



**Member Survey 2012**  
**Summary Report, April 22, 2012**

**61 Replies in total, shown in RED**

This report provides a summary of the replies to the Oughtred Society Members Survey, February 2012. The analysis of replies and suggestions received is still in progress. We will inform you as soon as conclusions have been drawn and resulting actions are defined. The full list of more than 400 anonymized comments is available on the OS website, section Message Board, under category "OS Journal/Membership Comments".

Age:

Under 35	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	Over 84	Not filled in
0	1	6	21	22	7	1	3

Country:

USA	47	Germany	2	France	1
UK	5	Australia	1	UAE	1
The Netherlands	2	Israel	1	India	1

**A. Oughtred Society Message Board**

**QUESTION 1: Should the Message Board be opened to all members of the other slide rule groups with whom the OS has a relationship, e.g., United Kingdom Slide Rule Circle, Dutch Kring, German Rechenschieber Sammler-Treffen, Spanish ARC?**

(48) Yes      (9) No      (4) Blank      (12) Comments

Some 80 % of the respondents favored the Message Board to be opened to international "circle" members too.

A larger audience would improve sharing of ideas, resolving problem and communications in general. Concern was expressed about the password system, the difficulty of controlling access to the various national circles with membership changes, and the overlap with the ISRG message group.

**QUESTION 2: Should the Message Board be opened to the International Slide Rule Group (ISRG), which includes the public?**

(21) Yes      (34) No      (6) Blank      (13) Comments

Only one third of the respondents said yes to opening the OS Message Board to ISRG members. Danger of discussions/flaming running out of control if no good board member acceptance and individual message control is exercised. The question is whether different subjects would be discussed in a public Message Board than in the ISRG.

**QUESTION 3: Will you or do you use the Message Board?**

(21) Yes      (13) No      (24) Maybe      (3) Blank      (7) Comments

Less than 20 % of the respondents have some experience, but usage appears to be minimal. This is probably caused by lack of traffic: chicken/egg problem. Only 2 respondents intend to start using it.

**QUESTION 4: How can the Message Board be improved?**

Comments: 11

Only 8 real proposals. Most relate to improving the system used for the MB because currently too rigid password access, fixed categories and no easy sequential view of messages. Some suggestions would move the MB closer to the ISRG, or even merge it. There were interesting suggestions, like using Facebook, LinkedIn, special topics, topic of the week/month, or stimulate MB postings by OS members with special interests or functions (e.g. Board members).

## **B. Your Purchases and Sales**

**QUESTION 5:** Do you **regularly** purchase items on eBay, at flea markets, antique stores, or from individuals?

(45) Yes      (15) No      (1) Blank      (7) Comments

Three quarter of the respondents appear to be genuine collectors as they do purchase regularly.  
Some comments show that collecting activities slow down at a certain point in time (age, illness etc).

**QUESTION 6:** Would you be interested in buying and/or selling slide rules or other calculating instruments in a private online auction for OS members, with items for sale (photos and descriptions) posted in a members-only section of the OS website?

(40) Yes      (14) No      (1) Maybe      (6) Blank      (11) Comments

Two thirds of the respondents were positive towards starting OS auctions.  
However, in the 11 comments reservations were expressed with regard to the benefit/cost ratio of a new OS auction system.  
Some find eBay and other selling platforms sufficient for their needs.  
A possible return of the basic "OS Swap Sheet" was mentioned.

**QUESTION 7:** Would you want an OS store on the OS website, offering slide rules, books, and similar related items for sale?

(51) Yes      (7) No      (3) Blank      (9) Comments

Almost all respondents said yes to starting an OS Store on our website.  
The 9 comments clearly identified that the concept of an OS Store was not properly explained, as there was confusion with the previous question on possible OS auctions.  
For example, there was a fear that an OS Store would be a costly and difficult project - although many software packages for flexible web store handling appear to exist.

## **C. Membership**

**QUESTION 8:** What can the OS do to attract new members?

Comments: 31

This question elicited a gratifying 80 % of comments from the respondents.  
The general trend of the suggestions was towards improving public visibility of our field of interest, collecting and research.  
OS members should step outside the comfort zone of our Society and turn with interviews, papers, articles, demonstrations, displays etc to the general public, in education (high school to university), teachers and professors, hobby circles, history of science and technology circles, and even general magazines, newspapers.  
The need for ongoing improvement of the OS website was emphasized.  
Further keywords for improvements are advertisements, internet presence by links to OS and visibility on Google, more visibility on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube movies, ISRG, displays in libraries, schools, member-brings-member bonus program, include OS membership in every signature on emails, eBay and other communications.

**QUESTION 9:** What can the OS do to retain more existing members?

Comments: 31

Almost half of the respondents gave comments on this question, but with less original ideas than from the previous question. Most common answer was: continue the good work.  
Some specific ideas: return to the "stapled" Journal as it will allow comfortable reading without breaking the spine, be careful with a too glossy and popular appearance of Journal, exit interview with every leaving member, optimal communication to members by email announcement and website.

