

The Australian Society of Archivists' 1993 Membership Survey

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The background to and results of a comprehensive survey of the ASA's membership is related and analysed. On the basis of a 43.5 per cent response rate, a typical ASA member is profiled and questions raised about respondents' views regarding education and training, their membership of the ASA and other professional bodies, their work situation and the ASA's role and activities.

IN EARLY 1993 THE ASA COUNCIL decided to survey the membership in an attempt to gather information about its constituency. The survey's purpose was to develop a membership profile and to seek from the membership details and comments of their involvement in the Society, and what they receive or would like to receive as members. It was anticipated that the survey results

would assist with planning, at both the state and federal levels, activities which meet members' needs.

In addition it was hoped that the results of the survey would help the ASA develop a profile of the archival community in Australia. It was anticipated that a picture in areas such as the level of training and the employment of archivists would emerge. The information collected in the survey does not otherwise exist or is sparse or fragmented, therefore a general picture of the profession is difficult to obtain. It was hoped that the survey would be the first of regular two or three yearly surveys.

Survey forms for this study were distributed to individual members with the December 1993 *ASA Bulletin*. Over the four to five months following completed forms were returned by members and during the latter half of 1994 the following analysis was undertaken, with this report being compiled in the early months of 1995.

Response Rate

The response to the survey was most gratifying, with 43.5 per cent of individual members responding. Respondents were distributed across the states as follows:

State	Individual Members 31/12/93	Number Responding	% Responding
ACT	62	22	35.5
NSW	179	72	40.2
NT	6	2	33.3
Qld	29	14	48.3
SA	29	13	44.8
Tas	10	5	50.0
Vic	96	46	47.9
WA	39	23	58.9
Other	12	0	0.0
No Response		4	0.0
Total	462	201	43.5

From the survey a typical respondent was likely to:

- be female;
- be in either of the age ranges 30–39 years or 40–49 years;
- live in New South Wales;
- have been working in the profession for around five years;
- have a Postgraduate Diploma, probably in archives administration, but have acquired the greater part of his or her archival training by learning on the job;
- have been a member of the ASA for about five years and have professional status;
- have a 50/50 chance of being a member of another Australian professional association or society;
- probably be a member of a Special Interest Group (SIG);
- regularly attend Branch meetings; and
- possibly have served on his or her Branch Executive.

In terms of work, the typical respondent would:

- be employed full-time;
- spend more than 50 per cent during a typical working week in management/administration or in reference/user services;
- be called an 'Archivist'; and
- work primarily with paper-based textual records.

The most common salary level is in the range \$30 000 to \$39 999 and the typical respondent probably works for a State or Territory Government.

The tables following summarise the survey results and where appropriate comments follow the table.

Responses

The first group of questions related to information about the respondent.

Q1 Sex	
Male	69
Female	128
No Response	4
Total	201

Comment: Membership numbers indicate that there are more female than male members of the Society. Yet the current leadership, nationally and at the branch and SIG level is predominantly male.

Q2 Age	
Under 20	Nil
20-29	23
30-39	43
40-49	62
50-59	36
60-69	22
70 plus	11
No Response	4
Total	201

Comment: Responses indicate that the profession is an ageing one. Over 100 respondents were between thirty and fifty years of age. This may indicate that the Society does not attract younger members of the profession or that many people come to the profession as a second profession. That is they have a change of career after some years in another profession.

Q3 In which state or territory do you live ?	
ACT	22
NSW	72
NT	2
Qld	14
SA	13
Tas	5
Vic	46
WA	23
No Response	4
Total	201

Comment: The survey confirmed that membership is concentrated in the capital cities, in particular Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. This obviously reflects the fact that these communities support more archival institutions.

However, it also raises questions concerning the level of support the society can provide for members outside the south eastern corner i.e. Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

Q4 How many years have you worked in the archival profession ?	
0 - 2 years	39
3 - 5 years	48
6 - 9 years	33
10 - 15 years	34
15+ years	42
No Response	5
Total	201

Comment: Responses indicate that eighty-seven people had been members for up to five years. This raises questions about the direction of professional development. Should the society be providing more training opportunities for newcomers instead of continuing professional development activities? Determining the right balance will obviously be a concern for Council, Branches and SIGs.

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

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Australian
Archives

The next group of questions related to the education and archival training of respondents.

Q5 Highest Academic level completed:	Responses
No degree	7
Highest year of secondary education	0
Diploma or Bachelors Degree	36
Postgraduate Diploma - Archives Administration	84
Postgraduate Diploma - Librarianship	22
Postgraduate Diploma - Other	16
Masters Level - Archives Administration	5
Masters Level - Librarianship	
Masters Level - Other	20
PhD	6
Other Qualification	4
No Response	1
Totals	201

Comment: From the responses received it would appear the majority of members have a tertiary qualification. Less than 50 per cent have post-graduate qualifications in archives administration.

