Why Are Users Searching Archives Online? Results of a User Survey from 12 State and Regional Archival Finding Aid Aggregators (NAFAN)

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At the 2021 Research Forum, OCLC Research reported preliminary findings from a national user survey from the Building a National Finding Aid Network (NAFAN) project, a two-year IMLS-funded research and demonstration project that seeks to lay the foundation for a national finding aid network that serves as the central point of search for archival finding aids across all collections (LG-246349-OLS-20). As the first survey to capture more than 3,000 archival users and the first of its scale focused on archival aggregation, it was most important to initially identify who searches for archival materials online and their search behaviors. This presentation is a follow-up to last year's presentation about the project's survey results and includes an analysis of archival users clustered into five groups. These five groups – Professional, Personal Interest, Family History, Student and Faculty - represent the different characteristics and information needs of users of archival aggregation. Descriptive statistics for each group and the user motivations and needs will be shared. The presentation will provide a more nuanced profile of the demographic characteristics of archival users and their path from the discovery and access of archival materials drawn from survey questions focused on the length of projects, the types of projects requiring archival materials, and the types of materials needed. This proposal is one of three focusing on different aspects of NAFAN project research, each will present on distinct data gathering and analysis activities.

About the author:

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