Opinion Survey

SSA Conference

Results & Analysis

May 3, 2011
Date: May 3, 2011

To: SSA Conference Survey Committee
   SSA Board of Directors
   SSA Staff

From: Bob Lacovara, Chairman – Conference Survey Committee

Re: Executive Summary - SSA Conference Survey – Results & Analysis

Background
SSA Staff appointed a Committee to design and conduct a survey concerning the annual convention. The purpose is to gather opinion data from the soaring community to assist with decision making for future meetings. The Committee consists of Walt Cannon, Dave Nadler, Richard Kellerman, Burt Compton, and Chairman, Bob Lacovara.

Method
The survey was published on 4-12-11 through Survey Monkey, an online survey service. Notice of the availability of the survey was posted on the SSA website, the Recreation Aviation Soaring (RAS) newsgroup, the Soaring Café website, and several other web sites. Survey responses were terminated 4-29-11 and compiled by Bob Lacovara.

Survey Response
The response was outstanding. Several hundred responses were submitted in the first 48-hours. A total of 375 responses, including 184 written comments were received at the time this summary was compiled. Assuming 10,000 SSA members, 375 responses represents approximately 3.75% of the membership. Typically a 2% response to a survey is considered good and provides a statistically valid sample of the larger demographic.

- The 3.75% response rate provides a statistically significant cohort
- The percentages and proportions of the responses changed only slightly (within 0.2%) from respondent number 250 through respondent number 375. This response equilibrium is a strong indicator that the sample cohort is representative of the larger body of potential participants
- Based on the stability of the response rates it is likely that the data would remain the same even with a much larger response
- This is good quality data, representative of the soaring community at large

The receipt of 184 written comments is an exceedingly strong indicator of the interest of SSA members concerning this topic. They have something to say and took advantage of the opportunity to be heard.

The Written Comments
The written comments are remarkable in volume, length and detail. These comments range from well thought-out and concise to some that are rambling, irrational or off point. However, in total they indicate a willingness to contribute to the dialog. An analysis of the comments produces a number of coherent “themes” that form threads through the written opinions. The frequency at which a topic is mentioned is a noteworthy indicator of the weight and importance attributed to a particular theme.

A review of the comments provides a snapshot of opinions that are likely to be representative of the general soaring community. The chart below illustrates the importance rating of a given theme: (Chart 1)
### Respondent Profile

Following is a snapshot that characterizes the survey respondents. Please review the data analysis for detailed information:

- 99% are SSA members
- 72% have attended an SSA Convention / 28% have not attended a convention
- 63% have attended a Convention in the last 1-3 years / 10% have not attended in the last 10-years
- More than 50% have flown gliders for over 20-years / 19% have flown between 1-5-years (this may be an indicator of new people entering the sport)
- 47% fly on a regular basis during the season (+30 flights) / 20% had between 0 and 10 flights last year, indicating they fly infrequently, or are not active pilots
- 68% own a glider / 32% do not own a glider (the survey is weighted toward the cohort of glider owners as compared to the likely population of non-glider owners)
- 70% fly at a club / 22% fly at a commercial FBO / 8% fly mostly at contests
- 49% fly cross-country / 32% fly local area / 19% are mostly involved in instructional flying (student or instructor)
- 79% do not fly in contests / 21% are active contest pilots (Approximately 4-5% of all US glider pilots fly in contests, indicating that the survey response is weighted more heavily toward contest pilots than the general population)
Opinions on the Convention*

Please review the data analysis for detailed information. A summary of survey questions is as follows:

*(Note: In the survey, the term “Convention” is used throughout to avoid the confusion of defining Convention and Conference. In this context, “Convention” means any form of a national level annual gathering of SSA members).

Q1 – Please rank the importance of these aspects of an SSA Convention to you:

*Ranking:
Almost twice as many respondents consider educational sessions "very important" as compared to those who ranked social events "very important". The hierarchy of importance ranks:

1 - Educational sessions
2 - Equip & accessory displays
3 - Sailplane displays
4 - Social events/interaction w/ friends

Analysis: The difference between equipment displays and sailplane displays is a statistically significant delineation; however the written comments articulate the importance of sailplane displays.

Q2 – How do you weight the factors you consider when deciding whether or not you will attend an SSA Convention?

*Ranking:
The hierarchy of importance:

1 - Interest
2 - Travel Commitment
3 - Available Time
4 - Cost
5 - Weather

Analysis: Having interest in attending a conference is the highest rated factor. Weather is the least important factor in the in making a decision to attend. However, in the written comments locations with good weather are an often repeated major factor. It appears there may be a difference an individual’s go/no-go decision to attend a specific convention, as compared to a broad general statement that locations with good weather are strongly desired. (Refer to comments).

Q3 – In your opinion how often should the SSA Convention be held?

There is a clear preference for a convention held every two years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every year</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every two years</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every three years</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every four years</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis: In the context of the written comments there is a strong preference is for a full convention (with displays) every two years and no national meeting in the “off-year”. However, there is a comment theme indicating some interest in smaller regional meetings in the off-year.
Q4 – How important are displays of sailplanes & equipment/accessories to the convention?

- By more than a two to one margin respondents indicate that displays are very important as compared to those who believe displays are less important
- Overall rating average is high (4.20) indicating a high level of importance for displays
- Only 4.8% of respondents indicate that displays are less than moderately important

Analysis: There is a strong indication that respondents rank displays of equipment and gliders important.

Q5 - If a full convention (with displays) was held every other year, how interested would you be in attending an education only (no displays) convention on the off-year?

- Over 70% of respondents indicate they have moderate or less interest in attending a no-display convention
- Overall rating average is low (2.79), indicating a low level of interest in a no-displays convention
- In the context of the previous question it can be concluded that there is only minor interest in a conference with no displays

Analysis: The written comments significantly support this conclusion - there is little support for an off-year “no-displays” conference.

Q6 - How would you feel about a convention in the off-year with equipment/accessory displays, but with NO sailplane displays?

- Only 10% of respondents are very interested in this concept
- Overall rating average is 2.91, making it better that no-displays, but it is over-shadowed by the 4.20 rating of the previous question concerning the importance of sailplane/equipment displays
- The indications are that a convention with equipment displays is better than no displays but not as desired as full displays (with sailplanes)

Analysis: The weight of the written comments indicates a strong preference for a full conference with sailplane displays. There is only a minority support for an “off-year” conference.

Q7 – Where do you think the convention should be located?

- **In a different location every year** 57.7%
- In three standard locations on a rotating basis (For example, Tampa, San Antonio, Reno) 37.4%
- In the same location every year 4.9%

Analysis: A clear majority of respondents indicate a preference for a different location every year. The written comments support these data, with comments on location being the most frequent theme. In conjunction, the written comments produce a very strong preference for locating in good (warm) weather.
areas only. Travel is a repeating theme in the written comments; numerous respondents state they want a convention in a “location near me” – A significant number of respondents are not willing to travel national scale distances and often link that with cost.

Q8 - Please rate your level of interest in SSA Convention educational sessions:

- **General Educational Sessions** – Rating Average – 4.06
- **OSTIV Technical Sessions** – Rating Average – 3.25

  - Twice as many respondents are very interested in General Education sessions as compared to OSTIV Technical sessions
  - The rating average gap of 4.06 for Educational sessions verses 3.25 for Technical sessions is very significant.
  - 72% of respondents indicate Educational sessions are important or very important, whereas only 41% indicate that OSTIV sessions are important or very important.

Analysis: The written comments address this issue in a tangential manner. The threads running through the comments indicate a preference for practical topics directed toward the average glider pilot. An extrapolation is that the “average glider pilot” makes up the population that would potentially contribute to increases in convention attendance. By statistical definition the average glider pilot flies at a club - half of this population flies cross-country and half does not - and 80% do not fly in contests.
SSA Conference Survey Data and Analysis
April 2011

Are you an SSA member?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
An obviously high population of SSA members responded to the survey. It is possible that everyone in the pool who would potentially respond also happens to be an SSA member; or that those who are not SSA members would not be inclined to participate in this type of survey. Clearly the demographic is a strong representation of participating SSA members.

Have you ever attended an SSA Convention?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
72% of respondents have experiential knowledge of the event. 28% of respondents offer opinions without first-hand knowledge of the conference.
If "Yes" to above when was the last convention you attended?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 years</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 years</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis:**
63% of respondents have recent knowledge of the event. 20% of respondents have not attended in more than 4-years 17% of respondents have not attended in more than 6-years 10% of respondents have not attended in over 10-years

Please rank the importance of these aspects of an SSA Convention to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational sessions</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailplane displays</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment &amp; accessory displays</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social events / interaction with friends</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis:**
Note: In this response form small differences in the rating average represent significant statistical proportions.

Almost twice as many respondents consider educational sessions "very important" as compared to those who ranked social events "very important".
The hierarchy of importance ranks - 1 - Educational sessions 2 - Equip & accessory displays 3 - Sailplane displays 4 - Social events/interaction w/ friends

The difference between equip. displays and sailplane displays is a significant delineation.
How do you weight the factors you consider when deciding whether or not you will attend an SSA Convention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Less Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Available time</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel commitment</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
*Note: In this response form small differences in the rating average represent significant statistical proportions.*

The hierarchy of importance ranks -
1. Interest
2. Travel Commitment
3. Available Time
4. Cost
5. Weather

Having interest in attending a conference is the highest rated factor. Weather is the least important factor in the in making a decision to attend.

In your opinion how often should the SSA Convention be held?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every year</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every two years</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every three years</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every four years</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
The clear preference is for a convention held every two years.
How important are displays of sailplanes & equipment/accessories to the convention?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate Importance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
By more than a two to one margin respondents indicate that displays are very important as compared to those who believe displays are less important.

Overall rating average is high (4.20) indicating a high level of importance for displays.

Only 4.8% of respondents indicate that displays are less than moderately important.

If a full convention (with displays) was held every other year, how interested would you be in attending an education only (no displays) convention on the off-year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
<th>Somewhat Interested</th>
<th>Moderately Interested</th>
<th>Interested</th>
<th>Very Interested</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate Interest</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
Over 70% of respondents indicate they have moderate or less interest in attending a no-display convention.

Overall rating average is low (2.79), indicating a low level of interest in a no-displays convention.

In the context of the previous question it can be concluded that there is only a minority interest in a conference with no displays.
How would you feel about a convention in the off-year with equipment/accessory displays, but with NO sailplane displays?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
<th>Somewhat Interested</th>
<th>Moderately Interested</th>
<th>Interested</th>
<th>Very Interested</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate Interest</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
Only 10% of respondents are very interested in this concept.

Overall rating average is 2.91, making it better that no-displays, but it is over-shadowed by the 4.20 rating of the previous question concerning the importance of sailplane/equipment displays.

The indications are that equipment displays are better than no displays but not as desired as full displays (with sailplanes).

Where do you think the convention should be located?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a different location every year</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the same location basis (For example, Tampa, San Antonio,</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the same location every year</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
A clear majority of respondents indicate a preference for a different location every year.
Please rate your level of interest in SSA Convention educational sessions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
<th>Somewhat Interested</th>
<th>Moderately Interested</th>
<th>Interested</th>
<th>Very Interested</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education Sessions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSTIV Technical Sessions</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis:**
Twice as many respondents are very interested in General Education sessions as compared to OSTIV Technical sessions.

The rating average gap of 4.06 for Educational sessions versus 3.25 for Technical sessions is very significant.

72% of respondents indicate Educational sessions are important or very important, whereas only 41% indicate that OSTIV sessions are important or very important.

HELP US UNDERSTAND A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOU: How many years have you flown gliders?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ years</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis:**
Over half of the respondents have flown gliders for over 20-years. 19% of respondents have flown gliders for 5-years or less indicating they are relatively new to the sport.

This is a particularly interesting demographic indicating that over the last 5-year period there are a statistically significant number of people entering the sport.
What is your current flying activity level - How many glider flights did you have last year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
Just under half of the respondents indicate they flew over 30 flights last year. With 32-weeks in the average soaring season this could mean they averaged a flight every weekend during the season. This group is obviously active and engaged in flying.

A significant statistic is that almost 20% of the respondents had between 0 to 10 flights last year. So about 1/5th of the respondents are minimally active with flying activity.

Do you own a glider?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis:
From a marketing perspective 68% of respondents are glider owners and therefore are potential customers for displaying equipment/glider vendors.

An extrapolation of this statistic may be coupled with the below question on club participation. 70% of respondents indicate they do a majority of their flying at a club. Within a club membership typically 15% to 30% of members own private gliders. An extrapolation may be that the respondents to this survey do not include the average glider club member, but are weighted toward more active glider owners.
Is a majority of your flying at a club, a commercial FBO, or at contests?

### Answer Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Club</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBO</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contests</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis:**
A clear majority (70%) of respondents fly within a club environment.

---

How would you characterize the main focus of your flying?

### Answer Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local area flights</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-country flights</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student - Learning to fly</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor - Giving instruction</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis:**
About 1/2 of the respondents are focused on cross-country soaring. 1/2 are focused on non-cross-country flying. About 1/3 of respondents characterize their flying as Local Area.
**Do you fly in contests?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Active contest pilot</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have competed in the past</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis:**
60% of the respondents do not fly in contests. Almost 20% have competed in the past but do not fly in contests now. 80% of respondents are not involved in contest flying.

