

YAPC::Europe
2007 Survey Results



A Report by
Vienna Perl Mongers
of

The Survey Results
from attendees of the
2007 YAPC::Europe Perl Conference

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2007 Survey Results



By Way Of Introduction

The eighth annual grassroots European Perl conference, better known as YAPC::Europe 2007, was organised by members of the Vienna Perl Mongers user group, Vienna.pm (<http://vienna.pm.org>).

After the conference, Birmingham.pm offered us to use the online feedback survey they developed for YAPC::Europe 2006. We gratefully accepted their offer.

This survey was sent to every attendee, whether participate, speaker, sponsor or organiser, to discover the overall experience of everyone at the conference, hopefully providing future organisers some thoughts on how best to organise a successful conference. 340 delegates were invited to take part in the survey, of which 205 responded. That's a very impressive 60.3% return, so thank you very much to everyone who took part..

What follows is the results of that survey and the organisers' observations and personal opinions of what the results meant to them. We hope they prove useful for future events and might give you an idea of what kind of people attend a YAPC::Europe, and what they expect to come away with.

Thank you to those taking part in the survey, and thank you very much to our speakers and sponsors for helping to make the event happen.

The 2007 organisers of YAPC::Europe

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



Table of Contents

1. Demographics.....	4
1.1. Survey Responses.....	4
1.2. Age Bands.....	5
1.3. Job Types.....	6
1.4. Industries.....	7
1.5. Regions.....	9
2. YAPCs & Workshops.....	10
2.1. YAPC Attendance.....	10
2.2. Workshop Attendance.....	10
2.3. Plans for the Future.....	11
3. YAPC::Europe:2007.....	12
3.1. When did you decide to attend this conference?.....	12
3.2. Were you a speaker?.....	12
3.3. What was your motivation for attending the conference?.....	12
3.4. What aspects of the conference do you feel gave value for money?.....	13
3.5. Did you plan holiday?.....	14
3.6. Next venue announcement?.....	14
3.7. Talks missed?.....	16
3.8. Speakers missed?.....	16
3.9. Future talks?	17
3.10. How would you rate your overall satisfaction of the conference?.....	19
4. Conference Prices.....	20
4.1. How much would you or your company be willing to pay?.....	20
4.2. How did you pay for the conference fee?.....	21
5. Conclusion.....	22

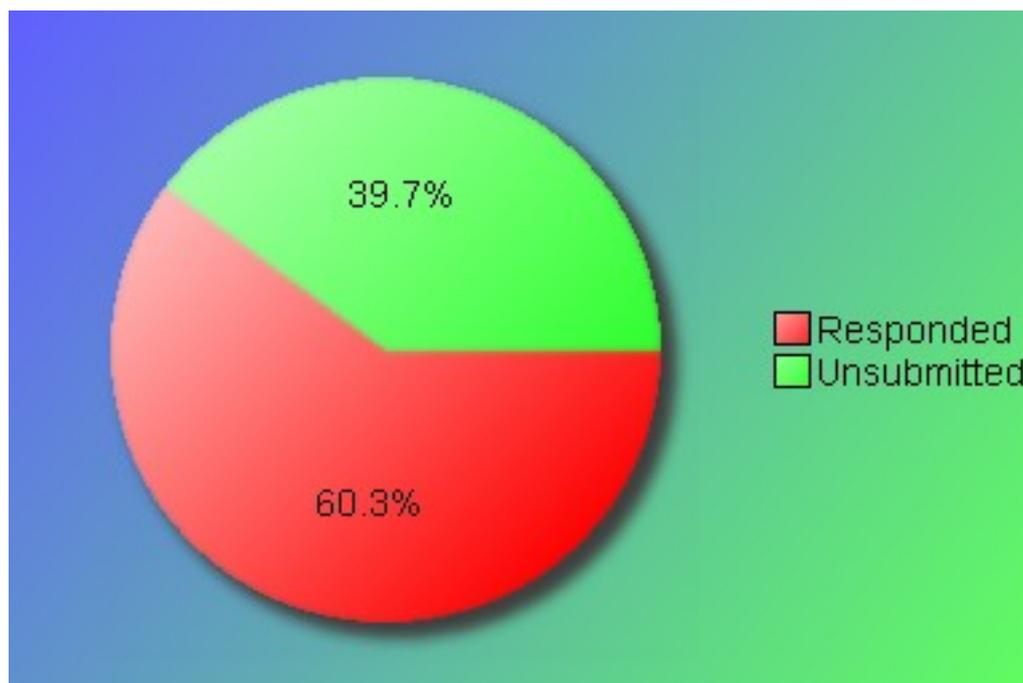
YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



