

# Montana Connecting to Collections Survey Report

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Finalized by the MT Connecting to Collections Task Force, May 2011

MT's Connecting to Collections Project is a partnership between the Montana State Library and the Montana Historical Society. The project is funded by the Institute of Museum & Library Services.



Montana Historical Society Museum Collections

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## Executive Summary

The Montana “Connecting to Collections” project, which began in 2010, is part of a nationwide program for states to develop collaborative preservation plans which has been funded by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The project’s web-based statewide preservation needs assessment survey was in the field between October 8, 2010 and January 21, 2011 and drew 138 institutional participants for a 36% response rate from the state’s 381 cultural heritage institutions.

The survey was developed by the Montana Connecting to Collections Task Force, which includes representatives from a variety of cultural institutions in the state, working in conjunction with consultants from the LYRASIS library collaborative. The survey included 78 questions, and was organized in sections collecting important data on institutional demographics, collection holdings, collection storage conditions, collections management policies and procedures, disaster planning, preservation and conservation activities, preservation funding, preservation training and assistance, cataloging, digitization, and historic building issues.

Survey responses were received from institutions in 51 of Montana’s 56 counties. The respondents included public libraries, history museums, county records repositories, special libraries, and academic libraries. Archives, historical societies, historic houses and sites, art museums, and natural history museums are also represented.

In order to determine what types of materials are held in Montana’s cultural heritage institutions, so that information and training on preserving these materials can be disseminated, respondents were asked to indicate all material types that are a permanent part of their holdings, and for which they have preservation responsibility. The survey found that material types most often held include books and bound volumes, newspapers, CDs/DVDs, bound manuscript materials, and maps.

The survey also found that many collecting institutions are able to control temperature and light levels in either all areas of their building or some areas within their facilities. However, the majority of organizations are not able to control humidity or air quality in any areas. A finding of concern is that 53 institutions participating in the survey do not use any type of environmental monitoring equipment. Recommendations for addressing this concern appear later in this report.

Montana institutions have a very positive response about whether their collections are stored adequately. Another positive finding of Montana’s Connecting to Collections survey is that more than half of the participating organizations include preservation of collections in their institutional mission statement. However, in regard to other types of preservation policies, many results indicate areas for improvement, including establishment of long-range preservation plans, expanding the number of disaster plans within the state, and having collection surveys done by preservation professionals.

A large majority of Montana’s cultural heritage institutions’ annual budgets do not include funds specifically allocated for preservation and conservation activities. An additional concern for the state is that over 50% of institutions have not applied for any external preservation funding over the past three years.

In the area of education, survey respondents were asked what preservation/conservation topics they would like to receive training on. There is an urgent need for training on preservation grant writing/fundraising/advocacy, book and paper repair, building design/construction/renovation, and digitization of materials. There is also a general need for additional topics including care and handling of collections, emergency/disaster planning and recovery, collections management, conservation, and storage/housekeeping.

When organizations were asked about the estimated percentage of their catalog or index accessible online, 44% said none of the catalog or index was accessible. An equal percentage of institutions have digital collections (50%) as do not have them. Two questions related to digital preservation provide answers which are of great concern. Although 51 institutions plan to retain their digital collections for more than ten years, only 27 have a digital preservation plan in place.

The final portion of the Montana Connecting to Collections Preservation Needs Assessment Survey dealt with historic buildings. More than forty institutions responded that they have responsibility for historic buildings as part of their collections or operation. The survey looked at building deterioration factors and asked if a historic structure analysis or building preservation survey has been performed; the survey indicates this is also an area of need.

Based on these findings and information gained in discussion at five preservation workshops held in the state in late 2010, Montana's Connecting to Collections Project Task Force will develop a statewide plan to reach out to the state's cultural heritage institutions with an expanded level of preservation information, education, and support.

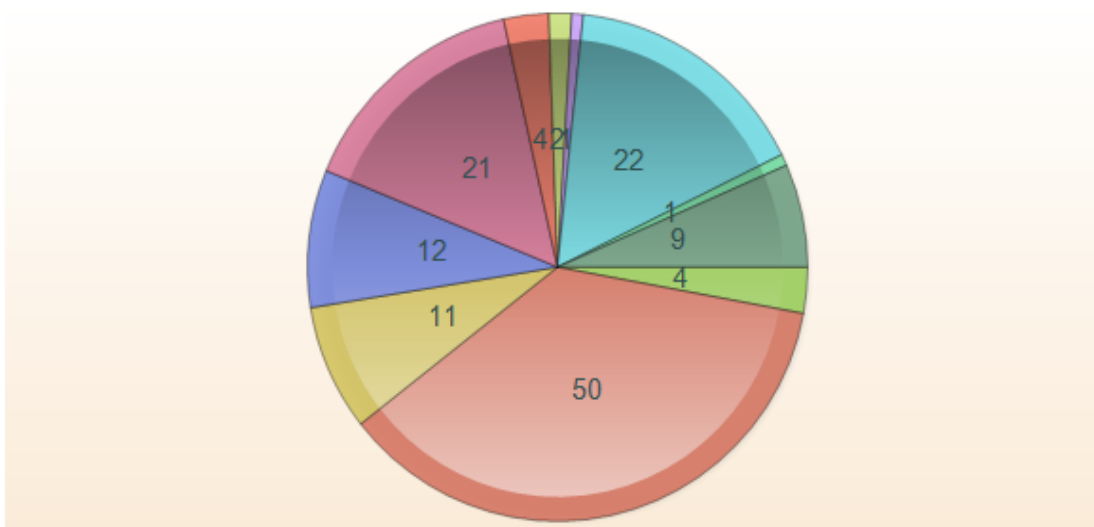
## ***Institutional Information***

The web survey reached institutions in all Montana's 56 counties. The representation of institution types among the respondents is helpful in gaining a view of the full array of preservation needs across many kinds of cultural heritage institutions. The leading institution types answering the survey included:

- *Public libraries (50 respondents or 36%)*
- *History museums (22 or 16%)*
- *County records repositories (21 or 15%)*
- *Special libraries (12 or 9%)*
- *Academic libraries (11 or 8%)*

In addition, archives (4), historical societies (4), historic houses and sites (2), an art museum, a natural history museum and nine other institutions which designated themselves as "other" (usually a hybrid of two or more of the above institutional types) participated in the survey. See the following chart for institution-type information. A follow up question showed that many of the responding organizations (especially public libraries and history museums) provide the additional function or service of an archive.

## Which one category most closely describes your primary function or service? (Select one)



A majority of the institutions have five or fewer paid full-time staff (only public libraries and county records repositories have a sizeable number of institutions with more employees). Most are open forty or more hours a week year-around. Their governance structures are mainly through county government (55 or 40% of respondents, especially in the public library and county records repository sectors), with non-profit/non-governmental organizations at 28 or 20%; college, university, or other academic entity at 13 or 9%; and ten or less respondents each from municipal, hybrid city/county, state, federal, or tribal governance structures.

The total annual institutional operating budgets reported are \$100,001 to \$500,000 (55 or 46%) or \$1 to \$100,000 (46 or 39%), but there are nine institutions with budgets ranging from \$1,000,001 to \$5,000,000 and four above a \$5,000,000 annual operating budget.

The association and organizational affiliations of the responding institutions varies widely. This is important, because associations may be utilized in the future as hosts for preservation training activities in order to reach a large number of people at one time. For this question, participants were able to name all of the organizations with which their institution is affiliated:

- Montana Library Association (53 institutions, or 45% of those answering the survey)
- Museums Association of Montana (26 or 22%)
- Montana Association of Counties (25 or 21%)
- American Library Association (23 or 19%)
- Montana Association of Clerks and Recorders (18 or 15%)

- American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) (14 or 12%)
- National Association of Counties (NACO) (14 or 12%)
- Mountain Plains Museum Association (8 or 7%)
- Northwest Archivists, Inc. (6 or 5%)

The Pacific Northwest Library Association, International Association of Clerks and Recorders, Election Administrators and Treasurers, Mountain Plans Library Association, and Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists were represented by five or fewer member organizations in the survey.

