LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

2014 DPOE Training Needs Assessment Survey

REPORT

December 18, 2014

Summary

The 2014 Digital Preservation Outreach and Education (DPOE) Training Needs Assessment Survey was a follow-up to a survey conducted in the summer and fall of 2010. There were slight changes between the two surveys, but the overall logic remains intact—that is, to maintain integrity between the two for the sake of analysis and comparison. One of the more interesting outcomes is the similarity of the results between 2010 and 2014. This trend will be of particular interest when the survey is conducted again in 2016. The most significant takeaways from the 2014 survey are: 1) an overwhelming expression of concern to ensure digital content is accessible for 10 or more years (84%, which is incidentally the same percentage as in 2010), and; 2) evidence that a strong majority of the organizations surveyed support professional development, continuing education, and training for their employees (83%, which is an increase from 66% reported in 2010). Overall, the distribution of responses was about the same from libraries, archives, museums, and historical societies between 2010 and 2014, although there was a notable increase in participation from state governments. A more detailed analysis reveals a slight increase in responses from libraries, and a drop in archives and museums since the 2010 survey.
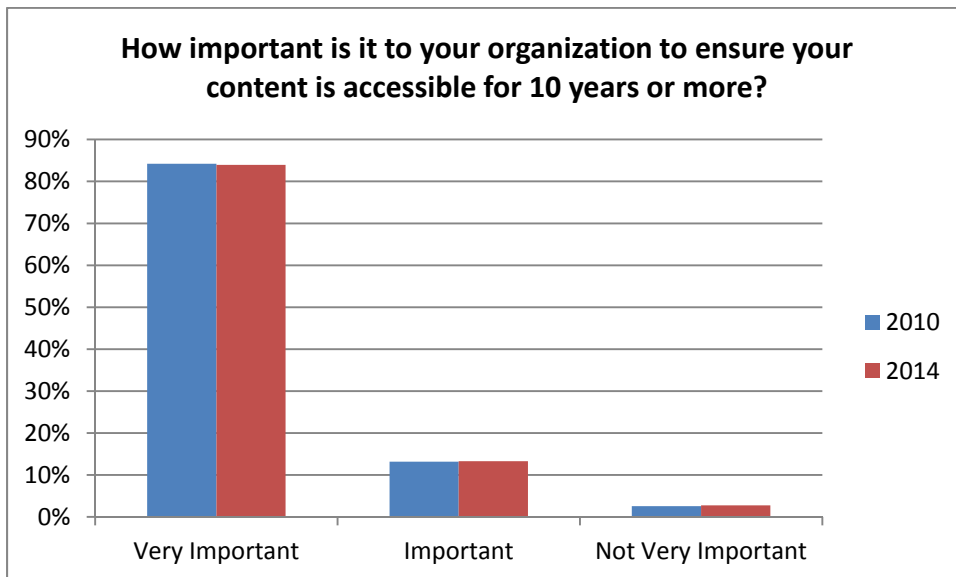
Fig. 1 Evidence of the importance of digital preservation

Regarding training needs online delivery is trending upward across many sectors to meet the constraints of reduced travel budgets. However, results of the 2014 survey reveal respondents still value intimate, in-person workshops. Respondents demonstrated a preference for training on applicable skills rather than introductory material on basic concepts, and show a preference to travel off-site within a 100-mile radius for half- to full-day workshops over other options.

Background

During the summer of 2014, the Library of Congress DPOE Program conducted a survey designed to access the needs for digital preservation continuing education, professional development, and training for cultural heritage organizations. The purpose of this survey was to collect data that will be used to further develop and refine the existing DPOE Curriculum.

The 2014 Survey was open for seven weeks to any organization in the United States and territories engaged in the preservation of digital content (although there were two international respondents—one from Victoria, British Columbia and another from Lahore, Pakistan). The survey questions addressed basic characteristics of an organization, staff size and responsibilities, collection building streams and types of digital objects, preferred training content and delivery options, and organizational support for professional development.

Methodology

The 2014 Survey is composed of 17 questions; two more than the previous one. Over a dozen former DPOE Train-the-Trainer Workshop participants, who are members of the DPOE National Trainer Network, were invited to participate in a conference call to critique and revise the questions from 2010 before repurposing them for 2014. The group convened in June to discuss enhancements, and make recommendations to update and improve the survey without significantly distorting its baseline logic. The goal of this exercise was to maintain the integrity of the survey from year to year, facilitate analysis, and ensure consistency in order to best compare the information from one survey to another.

Once the survey revisions were finalized, the 2014 Survey was designed, opened, and results collected using the Survey Monkey service. The URL was customized, and the 2014 Survey made available from https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2014DPOESurvey. An invitation to participate was announced on July 17, 2014 to 18 email lists and individual list owners for direct posting or re-distribution to reach a broad community concerned about digital preservation.

