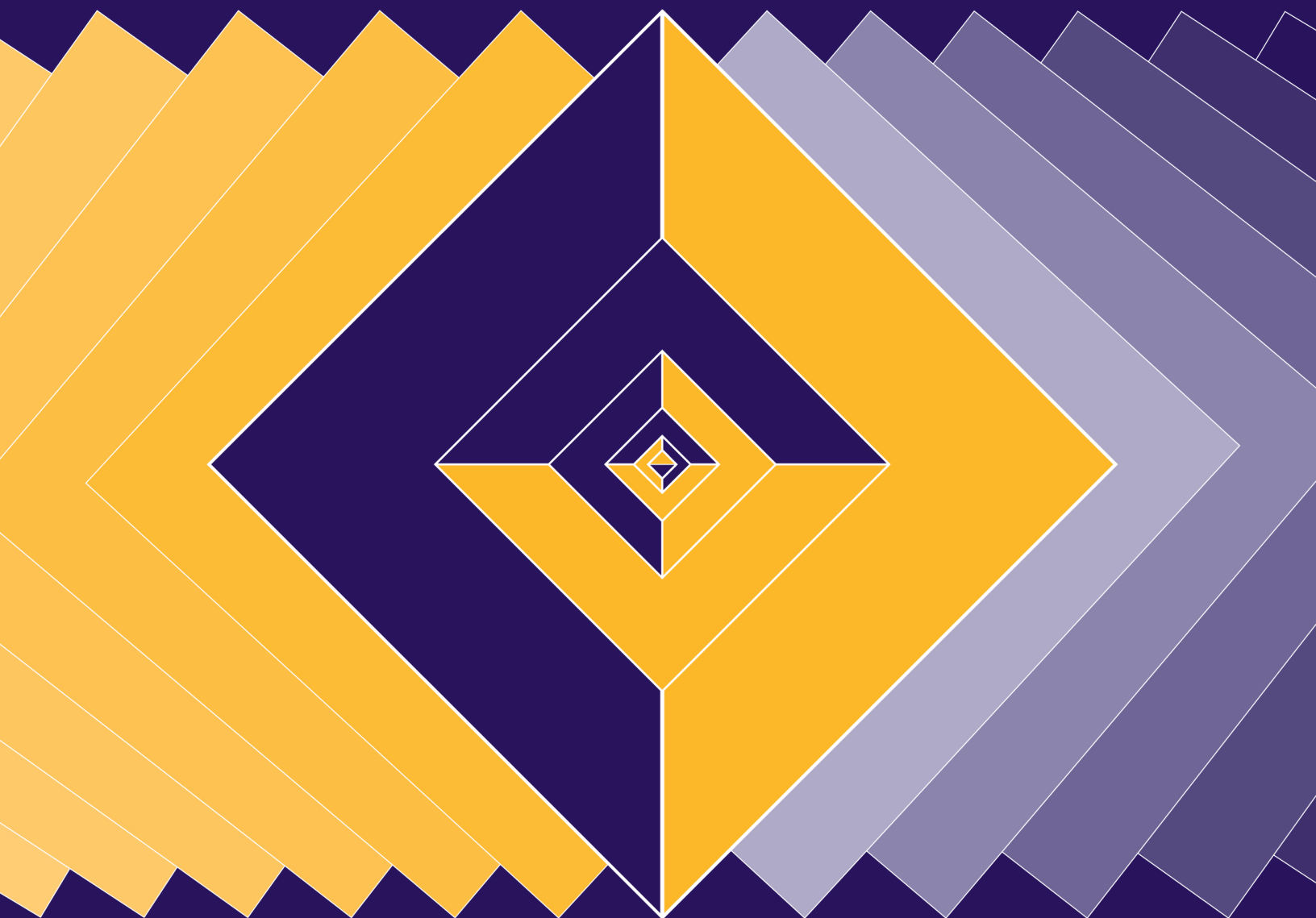




Kit 335

Digital Image Collections and Services
August 2013



ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES

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SURVEY RESULTS

Executive Summary	13
Survey Questions and Responses	21
Responding Institutions	64

