

The Acquisition of Digital Records at Small and Medium Sized Archives in Canada: Survey Research from InterPARES 3

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Introduction

- The objective of this study was to better understand the relationships between the educational, technological and personnel needs of small and medium-sized archives and their willingness to acquire, maintain and preserve digital records.
- The study focused on identifying and assessing the nature, extent, perceptions, and impact of the challenges faced by Canadian small and medium-sized archives with regard to acquisition and long-term preservation of digital records.

Main Survey Questions

1. On a scale of 1-5 how important is the issue of digital records to archives in general (5 being very important and 1 being not an issue of concern)?
2. What is the current situation at your archives with regard to accepting digital records?
3. If your institution currently refuses or plans to refuse donations of digital records, please identify with numbers the top two reasons why (1,2)
4. Does your institution have a policy for the acquisition of digital records? Yes/No
 - 4.a. If No, are there plans to develop such a policy?
5. Does your institution have a policy for the preservation of digital records? Yes/No
 - 5.a. If No, are there plans to develop such a policy?
6. Have staff or volunteers at your organization noticed an interest/awareness of the special nature of digital records on the part of archives users?
 - 6.a. If yes, please characterize the interest. Topic comes up:
 - ___Only once___Once a week___Once a month
7. Does your institution offer any educational or outreach programs to the public/potential donors? Yes/No
 - 7.a. If yes, what sort of programs? (For example, do you provide recordkeeping workshops or give presentations to volunteer organizations)?
 - 7.b. If yes, are digital records a topic that is brought up at these sessions? Please elaborate.
8. Please add any additional comments that you have on these issues.



Results

- 93 respondents filled in the survey
 - Two responses from very large institutions were discarded because they did not meet the definition of small/medium sized archives
- Issues with 91 remaining responses:
 - Included multiple responses from some institutions – these were kept in as opinions and perceptions can differ from person to person
 - 2 anonymous responses – were kept for overall results
 - Not many respondents filled in question 3

