



## **Post-IROS 2014 Conference Format Survey Results**

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## Background

In recent years, the large annual IEEE Robotics and Automation Society-affiliated conferences, ICRA and IROS, have used different formats for the technical program of contributed papers. At ICRA 2013 in Karlsruhe, some papers were presented as 15-minute oral presentations in six parallel sessions, each 90 minutes long (six papers), while other papers were given as interactive presentations (laptop and LCD monitor) during a simultaneous 90-minute period. At IROS 2013 in Tokyo, all papers were presented as 15-minute orals in sessions of six papers, with 13 parallel tracks. At ICRA 2014 in Hong Kong, all papers were presented as 20-minute orals in sessions of four papers, with up to 19 parallel tracks. At IROS 2014 in Chicago, each paper was assigned a three-minute oral “pitch” presentation during one of only three parallel sessions, plus an 80-minute interactive presentation with an LCD monitor in the following session period. Each oral session consisted of a 20-minute keynote talk followed by 20 three-minute pitches (80 minutes total).

To get feedback on the effectiveness of these different formats, a surveymonkey survey was sent to all 1626 people registered for the IROS 2014 main conference. The survey was emailed late on the last day of technical sessions, with a promise of a prize valued at 300 USD for one randomly selected winner. (The eventual winner received a 40,000 JPY Amazon gift card.) In just under two weeks, 752 responses were collected.

The purpose of the survey was not to arrive at a single best format to be applied to all ICRA and IROSeS, but rather to collect feedback on some formats that have been tried.

## The Survey

Three questions on the survey (Q2-Q4, see next page) related to the experience of the respondent (current position, number of previous ICRA/IROS conferences attended, and which of these conferences in 2013-14 were attended). Q5-Q8 asked about format preferences, regarding oral only vs. pitch plus interactive vs. interactive only, and whether session keynotes were appreciated at IROS 2014. The results of Q5-Q8, presented below, are broken out in terms of the subpopulations determined by Q2-Q4. Respondents also had the opportunity to enter text comments on conference formats, and 369 chose to do so. Analysis of these comments is left for future.

Of the possible conference formats surveyed, the data support a few observations:

- All demographics prefer a format with brief oral talks followed by interactive presentations. Interactive presentations only (no orals) are least preferred by nearly all demographics.
- This preference is strongest for less-experienced conference-goers (students; first conference attended; 2-4 conferences attended) and weakest for more experienced conference-goers (faculty and staff; 5 or more conferences attended).
- Experienced conference-goers have a stronger preference for pitch plus interactive for other people’s talks than for their own.
- All demographics prefer that all papers be presented the same way instead of some presented as oral, some as interactive (approximately 2 to 1).
- All demographics appreciated having session keynotes at IROS 2014, by approximately a 9 to 1 margin.

The full text of the survey questions is given on the next page, followed by the results.

## Survey Questions

1. Contact information (optional). Name, email address.
2. Which category best describes you?
  - Student or postdoc
  - Faculty or staff at a college or university
  - Industry
  - Government
  - Other
3. How many total ICRA and IROS conferences have you attended?
  - This is my first one
  - 2-4
  - 5 or more
4. Which conferences have you attended?
  - ICRA 2013 (which had a mix of oral and interactive presentations)
  - IROS 2013 or ICRA 2014 (which had only oral presentations)
  - IROS 2014 (which had only brief oral presentations followed by interactive presentations)
5. What format of presentation do you prefer for your own paper?
  - Interactive presentation only
  - Brief oral presentation (max five minutes) followed by interactive presentation
  - Longer oral presentation only
6. What format of presentation do you prefer for papers that you are not presenting?
  - Interactive presentation only
  - Brief oral presentation (max five minutes) followed by interactive presentation
  - Oral presentation only
7. Should all accepted papers be presented the same way, or should some be oral, some interactive?
  - All the same way (e.g., ICRA 2014 with oral presentations and IROS 2014 with brief oral presentations followed by interactive presentations)
  - A mix of oral and interactive presentations (e.g., ICRA 2013)
8. In addition to the traditional invited plenary talks, IROS 2014 featured many invited session keynotes. Which better describes your opinion?
  - These talks by well-known researchers were a positive feature of the program
  - Speaking time should be reserved for accepted papers
9. Please share any other suggestions you have on conference formats. (369 text responses)

Question 5: What format of presentation do you prefer for your own paper?

