

# Assessing Archival Collections through Surveys

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## Abstract

Assessment of collections holdings through survey can be used as the first step in the larger goal to uncover archives and special collections materials that are backlogged and thus inaccessible to researchers. This article seeks to gather data on the experiences and outcomes of collections assessment surveys. The responses of thirty-three archives and special collections professionals were analyzed to discover whether a survey was an effective planning tool and to determine if similarities would emerged that could be widely applied to future collections assessments surveys.

*Keywords:* Access, Assessment, Backlog, Hidden collections, Processing, Surveys

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In 2003, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) held the Exposing Hidden Collections conference to focus on the issues of unprocessed, unavailable, or backlogged materials in archival and special collections repositories. Conference findings noted that “libraries collectively hold millions of items that have never been adequately described and therefore are all but unknown to, and unused by, the scholars it is our mission to serve” (Tabb, 2004, p.123). To increase access, strategies for addressing backlogs have emphasized making materials available by employing minimal description as opposed to meticulous arrangement and description. Awareness of the damaging effects of backlogs, such as the lack of preservation and the potential loss of cultural heritage materials, has grown among repositories. As a result many have begun to assess their unprocessed and under-described materials to better understand the scope of their backlog in order to plan and prioritize projects to expose collections that are effectively “hidden” to the public. The 2011 OCLC Research report, “Taking Stock and Making Hay: Archival Collections Assessment” by Martha O’Hara Conway and Merrilee Proffitt, encouraged conducting collection surveys to evaluate and systematically gather information on all holdings in order to better understand how to provide access. The report proposed the benefit of assessment through surveying, stating, “An accurate census of its archival collection enables the institution to act strategically in meeting user needs, allocating available resources and securing additional funding” (Conway & Proffitt, 2011, p.8). Despite the benefits derived from collections surveys, the practice is irregular

in archival repositories because often it cannot be completed without additional resources. The issue of collection backlog is a concern to many, if not all repositories. Reports such as Conway and Proffitt's (2011) and the large multi-repository unprocessed collection survey conducted by the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collection Libraries (PACSCL) have shown that a survey can be the first step toward the ultimate goal of increased access. In fact, archivist Gregory S. Hunter states, "surveying records is an important archival skill, but one which does not receive enough emphasis within the profession. Everything else an archivist does – appraisal, arrangement, description, reference, and outreach- presupposes the ability to locate and identify records" (Hunter, 2003, p.22).

Archivists and special collections librarians often inherit backlogs, making it likely that they are unfamiliar with the contents. Previous access may have been dependent on institutional knowledge of long-time staff. To achieve the goal of increased access including being independently discoverable by researchers, collections need description, preferably online description. Before beginning work to increase access to materials by processing collections, creating online finding aids, and collection-level catalog records, often an assessment or survey of collections is necessary to determine where and how to start. How do the experiences and results of surveying collections by archivists and special collections libraries compare? Specifically, is there was a formula or a specific survey instrument to use? What is the typical amount of time a collections assessment survey should take? What can be learned from the survey results? Did others find it to be a useful experience? This study provides descriptive research on archivists' experience with assessing collections through survey at their own institutions. By attempting to systematically gather data and compare experiences to see if common elements emerged: Are there typical results for this sort of project? What can we learn about the assessment of collections through surveys?

## **Collections Surveys in Literature**

Interest in uncovering hidden collections which are uncatalogued or otherwise under-described, making them unknown to researchers, grew after the publication of the 1998 ARL survey of special collections libraries. Most notably the survey reported that among the 82 institutions that were polled, the mean for unprocessed manuscripts was 27 percent. Similarly, university archives, as reported from 71 institutions, indicated that 31 percent of collection materials were unprocessed. The survey reported higher percentages of unprocessed material for video (35 percent), graphic (36 percent), audio (37 percent), and artifacts (46 percent) (Panitch, 2000,

pp.49-50). This represents a significant amount of special collections and archival materials that are inaccessible to researchers because they are unprocessed or under-described. In an effort to acknowledge the problem of backlogs and seek ways to make these hidden collections visible to researchers, the ARL chaired a Special Collections Task Force, which organized 2003's Exposing Hidden Collections and published a Final Status Report on the conference findings. One position that has emerged from the conference and final report is that some access to all is preferable to no access to some. This seems to mark the movement towards minimal description as an approach to expedite availability to archival materials. To help address the problem of backlogs, the Council on Library Information and Resources (CLIR), with funding provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, created the Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives Program<sup>1</sup> to provide grants for projects "supporting innovative, efficient description of large volumes of materials of high value to scholars" (Council on Library Information and Resources "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives, About the Program"). Projects that received funding were required to make information about the collections available online. The main requirement for funding was that "collections in question must be truly hidden, that is, not currently discoverable by scholarly users working within the relevant subject domains, either through digital or analog means" (Council on Library Information Resources, Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives, About the Program). Metadata on collections were compiled into the Hidden Collections Registry, a web-accessible platform, browsable by subject, format, or type of holding institution (Council on Library Information Resources, Hidden Collections Registry).

