



Utah Connecting to Collections Survey Report

Submitted by:
Thomas F. R. Clareson
Final Report: April 12, 2010

LYRISIS
1438 West Peachtree Street NW
Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30309
800.999.8558
www.lyrasis.org

LYRASIS™

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Background	3
Preservation Planning and Funding	3
Preservation Training	5
Preservation Activities	6
Preservation Environmental Control, Security, and Disaster Preparedness	7
Preservation Resource Sharing	9
Digital Collections.....	9
Institutional Information	10
Survey Participant Commentary on Preservation Needs	11
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	11

Executive Summary

"Utah's Connecting to Collections Project: A Statewide Preservation Initiative," a 2009-2010 project funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, includes a statewide web survey on preservation needs, and a series of Town Hall meetings to discuss key findings of the survey and garner feedback from cultural heritage staff at institutions around the state. The project is directed by the leaders of a diverse group of heritage repositories, including representatives of the University of Utah Libraries, the Utah State Archives, Utah State Library, Utah State History, Office of Museum Services, Utah Academic Library Consortium, Brigham Young University, and the LDS Church History Department.

Background

The survey was available online for eleven weeks, beginning on September 4, 2009. From a potential universe of approximately 463 collecting institutions, 203 institutions completed surveys. This 44% return rate is one of the largest return rates seen nationally for a Connecting to Collections survey instrument. Among the respondents to the survey, there were a high number of state and local government agencies, which is a group that holds important documents, but is often overlooked in preservation planning. Public libraries, academic libraries, and history museums/repositories were the other leading respondent groups. All told, 16 different cultural heritage institution types completed at least one of the questionnaires.

The Utah Connecting to Collections survey has provided a great deal of information which the project task force and leading institutions in the state can utilize to develop a comprehensive preservation program for the state. The strong response to specific needs and the forthright comments by survey respondents make the goals of future statewide preservation activities quite clear.

Preservation Funding

Beginning with funding for preservation, a number of areas for awareness-raising and education arise throughout the survey. Less than one-third of the respondents had submitted a proposal for preservation funding in the past five years. Key reasons for not developing proposals include not knowing enough about the funding sources, and needing additional project planning or preparation before applying for a grant. The high level of need for further information, assistance, and planning to develop preservation grants indicates a strong need for awareness-raising and education on preservation grant writing and fundraising throughout the state. To answer this need in an immediate way, the project consultant and principal investigator developed information on preservation grants to be delivered within just a few months of the completion of the survey, at the Town Meetings scheduled for April 2010.

For organizations that have submitted preservation grants, it was interesting to note that most of the proposals have been to state funding organizations, private foundations, or private donors. The finding that none of the survey respondents had applied to the National Endowment for the Humanities (especially the NEH Preservation Assistance Grants to Smaller Institutions) or National Endowment for the Arts led to immediate plans to raise awareness of these preservation funding streams, as well as other Federal sources that had not been fully utilized by the state's institutions.

Preservation Education

To build the knowledge and capacity of existing and future preservation staff, a program of continuing education is needed. Over 50% of the survey respondents indicated that someone from their repository had attended conservation/preservation/collections care training in the past five years, but that did not quench the thirst for more preservation information and education. Short-term workshops were the number one method institutions felt was very useful for gaining preservation information, and using this method to get training on the preservation of books and bound volumes and unbound sheets was of high interest. Additionally, there was an urgent need expressed for training in how to deal with challenging formats including photographs and historic/ethnographic objects. Over 50% of the survey respondents expressed interest in workshops on several preservation topics such as disaster preparedness/recovery; conservation; preservation management; care and handling; preservation reformatting; and preservation of digital files. Add to this the urgent interest in education about preservation advocacy/fundraising/grantwriting, and a curriculum for preservation training in

the State of Utah begins to take shape. With survey information on preferred training locations, high-interest topics, and the concerns about travel costs, distance, and regional needs for training, one method to deliver training and overcome concerns would be to hold the workshops in a number of regions around the state.

Preservation Policy Development

The survey also found a number of preservation planning tools and activities lacking throughout the state. Very few survey respondents have yet developed a preservation plan; not many had utilized a conservation/preservation professional to conduct a preservation survey of their collections; and very few of the suggested activities to prolong the life of an institution's collections had been undertaken by the respondents. Lack of space, collections cataloging, preservation knowledge, funding, and staff time were among the top preservation concerns named by survey respondents, and many of these issues can be dealt with through education, consulting, and policy development. Another vital cornerstone of preservation activity – an institutional disaster plan – was missing in a total of 72% of the institutions (56% with no plan, and 16% who are currently preparing a plan but do not have a completed plan available). To develop a “preservation environment” or an infrastructure for preservation activity at institutions statewide, the Task Force and statewide preservation leaders should make institutional surveys, disaster plans, and preservation plan development central parts of any statewide implementation program.