## ***Collections Inventory***

In order to determine what types of materials are most often held in Montana’s libraries, museums, archives, and historical centers/sites, so that information and training on preserving these materials can be disseminated, respondents were asked to indicate all material types that are a permanent part of their holdings, and for which they have preservation responsibility. Institutions were asked to note specific types of materials held in these “families” of formats:

- Books and Bound Volumes
- Unbound Sheets
- Photographic Collections
- Moving Image Collections
- Recorded Sound Collections
- Digital Collections
- Historic Artifacts
- Transportation Vehicles
- Agricultural Objects
- Art Objects
- Ethnographic Objects
- Archaeological Collections
- Geological Specimens

More detailed information on material types held include:

- Books and Bound Volumes
  - Books/bound volumes, 118 or 88% of responding institutions hold this type of material
  - Newspapers, 82 or 61%
  - Bound manuscript material (ledger books, minute books, scrapbooks), 81 or 60%
  - Serials/periodicals, 64 or 48%
- Unbound Sheets
  - Maps, 74 or 71% responding to this question
  - Archival records or manuscripts, 60 or 58%
  - Oral history transcripts, 56 or 54%
  - Architectural drawings or blueprints, 37 or 36%
  - County-filed documents, 35 or 34%
- Photographic Collections
  - Black and white prints (of all processes), 63 or 72% answering in this category
  - Microfilm and microfiche, 55 or 62%

- Color prints, negatives, and positives, including transparencies and slides, 49 or 56%
- Moving Image Collections
  - Discs (laser, CD, DVD, minidisk), 67 or 85% of institutions responding to this question
  - Magnetic tape (Beta, VHS, digital), 62 or 78%
  - Motion picture film (reels or cans), 25 or 32%
- Recorded Sound Collections
  - Optical media (CD, DVD), 62 or 85% answering this question
  - Magnetic media (cassette, open-reel tapes, DAT), 58 or 77%
  - Digital media (MP3s, etc.), 20 or 27%
  - Grooved media (cylinder, phono disc, etc.), 19 or 28%
- Digital Collections
  - CD/DVD, 82 institutions or 92% answering in this category
  - Online collections, 29 or 33%
  - Floppy discs, 24 or 27%
- Historic Artifacts
  - Textiles (costumes, flags, rugs, quilts, etc.), 43 or 75% responding to this question
  - Furniture, 40 or 70%
  - Ceramic and glass (including stained glass), 36 or 63%
  - Domestic items (dolls/toys, frames, household machines and tools, musical instruments), 35 or 61%
  - Metalwork (arms, armor, coins) 27 or 47%
  - Science, technology, and medical artifacts, 26 or 46%
- Transportation Vehicles
  - Automobiles, 18 or 75% providing information on this collection type
  - Non-agricultural animal-drawn vehicles, 18 or 75%
  - Rail vehicles (locomotives, passenger and freight cars, cabooses, hand and mining carts), 13 or 54%
- Agricultural Objects
  - Hand tools (rakes, scythes, etc.), 27 or 96% answering in this category
  - Animal husbandry items (branding irons, collars, horseshoes, tack, yokes), 22 or 79%
  - Animal-drawn implements and vehicles, 19 or 68%
- Art Objects
  - Paintings (on canvas, panels, plaster), 48 or 73% responding to this question
  - Art on paper (drawings, prints, watercolors), 46 or 70%
  - Sculpture (indoor, outdoor, carvings), 36 or 53%
  - Posters, 35 or 53%
  - Decorative arts (fine metalwork, enamels, ivories, jewelry, lacquer, timepieces), 29 or 44%
- Other Collections of Note
  - Ethnographic Objects – Organic collections (leather, skin, feather, quills, hair, fur, wood, bark), 25 institutions responded holding this type of material

- o Ethnographic Objects – stone, bone, or shell collections, 22 organizations
- o Archaeological collections – individually-cataloged organic material (textile, fiber, wood, bone, shell, feather) – 14 sites
- o Archaeological Collections – individually-cataloged inorganic material (ceramic, glass, metal, plastics) – 11 repositories
- o Geological Specimens (gems, rocks, minerals, meteorites) – 15 institutions

## ***Collections Storage Conditions***

The great majority of the collections enumerated in this survey are stored in buildings or spaces owned by the holding institution (107 respondents or 80%) with buildings or spaces rented or leased a distant second with 14% of responding organizations selecting that answer.

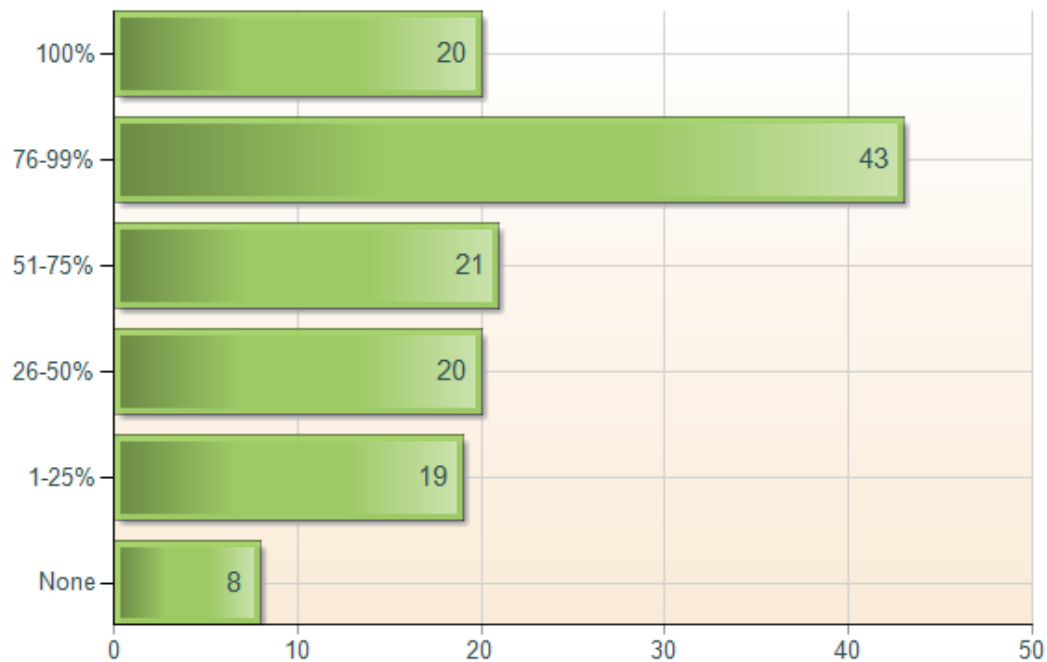
Collection holding institutions are able to control the temperature in either all areas of their building (42%) or some areas (47%). Control of light is similarly positive, with 38% “able to control in all areas” and 42% able to control “in some areas.” However, 53% or the majority of organizations are not able to control their humidity in any areas, and control of air quality is also poor; 46% do not have control in any areas. This is true across all types of institutions.

To monitor and control environmental conditions, the most-used equipment in Montana institutions includes 38% using thermometers, and 30% utilizing pest traps. A finding of concern, however, is that 41% of all respondents to this question do not use any environmental monitoring equipment. Special libraries, public libraries, and county records repositories are among the largest groups of respondents not utilizing environmental monitoring equipment.

Respondents were asked the percentage of their collections which they store in areas they consider to be adequate. This question excludes environmental concerns, but includes factors such as safe access to collections, appropriate storage furniture, and a space large enough to accommodate current collections. Twenty institutions said 100% of collections are stored adequately, 43 organizations said 76-99% are well-stored, and 21 said 51-75% are in good storage conditions. The following chart reports all findings for this question.