Over 20% of respondents indicate they are active contest pilots. Of all SSA Members approximately 4-5% fly in contests. The respondents to this survey are more heavily weighted toward contest pilots than represented by the general population of glider pilots.
SSA Conference Survey – Comments

Note: General theme category of comments assigned in [Red]

5/1/11 3:42PM View Responses
The two conventions I attended were in Dayton, Ohio, and Atlanta, GA (03 & 04 respectively). The weather in Dayton was sub-zero. Atlanta wasn’t much better. I would encourage the SSA to schedule the conventions in cities where the weather is apt to be warm(er) during the convention/conference season...or somewhere mountain wave is likely such as Reno, so flat-landers and east coast pilots might have a change to do some winter wave soaring if they are so inclined. [Good weather cities]

5/1/11 1:22PM View Responses
The closer a convention is to me, the more likely I am to attend. Not a great attitude, but the truth. Ever thought of combining with other aviation conventions? Hang gliders? EAA? AMA? I know the AMA may be a stretch, but many of the soaring pilots I meet are expert model flyers who simply stumbled into full-size gliders by accident. And their transition time is usually quite low. They already have the bug and already spend a lot of money in aviation and there are 150,000 members of the AMA so getting just one percent of them to join us would be a big boost. Finally, many of them fly scale gliders and have never given much thought to the real thing. Why? No one invited them and it really just never crossed their mind. Does the FAA get invited to our convention? Could they be asked to speak? Outreach to them could be more warm than I sense it currently is. I think many of us could use a full day just on marketing ideas, plans, strategies to gain new membership. Anyway, them's me thoughts. [Location close to me] [Invite other groups]

4/30/11 10:16AM View Responses
Perhaps I was mislead, but the schedule for the last convention appeared to have very little technical content. Mostly, it seemed to be a string of get-togethers for various interest groups. To justify the effort to attend, a convention has to be more than an opportunity to network with old friends, rework safety issues, or discuss the latest regulatory concerns; it should inspire, educate, inform and leave one with a sense that gliding is an exciting and forward-looking movement. Although I have not investigated the possibility, it might also be appropriate to consider joining forces with other communities dedicated to flying, i.e., those who fly ultra-lights, hang gliders, paragliders, etc., and sponsor one large integrated convention each year. The distinction between flyers under Part 103 and FAA qualified pilots should not act as a disincentive for collaboration and promotion of common interests. I am surprised at the interest shown by hang glider enthusiasts in going upscale as they get older and more prosperous. [More technical content – Has to be more than social] [Invite other groups]

4/29/11 11:51AM View Responses
I am an aspiring cross country pilot. I look to the convention for learning more about various aspects of glider flight with special emphasis on cross country and eventually competition. It is difficult to teach oneself xc soaring despite the availability of several good books. The convention should have various learning "paths" dedicated to various topics, but always a cross country path. That is, a new glider pilot should be able to plan on attending lectures each day that provide the nuts, bolts and practical "how to" experience to allow progression in the sport. There needs to be a logical progression and organization to these lectures. After-all, it seems to be accepted that the pilots that progress to cross country tend to stay in soaring longer and the sport is in need of gaining and retaining pilots, thus one would think that there would be an emphasis on teaching and promoting cross country flying at the convention, but I have found that this isn't the case. It is a broad topic that would lend itself to many areas of instruction, from the first steps outside of gliding range all the way up to competition flying with subjects such as weather, instrumentation, McCready theory and all of its subtleties (a lecture I would very much like to attend), pilot physiology, how to handle various weather (blue days, cu days, cloud street days) landing out, etc, etc. From basics to intermediate to advanced. All presented so that an attendee can attend them all without having to choose one over the other because of poor course scheduling. Weather is another
huge topic that does get some attention, but the lectures seem to presume a certain level of prior knowledge. A series of weather lectures from the basics progressing through more advanced would be of great interest. Glider pilots need to be very knowledgeable about the weather. Teach us and make us all soaring weather experts, but start at the beginning with the very basics. It seems as though the convention is geared more toward the long time glider pilot and needs to refocus on being the educational resource and advocate for the aspiring less experienced pilot. I find the scheduling of the lectures to be somewhat random and frustrating as invariably there are conflicting schedules. Also, the course schedules need to be available well in advance so that a decision to attend, arranging time off, and the various logistics can be arranged. Putting out a schedule only a couple of weeks ahead of the convention date just doesn't cut it. Yet another reason for reaching a decision not to attend. Consider asking lecture attendees to fill out a quick, short evaluation form for each lecture they attend and then working to continue well thought of lectures and perhaps reshaping those that may have been poorly ranked. Have a "best of" series of lectures each year. Perhaps consider asking the US Team to provide a recurring annual lecture series on competition, from newbie to nationals and everything in between (start here, practice this, this is how you practice that, these are the parameters we track and how we track them, etc., etc.). People just might be more willing to help fund the US Team efforts if they see them actively lecturing and working to advance the sport and at the same time giving back to the soaring community.

[Content suggestions]

[Late publishing of convention schedule]

4/29/11 11:51AM View Responses
I no longer have much time to devote to flying, but I crew a lot, and am active in SSA matters. The conference to me means board meetings, and other meetings. Seeing old friends, etc.

[Social participation]

4/29/11 7:13AM View Responses
I would opt for a fixed convention site if it would generate moderate cost savings for both the SSA and attendees. A site with the potential to fly or demonstrate equipment could prove interesting. If this can't be realized, then they should be held in different cities annually. EAA and AMA have been successful with a single location, though the EAA for somewhat different reasons. I would like to extend the convention period to plan for and conduct workshops and mentoring sessions for clubs, commercial operators, and SSA committees. This goes beyond what we've done and might attract more to the meeting. A window where 1/2 or full day workshops could be entertained might have some attraction, say on the Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. It's worked okay for the equipment vendors, why not for those running clubs and commercial operations? I know we have an 'agreement' of sorts to alternate years with the manufacturers. In 2010, the glider manufacturers stayed away from Friedrichshafen, apparently honoring that commitment.

[Single site if economical – Otherwise different cities]

[Content suggestions]

4/28/11 3:15PM View Responses
james bryson culp asw-20c USA residing gainesville fl metro area 32615

4/27/11 10:00PM View Responses
If the conference were held in conjunction with an EAA or AOPA conference I believe you would have a better vendor selection and would possibly gain the interest of power pilots.

[In conjunction with other groups]

4/27/11 8:57PM View Responses
I am your typical "flew when I was young and now my kids are almost cooked" so I am getting back into flying Guy:) Philadelphia was great - I know the weather and I know some people miss seeing new planes - but - I thought it was excellent. Also I think the lagistics had to be easier. If they don't cost extra and can offset some expense - I think having.
table top displays work nice. I was surprised there were not more and clubs trying to get members. It did seem like there was only hard core focus, but that kind of goes with the soaring population. Maybe one free event or two that could be marketed to new people and people with limited interest. That would give you the ability to market a little more. You do an excellent job! keep it up - see you next year
4/27/11 7:54PM View Responses
Question on how many flight can be mis-leading- due to abuse of the club ships as the club maintenance chair, as rated A/P and IA, I spent the year repairing and maintaining, the club ships. A very disappointing season. Perhaps a topic is the ability to lower liability by maintaining the ships in conjunction with a insurance Company presentation. We teach weather / piloting / ect. but very little on how and when to maintain a aircraft. Many glider pilots knowing violate the FAR's in the maintenance area because they know how to accomplish an item with no documentoion of actions on a glider or power plane. The A/P and IA are then set in place to clean up. When the actions of both should be a harmonous living. Yes, I have attended a SSA convention, In the education piece evaluate which sessions are well attended over the past several conventions. With a declining interest base in the sport while maintaining growth also means providing excitement to attend. Drawing one to leave home with the economy and fuel prices as they are is a hard battle to over come. The conventions seem to have a repeating theme, we collectivley need to stir excitement to attend, if teh members miss the convention - there is no penalty. Some one will write a story about the convention and all willmove on to the next local crisis, this we need to collecitively change. Sorry for the rambling thoughts Paul Irvin Aircraft Maintenance Manager Private Glider A/P – IA
[Add more excitement]

4/26/11 7:13PM View Responses
I am very appreciative of your willingness to solicit this type of information. This is one of the venues that allow each of us direct contact with the knowledge of soaring. There are two others that I find particularly important, online resource links from the SSA website and the other is Soaring Magazine. How SSA is configured is a little confusing to me, it that such a large part of the membership is not involved in competition, but rather, envolved with their local club and close-in local soaring. We are all interested, somewhat, in the highest tech developments and the latest soaring flight records accomplishments, but much more interested in those aspects that will directly benefit each of us at the local field level. It is wonderful, how well the staff at Soaring Magazine has upgraded its appearance and broadened the areas presented in a "series format". My point is this, is there a possibility that the convention content and magazine content could be more directed to the 95% of us who are not super-hightech or super-competition or super-extreme oriented? Soaring flight, in itself is wonderful, without the excesses that seem to be the focus of the current presentations. My thoughts, Jim Pilkington, CFI, CFIG, winch-launch appreciative pilot
[General SSA comments]
[Address the majority of non-contest, non-new glider owning population]

4/26/11 2:03AM View Responses
The educational and ongoing stress on safety is very important to the future of soaring. There should be educational and safety aspects at every conference. The state-of-the-art in sailplanes and instruments is also important to keep us abreast of what is available. Most of us will only buy one or two sailplanes in our soaring career but it is always of great interest to see the newest models. It is somewhat a tragedy that there are no US manufacturers of sailplanes in the US to to the litigation and liability issues of doing business in the US. Getting together and socializing is an important aspect of these conferences and getting charged up after talking to some of your peers and soaring icons is great way for us to get momentum when the season opens.
[Content – Safety emphasis]
[Sailplane displays important]
[Socializing important]

4/26/11 12:52AM View Responses
First, question 15 doesn't have my answer: my flying has no "majority" place. My flying is divided fairly evenly between my home airport (no club, but a few other glider pilots), soaring camps (usually Parowan, UT, and Mackay, ID), and independent flying while traveling with my wife in our motorhome, towing my motorglider behind it. A "seminar-only" convention like the last didn't attract me because it was a long flight to likely bad weather, and none of the talks were compelling (interesting, probably, but not compelling) enough to overcome those problems. If the sailplane and
equipment displays had been there, I’d probably have gone; or, if it had been closer and warmer, like San Diego, I definitely would have gone.

[Weather]
[Location close to me]

4/25/11 11:18AM View Responses
Points of interest are: 1. Increasing Club operations, Commercial operations, and SSA involvement in soaring Projects and Events. 2. Increasing activities and excitement for the next generation. 3. Reducing the cost of Insurance which is about 30% of our clubs costs. 4. We all need to Help grow the sport through safe and fun means.

[Content]

4/25/11 1:04AM View Responses
I wish the convention was done in the fall or spring at a glider location - the EAA convention is a good example - a thought would be to link to the EAA convention or to have a significant presence there similiar to what occurs at AeroFriedrichshaven. This is a like community of pilots - it would allow for mutual support and a great way to tap into a new potential group of new glider pilots. Get the convention away from downtowns and stale business hotels - do it at a key gliderport or airport - the convention should be a celebration.

[Timing – Spring or Fall]
[Avoid downtown business locations – Airport location]

4/24/11 11:21PM View Responses
- The Philly conference was not very exciting. Not sure what it was, but there was little excitement in the air. And it didn't help that the weather was bad and talks had to be moved around. It was really bad that it was often not announced well when a talk was rescheduled, and when it was then actually held. That's why several talks had practically no audience. - Something is Philly was really *BAD*. The OSTIV dinner presentation was closed for people who had not signed up for it in advance. As much as I understand that the hotel needs a head count for the dinner, why did you close the talk?? I was then told that the OSTIV dinner was supposed to be a fund raiser or promoter for OSTIV. So I completely fail to understand why some people were shut out. - I tend to think that if the talks are not of more substance, then having a conference without displays will not be sustainable in the long run.

[PHL was bad]

4/24/11 9:37PM View Responses
Regarding the convention location: I clicked on having a different one each year but fixed or limited locations would be fine also. Having good flight connections with competitive pricing would be important. East-West-Center location change might be necessary. Weather has been a big factor in the past as the Northern States will have ice and snow during February (which would be my preferred month, question should have been included in the survey).

[Different locations]
[Weather – Avoid northern States]

4/24/11 9:14PM View Responses
Attendance at this year's convention was low because Philly is a dangerous shithole. No one wants to go to Philly. The convention is in the winter time, we are glider pilots, we don't like cold weather, so consider a warm location. Pick a destination that other family members might enjoy. Pick a destination that has cheap flights available. Orlando, Destin, Las Vegas.

