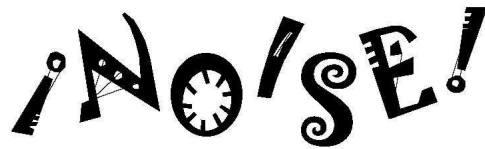


*Communication Preferences
A Survey Report*

Prepared for



by

OMSI Evaluation and Visitor Studies Division

Portland, Oregon

Contact: Cate Rhodes

This report was prepared for the Network of Informal STEM Educators (NOISE)
by the Evaluation & Visitor Studies Division at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI).

NOISE Communication Survey Report

Objectives

The objective of this survey was to learn about NOISE members' preferences for NOISE communications. NOISE members were asked what information they wanted to receive from NOISE and how NOISE should communicate that information. NOISE is also interested in expanding its network, so survey respondents were given the opportunity to provide contact information for, or forward the survey to, any potentially-interested individuals.

Methods

Participants

The survey was sent to 85 NOISE members from 61 different organizations. A total of 31 individuals, from 25 different organizations, completed the survey (39% response rate among individuals, 41% response rate among organizations).

Survey instrument

The survey instrument contained three questions. First, survey respondents were asked to enter their contact information. Next, respondents were asked a question that required them to match types of information with formats for communicating that information. Respondents were able to pick one or more formats for each type of information. They were also able to suggest another form of communication or simply no communication at all for that topic. If respondents chose "other form of communication," they were asked to use the box provided to describe what that form might be. After the communication question, respondents were offered the opportunity to provide contact information for additional colleagues who might be interested in participating in NOISE. Respondents were able to enter contact information for up to three individuals, at which point they were asked to e-mail NOISE staff with any additional names. They were also encouraged to forward the survey to other interested individuals.

There were three versions of the survey. Each version varied slightly the order in which the types of information and the communication formats were presented. This was to ensure that order did not overly influence participants' preferences. The NOISE members were divided into three groups and a different copy of the survey was sent to each group. One version of the survey instrument is in Appendix A.

In addition, the delivery program that was used to send the e-mail, MailChimp, provided information about the "open rates," "click rates," and "completion rates" for the survey. This company also provides e-mail marketing resources and data on industry standards for campaign success rates. These data are presented in this report.

Survey procedure

The survey was sent to NOISE members via a Web-based e-mail delivery program called MailChimp. Using this service, an identical HTML e-mail was sent to all participants that explained the purpose of the survey and contained a link to the survey; the survey was available in "text" format as well. The e-mail was sent to NOISE members on Wednesday, May 30, and they were asked to complete the survey by Monday, June 4. The HTML e-mail is in Appendix B.

Wednesday, May 30, was chosen as the day to send the e-mail for a variety of reasons. In the "e-marketing" industry, there is a great deal of debate about what day is the "best day to send" an email campaign. Despite this debate, most email campaigns are sent midweek. The times at which recipients are more likely to open an e-mail or more likely to click on a link within an e-mail also vary (ExactTarget. Retrieved 6/8/07, 1:56pm, <http://email.exacttarget.com/pdf/Best-Day.pdf>). Most e-marketers say that there is no best time to send; it simply depends. The following report from "ExactTarget email solutions" is suggested for further reading:

<http://email.exacttarget.com/pdf/Best-Day.pdf>.

Due to the fact that NOISE recipients opted into the NOISE member e-mail list, it was more likely that the e-mail would be received and opened. However, steps were taken to increase the likelihood that recipients would not only open the e-mail but also click on the link to the survey. The survey e-mail was ready to be sent to recipients on Thursday, May 24. However, due to the Memorial Day holiday weekend, the survey e-mail was not sent until Wednesday of the following week. Many people ended their work week early, or were traveling over the weekend, or both, thus it was expected that individuals would not be likely to open e-mails over the weekend, and that they would have a large amount of e-mail to catch up on after the long weekend.