The overall distribution of the announcement included:

- Federal libraries;
- two LYRASIS distribution lists;
- NDIIPP and NDSA partners;
- the digital preservation community touched by ALA, ASIS&T, ARL, CNI, DLF, and the Digital Preservation Management Workshop;
- state CIOs from all 50 states, DC, and three territories;
- historical society and museum professionals; and
- 430 project directors from recipients of NEH funds over the past four years, and LIS educators and students.

Email list recipients were asked to forward the survey to additional relevant organizations. Additionally, small tent cards were set out on tables during the *Digital Preservation 2014* meeting in Washington DC from July 22–23, which hosted a total of 318 digital preservation practitioners and thought leaders.

The initial deadline for participation was set for close of business on Friday, August 15th, then was extended for another three weeks through Friday, September 5th. The survey was open for a total of 36 business days, not including weekends and two Federal holidays, and there was no interruption between the initial deadline and the extension announcement.

Findings

Summary of participation

The 2014 Survey received 436 responses from domestic organizations and two international (Canada and Pakistan). For a five-week survey, this was a good response from the community considering summer vacation schedules and survey fatigue. In comparison, the 2010 Survey received twice as many responses (888), but it was open over three times longer (102 business days). In both years, none of the Survey questions were skipped by any of the respondents. The most recent survey had very good coverage nationally, including responses from organizations in 48 states, DC, and Puerto Rico. Based on a regional map developed for the 2010 Survey, the coverage distribution is illustrated below.
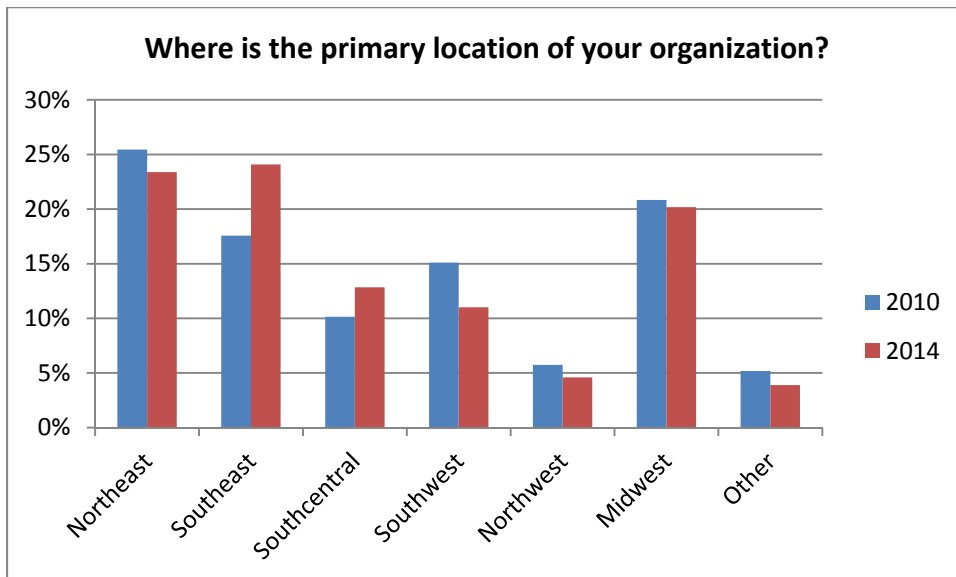

Fig. 2 Coverage of 2014 Survey by region, including an *Other* category for DC, US territories, and international respondents

There was a noticeable increase in responses from organizations in the Southeast (6% up from 2010), and a modest increase from the Southcentral region. All other regions show a slight decline in numbers, with the sharpest drop of 4% attributed to the Southwest. There is no general benchmark for participation for regional respondents, but the numbers could have some utility in DPOE strategic planning activities when thinking through recruiting regional collaborators and identifying potential hosts for the DPOE Workshop.

