

# **Archivists' Personal Collecting Behaviors and Their Impact on Professional Archival Practice**

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2024 SAA Research Forum

# Research Questions

- Are individual collecting behaviors a response to, or extension of, family collecting behaviors?
- Do family collecting practices influence one's decision to enter the archival field?
- Do archivists tend to grow up in certain collecting environments (hoarding, saving, organized, niche)?
- Does the completion of an LIS program change one's relationship to collecting?
- How much does one's personal collecting preferences influence one's professional practice?

# Significance for Information Studies

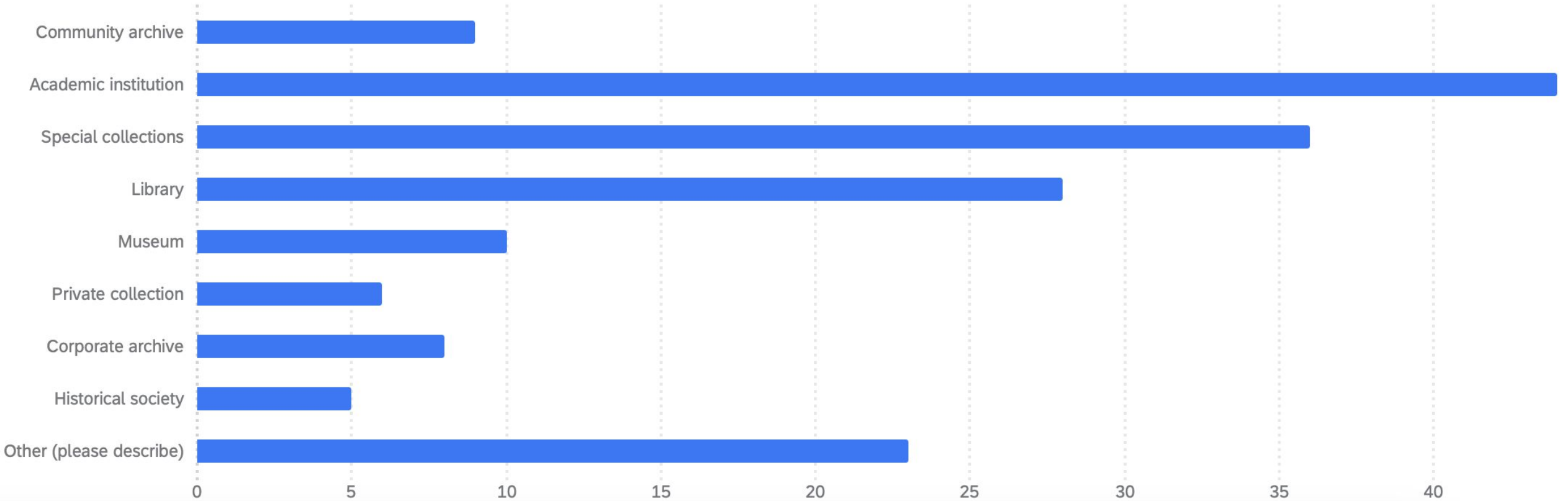
- Most of what ends up at archives comes from individual and family collections (Kretalic, et al)
- Just like the social convoy, the “material convoy” travels with one over time and traverses many different kinds of relationships (Ekerdt)
- Collecting is an everyday practice, yet most of the research on collecting up until recently has couched it using psychological extremes (Dillon)

# Research Methods/Parameters

- Online Survey
  - 147 responses, 97 complete
- One-on-one Interviews
  - 8 participants
  - Included students, recent graduates, working professionals, and a retired professional
- Mainly focused on physical rather than digital collections