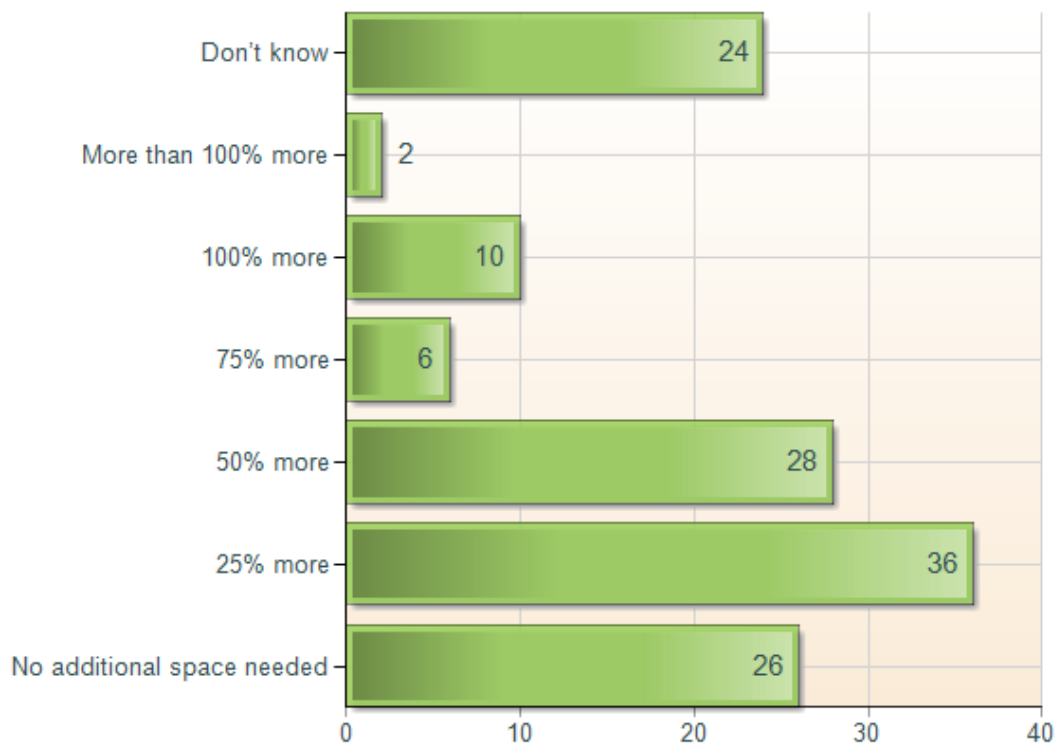


**Excluding environmental concerns, what percentage of your collection is stored in areas that you consider to be adequate? (For example, safe access to collections, on appropriate storage furniture, large enough space to accommodate current collections). (Select one)**



Most of the institutions concerned about collection storage adequacy are from the public library and history museum sectors. In a very positive response, a total of 64% of the responding institutions indicate that their collections are adequately stored. The overall positive findings on space needs are also reflected in the chart below, where the 36 institutions would only need 25% additional space over the next ten years at their present rate of collection growth to adequately store their collections. Twenty-eight organizations could utilize 50% more space, and 26 institutions indicate they need no additional space. Most of the responding institutions needing 100% more space are from history museums, academic libraries, and public libraries.

**How much additional space would you need (at your present rate of growth) over the next 10 years to adequately store your collections? (Select one)**



The types of security systems and practices used to protect Montana’s cultural heritage collections are mostly building or policy-based. The leading control method used is “staff observation of materials usage” (75%). Secure doors and locks (67%), control of access to the collections (54%), written policies and procedures (53%), and control of items brought into collections (42%) are all based on building features or employee procedures; use of alarm systems (43%) was the highest-ranked answer related to actual automated security systems.

Fire extinguishers (95%), smoke detectors (68%), and fire alarms (65%) are the top fire safety systems implemented by Montana’s collecting institutions. In addition, just over one-quarter of the cultural organizations use wet-pipe sprinkler systems for fire suppression. Of the organizations that have fire extinguishers, 62% are trained in their use, and 38% are not (the largest group not receiving training was surprisingly from the county records repository sector).

## ***Collections Management Policies and Procedures***

Another positive finding of Montana’s Connecting to Collections survey is that more than half of the participating organizations (54%) include preservation of collections in their institutional mission statement. Only public libraries as an institution type lagged in this category. However, in regard to other types of preservation policies, the results indicate areas for improvement.

Forty percent of respondents (54 institutions) do not have a written, long-range preservation plan for the maintenance, care, and repair of their collections and this is especially true among the state’s public libraries.

Nineteen institutions or 14% do have a plan, 11% of the institutions are developing a plan, and 15% address preservation in their institution's overall long-range plan.

At 46% of responding organizations, there are no full-time equivalent paid staff (where one FTE equals 40 hours of work per week for one year) spending time on collections care activities such as repair, rebinding, and reformatting. At 42% of institutions, up to one FTE paid staff spends time on collections care. The findings are quite similar for unpaid/volunteer staff, where there are no volunteers spending time on collections care at 87 institutions (or 65%), and only up to 1 FTE volunteer help at 34 (or 26%) of the institutions indicated as the next highest response.

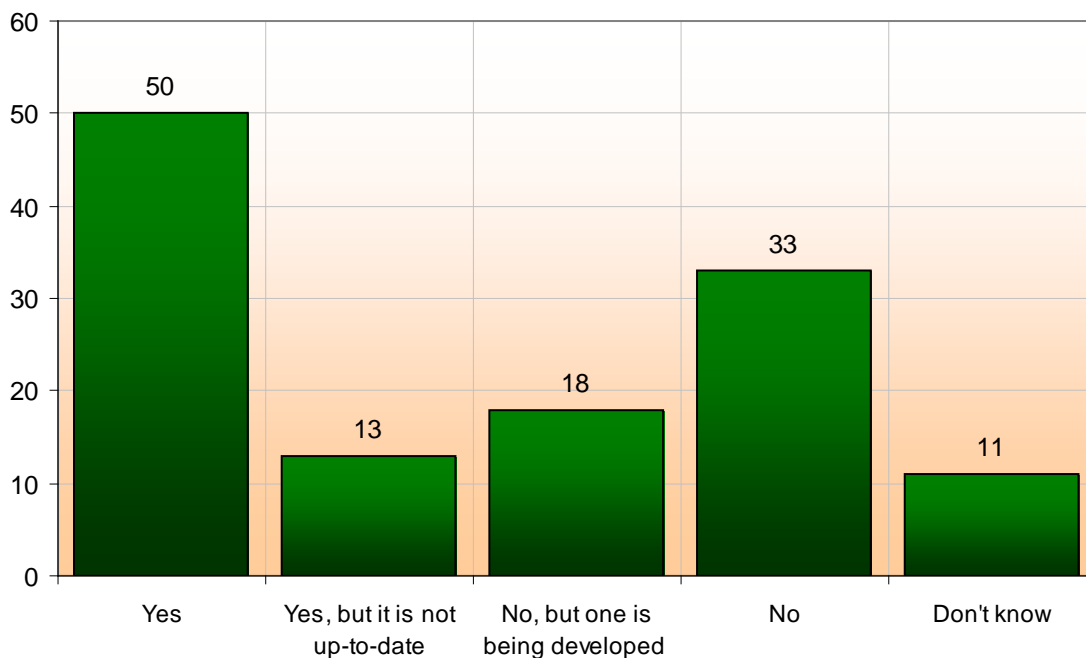
Almost three-quarters of the respondents (101 institutions or 74%) have not had a preservation survey, and only 12, or 9% have undertaken such a survey at the time of this project. Institution types in particular need of a preservation survey hail from the historical society, special library, public library, and county records repository groups.

## Disaster Planning

In the availability of disaster plans, policies, and procedures, Montana shows some excellent results.

