

# One (Online) Site: A New Paradigm for MLA Concurrent Session Planning?

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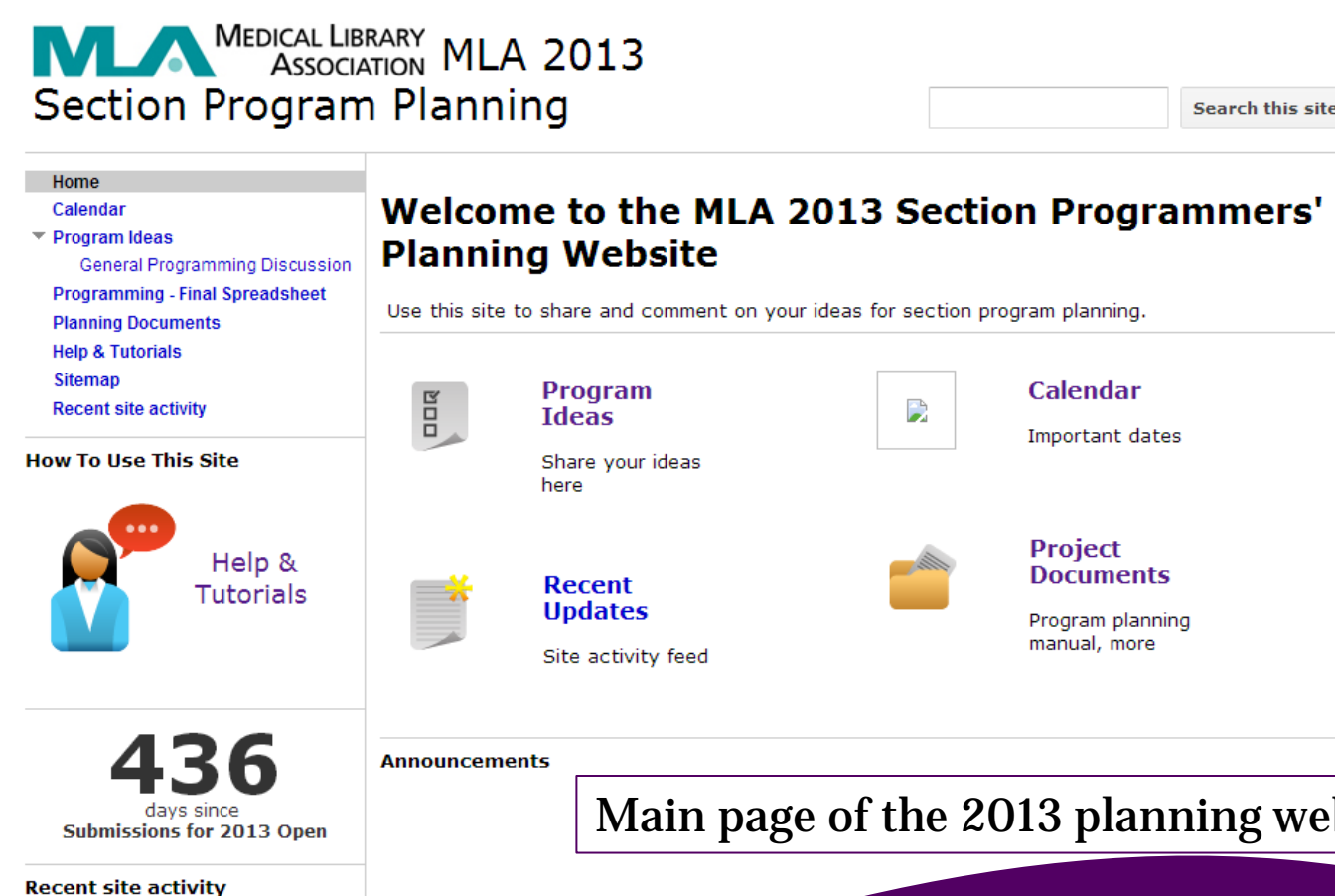
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Idea generation at 2012 planning meeting

## Design Requirements

- Planners need a **communication tool**
- Place for **announcements**, deadlines, and more
- **Ranking ideas** for consideration
- Planners **comment** on each others' ideas
- Includes **calendar** of important dates for NPC members and planners
- **Private** to MLA Section and SIG planners, federated meeting partners, and NPC members
- **Storage** for documentation, files, and guidelines
- **Shared** administrative rights



