

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

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# Valuing the *American Archivist*: An Interpretation of SAA's First Readership Survey

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Editorial Board

**Abstract**

The *American Archivist* Editorial Board administered a Web-based survey to 6,000 Society of American Archivists members and affiliates. The survey was open for response for 45 days during April and May 2010. Respondents expressed overall satisfaction with the *American Archivist*. Print remains the publishing vehicle of choice. Reading the *American Archivist* varies in priority. Three major issues emerge from the data analysis. First is the apparent contradiction between generally high overall satisfaction with the *American Archivist* and significant variation in the perception of the value of its individual components. Second is whether the journal should focus primarily on matters of practice or on scholarly or theoretical explorations of archival principles. The third issue is the relationship of the print and online versions of the journal.

**Background**

Three concerns shared by the Editorial Board and the Council of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) motivated the survey. First, SAA has never undertaken an explicit survey of its journal readers, relying instead on the traditional method of sporadic feedback (both compliments and complaints) to the editor on specific articles or issues. A recent article on reading habits of archivists has a fairly narrow scope and does not directly address the future

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direction of the *American Archivist*.<sup>1</sup> Second, the recent transformation of the *American Archivist* into an online publication raises questions about the preferences of readers to use the journal in print versus online formats. Third, electronic distribution of journal content opens possibilities for shifting the editorial emphasis of the journal's articles.

The *American Archivist* Editorial Board asked 6,000 SAA members and subscribers to give their opinions about the journal and to report their reading habits in a Web-based survey available from April to May 2010. The 30-question survey combined single-choice and multiple-choice items with open-ended comment boxes associated with various questions. Approximately 9% of those surveyed responded to the call, but some parts of the 541 usable questionnaires were not completed. Data from the SurveyMonkey implementation were downloaded into Excel spreadsheets, verified and recoded to support the processing of multiple-choice responses, and then analyzed using SPSS statistical software. This report does not present all of the findings but instead highlights responses that illuminate the perspectives of respondents on their reading patterns, their satisfaction with the journal, and their preference for print versus online editions.

The distribution of responses to the survey does not necessarily represent the employment patterns of the membership of the archival community or of SAA. Table 1 shows the differences between readership respondents and data from A\*Census. The survey respondents skewed heavily toward individuals working in academic settings.

**Table 1.** Q21: Employment Patterns of Respondents (n = 514)

	AA Readership Survey	A*Census
Academic institutions	51.8%	36%
Government	18.9%	31.6%
Nonprofit	16.8%	23.1%
For-profit	5.7%	
Self-employed	2.3%	

The survey respondents live in 46 states plus the District of Columbia (Q24). Although the majority of respondents reside in the United States, 31 (5.9%) reside outside the country. The majority of the respondents to the survey were between 25 and 44 years old (51.2%), with a small number under 25 (2.3%) and over 65 (3.6%). This distribution (Q22) parallels the Nimer survey; A\*Census respondents were older, on average.

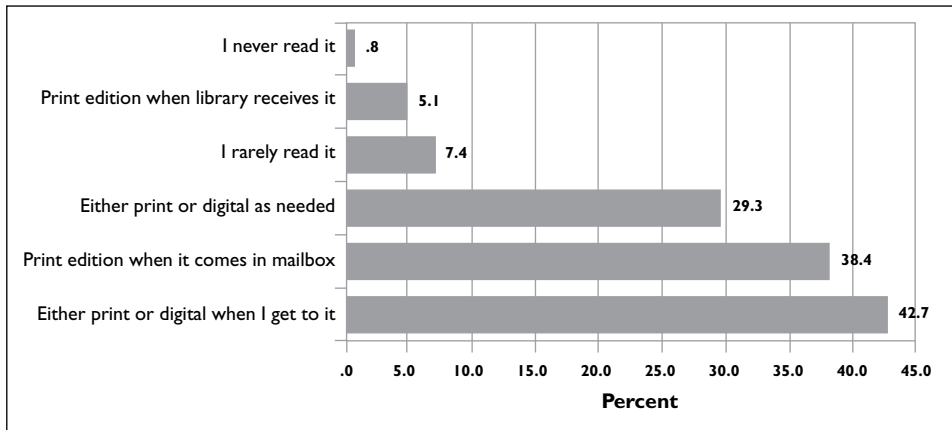
<sup>1</sup> Cory Nimer, "Reading and Publishing within the Archives Community: A Survey," *American Archivist* 72 (Fall/Winter 2009): 311–30.

