



A PUBLIC TRUST AT RISK: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collections

A PROJECT OF HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND THE INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Heritage Health Index Data on Archives ***Report for DC 2006, the first-ever joint meeting of NAGARA, CoSA, and SAA***

The Heritage Health Index, the first comprehensive survey to assess the condition of U.S. collections, released its findings in December 2005 and concluded that immediate action is needed to prevent the loss of millions of irreplaceable artifacts held in public trust. Heritage Preservation, the country's leading conservation advocate, conducted the study in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in 2004 and published the results in *A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collections*. The Heritage Health Index examined the state of preservation of 4.8 billion artifacts held in collecting institutions, large and small, from internationally renowned art museums and research libraries to local historical societies and archives.

To date, 18,500 copies of *A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collections* have been distributed, including to all members of Congress, foundations, and allied organizations in the cultural field. Heritage Health Index data has received national and international attention, including stories in *The New York Times*, *Associated Press*, *Reader's Digest*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and on National Public Radio and ABC television.

Data is just a click away—*A Public at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collections* is online in its entirety at www.heritagehealthindex.org along with a downloadable PowerPoint® presentation, selected data graphs specific to types of institutions, and additional preservation resources. The report summary is available for \$1.50 per copy for shipping and handling and may be ordered online.

The Heritage Health Index was developed with the input of 35 national associations and federal agencies, including NAGARA, CoSA, and SAA. The survey questionnaire was written with 100 leading collections and preservation professionals including archivists, preservation librarians, and conservators. RMC Research Corporation conducted the survey and analysis.

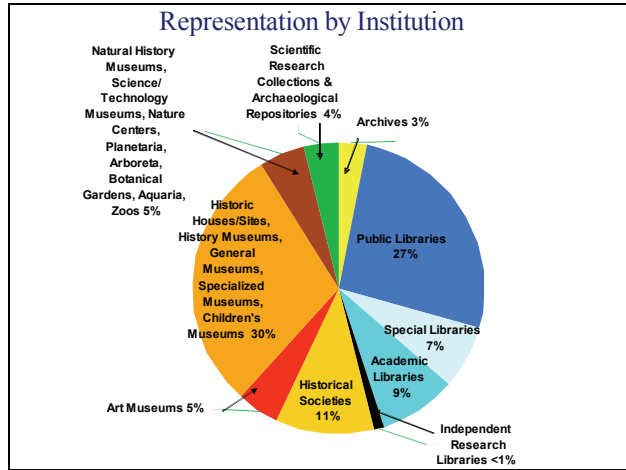
The goal of the Heritage Health Index was to cross professional boundaries to look at collections in a wide variety of institutions, large and small, and to assess the condition of the full range of collections. The Heritage Health Index asked institutions to report on all aspects of conservation and preservation and to estimate the quantity and condition of the collections for which they have a preservation responsibility. Baseline data now exists on condition and preservation needs of materials at archives, libraries, historical societies, museums, and scientific research organizations.

Overall, the Heritage Health Index received a 24% response rate with 3,370 surveys returned. Heritage Preservation had identified 500 of the nation's largest and most significant collections to participate in the survey and received a 90% response rate from this group, which included all state archives and National Archives and Records Administration units.

Heritage Preservation grappled with how to capture data on archives, as they are often subsidiaries of other institutions. Survey participants were instructed to complete the survey for all of their collections, and the example of a subsidiary archives or library was used. The questionnaire asked institutions to identify their primary function or service and to select as many additional functions or services as applicable. The Heritage Health Index data in this report includes institutions that selected archives as their primary function. The Heritage Health Index did not include record centers, such as county clerk offices, because their collections have not been through a decision-making process on long-term archival record retention. Focused on gathering data on collections held in the public trust, the Heritage Health Index did not include private or corporate archives.

