

Missouri Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB)
2008-2009 Statewide Records Assessment Survey

General Overview

In October 2008, the Missouri State Archives distributed over 1,000 paper surveys to archives, museums, libraries, historical organizations, genealogical societies, academic manuscript collections and other potential record holding institutions across the state. With the exception of state parks and historic sites, which were targeted due to a lack of prior documentation, state and local government agencies were not included in this survey as they have previously been assessed by the State Archives. Survey data was entered by the respondents in an online form or by Archives' staff when returned by mail.

Follow-up postcards were sent to encourage all recipients to respond and follow-up telephone calls were attempted to all institutions believed to be major record holding repositories. Data was compiled from all submissions received prior to July 1, 2009.

Organizations

- 434 institutions responded
- 310 indicated their institutions hold original records
- 124 institutions without records were excluded for this reason from the data

The largest percentages of institutions responding that they did not collect original records were libraries (50%), state parks (18.55%), historical and genealogical societies (12.90% each), and state historic sites (11.29%). With the exception of the historical and genealogical societies, most of these respondents were branch locations or instances where a parent organization housed an organization's records. The same generalization appears also to be true for those institutions not responding to the survey.

When categorized by primary and secondary organizational functions, the largest groups of respondents include:

- Museums – 45.81%
- Archives – 41.94%
- Libraries – 39.03%
- Historical Societies – 34.52%
- Not-for-profit Corporations – 23.55%
- Genealogical Societies – 13.23%
- “Other” – 10%
- Colleges and Universities – 8.71%
- Religious Organizations – 5.48%
- Military Groups – 1.29%
- For-profit Companies – 1.29%

Due to the diverse nature of historical institutions, many repositories have more than one core mission and are counted twice in the above data. Institutions that fulfill more than one role (e.g., a museum with a research archives and a library) were only counted using their top two roles.

Staff Training (Institutions were allowed to mark more than one level of training.)

The educational background of archival staff is as diverse as the institutions themselves. The most common professional entry paths include:

- Degree in History – 42.26%
 - Degree in Library Science – 21.61%
 - Other college degree – 5.48%
 - College degree or coursework in Archival Administration – 25.49%*
 - Workshops, Institutes, or On-the-job training – 36.45%*
- *combination of categories

Inventories, Policies and Plans

One of the fundamental elements in collecting archival material is being able to locate the record when needed. When asked if institutions had a basic inventory of holdings:

- 34.28% of institutions indicated they have close to a complete inventory (76-100%)
- 34.37% of respondents had little or no inventory (0-25%)
- 31.44% had some of their material inventoried (26-75%)

Standard policy and procedure use rates were also low.

- Deed of Gift Policy – 55.16%
- Acquisition Policy – 53.23%
- Access Policy – 47.74%
- De-accession Policy – 40.97%
- Loan Policy – 37.74%
- Disaster Plan – 25.48%
- Electronic Record Policy – 16.45%

Although some institutions do not have electronic records in their collections at this time, 60.97% are already using computers in their workflow. Possibly the most troubling parallel is the lack of policies compared with some of the declared record losses occurring in the last 3 years.

- Fire – 0.00%
- Natural Disasters – 1.61%
- Water Damage – 12.26%
- Theft – 8.06%
- Vandalism – 1.29%
- Misfiles – 10.65%

Other factors that relate to this issue include that only:

- 49.03% of repositories use fire detection
- 24.52% of repositories use fire suppression
- 45.81% of repositories use security systems
- An average of 34.47% of institutional collections have direct access to the public

- Only 7.94% of collections have been microfilmed
- 2.90% of repositories have microfilm cameras while 40.32% have microfilm readers, reader printers or reader scanners.
- 15.16% of institutions have microfilmed records in the last 3 years
- 13.87% of institutions charge an admissions fee
- 13.87% of institutions charge reproduction/licensing fees
- 20.32% of institutions charge a research fee

Collection Areas and Usage Areas

The span dates for all collections statewide range from 1190 to the present.

Although some of the broad survey collection areas encompass others, general trends can be identified, particularly when coupled with the statistics on usage. The concentrations of collecting across all institutions show strong focuses in:

- Local history – 78.71%
- Genealogy – 56.77%
- Education – 43.55%
- Civil War – 40.65%
- Military – 37.10%
- Politics, Law and Government – 33.23%
- Business – 32.90%
- Oral History – 32.58%
- Arts and Architecture – 31.29%
- Religion – 30.97%
- Women – 29.68%
- Agriculture – 28.71%
- African Americans – 27.74%
- Sports, Leisure and Recreation – 25.16%

Many of the lower collecting areas deal with records often viewed as confidential or sensitive:

- Social Services – 23.87%
- Native Americans – 22.90%
- Immigrants/Ethnic Groups – 22.90%
- Geography/Topography – 22.90%
- Transportation/Communications – 20.97%
- Medicine and healthcare – 19.03%
- Archaeology – 18.06%
- Science and Technology – 16.77%
- Environmental Affairs – 15.81%
- Labor – 12.90%

Anecdotal evidence also shows this to be the reason for declines in the collection of more recent materials related to politics, education and business.

Ranking of use:

1. Local history
2. Historic building research
3. School projects (K-12)
4. Media
5. Undergraduate coursework
6. Legal research
7. Genealogy
8. Graduate research
9. Administrative research

Records related particularly to architecture (32%) seem to be under-represented when historic building research is the number two research area across all institutions. The curiously low ranking of genealogical research is most likely due to the online accessibility to many of the common resources once only available on microfilm.

