

The Australian Society of Archivists' 1996 Membership Survey

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The Survey of Members conducted by the Australian Society of Archivists was instituted in 1993, and the report which follows is based on the findings of the second survey conducted in June 1996. The response rate in 1996 showed a decline (from 43.5% responding in 1993 to 36.55% responding in 1996). The profile of a typical member responding did not vary in any significant way from that which emerged from the 1993 Survey.

Introduction

In early 1993 the ASA Council approved a proposal to regularly survey the membership in an attempt to gather information about its constituency. The survey's purpose was to:

- develop a membership profile;
- seek from the members details of their involvement in the Society; and
- seek from members advice about their needs and expectations and requirements of the ASA.

In addition, it was envisaged that the results of the survey would help the ASA develop a profile of the archival community in Australia and to monitor changes to that profile over time.

The first membership survey was conducted in 1993. The results were reported in *Archives and Manuscripts*, November 1995 (Volume 23, Number 2). For the second membership survey a core set of questions from the 1993 membership survey were included to which supplementary questions were added. Survey forms for the second membership survey were distributed in June 1996 with membership renewals. Most responses were received between July and October. Collation of the results was complete by the end of November with the preparation of the report being concluded in 1997 for presentation to the ASA's Annual General Meeting in Adelaide on 24 July.

Response rate

The response to the 1996 Survey was positive with 193 individual members (36.55%) responding – in 1993 201 members responded (43.5%). In 1993 the ASA had 462 individual members, while in 1996 membership was 528. Respondents were distributed across the states as follows:

State	Individual Members 01/01/96	Number Responding	% Responding
ACT	76	20	26.31
NSW	167	62	37.12
NT	5	1	20
Qld	37	20	54.05
SA	32	16	50
Tas	8	6	75
Vic	139	51	36.69
WA	43	14	32.55
Other	21	2	9.52
No Response		1	0
Total	528	193	36.55

Fewer members responded to the survey particularly in NSW and Western Australia. There may be any number of reasons for the decline in the response rate. It is possible that the fact that stamped self addressed envelopes were not provided for the return of the survey forms had a bearing on the result.

From the survey the typical respondent emerged as:

- female;
- in the age range of 40-49 years;
- living in New South Wales;
- having worked in the profession for 6-9 years;

- having a postgraduate diploma in archives and records, but having acquired the greater part of her archival training by learning on the job;
- having been a member of the ASA for 3-9 years;
- considering electronic records issues and electronic records appraisal to be the most important areas of training need;
- probably being a member of a Special Interest Group; and
- someone who attends ASA meetings, conferences and events.

In terms of work, the typical respondent:

- was employed full-time;
- worked with up to six other people;
- earned between \$30 000 - \$49 999;
- spent 25% of time during a typical working week doing administration/management; and
- worked primarily with paper based textual records.

The profile of the typical respondent did not vary significantly from the one that emerged from the 1993 Survey.

Responses – information about the respondent

The first four questions sought information about members – their gender, age, state of residence and the period for which they have worked in the archival field.

The tables setting out responses are included in the Appendix. An analysis of the figures showed little difference between the 1993 and 1996 results. Two differences noted were:

- fewer males completed the survey in 1996 than in 1993 (30% compared with 34%); and
- in 1996 fewer respondents had been in the profession for under 5 years (32% compared with 43 % in 1993).

This latter result may reflect the ageing of the membership or a diminution in the number of entry level jobs available.

Responses – education and archival training

Questions 5 and 6 sought information about the highest academic qualification attained and where the archival component of respondents' education was received. The responses in 1993 and 1996 to the question about qualifications were virtually identical – the overwhelming majority of respondents having tertiary qualifications but less than 50% of them being in archival and/or records administration.

There was also remarkable similarity in 1993 and 1996 responses as to where the archival component of respondents' education was acquired. The tables setting out responses are included in the Appendix.