Fifty organizations (36% of the respondents) have a written emergency/disaster plan which includes collections materials; another 13 (9%) have a plan which needs to be updated; and 18 (13%) are developing a plan. About one-quarter of responding institutions (33 or 24%) do not have a plan, and 11 or 8% do not know. Those institution types most in need of disaster plan development are history museums and county records repositories. In addition, 44 institutions (54%) that have a disaster plan have staff that have been trained to carry it out, while 32 (39%) do not (chief among these historical societies and history museums).

### DISASTER PLANNING Does your institution have a written emergency or disaster plan that includes collection materials?



There were a number of reasons why institutions without a disaster/emergency plan have not created such a document. The reasons most given include:

- Lack of time to write the plan (20 institutions or 33%)
- No institutional priority placed on disaster planning (16 or 26%)
- Lack of expertise to write a plan (also 16 or 26% -- especially prevalent among history museums)

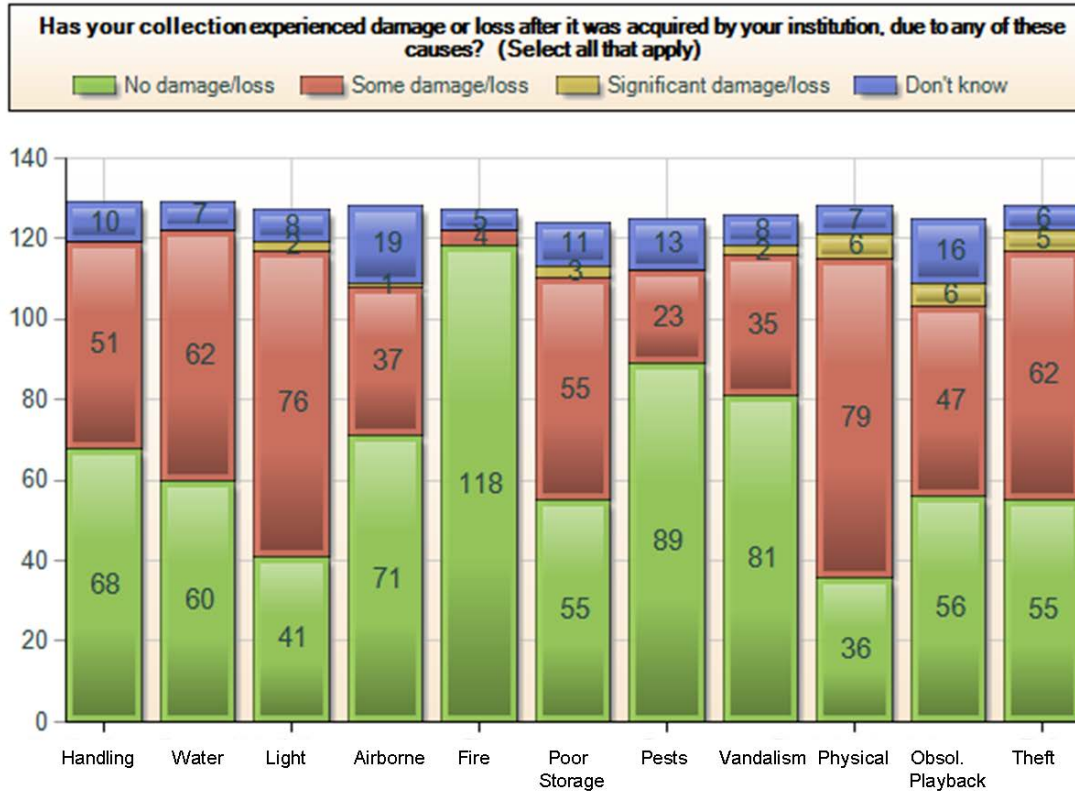
These concerns could be remedied through training on developing a disaster plan which is currently available from many preservation field service organizations.

An important part of disaster preparedness is having copies of records important to an institution, such as their catalog, insurance policies, and other key documents, stored offsite. Fifty-six institutions (41%) have some, but not all documents offsite; 35% have copies of all important records stored remotely; and 15% have not stored any copies of vital documents offsite (this was particularly evident for the historical societies responding to the survey). Most of the materials stored offsite are in paper or hard copy (55 or 52% of institutions), on CD/DVD/portable hard drive (48%), remote server (32%); or microfilm/microfiche (21%).

Very few of the institutions surveyed claim to have suffered significant damage or loss due to disaster or deterioration factors. However, many claim to have some level of damage or loss. Among the chief causes, which are reported in detail in the following chart:

- Physical or chemical deterioration (brittle paper, cracked leather, flaking paint, electronic media degradation) – 79 or 62%; especially seen in academic libraries and history museums
- Light (fading or discoloration) – 76 or 60%; especially prevalent in history museums and historical societies
- Water or moisture (stains, warping, and/or mold) – 62 or 48% ; a large problem in history museums
- Theft – 62 or 48%; a significant problem in public libraries and also a widespread problem among history museums
- Poor storage or enclosure – 55 or 44%; a problem at its worst in academic libraries and historical societies
- Handling (by staff, users, or in shipment) – 51 or 40%, especially in historical societies and special libraries

## Has your collection experienced damage or loss after it was acquired by your institution, due to any of these causes? (Select all that apply)



## Preservation and Conservation Activities

Institutions were asked what types of preservation activities they currently perform at their facilities. An interesting finding is that most of the activities are performed by paid staff or not at all – very few organizations other than those in the history museum sector are carrying out the activities by utilizing unpaid staff or having a third party perform the tasks. Preservation activities performed include:

- Preventive preservation (environmental monitoring, housekeeping) – carried out by paid staff at 87 (66%) of the institutions surveyed
- Preventive preservation management (assessment, planning, administration) – 79 or 61%
- Re-housing (re-foldering, reboxing) – 73 or 57%
- Preservation reformatting (preservation photocopying, microfilming, digitization) – 46 or 37%

Among the preservation activities performed at the least number of institutions are preservation of audiovisual materials (including playback equipment), conservation treatment, and preservation of digital materials and software, including migration of data.

## **Preservation Funding**

Montana's cultural heritage institutions were asked if their annual budget includes funds specifically allocated for preservation and conservation activities. A majority (68%) do not have this type of funding (especially in academic libraries); 19 institutions (14%) do, mostly in the county records repository sector. At those organizations with preservation budgets, the levels range from a low of \$400 to \$1000 at three institutions and to \$50,000 and above at two institutions. Other budget levels range from \$1,001 to \$10,000 (4 institutions) and \$10,001 to \$50,000 (4 institutions). Some organizations included the costs of web archiving in their preservation budget estimates.

A concern in Montana is that 61 institutions or 51% have not applied for preservation funding over the past three years. Another 16% said that receiving preservation funding from external sources was not applicable, and 14% did not know if their institution receives preservation funding. For those that had garnered support, the main sources were individual donors (15%, mainly in history museums, academic libraries, and art museums) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (8%), which was the most-utilized federal source.

When asked about *state-based* sources for preservation or conservation funding, a majority (66%) had not applied and 20% said it was not applicable. Overall, very few institutions have received state-based preservation funding.

Another question looked at reasons why institutions do not seek funding specifically for preservation and conservation activities. The leading reasons include:

- Lack of staff time to complete the application (37%)
- Unaware of funding sources (32%)
- Lack of staff expertise to complete the application (25%)
- Lack of project planning/preparation necessary before requesting grant funds (25%)
- Preservation and conservation are not institutional priorities (23%)

To complete the series of questions related to preservation and conservation funding, survey participants were asked, if their institutions were able to gain new funding specifically for conservation or preservation over the next three years, in which areas they would spend these increased funds. Top choices were storage supplies and materials (46%), digitization (40%), and staff training (30%).

