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NEVADA HISTORICAL RECORDS NEEDS ASSESSMENT:  
SURVEY OF HISTORICAL RECORDS CUSTODIANS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report presents the findings of a 2023 statewide survey of organizations that care for Nevada's historical records. The Nevada State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) would like to express its deep gratitude to all the repositories who took the time to respond to the survey. We appreciate all they do to fulfill our shared mission to preserve and provide ongoing access to the historical records in their care. An analysis of the survey responses illuminates some of the challenges faced by these organizations. The survey was designed to identify ways that SHRAB can support Nevada's historical records organizations in attaining their mission-critical goals and provide recommendations that organizations can use to advocate for change in their environments.

Overall, Nevada's historical records keepers care deeply about Nevada's history, support one another's efforts, and are doing their utmost to preserve and provide access to their holdings within the available resources. They are to be commended for their dedication and ongoing efforts. Nevada's organizations face significant challenges stemming from a lack of resources. With a few exceptions, the organizations generally lack the funds to purchase archival supplies and provide the facilities and environmental controls needed for proper storage of their digital and physical archival materials. They also lack the funds to hire and maintain the level of staffing needed to responsibly steward their historical records and make them available for use. For the most part, organizations are understaffed; 60% of the reported labor force are volunteers. The survey findings show that many organizations are not following best practices in the management, preservation, storage, and security of their collections. For some this may be due to a lack of familiarity with best practices, but for most it is due to insufficient resources to implement best practices. Volunteers and permanent staff alike are in need of archival training to manage, preserve, store, and facilitate access to historical records. While in-person hands-on training is the most successful method of delivering some types of archival education, the vast geographic expanse of Nevada (over 110,000 square miles) poses a significant challenge to delivering in-person support and training. Therefore, virtual support should be considered as a secondary method of training.

While Nevada organizations must continue to direct resources toward historical records preservation and disaster preparedness, it is important to keep in mind that access to the records is the ultimate goal. SHRAB receives funding from the National Historical Publications & Records Commission (NHPRC) to help "locate, preserve, and provide public access to documents, photographs, maps, and other historical materials."<sup>1</sup> Ensuring broad access and use of historical materials is the primary objective. As expressed in the Society of American Archivists' Core Values statement, "Archivists serve as stewards for primary sources in all formats, striving to identify sustainable preservation strategies so that materials can be accessible for continued future use. Preserving materials is a means to this end, not an end in itself."<sup>2</sup>

It is self-evident that historical records (paper-based and digital) must be preserved in order to remain accessible and useful to society. What often goes unrecognized is that historical records cannot be accessed or used if potential users do not know how or where to find them. Nevada's two major

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<sup>1</sup> National Historical Publications & Records Commission, "SHRAB Manual of Suggested Practices, Section I.b.," National Archives and Records Administration, 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/about/shrabs/manual.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Society of American Archivists, "SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics," 2020, <https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/about/shrabs/manual.html>.

universities and a handful of museums are successfully facilitating discovery and access to their historical records. However, only 21% of survey respondents claim to have online descriptions “for all, or almost all,” of their holdings (see figure 6). Most organizations’ historical records are not publicly discoverable online. For all intents and purposes, the majority of Nevada’s historical records are invisible, thereby rendering them largely inaccessible and underused. Furthermore, 68% of respondents do not actually know the size of their holdings, which suggests the absence of a comprehensive records inventory that could serve as a tool for locating and facilitating access to their archival materials.

To improve public access to historical records, organizations need training in best practices for archival administration and management. They also need the technical infrastructure, supplies, staffing, and other resources required to employ the best practices that will lead to increased public access.

## INTRODUCTION

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### Survey Background and Purpose

In 2023, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) provided funding for the Nevada State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) to conduct a statewide needs assessment survey of organizations whose mission is to collect, preserve, and provide access to historic records. The mission of the Nevada SHRAB is to lead “collaborative efforts to preserve, promote, and provide equitable access to the documentary heritage of the diverse peoples of Nevada.” Its purpose “is to advise and support Nevada records and archives repositories in developing accessible and efficiently managed programs for their historical records including support for archival education and the promotion of grant opportunities.”<sup>3</sup> The Nevada SHRAB operates under the authority of the National Archives and Records Administration, whose mission underscores the importance of discovery, access, and use of the records.

*Mission.* The National Archives and Records Administration serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. We ensure continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. We support democracy, promote civic education, and facilitate historical understanding of our national experience.<sup>4</sup>

According to “Nevada’s Cultural Resources Survey and Report 2013,” an analysis of previous years’ reports on the status of cultural resources in Nevada, dating back to 1968 are consistent in their findings that Nevada’s cultural resources are at risk.<sup>5</sup> While some parallels might be drawn between the findings of earlier reports and this one, due to the differences in the scopes of each of the surveys, comparing data between earlier surveys and the 2023 survey would be inexact.

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<sup>3</sup> Nevada State Library, Archives & Public Records, “State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB),” accessed September 8, 2023, <https://nsla.nv.gov/state-historical-records-advisory-board>.

<sup>4</sup> National Historical Publications & Records Commission, “SHRAB Manual of Suggested Practices, Section I.,” National Archives and Records Administration, 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/about/shrabs/manual.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Nevada State Library, Archives & Public Records, “Nevada’s Cultural resources Survey and Report,” accessed September 26, 2023, [https://nsla.nv.gov/ld.php?content\\_id=70168774](https://nsla.nv.gov/ld.php?content_id=70168774).

The purpose of this survey includes the following outcomes:

- Understand the needs and challenges of historical records keepers across the state.
- Identify ways that SHRAB and the State Archives can assist Nevada organizations with the needs revealed by the survey responses.
- Use the survey findings to inform the next iteration of SHRAB's statewide plan.
- Use the survey findings to support grant proposals (by SHRAB or by individual organizations).
- Publish the findings to increase awareness of the challenges faced by historical records organizations.

For the purposes of the survey, the terms “organization” and “repository” are used interchangeably to refer to any archives, historical society, museum, historic site, cultural center, library, government entity, Tribal nation, community group, or other entity whose responsibility includes caring for and providing public access to Nevada’s historical records. The terms “historical records” and “archival materials” are used interchangeably to refer to a broad spectrum of electronic and physical “records created or received by a person, family, or organization and preserved because of their continuing value.”<sup>6</sup>

## Methodology

The questions in the needs assessment were developed with an intentional focus on issues that are within SHRAB’s purview to address through future state funds and federal grants. The Consultant and Chair developed an initial list of nearly 100 survey questions. Mindful that many organizations are understaffed, and a lengthy survey would be burdensome, they eliminated questions that were non-essential or peripheral to the focus of the survey. The draft survey was posted online and discussed in an open meeting by SHRAB members, who collectively revised the questions. The draft survey was tested by three archivists, whose individual responses identified questions that needed clarification or contextualization. The result was a nine-part survey consisting of forty-four questions that explored staffing, material formats, care and storage of archival materials, security, disaster preparedness, training, supplies, technology, and discovery and access to collections (see appendix E for full survey instrument). Each respondent was allowed to answer the survey once, and only one response per organization was collected.

The survey utilized the web-based tool Google Forms to gather responses. Quantitative data were gathered from yes/no questions, multiple-choice (choose one) questions, “check all boxes that apply” questions, and fill in the blank questions for data such as number of employees in the repository and volume of collections in various units of measure. For questions that asked respondents to check all boxes that apply, the percentages reported reflect the number of respondents (n) and the percentage (%) of respondents that selected each option—for those questions, the combined percentages exceed one hundred. Multiple-choice questions included “other” as an option to gather responses outside the options provided.

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<sup>6</sup> Society of American Archivists, “Glossary,” definition of archives, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/archives.html>.

Quantitative data were collected from thirty-six required questions of the following types:

- Multiple choice (including yes/no/I don't know responses): select one (13)
- Multiple choice: select all that apply (13)
- Fill in the blank: write in data (10)

Repository identification, contact information, and whether the respondent wished to be contacted again were gathered through six questions. Qualitative data were gathered via two questions: one question to describe the specific communities that are documented by each organization's archival materials, and one optional free-text question that was open-ended to encourage respondents to share additional information or needs that had not been addressed by the survey questions.

When the survey closed, the Consultant exported the data from Google Forms to Microsoft Excel. The Consultant normalized the data insofar as she moved "other" responses into the appropriate category when analysis showed that responses to quantitative questions (such as repository type) that were marked as "other" belonged within one of the provided options.

For ease of use, percentages in the narrative and charts of this report have been rounded to whole numbers, and the sum of percentages related to a single question may therefore vary from 99% to 101% in the body of this report. More precise percentages are provided in the tables in Appendix D.

## Survey Population and Dissemination

Since no Nevada-wide listserv for archival repositories exists, the SHRAB Chair disseminated the survey with an introductory email to 108 entities whose online presence suggested that they hold historical records that are open for public access. The Chair then sent weekly email reminders requesting responses. The email list included thirty-six County Offices, six Special Libraries, seven Native culture organizations, and fifty-nine Nevada museums and repositories. The invitation and reminders to participate in the survey included a link to the online form, the option of completing a printed PDF survey form, and phone numbers to call if participants would like assistance of any kind (including giving their answers over the phone). In the final week of the survey period, individual appeals to organizations that had not yet answered were solicited via email and phone calls. Most respondents filled out the survey online. Two respondents handwrote responses on a printed version, which the Consultant added manually to the Google Form. Responses were accepted from July 6 through August 8, 2023. One response was accepted after the deadline. Respondents were strongly encouraged to participate, even if they did not know the answers to all questions. The survey reached a 48% response rate. Of the fifty-two organizations that responded, forty-seven responses were usable.

Three questions (Q5, Q6, and Q7) near the beginning of the survey were designed so that if a respondent answered, "No" to one of these questions, they would not proceed to additional questions. Five organizations were eliminated from the survey because either they do not hold historic records (Q5); do not allow the public to request copies, conduct research, or otherwise use their historical records (Q6); and/or do not have open hours (set or by appointment) that allow the public to access some or all of their records. Since the National Archives, NHPRC, and SHRAB focus on assisting organizations with preservation and access to records, those organizations that do not intend to provide access to historical records are outside SHRAB's scope of work and thereby outside the scope of the survey.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

### Organizational Information

As illustrated in figure 1, nearly half (47%) of the survey responses were received from organizations in the museum sector. The remainder of the survey participants represent a cross section of the different types of historical records organizations across the state.

