

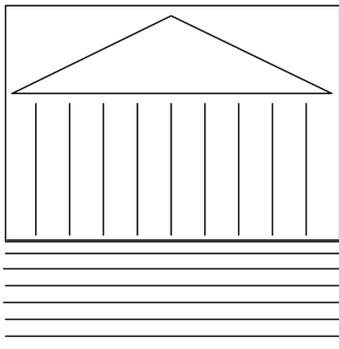
Where History Begins

A REPORT ON HISTORICAL RECORDS REPOSITORIES IN THE UNITED STATES

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for the
Council of State Historical Records Coordinators

MAY 1998



COSHRC
COUNCIL OF STATE HISTORICAL
RECORDS COORDINATORS

COUNCIL OF STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS COORDINATORS

The Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHRC) is an organization representing State Historical Records Advisory Boards (SHRABs) in each state, the District of Columbia, and the territories of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands. Each SHRAB is a citizen board comprised of keepers and users of records that plans for and encourages improved records and archival programs in both public and private agencies. The SHRABs also review grant proposals submitted to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), a federal funding agency affiliated with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

Each SHRAB is headed by a State Historical Records Coordinator who is usually the state archivist. Working collectively through their membership in COSHRC, the State Coordinators encourage cooperation among the states and state boards on matters of mutual concern, define and communicate archival and records concerns at a national level, and work with the NHPRC and other national organizations to ensure that the nation's documentary heritage is preserved and accessible.

Further information about the activities of COSHRC is available from each of the State Coordinators who are listed on the inside front covers of this report. Contact information is also available on the NHPRC web site: <http://www.nara.gov/nara/nhprc/statcoor.html>.

The **Historical Records Repositories Survey** (HRRS) was sponsored by the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHRC) with funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

An electronic version of the report, accompanying tables, and the HRRS database also will be made available through the NHPRC web site. Check <http://www.nara.gov/nara/nhprc> for further information.

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FOREWORD

“History Begins Here” is an apt title for this report because it suggests the primacy of historical documents to all historical endeavors, the vital role historical records repositories play in connecting us with the history of our communities and our country, and the immediacy that such documents bring to our experience and understanding of the past.

The report addresses a major goal in the NHPRC’s long range plan adopted last June that the Commission “will promote broad public participation in historical documentation by collaborating with State Historical Records Advisory Boards (SHRABs) to plan and carry out jointly funded programs to strengthen the nation’s archival infrastructure and expand the range of records that are protected and accessible.” The report provides some of the basic information necessary to carry out this goal both at the state and national levels.

But what do we mean by the “nation’s archival infrastructure?” Do we really expect “broad public participation in historical documentation?” What programs will best strengthen efforts “to expand the range of records that are protected and accessible?” The report will assist the Commission and its partners to develop answers to all these questions.

The report demonstrates dramatically that the “nation’s archival infrastructure” consists of a tremendous variety and number of institutions and organizations that share stewardship for our historical records. Most of us are familiar with the documentary treasures at such national repositories as the National Archives and Records Administration and the Library of Congress. Many of us also may have visited or written to the state archives, state historical societies, and major universities that preserve some of the other important collections of American historical documents. But this report suggests that the holdings of the historical records repositories around the country probably equal in quantity all of the holdings of the National Archives and all the state archives combined. With the survey covering less than half the states, historical records repositories reported nearly 2.5 million linear feet of letters, diaries, account books, photographs, and other materials that comprise the American documentary record.

The report’s findings suggest that there are more than 7,000 historical societies, libraries, museums, academic institutions and other organizations and groups who hold historical records in the United States and that each year volunteers contribute more than 17 million hours of labor to the cause of preserving our documentary history. While these figures may seem modest on a national scale, they demonstrate widespread and energetic grass roots efforts to preserve our country’s records.

However, despite this evidence of diverse participation in preserving historical records, and an impressive tally of historical records in repositories around the country, the report identifies a number of indicators that point to critical problems or challenges facing our nation’s repositories. For instance, while many repositories identify critical shortages of space and staff, only 39% report written plans for future acquisitions. Only 19% of the repositories participating in the survey have a plan for how they would respond if their collection were hit by a disaster like a flood or fire. Even among the largest repositories nearly two in five have no such plan. Despite widespread acceptance in the professional literature of the usefulness of these tools in managing historical records, the

actual use of these tools by repositories is far more limited. At the same time the report also contains some evidence that educational efforts at the state level regarding the development of these tools increases the number of institutions that make use of them.

Electronic records and electronic access remain significant challenges. While the repositories indicate tremendous interest and demand for training in the use of computers in archives, only 15 % of the repositories surveyed (24% of the academic repositories) actually hold computer generated materials as part of their collections. Only 27% of the repositories report using a local computer catalog to provide access to their collections, less than 10 % report participation in one of the major bibliographic utilities, and only 7 % use the World Wide Web to provide access. Given the of integration of the computer into every aspect of our daily lives, the report concludes that these figures should be much higher.

These are only a few examples of the challenges identified by this report. It presents no simple solutions. What it provides is a picture of the increasingly complex environment that makes up our nation s archival infrastructure. Many different types of institutions in many different settings preserving records created in many different media. At the same time, the report suggests that as with our natural environment no one part of this system operates in isolation from the others. To effectively preserve and use historical records that reflect our diverse national experience, we must nourish and sustain a diverse system of repositories as well as enlisting a wide range of other professions, institutions and organizations in this important work.

In fact, the message of the report might best be summarized by a slogan from the environmental movement, a successful strategy for expanding the range of records that are protected and accessible must Think globally and act locally. We must develop plans, standards, and tools at a national level, but work with organizations, the states, and individuals at variety of levels to assure their dissemination and successful implementation throughout our archival infrastructure. That is the challenge for the Commission and its partners and for all those who care about our historical records. The Commission plans a detailed discussion of this report and its implications at its June 1998 meeting.

RICHARD A. CAMERON
Assistant Director for State Programs
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WHERE HISTORY BEGINS

The pursuit of history begins here: in county historical societies and university special collections, in museums and public libraries, in corporate vaults and church offices. Each is a repository of the primary sources from which history emerges. The individuals using these documents might be working on scholarly treatises or the stories of their families, trying to establish a structure's credentials for the National Register of Historic Places or preparing for their community's centennial. In every case, original documents—diaries, letters, account books, case files—are essential because they contain evidence about events, transactions, and motives that have propelled individuals and society forward. Those who work to preserve historical records make it possible for all of us to understand how and why we have arrived at today and gain a sense of where we are going tomorrow.

A PASSION FOR HISTORY

There is a growing passion for history across our society as Americans look to the past for education and recreation. It may be a natural tendency at the end of a century to review progress, greatly enhanced this time around by the prospect of a new millennium. The sweep of nostalgia may also be yet another product of the sizable baby boom generation, old enough now that their childhood toys are collectibles and memories ever more precious. Whatever the cause, history is everywhere.

A recent article in *American Demographics* noted that close to half of American adults are interested in their family history, and determined that more than 100 million people were involved in genealogical research at some level.¹ Another study conducted for the Travel Industry Association of America found that 45% of the Americans embarking on a pleasure trip in Spring 1996 planned to visit a historic site while on vacation.² Scrapbooking has become one of the hottest new sectors of the extensive crafts industry, pitching acid-free paper and ink with advertising headlines by assuring their customers that their materials are of such high quality even professional archivists use them. The History Book Club, The History Channel on cable television, and *Historic Traveler* magazine all succeed because of an abiding passion for the past. This trend is also part of a broadening participation in cultural activities that has seen visits to museums increase from 390 million in 1979 to 600 million in 1989.³

The public's interest in history is often very personal and rooted in their communities. The manager of the Florida Collection at the Miami-Dade Public Library has noted that "All global events are local to some place. Local history is the story of the past in its most personal form."⁴ Historian Michael Kammen has studied the place of history in American culture for many years and confirms the very personal nature of history to individuals and communities.

¹ Jennifer Fulkerson, "Climbing the Family Tree," *American Demographics* (December 1995): 42-51.

² Rachel Dickinson, "Heritage Tourism is Hot," *American Demographics* (September 1996), found on the American Demographics web site (http://www.demographics.com/Publications/AD/96_ad/9609_ad/9609AB01.HTM)

³ Jan Larson, "The Museum is Open," *American Demographics* (November 1994): 34.

⁴ American Library Association, "12 Ways Libraries are Good for the Country," *American Libraries* (December 1995). Located on the ALA web site: www.ala.org/alanow/12ways.html.

In a recent book, Kammen observes that heritage became one of the key words in American culture starting in the mid 1950s and has been a powerful stimulus to the popularization and hence to the democratization of history. While cautioning that it can easily lapse into commercialization and vulgarization, Kammen asserts that the potential value of heritage is significant. Heritage that heightens human interest may lead people to history for purposes of informed citizenship, or the meaningful deepening of identity, or enhanced appreciation of the dynamic process of change over time. Many have contended that an understanding of our history is essential for a sound democracy. Kammen explains, Our heritage phenomenon has the great virtue of accentuating the common core of values, institutions, and experiences that Americans have shared, and to which newcomers have accommodated in the process of becoming Americans. Undeniably, many aspects of the heritage phenomenon provide the glue that holds us all together.⁵

ASSESSING CONDITIONS AND NEEDS IN HISTORICAL RECORDS REPOSITORIES

In recognizing the significance of heritage in American society, it becomes more essential than ever to ensure that historical documentation is preserved and made accessible to all who need it. No matter what the product or purpose, all historical work ultimately depends on the availability of primary source materials - the archives and records that appear in unlimited varieties of form and content, from diaries of suffragettes to laboratory research notebooks to photographs of coal miners to electronic data on agricultural futures trading.

