

A*CENSUS Background and Technical Notes

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Background

The A*CENSUS was funded by the [Institute for Museum and Library Services](#) (IMLS) and was one of the first projects supported through its program, "Librarians for the 21st Century." The A*CENSUS project, therefore, has placed emphasis on several topics that directly relate to preparing the next generation of archivists: education and training, credentials, aging of the profession, diversity, and leadership. All of these issues were already on the agendas of many of the archival associations at the national, regional, state, and local levels. This made the IMLS "21st Century" grant program an especially good fit for pursuing archival priorities.

IMLS approved the grant in late October 2003. On November 13, the 28-member [A*CENSUS Working Group](#) assembled in Chicago for its first meeting. Over the course of the next several months, the Working Group defined the areas of inquiry, developed the questions, and tested the online survey instrument. The Working Group also provided critical service in publicizing the survey, encouraging their own members to participate, and spreading the word to other organizations.

MSI Research, a survey research firm in Michigan, developed and delivered both the online and paper survey instruments. The A*CENSUS schedule was ambitious, targeting April-June 2004 for the survey so that preliminary data would be ready by the SAA annual meeting in August 2004. The project staff received the final data set on July 22 and made its first presentation on August 2. At the same time, members of the A*CENSUS Working Group received "banner books" containing data on their own associations' members (or the entire dataset if they were an educator or other representative) on August 4. Soon we hope to make a "public use" dataset available to anyone who wants it.

Who We Surveyed

Most of the individuals in the mailing list for the A*CENSUS were members of one or more archival associations. We chose to use association mailing lists as our primary source for contacts because we believed that joining an archival association is a strong indicator of some level of identity with the profession as a whole. We identified more than 65 separate archival associations in the U.S. and contacted each one of them to see if they would share their mailing lists. We had remarkable cooperation from all of them. If the organization was still operating, we could find the individuals in charge, and they had a list of members available, they sent it to us. In all, we received a total of 16,581 names from 59 associations.

We also sought out mailing lists from a variety of other sources. The National Archives sent a list of 707 staff members comprising all employees in the Archivist (1420) job series and in grades 9 and above in the Archives Specialist (1421) job series. The state archives submitted lists of 264 staff members and 790 other individuals who were on their mailing lists. We also included 299 participants in the Modern Archives Institute and Western Archives Institutes in 2002-2004 and 59 participants in the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Archives Training Institute. In an effort to reach those caring for Native American collections, we also contacted 512 individuals who attended two conferences on tribal libraries and archives and everyone on the contact lists for the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

ARMA and AASLH had policies prohibiting use of members' email addresses by outside organizations, but each actively promoted the A*CENSUS through their own paper and electronic mail channels.

We started with a total of 19,350 names, but the list contained many duplicate entries. It is very common for an individual archivist to belong to several associations, so we had to go through an extensive “de-duping” process. In the end, the mailing list we sent to MSI, the survey research firm that executed the A*CENSUS, contained 11,939 individuals.

A*CENSUS Mailing List

Started with a total of 19,350 names:

- 16,581 Membership lists from 57 archival associations, plus AAM archives group (42) and I-ASSIST (17)
- 707 All National Archives staff in the GS-1420 series (archivists), plus those at grade 9 or above in the GS-1421 series (archives specialists) and selected staff in other series whose work focuses largely on archival practice
- 264 State archives staff lists
- 512 Attendees at conferences on tribal libraries and archives, NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) mailing list, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs)
- 59 Participants in Historically Black Colleges and Universities Archives Training Institute
- 299 Participants in Modern and Western Archives Institutes (most recent 3 years)
- 110 Respondents to NFACE survey re: continuing education (duplicate names and volunteers removed)
- 790 State archives and SHRAB mailing lists of individuals
- 28 Self-nominated / added during final review

After duplicate names were removed, the mailing list contained 11,939 individuals.

