

Open for Use

Preservation and Conservation Survey Executive Summary

September 2016



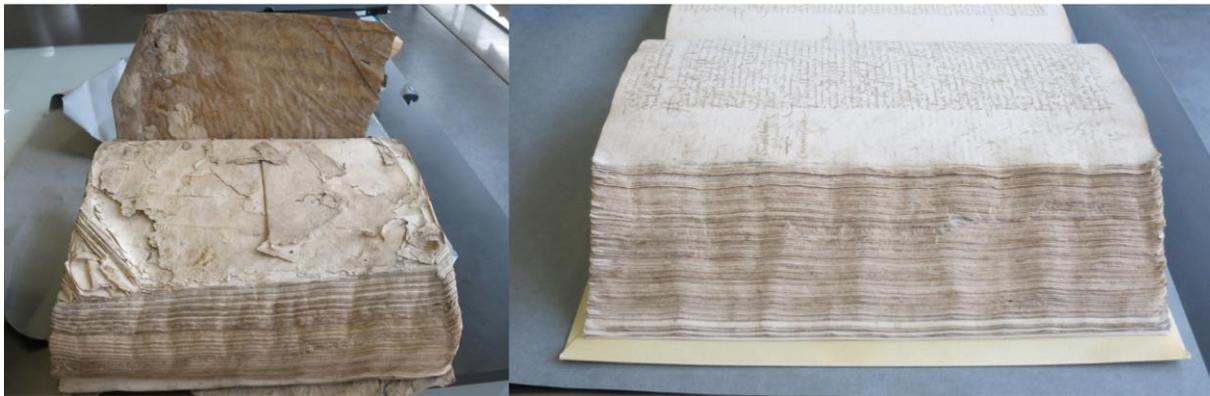
The Scottish Council on Archives: Preservation and Conservation

As current Convenor of the Preservation Committee of the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA), I am pleased to write this introduction. The existence of the Committee demonstrates the real importance attached to preservation and conservation - not just by SCA, but by the whole of the archives sector in Scotland.

Preservation and conservation can be defined as:

- Stewardship; having in place and implementing standards, procedures and controls that stabilise or slow down these inevitable processes and,
- Active or direct intervention, the harnessing of scientific knowledge and skills to conserve ensuring collections can be enjoyed, researched and used, handled, displayed and are accessible for digital imaging programmes committed to enhancing public access across Scotland.

Conservation and Preservation supports and enables access to our rich documentary heritage. The history of Scotland - peoples, communities and events, great and small – live on in archives. These collections are open to a wide range of users, from tourists, through genealogists, to educators, and not least by communities. Archives are unique sources of inspiration and information for present and future generations defining a sense of place, of history and of identity. Archives are also vulnerable and fragile.



Containing testaments, edicts of executry, processes and inventories, and divorces from 29 November 1623- 15 April 1624, this Register of Deeds was conserved to support a researcher based at the University of Aberdeen.

Traditional archive collections contain a wide range of organic materials such as paper, animal skins and wax which undergo a continual and inevitable natural ageing process. Handling and use directly affects the life expectancy of records and accelerates the process. Preservation and conservation are therefore primarily about care, harnessing available resources to ensure that these records continue to be available for use as long as physically possible.

There is no 'do nothing' option if archives – 'the documented national memory' – are to remain available for use and enjoyment by present and future generations. Every picture tells a story. There is a powerful story to be told for preservation and conservation, and the behind the-scenes activities that keep archives open for use.



Gathering Essential Preservation Data

Throughout 2010-13, the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA) provided financial and administrative support and developed a partnership with the then British Library Preservation Advisory Centre and the National Records of Scotland to secure the delivery of 11 Preservation Assessment Surveys (PAS) across archives in Scotland from 2010 to 2013.

The data gathered in those surveys, combined with data collected from 17 surveys carried out in Scottish archives is analysed and presented in *Our Past, Our Future: A Preservation Survey Report for Scotland*.

In order to address further the issues that featured in the report, in 2013, SCA established a Preservation Committee. The overarching purpose of the Preservation Committee is to take a strategic approach that identifies priority areas for action relating to the preservation and conservation of Scotland's archive collections and associated access issues.

The committee works to identify practical, actionable and cost-effective means of improving and promoting communication and partnership across Scottish archives. In the spirit of its commitment to partnership working SCA co-operates with bodies that share an interest in the preservation and conservation of archive collections in Scotland.

Identifying Current Priorities, Needs and Resources

After reviewing the results and recommendations of the 2013 PAS Report, the next step for the Committee was to consult the sector in Scotland about:

- current priorities
- training needs, and
- resources.

The survey content and questions were aligned with the UK Archive Service Accreditation standard to identify not only the priorities of the Committee's future work, but also to ensure that resources are focused on assisting services with elements of preservation and conservation relevant to preparations for meeting the requirements of the standard.

Survey and Feedback

In December 2015, a Preservation and Conservation Survey was distributed across the archive sector in Scotland. There were 23 respondents from a variety of services with a representative mix including Health Boards, Local Authorities, Universities, two National collections and a small number of Business and Special Collections. The following is a summary of the survey results which determine the priorities and guide the actions of the Committee. The Preservation Committee Action plan 2015-18 can be accessed on the SCA website.

Executive Summary

Who does the work

The Preservation and Conservation survey results cover the 23 archive services who responded from across Scotland. Feedback indicated:

- 30% have in-house Conservation staff and expertise
- 85% host volunteers trained to undertake very basic preservation tasks under supervision

In the majority of services, archivists are responsible for addressing preservation needs and mobilising resources for the conservation of collections, particularly those services based in smaller local authorities. This will continue over the next five years.

Funding and resources

This is a key challenge to services.

