

NCTE Historical Membership Sketch

NCTE membership and journal subscription rates have generally been declining since they peaked in 1993 (with 66,034 voting members, 7,429 student members (fewer than today), and 15,369 journal subscriptions). Voting membership more than doubled from the totals from 1982, before NCTE began marketing membership aggressively—but institutional subscriptions fell by 6,000 as schools foisted more of the cost burden for subscribing to professional journals on to teachers. Membership fell by an average rate of 2% per year from '93 to '96, and by 5% from '96 – '99. Immediately after the shift in membership structure (98-99), membership continued to decline at roughly the same rate, but several of our conferences and non-section journals saw an uptick for two years. Then, from '99 – '01, NCTE and CCCC introduced Teach 2000, a program to offer free memberships to every new (or eventually, every teacher in their first three years of practice who hadn't been an NCTE member). During this phase, membership expanded slightly (up 5%), but under the surface, paid membership was falling at a faster pace.

In the period of '01 to '04, we saw membership and subscriptions drop at an accelerated pace (down roughly 10% for three years on a row). Three factors contributed to this decline: 1) very few of the TEACH 2000 inductees renewed their memberships, essentially making visible in 2001 the underlying decline that had been building for two years; 2) virtually every professional society was seeing membership decline in this period and the post 9/11 period. Membership trend data compiled on 44 societies serving educators from 2000 to 2005 by the Trust for Insuring Educators showed that NCTE's rate of growth (decline) was only in the third quartile of all education groups—roughly 60% did at least marginally better than we had, but about 40% declined even faster than we had; 3) the transition to the AVECTRA database package ended up having very negative consequences for membership and subscriptions. It should be noted that the membership skid for elementary section continued through FY05, when more than 1,000 elementary members who had been subsidized by the SCRI program lost state funding and failed to renew individually.