REPRESENTATIVE DOCUMENTS

Digital Image Collections

Auburn University	
Auburn University Digital Library	68
Boston Public Library	
Flickr Photostream	69
Boston University	
Photographic Resource Center. NEO northeast exposure online	70
University of Florida	
UFDC: University of Florida Digital Collections	71
Indiana University	
Image Collections Online	72
University of Louisville	
Digital Collections	73
University of Maryland	
Welcome to Digital Collections	74
McGill University	
Digital exhibitions & collections	75
McMaster University	
McMaster University Library Digital Collections	76
National Library of Medicine	
Images from the History of Medicine (IHM)	77
University of Pennsylvania	
DigitalPenn	78

University of South Carolina	
University Libraries Digital Collections	79
Temple University	
Digital Collections	80
University of Washington	
Digital Collections	82
Washington University in St. Louis	
Modern Graphic History Library	83
University of Wisconsin	
University of Wisconsin Digital Collections	84
Yale University	
Robert B. Haas Family Visual Resources Collection	85

Shared Digital Image Collections

Alabama Mosaic	
About Alabama Mosaic	88
Arizona Memory Project	
Homepage	89
Calisphere	
Homepage	90
Civil War in the American South	
Welcome page	91
University of Colorado at Boulder	
Digital Library	92
Digital Library of the Caribbean	
Homepage	93
LOUISiana Digital Library	
Welcome page	94

Digital Image Service Points

Brown University	
Digital Production Services	96
University of Calgary	
Digital Media Commons	100
University of Colorado at Boulder	
Visual Resources Center	101
University of Florida	
Digital Collection Services	102
University of Michigan	
Digital Library Production Service (DLPS)	104
Northwestern University	
Digital Collections Department	105

University of Virginia	
SHANTI: Sciences, Humanities & Arts Network of Technological Initiatives	106
University of Washington	
Visual Services /Image Library	107

Digital Image Finding Aids

University of British Columbia	
Medical Images & Multimedia Resources	110
Brown University	
Finding and Using Images	112
Cornell University	
Images: A Guide to Finding Visual Resources	113
Library of Congress	
Prints & Photographs Reading Room. Collection Guides & Finding Aids	114
University of Michigan	
Research Guides: Images.....	115
Northwestern University	
Digital Images	116

Instruction/Training Materials

University of California, Irvine	
Visual Literacy	118
University of California, San Diego	
FAQ UCSD Libraries Digital Collections Website.....	119
National Library of Medicine	
FAQs. Images from the History of Medicine (IHM)	122
Northwestern University	
Training and Media Lab.....	124
University of Washington	
Images Research Guide	125
Yale University	
Visual Resources Collections.....	126

Promoting Digital Collections

Brown University	
Curio blog	128
University of Florida	
Basic Marketing Plan Components for Promoting New Digital Collections.....	129
University of Hawaii	
Ke Kukini: The Newsletter of UH Manoa Library. Collection News	131
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	
Aga Kahn Documentation Center Facebook page.....	132

University of Texas at Austin	
Deep Focus blog	133
Washington University in St. Louis	
What's New blog	134

Collection/Selection Policies

University of Alabama	
Selection Policies and Procedures	136
University of British Columbia	
Digital Initiatives. Documentation.....	139
Georgia Institute of Technology	
Georgia Tech Archives and Records Management Collection Development Policy	141
University of Hawaii	
Prioritization and Selection Criteria	146
University of South Carolina	
Selection Criteria for Digital Projects	148