- 86% have some proportion of the overall internal budget allocated to preservation/conservation needs
- 55% have a dedicated conservation/preservation budget
- 45% do *not* have such an ear-marked budget
- 43% have sought external funding to meet preservation/conservation needs.

Those successful in securing external funding brought in an impressive total of about £300,000 of extra funding over the past five years. Respondents rated fundraising and bid writing as their highest priority for skills development and training.

Buildings and storage

Buildings and storage are a huge challenge for respondent services.

The majority of services house their collections in a mix of storage conditions, many not environmentally controlled. The provision of environmental monitoring equipment and training in environmental monitoring was seen as a higher priority training and development need.

In terms of storage for collections:

- 54% of all storage for collections is *not* environmentally controlled
- 45% of storage is *not* purpose built
- 27% expected to have increased storage space within the next five years
- 40.9% expected the percentage of area of storage space containing archive material would increase
- 50% expected no change

Training and skills

A key element of the survey is identifying training and skills priorities for archive services. While the majority of respondent services have in place a rounded suite of essential collections care policies, they want training and guidance in the implementation and writing of some policies. Priority areas for training and skills development are:

- fundraising
- access plans
- risk assessment
- integrated pest management, and
- disaster planning and business continuity

Informal networks, workshops, conferences and events and online guidance were the most commonly sought mediums for learning and knowledge exchange.

The major challenges and opportunities

Survey respondents were asked to explain the major challenges and opportunities faced in preservation and conservation. The challenges are:

- storage
- staffing and expertise
- funding, and
- competing priorities.

The opportunities are:

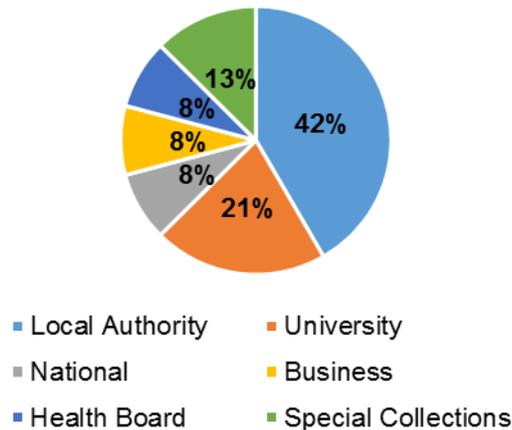
- establishing strengthened networks and partnerships to share expertise and exchange knowledge
- developing skills (most notably in fundraising and in reviewing and evaluating service delivery), and

- devising strategic plans that use limited resources with maximum impact.

Survey Findings and Priorities

1. Sample Group

There were 23 respondents to the survey- 5 Conservators, 16 Archivists, 1 Collections Care Manager and a Digitisation Project Co-ordinator. The mix of respondents - across National, Local Authority, Health Board, Business and Special Collections – is representative of the broad mix of archives in Scotland.

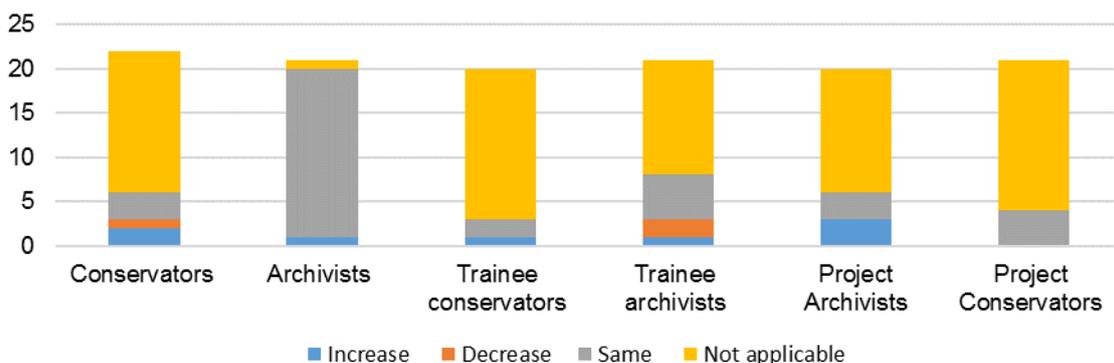


2. Conservation and Preservation Resources from 2010 to 2016

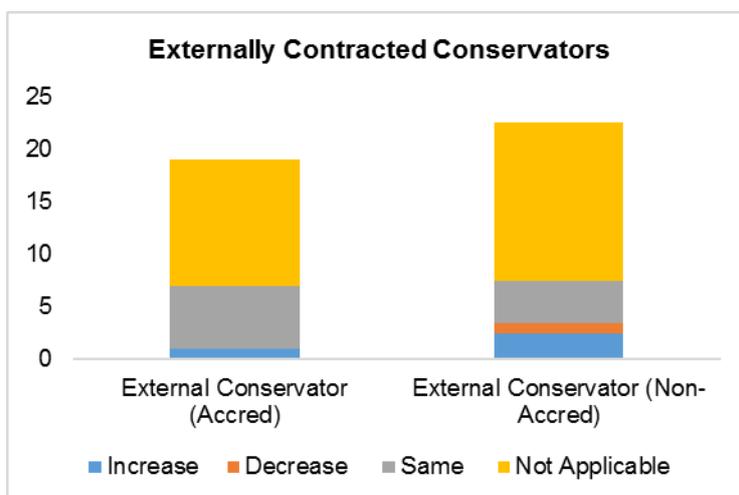
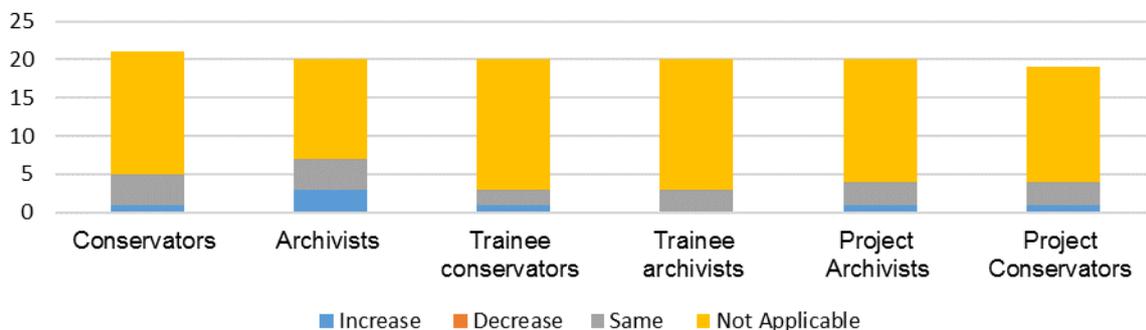
Respondents were asked to provide information about the availability of accredited conservation expertise within their service, responsibility for preservation within the service and the status of staffing (increased, decreased or static) in relation to both conservators and archivists over the past five years. The majority of respondents indicated that staffing levels across their services have remained largely unchanged since 2010. Most respondents indicated that they did not employ a conservator on a part or full time basis. Archivists are largely responsible for addressing and assessing preservation and conservation needs and liaising with external conservators as required.

