

SAA Preservation Section 2011 Membership Survey Report

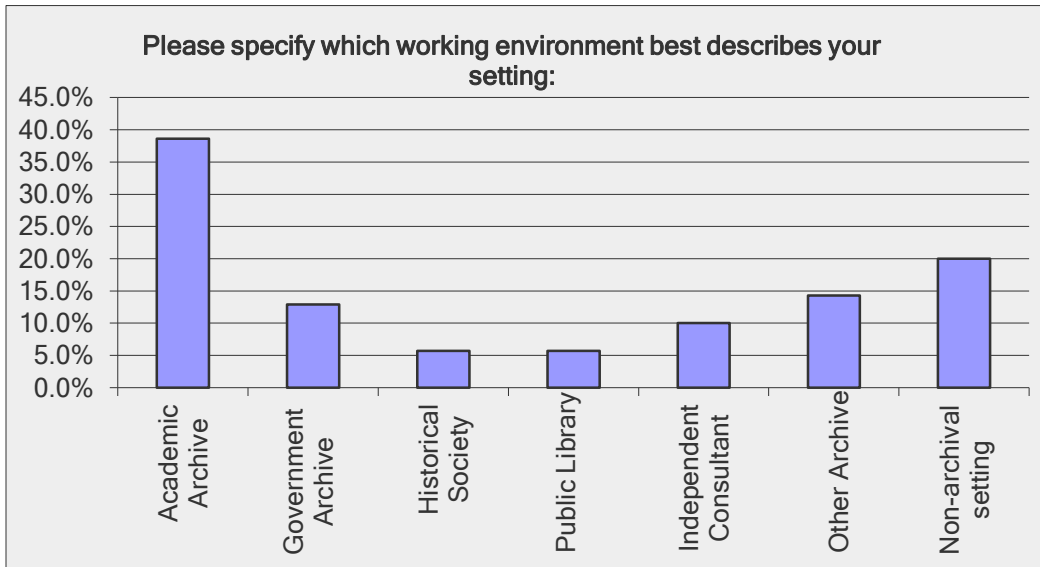
In the fall/winter of 2011 the Society of American Archivists Preservation Section surveyed its membership. The purpose of this survey was to gather information about the members themselves, to learn more about their professional interests, and to gauge their needs with regard to services and direction of the Preservation Section. Results from this survey will inform strategic planning of the Preservation Section.

Methodology

The section’s Steering Committee came up with 10 questions, which were compiled and entered into SurveyMonkey by the Outreach Committee Chairperson. The full survey is attached to the end of this report. Members of the Steering Committee sent out e-mails to SAA and other archival or preservation-related listservs asking people to fill out the survey. The survey was open for two months, from November 15, 2011 – January 15, 2012.

Survey Participants

74 respondents participated in this survey out of 972 registered section members. This represents .07% of the total section membership. Over half of respondents identified themselves as working in government or academic archives. Those that responded as working in “Other” or “Non-archival settings” described their employment as academic library, museum, conservation center/lab, preservation department, digital/digitization lab, corporate archive or in archives or conservation education. Though over half of the respondents identify as associated with an academic or government archive, we see diversity in the working environment of section membership.