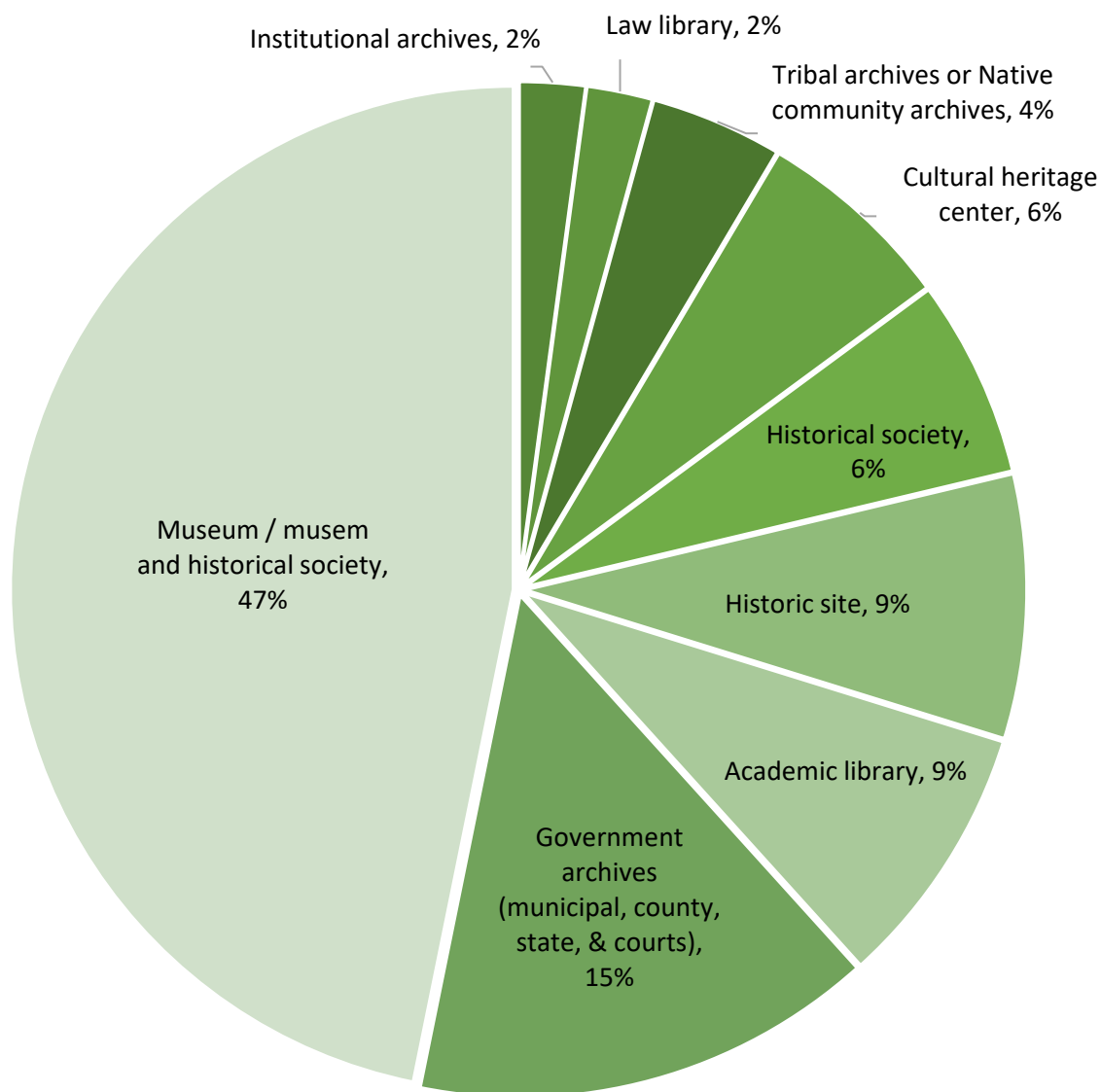


Figure 1. Chart illustrates the diversity of organization types that completed the entire survey (Q15); n = 46. One respondent did not know the composition of the labor force at their organization and is not represented in figure 1.

## Staffing

As illustrated in figure 2, the composition of Nevada’s historical records labor force is dominated by volunteers, who outnumber full-time and part-time personnel combined. Forty-six respondents reported a combined total of 516 employees and volunteers. Twenty-nine organizations reported a combined total of 309 volunteers (60% of the labor force); approximately 61% of those volunteers work in museums and 34% serve in historical societies or historic associations. Three organizations rely entirely on volunteer labor (no paid staff). One organization has no full-time, part-time, temporary staff, or volunteers caring for its records and relies entirely on students enrolled in classes led by faculty in various disciplines outside the library. Forty organizations reported employing full-time staff in the care of historical records, while seven organizations reported no full-time staff. Twenty-five organizations reported employing part-time staff (including students), and nine organizations reported employing temporary staff (including grant staff).

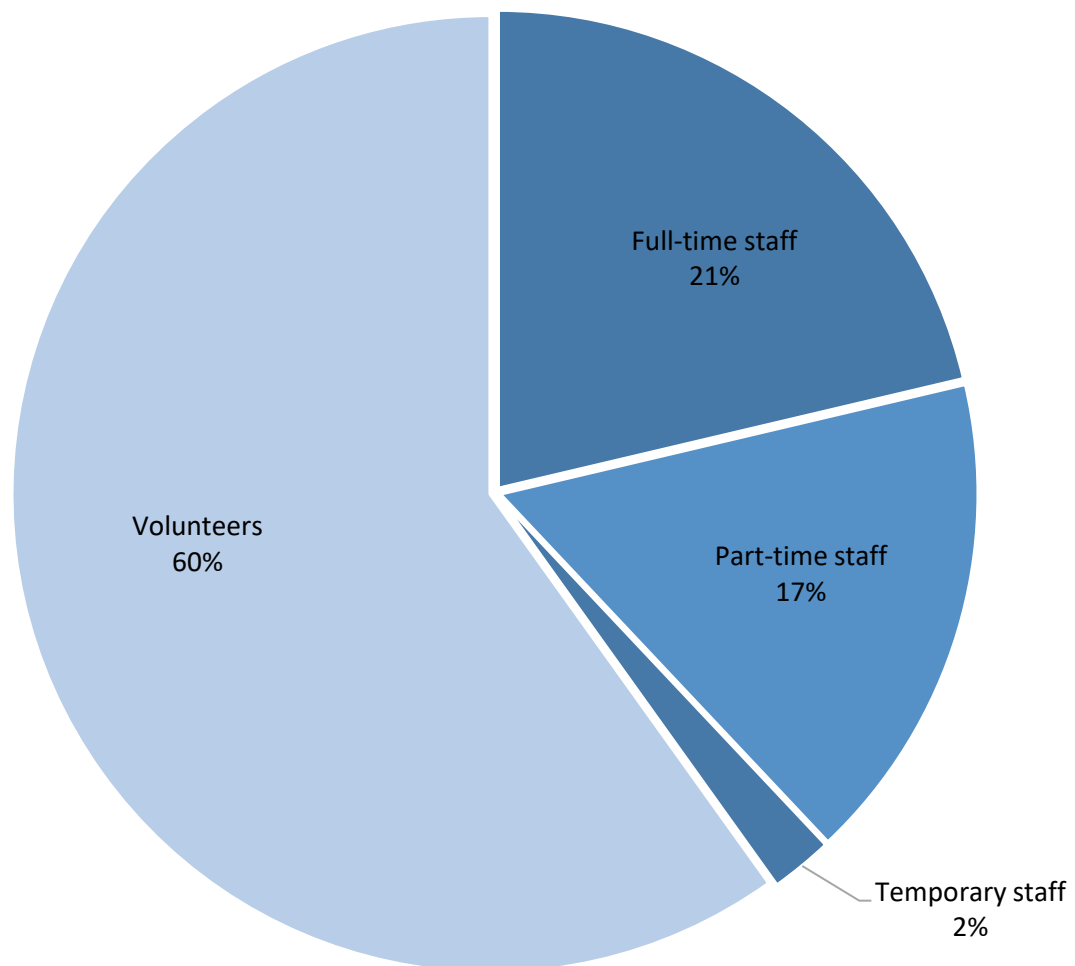


Figure 2. Chart illustrates the composition of the labor force in Nevada’s historical records organizations (Q16-Q19); n = 46.



## Archives Administration and Collection Management

### *Contents, size, and formats of holdings*

As expected, Nevada history is at the center of the historical records held by Nevada organizations. They often have a focus on local communities, cultural heritage, and special subjects that are unique to each region or organization (Q29). Over half the respondents hold records about mining, the built environment, and railroads. Less than half the respondents hold records on politics and government; water, land, and environmental issues; education; agriculture, animal husbandry, and ranching; arts; law or courts; ethnic or racial communities; natural history; and gaming. Less than a quarter of respondents hold records on religious communities; vital records; civil rights or discrimination; LGBTQ+ communities; archaeology; land records; and transportation. See appendix D, tables 20 and 21 for details.

Formats held by the organizations demonstrate the expanding and evolving responsibilities of historical records keepers. Not only are individuals expected to possess the expertise needed to preserve and care for fragile paper-based materials, they must also maintain the cutting-edge skills required to manage various electronic formats and digital media. All respondents (100%) hold bound materials; 96% hold unbound paper-based materials such as correspondence, broadsides, maps, architectural drawings, scrapbooks, ledgers, journals, diaries, photograph albums, and pamphlets; and 91% also hold photographs and images in a variety of formats. In addition to managing paper-based archival materials, the vast majority are also managing electronic records. Responses indicate that 83% of respondents hold digitized records created from physical records; 81% hold floppy discs, CDs, DVDs, and hard drives; 64% hold recorded sound; 66% hold moving images; and 47% hold born-digital records that are native to a digital environment and have no physical counterparts (Q28).

When asked about the size of their physical historical records (Q26), thirty-two organizations (68%) revealed that they did not know. The remaining fifteen organizations (32%) provided measurements ranging from 30 linear feet to 19,700 linear feet. When asked about the size of their electronic records (Q27), thirty-seven respondents (79%) stated they did not know. The remaining ten (21%) reported sizes ranging from the approximate count of items (such as “2 million born-digital images”) to extents as large as 2 TB.

Generally, it is common for some administrative tasks to be put on hold while staff address time-sensitive issues such as answering phones, fulfilling reference requests, and myriad other daily demands. When organizations are severely under resourced, keeping up with administrative tasks can be especially challenging. Thirty-two organizations (68%) reported that they are unaware of the physical size of their historical records. Thirty-seven organizations (79%) reported that they are unaware of the size of their electronic records. Respondents’ gaps in knowledge about the physical or digital extents of their holdings suggest an overarching gap in fundamental administrative practices. Although no repository should be expected to maintain an item-level inventory of its archival holdings, every repository should have a comprehensive top-level inventory (a basic description of each archival collection, or record group/series), including that includes the approximate size of the overall holdings, to support managing, locating, and facilitating access to records.

### *Collection care, preservation, and storage*

Several organizations reported storage practices that can place collections at risk. Archival materials are being stored on floors, tables, chairs, and wooden shelves; in non-archival boxes and folders; on site in an

open area accessible by the public, and off site in someone’s private house, garage, storage unit, trailer, or barn. The responses in this section of the survey revealed that 70% of respondents are not monitoring Rh levels and temperatures in their storage areas. Nevada’s climate is extremely arid. Just as too much moisture can be a danger to collections and lead to issues such as mold, dry conditions can cause historical records to become too brittle and accelerate their deterioration. Stable temperatures and relative humidity combined with controlled light and pollution are the most important factors in ensuring the longevity of historical records. Monitoring data regularly can inform repositories of actions that need to be taken to reduce the risk to collections.<sup>7</sup>

The survey responses indicate sixty-five instances of improper storage of historical records (across the 47 institutions) that place records at a higher risk for accelerated deterioration, damage, exposure to the elements, theft, and loss. Some of the more concerning instances include the following:

- Wood shelving. Wood, including natural and composite wood, is the least desirable material for storage because it releases harmful acids and other chemicals (stain, varnish) that can cause historical records to deteriorate more rapidly.
- On site in open areas where the public has direct access to irreplaceable materials.
- Off site in an individual’s private house, garage, storage unit, trailer, barn, etc.

As the responses demonstrate, the majority of organizations are managing digital records as well as paper-based records. Since the more advanced steps of digital preservation require a high level of technical expertise and infrastructure that takes years to achieve, the survey focused on a basic first step – ensuring there are two complete copies of the records in separate locations (backup) in case of system failure or human error.<sup>8</sup> The majority (64%) of organizations stated that their historical records are backed up regularly; 17% stated their records are not backed up regularly; and 19% stated they don’t know.

Some responses, such as “Don’t know,” imply that a gap in knowledge may be the reason behind poor practices at an organization; gaps in knowledge might be addressed by training. On the other hand, some responses suggest a lack of resources is the reason for poor practices. For example, respondents’ requests for supplies/equipment, archival housing, shelving, map cabinets, file cabinets, Rh and temperature dataloggers, humidifiers, and dehumidifiers suggest these organizations are aware of best practices but lack the means to provide proper enclosures, environmental controls, and storage spaces for their materials.

### *Security*

The presence of proper security measures to safeguard historical documents can help reduce opportunities for vandalism and theft. Survey responses indicate that some organizations only have very basic security measures in place (see figure 3).