- 70% of respondents do *not* employ a conservator on a part or full time basis
- 13% increase in part-time conservation staffing over the past five years
- 20% increase in the employment of accredited external contactors to carry out conservation work
- 9.5% increase in the appointment of externally funded conservation project posts
- 20% increase in externally funded project archivist posts
- 15% increase in full-time trainee archivists.

Staffing levels - Full time posts



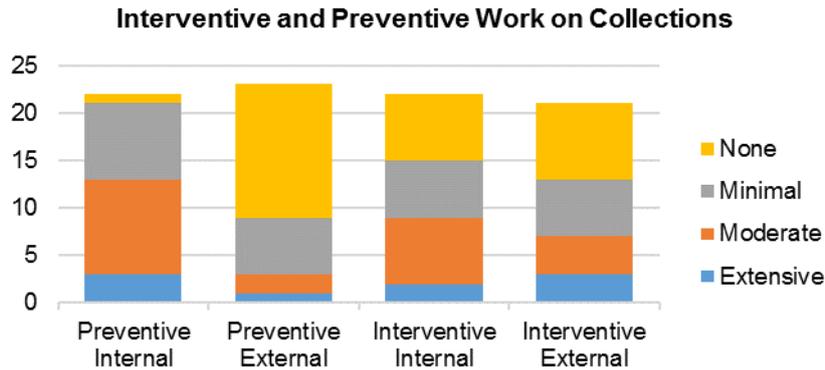
Staffing Levels - Part-time posts



Conservators Working in Scottish Services



The survey also enquired about the amount of preventive or interventive work carried out on collections over the past five years, by external contractors and internal staff. Preventive work is carried out to slow or prevent the deterioration of items and generally encompasses the monitoring of environmental conditions, pest management and the repackaging of items. Interventive measures involve work undertaken on items to ensure that they are stabilised, cleaned or supported both to ensure their survival and to facilitate access.



Survey responses indicate that the majority of all preventive work is undertaken by staff within a service. However, a noted exception to this were services that they had used external companies to do large scale repackaging of items affected by an outbreak of mould, or in preparation for the move of an entire collection to a different location. The majority of extensive interventive work undertaken on collections is carried out by an external provider.

30% of respondents employ conservators within their service. The amount of interventive work carried out on collections in these six services significantly exceeds the work carried out in services without in-house Conservators. Indeed, it is almost equal to all of the work combined being carried out in the remaining 17 services by external contractors.

3. Expected changes to Staffing levels over the next five years

The survey asked respondents to consider whether or not they expected any significant changes to staffing levels over the next five years. The majority of respondents did not indicate that there would be any known significant increases or decreases to staffing in the future. There were reports of modest anticipated increases to staffing.

- 9% increase of full-time conservators (two posts)
- 15% increase in full-time externally funded archivist posts (three posts).
- 4.8 to 5% decreases (the equivalent of approximately one post) for full-time conservators, external conservators, and part-time trainee archivists

It is worth noting that this survey was undertaken prior to the UK's EU Referendum result and therefore any potential implications for resources or funding were not gauged by respondents within this new context.

4. Volunteers

The survey asked respondents to provide information about the number of volunteers within their service undertaking preservation or conservation-related work, whether this work is supervised or unsupervised, if training is provided and if the service has a volunteer policy in place. Respondents indicated that the volunteers assist primarily with preservation-related tasks.

Some respondents gave further information about the types of tasks undertaken. They explained that the majority of work undertaken by volunteers involved basic re-housing and packaging of items. At two services volunteers have been trained to a standard where they were experienced enough to undertake preservation and very basic conservation tasks without close supervision.

- 50% of services indicated they have a volunteer policy in place
- 55% are actively working on a policy or intended to put one in place
- 15% of all services who responded did *not* have the capacity to support volunteers
- 85% of services host volunteers and all but one service provides volunteer training.
- 10% of services indicating that volunteers undertake conservation related tasks, under supervision.
- 54.5% of volunteers undertake preservation tasks under supervision

- 9.1% of volunteer preservation tasks are carried out independently.