[PHL was bad]
[Weather- Warm location]

4/24/11 8:58PM View Responses
A conference in a college campus/ town such as Embry-Riddle in Arizona. With some of the most affordable launching facilities close-by and an aeronautical college with professors co-hosting this type of setting could bring returning members educational benefits as well as travelers from distant locations more incentive to attend with a possible
student companion. I am imagining a campus with not only glider exhibitions but wind tunnel demonstrations of future models of sailplanes. This way attendees get a verbal and actual representation of some of the science soaring aviation can establish. Aviation college setting could comprehensively accommodate all facets of sailplane discipline with a return to the college of bringing prospective students through their doors. I am realising that your fine conferences of past have succeeded well in soaring orations and I am confident that soaring aviation conferences are a worthy topic of interest for all students of any educational coarse of study. Keep-up this fine workmanship S.S.A. exemplifies inclusively. And I thank you for your interest in my thoughts of S.S.A. Your votary Mark L. Allen - N8018- (907)7663117 P.S. - If conference coincided with the Worlds Soaring Championship in Texas 2012 it could have more attendees.

[Location – College campus/town]
[Location – With World Championships next year]

4/24/11 3:16PM View Responses
I did not attend Philidiphia because it was called a "mini-convention". The impression I had was it was for Instructors, Regional govenors etc.

[PHL was bad]

4/24/11 12:26AM View Responses
More advertisement to the power pilot community could possibly attract more participation to soaring. Perhaps AOPA would allow some minor advertising.

[Involve other groups]

4/24/11 9:22AM View Responses
I believe that the cost of accommodations and meals are a significant deterrent to attendance. While weather has been a problem over the past several years, I think we have been using the bad weather as an excuse for other likely causes: expense, professionalism of presentations, topics covered etc.

[Cost]
[Weather]
[Content]

4/23/11 9:48PM View Responses
If I can get to it without excessive travel, I will. I especially like the FIRC clinics. Being in the North East makes getting to them difficult.

[Location close to me]

4/23/11 3:48AM View Responses
While having the convention in winter may make sense (to not conflict with soaring season), it does potentially affect the attendance due to winter weather problems. This was the case even in Atlanta in 2004 in which a major ice storm north and east of Atlanta caused significant travel problems and I believe cut well into attendance. Having a winter time convention in the NE or midwest other winter-storm-prone locations exasperates the chances. I don't think having a spring-fall convention will work, but perhaps the convention should be held in a city less prone to winter storms. Also I believe the every-other-year format for the floor show is good because the vendors I spoke with can't justify the expense of coming every year. It may be the seminar-only format may not be sufficiently attractive to most members, but if it were located closer to home, I might have gone. The floor show especially the new equipment demonstrations is important in my view Mitch Deutsch Marietta, GA mitchdeutsch@comcast.net

[Warm weather location]
[Every other year]
[Displays important]

4/22/11 11:54PM View Responses
I have long wondered if an inexpensive convention might draw significantly better. Skip the fancy ($$) convention hotel. A city with plenty of EconoLodges, Motel 8s, etc. Find a cheap space for gliders and displays... empty hangars?
There were active Webinars members away in Orlando, which is a bad choice for any location.

4/22/11 10:43PM View Responses
opinionated response - every year with all aspects works best for most attendees, although some exhibitors complained, but it's their choice whether to come or not; more local involvement, if knowledgeable, is desirable.

4/22/11 1:13PM View Responses
SSA should follow AOPA's lead and involve Live web streaming and other Internet technologies MUCH more surrounding the convention. The seminars should be scheduled and recorded in live sessions during the convention and throughout the year for playback at any other time. This way nothing is missed on topics that are so important, both for current members and for the purpose of recruiting new members of the Internet age!

4/22/11 7:23AM View Responses
I think it's time for the SSA to make a giant step forward with the convention. I suggest having the convention in Orlando, Florida every year. Orlando is the perfect city for this because they are one of the leading cities in the United States to host conventions. This city has something very everybody. There are activities for the spouse and kids to attend while the sailplane pilot attends the conference. Look at the turnout for the Senior's championship each year. If the convention were held close to Seminole Lake Gliderport, then demonstration rides could be given by salesman. People want to see things in action. Imagine a seller demonstrating his winch for sale at Seminole Lake during January when the temperature is 75 degrees! Orlando, Florida also has very cheap airline tickets since America's two largest discount carriers Southwest and JetBlue Airways have hubs there. Cheap tickets even from the west coast will get people there in 4-5 hours as there are many nonstop flights. If the convention were up to me, I would set up traditions in a warm sunny spot, such as Orlando, where there is enough activities to do to keep the whole family happy and have access to an airport minutes away to show off the newest merchandise available. Having the ability to fly gliders during the convention would be a giant step in the right direction.

4/22/11 1:38AM View Responses
Was planning on attending my first conference in Philly this year (I live in Pittsburgh), but didn't attend because there were not going to be any displays.

4/22/11 1:28AM View Responses
Reno should be superb. Ontario okay. Memphis . . . not so much.

4/22/11 12:51AM View Responses
I am the President of a soaring club in the midwest. I don't get to fly my Discus as much as I would like as I am one of two active tow pilots. Our club is open and friendly and we don't make much money on the fees our members or guest pay. There has been a slow and steady decline in our membership. Please address the declining interest in soaring. Please address the issue of "a fix" for the L-13. Our L-13 is a primary transition training to more complex A/C as well as our primary "guest ride" glider. I am "Standing By"......
4/21/11 10:14PM [View Responses]
I would like to see the convention run from Friday noon through Sunday noon. This would allow me to only give up one day of vacation to attend. I would prefer sites in the Central US, preferably major airline hubs to minimize travel time and cost. The location is not of much importance since my wife does not travel to these with me. The inside of a convention center is all I ever see. I spend much of my time in the exhibit hall looking at new stuff and socializing. I will spend about half my time listening to talks/presentations. The dinners are of minimal interest to me as I am stuck at a table and cannot talk or hear very well. We rarely have "really" interesting speakers. Bill Elliott
[Shift convention days]
[Exhibit hall important]
[Dinners not interesting – better speakers]

4/21/11 8:27PM [View Responses]
I like the regional change of venues. It sometimes gives me a chance to visit where I might not otherwise. The educational and social aspects are great. Equipment vs. Sailplanes? If the sailplanes weren’t there, it wouldn’t bother me that much, but it would be a loss. Having historical or vintage only displays would be ok too.
[Different cities]
[Not having sailplane displays OK]

4/21/11 1:45PM [View Responses]
Linking the SSA Convention with other aviation events would be appealing to me. I suggest Air Venture (EAA) or Sun & Fun. Unfortunately Air Venture is in July which conflicts with soaring. As I recall Sun and Fun is in Florida in Feb? which is a better schedule. Another possibility is a national LSA meeting/event. However Air Venture is the most interesting !!!
[Partner with other organizations]

4/21/11 11:27AM [View Responses]
I like to go XC if there is a reasonable probability of returning to base. I have no desire for a long retrieve. I can enjoy a flight that stays within 20 miles of the home base. Until recently, our club was short on tow pilots so I spent a fair amount of soaring days on the front end of the rope. Last year had some additional issues but I usually average 10 to 20 flights per year in spite of towing. I have competed in informal contests (Memphis Fun Fly) but not a SSA sanctioned contest. With the exception of a few years, I have been an active soaring pilot since 1973. I attended the 1992 convention when looking for a new sailplane. I attended several in the Dallas area and the Memphis 2007 convention. I almost went to the Albuquerque convention but the weather didn't look good for driving and I didn't want to spend the money to fly commercial. I was going to attend the Little Rock convention but cancelled due to an ice/snow storm. Unless I have a specific need, I would limit my range to a day's drive.
[Location near me]

4/21/11 11:02AM [View Responses]
OK - I was there when we took the decision to go to every other year based on the Glider Manufactures request to go to alternate years with AERO Friedrichshafen. They held to their agreement based on their NOT attending the AERO in 2010 -but did it up big in 2011. As most of the USA flyers do not go to AERO - I would suggest we 1) ask the big mfg’rs when THEY want to have it to maximize sales and minimize cost and 2) failing that - have it in early April when AERO is held. Next - return to having the clubs bid and run the events. That means the club gets a better share of the expenses but does the lions share of the work. Ask SSA’s for the best conventions in the last 10 years and you will hear - Dayton, Indianapolis, LA. Ask for the worst - Nashville (super cold inside!) Dallas (too small) and Little Rock - all SSA run and with far less support than the successful club run events. It takes manpower to do it right and the big ones were right! Of course there is the risk of a club run one not making their obligations due to a winter storm (see above - move to April) I would not mind seeing the event move with AOPA - a late fall event - which has a set of locations that are ID’d because of pilot population (Hartford, Tampa, San Jose, Palm Springs) all in high pilot areas = although the venues might not support the floorspace (Palm Springs). Some of the vendors are the same - they would like it. An we get to recruit all those Grey Eagles and Bald Eagles that are having medical issues. Dave Newill - dbnsoaring@ameritech.net - former Region 6 director / Growth & Development / Clubs Committee
[Location]
[Get clubs to run again]
[High pilot population areas]

4/21/11 10:19AM View Responses
I am on the west coast and probably would not travel much east of Reno. I would probably fly a light airplane so weather would be a factor.
[Location near me]

4/21/11 9:31AM View Responses
I am a member of the board of directors of the Soaring Association of Canada and would be interested in discussing the possibility of combining our efforts with conventions. If you would like to contact me I can be reached via email at johnmulder@shaw.ca Thanks, John Mulder Alberta Zone Director Soaring Association of Canada
[Invite other organizations]

4/21/11 8:56AM View Responses
I traveled to phl this year through a snow storm only to find no displays. There was no statements to SSA members about that.
[PHL bad – No displays]

4/21/11 8:53AM View Responses
The SSA need to focus on quality content at the convention.
[Content]

4/21/11 8:49AM View Responses
Great idea doing this survey! I look forward to the results.
[Appreciate being asked]

4/21/11 7:53AM View Responses
Just a thought, but how about teaming up with an EAA regional flying-in for a convention. Since we have a cooperation agreement with them it might bring in outside participants and expand our membership base. It not a convention how about we get at least a booth to present our segment of aviation.
[Team with other organizations]

4/21/11 7:37AM View Responses
Hello, I think one of the biggest problems of the SSA conventions is the location. They need to be in locations that have attractions for pilot's families, are in warm climates and are in or near large airline hubs. Look how bad the attendance was at the Little Rock convention. Who wants to go to Little Rock and in the winter? What did it have to offer for non-pilot family members? Other than the Clinton museum, there was very little. I will grant that it's a nice little town, but that's hardly an attraction for a non-flying family member or traveling companion. Furthermore, unless an attendee lived in Chicago or some other major hub, there were no direct flights. This makes traveling more of a hassle. Furthermore, because it's a minor destination, it's hard to find cheap tickets. All of these factors have to be considered when selecting a convention site. I think the best plan would be to limit the convention to states that are relatively warm and alternate between east and west coasts, such as Orlando, Florida and Phoenix, Arizona. Granted, for the residents of those two states, travel times would be longer. But, for most of the other people, there would be a greater number of direct flights. Plus, they would get out of the winter weather and their families would have more to do. Moreover, it might even be possible to have a day of the convention at an actually gliderport! What could be better than that? Dylan
[Location – Good weather and of interest to family]

4/21/11 7:27AM View Responses
I think every two years would be good - a full blown convention. I do not think just displays or just tech sessions would attract a lot of attendance. I am a long time power pilot with a commercial and instrument rating ... and just got a commercial glider rating last year. I am learning and want to do cross country flying and will, at some point, buy my own glider. I am retired and I think there are a lot of people like me who have gotten into gliding just for fun after retirement. Power flying always had a "get me there quickly" reason for it .... gliding doesn't. I belong to two clubs - in the winter at Houston and in the summer in Vermont. I would hate to see the convention go away completely, but every two years ought to do it for most people like me.

[Every two years]

4/21/11 5:03AM View Responses
As interest in gliding continues to decline it will be necessary to reduce activities such as the convention. As the pilot group ages fewer will be willing to endure airline travel. Perhaps joining with another aviation-oriented convention would allow our meeting to continue.

[Join other groups]

4/21/11 4:57AM View Responses
Once I have gained more knowledge of SSA I hope to offer constructive opinions. I just didn’t wish to be a 'non-responder'.

4/21/11 4:21AM View Responses
Location is a primary attribute. I am MUCH more inclined to visit a convention that is in reasonable driving distance (from MA)

[Location near me]

4/21/11 2:20AM View Responses
Question 10 is a difficult one Question 16, I do a lot of instructing and a good deal of local personal flying. I think that you should also ask about participation of i.e.VSA or 1-26 ers ect.

4/21/11 12:52AM View Responses
Please do not always take the low-bid convention site. Choosing to hold the conference in the urban blighted areas of town is troubling. Lots of pilots take their wives and families to the convention and judging from the previous locations (such as Memphis and Little Rock) the downtown areas are unsafe and uncomfortable. We have to travel to the outer areas of town to dine and fine alternative hotels. I thought the Arlington choice was a good selection. Additionally, IF the SSA is benefitting from the hotels (in the form of booking kick-backs etc., ) I believe that the membership should be aware of this. By choosing only one hotel close to the convention center (such as Little Rock), it was easily over-run by the volume of attendees, and service was less than one would normally expect. I would strongly suggest that the committee entertain holding the conventions in the outlying areas of major towns, in as much as many of the satellite areas of town have exposition centers that would fit our gathering size and we would not be faced with all of the typical downtown problems.

