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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

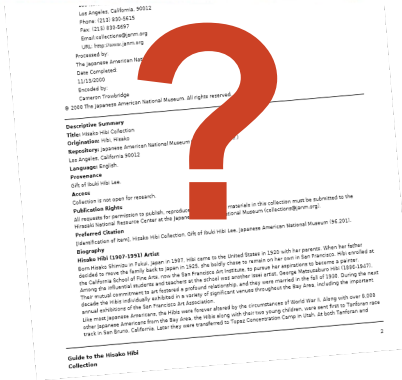


History of Medicine Finding Aids Consortium

Archival Resources in Wisconsin



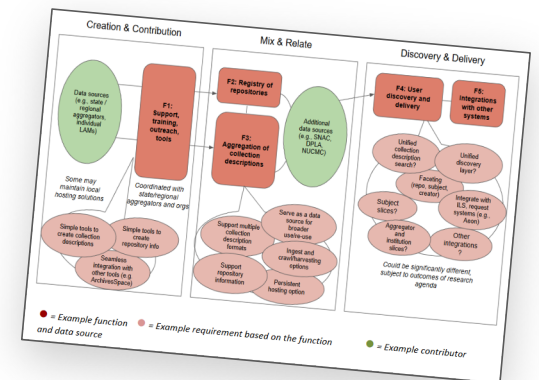
Researchers



Collection descriptions (“finding aids”)

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?

Survey Methods

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...