

Scholars Complete SGI-USA Survey
By JEFF FARR, Associate Editor
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The results are in. The University of California at Santa Barbara's Dr. Phillip E. Hammond has completed his survey of SGI-USA members, which will be the basis of his upcoming book on the organization. Dr. Hammond and his assistant, doctoral student David W. Machacek, thank all the survey participants for helping them reach their goal of getting at least a one-third response to the questionnaire, which was sent out in April.

Dr. Hammond and Mr. Machacek recently shared some initial findings, which show, they believe, that SGI-USA members have a "high level of commitment" to their practice within the SGI-USA.

The survey found that 62 percent of members surveyed chant twice daily; 64 percent spend two or more hours every week at SGI-USA meetings; 76 percent spend one or two more hours every week reading two or more SGI-USA publications; and 89 percent have introduced at least one other person to the practice.

One of the research team's main reasons for doing the study was to learn what kind of people convert to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Do people who switch to this Buddhism from another religion have certain shared characteristics? Hammond's and Machacek's answer at this point is a qualified yes, saying they tend to be "people who regard themselves as not locked in." But for more details, they say, we'll have to wait for the book.

Oxford University Press has agreed to publish the Hammond and Machacek book based on the success it had with a book on the SGI-UK, *A Time To Chant*, by Dr. Bryan Wilson and Dr. Karel Dobbelaere. The book on the SGI-USA is not expected to be published until 1999. The much-awaited answers to questions like "What do members think of other religions?" "Do they consider themselves liberals or conservatives?" "What is the ethnic makeup of the organization?" will all be in the book.

The SGI-USA agreed to Hammond's study in June 1996 at a Central Executive Committee meeting. The consensus was that the perspective of a respected scholar like Dr. Hammond would help increase understanding of the SGI-USA in society. The survey was then developed with input from SGI-USA members, although they had no editorial control over the final version. Twelve hundred surveys were sent out to randomly selected members from SGI-USA publications subscription lists.

Now Dr. Hammond and Mr. Machacek are busy comparing the 401 completed questionnaires with responses to a University of Chicago general census survey of the United States and Dr. Wilson's SGI-UK survey and constructing what Dr. Hammond calls the story line of their study — the story of the SGI-USA today.

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