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Helvetia Survey: Response from our Membership

Survey results

We had a good response: 62 people took the time to reply; 14 from the Wellington Club, two from Hamilton, 41 from Auckland, four are members of the Swiss Society only and one skipped the question. Thank you all! You busy Taranaki people missed out, bad timing to do a survey during calving season!!

And even more pleasing: Just over half (31) regularly read our Helvetia, cover to cover. 26 browse, the others look at the Club news mainly.

We asked which articles had been mostly read in past editions. Half of the participants replied. Many of them pointed out again that they read the Club news. We had many positive comments regarding articles about Switzerland – from current events to entertainment, personalities, politics, places and customs.

Trudi Brühlmann's series on the Swiss cantons was certainly very popular! Swiss recipes were read by many. Articles about Swiss living in NZ were mentioned, too. One of our readers passes the magazine to his Dutch neighbour, who again reads it from cover to cover. Good recycling!

Suggestions for future editions was next – what should definitely be part of Helvetia, or may be, or not at all. Not surprisingly, Club news came first: 57 of the 62 people (92%) voted for those as a "regular". The two next themes were Swiss people in New Zealand, with 77% of respondents feeling this should be a definite, together with issues for Swiss here, including law, taxes and AHV (75%). Proceeding to more practical topics, Swiss kitchen and recipes were a "must" for 73% of respondents. The opinions were more divided on other themes: Swiss customs, myths and legends attracted 64% as a favourite subject. More than 50% also wanted regular articles on Swiss current affairs and politics, and Swiss businesses in New Zealand. Half would like to see letters to the Editor. Just under half of the respondents would like to read regular articles on current Swiss entertainment and on famous Swiss people.

There were similar replies for personal stories (Carolyn Lane or Jakobsveg). The children's page was favoured by a little less than half of the respondents. Surprisingly (to me anyway), health, household tricks and gardening were the least desired. Still, the majority would like to see at least some information on those.

Separate suggestions were made by 24 participants. A recurring theme was travel tips in Switzerland for us New Zealanders. A couple of people would like to see sports news, while others like Sudoku and serial fiction. Also requested were stories about other immigrant communities in New Zealand and news from the Embassy.

The editorial committee has had some discussion about Swiss languages in the Helvetia and put a question into the survey. Regular articles in (High-)German were favoured by

32%, in Swiss German by 18%, in French by 13%, in Italian by 8% and in Romansh by 3%. These figures are a bit distorted as not everyone replied to all the questions, and the Romansh contingent consists of one person only! On the other side, over 60% of respondents did not want any Romansh or Italian, just under 50% no French, and just over 20% no German or Swiss German. 20 people made other comments: 13 of them would like either only English, or definitely mainly English, as many of our readers don't understand Swiss languages and would feel left out. Others would like to see poems, ballads and children's stories in German.

What are we going to do with all this information? It is certainly food for thought. We are well aware that we will not be able to satisfy everyone all the time. It is interesting to note that stories about Swiss life in New Zealand came high on the wish-list. Anybody who would like to share their story and/or their wisdom is most welcome! There may be some shoulder tapping coming up. Please keep on voicing your opinions in the letters to the Editor.

The last part of the survey asked about what brought you here, what you like in New Zealand and what you miss from Switzerland. I found the replies fascinating and will report on those in another issue of Helvetia.

By Nelly Steinemann

Congratulations to the winner of the Helvetia survey!

Drawn at the fondue night in Auckland (07 September), the happy winner was Pia Knarston of the Auckland Swiss Club. Six bottles of Renato wine will have reached you by now – ENJOY!



A sample of Renato wines