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<sup>7</sup> Northeast Document Conservation Center, “Session 2 The Building and Environment,” accessed September 4, 2023, <https://www.nedcc.org/preservation101/session-2/2monitoring-the-environment>.

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see the National Digital Stewardship Alliance “Levels of Digital Preservation” matrix <https://ndsa.org/publications/levels-of-digital-preservation/>.

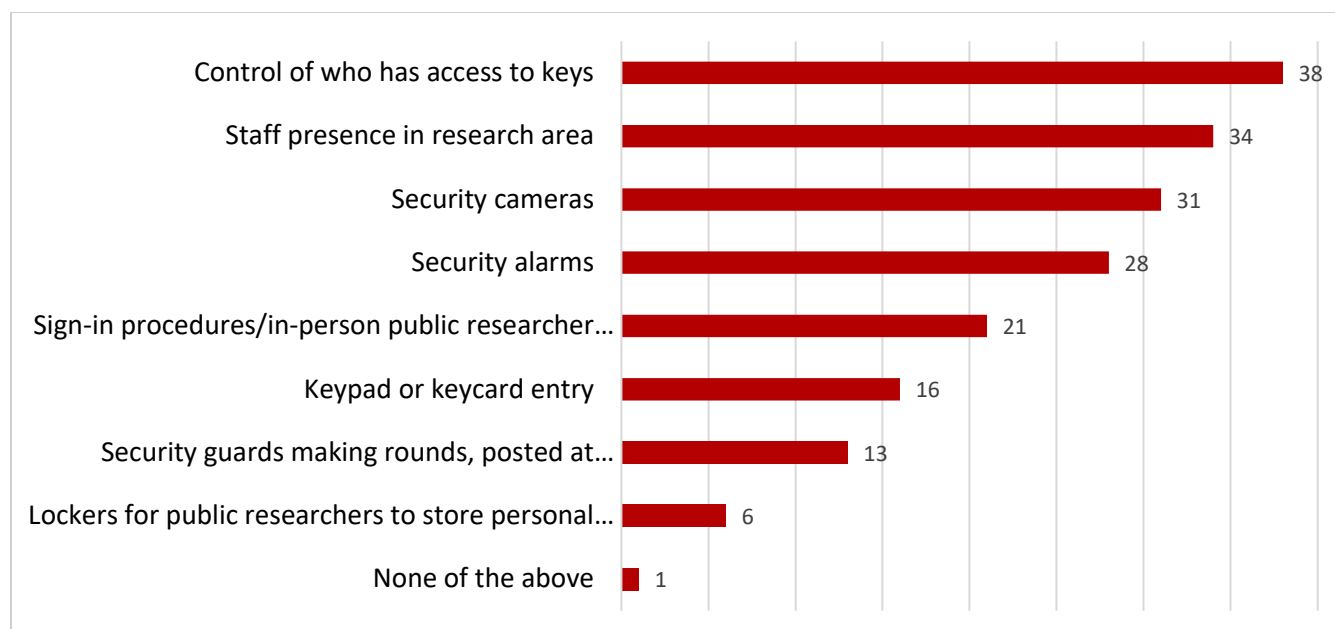


Figure 3. Graph illustrates the security measures that are in place at each organization to prevent vandalism and/or theft (Q41); n = 47. Respondents were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds 47.

#### *Disaster planning and emergency preparedness*

Nevada is the driest state in the country, with temperatures fluctuating from as low as a record-breaking -50°F during the winter months, to as high as 125°F during the summer months.<sup>9</sup> The Environmental Protection Agency predicts that climate change will bring Nevada more frequent heat waves, earlier snow melts, decreased water flows, and increased frequency and intensity of wildfires.<sup>10</sup> Extreme fluctuations in temperatures and increasing threats related to climate change have the potential to expedite the deterioration of historical materials if not monitored and addressed.

The survey looked at the threat of natural disasters in the regions across Nevada and did not inquire about man-made disasters (cyber-attacks, terrorism, etc.), which can happen anywhere. Although four organizations (9%) reported that they are not vulnerable to any natural disasters, 91% reported that their organization may be susceptible to drought/extreme heat, earthquakes, winter storms (snow, ice, hail, frozen pipes), floods (including flash floods), high winds, or wildfires.

Written plans for long term preservation, disaster recovery, and continuity of operations are essential. Responses show that 32% of the participating organizations do not have any of these types of plans in place. Preservation plans are essential for responsible stewardship of digital and physical historic records. Continuity of operations plans support the restoration or continuation of mission-critical functions and

<sup>9</sup> "Climate in Nevada." Tripreport, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://www.tripreport.com/provinces/nevada/climate#:~:text=Climate%20in%20Nevada&text=In%20summer%2C%20between%20June%20and,milder%20in%20most%20of%20Nevada.>

<sup>10</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. "What Climate Change Means for Nevada," United States Environmental Protection Agency, August 2016, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/climate-change-nv.pdf>.

services following a disaster or other disruption. Disaster preparedness, response, and recovery plans support staff in quickly and effectively mitigating damage and preventing loss of records. Responses revealed that 53% of survey participants have plans that include digital preservation; 21% stated their plans do not include digital preservation; and 23% stated that they do not know if digital preservation is included in their plan.

#### *Archival supplies and equipment*

Typically, archival supply needs will differ between organizations depending on the size of existing holdings, the average number of annual accessions, backlogs of unprocessed materials, the organization's priorities, and other organization-specific factors. Even when taking organizational variables into account, it is concerning that seventeen organizations (36%) spent less than \$500 on archival supplies in fiscal year 2023 or calendar year 2022 (see figure 4). To put this in practical terms, \$100 will only buy 200 legal-sized acid-free archival folders or ten standard (5-inch) acid-free archival boxes from a well-known vendor.<sup>11</sup>

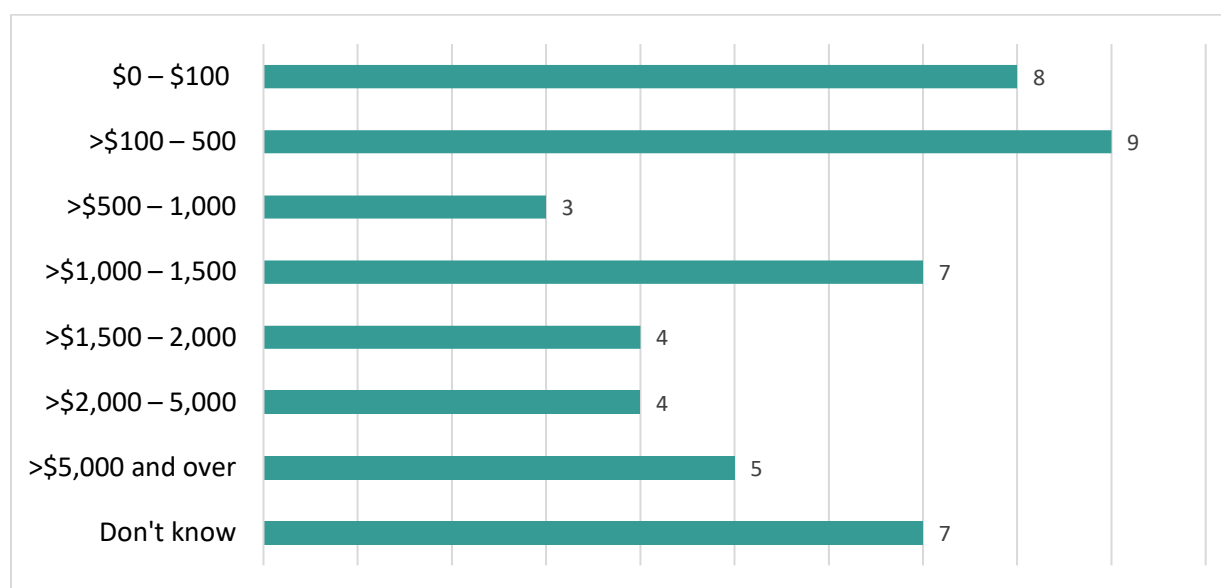


Figure 4. Graph illustrates the number of organizations in each category of archival supply spending during fiscal year 2023 or calendar year 2022 (Q23); n=47.

When asked what archival supplies and preservation-related equipment their organization would most benefit from but cannot purchase because of budget limitations (Q24), the better-resourced organizations did not request any supplies or equipment, but the under-resourced organizations expressed a variety of legitimate needs (figure 5).

<sup>11</sup>See Hollinger Metal Edge catalog <https://www.hollingermetaledge.com/document-storage/> for pricing samples.

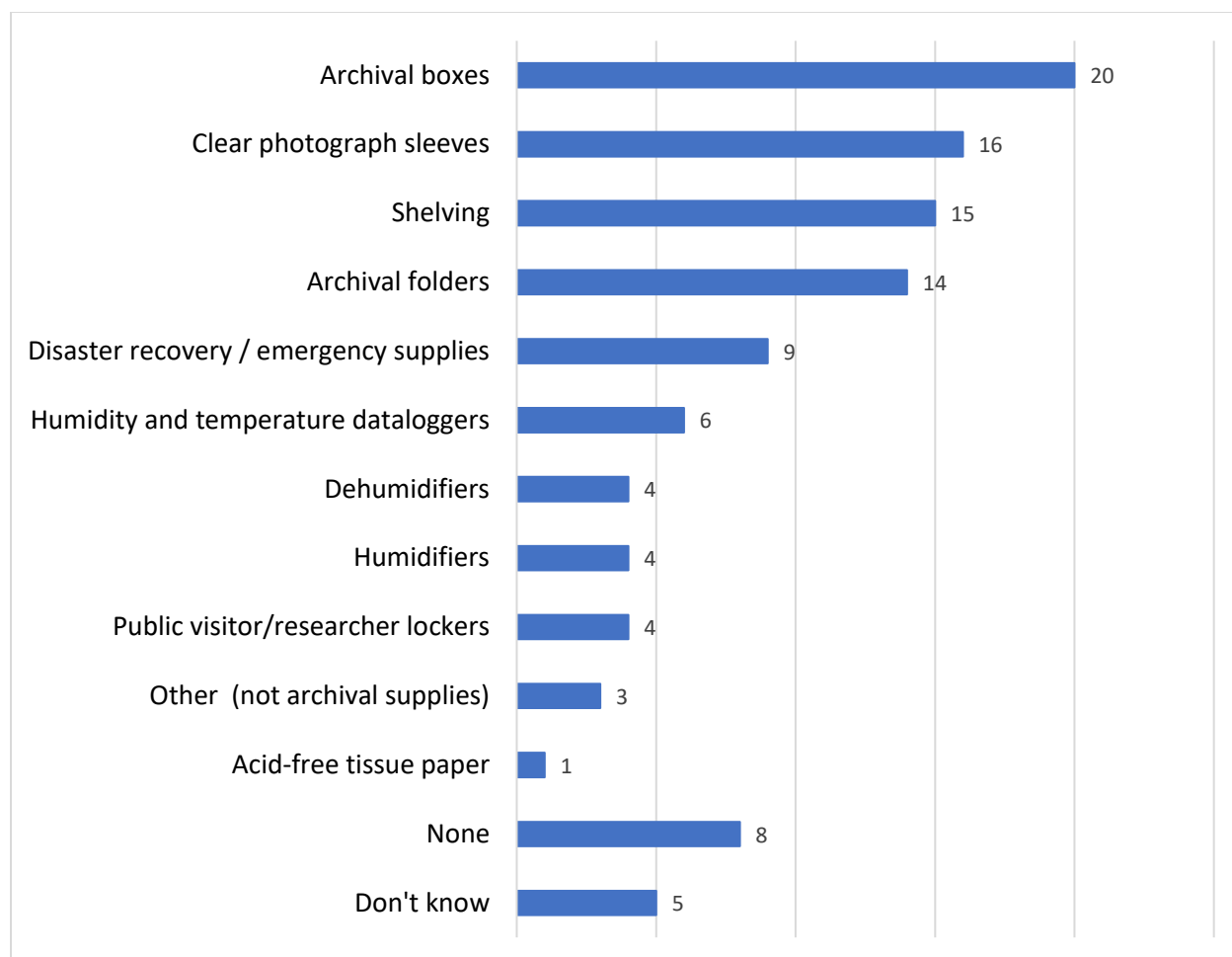


Figure 5. Graph illustrates the number of organizations requesting each type of archival supplies or preservation-related equipment (Q24); n = 47. Respondents were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds 47. See appendix D, table 15 for “other” responses.

