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CONNECTING TO COLLECTIONS IN FLORIDA:
CURRENT CONDITIONS AND CRITICAL NEEDS
IN LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, AND MUSEUMS

Corinne Jörgensen,¹ Paul F. Marty,² and Kathy Braun³

This article presents results from an IMLS-funded project to evaluate the current state of collections in Florida's libraries, archives, and museums, current practices to preserve and conserve these collections, and perceived needs to maintain and improve these collections for future generations. The survey, modeled after the Heritage Health Index national survey, demonstrated that many of Florida's collections are in desperate need of conservation and preservation and indicate a clear need for an increased effort to guarantee the continued safety of and access to these collections. In addition to providing data on Florida's collections, the results of this study have national implications that will help researchers, professionals, administrators, government agencies, and the general public better understand the nature of collecting agencies and the long-term requirements for the continued preservation and conservation of the nation's natural and cultural heritage.

Introduction

In 2005, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS, <http://www.imls.gov>), in partnership with Heritage Preservation, a national non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve the nation's heritage for future generations (<http://www.heritagepreservation.org>), released findings from the "first comprehensive survey ever conducted of the condition and preservation needs of all U.S. collections held in the public trust" [1, p. 1]. This survey, known as the Heritage Health Index (HHI), painted a

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distressing picture of the state of the nation's collections and raised significant concerns from cultural heritage organizations nationwide [2].

In response, the IMLS launched a national leadership initiative in 2007 designed to raise public awareness of the importance of caring for these collections as an essential part of the American story. This initiative, called *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action* (<http://imls.gov/collections>), encompassed multiple national, state, and local activities by funding planning, preservation, and conservation grants, as well as providing information resources such as the *Connecting to Collections Bookshelf*, which has been distributed to thousands of cultural heritage organizations (<http://www.imls.gov/collections/bookshelf.aspx>).

Building upon these efforts, this article presents results from a statewide collections survey modeled after the HHI and conducted by the Florida State University School of Library and Information Studies on behalf of the Florida Association of Museums, the Florida Library Association, and the Society of Florida Archivists. This survey, which was administered to hundreds of collecting agencies across the state of Florida, was part of a *Connecting to Collections Planning Grant* awarded to the Florida Association of Museums Foundation (FAMF) by the IMLS in 2008. The purpose of the planning grant was to conduct a statewide collections needs assessment in order to determine how recommendations from the HHI survey could be addressed in Florida. The results of this study provide important information on the condition of artifacts in Florida's institutions and help raise awareness of both the existence of these collections and the critical need to preserve collections held in public trust by Florida's government and nonprofit organizations. The results also have implications for issues of broader awareness and access to collections of national significance.

Literature Review

Preservation experts nationwide have long been concerned with the state of the nation's collections [3]. While the national discussion on preservation activities over the past few decades has covered topics ranging from conservation to restoration to disaster preparedness, the end result is an extensive body of literature covering the preservation of cultural heritage collections of all types [4]. Today, preservation activities transcend libraries, archives, and museums, engaging professionals and the general public alike in discussions of the value and importance of maintaining and providing access to human knowledge, past and present [5]. Underlying all of these discussions is a sense of urgency—the sense that if we do not act, we risk irretrievably losing a piece of human history. The destruction of the *Bamiyan Buddhas* by the Taliban, for instance, or the ongoing efforts to

preserve the Oxyrhynchus Papyri provide timely reminders of how fragile our physical cultural heritage can be.

Digital collections—especially born digital collections—face even graver dangers, and the nation’s digital collections are also in desperate need of urgent attention [6]. The tremendous growth in digital materials, combined with their varied formats and often temporary nature, present formidable challenges to preservation experts [7]. Modern librarians and information professionals are increasingly coping with the inherent difficulties of preserving “grey literature,” “new-model scholarship,” and other forms of born digital research [8]. As new relationships blur the lines between the producers and consumers of digital collections—especially with the growth of user-generated content—questions of what digital collections should be preserved become paramount [9]; the vast quantities of digital data produced daily in scientific research labs, for instance, may be essentially impossible to preserve.

It was this background of an impending crisis in preservation that prompted the implementation of the HHI survey in 2005 to document the current conditions of the nation’s collections. Despite a general understanding that collections nationwide were at risk and suffering from a lack of funds, the results of the HHI survey were startling. Based on data from 14,500 institutions nationwide, the survey presented an alarming picture of preservation policies, materials condition, collections care, and collections management. While the survey had only a 24 percent response rate overall, it received a 90 percent response rate from the nation’s 500 largest and most significant institutions. If these presumably well-funded institutions were facing difficulties in addressing their collection’s needs, the situation for the nation’s small to medium-sized institutions had to be even more urgent.

The results of the 2005 national HHI survey clearly and succinctly document the grave challenges facing the nation’s libraries, archives, and museums [1]. At the time of the survey, less than 50 percent of responding institutions had a collections plan; more than a third of all collections nationwide were in unknown physical condition; and numerous organizations were facing preservation problems ranging from unsuitable or unsustainable environmental conditions to a lack of funding and suitably trained staff. Seventy-eight percent of libraries or special collections had no emergency plan for catastrophic occurrences, such as hurricanes, tornados, or other unexpected events; 40 percent had no environmental controls to protect collections; and only 54 percent were receiving enough funding to allocate any resources at all toward preservation activities.