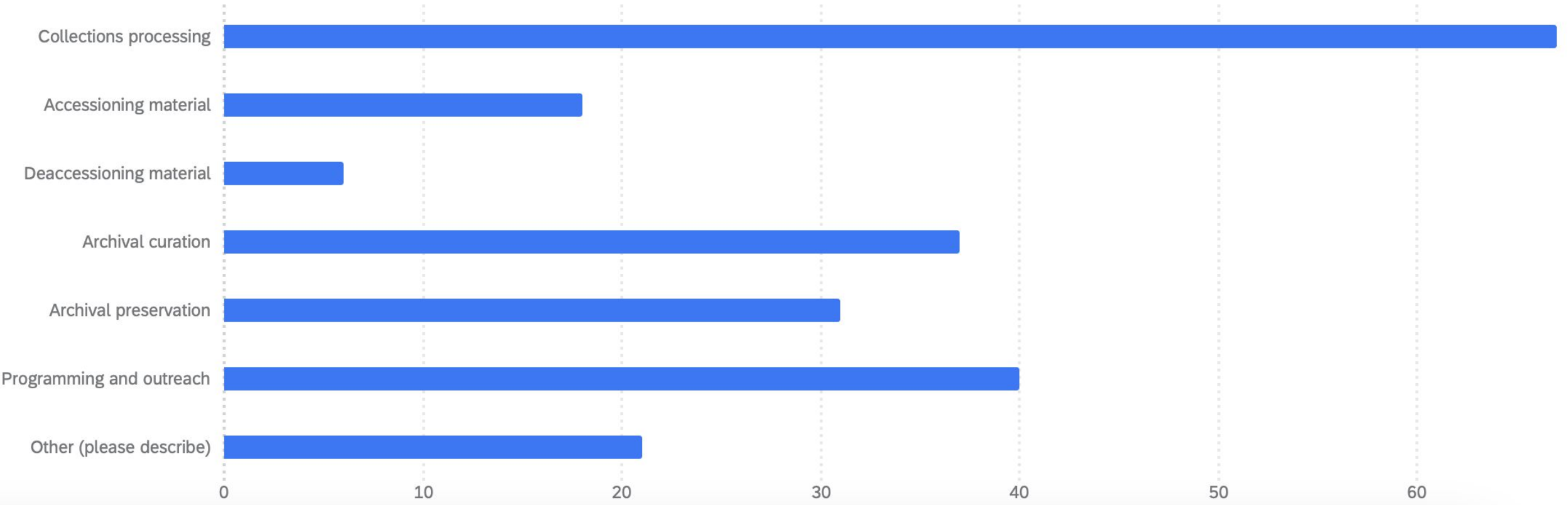
# Survey Results

How would you best describe the place where you work/volunteer? Check all that apply. 96 ⓘ