Governance and staffing

Two survey questions focused on the governance (Q1) and function (Q2) of organizations, with interesting changes shown from 2010 to 2014. There was a near 4% drop in responses from for-profit firms and a 3% drop from federal agencies, while state governments increased by 5% and participation from other organizations (mostly nonprofits) went up 2%. Research on the effects of the economic downturn and grant-making activities over the last four years may suggest reasons why, but are beyond the scope of this report.
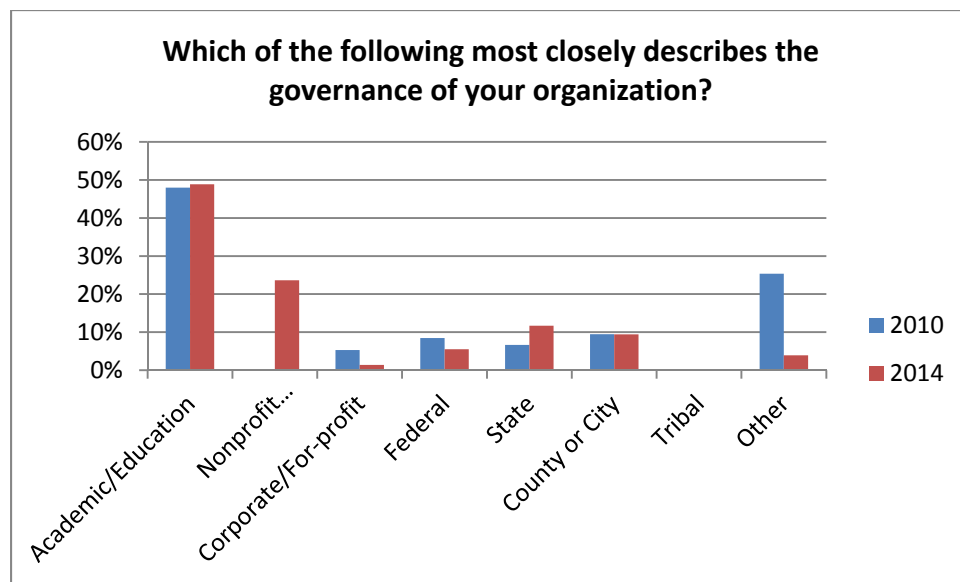

Fig. 3 Organizational governance of respondents

An external team of subject matter experts in the DPOE National Trainer Network recommended a change to Q2, which resulted in more specificity regarding organizational function. The *Other* category from 2010 was parsed into the 2014 Survey additional categories of *Media/Web*, *IT/System Administration*, and *Records Information Management*. The change added clarity, yet made little difference in the results between the two years. The 2010 catch-all *Other* category tallied in at 17.23%, while the sum of the three new additions and *Other* category for 2014 is 17.43%.

Which of the following most closely describes the type or function of your organization?
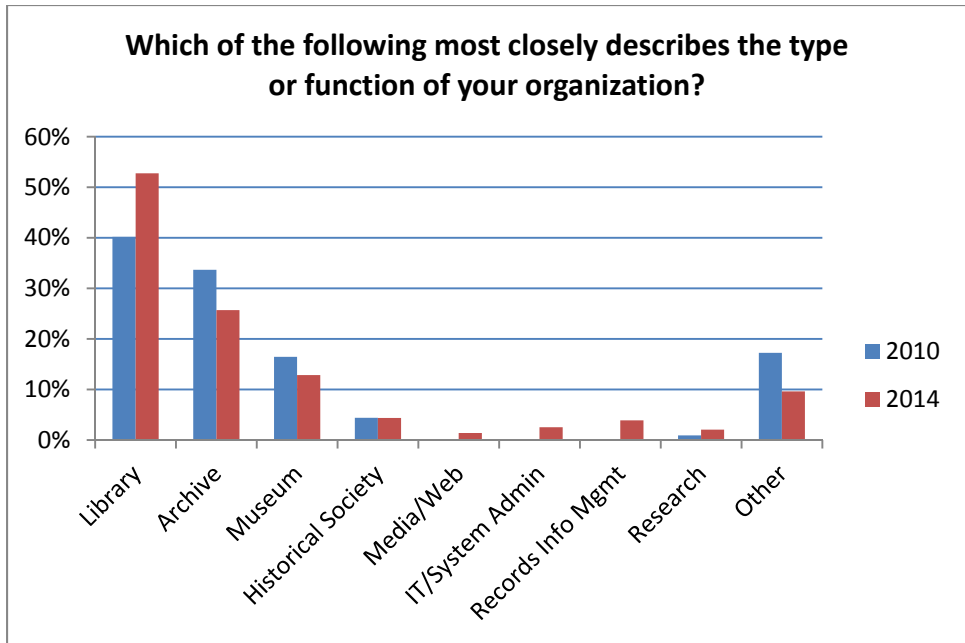
Fig. 4 Primary function of organizations

Two survey questions attempted to discover facts about the organizational composition of responding organizations, addressing staff size (Q4) and configuration (Q5). There was a marked decrease in staff size of 6% at smaller organizations, those ranging from 1–50 employees, and a slight 2% drop in staff size at large organizations with over 500 employees. In comparison, medium-size organizations (from 51 – 100) reported a 4%increase in staff, and there was a 3% increase for organizations in the 201–500 range.

