

**A\*CENSUS 2004**  
*Data Collection Methodology Report*

Prepared for:



Prepared by:

**MSI**Research  
Social Science Survey Research

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## **Introduction**

The 2004 A\*CENSUS (Archival Census & Education Needs Survey in the United States) was conducted by a team of researchers from the Society for American Archivists (SAA) in conjunction with other archivist organizations. MSIResearch, a division of Market Strategies, Inc., conducted the data collection in support of this study. A\*CENSUS was funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

The main purpose of this study was to define the universe of archivists currently in the workforce, determine the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs now and in the future, and provide baseline data to graduate and continuing education programs to support recruitment and training of new archivists.

## **Study Design**

The 2004 A\*CENSUS data collection used a multi-mode design, utilizing both web and mail surveys to collect data. The two surveys had identical content and skip logic, with the exception of a special management section and association specific questions that were asked only in the web survey. Respondents were contacted via email and U.S. Mail.

SAA provided the sample, which consisted of membership lists from the participating organizations. SAA removed all duplicates from the list prior to delivering it to MSI.

The questionnaire contained approximately 350 items with skip logic used to minimize the number of questions for any single respondent to only relevant questions. To improve the perceived legitimacy of the survey effort, both the web and mail surveys displayed the A\*CENSUS logo.

## **Data Collection**

The data collection protocol for this study began with a pre-notification letter mailed to all participants via U.S. Mail. This letter included a description of the study and instructions for how to complete the survey over the Internet. The A\*CENSUS logo was printed on both the letterhead and envelopes.

An email invitation was sent to non-respondents who did not complete the survey after receiving the pre-notification letter, followed by three email reminders. Reminders were only sent to those people who had not yet completed the survey. Each communication contained a URL and unique survey ID number to gain access to the survey. A few days after the second email reminder was sent, a list of non-responders was pulled from which 4,796 were randomly selected to receive the paper version of the survey sent via U.S. Mail. Included with the mail survey were instructions for completing the survey on the web if the participant preferred. A reminder postcard followed the paper survey, both sent via first class U.S. Mail. All communications to respondents can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1 shows the counts of emails at each stage of the data collection process that were successfully sent as well as the count that did not get delivered, otherwise known as “bounced” emails. The emails contained a subject line that identified the study and they appeared to be coming from the primary investigator.

**Table 1: Email Counts**

	Email Invitation		Email Reminder 1		Email Reminder 2		Email Reminder 3	
Date Sent	5/7/2004		5/13/2004		5/19/2004		6/9/2004	
	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Bounced</i>	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Bounced</i>	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Bounced</i>	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Bounced</i>
	7,919	1,422	6,517	295	5,161	30	4,226	61

Counts of bounced emails are often inaccurate. Email systems have many different ways of reporting bounced emails back to the sender, and frequently, even if one is warranted, no bounce message is created. Similarly, bounces may be sent in some cases where the emails were successfully delivered. Any evaluation of the sample quality using bounces should keep these facts in mind.

Table 2 shows the counts of pre-notification letters, mail surveys and postcards that were sent. It includes a count of those that were returned due to bad addresses. When a participant’s pre-notification letter was returned, a paper survey and postcard were not mailed.

**Table 2: Mail Counts**

	Pre-notification Letter		Mail Survey 1		Postcard	
Date Sent	4/30/2004		5/28/2004		6/3/2004	
	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Undeliverable</i>	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Undeliverable</i>	<i>Successful</i>	<i>Undeliverable</i>
	11,659	280	4,796	0	4,796	0

**Responses**

During data collection the eligibility of sample members was monitored. If it became clear through communication with the participant that he/she did not fit the criteria for the study, he/she was deemed ineligible. Reasons for becoming ineligible for the study include, no longer working in the archives field, deceased, etc. Table 3 shows the counts of ineligible respondents.

