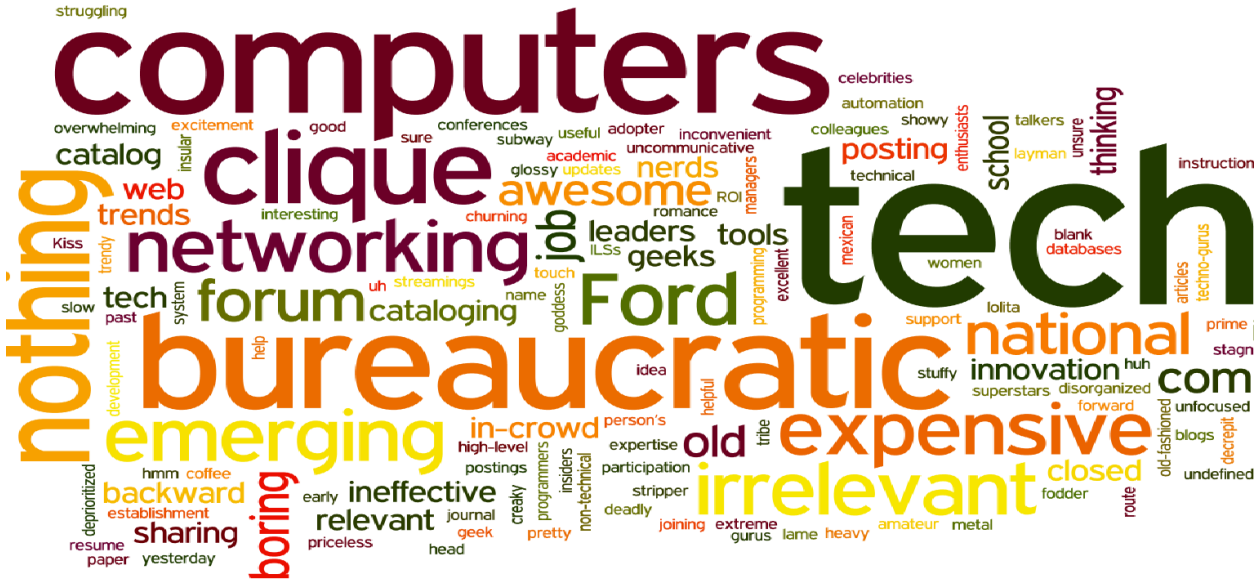


# BRANDING LITA: A MARKET IDENTITY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Library Information and Technology Association (LITA) has recently faced challenges in retaining existing members, recruiting new members, and articulating to the library community its mission and value, particularly in light of the increasing number of competing organizations. Project Team M of the 2011 Emerging Leaders Program was charged with developing a “market identity for the 21st century” for LITA, to provide marketing recommendations to help re-invigorate LITA.

## Methodology

- Team administered a three-question survey on the current perceptions of LITA.
- Based on the LITA perception survey responses, the market survey conducted by R2 Consulting in December 2009, and the recent LITA Assessment and Research Committee survey results, the Emerging Leaders team conducted a SWOT analysis of the LITA brand and developed a set of marketing principles and strategies, providing a rough cost estimate for each strategy.

## Findings

- The SWOT analysis revealed both positive and negative perceptions of the LITA brand.
- LITA is perceived as cutting-edge by a portion of both members and nonmembers; however, many nonmembers perceive it as outdated or “behind the curve.”
- Many members see LITA as too large, bureaucratic and slow-moving as an organization.
- Both LITA members and nonmembers are unsure of LITA’s target audience and mission.
- LITA’s programming and the LITA listserv are considered strong points among those familiar with them.
- LITA is perceived as cliquish and difficult to break into, with a static roster of “stars” who dominate organization programming.

## Recommendations

Future LITA branding and marketing efforts should be guided by the following principles:

1. Distinguish LITA from similar organizations
2. Strive to make LITA more open, welcoming, flat and agile
3. Focus LITA programming to meet the needs of its members
4. Empower LITA membership to take charge of marketing efforts

## II. METHODOLOGY

Our diagnostic tool was a short web survey consisting of three questions:

1. Are you a member of LITA?
2. What is the first word or phrase that comes to mind when you think of LITA?
3. Feel free to elaborate on your response to Question 2 above.