What is the approximate staff size of your organization, including full and part-time employees?
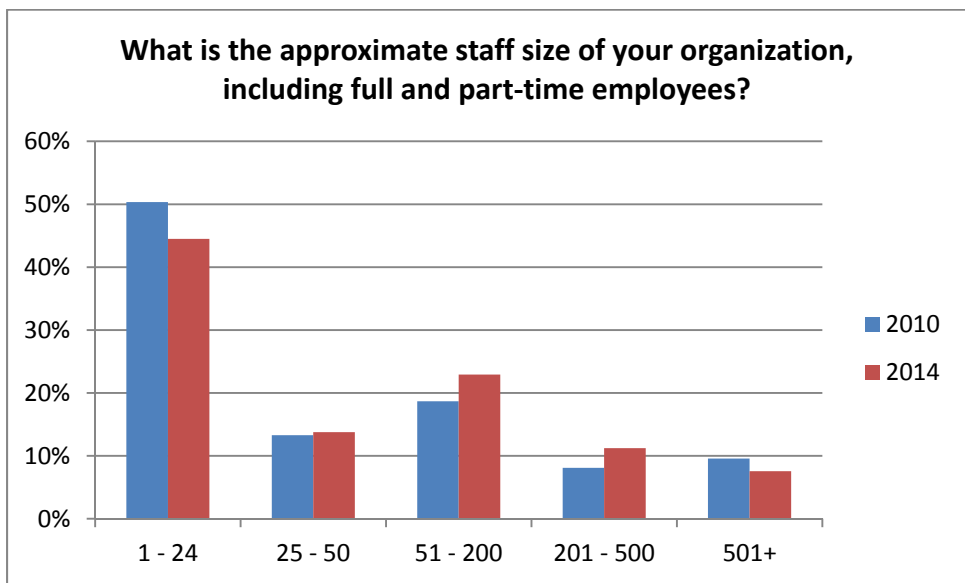
Fig. 5 Approximate staff size

In general, the survey revealed one important development for cultural heritage organizations. Across the entire sample, the 2014 Survey reveals a substantial 13% increase in paid full-time or part-time professional staff with practitioner experience, and a smaller 3% increase in outsourcing. However, the highest percentage of respondents (51%) covers their digital preservation staffing needs with a matrix of various staff as needed. There was a 5% drop in organizations reporting no staff, which may be a good sign for the community and emerging professionals hitting the job market.

Further research into these trends may reveal that capacity-building at one tier of staffing siphon off talent from other tiers. Future surveys or studies could address hypotheses about how effects of the most recent economic downturn or grant-funded projects have impacted staffing during the last four years, but these questions are beyond the scope of this report.
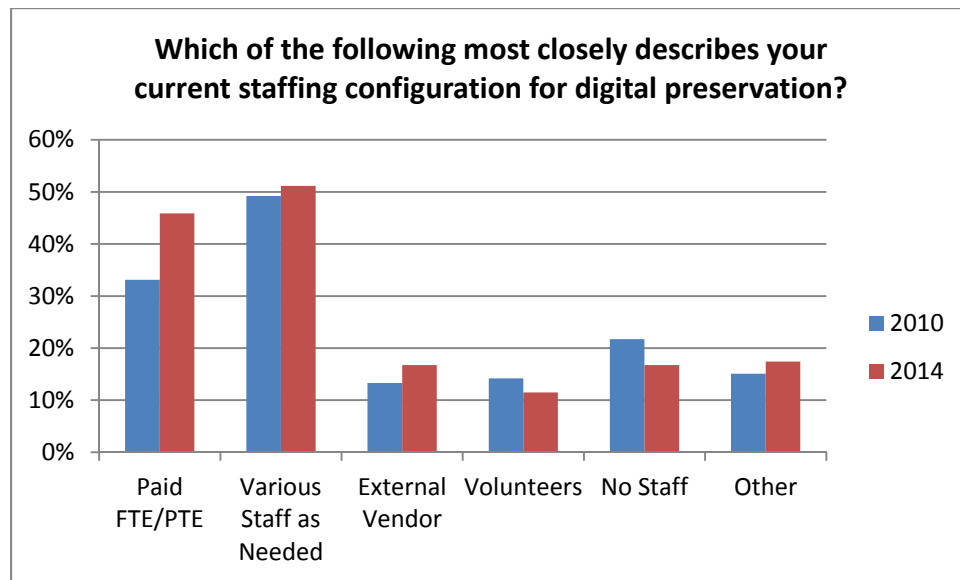

Fig. 6 Staffing configuration to support digital preservation

Digital Content

Two survey questions tackled the issue of how digital content is being collected (Q6), and the types of digital content that make up digital collections (Q7). A non-trivial revision to how organizations characterize the content they are collecting posed challenges to analysis between 2010 and 2014 with the addition of three new categories in the latter survey. While both surveys reveal a significant amount of reformatted materials, there wasn't a *born-digital* category in the 2010 version of the survey. For the 2014 survey, born-digital trails close behind reformatted materials. This will be a closely-monitored data point for the next survey, which will be conducted in 2016.

