

**Approaching 50:
The Southwestern Psychological Association,
1994—2003**

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**In Honor of SWPA's 50th Convention
San Antonio, TX
April 8—10, 2004**

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Chronological milestones usually elicit reflection. As the Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA) approaches its fiftieth meeting, we pause to reflect on the Association's history. Having previously detailed SWPA's first 40 years elsewhere (Davis & Wight, 1994), this review updates that history, focusing exclusively on the decade 1994-2003. We encourage the reader to consult the earlier work to put the more recent activities in better context.

The data supporting this chapter derive from two sources. We first sent a questionnaire to the 13 Association officers and staff who served from 1994 to 2003 (see Table 1). Eleven responded. The questions asked included:

- ¥ What issues and events characterized your term as Officer or Staff Member?
- ¥ How would you depict the Association's nature at that time?
- ¥ How did you shape the program during your years of service?
- ¥ What imprint did you leave on the Association?
- ¥ What was the state of psychology in the southwest during your time as Officer or Staff Member?

We also analyzed the programs for this period. Each item in each program was coded by presentation type, presentation topic, organizational sponsor, and affiliation of the first author ($N = 3385$). Using the institutional categories American Association of University Professors as a starting point, we assigned the affiliation of each first author to one of the following groups:

- ¥ Doctoral-level institution ($n = 1436$ total, nonunique entries)
- ¥ Master-level institution ($n = 1465$)

¥	Baccalaureate-level institution (<i>n</i> = 233)
¥	Two-year institution (<i>n</i> = 29)
¥	International institution (<i>n</i> = 27)
¥	Medical school (<i>n</i> = 41)
¥	High school (<i>n</i> = 11)
¥	Psychological practice (<i>n</i> = 45)
¥	Government agency (<i>n</i> = 31)
¥	Business (<i>n</i> = 32)
¥	Professional psychology school (<i>n</i> = 3)
¥	Other (<i>n</i> = 32)

With these data in mind, we couch the remainder of this report in terms of several general, but not totally independent, themes: Technology, Participation, and Notable Events.

Technology and SWPA

Reflecting its importance, 6 of the 11 survey respondents listed technology as one of the most important issues dealt with during their tenure among SWPA's leadership. Secretary-Treasurer Randall Wight created SWPA's first web presence in 1997. Two years later Emporia State's Kurt Baker advanced the site's design by enhancing layout, adding frames, and developing linkages.

Ed Kardas's first year as Program Chair marked the consolidation of website oversight and program responsibilities. An associational goal was to provide member access to web-based program submissions. Kardas ably led this initiative. As with most plans, the process took longer than initially conceived. SWPA's program went online in 2000.

The Association was among the first of the regional associations to offer an interactive website. Members had the option to submit convention proposals in 2000, 2001, and 2002. The 2003 SWPA Convention marked required online submission of all proposals. Likewise, 2003 was the first year that all convention proposals were reviewed online.

Sensing the need for a multipurpose venue, John Davis applied for and received a \$1,000 grant from the American Psychological Association's Science Directorate to help support the further development of SWPA's infant website. Presently, the Association's site provides members several services, including:

- ¥ Current information about psychology in the southwest and the annual SWPA convention;
- ¥ Online membership application;
- ¥ The ability to view complete convention programs dating from 2001;
- ¥ Increased and rapid communication among Association leadership and membership;
- ¥ Management of the membership database.

Having the SWPA membership database online allows members to update their own personal information. This feature also enables the SWPA Secretary-Treasurer to download the most current mailing list. The SWPA leadership anticipates adding the ability to pay yearly dues online via credit card in the near future.

These decidedly positive advances notwithstanding, technology has produced its own share of problems and issues. First, because online submission is now the only option available to members, some fear this requirement has contributed to a decline in the number of program submissions. Second, and perhaps most surprising, is tension between the Association and the hotels that host its meetings. The ability of members to reserve rooms through the internet coupled with changes in the hotel market created a completely unforeseen problem: the loss of hotel revenue credited to SWPA.