[Location]

4/21/11 12:40AM View Responses
Would like to see rejuvenation of the World Class. We need to decrease the costs of gliding. SSA should oppose the use of transponders. Their costs will be more than the glider come mandated Mode S.

4/20/11 11:25PM View Responses
A convention is not an optimum way to measure consensus unless the attendees are chosen representatives from each soaring district or region. If the convention method is selected to measure consensus advance questions/feedback from the members is needed. A better approach is a well designed survey coupled with a convention of regional representatives for decision making.

4/20/11 11:15PM View Responses
Regional conferences should be reinforced with attendance of SSA personnel. Several locations throughout the country should be stressed as this allows most pilots to be reasonably close to a safety conference.

[Regional conferences – Location near me]

4/20/11 11:06PM View Responses
I have gone to every SSA Convention from 1995-present without a miss, but I'm okay with the present system of convention and conference on alternating years.

[Every other year]

4/20/11 10:32PM View Responses
Consider finding 3 pleasant, convenient travel locations for main conventions with sailplane displays. Off-year "seminar" conventions could be at different locations. Some resort areas are cheap in the off season. As an example: One of my professional groups did a meeting in U.S. Virgin Islands in October, just before the tourist season started. Actually cost our group less, including travel, than having the meeting in Atlanta.

[Location]
[Cost]

4/20/11 9:55PM View Responses
The industries I have been involved with in the past, oil tool, foundry and machine tool would have an equipment show, real equipment that was often operational every two years. Every year we had what we called a paper show which were presentations of engineering/science updates and everything else related to our industries. These were done in a conference format. The cost of the equipment shows to the exhibitors was very high. A show that did not have aircraft could be a table top show which are considerably less expensive than one requiring space for aircraft. I am a private pilot that will be getting my glider rating soon.

[Every other year – displays / off-year papers]

4/20/11 9:42PM View Responses
I realize this is always in the dead of winter, but if you could have it somewhere centrally located where the weather is moderate it would be great! Your suggestion of San Antonio is very good. My most common memories of attending SSA conventions is freezing my ass off! Whether you are talking about sub-zero temperatures in Dayton, ice storms in Little Rock and Memphis, and frigid norther's in Albuquerque... Let's find somewhere centrally located and consistent. Again, I think San Antonio would be a reasonable alternative. It could be cold there but the likelihood is that it will be moderate.

[Location – weather]

4/20/11 9:23PM View Responses
I've attended many conventions over many years from Seattle to Hartford to Indianapolis, etc. Some of the most enjoyable parts are seeing the latest sailplanes; talking with vendors and discussing the newest equipment; and attending the technical presentations. The quality of presentations has varied e.g. To have a speaker tell folks to "fly high and stay high" is always a dissapointment. Also too often the best sessions are scheduled at the same time. (One convention solved this problem by providing a booklet that reproduced the speakers talk and projected pictures ---this was a major plus). Weather has always been a factor. Chicago got hammered with snow twice and Little Rock by snow last year. Realizing that the northern states need to have a convention in their area too, how about having a convention every year and a half i.e. Winter in warm areas and Fall a year and a half later in a cold area of the country. Keep up the great work you all are doing. Thank you for your efforts. John Murphy Tennessee

[Location – weather]
[Content]
[Presentation scheduling]

4/20/11 9:23PM View Responses
I have given up the sport and dropped membership in both my local club and SSA, due in part to my wife's perception that we're safer driving in our Corvette than we were in flying a glider. I have to say the safety and accident record of the

SSA Conference Survey Comments
club gave quite a bit of support to those fears about safety. That isn’t intended to be the topic here however, so I won't go on. I did enjoy the one convention I attended (Dallas - I think in 2007) and while there enjoyed and received the most benefit from the seminars I attended as well as being able to see and handle all the equipment and talk to the vendors. It seems to me that not a whole lot changes in equipment or seminar topics year to year however, so even if I had remained active I doubt I would consider attending conventions annually. As for the social aspects of the convention, I really didn’t know very many people there and felt quite "left out" that my attendance at those functions were short.

[Quit flying – Safety concerns]

4/20/11 9:15PM View Responses
I would think if you followed the model the EAA used (years ago, before they partnered with big corporations and ruined it) at Rockford and Oshkosh with their annual fly-in, people interested in gliding would come. Keep it in one location, so there’s no question where it will be. People appreciate that kind of stability and the convention site will then take on its own meaning, like "Oshkosh" did, before they prostituted it into "AirDisney." Encourage us to volunteer at the convention, to be a part of it, and the cost of labor will be minimized...as long as you recognise your volunteers and treat them well.

[One standard location]

4/20/11 9:07PM View Responses
My wife (Anne Mongiovi) is the driving force for me to attend.

4/20/11 8:48PM View Responses
They are very important in uniting members from different locations and bringing together our common interest in soaring.

4/20/11 8:32PM View Responses
I deliberately left the location question blank since its not important to me. It was nice to have this years convention in Philadelphia since the convention seldom visits the NE. Thought the convention this year was well run, and was disappointing at the turnout. The "seminar" with Karl Streideck was especially nice, and well attended.

[PHL was good – Turn out disappointing]

4/20/11 8:10PM View Responses
The convention should be held every year, alternating between a 'full display' and 'sessions only', like the one in Philadelphia. To me, it is less important if the convention is held in a major metro area. Cost of lodging and 'getting there' is more important. The convention should be held in locations which are somewhat weather-proof, i.e. scheduling it in January/February in Buffalo, NY is a recipe for failure.

[Every year – alternating displays / no-displays]

[Better weather location]

4/20/11 8:00PM View Responses
This comes under the be careful what you wish for heading but I often thought that the members may be better served if SSA was affiliated with a larger organization such as AOPA or EAA. Our club was particularly hard hit by the blank failure and I often thought we would be better could have used the lobbying resources of AOPA.

[Team with other organizations]

4/20/11 7:49PM View Responses
I would fly more and in contests if the rules were simpler.

4/20/11 4:31PM View Responses
I enjoy traveling so having the convention at different locations makes sense to me. My only request would be that the convention be held somewhere warm or at least a prime soaring area. The static displays bring a lot of excitement to the conventions especially for the people new to soaring or the general public trying to learn what the sport is all about.

[Location – warm]

4/20/11 1:29PM View Responses
How about a location where we had a flight line and could buy and sell used gliders at the same time? Sort of like a fun and sun.
[Airport location]

4/20/11 1:18PM View Responses
I realize trying to travel to Hobbs is a nightmare.....but it would be nice to have a convention there. I'd like to see the place our money is going,......maybe have the convention there in the off year with some kind of super simple and friendly
[Location – Hobbs]

4/20/11 1:05PM View Responses
Good you are doing this. Yes, you will have a goodly group interested in the newest and the greatest sailplanes and equipment and OSTIV, BUT remember that you must serve the GENERAL MEMBERSHIP. You want to increase the attendance to conventions, then you MUST appeal to the average glider pilot. The average pilot can't afford these pricey gadgets and ships..... You MUST do more basic training, better training of your CFIGs. Also, though I instruct, my main focus is cross country. Neita Montague
[Must appeal to the average glider pilot]
[Be sensitive to cost]

4/20/11 12:26AM View Responses
combine convention with other aviation organization (aopa) or events (arlington, oshkosh or similar, if costs could be reduced.
[Team with other organizations]

4/20/11 12:17AM View Responses
I would like to see less on contests/record setting elitists. More on who's doing what at the local level. Human interest stories. Recognize individuals with a passion for soaring that have been an inspiration to others. More on experimental and homebuilt’s. More on training and skill improvement. Product reviews for new instrumentation, gliders, accessories. Encourage members to write articles based on a personal experience.
[Less on contests – More on other facets of soaring]

4/20/11 11:48AM View Responses
I have only attended one SSA Convention, and that was when it was held in Ontario, CA, a few years ago. Unfortunately, my work and lack of a 'schedule' makes it hard for me to do much, if any soaring now. When I first got involved and added my glider rating, more than 20 years ago, I was obviously much more active. Having said that, I would like to attend an SSA Conference/Convention of some sort, on occasion, when possible. I do want to get back into soaring and get involved...on some level, even though I have not been at all active in recent years. Work keeps getting in the way. I would like to change that. Perhaps you could do it like AOPA does, and alternate east and west coast locations, or rotate among three cities as you mention. For the smaller glider pilot population, that might make more sense. So I am an admittedly a very inactive member, but I still do have an interest in soaring, and look forward to getting involved again, when I can.
[Alternate locations – three cities]

4/20/11 11:38AM View Responses
I attend conferences occasionally, usually no more than once every 5 years (SSA and AOPA combined). I just can't see going any more often. Moving the conference around seems to be a very good idea so different sets of people will attend each year. If you were to tie it down to a few locations I believe you would see a decline in attendance year to year. [Different locations]

4/20/11 11:36AM View Responses
I attended Dallas a few years ago and Philadelphia this year. The displays were interesting in Dallas, but I didn't get too good a feel for the sessions, as I was only there for a day and was visiting family at the same time. The full OSTIV track this year in Philadelphia was incredible, as an engineering student and glider pilot it was an incredible opportunity to learn about the technical side of soaring and meet some of the technical soaring community (the fact that it helped me get a GRA didn't hurt either). I would very much be interested in OSTIV sessions in the future (limited by my schedule - I had to skip a lot of class to fly halfway across the country), for me that was the highlight by far of the convention. [Liked OSTIV in PHL]

4/20/11 11:28AM View Responses
You have completely missed the MOST important topic that should be at each convention: FAA & government affairs. EVERY convention should include participation from the top people at the FAA that are involved with our sport, starting with Randy Babbit. If we can't get this level of participation, then why bother having a convention (or the SSA for that matter). [Content]

4/20/11 11:12AM View Responses
Certainly hope you publicize the results of this survey--including responses to the last few questions!

4/20/11 11:11AM View Responses
There is a long standing MOU between SSA and CAP and am a Regional Director of the CAP Glider Centers of Excellence and was an early member of the SSA/CAP national committee. I have seen less and less efforts in this area over the last few years and as a member of the CAP Glider Advisory Committee I would be interested in reactivating the CAP attendance for a meeting at the SSA Convention. Roger Brogren Lt Col, CAP NCR/DOG NCR Glider Flight Academy Commander SSA Instructor
[Involve CAP]

4/20/11 11:02AM View Responses
Re: Q 15, Most of my flying is now as an Instructor for the CAP. Absent that, I'd instruct for an FBO. I tried a club once - never again. It was too unprofessional. Too much "politics" and ass kissing to the people who had been there forever and weren't willing to accept a new member as an equal. Your omission of questions is as significant as your choices. Why not ask what time of year for a convention? I'd prefer summer, but am always told that won't work because the IMPORTANT people are busy flying contests. I'd wager the majority of your members have never flown in a contest, probably never will, and don't have a clue what they are about. The IMPORTANT people are the majority – who do not fly contests. The high cost of conventions keeps a lot of the younger people, especially those with kids, away. Not only the cost, but the timing is a negative. Look at Oshkosh. You can room in a dorm and eat in the school dining hall - very reasonably. Want to get the "silent majority" interested in contests? Hold a convention close to a contest site - in the summer, of course. No expensive indoor displays for vendors. That would be a big help because the market is shrinking..... PS: Soaring (the magazine) is sadly lacking when compared to Gliding. Maybe SSA should consider becoming an affiliate of AOPA before it (SSA) fades out of existence. [Most people do not fly contests] [Cost] [Summer – Outdoor displays] [Team with AOPA]
4/20/11 10:40AM View Responses
I would like to attend the Conference more often, but find it would be better if held in larger towns with less expensive airfare. It would be great if they were held in the same 3 towns and rotated, giving the US a chance to entice local regions. The seminars are #1, with equipment #2, gliders are cool too, but #3 Good luck
[Cities with inexpensive airfare]
[Rotate three cities]

4/20/11 10:39AM View Responses
I might go to Kansas City, Omaha, Wichita, Oklahoma City or Denver for my first convention. Otherwise, I am not very interested in the distance. I might get interested if I enjoyed my first convention at some closer location. I find as many excuses as possible to stay off the airlines. I am interested in getting myself a glass bird, however. I need some knowledge about prospective ownership.
[Location near me]

4/20/11 10:38AM View Responses
Stay in middle of U.S. (ABQ, DAL, HOU, SAT, DEN). Question 16: I do a lot of CFI-G flights, but often work with FBOs for pleasure/Cross country flights. I would really enjoy - and would attend regularly - every other year for a full blown convention. I enjoy being a member of SSA, and the folks at Headquarters do a superb job. Best wishes. PW Chapman
[Location near me]

4/20/11 10:22AM View Responses
I am a sailplane pilot getting back into soaring after a long, multi-year period of inactivity due to children (now grown) and work commitments.

4/20/11 10:13AM View Responses
I attended the Memphis convention. I had planned to go to Little Rock, but the ice and snow prevented my attendance. I had intended at that convention to look at all my different options for designing my panel for my 1-26. Therefore, it is very important to me to have vendors on site so I can look at the latest in equipment and accessories. As much as I am interested in education, I would not want to attend just an educational seminar. Thank you. Mark Kellum, Belden, MS.
[Weather – Better location]
[Displays important]

4/20/11 10:13AM View Responses
I mostly fly OLC and consider it a "contest" but answered question #17 as "No" as I assume you mean traditional contests (regionals, nationals, etc.).

