Scalability and Process:
A National Survey of Inventory Practices within Archives

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Community partnership -- Terry Cook and Timothy L. Ericson.

To know about the resource and the information it contain?

How can we partner when we don't know what we have?

In a nutshell, without a comprehensive inventory, it is much harder to partner (including rights).

Hypothesis: Departing from the MPLP model used for processing through the inventory lens, a more inventory, more access (MIMA) scalable approach for lone-arranger and large archives could allow archives to know what they do not know.

Problem Statement

Population: Professionals across the United States, reaching out to state, regional and national archival and museum associations, historical societies, as well as organizations dedicated to the preservation of digital media.

Contact: email, listserv.

Questionnaire: Twelve (12) questions. Likert scale and open comment via Qualtrics.

Methodology

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Out of 243 responses, 143 were usable.

Most respondents (47.2%) expressed that they had accounted for inventorying their archival materials, but would process them at a later time.
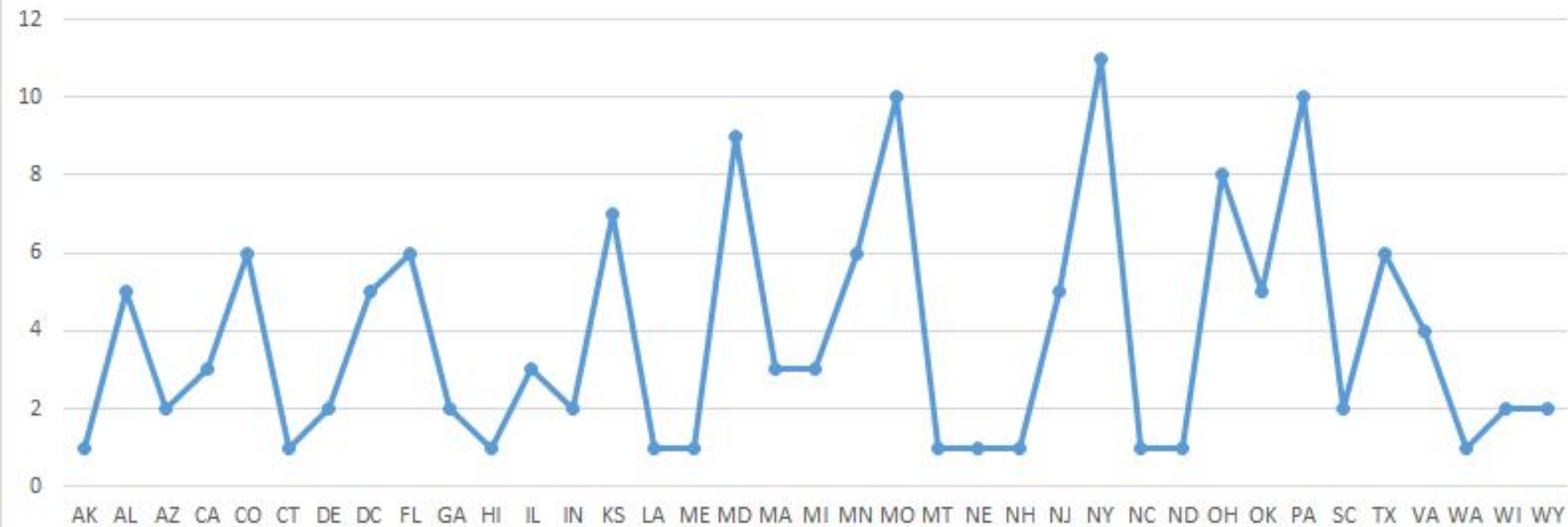
By contrast, 32.4% of materials were inventoried at the time of arrival in the Archives.

Most represented states: New York, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

Findings

Figure 1: Number of Participants who shared their geographical US location.

Note: Unidentified states are not included in this chart.

Table 4. Question 3. How much of your archival collections are inventoried?		
Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Responses
None	n/a	0
1% to 20%	12.4%	16
21% to 40%	13.9%	18
41% to 60%	24.8%	32
61% to 80%	27.9%	36
81% to 100%	20.9%	27

Findings

Table 5. Question 4: Have you created an inventory of your digital materials?		
Answer Choices	**Percentage**	**Number of Responses**
Yes	24.8%	32
No	37.9%	49
In process	37.2%	48

Findings

The archivist had the main responsibility for the creation of inventory content (76%)

Prioritizing the inventory process:

a. By demand from either users or projects (48.5%)
b. By content type and/or by enduring value (20% each)

By contrast, criteria like long-term preservation, digital curation, and rights permissions accounted for a mere 1% each.

Findings

Table 7. Question 6: Are inventory records reconciled in a central database on a regular basis?

Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Responses
Yes	32%	41
No	29.7%	38
On occasion	10.1%	13
Not sure/as much as we are able	28.1%	36

Findings

Table 9. Question 8: How has the use of an inventory translated into guidelines and procedures?

Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Responses
Thoroughly	27.3%	28
Ad hoc	58.3%	59
For digitization	4%	4
For digital preservation / curation	10%	10

Findings

"We might say that objects of which nobody is aware cannot be information, while hastening to add that they might well become so when someone does become aware of them" (Buckland, 1991, p.356)

How does the archives and museums community respond to these challenges and new demands when taking into consideration personnel and skills?

Contextualization

MIMA approach as a scalable tool.

In sum, "there is nothing wrong with being interested in 'mere ideas'." (Gauld, 2018, p.7)

In Conclusion

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References

Thanks everyone!

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