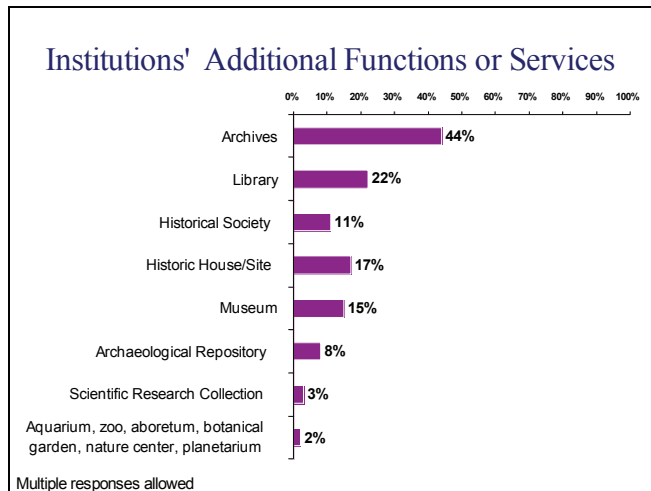
Since the number of archives in the Heritage Health Index survey population was small, this group was sampled at 100% in the stratified sample. In total, 206 archives participated in the survey. Archives responded at a slightly higher rate than other institutions (35%), and the data from archives has a margin of error of $\pm 5.5\%$.

Heritage Preservation estimates that there are 30,827 collecting institutions in the U.S., including 1,033 archives. This graph shows the representation of archives compared to the other institutions in the total Heritage Health Index data.

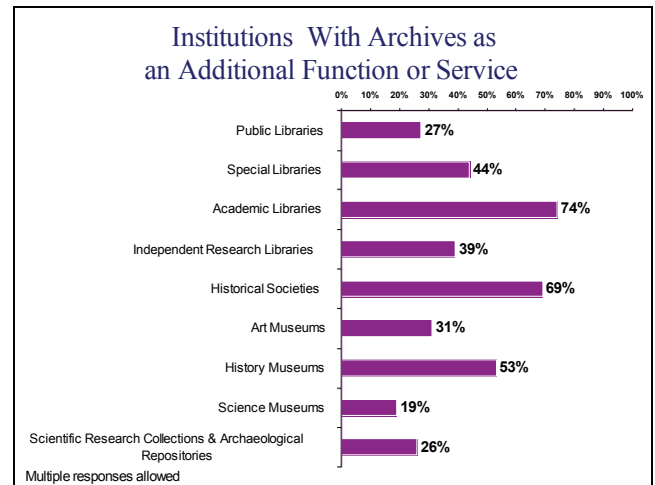


In response to the Heritage Health Index question on additional functions or services, 65% of institutions indicated at least one additional function. Historical societies and history museums have the highest rates of having more than one function.

The following graph shows that archives are most likely to be an additional function or activity. Heritage Preservation estimates 13,407 U.S. institutions have archives as an additional function.



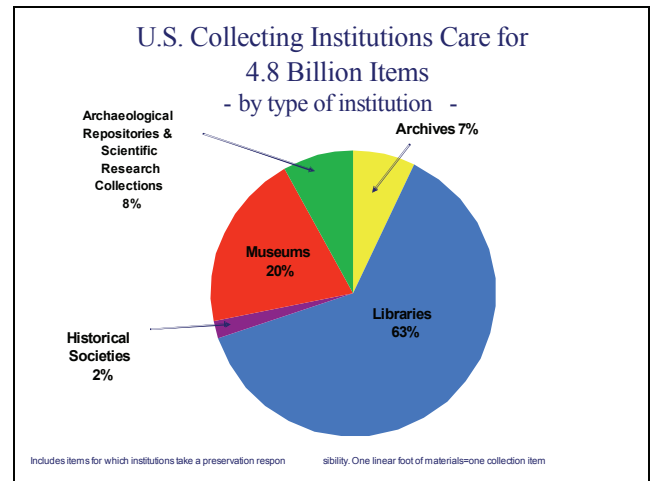
Academic libraries, historical societies, and history museums are most likely to have archives as an additional function.