Question 7 asked respondents to nominate their most important training needs. This question was not asked in 1993 and consequently no comparison was possible. Respondents were asked to nominate and rank their five highest priority needs. As not all respondents ranked their needs, collating the responses was difficult.

The two areas selected most frequently as the first and second priority were electronic records issues and appraisal of electronic records respectively. The next two most frequently cited as first priority were records appraisal and strategic planning for archives.

If we ignore how areas were ranked and look at how often they were selected, the top five areas were:

- electronic records;
- appraisal of electronic records;
- strategic planning for archives;
- management of archival programs; and
- electronic records documentation.

The table setting out responses can be found in the Appendix.

Responses – membership of the Society

Questions 8 to 16 sought information about respondents' association and interaction with the Society.

In 1996 a higher number of respondents had been members for between six and 15 years – 46% compared with 31% in 1993. The corollary was that in 1996 41% of respondents had been members for under five years whereas in 1993 the figure was 54%. This means that the views of newer members of the Society were not being heard in the 1996 Survey to the extent they were in the 1993 Survey. The percentage of respondents who were Associate members and Professional members remained unchanged.

More respondents belonged to another Australian professional association in 1996 than they did in 1993 – 50% in 1996 compared with 44% in 1993. Respondents cited forty eight different associations of which they were members. Those most frequently cited were:

- Records Management Association of Australia (50);
- Australian Library and Information Association (21);
- Museums Association of Australia (9); and
- Oral History Association of Australia (8).

Fewer respondents belonged to overseas professional associations in 1996 than they did in 1993 – 10% in 1996 compared with 14% in 1993. Associations to which ASA members were most likely to belong were:

- Society of American Archivists (9);
- Association of Canadian Archivists (7); and
- Society of Archivists – United Kingdom (3).

Respondents listed a total of nineteen different overseas associations to which they belonged.

In 1996 55% of respondents belonged to Special Interest Groups and they were likely to belong to two Groups. In 1996 43% did not respond to this question and presumably did not belong to a Group. Was this because

there was no Group catering to their particular interest or because there was insufficient understanding of the Groups that existed and how to join?

Of those belonging to a Group 65% considered membership an advantage. The reasons most frequently cited were:

- contact with other professionals working in the specialty (48);
- ability to share information, experiences, discussion, problems, support (44);
- being kept up to date with relevant information, policies, trends, etc (24); and
- receiving newsletters, publications, etc (17).

In 1996 157 respondents (81%) indicated they had attended 413 meetings in the 1994-1996 period (annual conferences, branch and SIG meetings) or an average of two to three events each. 36 respondents (19%) attended no meetings or did not respond. The reasons most frequently cited for not attending were:

- expense (21);
- other commitments (16);
- events were of no interest or relevance (12);
- distance (11); and
- lack of time (10).

In 1996 86 respondents (45%) had served the Society in some way. On average these 86 people had served the Society in two or three capacities. In 1993 46% of respondents had served the Society in some capacity.

Responses – work situation

In 1996 the five areas most likely to occupy over 25% of respondents' time in a typical week were:

- administration/management (96 respondents);
- appraisal (67 respondents);
- reference/user services (63 respondents);
- arrangement and description (62 respondents); and
- records management (57 respondents).

In 1993 the five areas most likely to occupy over 25% of respondents' time in a typical week were:

- administration/management (98 respondents);
- reference/user services (65 respondents);
- records management (59 respondents);
- appraisal (59 respondents); and
- arrangement and description (59 respondents).

The majority of respondents (78%) in 1996 worked primarily with paper based textual records. 34% of respondents said that electronic records and recordkeeping systems had a significant impact on how they worked and 47% said that electronic records and recordkeeping systems would have a significant impact on their work in five years time. Interestingly, 32% of respondents did not respond to this question.

Overwhelmingly, respondents saw the ASA's role as being to raise awareness, keep members up to date and to disseminate information. Respondents wanted the ASA to do this through:

- conferences and workshops;
- more material in *Archives and Manuscripts*; and
- a dedicated publication about electronic records and their management.