Questions 1 and 2 were required, and question 3 optional. Question 1 was fashioned as a radio button; questions 2 and 3 were text boxes with unlimited input size. See Appendix A for full survey.

The survey was published in Google Forms, and a link to the survey was distributed to the Emerging Leaders listserv, LITA-L, Code4Lib, Web4Lib, OSS4Lib, NMRT-L, ILI-List, and Syslib-L. In addition, one team member distributed the survey link to their library's staff listserv and posted the link on their Facebook page; another shared the survey via Twitter. The survey was also posted on the LITA blog. The survey was open from March 29 to April 7, 2011, a total of 10 days.

A total of 638 responses were received, of whom 408 (64%) completed the optional question 3. Based on the input we received, we designed three coding systems to assess the content and mood of responses:

- Code 1 indicated whether the response to questions 2 and 3 represented positive, negative, neutral, or mixed sentiment overall
- Code 2 identified sentiments relating to LITA's mission: perceptions of LITA's intended audience, goals, organizational purpose, etc. The response to questions 2 and 3 were considered together. A response was labeled with a code indicator if its content included the sentiment represented by that code indicator; a response could receive zero or multiple code indicators depending on its content. Code 2 included a "neutral" marker that simply indicated whether the respondent had mentioned "technology" or technology concepts without qualification.
- Code 3 identified sentiments relating to LITA's membership and programming: LITA events and functions, value of programming relative to membership cost, LITA publications, perceptions of LITA membership as a whole, etc. The response to questions 2 and 3 were considered together. A response was labeled with a code indicator if its content included the sentiment represented by that code indicator; a response could receive zero or multiple code indicators depending on its content.

As mentioned above, Code 2 and Code 3 each included a variety of concepts relating to mission and membership/programming respectively. These concepts were determined by manually inspecting the responses and identifying themes that occurred more than once. In some cases, additional concepts were then added to create complementary sets of concepts. The responses were then hand-coded by members of the team. For consistency of coding, all

code indicators in a given code were applied by a single person. Each code was applied by a different member of the team.

We conducted our analysis by examining, for each code, the percentage of responses that included each code indicator.

- For Code 1, we examined the number of positive, negative, mixed, and neutral responses divided by the total number of responses. In addition, we examined the percentage of positive, negative, and mixed responses in the corresponding subset of all responses (e.g., number of positive responses divided by (positive + negative + mixed)) ; as well as the percentage of positive and negative responses in the corresponding subset.
- For Code 2, we examined the number of responses that included each code indicator, divided by the total number of responses. In addition, we examined the number of responses for each code indicator, divided by the number of non-blank, non-neutral responses.
- For Code 3, we examined the number of responses that included each code indicator, divided by the total number of responses. In addition, we examined the number of responses for each code indicator, divided by the number of non-blank responses.

Each percentage calculation described above was calculated for all respondents, for LITA members only, and for non-LITA members only. See Appendix B for full analysis.

The group examined the percentages that each code indicator received. These percentages were used to identify the relative positive-negative feelings towards LITA, and to indicate the most common sentiments expressed regarding the organization, both among its members and among nonmembers. Based on the identified perceptions, the team generated a set of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing LITA as an organization.

### **III. SWOT ANALYSIS**

#### **Strengths**

- Many members and nonmembers perceive LITA as being on the cutting edge of technologies.
- Many members view LITA as a good source for information about library systems and information technologies.
- Respondents who commented on LITA programming were overwhelmingly positive in their comments.

#### **Weaknesses**

- The “LITA” brand name itself is not well understood and fails to suggest the organization’s purpose: Members and nonmembers alike have trouble in remembering or perceiving the meaning of the acronym. Members and nonmembers alike are distracted by its similarity to other acronyms and names (including “Lita” as a woman’s name).
- The cost of membership is perceived as being too high in comparison to benefit.
- Respondents perceive LITA as being cliquish, insular and hard to break into.
- Respondents, particularly LITA members, perceive LITA as being overly bureaucratic and slow-moving.
- Many non-members perceive LITA as being behind the curve, outdated, etc. with respect to current technologies.
- Members and non-members alike express varying degrees of uncertainty about LITA’s role and target audience.
- Among those expressing their perception of the “intended” audience of LITA, most identify enterprise-level systems and library automation technologies as the seeming focus of the organization.
- The focus of LITA is seen as unclear and mixed: The larger community sees LITA as variously cutting edge, behind the times, “techie”-oriented and not up-to-date enough for “techies” at the same time.