How would you characterize the digital content that your organization possesses?
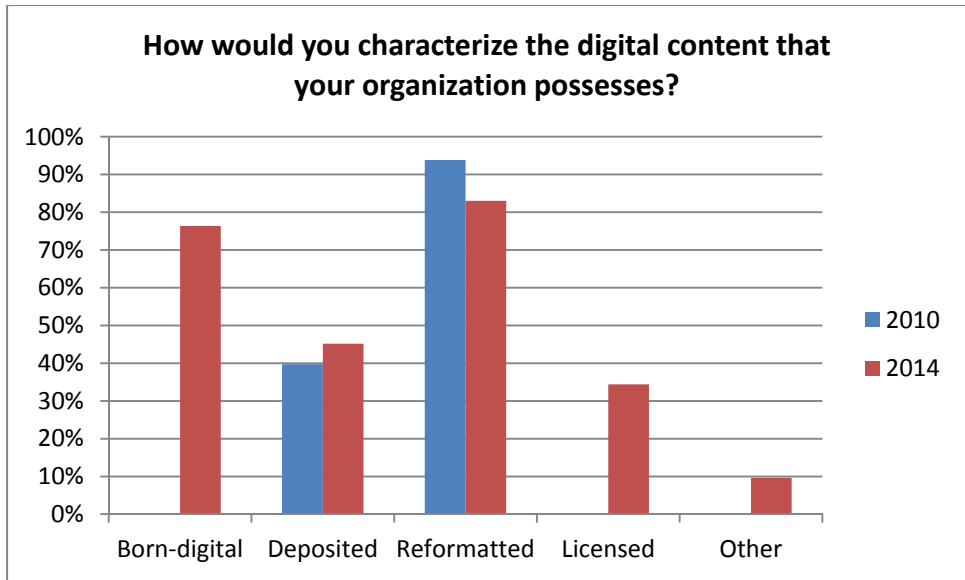

Fig. 7 A view into how organizations are building digital collections

Between the two surveys there were no changes to categories of types of digital content held by organizations. The 2014 Survey saw increases in all categories save for the *Architectural* (CAD and other design drawings), and the *Other* categories. It will be interesting to see how the relevance of these categories holds up through the next iteration of the Survey, or whether it will be necessary to add new categories. Some new additions could be extrapolated from the 2014 Survey *Other* category, e.g., social media, and going forward could be a harbinger of the ever-changing information landscape.
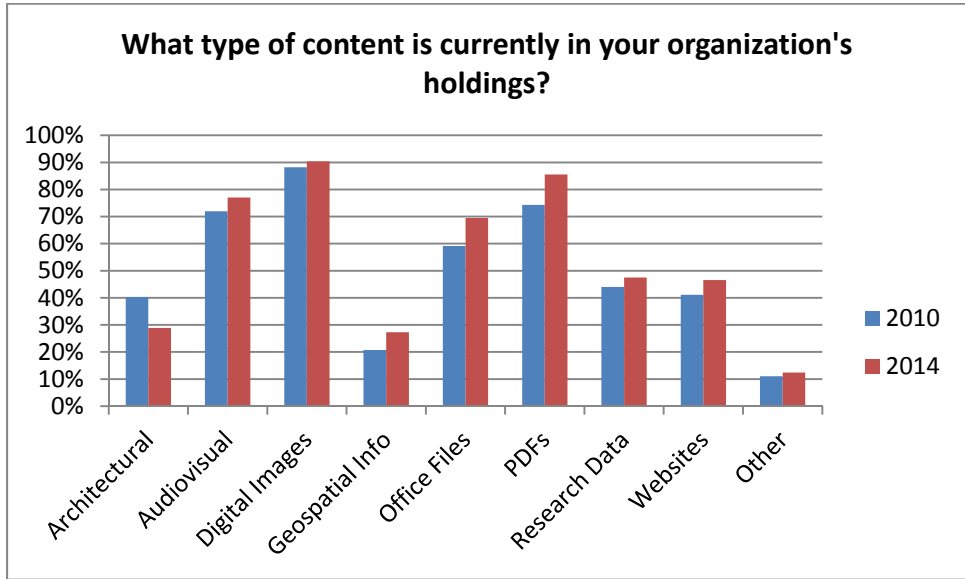
What type of content is currently in your organization's holdings?