4/20/11 10:01AM View Responses
My biggest issue with attending is the expense. I would like the SSA explore having regular Webinar sessions that would cover educational material, and new equipment/aircraft. -Ted Mavrotheris
[Cost - Travel expense]
[Webinars]

4/20/11 9:58AM View Responses
The Reno convention will be the first time I have been able to go because it will be close by. If you don't move it around, fewer people will be able to participate due to the cost of travel.
4/20/11 9:55AM View Responses
A "full" convention with sailplane display probably isn't needed each year because new designs don't come out very often. Maybe even have a full display once every three or four years and "education and social" conference once a year. I do like the conference during the non-flying season. There's no conflict with soaring weekends or races that way. I realize there is no soaring club near Kill Devil Hills on the Outer Banks of North Carolina that could host a convention, but I think it would be fun to have a convention by the Wright Brothers' beach play ground some day.
[Ed conference every year – Full displays every 3-4 years]

4/20/11 9:36AM View Responses
I mostly go to see the toys. An option might be to combine the conference with another sport aviation-oriented airshow/fly-in, perhaps one of the regional GA shows (Oshkosh is an obvious one but there are a few shows in Florida and I'm sure there are others). The exhibitors (and the SSA) would have an opportunity to pull in new people. As for the presentations, it might be good to video presentations made at regional meetings and post them on the SSA site (YouTube makes it easy). That way the rest of us could see them in our own time. Finally, having more toys to see (beyond gliders) is appealing to us glider pilots too, while the meetings (educational, organizational) are likely to draw in a relatively small number of people. However, if the meetings were happening at a bigger sport aviation-oriented event, the bigger event might draw more glider pilots in - and improve the attendance at the meetings. Thanks for the survey!
[Displays important]
[Team with other organizations]

4/20/11 9:32AM View Responses
Probably would not attend unless 2 hours or less from my home.
[Location near me]

4/20/11 9:27AM View Responses
Hate the convention days of the week. Thursday through Saturday doesn't work for the working, non-retired world. Friday through Sunday would be a lot better. T-Sat works for dedicated sailplane devotees, but if we want the organization to grow, F-Sun will get more of the average persons attention, as they don't have to take vacation to go to the convention. As a helpful suggestion, talk to the people at Oshkosh (and our presents there is very poor ... which is NOT a comment on the wonderful people that are there trying). OSH runs Mon-Sun for very purposeful reasons. Mon-Wed (when the vendors are fresh) is for the die-hards that are serious and will take vacation to attend. Thu is a transition day. Fri-Sun are for the "weekend warriors" and the people that are in Wisconsin and surrounding states. The serious people attend Sun-Sat (yes, a day early). Just my personal thoughts. I am only one of many. Thanks, Ron
[Change convention days]

4/20/11 9:14AM View Responses
My fights have been at my club, FBOs, and regional contests. It would be much more manageable to have conventions in the fall to avoid extreme weather.
[Convention dates to avoid bad weather]

4/20/11 9:03AM View Responses
The conference in Philly was an experiment.... Unfortunately, it had bad weather in conjunction with no displays..... This hurt it a lot.
[PHL bad - Weather – no displays]

4/20/11 9:02AM View Responses
Consider warm weather locations only. Convention attendance was badly affected by weather in both Little Rock and Philadelphia. The "no vendor" policy in PHL was a complete disaster. Don't make that mistake again. Vendors who want to attend a convention should be allowed to do so. The membership wants them there. It is a business decision to
attend. Let the vendors make their own decisions. I haven't missed an SSA convention since I started flying gliders. Dayton was my first. I have presented at ABQ, LIT, and PHL. I look forward to the convention each year. Only a funeral will keep me away; my own. Thanks for asking.

[Warm weather location]

4/20/11 9:00AM View Responses
Please consider the actual convention site carefully and for atmosphere for families/spouses. There are more and more smaller venues in more interesting places than the "downtown" convention center. For instance in North Texas at the Gaylord Texan, or the Irving convention center. Also, an Orlando permanent site for say the glider display convention could hardly go wrong with me or my family.

[Better weather / family friendly locations]

4/20/11 8:56AM View Responses
I was able to attend the recent convention in Philadelphia only because I live in the area. I work full time, get two weeks of vacation a year and would not have been able to spend the time or the money had travel to a distant location been required. That is why I recommend having the convention at least once every two years and at a different location every time - to give a broader segment of the soaring community a chance to participate. Otherwise I think you will find that the same group (growing smaller every year) of relatively affluent pilots, local to the area, will comprise most of the attendees year after year. I found the seminars very helpful & the social gatherings most enjoyable.

[Different locations]

4/20/11 8:46AM View Responses
Thoughts ! Having attending ABQ and LIT the weather seems to be quite a factor. Winter weather limits access and turnout to a large degree. I know some groups might feel slighted bypassing their home area. Good airline service is a huge factor for the greater masses as well as costs. Since we don't usually have thousands in attendance, hotels and accommodations are not unusually restrictive. However near or adjoining accomodations are a prerequiste for success. The dealers, sponsors, exhibitors, vendors, etc. definitely need access not only to showcase their wares but to support their efforts. We can all look at pictures and read technical info but hands-on is where its at. The speakers and subject matter are well diversified and command full attention from the groups as a credit for their efforts. The flow is well thought out and progresses very well. I am not in the marketing field but wherever the next location happens to be hopefully more exposure to the News media (TV, radio, newspapers) could be brought into the loop for exposure. After all we are world wide. As a final comment. These conventions are a little like family reunions. Some people just cannot attend every year but the option of annual gatherings would encourage attendance if offered. I know I'm not the money man. Thanks bk

[Good weather locations]
[Need displays]

4/20/11 8:43AM View Responses
While I haven't competed or done a lot of cross country work, I am very interested in this avenue of my flying and expect to pursue soaring more as I retire from military service.

4/20/11 8:39AM View Responses
I bought my sailplane new off the floor of the Seattle convention years ago - the convention was an integral part of my indoctrination to soaring, and I attended additional conventions around the country thereafter. Conventions remain the best hands-on opportunity for shoppers be it for planes themselves or instruments and equipment.

[Displays important]

4/20/11 8:36AM View Responses
Was very disappointed in Philly that Paul Remde was the only vendor in attendance, and limited at that ! This is an very expensive and highly technical sport if you are serious about doing more than flying a 2-33 around the flagpole. Access to equipment and knowledgeable vendor representatives is the only way for newbies and everybody from low time pilots to
seasoned cross country cronies to really get an understanding of the equipment - new and old alike. Otherwise all of the technical presentations are abstract unless you can see, touch, feel play with equipment and ask questions and not feel that you are taking a leap of faith on a 5000 dollar piece of equipment.

4/20/11 8:33AM View Responses
I think equipment and sailplane displays are very valuable and I would rather see the convention every other or every third year if it meant that it could be a "full" convention with displays. Also, the convenion very rarely gets to the east coast and as a resident of Philadelphia, I was very disappointed that the event in Philadelphia this year did not have any sailplanes and very limited equipment. I hope the event will visit the Northeast again in its full format some year soon.

4/20/11 8:27AM View Responses
I like a full convention every year, but every other year is okay with convention like Philadelphia in the off years. All conventions - full or not - should be in the south. Rotate between three locations, but no conventions in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan or anywhere else where it is likely to snow in January!

4/20/11 8:23AM View Responses
I'm a 600hr recreational power pilot just starting in soaring. (I love it!) SSA magazine is a very nice doorway to soaring and I think even more energy can be directed to it. More articles, I like the Condor column. I've been to several GA conventions. These are very large exciting events which makes it more attractive. Maybe the soaring community is just too small to make this kind of event attract large crowds. But I'm sure we will survive through other channels. The races, the clubs, the web community etc etc. P.S. I don't know what OSTIV is.

4/20/11 8:19AM View Responses
A publication of major papers, educational material, etc. would be great for those who can't attend. Unfortunately it is expensive to travel to the sites, and if the convention is loaded with high tech or contest info it won't be of much interest to the rest of us. As you know, it's a lot of work to make a convention happen, and given our group's size I think a good one every couple of years beats a mediocre annual one.

4/20/11 8:18AM View Responses
SSA should have a prominent presence at EAA Airventure and at Sun-N-Fun.

4/20/11 8:16AM View Responses
I would suggest more venues. Travel/lodging expenses are important to me since I am retired. With the current economic situation rotating venues would allow many who like me will not travel much past the Mississippi to attend. I would suggest 6 sites across the US r/jim

4/20/11 8:03AM View Responses
I used to love going to the SSA Conventions whenever they were in the Southwest! I've attended in Reno, San Diego, and LA. I no longer have a husband who is a pilot. Being the only pilot in the family, and a female, retired school teacher, with
not much income, I find it too costly to attend if I have to fly commercial airlines and stay in hotels to get there. I could drive to LA and to San Diego, and in Reno we stayed in the RV Park.

[Location near me]

4/20/11 8:00AM View Responses
I have been flying for 41 years and have recently discovered Soaring and LOVE IT.... Had I started with Glidres it is doubtful if I would have ever flown powered airplanes.... As an outsider looking in I have some observances... 1. Sailplane pilots seem to be a aloof. Don't blame them but the powered guys not so much. 2. There is a "them" and "us" mentality with Sailplane instructors, almost a jealously... I can provide names of instructors and a DPE in South Phoenix to back this statement up. 3. There is little publicity about this the most graceful and beautiful of aviation activities. Brag about yourselves, show the modern gliders to get folks interested. 4.

[Can't seem get involved in soaring community]

4/20/11 7:58AM View Responses
Nasty weather has smacked the last two national meetings. The potential of such occurring, which severely restricts attendance, needs to be addressed. Either warm winter climate areas or different times of the year for meetings need to be seriously considered. I was very lucky at Little Rock, getting in on one of the last flights before the airport was iced in, and out on one of the first to get out when the icy runways were partially cleared. MANY flying friends were not so lucky. Sure hope Reno works out. Access by affordable airlines, such as Southwest, is critical. Regarding the Social events / interaction with friends question #4, I'm FAR more interested in the interactions with friends than planned social events. Regarding question #17, dealing with contests, I realize they are important to a certain group of glider pilots, and they have their place. I attend all local contests, but only as sniffer. I lost my 2 best friends in gliding in contest accidents (1 in region 9 at Hobbs, and 1 in local contest... and he was already the state champ for that year), and came close to losing another this past season in a mid-air in a national contest.

[War weather location]
[Good airfare locations]
[Too much emphasis on contests]

4/20/11 7:57AM View Responses
I recommend full (traditional) conventions every other year at varying locations. In the off years the SSA should encourage regional gatherings (some regions already have these), or super-regional events involving multiple regions. These would be less commercial and less formal than conventions. They would be held at a low cost venues like a school or airport. They would probably be 1-day, Saturday, events; but should include multiple tracks of presentations, like a convention, so there is always something of interest going on. Directors would give SSA status reports and solicit feedback from constituents they otherwise rarely see. Regional FBOs and clubs would show off their services. A weatherman would talk about unique local soaring conditions. Instructors would talk about safety issues. Regional competitions would be discussed. These events would end with a local recognition dinner where regional competition awards, state records and the like would be presented. The events would be publicized nationwide so anyone can attend.

Mike Koerner
[Every other year]
[Regional meetings in the off-year]

4/20/11 7:51AM View Responses
As a fledgling glider pilot I am primarily interested in general glider education. i.e. thermals and novis cross country and general glider proficiency. Although I feel I am competitive, ( have raced sports cars, sailboats and motorcycles) I don't feel I am ready for any sort of competitive soaring events. I am a power pilot with 1700 hrs. I only have approx. 45 hours and 120 flights. I fly a 2-32 due to my weight. I plan to attend Reno next year.

4/20/11 7:51AM View Responses
Show should be held at a time and place where there exists a chance to fly at local clubs and or commercial operations and also to give exhibitors a chance to Demo their products.
4/20/11 7:49AM View Responses
Locate the convention in very big urban and high network regions of the country...San Francisco, Seattle, New York City, Miami, etc. Once every two or three years is fine. On another matter get the soaring magazine onto retail magazine racks in grocery stores, etc. Also get a higher profile at the EAA air adventure in Oshkosh and the Sun and Fun. Several years ago when I attended the Oshkosh event the SSA presence, and location, was embarrassing. Thanks for the opportunity to share some thoughts and good luck. Robert Jones Fair Oaks, California

[Larger urban area locations]

4/20/11 7:39AM View Responses
Travel is my biggest restriction, that is the cost of the travel to far away places.

