

## Reviewing a Biased Survey for the SCA Anakin Steuart Michele

The Society for Creative Anachronisms is an educational non-profit group dedicated to medieval living history, and has over 30,000 members around the globe.

In 2015, the Society for Creative Anachronisms created a Peerage (the highest level of award) for Fencing. Previously, the Peerages had been for Armored Combat, Knowledge, Service, and Royalty. Four years later, a Peerage is being discussed for Archery, Equestrian, Siege Engines, and Target Throwing.

This is a question-by-question breakdown of a survey shared with every person involved with the SCA. This survey was available at the following URL, and was taken down after an overwhelming number of complaints.

<https://surveys.eastkingdom.org/index.php/313648?lang=en> My commentary is in blue.

I have listed each question as it appears, with my comments in blue text.

0. Are you a member?

Asking this question first sets a negative tone for the entire survey, implying the Society of Creative Anachronism only wishes to hear from its paid members. This is not a good way to recruit new members, and alienates people who participate infrequently.

A better way to approach this is to include a follow-up question for non-members, asking how long they have been involved with the Society, and why they are not paid members, due to constraints such as lack of money or lack of time due to education or multiple jobs.

Yes, I am a member.

No, I am NOT a member.

If yes, please tell us your member number and enter your expiration date.

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1. Do you believe that the addition of the Order of Defense has been a good thing for the Society?

This survey is focused on the creation of a new Peerage. Opening with a question about a different Peerage suggests this survey does not care about the creation of a new Peerage, and is only going through the motions of asking for Populace feedback.

Asking if the creation of the Order of Defense is "good" for the Society is vague. Asking specific questions about participation and membership would be better.

Yes

No

No opinion/Prefer not to answer

2. Have you seen an overall increase in activity since the Order of Defense 's Creation?

This is an impractical question to ask the Populace. Sending a request to each Barony's Seneschals and Armored Combat and Fencing Marshalls would be the best way to find information about each group's membership, practice, and event attendance from the past five years.

Yes

No

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No opinion/Prefer not to answer

3. Did you become a member of the SCA to participate in fencing activities since the creation of the Order of Defense?

This question's audience is members who have joined the Society after the Order of Defense was created in February 2015. That information should be included in the question.

Yes

No

No opinion/Prefer not to answer

4. Have you seen a notable increase in the crossing over of Rattan Fighters into the Fencing arena?

This is a very complex question. Many crossover fighters focus on one martial art for years, only changing to another once they have mastered the first or need to change their martial participation due to illness, injury, or age. The creation of the Order of Defense does not impact those life changes.

Yes

No

No opinion/Prefer not to answer

5. Do you believe that any other areas of the Society suffered due to the attention that the Order of Defense has placed on fencing in the last two years?

The phrase "other areas have suffered" implies a negative response to the creation of the Order of Defense. An unbiased way to phrase this question would be, "Has the creation of the Order of Defense taken time and focus away from other activities?"

Yes

No

No opinion/Prefer not to answer

6. Do you believe there has been a notable crossing over from other medieval groups, such as HEMA, since the Order of Defense's creation?

Unlike event and practice attendance, there is no metric to measure group crossover. It will be interesting to see if the Armored Combat League's Knight Fights television show will lead to an increase in Armored Combat fighters and overall Society membership.

Yes

No

No opinion/Prefer not to answer

7. Do you agree with this Statement? "Persons who were fencers before the Order of Defense's creation are taking a more serious approach to the Society now that there's a Peerage for their focus' activity."?

How can 'seriousness' be measured? By the historical accuracy of arms and armor? By the study of period manuals? Or does this question ask how people feel fencers impact the Society?

Yes

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- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

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8. Has membership has gone up in your local group since the Order of Defense's inception?

Like Question 2, this is an impractical to ask the Populace. Sending a request to each Barony's Seneschals and Armored Combat and Fencing Marshalls would be the best way to find information about each group's membership, practice, and event attendance from since 2015, when the Order of Defense was created.

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

9. Do you agree with the following: "Superior martial skill at a martial art, such as archery, thrown weapons, siege, and equestrian, deserves recognition with a Peerage."

Asking agreement puts implies there will be a positive response to the creation of a Peerage for Archery, Combat Archery, Equestrian, Siege, and Throwing. An unbiased way to phrase this question would be, "Does superior martial skill in Archery, Combat Archery, Equestrian, Siege, and Throwing deserve a Peerage?"

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

10. Do you participate in the following?

This is a useful question!

Select all that apply:

- Archery
- Armored Combat
- Combat Archery
- Equestrian Activities
- Fencing
- Siege Engines
- Thrown Weapons
- None of the above
- Prefer Not to Answer

11. Do you think there are enough peerages?

This is a vague question. Many people only care about a thing if impacts them. For people who are not involved in Archery, Combat Archery, Equestrian, Siege, and Throwing, the only time other peerages would impact them is during Court. Specifically, when a new Peer is Elevated, a member of every other Peerage speaks for them. Noting a significantly longer court for multiple new peerages is critical, and has not been addressed anywhere in this survey.

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

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12. How do you believe displaying skills in equestrian/archery/etc. should be recognized?

This question asks about the creation of an all-in-one Peerage, individual Peerages, and if non-martial Peerages should cover martial actives. This should be three separate questions.