Gregory S. Hunter, author of *Developing and Managing Practical Archives*, encourages the use of a survey as an effective collection management tool, but advises, "Any [collection] survey, even a small one, is a complex task. It will require a great deal of time and effort, resulting in the diversion of staff time from other activities" (Hunter, 2003, p.27). Collection surveys require additional resources and in a period of reduced funding and many competing interests, the act of surveying is not a regular practice in most repositories. In order to have useful data from the survey, a clearly defined goal is a necessity. Hunter urges archivists to use the results of the survey as a planning tool for the repository's programs by identifying priorities for the future and gathering resources that will be needed to reach those goals. However, Hunter cautions that "To spend time on a survey without using the results for institutional planning is a squandering of resources. Similarly, to plan for an archival program without having an accurate survey of existing records and storage

1. CLIR's Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives Program was discontinued in December 2014.

conditions is to risk the failure of the entire effort” (Hunter, 2003, p. 30). Collection assessment by survey is a time-intensive exercise, but allows an archivist to establish physical and intellectual control over collections, which results in a clearer idea of the scope and needs of the materials.

However, few universal guidelines exist for conducting a collection survey. Conway and Proffitt in “Taking Stock and Making Hay” (2011) acknowledge that a single approach does not exist and would not be practical to fit the needs of every repository. Instead, Appendix A of the report summarizes fourteen collection survey projects successfully undertaken<sup>2</sup> by various institutions and provides links to their websites containing the project documentation and survey models which can be borrowed and adapted to suit a range of survey projects. Conway and Proffitt express their hope that the report motivates those who are interested in using a survey to assess their collections by suggesting an array of possibilities that can be readily applied to meet immediate and/or long-term needs” (Conway & Proffitt, 2011, p.8).

## **Method: Collections Assessment Survey Questionnaire (CASQ)**

While several repositories have completed assessments of their collections by survey, there has not been specific information in literature that addresses the experiences and findings of these surveys at other repositories. It is possible to presume their experiences and findings by the type of projects conducted after their survey. For example, PACSCL at the conclusion of their survey initiative received funding to process collections and create online descriptions. Several of the collection survey projects identified in “Taking Stock and Making Hay”(2011) had launched project blogs that indicated a move towards applying More Product, Less Process (MPLP) principles and/or cataloging the formerly unprocessed collections. However, as of this study there has not been literature that addressed the experience of conducting a collections assessment survey and the impact upon the institution.

What types of data did others gather in a collection assessment survey? Is there a more efficient way of conducting a collection assessment survey? Would others have conducted their surveys differently if they had known methodology employed by other institutions? Can answers to these questions reveal any consistencies in order to establish guidelines for conducting a collections survey? To find a sample of archivists or special collections librarians that have conducted or participated in collection surveys, messages<sup>3</sup> were posted on two of the Society of American Archivists’ (SAA) Roundtables email discussion lists: the Lone

2. Or in progress at the time “Taking Stock and Making Hay: Archival Collections Assessment” was published in 2011.

3. See Appendix I for text of the messages.

Arrangers Roundtable and the Students and New Archives Professional (SNAP) Roundtables. The two SAA Roundtables were selected because of previous discussion regarding internal archival inventories on the Lone Arrangers list and the suggestion that, because the SNAP Roundtable focus on students and early career professionals, members would have been likely to have participated in an assessment of collection materials as a surveyor. The posting invited those who had conducted or participated in a collection survey to complete an online questionnaire hosted by Survey Monkey.