In terms of educational background (Q21), most respondents have completed one master's degree ( $n = 304$ , 59.1%). The next largest group have completed more than one master's degree ( $n = 121$ , 23.5%). Nearly 10% (50) of survey respondents holds the PhD, but their disciplines are not known. Of the 35 respondents (8.6%) who only have a bachelor's degree, 7 indicated that they have a master's degree in progress. Of the total respondents, 60.3% have a degree in archival studies, library science, or information science. Of the 304 individuals who have a master's degree, 189 (62.1%) have that degree in archives or library or information science, and all individuals with multiple graduate degrees have a master's degree in archival studies, library science, or information science. Most of the respondents (75.2%) are not certified by the Academy of Certified Archivists (Q23).

### Reading the *American Archivist*

The survey asked readers to report on the style, frequency, and media preferences for reading the *American Archivist*. The purpose of these questions was to understand the priority that readers place on the content of the journal and to assess a potential trend in the shift from paper to online access.

**Table 2.** Q8: When do you read the *American Archivist*? ( $n = 526$ )

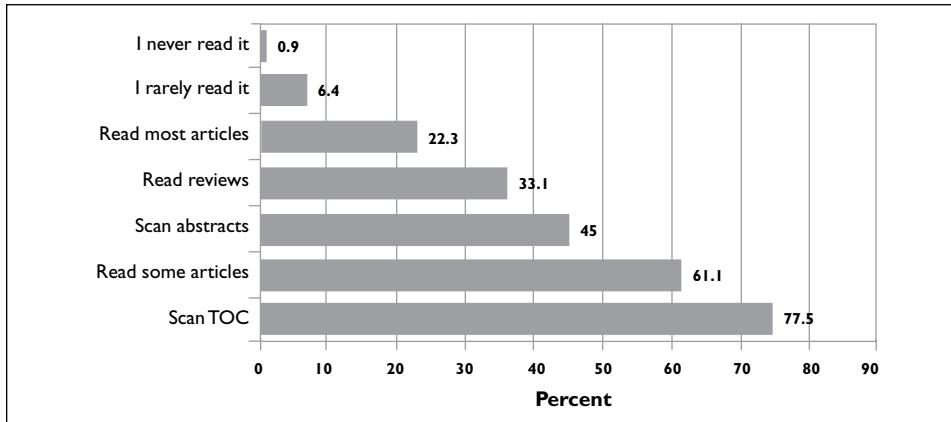


Reading the *American Archivist* varies in priority for SAA members and subscribers. Table 2 shows responses to the question, “When do you read the *American Archivist*?” About 1 in 12 respondents (8.6%) indicated that he or she consults the online edition of the journal as soon as it is posted to the website. Almost 5 times as many readers (38.8%) claimed to read the *American Archivist* in print form “as soon as I receive it in my mailbox.” Together, almost half of the respondents takes a look at the journal when it is published. The largest single

group of respondents (43.2 %) “read either the print or online edition when I get to it.”

Not only is it important for the format of the *American Archivist* to fit their lives appropriately, respondents also expressed a wish that notification of articles and new issues be more effectively incorporated into their usual media consumption. A majority (62.4%) of survey respondents prefer to receive an email notification from SAA when a new issue is published (Q18). Many respondents ( $n = 489$ ; 57.9%) also favor a rolling publication model in which articles are posted online when editorial work is complete and then are compiled into discrete print and online issues twice a year (Q16).