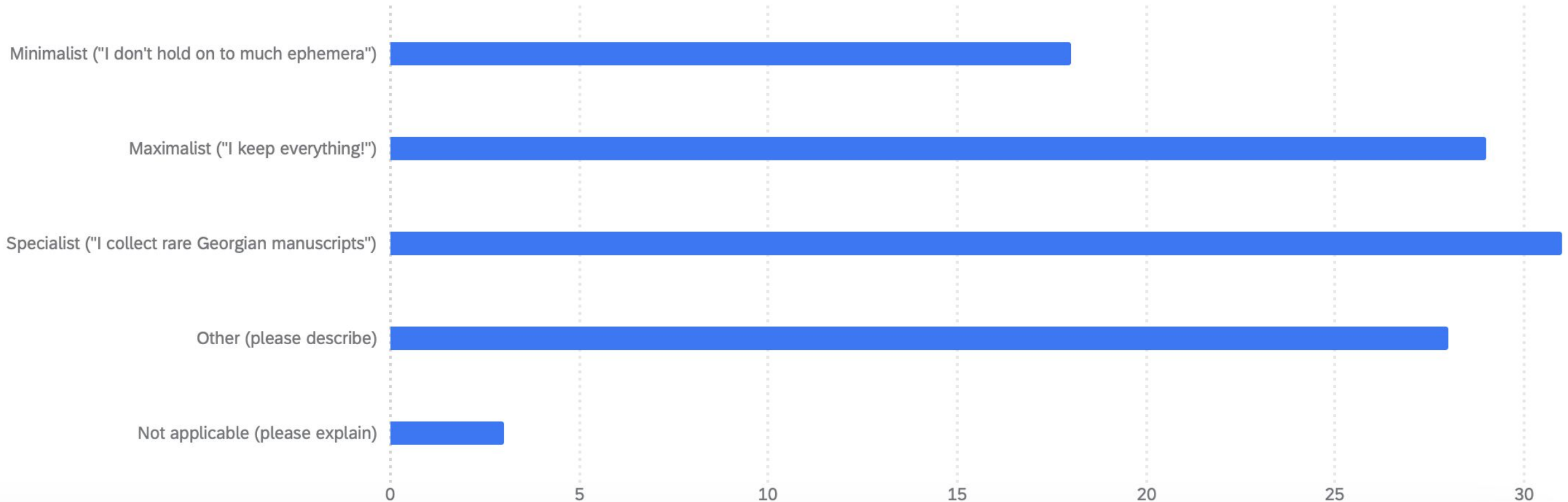
# Survey Results

What job duties do you enjoy the most? Check all that apply 92 ⓘ



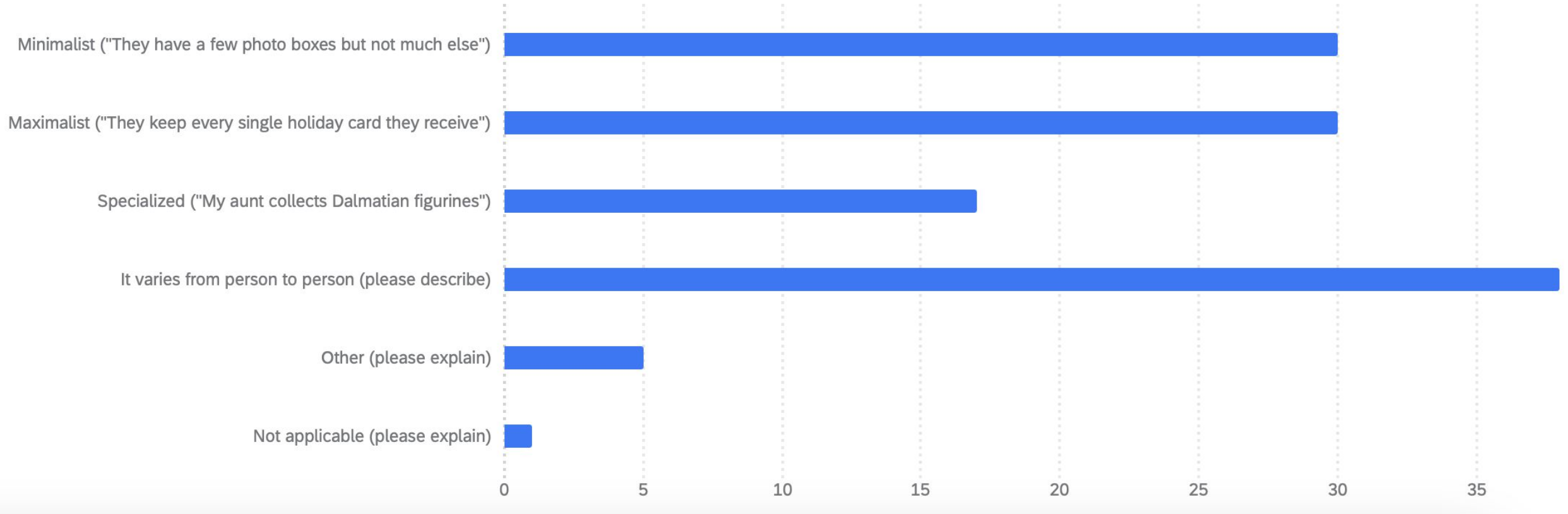
# Survey Results

How would you best describe your collecting behavior to somebody else? 96 ⓘ



# Survey Results

How would you best describe your family's collecting behavior? 96 ⓘ





# Survey Excerpts

- “My family was military, so collecting was kept to a minimum out of necessity for a long time. Afterwards, some of us responded by hanging on to everything, others kept up a more curated collecting habit”
- “I'd say we used to collect more, but after my mother's parents passed away she realized the burden of going through households of belongings and has seriously downsized.”
- “my immediate family is the ‘keep nothing’ type or the ‘give it to (me), she's the professional’ type”

# Interview Responses

- Intergenerational collecting practices
  - Same kind of collecting between parent and child
  - Inverse collecting behavior – as a response to parental collecting
  - Amalgamation of divergent parental collecting behaviors
- Personal/Professional Overlaps
  - Approach to personal collections carries over into professional settings and vice versa
    - Both inversely and directly correlated

# Emergent Questions

- Do archivists' personal collecting behaviors significantly differ from non-archivists?
- Are archivists' inherently caretakers of familial belongings, or are they assigned that role within the family because of their training?
- How will personal and intergenerational collecting practices shift with the move toward predominantly digital materials?
- How does the current demographic make-up of the professional field factor into this research? Who is left out when discussing intergenerational collecting?