Digital records, considered separately, faced similar concerns. At the time of the survey, there were more than 9 million physical storage devices (e.g., CDs, DVDs, floppy discs, and data tapes) and more than 55 million online

files being maintained on websites or servers by cultural heritage organizations nationwide [10]. While digital artifacts are frequently considered a potential surrogate for deteriorating physical materials, digital records face many of the same problems as physical collections. Nearly 60 percent of online files were in unknown condition, and 46 percent of responding institutions expressed growing urgent needs for personnel, know-how, and equipment to maintain their digital collections.

While the nation's libraries, archives, and museums face an overwhelming need for basic preservation and conservation, the lack of cataloging and accessibility of collections poses yet another serious challenge to the nation's collecting agencies [11]. Nearly 25 percent of the respondents reported that their institutions had 25 percent or less of their collections cataloged, while only 12 percent reported having all their collections available through catalogs or other finding aids. Without accurate data on collections content, it is even more difficult to make decisions such as prioritizing the limited resources available for maintaining and preserving artifacts.

This lack of cataloging results in a vast wilderness of "hidden collections," where scholarly materials of potentially great value to researchers, professionals, and the general public can be nearly impossible to find [12]. The diversity of these collections to researchers in medicine, biology, environmental science, history, anthropology, cultural heritage, and art can hold great value, yet the more difficult they are to find, the more likely they are to be deteriorating or in need of basic conservation.

The potential of actual loss of these materials represents a larger calamity, as Jørgensen notes: "Information of many types (cultural, indigenous, artistic, historical, experiential) is disappearing as environments and people with implicit and untapped knowledge cease to exist. The inability of traditional and conventional methods to keep pace with describing, preserving, and providing access to what exists, much less capture and preserve rapidly disappearing documents and knowledge, would seem a cause for despair, and a calamity tantamount to the physical destruction of great libraries, archives, and museums of the past (which unfortunately, as we have recently seen, continues even today)" [13, p. 462].

The HHI report raised the concerns of cultural heritage professionals nationwide and prompted many to ask what libraries, archives, and museums can do to collect, preserve, and make their collections more accessible [2]. Unfortunately, there is a direct relationship between the severe shortage of financial resources among libraries, archives, and museums and the state of their collections. Even the institutions that receive sufficient funding to allocate funds for preservation report a 3 : 1 ratio of unpaid volunteers to paid professional staff. There is a severe lack of resources to address even the most basic levels of collections care, much less the level

of preventative care, preservation, and accessibility needed to maintain them for the future.

Given that every state and community in the nation faces similar challenges, there is a clear need for a better understanding of the current state of collections at a local level, in order to determine how the results of the HHI survey can be addressed in specific communities and help raise overall understanding of the critical need to preserve collections. It is especially important in a state as large and as environmentally and culturally diverse as Florida to be thorough in assessing the needs and concerns of a majority of cultural institutions before embarking on a path to address the issues outlined in the HHI survey.

Unfortunately, the HHI survey did not include a large percentage of Florida's institutions—there were only seventy-two Florida institutions that responded to the survey, yet according to the Florida Association of Museums, the Florida Library Association, and the Society of Florida Archivists, there are at least 340 museums, 240 libraries, and thirty-three archives registered with these organizations in the state; fewer than 13 percent of the members of these respective Florida associations are reflected in the HHI survey data. There was a clear need, therefore, for a study that specifically focused on Florida's collecting agencies to complement and update the results of the 2005 HHI survey. The study reported here, funded by an IMLS Connecting to Collections grant, provides a model for other states needing more detailed data, especially from smaller institutions.

Methods

To address this need, the researchers prepared a collections needs assessment survey instrument, based in part on the HHI survey but designed specifically for Florida's collections, that would allow museums, libraries, archives, historic houses and sites, and archaeological collections across the state to determine and identify their priorities for collections care. Survey questions were divided into six broad areas (for the complete survey instrument, please see app. A, available online):

1. *Characteristics of collecting institutions.* What are the characteristics of Florida's collecting institutions? What are their governance structures? What services do they offer and what functions do they serve?
2. *Types of collections.* What are the types of collections held by these institutions? What is the composition of their holdings? Which collections are significant or notable?
3. *Condition of collections.* Is the condition of these collections known? If so, what is their condition? How accessible are they? What circum-

stances limit their accessibility?

4. *Environmental controls.* What environmental controls are in place? What percentage of the collections is held in environmentally adequate conditions, where factors such as temperature, light, and humidity can be controlled? What are the most pressing environmental concerns?
5. *Preservation and disaster planning.* What preservation and disaster planning documents exist? What preservation and disaster planning efforts are underway? Are written plans part of the mission of the institution? What training has been done or is available?
6. *Critical institutional priorities.* What are the most critical institutional priorities related to collections? Are there resources to accomplish these? What methods are used to keep staff current on issues of professional practice?