A principal focus of the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHRC) and of most of the State Historical Records Advisory Boards in the fifty states -- is an ongoing effort to understand the status and needs of archival and records programs throughout the United States. In 1993 and 1995-96, COSHRC conducted in-depth surveys of state archives and records management agencies in conjunction with the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators annual statistical survey. The report of the 1993 survey, *Recognizing Leadership and Partnership*, was the first detailed examination of the state archives since Ernst Posner wrote *American State Archives* in 1964. It contained both statistical and narrative accounts of each state archives holdings, fiscal conditions, program activities, facilities, staffing, and more. The 1996 survey report, *Maintaining State Records in an Era of Change: A National Challenge*, updated the statistical data and also examined issues confronting state archives that cross state boundaries, including electronic recordkeeping, information management, preservation, and access to records via information technologies (Government Information Locator Services, Internet home pages, bibliographic networks and online catalogs). Both reports contained two volumes, one for the main narrative report and statistical tables and a second that contained individual profiles of each state's archives and records program. The 1996 report is available via the NHPRC web site.⁶

Having completed two surveys of state archives and records programs,⁷ COSHRC undertook the Historical Records Repositories Survey (HRRS) to learn more about nongovernmental repositories in their states. The HRRS has gathered more detailed programmatic data than ever before on the many institutions

⁵ Michael Kammen, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 214, 222.

⁶ See <http://www.nara.gov/nara/nhprc/maintrec.html>.

⁷ These two surveys are further described in the Introduction to this report, see p. vii.

and organizations across the country that are collecting these primary source materials. The report that follows examines their strengths and considerable needs as they pursue ambitious goals with scarce resources. It also suggests ways in which the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators and individual State Historical Records Advisory Boards, along with other professional associations at the national, state, and local levels, can most effectively assist historical records repositories in their work.

In a sense, the HRRS is a market survey. There is a range of professional associations, state and federal agencies, and other providers that have the potential to offer expertise, grant funds, and products and services (workshops, publications, records consultations) to help repositories, large and small, improve conditions and methodologies for collecting and preserving historical records. Many of the State Historical Records Advisory Boards (SHRABs) believe that one of their most important functions can be to serve as mediators between the providers of these products and services and the repositories that need their assistance. The SHRABs want to know where the greatest needs are in their states in order to establish their own priorities for encouraging these connections. They also wanted to gather baseline data so that they can document progress or decline in the future.

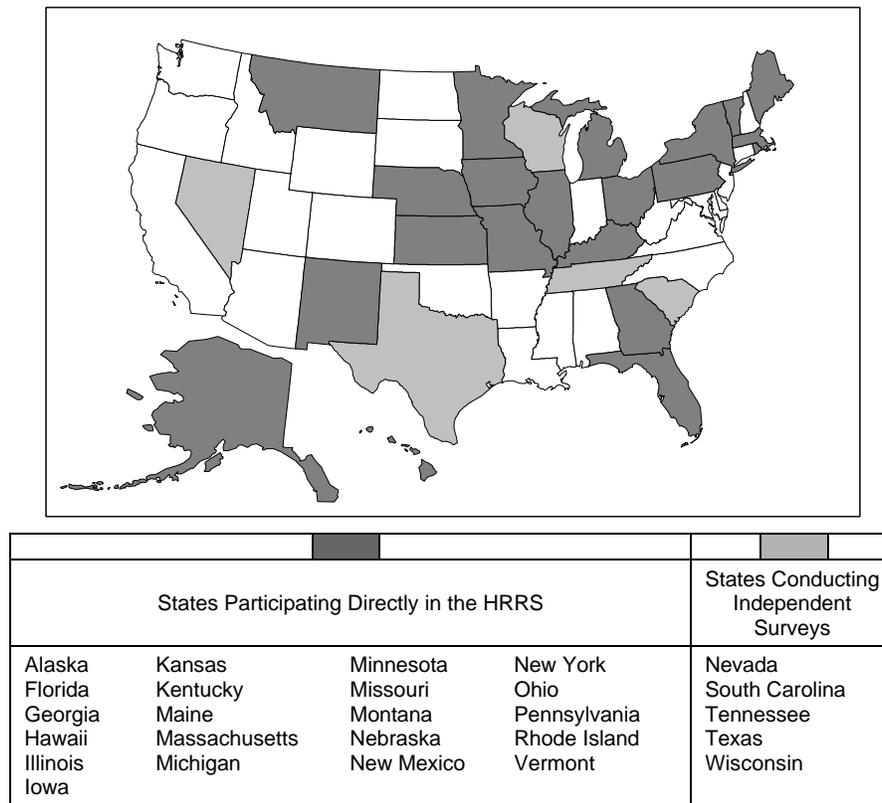
Collectively, the individual state boards and their coordinators work through COSHRC to target products and programs that have national benefit. With three surveys now completed and with every state having gone through its own formal assessment of historical records needs,⁸ it is possible to delineate problems and priorities that cut across state lines and face repositories at all levels, from large to small, public and private. With this clarity of understanding and the numbers to substantiate the findings, COSHRC is better positioned to work with other national organizations to bring collaborative forces to bear on improving the preservation and use of historical documentation nationwide.

⁸ For further information about a specific state's assessment report and/or planning documents, contact the State Coordinator (see contact information on inside covers of the printed report or on the NHPRC web site at <http://www.nara.gov/nara/nhprc/statcoor.html>).

DESIGN AND EXECUTION OF THE HISTORICAL RECORDS REPOSITORIES SURVEY

COSHRC designed the Historical Records Repositories Survey to collect a broad range of information about historical records in the United States and the repositories that hold them. Each participating state developed its own mailing list for distribution of the survey instrument. There was no attempt to select a scientific sample. Instead, this survey has attempted to probe all possible places that might be collecting historical materials. Although we tried to explain to potential respondents that our focus was on original materials (not reproductions or printed items) and on documents (rather than artifacts), these distinctions are often blurred, especially in smaller repositories.

Fig. 1. States Covered in the Analysis of the Historical Records Repositories Survey



Participation in the Historical Records Repositories Survey was open to all of the states and territories. Twenty-one states took part in the two-year project, while several states had completed similar surveys of their own in the last few years and chose not to duplicate these efforts.⁹ The HRRS project

⁹ When the HRRS got underway, Nevada had already started a surveying process under direction of its consultant, Peter Parker. Nevada surveyed a broader group, including local governments, but incorporated a number of the HRRS questions into their forms so substantial comparability exists between the two efforts. Six other states conducted earlier surveys of their own (Delaware, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin) and their findings and conclusions are incorporated here when possible.

benefited from their experience in developing the survey instruments and methodologies. We have also been able to incorporate their findings and conclusions where appropriate into the analysis that follows.

Details of the survey design and procedures are covered in an appendix to this report along with documentation for using the database and copies of the survey forms. There are some points about the way the survey was conducted that are important to understanding and interpreting the data, however.

Survey distribution/coverage. While the HRRS project coordinator provided guidelines about what kinds of organizations should be sent the survey, the mailing lists were developed and controlled by each state independently. Inevitably this resulted in some variations, state-to-state, in the kinds of repositories included. Minnesota, for instance, did not survey public libraries at all, although all of the other states did. Only about half of the states made specific efforts to survey collections still held by the organizations that created them (designated Records Creators in the tables that follow), like businesses, churches, and nonprofit associations. As a result, data about public libraries and, especially, the Creators should be viewed as less comprehensive than other categories.

The states also had a choice between a long and short version of the survey form. Although most sent the long form to most or all of their target repositories, Kentucky and Rhode Island sent out short forms to selected repositories and Kansas, New Mexico, and New York used only the short form. Another set of differences arose in Georgia and Montana, states that started their surveys slightly ahead of the rest and developed their own forms, adapting an early version of what ultimately became the long form. Most of their changes were minor, but a few questions included in the final HRRS survey were not incorporated in these two states.¹⁰

Details on which questions were omitted are included in Table A.2. Percentages for affected questions in the tables were calculated to reflect only the number of repositories that received the longer forms. Appendix B contains additional details about the administration and analysis of the survey.

Survey focus. The targets for the HRRS were those repositories that collect and hold historical materials produced by private organizations and individuals. It focused primarily on historical societies, colleges and universities, public libraries, and museums. The survey was intended only to cover repositories holding original materials including correspondence, office files, scrapbooks, diaries, photographs, maps, blueprints, motion pictures and videotapes, audiotapes, or computer media, as well as record copies of microfilm or other reproductions meant to replace any of these original materials. The survey tried to exclude repositories that collect only printed materials (books, newspapers), official government records (state or local), or copies of records that are held in original form by another repository (e.g., census microfilm).

Response rate and relative coverage of entire historical records community. From the outset, this survey was intended to be a needs assessment, not a census, so the emphasis has been on uncovering conditions, needs, and priorities rather than establishing a firm count of all institutions collecting historical

The reports from these surveys are further described in Appendix B. Several other survey projects have been conducted independently since the deadline for participation in the HRRS closed, including ones in Colorado and Puerto Rico.

¹⁰ Questions omitted from short form in their entirety were E3, G3, I2, I4, J4, and J5. Questions in which several possible responses were omitted from the short form were I3 (responses 4a-b-c, 5a-b-c, 8a-b-c), J1 (responses 6,7,8), and K1 (responses 15, 16). Georgia and Montana did not include the following questions: J2, J3, J5.

records. It is impossible to say precisely what portion of all historical records repositories in the participating states are represented here, but in nearly every case the state coordinators and their staffs expressed confidence that the number of survey forms returned was satisfactory and often exceeded expectations.

It is also difficult to draw firm conclusions about what portion of the entire universe of historical records repositories in the U.S. is reflected in the HRRS data. An examination of statistical data from other sources (see Table A.1) could support a very rough assumption that we are dealing with about half of the total records repository universe, give or take 10 percent. The states that participated in the HRRS encompass 45% of the total U.S. population. They are home to 51% of all 2- and 4-year colleges and universities and 58% of all public libraries. They also account for 53% of all repositories included in the 1988 Directory of Archives and Manuscript Collections compiled by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Thus, while the HRRS is not necessarily representative in a scientific way of the universe of historical records repositories in the U.S., we are confident that its broad coverage presents a relatively accurate view of the whole.