#### **Opportunities**

- Leverage the positive impression gained from the LITA programs towards recruiting new members and grow an active community of practitioners in library IT.
- Meet the expectation that LITA is a reliable and up-to-date source of information about library IT.
- Meet the expectation that LITA is open, flat, and agile from the current perception that LITA has the cutting-edge, cool, and knowledgeable members.

## Threats

- LITA is perceived as outdated, discouraging new members from joining LITA. Considering that LITA is an IT professionals' organization, being perceived as outdated is deadly in technology.
- LITA is perceived as slow-moving, policy-oriented and bureaucratic. This directly conflicts with the expectation that LITA should be open, flat, and cool. This also discouraged members from actively participating in LITA.
- LITA is perceived to be difficult to break into and not welcoming to new members. This threatens LITA's ability to recruit and retain members who are interested in active participation.
- There is a perception that the public face of the organization is dominated by a small, unchanging clique of well-known individuals, with little opportunity for others to break into leadership roles in organizational programming. This threatens LITA's ability to retain members with an interest in establishing a public persona through the organization.
- Similar organizations and ALA divisions are perceived to provide better content and services for focused audiences, often at a lower cost than LITA. This will result in LITA losing existing membership as well as potential new membership.

## Summary of SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cutting-edge perception</li> <li>• Reputation as good information source for ILS and library technology</li> <li>• Excellent conference programming (Top Tech Trends, LITA Forum)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LITA brand and acronym not easily understood</li> <li>• Cost of membership high</li> <li>• Membership benefits unclear</li> <li>• Leadership and member opportunities not well known</li> <li>• Target audience, organization role, and focus unclear or mixed</li> <li>• Perceived to be insular, behind the curve, slow-moving</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage conference programming for member recruitment/retention</li> <li>• Serve as reliable and up-to-date library IT source</li> <li>• Foster an open, flat, agile organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdated perception deadly in technology</li> <li>• Bureaucratic perception discourages participation of current members</li> <li>• Reputation for not welcoming new members</li> <li>• Cliquish leadership and programming perception discourages new members and member participation</li> <li>• Similar organizations may provide better or similar content at lower cost</li> </ul>

## IV. MARKETING PRINCIPLES

Each marketing strategy below has been assigned one of the following indicators based on its estimated cost or complexity.

\$ no/low cost to LITA

\$\$ medium cost to LITA

\$\$\$ high cost to LITA (may require professional marketing services)

### 1) Distinguish LITA from similar organizations

*Marketing strategies*

- Identify and communicate more clearly LITA's core mission and value; ensure that newly designed logo and tagline reflect this mission (see suggestions below and the mood board) \$\$\$
- Consider changing name or "nicknaming" LITA (e.g. LibTech) to clarify LITA's audience and function \$
- Develop and advertise the tangible benefits available only to LITA members (see below) \$\$
- Develop "I am LITA" video or poster campaign during which members share their library background and why they value LITA \$\$

### 2) Strive to make LITA more open, welcoming, flat and agile

*Marketing strategies*

- Reach out to and offer opportunities for the new members in their first 1-2 years to make them comfortable in LITA, get to know other members, and become involved in LITA. Also allow them to connect with other new members who join LITA around the same time. \$
  - Invite new members to contribute to LITA blog, Twitter feed, Facebook presence, etc. \$
  - Provide a mentoring program for new LITA members; organize a mentoring social (much like that of NMRT) \$\$
  - Provide training for new members who wish to get involved in LITA (e.g. online documentation and webinars for starting an Interest Group) \$\$
- Provide opportunities for mid-career LITA members to participate actively in the community \$\$
- Provide a "step up to success" program for all LITA members who wish to connect with members who have particular expertise in their field \$\$
- Emphasize the low barrier of participation in LITA Interest Groups by advertising and supporting these groups more broadly \$
- Provide more opportunities for members to network, communicate, participate, and collaborate in LITA virtually (e.g. consider hosting virtual dine-arounds where LITA members would meet over dinner via Skype) \$\$