[Location near me]

4/20/11 7:37AM View Responses
if the conference is in the winter, have it in a warm climate

[Warm weather location]

4/20/11 7:34AM View Responses
I have been to many SSA conventions and for me, I think the seminars are particularly valuable and a big draw. I would encourage you to emphasize the speaker schedule and try to line up the best talent you can. i.e...have Karl Striedeck (or similar) talk about contest flying, maybe Heinz Weissenbuhler discuss a repair topic, Tom Knauff give a safety discussion, Peter Masak on new winglet designs, invite each of the manufacturers to give a presentation on new products....etc. Please choose cities that are easy to get to non-stop and centrally located (Denver?). Little Rock Arkansas was a poor choice. Not easy to get to...Bad restaurants and hotels, and when the weather went down, we had to suffer trying to get home with connections through Chicago. It was a mess. Thank you for asking.

[Good airline cities]

4/20/11 7:31AM View Responses
I have gone to the Conventions that are within one days driving distance of Oklahoma. I would like a Convention every year but I don’t think that is going to ever happen again. Convention is like a contest, if it is close enough I try to come and watch, work, or fly (1-26 Nationals if they could get someone who knows how to score it). I don’t support SSA by staying at the Convention hotel. I am just to cheap to spend the money on a room when I can spend it on the toys for sale at the Convention. I do try to buy products from the vendors that support the Convention. I like the Convention the way it was but will support SSA in whatever you to do. Henry Marshall Claybourn Jr.

[Location near me]
[Cost]

4/20/11 7:26AM View Responses
There are always some very thought-provoking presentations as well as those that renew my commitment to soaring. Those of us who do not live near the clubs that put together great presentations on flying, safety, etc. lose out on essential education. The convention is our only hope. The problem is that there are a number of hours when there is nothing scheduled for pilots interested in cross country and safety. I have spent hours wandering around the exhibits because nothing is scheduled of general interest. Then sometimes I have to chose between two good ones. I hope that programs for Condor and contest pilots will not dominate the majority of programs. It is important to remember that contest pilots are required to join the SSA. For others, not in a charter club, it’s an option. Those members need to be top priorities at conventions. The contest people have plenty of time for get-togethers. The board is dominated by contest participants and their family members. I hope that the board will think of others as decisions are made about future conventions.

[Content]
[Too much contest related content]
4/20/11 7:26AM  View Responses
The location needs to be somewhat central US and most importantly be at a city with good air connections.
[Central location – good air connections]

4/20/11 7:16AM  View Responses
I would probably attend just the full conventions every other year. I would attend the conferences only if they were near my location.
[Will only attend full conventions every other year]
[Location near me]

4/20/11 7:13AM  View Responses
I attended the Convention in Philadelphia this year. It was my first SSA Convention. I greatly enjoyed the OSTIV seminars and felt they were well worth my time. I did not know that there would not be any vendors there this year, and was very disappointed to find that out. As an aside, one vendor did take the time to attend, be available, and market his products. I was very disappointed how SSA treated this vendor, making him essentially shut down. If a vendor is willing to invest time and money to come to the Convention to market their product, that is their decision and SSA should allow it; those vendors who choose not to attend, that is their choice and that’s fine. I commend that vendor for taking the initiative to be there and participating; he was treated unfairly. The weather was a very unfortunate factor as well, preventing many from attending. Weather we simply can't control! The hotel, and it's location, was great. I live in the northeast. If a full convention were again held up this direction, I definitely would attend. If it was a "seminar only" convention like this year, I'd probably have to think about attending. The vendors really add value to the enjoyment and learning of such conventions.
[Location near me]
[Vendors add value]

4/20/11 7:06AM  View Responses
 Tried to fil it out. but can't get teh check marks to show up except once in awhile. If you get it fixed I will try agian

4/20/11 7:05AM  View Responses
I am an SSA member but not an active glider pilot although I of course enjoy time in sailplanes as a passenger. I am a radio-controlled glider enthusiast and historian for the local glider club, but have been a proud SSA member since 1991. I have several comments: 1) Firstly I am glad that SSA is taking the time to do a survey like this. Thank you for doing so. Surveys not only provide great information but they help management stay in line with the community. I might disagree with the management or the community but at least I’m glad the management is seeking the input of the community! The community will feel the management represents them the more times the management seeks their input. 2) The convention has in my opinion become two things: a) a glider display area, b) a banquet. That’s insufficient to draw people to fly across the country to attend. Several additional things could boost attendance. a) hold the convention in a place that is close to one of the large annual contests. You already have a collection of people there who have traveled from far away to attend the contest. Simply append the convention to the end of the contest at the nearest largest town and you will double attendance. b) have important regional and national lectures and “town hall” discussions. When the convention is held in Reno, have lectures on issues with Reno airspace, the Sierra Wave, regional clubs providing their history, etc. so that the community in Reno can benefit, and so that the regional clubs can benefit by attracting new members. Give free display area tickets to local engineering schools and I’ll bet you pick up 20-30 new attendees, and some of those will then hook up with the local club. c) with GPS and race tracking, it is possible now to review previous contests in ways that are educational. How about replaying some of the contest days in a room at the convention? there could be a screen that people could just sit and watch the action, moderated perhaps by the winner or one of the contestants so that a discussion results about strategy, etc. Some contestants might not want to participate, but others might become new contest participants by being interested in what folks are up to. Having never attended a nationals, I think this would be a fun and techno-savvy way of introducing competition soaring to folks like me. d) I have never understood why the convention has to be in winter. Its a difficult time for people to travel, especially to places like Philadelphia. People are much more apt to travel in summer, or in October before the family holidays. e) the national
soaring museum has its barnaby lecture, which is usually held at the NSM or somewhere else during the year. Why not have this at the conference each year? f) each of the sister disciplines of the SSA (i.e. the 1-26 association, etc.) should have the opportunity to present a lecture on their organization, what they are doing regionally and nationally, and how they are assisting SSA. too often i have no idea how these sister organizations are helping the cause of SSA. I'd really like to learn. g) lastly, with tools like the flight simulator Condor, we now have the opportunity to have "gaming" contests at the convention itself! Why not arrange for 8-10 PCs at the convention in a gaming room, each with their own screen for an audience to watch so that the top pilots can race in a virtual environment in front of everyone! This would be exciting to consider doing in an amphitheatre style with a moderator as if it were on ESPN, with a trophy at the end. I think sims like Condor have the ability to hook young audiences, and then get them into soaring with a great deal of education after flying the sim for hours. One of the additional prizes for the top 3 competitors under 16 might be a free ride in a sailplane or something - something that helps them transfer from PC to cockpit. Lastly, the convention is the annual flagship event of the SSA. It is hard for me to imagine that the SSA would go to a biannual flagship event. It makes me concerned for the future of SSA. Rather than cut back on the number of conventions when membership is in decline, this is precisely the time to have more meetings rather than less. How about soliciting papers from top aerodynamicists on a subject like "the design of sailplanes in 2050"? These authors such as Dr. Ilan Kroo could then be asked to write a paper from their lecture and the collection of papers could appear as a special issue of Soaring. Each year, the SSA could pull together by invitation a collection of authors/speakers on a different topic of interest, with those speakers following it up as a special issue in the magazine. I know that I have made a lengthy list of ideas! Some are better than others. I probably have other ideas as well but these were the ones that come to mind. If you would like to chat further I can be reached at garyfogel@gmail.com or (858) 455-6449 Thank you again for this survey Gary

[Content]

[Hold convention in conjunction with large contests]

4/20/11 7:05AM View Responses
I believe it's important for the soaring community to get together at a complete convention on every two year basis. I believe this gathering is important to show the aviation community the SSA and soaring is alive and well. Although I have not attended so far due to time and cost commitments I plan to do so in the future. My main interest would be the general seminars and while I'm there have the ability to see glider displays and equipment. This approach best serves the time and expense invested Vs just a conference as was held this year. Good luck and thanks for asking

[Every other year]

4/20/11 7:04AM View Responses
I think the potential for the conventions is great. There could be seminars for the less experienced glider pilots and for the more experienced pilots which could ensure something of interest for everyone. It would also be interesting to schedule the convention in conjunction with a commercial operator or operators at a nearby field. Maybe offering a sort of Badge Camp in conjunction with the convention? This could bring some actual flying into the event instead of just meetings and banquets. Maybe even a spot landing contest (rookies versus pros?). Could you imagine the fun of competing against Doug Jacobs? I just think that there is a lot more that can be offered that would be of interest to many of us. Someday I would like to get involved with contests but haven't a clue as to the GPS and Data Logger equipment requirements and how to use them. Some hands on training with this stuff would be very interesting and helpful. Thanks for asking for my opinion! I just earned my add-on rating last Friday. Brian K. Lott SSA# 226833

[Content]

4/20/11 7:00AM View Responses
I think the conference should be more like a trade show. Highlight all the new equipment with dealers and manufacturers displaying their latest gadgets. Schedule time for training and demos for software and hardware. Promote "Convention Pricing" on items purchased at the convention. Get dynamic speakers giving talks about current events in soaring. Get manufacturers to donate really great items for a big raffle drawing. Do anything to get young people interested enough to attend. I'm 48 and the youngest guy at the races.

[Displays important]

4/20/11 6:54AM View Responses
I traveled to Arkansas for the last one. I would prefer having regional educational conventions - displays optional (realize smaller space for just teaching events). Traveling farther East than Utah is just not going to happen any more for things like this. If it were closer (I live in Oregon), I'd plan on attending regularly.

[Regional conferences]
[Location near me]

4/20/11 6:48AM View Responses
I want to move from local flying to cross-country, badge flights and simple contests. My main current interest is in learning about more sophisticated soaring techniques and soaring computers. I would rather go to a close-by, 1-2 day convention than to a big meeting that was really over my head, beyond my pocket book, and where I felt like a babe-in-the-woods. I don't care at all about dinners, drinks, awards banquets or any of that stuff.
[Regional smaller meetings]
[Don't care about social stuff]

4/20/11 6:48AM View Responses
It is very critical that the conventions be held where the chances of bad weather are minimal. As a result, it requires that the convention be held in cities in the south since the conventions are normally held in winter. As a result, cities like: Orlando, Tampa, Dallas, San Antonio, Albuquerque, Phoenix, Tucson, LA or San Diego are excellent locations. Another option would be to have the conventions in the fall, before the bad weather moves in, and then it would open up other potential locations such as: Denver, DC, Reno, etc etc. Thank you!
[Good weather locations]
[Change timeframe – Fall]

4/20/11 6:47AM View Responses
it would be hell to do but, maybe a scaled back mostly ed conference in each region.
[Regional conferences]

4/20/11 6:45AM View Responses
The main factor for me is MONEY.
[Cost]

4/20/11 6:43AM View Responses
Basically the present structure seems to be satisfactory. I don't know how you could improve location selection, if it's too far away I don't go, but I don't begrudge the folks that do get to go to that one, they may not come to the ones that are close to me. Overall I think you do a great job by rotating the location around the country. The seminars are great and one of the main attractions to me, but I also rate the equipment and sailplane displays highly.
[Location near me better]

4/20/11 6:37AM View Responses
Especially interested in MotorGliders and motorgliding for independance and time saving.
[Content]

4/20/11 6:35AM View Responses
The Philadelpia Meeting in 2011 was very poor. No displays and dispirited US participants. OSTIV was the only thing that made it moderately worthwhile, and of course the very attractive city and its tourist opportunities
[PHL was bad]

4/20/11 6:33AM View Responses
We should actively market our sport in all the large metro areas. Los Angeles for example has year round flying yet their is but a handful of gliderpilots there. Why? As a marketing sales and professional I understand the incredible return on
investment of a good marketing campaign. Today marketing to the youth anyone under 30 is done quite efficiently through the Internet. For example if you tie flying to a game where aircraft are used you couldn’t keep up with inquiries.

[Location – Large metro areas]

4/20/11 6:33AM View Responses
Location is very important. Travel cost, reliability of weather, and cost of travel have a lot to do with attendance.

[Good weather location]
[Cost]

4/20/11 6:32AM View Responses
Profit sharing with local sponsors is important.

[Involve local clubs]

4/20/11 6:31AM View Responses
The focus of SSA has evolved from the average pilot to the elite. The convention is oriented at high end aircraft and competition pilots. Why would the average pilot attend a show like that? I worked on the Knoxville conference. Management wouldn’t rent a booth to multiple groups until late in the planning when there were empty booths. VSA, SHA, Marske Aviation et al had one booth. It was the most attended booth on the floor. There is a message there. Booth pricing and availability have to accomodate non-commercial displays. There has to be room for speakers and displays that appeal to the beginner pilot, the social pilot, the weekend pilot, the senior pilot, the vintage pilot, the badge and record pilot. Otherwise no one will be around to become competition pilots who fly megabuck aircraft. On a related note, Soaring magazine used to carry articles for average pilots. Editorial policy changed and the how to’s and where to fly's were returned to their authors. Today it’s a slick publication with little relevance for the rest of us. If I were not already a life member, I wouldn’t subscribe. I was a regular contributor to Soaring back then. I wrote about canopy cleaner, camera mounts and ski boot carriers as release extensions. They won’t print my stuff today. For years, when the national convention was too far away, people ran local multi day mini conventions, in North Carolina and Atlanta. Display aircraft were in the parking lot. Presentations were on buying a plane, insurance, joint ownership, ground launch, badge/cross country flying. They were always well attended. SSA could learn a lot from local events. There’s an idea. How about multiple small conventions instead of one big one? Nyah. It would never work. The elites would never go for it.