CATEGORIZING REPOSITORIES BY TYPE, REGION, AND SIZE

There are three principal ways in which the data is presented throughout the report: by repository type, by geographical region, and by repository size. The following section describes how the categories were devised and the rationales underlying each of them.¹¹

Repository Type. The respondents were asked to choose from six categories of institutions: historical society, college or university, public library, museum, genealogical society, or other. Once the data was in, the project coordinator made several adjustments to refine these categories in consultation with the participating states. Only a few respondents originally chose genealogical society; they were subsequently assigned to the historical society category. Several states surveyed local government entities as part of their own projects, but they were eliminated from this analysis because the focus was intended to be on nongovernmental records only. On the other hand, government-run institutions like state historical societies and presidential libraries were included, but only those program statistics related to the nongovernmental portion of their holdings were counted. Of special concern were the more than 600 other responses which have now been broken into new categories to make the analysis more meaningful. About half of them are now in a newly established category called records creators. The others were distributed among the other four categories as appropriate. Figure 2 delineates the categories as they stand now.

¹¹ A list of all respondents included in the survey analysis is provided in Appendix E along with their repository type and size categories and the total number of linear feet of historical records held by each.

Fig. 2. Repository types. This table describes the categories as they are applied in the data analysis, the number of respondents falling into each category, and the percentages each category represents of all respondents. The number of institutions falling under subtypes of the Academic and Records Creators categories is also shown in parentheses.

Repository type	Includes	Total respondents	% of total resp
Historical Societies/ Archival Repositories	County and other local historical societies Archival repositories (other than academic), such as State and city historical societies Presidential libraries (nongovt records holdings only) Private research institutions Town historians & commissions (primarily MA & NY) Genealogical societies Specialized archival repositories, such as architectural archives and photographic archives	1,271	36.2%
Academic	Colleges and universities (484) Seminaries (6) Elementary & secondary schools (16)	506	14.4%
Public Libraries	Public libraries	744	21.2%
Museums	Historical organizations whose primary focus is on artifacts and other 3-dimensional objects, such as Historic sites National and state parks Historic houses Other museums, such as Arboretums and zoos Archaeological museums Art museums Special subject museums	683	19.5%
Records creators	For profit corporations, primarily businesses (28) Religious organizations (except academic and hospitals) including dioceses, synods, churches, parishes, congregations, orders, communities (115) Nonprofit organizations whose primary missions is not related to the collection of historical materials or artifacts, such as civic groups, anniversary commissions, fine arts organizations, theaters, opera and dance companies (116) Medical institutions, including hospitals, clinics, and medical research facilities (42) Native American tribes (2) Unions (1)	304	8.7%
TOTALS		3,508	100%

Query: B1_OrgType_Ct Excel file: B1_OrgType/TypeTotals

Geographic Region. Because participation in the project was voluntary, the geographical distribution of the states is not necessarily ideal in order to accurately reflect the nation as a whole. The heaviest HRRS representation falls in the Midwest and Northeast sections of the country, with the South and West significantly under-represented.¹² In the end, we broke the participants into the six regions shown in Figure 3.

¹² One indication of the lack of balanced representation among regions comes in a comparison with the systematically stratified survey of historical organizations (not necessarily records keepers, however) undertaken for the American Association of

We have been able to compensate somewhat for the shortfall in the South with data gathered during earlier surveys conducted independently by the SHRABs in Tennessee (1992), South Carolina (1994), and Texas (1995). Nevada conducted a survey that began just before the HRRS was formalized using many of the same questions, which helps fill out the West a little more. Wisconsin also conducted a survey of its own in 1995, further extending the coverage of the Great Lakes region.

Fig. 3. Geographical regions. The 21 participating states are listed under their respective regions, along with the total number of respondents for each region and the percentage it represents of the whole. The number of respondents within each state is also shown following the state names.

Region	States	# of resp in state	Total respondents	% of total resp
1-New England	Maine.....	168	753	21.5%
	Massachusetts	439		
	Rhode Island	59		
	Vermont.....	87		
2-Mid Atlantic	New York.....	484	783	22.3%
	Pennsylvania	299		
3-Great Lakes	Illinois	238	860	24.5%
	Michigan	218		
	Ohio.....	404		
4-Plains	Iowa.....	120	551	15.7%
	Kansas	93		
	Minnesota.....	98		
	Missouri.....	153		
	Nebraska.....	87		
5-South	Florida	38	328	9.4%
	Georgia.....	195		
	Kentucky.....	95		
6-West	Alaska.....	20	233	6.6%
	Hawaii.....	19		
	Montana	139		
	New Mexico	55		
TOTALS			3,508	100%

Access queries: TotalNoForms_by_State; TotalNoForms_by_Region

Size of Repository. The third breakdown of respondents is made by relative size of their holdings. Because there are no national standards for measuring archival collections, and because calculating the volume of holdings has been problematic in many earlier survey efforts, we paid particular attention to instructing the respondents on how to calculate the size of their holdings. We asked for a measurement of paper records in linear feet and gave them guidelines for converting various containers and shelving into linear feet. We also asked them to report on seven other types of records and for these gave them the option of providing the number of items or linear feet measurements (they were instructed to give one or the other, not both). About 88% of the respondents provided usable measurements of their holdings. We calculated

State and Local History in the early 1980s. It found 34.7% in the Northeast (our New England and Mid Atlantic, combined), 28.5% in the North Central (our Great Lakes and Plains, combined), 23.5% in the South, and 13.3% in the West. Charles Phillips and Patricia Hogan, *A Culture at Risk* (Nashville: AASLH, 1984), p. 42.

total linear feet of all types of records for each repository (converting item counts when necessary using conservative formulas¹³). We then assigned them to one of four size categories according to the criteria provided in Figure 4.

As we worked through the analysis of the data, we determined that the repositories that comprise the size not designated category most often shared characteristics with the repositories whose volume of holdings placed them in the small category. It is likely that most of the not designated repositories are themselves small in size and their programs are less well developed overall, to the point that it is difficult for them even to estimate the volume of records they hold. As a group, they have the lowest percentage of finding aids of all repository types (if you have not inventoried it, you cannot count it), are nearly identical to small repositories in the percentage having no collections policies, and also have about the same rate of paid nonprofessional staff and a lower rate of paid professionals than the small.

Fig. 4. Size of repository. The number of respondents falling within each of the size categories is listed along with the percentage each size category represents of the whole.

Repository size designation	Volume of records reported	Total respondents	% of total resp
MAJOR	5,000 linear feet or more	123	3.5%
LARGE	500 to 5,000 linear feet	385	11.0%
MEDIUM	50 to 500 linear feet	938	26.8%
SMALL	Less than 50 linear feet	1,640	46.8%
SIZE NOT DESIGNATED	Unreported	422	12.0%

Summarized from Table D.1.d.

It can be assumed that, even when they failed to provide actual volume counts, all of the respondents included in the analysis gave some indication that they actually held original historical records of some kind. The survey administrators in each state screened the incoming forms and removed any that appeared to fall outside the survey criteria, specifically those whose collections comprised only printed materials or reproductions or that appeared to have no collections at all.

REPOSITORY CHARACTERISTICS

VARIATIONS AMONG TYPES OF REPOSITORIES

Two types of repositories dominate the responses to the Historical Records Repositories Survey, but for different reasons. By far the largest group in terms of sheer numbers are the historical societies and

¹³ The following formulas were used to convert number of items to linear feet for each type of records (where n=number of items reported): photographs (n/100), microfilm (n/10), oversize paper (n/50), motion picture film (n/10), videotapes (n/10), audiotapes (n/20), computer media (n/20). The database still contains the original data reported by each repository so that someone wanting to calculate these conversions using different formulas could do so in the future.

archival repositories that comprise more than one-third of the total respondents. While they are numerous, however, their holdings as measured in linear feet are relatively small, totaling 602,584 lin. ft, or only 25% of all records held by HRRS respondents. This translates into an average of 555 lin. ft. per repository. More striking, the median size of their holdings is only 28 lin. ft. (Fig. 5).

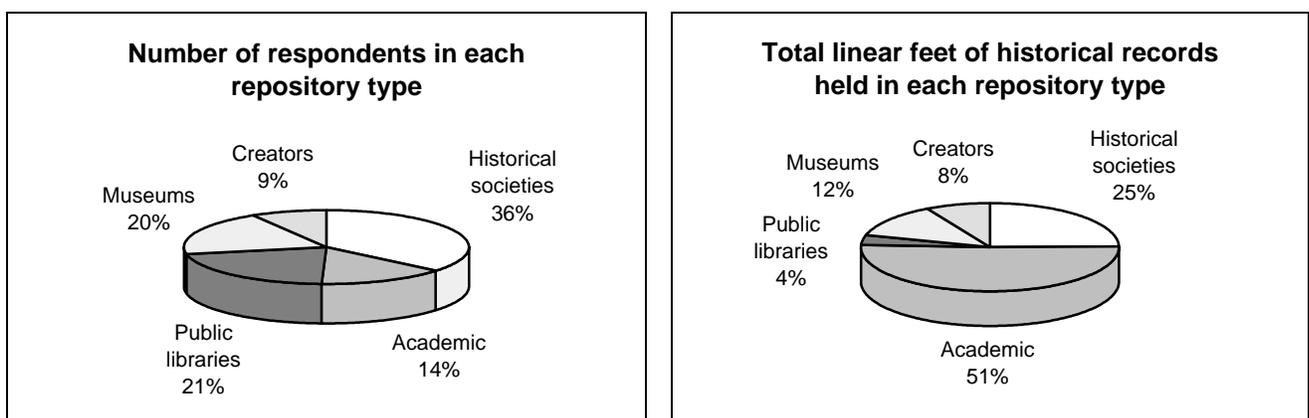
Fig. 5. Volume of holdings by repository type. The percentages, averages, and medians are calculated using only the 3,086 repositories that provided usable data on holdings volume.

Repos Type	No. of repositories providing usable info on vol. of holdings	% of type providing info on holdings	Total lin ft of records reported by all repos in type	% of all records reported	Average/mean lin ft per repos	Median lin ft per repos
	# of repos	% of type				
1-HIST SOC/ARCH REPOS	1,086	85.4%	602,584	24.70%	555	28
2-ACADEMIC	465	91.9%	1,246,325	51.08%	2,680	372
3-PUB LIBS	659	88.6%	90,326	3.70%	137	15
4-MUSEUMS	598	87.6%	304,821	12.49%	510	45
5-CREATORS	278	91.4%	195,903	8.03%	705	113
TOTAL	3,086	88.0%	2,439,959	100.00%	791	41

Access query: ReposType_ReportingHoldings_Ct; tblLinFt_Type_Size; qReposType_Size_AllRepos
Excel file: B1_OrgType / AvgMedian_Type

At the other end of the spectrum are the academic repositories which account for only 14% of the total number of respondents. Collectively they hold more than half of the records reported, a total of 1.25 million linear feet for an average of 2,680 lin. ft. The median size of the academic repositories holdings is 372 lin. ft., some 13 times larger than the median for historical societies. These holdings often represent manuscript materials collected from individuals and institutions outside the campus as well as the college's own institutional archives.