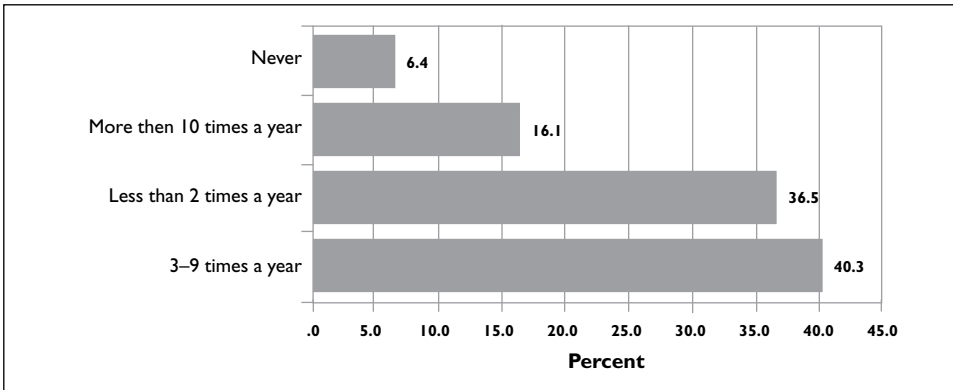
**Table 3.** Q9: How do you read the *American Archivist*? ( $n = 523$ )



As is typical with scholarly journals, readers of the *American Archivist* tend not to read the publication cover to cover. Less than one-quarter of the respondents (see Table 3) reported that they read most of the articles in the journal (22.3%); a small portion (7.3%) rarely or never read the issues. Most readers scan the table of contents (77.5%) and abstracts (45%) and read some (but not all) articles (61.1%). Given this readership pattern, an important priority for SAA should be to make the table of contents for each issue of the journal available widely and freely in a timely way through the Internet.

Table 4 shows that a majority of respondents frequently consults the *American Archivist*. About 1 in 6 respondents consults back issues of the journal more than 10 times per year. An even larger portion of readers estimated that they consult back issues between 3 and 9 times per year. This tracks with respondents' reports that they most commonly read articles as needed; instead of reading each new issue straight through, most respondents search for and return to previously published articles as they become relevant to them. Survey responses regarding readership of new and back issues seem to validate the investment by

**Table 4.** Q10: How frequently do you use back issues of the *American Archivist*? (n = 526)



SAA in delivering journal back-file content online, where it is easily and freely accessible. The Society should expect consultation of back issues of the journal to increase over time.

The survey presented 5 optional questions about other information sources consulted beyond the *American Archivist*. The design of the questions and response categories in the survey complicated the analysis. Appendix 2 presents reconfigured data to clarify the explicit declarations of respondents regarding their reading patterns. For each journal listed, 3 bars indicate the proportion of respondents who indicated they 1) scan the journal at least twice a year, 2) read an article at least once a year, or 3) scan and read periodically in some combination. The results of this data reconfiguration suggest that the *American Archivist* is the most well-read archival journal among SAA members and subscribers, with the Society's bimonthly newsletter, *Archival Outlook*, standing out as the second most frequently read source. Less than 15% of the survey respondents read the other primary archival journals, *Archivaria*, *Archival Science*, and *Archival Issues*. Given that the readership survey was limited to SAA members, the narrow range of reading should not be surprising. Further, because SAA administered the survey, respondents may have inflated their self-estimates of reading the *American Archivist* relative to other publications.

Respondents' reports of their reading practices display a "long tail" distribution. Appendix 2 shows that many readers consult a handful of archival journals, but that they also read a variety of other archival publications (Q25), especially regional newsletters, such as *Easy Access* (Northwest Archivists), *Southwestern Archivist*, and those published by MAC, MARAC, and the New England Archivists. They also listed domain-specific publications, such as *The Moving Image* (AMIA) and *Watermark* (Archivists and Librarians in the History of the Health Sciences).