Storage Concerns

Another troubling finding, which can be addressed through a combination of onsite preservation surveys and workshops, was the startling fact that over 56% of the survey participants thought that less than half of their collection was adequately stored. On a more positive note, the majority of the respondents stated that 75-99% of their collection had been cataloged and processed, which is a higher rate than many states have reported in their Connecting to Collections surveys.

Potential Statewide Services

Utah cultural heritage institutions were eager to be able to utilize potential preservation services. State-sponsored preservation workshops, preservation grants, and the ability to work with experts to gain preservation information, assistance in disaster planning and recovery, and to host on-site preservation survey visits by professionals were all areas of high interest. Statewide contracting for preservation and disaster supplies, disaster recovery assistance, and electronic data storage were also popular concepts. Finally in this area, collaborative activities including grant projects, disaster mutual assistance agreements, and methods by which institutional staff could learn to mentor other employees and volunteers were areas of expressed interest. Any statewide plan should take these potentially popular services into account.

Digital Preservation

Questions in the survey turned to the preservation of digital assets for the long term (ten years or more). Very few institutions had a digital preservation plan – in fact 71% said they did not, and another 17% said they didn't know if such a plan existed. This is another area where future statewide preservation activity including workshops can be focused. While there were positive findings about offsite storage of digital files, and regular backups were done in a majority of institutions, the findings that one-third of the respondents don't know their backup schedule or admit that it is “not (done) on a regular basis” is troubling, and shines a spotlight on another area for awareness-raising and education.

Future Directions

Through the survey findings and comments from the respondents, it is clear that a preservation program which first raises awareness about key issues and solutions, then provides experts and education to help institutions implement these solutions, is of strong interest to the cultural heritage community in Utah. Development of a multi-tiered program to meet institutional preservation needs is an important outcome of the Utah Connecting to Collections project.

Background

"Utah's Connecting to Collections Project: A Statewide Preservation Initiative," a 2009-2010 project funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, includes a statewide web survey on preservation needs, and a series of Town Hall meetings to discuss key findings of the survey and garner feedback from cultural heritage staff at institutions around the state.

The project is being directed by representatives of a diverse group of heritage repositories. Led by Randy Silverman of the University of Utah Libraries, the Project Task Force also includes representation from the highest administrative levels of the Utah State Archives, Utah State Library, Utah State History, Office of Museum Services, Utah Academic Library Consortium, Brigham Young University, and the LDS Church History Department.

The Task Force has been very active in promoting the importance of this project. Utilizing the e-mail networks of the Utah State Library, Utah State Archives, and the Office of Museum Services, the Task Force distributed links to the web-based survey, run from the University of Utah Libraries' Zoomerang System, to a wide array of cultural institutions.

Beginning on September 4, 2009, the survey was available for eleven weeks. The online survey instrument was publicized and made available via U.S. mail to many smaller institutions in the state without the capability to complete the survey online. The last response was received on November 18, and the survey was closed on December 1, 2009. From a potential respondent universe of approximately 463 collecting institutions, 203 institutions completed surveys. This 44% return rate is one of the largest return rates seen to this point for a Connecting to Collections survey instrument. The large level of participation allows readers to detect trends and provide conclusions for programmatic activities in preservation which can be beneficial to a large number of institutions throughout the state.

Among the respondents to the survey, there were a large number of state and local government agencies, which are a group often overlooked in preservation planning. Public libraries, academic libraries, and history museums/repositories were the other leading respondent groups, although, all told, 16 different cultural heritage institution types completed at least one of the questionnaires.

Initial analysis of the survey results was completed by Tom Claeson, Senior Consultant for New Initiatives for LYRASIS (a new organization formed in 2009 from the merger of the PALINET, SOLINET, and NELINET library networks), with additional input from Silverman and the Project Task Force. Claeson has wide experience with statewide preservation and digitization programs and survey research on the needs of such programs, beginning with the Amigos Imaging and Preservation Services longitudinal studies in the 1990s, and continuing through work on ten states' Connecting to Collections projects beginning in 2008.

This report represents the initial findings of the survey project. Particular attention is paid to topics including preservation planning and funding; preservation training; existing and planned preservation activities; environmental control, security, and disaster preparedness; preservation resource sharing; digital collections; and institutional information including annual operating and preservation budgets. One of the most interesting results of this survey, in comparison to other Connecting to Collections surveys and previous statewide preservation needs assessments, is that survey participants also generated a number of very useful comments in an open-ended question at the end of the survey instrument; those comments are reported here as well.

Preservation Planning and Funding

The leading source of preservation funding among Utah's cultural heritage repositories is the institution's own budget. Over 70% of the respondents (145 institutions) utilize funding from their institutional budget for preservation activities. This can be a positive factor, showing institutional commitment to preservation, but it is also a concern when many institutions' core budgets nationwide are dwindling. State grants, named by 42 respondents (21%) were the second leading funding source; donor funding or "none" (no specific sources of

preservation funding) both received 31 responses, or 15%. Twenty institutions (10% of the respondents to this question) reported receiving Federal Grants. An interesting finding was that smaller institutions, with annual operating budgets of \$25,000 and below, utilized state grants and donor funding quite heavily for preservation activities.