- Moderate listserv discussions, including threads designed for new members \$
- Provide easy ways for the LITA membership to communicate with LITA leaders \$
- Make the committee appointment process transparent and clear, and involve LITA membership in setting the goals for committees and task forces, etc. \$
- Consider including new member representative(s) in select committees and at LITA board meetings \$
- Leverage the small size of LITA, and offer more opportunities for members to get to know one another at conferences and forums through social occasions such as dinners, happy hours, etc. (NB. Consider having well integrated LITA members present at these occasions to meet new members in order to dispel the perception that LITA is cliquish, unwelcoming, and insular) \$\$
- Provide learning resources for new library IT professionals that are immediately useful \$\$
- Consider lowering annual fees for LITA membership, or add benefits to membership (e.g. provide discounted rates for non-LITA technology webinars, preconferences, publications, etc.) \$\$\$
- Display prominently LITA membership benefits for current and prospective members on website and other publicity materials \$

### **3) Focus LITA programming to meet the needs of its members**

#### *Marketing strategies*

- Provide multiple venues for members to offer suggestions for conference programming and virtual resources – ask members what they want! \$
- Streamline process for proposing conference programs and discussions \$
- Develop multiple programs with different target audiences instead of attempting to meet the needs of all members in a single program \$\$
- Clearly indicate a program's intended audience in marketing and promotional materials \$
- Intentionally choose panelists who reflect the diverse membership of LITA (e.g. system staff, public librarians, academic librarians) for popular programs like Top Tech Trends. (NB. Do not rely on same speakers over and over again. Bring in new faces and more diverse voices to dispel the perception that LITA is cliquish, unwelcoming, and insular.) \$

### **4) Empower LITA membership to take charge of marketing efforts**

#### *Marketing strategies*

- Ensure that marketing and branding remain a priority for LITA by doing one or more of the following:
  - Assign the role of marketing to a LITA member or team of LITA members \$
  - Devote more LITA staff time to marketing \$\$
  - Appoint a LITA member to manage marketing in exchange for conference fees or some other form of benefits / compensation \$\$
  - Recruit a student intern to manage marketing \$\$

- Encourage membership to view LITA blog as part of its brand by developing a focus for the blog (e.g. tech news and trends), increasing content and encouraging consistent contribution \$
- Appoint a member to serve as a liaison with other technology-interested ALA divisions and similar library IT organizations such as Code4Lib to encourage and promote the exchange of ideas and collaboration \$
- Identify and interview leaders of other library technology organizations or ALA divisions that have been successful in marketing and recruitment efforts \$
- Redesign LITA logo and re-brand website, mailings and other materials in order to more accurately represent LITA's focus and purpose \$\$\$

## V. BRANDING SUGGESTIONS

### Logo & color scheme

One of the most frequent criticisms of LITA is that it is insular and unwelcoming. We feel LITA's current color scheme is dark and forbidding and that the logo does not adequately reflect the dynamism and interconnectedness of the LITA membership.

We suggest that LITA update the current logo and branding materials to be fresh, hip, and welcoming – use these materials to make a bold statement about the role of LITA. Use bright, positive colors; make materials more welcoming by using loose fonts and avoiding borders, and consider a logo that emphasizes the connections LITA enables members to make with each other and the profession.

See Appendix C for mood board of recommended fonts, color scheme and overall “feel” of logo and color scheme.