This decision was made, in part, thanks to the e-mail marketing tools and resources provided on the MailChimp website; these findings may help inform e-mail sending “best practices.” MailChimp conducted a study of open rates for approximately 2,000 of its own HTML e-mail campaigns. The study found that of the total number of people who would eventually open those e-mails:

- nearly 1/3 will open **within the first hour** of sending
- the majority (53%) will open within 6 hours
- 78% will have opened within 1 day
- within 1 week, 95% of openers will have opened
- and people will still open your email a full 30 days after sending. (MailChimp. “Nearly One Third of Opens Occur within 1 Hour.” Retrieved 6/6/07, 11:15am, http://mailchimp.blogs.com/blog/2006/09/nearly_one_thir.html)

In addition to sending time and open rates, a number of other important factors contribute to the success of an e-mail campaign, such as subject line and e-mail formatting. Subject line, especially, is important so as to avoid SPAM filters, which look for “gimmicky” or “sales-like” appeals.

MailChimp conducted an internal study to look at successful subject lines. Table 1 presents sample MailChimp subject lines that have the “best” and “worst” open rates.

Table 1. MailChimp E-mail Marketing Subject Line Comparison

Best Open Rates (60%–87%)	Worst Open Rates (1%–14%)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [COMPANYNAME] Sales & Marketing Newsletter 2. Eye on the [COMPANYNAME] Update (Oct 31–Nov 4) 3. [COMPANYNAME] Staff Shirts & Photos 4. [COMPANYNAME] May 2005 News Bulletin! 5. [COMPANYNAME] Newsletter—February 2006 6. [COMPANYNAME] Newsletter—January 2006 [* FNAME * * LNAME *] 7. [COMPANYNAME] and [COMPANYNAME] Invites You! 8. Happy Holidays from [COMPANYNAME] 9. ATTENTION [COMPANYNAME] Staff! 10. ATTENTION [COMPANYNAME] West Staff!! 11. Invitation from [COMPANYNAME] 12. [COMPANYNAME] Jan/Feb 2006 Newsletter 13. Website news—Issue 3 14. Upcoming Events at [COMPANYNAME] 15. [COMPANYNAME] Councils: Letter of Interest 16. [COMPANYNAME] Coffee Exchange—Post-Katrina Update 17. We're Throwing a Party 18. October 2005 Newsletter 19. [COMPANYNAME]: 02.10.06 20. [COMPANYNAME] Racing Newsletter 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Last Minute Gift—We Have The Answer 2. Valentines—Shop Early & Save 10% 3. Give a Gift Certificate this Holiday 4. Valentine's Day Salon and Spa Specials! 5. Gift Certificates—Easy & Elegant Giving—Let Them Choose 6. Need More Advertising Value From Your Marketing Partner? 7. [COMPANYNAME] Pioneers in Banana Technology 8. [COMPANYNAME] Moves You Home for the Holidays 9. Renewal 10. Technology Company Works with [COMPANYNAME] on Bananas Efforts 11. [COMPANYNAME] Update—A Summary of Security and Emergency Preparedness News 12. Now Offering Banana Services! 13. It's still summer in Tahoe! 14. [COMPANYNAME] endorses [COMPANYNAME] as successor 15. [COMPANYNAME] Holiday Sales Event 16. The Future of International Trade 17. [COMPANYNAME] for your next dream home. 18. True automation of your Banana Research 19. [COMPANYNAME] Resort—Spring into May Savings 20. You Asked For More...

* Study only included campaigns sent to at least 100 recipients.
 (MailChimp. "Email Marketing Subject Line Comparison." Retrieved 6/6/07, 11:17am, <http://www.mailchimp.com/resources/subject-line-comparison.phtml>)

Mail Chimp conducted this study in response to questions from new e-mail marketers about how to maximize their "open rates." MailChimp analyzed more than forty million e-mails sent by its own customers to determine which ones had the highest open rates and which ones had the lowest open rates. MailChimp then compared the subject lines of twenty e-mails from the "high open rate" group and the "low open rate group." (See Table 1 above.)

MailChimp tracks open rates for all of the campaigns that are sent through its service. In addition, the company tracks "click rates"—this is when someone actually "clicks" on a URL that is embedded in an e-mail. Below are the "open rates," "click rates," and "survey completion rates" for the NOISE Communication Survey (Table 2).

The table shows who received the survey e-mail, who opened the survey e-mail, who clicked on a link to the survey that was embedded within the e-mail, who started the survey, and who actually took the survey. The total

number of individuals is listed for each of these categories. Percentages are listed for each category when relevant; they are based on the percentage of total recipients and the percentage of people who actually took the survey. Please note that the “survey completion rates” were not tabulated by MailChimp; these rates were gathered based on the actual surveys recorded within the separate survey program, SurveyMonkey.