**Table 3: Ineligible Respondents**

<b>Sample Size *</b>	<b>Ineligible *</b>	<b>Eligible Sample *</b>
11,939	97	11,842

*\*See Table 6 for definition of terms.*

A small percentage of respondents informed study staff that they did not wish to participate in the study. These requests were received via email and telephone. Participants' requests not to participate were granted and were noted in the sample database so that further contacts with the refusing participant were not processed. The counts of refusals are provided in Table 4.

**Table 4: Refusals**

<b>Sample Size *</b>	<b>Refusals*</b>	<b>Refusal %*</b>
11,842	38	0.32%

*\*See Table 6 for definition of terms.*

The overall response rate for this study was 45.83% and the total number of completed cases was 4,913. The responses for the overall study are shown in Table 5, along with the breakdown of web survey responses versus mail survey responses.

**Table 5: Responses**

	Web		Mail		Total			
<i>Eligible Sample</i>	<i>Partials *</i>	<i>Completes*</i>	<i>Partials*</i>	<i>Completes*</i>	<i>Partials*</i>	<i>Completes*</i>	<i>RR%*</i>	<i>CR%*</i>
	515	4308	0	605	515	4913	45.83%	90.51%

*\*See Table 6 for definition of terms.*

**Table 6: Definitions of Terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<i>Sample Size (n)</i>	The count of sample members included in the original sample from SAA.
<i>Eligible Sample (E)</i>	The count of sample members who were eligible to take the survey.
<i>Completed Surveys (C)</i>	The count of respondents who reached the last question in the base questionnaire and submitted it. This count does not take into account any missing data.
<i>Partial Surveys (P)</i>	The count of respondents who started the survey, but did not finish it.
<i>Response Rate (RR%)</i>	The number of completed surveys plus the number of partially completed surveys divided by the eligible sample size. The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) accepts this rate as a standard rate for report response rates <sup>1</sup> . This is AAPOR response rate calculation #2. $((C+P+V)/E)$
<i>Completion Rate (CR%)</i>	The number of completed surveys divided by the number of completed surveys plus partially completed surveys. $(C/(C+P+V))$
<i>Ineligible (I)</i>	Count of participants who were determined to be ineligible for the study. Reasons for becoming ineligible include, no longer working in the archives field, deceased, etc.
<i>Refusals (R)</i>	Count of participants who indicated that they did not want to participate in the survey.
<i>Refusal %</i>	Count of participants who expressed that they did not want to participate in the survey divided by the total sample. $(R/N)$
<i>Unknown (U)</i>	The count of cases where eligibility is unknown. Used in AAPOR response rate #4

<sup>1</sup> From *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcomes Rates for Surveys*. The American Association for Public Opinion Research (2000).

### **Non-Response Follow-up**

At the end of the data collection period 1,200 non-responders were randomly selected for a non-response phone follow-up. Of those selected, 586 had a valid phone number listed in the sample file. 227 completed the non-response study. The survey collected basic information about the respondents and their current occupation for use in data analysis but also asked for reasons for non-response to the main survey.

The main goal of the non-response follow-up was to determine the eligibility of the non-responders. Of the 227 responders, 13 indicated that they no longer worked in the archival field and were therefore ineligible to complete the study. These results are reflected in the response rate section below.

### **Response Rates**

Two response rates are calculated below.

AAPOR Response Rate #2: This is a simple calculation that includes responses/eligible sample.

$$(C+P)/[(C+P)+(R)+(U)]$$
$$(4913+515)/[(4913+515)+(38)+(6376)] = \mathbf{45.83\%}$$

AAPOR Response Rate #4: This is a calculation that uses an estimate of eligibility (e) amongst those of unknown eligibility. This estimate is derived by calculating the eligibility rate from the non-response phone survey.

$$(C+P)/[(C+P)+(R)+e(U)]$$
$$e = (1-(13/227)) = .947$$
$$(4913+515)/[(4913+515)+(38)+(.947)(6376)] = \mathbf{47.18\%}$$

### **No ID Survey**

In addition to the sample controlled version of the survey there was also a version of the survey that could be accessed without an ID number. This version was used to elicit responses from archivists who were not included in the sample lists. The URL was posted to newsgroups and mailing lists by project staff. Overall 158 unique completed surveys and 34 unique partials were received via this survey.