The survey was developed and administered by researchers at Florida State University using the SelectSurveyASP software package; survey results were analyzed, and descriptive statistics generated using SPSS. To gather qualitative data to complement the quantitative survey results, each question area (except the first) included an open-ended question where respondents could indicate the most pressing concerns for their institutions in that area. Select responses from these open-ended questions are presented in the findings below where appropriate—specifically, with respect to the type, significance, condition, and accessibility of collections—to provide examples that complement the quantitative data. These responses are also summarized in appendix B (available online) to provide a broad picture of the types of collections represented by the survey respondents.

To reach as wide a range of collecting agencies as possible, all Florida public institutions, including libraries, archives, museums, historic homes, and living collections, were invited to participate in the study. An e-mail invitation was sent to collecting agencies throughout Florida, using e-mail lists provided by the Florida Association of Museums, the Florida Library Association, and the Society of Florida Archivists, inviting each institution to participate in the online survey. The survey requested that only one individual from each organization respond, but allowed for gathering input from other staff in specific areas.

Findings

The survey was administered online from August through November 2009, and a total of 237 collecting agencies responded. Not every institution

responded to every question, and specific *n*-values are provided for each response below.

Characteristics of Responding Institutions

Table 1 shows the primary, secondary, and tertiary functions of the responding institutions according to the survey respondents, providing information about the different types of institutions surveyed. Respondents were allowed to select more than one response for each, and most institutions self-identified with more than one function, with ten institutions choosing up to seven, and one choosing eight different functions. The top five functions selected by the survey respondents across all three categories were History Museum, Archive/Special Collections, Academic Library, Historic House, and Art Museum.

Table 2 shows the term or phrase that most closely describes the governance of each responding institution (respondents were able to select more than one type of governance). More than a third (37.1 percent) of these institutions are directly supported by local, state, and federal taxes. When academic entities and nonprofits are considered, more than half of the responding institutions are publicly supported through tax revenues, grants, and other public programs.

Type and Significance of Collections

Table 3 shows the types of collections held by the responding institutions, aggregated and organized by the relative size of each holding as a percentage of the institution's total collections. These results demonstrate that most institutions have a mix of collection types and a wide range of different types of holdings (e.g., the types of collections described by the survey respondents range from the most complete skeleton of a giant ground sloth in North America to one of the most important collections of historic American furniture in the Southeast). While books and print materials clearly comprise the largest percentage of materials for most institutions, it is notable that there is no one type of holding that is not represented by at least one institution in the state of Florida. Moreover, there were at least five institutions whose majority holdings comprised the least held collections: natural science specimens (e.g., more than 4,000 lots of Sanibel and Captiva Island shells); recorded sound collections (e.g., oral histories and birdsong recordings), living collections (e.g., raptors, native plants, corals, or rare palms), moving image collections, and architectural drawings.

Table 4 shows the aggregated significance of each type of collection as assessed by the survey respondents. This question was asked with the intention of allowing institutions with smaller holdings of collections con-

TABLE 1
PRIMARY, SECONDARY, AND TERTIARY FUNCTIONS OF RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS

Primary	<i>n</i>	Percent	Secondary	<i>n</i>	Percent	Tertiary	<i>n</i>	Percent
Academic library	34	16.2	Archive/special collection	74	40.7	Archive/special collection	24	22.9
History museum	28	13.3	History museum	24	13.2	Art museum	12	11.4
Public library	26	12.4	Academic library	9	4.9	Historic house	11	10.5
Art museum	24	11.4	Historical society	8	4.4	Archaeology collection	7	6.7
Archive/special collection	20	9.5	Historic house	8	4.4	History museum	7	6.7
Museum, one focus	17	8.1	Research library	8	4.4	General museum	6	5.7
Historic house	14	6.7	Special library	6	3.3	Research library	6	5.7
Historical society	11	5.2	Public library	6	3.3	Public library	6	5.7
Special library	8	3.8	General museum	5	2.7	Special library	5	4.8
Natural history museum	6	2.9	Nature center	5	2.7	Historical society	4	3.8
Child/youth museum	5	2.4	Arboretum/botanic garden	4	2.2	Arboretum/botanic garden	3	2.9
Science/technology mu- seum	5	2.4	Art museum	4	2.2	Child/youth museum	3	2.9
Arboretum/botanic garden	3	1.4	Museum, one focus	4	2.2	Museum, one focus	3	2.9
General museum	3	1.4	Natural history museum	4	2.2	Natural history museum	3	2.9
Research library	2	1.0	Aquarium	3	1.6	Planetarium	2	1.9
Zoo	2	1.0	Child/youth museum	3	1.6	Academic library	1	1.0
Archaeology collection	1	.5	Agency/university depart- ment	2	1.1	Aquarium	1	1.0
Nature center	1	.5	Archaeology collection	2	1.1	Nature center	1	1.0
			Planetarium	2	1.1			
			Science/technology mu- seum	1	.5			
Total	210	100		182	100		105	100