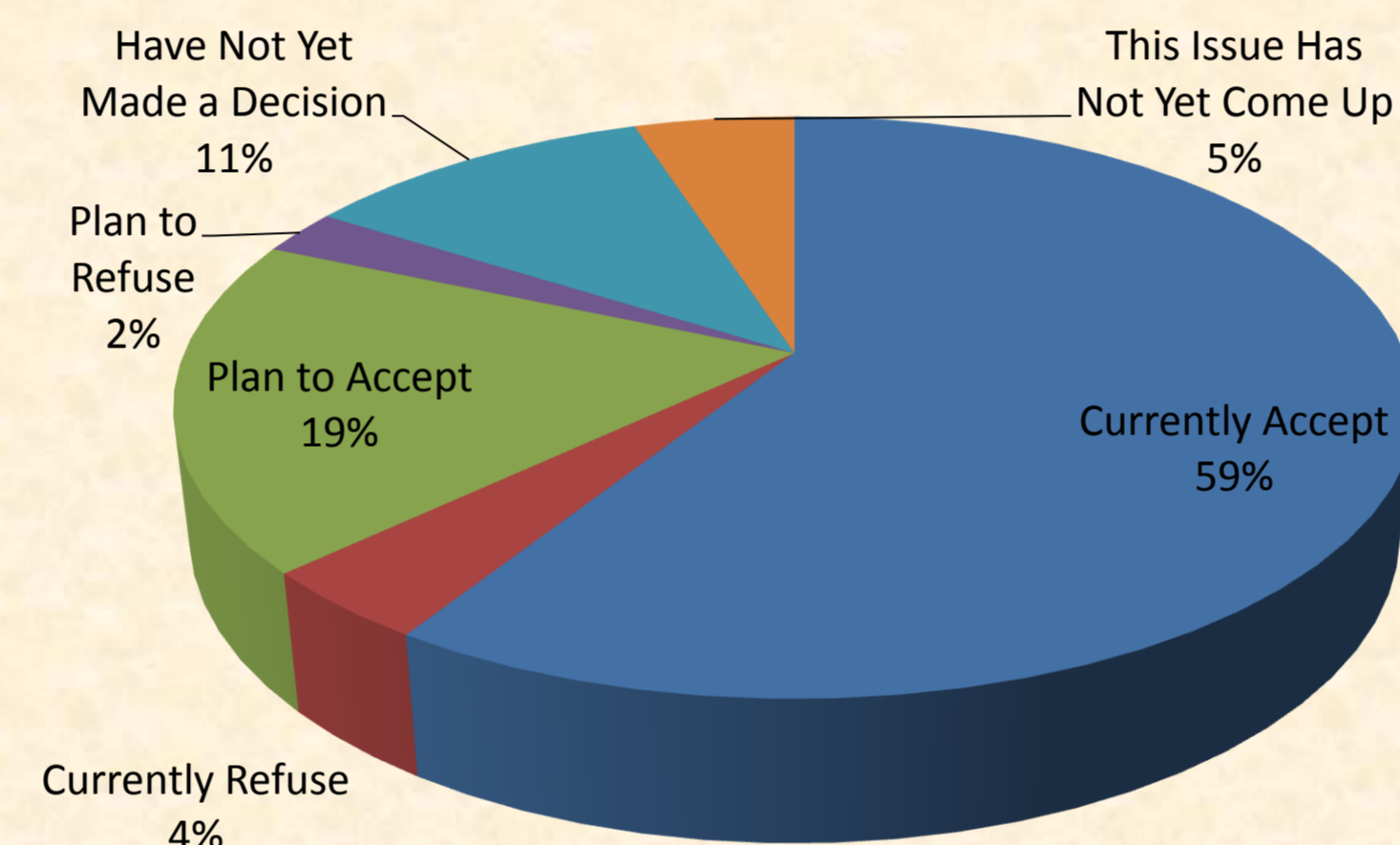


Figure 1: Responses to question 2: What is the current situation at your archives with regard to accepting digital records?

Analysis

- Survey results by type of institution:
 - Categories: Museums/Heritage Centres, Territorial/Provincial Archives, University/College Archives/Special Collections, Community Archives and Special Archives/Libraries, Religious Archives, Municipal Archives

Religious Archives

- 100% of respondents do **not** have a digital records acquisitions policy
- 100% of respondents do **not** have a digital records preservation policy

University /College Archives/Special Collections

- 39% of respondents noticed archives users were interested/aware of special nature of digital records. 61% did **not** notice an awareness.

Community Archives and Special Archives/Libraries

- 70% of respondents accept digital records
- 79% do **not** have a digital records acquisitions policy; 90% do **not** have a digital records preservation policy

- Survey results by number of staff per institution:
 - Categories: 1 or less full time staff, 1-2 full time staff, and 3 or more full time staff

1 or less Staff

- Refusal of digital records was related to the following:
 - lack of staff time,
 - cost of technological expertise
 - lack of staff training

1-2 Full Time Staff

- 59% of respondents indicated that they had noticed an increased awareness/interest in digital records by archives users

3 of More Full Time Staff

- 45% of respondents noticed an increased awareness/interest in digital records on the part of archives users
- 77.7% of respondents indicated this issue came up once a week

Methodology

Literature Review:

- Revealed little scholarship devoted specifically to the issues, challenges, and potential solutions surrounding the acquisition of digital records at small and medium sized archives. At the time the literature review was conducted no information on this topic had been collected in a systematic way in Canada.

Survey:

- 8 question survey created in both English and French.
- Survey posted online for seven weeks.

Advertisement:

- Bilingual advertisements placed in provincial and territorial archival newsletters, provincial archival association websites, and on provincial and national archival listservs.

Discussion

- In their comments, the majority of respondents noted their lack of training, funding and knowledge regarding digital records acquisition and preservation
- It is evident that many institutions do not have adequate policies or procedures in place to deal with the acquisition and/or preservation of digital records

Future Work

- For this study:
 - Complete analysis of survey data
 - Finish Final Report for InterPARES Project
 - Present findings at 2011 AABC Conference
- For small and medium sized archives:
 - Develop specific acquisition and preservation policies for digital records
 - Further training on, funding for, and education about acquiring, maintaining and preserving digital records

Acknowledgement

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- Further information about the InterPARES 3 project can be found at: <http://www.interpares.org/>