1. Demographics

1.1. Survey Responses



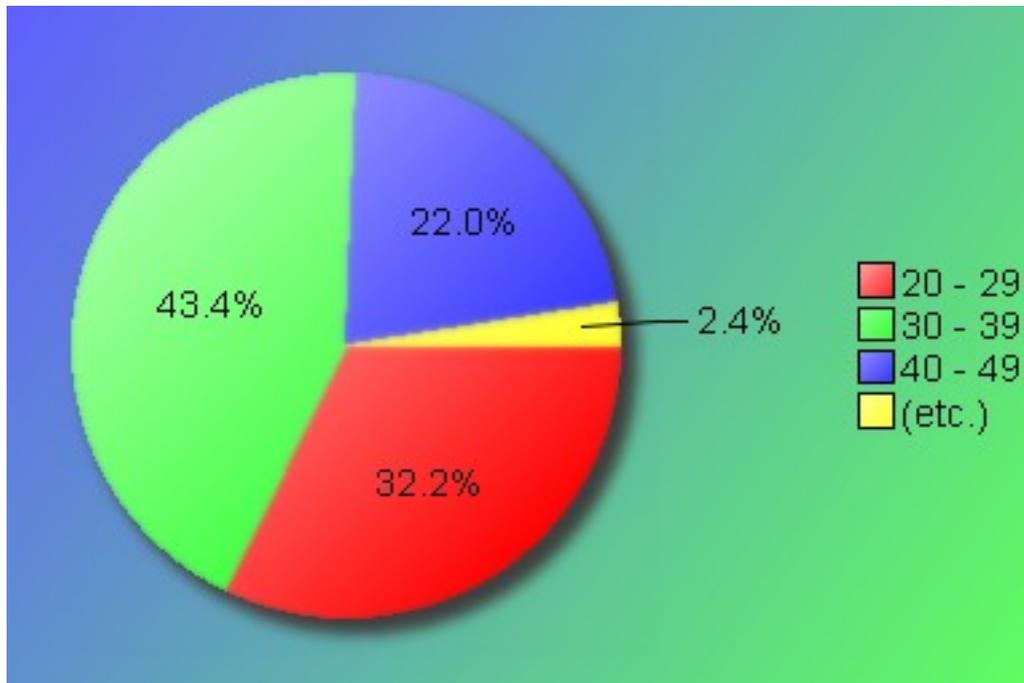
205	Responded
135	Unsubmitted
340	Total Attendance

This is a fantastic response from the 340 attendees who were invited to take part in the survey. Many many thanks to everyone who took the time to complete and submit their responses. This is a significant increase over the response to the 2006 survey, so hopefully this will continue with future surveys. After all the main aim is to provide future organisers with a perspective of what worked and what could be added to the conference experience for attendees.