Less than one-third of those responding to the survey had submitted a grant application for preservation funding, whether it was successful or unsuccessful, to any public or private funding source in the past five years. Government agencies and public libraries were the least likely to have submitted preservation grants during this period, but results showed that institutions with smaller annual operating budgets (\$1-25,000) had made grant applications as much or more than institutions with budgets over \$1,000,000.

There were a variety of reasons which influenced institutional decisions not to apply for a grant. The organizations reported that they:

- Don't know enough about funding sources (64 respondents or 48%; this was the highest-ranking answer across all institution types)
- Lack the staff time or expertise to complete an application (57 or 43%)
- Need additional project planning or preparation before applying for a grant (40 or 30%)

In addition, fifteen institutions (11%) reported having sufficient funding for preservation, and respondents stated that conservation/preservation is not an institutional priority in 28 cases (21%). Overall in this area, though, the high response rate for needing more information, planning, and assistance to complete grants indicates a potential action area for statewide preservation planners. The concerns and barriers to applying for grants were most pronounced among medium-sized institutions with budgets of \$50,000-250,000.

When asked about sources for preservation funding, there were a variety of responses, and some noticeable gaps among the organizations surveyed. As expected from the previous questions, a line item in the institution's operating budget was the most-cited source with 30 respondents, or 16% naming this resource.

Top external funding sources included:

- Office of Museum Services (28 responses, 15%. These grants were seen as especially helpful to institutions with budgets of \$25,000 and below)
- State Archives, Utah State Historical Records Advisory Board Grants (18, 9%)
- Utah State History, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Grants (CLG): (10, 5%)
- Private Foundations (10, 5%)
- Individual contributions dedicated to conservation/preservation projects (10, 5%)
- State Library, Community Enhancement Funds (public libraries only) (9, 4%)
- Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) direct grants to recipients (8, 4%)
- Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant funding (7, 4%)

What is somewhat surprising is that none of the respondents had applied for funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) or National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Among the grant categories which had not yet been utilized were:

- NEH Preservation Assistance Grants to Smaller Institutions
- NEH – larger Program Grants
- NEA – Access to Artistic Excellence Grants

Additionally, only three organizations had applied for either Save America's Treasures Grants from the National Park Service, or IMLS/Heritage Preservation Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) funding, and only one applicant to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) responded to the survey. These results provide an even stronger indication that awareness of the availability and benefits of these grants must be raised.

When asked to describe their institution's current staffing scenario for preservation/conservation or collections care, a majority of respondents answered that various paid staff are assigned conservation/preservation duties as needed (84, or 41%), or that no staff person or volunteer has conservation/preservation responsibilities (50, or 25%, especially high in medium-sized institutions with budgets of \$50,001-250,000). Additionally, volunteers provide all (21 or 10%) or some (25 or 12%) of the conservation/preservation services

in a number of respondents' repositories. This was especially true among institutions reporting an annual operating budget of \$25,000 and below. Only 27 of those answering the survey (13%) reported having paid staff whose job duties are predominantly conservation or preservation on a full- or part-time basis. With these results in mind, discussion of education, deployment, and even possibly collaboration/sharing of preservation/conservation staff and volunteers should be considered by the statewide planning group.

A vast majority of responding institutions (158 or 78%) do not have conservation or collections care staff members with formal training. Sixteen institutions (8%) – mostly academic libraries and history museums – reported staff members with experience and training working for a trained conservator; six (3%) had staff with a graduate degree in museum studies, and five (2%) had a graduate degree in conservation from a recognized training program. Additional respondents noted degrees in fields such as archaeology. And, although not considered formal training, a large number of respondents had attended state- or university-funded preservation/conservation workshops.

Preservation Training

On the more “informal” side of preservation training, over 50% of the respondents (107 in total) reported that someone from their institutions had attended a training program on conservation/preservation or collections care in the past five years. Academic libraries, historical societies, and art museums were the groups with the highest number of training attendees among the survey respondents. Staff had not attended training at 74 institutions (37%), and 21 respondents (10%) did not know if staff had attended such training.

For obtaining preservation information, respondents used a variety of means. Looking at which of these methods is “very useful” for getting information:

- Short-term training workshops (one- or two-day sessions) were seen as very useful by 85 respondents (44%).
- Communication with resource people by telephone or e-mail (including staff at state agencies; colleagues at other libraries, museums, or archives; consultants; or vendors) was seen as very useful by 78 or 39% of respondents.
- On-site visits at their institution (by professional staff from the State Archives, State History, or Office of Museum Services) ranked high with 72 (37%) of respondents.
- Print materials (books, journals, pamphlets, and newsletters) were used by 63 people or 32%.
- Web sites (58 or 30%) and electronic journals and reports (56 users or 29%) also ranked high in the very useful information dissemination methods. These were especially popular information vehicles with medium-sized institutions with budgets of \$50,001-250,000; however, government agencies and public libraries responded in ways that showed the need to raise awareness of these preservation information avenues to those groups.