## **Preservation Training and Assistance**

Over the past three years, Montana institutions have participated in a variety of training programs and services related to preservation. Workshops (54%), peer advice (40%) and conferences and meetings (31%) are all top-ranked activities. However, 24% of institutions have not participated in any preservation training activities.

Looking forward, survey respondents were asked about preservation/conservation topics on which they would like to receive training. Seventeen respondents indicate an urgent need for training on preservation grant writing/fundraising/advocacy. Book and paper repair, building design/construction/renovation, and digitization of materials all received 11 indications of urgent need. Other workshops for which survey participants indicate a general level of need (especially strong for history museums, historical societies, and archives) are:

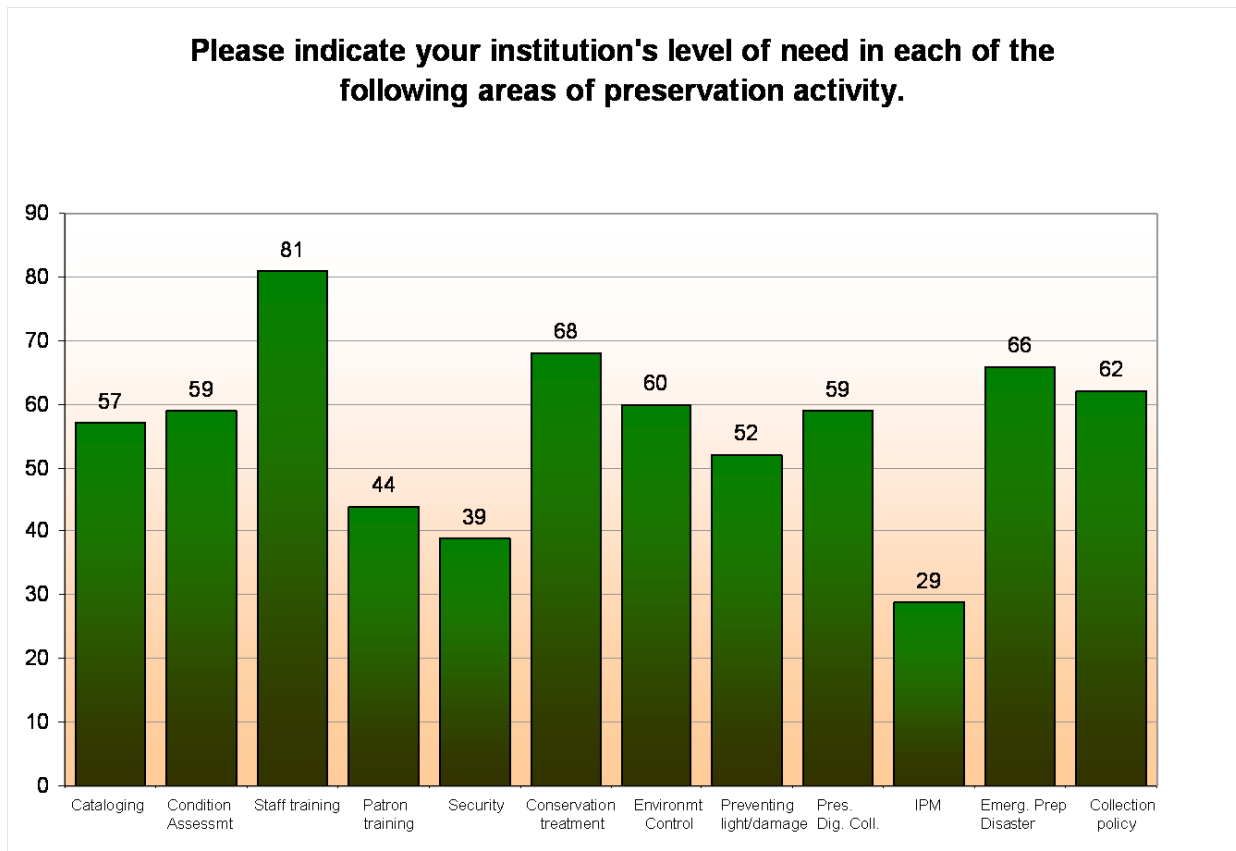
- Book and Paper Repair (65%)
- Care and Handling of Collections (60%)
- Emergency/Disaster Planning and Recovery (60%; also a strong need in county records repositories)
- Collections Management – Planning, Policies, and Procedures (59%)

- Collections Conservation – Physical Treatment (58%)
- Collection Storage/Housekeeping (57%)

When asked what barriers prevent their institution from sending a staff member to a preservation/conservation workshop or training course, the main impediments are:

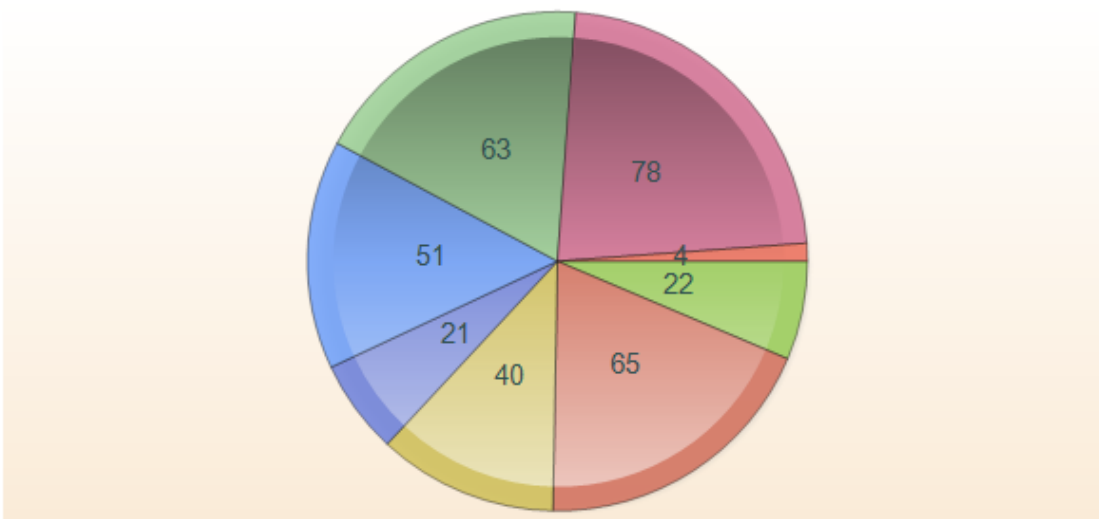
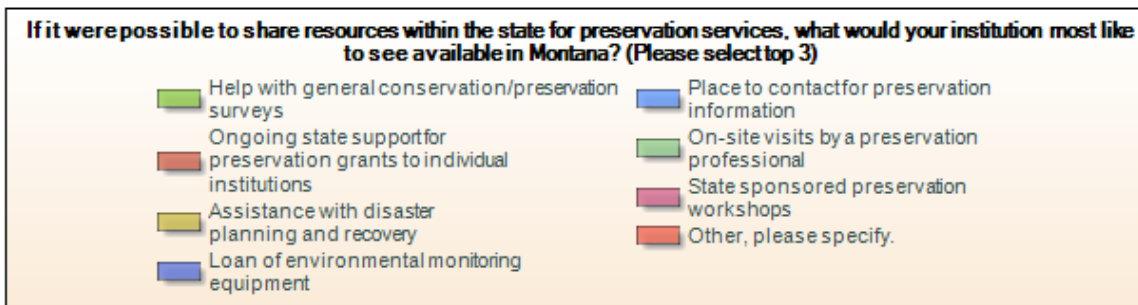
- Travel costs (102 or 76%; all respondents in the academic library and historical society sectors see this as a problem)
- Registration costs (85 or 63%, especially a problem for special libraries)
- Training not available in their geographic area (68 or 50%)
- Cannot spare the staff time (54 or 40%)

Institutions also indicated their level of need for various programmatic preservation activities. Top areas of urgent need were condition assessments/surveys of collections and staff training in preservation (both 11 respondents). Staff training was also a top choice at a general level of need with 63% (especially from the special library, county records repository, and history museum fields), conservation treatment (56%, heavily from academic libraries, historical societies, and history museums), emergency preparedness/disaster planning (53%, highly prevalent in the historical society and history museum fields), collection policy and procedure creation or updating (51%, an urgent need in history museums and a high-level need in academic libraries), or environmental controls (temperature/humidity) at 49%, especially in archives and history museums. In the chart below, “IPM” refers to Integrated Pest Management.