Fig. 8 Types of digital content held by respondent organizations

Training needs

The main purpose of the Survey is to collect data about the training needs of organizations with a mission to preserve digital content, and half a dozen survey questions are devoted to this task. Mentioned in the Summary above (see Fig. 1), an overwhelming number of respondents expressed a concern to ensure digital content is accessible for 10 or more years (Q8). It's noteworthy to point out that there was a 17% increase from organizations reporting financial support for training (Q10) between 2010 and 2014. This may be good news for DPOE and other training initiatives within the digital preservation community, and a sign that the importance of digital preservation is getting some traction.

Fig. 9 Indication of how organizations support training

Financial issues

Questions addressing financial concerns revealed that the majority of surveyed organizations set early- to mid-calendar year deadlines for travel forecasts (Q15 results reveal 30% are due in the first quarter of the calendar year, and another 30% in the second). The 2014 Survey attempts to shine a little more light on the connection between funding and training opportunities, and asks how much is allocated per person annually (Q9). Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents didn't know (25%)—and equally as important—another 24% reported a range of $0–$250 in financial support.

These questions only scratch the surface as other issues, such as time away from the office, are not addressed. These results have significance for planning future DPOE Workshops, and to other training providers, as they suggest what trainees are able to afford for digital preservation training events. The chart below illustrates that there is little support for training budgets above $3,001 (2%), and provides a breakdown of ranges between that ceiling and the $250 threshold mentioned above. This question was added for 2014, so no previous data is available.
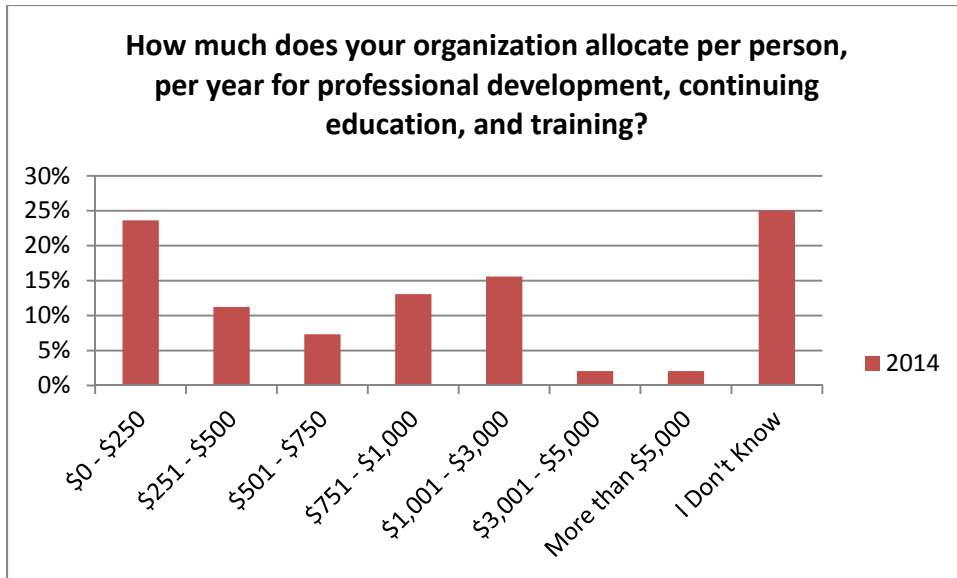
How much does your organization allocate per person, per year for professional development, continuing education, and training?

Fig. 10 Budget ranges of available annual funding for digital preservation training

Training preferences

Moving past cost considerations, a few questions addressed structural and design issues of training events (Q12, Q13, and Q14). Respondents ranked their preferences for event duration, with half–one day training sessions ranking higher than 2–3 day or week–long intensives on a scale from 1–5. Interestingly, the most popular choice of event format among respondents in both the 2010 and 2014 surveys is an in-person, small workshop, with webinars and self-paced, online courses as the next two choices for 2014.