The survey instrument looked at training needs from two angles.

First, respondents were asked which collection types institutions needed preservation training on. There was a need for training on all formats, but especially for Books and Bound Volumes (monographs, serials, newspapers, scrapbooks, albums, and pamphlets) with 112 respondents or 57%; and Unbound Sheets (archival records, manuscripts, maps, oversized items, ephemera, broadsides, philatelic and numismatic artifacts, and other paper artifacts) encompassing 99 respondents or 51%. In another interesting finding, although the standard “need” for training on these formats was not as high, the two areas receiving the highest “Urgent Need” rating were Photographic Collections (microfilm, microfiche, photographic prints, negatives, slides, transparencies, Daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, glass plate negatives, and lantern slides) with 15 or 8% “urgent need” respondents, and Historic or Ethnographic Objects such as textiles, flags, rugs, costumes and accessories, ceramics, glass – including stained glass, ethnographic artifacts such as leather skin, baskets and bark; metalwork including armor, medals, coins; furniture, domestic artifacts including frames, household tools/machines, dolls/toys, musical instruments; technological and agricultural artifacts, medical and scientific artifacts, and transportation vehicles – with 14 respondents or 7%. The need to receive training in work with Historical and Ethnographic Objects was most pronounced among historical

houses and sites, and those institutions with budgets of \$250,000 and below. A potential method to address these needs would be a travelling workshop on book and paper preservation/conservation which might be held in various regions of the state, and one-time, special workshops on photo preservation and historic/ethnographic object preservation/conservation, to be held soon to address the urgent needs.

When the survey considered the preservation topics on which responding institutions need training, a wide variety of institutions cited a high level of need for classes in several subject areas. Over 50% of the respondents to this question indicated a need for training on each of these topics:

- Disaster preparedness and/or recovery (119 responses or 60%; especially a high need among art museums)
- Conservation (physical treatment of collections): 117, 60%
- Preservation management (administration, planning, assessment): 111, 57%
- Providing care and handling instruction for staff: 109, 56%
- Preservation reformatting (preservation photocopying and microfilming): 100, 51%
- Preservation of digital files (databases, web sites, image files): 99, 52%

In addition, training on digitization/imaging was just under the 50% level, with 92 responses or 47% indicating a need for this type of instruction, and 90 respondents (46%) needing Advocacy/Fundraising/Grant Writing Training (this need was across all institution types).

Another interesting development was that a number of respondents indicated an urgent need for instruction on some of the training topics. This immediate need for classes was highest for Advocacy/Fundraising/Grant Writing (30 respondents/15%), and high interest was also shown for preservation management (23/12%), digitization/imaging (23/12%), conservation (22/11%), disaster preparedness, and care and handling instruction for staff (both 21/11%). These urgent needs were noted by institutions at all budget levels.

These high levels of need for instruction are an indication that a regular program of preservation education is necessary for the state. And, the urgent interest in Advocacy/Fundraising/Grant Writing solidifies the earlier results showing a need for much greater awareness of preservation funding resources.

One day (72 respondents, 36%) or two day (42 respondents, 21%) classes were the institutional preferences for the length of conservation/preservation or collections care training sessions.

Respondents felt that \$100-199 (44 or 22%) or \$50-99 (42 or 21%) was the maximum amount they or their employer would be willing to pay to attend a training event on conservation/preservation. These figures represented combined travel and tuition costs.

While a question asking respondents to name their top three preferred cities for training locations had Salt Lake City as a leader in all three "slots," other locations drawing a large number of "votes" included Provo/Orem, St. George, Ogden, Cedar City, Logan, Richfield, Vernal, and Price.

The survey looked at barriers to attending conservation/preservation training – the causes that would prevent the surveyed institutions from sending a staff member to collections care-related workshops. Travel costs (135 respondents or 67%), registration costs (135 respondents or 67%), unavailability of workshops in the region (102 or 51%), distance (97 or 48%), and inability to spare staff time (87 or 43%) were the leading concerns. One possible method to overcome distance and travel costs would be to hold the workshops in a number of locations around the state.

Preservation Activities

A majority of respondents, across all institution types (135 or 67%), did not have a written long-range preservation plan for the care of their collection. This type of plan can be very helpful in building institutional capacity for preservation, as preservation plans describe a multi-year course of action to meet the institution's overall conservation/preservation needs for its collection.

An even larger number of respondents (142 or 70%) had not had a conservation/preservation professional conduct a general survey of their collection to determine the extent of preservation/conservation problems. The lack of surveys was particularly noticeable among the public library respondents. These surveys focus on environmental conditions, collection management, security, disaster planning, special collections, and the needs of special formats. Out of the 43 institutions reporting that they did have a survey, about half (22 respondents or 51%) said that the survey had resulted in conservation/preservation actions. These findings show a strong need for offering a statewide program of preservation site surveys.