YAPC::Europe 2007 Survey Results



1.2. Age Bands



0	under 20
66	20 - 29
89	30 - 39
45	40 - 49
5	50 - 59
0	60 and over

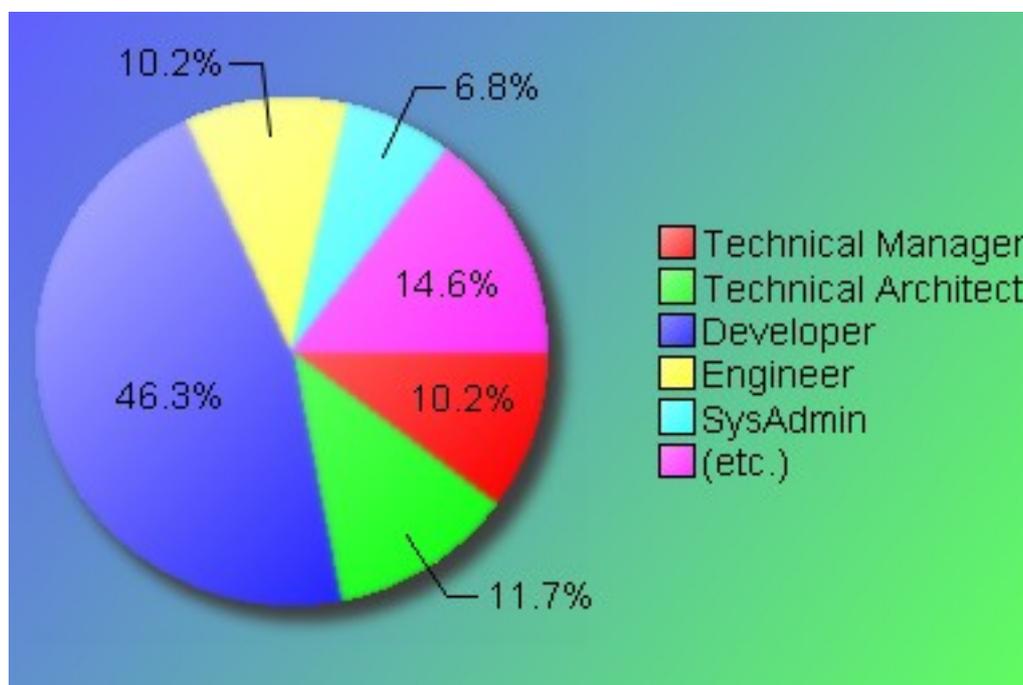
The demographic of age once again highlighted that the dominant age range coming to YAPC::Europe is 30-39, with the ranges 20-29 and 40-49 still having significant representation. Most students appear to be coming along in the later years of their courses, with older attendees still proving they have a healthy interest in the programming Perl.

Companies are seeing the benefit of having their staff attend the technically orientated conferences. The ability to converse with other developers and in many cases the original authors of the code they use, together with a number of presentations that are often specifically targeted, can be very advantageous. The vast bulk of the 2006 attendees are in paid employment and have appear to have been employed for several years. While many are not novices to programming, it is not unusual to find some attendees only recently discovering Perl.

YAPC::Europe 2007 Survey Results



1.3. Job Types



95	Developer
24	Technical Architect
21	Technical Manager
21	Engineer
14	SysAdmin
10	CEO/Director
8	Other
5	Student
4	Lecturer/Trainer
2	Researcher
1	Unemployed

Once again the bulk of attendees class themselves in a technical role, but it is positive to note that many decision makers, including Directors & CEOs, are also attending. In fact we saw a ten-fold increase compared to 2006, where only 1 Director/CEO responded, this year we had 10 respond.

There were several non-technical attendees, such as HR representatives, and many discovering a YAPC for the first time, seeming to realise the educational and social networking benefits.