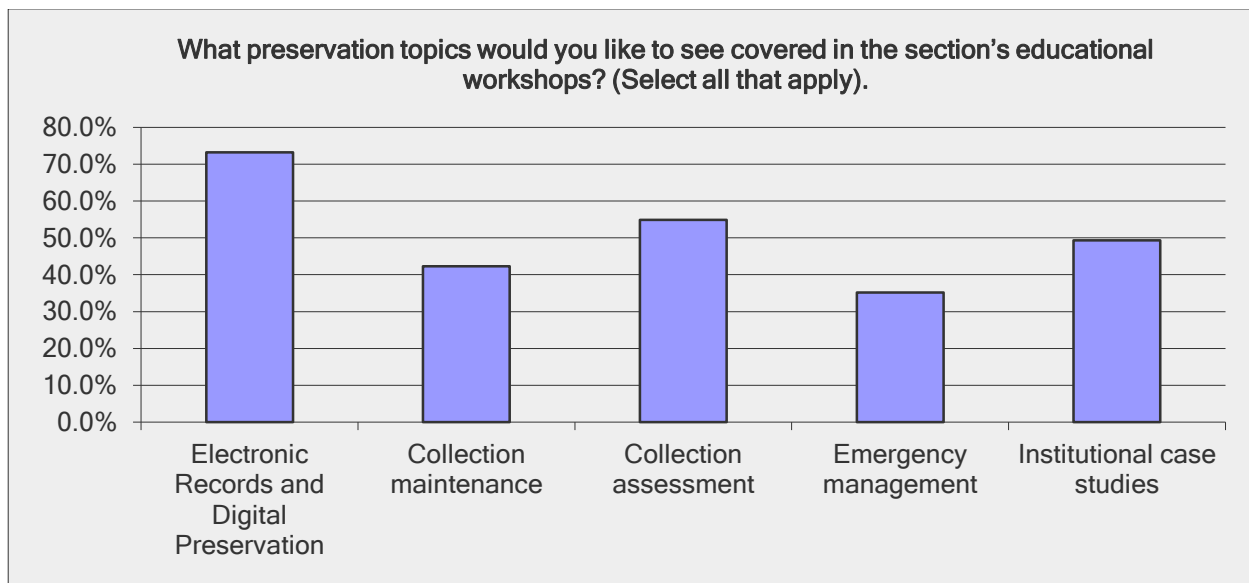


Preservation Concerns

We asked participants to identify (via free text field) their greatest preservation need and what they thought their supervisor would identify as the greatest preservation need. By loosely categorizing the answers, we see that three responses—digital preservation (or electronic records), environmental control, and resources (funding, staff, space)—appeared most frequently. Other concerns that surfaced include preservation of audiovisual materials, digitization projects, education, conservation, disaster planning and surveys/assessments. Finally, a few respondents included concerns about preservation in small institutions. We are not able to produce reliable conclusions on the difference between participants’ responses and how they thought their supervisors would respond (for reasons related to inconsistencies in entering answers into a free text field).

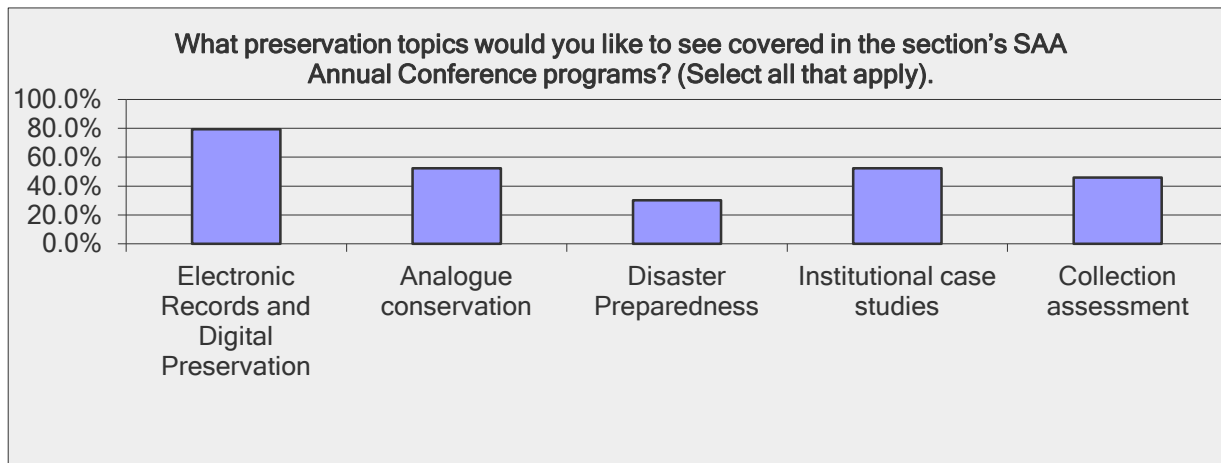
Educational Opportunities

Respondents were asked to choose (as many as appropriate) what type of educational workshops they would like to see offered by the Preservation Section. Respondents’ needs reflect workplace concerns as discussed above. 70% of respondents would like to see digital preservation and electronic records offered in an educational setting. Over 50% of respondents would like to see training on how to conduct collection assessments, and nearly 50% would like to hear more about institutional case studies. 42% of respondents marked their interest in collection maintenance and 35% in emergency management. Respondents were also asked to add their own ideas. These responses varied widely, from basic conservation (book repair, treatment) to metadata and digitization in small libraries.