### Additional branding and marketing ideas

- Adopt a nickname such as “LibTech” to add meaning to the LITA name
- Adopt taglines such as “We know technology,” “The place for techies,” or “Your library tech community”
- Utilize current technologies such as QR codes and mobile apps for marketing
- Seed content in social media channels including Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube
- Conduct video marketing campaign to dispel negative perceptions – examples include:
  - “*I am LITA*” campaign during which members share their library background and why they value LITA
  - *Changing of the guard* video with current LITA “star” who has his/her mic removed and passed to a newcomer to bring out humor
  - *Rock stars to “everyone’s a star”*, where a star sign is removed from dressing room door and replaced with a team sign

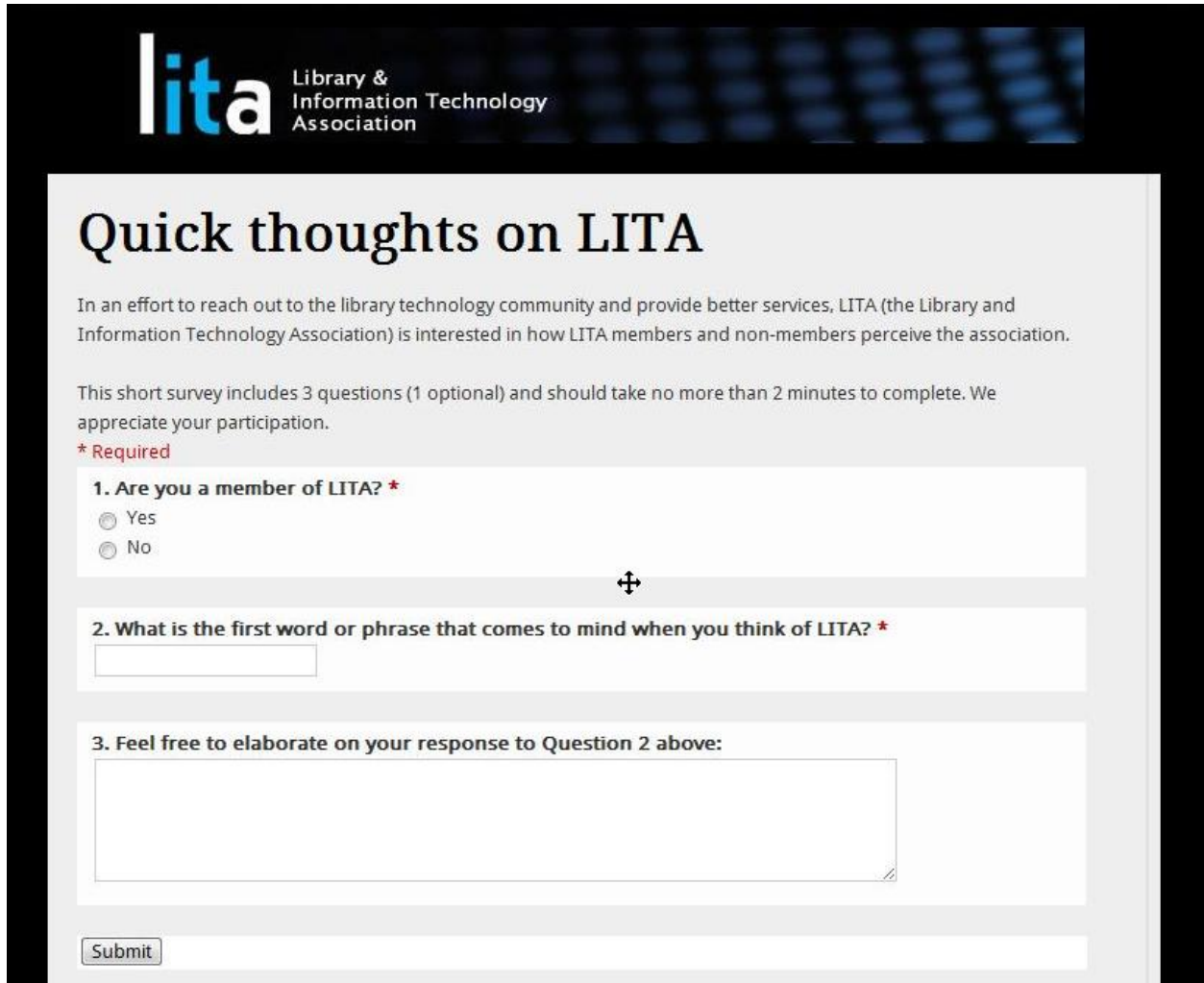
## **VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We wish to thank Nancy Dowd, Director of Marketing Public Relations for New Jersey State Library, and Kathy Dempsey of Libraries are Essential consultancy and author of *The Accidental Library Marketer* for their review of and suggestions for this report.