Response rate

The total number of individuals who responded to the A*CENSUS was 5,620. 5,428 used an ID number that we provided to them through email and surface mail communications; 192 took the no-ID version of the survey having learned about it through news releases, announcements on listservs, or other publicity efforts.

Of the 5,620 total respondents, 5,105 completed the entire survey while 515 submitted partial data. The number of people who answered the first question is only 5,492, meaning that 127 people opened the survey online, saw the first page of text, and then closed it without responding to any of the questions. One of the last questions in the survey asked about gender; 4,811 individuals responded to that question. That means that another 681 people exited the survey or simply refused to respond to questions along the way. Given that the average time required to complete the survey was about 45 minutes, the fact that 5,105 were willing to stick with it through the end is remarkable.

The official response rate calculated by the A*CENSUS research firm, MSI, is 47.18%. (A detailed description of how MSI calculated the response rate is contained in the [MSI methodology report](#).) While not as high as we might have hoped for overall, it compares favorably to the response rate of the last comprehensive survey of archivists in the U.S. conducted by David Bearman in 1982. Of the 4,000 individuals Bearman contacted, 1,717 responded for a 43% overall response rate. The A*CENSUS contacted nearly three times as many people and heard from, proportionally, slightly more than that.

Even more significant, the A*CENSUS respondents represent a significant proportion of most of the national and regional archival associations and many of the state and local archival associations. In 12 associations, the number of respondents indicating that they belonged to those organizations topped 70 percent of the total number of individual members. For the Society of American Archivists, 2,409 individuals indicated membership which is equivalent to 82.7% of SAA's total number of individual members. For the Academy of Certified Archivists, 593 indicated membership, equivalent to 77.5% of ACA's members. The number of A*CENSUS respondents who said they belonged to each archival association is available in the table, ["Archival Association Members."](#)

Calculating approximate means in the A*CENSUS

Process for calculating approximate means for questions with ranges

We have calculated "approximate means" for all of the questions which use ranges for responses. The "approximate means" are calculated by multiplying the number of respondents for each range by an assigned value, adding these products together, and then dividing the total by the total number of respondents.

In most cases, the value used for calculation is the center of the range. For instance, the value used to calculate the "approximate mean" for the age range 25-29 years is 27.5 years and the value used for the salary range \$35,000-\$39,999 is \$35,000.

For those ranges at the top ("and over") and bottom ("less than"), we have chosen a value that we believe is most appropriate for making these calculations. Someone could legitimately argue that another value is more appropriate and use it instead to recalculate the approximate means for each question. For most questions, the number of responses in the lowest and highest ranges is small, so changes in the values used for these ranges will have only minor effect on the overall "approximate mean" value.

The tables, below, show the values used to calculate the "approximate means" for each affected question.

Age (field name: agefinal)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Under 25	21
2	25-29	27.5
3	30-34	32.5

4	35-39	37.5
5	40-44	42.5
6	45-49	45.7
7	50-54	52.5
8	55-59	57.5
9	60-64	62.5
10	65 and over	69
11	Rather not say	Not included

Salary (field name: Q34a). Please indicate your total annual salary for 2003.

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than \$20,000	15,000
2	\$20,000-\$29,999	25,000
3	\$30,000-\$39,999	35,000
4	\$40,000-\$49,999	45,000
5	\$50,000-\$59,999	55,000
6	\$60,000-\$69,999	65,000
7	\$70,000-\$79,999	75,000
8	\$80,000-\$89,999	85,000
9	\$90,000-\$99,999	95,000
10	\$100,000 and over	110,000
11	Rather not say	Not included

Employer support for continuing education: Registration fees (field name: Q14a)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	None	\$0
2	Less than \$500	\$250
3	\$500 to \$999	\$750
4	\$1,000 to \$1,499	\$1,250
5	\$1,500 to \$1,999	\$1,750
6	\$2,000 to \$2,499	\$2,250
7	\$2,500 or more	\$3,000
8	Rather not say	Not included