Figs. 5a and 5b. Comparisons of numbers of respondents in each category to the relative size of holdings. (Excel file: B1_OrgType / Charts)



Of course, within each of these two categories there is also great diversity. The historical society category encompasses substantial collections of private materials, the largest of which are the Western Reserve Historical Society with nearly 42,000 lin. ft. and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania with nearly

35,000 lin. ft.. The academic category includes 40 institutions with very large collections ranging from 10,000 to 55,000 lin. ft., the largest of which are Cornell University's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections and Wayne State University's Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. On the other end of the scale are 80 colleges whose collections are smaller than 50 lin. ft. Table D.1.b. lists all of the Major repositories with the total volume of their holdings.

Figure 6, below, provides details on the distribution of holdings among each type of repository according to its size designation. It is striking to note that the 65 major academic repositories, which represent less than 2% of the total number of HRRS respondents, together hold 41% of the records reported by all respondents. On the other hand, the 1,640 small repositories make up 47% of the respondents but hold only 1% of the records.

Fig. 6. Distribution of numbers of repositories and total linear feet of records held by each category according to repository type and size designations. The figures in this chart cover the 3,086 respondents (88% of the total) that provided usable volume counts for their holdings. The 422 respondents that did not provide data on the size of their holdings are not accounted for here.

Repos Type	Size Designation								Total lin ft in each type
	MAJOR <5,000 lin ft		LARGE 500-5,000 lin ft		MEDIUM 50-500 lin ft		SMALL >50 lin ft		
	number of repos	total lin ft held	number of repos	total lin ft held	number of repos	total lin ft held	number of repos	total lin ft held	
1-HIST SOC/ ARCH REPOS	33	406,826	81	139,229	300	45,620	672	10,909	602,584
2-ACADEMIC	65	994,399	141	211,955	179	38,126	80	1,845	1,246,325
3-PUB LIB	2	15,712	37	50,658	133	17,674	487	6,282	90,326
4-MUSEUMS	11	171,359	66	93,372	214	34,906	307	5,184	304,821
5-CREATORS	12	78,962	60	94,376	112	20,777	94	1,789	195,903
TOTAL	123	1,667,258	385	589,590	938	157,103	1,640	26,009	2,439,959

Access queries: LinFt_Type_Size; Size_Type_Ct Excel file: B1_OrgType / LinFt_Type_Size

Public libraries and museums both accumulate collections of historical records as adjuncts to their primary collections -- books and artifacts, respectively. The historical records in public libraries seem especially incidental since their quantity per library is so small, with an average of 137 lin. ft. and a median of 15 lin. ft. (Fig. 5) But what they lack in size they make up for in numbers, for they are the second largest category of HRRS respondents, representing 21% of the total (Fig. 2). Public libraries with historical records are especially numerous in the Midwest, representing 38% of the respondents in Iowa, 30% in Ohio, and 29% each in Michigan and Kansas. If Minnesota had included them in their survey, their numbers would have been even higher, both in the survey as a whole and in the Plains states. Also worth noting is that 34% of the respondents to Tennessee's survey were public libraries.

Those repositories classified as museums have more substantial records holdings, with an average of 510 lin. ft. and a median of 45. (Fig. 5) Both of these figures make them larger, repository-to-repository, than historical societies, but there are only half as many of them. As a group, they are just behind the public libraries in number, comprising 20 percent of the total. It may not be as surprising to find so many museums

also collecting historical records when one considers that half of the museums in the United States have history as a principal focus.¹⁴

The repositories assigned to the records creator category are the most diverse. As noted above, they also vary widely in their coverage from state to state because some states made stronger efforts to reach them than others. From the outset, the HRRS project was intended to focus on historical records being collected and preserved by institutions primarily established for that purpose. But the fact remains that there are substantial bodies of corporate archives still in the hands of their creators -- businesses, religious institutions, hospitals, and others -- that document important segments of our cultural heritage.¹⁵

RESOURCES

Historical records programs in the United States represent an extensive enterprise that perseveres with scarce resources but ambitious goals. Like virtually all cultural organizations, they are supported by people who have always expected to have to do more with less, to pursue their programs primarily because of its benefit to the larger society, for psychic rather than financial reward.

Staff and Volunteers

The people who are responsible for the collection and safeguarding of historical records probably share one characteristic above all others: a passion for what they do. They certainly are not in it for the money at any level. Other surveys have documented the relatively low compensation rate for professional archivists,¹⁶ but less than one-third of the HRRS respondents have one or more professionals on staff anyway. Overall, 28% of the repositories operate entirely with volunteer labor. Wisconsin's survey found that fully 36% of its repositories were all volunteer. Among HRRS respondents, 55% of the historical societies are all volunteer while only 21% have 1 or more full-time professionals. The picture for college and university archives is quite different, as might be expected. Eighty-six percent have some professionals on staff and in 65% there is also support from paid nonprofessional personnel. But even the academic institutions are not flush with workers; fewer than one in five have more than two full-time professionals. (Tables I.1.a-e)

Not surprisingly, the number of paid staff rises in direct proportion to the size of the collections, with more than 90% of both Major and Large repositories reporting some paid staff (Tables I.1.f-).

Question I.2. asked about specialized training obtained by paid staff. The greatest degree of formal training is found in the larger institutions: more than half of the major repositories have staff with graduate degrees in history or library science, while more than one-third of the large ones do. Graduate education in library and information science is clearly rising in importance and has drawn very close on a percentage basis to graduate coursework in history. In fact, in academic repositories 46% of the repositories report library

¹⁴ The Institute of Museum Services conducted a national needs assessment in 1992. Twenty-five percent of the respondents were historic houses, 23% were history museums. Michael Kammen cites a 1991 survey indicating that 55% of the 7,500 museums in the U.S. were historic sites (2,083) or history museums (2,401). Kammen, p. 151.

¹⁵ We have made no attempt here to analyze the subsets of creating organizations, although we realize that certain segments are of special interest. The HRRS database contains coding that can segregate each type of records creator so that religious organizations or businesses could be analyzed later, if desired.

¹⁶ References to SAA salary surveys.

science degrees while only 32% report history degrees among their paid staff. On the other hand, staff with graduate degrees in archival administration are still fairly rare, reported by only 5% of the repositories overall, although 10% of the academic repositories noted them. (Tables I.2.a-b) Overall, archival workshops show up most often as the type of training received by staff, taken by 22% of the total and 36% of the academic repositories staff. Eighteen percent of the total repositories reported no specialized training.

Finances

When asked about their organization's annual spending for historical records programs, including salaries, building maintenance, and the like, more than 40% reported spending less than \$1,000 per year, including three whose holdings place them in the major category and 27 that are classified as large. Eighty-one percent of the small repositories have budgets below \$10,000. Only 59 (1.7%) of all respondents spend more than \$250,000 per year on historical records programs. It is quite possible that many of the respondents did not understand the instructions for this question, however, and failed to include dollars spent for staffing and space. If that is the case, then the low numbers are more understandable. (Fig. 7 and Tables J.1.a-b)

Fig. 7. Annual spending for historical records programs.

Range of Annual Spending	No. of repositories	% of all respondents
Less than \$1,000	1,414	40.3%
\$1,000 - \$10,000	828	23.6%
\$10,000 - \$50,000	456	13.0%
\$50,000 - \$100,000	175	5.0%
\$100,000 - \$250,000	126	3.6%
\$250,000 - \$500,000	35	1.0%
\$500,000 - \$1,000,000	18	0.5%
More than \$1,000,000	6	0.2%
Don't know	233	6.6%
NO RESPONSE	217	6.2%

Access query: J1_COUNT Excel file: J_FinancialSupport / J1_Summary

The good news is that what money is available is also fairly stable. Respondents were asked to describe trends in the funding available for their historical records programs over the last 3 years and project anticipated funding for the next three years. More than half reported stable funding, past and future, and almost three times as many expected funding to increase in the next three years as did those who thought it would decrease. (Tables J.2 and J.3) In Texas, twice as many reported funding increases as opposed to decreases in financial support.

Facilities and Equipment

Lack of storage space is a critical problem expressed in all of the surveys. The HRRS evidence of acute storage problems comes in the needs and priorities discussed in some detail later in this report (see Figure 11 and Tables K2.a-b, in particular). The current survey did not ask about how close to capacity the

repositories records storage areas were, but 23% of the respondents to South Carolina's survey and more than half of Wisconsin's reported that they were at or near capacity.

Also of concern in all archival repositories is the quality of the storage environment in which records are stored. Fundamental to the long-term preservation of archival materials is stable temperature and humidity. Collections also need to be protected against fire and theft. The findings are discouraging in these areas. Nearly half of the repositories report that they have no humidity controls in their storage areas. Even in the South where humidity is a significant problem year-round, nearly one-third have no such controls. Only 46% store all of their collections in areas secured against theft with locks, alarms, or other devices. (Tables G.2.a-e) In Nevada, most had temperature but few had humidity controls.

Equipment for maintaining collections and providing access to them is less than desirable as well. (Table G.3.) There are 107 repositories that report having microfilm (in question D2) but no microfilm reader (under question G3). Similarly, there are 376 repositories that hold videotapes but apparently have no video players.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Collections

The HRRS asked for information about both the media and subject matter in each repository's collections. (Tables C.2.a-f) Many of the State Historical Records Advisory Boards wanted more detailed information about what was already held as well as which areas were the focus of active collection efforts. Many are interested in developing statewide documentation strategies, whether formal or informal. They also want to refer potential donors to repositories whose collecting areas matched the collections being offered.