When asked what actions their institution has taken to prolong the life of its collections, installing storage furniture (shelving, cabinetry) had been completed by 79 institutions (41%), and rehousing (refoldering, reboxing, making better storage mounts) had been done by 74 repositories, or 38%. Again, the public library respondents had taken the least amount of actions of any group responding to the survey.

The results in other areas of preservation activity showed an even lower number of institutions currently implementing programmatic preservation actions. In fact, all of the following preservation program areas could be offered as activities in Utah where a Statewide Planning Group could assist cultural heritage institutions:

- Advocacy/fundraising/grant writing
- Preservation management
- Environmental monitoring
- Conservation/physical treatment
- Disaster preparedness and/or recovery
- Preservation reformatting
- Preservation of digital files
- Providing care and handling instruction for staff
- Contracting for conservation/preservation services
- Digitization/imaging
- Cataloging/data gathering about objects
- Pest management, including mold prevention or remediation
- Exhibit improvement
- Building design/new construction/renovation
- Moving collections

Institutions with annual operating budgets of \$50,001 and above were most likely to have completed actions including digitization and exhibit improvement.

The need for programmatic activity in preservation was also illustrated in a question where respondents were asked to list their top three preservation concerns. Between 300-400 individual answers were received for this open-ended question. Chief concerns included: lack of space, especially for collections storage; need to organize/index/catalog collections; need for digitization and digital preservation; lack of knowledge/need for preservation education; lack of funding for preservation activities; lack of collections care and records maintenance activities; and lack of both staff time and staff resources to perform preservation activities. Many of these concerns can be addressed through training, consulting, and policy development.

Preservation Environmental Control, Security, and Disaster Preparedness

Responding institutions were asked if they control the following environmental factors in order to preserve their collections. The majority said that they did not control air quality, relative humidity, light levels, or temperature in their facilities, although temperature and light were the most likely environmental factors to be controlled in all or some areas. Public libraries were the least likely group to have control of any of the environmental factors at their institutions.

One of the most troubling sets of answers in the survey came when participating institutions were asked, from a preservation perspective, how much of their institution's collection they estimate is adequately stored. Adequate storage was defined as a secure, environmentally-controlled space, on appropriate mounts or containers, in appropriate storage furniture, and with enough space to accommodate non-damaging access. Over 56% of the survey participants thought that less than half of their collections were adequately stored. Forty-nine respondents (25%) stated that none of their collections were adequately stored (a large number of the respondents in this category were public libraries); 38 (19%) felt 1-24% of the collection was well-stored (in particular, institutions with medium-sized budgets reported this low level of good storage for collections), and 24 or (12%) said 25-49% was stored correctly.

On the other side of the equation, nine (5%) of the surveyed institutions stated that all collections were stored well; 36 (18%) said 50-74% were appropriately stored, and 23 (12%) estimated 75-99% were successfully stored.

The answers here lead to a strong call for utilizing a program of onsite surveys and education to help institutions improve their collection storage conditions.

When specifically asked about fire protection equipment their institution has installed, a majority of respondents reported having fire extinguishers (116 or 60% in all areas of the facility; 54 or 28% in some areas); fire alarms (101 or 53% in all areas, 27 or 14% in some); and smoke detectors (99 or 52% in all areas, 29 or 15% in some). The majority did not have, or did not know if they had wet-pipe, dry-pipe, or non-aqueous fire suppression systems (such as Halon or FM-200). Additionally, 142 respondents (75%) noted that their fire extinguishers are inspected regularly, while 25 (13%) did not know the schedule of fire extinguisher inspection.

Institutional representatives were asked if their institution had experienced disasters that damaged materials in the past five years. Thankfully, 165 respondents (82%) said no. However, 30 institutions or 15% of the group answering the survey said yes. Academic libraries reported having the most disasters of any institution type. Those who experienced disasters mainly said that 1-24% of their collections were damaged (25 respondents or 62%); eight said no collections were damaged.

As has become a trend in other state and regional preservation surveys throughout the country, the largest number of disasters (22 or 63%) were caused by water leakage from pipe damage, roof damage, etc. The second highest cause was flooding, and six institutions or 17% indicated that as the chief cause. Mold, fire, and pests caused disasters in only 1-3 reported cases each.

Most often, cleanup and repair of materials damaged in these disasters was taken care of by internal staff only (21 cases or 55%) or internal staff and others (an additional 7 organizations or 18%).

Another finding of great concern was that 113 respondents, or 56% of those completing the survey, did not have a disaster plan for the protection and recovery of their collections. While a majority of the academic libraries and art museums responding to the survey did have disaster plans, government agencies, historical houses, and public libraries were the groups which most often did not have disaster plans in place; it was also noted that institutions with both the smallest and largest annual operating budget levels did not have plans. Forty institutions (20%) do have plans, and 33 (16%) said they are currently preparing a plan. This indicates another strong priority for statewide action.