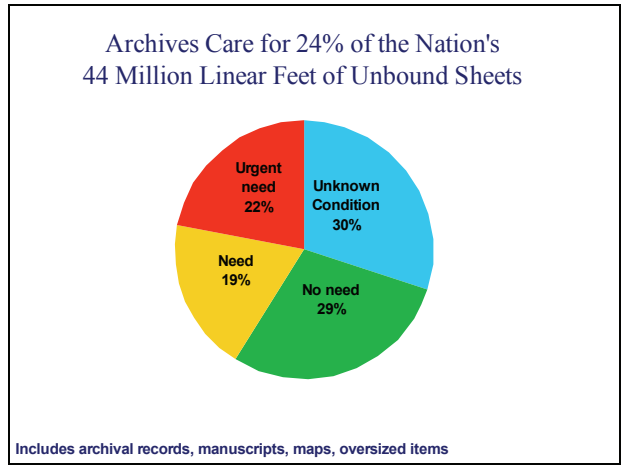
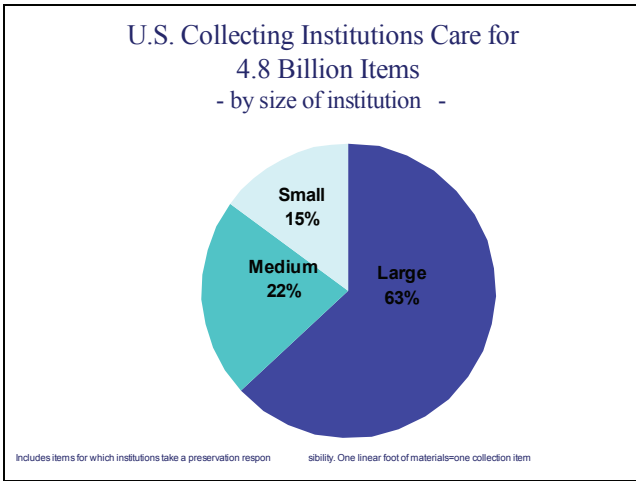


Condition of Collections

The Heritage Health Index provides the first comprehensive data on the condition of U.S. collections. Note that in the following charts one linear foot of unbound sheets was counted as one item.

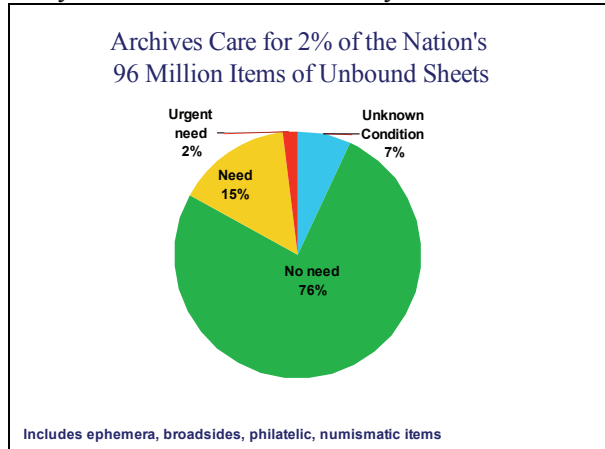
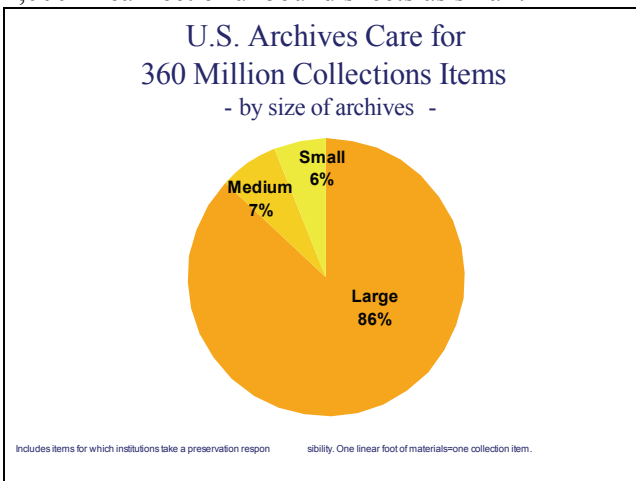
Item Type	Quantity (in millions)
Books/Bound Volumes	1,700
Microfilm/Microfiche	1,000
Natural Science Specimens	820
Photographic Collections	727
Archaeological Collections, individually catalogued	198
Unbound Sheets catalogued in items	96
Online Files	55
Historic Objects	48
Recorded Sound	46
Unbound Sheets catalogued in linear feet	44
Moving Images	40
Art Objects	21
Digital Materials	9
Archaeological Collections, bulk catalogued in cubic feet	3





Definitions of size vary by type of institution. For archives, Heritage Preservation considered those with more than 5,000 linear feet of unbound sheets as large (including all NARA facilities and most state archives); those with 1,000-4,999 linear feet of unbound sheets as medium; and those with fewer than 1,000 linear feet of unbound sheets as small.