Several things about the media being collected are notable. First, the raw numbers themselves are impressive. Collectively, these repositories hold 2.4 million linear feet of paper records and upwards of 40 million photographs. (Fig. 8 and Tables C.2.a-f))

The patterns of which repositories are collecting what media are also revealing. Only the Academic and Creator categories of repositories are bringing in computer media in any significant numbers, although less than one-quarter of even these institutions hold such records. (Table C.2.a) Current holdings of optical disks are extremely low and few indicate that they are actively collecting them. This is one area, then, that distinguishes government and nongovernment repositories, because optical disks are in wide use in the public sector and are of significant concern to government archivists.

Overall, public libraries deviate from the norm more than any other repository type. The fact that just over half indicate that they are actively collecting paper records, as compared with 81% of the historical societies and academic repositories, would support the assumption that they are more likely than the others to hold historical records by accident rather than design.

Figure 8. Total volume of each type of recording media reported by all HRRS respondents. The figures in this chart cover the 3,086 respondents (88% of the total) that provided usable volume counts for their holdings. The 422 respondents that did not provide data on the size of their holdings are not accounted for here.

Types of records held	Linear feet
Paper records	1,776,720
Photographs	439,113
Microfilm	75,061
Oversize paper (maps, blueprints)	78,370
Motion picture films	34,205
Videotapes	15,333
Audiotapes	19,958
Computer media (disks, CDs)	1,201
TOTAL LINEAR FEET, ALL REPOSITORIES	2,439,959

Summarized from Excel file D1_2_AllRepos.xls / consolidate

Historical societies are pursuing most media with some vigor and are relatively stronger than the other types of repositories in collecting maps and plats which, of course, are mainstays of genealogical and local history research. By contrast, maps and plats come in significantly low in academic settings, probably because they are accessioned by map collections in college libraries rather than the archives.

Creator repositories are relatively strong in most media, lagging only slightly behind historical societies in paper and photos. Along with academic repositories, they are particularly active in collecting sound and video recordings. In fact, longevity issues related to magnetic media could prove especially problematic in the creator repositories since more than 70% currently hold sound and video tapes. In raw numbers, the HRRS repositories now house nearly half a million magnetic recordings collectively.

Longevity of the programs. The HRRS data also underscore the large number of history-related programs that were created in the 1970s, propelled by the U.S. Bicentennial and the publication of Alex Haley's *Roots*. (Table B.2.) What started as a surge has carried forward, for although the rate of new programs has slowed slightly, there is still considerable activity. Half of the organizations reported that their historical records programs were established in the last 30 years. Programs in college and university archives began to increase rapidly a decade earlier, with 61% starting since 1960.

Date spans of collections. Despite the fact that more than half of the historical records collections have been established in just the last 35 years (Tables B.2.a-b), 75% of them hold records from the 19th century or earlier. Eighty-six percent of the collections have pre-1950 materials.

Acquisition policies. The archival profession has come to regard an acquisition policy as a crucial element of a sound records program. It should provide a clear statement of the kinds of materials [the repository] accepts and the conditions or terms which affect their acquisition.¹⁷ Without such a policy,

¹⁷Lewis J. Bellardo and Lynn Lady Bellardo, *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992).

repositories are more likely to accept materials that are interesting but not related to the overall scope of their other collections. Without some guidelines, collections can grow quickly and overwhelm an already overburdened staff which lacks sufficient time to process them, storage space to house them properly, and resources to provide ongoing physical care and access.

Overall, there appears to be only limited success in convincing repositories of the value of these policies, for less than 40% of the respondents now have them. (Tables C.1.a-d) In Texas, the rate was about 50%. There is significant variation from state to state, however. Among repository types, public libraries are least likely to have such policies, further reinforcing their incidental approach to collecting historical records. Among HRRS respondents, the larger the organization, the more likely it is to have an acquisitions policy in place. This was also true in the Tennessee survey. The earlier Wisconsin survey, however, found that medium repositories – especially those with all volunteer labor -- had the lowest rate of policies, leading to the speculation that their absence had led to unchecked growth and strained the capacity of the organization to sustain the program properly.

Access tools and finding aids. Repositories may have wonderful collections of historical records, but without access tools – inventories, indexes, catalogs, and the like – the collections are no more than piles of unusable stuff. Progress in creating these tools lags significantly across repository types, being particularly acute in smaller repositories. (Tables E.1.a and E.3.a-b)

Asked to identify major impediments to use, nearly half of the respondents cited lack of indexes or other finding aids. (Table E.2.a) More than 41% also indicated that they are facing a processing backlog. Historical societies and museums also seem to have more of a problem with having the equipment necessary to use certain types of records than the others.

Users. Collectively, the HRRS respondents are handling more than 2 million reference requests per year. (Fig. 9) They come largely via in-person visits to the repositories, followed by telephone inquiries, although electronic mail is beginning to make inroads into more traditional research methods.

Genealogy and local history are by far the most frequently reported types of use, ranking high in both the historical society and public library repository types. (Table F.2.a) This is not surprising when we know that 19 million Americans are actively researching their family histories.¹⁸ Local history is also strong in museums. Use by high school and elementary school students is about 50% higher than by college undergraduates in historical societies, public libraries, and museums. Use for publicity campaigns and public relations is strong in creator organizations as well as in academic repositories (where alumni relations are an important factor).

Respondents also provided many examples of other types of uses. Those most frequently mentioned were exhibits; general interest or leisure (including curiosity, collectors, and hobbyists); uses by authors, journalists, and documentary film makers; institutional research; and commercial purposes.

¹⁸ Fulkerson, p. 44.

Figure 9. Number of research requests received each year by all HRRS repositories. The figures in this chart cover the 3,058 respondents (87% of the total) that provided usable information on their users. The 450 respondents that did not provide data on users are not accounted for here.

Category	Total no. reported by all respondents
Regular mail	308,835
Electronic mail	48,364
In person	1,138,997
By telephone	640,529
TOTAL Reference Requests	2,136,725

Access query: F1thru4_Sums

As part of its project, Nevada did a user survey that yields some interesting observations. The uses most often cited by users were historical (76%) and genealogical (19%). The types of repositories they used ranked in the following order: state historical society (26%), academic (22%), public libraries (15%), state archives (11%), and local historical societies (10%). But when asked what kinds of materials they used, 22% cited newspapers and other published items, while those who used paper records accounted for 19% of the respondents and photographs, 16%. Eighty-eight percent said the materials were receiving proper care. The improvements they wanted most included additional hours (29%), better finding aids (22%), and additional staff (20%).

Preservation-related activities. We have already discussed the regrettable lack of environmental controls in many repositories, a factor that can have only detrimental effects on the overall preservation of historical materials. Perhaps we can take some encouragement from the 14% of repositories that report they have undertaken upgrades in the past year. (Table H.3.a)

There have been a number of disasters among the respondents, with 5% (174) reporting water damage and 0.5% (17) having sustained a fire in the last 3 years. (Table H.2.a) In a separate question, 77 respondents indicated that they had conducted some disaster recovery during the past year. (Table H.3.a)

Thefts and misfiles are the two most common causes of loss in records collections. (Table H.2.a) In Nevada, theft was the only type of loss reported and the Texas report alluded to a significant theft problem as well, although it noted that their respondents showed a surprising lack of concern in this area. It looks like the low level of concern is present in the HRRS states as well, for less than half report having all of their collections in storage areas equipped with security devices. (Table G.2.e)

The library and archives communities have made strong attempts to promote systematic disaster planning in the last decade and it appears to have met with some success in those states that have stressed it. Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, and Rhode Island stand out as having a significantly higher percentage (more than one-third) of repositories covered by disaster plans than in the other states. (Table H.1.a) But even in Florida, where they are most widespread, more than half of the reporting repositories still do not have disaster plans.

In this area, historical societies as a group are most lacking; only 9% have undertaken disaster planning while one-third of the academic repositories have. Since state library agencies have often led the way in organizing disaster planning initiatives, it is somewhat surprising to find public libraries as a group below 20% in establishing these plans.

COMPARING HRRS RESPONDENTS TO OTHER ARCHIVAL REPOSITORIES

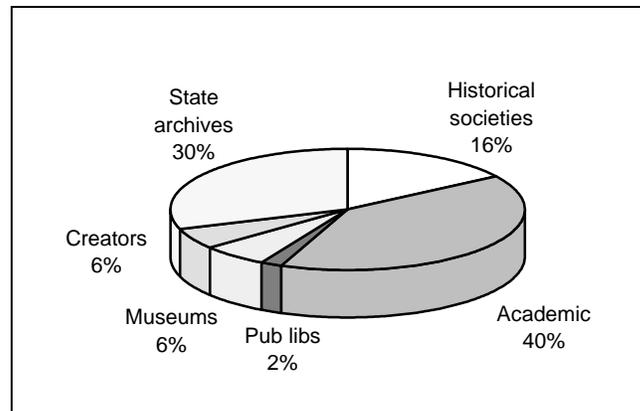
Gaps in our knowledge. In the surveys conducted by COSHRC since 1992, two of the major segments of the archival universe within each state have been examined in some detail: state government records and historical records repositories. COSHRC has yet to undertake any comprehensive analysis of another major recordkeeping sector -- local governments -- although a few states have done surveys of their own in this area.¹⁹ Repositories falling into the fourth major category, records creators, were surveyed to varying degrees in some of the states participating in the HRRS and data for those responding have been included in the tables for this report. The analysis offered here has been fairly limited, however, because as a group the coverage was inconsistent, making it difficult to draw conclusions with confidence.

Of course, in addition to these segments within the states, we must remember that there are national repositories like the National Archives and Records Administration, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian Institution, among others, as well as the many historic sites managed by the National Park Service, that hold huge volumes of private and public records. A complete portrait of the archival universe in the U.S. would have to include them as well.

Comparing HRRS respondents with state archives. It is possible to look back at the two COSHRC surveys of state archives, compare their findings with the HRRS, and find some instructive similarities and contrasts.

Overall, the larger historical societies and academic repositories share more characteristics with the state archives than do the smallest repositories. The substantial size of the holdings in each of these groups brings along with it common concerns relating to both physical and intellectual control.