The employment status of respondents had not altered markedly between 1993 and 1996 – 56% worked full time in 1996; 57% worked full time in 1993. The comparison of part time workers was 17% in 1996 and 15% in 1993 showing an increase in part time work.

In 1996 20% of respondents worked alone (23% in 1993), while 57% worked with between one and 14 people (55% in 1993). The bulk of respondents worked alone or in small groups which reflected the importance respondents attached to the ASA's role as a facilitator of professional interaction.

Tables showing the salary range for respondents and the category of archives for which they worked are included in the Appendix. 79% of respondents expected that in five years time they will be working in the archival or records field. The most common reason cited for not holding this expectation were age (13 respondents) and wanting a change (ten respondents). This expected longevity in the profession is important in that it signals to the Society that it has a stable membership base which has sophisticated professional needs.

Responses – assessing the Society and the future

89% of respondents cited something they valued about their membership of the Society. The responses occurring most frequently can be grouped into the following three categories:

- communication and contact with colleagues;
- opportunities for education, building awareness and keeping up to date; and
- professional literature.

Respondents did make a few comments critical of the Society including that:

- office bearers could be friendlier and more welcoming; and
- there is a need for the Society to better support Special Interest Groups so that they can reach more potential members.

The last two questions asked respondents to nominate three important issues they will be facing and the profession will be facing. Each question elicited around three hundred comments.

The comments in response to issues facing us as individual professionals

were grouped in order to identify broad areas of concern. The four areas which were seen as most pressing were:

- electronic records (cited 99 times);
- the management of records and archival services and programs in an era of shrinking resources, fewer staff and greater expectations (cited 49 times);
- personal challenges (cited 30 times) – these included job security, remuneration levels, resolving conflict, moving overseas and needing to learn about a new professional environment, expanding skills, getting more organised; and
- the need to impress one's employing organisation and the public of the importance and value of archives and the skills that archivists can contribute (cited 25 times).

The comments in response to issues facing the profession were also grouped in order to identify broad areas of concern. The three areas which were seen as most pressing were:

- electronic records (cited 77 times);
- professional issues (cited 75 times) – these included the role, status and profile of the profession, continuing education, the importance of strategic alliances and an outward focus; and
- the need to convince society, organisations, and the public of the value and relevance of archives and archivists (cited 31 times).

Conclusion

The results of the 1996 Survey did not show any startling trends in terms of the profile of members or the level of their interaction with the Society. The 1996 Survey provided useful information about the concerns and preoccupations of members for the consideration and action of the Society's leadership at all levels (ie national, state and Special Interest Group).

Appendix

Explanatory notes

Figures in brackets represent responses to the 1993 Survey. Comparative figures are provided where possible – that is, where the same question was asked, in the same way, in 1993 and again in 1996.

Questions 7, 13, 19, 26, and 28 which were included in the 1996 Survey were not included in the 1993 Survey – consequently no comparisons are possible.

Q1. Sex	
Male	57 (69)
Female	128 (128)
No Response	8 (4)
Total	193 (201)

Q2. Age	
Under 20 years	0
20-24 years	2
25-29 years	17
30-34 years	21
35-39 years	22
40-44 years	34
45-49 years	31
50-54 years	23
55-59 years	12
60-64 years	10
65 years and over	20
No Response	1
Total	193

Comment: In 1993 52.23% of respondents were between 30 and 50 years of age. In 1996 55.95% were between 30 and 50 years of age – perhaps a trend in the ageing of the membership. Only 10% of 1996 respondents were under 30 years of age. About one third of the ‘65 and overs’ were relatively new to the profession (under 10 years).

Q3. In which state or territory do you live?	
Australian Capital Territory	20 (22)
New South Wales	62 (72)
Northern Territory	1 (2)
Queensland	20 (14)
South Australia	16 (13)
Tasmania	6 (5)
Victoria	51 (46)
Western Australia	14 (23)
Other	2 (0)
No Response	1 (4)
Total	193 (201)

Comment: There was no allowance made on the survey form for ‘other’. Two people indicated that they lived overseas.