Prior to the study, approval was received from The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board to conduct the survey with members of the two SAA Roundtable discussion lists. Those who responded remained anonymous and no identifying information was collected. All participants self-identified as having previously completed or as being in the process of conducting a collections survey by agreeing to answer the questions. The Collection Assessment Survey Questionnaire (CASQ) consisted of 14 questions, seven of which were free-text answers in order to elicit responses on the participant's experiences in their own words. The other seven were multiple choice questions designed to allow participants to choose more than one answer as well as contribute free-text comments to place their selections in context. The survey was live from June 25 to August 8, 2014. Thirty-three respondents participated, of which 25 completed the entire survey. Incomplete responses included only the multiple choices questions and skipped the more descriptive free-text responses, so there was still data that could be analyzed. Admittedly, the sample size was small, but the CASQ was designed as a descriptive research survey to depict a representative sample of experiences and provide insight into the process and impact of collections surveys.

## **Results: Collection Assessment Survey Questionnaire Findings**

About 66 percent of the respondents indicated that a collection survey was used to assess the entire holdings, including both unprocessed and processed materials of any format, while about 18 percent chose to use a collection survey only to assess materials of specific formats such as electronic records, architectural drawings, or sacramental registers. About 6 percent reported that they used their surveys only to assess materials in a specific subject area.

The catalysts for conducting a collections survey varied among the participants. Some respondents cited assessing backlog, preservation needs, and updating inventories. Others undertook surveys at that

particular time in order to locate materials for an upcoming institutional anniversary, to clear materials from a storage space, or simply to take advantage of part-time help during the summer months. The answers all indicated that the principal goal for the collection survey was to gain intellectual and physical control of their repository’s materials. When respondents were specifically asked, “Question 2: Briefly select the reasons for conducting an internal survey (please check all that all apply),” the highest percentage, 78 percent, chose the answer “to gain intellectual control.” The second most popular answer was “To gain physical control” at 69 percent. (See Table I below.)

Answer Choices	Percentage	Number of Responses
To identify unprocessed or under-processed materials or backlogged materials	66.67%	22
To identify material in need of preservation or conservation	60.61%	20
To gain intellectual control	78.79%	26
To gain physical control	69.70%	23
To identify collection strengths and opportunities to expand collecting efforts	39.39%	13

Table I. Question 2, Briefly select the reasons for conducting an internal survey (check all that apply)  
[33 Answered; 0 Skipped]

Interestingly, one respondent shared that in addition to wanting to gain better physical and intellectual control, undertaking a survey was also motivated by donors. The respondent explains:

“The effort was also inspired by the occasional donor wanting to see the collection he/she donated at some point in the past, but as there had been no accessioning or cataloging procedures I often could not locate them (nor confirm we had ever had them). If materials were found they were not in very good shape. This became a little embarrassing. So the survey was also done in an effort to restore the faith of these donors and show potential donors that we took our role as stewards of these materials seriously” (Participant #17).

Question 4 asked participants to select the types of information gathered in their survey, choosing from a list of 21 fields (see Table II). The most frequent responses were format and location of materials (89.3 percent), followed the by extent or quantity (85.7 percent), physical



condition (75 percent), creator and title (both 71.4 percent), and subject of collection tied with the availability of unpublished finding aid or other container list (both 35 percent). This selection represents the most commonly gathered information fields from the respondents' surveys. The other types of information gathered were specific to the individual survey and repository, such as recording the physical dimensions of oversized artwork. One respondent indicated inclusion of a field to record if a collection contained materials related to a prominent individual or historical event at their university.

Participants were asked to describe the physical steps used to collect the information. All respondents indicated that they assessed materials directly within the collection storage space. One used the term "hunting" to describe locating materials in various storage areas. In conjunction

Answer Choice	Percentage	Number of Responses
Creator	71.43%	20
Title	71.43%	20
Inclusive or bulk dates	60.71%	17
Extent or quantity	85.71%	24
Format of materials	89.29%	25
Location of materials	89.29	25
Brief Collection abstract	28.57%	8
Subject of collection	35.71%	10
Physical condition	75.00%	21
Availability of catalog record	32.14%	9
Availability of online finding aid	25.00%	7
Availability of unpublished finding aid or other container list	35.7%	10
Related materials	25.00%	7
Access restrictions	28.57%	8
Copyright restrictions	7.14%	2
Expected collection growth	21.43%	6
Language	21.43%	6
Processing status	42.86%	12
Numerical Rankings	10.71%	3
Provenance	39.29%	11
Other (not on list)	21.43%	6

Table II. Question 4, Please list the fields used in the survey (check all that apply):  
[28 Answered; 5 Skipped]

with the physical inspection of each box, respondents also gathered existing inventories and paper files to reconcile what was known or what had been done previously to the collection. One respondent indicated the need to examine contents thoroughly because of a lack of documentation. Some took initial action along the way to box up loose materials, refile misfiled items, amend information, and rehouse materials.