Finally, in this section, institutional representatives were asked to indicate which security systems they utilize. The most popular methods were control of access to collections (78 or 40% in all areas, 72 or 37% in some areas); employee and volunteer screening (72 or 38% in all areas, 47 or 25% in some); written policies and procedures (71 or 36% in all areas, 40 or 21% in some); alarm systems (67 or 34% in all areas, 27 or 14% in some); and control of items brought into collections (62 or 32% in all areas, 50 or 26% in some).

Preservation Resource Sharing

Institutions were asked to express their interest in a variety of preservation services and service provision methods. Top shared activities included:

- State-sponsored preservation workshops (130 or 70%)
- Ongoing state support for preservation grants to individual institutions (114 or 62%). This activity was especially popular with academic libraries, government agencies, historical societies, and historical houses/sites.
- Source to contact for preservation information (110 or 59%)
- Assistance with disaster planning and recovery (107 or 58%)
- On-site visits by a preservation professional (98 or 53%). Special libraries, academic libraries, and history museums expressed an especially strong interest in this potential service.

Among the most interesting results to this question were some of the respondent comments. Resources needed include “an intern to help!”, “a proper facility for all State owned collections,” and “funding for small museums who don’t get anything.” Other comments reflected the interest of some state agencies, through collections and preservation assessments, in the need for state-funded actions on collections owned by the state, but under the stewardship of other agencies. Although these comments may be difficult to address in the short-term, the utilization of interns, some type of centralized, environmentally controlled collection storage, and a focus on preservation funding and services are certainly worthwhile goals for future iterations of the statewide preservation program in Utah.

Another angle on shared services was a question about collectively contracting for preservation or collections care services within Utah. Contracts which institutions would like to see centrally negotiated statewide or regionally include:

- Preservation/collections care supplies (88 respondents or 44%)
- Disaster recovery (vacuum freeze drying, on-site cleanup, etc.) – 88 or 44%
- Electronic data storage (79 or 40%)
- Disaster response supplies (75 or 38%)

It should be noted that 69 institutions, or 35%, responded “don’t know” to this question.

Another question on collaborative preservation initiatives asked about institutional interest in a variety of activities. Top “vote-getters” among these activities were: developing collaborative grant projects (36 or 19% great deal of interest, 80 or 41% some interest); learning to mentor employees/volunteers (32 or 16% great interest, 86 or 43% some interest); and developing mutual assistance agreements for activities such as disaster response (26 or 13% great; 91 or 46% some). Developing collaborative digitization projects was another area of interest across all types of institutions.

Digital Collections

Utah’s collecting institutions were asked a variety of questions about their digital holdings. When queried on digital formats their institution owns, documents (90 respondents), photographs (87), video/audio (72), sound recordings (71), and books (65) were the top formats indicated. The main types of material the institutions have digitized are documents (69 or 43% – particularly high among academic libraries and government agencies) and photographs (64 or 40%, often done in history museums and academic libraries). Forty-five institutions or 28% of the respondents to this question answered “none.”

When asked about digital preservation planning – whether their institution had a plan in place for managing digital assets for ten years or more – 118 respondents or 71% said no. Government agencies most often reported having these plans. Additionally, another 28, or 17% said they did not know.

Asked if their organization operates a digital repository, 41 or 25% of respondents answered yes, 106 or 69% no, and 19 or 11% did not know. Academic libraries were the most likely to have these services.

While backup alone is not digital preservation, it can serve as a building block for programmatically developing a digital preservation strategy. Institutions were asked how often backup files are created for their digital assets; 80 or 47% said once a week or more often, and 26 or 15% said "a few times a month." However, "don't know" was actually the second most popular answer to this question (31 or 18%) and "not on a regular basis" garnered 24 responses or 14% of all answers. This high percentage of organizations unsure about backup practices is troubling from a digital preservation perspective.

A positive finding was that backup files are stored offsite (61 responses or 33%) or in multiple places (42 or 23%), more than onsite. These are considered to be good digital preservation practices following the ravages of Hurricane Katrina, which often damaged computer and backup files that were stored in the same room or same building. Fifty-one institutions store backup files onsite, and 29 or 16% don't know where their backup files are stored; these results are problematic and indicate a need for digital preservation awareness-raising and education.

Institutional Information

A wide variety of institutional types participated in the Utah Connecting to Collections Statewide Preservation Survey. Ninety-four institutions (47% of the respondents) were from state or local government agencies; Public Libraries were responsible for 35 or 18% of responses; and academic libraries/archives and history museums/repositories each reported sixteen responses (8% of the total for each category). Other participating institutional types included historical houses/sites; historical societies; art museums; special libraries; independent non-profit archives; natural history museums; archaeological museums/repositories/research collections; two schools; a law library; a cultural center; and a general museum with two or more disciplines.

The categories best describing responding organization types/affiliations were local/municipal/county government (123 or 62%); private non-profit/non-government (34 or 17%) and state government (30 or 15%). And, about one-third (64 or 32%) of the institutions responding were housed in, or responsible for, historic buildings.