Because archives typically express the quantity of their holdings in linear feet, they did not indicate many unbound sheets counted by item:



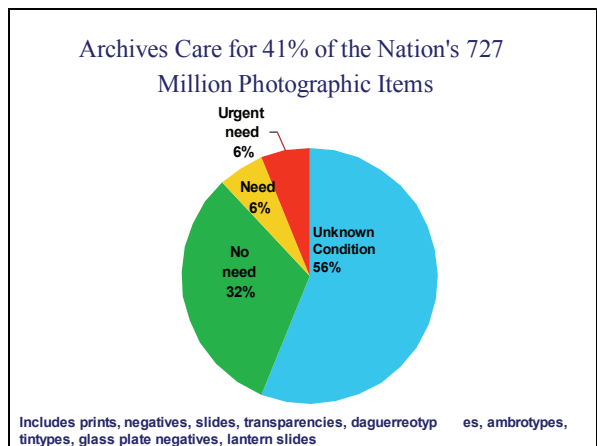
To follow are the condition of materials commonly held at U.S. archives. The following definitions were used:

Unknown condition: Material has not been recently accessed by staff for visual inspection and/or condition is unknown.

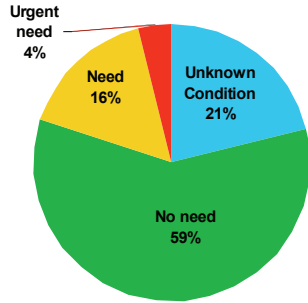
No need: Material is stable enough for use and is housed in a stable environment that protects it from long-term damage and deterioration.

Need: Material may need minor treatment or reformatting to make it stable enough for use, and/or the collection needs to be re-housed into a more stable enclosure or environment to reduce risk of damage or deterioration.

Urgent need: Material needs major treatment or reformatting to make it stable enough for use, and/or the material is located in an enclosure or environment that is causing damage or deterioration. For machine-readable collections, deterioration of media and/or obsolescence of play-back equipment or hardware/software threaten loss of content.

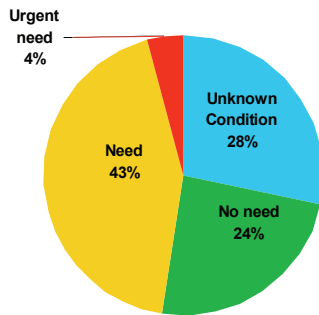


Archives Care for 6% of the Nation's 40 Million Moving Image Items



Includes motion picture film, video tape, laser disc, CD, DVD, m inidisc

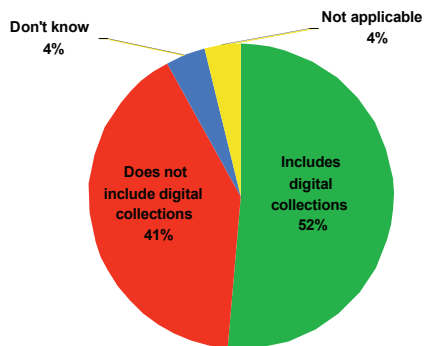
Archives Care for 6% of the Nation's 46 Million Recorded Sound Items



Includes cylinder, phonodisc, cassette, open reel tape, DAT, CD, DVD, MP3

The Heritage Health Index collected some of the first data on whether institutions of all types and sizes have included digital preservation in their preservation mission or program.

Archives That Include Responsibility to Preserve Digital Collections in Conservation/Preservation Mission or Programs



Preservation Needs

The following chart shows how various preservation needs rank at archives. Digital preservation ranks as a much more common need at archives and academic libraries than at any other type of institution.