Q6 Where have you acquired the archival component of your overall education and training ?	
Graduate level course(s)	16
Postgraduate level course(s)	117
Continuing education course or workshop	69
In-house training program	56
'Learn by doing'	140
No Response	4
Totals	201

Comment: 140 respondents indicated that they got their primary training as 'learnt by doing', while 117 indicated that they acquired their archival training through a postgraduate course. This does reveal the level or quality of training but indicates that most training opportunities appear to arise outside the society. In many instances members of the society will be presenters etc. of these training programs and in the case of postgraduate courses the ASA has had some input into development and content.

This group of questions related to membership of the Society.

Q7 Number of years you have been a member of the ASA?	
0 - 2 years	42
3 - 5 years	66
6 - 9 years	32
10-15 years	30
15+ years	29
No Response	2
Total	201

Comment: Less than 15 per cent of respondents have been members for more than fifteen years, while the bulk of respondents (53 per cent) have been a member for five years or less. Without knowing reasons for members not renewing their membership it is difficult to comment on the responses to this question. It is possible to make some educated guesses. Do people join the society and find that it does not meet their needs? Do people pass through the profession? That is, do they join the profession and join the society and then move on to another area of work and hence leave the society?

Q8 Your current membership category of the ASA?	
Professional	93
Associate	72
Associate (Student)	9
Associate (Concession)	9
Honorary	4
No Response	14
Total	201

Q9 Do you belong to other Australian professional associations/societies besides the ASA (e.g. ALIA, RMAA)?	
Yes	88

Comment: Responses indicated that the most popular professional societies/associations to which members belonged were:

- Records Management Association of Australia (48)
- Australian Library and Information Association (32)
- Museums Australia (12), and
- Oral History Association of Australia (7).

In total members belonged to thirty-six different Australian professional associations and/or societies other than the ASA.

Q10 Do you belong to any overseas professional associations/societies (e.g. SAA, ACA, ARANZ)?	
Yes	29

Comment: Responses indicated that less than 15 per cent of members were also members of overseas professional associations/societies. This was a surprisingly low figure. The question that arises is why are ASA members not becoming members of overseas archives associations/societies. If members are not joining societies should the ASA publish information from other societies for the information of members? If so what is the appropriate vehicle, the *Bulletin* or *Archives and Manuscripts*?

The most popular associations/societies reported were:

- Society of American Archivists (10)
- Association of Canadian Archivists (9)
- Society of Archivists (9), and
- New Zealand Society of Archivists (5).

In all nineteen different associations and/or societies were reported.

Q11 Do you belong to a SIG?	
Business Archives	30
Collecting Archives	30
Local Government Archives	19
School Archives	25
Science, Medicine & Technology	20
University Archives	21
Electronic Records	18
No of Respondents in one or more SIG	112

Comment: A significant number of members are members of a SIG, many with multiple SIG memberships. With a relatively large membership why do we see so little activity in SIGs? Should they be restructured, scrapped or left alone?

Q12 Do you think there is a need for more SIGs? If so what area(s) do you think they should address? Please specify.	
Private Archives	
Government Archives	
Religious Archives	
Applied Professional Areas e.g. Architecture, Engineering	

Q13 What archival meetings did you attend during 1992 and 1993?	
ASA Annual Meeting/Conference - Wagga Wagga 1992	47
ASA Annual Meeting/Conference - Melbourne 1993	83
Branch Meetings	129
Branch Workshops/Seminars	82
SIG Meetings/Seminars	52
Other meetings on archival issues	74
Did not attend any meetings in 1992 and 1993	31
No response	3

Comment: It would appear from responses that members are active participants in Society activities. However it may be that this level of participation is a reflection of the interest of respondents only. The fact that there were many non respondents to the survey may reflect their level of participation.

Q14 Have you ever undertaken any of the following activities for the ASA?	
Served on a Branch Executive	58
Served on a Branch sub-committee	40
Served on Council	23
Served on a Council sub-committee	16
Worked on Society publication(s) (e.g. Directory)	19
Organised workshops/seminars for the Council/Branch	34
Served on a SIG Committee	23
Number of responses	86
No response	115

Comment: Responses indicate a relatively high level of participation in society administration with about 46 per cent of respondents having participated on council, branch or SIG committees.

The next group of questions related to respondents' work situation.

Q15 Please indicate the percentage of your typical working week that is devoted to working directly with archives/manuscripts and their creators.

Comment: Due to either the lack of responses or the unclear nature of some responses it has not been possible to adequately assess and comment on this question. It is recommended that this question will be handled differently in the next survey.

Q16 The following activity occupies more than 25% of my time in a typical working week (Select no more than 4 responses):	
Administration/Management	98
Records management	59
Appraisal (inc Disposal)	59
Accessioning	40
Arrangement and Description	59
Reference/user services	65
Public program/outreach	14
Preservation/conservation	12
Oral history	3
Teaching/research	28
Other, please specify (see below)	13
No specific activity occupies more than 25% of my time	16
No Response	13

Comment: Other areas of activity that were reported were:

- Policy development;
- Historical research and writing;
- Librarianship;
- Microfilming;
- Registry Classification;
- Development of RM program;
- Displays;
- Planning; and
- Information Technology and Data Analysis.