Fig. 10. Total linear feet of records held in each HRRS repository type as well as the state archives holdings in the 21 participating states.



A comparison of the relative size of the state archives holdings to those in nongovernment repositories further underscores the dominance of the larger repositories in the volume of records they hold

¹⁹ Three states sent modifications of the HRRS form to local government agencies at the same time they surveyed nongovernment repositories: Kansas, New Mexico, and New York. Nevada also surveyed local governments during its independent survey. [Readers: are there other recent examples??]

(Fig. 10 and Table A.1). The total volume of state government records in the 21 participating states was 768,793 lin. ft. in 1994, or 30% of the total when combined with the nongovernment records reported to the HRRS. The relative balance between government and nongovernment records varies significantly from state to state, however. Government records represent more than 70% of the total in Hawaii, but are below 15% of the total in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. (Table D.1.a) Keep in mind that the quantity of privately created materials held by state archives is reported in the HRRS "historical societies" category; the linear feet assigned to "state archives" in the charts and figures above include only official government records created by state agencies.

The 1996 report estimated that paper holdings in state archives were growing at a rate of 100,000 cu. ft. per year, which represents a 6% annual increase. While it is not possible from the data currently available to determine the rate of increase among nongovernment repositories, we can note that the number of historical records programs appears to have increased significantly and steadily in the last 30-35 years. (Table B.2) Nearly half of the academic repositories have been established since 1960 raising the probability that the total volume of records held by academic repositories has increased at an even faster rate than those in state archives.

In some other measures the state archives are ahead of the HRRS respondents as a whole, although if just the large and major repositories were isolated, the gap would probably narrow significantly. Seventy percent of the state archives reported storing all of their holdings in temperature controlled environments, while 60% were in humidity controlled storage. Comparable figures for all HRRS repositories were 39% and 21%, respectively. On the other hand, more than 52% of HRRS repositories have fire detection for all of their holdings, while only 44% of state archives did. Fire suppression systems are low in all types of repositories.

Disaster planning at the state level is comparable to that in other major repositories: 64% of major HRRS respondents (Table H.1.b) and 66% of state archives. There did not appear to be any correlation between the percentage of HRRS repositories in each state that have disaster plans and the presence or absence of one in the state archives.

Access tools are a major concern for state archives, as they are for other repositories with large collections, but descriptive coverage lags for all of them. Only 8 state archives reported that all of their holdings were described, either at the record group or series level, in nonautomated finding aids of some kind. Twelve more have descriptive controls for 80-90% of their holdings. This is roughly comparable to the 38% of major repositories in the HRRS that had 75-100% of their holdings described.

Only 6 state archives use OCLC, but 16 (32%) make their descriptions available via RLIN, a higher participation rate than any of the other repository types. Of the academic repositories responding to the HRRS, 26% report to OCLC while 10% report to RLIN. (Table E.1.a) The state archives are seeing a great increase in the use of electronic mail for reference activity. Many state archives have established Internet sites and make a range of descriptive information available. An increasing number are mounting searchable databases and even copies of records themselves for remote users. Only a small number of HRRS respondents indicated that they are using the Internet to any extent. Just 7% of all HRRS respondents

reported having a World Wide Web site for reference use, although that number is certain to have increased during the 12-18 months since the data was collected.²⁰

State archives as a group have a much more active interest in issues concerning new media, particularly electronic records and optical imaging technologies. With the widespread implementation of electronic information systems in state government, the archival repositories that will ultimately retain them for the long-term have had to address issues of obsolescence, media preservation, and access.

²⁰ Most of the HRRS survey forms were completed between September 1996 and April 1997.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS

PRIORITIES

Every recent survey of curatorial organizations -- historical societies, museums, libraries, and others - which collect and preserve paper and artifacts echoes the conclusions of the 1991 Institute of Museum Services study of emerging museums: they all need more people, more training, better equipment, more money, and more space. The Historical Records Repositories Survey is no different.

The HRRS respondents were asked to rank a list of possible priorities on a scale from 3 being a major priority to 0 being not a priority. Figure 11 shows the top ten for all respondents.

Figure 11. Top ten priorities identified by respondents.

3 = major priority 2 = moderate 1 = minor 0 = not a priority

Priority	Ranking
1. Preservation/conservation of collections	2.16
2. Increase funding	2.14
3. Improve finding aids	2.10
4. Increase capacity of storage space	2.04
5. Improve storage conditions	1.96
6. Increase visibility of or support for program	1.95
7. Process backlog of acquired collections	1.89
8. Improve staff training or expertise	1.89
9. Encourage greater use of collections	1.89
10. Automate description systems	1.59

Access query: K1_Avg_All

There are some variations within the repository types, however, that are revealing. (Tables K.1.a-c) Historical societies ranked increasing visibility much higher than any of the other categories; their comments under question K.2. suggest that they are especially concerned with making their local communities understand the importance of what they are doing and promoting the use of their materials. Academic organizations were more concerned with processing backlogs, not surprising since their overall holdings are much larger than the other repositories. Regional variations were relatively few, with one exception. Repositories in New England expressed a much stronger interest in increasing the solicitation of collections than any of the other regions. This could be a response to a trend that SHRABs in Maine and Connecticut have described in their assessment reports: as population and industry migrate to other parts of the United States, the historical records documenting their activities and impact on the region are leaving as well. Archivists in New England have determined that they must be more aggressive in capturing that portion of their history in order to keep it close to its original home.

Priorities expressed by respondents in earlier state surveys were similar to the HRRS concerns. (Table K.1.d)

When respondents were asked to describe their most pressing problem in their own words, storage-related concerns outweighed all others (Fig. 12 and Tables K.2.a-b). Lack of storage space was the most frequently cited problem (by 630 repositories), while improving storage conditions was a priority for 423

respondents. Access- and finding-aids-related issues were also of considerable concern, as were the processing backlogs that plague so many repositories. The respondents also placed great importance on the need for more people and more time to do the work.

Figure 12. Most pressing problems cited by respondents when asked to describe them in their own words.

Most pressing concerns	Total citations, all respondents
1. Space, storage	630
2. Access/finding aids	595
3. Staff (includes lack of time)	568
4. Processing backlog	460
5. Storage conditions, environmental controls	423
6. Funding	374
7. Preservation	290
8. Automation	158
9. Volunteers, need more	158
10. Training	96

Excel file: K2_WorstProbs_byReposType.xls / High_to_Low

In looking at these lists, we can see lower interest than might be desired in issues that many in the archival profession recognize as significant challenges demanding more attention from us all. Only 9 respondents cited electronic records as a most pressing problem while just 33 expressed concern over other new media, including video tape and other magnetic media known to be adversely affected by rapid obsolescence and physical deterioration. Disaster planning was a pressing problem for only 10 respondents despite the broad scale education effort that has occurred in this area and the disturbingly low rate at which plans have been implemented (discussed above).

On the other hand, a number of issues appeared in the responses that had not been part of our original list. Quite a few were concerned with acquiring a new facility or renovating their existing one. A number also expressed concern over lack of interest, either in their community or parent organization, or cited conflicting priorities, especially those repositories whose primary missions are not historical recordkeeping (public libraries, museums, creators). Some worried about an uncertain future for their organization. Historical societies, which rely so heavily on volunteers, were concerned about their aging memberships.

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

In a field where resources are spread thin, we often talk about cooperative efforts as a solution that would bring the economies of scale to bear on common problems. Among the HRRS respondents, the cooperative efforts that received the most interest were those that could provide technical services unavailable in individual repositories and, for the most part, are impractical for them to implement locally. Strongest interest was in central preservation laboratories, followed by central microfilming facilities. (Tables K.3.a-b)

There was nearly as much interest in cooperative purchasing across the board, except in the Great Lakes region, where it ranked somewhat lower. Statewide cataloging networks were strongest in the South and West, although all regions showed modest interest.

The HRRS proves that although storage space is the number one problem among historical records repositories, shared storage facilities are not a popular alternative. In all regions and among all types of repositories the reaction came in very low, between of some use and not useful.

Respondents did propose several types of cooperative efforts that we had not included. The most frequent request was for some kind of on-site professional assistance. This was often described in the form of a traveling state-funded professional archivist, something that the Wisconsin survey report called an archival circuit rider. They also suggested formation of a consultation network with peer counselors, an approach that would build on the natural proclivity expressed elsewhere to turn to colleagues in other institutions.

Other types of cooperation the respondents favored were joint publicity campaigns, workshops and other training opportunities, financial assistance for smaller repositories, cataloging and finding aids assistance, and sharing of entry-level or part-time employees.

Cooperation can also cross professional lines. One of the principal focuses of the Texas survey was an analysis of the interrelationships among records managers, archivists, and preservation administrators. A high 80% responded favorably to the idea of establishing inter-professional discussions of common records issues in Texas and preferred to accomplish the communication through, in order of preference, a newsletter, continuing education, a listserv, and a formal organization.

TRAINING AND PUBLICATIONS

We asked respondents to tell us both what topics they most wanted covered in educational offerings and their preferred methods for receiving additional training.

Out of the seven topics proposed in the HRRS questionnaire, preservation methods, archival methods, and the uses of computers in archives were cited most often. (Tables I.3.a-b) They were especially strong among historical societies and museums. The first two have been the focus of a number of offerings from SAA and the regional archival associations, but computer applications (beyond the MARC format and other specific description-related topics) have probably not received as much attention as they warrant.

Appraisal and collection development, disaster preparedness, and records management were in a second tier, although disaster preparedness was a clearer choice among historical societies and libraries. Given the dismal state of disaster preparedness overall, it is encouraging that the repositories are interested in learning more.

There was less interest in electronic records and public relations/outreach overall, although they still garnered support from more than one-quarter of the respondents, so there is probably enough demand even for these to make offerings worthwhile. Interest in electronic records tends to be concentrated in the larger repositories where they present the most problems currently. They probably need as much research and development support as training opportunities to encourage progress. The smaller repositories are the ones most interested in public relations and outreach. They probably could use prepackaged promotional

materials (reproducible handouts, posters, etc.) and the support of a collaborative, statewide effort like an Archives Week, as well as a workshop to achieve their goals.