Digitization/Migration

One of the most interesting statistics from the survey is that 90.99% of institutions with computers (60.97% percent of total institutions) have the ability to scan while interest in scanning peaks at 37.10% for documents and 30.32% for photographs. This is in stark contrast to the public's desire for online resources but may be partially explained by digitization being the highest training interest of respondents. Anecdotal evidence reflects that this hesitance could be based on two factors: perceived loss of revenue and expenses related to digital storage and retrieval.

Interest in reformatting deteriorating media types is conversely strong. The figure in parenthesis below shows the percentage of institutions holding these record types.

- Oral histories – 68.66% (42.50%)
- Motion picture film – 49.25% (30.31%)
- Video tapes/DVDs – 68.66% (40.31%)

Condition of Records

Only 44.38% of institutions listed their records as in good condition. All others did not respond or listed their condition as poor (8.21%) or fair (25.83%). Current storage environs (below) could be one of the leading reasons for this consideration.

- 29.67% – Archival Storage Area
- 24.55% – Attic, Basement, Closet, Storage Room or Warehouse*
- 15.32% – Office Space
- 11.39% – “Other”

*combination of categories

Other factors that relate to this issue include:

- 57.42% of institutions use archival boxes and folders
- 45.16% use temperature control
- 34.19% use humidity control
- 15.48% have upgraded their environmental controls in the last 3 years
- 37.74% use pest monitoring
- 28.71% have had documents conserved in the last 3 years

- 17.74% have rebound or repaired bound volumes in the past 3 years

Challenges and Assistance Needed

Below is a ranking of what respondents said were their greatest challenges and the areas in which they need the most assistance.

Challenges

- Staff/Funding (63.52%)
- Lack of Finding Aids (38.36%)
- Processing Backlog (33.96%)
- Needed Equipment (24.21%)
- Space (20.75%)
- Security (15.09%)
- Cannot Locate Records (14.47%)
- Parking (8.81%)
- Other (6.92%)
- Record Deterioration (5.35%)

Assistance Needed

- Funding (66.45%)
- Staffing (58.06%)
- Storage Space (41.29%)
- Need to Reformat (33.55%)
- Conservation (32.90%)
- Storage Conditions (32.58%)
- Staff Training (25.48%)
- Inadequate Finding Aids (17.42%)
- Online Access (11.94%)
- Limited Use (11.29%)

Income

Income sources vary dramatically from institution to institution. Below are the average income sources across all institutions:

- Parent organization and/or government – 33.21%
- Earned Income – 17.28%
- Fundraising – 7.45%
- Endowments – 5.98%
- Grants – 3.20%

Training/Services

Areas of highest training interest include:

- Digitization – 75.3%
- Conservation/Preservation – 74.7%
- Grants/Fundraising – 71.3%
- Improved Storage and Handling – 71.2%
- Processing, Arrangement and Description – 70.9%

- Records Management – 64.8%
- Use of Computers in Archives – 60.2%
- Disaster Preparedness – 58.0%
- Electronic Records – 56.8%
- Advocacy – 55.1%
- Reference – 52.8%

Interests in various methods of training are ranked below:

- Workshops
- Onsite Training
- Printed Materials
- Online Training
- Professional Meetings
- Consultant Services
- Mentoring

Internships, institutes and particularly graduate courses had lower rates of interest. It is probably not coincidental that all three of these areas are often associated with training immediately prior or immediately after entry into the field (thus a group not heavily represented in the respondents).

Respondents were most interested in being provided the following services:

- Workshops – 52.26%
- Conservation Treatment – 42.90%
- Site Visits – 39.68%
- Collections Processing – 33.55%
- Centralized Microfilming/Imaging – 32.58%

Impact of Past Efforts

The familiarity of respondents with state granting agencies and their programs was also addressed in the survey. Of those surveyed:

- 30.65% were familiar with the Missouri Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB)
- 34.84% were familiar with the MHRAB's Missouri Historical Records Grant Program (MHRGP)
- 8.06% had received an MHRGP grant
- 29.03% were familiar with the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants awarded by the Missouri State Library
- 16.13% had received an LSTA grant

Although many of the questions from a 1998 Council of State Archivists survey are dissimilar, some are comparable and additional information about the development of archives in Missouri can be gleaned from those results. The current survey includes twice the number of respondents (310 compared to 153) with much larger samplings from archives, museums, and libraries.

	<i>1998 Survey</i>	<i>2008-2009 Survey</i>
Inventory (76-100%)	28.76%	34.28%
Some Inventory (26-75%)	29.41%	31.44%
Little or No Inventory (0-25%)	41.83%	34.37%
Acquisition Policy	28.76%	53.23%
Disaster Plan	9.80%	25.48%
Loss of Records to Fire (3 years)	0.65%	0.00%
Loss of Records to Misfiles (3 years)	11.76%	10.65%
Loss of Records to Theft (3 years)	13.76%	8.06%
Loss of Records to Water (3 years)	5.23%	12.26%
Loss of Records to Other (3 years)	1.96%	3.87%
Avg. Annual Requests by Mail	74.57	34.74
Avg. Annual Requests by Email	7.04	291.46
Avg. Annual Requests In-Person	269.70	142.03
Avg. Annual Requests by Telephone	241.52	175.75