Several of the respondents indicated they were able to take a laptop in their stacks and enter information directly into the template. Most respondents used a paper form of the survey to jot down observations, later transcribing and entering them into a software program. Most respondents (62.5 percent) used Excel spreadsheets to organize their information; programs such as Access and File Maker Pro, were not widely used, each with 4.17 percent. Other systems such as Lotus Notes and PB Works Wiki were used because their larger institution used the software. Paper was the second most selected answer at 29.17 percent. One respondent stated that paper forms were used because their volunteer surveyors were not comfortable with computers. Another respondent indicated that their repository did not have access to a database program and thus used a paper form and later created a Word document. Several stated they were able to enter the survey information directly into Archivists' Toolkit.

Respondents reported an average of two full-time staff members and one part-time staff member working on their collection survey (see Table III). Assistance from students and volunteers was also used at an average of eight hours per week. Since the availability of students and volunteers can vary, the questionnaire asked respondents to estimate. The estimate of the number of hours all persons spent working on the survey varied greatly among respondents. Answers ranged from a total of eight hours to 5,000 hours. The reasons for such disparity could be due to several factors including the extent of collections, physical state of the materials, complexity of information encountered, and individual pace, but respondents did not elaborate on this. According to the CASQ, respondents estimated that all staff members working on the survey spent an average of 914 hours to complete the survey. Despite the wide range of hours, the investment of time and labor was significant. In addition to physically inspecting each container, some participants also researched previous data collected about the materials, reconciling legacy inventories, and several respondents mentioned interviewing current and former staff for their institutional memories concerning archival collections. A collection survey is a time investment and often additional resources are involved. As Participant #19 described the reaction of their repository, "There's been some dismay at the amount of time it took, but it demonstrated how much needs to be done with the collection."

Although there was a large investment of time, the self-reported results indicated that half of the respondents considered themselves “very satisfied” with the outcomes of their survey, and 66 percent agreed that the survey had achieved all the goals it had set out to complete (see Tables III and IV).

According to the respondents, gaining a better understanding of their collections, including physical and intellectual control, was the most successful aspect of the survey. When asked “Question 13, What was the biggest challenge you faced in conducting their survey,” answers generally

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Very Satisfied	50%	13
Satisfied	38.46%	10
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	11.54%	3
Dissatisfied	0%	0
Very Dissatisfied	0%	0

Table III. Question 10, How satisfied are you with the results of your survey? [26 Answered; 7 Skipped]

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
It achieved all the goals	66.67%	16
It achieved some of the goals	33.33%	8
It did not achieve the goals	0%	0

Table IV. Question 11, Did your survey achieve the goals described in question #3? [24 Answered; 9 Skipped]

touched upon limited resources (both of time and staff) for what was a large task, and respondents indicated that finding time to work on the survey was the biggest challenge they faced. Another common challenge for the respondents was the very little or non-existent provenance information on the collections. Answers included:

“Complexity of and incorrect information recorded for many collections, and messy accession information have slowed this all down” (Participant #12);

“What seemed to me to be an idiosyncratic filing system in place (collections based on topics, not provenance)” (Participant #5);

“Collections with little accession information” (Participant #20);

“The complete lack of records from the previous archivist’s tenure was also a real challenge” (Participant #13);

Interestingly, one respondent experienced resistance from staff regarding the necessity of conducting a survey. Colleagues with more seniority felt they could find everything, so they felt it was a waste of time (Participant #30). Disorganization combined with little provenance information also challenged respondents. Another difficulty experienced by many was the challenge of being unfamiliar with the materials, because they did not understand the significance of obscure terms or persons found within the unprocessed materials until after they had processed the collections. Likewise, unfamiliarity with the repository made it difficult to ascertain the corporate structure of the organization and create a records retention schedule. One respondent reported the challenge of training students and the need to impress upon them the importance of understanding what they would see, since theirs might be the only eyes on the item for decades.

Generally, the reaction from the respondents’ supervisors or institutions to the outcomes of the surveys was positive. The answers indicated that supervisors were mostly pleased with the improved access to collections and unprocessed materials by the public and by the staff. One respondent noted a great response by faculty to using “new” materials in the archives (Question 14, Participant #21). Other responses from supervisors and institutions were more neutral stating that the survey was “just something that needs to be done” (Question 14, Participant #2).