Archives With Conservation/Preservation Needs - combines need and urgent need -

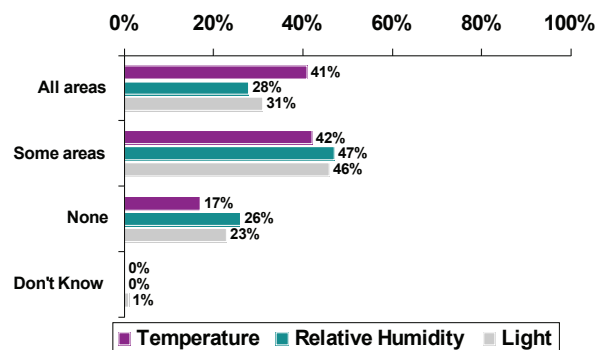
Condition surveys/assessments	78%
Staff training	77%
Finding aids/cataloging collections	75%
Conservation treatment	73%
Preservation of digital collections	68%
Environmental controls	65%
Reduce exposure to light	53%
Security	48%
Integrated pest management	38%

Environment

The Heritage Health Index found that at all types of institutions, improper storage facilities presents one of the greatest hazards to collections. Fifty-six percent of archives have the majority of their collections stored in areas too small to accommodate them safely and appropriately and 76% of archives have experienced damage to collections due to improper storage.

The graph below shows whether the environment where collections are held are controlled for temperature, relative humidity, and light. Combining all three environmental controls, the Heritage Health Index found that 7% of archives do not control temperature, relative humidity, or light in any areas that hold collections.

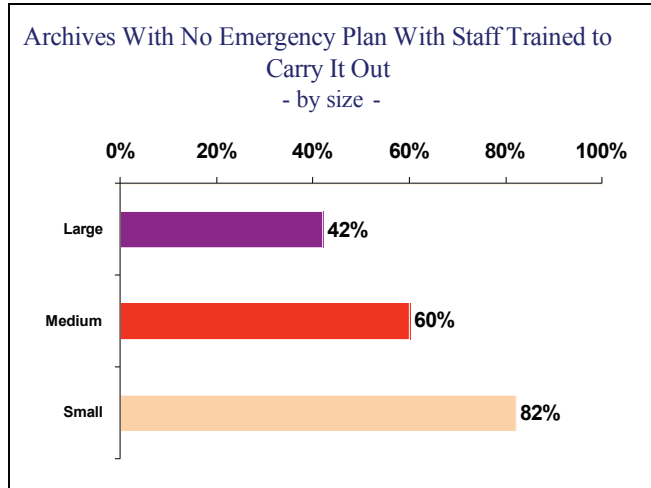
Archives' Use of Environmental Controls for the Preservation of Collections



Disaster Planning

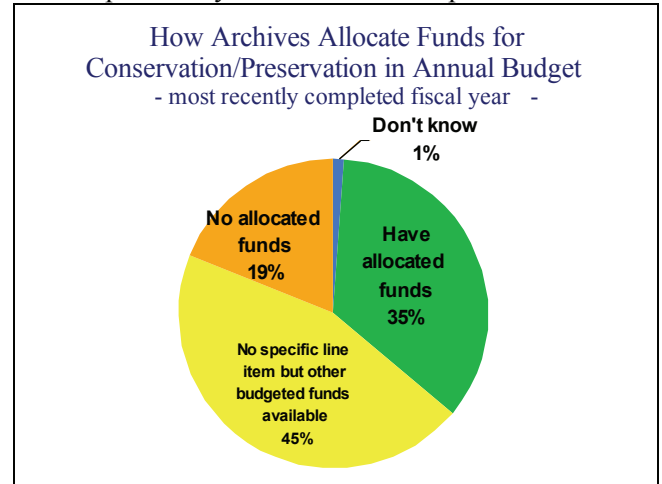
One of the most shocking findings from the Heritage Health Index is that 80% of collecting institutions do not have an emergency plan that include collections with staff trained to carry it out. This puts 2.6 billion items of historic, cultural, and scientific significance at risk. Seventy percent of archives do not have an emergency plan to protect collections with staff

trained to carry it out, which puts 41%, or 149 million, collections items at risk should a disaster strike.



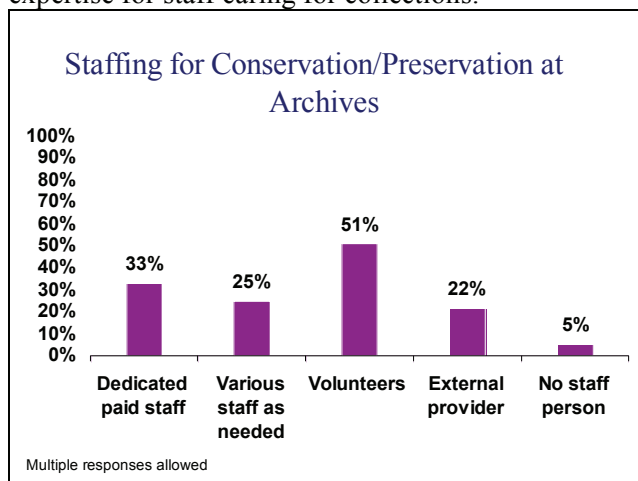
Funding

The Heritage Health Index found that 65% of archives do not specifically allocate funds for preservation.