Copyright and Use Rights Policies

University of Calgary	
Copyright and Images	150
Case Western Reserve University	
Copyright@Case	151
University of Colorado at Boulder	
Copyright Policies for Collection Managers	152
Digital Library of the Caribbean	
Guide to Permissions & Copyright/Public Domain Review.....	153
University of Florida	
Permissions	159
Indiana University Bloomington	
Using Images.....	162
Library of Congress	
Copyright and Other Restrictions That Apply to Publication/Distribution of Images.....	163
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	
Using Images: Copyright & Fair Use	164
University of Ottawa	
Audiovisuals and Newspapers. Copyright for Images	165
University of South Carolina	
General Policies for Provision of Images and Permissions for Image Use	166
Temple University	
Visual Literacy. Copyright.....	167
Virginia Tech	
Digital Library and Archives. Conditions of Use	168

University of Washington	
Images Research Guide. Ethical Use & Copyright	170
Yale University	
Copyright & Citation Help	172

Privacy and Publicity Policies

National Library of Medicine	
Patron Guide to Copyright and Historical Materials: Privacy and Publicity Rights	176

Managing Digital Assets

University of Alabama	
Preservation Plan for Digital Images	178
Northwestern University	
Hydra. Digital Image Library	182
Washington University in St. Louis	
Digital Project Support Framework	184

SELECTED RESOURCES

Books, Reports, and Journal Articles	193
Standards	194
Websites	194



SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The growth of digital image collections has provided new opportunities for teaching, learning, and research at research institutions and has transformed the role of ARL member libraries with respect to the provision of visual resources and services. The last decade has seen the transition from analog to digital images and the growth of digital images available from commercial vendors and/or created within institutions or their libraries. This is in large part a response to increasing demand for digital multimedia to augment teaching, learning, and research endeavours across an array of disciplines.

The purpose of this survey was to examine how research libraries and their parent institutions have responded to these developments. It gathered information about current practices relating to the development and management of institutional digital image collections and the acquisition and use of licensed image databases. It explored the infrastructure and support provided by research libraries and/or their institutions with respect to the creation and use of digital images in teaching, learning and research including systems and platforms, cataloguing and metadata, access and training, services and service points, and copyright and other rights issues. It also sought to identify collaborative strategies amongst ARL member institutions for the provision of digital images.

Eighty-one libraries at 72 of the 125 ARL member libraries submitted a survey between April 15 and May 27 for a response rate of 58%. The survey revealed a vast range of activities relating to digital images at these institutions, from the digitization of analog collections to the creation of born-digital images. Digital

images are created and/or purchased in a wide range of disciplines and used by a broad range of users across institutions. Archives and Special Collections units are heavily involved in digitizing local collections and actively promoting these collections. There appears to be a shift away from an emphasis on the creation of images for teaching purposes to the creation of images promoted as institutional assets. Responsibility for the management of digital images varies from institution to institution with relatively few respondents reporting a coordinated and integrated approach.

Digital Asset Management Plans

Digitization and preservation are the most common activities comprising digital asset management plans (DAMP). Only 30 respondents (37%) indicated that the institution has an overarching digital asset management plan. As might be expected, activities falling under these plans that were common to all respondents include the digitization and preservation of existing analog collections (100% and 80% respectively). After that, less frequently addressed activities include licensing of commercial digital image products, and acquiring digital images through gifts (16 responses each, or 53%). Ten plans (33%) address purchasing of digital image collections. Other activities include cataloguing digital images and placing images in online databases.

Of the 30 institutions that have an existing digital asset management plan, the unit(s) or department(s) responsible for the implementation of the plan are distributed across an array of sectors. Eleven respondents identified some variation on Archives and Special Collections. Not surprisingly, 21 respondents

listed units whose names include the word “digital,” ranging from the now prosaic “Digital Initiatives” to “Digital Curation Services,” “Digital Consulting and Production Services,” “Digital Stewardship,” “Digital Conversion and Media Reformatting,” and similar.

In comments, several of those who responded that they had a Digital Assets Management Plan in place qualified their response by saying that the plan is either new, a work in progress, or not yet fully adopted. This was echoed by those who responded in the negative, with one caveat stating that this should “not be taken to imply that we are not doing any of these activities such a plan might outline; it simply means that we have not codified these activities in the form of a policy or plan.”