Table 2. NOISE Communication E-mail Campaign Statistics, Open, Click, and Survey Completion Rates

Campaign statistics	Total	Percentage from all recipients	Percentage from survey takers
Recipients of survey	85	100%	---
Recipients who opened	41	48% opened	76% who opened took survey
Recipients who clicked	36	42% clicked	86% who clicked took survey
Recipients who started the survey	33	39%	94% who started survey finished it
Recipients who took survey	31	36%	---

In addition to tracking the “success” of e-mail campaigns, MailChimp provides data on how different e-mail campaigns perform, on average, by industry. The “open” and “click” rates represent the percentages of individuals who either “opened” the e-mail or “clicked” on a link within the e-mail. The “soft” and “hard” bounces refer to e-mails that were not successfully delivered to an individual’s e-mail inbox. A “soft bounce” means that the inbox is “temporarily unavailable” (e.g., it might have been full at the time of attempted delivery). A “hard bounce” means that the e-mail address “failed” (e.g., the address may have contained an error, the account may no longer exist, or a SPAM filter may have blocked it). Below are some sample industry performance statistics, along with the NOISE Communication Survey statistics (Table 3).

Table 3. Average E-mail Campaign Statistics of MailChimp Customers by Industry and for the NOISE Survey

Type of Company	Open Rate	Click Rate	Soft Bounces	Hard Bounces	Abuse Complaints	Unsubscribes
NOISE Communication Survey	48.00%	42.00%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Education	37.50%	7.08%	4.80%	7.39%	0.02%	0.11%
Non-profit	36.59%	11.67%	4.92%	7.58%	0.03%	0.09%
WEIGHTED AVERAGES¹	17.76%	14.56%	3.16%	4.25%	0.04%	0.12%

¹ The “Weighted Average” figures come from a very large proportion of campaigns from customers who classified themselves as “Other.” Click and open rates are based on “successful deliveries.” A “successful delivery” is an e-mail that did not hard or soft bounce.

(MailChimp. “Email Marketing Benchmarks for Small Businesses: Average open, click, bounce and abuse complaint rates by industry.” Retrieved June 6, 2007, 11:15am, http://www.mailchimp.com/resources/email_marketing_benchmarks.phtml)

There are many tactics to running a successful e-mail campaign. One effective step that can increase the likelihood that recipients will open an e-mail is preparing them for receiving that e-mail. This can be done by sending e-mails on a set schedule. An example of this is the *Mostly Monday Memo* that OMSI sends to teachers each Monday. To improve its e-mail campaigns, and successfully communicate information to its members, NOISE may want to consider conducting further research on these and other topics related to “e-marketing.”

Results

Question 1

Survey respondents were asked to provide their first and last names and their contact information. A total of 33 individual respondents entered at least their first and last names, but only 31 respondents proceeded to complete the survey. These 31 individuals represented 25 different organizations. See Table 4.

Table 4. Organizations/Institutions Represented by Survey Respondents

Organizations/Institutions	
1. Baker 5J School District	14. Oregon Trout
2. Business Education Compact	15. Oregon University System
3. Education Soaring	16. Oregon Zoo
4. Friends of Pine Mountain Observatory	17. Portland Parks Environmental Education
5. George Fox University	18. Portland State University
6. Hillsboro High School	19. Saturday Academy
7. Intel	20. Science Works Hands-On Museum
8. The Lemelson Foundation	21. Society of Women Engineers
9. Oregon Health Career Center	22. South Albany High School
10. Oregon Health Science University	23. University of Oregon
11. Oregon Museum of Science and Industry	24. Wildlife Safari
12. Oregon Science Teachers Association	25. Willamette University
13. Oregon State University	

Question 2

Using a matrix, similar to the table below, survey respondents were asked to match certain types of information with the way in which they wanted that information communicated. Respondents could choose more than one format for communicating each type of information (i.e., an individual could choose to have information about the NOISE Conference communicated via e-mail *and* via a website). In addition, respondents were given the option to select “no communication” or “other form of communication.” If respondents selected “other form of communication,” they were asked to explain their preferred communication format. Interestingly, no survey respondents selected “no communication.” The survey responses are listed by type of information in Table 5.