## **Appendix A: Custom Communications**

### **Mail Pre-notification Letter**

Dear {MERGE FIRST NAME} {MERGE LAST NAME}

A\*CENSUS (Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the U.S.), the first truly comprehensive nationwide survey of the archival profession, is ready for your response!

Funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), A\*CENSUS seeks to define the universe of archivists currently in the workforce, determine the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs now and in the future, and provide graduate and continuing education programs with baseline data to support recruitment and training of new archivists.

The survey was developed by the A\*CENSUS Working Group, whose members represent national and regional associations, graduate archival education programs, and continuing education programs, as well as the interests of diverse communities. The survey is being fielded by MSIResearch, a national survey research firm contracted by the A\*CENSUS Working Group.

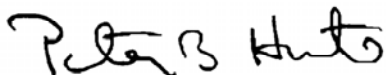
The survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes. You may exit and re-enter the survey as many times as you wish. Your participation is voluntary; all of your data are confidential and will be reported in aggregate form only.

In the coming days you will receive an email invitation to complete the survey. However, if you wish to complete the survey via the Internet now, follow these steps:

1. Take note of your unique survey ID: {MERGE ID}
2. Go to <http://www.msisurvey.com/acensus> and enter your survey ID in the space provided

If you have questions or require technical assistance, please contact the MSI Support Desk by sending an email to [acensus@msisurvey.com](mailto:acensus@msisurvey.com) or by calling toll free, 1.866.674.3375. Please refer to the A\*CENSUS survey and provide your survey ID: {RESTORE ID}.

Thank you for your participation!



Peter B. Hirtle, Chair  
A\*CENSUS Working Group

For more information about the A\*CENSUS project, visit [www.archivists.org](http://www.archivists.org) or contact [acensus@archivists.org](mailto:acensus@archivists.org).

**Email Invitation**

Subject: Be Counted in the A\*Census!  
From: Peter B. Hirtle

Dear {MERGE FIRST NAME} {MERGE LAST NAME}

You should have recently received a letter informing you of this important research study. The A\*CENSUS (Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the U.S.), the first truly comprehensive nationwide survey of the archival profession, is ready for your response!

Funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), A\*CENSUS seeks to define the universe of archivists currently in the workforce, determine the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs now and in the future, and provide graduate and continuing education programs with baseline data to support recruitment and training of new archivists.

The survey was developed by the A\*CENSUS Working Group, whose members represent national and regional associations, graduate archival education programs, and continuing education programs, as well as the interests of diverse communities. The survey is being fielded by MSIResearch, a national survey research firm contracted by the A\*CENSUS Working Group.

The survey will take approximately 45 minutes. You may exit and re-enter the survey as many times as you wish. Your participation is voluntary; all of your data are confidential and will be reported in aggregate form only.

Please participate now by following these steps:

1. Take note of your unique survey ID: {MERGE ID}
2. Go to <http://www.msisurvey.com/acensus> and enter your survey ID in the space provided

If you have questions or require technical assistance, please contact the MSI Support Desk by sending an email to [acensus@msisurvey.com](mailto:acensus@msisurvey.com) or by calling toll free, 1.866.674.3375. Please refer to the A\*CENSUS survey and provide your survey ID: {RESTORE ID}.

Thank you for your participation!

Peter B. Hirtle, Chair  
A\*CENSUS Working Group

For more information about the A\*CENSUS project, visit [www.archivists.org](http://www.archivists.org) or contact [acensus@archivists.org](mailto:acensus@archivists.org).

