The Digital Landscape of the Conservation Profession

Overview and Survey Preview

AIC 42nd Annual Meeting, Saturday, May 31, 2014
The Digital Landscape of the Conservation Profession

*Project Goals:*

- What digital resources are currently created and used in support of conservation and collections care
- What digital resources are most urgently needed
- How FAIC and other organizations might best support those needs

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*Project Components*

- Review of existing digital resources
- Survey of users and creators of digital resources
- Meetings of key stakeholders
- Phone interviews with key stakeholders
- Recommendations/priorities for FAIC and other organizations
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*Survey Goals:*

- How do conservation, preservation, collections care professionals create, share, use digital resources?
- What are the needs and wishes for the future?

Sent in early May to AIC members, ConsDistList, on websites, to allied organizations. Approximately 560 full responses as of 5/20.

**THIS IS A PRELIMINARY LOOK!**
Survey – Online Searches

• 2/3rds of respondents search online for conservation/preservation/collections care information at least once a week
• 30% search online daily
• Only 14% search less than once a month
Survey – Top Online Resource Used

- CoOL/DistList: 46%
- AIC/JAIC: 30%
- Google: 11%
- All others: 13%

Legend:
- CoOL/DistList
- AIC/JAIC
- Google
- All others
Survey – Top 3 Online Resources

- CoOL/DistList: 25%
- AIC/JAIC: 21%
- Google: 7%
- AATA/Getty: 9%
- CAMEO: 8%
- CCI: 4%
- JSTOR: 4%
- NPS: 7%
- All Other: 2%
Survey – Successful Searches

% “Always” or “Usually” Successful

- Disasters: 70%
- Suppliers: 65%
- Environmental Guidelines: 62%
- Health & Safety: 60%
- Mold/pests: 58%
- Digital Imaging: 55%
- Storage: 53%
- Documentation: 51%
- Exhibit/Display: 49%
- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%
Survey – Not So Successful Searches

% "Always" or "Usually" Successful

- Deterioration of Materials: 50%
- Cleaning: 50%
- Handling/Shipping: 40%
- History/Manufacture of Objects: 40%
- Treatment Information: 30%
- Artist Working Materials: 20%
Top Problems with Online Resources

70% - Lack of information specific to exact needs
49% - Lack of up-to-date information
43% - Concern about the reliability of information
32% - The time it takes to find/obtain the information
31% - Finding the right question/search term
Searches for Professional Information Online (training, jobs, etc.)

TOP 3 SOURCES:

30% - AIC  (First choice of 44% of respondents)

18% - ConsDist/CoOL  (First choice of 30%)

3 to 4% each - Google, Facebook, Linked-in

2 to 4% each - IIC, ICON, ICOM/ICOM-CC
Creating and Maintaining Digital Resources

71% are involved in creating or maintaining...

- Documents
- Images (visible light)
- Other images
- Social media platforms
- Websites
- Datasets
Problems in Creating and Maintaining Digital Resources

- Time/staffing
- Keeping Resources Current
- Inadequate skills/training
- Stability/longevity of storage
- No Problems
Top Enhancements Desired

50% or more expressed “high interest” in:

• Better indexing of/search for information
• A repository for research findings
• A repository for conservation treatment records
• Archive of past conservation practices
• Clearer identification of trustworthy information
Digital Tools Used

- Image Management
- Document Management

(Less use of online collaborative workspaces)
Digital Skills Desired

MOST OFTEN CITED:
• Digital Asset Management
• Digital Imaging

FREQUENTLY CITED:
• Database creation and design
• Photoshop
• “Programming Skills”
Policy Issues

- Copyright/intellectual property issues
- Institutional/repository policies
- Time (lack thereof!)
- Standards/terminology needed
Respondent Profile

90% from U.S. (so far)
67% practicing conservators
35% in for-profit practice
33% in museum setting
Good distribution of experience and age ranges
Age and Responses

• Online search frequency for collections information about the same across ages. Ages 45-65 actually a bit more likely to go on line for this info.
• Younger respondents are more likely to look for, and more interested in, professional information on line (I suspect jobs!)
• Older respondents more interested in faster access to information and better online communications with colleagues.
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