Another approach to determining need for preservation assistance was a question focusing on preservation services institutions want to see available in the state. The top choices, as seen in the chart below, are state-sponsored preservation workshops (62%, especially a need for academic libraries), ongoing state support for preservation grants to individual institutions (52%, with high interest from history museums), on-site visits by a preservation professional (50%), a place to contact for preservation information (41%), and assistance with disaster planning and recovery (32%).

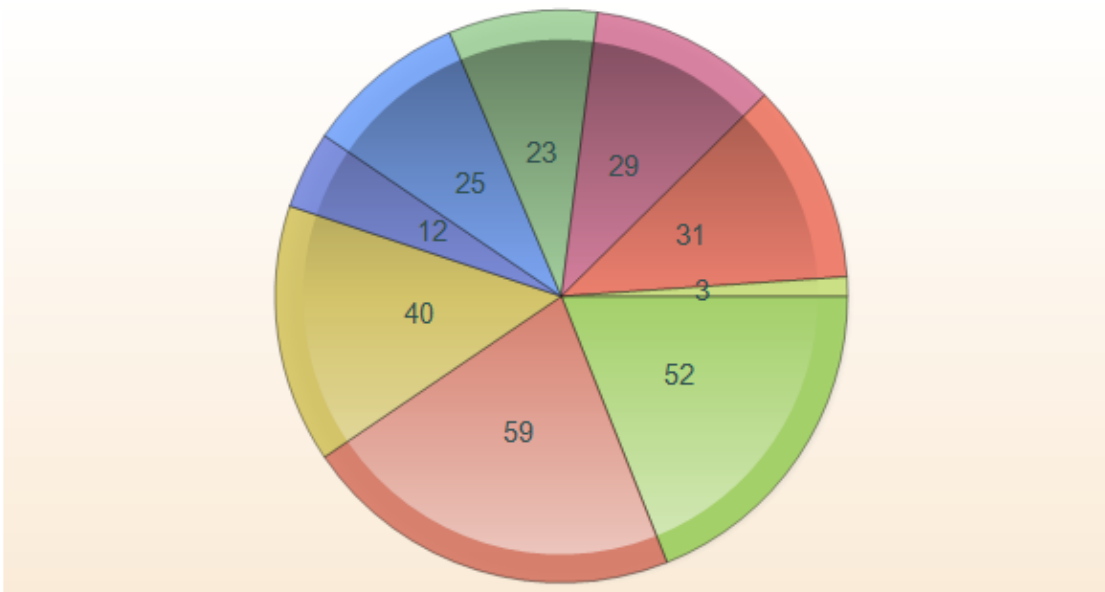
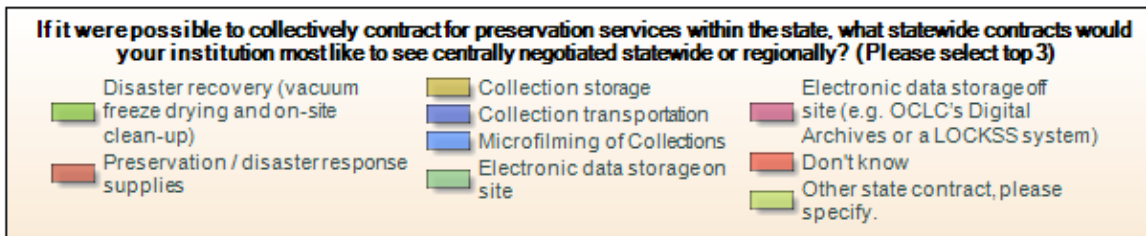
## If it were possible to share resources within the state for preservation services, what would your institution most like to see available in Montana? (Select top 3)



Finally on this topic, respondents were asked, if it would be possible to collectively contract for preservation services within the state, what statewide contracts they want to see centrally negotiated on a statewide or regional bases. Top selections reported in the following chart are the purchase of preservation and disaster response supplies (47%), disaster recovery services including vacuum freeze-drying or on-site cleanup (41%), and collection storage (32%).



## If it were possible to collectively contract for preservation services within the state, what statewide contracts would your institution most like to see centrally negotiated statewide or regionally? (Select top 3)

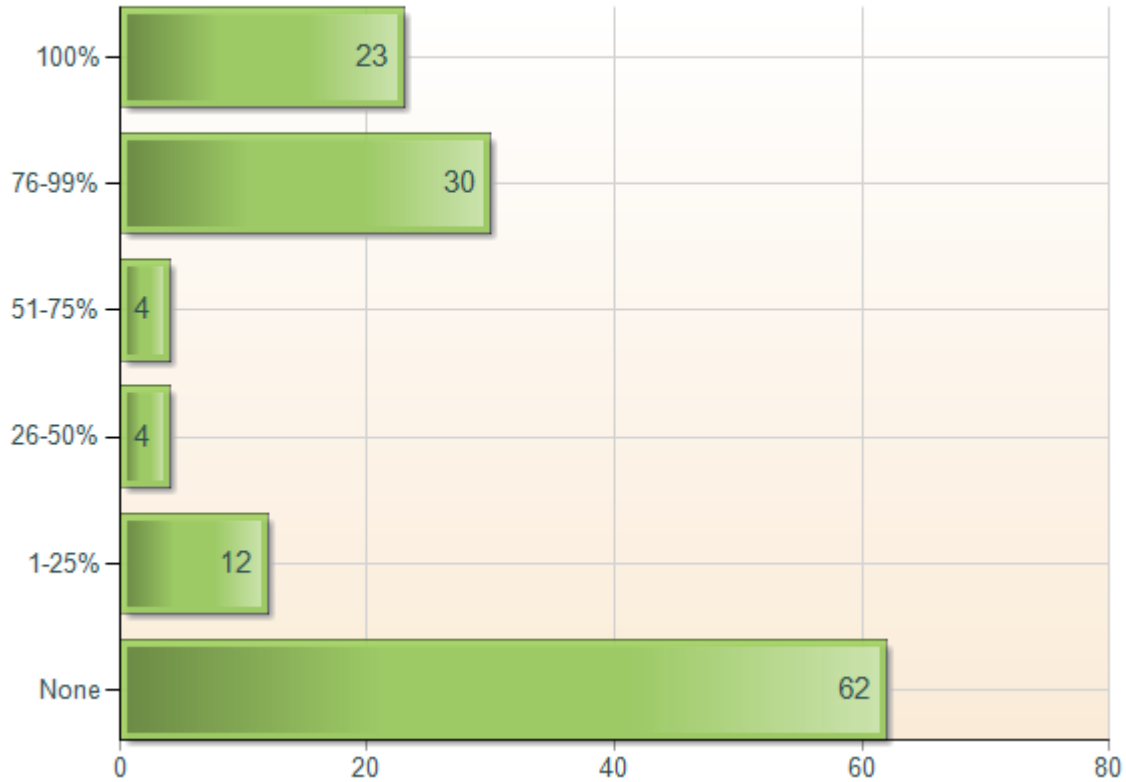


### Cataloging

In positive findings parallel to those dealing with collection storage adequacy, participants were asked about the estimated percentage of their collection which is cataloged or indexed on paper or in an automated system. Seventy-six institutions said that 76-99% is cataloged, 21 said 100% is completed, and 19 have 51-75% of their collection cataloged or indexed. The catalog or index is most often maintained in paper/hard copy (50%); an online system/integrated library system such as SirsiDynix, Endeavor, Follett, or Koha, (49%); or cataloging software like PastPerfect (36%).