Check all that apply

- Within a shared peerage (all in one peerage)
- Within their own individual peerage (several peerages)
- Within the Laurel
- Within the Pelican
- Within the Chivalry
- Within the Order of Defense
- Do not recognize
- No Opinion/Prefer Not to Answer

13. Do you agree that a Peerage for a specific skill will increase participation in that activity?

I would like to see how Peers answer this question in comparison to non-Peers.

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

14. Do you agree that a peerage path for Archery/Equestrian/Thrown Weapons/Siege will encourage cross-over from other SCA martial disciplines?

This question asks for agreement. It should be worded, "Do you feel that a peerage path for Archery/Equestrian/Thrown Weapons/Siege will encourage cross-over from other SCA martial disciplines?"

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

15. Do you perceive that participation in Archery/Equestrian/Thrown Weapons/Siege has suffered in recent years because of increased focus on other martial pursuits?

I am interested to see how these responses correlate to each Barony or Shire's membership, practice, and event attendance numbers.

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

16. Do you believe that a Peerage path for Archery/Equestrian/Thrown Weapons/Siege will attract membership from other recreation groups?

If the Society wants to grow larger, we must focus on encouraging new members to join and have fun.

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

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17. Do you believe that a peerage path for an Archer/Equestrian/ Thrown Weapons /Siege will make those persons take their participation in the Society more seriously? Is the goal of the Society to be serious, or to encourage existing members to participate and include new members? Also, how can 'seriousness' be measured? By the historical accuracy of arms and armor? By the study of period manuals? By the study of how period materials and tools were created and used?

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

18. Do you believe that Additional Peerage(s) will increase membership? Membership will be increased if people are enjoying themselves and having fun. I am interested to see the comparison between how long people have been members of the Society and how they answer this question.

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

19. Were you a member of the SCA when the Order of Defense Peerage was created? The Order of Defense was created in February 2015. Its first two responses should be, "I was a member before 2015" and "I joined the Society during or after 2015."

- Yes
- No
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

20. Did the creation of the Order of Defense make YOU more or less likely to participate?

This question would be an excellent follow-up to Question 3. Another good follow up question is: "If you were not fencing before the Order of Defense, did the creation of a Peerage make you interested in fencing?"

- More
- Less
- No opinion/Prefer not to answer

21 What is your current Kingdom?

This question is useful for comparing data across Kingdoms.

22. What is your level of recognition within the SCA?

This question is limited because it lists four non-Peer ranks and nine Peer ranks. This list should include the Peer-in-training ranks: Squire, Cadet, Protegee, and Apprentice. If the number of Cadets has increased from before 2015, there is a strong argument that the Order of Defense has encouraged fencers to become formal students.

Check all that apply

- Member
- Award/Grant of Arms

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- Court Baronage
- Knight
- Laurel
- Pelican
- Master of Defense
- Landed Baronage
- Viscount/Viscountess
- Count/Countess
- Duke/Duchess
- Prince/Princess (current)
- King/Queen (current)
- Prefer Not to Answer

23. What is your age?

[This is useful information to compare responses.](#)

- Under 20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- Over 60
- Prefer not to answer

24. How long have you been in the SCA?

[Some people have been involved with the SCA their whole lives. I would like to see the responses to this question compared with question 23.](#)

- Less than 2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- 20-30 years
- 30-40 years
- Over 40 years
- Prefer Not to Answer

25. How many family members participate in the SCA?

- I am the only one
- My spouse/significant other and I
- Family with children
- The whole family
- Prefer not to answer
- Other:

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26. If a new peerage is considered for any endeavor, how would you like to hear about it?

This question should have a short write-in option.

Check all that apply

- Email to all members
- Kingdom Chroniclers
- Kingdom newsletters
- Kingdom website
- SCA Website
- Social Media
- Mailings to members
- Prefer Not to Answer

27. How can this process be made more transparent?

This question should be broken into several questions about concerns for the creation of a new Peerage, how people can support or not support a new Peerage, and if there should be a single Peerage or four separate Peerages.

**The following is my personal response to Question 27:**

The word "transparent" is used to show how visible the process of creating a new peerage is. This survey has shown many things, including bias, poor planning, and poor editing. It heavily implies that the of the Order of Defense took away from the seriousness and enjoyment of non-fencers in order to acknowledge Fencing as a Peer-worthy Path just as the Order of Chivalry is the Peer-worthy Path of Armored Combat.

Of the twenty-six previous questions, 10 concern the Order of Defense, 9 concern Peerages, 8 concern Activity, 4 concern new members, and 2 concern the seriousness of the SCA. This survey claims to concern the creation of a new Peerage, but the repeated references to the Order of Defense make this survey less transparent.

For this process to be transparent, this survey must be completely re-written to remove any and all negative biases regarding the Order of Defense.

My opinion follows: the addition of the Order of Defense Peerage has not taken away focus from the other Peerages. Instead, it has allowed Fencers to be recognized for their deeds and skill. The creation of the Order of Defense has allowed fencers to be made equal to the Orders of Chivalry, the Laurel, and the Pelican. Creating a new Peerage to empower people who are archers, throwers, equestrians and siege engineers will not take away from the other Peerages. The Society is a volunteer-run organization. We recognize one another's deeds with Awards and in Courts. Providing a new way to empower our members will not weaken us. Any person who thinks the addition of a new Peerage will take away from theirs needs to ask themselves if they are peers or peers-in-training because they want to support the Society, or if they only want the prestige of new awards.