As anyone who has traveled for a number of years can attest, the options available for making traveling arrangements has exploded. No longer do we simply call the front desk to make a voice reservation. Many of us now logon and (perhaps more simply) type out our requests and needs. Unfortunately, SWPA receives no room credit for travel arrangements made through Orbitz, Expedia, or the like. Room

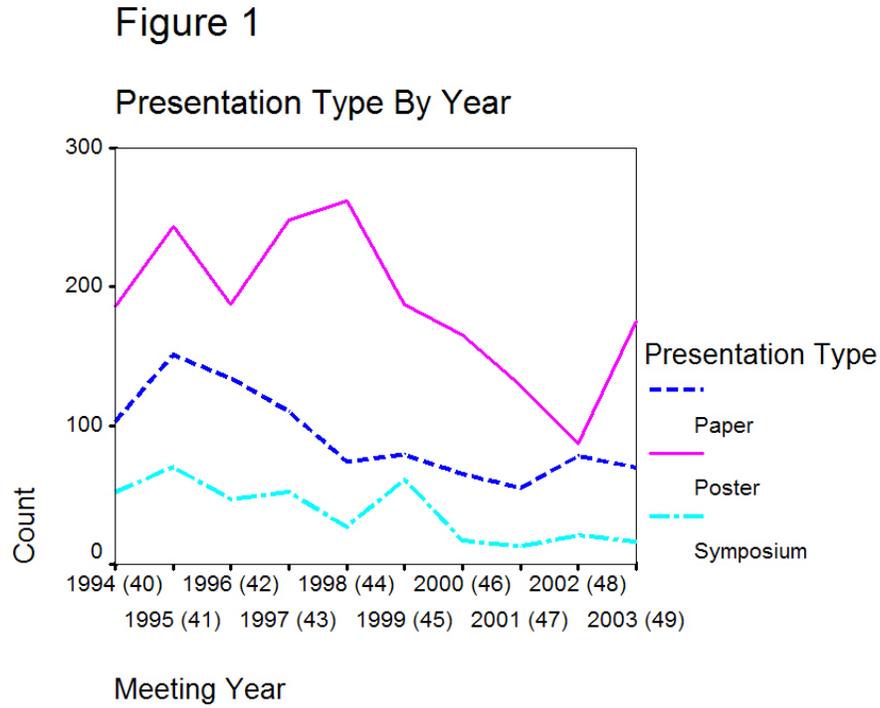
arrangements made through these intermediary services have, essentially, already been purchased by the service itself and are then sold to individual customers. In effect, these rooms belong to the service not the original hotel source.

This technological change converged with a shift in the hotel business cycle. During the late eighties and early nineties, hotel rooms were in plentiful supply in the cities SWPA frequents. As the century closed, a buyers market became a sellers market, particularly in the most popular tourist cities (e.g., New Orleans). Hotel negotiators began to push for contract clauses that financially penalized organizations for failing to meet guaranteed room coverage. The contracts require that the Association guarantee to cover a set number of rooms for a specific number of nights. This problem reared its ugly head in earnest for SWPA during the 2003 New Orleans meeting at the Fairmont Hotel, costing the Association much frustration and thousands of dollars in unanticipated expenses.

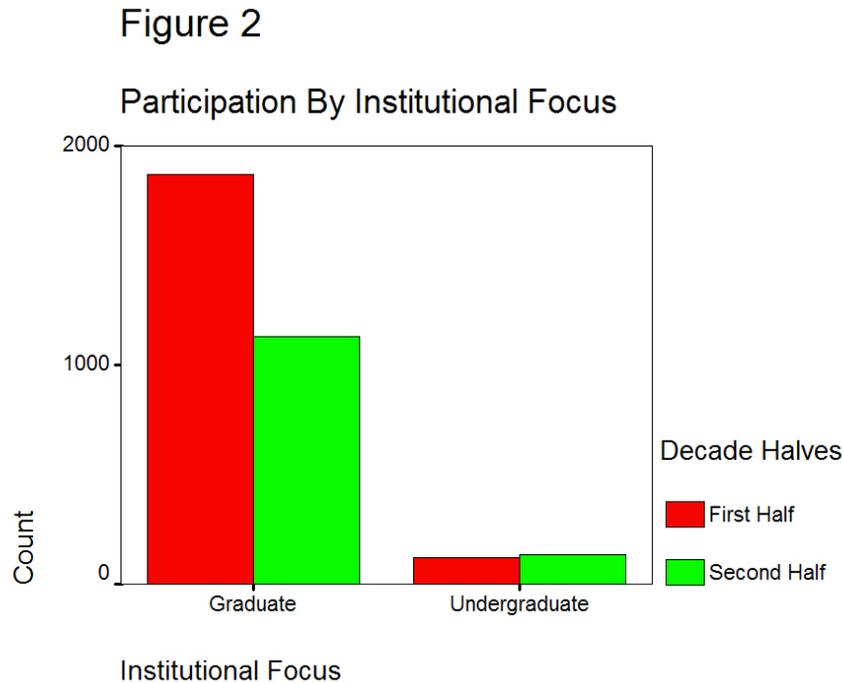
The SWPA officers and leaders are dealing with these issues. Rather than being stumbling blocks, these concerns have promoted further growth and maturity in SWPA.