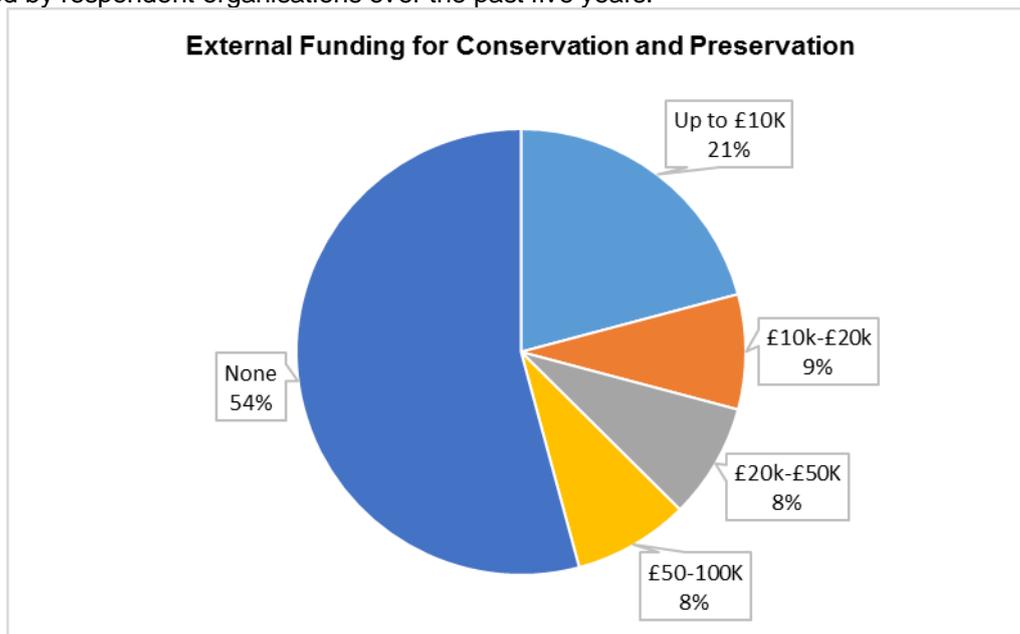
5. Funding

A number of questions were asked to ascertain the funding situation of services in relation to resourcing preservation and conservation needs

- 55% of respondents have a dedicated budget for conservation and preservation needs
- 45% do *not* have a dedicated budget
- 86% of respondents indicated that a proportion of the overall internal budget was allocated to preservation and conservation-related needs.
- One responding service currently has *no* funding in place for conservation or preservation.
- 43% of respondents sought external funding for preservation and conservation needs
- 73% of the respondents with experience of submitting funding applications indicate that internal staff were responsible for drafting the application
- 9% of successful applications were drafted by external consultants
- 45% of respondents have *not* submitted a successful funding application

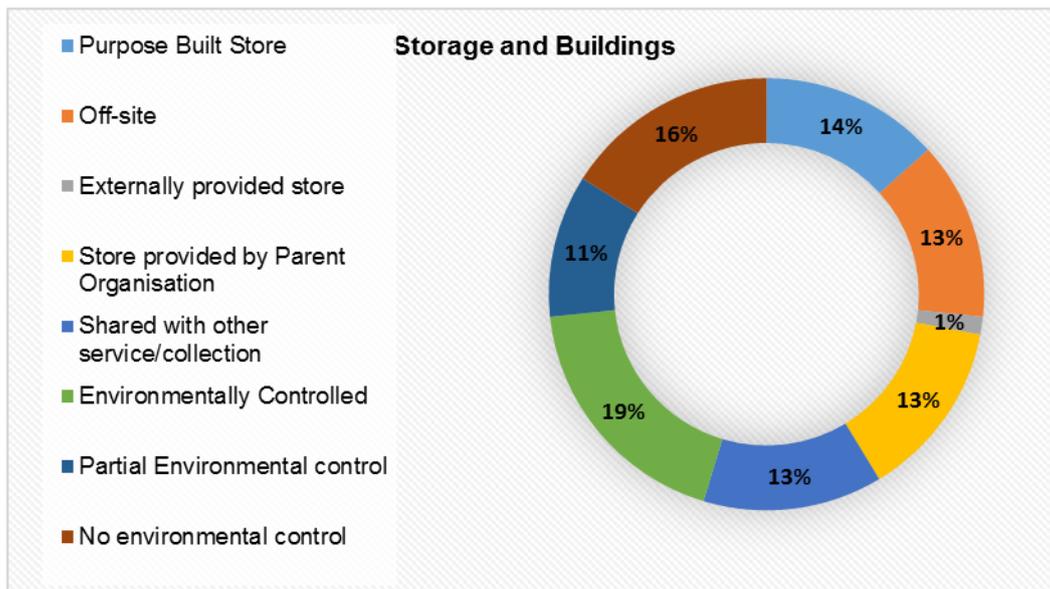
The Heritage Lottery Fund, National Manuscript Conservation Trust and the Wellcome Trust were identified as key funders. It was noted that the input of conservators, whether internal or external, was sought in drafting funding applications.

The following outlines the levels of external funding for conservation and preservation-related projects received by respondent organisations over the past five years.