[Focus is on elite pilots, needs to be on the average pilot]
[Regional conventions]

4/20/11 6:30AM View Responses
A central location for the convention

[Central location]

4/20/11 6:24AM View Responses
The US has so many pilots (I’m a Kiwi & live in New Zealand, but wanted to share my thoughts) that you must be able to make this work.

4/20/11 6:24AM View Responses
Convention should be in area of good weather and airline access if during the winter

[Good weather location]
[Good air access]

4/20/11 6:23AM View Responses
The people who go to the conventions are mostly the "movers and shakers" in soaring, plus some with commercial interests. We have felt for several years that it was unnecessary to have a convention every year which puts a burden on the SSA and sponsoring clubs. Once every two or three years should be enough to satisfy those who wish to socialize
outside of their contest circles. Some of us have aged out of soaring now and would not attend the convention even if we had more interest.

[Every two or three years]

4/20/11 6:22AM View Responses
I can understand why the SSA is interested in people’s opinions about the convention, but it begs the bigger question: What can be done to revitalize / grow interest in the sport? I don’t know the answer to that question, but it needs to be the primary focus of SSA. If the economics of running a dedicated SSA convention is marginal (and worsening), thought should be given to combining annual conventions with other sport flying groups... parachuting, LSA's, ballooning, etc.

4/20/11 6:22AM View Responses
In my opinion, a convention every other year is quite sufficient. A convention without the combination of seminars and (at least) equipment and accessories, (but better with sailplanes on display) is a waste of time for all involved.

[Every other year]

[Displays important]

4/20/11 6:20AM View Responses
Strong consideration of selecting sites in more southerly US locations so inclement weather isn't a major concern for attendees if SSA is going to continue holding conventions in the winter months.

[Good weather locations]

4/20/11 6:18AM View Responses
I know making decisions is tough for everyone in aviation. I am puzzled by how little interest the youth have in gliding. Perhaps that can be addressed at conventions; the idea of sustainability. I have ideas but I am sure they're not much different than those of others. I do admire the continued efforts of everyone at SSA for trying to make the organization valuable and relevant to its members and to the aviation community in general.

4/20/11 6:17AM View Responses
I like traveling to new parts of the country for the convention but time has proved that cold climate locations are a very bad idea. The conventions, if they are to still be during the winter, need to be in warm climates like So Cal, AZ, FL. The idea to put the last mini convention in Philly in the middle of winter was laughable! TX is also miserable that time of year. If you want a good turn out you need to spend the money to put the convention in places where people want to go. I am tired of freezing my ass off at these conventions. In the last decade I would say Ontario CA is by far the best location. Our company has a display at each convention and many lately have been a complete waste of our hard earned money due to lack of attendance. Jason Stephens Arizona Soaring Inc., Owner & chief CFIG

[Good weather locations]

[PHL was a bad idea]

4/20/11 6:14AM View Responses
first: have the convention in places where the chance of snow and ice is minor (like Ontario, CA) The costs for the special breakfasts and lunches have gone through the roof. In Philadelphia WSPA opted for a self-organized lunch at a nearby restaurant. I don't know what the plans for Reno will be.

[Good weather locations]

4/20/11 6:12AM View Responses
I would like to attend a conference that has some informational sessions for instructors. Maybe even a CFI Renewal seminar. I do like to look at the new toys but I'm really after information and sharing ideas with other instructors. I'm a high school administrator so it's tough getting free. Prefer a convention in the summer but will take Jan or Feb as next choice. Also like the idea of rotating between three or four locations. Thanks Mike
4/20/11 6:10AM **View Responses**
The convention has to be in a city where spouses and family members want to go too. It should be a city with direct (and economical) flights from almost anywhere in the USA. Las Vegas would be, by far, the best location for a convention, even if it is held there every year. It should also be held during warm weather to allow "sitting by the pool" for the family members. Las Vegas in January is too cool for that sort of activity. Las Vegas is also small enough for most people to not need a car to get around. There's also a good gliderport south of the city. Really the only cities for a convention are: 1. Las Vegas 2. Orlando (families can go to Disney World, Universal etc.) If really needed: 3. Washington, DC (every family makes a trip to DC at some time)

**[Good weather - Family friendly locations]**

4/20/11 6:08AM **View Responses**
Question 10 is intriguing and I am not too certain how to answer. Meanwhile, thank you for asking for opinions in this matter. The Conference in Philadelphia served its purpose well.

**[PHL OK]**

4/20/11 6:05AM **View Responses**
Thanks for taking this survey. It is heartwarming to belong to a national organization which cares about what the members think.

4/20/11 6:02AM **View Responses**
Hi Friends, first many thank for the excellent work you are doing for the membership. I know it is very difficult to find sponsors for a large convention, perhaps every 2 years would be more realistic. How about at another time of the year. Combining it with flying at a near glider port? Would that attract more members, perhaps. Just a thought, I definitely would like it. Many regards. Juergen Loenholdt

**[Every two years]**

**[Different time of year]**

**[Flying location]**

4/20/11 5:59AM **View Responses**
Try to have conventions in central location and easy to get to, Dallas, Denver etc East coast or small cities take extra time and expense to get to.

**[Central location]**

**[Good air access]**

4/20/11 5:59AM **View Responses**
Maybe have the "off season" convention in the same place (like Reno), with the "display" convention at different places every other year.

**[Different locations]**

4/20/11 5:58AM **View Responses**
Total cost is very important. The registration fee is high. The nightly charge for the close hotel is very high. The cost of meals in a big city is very high and the cost of food and drink in the convention hall is even greater. The cost to attend an SSA function breakfast for $25 - $30 is outrageous to me. The SSA conventions are obviously for just the wealthier members. I use to attend the SSA conventions every year, starting with the first convention. Even though the conventions have been interesting and informative I have quit attending due to the high cost. I think that my soaring education will benefit more by spending the money on another 10 - 15 tows. If the registration fee was reduced to $25, the hotel room charge was $60/night, the cost of lunch and dinner could be had for $10 - $15, the cost of a $.30 can of
soda pop in the convention hall was only $1.00 instead of $2.50 - $3.00, and the SSA function breakfasts were only $10, I might consider attending again. But, with the conventions being held in a big city, in a fancy hotel, in an expensive convention hall, I do not see any probability of that happening. Like I said above, the conventions are obviously for just the wealthier members.

[Cost]

4/20/11 3:30AM View Responses
This survey is not very good. Does not seek to increase attendance by broadening the offering. It only asks the highest level most obvious questions with no real thought.

4/19/11 11:18PM View Responses
Question 10 is poorly written. The convention needs to rotate, because about half the attendees will come only to a 'local' one, for various reasons. So it it rotates among only a few sites, it needs to rotate among the regional strongholds of soaring, I think. I'm not privy to geographic data, but get the impression that this would maybe entail more than 3 locations. I can think of six broad areas: NE - Ohio->Vermont->New Jersey triangle SE - NC -> Fl->AL triangle MW - IN- >MO->MN triangle S - MS->E'nTX->AR triangle SW- NM->CO->S'nCA triangle NW - WA->OR->N'nCA triangle Question 3 does not reflect the profound changes of the last 4 years, in that each of the 3 conventions of the last 3 years is "special" in some way, and most respondents were probably non-attendees of the educationally excellent Phila convention last year. Hard to judge a convention you didn't go to.

[Different locations]
[Major pilot population areas]

4/19/11 8:08PM View Responses
I believe the quality of SSA Conventions has decreased significantly since the SSA took over the management. When clubs were the primary hosts, there was a significant incentive to put on the convention as a much needed source of revenue. The Albuquerque Soaring Club sponsored and hosted conventions in 1991 and 2000. I believe these were well-received and our club made enough to acquire some much needed equipment and complete some very expensive maintenance.

In 2008, the ASC was not informed of the decision to hold the convention in Albuquerque until after letters and contracts were signed between the SSA and the Albuquerque Convention Center. After the SSA was committed to the ABQ Convention, the ASC was informed that we were to be the hosts and a Memorandum of Understanding was sent to the ASC. It basically stated that we were to be responsible for virtually all the on-site preparation, speakers, physical labor and the like (essentially doing the entire job) while being promised a pittance, and only if the attendance was over 1,200-

a number that has rarely been achieved at ANY SSA convention. We refused. Our club felt highly insulted by the SSA, and, although we did ask members to volunteer their assistance (and many did) we felt that the SSA's management at that time was extremely condescending and inept at building a relationship with the ASC. At this time we had also made the difficult decision to remove ourselves from SSA Chapter status, due to 30% of our members telling us that, if 100% SSA membership was required for Chapter status, they would quit the SSA AND the ASC. Their decision was based on dissatisfaction with the situation involving Mr. Gleason's embezzlement and Mr. Wright's mismanagement. Rather than lose nearly a third of our members, we voted to relinquish our Chapter status. After the 2008 SSA convention, the ASC received a check for $1,500 from the SSA. We donated it to the Eagle Fund. Further, I have attended several conventions under the SSA's management, and there have been significant problems at most of them, i.e. no heat in the hall for two days (Memphis), cramped exhibit space (Arlington), weather at several locations. If the SSA intends to hold conventions in the dead of winter, it behooves them to at least PLAN on some sort of weather prognostication. I agree that this can be a daunting task, but a simple check of what kind of conditions are likely will have a major effect on participation by vendors. Nobody likes to tow cross country with a glider trailer on roads that are a solid sheet of ice. Been there, done that. Got the T-shirt (and used it to clean the road salt off the windshield).

[Good weather location]
[SSA/club relations]
4/19/11 8:39AM View Responses
It would be helpful if the conventions were held in venues that offer non-flying friends/family an opportunity to go sight seeing or to have other activities to attend.

[Family friendly locations]

4/19/11 8:05AM View Responses
We've attended SSA conventions for 20+ years, and the most significant negative change has been the diminution of "social" events, particularly for family members. "Back in the day", my wife thoroughly enjoyed meeting old friends, participating in "spouse-events", special events (like the evening at the Dayton museum). My wife and I will NEVER forget the session on "Is There Sex After Soaring", given by a woman who crewed for her contest-pilot husband, and which attracted TWO packed houses! For the last few years, the involvement of non-pilots has completely disappeared!! As a glider pilot for 40+ years, and a CFI(G) for 30+ years, the formal sessions are way less important to me than getting to play with and learn about new equipment, and socialize with people from all over the world that I never see EXCEPT at conventions. The exhibit hall has "the" common forum for getting together. I honestly don't think these changes are the result of SSA's management of convention, but are of some more insidious cultural changes in our community's population - and that of the country as a whole. Yes, I know that's not helpful . . .but, again to be honest, I see the EXACT same changes in the culture of my own club which, with every passing year, becomes less attractive as a place for members and families to socialize and play together. . .Jim Kellett

[More family friendly]
[Displays important]

4/19/11 6:47AM View Responses
My only frustration is that the safety thread runs simultaneously with other threads. Suggest one half day be dedicated to safety education. Great work to the teams who have run past conventions (I enjoyed Little Rock, but not the weather). I liked the Ontario, CA location, since less expensive hotels were near the show hotel - I'm retiring shortly, and won't afford the show hotel.

[Weather issues]
[Content]

4/19/11 6:40AM View Responses
You should have more social gatherings during the convention in the daily schedule such as lunches, brunchs, ect. Allow evenings for people to set up their own social gatherings. Example: Having a Brunch sponsored by the sailplane Mfg's meet and greet kind of thing. Maybe the same with soaring instruments mfg reps, racing rules committee, ect ect. Thanks for asking!

[More social events]

4/19/11 6:00AM View Responses
With the availability of information on the internet like RAS and Soaring Cafe I feel that I have or can get information easier than going to a "gathering." I also can meet and get caught up via contests and contest related social events. The bottom line for me is that I am unlikely to attend a convention unless it is very conviently located. I also think the SSA staff should not devote their time leading up to and during a convention on convention related activites and should focus on other activities and issues.

[Location near me]
[Convention not important]

4/19/11 5:40AM View Responses
With a diminishing pilot population (30% decrease in the past decade or so) it is unlikely a large attendance can be expected. The SSA must recognise members are unlikely to attend at a northern site in winter months. It is time to try Orlando Florida - perhaps in January well before The Seniors contest. Cheaper airfairs to places such as Orlando and Las Vegas.
4/19/11 2:55AM  View Responses
I'm of the opinion that Conventions have a major positive impact on members - especially newer ones. I've been involved in organizing and running 2 conventions and would dearly like to see an arrangement whereby the organizing club or group could do most of the work in return for a hansom profit - at least $20,000 to $25,000. Such arrangements in the past were very motivational for the organizing group and resulted IMHO in excellent conventions.

[Get clubs involves to share profit]

4/19/11 2:42AM  View Responses
I think that the past conventions and conference had been a big disappointment, but this has been due to the local weather conditions. I really have not liked the locations and times for the conventions. The convention centers are expensive for them and the cost of the hotel is more then I like to pay. It would be nice to have a convention at an airport where we can fly, bring our gliders, campout. I am really looking forward to Reno. I might try to bring my glider out from OK to fly out of the Minden area.