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS WITH SPECIFIC TYPES OF GOVERNANCE

Type of Governance	<i>n</i>	Percent
College, university, or other academic entity	53	23.7
Nonprofit, nongovernmental organization or foundation	97	43.3
Corporate or for-profit organization	4	1.8
Federal	4	1.8
State	11	4.9
Local (county or municipal)	68	30.4
Tribal	1	.4
Total	238	100

sidered especially valuable or particularly interesting to the public the opportunity to equalize this discrepancy. As with the overall makeup of the holdings of the responding institutions, the broad diversity of what the institutions feel make up their most important collections is evident. Four types of collections stand out as being considered more significant than the size of the collection might indicate. Photograph collections (e.g., original and unique historical aerial photography), digital materials, recorded sound collections, and architectural drawings all placed higher in the significance question than they did in the overall percentage of collections question. That digital materials appear on the list of collections that are seen as significant by these institutions may seem surprising given the traditional collections makeup of many archives. Digital formats are highly important to both maintaining fragile collections and providing access to them, and in some cases may eventually be the only record left of some of the items (e.g., taxidermy specimens treated with organic materials for which no preservation methods currently exist).

Condition and Accessibility of Collections

Table 5 presents the current condition of the holdings of Florida's museums, archives, and libraries. According to the survey respondents, 57 percent of the combined collections are in some state of decay and in need of conservation; more alarming is that 7 percent of the collections are so unstable as to be considered at risk of loss. Collections needing the most urgent help include historical/ethnographical objects, unbound sheets, photographic collections, and bulk cataloged archaeological collections. Notable items most in need of conservation, according to the survey respondents, include Ku Klux Klan records, costumes, and oral histories on cassette and videotape that have not been transcribed. Among those institutions specializing in living collections, 44 percent report that

TABLE 3
 TYPES OF HOLDINGS HELD BY FLORIDA INSTITUTIONS (by Percent of Collection)

Type of Holding	>80%	60%–80%	40%–60%	20%–40%	<20%	None	Unknown	<i>n</i>
Books/bound volumes	23 (46)	14 (28)	6 (13)	6 (13)	42 (86)	7 (14)	1 (3)	203
Unbound sheets	2 (4)	4 (7)	5 (8)	9 (16)	44 (76)	26 (45)	10 (17)	173
Print materials	9 (16)	4 (8)	6 (10)	15 (27)	47 (85)	13 (23)	6 (10)	179
Architectural drawings	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)	5 (8)	51 (86)	37 (61)	6 (10)	167
Photographic collections	6 (11)	2 (4)	10 (20)	14 (27)	54 (107)	14 (27)	2 (3)	199
Moving image collections	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (2)	5 (9)	55 (99)	33 (60)	4 (8)	180
Recorded sound collections	1 (2)	1 (2)	2 (3)	3 (5)	58 (105)	31 (56)	4 (8)	181
Digital material collections	3 (6)	1 (1)	3 (5)	9 (15)	49 (86)	26 (46)	9 (15)	174
Art objects	9 (16)	3 (5)	2 (3)	8 (15)	49 (88)	25 (45)	4 (7)	179
Historic/ethnographic objects	4 (8)	8 (14)	7 (12)	14 (26)	35 (64)	27 (49)	4 (8)	181
Archaeology collection—individually cataloged	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (6)	2 (4)	26 (42)	58 (94)	9 (15)	162
Archaeology collection—bulk cataloged	0 (0)	1 (2)	3 (4)	2 (3)	12 (18)	75 (114)	7 (11)	152
Natural science specimens	1 (2)	1 (1)	4 (7)	2 (4)	15 (24)	71 (117)	6 (10)	165
Living collections	2 (4)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (2)	7 (11)	82 (135)	7 (11)	164

NOTE.—Values in parentheses indicate the total number of holdings.

TABLE 4
SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLDINGS BY TYPE (according to Their Institutions)

Type of Holding	Extremely Significant %	Very Significant %	Significant %	Somewhat Significant %	Not Significant %	NA %	Unknown %	n
Books/bound volumes	21 (40)	20 (38)	16 (30)	17 (31)	12 (22)	12 (23)	2 (3)	187
Unbound sheets	8 (14)	12 (20)	12 (19)	17 (28)	14 (23)	31 (51)	6 (10)	165
Print materials	14 (24)	22 (38)	14 (24)	22 (37)	7 (12)	15 (26)	6 (11)	172
Architectural drawings	4 (6)	8 (12)	12 (19)	19 (30)	18 (29)	35 (56)	4 (7)	159
Photographic collections	26 (46)	17 (30)	20 (36)	15 (27)	5 (9)	13 (24)	3 (6)	178
Moving image collections	4 (7)	8 (14)	12 (20)	21 (36)	15 (26)	35 (59)	5 (8)	170
Recorded sound collections	5 (8)	12 (21)	13 (22)	19 (33)	13 (22)	32 (54)	6 (10)	170
Digital material collections	14 (23)	15 (24)	14 (23)	18 (29)	8 (13)	25 (42)	7 (11)	165
Art objects	12 (21)	8 (13)	14 (24)	20 (34)	12 (21)	27 (46)	5 (9)	168
Historic/ethnographic objects	17 (29)	13 (22)	11 (20)	14 (24)	8 (14)	32 (56)	5 (9)	174
Archaeology collection—individually cataloged	8 (13)	7 (11)	5 (8)	6 (9)	6 (10)	62 (99)	6 (9)	159
Archaeology collection—bulk cataloged	3 (4)	3 (4)	3 (5)	6 (9)	5 (7)	74 (115)	7 (11)	155
Natural science specimens	5 (6)	1 (2)	5 (8)	4 (6)	9 (15)	71 (115)	5 (8)	162
Living collections	8 (12)	1 (2)	1 (2)	0 (0)	5 (8)	80 (125)	5 (8)	157