Participation

Our analysis of participation in SWPA's program reveals two trends. First, the program declined in size during the twentieth century final decade. This trend is evident in examining the number of papers, posters, and symposium (see Figure 1). Comparing the number of presentations during the first half of the decade ($n = 2081$) and the second half ($n = 1304$) underscores this drop in participation, $\chi^2(1, N = 3385) = 178.35, p < .001$.



The second major trend is the sharp decline in participation among authors affiliated with graduate compared with undergraduate programs (see Figure 2). Participation among authors employed at graduate institutions plummeted, $\Pi^2(1, N = 3001) = 182.97, p < .001$, from the first half of the decade ($n = 1871$) to the second ($n = 1130$). Participation among authors employed at undergraduate institutions did not significantly shift, $\Pi^2(1, N = 262) = .015, p = .9$, between the first ($n = 130$) and second ($n = 132$) halves of the decade.



Interesting participation patterns between the two decade halves by authors at other types of institutions include declines among practitioners and government employees and as well as static participation among the business community: Psychological practice, First ($n = 33$), Second ($n = 12$), $\Pi^2(1, N = 45) = 9.8, p = .002$; Government, First ($n = 24$), Second ($n = 7$), $\Pi^2(1, N = 31) = 9.32, p = .002$; and Business, First ($n = 14$), Second ($n = 18$), $\Pi^2(1, N = 32) = .5, p = .48$.

It is difficult to know what to make of these participation trends. In the last decade, largely through the diligent efforts of Theresa Wozencraft, SWPA has tried to entice practitioners to the annual meeting, apparently to no avail, by expanding the Association's continuing education offerings. The loss of government agency participation may have more to do with job changes among a few specific individuals than

with a larger trend. Likewise, a small group of supportive individuals may account for the steady business input.

Perhaps more difficult is to know how to account for the drop in participation among graduate schools. One factor may be that the relatively affluent 1990s witnessed both increased travel budgets and expanded opportunities for presentations at a variety of convention venues. Not only did more topically focused conferences proliferate, but the American Psychological Society and its annual meeting rose to prominence during this decade. It remains to be seen if the declining regional attendance trend will continue as travel budgets shrink under retrenchment pressures. For instance, public institutions in Texas recently and sharply curtailed travel options, suggesting changes are on the horizon.

Another, less comforting, possibility is a seeming increase in disdain among graduate institutions regarding participation in regional associations. To illustrate, the author of a regular column in a widely-recognized professional publication writing on vita construction recently remarked, "Does anyone care what talk I gave at the meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association in 1974?" (Roediger, 2004, p. 27). Well, people do care. Seeing the flow of professional participation over time is as informative within an individual as within an organization or a discipline. We see in these patterns nuances in the person's organization or discipline development. More indirectly, subtle—even humorous—language regarding the status of professionals at less-than cutting edge institutions (the Hoi Poli compared to full-fledged cutting edge institutions (the Hot Damn) have begun to appear in print (see recent Ask Aunt Academe columns in Division 35's newsletter, *The Feminist Psychologist*). These amusing remarks seem to point to starkly-drawn perceptions of status within the discipline's division of labor. Returning this discussion to SWPA, an often heard remark regarding the Association's recent programs is that teaching interests have come to predominate. Perhaps, but program content fails to support this assertion. Rather than the Hoi Poli overrunning the Hot Damn, our data suggest the latter are deserting the former for reasons that remain unclear. And this is sad, for as James Pate (1993) suggested, the regionals are a small part of the disciplinary landscape.