DPOE currently provides an in-person training event, and is exploring options for extending its workshop curriculum to include online delivery options for the training modules. These advancements will address some of the issues raised in the survey results reported here, and may include regularly scheduled webinars, on-demand videos, and pre- and post-workshop videos.
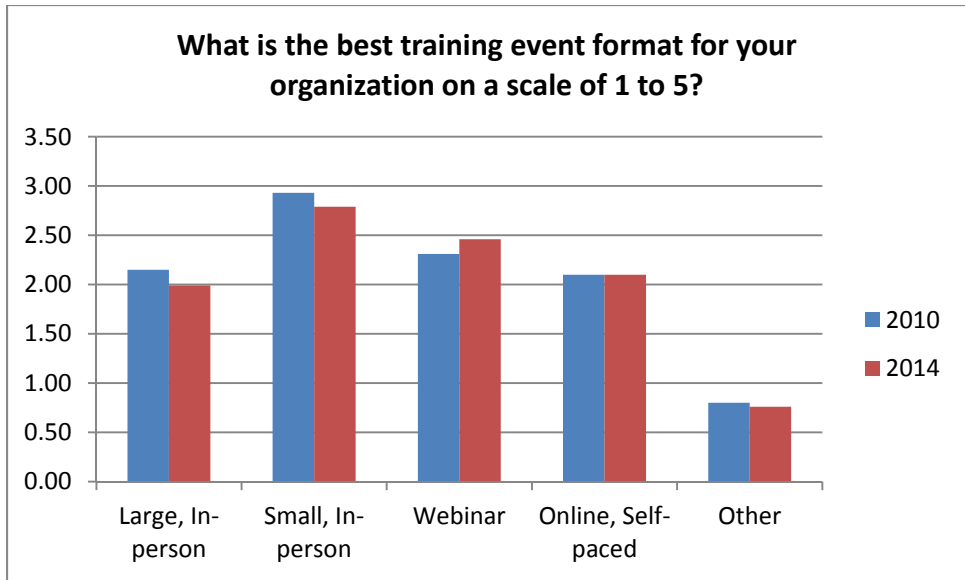
What is the best training event format for your organization on a scale of 1 to 5?

Fig. 11 Preferred training event formats

The survey category designated as "Other" solicited feedback from respondents with a free-text field, however, many answers lacked the detail that would lead to clear recommendations about what other options are possible. Some comments point to planning training events around conferences. While leveraging the draw of regional and national conferences capitalizes on outlays for travel and time away from the office, these locations were least favored by respondents in relation to distances from their organizations. Obviously, some regional and national events would fall with an 100-mile radius, and in-state, for some organizations on a case-by-case basis.
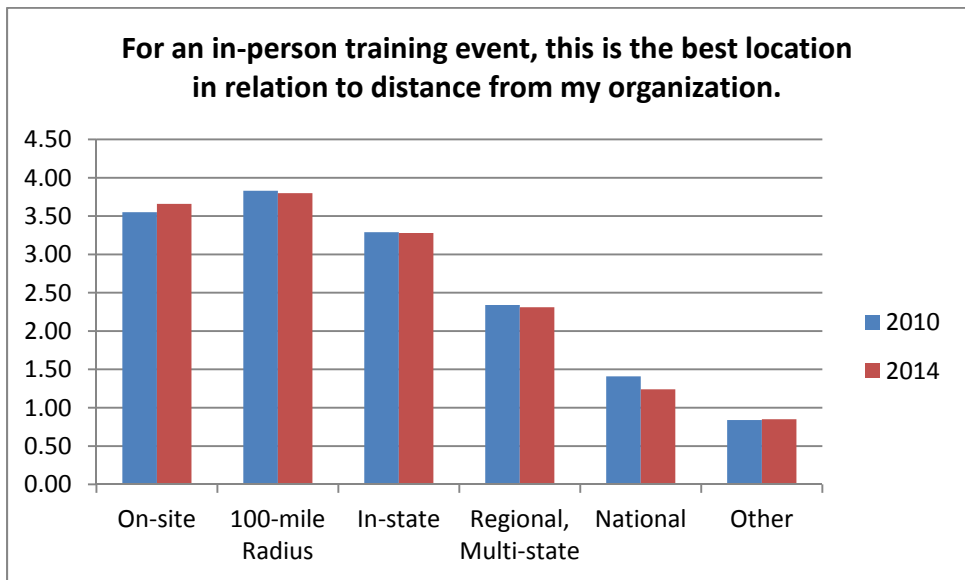
For an in-person training event, this is the best location in relation to distance from my organization.