Categories of Digital Images

All but two respondents indicated that their library has locally digitized some or all of their analog collections. This is likely a reflection of the shift from slide to online images. A majority of respondents (69, or 86%) also indicated that they subscribe to commercial, licensed collections of digital images (provided from a vendor such as ARTstor). A majority of libraries (68, or 85%) are also involved in locally creating born-digital images. In addition, some libraries indicated that they have acquired born-digital images from a vendor, or from a donor. Some institutions have had their analog images digitized by an external third party, and in some cases by a commercial vendor.

Licensed collections make up the vast majority of digital images in the fine arts (including architecture) (55, or 71%), which is likely a reference to ARTstor and architecture-related database subscriptions held by academic libraries. Digitized analog images are most common in the humanities (47, or 61%) and social sciences (37, or 49%). While a fairly large number of respondents reported having no digital images in medical and science fields, this is most likely because they were not reporting on the holdings of separate medical and science libraries. When asked to indicate the current level of growth of digital collections in each subject area, the majority of respondents reported medium to high growth in the humanities. For fine arts and social sciences, the majority reported low to medium growth. Low to no growth was most

frequently reported for digital images in the sciences and medicine.

The examples of web pages for digital collections and digital image finding aids in the representative documents section of this SPEC Kit also reveal rich collections spanning many subject areas.

Collaboration

The library takes the majority of responsibility for the creation and purchase of digital images and associated activities such as digitizing analog images (74, or 94%), negotiating the purchase/use of licensed collections (71, or 97%), and negotiating individual agreements with image rights holders (70, or 96%). The creation of born-digital images is an activity that is often shared with other units. Forty-seven respondents reported that the library has responsibility for this activity and 22 of those report other units that also create born-digital images. Eighteen others report that only non-library units create such images. Other related activities include acquisition of born-digital special collections, digitizing audio and video, and grant applications.

In addition to the museum/gallery, the most common “other units” that have responsibility for the creation and purchase of digital images are academic departments and units. These are usually art department visual resources centers and archival units, but also a wide range of other departments such as anthropology, nautical archeology, veterinary medicine and biodiversity research. There has been a movement away from stand-alone departmental collections to institution-wide collections. In some cases images are both created and managed by these other units; in others they are created within other units but hosted and managed by the library. A number of institutions also reported a digital media/information technology unit responsible for digitization services and a marketing and communications department involved with the creation and digitization of images. University counsel at several of the responding institutions is involved in negotiating rights agreements. External partnerships were also reported. In one case community organizations identified images for digitization; in another, historical societies and state archives were involved in digitization activities.

The library also appears to take principal responsibility for digital image management activities, including creating metadata for images (74, or 99%), hosting image collections (73, or 97%), cataloguing images (71, or 99%), and negotiating image use permissions (68, or 97%). Other units that play a major role in management activities include the museum/gallery, academic departments (with art departments most frequently cited), and campus IT departments. Other management activities mentioned include asset management, digital preservation, and evaluation of systems. An integrated and coordinated approach was described by one institution: "All units in the university contribute to the digital collections with digital images related to their units and research, including digitized images and born-digital curated images. The online repository or digital asset management system tools allow for easy ingest of existing data and ease of creating new metadata/catalog records. The Libraries also have a well-developed permissions process with full documentation that is regularly done by all partners." External organizations also have responsibility for digital asset management activities. One respondent explained, "Institutional repository is hosted by commercial vendor; metadata for licensed resources may be purchased or provided by vendor; metadata for institutional repository may be supplied by author." A unique approach was cited by one respondent where cataloguing of images and creation of metadata were "crowdsourced" using "scholars familiar with content contained/captured by image," and an "optimization consultant helps with aggregating information for potential metadata inclusion."