The respondents also suggested a number of topics that did not appear on our list. The most frequently mentioned were cataloging and indexing, automated description, and fundraising. There was also interest in grant writing, exhibit design, and management-related topics (supervisory skills, planning).

Many respondents to the HRRS expressed an interest in publications and this ranked high in the South Carolina survey as well. On-the-job training and archival consultants also received a significant number of citations.

The survey form in Wisconsin offered a slightly different list of choices. Regional workshops topped their preferred methods of delivery, followed by on-site training. The smaller repositories third choice was for an archival consultant, while the larger ones opted next for computer-based training. All of these share the element of being close in geographic proximity to the potential trainees. Wisconsin also asked about interest in distance learning but it did not receive much support. It is possible that the respondents lacked an understanding of what it might entail. North Carolina has had a successful experience offering archival training over its statewide telecommunications network that should be explored further by states with similar facilities.

Additional methods proposed by the respondents themselves included on-site visits or consultations, videotapes, and training via computers, particularly the Internet.

RESPONDING TO NEEDS

EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE, LIKE POLITICS, IS LOCAL

Along with gathering information about needs and priorities, the HRRS asked respondents where they go for assistance so that already established communication channels can be used to deliver the products and services that might help them. It is clear from their responses that Tip O'Neill's assertion that "All politics are local" applies here, too. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they are most likely to turn to someone who is nearby, geographically, and to someone who is in an organization similar to their own.

Their first choice for assistance, by far, is a colleague in another repository. (Table K.4.a) This was true for more than half of all repository types, except those in public libraries who also turn to state government agencies with some frequency. This difference probably reflects the strength of the leadership provided to public libraries in most states by the State Library.

Those in academic repositories are more likely than in the other types of repositories to go to professional associations (nearly half), while less than one-quarter of those in historical societies do so. Academic archivists clearly rely on the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and the regional archival associations, while historical society personnel look to state-level archival, museum, and historic preservation organizations. (Table K.4.b) Few of the repository types go to federal government agencies for assistance, except for the museums who turn to the Institute of Museum Services and the National Park Service.

This would indicate that anyone developing workshops or publications needs to work with regional and state-level archival associations, and with the state agencies who are in regular contact with libraries and

museums, to make information and assistance more accessible to the smallest repositories. SAA looks like a good way to reach academic repositories, but not all of them. The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) reaches nearly as many historical societies as does SAA, although SAA is ahead somewhat. The American Association of Museums (AAM), of course, is high among museums.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION REMAINS A HIGH CONCERN

Respondents have said they need to know more about areas like preservation and automation. The archival profession as a whole has also identified certain issues as presenting significant challenges that everyone should be concentrating harder on, like disaster planning and electronic records. Whether it is something the respondents want to learn or something we think they ought to know, it all comes down to disseminating information through workshops, publications, consultancies, one-on-one counseling, whatever the methods.

Information dissemination is not a new issue, for the State Historical Records Advisory Boards or for the archival profession. In 1986, the Society of American Archivists Task Force on Goals and Priorities (GAP) asserted that publication and dissemination of information and analysis on archival concerns is of critical importance. The GAP report repeatedly called for clearinghouse activities to gather information necessary for the evaluation of projects, programs, and personnel, to monitor developments affecting archives, and, in general, to provide on-line access to information.²¹

Many of the SHRAB-sponsored reports assessing records-related needs in each state have also identified the need for better mechanisms for the dissemination of information both vertically and laterally and the need for better communication links to encourage exchange of opinion and discussion among all those having anything at all to do with archives and manuscripts.²²

Since there is already a substantial body of literature about archival methods and procedures, it is possible, in addition to simply publishing more, that we need to do a better job of letting all levels of records keepers know what is currently available. The National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) conducted a study of the potential benefits to be gained from establishing some kind of archives and records clearinghouse in the mid-1980s.²³ Partially in response to that project, the National Archives and Records Administration established the Archives Library Information Center (ALIC) to serve as a central repository and information referral service open to everyone. Unfortunately, not enough professional archivists are aware that it exists or ever use its resources. The vast majority of non-specialists volunteers, museum curators, and public librarians --who are grappling with historical records are even less likely to know about or use ALIC.

The proclivity expressed by HRRS respondents to stay close to home and seek assistance from someone they already know may explain why ALIC has not achieved greater visibility and use. It is in a federal agency, at a great distance geographically and operationally from the majority of smaller repositories

²¹ Society of American Archivists, *Planning for the Archival Profession* (Chicago: SAA, 1986): 31.

²² Margaret Child in *Documenting America: Assessing the Conditions of Historical Records in the States*, ed. Lisa B. Weber (Atlanta, 1984): 48, 66.

²³ National Association for Government Archives and Records Administrators, *Information Resources for Archivists and Records Administrators*, project report prepared by Victoria Irons Walch (Albany, 1987).

that most need help. Certainly it provides an excellent and underused resource for skilled professionals, but it can never be the answer for everyone.

The tendency to rely on peers is common in every profession and is why efforts to train the trainers work so well. COSHRC and the other concerned organizations need to figure out how to help the helper. The SHRABs could play an important role in this regard, not offering services or assistance themselves, but encouraging collaboration among the groups that contain the expertise and mechanisms that meet the many and diverse needs in their states. In fact, the composition of many of the SHRABs is already effecting this kind of inter-organizational cooperation because they draw their members from the wide variety of constituent groups that comprise the universe of records repositories.

TARGETING LIMITED RESOURCES AND ENCOURAGING PROGRESS

The characteristics of each repository type can provide guidance on how to address its needs and provide assistance through the most favorable and cost-effective formats and venues.

The substantial collections in academic institutions and larger historical societies bring with them more interest in advanced techniques and sophisticated access systems. These are the repositories that have the expertise and motivation to develop new methods and standards for the entire profession. They also have the colleagues that the medium and small repositories will turn to for help and can provide the backbone for a network of peer support. They need support for research and development activities to move archival practice forward on all fronts. In a sense, they play the same role for smaller historical records repositories that many state archives play for local government records programs. Enhancing the archival programs in larger repositories will provide crucial support for repositories at every level.

The smallest historical societies and museums need simple guidelines and assistance in locating and implementing best practices. The American Association of Museums web site has an excellent introductory section that include answers to such questions as We want to start a museum where do we begin? that could provide one model.²⁴ The smallest repositories also need someone nearby to call when they have a question about the proper way to manage their collections.

Another point to remember in trying to reach the smallest of these repositories is that the message has to be repeated over and over. Their work force is comprised of a constantly changing group of volunteers, part-time paraprofessionals, and professionals in other fields who only sporadically work with their historical records collections. For those who want to provide such assistance, delivery of basic archival information to the smallest repositories must become a routine, periodic activity that is sustained indefinitely.

Most important, the individuals who support and maintain these local historical societies are our grass roots. They are the front line with the greater public in promoting an appreciation for history and the value of historical records in American society. Among their highest priorities are visibility, public relations, and collaborative efforts to help them reach out to their communities and convey the importance of what they are doing. We would do well to support their efforts and provide as much professional guidance as possible to make sure the message is accurate and powerful.

²⁴ The document is located in the Technical Information Service section of the American Association of Museums web site: <http://www.aam-us.org/tis.htm>.

The public libraries present a different kind of audience for assistance. There are a lot of them that collect historical materials, and they are often staffed by professional librarians who, because of their interests and training, are similar to archivists in outlook. They realize that there are probably archivally correct ways to do things, if only they knew what they were.

While numerous, the public libraries' historical records collections are very small in size, so if we were to impose a strict cost-benefit analysis they probably would not come out very high on our own priority list. Common sense tells us that most librarians are at least going to ensure a relatively good storage environment, within the limits of their resources, because book collections are also threatened by high humidity, theft, and disorganization. But they need advice on basic techniques like processing, archival containers, and applying library cataloging methods to these special materials.

Because they go to the state library agencies and state-level library associations, the SHRABs could work with these organizations to serve as intermediaries. That, in fact, is what the Wisconsin SHRAB is doing following its own survey project. In cooperation with the Wisconsin Library Association, it is preparing a best practices manual and offering workshops to public librarians. The Ohio Historical Society is also working actively with the State Library in many ways to reach public librarians. Perhaps the other SHRABs could benefit from their experiences in delivering similar services to public libraries in their own states.

AN EVOLVING PICTURE OF THE ARCHIVES AND RECORDS COMMUNITY IN THE U.S.

CONSTANCY AND CHANGE OVER TWO DECADES

The State Historical Records Advisory Boards made their first formal assessments of conditions and needs in historical records repositories in the early 1980s. NHPRC provided funds for these projects to encourage state-level planning and the development of action documents upon which appropriate goals and priorities could be built. Twenty-one states completed assessment reports in the first round (all of the other states had completed assessment reports by 1998), prompting the State Coordinators as a whole to gather in 1983 and to review their findings.

Four experts in the field were asked, in advance of the meeting, to analyze the assessment reports and provide written accounts of the patterns and trends they observed. These papers were published in *Documenting America*, which has become a benchmark document for the archives profession.²⁵ The consultant reports comprised four sections which mirrored the structures of most of the assessment reports: state government records programs, local government records programs, historical records repositories, and statewide functions and services.

Looking back at William Joyce's section on historical records repositories and comparing it with what we have learned through the HRRS, it is possible to see both change and constancy in the intervening fifteen years. One prominent feature of Joyce's review was his many pointed observations about great discrepancies between large and small repositories. He cited several examples from specific states:

- ◆ The Minnesota Historical Society contained more records than the next 97 largest repositories in the state combined. The University of Minnesota had 28% of the total. Gustavus Adolphus College was the only other repository in the state with more than 1,000 linear feet of records.
- ◆ Ohio distinguished between general and local repositories. Among the general, 81% had archivally
- ◆ In Pennsylvania, 90% of the records were held by 20 repositories.
- ◆ The Illinois and Kentucky reports said that college and university archives dominated the states' historical records programs. The Nebraska State Historical Society was by far the most dominant repository in that state.