One area of concern is that when organizations were asked about the estimated percentage of their catalog or index accessible online, 62 institutions, particularly in historic houses/sites, history museums, archives, and county records repositories, say that none of the catalog or index is accessible. On the obverse, 30 institutions said 76-99% is available online, and 23 have 100% of their catalog or index currently online. Overall findings appear in the chart below. These high-percentage results most often came from the special, academic, and public library groups.

### What is the estimated percentage of your catalog or index that is accessible online? (Select one)



## Digitization and Digital Preservation

Fifty percent of the institutions surveyed have digital collections; this was found to be especially strong in the academic library, historical society, history museum, and county records repository fields. The other 50% of respondents, especially public libraries, do not have digital collections. More institutions provide online access to the collections via digitization rather than online exhibits or interactive resources.

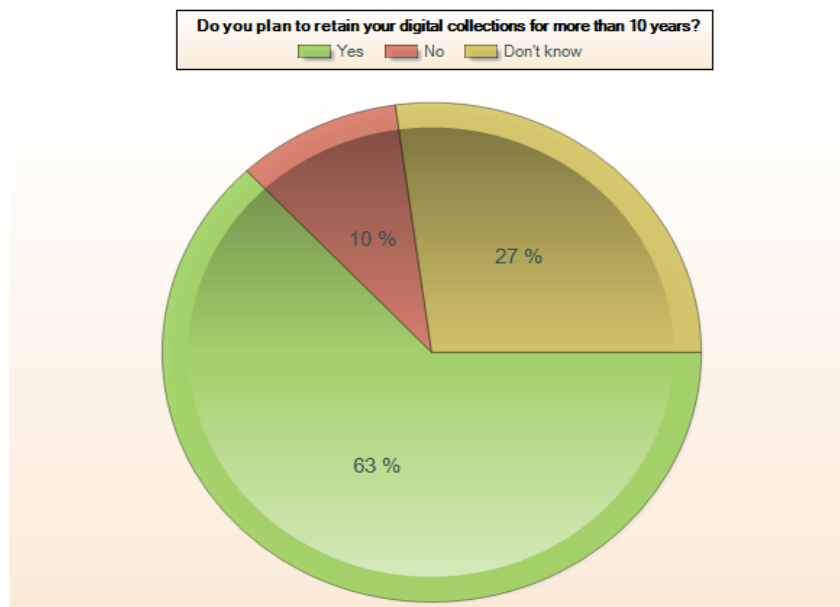
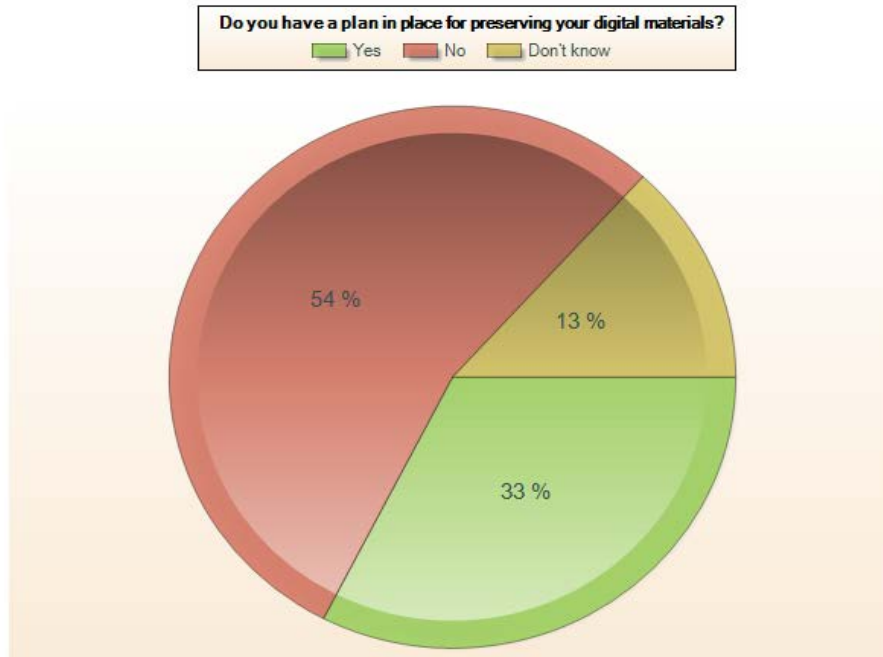
Twenty institutions maintain their digital collections through PastPerfect, 14 via the hosted CONTENTdm Montana Memory Project (particularly in public, academic, and special libraries), and 6 through a local CONTENTdm instance.

Respondents were asked what born-digital formats (materials that are both created and stored digitally) their institution is collecting. Thirty organizations (47%) are collecting photographs, 37% documents, 27% sound recordings, and 24% books.

When asked what types of materials their institutions have digitized or converted to digital format, photographs were again the top type (56%), documents next with 48%, then books (27%) and maps (23%).

Two questions related to digital preservation have responses which are of concern. Although 63% of institutions plan to retain their digital collections for more than ten years, only a third of respondents have a digital preservation plan in place; 54% (especially in academic, public, and special libraries) do not; and 13% don't know if their institution has a plan. Please see the two following charts for detailed information.

## Do you have a plan in place for preserving your digital materials (top chart); and Do you plan to retain your digital collections for more than 10 years (bottom chart)?



Staff responsible for preservation of physical items also has responsibility for digital preservation at 60% of the organizations surveyed. This was especially the case in county records repositories, academic libraries, and history museums.

Two final questions in this section dealt with backup files of digital collections. Institutions were asked how often backup files of digital collections are created for preservation purposes. Thirty institutions (27%) do not know, and 17% said never. Twenty-one institutions (19%) create backups daily and 16% do so weekly.

Storage of the backup files is being handled well, with 26% of organizations (especially from the special library audience) storing backups at multiple locations including offsite; 23% store files offsite, 16% store onsite, and 16% did not know.