Notable Events

The 1993-2003 decade produced many notable events and accomplishments for SWPA. We wish to recount some of those moments, beginning in 1995 at San Antonio. President Mike Best and Program Chair Bob Batsell pulled out all the stops in developing and orchestrating a convention that attendees still describe as one of the best in SWPA history. The program, which indelibly bore Best's signature, featured (a) a cadre of excellent invited speakers, (b) numerous special symposia, and (c) guest presenters who began numerous sessions with invited, 30-min presentations. These features, coupled with Mike's charismatic personality and a memorable Association-sponsored dinner cruise along the San Antonio River made the 1995 convention one for future SWPA presidents to emulate.

The 1996 convention in Houston was among the Association's most electric, featuring a program that became a flash point in the controversial false memory debates. President Roger Kirk and Program Chair Charles Weaver prepared an international meeting of memory experts. Once word of the slate of speakers spread, frequent and adamant complaint arose over the one-sidedness of the selected experts, who included John Kihlstrom, Henry Roediger, and Larry Weiskrantz. Months before the convention, Kirk began receiving messages threatening disruptive protest unless the Association cancelled Elizabeth Loftus's keynote address. Although the protests never materialized, the Executive Council prepared for that contingency by hiring security. As Weaver observed: "With the benefit of seven years hindsight, clearly SWPA was on the front end of a trend among researchers to treat the topic of repressed and recovered memory with scientific rigor. At the time, it was a courageous and pioneering meeting, one of the first of its kind."

Nature punctuated a fine 1999 Albuquerque convention led by Jesse Purdy. Great speakers, informative papers and posters, and pleasant collegiality thrived in a place whose restaurants, entertainment, and architecture created a most warming southwestern ambience. When the snow started to fall—some say blow in horizontal sheets—Saturday morning, this particular convention was permanently etched in everyone's mind. No one could remember ever attending a snow-graced SWPA

meeting. Not even the hearty souls who competed, *in the snow*, Saturday afternoon in the SWPA Golf Tournament.

The Association's operation also saw noteworthy advance. Because the annual convention meeting was not providing sufficient opportunity to conduct business completely, effectively, and efficiently, John Davis envisioned a second yearly meeting for the SWPA Executive Council (see Table 2). The inaugural mid-year meeting was held in 2001 at Steve Davis's home at Hide-A-Way Lake, TX. Texas Executive Council Representative Lauren Scharff hosted the second meeting at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches. Association member John P. Hall graciously hosted a third meeting for the Executive Council at Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth. These meetings took place over a weekend with participants arriving Friday night or early Saturday morning. The primary meeting took place all day Saturday, culminating in a group dinner Saturday evening. If needed, participants met Sunday morning to finish remaining business. Watching these meetings, one is struck by the extraordinary dedication of these men and women to SWPA. All participants have deemed these meetings highly successful.

Upon Reflection

The 1994-2003 decade was filled with change, turmoil, and growth for SWPA. The Association's technological initiatives reflect the positive growth that occurred. Despite the declines in the number of presentations and participation by institutions having graduate programs during the second half of the decade, the quality of the annual meeting remained memorable and high. What do the next 50 years hold for SWPA? We cannot forecast with complete accuracy. However, the data we gathered prompt several reasonable speculations. First, we believe that SWPA and its annual convention will continue to be a strong force for psychology in the southwest. Second, the Association will continue to embrace appropriate technological changes. Third, the SWPA officers, Executive Council, and membership will develop appropriate strategies to counter the declines in program submissions and participation by graduate institutions. With these concerns in check, SWPA's future should be decidedly positive.

References

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Note

SWPA gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Science Directorate of the American Psychological Association in the production of this document.

Table 1:**Southwestern Psychological Association Officers and Staff, 1994-2003**

Year	President	Secretary-Treasurer	Program Chair	Convention Manager	Publications	Location
1994 (40)*	Dennis C. Cogan	Randall D. Wight	Kenneth A. Weaver	Phillip D. Finney	Stephen F. Davis	Tulsa
1995 (41)*	Michael R. Best	Randall D. Wight	W. Robert Batsell, Jr.	Phillip D. Finney	Stephen F. Davis	San Antonio
1996 (42)	Roger E. Kirk	Randall D. Wight	Charles A. Weaver, III	Phillip D. Finney	Stephen F. Davis	Houston
1997 (43)	Robert T. Hogan	Randall D. Wight	Phillip D. Finney & Randall D. Wight	Phillip D. Finney	Stephen F. Davis	Fort Worth
1998 (44)	Vicki A. Green	Randall D. Wight	Ellen S. Sullins	Phillip D. Finney	Stephen F. Davis	New Orleans
1999 (45)	Jesse E. Purdy	Ray Russin	Steven J. Shapiro	Bob Newby	Stephen F. Davis	Albuquerque
2000 (46)	Theresa A. Wozencraft	Ray Russin	Edward P. Kardas	Bob Newby	Stephen F. Davis	Dallas
2001 (47)	Randall D. Wight	Ray Russin	Edward P. Kardas	Bob Newby	Stephen F. Davis	Houston
2002 (48)	John M. Davis	Ray Russin	Edward P. Kardas	Bob Newby	Kenneth A. Weaver	Corpus Christi
2003 (49)	Mary Brazier	Ray Russin	Edward P. Kardas	Bob Newby	Cathy Grover	New Orleans