YAPC::Europe 2007 Survey Results

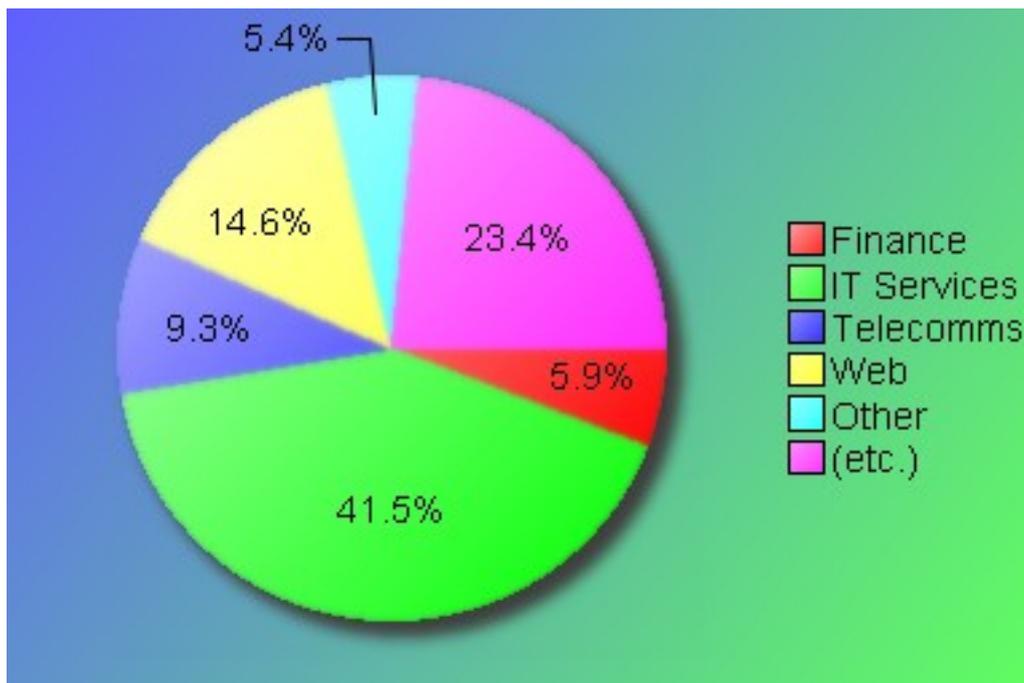


Among those job types that people listed as 'Other' included:

- IT Scripting Engineer
- Process manager
- HR Administrator
- Consultant/Contractor
- Enterprise Integration with Perl :)
- Freelance Translator

This helps to emphasise that a broad selection of people are interested in Perl, whether from a programming or from a recruitment perspective. Hopefully this re-enforces the idea that Perl is still in productive use, just perhaps not as higher profile as some other languages.

1.4. Industries



85	IT Services
30	Web
19	Telecommunications
12	Finance
11	Other
10	Media

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



8	Education
6	Medical/Healthcare
6	Government
5	Research
3	Engineering
2	Travel
2	Property
2	Unemployed
1	Automotive
1	Legal
1	Logistics
1	Retail

Traditional IT industries were very strongly represented, but it's also encouraging to see a variety of industries represented. Among those industries that people listed as 'Other' included:

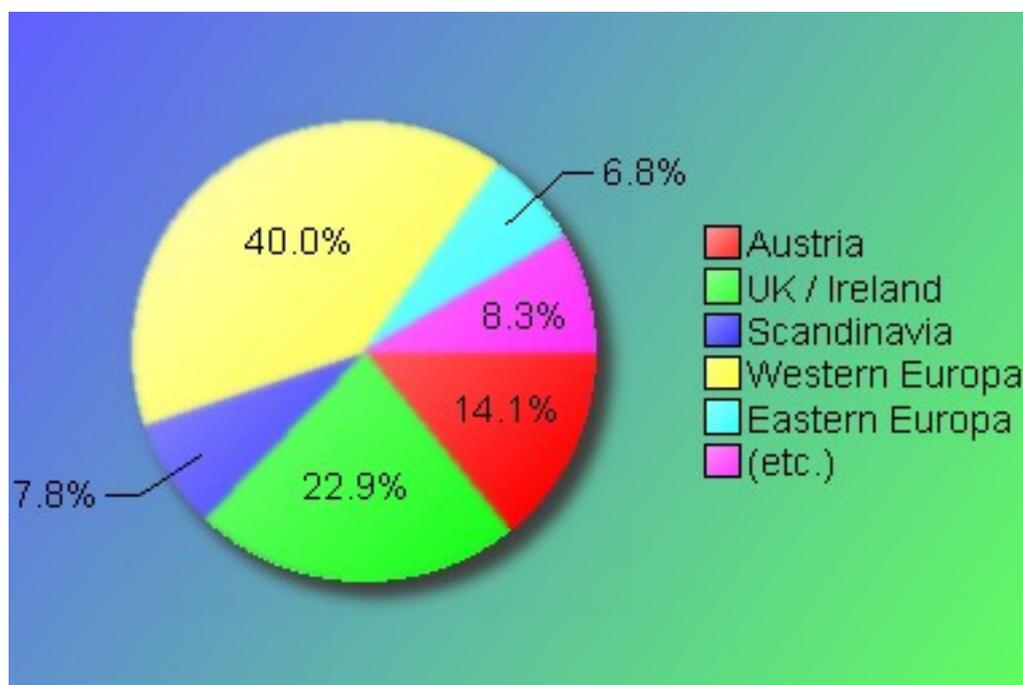
- Entertainment
- Politics
- Human Resources
- ITC
- Translation/Software Localization
- Microelectronics
- Security