**Email Reminder 1**

Subject: Still Time to Be Counted in the A\*Census!  
From: Peter B. Hirtle

Dear {MERGE FIRST NAME} {MERGE LAST NAME}

A few days ago, we contacted you about participating in the A\*CENSUS (Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the U.S.). Since then, we have received thousands of responses from archival professionals across the country. Along with their responses, your professional colleagues have reported that they have found participating in the survey to be a very interesting and thought-provoking experience.

The survey is still available for you to participate!

The survey will take approximately 45 minutes. You may exit and re-enter the survey as many times as you wish. Your participation is voluntary; all of your data are confidential and will be reported in aggregate form only.

Please participate now by following these steps:

1. Take note of your unique survey ID: {RESTORE ID}
2. Go to <http://www.msisurvey.com/acensus> and enter your survey ID in the space provided

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The survey was developed by the A\*CENSUS Working Group, whose members represent national and regional associations, graduate archival education programs, and continuing education programs, as well as the interests of diverse communities. The survey is being fielded by MSIResearch, a national survey research firm contracted by the A\*CENSUS Working Group.

If you have questions or require technical assistance, please contact the MSI Support Desk by sending an email to [acensus@msisurvey.com](mailto:acensus@msisurvey.com) or by calling toll free, 1.866.674.3375. Please refer to the A\*CENSUS survey and provide your survey ID: {RESTORE ID}.

Thank you for your participation!

Peter B. Hirtle, Chair  
A\*CENSUS Working Group

For more information about the A\*CENSUS project, visit [www.archivists.org](http://www.archivists.org) or contact [acensus@archivists.org](mailto:acensus@archivists.org).

**Email Reminder 2**

Subject: A\*Census: If you receive this email, we want to hear from you!  
From: Peter B. Hirtle

Dear {MERGE FIRST NAME} {MERGE LAST NAME}

The A\*CENSUS (Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the U.S.) is well underway. Across the country, we have received responses from professionals like you. We will continue to collect responses for a short time.

If you receive this email, it means that we believe that you are an archivist or have an interest in archives. We are trying to reach everyone whose work is archives-related, so even if you are not a full-time professional archivist, your participation in A\*CENSUS is important. You will be provided with an opportunity to describe the nature of your work.

In about a week, we will be mailing paper copies of the survey to some of those who have not yet responded. But given limited resources, we would greatly appreciate your response via the Internet now so that we can save the postage.

Please participate now by following these steps:

1. Take note of your unique survey ID: {RESTORE ID}
2. Go to <http://www.msisurvey.com/acensus> and enter your survey ID in the space provided

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The survey was developed by the A\*CENSUS Working Group, whose members represent national and regional associations, graduate archival education programs, and continuing education programs, as well as the interests of diverse communities. The survey is being fielded by MSIResearch, a national survey research firm contracted by the A\*CENSUS Working Group.

The survey will take approximately 45 minutes. You may exit and re-enter the survey as many times as you wish. Your participation is voluntary; all of your data are confidential and will be reported in aggregate form only.

If you have questions or require technical assistance, please contact the MSI Support Desk by sending an email to [acensus@msisurvey.com](mailto:acensus@msisurvey.com) or by calling toll free, 1.866.674.3375. Please refer to the A\*CENSUS survey and provide your survey ID: {RESTORE ID}.

Thank you for your participation!

Peter B. Hirtle, Chair  
A\*CENSUS Working Group

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**Email Reminder 3**

Subject: Archivist Census: Your last chance to be counted!  
From: Peter B. Hirtle

Dear {MERGE FIRST NAME} {MERGE LAST NAME}

A\*CENSUS (Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the U.S.) is wrapping up. Participate now or you won't be counted! The survey will close on Tuesday, June 22, 2004.