And we could not have completed this work without the leadership and support of our Emerging Leaders mentors, Maurice York and Melissa Prentice. Thank you, Maurice and Melissa, for the countless hours you spent helping us understand better the culture of LITA and the importance of branding the organization and for the insights, information and support you provided at every stage of the project.

## VII. APPENDICES

### A. Survey: Quick thoughts on LITA



**lita** Library & Information Technology Association

## Quick thoughts on LITA

In an effort to reach out to the library technology community and provide better services, LITA (the Library and Information Technology Association) is interested in how LITA members and non-members perceive the association.

This short survey includes 3 questions (1 optional) and should take no more than 2 minutes to complete. We appreciate your participation.

**\* Required**

**1. Are you a member of LITA? \***

Yes  
 No

+

**2. What is the first word or phrase that comes to mind when you think of LITA? \***

**3. Feel free to elaborate on your response to Question 2 above:**

## B. Survey codes & results

Code descriptor	Count all	Count LITA	Count Non-LITA	% All	% LITA	% Non-LITA
(N)	638	248	390	100.00%	38.87%	61.13%

Code 1	Count all	Count LITA	Count Non-LITA	% All	% LITA	% Non-LITA	Excl. neutral: % All	Excl. neutral: % LITA	Excl. neutral: % Non-LITA	Pos/Neg only: % All	Pos/Neg only: % LITA	Pos/Neg only: % Non-LITA
Positive	124	70	54	19.44%	28.23%	13.85%	42.47%	41.42%	34.18%	56.11%	70.71%	44.26%
Negative	97	29	68	15.20%	11.69%	17.44%	33.22%	17.16%	43.04%	43.89%	29.29%	55.74%
Mixed	71	70	36	11.13%	28.23%	9.23%	24.32%	41.42%	22.78%			
Neutral	346	114	232	54.23%	45.97%	59.49%						

Code 2	Count all	Count LITA	Count Non-LITA	% All	% LITA	% Non-LITA	Excl. "Z" & blank: % All	Excl. "Z", blank: % LITA	Excl. "Z", blank: % Non
(blank)	77	11	66	12.07%	4.44%	16.92%			
A: Cutting-edge, innovative, high-tech, forward looking, etc	50	25	25	7.84%	10.08%	6.41%	20.00%	21.01%	19.08%
B: Helps me keep up to date in tech matters	33	18	15	5.17%	7.26%	3.85%	13.20%	15.13%	11.45%
C: Behind the curve, outdated, backwards, irrelevant, does not succeed at tech mission	33	9	24	5.17%	3.63%	6.15%	13.20%	7.56%	18.32%

D: Too bureaucratic, structured, slow moving, cautious, complex, too much talk without action, etc.	31	20	11	4.86%	8.06%	2.82%	12.40%	16.81%	8.40%
E: Once necessary/ useful but its role is now diffused throughout librarianship	11	6	5	1.72%	2.42%	1.28%	4.40%	5.04%	3.82%
F: Surpassed by other organizations achieving same mission better	16	8	8	2.51%	3.23%	2.05%	6.40%	6.72%	6.11%
G: Not focused enough	9	8	1	1.41%	3.23%	0.26%	3.60%	6.72%	0.76%
H: Policy oriented	5	2	3	0.78%	0.81%	0.77%	2.00%	1.68%	2.29%
I: Enterprise/systems/ automation oriented	27	10	17	4.23%	4.03%	4.36%	10.80%	8.40%	12.98%
J: Management oriented	3	0	3	0.47%	0.00%	0.77%	1.20%	0.00%	2.29%
U: Practitioner oriented	6	4	2	0.94%	1.61%	0.51%	2.40%	3.36%	1.53%
K: Developer/ implementer oriented	16	6	10	2.51%	2.42%	2.56%	6.40%	5.04%	7.63%
L: Good source for info that is applicable	34	20	14	5.33%	8.06%	3.59%	13.60%	16.81%	10.69%