Q4. How many years have you worked in the archival profession?	
0-2 years	31 (39)
3-5 years	30 (48)
6-9 years	53 (33)
10-15 years	32 (34)
Over 15 years	43 (42)
No Response	4 (5)
Total	193 (201)

Q5. Highest Academic level completed:	
No degree	3 (7)
Highest year of secondary education	3 (0)
Diploma or Bachelors Degree	32 (36)
Postgraduate Diploma	
- Archives and Records Administration	73 (84)
Postgraduate Diploma	
- Librarianship	13 (22)
Postgraduate Diploma	
- Other	26 (16)
Masters Level	
- Archives and Records Administration	7 (5)
Masters Level	
- Librarianship	0 (0)
Masters Level	
- Other	24 (20)
PhD	8 (6)
Other qualification	2 (4)
No Response	2 (1)
Total	193 (201)

Q6. Where have you acquired the archival component of your overall education and training (tick all that apply).	
Graduate level course(s)	13 (16)
Postgraduate level courses(s)	114 (117)
Continuing education course or workshop	62 (69)
In-house training program	53 (56)
"Learn by doing"	107 (140)
No Response	4 (4)

Comment: The 189 people who answered this question gave a total of 353 responses, meaning that on average they gave one to two answers each. The high response to 'postgraduate level courses' (114) is not surprising, as 151 people reported having postgraduate (or better) qualifications. All studies seem to be supplemented by 'on the job' opportunities and experience.

Q7. What do you consider to be your most important training needs? Rank your 5 highest priority needs on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 representing the highest priority.

Priorities	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Appraisal of Electronic Records	31	29	13	15	8	96
Arrangement and Description	12	14	8	5	5	44
Audio-Visual Records	1	3	3	6	4	17
Designing and Delivering Training Programs eg. "Train the Trainer"	0	6	5	5	3	19
Electronic Records Issues	44	29	15	10	6	105
Electronic Records Documentation	12	16	25	11	7	72
Exhibition Planning and Design	1	4	4	10	17	37
Management of Archival programs	13	19	20	8	14	74
Oral History	2	3	6	4	9	24
Public Programs - Promoting the archives	8	7	14	14	12	55
Records Appraisal	19	5	22	17	8	71
Strategic Planning for Archives	18	16	18	22	22	96
System Design	7	9	10	16	11	52
WWW Development and the Internet	4	10	5	15	19	53
Other, please specify	4	1	2	2	9	20
No Response						14

Comment: This was the hardest question to collate and to evaluate in any detailed fashion. Not everyone gave five responses. Some gave only one or two, some tried to prioritise every box. The 179 people who answered this question gave a total of 834 responses, meaning that on average they gave four to five responses each. Quite a few people did not prioritise their responses, but merely ticked the boxes instead. The breakdown of 'other' was as follows:

Priority 1:

- Conservation of documents
- Identify and establish computer program suitable to the needs of a small 'one person' archive and having a wide range of retrieval options
- Ongoing government reform, its effects on management

- Reference/user services

Priority 2:

- Metadata

Priority 3:

- Disposal of private records, identification classes records/papers not worthy of retention. Plus evaluation of restrictions – where necessary and for how long (private records)
- GILS and archival access

Priority 4:

- Preservation of archival material
- Records management standards

Priority 5 (or no priority):

- ‘Connections’ with other school-centred archivists
- As I no longer work primarily in Archives Management, I need chiefly to be kept up to date with news and developments in the profession
- ATSI access
- Development of disaster plan and preservation
- Education of Directors/Trustees
- Management of photographic and plan collections
- Reference and access
- School archives
- Records management

Q8. Number of years you have been a member of the ASA	
0-2 years	31 (42)
3-5 years	48 (66)
6-9 years	47 (32)
10-15 years	42 (30)
Over 15 years	24 (29)
No Response	1 (2)
Total	193 (201)

Q9. Your current membership category of the ASA	
Professional	89 (93)
Associate	86 (72)
Associate (student)	3 (9)
Associate (concession)	14 (9)
Honorary	0 (4)
No Response	1 (14)
Total	193 (201)

Q10. Do you belong to other Australian professional associations/ societies besides the ASA (eg ALIA, RMAA)	
No	95 (-)
Yes	97 (88)
No Response	1 (-)
Total	193 (-)

Comment: The 97 people who answered 'yes' to this question gave a total of 149 responses, meaning that on average they each belonged to one or two other associations/societies. In all 48 different associations/societies were mentioned.