NOTE.—Values in parentheses indicate the total number of holdings.

TABLE 5
CONDITION OF HOLDINGS BY TYPE WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

Type of Holding	S/C %	CS/NC %	NC %	S/NPC %	ID/NIC %	NA %	Don't Know %	n
Books/bound volumes	34 (61)	36 (65)	10 (18)	3 (5)	1 (1)	13 (24)	3 (6)	80
Unbound sheets	14 (22)	22 (35)	15 (23)	3 (5)	1 (2)	36 (57)	9 (14)	58
Print materials	27 (44)	28 (46)	14 (23)	3 (5)	1 (2)	19 (31)	7 (12)	63
Architectural drawings	16 (24)	20 (30)	10 (16)	3 (4)	1 (1)	44 (67)	7 (11)	53
Photographic collections	23 (40)	35 (61)	18 (31)	5 (8)	1 (1)	15 (26)	3 (6)	73
Moving image collections	15 (25)	16 (26)	10 (17)	3 (5)	2 (4)	44 (72)	8 (13)	62
Recorded sound collections	18 (29)	17 (28)	12 (19)	3 (5)	1 (2)	40 (65)	9 (14)	62
Digital material collections	34 (54)	19 (30)	4 (6)	1 (1)	0 (9)	31 (49)	11 (18)	58
Art objects	26 (42)	24 (38)	11 (18)	2 (3)	1 (1)	31 (50)	5 (8)	60
Historic/ethnogr. objects	14 (22)	23 (38)	14 (23)	4 (6)	1 (1)	37 (60)	7 (12)	62
Archaeology collection—indiv. cataloged	13 (19)	12 (18)	3 (4)	1 (1)	1 (1)	63 (95)	9 (13)	51
Archaeology collection—bulk cataloged	5 (8)	8 (13)	3 (4)	1 (1)	1 (1)	73 (109)	10 (15)	50
Natural science specimens	11 (17)	6 (9)	1 (2)	2 (3)	1 (1)	73 (109)	6 (9)	50
Living collection	6 (9)	1 (1)	3 (4)	0 (0)	1 (1)	82 (122)	8 (12)	49

NOTE.—S/C = stable/conserved, CS/NC = currently stable/needs conservation, NC = needs conservation, D/NPC = deteriorating/needs prompt conservation, ID/NIC = in danger/needs immediate conservation. Values in parentheses indicate the total number of holdings.

their plants and animals are in need of help and that 7 percent are in danger of dying. In eleven out of the fourteen different categories targeted by the survey, 50 percent or more of the collections in those categories are unstable and in need of some kind of conservation.

Table 6 shows the ability of Florida's libraries, archives, and museums to make their collections available to researchers and the general public. Nearly 50 percent of respondents, when asked about the accessibility of their collections, stated that up to 80 percent of their holdings are inaccessible to the general public, and 26 percent of the surveyed institutions cannot provide access to up to 80 percent of their collections even to qualified researchers, who are understood to have broader access than the general public. That these problems of accessibility extend beyond direct access to collections by patrons is revealed by the fact that 60 percent of survey respondents claim their institutions have less than 80 percent of their holdings listed in an in-house finding aid or catalog, while 72 percent of those responding say their institution has less than 80 percent of their holdings listed/findable on their website.

Table 7 lists the reasons collections were not accessible to the public; survey respondents could choose more than one response. The three major reasons were lack of staffing (58 percent), funding-related issues (46 percent), and space and storage constraints (41 percent); these three items are frequently linked, given that staffing, space, and storage tend to be limited by funding. Reasons related directly to the objects, such as fragility and rarity, were mentioned by 32 percent and 16 percent of respondents, respectively; only 14 percent of the collections were not open to the public.

Environmental Concerns

As shown in table 8, perhaps the most alarming of the findings pertaining to Florida's collections concern a lack of environmental controls. In a state known for its brilliant sunshine, long hot summer temperatures, and often smothering humidity, three out of four institutions responding to the survey reported that they do not have adequate environmental controls throughout their institutions, and more than half of respondents stated that up to 80 percent of the collections in their care are not stored in environmentally adequate areas. Even worse, one out of every four institutions has no environmental controls at all.