M: Not a good source for info that is applicable	16	5	11	2.51%	2.02%	2.82%	6.40%	4.20%	8.40%
N: Meets/exceeds needs and expectations of potential constituents	9	7	2	1.41%	2.82%	0.51%	3.60%	5.88%	1.53%
O: Fails to meet mission or needs and expectations of potential constituents	39	17	22	6.11%	6.85%	5.64%	15.60%	14.29%	16.79%
P: More library oriented than tech oriented/ for librarians	7	1	6	1.10%	0.40%	1.54%	2.80%	0.84%	4.58%
Q: More tech oriented than library oriented/ for "techies"	27	5	22	4.23%	2.02%	5.64%	10.80%	4.20%	16.79%
X: Too technical	16	6	10	2.51%	2.42%	2.56%	6.40%	5.04%	7.63%
Y: Provides tenure fodder/resume filler	5	2	3	0.78%	0.81%	0.77%	2.00%	1.68%	2.29%
Z: Comment includes generic notion of technology/tech, not covered elsewhere	311	118	193	48.75%	47.58%	49.49%			

<b>Code 3</b>	<b>Count all</b>	<b>Count LITA</b>	<b>Count Non-LITA</b>	<b>% All</b>	<b>% LITA</b>	<b>% Non-LITA</b>	<b>Excl. blank: % All</b>	<b>Excl. blank: % LITA</b>	<b>Excl. blank: % Non-LITA</b>
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(blank)	401	171	230	62.85%	68.95%	58.97%			
A: Smart, cool, hip people, etc	21	10	11	3.29%	4.03%	2.82%	8.86%	12.99%	6.88%
B: Cliquish, insular, hard to break in, good old boys club, always the same people, etc.	50	18	32	7.84%	7.26%	8.21%	21.10%	23.38%	20.00%
C: Welcoming, inviting, fun, great time at conferences, etc	17	14	3	2.66%	5.65%	0.77%	7.17%	18.18%	1.88%
D: Cost of membership or programming is high, "too expensive", "couldn't afford", "no funding", "not worth the money"	38	10	28	5.96%	4.03%	7.18%	16.03%	12.99%	17.50%
E: Membership contingent on ALA membership	12	0	12	1.88%	0.00%	3.08%	5.06%	0.00%	7.50%
F: Never heard of it, had to look it up, unsure what it stood for, don't know what they do, etc (either expressed outright or evident from comment).	62	5	57	9.72%	2.02%	14.62%	26.16%	6.49%	35.63%

G: Positive comment on LITA programming and content (national forum, top tech trends, pubs, lists, etc)	44	22	22	6.90%	8.87%	5.64%	18.57%	28.57%	13.75%
H: Neutral comment on LITA programming	7	6	1	1.10%	2.42%	0.26%	2.95%	7.79%	0.63%
I: Negative comment on LITA programming	13	3	10	2.04%	1.21%	2.56%	5.49%	3.90%	6.25%
J: ITAL/other LITA documentation should be open access	3	1	2	0.47%	0.40%	0.51%	1.27%	1.30%	1.25%
K: Would rather spend time/money at... (ALCTS, SXSW, Code4Lib, other conference or org)	6	0	6	0.94%	0.00%	1.54%	2.53%	0.00%	3.75%
L: Was a member but am no longer	18	0	18	2.82%	0.00%	4.62%	7.59%	0.00%	11.25%
M: More focus needed on electronic forums, webinars, etc.	6	3	3	0.94%	1.21%	0.77%	2.53%	3.90%	1.88%
N: Mentions midwinter streaming kerfuffle	3	2	1	0.47%	0.81%	0.26%	1.27%	2.60%	0.63%
O: Needs better/more publicity	9	5	4	1.41%	2.02%	1.03%	3.80%	6.49%	2.50%

P: Lita Ford, "Kiss Me Deadly", etc., or thinks of a woman's name	12	1	11	1.88%	0.40%	2.82%	5.06%	1.30%	6.88%
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C. Mood board of recommended fonts, colors and tone