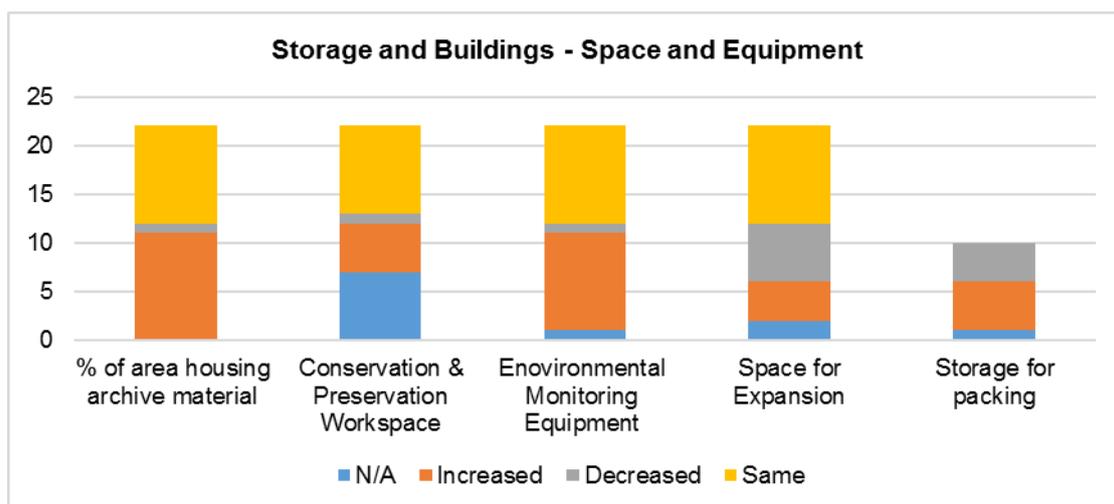


6. Buildings and Storage

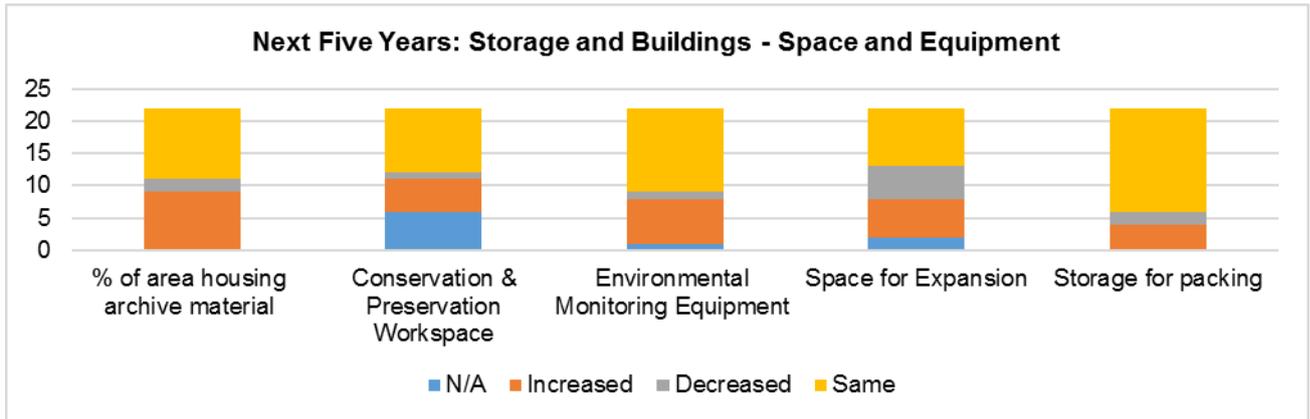
Respondents were asked a series of questions about the status of their building and storage facilities, including any expected changes over the next five years. Many respondents indicated that they had a mix of some environmentally-controlled or partially controlled storage sites, in addition to a combination of off-site, on-site, shared and externally provided storage arrangements. The following diagram outlines the range of types of storage arrangements and levels of environmental control that respondents indicated applied to their storage arrangements



Questions were also posed about the status and availability of storage, environmental monitoring equipment and work space over the past five years - whether it had decreased, increased or remained the same.



- 50% indicated that the percentage area housing archive material over the past five years had increased
- 45.5% that it had remained the same
- 18% indicated space for expansion had increased
- 27% that it had decreased
- 45% indicated that the space available remained the same
- 45.5% was the figure for an increase in environmental monitoring equipment over the past five years.

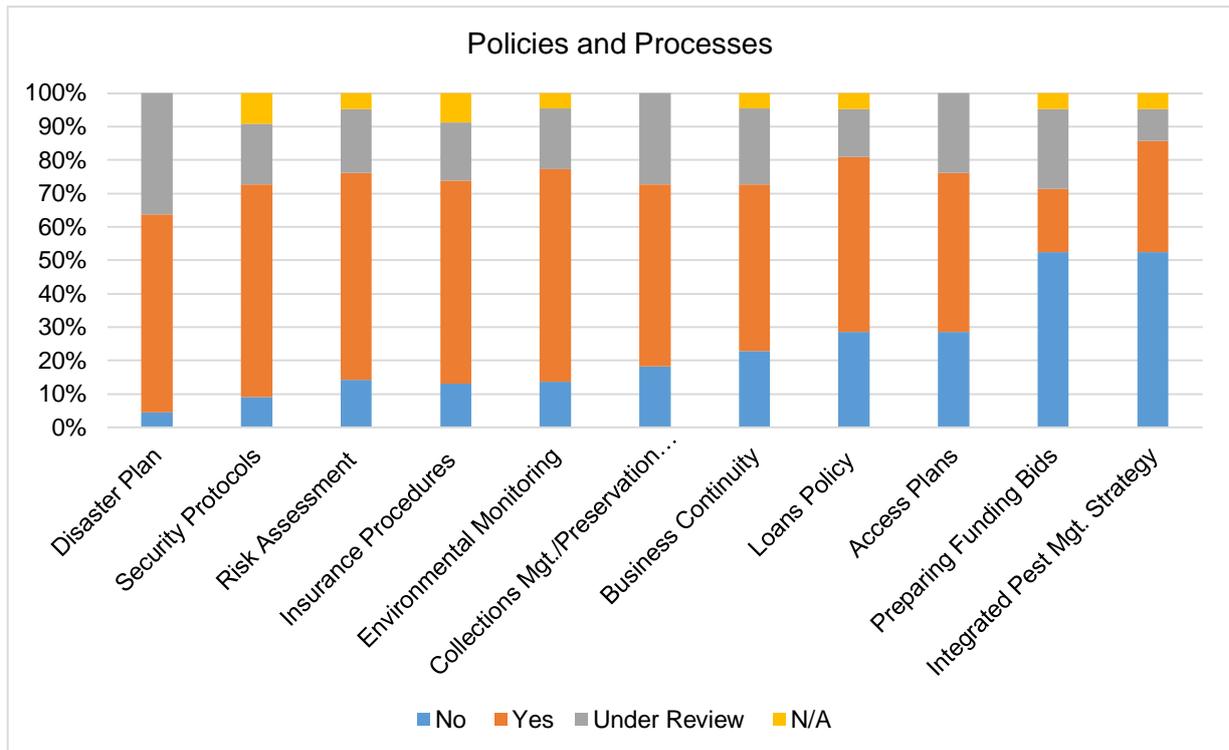


Across the majority of areas related to space and equipment, most respondents expected that *all* elements would remain relatively static.