Table 9 shows the ability of Florida's libraries, archives, and museums to control environmental factors. According to the survey respondents, on average, less than 30 percent of the responding institutions have the ability to control temperature, humidity, and light in all areas throughout their facilities. Even worse, 18 percent cannot control temperature, 25 percent cannot control light, and 30 percent cannot control humidity anywhere in their facilities. These findings are especially alarming given that rapid

TABLE 6
ACCESSIBILITY OF COLLECTION BY TYPE OF AUDIENCE AND FINDING AID (by Percent)

Accessible to/through	>80%	60%–80%	40%–60%	20%–40%	<20%	0%	Don't Know	<i>n</i>
Visitors/general public	51 (97)	14 (26)	10 (19)	7 (14)	15 (29)	2 (4)	1 (1)	90
Researchers/scholars	74 (14)	12 (22)	6 (11)	4 (7)	3 (5)	2 (3)	1 (1)	90
Catalog/finding aid in institution	40 (75)	14 (27)	10 (19)	9 (17)	12 (23)	13 (24)	2 (3)	88
Catalog/finding aid on website	28 (52)	7 (13)	6 (12)	4 (8)	20 (37)	32 (61)	3 (5)	88

NOTE.—Values in parentheses indicate the total number of collections.

TABLE 7
REASONS FOR INACCESSIBILITY OF COLLECTIONS
(*n* = 180)

Reason	Percent	<i>n</i>
Staffing	58	104
Funding	46	82
Space or storage	41	73
Fragility	32	57
Rarity	16	28
Not open to public	14	26
Don't know	7	12
Other	18	32

shifts in temperature, humidity, and light can cause irreparable damage to the stability and condition of all artifacts: light causes fading of paper, paints, and fabrics; fluctuating temperature causes expansion and retraction of materials, which is damaging to glues, paints, and joints of furniture and other manufactured items; and humidity causes ruffling of paper edges, moisture stains, and creates a haven for molds and bugs.

Preservation and Disaster Planning

Caring for collections requires planning and training, and cultural heritage institutions need to have clear and thorough plans in place for every possible contingency. Table 10 shows that more than half of Florida's institutions do not have collections care plans in place, staff trained to implement them, or adequate security for their collections. Only 38 percent of the responding institutions have an up-to-date preservation statement; 55 percent do not have an up-to-date emergency/disaster plan, and 57 percent of institutions have no long-range preservation plan of any nature.

In addition, a lack of off-site storage for use during emergencies such as hurricanes and other disasters, staff members who are not adequately trained to implement emergency plans, and inadequate security systems pose problems for more than 50 percent of Florida institutions. Only 31 percent have copies of their collection records stored off-site, particularly distressing in light of the more than 50 percent of institutions who have

TABLE 8
PERCENTAGE OF COLLECTION STORED IN ENVIRONMENTALLY ADEQUATE AREAS
(*n* = 186)

>80%	60%–80%	40%–60%	20%–40%	<20%	0%	Unknown
51 (95)	15 (27)	11 (20)	6 (12)	7 (13)	5 (9)	5 (10)

NOTE.—Values in parentheses indicate the total number of collections.

TABLE 9
 ABILITY TO CONTROL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ($n = 186$)

Ability to Control	Yes, All Areas %	Yes, Some Areas %	No %	Don't Know %
Temperature	31 (58)	47 (87)	18 (33)	4 (8)
Humidity	23 (43)	44 (81)	30 (55)	4 (7)
Light Levels	28 (53)	44 (81)	25 (47)	3 (5)

NOTE.—Values in parentheses indicate the total number of collections.

no emergency plans. Should disaster strike, it is vital to have a reliable list of holdings available to determine the extent of damage and loss.

While only 15 percent of the survey respondents stated that the staff of their institution was not adequately trained to carry out an emergency plan, 36 percent either did not know about staff training or felt it was not applicable to their institution. These findings suggest the training problem is more prevalent than the 15 percent response would indicate. However, staff training may not be as pressing a concern for those institutions having very limited staff in the first place.

Institutional Priorities and Professional Practices

Table 11 shows the most critical priorities for Florida's libraries, archives, and museums, according to the responding institutions. While funding and space constraints were the most pressing concerns, 49 percent of the institutions expressed concerns over cataloging, the most basic of curatorial processes. Without a proper catalog detailing the institution's holdings and their condition, unique items capable of increasing our knowledge risk being left to decay or are simply overlooked and forgotten.

Table 12 shows how professionals felt they could best receive the training they need to keep up with the field, covering various methods of providing professional development. Responses were somewhat evenly distributed between the two broad categories of various types of meetings and a variety of online support mechanisms. Overall, there was a strong preference for local (56 percent) or regional (49 percent) conferences, as well as for resources that can be delivered using the Internet (73 percent), listservs (42 percent), or online courses (35 percent); print journals also ranked highly (58 percent). From the perspective of learning from colleagues (peer mentoring, 30 percent), this can take place in person and also over the Internet. Given the number of volunteer workers in the field and current economic constraints, a combination of several of these methods may prove worthy of exploring.