While most industries feature IT or programming today, is notable that several also have an interest in Perl, or at least their employees do.

YAPC::Europe 2007 Survey Results



1.5. Regions



82	Western Europe
47	UK / Ireland
29	Austria
16	Scandinavia
14	Eastern Europe
9	USA / Canada
4	Asia / Australaisa
3	Southern Europe
1	South America
0	Africa

With Austria being a fairly central European country, it is not too surprising to see a strong representation from all over Europe. The Western Europe contingent mostly from Germany and France, and as has been noted on occasions previously, the UK and Ireland still represent a large portion of the attendance, with the home country representing themselves very well. Obviously hosting the conference in Vienna proved a popular choice for the locals. Once again several are still making the effort to travel from further afield.

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



2. YAPCs & Workshops

2.1. YAPC Attendance

107	This was my first YAPC
-----	------------------------

Over the last few years, for both YAPC::Europe and YAPC::NA, at least 25% of the attendees are coming to YAPCs for the very first time. While some may find it's not for them, and others may come along because the venue is close to where they live and/or work, we do hope those new attendees do get involve in the community, whether that's in coming to local Perl Monger groups or Perl Workshops, or coming to future YAPCs.

Attended	YAPC::Europe	YAPC::NA	YAPC::Asia	YAPC::Australia/ OSDC::Australia	YAPC::Israel/ OSDC::Israel	YAPC::SA/ YAPC::Brazil
once	28	8	3	2	1	
twice	14	3	2	1	1	
3 times	13	3				1
4 times	12	1			1	
5 times	7	1				
6 times	6					
7 times	10	1				
8 times	2					
9 times		9				

Impressive to see attendees from all the other major YAPCs at this years conference, although that could also mean that European attendees are also venturing further afield too. Worth noting that an increasing number of attendees are returning again and again.

2.2. Workshop Attendance

Perl Workshops are mini-conferences, often in a non-English speaking region and thus having talks predominately in the native language, encouraging attendees who would not normally attend a large conference, such as a YAPC. Many of the workshops have now been running successfully for several years.

115	I've never been to a workshop
-----	-------------------------------

With so many attendees to YAPC::Europe responding, it is very encouraging that 2/3rds have attended a local workshop. Of those that haven't it is quite possible that most have also not attended

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



a YAPC either. Hopefully they will be encouraged to attend a local workshop after this YAPC.

Attended	Austrian	French	Italian	London	German	Dutch	Nordic
once	7	5	3	12	7	2	10
twice	1	1	1	8	8	2	4
3 times	4	5	1	4	4	1	3
4 times				1	3	5	
5 times					5		2
6 times					3		
7 times							
8 times					2		

Attendees from the various European Perl Workshops are very well represented, and reaffirm the success of all these local workshops for the benefit of the community.

2.3. Plans for the Future

	Yes	Maybe	Don't Know	No
Do you plan to attend a future YAPC/Workshop?	166	25	4	4
Are you a member of a local Perl Mongers user group?	114	-	-	84
If not do you plan to find one, or start one?	16	39	13	25

The overwhelming response of attendees is that they do plan to return, but it is worth remembering that a grassroots conference isn't for everyone. YAPCs are not big corporate events and the content is very heavily geared towards lectures and training and not product marketing or sales promotions.