A majority of respondents (54, or 67%) collaborate with consortia to acquire, create, or manage digital image collections. State-/province-wide consortia and research library consortia are the most frequent partners, and their most common activity is license negotiation. State-/province-wide consortia are also likely to host image collections, digitize analog images, and create metadata. A little more than half of the responding libraries share digital image collections with other institutions. These are often state-/province-wide collaborations where partners contribute images to specialized or subject specific projects of common interest that are hosted by a particular

institution. Partners include universities, libraries, museums, and cultural institutions. Descriptions of some of these shared collections are provided in the web pages for shared digital collections in the representative documents section.

Storage and Delivery

The responding institutions employ a variety of storage and delivery solutions for digital images and many take advantage of multiple solutions at once. These include commercial database providers such as ARTstor (60, or 74%), local servers available within the institution (50, or 62%), and repository solutions, both open source (49, or 61%) and proprietary (36, or 44%). Almost an equal number of respondents use open source software (29, or 36%), a shared digital repository (28, or 35%), and public photo sharing sites (28, or 35%). Some respondents mentioned open source and cloud-based solutions including DuraCloud, Glaciercloud, and SobekCM.

The most frequently reported delivery method used by the library to provide access to digital image databases/resources primarily for teaching and research is online access to a digital repository system (74, or 91%), followed by online exhibition (61, or 75%), database search engine (51, or 63%), web site browse/directory (50, or 62%), search and discovery layer that allows for searching for images within e-resources (47, or 58%), and third-party access and delivery system (58%). One respondent reported posting images and metadata on Flickr. Images are also delivered to users via Dropbox, email attachments, DVDs, and hard drives. Meanwhile, specialized digital image collections that are being developed by units such as archives and special collections use a variety of web-based tools, Omeka being one frequently reported example, to promote as well as provide access to their images.

Services

With respect to service points that support the use of digital image databases/resources at their institution, the most frequently reported is a specialized unit located in the main library (50, or 63%), followed by a specialized unit located in a branch or subject library (37, or 46%). Several respondents noted that access to

images is accessible from any location and that all service points provide support for digital images and databases. Usually, the library or department most directly related to the content matter of the images, especially as relates to the creation of those images, takes responsibility for providing support for the use of the images. The most frequently reported specialized units were visual resources centers located within the art history department, archives and special collections, and digital library services units. Digital library service units usually provide support for a wide range of digitization activities, including those relating to images. Staff in archives and special collections and digital library services units usually provide support for the use of locally created digital images, while staff at the library reference desk provide help with the use of licensed image databases/resources. For those institutions with no specialized service point, support is provided at the reference desk. Although not expressly stated, it appears the main library is gradually assuming responsibilities that historically used to be the domain of departmental visual resources centres. A typical scenario was provided by one respondent: "There are various units, groups, and people that support the use of different digital image databases/resources for different support needs. This is done, to some degree, by all faculty and staff in the libraries."

The most common service provided for users is finding/locating images (77, or 97%) followed by assisting with copyright, citing, and permissions (73, or 92%), creating images (i.e., scanning, digitizing) (92%), using local/institutional image databases/resources (72, or 91%), using licensed image databases/resources (69, or 87%), and saving and storing images (65, or 82%). Other services include providing access to software to create images, assisting with editing and printing of images, and creating metadata to support findability. A range of units are responsible for providing these services, but again the main library and branch/subject libraries are most often the service providers. Other units include digital/IT services, special collections and archives, and university counsel/copyright. Several respondents reported a media commons unit both within and outside the library that assist students and faculty with "creative uses of technology." Also reported were digitization units

that were responsible for coordinating and overseeing large-scale digitization projects.

Respondents did not generally distinguish between web pages as finding aids, promotional tools, or instruction/training tools. Often the same web pages provide multiple functions or serve as a starting point. Web pages are generally visually dynamic and used to promote local collections by presenting them in meaningful ways, thematically or by providing additional context. They usually describe and provide access to a range of digital collections in addition to digital images. Many web pages include thematic essays, links to exhibitions, bibliographies, and other collections. A web page is the most common finding aid provided for locating digital image databases/resources (72, or 91%), followed by a LibGuide (62, or 79%). Web pages usually offer access to digital collections through basic and advanced search tools and browsing. Numerous respondents mentioned the use of archival findings aids, usually encoded archival descriptions. Also reported were the Archon archival system, videos and electronic bulletin boards, and online catalogue and discovery layers.

