

Survey of Religious Archives

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Abstract

The Society of American Archivists – Archivists of Religious Collections Section Survey of Religious Archives collected data about religious archives and archivists in the US and Canada. It covered the areas of staffing, salaries, education, holdings, storage, policies, outreach, reference services, digitization, digital preservation, technology, and perceptions and needs. The web survey used a combination of 88 multiple choice, Likert scale, and open text questions and ran from April 10-May 11, 2024. It had a 68% completion rate. Only the sample of 210 complete responses was analyzed. Of this sample, the majority of respondents worked in American Catholic archives.

Some findings related to staffing, budgets, training, collection extent and access, digital preservation, technology, and perceptions and needs are compared with the *SAA A*Census* reports (2022, 2023). In general, this survey found that while storage space was well-controlled in terms of security and environment, many expected to run out of capacity within five years and had no plans in place for this. Religious archivists mostly held advanced degrees, but many indicated the need for training on digital preservation, digital asset management systems, web archiving, and digitization. Additionally, although they kept digital material, few had a digital preservation program in place, and fewer still preserved websites. Outreach was primarily internal, and few had a stand-alone website or used social media. Most felt they were under-resourced and not given enough respect within the archival community.

About the authors:

Mary Grace Kosta is an archival consultant with many years of experience as a religious archivist. She served for four years on the steering committee for the Society of American Archivists, Archivists of Religious Collections Section (SAA ARCS), and currently chairs the Joint US-Canada AtoM Users Group, the Canadian Council of Archives – Archives Canada Working Group, the SAA ARCS Models and Resources Committee, and serves as a member of the AtoM Foundation Communications Committee, the Association of Canadian Archivists Professional Development Committee, and the NDSA Communications and Publications Working Group. She is a winner of the Society of American Archivists Sr. M. Claude Lane, O.P., Memorial Award and the Archives Association of Ontario James J. Tallman Award.