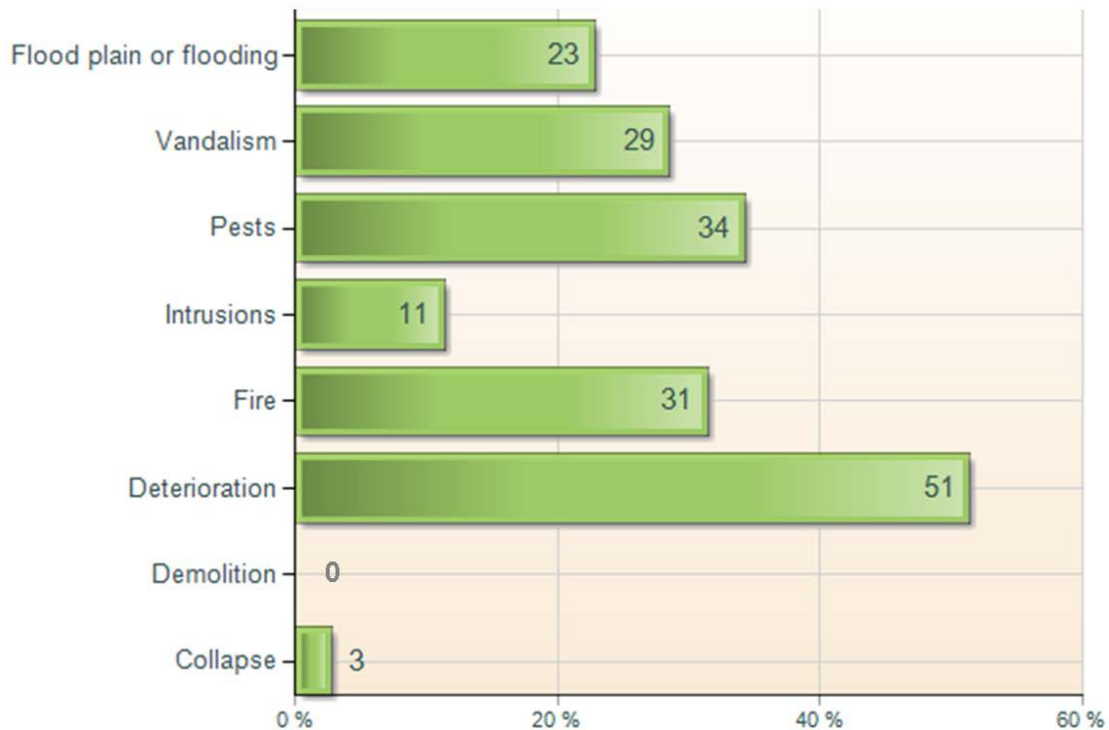
## ***Historic Buildings***

The final portion of the Montana Connecting to Collections Preservation Needs Assessment Survey dealt with historic buildings. Generally, historic buildings are those 50 years old or older, but institutions may have indicated buildings that are historically significant to their community. When asked if their institution has historically-significant buildings under their responsibility that are used to house their library, archives, museum, or historical society, their collection materials, or hold historic buildings that are considered part of their collections, 43 institutions (31%) responded affirmatively. Sixteen of those housed in historic buildings are from history museums, eight from public libraries, and six from county public records repositories.

Most (23) of the responding organizations have only one historic building, but 11 have from two to five buildings, and one reported a campus of 35 buildings. Twenty-nine organizations said the buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and seven others are interested in having their buildings evaluated for inclusion on the National Register.

Most said that the condition of the building features is good; only fire detection and suppression systems (24%) and window material (15%) are seen as being in poor condition. Existing threats to the buildings include deterioration (51%), pests (34%), fire (31%), and vandalism (29%); responses by type of threat appear in the following chart.

## Are there any existing threats to the building(s)? (Select all that apply)



Most of the historic buildings (71%) have not undergone a historic structure analysis or preservation survey; only 23% have. Of those that have not undergone such an analysis/survey, six institutions said this type of survey is needed in the next two to three years, three felt there is an urgent need for a survey in the next year, and twelve said a building survey is desired but not urgent.

### ***Comments from the Survey Instrument***

The comments from Montana survey participants were generally positive, hopeful and constructive. A sampling of these comments is included below and can help to shape future statewide preservation activities in Montana:

“I have participated in and appreciate the Montana Memory Project and I support all of the digitization done at the State Library. We are small, but through their efforts we have access to state documents and projects for which we are very grateful.”

“There is so much to do that it is overwhelming to think of what needs to be done first and where the funds will come from. Most of what has been done is volunteer and these folks are all getting older. The (Montana Connecting to Collections statewide workshop series classes) helped to look into what we can do. I will be scanning and putting on a flash drive of works to be kept off site. I will also begin a disaster plan which I had never considered before. Thanks.”

“Having a list of recommended conservators for various types of work would be helpful. I also wish we did more consortial digital preservation work within the state.”

“Due to financial constraints, we find our need for staffing and more open hours as well as collection development to be the top priority.”

“I am the City Historic Preservation Office and have ended up with huge amounts of historic materials in my office as default for any other storage place. My goal is to get it somewhere where it can be appropriately dealt with and cared for.”

“Living in geographically isolated areas of the state it is difficult to find people to do any work that needs to be done. A list of traveling building repair people would be helpful.”

There were also several comments expressing interest in the digitization of local newspaper collections.

## **Recommendations**

Preservation is seen as central to the activities of a majority of the repositories which participated in the survey, as noted by the inclusion of preservation in the institutions’ mission statements or overall strategic plans. A majority of Montana’s libraries, museums, archives, and other cultural heritage collections feel that their storage space and conditions are adequate. Montana also has a good ratio of institutions with existing disaster plans – although there is still a relatively large group which could use assistance in development or updating of their collections emergency/disaster preparedness and recovery plans.

In many ways, the basic infrastructure for statewide collaborative preservation activity exists in Montana. These positive findings, though, are balanced by a number of critical needs at institutions within the state. The recommended areas for action below are not ranked in particular order, and all are of equal importance.

### **Environmental Controls**

While a majority of the institutions polled feel that they can control the deleterious effects of temperature and light on their collections, they do not have a similar level of control over humidity and air pollution/quality. In order to monitor and maintain safe environmental conditions for collections throughout the state, a more widespread adoption of environmental monitoring practices should be adopted. This can include workshops focusing on best practices in environmental monitoring and control, as well as the development of additional environmental monitoring equipment kits which can then be loaned to interested institutions throughout the state.

### **Preservation Site Surveys/Assessments**

Another programmatic suggestion which could help to determine environmental conditions, as well as reviewing collection condition and helping to build institutional preservation policies across the state, is to arrange preservation site surveys, performed by preservation and conservation professionals, to be held at interested institutions across Montana. Funding for a program of individual institution surveys can be garnered in a number of ways. Institutions can also individually, or in small groups, apply to federal funding sources such as the National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant program or the IMLS/Heritage Preservation Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) grants. Additionally, Montana can include a program of surveys across the state as part of its implementation plans for the Connecting to Collections program.

## **Preservation Funding**

Very few organizations in Montana have specific budget lines for preservation and/or conservation. In many institutions across the country, as the organization begins to incrementally build a small dedicated budget for preservation, they also look to grants to help “kick start” their preservation program. Very few institutions in Montana have yet taken advantage of national or state funding sources for preservation. Through a program of awareness-building including workshops and regular listserv and website updates on available preservation grants, more institutions can become aware of these external preservation funding opportunities.

## **Education**

While workshops on environmental control and preservation grant writing and fundraising have already been mentioned in this section, there are a variety of other workshops in which Montana cultural heritage institutions expressed an urgent interest. Please see the “Preservation Training” section for details on workshops needed on an urgent or general basis.

Because travel and registration costs are seen as barriers to many organizations attending these classes, a program of state-supported preservation workshops, to be held in 4-5 locations around the state, and/or as distance education workshops/webinars, can be developed to be held over a two-three year period. In addition, presentations on key preservation topics should be scheduled at the popular Montana Library Association and Museums Association of Montana conference each year.

Finally on this topic, the “Collections Inventory” portion of this survey report also provides information to gauge the breadth of holdings of various cultural heritage collection material types in Montana, and indicates further format-specific types of preservation training which should be presented across the state.

Digitization is a topic of growing interest in Montana, as seen by both the survey results and comments from the surveys. A program of workshops to address digital creation, presentation, and maintenance/preservation issues should be developed within the state. Particularly in the area of digital preservation, survey results point to the need to develop and adopt digital preservation plans, policies, and procedures.

## **Cooperative Purchase of Preservation Supplies**

Survey respondents expressed interest in collectively contracting to purchase preservation supplies as a service they would like to see centrally negotiated on a statewide or regional basis. Montana cultural heritage institutions may be able to take advantage of an existing preservation supply purchasing cooperatives which has been managed for many years by the Museums Association of Montana or an even larger, regional cooperative developed by the Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums, and open to members of the Mountain Plains Museums Association. The cooperative already offers participating institutions a large discount on preservation supplies; adding Montana cultural heritage organizations to the CWAM/MPMA cooperative would help to drive down prices even further.

## **Access to Collections**

While the results of questions on collections inventorying and cataloging are very positive, there is a strong need to develop a program for more institutions to begin making this cataloging and indexing information available online, so other institutions, and, more importantly, the citizens of Montana, know what materials their cultural institutions hold.

## **Historic Buildings**

Finally, while not all institutions in the state include historic buildings as part of their collections or operations, those which do include these buildings in their responsibility indicated some level of need for support, education, surveys, and assistance in preserving these structures and potentially the content within them.