Web pages provided by the library/visual resources staff are the most common method of instruction/training for the use of digital image databases/resources (59, or 79%), followed by workshops provided by the library/visual resources staff (52, or 69%), web pages provided by licensed image database provider (39, or 52%), and web-based tutorials provided by a licensed image database provider (28, or 37%). Many web pages link directly to the ARTstor website or training tools. Respondents also mentioned LibGuides, in-class instruction, individual consultations, and reference desk assistance. One respondent mentioned a webcast of one-time live presentations made available on the institution's website.

A web page is the most common method used to promote digital image databases/resources (77, or 95%), followed by LibGuide (59, or 73%), listserv/electronic mail list (32, or 40%), and newsletter (29, or 36%). There were a large number of other methods reported (27, or 33%). Social media including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Social Pin are often used as a method to promote digital images databases/resources and highlight new acquisitions or newly

digitized collections. Also frequently reported are blogs, conference presentations, webcasts, videos and press releases. Specific user groups (students, faculty, etc.) are targeted by subject librarians and other staff.

Policies and Procedures

The majority of respondents reported that digital images are not explicitly addressed in a collection development policy (48, or 62%). About a quarter report that digital images are addressed in a general collection development policy. Seven (9%) report that digital images are addressed in an electronic resources collection policy. Only six have a separate digital images policy. As the representative documents reveal, digital images usually fall under a broader digitization policy.

The majority of libraries who responded to the survey provide copyright guidelines regarding the use of digital images (71, or 88%), acknowledging the importance of managing rights to minimize risk to the institution and its users, and to protect the rights of the copyright holder. The library itself typically implements the guidelines (63, or 93%). About a third of these share this responsibility with the parent institution. Four report that the parent institution has sole responsibility for implementation. A majority of the responding libraries, however, do not provide privacy and publicity guidelines with respect to use of digital images (49, or 61%), highlighting a gap in policies.

There is an increasing use of standards to catalog and classify images, yet no one standard prevails. Respondents reported using a wide variety of content standards to describe digital images, with the Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus the most frequent response (52, or 65%). About half use the Library of Congress Thesaurus for Graphic Materials and AACR2. About a third use the Getty Union List of Artist Names, Cataloging Cultural Objects, and/or DACS. Ten use ICONCLASS. Among the other standards are the LC subject headings and name authorities file, local guidelines, RDA: Resource Description and Access, and RAD: Rules for Archival Description. Only four respondents (5%) indicated that they use no content standard at all.

The most frequently reported metadata standard used to describe digital images is Dublin Core (65, or 83%). Half use the Encoded Archival Description

standard. VRA Core (hosted by the Library of Congress in partnership with the Visual Resources Association) is used almost as frequently as EAD (37, or 46%). MARC and MODS (Metadata Object Description Schema) are also frequently used.

Only 30 respondents (39%) report that locally created images are given alt-text for accessibility by screen readers, revealing a distinct gap in meeting accessibility standards.

Research and Development Initiatives

The survey asked respondents if their institutions had any research and development initiatives that involve the use of digital images. The responses reflect a wealth of innovative initiatives that span the disciplines, moving well beyond the digital humanities to encompass areas such as anthropology, gastronomy, engineering, mathematics, and science. Some highlights are noted here but the complete set of descriptions in the survey questions & responses section merit a close reading.