## **Discussion**

### **Collection Assessment Survey Questionnaire**

An analysis of the qualitative responses confirmed the assumption that surveys were effective planning tools. Respondents shared that unknown collections were identified, processing projects were planned, items were earmarked for preservation, and publishable collection metadata had been created as a result of the survey. The CASQ results revealed the impact of collection survey results on allocation of resources, especially in terms of physical storage space. One respondent stated that they used the information gathered in the collection survey in order to estimate the shelving needs of a new space. Likewise, one respondent used the survey results to determine cold storage needs for audiovisual materials.

Another indicated that the collection survey was done in order to shift materials around to better utilize their current space. Additional responses echoed these sentiments, that results from the surveys were used to make decisions about storage needs. It seems that physical storage space can influence many decisions in a repository. One respondent explains, “The archives was [sic] set up by a volunteer with very limited knowledge of any archival theory or practices. As it exists now, it is almost unusable and needs to be reconfigured in a way that can support growth while retaining the original order. The survey was the first step in this process” (Participant #4).

CASQ findings also indicated that results were used to tighten the scope of collections. Participant #30 used the collection survey results to sort materials out of their storage space that did not belong to archives or were better suited to be “moved to other parts of the library.” Another, Participant #9, stated that as a result of their collection survey they were able to identify materials that needed to be returned to donors.<sup>4</sup> Respondent #28 stated one the goals for conducting a collection survey was “to identify out-of-scope collections.” Similarly, another used the results of the survey to “create records retention schedule in order to do disposition based on the retention schedule” (Participant #16). The survey results helped several respondents to assess collecting areas to develop and which areas could be weeded.

An additional impact of the survey for several respondents was that it functioned as a tool to transfer or gain institutional knowledge. The respondents stated:

“Our current college archivist has been here since 1986 and knows the collections in and out. But beyond his brain, there was little-to-no intellectual control over the holdings” (Participant #5).

“As a newly-appointed archivist, I needed to know what materials were in the archives. I was only the second person in the position, and the previous archivist had left no inventories or collection information at all” (Participant #15).

“As the first full-time archivists, no complete inventory had ever been performed on the collection” (Participant #21).

“I assumed responsibility for processing collections after a colleague left, and the director of the archive was recently transferred in, so we could [both] become more familiar with our holdings” (Participant #20).

4. The archive only held parish registers from closed churches; parish registers from still operating churches needed to be returned as they were out of scope.

Besides systematically gathering data about collections in order to have consistent and adequate description, a collection survey can also be used as an immersive experience for a new archivist to gain institutional knowledge and document that information for others.

## **CASQ Impact**

The purpose of the CASQ was to gather data on the experiences of conducting a survey to determine if there were similarities which could be applied widely to other collections assessment surveys. The CASQ results did reveal some common elements. A majority of respondents assessed their entire holdings as opposed to surveying just unprocessed collections or materials of a specific format. The main catalyst for conducting a survey among the respondents was to gain intellectual and physical control over collections. While the CASQ results did not indicate a specific survey instrument or model, some common elements of the types of information were gathered, such as format, location, extent and physical conditions of the materials. Additional types of information such as the availability of an online finding aid or physical dimensions were unique to the specific repository and its holdings. No specific formula or guidelines were uncovered through the CASQ findings. The results of a survey are largely dependent on the repository's goals. Many of the respondents did indicate that they lacked any data for their collections, or that the data was incorrect or incomplete. In order to move forward to accomplish the larger goal of increasing access, consistent collection-level data was required. Most often the survey was the necessary step before a larger plan could be developed. This recalls the statement in "Taking Stock and Making Hay" that an accurate census of materials allows an "institution to act strategically in meeting user needs and allocating available resources and securing additional funding" (Conway & Proffitt, 2011, p.3). The CASQ also identified several secondary collection benefits resulting from the survey. Results of the collections surveys were used to evaluate future physical storage space needs and reconfigure existing space for growth. Several respondents reported that their results assisted in tightening the scope of collections and identified materials to be deaccessioned or transferred. Responses did not indicate a typical amount of time required to complete a survey. The CASQ found that the total hours spent on a survey varied greatly.

A majority of the respondents rated their collections survey as having achieved all its goals. Remarkably, none of the respondents reported that their survey failed to achieve any goals. Similarly, half of the respondents rated themselves very satisfied, while none reported that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the results of their collections survey. These results seem to indicate that respondents found the survey to be a useful experience.