- 40.9% expected the percentage area of storage space containing archive material would increase,
- 50% expected it would remain the same
- 27% of respondents indicated there were future plans for storage expansion
- Two respondents stated that projects for expansion within their organisations were currently being explored and were unlikely to be delivered in the next five years

7. Collections Care and Policies

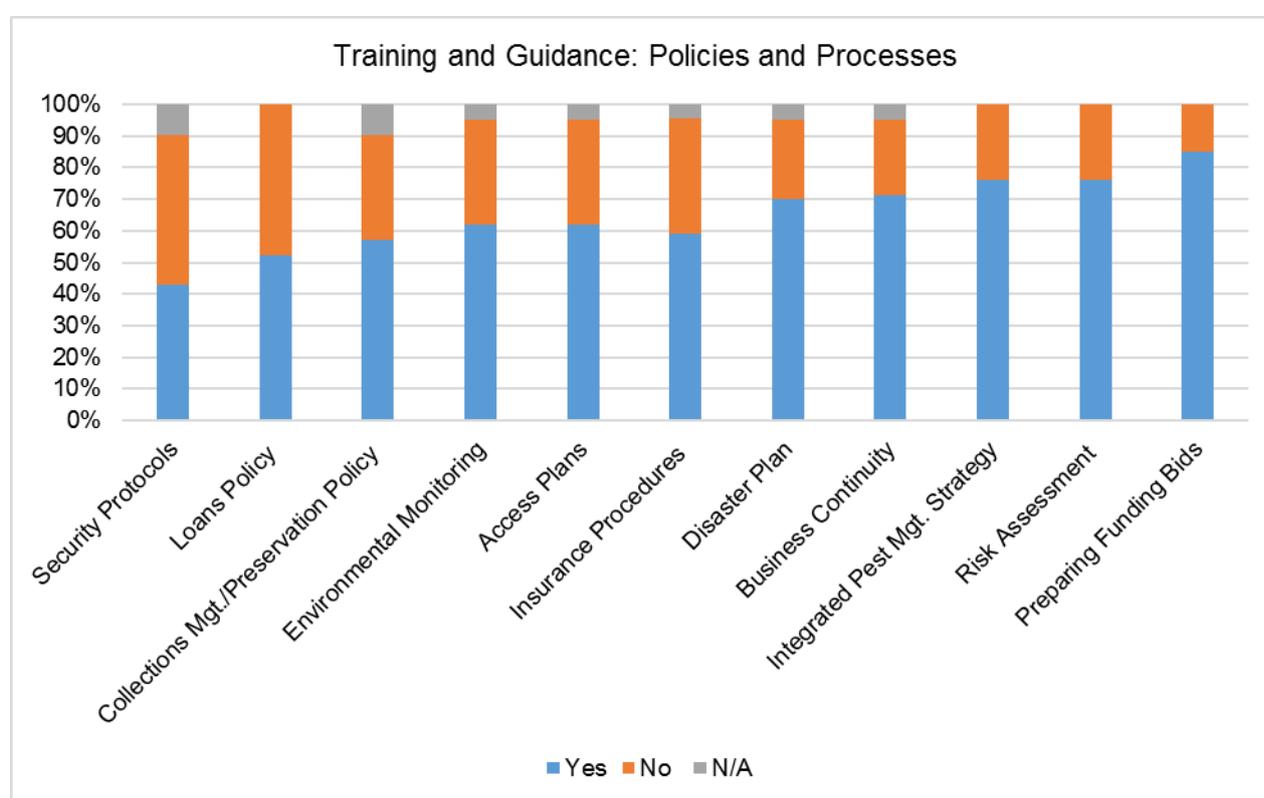
The survey findings show that the majority of respondents have a range of collections care policies in place within their services. 90% of services have an overall conservation and preservation strategy in place for the next five years. Of those who indicated they do not currently have a strategy in place, some noted that they were aware of areas in need of improvement but had yet to pull this together into a strategic plan or plans were under review due to organisational change or there were current plans to seek external funding to bring in the relevant expertise to assist with drawing up a strategy.



Services were asked to indicate whether or not they currently had a range of policies and processes in place. If policies were noted as not applicable in the survey, it was commonly cited that responsibilities for the development of these particular policies rested with another division or department within the organisation. Most respondents had policies or processes in place or under review, however gaps were noted in preparing funding bids, integrated pest management strategy, access plans and loans policies.

The survey also sought to gauge where respondents might want guidance or training in implementing the abovementioned policies and processes:

- 81% of respondents requested training in preparing bids for funding
- 76% for Integrated pest management and risk assessment
- 71% for business continuity
- 70% for disaster planning and testing
- 61% for environmental monitoring
- 57% for creating a preservation and collections management policy



Respondents were asked if they would be interested in assisting with the delivery of training across any of the identified areas.