**Even if you don't think you fit the definition of an "archivist," it is important that we hear from you. We deliberately cast our "net" broadly because many people who work with archives and manuscripts come from other professions or occupations. We want to understand more about their needs and concerns in addition to those of professional archivists.**

Please participate now by following these steps:

1. Take note of your unique survey ID: {RESTORE ID}
2. Go to <http://www.msisurvey.com/acensus> and enter your survey ID in the space provided

Funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), A\*CENSUS seeks to define the universe of archivists currently in the workforce, determine the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs now and in the future, and provide graduate and continuing education programs with baseline data to support recruitment and training of new archivists.

The survey was developed by the A\*CENSUS Working Group, whose members represent national and regional associations, graduate archival education programs, and continuing education programs, as well as the interests of diverse communities. The survey is being fielded by MSIResearch, a national survey research firm contracted by the A\*CENSUS Working Group.

The survey will take approximately 45 minutes. You may exit and re-enter the survey as many times as you wish. Your participation is voluntary; all of your data are confidential and will be reported in aggregate form only.

If you have questions or require technical assistance, please contact the MSI Support Desk by sending an email to [acensus@msisurvey.com](mailto:acensus@msisurvey.com) or by calling toll free, 1.866.674.3375. Please refer to the A\*CENSUS survey and provide your survey ID: {RESTORE ID}.

Thank you for your participation!

Peter B. Hirtle, Chair  
A\*CENSUS Working Group

For more information about the A\*CENSUS project visit [www.archivists.org](http://www.archivists.org) or contact [acensus@archivists.org](mailto:acensus@archivists.org).

**Mail Survey Cover Letter**

Dear {MERGE FIRST NAME} {MERGE LAST NAME}

You should have recently received a letter and/or email messages informing you of an important research study of the archival profession. A\*CENSUS (Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the U.S.), the first truly comprehensive nationwide survey of the profession, is ready for your response!

**You have been included in this study because you are a member of a professional association related to the archives field or have participated in a recent archival education program or conference. Your membership is a good indicator that you have an interest in the profession, and we hope that you will complete the survey.**

Funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), A\*CENSUS seeks to define the universe of archivists currently in the workforce, determine the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs now and in the future, and provide graduate and continuing education programs with baseline data to support recruitment and training of new archivists.

The survey was developed by the A\*CENSUS Working Group whose members represent national and regional associations, graduate archival education programs, and continuing education programs, as well as the interests of diverse communities. The survey is being fielded by MSIResearch, a national survey research firm contracted by the A\*CENSUS Working Group.

For most participants, the survey will take approximately 30 minutes. Your participation is voluntary; all of your data are confidential and will be reported in aggregate form only.

**To participate, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided. Or to participate online, please follow these steps:**

1. Take note of your unique survey ID: **{RESTORE ID}**
2. Go to <http://www.msisurvey.com/acensus> and enter your survey ID in the space provided. If you choose to take the survey online, you may exit and re-enter the survey as many times as you wish.

If you require technical assistance, please contact the MSI Support Desk by sending an email to [acensus@msisurvey.com](mailto:acensus@msisurvey.com) or by calling toll free, 1-866-674-3375. Please refer to the A\*CENSUS survey and provide your survey ID: {RESTORE ID}.

For additional information about the A\*CENSUS project, visit [www.archivists.org](http://www.archivists.org). Or contact Jodie Strickland, A\*CENSUS Project Assistant, by email at [a-census@archivists.org](mailto:a-census@archivists.org) or by telephone at 1-312-922-0140.

Thank you for your participation!

Peter B. Hirtle, Chair  
A\*CENSUS Working Group



**Mail Postcard**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

Over the past several weeks, you may have heard from us about your participation in the A\*CENSUS, a comprehensive nationwide survey of the archival profession. The survey is funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and led by a Working Group that consists of most major professional archival associations. If you have already completed the survey via the Internet or mail, we thank you.

You are part of a special sample. Your firsthand experience and knowledge are vital. If you have missed this survey, and would like instructions for how to participate, please email your full name to us at [acensus@msisurvey.com](mailto:acensus@msisurvey.com).

Thank you for your participation!