Possibly due to the type of institutions answering the survey, the estimated numbers of holdings by format provide some interesting data. Below is a list of the number range receiving the largest response per format.

- Books/Bound Volumes: 1-100 volumes (26%)
- Unbound Sheets: 11-100 cubic feet (21%); don't know (25%)
- Photographic Collections: 1-100 or no holdings of this type (both 27%)
- Moving Image Collections: No holdings (37%) or 11-100 (14%)
- Recorded Sound Collections: No holdings (29%) or 101-1,000 (21%)
- Digital Materials: 11-100 (29%)
- Art Objects: No holdings (39%); 11-100 (42%)
- Historic and Ethnographic Objects: No holdings (46%); 11-100 (13%)
- Archaeological Collections: No holdings (73%); don't know (9%)
- Natural Science Specimens: No holdings (75%); don't know (9%); 1-10 (9%)

The largest collections, by number of items, in the institutions with the smallest budgets were photographs, artwork, and ethnographic collections; these three collection types are considered some of the most difficult to preserve and conserve. Considering all formats, institutions were asked to indicate the estimated percentage of their collection that has been cataloged or processed. The results here were somewhat better than the percentage of collections stored appropriately. While the majority said that 75-99% of their collection is cataloged (55 institutions or 28% answering the question), 40 institutions (or 20%) said that only 1-24% had been cataloged, and 24 organizations said none of their collection was cataloged.

The survey concluded with questions on institutional and preservation budget levels. When asked for the range of their institution's total annual operating budget for the most recently-completed fiscal year, the top three responses were:

- \$50,001-250,000 (21%)
- \$5,000,001 and above (14%)
- \$1,000,001-5,000,000 (14%)

Historical societies, historical houses, and history museums were the groups most often reporting annual operating budgets of \$25,000 or below.

Institutional annual budget levels for conservation/preservation or collections care during the same fiscal period were:

- None (31% – many government agencies and public libraries reported no preservation budget)
- \$1-500 (20%)
- Don't know (15%)
- \$1,001-\$2,500 (10%)

As should be expected, those institutions with a smaller operating budget also had smaller preservation budgets.

Survey Participant Commentary on Preservation Needs

More than any other preservation needs assessment this consultant has worked on during the IMLS Connecting to Collections initiative, or throughout the past twenty years, the comments of participants, when asked if there was anything else they would like to say about their institution's conservation/preservation or collections care needs, were poignant and telling. Thirty-five respondents felt it was important enough to provide comments to the survey organizers that could help to further preservation in the state and region. There was good feedback on training workshops sponsored by the State organizations and Universities. Among the highlights of the general comments in this section:

- "We desperately need archival housing for artifacts."
- "We would love to have a consistent, permanent person to consult with."
- "We are not trained nor have sufficient information about conservation/preservation and need help to manage our collection."
- "Make it simple for small towns."
- "We desperately need grant funds."
- "We usually pay for what needs to be done out of our own pockets. We don't know how to apply for grants to help us. None of us are 'professionals.'"
- "People need to be more concerned about historic artifacts and follow (the) state's recommendations. Too much goes by the wayside."

In many ways, these comments embody the overall findings of the Utah Connecting to Collections Survey. There is a need for stable sources of preservation information, training, grants, and supplies/equipment. There is an especially strong need for the state's cultural heritage professionals to learn about grant sources and grant writing. And, there is a strong belief in the importance of preservation of objects and artifacts in the State of Utah.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Utah Connecting to Collections survey has provided a great deal of information which the project task force and leading institutions in the state can utilize to develop a comprehensive preservation program for the state. The strong response to specific needs and the forthright comments by survey respondents make the goals of future statewide preservation activities quite clear.

Preservation Funding

Beginning with funding for preservation, a number of areas for awareness-raising and education arise throughout the survey. Less than one-third of the respondents had submitted a proposal for preservation funding in the past five years. Key reasons for not developing proposals include not knowing enough about the funding sources, and needing additional project planning or preparation before applying for a grant. The high level of need for further information, assistance, and planning to develop preservation grants indicates a strong need for awareness-raising and education on preservation grant writing and fundraising throughout the state. To answer this need in an immediate way, the project consultant and principal investigator are developing information on preservation grants to be delivered within a few months of the completion of the survey at the Town Meetings scheduled for April 2010.

For organizations that have submitted preservation grants, it was interesting to note that most of the proposals have been to state funding organization, private foundations, or private donors. The finding that none of the survey respondents had applied to the National Endowment for the Humanities (especially the NEH Preservation Assistance Grants to Smaller Institutions) or National Endowment for the Arts led to immediate plans to raise awareness of these preservation funding streams, as well as other Federal sources that had not been fully utilized by the state's institutions.