Table 5. Preferred Formats for Communicating Certain Types of Information (31 respondents)

Communication Format	NOISE Conference	Committee Meetings	Professional Development	STEM Resources	Program Offerings	Members' Contact Info	Peer-to-Peer Communication	Total (avg. # responses)
E-mail (listserv)	18	17	17	11	15	11	12	101 (14)
E-mail (personal)	14	17	8	8	9	9	24	89 (13)
Website	9	6	13	19	16	13	2	78 (11)
Print brochure/catalog	0	0	5	5	6	3	0	19 (3)
Phone	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	9 (1)
Blog	1	1	2	1	2	0	1	8 (1)
Snail mail	4	0	2	1	1	0	0	8 (1)
Online msg. board	0	1	0	1	2	0	3	7 (1)
Other form of communication	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1 (0)
No communication	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The survey results are described below in terms of 1) the most commonly selected formats across the respondent group and 2) the most commonly selected formats for individuals within the group.

First, for communicating all types of information (NOISE Conference, Committee Meetings, Professional Development, STEM Resources, Program Offerings, Members' Contact Information, and Peer-to-Peer

Communication), the most commonly selected formats across the respondent group were listserv e-mail, personal e-mail, and website. In fact, a close examination of the data revealed that every individual selected one of these three options at least once (see Appendix C for more detail).

These preferences may have been expected among this particular group, but it should be noted that the survey was sent via e-mail and was Web-based, which may have resulted in a disproportionate number of responses from those individuals' who prefer e-mail and the Web. If NOISE would like to confirm whether or not email and websites are truly the preference of most NOISE members, a phone survey could be conducted with members who did not respond to the Web-based survey to ask their preferences.

Second, listserv e-mail, personal e-mail, and website were also the most commonly selected formats for individuals within the group. A close examination of the data revealed that respondents consistently showed a preference for one of the three most commonly selected formats (listserv e-mail, personal e-mail, or website) (see Appendix C for more detail). That is, all but one of the 31 respondents chose the same communication format for at least four of the seven types of information.

The final portion of this question asked respondents to suggest alternate communication formats. The responses to this question included in-person communication (e.g., RAPs at conferences, etc.), a digest option for listserv e-mails, and website information (such as Members' Contact Information, STEM Resources, and Program Offerings) in a printer-friendly, downloadable format. See Table 6.

Table 6. Additional Communication Formats and Suggestions for Existing Formats (2 respondents)

Additional communication formats	Respondents
E-mail (listserv)	
Offer a digest format	1
Website	
Members' contact info in a printer-friendly, downloadable format	1
STEM resources in a printer-friendly, downloadable format	1
Program offerings in a printer-friendly, downloadable format	1
Peer-to-peer	
In person (RAPs)	1

To summarize the results of Question 2, the respondent group demonstrated a strong preference for listserv e-mail, personal e-mail, and website communication, no matter the type of information being communicated. Individuals within the group demonstrated strong preferences for a single one of these three formats—some preferring listserv e-mail, some personal e-mail, and some websites. Given these findings, NOISE may want to offer all information in all three formats to provide NOISE members the opportunity to choose the format that best suits their needs.

Question 3

The final question allowed survey respondents the opportunity to provide names and contact information for other individuals who would be interested in joining NOISE. Of the 31 survey respondents, four offered contact information for additional individuals. Contact information was provided for five new individuals; all of these individuals were from organizations/institutions that are currently represented in NOISE.

Survey respondents were also encouraged to forward the survey e-mail to other potentially interested individuals. While survey respondents may have forwarded the e-mail directly to other individuals, no survey respondents clicked on the "Forward This E-mail" to send the survey to others. Of the survey respondents, only one was from an organization that was not formerly affiliated with NOISE.

Appendix A

Thank you for choosing to complete the NOISE survey.

You will be asked to enter your contact information and answer two short questions.

Then, you will have the opportunity to add additional representatives from your institution.

Your responses will help NOISE communicate with you better.

First Name

Last Name

Organization/Institution Name

Title

Email

Phone

What is the best way for NOISE to communicate with you about the following information?

	Email (personal)	Email (listserv)	Website	Blog	Online message board	Phone	Snail mail	Print brochure/catalog	Other form of communication	No communication
NOISE conference	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Committee meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STEM resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program offerings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Members' contact info	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer-to-peer communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you selected "other form of communication" for any of the previous items, please list the item(s) and your preferred form of communication.