Shelving (furniture) is outside the scope of NHPRC’s State Programming grants and most other federal grant opportunities. However, these requests for shelving add to the understanding of storage needs and practices.<sup>12</sup> For example, organizations requesting shelving may be improperly storing collections because they have no other options.

## Discovery and Access

### *Open hours and research assistance*

Although full-time employees are scarce at most organizations, all forty-seven organizations represented in the final data set are open to the public and provide services on site, via phone, and via email. Over half

<sup>12</sup> SHRAB relies on NHPRC funding. As stated in its application instructions <https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/apply>, “The NHPRC does not provide grant funds for the acquisition of routine equipment such as office furnishings, shelving, and file cabinets, but we may provide grant support for the purchase of technical equipment, such as software, computers and peripherals, essential for a project.”

of the organizations are open full-time, and just under half of them are open part-time (either through set open hours or by appointment only). In addition to providing services during set hours, many of the organizations will also provide access outside their normal hours of operation if users request appointments.

Twenty-one respondents (45%) stated they did not know how many people they assist with historical research questions on an annual basis. The remaining twenty-six respondents (55%) provided varied answers ranging from two annual requests at the low end to 1,241 at the high end. More than half of the respondents provided precise numbers, indicating that they systematically track the usage of their historic records; however, nearly half of respondents are not recording their research requests. Recording metrics on use and collecting impactful stories of how historical records are being used provides a strong foundation for advocacy and funding requests.

#### *Discoverability of historical records*

Given the 21<sup>st</sup> century expectation for information to be available online, the biggest concern surfaced by survey responses is the low number of collections or record groups that are described online. As illustrated in figure 6, only 21% of survey respondents claim to have online descriptions “for all, or almost all,” of their holdings (Q11).

Public access to descriptions of historical records at the most basic collection/record group level is limited and most descriptions are not available online. Twenty organizations (43%) indicated they require the public to ask staff (via phone, email, or in person) for information about the materials they hold since they have no descriptions that are for public use and seven organizations (13%) stated that the public may access collection/record descriptions in person only using either paper inventories, finding aids, or local computer access to a database, collection management system, or other electronic form. This means that 56% of organizations do not have any of their archival materials described online. Only ten organizations (21%) stated that either all or almost all their collections/records have descriptions that are publicly available online. The remaining organizations have descriptions of their materials online to varying degrees. Online descriptions are mission-critical because historical records cannot be accessed or used if potential users do not know how or where to find them. For all intents and purposes, over half of Nevada’s historical records are hidden, making them largely inaccessible and thereby underused.

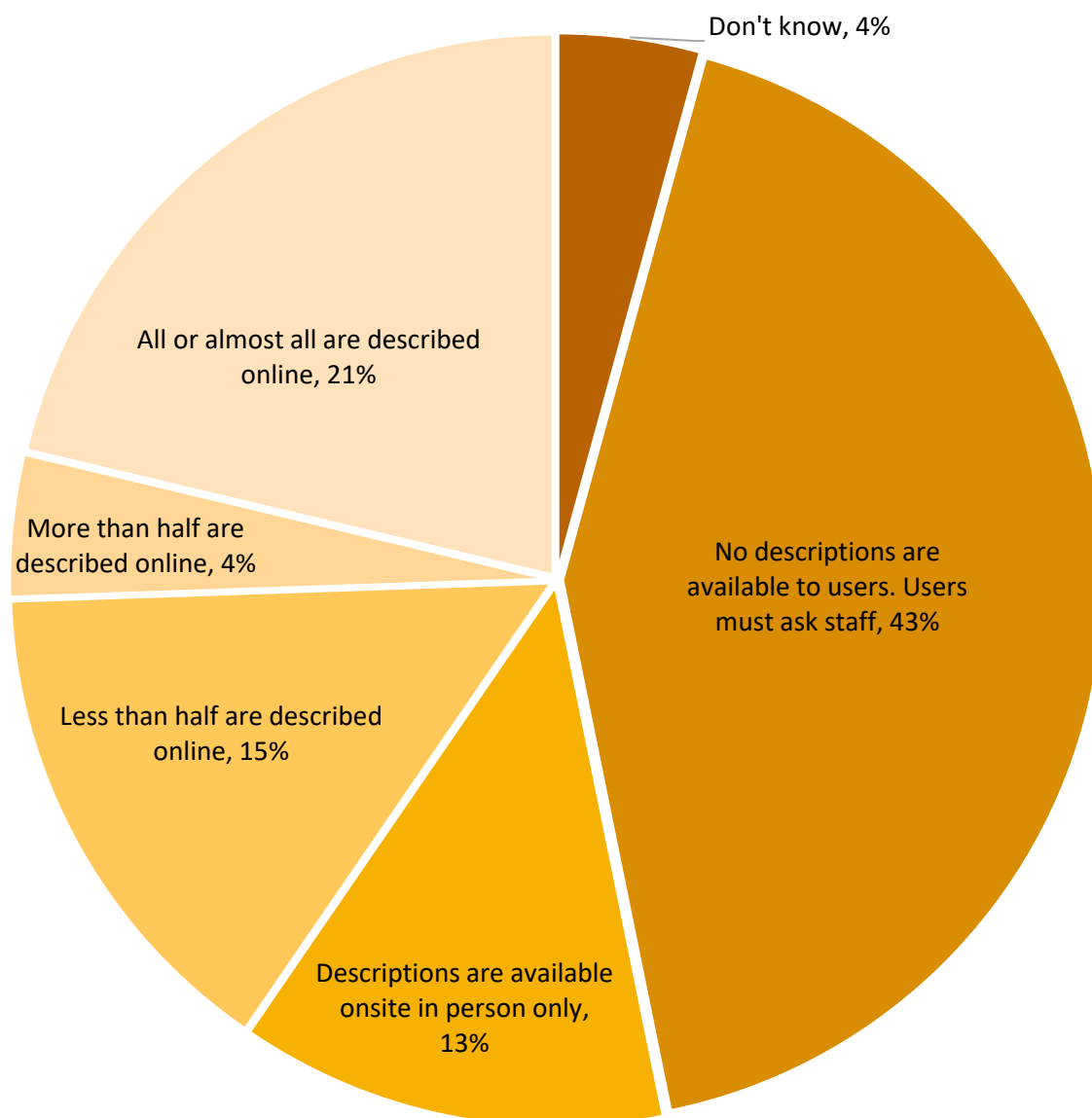


Figure 6. Chart reflects the degree to which the public can access descriptions of collections/records to discover the historical records and archives that are held by each organization (Q11); n = 47.

Although public access to descriptions of collections/records is limited in most organizations, most organizations report that they do have descriptions that are used by staff behind the scenes to identify and locate materials. Twelve organizations (26%) have up-to-date descriptions for 90% or more of their collections/records for staff use; another twelve organizations (26%) stated that descriptions exist for most of their collections/records for staff use but need updating; twenty-one organizations (45%) stated that their descriptions for staff use are partially completed; and two (4%) stated that no formal descriptions of their collections exist (Q10).

### *Online public access to digital records*

In addition to the expectation for users to find basic descriptions of historical records online, remote access to digital surrogates or born-digital records is also an expectation in the digital age. Given the geographic expanse of Nevada, it is often unrealistic for Nevadans to travel to an archival repository to discover and use historical records. Providing online access to historical records is a great service to its residents. Only two organizations (4%) provide online access to all or almost all their archival materials. Twenty organizations (43%) provide online access to less than half of their historical records (in addition to providing on-site access). Three organizations (6.6%) provided a write-in response to indicate they do not provide in-person access but provide digital access of some kind. It is important to note that nearly half (45%) of the organizations provide access to their historical records on site only and users who cannot visit in person may request photocopies or scans of records. See appendix D Q13, table 6 for details.

### Technology

When asked about technical equipment (Q25), responses reveal that almost all participating organizations (98%) are equipped with computers. More than half of the organizations have standard office equipment such as photocopiers, standard flatbed scanners, and sheet-fed scanners. Less than half of the organizations have some of the more specialized equipment used in archives, such as a lightbox for viewing slides and negatives, microfilm/fiche readers, and oversized flatbed scanners. Over a quarter of respondents (26%) utilize an overhead digital camera/scanner, 4% use a drum roll scanner, and 2% use a slide scanner. Specialized equipment (such as microform readers and lightboxes) enables an organization to provide improved access to materials onsite. Specialized scanners and overhead cameras support digitization and online access for oversized and/or fragile materials.

Technology is essential to public online access to collection descriptions and digital records/ collections. Some technologies are multifaceted and are designed to support behind-the-scenes collection management as well as public access to collection descriptions and/or digital assets. Some organizations use a combination of two or more technologies to manage, describe, and/or provide online access to digital assets. Responses to questions about technology revealed seventeen different discovery platforms used within thirty-one organizations. Twenty-one respondents (45%) use PastPerfect, a software used by museums and historical societies to describe their collections, make digital collections discoverable and accessible, and maintain administrative records, usage that roughly aligns with the number of respondents (47%) identified as museums. Thirteen respondents (28%) use spreadsheets, 26% use the organization's website, 21% of respondents use an online library catalog, 13% use a database, 11% use ArchivesSpace, and 4% use Catalogit. Several other technologies are each used by only 2% of respondents.

Twenty organizations (43.2%) indicated that in addition to in-person access, they provide online public access to less than half of their historical records (digitized or are born digital). Eleven organizations (23%) reported that they do not have a platform for providing online access to their digital records. Five respondents (11%) don't know what platform is being used to access their digital records.

Managing, promoting, and providing access to historical records depends heavily on technical knowledge and support, yet less than half of respondents appear to have IT support dedicated to their organization. Nearly half of respondents (45%) indicated they rely on shared IT support, 34% have in-house technical



support, 9% use a combination of in-house IT support and another form of support, 2% rely entirely on external IT support, and 9% have no IT support (Q22).

## Training

Keeping pace with emerging technologies and best practices in archival collections management requires ongoing professional development for permanent archives staff. Temporary employees and volunteers need training in archival fundamentals and the technologies that support archival work. Twenty-four organizations (51%) indicated that either staff or volunteers had taken relevant training or workshops. Nineteen organizations (40%) indicated that neither staff nor volunteers had engaged in training. Four organizations (9%) indicated that they didn't know if any staff or volunteers had attended relevant training. When asked what type of training would most benefit them and their organization (Q21), the respondents recognize their needs for additional training across eight different areas (figure 7).