Joyce asserted that the majority of historical records repositories were barely capable of providing even the most rudimentary and basic maintenance of their holdings. One of the most critical areas was the dismal financial conditions that were reported. In at least three states, two-thirds of the respondents had budgets under \$10,000. This figure is almost identical to the level reported in the HRRS.²⁶ (Fig. 7 and Tables J.1.a and J.1.c)

²⁵ *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the United States*, ed. Lisa B. Weber, sponsored by the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators in cooperation with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (Atlanta, 1983).

²⁶ It must be noted that the financial figures reported by HRRS respondents appear not to be entirely reliable. Many repositories that reported having paid staff under question I.1 did not report sufficient funds to support that staff under question J.1. It is likely that some portion of the respondents did not follow the instructions to include personnel expenses in their budget figures, possibly because they only reported funds that were directly allocated to the archival program and did not account for the personnel

Some fifteen years later, two segments of the archival landscape still look pretty much the same: a small core of large, professionally run repositories that hold the bulk of the records and many small organizations which are doing the best job they can with energetic, but largely untrained, volunteer labor, in facilities that have less than ideal storage environments, with little money and inadequate equipment and supplies. But we now recognize a significant number of repositories that fall in between these two extremes, a group that could be called the archival middle class. There appears to be growth in the number of institutions that are maintaining collections of historical records with part-time professionals.

What has also changed significantly in the intervening years amounts to an attitude shift on several levels. First is societal. Joyce observed in the early 1980s that American culture was often described as ahistoric and rootless and that there was limited public appreciation of history and the usefulness of historical records. When we look around us today, however, we find instead the broad passion for history that Michael Kammen and others describe.²⁷

The other attitude shift has come among the SHRABs in their view of the smallest repositories. The position expressed in *Documenting America*, by Joyce and several of the SHRABs themselves, was that if these repositories were incapable of doing the work properly they should not be doing it at all. The Massachusetts report at the time went so far as to adopt a recommendation that smaller, poorly funded repositories should get out of the business of managing historical records altogether. It was not a view shared by the repositories themselves, however. When Kentucky asked in its 1982 survey if the repositories would be willing to transfer their holdings to another, better-equipped repository, not a single one said yes.

The fact is these small repositories are not going to go away and instead are continuing to grow, in numbers if not in size, more rapidly than ever. Twenty-eight percent of the historical records programs responding to the HRRS have been established since *Documenting America* was published. They continue to abound, born out of the broad public interest in history and heritage described by Michael Kammen.

A NEW VIEW OF THE ARCHIVAL LANDSCAPE

It is possible to see these small, mostly volunteer organizations as the outer ring in a series of concentric circles that define three distinct segments of the archival community. (Figure 13) Each of the repositories that comprise these segments—large, midsize, and small; professional, part-time, and volunteer has its place in the archival landscape and each plays a vital role in the preservation of our heritage.

At the center are those organizations whose primary missions are focused on recordkeeping activities. They comprise the Professional Core and include the state archives, larger academic archives and special collections, larger historical societies and private archival repositories, as well as federal repositories like the National Archives and Library of Congress. These repositories are staffed by trained professionals and they hold the bulk of all historical records in the United States.²⁸ They are also the centers of research and development for advancing archival practice. The serious and important work of advancing professional practice has always been, and will continue to be, the domain of the largest and best-funded repositories.

paid for in other departmental budgets but working part-time in the archives. Others may not have included the costs of facilities and maintenance when it is absorbed by a larger parent organization.

²⁷ See pp. 1-2 of this report.

²⁸ See the discussion of relative numbers of repositories and size of holdings on pp. of this report.

They are the only ones with the wherewithal to determine the requirements for keeping electronic media accessible as technology changes or to develop standards for effective descriptive access through networked cataloging systems.

In the second ring are Multifunctional Organizations in which recordkeeping is only an adjunct to or one (sometimes small) part of the institution's primary mission. It is a mixture of many types of organizations with a wide variety of staffing arrangements for its records-related functions. What the individuals in these positions share is the recognition that professional archival methods and techniques exist and should be followed to the greatest extent possible. They are stretched in meeting this goal, however, because they only work part-time with records. The demands of the other sectors of their jobs make it difficult to pursue extensive training or read all the latest literature.

Figure 13.



One part of this middle ring includes curatorial organizations like public libraries, museums, and historic sites that happen to acquire small bodies of historical records along with their primary collections of books and artifacts. They are often staffed by professionals who are trained in related fields (library science, museum studies, historic preservation) but have had little or no exposure to archival methods during their professional education.

This group also includes corporate entities -local governments, businesses, create records in the course of business and maintain them for long periods of time. The "creator" organizations discussed in this report fall into this category. While some creators may eventually accumulate

enough historical records to warrant the establishment of a formal archives within the organization, most assign records-related activities to a department with multiple responsibilities.

Smaller academic institutions may also be in this second ring, particularly those in which the college library has implicit or incidental responsibility for maintaining historic materials. The archival collections may not be centralized, there is often no one on staff with specific training, and the materials may be stored in a closet or office without sufficient intellectual or physical controls. These small college collections often are a mix of the curatorial and creator organizations because they encompass both materials collected by faculty and staff, as well as archival records generated by the college itself.

The outside circle of repositories is occupied by the volunteer enthusiasts who establish and propel the work of small, Community-Based historical societies and genealogical organizations. In these repositories, the people who care for the historical records do so as an avocation, for the love of history and their communities. Their collections comprise a variety of media and formats. While archivists, librarians, and museum curators at the Professional Core see major distinctions among archival documents, books, and artifacts, those in the Community-Based ring see them simply as historical collections.

These volunteers have the enthusiasm to tell their neighbors across the nation how important and exciting history is. They are the ones with the time to go to school classrooms to supplement the textbooks with examples of real documents or to staff booths at town festivals to educate the community about the architecture of their town hall. They will invite the professional archivists from the nearby state archives or university to come speak at their events, providing a conduit from the professional level out to the public at large.

SKETCHING THE FUTURE

Through the Historical Records Repositories Survey, the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators has compiled a great deal of information about the functions, status, and needs of archival institutions in the United States. The individual states that participated have only just begun to make use of the data for their own programs and services. It is also likely that the many groups that share an interest in improving the management and appreciation of archival materials—the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, professional associations such as SAA and AASLH, NARA and other federal agencies—will begin to re-examine the services they provide and the ways they communicate with their constituents based on what the HRRS has uncovered. As these deliberations take place, several areas emerge from the HRRS that deserve special focus.

The profession is only beginning to see the value of the surveys that have been undertaken since the first state assessments were completed some 15 years ago. Archivists and other records professionals need to **continue and expand these data gathering processes**. The NAGARA annual statistics on state archives now cover nearly a decade and, supplemented by the additional information acquired during the 1993 and 1995-96 COSHRC studies, allow us to assess both current status and change over time in those programs. The HRRS survey should provide the same kind of baseline data for future studies of nongovernment archival repositories. Still missing, however, is any large scale analysis of programs and conditions in repositories of local government records. Records creators also deserve some focused attention, far beyond

the spotty coverage in the HRRS. Finally, we also need to consider how to integrate information about major federal repositories – the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian, the National Park Service facilities, and others – into a composite analysis that will give us a better picture of the entire archival landscape and how each of its components relates to the others.

There is a continued need for developing and refining **standards and best practices** for archival repositories of all kinds. The larger, professionally staffed repositories will take the lead in technical areas like preservation and descriptive methods, delineating optimum media specifications for long-term retention, for instance, or pursuing initiatives like Encoded Archival Description to unify access to information about collections across repository boundaries. The smaller repositories, especially those staffed largely by volunteers or those that are newly established, need more basic guidance.

We need to make sure that, once these standards and best practices are developed, that there are **effective dissemination and education** vehicles in place. There must also be means to sustain them so they remain visible and available to all who might need them in the future. Because the individuals working in each type of repository turn to different organizations for assistance, these development and dissemination and education efforts must be highly collaborative.

Many of the State Historical Records Advisory Boards have become concerned increasingly concerned about **inadequate or uneven documentation**. The information gathered during the HRRS is not extensive, but enough to fuel this concern and lead several to actively pursue further discussion and study in their own states. While there is evidence that the number of repositories collecting records on African Americans, Native Americans, the environment, science and technology, labor, and health care, for instance, are rising somewhat, there is reason to question whether any of these areas are receiving sufficient attention.

Professional education continues to be a major concern for all archivists. What the HRRS may help us to understand is how to target and deliver our efforts more effectively, especially in the area of **continuing professional education**. Again, because individuals in different types of repositories turn to so many different venues for assistance and training, the national, regional, and state-level associations and government agencies that provide educational services must collaborate in developing programs and coordinate their schedules to maximize availability and minimize unnecessary duplication. A national conference to bring education directors from all these organizations and agencies together could enable them to identify needs and set a common agenda. Of course, representatives of the graduate archival education programs operating in universities should also be involved in this or similar processes.

While progress has been made in developing automated description systems in archives, there remains a significant problem with **providing basic access to records** in many repositories. Those institutions that have produced solid descriptive tools in traditional, paper forms – inventories, registers, printed guides, and even card catalogs – are in a much better position now to move those descriptions into new electronic access tools. Those repositories that have only fragmentary descriptions of their record collections, however, have no substantive content on which to build an online catalog or Internet web site, no matter how slick the technology.

All would agree that **preservation** has and always will be a key issue for archival repositories everywhere, no matter what their staffing or financial resources are. The HRRS documents some progress, but underscores the high priority that should be placed on implementing basic controls, continuing a broad-

scale education effort, and supporting in-depth investigations that will yield improved methods for handling the wide variety of media now residing in the nation's archives.

New media present preservation problems along with a whole host of other concerns as they spread into every area of record keeping and type of repository. Along with how long will it last questions, repositories also must confront how do we use it inquiries as researchers seek to access the information contained in electronic files, video and audio tapes, and motion picture film. Too often, these repositories do not have the equipment necessary to read the media they hold or the staff expertise to handle it properly.

Throughout this report, we have highlighted the need for increased cooperation among organizations and institutions to address archival needs and concerns. In doing so, we echo the many other reports from the last two decades that have also urged better collaboration, improved communications, and integration of programs across organizational lines. If the current passion for history described in the opening pages of this report is real, the time will never be better to harness the energy of professionals and the public alike into a collective effort to ensure that our nation's archival records are preserved and available far into the future.