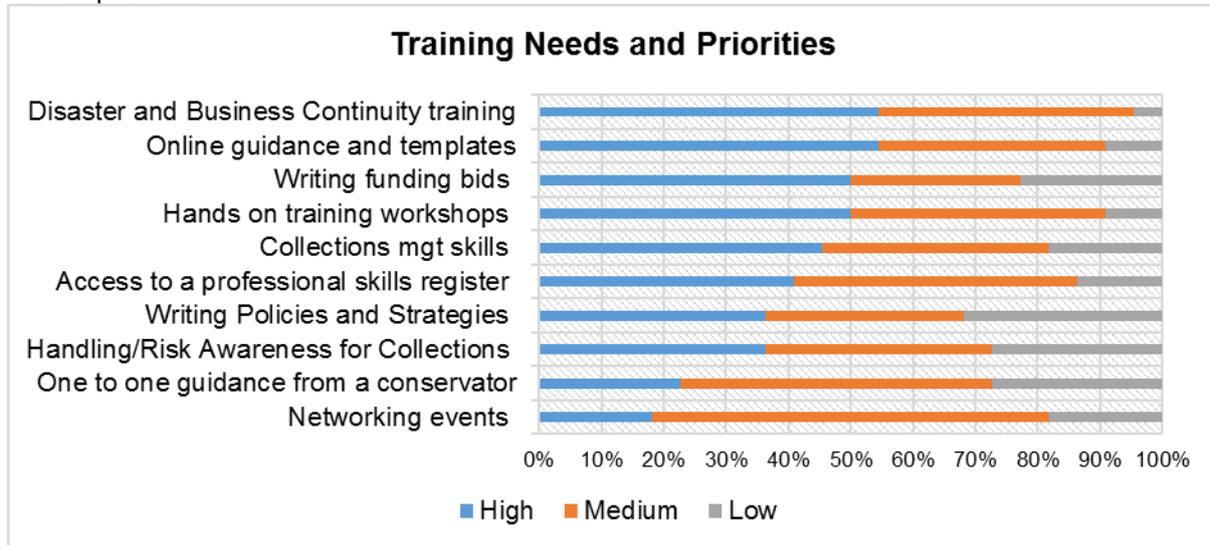
- Between 75% and 80% of respondents indicated that owing to a lack of relevant skills, they would be unable to deliver training across the majority of areas
- 20% indicated that they would be willing to assist in the delivery of training in collections management
- 19% indicated that they would be willing to assist with disaster planning, Integrated Pest Management, and environmental monitoring.

8. Advice, Networks and Skills Development

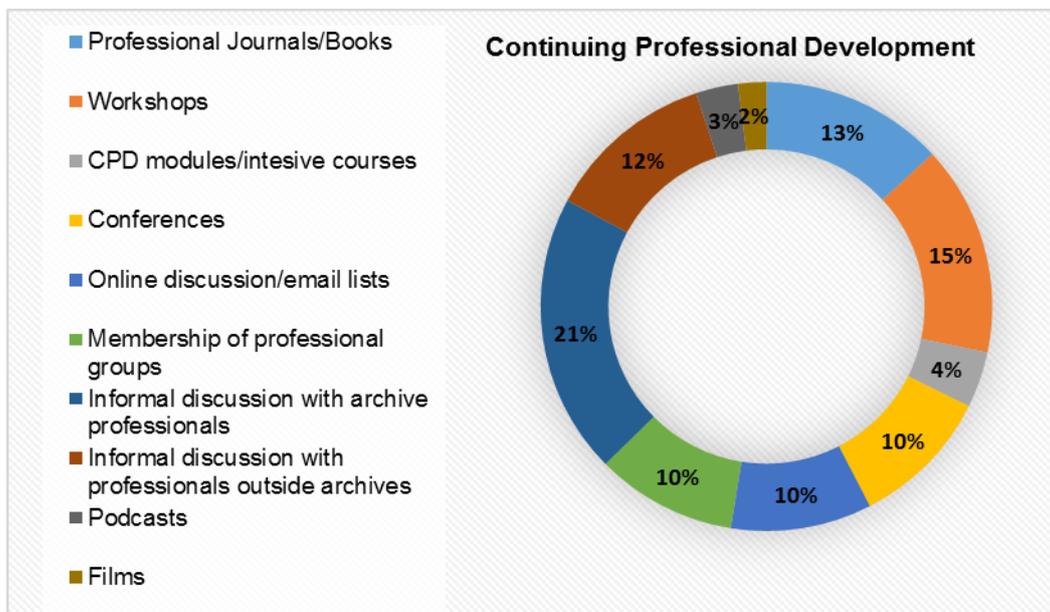
In addition to asking respondents to identify areas of useful training and guidance, the survey asked for prioritisation of training needs and skills development across these areas. The survey also set out

to gauge awareness or belonging to disaster networks, supply and equipment needs in addition to surveying the potential for sharing and exchanging equipment and supplies.

Disaster and business continuity training, the provision of online guidance and templates, training on writing funding bids and hands on training workshops on preservation and conservation related topics were rated as the highest priority training and skills development needs by respondents. Support and training in writing policies and strategies was ranked as the lowest development need while one-to-one guidance from a conservator and networking events were selected as the greatest medium-ranked priorities.