[Good weather location]
[Past venues are too expensive]

4/19/11 2:18AM  View Responses
Question 10. I would say have it alternate between East, Central, & West but at different locations
[Different locations]

4/19/11 2:13AM  View Responses
More Local club involvement with Convention management and profit sharing. Conventions seemed to be better when a local soaring organization was involved.
[More local club involvement]
[Profit sharing w/ clubs]

4/19/11 1:45AM  View Responses
I understand (and appreciate!) how much effort - from SSA staff, 'sponsoring locals,' displayers/vendors, presenters, and probably others 'beyond my ken' - goes into putting on a convention (whether a 'full' one or a 'like the recent Philly' one). That said, I believe the convention is a significant part of the 'glue' that holds SSA together, and trying to cut back on conventions (e.g. Philly this year) is likely to be a 'glue weakening' step, and therefore not a wise one. Let's no 'go there.' (Regarding Philly, I am personally aware of several dithering possible attendees who opted to not go, ostensibly because of the weather, but I also know the absence of a full display by soaring vendors played a significant part in their decision to not attend. I believe this is the sort of - probably unmeasurable but nevertheless real - effect likely to attend scaled back conventions.)
[Weather an issue]
[Displays important]

4/19/11 1:19AM  View Responses
Question 15 should have a "none of the above" option.

4/19/11 12:59AM  View Responses
it should not cost the same for the Conference (without a hall) or the Convention (with a hall)

4/19/11 12:31AM  View Responses
I really missed the soaring instruments and books and videos, etc. at the recent SSA Conference. I would have also liked to see gliders on display too. I don't understand why dealers that wanted to display were not allowed to display their
products. Why not just let those that want to display go ahead? Those that don't want to bring products or gliders don't need to. That is up to them. I thought it was wrong to have those that didn't want to display block those that wanted to display.

[Displays important]

4/18/11 11:47PM View Responses
Q 16 limits answers to one. I would have checked all but "Student - Learning to fly" if possible. I think it would be a mistake to limit the location to one or a few repeating cities. There are two participant segments that have been well served in the past. Die hard attendees that will go anywhere and local attendees that are within easy driving distance for a day or more at the event. An underserved segment in my opinion at most prior conventions is working to attract the local non soaring public and get local media publicity for the sport. Going to different locations provides the greatest opportunity in the last two segments. Some creative thinking on having convenient lower cost lodging and meals available could have appeal. Many of the soaring folks I know would prefer a "1 tow" motel versus a "2 or 3 tow" motel. Renting a meeting room for a brown bag lunch versus the high priced event lunches could also help keep costs down. Most people are there for the content and not the food. Also, the food in the typical hotel meal is not that great to start with. Obviously this creates some planning problems with the event hotels, but there are some smart folks in SSA that should be able to come up with some creative alternatives. Air Venture, Sun n Fun and most Soaring Contests have a number of folks in RV's, camping, etc.

[Different locations]
[Cost]

4/18/11 10:48PM View Responses
I serve on the Board of Directors for the American Institute of Aeronautic and Astronautics (AIAA) and have been directly involved in planning and coordinating technical meetings with exhibits that have from 300 to over 2000 attendees over three or four days. I have had to deal with some of the same issues that your committee is dealing with now. My strongest suggestion for location is to preferentially consider locations that are major airline hubs. This will tend to minimize the travel cost and time for an attendee. This should increase attendance. Since the event has typically been held during the winter, I would suggest a southern tier of rotations, since it will tend to reduce the weather issues. Realizing that it will not eliminate weather issues like I encountered driving several pilots to Little Rock in 2010, but hopefully reduce the frequency. So more people have a chance to attend a regional event, a rotation between East Coast, Middle America, and West Coast is a good idea. I would suggest that the Atlanta, DFW, and Arizona-So.California locations would be good choices. Those locations would offer the lowest total travel costs. The places mentioned above, Tampa, San Antonio, & Reno, reflect the same regions, but they are all destinations, not hubs. Travel cost & time & plane changes make these less attractive. Also, Reno in winter can be a challenge. I have direct experience with attending the AIAA Aerospace Sciences Meeting in January in Reno. I attended this meeting over 25 times and twice I was the General Chair of the meeting. Fog and snow were problems that often delayed even those from the San Francisco area to make it either by air or ground across the Sierra Nevada mountains on the day they intended to travel. The only people that were upset about moving the AIAA meeting from Reno were the skiers. This meeting is now in primarily east coast, mid america, west coast rotation and is scheduled for 8 or more years in the future. Our meeting is likely too small to be considered attractive for Las Vegas. Denver is a better choice than Reno, since it is a hub and much easier to get to, even in bad weather. Secondary hubs like Memphis, Cincinnati could be considered. In the past, local sections or groups often provided support for the meetings. That may be desirable to peak local interest and attendance, but it may mean a few more venues need to be considered to avoid burnout of these groups, even on a three-year rotation. Even if the event is coordinated by HQ, we should try to work with regional groups to assist. If HQ carries the ball, it is very helpful to have an experienced event planner that understands the hotel and convention center business. Also, doing the event in a hotel alone is likely the most financially efficient way to go, since a single hotel entity is willing to trade room and catering costs in part on the number of sleeping rooms. A convention center will have a standard cost model with less flexibility. This is where an experienced person is important. I would be glad to talk with any of the team doing this survey, because it I think it is vitally important for the health of SSA to have a major annual event each year. ..... Neal Pfeiffer Wichita, KS nealpfeiffer@sbcglobal.net (316) 641-9928 mobile

[Good weather locations]
[Good air access]
4/18/11 10:47PM View Responses
The EAA AirVenture is a model. Although in an inconvenient location, it gets a huge attendance. A partial reason for that success is a single venue so all potential attendees can plan attendance years in advance. The name itself "Oshkosh" has become an icon. The SSA should anchor its conventions in a central location near an airline hub and schedule it before or after the winter's worst weather. I suggest Fall after the soaring season has wound down and before winter weather. For many locations, Spring has very good soaring weather which would compete with the convention. If every SSA member knew the place and date of the SSA convention would always be the same, the question, "Are you going to xxxxxxx this year?" would be on everyone's lips. Scheduling the same location for years in advance would most likely open the door to large discounts.

[Fixed location]
[Timing – In the fall]

4/18/11 10:47PM View Responses
I've been to every Convention since 2004 and wouldn't miss one. Love seeing my friends and socializing. I was skeptical about the "Conference" in Philly but enjoyed going to the talks. Usually at the full conventions I spend most of my time on the floor manning a booth or visiting with other exhibitors. The attendance in Philly seemed to me to be 1/3 to 1/4 of the normal full conventions, so apparently having the exhibitors and gliders on display draw people to attend. Because of that I really prefer to have the exhibits even though I'll still attend without them.

[Exhibits important]
[Socializing important]

4/18/11 10:26PM View Responses
Question 15 excludes the option of club operations conducted at an FBO facility. Many clubs do not have their own towing capability. Question 17. Suggest asking if there is an interest in becoming a contest pilot. Non-members should be allowed to buy cheap passes at conventions that would allow them to view the sailplane exhibits, and attend one free seminar designed for people who want to learn about soaring. This might help promote the sport.

4/18/11 10:17PM View Responses
Conventions must be in areas that have a heavy concentration of glider pilots. The convention attendance this year showed that a Convention without Displays was poorly attended. Due to the cost for vendors to travel and shipped all their display material the convention should be held every two years. If you intend the have the convention every year, then the vendors should be compensated as they are the biggest draw. By compensation I mean (free booths and convention charges). Very rarely is a convention a money making exercise for a vendor. In my experience 1 of the last four conventions was a profit and that was minimal. Please do not justify a convention every year by this survey. Survey the vendors and see how many of the vendors are willing to subsidize the convention.

[Location in high pilot population areas]
[Free booths for exhibitors for a draw]

4/18/11 10:02PM View Responses
Bob, I think that this survey adequately covers the what we are interested in learning. I am most interested in the response about the concept of a conference without gliders meaning that it would be a cheaper event with a smaller display area without the risk of transporting gliders in the snow and ice. I approve of sending out the survey to the SSA members. Thanks for your efforts to organize the survey. Walter

4/12/11 12:37AM View Responses
Our annual gathering should not be a "Conference". I prefer annual Conventions, as in the past. I know that SSA Conventions can be profitable for the SSA. The Hobbs staff is very capable of managing an annual SSA Convention. Most other aviation organizations (EAA Sun 'n Fun in Florida / AirVenture at Oshkosh, AOPA, NBAA, Helicopter) have annual conventions with aircraft displays. I enjoy seeing the vintage gliders, experimental gliders and production sailplanes on display at our annual Convention.
Test comments - RL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographic Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 [Airport location]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [Alternate locations – three cities]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [Avoid downtown business locations – Airport location]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [Central location – good air connections]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 [Central location]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 [Central location]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 [Cities with inexpensive airfare]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 [Family friendly locations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 [Family friendly locations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 [Family friendly locations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 [Family friendly locations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 [Fixed location]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 [Flying location]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 [High pilot population areas]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 [Larger urban area locations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 [Location – College campus/town]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 [Family friendly locations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 [Family friendly locations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 [Location – Hobbs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 [Location – Large metro areas]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 [Location – With World Championships next year]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 [Location in high pilot population areas]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 [Location near me]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
32 [Location near me]
33 [Location near me]
34 [Location near me]
35 [Location near me]
36 [Location near me]
37 [Location near me]
38 [Location near me]
39 [Location near me]
40 [Location near me]
41 [Location near me]
42 [Location with flying possibilities]
43 [Location]
44 [Location]
45 [Location]
46 [Location]
47 [Location]
48 [Major pilot population areas]
49 [Rotate three cities]
50 [Single site if economical – Otherwise different cities]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Displays</th>
<th>Convention Timing</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 Comments</td>
<td>[Every other year full displays / off-year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>[Every other year full displays / off-year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[Every other year full displays / off-year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>[Every other year full displays / off-year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>[Every year – Full displays every 3-4 yea]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>[Not having sailplane displays OK]</td>
<td>[Every year]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Displays</th>
<th>Convention Timing</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 Comments</td>
<td>[Every other year full displays / off-year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>[Every other year full displays / off-year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[Every other year full displays / off-year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>[Every other year full displays / off-year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>[Every other year]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>[Every year – Full displays every 3-4 yea]</td>
<td>[Cost]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>[Not having sailplane displays OK]</td>
<td>[Every year]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Involve/Join Other Groups</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Comments</td>
<td>14 Comments</td>
<td>11 Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 [Different locations]</td>
<td>[Invite other groups]</td>
<td>[PHL bad – no displays]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [Different locations]</td>
<td>[Invite other groups]</td>
<td>[PHL bad - No displays]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [Different locations]</td>
<td>[Invite other groups]</td>
<td>[PHL bad - Weather – no displays]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [Different locations]</td>
<td>[Involve CAP]</td>
<td>[PHL bad]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 [Different locations]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td>[PHL OK]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 [Different locations]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td>[PHL was a bad idea]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 [Different locations]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td>[PHL was bad]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 [Different cities]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td>[PHL was bad]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 [One city location – flight demonstrations]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td>[PHL was bad]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 [One standard location]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td>[PHL was bad]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 [In conjunction with large contests]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td>[PHL was good – Turn out disappoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 [More locations]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 [Move locations]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 [Three or four different locations]</td>
<td>[Partner with other organizations]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season/Dates/Days</th>
<th>Good Airfare Cities</th>
<th>Regional Conferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Comments</td>
<td>6 Comments</td>
<td>6 Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 [Change convention days]</td>
<td>[Good airline access]</td>
<td>[Regional conferences]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [Change timeframe – Fall]</td>
<td>[Good airline access]</td>
<td>[Regional conferences]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [Convention dates to avoid bad weather]</td>
<td>[Good airline access]</td>
<td>[Regional conferences]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [Different time of year]</td>
<td>[Good airline access]</td>
<td>[Regional conventions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 [Shift convention days]</td>
<td>[Good airline access]</td>
<td>[Regional conventions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 [Summer – Outdoor displays]</td>
<td>[Good airline access]</td>
<td>[Regional conventions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 [Summer timeframe]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 [Timing – In the fall]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 [Timing – Spring or Fall]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contest Related Content</th>
<th>Club Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Comments</td>
<td>4 Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 [High tech and contest info not of interest]</td>
<td>[Get clubs involved sharing profit]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [Must appeal to the average glider pilot]</td>
<td>[Get clubs involved sharing profit]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [Too much contest related content]</td>
<td>[Involve local clubs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [Too much emphasis on contests]</td>
<td>[Involve local clubs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Address the majority of non-contest pilots]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 [Appreciate being asked]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 [Can’t seem get involved in soaring community]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 [Convention not important]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 [Dinners not interesting]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 [Don’t care about social stuff]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 [Focus is on elite pilots, needs to be on the average pilot]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 [Free booths for exhibitors for a draw]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 [General SSA comments]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 [Presentation scheduling]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 [Quit flying – Safety concerns]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 [SSA/club relations]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 [Vendors add value]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 [Webinars]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 [Webinars]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment Themes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Location</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Weather Location</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Content</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention Content</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention Timing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location - Rotation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve/Join Other Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season/Dates/Days</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Airfare Cities</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Conferences</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contest Related Content</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Involvement</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>