## Limitations of the CASQ Study

Following discussion from the SAA Lone Arrangers Roundtable, the CASQ was initially designed as a small survey focused on library professionals in institutions with small staffs. While the results seem to indicate the survey was an effective tool, possibilities for further research into the topic would involve increasing the number of respondents to see if the results are applicable to a larger sample. It would also be useful to break down results based on the size of the institutions. Data from the experiences of surveys at large research libraries could introduce variables that were not considered by smaller institutions. Future research into collection assessment by survey should gather data on the institution size. It is also important to note that the CASQ revealed that respondents did not all use the same methodology when conducting surveys at their own repositories. Slight variations among the respondents could have significant impact upon experiences and results. Another limitation of the CASQ was in the lack of detail on the estimated staff hours spent on the survey. Follow-up research should break down the number of hours spent by part-time staff and by full-time staff and compare the hours with the number of collections that were surveyed to account more accurately for the average amount of time it took to complete the survey.

## Conclusion

Awareness of the damaging effects of backlogged or hidden collections has made increasing access to archival and special collections materials a priority among many repositories. As the first step to increase access, many institutions have used collections surveys to assess all types of materials within their care to better understand the needs of the backlogged materials and to plan and prioritize projects that will uncover these collections. The surveys function as a systematic method to gather consistent collection data in order to prioritize, plan, and create descriptive information. An immediate result of the collections survey is better intellectual control by providing the percentage of processed and unprocessed collections. The surveys had a secondary benefit as a method to document the institutional knowledge of long-time staff.

In order to find out what can be learned from collections assessment surveys, the CASQ reached out to professionals who had completed their own collections surveys in order to elicit their experiences. Responses to the CASQ indicated that many institutions also found assessment through collection surveys to be an effective planning tool. While the results did not reveal a consistent survey instrument or typical timeline for surveying

a collection, results of the surveys allowed the majority respondents to better understand the needs of their collections and allocate resources. The results of the CASQ can be considered the first step to analyze experiences conducting collection assessment surveys. Further research into this topic could reveal more insights and lead to developing a set of best practices. Suggestions for further study include expanding the respondent sample, specifically including participants from larger research libraries. The CASQ form should be revised to document institutional size of repository to study its effects. In future research, a deeper exploration of the variations in assessment of hidden collection survey methodologies could provide additional useful data regarding the survey experience.



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## Appendix I

### Initial Survey (CASQ) Administered via Survey Monkey-Email Invitation:

Call for Volunteers: Survey on methods used in conducting an internal archival inventory

Hello Colleagues: Happy Friday!

Have you conducted or participated in an internal archival inventory? If so, I need your help!

My name is Wendy Pflug and I am an associate curator/archivist at the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum at Ohio State University. Last month's discussion on conducting an internal archival inventory brought many great responses from those who have conducted a survey and much helpful advice for those beginning or in the midst of an inventory survey. Following a research interest of mine, I am seeking to survey other archivists who have conducted an internal survey of their repository's collections and materials, in order to find how it was done and what impact it had. Below is a link to a short survey (14 questions, many multiple choice, which will take about 20 minutes) asking what types of materials were surveyed, the reasons for conducting an internal inventory, what types of information was gathered, and the final results. The goal of these questions is to find out what information is needed to conduct an effective inventory survey and to articulate the impact it can have on a repository. My intention is to write an article based on these questions that will (hopefully) be a resource for other colleagues beginning their inventories from scratch and to enhance our understanding of what sort of information could be considered effective. If you have any questions or concerns about the study and survey please contact the Principle Investigator, Wendy Pflug at [pflug.9@osu.edu](mailto:pflug.9@osu.edu) or by phone 614-292-0538.

Please note: the survey questions will not ask identifying information such as your name or workplace; all answers will be anonymous. For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research at 1-800-678-6251.

Thanks in advance for your help with my research! Here is the link to the survey:

## Appendix II

### Survey Questions

Responses for all questions are available:

1. Did the survey inventory the entire holdings within the repository or did the survey focus on materials of a specific format or subject, or other criteria?
2. Briefly select the reasons for conducting an internal survey (check all that apply)
3. Can you describe your goals for conducting the survey?
4. Please list the fields used in the survey (check all that apply):
5. What were the physical steps or procedures used to collect the information for the fields?
6. How did you organize the results of the descriptive information?
7. What did you or your organization do with the results of the survey?
8. Please estimate the number of staff hours it took to complete this survey:
9. Please estimate the number of items and/or number of collections surveyed
10. How satisfied are you with the results of your survey?
11. Did your survey achieve the goals described in question #3?
12. What was the most successful aspect or aspects of your survey?
13. What was the biggest challenge you faced in conducting the survey?
14. Please describe the response of your institution to the survey