2008 Rangelands Health & Management Information Needs Assessment Survey: Summary of Results

Jeanne L. Pfander
University of Arizona
February 12, 2009

Purpose

- To inform development of technical requirements for RW portal (as part of requirement by campus funder (UA Libraries) including also business plan for WRP.)

- To gather preliminary user needs information in support of the eXtension grant proposal submitted by some WRP partners.

Survey Process/Methodology

- Online, web-based and anonymous
- Sixteen questions, including some open-ended
- Estimated to take 15 minutes
- IRB / Human Subjects approval
- Distributed preliminary "heads-up" via email from WRP state representatives
- Subsequent email with link to survey website

Response Rate

- Estimated 1066 individuals received invitation to take survey

- 177 individuals completed the survey (almost 17% response rate)

Professional Background of Respondents

Question 1: In what areas do you work? (Select all that apply.)

- ranching (48.1%)
- land use/resource management (41.3%)
- federal/state government (35.4%)
- Cooperative Extension (33.3%)

Professional Background

Question 2: Which sector do you represent most of the time? (Select one.)

- public sector (52.1%)
- private sector (47.9%)

Professional Background

Question 3: Which of the following best describes your position? (Select one.)

- private landowner (24.5%)
- agency land manager (25.2%)
- Extension agent (23.9%)
- Extension specialist (11.0%)
- Other (24%)

Internet Use and Access Patterns

Question 6: How often do you access the Internet for rangeland information?

- Only 17.3% of respondents access the Internet daily

- Most respondents indicate that they access the Internet for rangeland information on a weekly basis (30.9%) or less (monthly – 25.7%; a few times a year – 24.6%)

Internet Use and Access Patterns

Question 7: How do you access the Internet? (Select all that apply.)

- Wired broadband (e.g. cable, DSL) from their home or office (74.9%)
- Wireless broadband from home or office(27.3%)
- Extension office (16%)
- Dial-up from home or office (9.6%)
- Local library (2.7%)
- Other (3%): satellite connection (5); university hi-speed access (1)

Topics / Purpose of Online Information Use

Question 4: What are your current sources of info (all that apply)?

- University-based researchers/colleagues (84.5%)
- Meetings, workshops or symposia(82%)
- Extension publications (75.6%)
- Websites (73.6%)
- Government agency publications (70.5%)
- Peer-reviewed journals (58.5%)
- Other land managers (57.0%)
- Trade or professional organization periodicals (50.3%)
- Media sources (newspapers, TV, media websites) and not-for-profit advocacy organizations received relatively low response rates (30.6% and 21.8% respectively).

Topics / Purpose of Online Information Use

Question 5: What online resources do you most frequently use (all that apply)?

- Google (70.3%)
- Government agency websites (49.2%)
- SRM (rangelands.org) (41.1%)
- County Extension websites (27.6%)
- Library online resources (25.4%)
- eXtension (23.8%)
- NGO websites (20.5%)

Topics / Purpose of Online Information Use

Question 8: What topics do you look for online (all that apply from list)?

- Grazing management (74.2%)

- Climate/drought (64.6%)

- Plant identification (63.5%)

- Weather forecasts and outlooks (59.6%)

- Inventory and monitoring (53.4%)

Topics / Purpose of Online Information Use

Question 9: List names of top four websites or other sources you rely on (open-ended response).

- Websites from U.S. federal agencies were most commonly mentioned (124 times).

- State Extension, state government and University sites were also mentioned frequently (88 times).

- SRM website and/or SRM journal publications were listed fifty-two (52) times.

- Rangelands West (rangelandswest.org) and RW state sites were listed 21 times.

- Google showed up on the lists 19 times

Topics / Purpose of Online Information Use

Question 10: Why do you seek information on rangeland management (Select all that apply from list of ten.)?

- To understand impacts of invasive species on rangelands (66.3%)

- For planning or decision-making (64.6%)

- To understand impacts of grazing on physical and biological systems (61.8%)

- For a general understanding of rangeland ecological processes (53.9%)

- To understand impacts of fire on rangelands (52.2%)

- As background or supplemental information in reports (50%)

Topics / Purpose of Online Information Use

Question 11: What work-related decisions do you anticipate making that will require more or better information about rangeland management? (Open-ended)

- 125 responses
- Analysis of keywords/phrases shows top issues consist with key themes seen in responses to other survey questions:

  Grazing, rangeland vegetation, climate, water/drought, and livestock

Proposed Features and Functionality

Question 12: How would you value the following kinds of information (from list of 10)?

- Very much:
  - Summaries and/or full-text of journal articles or reports (50.9%)
  - Announcements of meetings, workshops and other events (39.9%)
  - How-to guides and manuals (38.6%)
  - Current protocols, policies and legislation (35.1%)
  - Searchable database of frequently asked questions (FAQs) (34.5%)

Proposed Features and Functionality

Question 13: How likely would you be to use the following features (from a list of 8)?

- Very likely: Libraries of documents and graphic figures (40.5%)
- Somewhat likely:
  - Video clips (55.7%)
  - Experts Directory (49.4%)
  - Interactive educational features (47.1%)
  - Audio clips (e.g. podcasts) (46.8%)
  - Libraries of documents and graphic-figures (46.8%)

Proposed Features and Functionality

Question 14: How valuable would the following collaborative network features be for you?

Very valuable:

- Brief bios and contact information for Extension professionals (50%)

- Web-based tools that foster collaboration among network members (41.3%)

Proposed Features and Functionality

Question 14: How valuable would the following collaborative network features be for you?

Somewhat valuable:

- Brief bios and contact information for rangeland scientists (55.5%)

- Brief bios and contact information for people using rangeland management information for decision-making (52.3%)

- Web-based tools that foster collaboration among network members (50.0%)

Proposed Features and Functionality

Question 15: Would a customizable portal homepage be valuable to you?

- Yes (70.6%)
- No (29.4%)

Miscellaneous Input

Question 16: Is there any other information you would like to see or comments you would like to provide…

- 39 responses
- Analysis still underway
- Several comments related to controversial and/or politicized nature of rangeland management issues
- Some suggestions for specific types of information or web features (RSS feed, etc.)

Next Steps

- Follow up with focus groups and/or interviews in Western Rangelands Partner states

- Use information gained to help define technical requirements for next version of Rangelands West portal

For more information:

Jeanne L. Pfander

University of Arizona Libraries

pfanderj@u.library.arizona.edu

(520) 621-6375