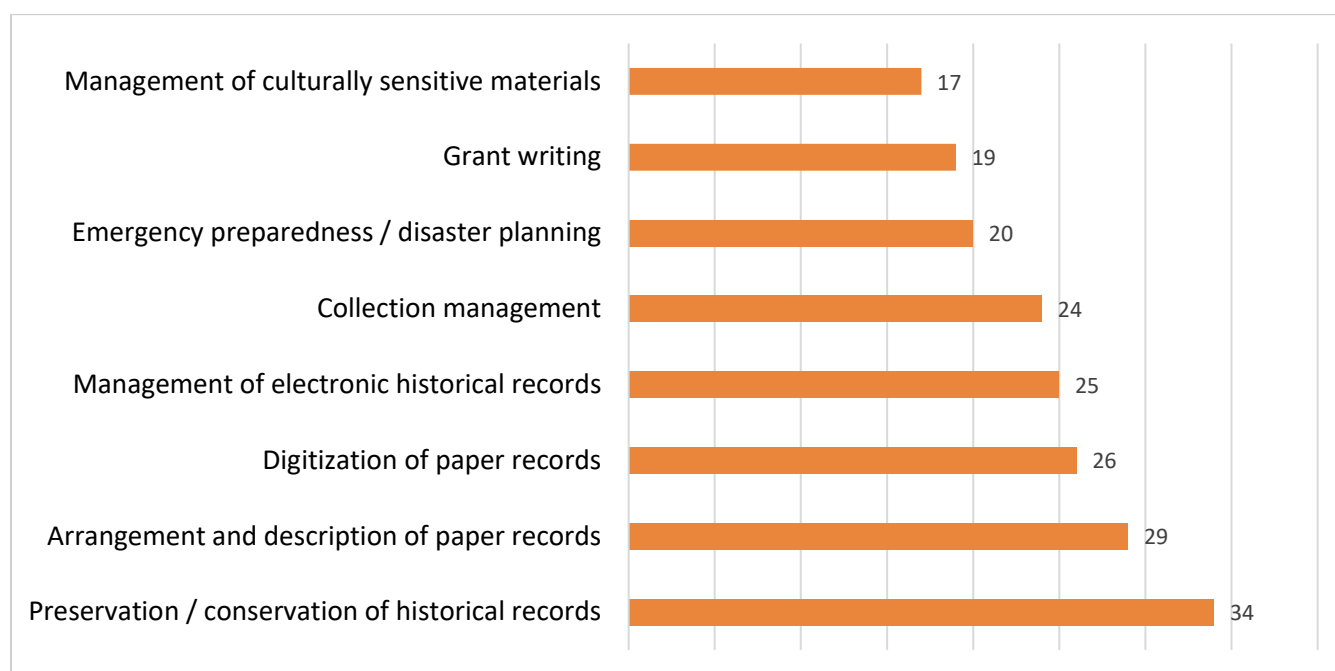


Figure 7. Graph illustrates the number of organizations requesting each type of training (Q21); n = 47. Respondents were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds 47.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Collectively, the survey responses leave no doubt that Nevada's historical records keepers are in need of substantial support. While participating organizations express genuine needs in the areas of permanent staff, building improvements, technical infrastructure, and furniture for storing collections, those areas are outside the bounds of the resources provided to SHRAB through the NHPRC. The following recommendations primarily focus on issues that are within the scope of the Nevada State Historical

Records Advisory Board's mission and purview. Some recommendations fall outside NHPRC's State Programming funding, but are within the scope of other granting agencies, which organizations may choose to pursue independently. Given that most participating organizations are under-resourced, it is important that efforts to implement these recommendations do not place additional pressure on the organizations they are designed to assist. Organizations might use these recommendations to support advocacy for sustainable funding for additional resources, including permanent staff, technical support/infrastructure, and supply budgets. While grant funding is no substitute for sustainable funding, grant funding can enable one-time projects to assist organizations in advancing their goals. Grant-funded initiatives should employ externally funded project staff so as not to add to the workloads of current staff.

### Training: General

The survey analysis confirms that training is one of the greatest needs for staff in Nevada's historical records organizations. Overall, it is notable that most of the labor force (60%) engaged in caring for, and providing access to Nevada's historical records are volunteers. The 300+ volunteers are contributing greatly to the efforts of their organizations. However, training and coordinating the volunteers comes at a cost to the already over-extended staff. There are several ways to accomplish archival training across the State with minimal strain on permanent staff. SHRAB's purview includes coordinating, sponsoring and/or leading training programs and workshops to help organizations adhere to best practices in the management of the state's historical records.

The most meaningful workshops are often those that have tangible take-aways, from which participants emerge not only with new knowledge but also with something concrete, such as a preliminary disaster plan, a draft grant proposal, damaged documents that they have properly repaired, draft protocols for their research room, draft procedures for digital preservation, or a set of their own historical records that they have re-housed or described. While virtual support and webinars can effectively meet some training needs, in order to reach those with different learning styles, in-person training should be offered when feasible. In-person training in classroom environments should also be offered for educational content that is best learned hands-on (such as book and paper repair). General training recommendations include:

- Establish statewide training for volunteers wherein representatives from each organization are trained; once trained, participants train others (a "train the trainers" approach).
- Offer on-site training throughout the state led by Nevada State Archives staff or SHRAB members with relevant expertise who travel to various regions to lead in-person workshops.
- Offer on-site training led by a grant-funded professional who travels across the state, visits organizations, assesses their situations, and conducts training tailored to local needs.
- Hold workshops at the State Archives and subsidize participants' travel through grant-funded stipends.
- Offer hands-on workshops at a well-established archival repository and provide tours of the collection spaces to illustrate the lessons of the workshop (proper collection handling, storage, environmental monitoring, archival supply options, technical tools, etc.).
- Partner with allied professional organizations to sponsor workshops tailored to their needs.

While the section above focuses on general training recommendations, each section below includes subject-specific training recommendations in the context of addressing needs in the areas of archival administration and collection management, security, disaster planning, and access.

## Archives Administration and Collection Management

Survey responses reveal that most participating organizations would benefit from supplies, training, and technology to support archives administration, preservation, collection care, and collection storage.

### *Supplies*

SHRAB should advise organizations on the supplies that would best meet their respective needs. The recommendations herein are not exhaustive, and needs will vary from one organization to the next.

- Basic archival supplies can be built into archival processing grant proposals: acid-free boxes, acid-free folders, buffered and unbuffered tissue, mylar, bone folders, pencils, white vinyl erasers, etc.
- Supplies that improve disaster response and recovery time can be built into preservation grant proposals. Disaster kits (mop, bucket, sponges, gloves, flashlight, duct tape, markers, plastic sheeting, zip-top bags, trash bags, plastic cartons, blotter paper, paper towels, fans, etc.) can be purchased from standard library, archives, or museum supply vendors.
- Organizations that are currently not recording the daily Rh and temperature of their storage areas should secure data loggers—either digital or manual. Oscillating fans should be procured to aid in the circulation of air in storage spaces.
- Organizations should replace their current wood shelving for powder-coated steel shelving to ensure the longevity of historical records.

### *Training*

- Collection management workshops help participants understand the importance of keeping track of who is accessing their collections and for what purpose. Compelling stories and metrics about collection usage directly inform outreach, promotion of the collections, grant writing, processing priorities, digitization priorities, and awareness of if and when materials are lost or stolen.
- Preservation and conservation workshops inform participants on the importance of environmental controls and tracking Rh and temperatures to help them advocate for climate control in storage spaces. Conservation workshops teach participants basic conservation techniques for repairing and housing paper-based records and photographs. If funding permits, workshops could include basic conservation tools and dataloggers.
- Workshops on the preservation and management of born-digital records introduce participants to best practices, technologies, templates for developing local policies and procedures, and talking points to support advocacy and funding for the management and preservation of born-digital records. More advanced workshops offer training in specific areas such as web archiving, email preservation, digital forensics, and audio/video preservation.
- Workshops on grant writing demystify the process and support participants in writing competitive applications for the resources they need to preserve and provide access to their materials. Some granting agencies offer free webinars and/or online question and answer sessions for potential applicants.

## Technology

For several decades, our communities and governments have been creating their cultural and governmental records in bits and bytes rather than with paper and ink. The preservation of born-digital records is an urgent, active, and ongoing process. A great deal of effort and up-to-date knowledge is required to record metadata, move files from external media (floppy disks, CDs, DVDs, and hard drives) to secure servers, resurrect and reformat obsolete file formats, document the preservation process, and maintain the records. Digital preservation requires an ongoing investment in technology, training, storage, and maintenance.<sup>13</sup> As with paper-based records, the purpose of digital preservation is access and use. “The goal of digital preservation is to maintain the ability to display, retrieve, and use digital material in the face of rapidly changing technological and organizational infrastructures.”<sup>14</sup>

## Security

While historical records organizations encourage public access and strive to create welcoming environments for visitors, they must also enforce security measures to minimize loss or damage to archival materials. Although safeguarding historical materials depends on technologies such as locks, cameras, and alarms, the most effective deterrent to theft of individual documents, photographs, or book pages is the vigilance of staff. The following recommendations will help protect Nevada’s historical records:

- Workshops on collection management should include a segment on the importance of security to give participants facts and figures they can use to advocate for better security measures in their organizations. Instruction should emphasize the essential role that staff play in protecting materials.
- Organizations should advocate for procurement of lockers, security cameras, and alarms to decrease the probability of theft and vandalism.
- Visitors should register to use historical records.
- Organizations with historical records in open stacks should not leave patrons unattended with materials.
- Organizations should ensure visitors’ personal belongings (coats, backpacks, notebooks, etc.) are stored in lockers before they are permitted to work with archival materials. Limiting opportunities for a patron to conceal individual items within their belongings eliminates temptation and helps prevent theft. In the absence of lockers, at a bare minimum, patrons should be asked to leave personal materials on a table or chair that is at least six feet from the table at which they access archival materials.
- SHRAB should provide examples and templates for research room protocols and/or visitor conduct.

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<sup>13</sup> “Digital Preservation Management: Implementing Short-term Strategies for Long-term Problems,” Cornell University, accessed September 4, 2023, [http://www.dpworkshop.org/dpm-eng/eng\\_index.html](http://www.dpworkshop.org/dpm-eng/eng_index.html).

<sup>14</sup> Kenney, Anne R. and McGovern, Nancy Y, “The Five Organizational Stages of Digital Preservation,” in *Digital Libraries: A Vision for the Twenty-first Century*, a festschrift to honor Wendy Lougee, 2003. University of Michigan Scholarly Monograph Series, accessed September 4, 2023, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=spobooks;idno=bbv9812.0001.001;rgn=div1;view=text;cc=spobooks;node=bbv9812.0001.001:11>.

## Disaster Planning and Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness is extremely important for protecting an organization's investment in its collections. While theft can lead to loss of targeted records, a natural disaster or burst pipe has the power to destroy an entire collection. Preparedness can substantially mitigate damage and loss. Creating or updating an existing plan for collections recovery is critical. Plans list steps and actions for staff and volunteers in the event of a disaster and provide them with insights about preventative measures that can minimize collection threats.<sup>15</sup> The plan should map out locations of priority records for rescue as well as identify formats that are most vulnerable. The following are suggestions for improvements to protocols for disaster planning and emergency preparedness:

- Disaster preparedness workshops stress the importance of disaster planning and emergency preparedness that supports advocacy efforts. They provide disaster recovery plan templates and walk participants through creating or updating their own plans.
- Once drafted, organizations must 'exercise' their plans with regularity to ensure that, were disaster to strike, current staff understand the need to prioritize the recovery and stabilization of the high value collections and support collection recovery as a priority.
- Promote resources such as the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), which provides free templates and guidance. Encourage organizations to take the first step toward emergency preparedness. Share the NEDCC instructions for a [Pocket Response Plan](#). Emphasize the importance of identifying key personnel and service providers (including work, home, and mobile phone numbers). Send annual reminders for organizations to update their plans since contacts may change.

## Discovery and Access

Public access to historical records is dependent on the users' awareness that the records exist. Analysis of survey responses suggests that the lack of publicly available archival description is the most significant barrier to the access and use of historical records in Nevada. While 39% of the respondents report that at least *some* of their collections/record groups are described and discoverable online, 56% of respondents do not have any descriptions online. The first step to improving access is to create a basic top-level description of each record group or collection in the organization and expose descriptions of these hidden resources online.

Description that facilitates discovery can take many forms. What matters most is that an organization consistently follows a standard. When descriptions are standardized, they can be repurposed in a variety of discovery platforms (now or in the future). The national standard for archival description is *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACs), which sets an achievable level of description for each collection or record group (a minimum of eight fields). DACs-compliant description can be created in an excel sheet or entered into a collection management or digital asset management systems (encoded as Dublin Core for digital assets, MARCXML for library catalogs, or Encoded Archival Description for hierarchical systems).