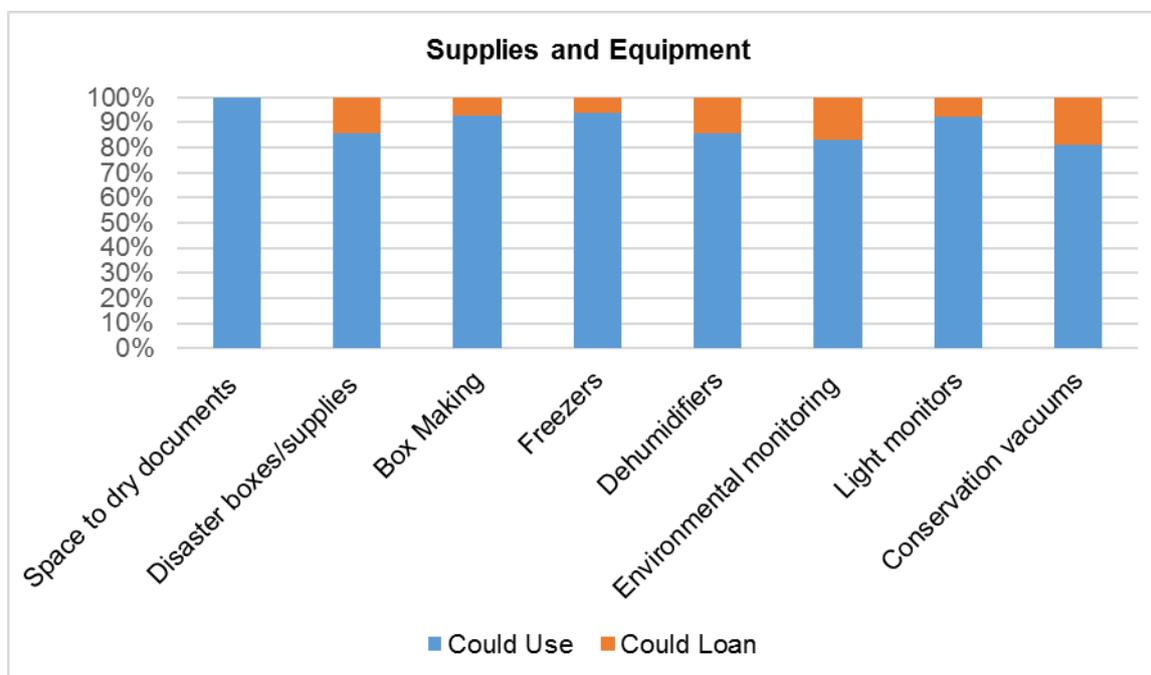
Respondents were also asked to give an overview of the formats or means by which they have accessed continuing professional development in relation to conservation and preservation of collections over the past five years. The most commonly accessed resource was advice and guidance obtained through informal discussion with other archive professionals and at workshops, with the least commonly accessed being podcasts and films.



- 86%, were aware of disaster response networks
- 68% possess disaster network and response contact details
- 47% belong to a disaster response network or team

The Glasgow Area Disaster Network and the National Records of Scotland were identified as disaster response contact points, along with Harwell Document Restoration. Several respondents indicated that they belonged to local or organisational disaster response teams.

Respondents were asked if they would benefit from the loan and use of a variety of supplies and equipment (primarily in the event of a disaster) and they were also asked if they would be in a position to loan supplies to other services.



The majority of respondents were not in a position to loan supplies, however there were a small number of respondents who would be able to consider loaning out supplies, particularly in an emergency. It was noted by several respondents that although they do have some of these supplies and equipment available within their service, they do not have a surplus available for loan and issues such as having a service based in a remote location would likely make it impractical and costly to arrange loans.

9. Challenges and Opportunities

Survey respondents were asked to share their thoughts on the main challenges and opportunities facing their services in relation to conservation and preservation, while indicating any factors or initiatives they think will best assist them in the future development of their service in this area.

There were challenges commonly identified and these included:

Storage: Few buildings available to services for the storage of their collections are purpose built or entirely environmentally controlled.

Staffing & Expertise: Few services have a conservator(s) on staff and there are limited numbers of freelance/external contractors in Scotland. Furthermore, some services with an already small complement of existing staffing are concerned about the impact of potential compulsory redundancies or further cutbacks on services currently under pressure to deliver with minimal staff.

Funding & Competing Priorities: Funding to public services is constrained and internal budgets rarely able to provide the resources needed to address the conservation and

preservation needs of collections. Preservation and conservation can often slip on the list of priorities or responsibilities required of the archivist (e.g. legislative compliance).

Opportunities identified to address some of the commonly experienced challenges:

Establishing strengthened networks and partnerships: Expertise and knowledge is available across the sector and there is an established culture across the sector of colleagues sharing their experience and offering assistance.

This can be harnessed and mobilised by the SCA Preservation Committee to offer a central resource via the SCA website for sharing templates and guidance. In addition, keeping contact details for disaster networks, delivering training and networking events on key topics and identifying partners who can contribute to skills development in priority areas, support bulk buying schemes can all work to help support the sector in addressing knowledge and resource gaps.

External Funding & Skills Development: Several respondents indicated that they are optimistic and awaiting decisions on external funding bids to open up access to their collections, fund conservation work and improve storage conditions. Promoting the value of opening up access to collections for community and educational purposes is a compelling way to secure funding for conservation work and preservation supplies, including items such as environmental monitoring equipment to assist in managing less than ideal storage conditions.

Respondents indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to learn more about how to write a successful funding application and thus secure greater resources for their preservation and conservation needs. Time is a constraint and funding applications do require investment of time. The Preservation Committee can assist by building relationships with potential funders, identifying and delivering further training opportunities in this area and highlighting existing skills development opportunities and lesser known sources of funding for preservation and conservation projects.

Change, Evaluation and Planning: Some respondents identified some opportunities inherent within the major challenges they faced. For example, a change of location or organisational mergers can prompt a review and evaluation of service delivery and highlight ways that services can be streamlined to make better use of shared resources.

Ever increasing pressure on resources makes the implementation of strategic plans. Such plans underpin work towards addressing service priorities for conservation and preservation and are critical in ensuring the best use of limited resources. One respondent of a publicly-funded service indicated that they have moved towards exploring different models for bringing in external income for conservation work. This approach could open the way to employment of more conservators and some expansion of available skills and expertise across the sector.



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