## **D. Communications**

**QUESTION 10:** Do you prefer electronic or paper mail, e.g., for announcements, the annual directory?

(12) Paper      (32) Electronic      (3) Both P and E      (14) Blank      (17) Comments

Over half of the respondents favored electronic communications, while 20 % voted for paper. Of the 17 comments however, 11 wanted specifically the Directory on paper. The preprinted Survey answers did not allow ticking "Paper AND Electronic", but the comments showed that both, or at least a choice, would be appreciated.

**QUESTION 11:** Do you **want** to contact other OS members regarding your collection, interests, other?

(38) Yes      (15) No      (8) Blank      (13) Comments

Almost two third of the respondents would like contact with fellow-members which still leaves a surprising one third of lone collectors.

Of the 13 comments, most reported past contacts, some expressed an intention. The directory was mentioned as a good pointer to contacts in the OS while also the Message Board and individual websites were mentioned.

**QUESTION 12:** Have you communicated with other OS members?

(52) Yes      (8) No      (1) Blank      (41) Comments

What method did you use?

Comments: 31

A vast majority of the respondents reported past contacts, which remarkably is more than the wishes for contacts reported in the previous question.

Of the 41 comments almost all mentioned email as contact medium, only a few used Message Board or phone, and one even Facebook.

**QUESTION 13:** Do you discuss slide rules or other calculating instruments or methods with others?

(49) Yes      (9) No      (3) Blank      (16) Comments

Can the OS provide any information or means that facilitates communication?

A vast majority of the respondents claim to talk with others about historical calculating instruments.

The 16 comments mostly give information or examples about conversations or presentations and where, to whom.

## **E. The Journal of the OS**

**QUESTION 14:** Are you interested in obtaining past copies of JOS in **electronic** format (PDF files on CD or DVD)?

(37) Yes      (21) No      (1) Maybe      (2) Blank      (16) Comments

Almost two third of the respondents are interested in past Journals in digital format.

The 16 comments were largely from members who already have many (or all) paper copies, but do want electronic copies too.

**QUESTION 15:** Would you want a searchable index of JOS articles and contents provided in the CD/DVD?

(44) Yes      (12) No      (5) Blank      (13) Comments

Over two third of the respondents do want a searchable index in digital format.

The 13 comments pointed out that especially an index would better be placed online on the OS website, maintainable and up-to-date.

Comments noted that Rod Lovett's website already provides this function today.

**QUESTION 16:** Would you like to write an article for JOS?

(34) Yes      (26) No      (1) Blank      (33) Comments

If you have not, why not?

Over half of the respondents are potential Journal authors. However, the 33 comments are mostly filled with reasons not to do so soon, one reason being supposed lack of knowledge.

Nevertheless, some respondents however are regulars and promise to keep writing.

## **F. OS Operations, Activities, and Volunteers**

**QUESTION 17:** Are you interested in helping operate the OS?

(23) Yes      (30) No      (8) Blank      (11) Comments

Only one third of the respondents are potential OS volunteers.  
The 11 comments give reasons either not to help, or come from current and some potential volunteers.

**QUESTION 18:** Are you interested in helping with the Journal?

(17) Yes      (33) No      (11) Blank      (12) Comments

Over one third of the respondents might be willing to help with the Journal.  
The question was put so general that many of the 12 comments contained questions on how.

**QUESTION 19:** Are you interested in helping with OS meetings?

(15) Yes      (38) No      (8) Blank      (15) Comments

One quarter of the respondents might be willing to help with OS Meetings.  
Most of the 15 comments stressed the volunteer's home should be near the meeting place (or the other way around?). Outside the USA are the national circles that are already organizing IM's, which are not (yet?) under the OS umbrella.

**QUESTION 20:** Where would you like OS meetings to take place?      Comments: 37

Locations? (9) Comments

How often? (9) Comments

The 37 comments are as diverse as the respondents are scattered geographically.  
Many unrelated preferences. Some ideas: stimulate local activities, rotate/vary locations of official meetings, connect with international/EU IM-meetings, combine OS meetings with tourist attractiveness.

**QUESTION 21:** What can the OS do to encourage you to attend meetings?      Comments: 31

Of the 31 comments, most give prohibitive reasons not to come, but offer few solutions.  
Some ideas: combine meeting with other attraction(s) like antique/flea market, museum/exposition; electronic meetings/"webinars"; timely announcements; program with attractions/free gifts/lotteries/auctions; low pricing.

**QUESTION 22:** Are you willing to help the OS promote slide rules to young people and other non-OS audiences?

(34) Yes      (12) No      (15) Blank      (25) Comments

Most of the 25 comments give examples of how respondents do promote slide rules to the young, like class or family presentations or displays in public places.  
Still there is also a need to be shown (by OS?) what is the best way to do that.  
One interesting idea is "embedded" slide rule presentations, for example present the history of the Hoover Dam and make an inner detour to the slide rule for its design calculations.

## **G. Improvement of the Oughtred Society**

**QUESTION 23:** With what activities should the OS become more involved?      Comments: 23

Each realistic proposal in the 23 comments should be considered for creation of an action point.

**QUESTION 24:** Please list your suggestions for improving the OS.      Comments: 26

Each realistic proposal in the 26 comments should be considered for creation of an action point.