Preservation Staffing and Education

As with the majority of the states surveyed as part of the Connecting to Collections project, there is always a need for further staff to carry out preservation activities, and further formal training for staff members as appropriate. However, Utah fares better than many other states with the number of staff focused predominantly on preservation or assigned to conservation and preservation duties as needed.

To build the knowledge and capacity of existing and future preservation staff, a program of continuing education is needed. Over 50% of the survey respondents indicated that someone from their repository had attended conservation/preservation/collections care training in the past five years, but that did not quench the thirst for more preservation information and education. Short-term workshops were the number one method institutions felt was very useful for gaining preservation information, and using this method to get training on the preservation of books and bound volumes and unbound sheets was of high interest. Additionally, there was an urgent need expressed for training in how to deal with the preservation challenges of paintings, photographs, and historic/ethnographic objects. The need to receive training in work with historical and ethnographic objects was most pronounced among historical houses and sites, and those institutions with budgets of \$250,000 and below. A potential method to address these needs would be a travelling workshop on book and paper preservation/conservation that might be held in various regions of the state, and one-time, special workshops on photo preservation and fine art and historic/ethnographic object preservation/conservation (including storage and exhibit), to be held soon to address the urgent needs.

Over 50% of the survey respondents expressed interest in workshops on several preservation topics such as disaster preparedness/recovery; conservation; preservation management; care and handling; preservation reformatting; and preservation of digital files. Add to this the urgent interest for education on preservation advocacy/fundraising/grant writing, and a curriculum for preservation training in the State of Utah begins to take shape.

One-day training, priced between \$50-199, was of interest to the survey respondents. High registration costs were seen as a key barrier to people taking advantage of the training, as were travel costs, distance, and unavailability of workshops in the region.

With survey information on preferred training locations, high-interest topics, and the concerns about travel costs, distance, and regional needs for training, one method to deliver training and overcome concerns would be to hold the workshops in a number of regions around the state. The Town Hall meetings to be held around the state in April 2010 will be a test of how such preservation education opportunities might be attended in the future.

Preservation Policy Development

The survey also found a number of preservation planning tools and activities lacking throughout the state. Very few survey respondents have yet developed a preservation plan; not many had utilized a conservation/preservation professional to conduct a preservation survey of their collections; and very few of the suggested activities to prolong the life of an institution's collections had been undertaken by the respondents. Lack of space, collections cataloging, preservation knowledge, funding, and staff time were among the top preservation concerns named by survey respondents, and many of these issues can be dealt with through education, consulting, and policy development. Another vital cornerstone of preservation activity – an institutional disaster plan – was missing in a total of 72% of the institutions (56% with no plan, and 16% who are currently preparing a plan but do not have a completed plan available). To develop a “preservation environment” or an infrastructure for preservation activity at institutions statewide, the Task Force and leading institutions in the state should make institutional surveys, disaster plans, and preservation plan development central parts of any statewide implementation program.

Addressing Storage and Safety Concerns

Another troubling finding, which can be addressed through a combination of onsite preservation surveys and workshops, was the startling fact that over 56% of the survey participants thought that less than half of their collection was adequately stored. On a more positive note, the majority of the respondents stated that 75-99% of their collection had been cataloged and processed, which is a higher rate than many states have reported in their Connecting to Collections surveys.

Findings in environmental controls, fire protection, and security systems were better than in many other surveyed states, but the need for education and work with facilities personnel to control environmental conditions, and first responders to mitigate the effects of emergencies and disasters, was still quite evident in the survey results.

Potential Statewide Services

Utah cultural heritage institutions were eager to be able to utilize potential preservation services. State-sponsored preservation workshops; preservation grants and the ability to work with experts to gain preservation information; assistance in disaster planning and recovery; and on-site preservation survey visits by professionals were all areas of high interest. Statewide contracting for preservation and disaster supplies, disaster recovery assistance, and electronic data storage were also popular concepts. Finally in this area, collaborative activities including grant projects, disaster mutual assistance agreements, and methods by which institutional staff could learn to mentor other employees and volunteers were defined as areas of interest. Any statewide plan should take these potentially popular services into account.

Digital Preservation

In the areas of digitization and digital preservation, documents and photographs were the most common format of items institutions held in digital form, and the materials most frequently digitized. Other questions in the survey turned to the preservation of those digital assets for the long term (ten years or more). Very few institutions had a digital preservation plan – in fact 71% said they did not, and another 17% said they didn't know if such a plan existed. This is another area where future statewide preservation activity, including workshops, can be focused. While there were positive findings about offsite storage of digital files, and regular backups were created in a majority of institutions, the finding that one-third of the respondents don't know their backup schedule or admit that it is “not (done) on a regular basis” is troubling, and shines a spotlight on another area for awareness-raising and education.

Future Directions

Through the survey findings and comments from the respondents, it is clear that a preservation program that first raises awareness about key issues and solutions, then provides experts and education to help institutions implement these solutions, is of strong interest to the cultural heritage community in Utah. Developing a multi-tiered program to meet institutional preservation needs is an important outcome of the Utah Connecting to Collections project.