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<sup>15</sup> Northeast Document Conservation Center. "dPlan Arts Ready." Northeast Document Conservation Center, 2022, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/disaster-assistance/>.

In addition to creating descriptions that aid in discovery, a subsequent (or concurrent) step toward increasing discovery and access is to place digital surrogates or born-digital records online. The digitization and description of paper-based records enables remote access to unique collections. The need for remote access is heightened in a state the size of Nevada where the cost of travel from rural areas is a considerable barrier to in-person access. The following recommendations for increasing access to Nevada’s historical records consider online discovery, preservation, and access to digital assets.

- Workshops on collection survey strategies and best practices in archival description provide organizations with foundational knowledge in creating standardized descriptions (metadata) that are compatible with professional standards.
- For the sake of efficiency, organizations should be cautioned against creating detailed item-level description (as is standard for museum artifacts) and instead focus on describing archival materials in the aggregate (collection level or record group level).
- A grant-funded professional archivist (circuit rider) visits participating organizations to gain understanding of their challenges and provide guidance. Ideally, the circuit rider comes equipped with templates and archival supplies for collection inventories and description, and advises on preservation. The circuit rider later revisits the organization to assess progress, answer follow-up questions, and support staff/volunteers in sustaining their efforts.
- Establish a statewide state-funded discovery platform through which Nevada organizations could contribute descriptions of their collections for public discovery. [Archives West](#) (regional) and the [Online Archives of California](#) (statewide) are examples of the potential of a collaborative platform. Ideally, the selected platform would have a hierarchical structure for standardized description that supports collection management as well as public access. The survey findings suggest that most participating organizations lack the financial and technical support to implement an online discovery platform. Providing a centralized platform at no cost to under-resourced organizations has the greatest potential to increase access to Nevada’s historical records. Implementing and maintaining a statewide discovery platform would require state-level coordination as well as ongoing training for staff at participating organizations.
- Workshops on standardized description for staff who are unfamiliar with creating metadata.
- Workshops to assist organizations in writing a grant to fund a project archivist and foundational digitization equipment that will get digitization efforts off the ground.
- Grant funding for digitization projects can include digitization equipment, a project archivist, development of local digitization and metadata guidelines, and training that supports permanent staff in sustaining momentum after the projects conclude.
- Develop and promote a basic metadata profile (with crosswalks to the most common metadata schemas) for collection descriptions and digital assets that can be adapted to various environments adopted by any organization.

## CONCLUSION

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Responses to the 2023 Nevada statewide survey of historical records organizations show most of the participants are short on staff, supplies, collection management tools, and IT support. The majority of organizations face significant challenges in their efforts to preserve and provide access to Nevada’s

historical records and should be commended for their continued dedication and work. This report provides numerous recommendations on how to support organizations, improve collection conditions, and increase access to records.

The survey findings reveal many legitimate needs. Addressing these needs will require time and resources. To ensure the long-term preservation of and access to Nevada's historical records, the Consultant recommends that SHRAB prioritizes training, discovery/access, and support for grants. Most of the recommendations call for ongoing assessment, planning, and action to achieve optimal results. Ongoing efforts will be required to maintain momentum as staff come and go, budgets expand and contract, and technologies evolve.

There is a strong need for continuous training across the state. Training requested by fifteen or more survey respondents (figure 7) should be offered throughout the state. The Consultant recommends prioritizing training that supports organizations in learning and adhering to best practices in the management of the state's historical records. Training and outreach should target those organizations that rely heavily on volunteers and/or those organizations that employ staff with little to no professional training in the care and handling of historical records. Ideally, externally funded circuit rider archivists would travel to the more remote areas of the state to provide regional in-person training and conduct site visits to help organizations identify their specific needs and appropriate courses of action.

Given the lack of technical infrastructure and dedicated IT support in many organizations, implementation of a statewide discovery platform for Nevada's historical records may have the greatest potential to increase access to archival materials. The Consultant recommends that the Nevada State Archives explore options for a cooperative discovery platform. To support discovery and access of historical records, the Consultant recommends that SHRAB support training in archival description and technologies that support discovery and access. Concurrently or subsequently, training in best practices for digitization and description of digital records should also be offered.

Given the lack of funding and staff dedicated to historical records management at most organizations, obtaining grant funds for one-time projects to improve preservation and access will require organizations to write competitive grant proposals. SHRAB should coordinate or sponsor grant writing workshops, during which attendees draft a grant application for an actual funding opportunity that will increase their capacity to better care for and provide access to their historical records. SHRAB members with grant writing experience should follow up with attendees to support their efforts to submit proposals.

When developing a statewide plan and grant projects, SHRAB must be mindful not to burden understaffed organizations. It is equally important for SHRAB not to overextend itself. SHRAB can help organizations help themselves by coordinating and leading select training and initiatives. SHRAB must evaluate the recommendations in light of its own capacity, selectively prioritize recommended actions, determine where best to direct its energy, and create a phased statewide plan with realistic goals and objectives.

## APPENDIX A. Participating Organizations

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The list of participating organizations includes all organizations that responded to the survey, including the five that were ultimately eliminated.

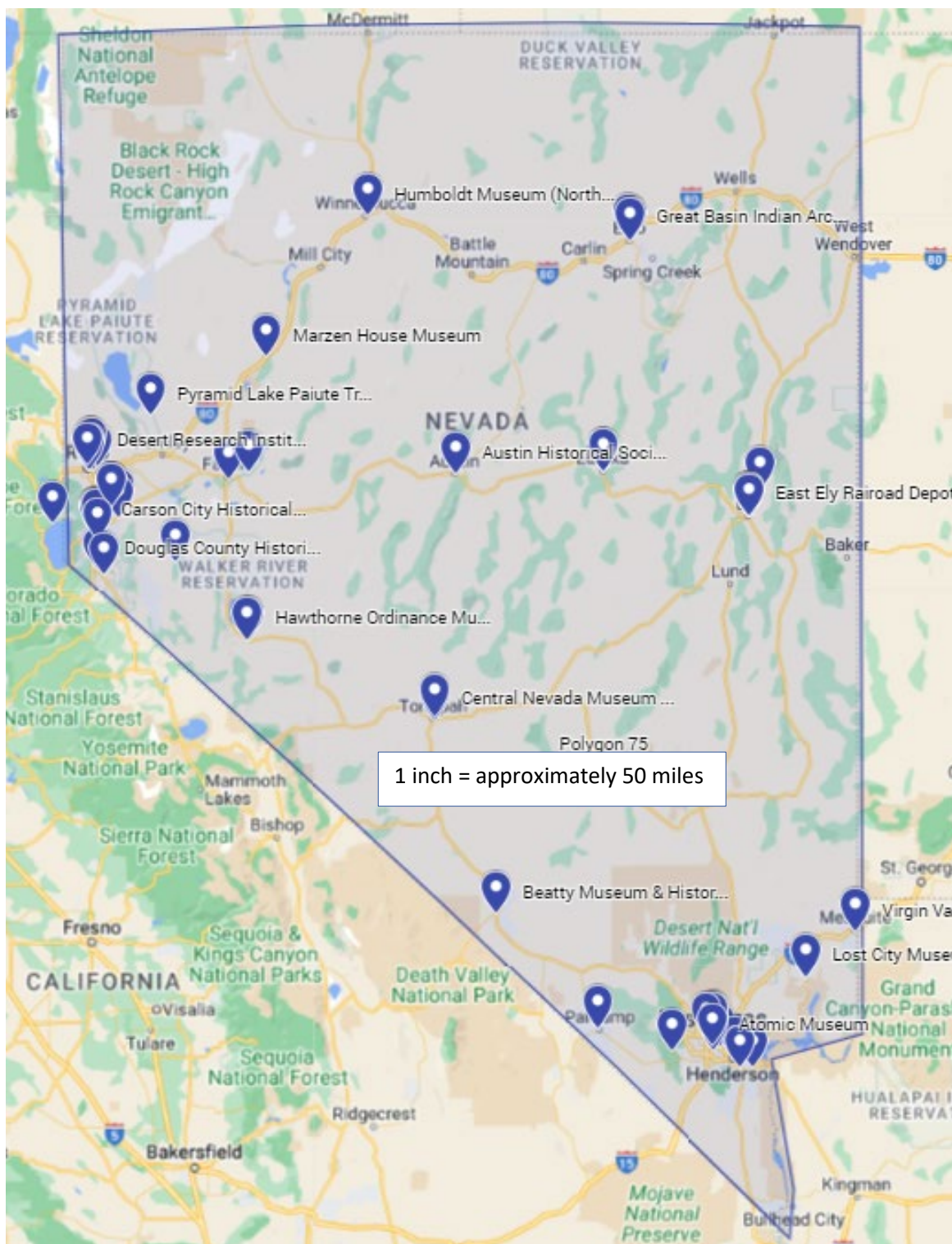
1. Atomic Museum (National Atomic Testing Museum)
2. Austin Historical Society
3. Boulder City Museum & Historical Association (BCMHA)
4. Carson City Historical Society
5. Churchill County Museum
6. City of Henderson
7. Clark County Museum
8. Comstock Foundation for History and Culture
9. Douglas County Historical Society
10. Esmeralda County Recorder Office
11. Friends of Sutro Tunnel Charity
12. Great Basin Indian Archives
13. Historic Fourth Ward School Museum
14. Historical Society of Dayton Valley
15. Las Vegas Convention and Visitor's Authority
16. Las Vegas Natural History Museum
17. Legislative Counsel Bureau Research Library
18. Lost City Museum
19. Lyon County
20. Marzen House Museum
21. Mineral County Museum
22. Nevada Department of Transportation Research Library
23. Nevada Historical Society
24. Nevada Judicial Historical Society
25. Nevada Museum of Art
26. Nevada Northern Railway Museum
27. Nevada State Library, Archives and Public Records
28. Nevada State Museum, Carson City
29. Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas (Cahlan Research Library)
30. Nevada State Railroad Museum, Carson City
31. Nevada State Railroad Museum, Ely
32. Nevada State University
33. Nevada Supreme Court Law Library
34. Noowuh Knowledge Center (Shoshone)
35. North Central Nevada Historical Society – Humboldt Museum
36. Nye County Clerk
37. Pahrump Valley Museum & Historical Society
38. Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Museum and Visitors Center
39. Reno-Sparks Indian Colony
40. Sparks Heritage Foundation & Museum, Inc., dba Sparks Heritage Museum
41. Stewart Indian School Cultural Center & Museum
42. The Hawthorne Ordinance Museum



43. The Mob Museum (National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement)
44. The Neon Museum
45. Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society
46. Tonopah Historic Mining Park
47. Truckee Meadows Community College
48. University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Special Collections and Archives
49. University of Nevada, Reno, Special Collections and University Archives
50. Virgin Valley Heritage Museum
51. Washoe County Law Library
52. Western Folklife Center

## APPENDIX B. Geographic Distribution of Organizations

The map includes the historical records organizations that were invited to respond to the survey except for clerks and recorders, which are present in all seventeen counties.



## APPENDIX C. Comments from Participants

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The final survey question was open-ended. The order of the comments in Appendix C differs from the order of the participants in Appendix A. Square brackets enclose redacted (anonymized) information.

Q42. Please provide your perspective on the greatest need of your organization (supplies, onsite training, travel scholarships, etc.) that SHRAB might be able to help with. Please feel free to also include any additional information that the survey did not touch upon that might help SHRAB better serve your organization.