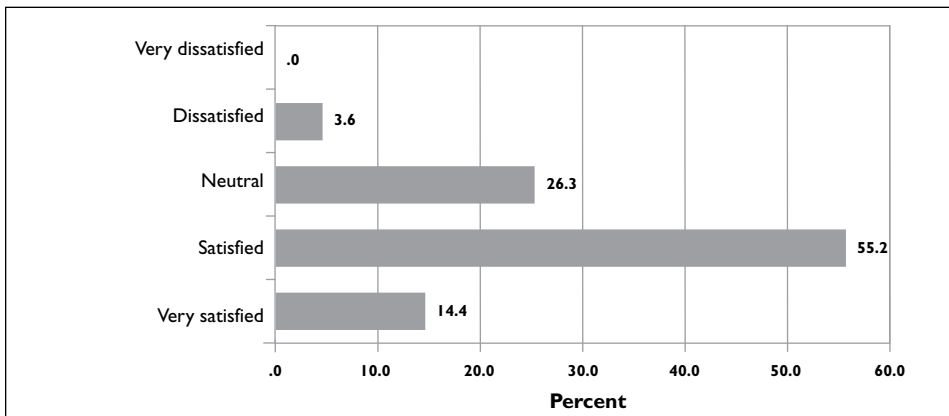
Although less than half of the respondents indicated that they read blogs regularly (Q26), the proportion of blog readers is substantial. *ArchivesNext* ( $n = 160$ ; 73.1% of the 219 respondents who read blogs) is the most popular blog, with the others listed garnering 25% or fewer of the regular readers. Almost 55% of the respondents indicated that they rarely or never read blogs. Appendix 1 contains a list of blogs that respondents reported reading somewhat regularly beyond the ones listed directly on the survey.

The *American Archivist* is one part of a large but eclectic diet of literature that an archivist consumes regularly or periodically. Appendix 2 lists the journal literature reported by respondents in the “Other” category in question 28: “What other literature do you scan and read?” ( $n = 373$ ). The sheer number of journals and other publications that respondents read or scan regularly, along with the fact that none of the journals is significantly more popular than the others, hints at the diversity in the archives profession’s information needs. An alternative view of the diversity of the reading list may be that the membership of the Society depends too completely on the *American Archivist* for archival knowledge and that this dependence influences expectations for the journal.

#### Satisfaction with the *American Archivist*

Allowing for framing effects that may inflate the propensity of SAA members to value the Society’s publications, the *American Archivist* is a satisfying publication for the members of the Society of American Archivists (see Table 5). The majority of respondents to the survey rated themselves either satisfied (55.2%) or neutral (26.3%) with the *American Archivist*. More readers are very satisfied (14.4%) than are dissatisfied (3.6%). None is very dissatisfied.

**Table 5.** Q1: Overall, how satisfied are you with the *American Archivist*? ( $n = 539$ )



Against this backdrop of overall satisfaction, survey respondents are quite discerning in their judgments about the value of the individual components of the journal (see Table 6). Readers find the core content of the journal either very valuable or valuable, including research articles (93%,  $n = 501$ ), case studies (94%,  $n = 499$ ), and reviews and review essays (80%,  $n = 423$ ). With one exception (Council Minutes), no single component of the journal is “not valuable” to more than 15% of the respondent group.