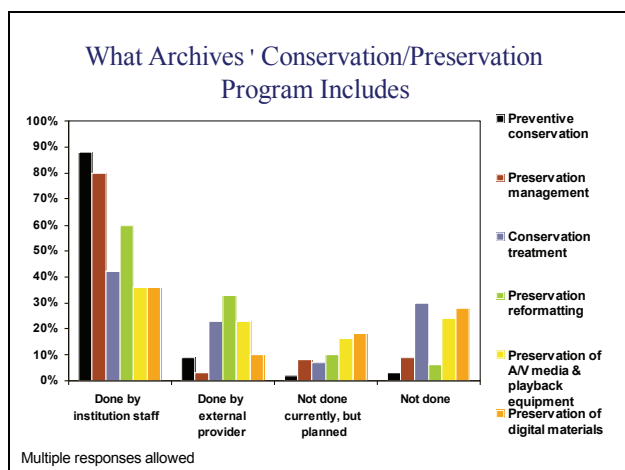
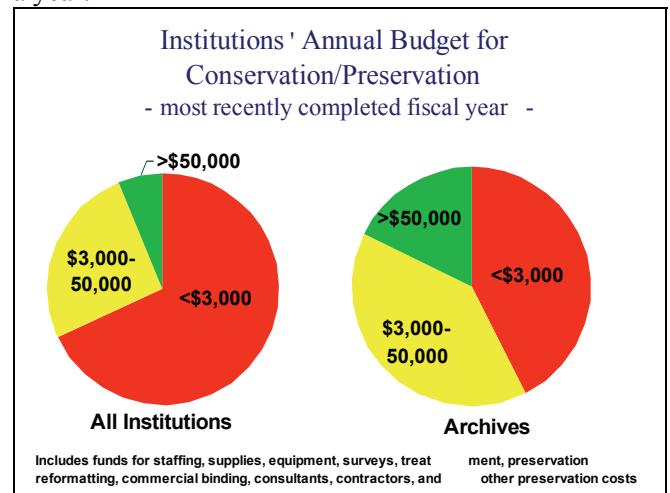


Staffing

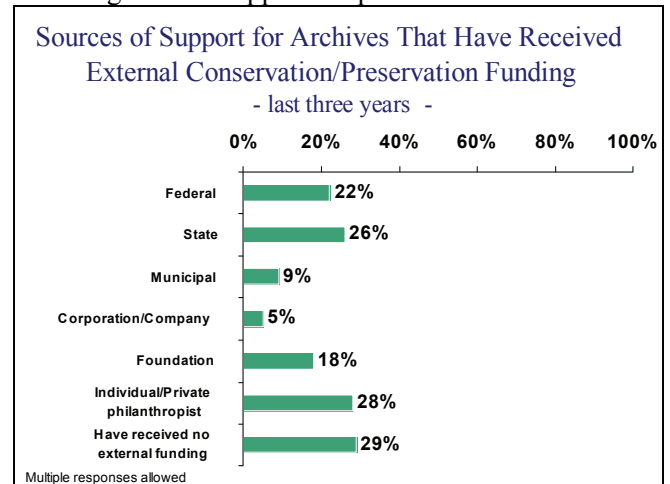
The Heritage Health Index found that 67% of archives do not have paid staff dedicated to collections care and that 77% of archives need additional training and expertise for staff caring for collections.