TABLE 10
PRESERVATION AND DISASTER PLANNING

Does Your Institution Have:	Yes %	Yes, Out of Date %	Yes, Some %	No, Being Developed %	Don't Know %	NA %	n
Preservation statement	38 (69)	17 (31)	NA	5 (10)	5 (10)	NA	182
Emergency/disaster plan	45 (82)	14 (26)	NA	17 (31)	4 (8)	NA	183
Trained staff	49 (89)	NA	NA	NA	13 (24)	23 (42)	181
Off-site storage	31 (56)	NA	36 (65)	NA	6 (11)	3 (6)	182
Long-range preservation plan	12 (22)	5 (10)	NA	19 (34)	0 (0)	NA	181
Adequate security system	49 (89)	NA	38 (68)	NA	0 (0)	NA	181

NOTE.—Values in parentheses indicate the total number of institutions.

TABLE 11
 INSTITUTIONS' CRITICAL PRIORITIES CONCERNING
 COLLECTIONS ($n = 180$)

Critical Priority	Percent	n
Funding	72	130
Space storage	67	120
Cataloging	49	89
Public access	26	46
Security	25	45
Staff volunteer planning	23	41
Emergency disaster staff training	22	40
Emergency disaster planning	22	39
Collection care	20	36
Emergency disaster network	14	26
Other	6	10

Discussion

The survey findings make it abundantly clear that the state of Florida is rich in collections of historical, cultural, social, and natural history—collections that are significant to researchers and the general public—but that Florida's collecting institutions face considerable challenges in maintaining, preserving, and providing access to these collections, as do those of many other states. Conservation efforts in particular pose a challenge for Florida's libraries, archives, and museums: when compared to the national HHI survey results, the total percentage of Florida's collections in need of conservation is much higher than the national average in almost every collections category (table 13). It is critically important that Florida's collecting agencies take steps to move forward in each of the areas covered by this survey. The following discussion provides suggestions for how librarians, archivists, curators, and other cultural heritage professionals can learn from the results of this survey to improve the conservation, preservation, and accessibility of their collections as well, regardless of location.

Type and Significance of Collections

The multiple varieties of collection types as reported in this Florida statewide collections survey range from extensive textile collections to historical structures to oral histories to natural history collections (see app. B, available online, for specific examples of the significant materials held). The data suggest that each institution must meet the challenge of providing the specialized requirements for the unique collections in its care with regard to appropriate storage, preservation, emergency plans, cataloging, and accessibility. At the same time, the data also demonstrate that even

TABLE 12
PREFERRED METHODS FOR PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT ($n = 179$)

Method	Percent	n
Internet	73	131
Print journals	58	104
Local (<100 miles) conference	56	100
Peer network	44	79
State conference	43	77
In-state regional meeting	42	76
Listservs	42	75
Online classes	35	62
Peer mentor	30	54
National conference	30	53
Regional multistate conference	19	34
College classes	9	17
Other	5	9

very different collections share similar broad issues in regard to such issues as access and security. The information provided by the survey can enable institutions with similar collections to share resources and knowledge about how to provide the necessary specialized care, as well as more general methods and principles applicable to all types of collections. For instance, a small museum with a predominately volunteer staff could ask for advice and guidance from a better-staffed institution dealing with similar collections, or a collection with finding aids could be used as a template for another institution whose collections are not yet accessible. The knowledge provided by this survey of institutions having similar or complementary collections could support the development of referral systems among institutions that will link their personnel and allow for more collaborative problem solving.

Condition and Accessibility of Collections

Only one-quarter of Florida institutions have the majority of their collections listed in a catalog that is accessible via the Internet. Even when a patron is physically able to visit the institution, there may be no catalog or only an incomplete catalog of what they can access in the collection. The data suggest that if a visitor or researcher wants to be sure that a certain item is located within these institutions, there is no way to ascertain that information in more than half of Florida's museums, archives, and libraries. In essence, these collections are not only inaccessible but also invisible. Besides the lost value to scholarly researchers and students, collections that are not accessible are more prone to loss, deterioration, and

TABLE 13
COMPARISON OF FLORIDA'S COLLECTIONS WITH NATIONAL AVERAGES (HHI)

Collections in Need of Conservation	Florida (%)	HHI (%)
Unbound sheets	75	78
Historic/ethnographic objects	75	28
Photographic collections	72	21
Archaeology collections—bulk cataloged	71	21
Architectural drawings	68	NA
Moving image collections	68	12
Recorded sound collections	65	14
Print materials	63	NA
Books/bound volumes	59	16
Art objects	59	22
Archaeology collections—individually cataloged	56	19
Natural science exhibits	47	23
Digital materials collections	46	12
Living collections	40	NA

obsolescence, as over time local personnel may change and the institution loses the knowledge of what is held in various storage areas. Sometimes it only takes one nugget of information to finish the scholarly puzzle or to spark the beginning of a new endeavor, but currently much information about where these nuggets may be found is inaccessible.