Roughly a third of attendees are members of a local Perl Mongers group, and of the several that aren't quite possibly will be looking at finding one locally.

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



3. YAPC::Europe::2007

The following survey questions were specifically aimed at the 2007 YAPC::Europe conference.

3.1. When did you decide to attend this conference?

75	I'm now a regular YAPC::Europe attendee
14	After YAPC::Europe::2006 in Birmingham
86	This year after seeing references online/in the press
22	I was nominated to attend by manager/colleague

With being the eighth YAPC::Europe conference, it is to be expected that a significant number of attendees would have already attended a previous YAPC::Europe conference, but what of the other attendees?

While 14 were encouraged to attend again following the event in Birmingham, the promotion of the event in the press also drew a notable attendance. The message is also getting across to managers, as it is encouraging that an increasing number of managers and colleagues are nominating people to attend the events.

3.2. Were you a speaker?

132	No
23	No, but I have spoken before at similar conferences
37	Yes, and I have spoken before at similar conferences
8	Yes, and it was my first time as a speaker

Once again a good balance between speakers and non-speakers, with healthy increase in new speakers too, hopefully our future stars of the community.

3.3. What was your motivation for attending the conference?

149	to meet with Perl/project co-contributors
148	to socialise with Perl geeks
123	the list of speakers
112	the quality of the talks scheduled
59	to meet Larry Wall
36	to be a speaker
27	other

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



7	to meet Damian Conway
7	to see Vienna

The primary goal of the conference is to host some great talks and get Perl people together. The above illustrates that that was considered as a motivational factor in people attending too. The ability to socialise and network with other Perl programmers is not to be underestimated, as being able to talk in person to other developers can often be invaluable. Buy them a beer and you have a friend for life :)

Having Larry Wall, Damian Conway and Mark Jason Dominus appearing was important for some. All three giving major presentations during the conference.

Of the 'Other' reasons, these included:

- To learn how to start with organizing YAPC in my country
- General curiosity
- Learn different POVs
- The experience with the Perl workshops
- Look inside the Perl community and see what's going on
- Hear about new and interesting things to do with Perl
- Wife made me
- To see everyone again
- Austrian beer

3.4. What aspects of the conference do you feel gave value for money?

190	the talks / speakers
119	Vienna
110	the conference dinner
100	the conference venue
73	the tshirt
46	the conference bag
33	the job fair
11	the attendees
10	other
3	the hallway track

While the main aims seem to have been satisfied with attendees, it was also pleasant to find that the city of Vienna and the job fair were considered positive parts of the conference experience. It should be noted that “the attendees” and “the hallway track” responses were taken from several

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



'other' remarks, further 'other' remarks included:

- Meet co-contributors one otherwise wouldn't meet
- It's not about value for money
- WLAN access during conference
- Damian Conway
- Hackathons
- The game track

3.5. Did you plan holiday?

95	I came just for the conference
18	several days before only
26	1 day before only
33	several days before and after
26	1 day after only
4	several days after only

At this and previous conferences there has been an effort to promote the city and locale of the host. With this question we wanted to see if attendees had planned to take advantage of additional holidays for sightseeing. It would appear that many did.

3.6. Next venue announcement?

59	Start
20	End
117	No Preference
2	Other

One question the YEF Conference Committee were keen to understand was, when would attendees like to hear the choice for the next host of the conference for the following year. It had been felt by some that with the announcement at the end, the future organisers couldn't talk to sponsors, attendees and speakers as openly. For Vienna the decision was taken to announce the future at the beginning of the conference. It was also intended to have a closing presentation, but unfortunately due to time constraints this didn't happen.

It would seem that the majority had no preference for the timing of the announcement, but of those that did, at the beginning of the conference did favour slightly better. We also asked why attendees preferred the timeslot they chose. It seems there were some wildly different views.