- Archival supplies needed for document storage. Onsite training for new volunteers, financial aid for support staff.
- Supplies, onsite training, travel scholarships.
- Onsite training.
- Digital preservation training/digital storage, supplies.
- Supplies and training.
- We lack adequate staffing. SHRAB may be able to help with advocacy at the state level for funding for archives organizations.
- Training on how to manage digital records including born digital records and creating digitization plans. Digital preservation.
- Our greatest need to have training for one of more library staff members on basics of archival preservation, storage, and handling of the physical and digital collections and training or assistance to create policies and procedures, including long range planning and disaster recovery, for the collection.
- Our organization would benefit from a best practices training session.
- Access to the recommended tools would be great, particularly long-term storage materials (shelving primarily).
- The [Museum] houses the extensive collection of the [organization] that operated from 1905-1983. The expansive collection contains the records of the company from its organization until it closed. All totaled, there are 462 archival boxes, numerous ledgers, maps, photos, and other materials of miscellaneous sizes.
- We have a wonderful small museum with an eclectic collection of the local past. I am close to retirement and would like to see the museum continue to flourish. We have active community/education programs, however, I feel it would benefit all of us to know more about preserving the papers, discs, tape recordings, etc. To me the foundation which we are still working on of establishing efficient archival area that is created in collections. We are small with over 4000 pieces of varying sizes and one of the best ways for all the artifacts to be seen is to have a rotating system in place. We are challenged with lack of knowledge to preserve items correctly and having the space to do so. We often think outside the box. Insights into other successes and failure would be very useful when we are thinking of our next projects.
- Onsite training for certain types of training needs, travel scholarships for part time staff who are not generally allocated monies for training, specialized supplies and storage for oversized materials. This is beyond SHRAB but we are in need of funding for additional staff as are most organizations in order

to keep up with physical and born digital processing. Again, not a matter for SHRAB, but we are also in need of funding for reformatting of AV material.

- Our lack of providing access to the public is a combination of several factors, most notably a lack of space for someone to access the records and a lack of available staff. Currently, only one person (myself) does almost all of the work related to the collections and I don't always have time to do that. We will do some research into our collections if someone makes a request but cannot provide direct access to the objects.
- Training and travel scholarships.
- Digitization.
- Supplies.
- Supplies, onsite training, help recruiting more volunteers.
- Training, better storage ideas, scholarships.
- Staff and supplies.
- Our organization is in need of archival safe supplies, an archival management system and a dedicated staff member or volunteer to instate and then facilitate our archival holdings.
- Travel and digitization training.
- Management plan.
- At this moment, supplies are the biggest need to properly store materials, this is closely followed by collections furniture.
- We need help with the overall management of our archives.
- Regional training is always helpful (in-person or online).
- We need a new building to house historical archives ([artifact example]), travel expenses for the museum curator (travels every week to Museum).
- Onsite training, supplies, donations for expansion of displays.
- Operational grants for the archives.
- The [Museum] has always been a private non-profit organization but works to collect and preserve the history of the [city], and the surrounding region of [region]. With this mission, multitudes of artifacts, historic documents, photographs, and other materials associated with archives have been collected. Archival supplies are the greatest need, but training, shelving, storage, and digital management information and support are also very important issues we are challenged with presently. Acid free boxes, files, bags, sleeves, and appropriate shelving is our greatest need.
- Supplies and training.
- On-site training; off-site/online training; overhead scanner; storage equipment/supplies for large-format items (maps, etc.) currently in wooden map cases, non-archival boxes, and open shelves.
- After you review my survey I would love any feedback possible to assist in making sure our collections thrive for many years to come.
- The needs for [organization name] center on training on digital preservation and archiving. Additionally, travel scholarships to conferences and training would also be helpful.
- Travel scholarships; training for volunteers.
- We have over 7 million negatives and nearly 450,000 moving images that document primarily [city name], but also the surrounding regions. The majority are not processed, re-housed, or digitized. We could certainly use grants for digitization.

## APPENDIX D. Tables of Select Responses

Appendix D provides selections from the survey responses represented in tabular form for ease of reference. The complete survey responses (spreadsheet of raw data) is available for download on the Nevada State Historical Records Advisory Board's website. The publicly available raw data has been anonymized.

"Q" refers to the corresponding question numbers in the survey instrument (appendix E). "R" refers to the number of responses to the multiple-choice option for a question. "n =" refers to the sample size, reflecting the number of respondents who were expected to answer that question. Total percentages and number of respondents are included when respondents were asked to provide only one response to a question.

### *Q7. Does your organization have set open hours that enable the public to access your records?*

	R	%
Yes, by appointment only	1 6	31.37%
Yes, with some open hours and by appointment	14	27.45%
Yes, we are open to the public (no appointment necessary)	13	25.49%
Other – Virtual research assistance and digital copies are provided, but no in-person public access.	4	7.84%
No	4	7.84%
Total	51	99.99%

Table 1. One of the 52 respondents had been eliminated at this point because they do not hold historical records. Out of 51 remaining respondents, 4 respondents do not allow the public to use their historical records, causing them to fall outside the scope of the survey. Q6; n = 51.

### *Q8. How many hours/week is your organization open to enable public access to your records?*

	R	%
30-40 hours/week	26	55.32%
By appointment only or less than 30 hours per week	20	42.55%
Don't know	1	2.13%
Total	47	100%

Table 2. Q8; n = 47

### *Q10. Do you have an inventory, accession record, catalog record or other formal description documenting each of your collections, records groups, or records series?*

	R	%
Description of collections/records is partially completed	21	44.68%

Descriptions exist for the majority of the collections/records but need updating	12	25.53%
Descriptions are up to date for 90% or more of the collections/records	12	25.53%
No formal descriptions of the collections exist	2	4.26%
Total	47	100%

Table 3. Q10; n = 47.

*Q11. How does the public discover the descriptions of the contents of the historical records your organization holds?*

	R	%
The public must ask staff (no publicly available descriptions are available)	20	42.55%
The public may access collection/record descriptions in person only (paper inventories or finding aids, local computer access to database, collection management system, or other electronic form)	6	12.77%
Less than half of the collections/records have descriptions that are publicly available online	7	14.89%
More than half of the collections/records have descriptions that are publicly available online	2	4.26%
All/almost all collections/records have descriptions that are publicly available online	10	21.28%
Don't know	2	4.26%
	47	100.1%

Table 4. Q11; n = 47.

*Q12. What platform does your organization use to manage and/or publicly display historical records descriptions?*

	R	%
PastPerfect	21	44.68%
Spreadsheets (Excel, etc.)	13	27.6%
Organization's website	12	25.53%
Online library catalog	10	21.28%
Database (Microsoft Access, homegrown, other)	6	12.77%
ArchivesSpace	5	10.64%
Catalogit	2	4.26%
LibGuides	1	2.13%
Helion	1	2.13%
STQRY, Intuiface on touch screen kiosks and social media posts	1	2.13%
OnBase	1	2.13%
Internet Archive	1	2.13%
Claris Filemaker	1	2.13%
Sobek Digital	1	2.13%

NVCRIS	1	2.13%
Word Documents	1	2.13%
Portfolio	1	2.13%

Table 5. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q12; n = 47.

*Q13. How does the public access your historical records?*

	R	%
Historical records (paper and/or digital) are available in-person only and those who cannot visit in-person can request photocopies or scans of records	21	44.68%
In addition to in-person access, less than half of our historical records have been digitized or were born-digital and are available publicly online	20	42.55%
In addition to in-person access, all/almost all of our historical records have been digitized or are born-digital and are available publicly online	2	4.26%
In addition to in-person access, more than half of our historical records have been digitized or were born-digital and are available publicly online	1	2.13%
They fill out a webform with their request and we do the research and send them the assets.	1	2.13%
No in-person access; a percentage of our historical records have been digitized.	1	2.13%
We maintain an online index from 2008 to current	1	2.13%
	47	100.01%

Table 6. Q13; n = 47.

*Q14. What platform does your organization use to publicly display digital versions of its historical records online?*

	R	%
Organization's website	13	27.66%
PastPerfect	9	19.15%
Islandora	2	4.26%
Catalogit	2	4.26%
TV streaming platform, Youtube, Facebook	2	4.26%
OnBase	2	4.26%
CONTENTdm	1	2.13%
Omeka	1	2.13%
InMagic, DBTextworks and WebPublisher	1	2.13%
STQRY, occasionally social media	1	2.13%
One Drive	1	2.13%
LibGuide	1	2.13%
Luna Imaging	1	2.13%

Proficio database	1	2.13%
SobekCM Digital Repository	1	2.13%
ArcGIS	1	2.13%
Don't know	5	2.13%
None/NA	11	2.13%

Table 7. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q14.

*Q15. What category best defines your organization?*

Organization types	R	%
Museum / Museum and historical society or historical association	22	46.81%
Government archives (municipal, county, state, & courts)	7	14.89%
Academic Library (Special collections & archives)	4	8.51%
Historic site / Historic site and historical society	4	8.51%
Historical society	3	6.38%
Cultural heritage center	3	6.38%
Tribal archives or native community archives	2	4.26%
Institutional archives (for profit or non-profit)	1	2.13%
Law library	1	2.13%
Total	47	100%

Table 8. Some write-in responses from multifunctional organizations that selected “other” were normalized according to the main function of the organization. Q15.

*Please report on staff and volunteers working in the department, program, or unit that cares for your historical records. Do not include staff and volunteers that work for the larger parent organization.*

*Q16. Number of full-time staff:*

*Q17. Number of part-time staff (including student workers):*

*Q18. Number of volunteers:*

*Q19. Number of temporary employees (including grant funded staff):*

	R	%
Full-time staff	40	85.11%
Volunteers	29	61.70%
Part-time staff (including student employees)	25	53.19%
Temporary staff	8	17.02%
Don't know	1	2.12%

Table 9. Composition of staffing at participating organizations. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19; n reflects the number of organizations that have at least one of each type of position.



	R	%
Volunteers	309	59.88%
Full-time staff	110	21.31%
Part-time staff (including student employees)	86	16.66%
Temporary staff	11	2.13%
Don't know	n/a	n/a
Total	516	99.98%

Table 10. Table represents the number of individuals employed in each type of position. Percentage is calculated based on the total number of employees reported (516). Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19; n = 47.

*Q20. Have any of your staff or volunteers attended archives-related training/ workshops?*

	R	%
Yes	24	51.06%
No	19	40.43%
Don't know	4	8.51%
Total	47	100%

Table 11. Q20; n = 47.

*Q21. What type of training would most benefit you and your organization?*

	R	%
Preservation/conservation of historical records (best practices and standards for: environmental monitoring; proper enclosures; repair, care, and handling for paper materials, scrapbooks, rare books, photographs, maps, drawings; etc.)	34	72.34%
Arrangement and description of paper records (best practices and standards for: accessioning, processing historical records, creating standardized finding aids or catalog records)	29	61.70%
Digitization of paper records	26	55.32%
Management of electronic historical records (best practices and standards for: ingest, processing, creating standardized finding aids or catalog records, storage, fixity checks, preservation, etc.)	25	53.19%
Collection management (best practices and standards for: policies, collection surveys, working with donors, deeds of gifts, space planning, etc.)	24	51.06%
Emergency preparedness/disaster planning	20	42.55%
Grant writing	19	40.43%
Management of culturally sensitive materials (for example, training in Protocols for Managing Native American Archival materials)	17	36.17%
Don't know	1	2.13%

Table 12. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q21; n = 47.

*Q22. Which best reflects your organization’s technical environment and information technology (IT) support?*

	R	%
Shared IT support	21	44.68%
In-house IT support	16	34.04%
Combination of in-house IT support + another form of IT support	4	8.51%
External IT support	1	2.13%
No IT support	4	8.51%
Don’t know	1	2.13%
Total	47	100%

Table 13. One response contradicted itself and was normalized to “Don’t know.” Q22; n = 47.

*Q23. How much money did your organization spend on archival supplies last year in FY23 or calendar year 2022?*

	R	%
\$0 - \$100	8	17.02%
>\$100 – 500	9	19.15%
>\$500 – 1,000	3	6.38%
>\$1,000 – 1,500	7	14.89%
>\$1,500 – 2,000	4	8.51%
>\$2,000 – 5,000	4	8.51%
>\$5,000 and over	5	10.64%
Don’t know	7	14.89%
Total	47	99.99%

Table 14. Q23; n = 47.