Environmental Concerns

Given Florida's particularly challenging environment (from high heat and humidity to hurricanes and other natural disasters), the inability of so many of the state's libraries, archives, and museums to provide adequate climate control is an additional and unrelenting factor contributing to the fragile state of Florida's collections. Over time, environmental factors such as light, humidity, temperature, and pests at work in museums, archives, and libraries can have as much destructive power as a natural disaster, yet they are not obvious to untrained personnel. In order to protect the state's valuable collections for the future, environmental elements must be controlled. If individual institutions are not able to carry this out, other alternatives such as regional controlled storage for the most valuable items should be explored. This survey has provided initial data on what these collections are and can increase awareness of their needs.

Preservation and Disaster Planning

As much as environmental conditions are a continuing danger to collections, natural disasters, although less frequent, can certainly be more vi-

olent and destructive. Since these events are by their very nature unpredictable and uncontrollable, a carefully created plan is a requirement for mitigating the effects of such events. Preservation plans and disaster plans are the baselines for protecting an institution's collections and are every bit as important as other collection functions such as cataloging, storing, and providing access to the collections. Official preservation plans and disaster plans detail the information needed to secure and maintain the collections: whom to notify, how to put the call for help out to local emergency officials, where supplies are located, how to operate emergency generators, and what to move first. In a large-scale disaster such as a hurricane, many communities and organizations may be competing for resources, so it becomes vitally important to plan regionally as well as locally. Knowledge about collections holdings within a region, such as provided in this survey, can enable this type of planning.

Institutional Priorities and Professional Practices

Institutional priorities concerning their collections can be set only when there is a solid foundation of data from which to evaluate their current status. These survey results help provide that foundation in Florida, for the individual institutions and for regional and state holdings. It is also likely that the act of responding to the survey may have motivated institutions to think more carefully about their collections. The process of attempting to quantify the state of the collections can provide much needed insight to an institution's needs and priorities. Among those priorities is the need for staff to have greater access to professional training. While opportunities are available through local workshops, online listservs, chat-rooms, blogs, and classes, what emerged from the survey was not just a need for information, but a need for connecting with others in order to better understand the processes involved. Increased opportunities for education would enable cultural heritage professionals and volunteers to establish priorities among their collections for preservation, conservation, and accessibility. Training professionals and volunteers in simple preservation methods (which can be very inexpensive) and digitization techniques (which can provide basic levels of access to hidden collections) could go a long way toward preserving these collections and their representations.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the survey data reported here. The respondents are self-selected, and the data are self-reported by the institutions. The institutional respondents providing the data were likely to be

of varying levels of expertise and familiarity with the collections, and the data are not comparable across collections as they represent the perceptions of the respondents. The call for participants and the survey itself were distributed online through listservs and a web interface, and there may be smaller institutions that were either not aware of the survey or who were unable to respond because of a lack of technology, connectivity, or expertise. The survey itself was somewhat lengthy and detailed, and some institutions may have been unable to respond because of a lack of staff or time. Nevertheless, the data were consistent with the findings of the HHI, and open-ended survey responses made clear that this Connecting to Collections (C2C) survey was reaching small institutions with limited resources, but valuable and significant collections.

Conclusion

The results presented here provide useful background data for Florida's collecting institutions as they discuss funding and policy decisions with the local and state agencies that oversee Florida's libraries, archives, and museums. While Florida's cultural heritage organizations contain many unique collections, these collections are in tenuous or fragile states and in need of immediate conservation and preservation; some are in imminent danger of being lost. Nearly two-thirds of the items that the state's institutions have pledged to maintain and preserve are in danger of permanent damage or loss, and Florida's libraries, archives, and museums simply do not have the funding they need to stabilize, preserve, catalog, and provide access to them.

While the results of the HHI have raised awareness of these issues nationally, awareness of the critical need to preserve collections held in the public trust by state governments and nonprofit organizations is urgently needed at a local level. To increase awareness, for instance, the current condition of Florida's collections could be presented in an online dashboard—with regular data updates—so that anyone from state legislators to members of the general public could see the current status of Florida's collections at a glance. In addition to supporting calls to increase state funding and access to federal grant opportunities, access to survey data in this format could encourage the creation of regional workshops, new preservation networks, and other collaborative activities designed to encourage best practices statewide.

Florida's institutions and their dedicated staffs work diligently and lovingly with too little funding and too few hands to maintain and preserve the evidence of the state's shared heritage. The IMLS continues to fund

C2C implementation grants in a number of states to address these urgent issues at local levels, and Florida continues in these efforts with a C2C implementation grant recently awarded to the Florida Association of Museums Foundation, Tallahassee, and its partners, the Florida Art Museum Directors Association, the Florida Library Association, the Florida Public Archaeology Network, the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation, the Department of State, and the Society of Florida Archivists (<http://www.flamuseums.org/programming/c2c/>). This implementation award, for example, is currently funding a series of statewide workshops to help collecting agencies develop or improve emergency management plans to help protect their organization's collections.

It is our hope that the results of this study will prove useful for Florida's libraries, archives, and museums as they consider how they might best improve their own collection management practices and prioritize future work. Without targeted efforts to reveal and preserve the significant—yet hidden—collections that exist in all states, much of the nation's cultural and natural heritage, and the valuable data that these collections contain, could be lost forever.

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