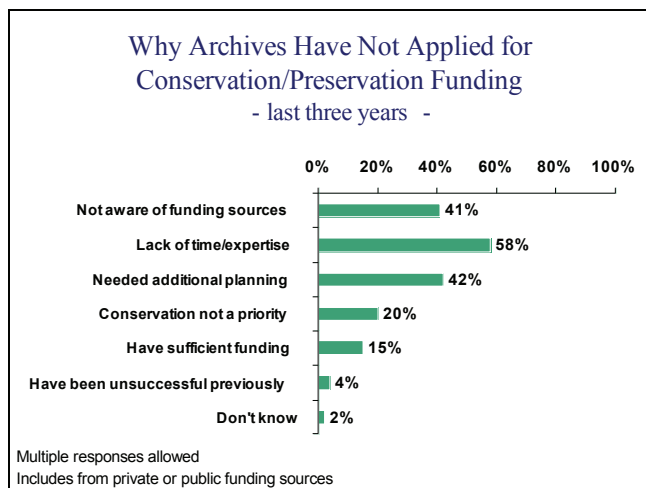
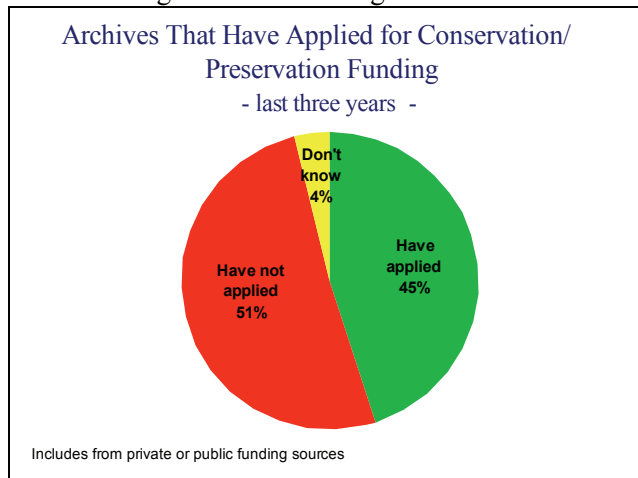
Although preservation budgets are higher at archives than at all institutions combined, more than 40% of archives have preservation budgets of less than \$3,000 a year.



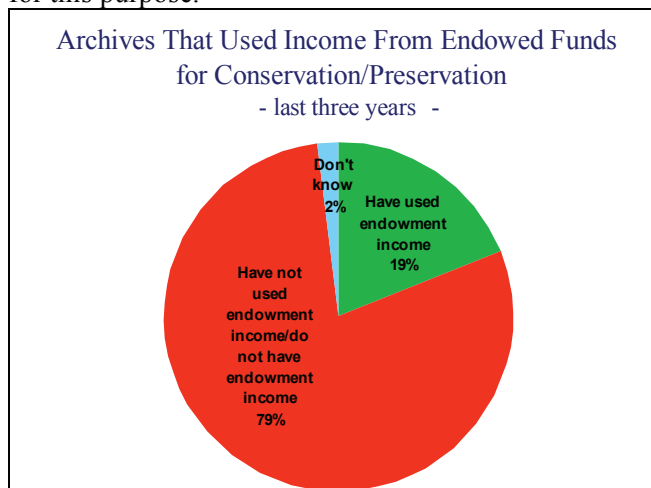
The following shows from where archives are receiving outside support for preservation.



Only about half of archives have applied for preservation/conservation funding in the last three years and the second graph below shows why they have not sought outside funding.



Like at many institutions, income from endowed funds either does not exist or is not often directed toward conservation/preservation activities. At large archives, 27% have used income from endowments for this purpose.



Report Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Heritage Health Index, Heritage Preservation recommends:

- Every institution recommit to providing safe conditions for the collections they hold in trust.
- Every collecting institution develops an emergency plan to protect its collections.
- Every single institution assigns responsibility for caring for collections to members of its staff.
- Individuals at all levels of government and in the private sector assume responsibility for providing the support that will allow these collections to survive.

Act Locally to Make a National Impact

- ➔ Use the Heritage Health Index data to alert local decision-makers and press about the needs of your institution's collections.
- ➔ Use the Heritage Health Index data to highlight how your institution cares for collections.
- ➔ Preservation has public appeal. Feature preservation in your work: exhibits, newsletters, donor incentives, etc.

Future preservation initiatives depend on knowing how the Heritage Health Index results are making an impact. Have they helped your institution prepare funding requests or inform management, stakeholders, and other supporters about issues facing collections? Complete a five-question survey or send in a story about how you are using the Heritage Health Index at the "Feedback" link of www.heritagehealthindex.org.

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