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



A selection of those who preferred the start also stated:

- So it's not a secret
- Everyone will attend the start
- Allows questions/discussions/arrangements with other attendees already during the current conference
- Better flow of information
- Chance to discuss with next years organisers
- To prevent the whisper-whisper "I know", "you don't"
- More time for planning with other people
- Better publicity
- Good to get some of the administrivia out of the way.
- Maybe one cannot attend until the official closing for early scheduled flight or similar
- Rumours abound, so earlier lets us avoid wasted time

These sentiments were repeated several times, and backed up some of the reasons for the decision to make the announcement at the start. However, to balance that with the attendees who preferred the end, a selection of their statements include:

- It's more ceremoniously
- Keep the excitement
- For the suspense
- we are not in a hurry
- for people to be able to enjoy this conference before thinking about the next.
- Tension
- So we can spend hours speculating about it during the conference... ;-)
- Good way to end the conference
- Saying "Thank you" to the old organizers and announcing the new venue was a nice ceremony
- Appears we've "moved on" before we've even started the current one

Again some of the “surprise” and “suspense” sentiments were repeated a few times, which is understandable. As mentioned earlier there was the intention to have a final presentation too, but alas this got lost during timing overruns. Hopefully we can strike a suitable balance with future conferences.

3.7. Talks missed?

	Yes	No
Where there any talks at the conference that you wanted to see, but missed because they conflicted with other talks?	122	70

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



While it is to be expected that attendees were likely to miss something with such a strong line-up in the schedule, it was still intriguing to see what talks attendees chose to miss. Many questioned the MJD vs Conway slot, with many missing one or the other. Some also felt they missed out on the hackathons as well as the talks up against Larry, Damian and Mark. In fact most talks appeared to get a mention, so perhaps we could rerun the whole event again :)

3.8. Speakers missed?

	Yes	No
Where there any speakers not present you were hoping would appear at the conference?	56	128

This was a question we hoped would generate a list of people who we might be able to persuade to come along to future conferences. Below are those speakers who got a mention:

Mentions	Speaker
44	Audrey Tang
4	Michael G Schwern
3	brian d foy
2	Nelson Ferraz
2	Randal Schwartz
1	Adam Kennedy
1	Rafael Garcia-Suarez
1	Dave Mitchell
1	Steve Hay
1	Jawad Yaqub
1	Simon Clinch
1	chromatic
1	Clinton Pierce
1	Jonathan Rockway
1	Kake Pugh
1	Tim Bunce
1	Uri Guttman
1	Jos Boumans (was present, but not as a speaker)
1	Nat Torkington

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



1	chromatic
1	Marc Lehman
1	Stas Beckman
1	Lincoln Stein
1	Alligator Descartes
1	Thomas Christian
1	Jon Orwant

With Audrey being unable to attend, it perhaps wasn't too surprising that her presence was missed. Many of the suggested speakers were non-European, and hopefully some of them will be encouraged to attend in the future, although some have already been speakers at previous events.

3.9. Future talks?

Another couple of questions asked, were to enable future organisers to understand what topics attendees are looking for in the schedules for their events. That's not to say that the talks this year were not wanted, just that as focus changes, it doesn't hurt get some idea of other topics that your attendees are likely to appreciate. It also helps speakers think about some of the topics to use in future presentations.

The first question we asked here was, *What kinds of talks would you prefer at future conferences?*

6	More beginner level talks
27	More intermediate level talks
42	More expert level talks
101	It's about right
20	No preference

It would seem that the overall balance appears to be about right for the skill level, although some would prefer slightly more emphasis at each level. There is definitely no harm in encouraging some high level presentations, but it is worth remembering that we also want to include those that might be new to the language, and need some introductory talks to get them started.