Fig. 12 Preferred locations of training events

Continuing to probe issues at the heart of the survey's objectives, two questions covered what kind of training would be most beneficial overall (Q11), and what kind of demonstrable outcomes do organizations value the most (Q16). Respondents identified a clear need for technical training to assist staff in understanding and applying specific digital preservation techniques in their daily work followed by training focused on strategic planning, management and administration, project management, and fundamentals (Fig. 13).
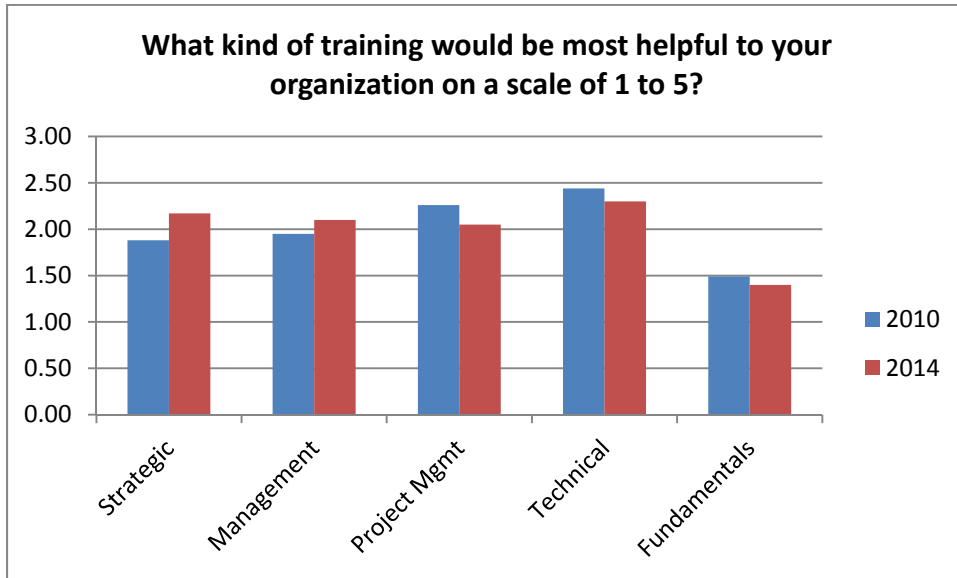

Fig. 13 Training focus, and how it fits short-term organizational priorities

Finally, respondents identified training investments that result in an *increased capacity to work with digital objects and metadata management* as the most beneficial outcome with a three-year horizon. In addition, organizations selected a "better understanding of digital preservation in general" and "guidance for implementing archival storage options", as also important. This question was added for the 2014 Survey, so there are no results from 2010 for comparison.
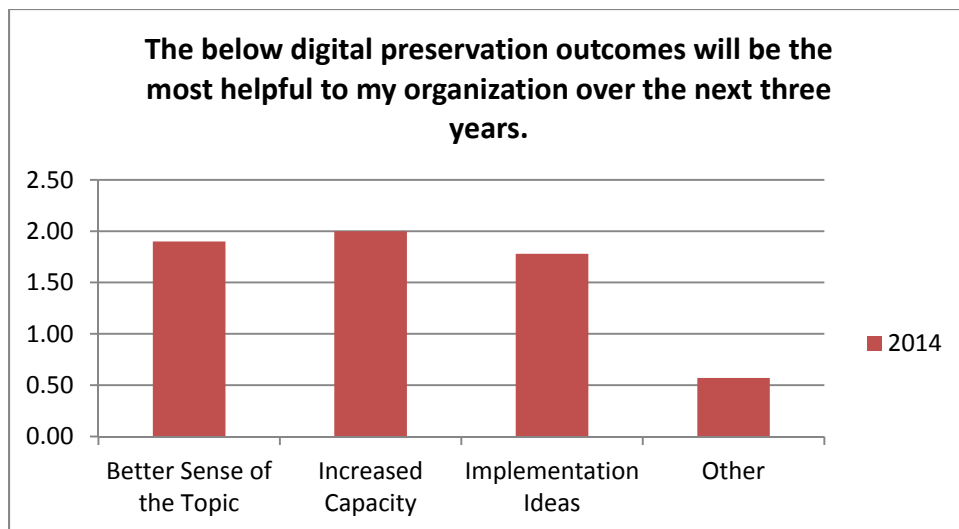
The below digital preservation outcomes will be the most helpful to my organization over the next three years.

Fig. 14 Most beneficial outcomes for organizations over the next 3 years

Conclusions

The DPOE Training Needs Assessment Survey helps the Library of Congress better understand the current digital preservation capacities of the surveyed organizations. Responses provide insights into digital preservation practice, what types of training are necessary to support the community, and preferences for the best delivery options of training events. This information will help DPOE's current outreach and education efforts and plan a roadmap for the future. These results will help the Program tailor its Curriculum and Workshop to meet the needs of organizations, and develop a better national outreach and education offerings.

The respondents expressed an overwhelming concern for making their content accessible for at least a ten-year horizon, and showed strong support for educational opportunities, like the DPOE Train-the-Trainer Workshop, which provide training to working professionals, increasing organizational capacity to provide long-term access to digital content. Currently DPOE is exploring options for extending the DPOE Curriculum and online delivery options for training modules. These advancements will address some of the issues raised in the Survey. While the DPOE Workshop is currently focused on training practitioners to teach beginners and novices about the fundamentals of digital preservation, the educational objectives of the DPOE Workshop are to provide current and relevant solutions at all levels of community engagement.

In the coming year, DPOE will use the information gathered in this survey to enhance the Curriculum and Workshop materials to address the needs of executive, managerial, and practitioner audiences. In addition to enhancements of the in-person Workshop, the Program will be exploring options for extending the Curriculum materials to include online delivery options for webinars and on-demand videos.