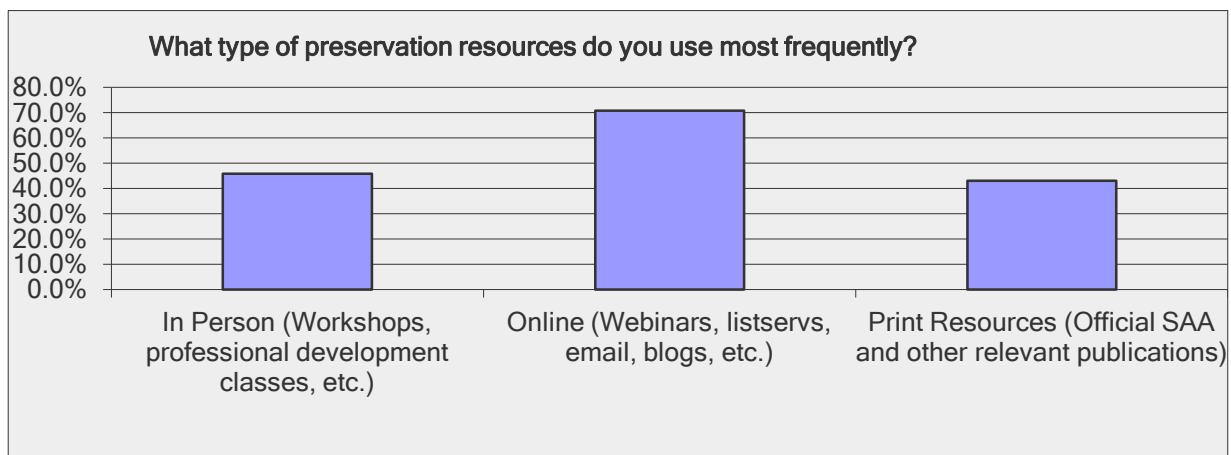
Conference Programming

Nearly 80% of the respondents would like to see programs on electronic records and digital preservation offered by the Section during SAA's annual conference. Reformatting and institutional case studies followed as the next most popular topics chosen by respondents. Collection assessment and disaster preparedness also received a significant percentage of marks.



Preservation Resources

Respondents overwhelmingly chose online resources (defined as webinars, listservs, email and blogs) as the most frequently used method for getting preservation information. Just over 40% of respondents also chose in-person workshops or print resources as resources they consult. A number of respondents mentioned the benefit of reaching out to colleagues in the field.



Use of Preservation Section Website

73% of respondents indicated that they rarely or never use the Preservation Section website. 30% of these responders did not realize that the Section had a website. This information reinforces the efforts of the section to update and promote the section's web presence. To that end, respondents were asked to identify the resource or tool that they found the most useful (see the Appendix for list of responses). These responses will be considered as we update the "Preservation Resources" section of the website.

Section Involvement

20% of the respondents volunteered to work with committee chairs on activities including outreach, education and web/publications. These members have been contacted.

Conclusion

As expected, our survey indicated that we have a membership who are engaged and challenged by today's preservation environment. While many responded with a need for more attention to digital preservation, we see that members still have great concern for the overall preservation environment and the amount of resources devoted to it. Fortunately, the Steering Committee is already addressing how best to support some of these needs. Currently the Web Committee is working to redesign the section's website to make it more robust and easier to navigate. The Education Section is developing the "Resources" page, and the SAA 2012 conference Program Committee have accepted sessions endorsed by the Preservation Section that cover digital preservation, assessment, and low-cost preservation tools. The Preservation Section Steering Committee will review the survey results and follow up with initiatives that address the needs of the members. We have already contacted Section membership for assistance with some of these initiatives, and will continue to look at ways to increase membership involvement.