* Randolph A. Smith serves as Executive Director

Table 2:

Southwestern Psychological Association Executive Council, 1994-2003

Year Served	State	Council Members
1994 (40)	Arizona	Thomas D. Kennedy
	Arkansas	Loretta N. McGregor
	Kansas	David E. Neufeldt
	Louisiana	Mary M. Brazier
	Missouri	Chris T. Bersted
	New Mexico	Holly B. Waldron
	Oklahoma	Diane J. Willis
	Tennessee	W. Beryl West
	Texas	Alan S. Brown
1995 (41)	Arizona	Thomas D. Kennedy
	Arkansas	Ralph J. McKenna
	Kansas	Kenneth A. Weaver
	Louisiana	Mary M. Brazier
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Holly B. Waldron
	Oklahoma	Diane J. Willis
	Tennessee	Harold D. Whiteside
	Texas	Alan S. Brown
1996 (42)	Arizona	Vicki Green
	Arkansas	Loretta N. McGregor
	Kansas	Kenneth A. Weaver

	Louisiana	Mary M. Brazier
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Holly B. Waldron
	Oklahoma	Robert A. Nicholson
	Tennessee	Dana K. Fuller
	Texas	D. Theron Stimmel
1997 (43)	Arizona	Constance J. Smith
	Arkansas	Randolph A. Smith
	Kansas	Marilyn L. Turner
	Louisiana	Mary M. Brazier
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Holly B. Waldron
	Oklahoma	Robert A. Nicholson
	Tennessee	Dana K. Fuller
	Texas	D. Theron Stimmel
1998 (44)	Arizona	Constance J. Smith
	Arkansas	Bill J. Lammers
	Kansas	Marilyn L. Turner
	Louisiana	Mary M. Brazier
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Holly B. Waldron
	Oklahoma	Scott D. Gronlund
	Tennessee	Dana K. Fuller
	Texas	John M. Davis

1999 (45)	Arizona	Constance J. Smith
	Arkansas	Bill J. Lammers
	Kansas	Marilyn L. Turner
	Louisiana	Mary M. Brazier
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Holly B. Waldron
	Oklahoma	Scott D. Gronlund
	Tennessee	Dana K. Fuller
	Texas	John M. Davis
2000 (46)	Arizona	Constance J. Smith
	Arkansas	Bill J. Lammers
	Kansas	Marilyn L. Turner
	Louisiana	Mary M. Brazier
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Holly B. Waldron
	Oklahoma	Scott D. Gronlund
	Tennessee	Dana K. Fuller
	Texas	Lauren Scharff
2001 (47)	Arizona	Bill Gibson
	Arkansas	Bill J. Lammers
	Kansas	Marilyn L. Turner
	Louisiana	Joseph R. McGahan
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Holly B. Waldron

	Oklahoma	Paul R. Nail
	Tennessee	Harold D. Whiteside
	Texas	Lauren Scharff
2002 (48)	Arizona	Bill Gibson
	Arkansas	Bill J. Lammers
	Kansas	Marilyn L. Turner
	Louisiana	Mukul Bhalla
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Gordon Hodge
	Oklahoma	Paul R. Nail
	Tennessee	Harold D. Whiteside
	Texas	Lauren Scharff
2003 (49)	Arizona	Bill Gibson
	Arkansas	Bill J. Lammers
	Kansas	Marilyn L. Turner
	Louisiana	Mukul Bhalla
	Missouri	Frances M. Haemmerlie
	New Mexico	Gordon Hodge
	Oklahoma	Paul R. Nail
	Tennessee	W. Beryl West
	Texas	Lauren Scharff

Southwestern Psychological Association Presidents Attending the 35th Meeting