Q11. Do you belong to any overseas professional associations/societies (eg SAA, ACA, NZ Society of Archivists)	
No	168
Yes	20
No Response	5
Total	193

Comment: The 20 people who answered 'yes' to this question gave a total of 40 responses, meaning that on average they each belonged to two other associations/societies. In all 19 different associations/societies were mentioned.

Q12. Do you belong to a SIG (Tick all that apply)	
Business Archives	6 (30)
Collection Archives	26 (30)
Local Government Archives	16 (19)
School Archives	22 (25)
Science, Medicine and Technology	21 (20)
University and College	14 (21)
Electronic Records	30 (18)
Proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Records	13 (-)
No Response	84 (-)

Comment: The 106 people who answered this question gave a total of 232 responses, meaning that on average they each belonged to two SIGs.

Q13. Do you consider that being a SIG member is an advantage?	
No	13
Yes - Please describe the advantages	125
No Response	55
Total	193

Q14. What archival meetings did you attend during the period 1994 to 1996 (Tick all that apply)

ASA Annual Meeting/Conference - Townsville, 1994	27
ASA Annual Meeting/Conference - Canberra, 1995	61
ASA Annual Meeting/Conference - Alice Springs, 1996	39
Branch Meetings	123
Branch Workshops/Seminars	51
SIG Meetings/Seminars	46
Other meetings on archival issues	66
I did not attend any meetings during 1994 to 1996	32
No Response	4

Comment: In total, 413 meetings were attended by 157 people. Therefore each person who responded averaged attendance at two to three meetings.

Q15. Were there any specific reasons for not attending any ASA activities during the period 1994 to 1996?

Response	72
No Response	121
Total	193

Comment: Of the 72 people who responded to this question, only 32 (from the previous table) did not attend any meetings. Many people who attended some meetings gave reasons for not attending others.

Q16. Have you ever undertaken any of the following activities for the ASA (Tick all that apply)

served on a Branch Executive	62 (58)
served on a Branch sub-committee	40 (40)
served on Council	25 (23)
served on a Council sub-committee	15 (16)
worked on Society publication(s) (eg Directory)	13 (19)
organised workshops/seminars for the Council/Branch	43 (34)
served on a SIG Committee	18 (23)
No Response	107 (115)

Comment: The 86 people who answered this question gave a total of 216 responses, meaning that on average they each served in two to three capacities.

Q17. The following activities occupy more than 25% of my time in a typical working week (Select no more than 4 responses).

Administration/Management	96 (98)
Records management	57 (59)
Appraisal (inc Disposal)	67 (59)
Accessioning	45 (40)
Arrangement and Description	62 (59)
Reference/user services	63 (65)
Public program/outreach	17 (14)
Preservation/conservation	16 (12)
Oral history	5 (3)
Teaching/research	25 (28)
Other, please specify	27 (13)
No specific activity occupies more than 25% of my time	14 (16)
No Response	9 (13)

Comment: The 184 people who answered this question gave a total of 494 responses. That is an average of two to three responses each. A couple of

people who did not respond to this question or questions 18 or 20, answered 'not applicable' to them, indicating that they were not working as archivists

Q18. I work primarily with (choose one response only)	
Paper based textual records	150 (151)
Still photographs	3 (4)
Film and/or sound records	0 (1)
Electronic records	4 (4)
Published material	2 (3)
Cartographic records (maps and plans)	0 (1)
Other, please specify	7 (-)
Not applicable	22 (17)
No Response	5 (23)
Total	193 (201)