Demographic			Percentage of responses		
Question	Response	Size	Interactive only	Brief oral then interactive	Longer oral only
Q2	Other	12	25.00	50.00	25.00
	Student or postdoc	374	11.23	71.93	16.84
	Faculty or staff at a college or university	272	8.46	48.90	42.65
	Industry	83	15.66	63.86	20.48
	Government	11	9.09	72.73	18.18
Q3	First	265	10.94	75.09	13.96
	2-4	227	13.66	66.08	20.26
	5 or more	260	8.46	46.15	45.38
Q4	IROS 2014 only	380	11.84	71.05	17.11
	IROS 2014 and ICRA 2013	86	19.77	51.16	29.07
	IROS 2014 and IROS 2013/ICRA 2014	145	8.97	56.55	34.48
	IROS 2014, ICRA 2013, and IROS 2013/ICRA 2014	141	4.96	51.77	43.26
Overall		752	10.90	62.37	26.73

Question 6: What format of presentation do you prefer for papers that you are not presenting?

Demographic			Percentage of responses		
Question	Response	Size	Interactive only	Brief oral then interactive	Longer oral only
Q2	Other	12	33.33	58.33	8.33
	Student or postdoc	374	17.91	63.37	18.72
	Faculty or staff at a college or university	272	12.87	55.15	31.99
	Industry	83	19.28	62.65	18.07
	Government	11	9.09	72.73	18.18
Q3	First	265	16.60	69.43	13.96
	2-4	227	19.38	58.59	22.03
	5 or more	260	13.46	52.69	33.85
Q4	IROS 2014 only	380	16.32	66.58	17.11
	IROS 2014 and ICRA 2013	86	23.26	48.84	27.91
	IROS 2014 and IROS 2013/ICRA 2014	145	16.55	54.48	28.97
	IROS 2014, ICRA 2013, and IROS 2013/ICRA 2014	141	12.06	56.74	31.21
Overall		752	16.36	60.37	23.27

Question 7: Should all accepted papers be presented the same way, or should some be oral, some interactive?

Demographic			Percentage of responses	
Question	Response	Size	All the same	A mix
Q2	Other	12	91.67	8.33
	Student or postdoc	374	69.25	30.75
	Faculty or staff at a college or university	272	66.18	33.82
	Industry	83	60.24	39.76
	Government	11	54.55	45.45
Q3	First	265	71.32	28.68
	2-4	227	67.40	32.60
	5 or more	260	63.08	36.92
Q4	IROS 2014 only	380	68.95	31.05
	IROS 2014 and ICRA 2013	86	61.63	38.37
	IROS 2014 and IROS 2013/ICRA 2014	145	67.59	32.41
	IROS 2014, ICRA 2013, and IROS 2013/ICRA 2014	141	65.96	34.04
Overall		752	67.29	32.71

Question 8: In addition to the traditional invited plenary talks, IROS 2014 featured many invited session keynotes. Which better describes your opinion?

Demographic			Percentage of responses	
Question	Response	Size	Positive feature	Speaking time for accepted papers
Q2	Other	12	100.00	0.00
	Student or postdoc	374	94.12	5.88
	Faculty or staff at a college or university	272	84.56	15.44
	Industry	83	95.18	4.82
	Government	11	81.82	18.18
Q3	First	265	96.23	3.77
	2-4	227	92.95	7.05
	5 or more	260	83.08	16.92
Q4	IROS 2014 only	380	95.00	5.00
	IROS 2014 and ICRA 2013	86	90.70	9.30
	IROS 2014 and IROS 2013/ICRA 2014	145	88.28	11.72
	IROS 2014, ICRA 2013, and IROS 2013/ICRA 2014	141	81.56	18.44
Overall		752	90.69	9.31