



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

On behalf of my colleagues at the *Journal* and AFSA, I would like to thank the 857 people who took our recent online reader survey between May 1 and June 25. That total represents more than 6 percent of our current circulation of 13,800, a very healthy response rate that has provided us with a lot of useful information (and is about double the participation level for our last reader survey, back in 2001). Here are some highlights from the data.

Active-duty Foreign Service personnel comprise 75 percent of the respondents, while 23 percent are FS retirees; the remaining 2 percent are not affiliated with the Foreign Service. Some 91 percent of the survey participants are AFSA members, and more than three-quarters of the active-duty respondents (77 percent) are currently serving overseas.

We began by asking respondents how often they typically read each section of the magazine. Not surprisingly, the most popular department is *AFSA News*, which garnered a whopping 95 percent (74 percent usually read it and another 21 percent sometimes do). But several other departments have similarly large readerships: features (93 percent of you usually or sometimes read those); Speaking Out (56 percent usually read those columns and 36 percent of you sometimes do, for a total of 92 percent); and President's Views and Letters, each of which 91 percent of respon-

*There are many ways
you can share your
insights in our pages.
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dents usually or sometimes read.

Next we listed the focus sections for each issue over the previous year (May 2007 through April 2008) and asked whether you read all, most, some or none of each. Generally speaking, topics bearing directly on professional concerns were the most fully read: Our May 2007 coverage of the Foreign Service as a career earned top marks, as 58 percent of respondents read most or all of that issue and only 10 percent skipped it completely. Other popular focus topics from the past year included Iraq, five years after the war (March); Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the FS (January); and political Islam (April).

The next section of the survey addressed the *Journal's* online presence. Many of you apparently did not know that the entire contents of each issue have been available on AFSA's Web site (www.afsa.org/fsj), as well as at www.fsjournal.org, for three years now. (In addition, you can read selec-

tions from issues published between 2000 and 2005.) We are in the process of exploring some changes to make the magazine's homepage more inviting and searchable, so stay tuned for news about that.

A majority of respondents (53 percent) were very satisfied with the *Journal* overall, and another 39 percent are somewhat satisfied. Nearly half of you (46 percent) favor a continuation of our current goal to maintain a roughly 50/50 balance between Foreign Service-specific professional issues and general foreign affairs coverage, and 60 percent of you see that balance reflected in our pages.

Thanks also for the hundreds of written comments on various aspects of our coverage and format. A clear majority expressed the desire for more "news you can use" about AFSA activities, initiatives and services, as well as Foreign Service-specific issues and concerns — such as the problems faced by minorities, women, families and Members of Household. In addition, those of you from agencies other than State would like to see more coverage of your AFSA constituencies.

Let me assure you that the FSJ Editorial Board fully supports all those goals, but the best way to ensure that happy outcome is to write about these topics yourselves. For information on how to submit a column, article or letter, please contact us at authors@afsa.org and we will be delighted to respond.

Let us hear from you. ■