Q19a. Do electronic records and record keeping systems have a significant impact on how you work at the moment	
Yes	65
No	78
Other	6
No Response	44
Total	193

Q19b. Do electronic records and record keeping systems have a significant impact on how you will work in (say) five years time.	
Yes	91
No	15
Other	26
No Response	61
Total	193

Q19c. do you see the Society's role as:	
assisting you to manage electronic records?	54
raising awareness of the issues involved?	137
keeping you up-to-date?	157
sharing information about what is happening in other archives through case studies etc?	136
No Response	11

Q19d. how might the Society best help:	
conferences or workshops	123
more material in A&M	77
a dedicated publication	58
Other, please specify	27
No Response	20

Q20. What was your archival employment status on 30 June 1996?	
Full time employed	109 (115)
Part time employed	33 (31)
Casual	12 (9)
Part time, seeking full time	0 (1)
Not employed, seeking full time	3 (2)
Not employed, seeking part time	1 (1)
Not employed, not seeking a job	2 (6)
Volunteer capacity, not seeking a job	16 (13)
Not applicable	15 (18)
No Response	2 (5)
Total	193 (201)

Q21. If you are employed in a part-time capacity, please indicate the number of hours employed per week:

Responses	38
No Response	155
Total	193

Comment: The 38 people who responded to this question, worked an average of 21 hours and 20 minutes per week.

Q22. Total number of people (paid employees or volunteers) in your administrative unit, excluding yourself.

None	39 (47)
1-2	35 (46)
3-6	39 (30)
7-14	36 (35)
15-29	17 (11)
30 or more	11 (9)
No Response	16 (23)
Total	193 (201)

Q23. Total salary (excluding benefits) paid to you in the taxation year 1995/96. If paid as a package, indicate salary components.

under \$20,000	13
\$20,000-\$24,999	10
\$25,000-\$29,999	14
\$30,000-\$34,999	21
\$35,000-\$39,999	21
\$40,000-\$44,999	26
\$45,000-\$49,999	18
\$50,000-\$54,999	11
\$55,000-\$59,999	6
\$60,000 plus	8

Q23 continued overleaf

<i>Q23 continued</i>	
I contribute my services as a volunteer	24
If your salary rate is not expressed as an annual rate please indicate the rate - Fortnightly	0
If your salary rate is not expressed as an annual rate please indicate the rate - Weekly	0
If your salary rate is not expressed as an annual rate please indicate the rate - Hourly	8
No Response	13
Total	193

Comment: Some respondents who nominated their earnings in the lower salary range included the 45 people who worked part-time or casually. Of the 24 people who volunteered, nearly all were over 65 years of age and worked for either Religious Orders or Schools

Q24. Please indicate the type of institution of which your administrative unit is a part.	
Commonwealth Government	28 (28)
State or Territory Government	41 (43)
Local Government	13 (18)
Corporate Organisation (for profit)	12 (17)
Non-Profit organisation	8 (6)
Tertiary Education Body	24 (29)
School/College	19 (19)
Religious Order/Organisation	15 (16)
Historical Society	1 (3)
Museum	3 (2)
Consultancy Practice	4 (3)
Self Employed	7 (2)
Other, please specify	8 (2)
No Response	10 (13)
Total	193 (201)

Q25. Is your archival organisation

an in-house archives	88 (82)
a collecting archives	22 (21)
both	53 (66)
No Response	30 (32)
Total	193 (201)

Q26. In five years time, do you want to be working in the archival or records related field?

Yes	152
No	30
No Response	11
Total	193

Q27. What do you value most about your ASA membership?

Response	172
No Response	21
Total	193

Q28a. What do you see as the three big issues in the future (say next five years) for you as an archivist and what you do in your particular work situation.

Response	148
No Response	45
Total	193

Q28b. What do you see as the three big issues in the future (say next five years) for the archival profession generally.

Response	143
No Response	50
Total	193