Common themes that emerged indicate that digital images are increasingly incorporated as an integral element in eLearning and eTeaching strategies and modules. Emphasis is on the development of visualization tools. A noteworthy example is MIT Media Lab's Camera Culture which is exploring new ways to capture and share visual information (see <http://www.media.mit.edu/research/groups/camera-culture>). Immersive image studios employ images to create 3D immersive experiences. Some respondents reported plans to use crowd sourcing to assist in transcription of digitized content while others described moving into digital moving image and digital audio realms with their R & D projects. Several indicated that there were simply too many projects to report, perhaps reflecting on the ubiquitous nature of digital image research already underway. One respondent noted that they have a well-established and strong grant-based approach to supporting innovative initiatives using and manipulating images. Finally, Indiana University's Image Collections Online service is also a noteworthy model to visit (see <https://wiki.dlib.indiana.edu/x/rCqBHg>) providing as it does a dual service in supporting both the creation and publishing of images online.

Assessment

Most of the responding libraries (48, or 60%) do perform regular assessment activities on the use of digital image collections. The most common form of assessment is the collection of usage statistics (46, or 96%), presumably on commercially licensed collections such as ARTstor. Collection of informal feedback from users is also widely employed (34, or 71%). Formal surveys/feedback are employed less frequently.

At the majority of responding libraries, subject librarians and electronic resources librarians are primarily responsible for selecting and evaluating digital image resources for acquisition and/or renewal. To a lesser degree visual resources staff are also involved in these processes (26, or 35%).

Faculty demand was the factor ranked high in importance most frequently when it comes to evaluating image databases for acquisition. However, more than half of the respondents also ranked most of the other criteria as highly important, including frequency of use, image resolution/quality, cost, subject area, and having cleared copyright permissions. The only criterion that was not ranked high in importance was accessibility of the images. Only 40% of respondents reported that commercial products are evaluated for accessibility by disabled users, and only 16% rated accessibility as highly important in their decision making. These responses, along with those about adding alt text to locally created images, reveals that there is much that needs to be done to ensure that the needs of users with disabilities are kept at the forefront when it comes to the acquisition of digital image content.

The two most important characteristics of digital image collections for teaching, learning, and research is having access to a large database of images and ease of use (i.e., incorporating images into presentations, course websites, etc.) Having rights to use images in websites, course sites, etc. was a more distant third. Half of the respondents ranked having image alt text or captions to provide accessibility as of low importance. In the additional responses, quality metadata to accompany images was cited as a critical factor, highlighting the use of standards for description to facilitate search and retrieval of images.

Conclusion

In general, while it seems clear that there is a great deal of activity taking place in the digital image realm both in terms of creation and use, there is a parallel sense that the diversity of the activity and also the disciplines in which that activity is taking place makes it especially challenging to monitor campus-wide developments:

“It’s difficult to know the larger image environment on campus. We know that other projects are happening and we hear of other repositories on campus, but building a 1-stop source for all campus images eludes us. Other entities on campus seem determined to go it alone. Increasingly our faculty undertake image searching, retrieval and production on their own.”

The complexity of this landscape is further called out by this contributor:

“Creation/acquisition, use, and management of digital images are so integrated with other types of collections and services that it is quite difficult to pull this apart and speak exclusively about digital image collections and services. Furthermore, for better or worse, there are very different practices and services, and completely different staff involved with managing licensed vs. locally created digital collections.”

The survey findings reveal the critical role played by digital images and services in relation to the teaching, learning, and research missions of ARL member institutions. Increasingly, digital image collections and initiatives are being used to enhance the profile of these institutions. However, the findings also demonstrate the need for increased understanding of the activities relating to the creation and management of digital images currently taking place across units within institutions. In addition, there is a need for better coordination and integration of these activities at the institutional level. The development of overarching digital management asset plans that provide

oversight for the creation, acquisition, management, preservation, organization, access, and discovery of digital images would reap numerous benefits. Collaboration in the building of institutional image collections within institutions creates efficiencies and

promotes increased access and use. Similarly, collaboration and fostering partnerships on a broader level beyond individual institutions create efficiencies and result in rich digital image collections that are available to wider constituencies.