

Digital Preservation Outreach and Education Program 2014 Training Needs Assessment Survey Executive Summary

In September, DPOE wrapped up the *2014 DPOE Training Needs Assessment Survey* in an effort to get a sense of current digital preservation practice, a better understanding about what capacity exists for organizations and professionals to effectively preserve digital content, and some insight into their training needs. The respondents expressed an overwhelming concern for making their content accessible for at least a ten-year horizon, and showed strong support for educational opportunities, like the DPOE Train-the-Trainer Workshop, which provide training to working professionals, increasing organizational capacity to provide long-term access to digital content.

The 17-question survey was a follow-up to an earlier survey conducted in the summer and fall of 2010. This year's survey was open for seven weeks to relevant organizations and received 436 responses. The questions addressed issues such as primary function of an organization (library, archive, museum, etc.), staff size and responsibilities, collection items, preferred training content and delivery options, and financial support for professional development and training. There was good geographic coverage in the responses from organizations in 48 states, DC, and Puerto Rico, and none of the survey questions were skipped by any of the respondents. Overall, the distribution of responses was about the same from libraries, archives, museums, and historical societies between 2010 and 2014, although there was a notable increase in participation from state governments.

The most significant takeaways are: 1) an overwhelming expression of concern that respondents ensure their digital content is accessible for 10 or more years (84%); 2) evidence of a strong commitment to support employee training opportunities (83%, which is an increase from 66% reported in 2010), and; 3) the similar in the results between 2010 and 2014. This trend will be of particular interest when the survey is conducted again in 2016. Other important discoveries reveal changes in staff size and configuration over the last four years. There was a marked 6% decrease in staff size at smaller organizations (those with 1–50 employees), and a slight 2% drop in staff size at large organizations with over 500 employees. In comparison, medium-size organizations reported a 4% uptick in the staff range of 51–200, and 3% for the 201–500 tier. There was a substantial 13% increase across all organizations in paid full-time or part-time professional staff with practitioner experience, and a 5% drop in organizations reporting no staff at all. These findings suggest positive trends across the digital preservation community, which bodes well for the long-term preservation of our collective cultural heritage. Born-digital content wasn't extant as a choice for the 2010 survey regarding content held by respondents, yet is a close second to reformatted materials. This will be another closely-monitored data point in 2016.

Regarding training needs, online delivery is trending upward across many sectors to meet the constraints of reduced travel and professional development budgets. However, results of the 2014 survey reveal respondents still value intimate, in-person workshops as one of their most preferred delivery options with webinars and self-paced, online courses as the next two choices. Respondents demonstrated a preference for training focused on applicable skills, rather than introductory material on basic concepts, and show a preference to travel off-site within a 100-mile radius for half- to full-day workshops over other options.