The second question we asked was, *Are there any topics you would specifically like to see featured?* Just some of the suggestions mentioned included:

- POE
- More Perl as a heart of web-development.
- Linux integration with the desktop like Gtk, Dbus, Gnome.
- Perl and Extreme/Agile Programming

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



- Testing Catalyst applications
- Automated Unit Testing
- Automated Integration testing
- Web 2.0 with Perl (Mashups, Ajax)
- more graphics, 3d
- XS, internals hacking
- I liked the more 'Here is Perl in use in a real world application' - These are very interesting
- AI and Statistics
- Something about the future of CPAN and its integration with the toolchain.
- Beginner's topics: learning Perl, learning this, learning that...
- Personally, I'd like to see less web and more on Perl 6
- Extending/Embedding Perl with XS
- more practical tutorials (hands on)
- Security
- Examples of real Perl applications
- Debugging - and not just how to use the debugger; Advanced techniques for finding flaws, such as race conditions;
- XS for dummies
- OO Perl Best Practices
- Perl on small devices (phones/pdas)
- Practical applications. Perl being used in places where I wouldn't expect it.
- More war stories of "how I got a job done, and these are the modules I found to help me do it"
- Perl and performance in high traffic web sites Template Toolkit
- Perl Intro for people coming from other languages
- techniques
- more hands-on web development stuff. more catalyst. more dbic.
- Perl Usage in System Administration, Monitoring, Web Services and Apps, Tangible Frameworks that take up with Rails
- Less Perl6 (bleh), more currently useful stuff ;)

XS seemed to be a surprisingly popular choice, while there was definitely a trend leaning towards real world examples of Perl and some learning Perl type presentations, with the web (1.0 and 2.0) still important to several attendees. Plenty of food for thought for the future.

3.10. How would you rate your overall satisfaction of the conference?

84	Excellent
90	Very Good

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



21	Good
2	Okay
0	Poor
0	Abysmal

Judging from the responses and the personal comments, everybody seemed to have a great time at the conference this year. While some were obviously rather more delighted than others, it would seem that we got enough right to make it an enjoyable conference, and hopefully very educational and productive too.

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



4. Conference Prices

4.1. How much would you or your company be willing to pay?

Business Rate		Standard Rate		Student Rate	
€1	1	€50	2	€20	3
€75	1	€70	1	€25	1
€99	1	€75	2	€30	7
€100	8	€80	13	€40	7
€120	3	€90	2	€42	2
€130	2	€99	3	€49	3
€150	31	€100	71	€50	55
€160	2	€105	1	€60	5
€175	1	€110	1	€70	4
€200	48	€120	10	€75	7
€220	1	€125	3	€79	1
€250	9	€130	1	€80	4
€300	7	€150	15	€99	1
€400	1	€180	1	€100	5
€500	2	€200	4		
€600	1				
€700	1				

The conference fees were set at €100 (standard rate) and €80 (student rate), with an “Early Bird” rate of €80 instead of the standard rate, if attendees paid before 31st March 2007. In addition there was a voluntary business/sponsor tariff set at €200.

Currently the conference fee is a small part of many attendees costs, when travel, hotel, food and drinks are all included in an individual's expenses. Although speakers had their fees waived, a large portion of the conference funds are drawn from the attendance fees.

The business rate is aimed at those attendees whose expenses are being covered by their company, while the standard rate is for those who are typically paying for themselves. As the conference tries to encourage student or low-waged attendees, there is also the student rate.

Judging from the responses, most believed the fees were at the right price about right. Although it was interesting that several thought a higher price was possible for the Business and Standard rates. It should also be noted that the examples given in the survey were €150, €100 and €50 for the

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



respective rates, which shows in the responses, many picking the values suggested.

4.2. How did you pay for the conference fee?

33	N/A - I was a speaker
15	N/A - I was a sponsor
75	My company paid
76	I paid out of my own pocket
0	I wasn't able to attend

Adding weight to all the previous questions, 75% of those responding paid for their attendance fee, or their company did.

YAPC::Europe

2007 Survey Results



5. Conclusion

With so much of the survey aimed at improving the conference experience for attendees, it is pleasing to see so many of them responded to the survey. We can appreciate that not everyone wants to submit their thoughts and experiences of the event, but we are very grateful to everyone who did take part.

Many thanks to all the attendees, speakers and sponsors, without you this conference would never have been as good as it was.

See you in Copenhagen

Andrea Pavlovic
on behalf of the 2007 YAPC::Europe Organisers