*Q24. What archival supplies and preservation-related equipment would your organization most benefit from but cannot purchase because of budget limitations?*

	R	%
Archival boxes	20	42.55%
Clear photograph sleeves	16	34.04%
Shelving	15	31.91%
Archival folders	14	29.79%
Disaster recovery/emergency supplies	9	19.15%
Humidity and temperature dataloggers	6	12.77%
Dehumidifiers	4	8.51%
Humidifiers	4	8.51%
Public visitor/researcher lockers	4	8.51%
Other: Acid free tissue paper	1	2.13%
Other: Map cabinets, bookshelves, filing cabinets	1	2.13%

Other: Server space	1	2.13%
Other: Retrofit/expansion of automated retrieval system	1	2.13%
Other: Book scanner, color calibration chart	1	2.13%
Other: Paint and restoration materials	1	2.13%
Other: Preservation of old books and newspapers	1	2.13%
None	8	17.02%
Don't know	5	10.64%

Table 15. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Several of the “Other” write-in responses fall outside the scope of the question but were retained for informational purposes. Q24; n=47.

*Q25. Does your organization currently possess and use any of the following technical equipment?*

	R	%
Computer(s)	46	97.87%
Photocopier	36	76.60%
Scanner: standard flatbed	35	74.47%
Scanner: sheet-fed	25	53.19%
Lightbox for viewing transparencies	19	40.43%
Microfilm reader	16	34.04%
Scanner: oversized flatbed	15	31.91%
Overhead digital camera / scanner	12	25.53%
Scanner: drum roll scanner	2	4.26%
Slide scanner	1	2.13%
Don't know	1	2.13%

Table 16. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q25; n = 47.

*Q26. What is the approximate total size of your physical historical records?*

	R	%
Approximately 30 cubic feet	1	2.13%
Approximately 116 linear feet	1	2.13%
248 linear feet	1	2.13%
400 cubic feet	1	2.13%
Approximately 500 cubic feet	1	2.13%
Approximately 700 cubic feet	1	2.13%
1100 linear feet	1	2.13%
1100 cubic feet	1	2.13%
1800 square feet	1	2.13%
approximately 3,500 cubic feet on known records	1	2.13%
16268	1	2.13%

Approximately 19,000 linear ft.	1	2.13%
19,700	1	2.13%
1500-2500 If estimated	1	2.13%
6x6' floor to ceiling	1	2.13%
3000? don't know	1	2.13%
Don't know	31	65.96%
Total	47	100.04%

Table 17. In the report, the response "3000? don't know" was normalized to "don't know." Q26, n = 47.

*Q27. What is the approximate total size of your electronic records? Please report the extent of your electronic historical records in gigabytes. Count unique electronic records only. Do not count copies or digital versions of paper records that have been retained. Enter zero if your holdings do not include electronic records. If you are unsure, please write in, "Don't know."*

	R	%
0	1	2.13%
2 GB	1	2.13%
120 [GB]	1	2.13%
500 GB	1	2.13%
505.57 GB	1	2.13%
2 TB	1	2.13%
2.7 TB (2,700GB)	1	2.13%
In the terabytes	1	2.13%
Accessioned over 4000, documents, photos and objects	1	2.13%
Around 2 million born digital images and 400,000 born digital moving images	1	2.13%
Don't know; minimal; Don't know-very few uniquely electronic records; Don't know-likely in the millions of images; would need to check	37	78.72%
Total	47	100.02%

Table 18. Q27, n = 47.

*Q28 What formats of historical records does your organization currently hold?*

	R	%
Bound materials (scrapbooks, ledgers, journals, diaries, photograph albums, pamphlets, etc.)	47	100%
Unbound sheets (correspondence, broadsides, maps, architectural drawings, etc.)	44	95.7%
Photographs and images (any format)	43	91.49%
Digitized records (records that have been digitized from physical records in your holdings or from your community and added to your holdings)	39	82.98%
Floppy discs, CDs, DVDs, hard drives	38	80.85%

Moving images (any format)	31	65.96%
Recorded sound (any format)	30	63.83%
Born-digital records (electronic records that were created in the digital environment and have no physical counterpart in your holdings)	22	46.81%
Other: Artifacts	1	2.13%

Table 19. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q28, n = 47.

*Q29. To provide SHRAB with a better understanding of how the subject matter of your historical records related to the history of Nevada, which of the following areas reflect the content of your organization's holdings?*

	R	%
Nevada history – local	39	82.98%
Mining	27	57.45%
Cultural heritage – general	27	57.45%
Nevada history – general	25	53.19%
Built environment (architectural drawings, deeds, building records, etc.)	25	53.19%
Railroads	24	51.06%
Politics & government	21	44.68%
Water, land, and environmental issues	21	44.68%
Education	20	42.55%
Agricultural, animal husbandry, and ranching	17	36.17%
Arts (visual and performing)	17	36.17%
Law/Courts	17	36.17%
Community – ethnic/racial	16	34.04%
Natural history	14	29.79%
Gaming (gambling) including Tribal gaming	13	27.66%
Community – religious	11	23.40%
Vital records (birth, marriage, death)	11	23.40%
Civil rights/discrimination	8	17.02%
Non-Nevada records	7	14.89%
Community – LGBTQ+	5	10.64%
Other: Archaeology	2	4.26%
Other: Land records	1	2.13%
Other: Transportation	1	2.13%
Other: Sutro Tunnel, Adolph Sutro, Comstock mining region	1	2.13%
Other: Native American Cultural items	1	2.13%

Table 20. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q29, n = 47.

*Q30. If you chose LGBTQ+, religious, and/or ethnic/racial community in the previous question, please specify subgroups of those communities here if appropriate.*

	R	%
Indigenous, Native American, Tribal	8	17.02%
AAPI: Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese	7	14.89%
European/Eastern European: Italian, Slavic, Basque	5	10.64%
Local churches/religions: Jewish, Catholic, Episcopalian, Baptist, Mormon	5	10.64%
African American	3	6.38%
Local LGBT	2	4.26%
Latinx	1	2.13%
American West	1	2.13%
Fieldwork around the West	1	2.13%

Table 21. Q30 was open to 47 organizations; 13 organizations responded that they hold historical records about community groups. Responses from a single organization often included more than one type of community group. Percentages are calculated based on all 47 respondents (the sample size). Q30; n = 47.

*Q31. Does your organization monitor and collect data on the humidity and temperature of the spaces where historical records are stored?*

	R	%
Yes	34	72.34%
No	13	27.66%
Total	47	100%

Table 22. Q31; n = 47.

*Q33. Does your organization have any plans in place?*

	R	%
Collection disaster recovery plan	16	34.04%
Continuity of operations plan	14	29.79%
Long-range preservation plan	12	25.53%
None	15	31.91%
Don't know	5	19.64%
Other: Fire suppression system, backup of PastPerfect	1	2.13%
Other: Needs updating	1	2.13%

Table 23. Respondents were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q33; n = 47.

*Q35. Do any of your plans include digital preservation?*

	R	%
Yes	25	53.19%
No	11	23.40%
Don't know	11	23.40%
Total	47	99.99%

Table 24. Q3; n = 47.

*Q36. Where are your organization's physical historical records stored?*

	R	%
On-site: closed area (the public does not have access, and materials need to be retrieved by staff or volunteers)	42	89.36%
Shelves, metal	36	76.60%
Filing cabinets (vertical files)	36	76.60%
Acid-free boxes and folders	33	70.21%
Exhibition cases	24	51.06%
Map cases (oversized flat files)	23	48.94%
Flat files	22	46.81%
Hanging on walls	19	40.43%
On-site, open area (public has open access to materials)	14	29.79%
Off-site, in a building owned or rented by the organization	9	19.15%
Offsite in other Museum's holdings	1	2.13%
Non-archival boxes and folders	17	36.17%
Shelves, wooden	14	29.79%
On-site: open area (the public has open access and materials do not need to be retrieved by staff or volunteers)	14	29.79%
On floors	8	17.02%
On tables, chairs	7	14.89%
Off-site, in someone's private house, garage, storage unit, trailer, barn, etc.	5	10.64%

Table 25. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Responses show that there are mixtures of both proper and improper storage practices even within a single organization. The shaded cells represent improper storage practices. Q36; n = 47.

*Q37. Where are your electronic historical records currently stored?*

	R	%
Server	31	65.96%
External drive/media (floppy discs, CDs, DVDs, hard drives)	29	61.70%
Local computer	26	55.32%
Cloud	20	42.55%

Mainframe in another building	1	2.13%
Don't know	3	6.38%

Table 26. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q37; n = 31.

*Q38. Are your electronic records regularly backed up?*

	R	%
Yes	30	63.83%
No	8	17.02%
Don't know	9	19.15%
	47	100%

Table 27. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q38; n = 47.

*Q40. Is your organization vulnerable to any types of natural disasters?*

	R	%
Drought/extreme heat	35	74.47%
Earthquakes	28	59.57%
Winter storms (snow, ice, hail, frozen pipes)	27	57.45%
Floods (including flash floods)	26	55.32%
High winds	25	53.19%
Wildfires	23	48.94%
Tornadoes	1	2.13%
Hurricanes	0	
None of the above	4	8.51%

Table 28. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q34; n = 47.

*Q41. Does your organization have security measures in place to prevent vandalism and/or theft of your historical records?*

	R	%
Control of who has access to keys	39	82.98%
Traditional physical key/lock	39	82.98%
Staff presence in research area when public visitors are present	34	72.34%
Security cameras	33	70.21%
Security alarms	28	59.57%
Sign-in procedures/in-person public researcher registration	21	44.68%
Keypad or keycard entry	16	34.04%



Security guards (making rounds, posted at checkpoints such as entrances/exits)	14	29.79%
Lockers for public researchers to store personal belongings while using the records	6	12.77%
None of the above	1	2.13%

Table 29. Participants were instructed to select all answers that applied; therefore, the total percentage exceeds 100. Q41; n = 47.

## Appendix E. Invitation and Survey Instrument

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July 6, 2023

Hello from the State Historical Records Advisory Board!

I'm writing to introduce myself and learn about how the [State Historical Records Advisory Board](#) (SHRAB) can support you in your work to preserve and provide access to documentation of Nevada's history. My name is Cyndi Shein and I'm the Nevada State Archivist and Coordinator of SHRAB.

There are many organizations across the state caring for materials that tell the remarkable story of Nevada's history. We're all doing the best we can to care for the materials in our custody using the knowledge and resources we have. Many operate on a shoestring budget with very small staff or only one staff person. SHRAB would like to help.

SHRAB is eligible to apply for federal grants that can be used in a variety of ways. In 2023 SHRAB obtained a small grant to fund five modest competitive scholarships to support training staff from Nevada organizations that preserve historical records. (For more information on eligibility and how to apply, please see the scholarship announcement <https://nsla.nv.gov/blog/Historical-Records-Education-Scholarship-2023>.) The federal grant funds also support a statewide survey that will help us identify how we can best serve you in your role as custodians of Nevada's historical records. Your response to the survey will help inform SHRAB's next federal funding request. SHRAB may be able to obtain federal funding to provide free workshops or to help you with small one-time purchases of supplies or equipment.

In order to focus and prioritize SHRAB's activities and future funding requests, we need your input. We invite you to complete a survey to help SHRAB get to know your organization and its needs. The survey will likely require 20-25 minutes of your time. It is available here: <https://forms.gle/R3A34DjbrPv21dQf6>

We ask that each organization only fill out the survey once. We encourage you to forward the survey link to other organizations that might not have received this email.

We ask you to **please complete the survey by July 25**. If you need help completing the survey online, please email Ellen Ryan at [RyanPreserves@gmail.com](mailto:RyanPreserves@gmail.com). If you are unable to take the survey online, please email or call me (contact info below) and I will be happy to mail you a paper copy.

Thank you for taking care of our region's historical records. I hope that you will take the time to fill out the survey so that your voice is heard.

Thank you,

*Cyndi Shein*

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