Who Searches Archives Online? Results From a User Survey from 12 State and Regional Archival Finding Aid Aggregators (NAFAN)

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SAA Research Forum 2021
Researchers

Collection descriptions
(“finding aids”)
Researchers

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Functions

• Inclusive
  – Low-barriers to participation
  – Formats beyond Encoded Archival Description (EAD)

• Extensive
  – Continually updated registry
  – Regardless of whether or not they have finding aids

• Primary or supplemental platform
  – Supports comprehensive aggregation of finding aids
  – Integration with related context and content

https://confluence.ucop.edu/display/NAFAN/Project+Reports+and+Resources
Research Question

What are the needs of both researchers regarding finding aid aggregation?
Data that describes need

• **Demographics:** where are researchers located? How old are they? What is their profession?

• **Purpose for researching:** Why are they using the aggregation site?

• **Behaviors:** How frequently do they visit the site? Do they use other sites for their search? If yes, which ones?
Purpose
• Capture data on users of online aggregators
• Identify potential interviewees for qualitative analysis

Design
• Hosted by 12 aggregators
• Convenience sample
  • Opt-in
• Opened March 18 - Closed on May 31
• ~3,300 responses
Survey Questions

- Demographics
- How the user found the aggregator
- Purpose for research
- Type of material wanted for research
- Preference for digital vs. physical materials
- Impact of COVID on research
Results: Demographic

- Profession: Most users are retired (20%)
- Age: Most users over 55 (56.9%)
Results: Purpose & Material Preference

- Personal interest most common (31%)
- Any material related to project most desired (58.5%)
- Digital material preferred over physical material (57.1%)
Results: Search Behavior

- Aggregator most commonly found through browser search (44%)
- Most commonly first time using an archival aggregator site (55%)
Key Takeaways

• Aggregator most commonly found through browser search (44%)
• Personal interest most common (31%)
• Most commonly first time (55%)
• Profession: Most users are retired (20%)
Next Steps

- Cluster analysis
- Semi-structured interviews
- Persona development
Thanks! Now live Q&A…