NOISE is an open organization. We would like to invite you to add additional representatives from your institution to the network.

***Would you like to add an additional representative from your institution at this time?**

Yes

No

[*Note: If participants responded “no,” they were taken to a “thank you” page at the end of the survey. If participants responded “yes,” they were allowed to enter contact information for an additional contact, then they were asked if they wanted to enter another contact. This process was repeated until the participant either responded “no” or entered the maximum of three contacts, at which point the participant arrived at the end of the survey.]

Additional Contact First Name

Additional Contact Last Name

Additional Contact Organization/Institution Name

Additional Contact Title

Additional Contact Email

Additional Contact Phone

Thank you for completing the survey!

If you have questions or comments, please contact us at NOISE@omsi.edu. We also encourage you to forward the survey email you received to other individuals who would be interested in NOISE.

Appendix B

iNOISE! (Network of Informal STEM Educators)

Help **iNOISE!** communicate with you better by answering some

quick questions

about your communication preferences.

iNOISE! is a network of providers and partners dedicated to lifelong learning opportunities for informal STEM education. The network was founded in 2007 during a conference at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) and consists of four Committees, Leadership, Communications, Funding, and K-12 Education, and an at-large membership.

Please respond to these **quick questions** by Monday, June 4th.

Thank you for your time! We look forward to incorporating your feedback.

You are subscribed to this list because you attended the NOISE Conference at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI).

[Unsubscribe](#) crhodes@omsi.edu from this list. [Forward](#) this email to a friend.

NOISE
1945 SE Water Avenue
Portland, OR 97214
www.omsi.edu/noise

Appendix C

Respondent#	Conference	Committee	Prof develop.	STEM	Program	Member info	Peer-to-peer
1	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Personal
2	Personal	Personal	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Personal	Personal
3	Listserv	Personal	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Website	Personal
4	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal
5	Listserv	Listserv	Website	Website	Website	Website	Personal
6	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal	Website	Personal
7	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv
8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	Personal Website	Personal Website	Personal Print brochure	Personal Website	Personal Website Print brochure	Personal	Personal
10	Personal	Personal	Listserv	Website	Website	Website	Personal
11	Personal	Personal	Personal	Website	Personal	Website	Personal
12	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal
13	Listserv	Listserv	Website	Website	Website	Website	Listserv
14	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv Website On-line msg.	Listserv Website On-line msg.	Website	Personal
15	Listserv Snail mail	Listserv	Listserv Snail mail	Listserv Print brochure	Listserv Print brochure	Personal	Personal Listserv
16	Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Website	Listserv Website	Website Print brochure	Personal Listserv Website
17	Listserv	Personal	Website	Website	Website	Website	Listserv
18	Personal Listserv Website	Personal Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Personal Listserv
19	Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Listserv Website	Personal Listserv Website On-line msg.	Listserv	Personal On-line msg.
20	Personal Website Snail mail	Personal Website	Listserv Website Print brochure	Website	Website Print brochure	Website Print brochure	Listserv Other
21	Website	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Personal
22	Listserv Website	Blog On-line msg.	Listserv Website Blog Print brochure	Website Print brochure	Listserv Website Blog	Listserv	Personal On- line msg.
23	Personal Listserv	Personal Listserv	Personal	Personal	Personal	Personal Listserv	Personal
24	Personal Snail mail	Personal	Website Snail mail	Website Snail mail Print brochure	Website Snail mail Print brochure	Website	Personal Phone
25	Listserv Blog	Listserv	Website Blog	Website	Website Blog	Listserv	Listserv Website Blog On-line msg.
26	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Website	Listserv	Website	Listserv
27	Personal Snail mail	Personal Listserv	Website Print brochure	Personal Listserv Website Print brochure	Website Print brochure	Personal Print brochure	Personal Listserv
28	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Blog	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv
29	Personal Listserv Phone	Personal Listserv Phone	Personal Listserv Phone	Personal Listserv Phone	Personal Listserv Phone	Personal Listserv Phone	Personal Listserv Phone
30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
31	Listserv	Listserv	Listserv	Website	Listserv	N/A	Personal
32	Personal Website	Personal Website	Personal Website	Personal Website	Personal Website	Personal	Personal
33	Website	Personal	Website Print brochure	Website Print brochure	Website Print brochure	Personal	Personal