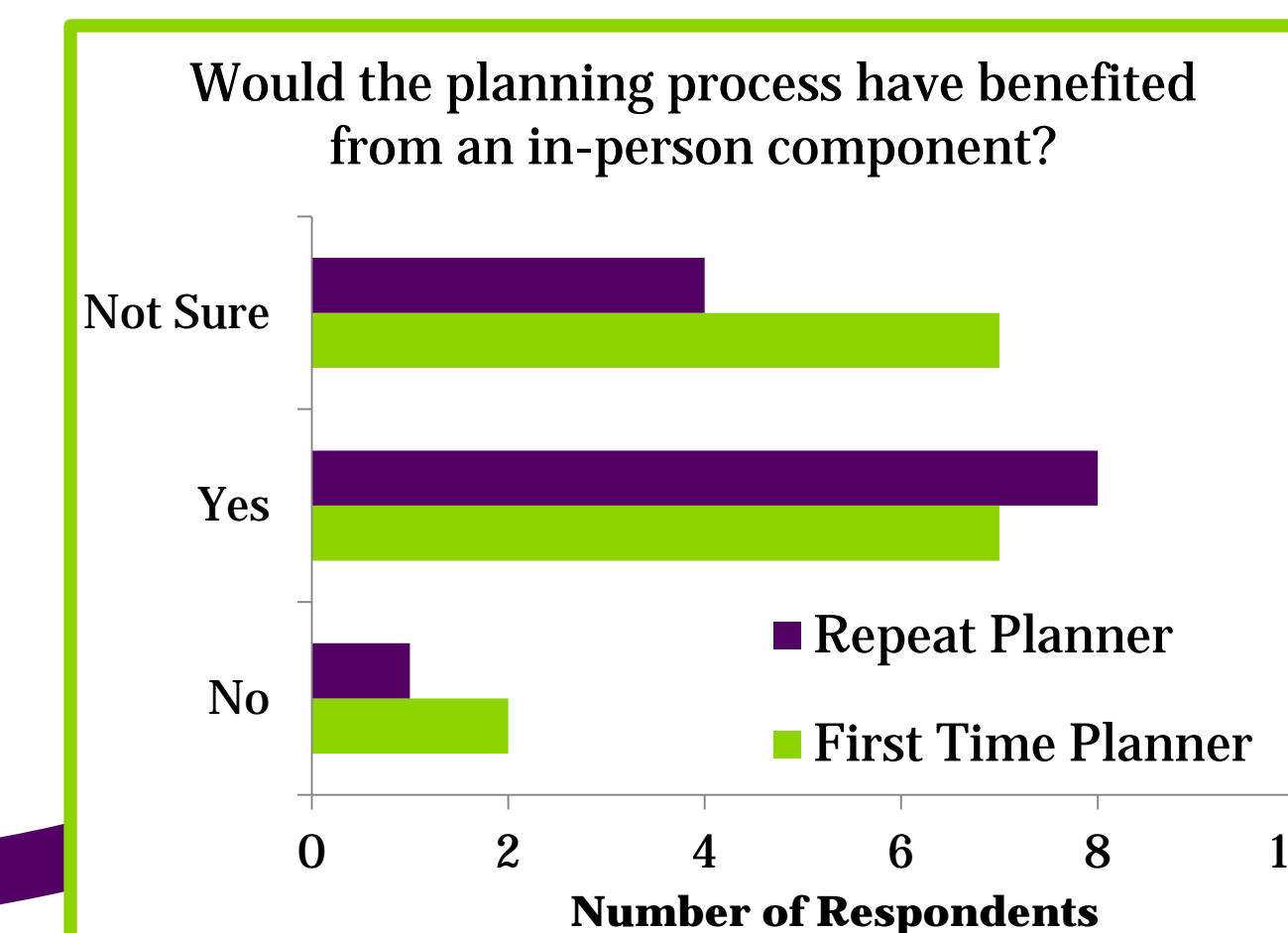
Main page of the 2013 planning website

Theme (working title)	Ranking	Section / SIG	Possible partners (note when "Confirmed")	Link for discussion
Innovative projects and partnerships with technology for teaching and learning.	2	SECT Educational Media & Technology	Libraries in Curriculum SIG	Innovative Ideas in Education - Technology Enhancements
Role of librarians in patient discharge, continuing care and education	2	SIG Informationist	SIG Clinical Librarians; SECT Consumer and Patient Information	Patient Discharge and Continuing Ed
International Distance Education: Opportunities and Challenges	2	SECT Public Services	Medical Library Education Section	International Distance Education
Speaking the language: improving health	2	SECT Pharmacy & Drug Information	SIG Library Marketing; also looking for	Speaking the language: improving health across language, culture, and other barriers
Developing new Apps in a Global Health Environment	2	SECT Pharmacy & Drug Information	Looking for collaborators!	Drug Apps

Program Ideas page: Planners could add ideas, rank topics, and link to discussion



Word cloud of survey responses to question, "What didn't work?"



"In the past, ...the live process was synergistic. It seemed like planners went into the live session with ideas and then transformed/built upon those ideas when the met live."

"I liked all of the features. Much better than writing on paper like...previous MLA annual conferences"

"I would like to see a "hybrid" model in the future -- face-to-face meeting at the MLA meeting followed by...a Google docs spreadsheet"

## Results

34 planners (from all 23 Sections and 7 SIGs) responded to the survey. 1 respondent had not used the online planning site at all, due to inaccessibility of Google Sites at work. Of the remaining 33 respondents, 17 were first-time program planners. Responses about the site were generally positive (4 responses from experienced users were negative about usability, and 3 indicated it was ineffective). Non-users of the online tutorials perceived the site's usability negatively or very positively, though perceived site effectiveness did not differ by tutorial usage.

The overall online planning process was perceived slightly less positively and 3 experienced planners felt the 2013 process was worse than their previous experience (same n=7; better n=5). Most planners favored adding an in-person component, though 3 felt it would not have benefited the process, and 11, primarily first-timers, were unsure.

Communication challenges were mentioned in qualitative survey comments and focus group discussions, though it was acknowledged that the online process allowed more people to participate in a more efficient, trackable manner. Strong leadership, perceived as evident for 2013, could ensure future success with online planning.

## Conclusion

For the online planning process to succeed in the future, an in-person component should be retained as a supplement.

## Objective

To assess the effectiveness and usability of an online Section/SIG program planning process for the MLA 2013 meeting, and to investigate whether the time has come for the process to move online for future meetings.

## Methods

Traditionally, MLA has required that Section and SIG planners attend two on-site meetings that take place the year prior to the meeting being planned. An experiment grew out of necessity when planning for the 2013 international federated meeting resulted in a meeting planning timeline that did not follow the usual pattern. An alternative method was devised, implemented, and tested. All 2013 program planners were invited to participate in a survey to gauge their satisfaction with the online session theme planning process. A follow-up interview was conducted with those planners who had earlier experience with the previous planning process. Survey comments and focus group discussions were analyzed qualitatively for themes using Weft QDA.