Q17 What is your position title?

Comment: A total of sixty-one different position titles were reported. Of these the most frequently used were: Archivist (56); University Archivist/ Assistant University Archivist (16); Records Manager/ Officer (11); Archives Officer (6); School Archivist (5) and Librarian (5).

Q18 I work primarily with:	
Paper based textual records	151
Still photographs	4
Film and/or sound records	1
Machine readable records	4
Published material	3
Cartographic records (maps and plans)	1
Other, please specify	-
Not applicable	17
No response	23
Total	201

Comment: Responses indicate that Australian archivists are still preoccupied with paper records. This is despite the continuing calls for more information and training on many aspects of electronic records.

Q19 What was your archival employment status on 30 June 1993?	
Full-time employed	115
Part-time employed	31
Casual	9
Part-time, seeking full-time	1
Not employed, seeking full-time	2
Not employed, seeking part-time	1
Not employed, not seeking a job	6
Volunteer capacity, not seeking a job	13
Not applicable	18
No response	5
Total	201

Comment: It was gratifying to note that few respondents said that they were seeking employment and that the majority were employed full-time.

Q20 If you are employed in a part-time capacity, please indicate the number of hours employed per week:	
1 - 10 hours	9
11 - 20 hours	8
21 - 30 hours	13
No response	1
Total	31

Q21 Total number of people (paid employees or volunteers) in your administrative unit, other than yourself:	
None	47
1 - 2	46
3 - 6	30
7 - 14	35
15 - 29	11
30 or more	9
No response	23
Total	201

Comment: It is interesting to note that almost 25 per cent of respondents were sole archivists. This raises the question of what role the ASA has as a communicator/supporter for these archivists. It would appear that membership of the society may be low amongst archivists working with larger employers of archivists, although there are few large employers of archivists, only twenty respondents coming from employers with fifteen or more employees.

Q22 Total salary (excluding benefits) paid to you in the taxation year 1992-93. If paid as a package, indicate salary components:	
under \$20 000	18
\$20 000-\$29 999	25
\$30 000-\$39 999	55
\$40 000-\$49 999	42
\$50 000 plus	18
I contribute my services as a volunteer	19
If your salary rate is not expressed as an annual rate please indicate the rate	
- Fortnightly	1
If your salary rate is not expressed as an annual rate please indicate the rate	
- Weekly	-
If your salary rate is not expressed as an annual rate please indicate the rate	
- Hourly	8
No response	15
Total	201

Comment: Given the qualifications and maturity of the respondents it appears that the job of archivist is not very well paid.

Q23 Please indicate the type of institution of which your administrative unit is a part.	
Commonwealth Government	28
State or Territory Government	43
Local Government	18
Corporate Organisation (for profit)	17
Non-Profit organisation	6
Tertiary Education Body	29
School/College	19
Religious Order	8
Religious Organisation	8
Historical Society	3
Museum	2
Consultancy Practice	3
Self Employed	2
Other, please specify	2
No response	13
Total	201

Q24 Is your archival organisation:	
an in-house archives	82
a collecting archives	21
both	66
No response	32
Total	201

The last three questions sought opinions about particular aspects of the Society.

Q25 Do you believe that the ASA should take a role in industrial matters on behalf of members?	
Yes	131
No	40
No response	30
Total	201

Comment: A large proportion of respondents felt that the ASA should have a role in industrial matters. This raises the question of the role the ASA can play in regard to industrial relations. It also raises a question about the role of a professional society versus an industrial association.

Q26 What do you value most about your ASA membership?

Comment: Almost every respondent indicated that what he or she valued about their ASA membership was networking, news, information, journals and training opportunities. Two respondents indicated that they valued SIG membership and a further four indicated that they valued professional identity.

Q27 What services and/or activities could the ASA offer you as a member?

Comment: Respondents provided a number of suggestions for services and activities that the ASA could offer to members. These included:

- workshops, seminars and continuing education (32);
- outreach to isolated archivists (7);
- product/services directory;
- pro-active political role;
- archival literature journals/book service;
- job bulletin, employment placement, salary survey, minimum pay rates;
- closer relationships with records managers, Museums Australia; and
- more discussion, involvement of younger members, accredited certificate and Australian Archives Listserv.

Conclusion

This survey was the first comprehensive study of the individual membership of the Society. It is anticipated that the results will be noted by the Society leadership at all levels (i.e. national, state and SIG) and that the needs expressed by respondents are included in the planning and decision making processes of the Society. We anticipate that the next survey will be conducted in mid 1996 along with membership renewals. The results of that study along with this one will provide a basis for the enhancement of membership services and for assessing membership trends over a period of three years. The data will also provide a measure of how the Society is perceived by its members and perhaps the wider community as well as any trends within the profession.