**Surveys**

* Some Clubs and SIGs have attempted to collect additional data on members and their broader constituency to help advance Club/SIG objectives, although results have been mixed. Surveys have been the primary vehicle, yet not all surveys have produced value. Among the Clubs/SIGs that have produced productive surveys, the benefits appear to cluster in four categories:
  1. **Planning:** Shaping annual goals for the Club/SIG; collecting membership pricing feedback
  2. **Events:** Helping uncover or filter event ideas/organizers/venues; prompting event collaboration with other university alumni clubs
  3. **Communications:** Determining frequency of newsletter; helping remind newsletter recipients whether or not they are members
  4. **Member engagement:** Prompting people who’ve never been engaged with the Club to start engaging; creating renewed engagement with previously moribund clubs
* For Clubs/SIGs that want to collect additional information, here are some types of information that some Clubs/SIGs mentioned that they have applied in their planning:
  + **Interests:** Events, volunteer activities
  + **Demographics:** Occupation/industry, gender, race/ethnicity, home/work location, affiliation with Harvard or other universities
  + **Timing:** Preferred timing for events, frequency of newsletter
  + **Active engagement:** Willingness to help organize an event, provide a venue for an event, volunteer, or share knowledge with other Club/SIG members
* But there are a couple of big catches when it comes to surveys. The first is that the only surveys that worked were short surveys. As a result, it’s best to ask only about information that a Club/SIG would actually act upon. The second is that response rates for online surveys are plummeting. For the two Clubs that saw a strong response rate compared to most online surveys (both around 9%), their survey invitations were crafted carefully to emphasize that the surveys were short and would actually matter. Without nailing the survey invitation, email blast and survey content effectively, it’s hard to get even a 5% response in today’s environment.

**Other data collection tactics**

* There are other opportunities to collect additional data on members. For Clubs/SIGs that handle membership and renewals online, there’s no better opportunity to collect member information than during that process since that’s the one point where you have most of your members somewhat captive. To do so, however, requires membership registration software that either accommodates survey questions, or connects registrants to a survey page, or triggers a confirmation email that includes a survey invitation. In any case, a small incentive such as a drawing for something such as free upgraded membership or event tickets would likely help lift response a bit. The big challenges with this process, however, are that for Clubs/SIGs with rolling memberships (i.e., not based on a calendar or fiscal year), the feedback would roll in slowly, and responses would come only from paid members.
* For Clubs and SIGs that don’t field online surveys, there’s another possible channel for member data collection: Paper surveys at the better-attended events. The challenges with this process are that it requires aggressive collection, and those only come from event attendees.
* LinkedIn is another resource that a few startup Clubs/SIGs have used to identify potential members. For example, some regional Clubs and religion-based SIGs have searched both “Harvard” and other identifying characteristics found on LinkedIn to build their contact lists.

**Emerging opportunities**

* Following the HAA’s move to the Alumni Magnet online platform, some new opportunities have opened up for Clubs/SIGs to mine alumni data for better planning. At this point, it requires previous knowledge to export and analyze the data for the most ambitious Clubs/SIGs, although some Clubs/SIGs may have someone with those capabilities. But over time, those barriers are almost certain to drop, ushering in a new era of data mining for Clubs/SIGs to plan more effectively.
* There’s also some experimentation with mining information from reunion Red Books (College Class Reports) to identify potential Club/SIG members. While a Red Book search tool is not readily available yet, if your Club/SIG sees potential for a Red Book search query to identify potential members, it may be worth asking the Harvard Alumni Association if there’s an easy path to help your Club/SIG pull that information, and over time, Red Book searches are likely to become more readily available to Clubs/SIGs.