Employer support for continuing education: Travel/lodging (field name: Q14b)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	None	\$0
2	Less than \$500	\$250
3	\$500 to \$999	\$750
4	\$1,000 to \$1,499	\$1,250
5	\$1,500 to \$1,999	\$1,750
6	\$2,000 to \$2,499	\$2,250
7	\$2,500 or more	\$3,000
8	Rather not say	Not included

Amount willing to invest personally in continuing education: Registration fees
(field name: Q15a)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than \$500	\$250
2	\$500 to \$999	\$750
3	\$1,000 to \$1,499	\$1,250
4	\$1,500 to \$1,999	\$1,750
5	\$2,000 to \$2,499	\$2,250
6	\$2,500 or more	\$3,000
7	Whatever it takes	Calculated separately
8	Employer pays	Calculated separately
9	Rather not say	Not included

Amount willing to invest personally in continuing education: Travel/lodging
(field name: Q15b)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than \$500	\$250
2	\$500 to \$999	\$750
3	\$1,000 to \$1,499	\$1,250
4	\$1,500 to \$1,999	\$1,750
5	\$2,000 to \$2,499	\$2,250
6	\$2,500 or more	\$3,000
7	Whatever it takes	Calculated separately

8	Employer pays	Calculated separately
9	Rather not say	Not included

Retirement (field name: Q33). If you expect to end your career while still working in the archival field, when do you plan to do so?

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than 3 years	1.5 years
2	3 - 9 years	6 years
3	10 - 19 years	15 years
4	20 - 29 years	25 years
5	30 plus years	35 years
6	Don't know	Not included

Proportion of managers' time performing core archival functions (field name M2a)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than 10%	5%
2	11 – 25%	18.5%
3	26 – 50%	37.5%
4	51 – 75%	62.5%
5	76 – 100%	87.5%
6	Do not have these responsibilities	Calculated separately
7	Don't know	Not included

Proportion of managers' time devoted to management responsibilities (field name M2b)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than 10%	5%
2	11 – 25%	18.5%
3	26 – 50%	37.5%
4	51 – 75%	62.5%
5	76 – 100%	87.5%
6	Do not have these responsibilities	Calculated separately
7	Don't know	Not included

Proportion of managers' time devoted to other responsibilities (field name M2c)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than 10%	5%
2	11 – 25%	18.5%
3	26 – 50%	37.5%
4	51 – 75%	62.5%
5	76 – 100%	87.5%
6	Do not have these responsibilities	Calculated separately
7	Don't know	Not included

Proportion of staff time devoted to archival work (field name M5)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than 10%	5%
2	11 – 25%	18.5%
3	26 – 50%	37.5%
4	51 – 75%	62.5%
5	76 – 100%	87.5%
6	Don't know	Not included

Proportion of volunteer time devoted to archival work (field name M7a)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than 10%	5%
2	11 – 25%	18.5%
3	26 – 50%	37.5%
4	51 – 75%	62.5%
5	76 – 100%	87.5%
6	Don't know	Not included

Proportion of volunteer time devoted to non-archival work (field name M7b)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than 10%	5%
2	11 – 25%	18.5%

3	26 – 50%	37.5%
4	51 – 75%	62.5%
5	76 – 100%	87.5%
6	Don't know	Not included

Budget. Please indicate the total annual budget of the unit for which you are responsible. (field name: M8a)

Response code	Range	Value used for calculation
1	Less than \$1,000	\$500
2	\$1,001 – \$4,999	\$3,000
3	\$5,000 - \$9,999	\$7,500
4	\$10,000 - \$19,999	\$15,000
5	\$20,000 – \$49,999	\$35,000
6	\$50,000 - \$99,999	\$75,000
7	\$100,000 - \$249,999	\$175,000
8	\$250,000-\$499,999	\$375,000
9	\$500,000 or more	\$800,000
10	Not sure	Not included