**Table 6.** Q3: Rate the value you find in each of the following sections of the *American Archivist*. ( $n = 533$ )

	<b>Very valuable</b>	<b>Valuable</b>	<b>Not valuable</b>	<b>No opinion</b>	<b>Rating average</b>	<b>Response count</b>
About the Cover	10.8% (57)	<b>48.2%</b> (254)	14.0% (74)	26.9% (142)	2.43	527
Gallery of Contributors	17.2% (91)	<b>63.6%</b> (336)	3.8% (20)	15.3% (81)	2.83	528
Forum (Letters to the Editor)	12.6% (66)	<b>55.6%</b> (292)	11.8% (62)	20.0% (105)	2.61	525
From the Editor	10.5% (55)	<b>56.7%</b> (298)	13.5% (71)	19.4% (102)	2.58	526
Presidential Address	15.8% (82)	<b>51.9%</b> (270)	14.8% (77)	17.5% (91)	2.66	520
Research Articles	<b>59.4%</b> (316)	34.8% (185)	1.9% (10)	3.9% (21)	3.50	532
Perspectives	32.6% (171)	<b>48.9%</b> (256)	4.0% (21)	14.5% (76)	3.00	524
International Scene	20.1% (106)	<b>51.7%</b> (273)	11.9% (63)	16.3% (86)	2.76	528
Case Studies	52.4% (278)	41.6% (221)	2.1% (11)	4.0% (21)	3.42	531
Review Essays	25.0% (132)	<b>55.1%</b> (291)	7.2% (38)	12.7% (67)	2.92	528
Reviews	25.1% (132)	<b>55.7%</b> (293)	7.5% (40)	11.6% (61)	2.94	526
Council Minutes	7.2% (38)	<b>43.2%</b> (228)	28.4% (150)	21.2% (112)	2.36	528
Advertisements	2.5% (13)	28.4% (147)	<b>35.4%</b> (183)	33.7% (174)	2.00	517

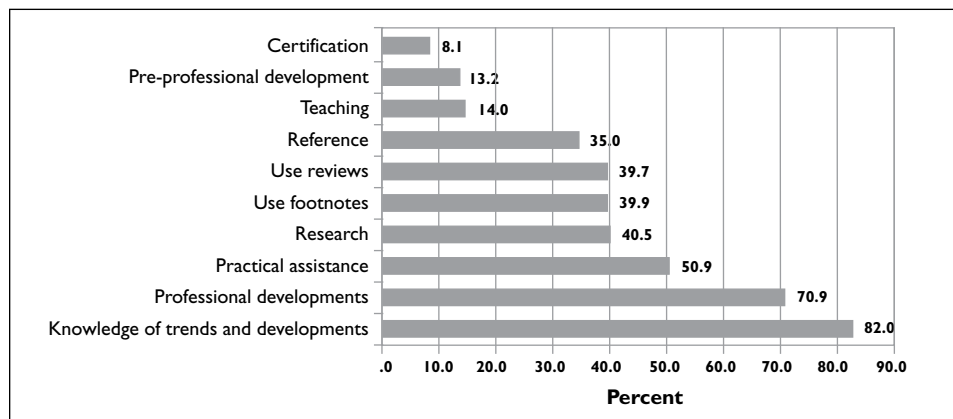
Comments on this question shed some light on the rankings for different sections. Respondents suggested that the relatively large number of “not valuable” responses for Council Minutes may be because they are a better fit for another kind of publication. One respondent explained, “Council minutes are kinda stale by the time they get published. On the website is a much better option.” Another respondent suggested the same was true for the Presidential Address, International Scene, and Letters to the Editor. Although the survey did not ask readers directly about the value they place on peer review, respondents clearly and strongly value those elements of the *American Archivist* for which editorial processes are fundamental to the integrity of a scholarly journal. Research articles, perspectives, and case studies undergo rigorous, blind review

by at least two anonymous reviewers, with further editorial work undertaken by the editor and sometimes by members of the Editorial Board. Readers apparently value this investment in content quality, even if they do not necessarily understand or care about the mechanics of the journal's editorial process.

### Content for Practice or Theory

The *American Archivist* began its publication life nearly 75 years ago with an editorial policy "to be as useful as possible to the members of the profession."<sup>2</sup> Such usefulness initially encompassed a singular focus on professional practice. Over the intervening decades, the SAA membership has debated the proper balance between codifying process and procedure, on the one hand, and advancing the empirical and theoretical underpinnings of archival thought, on the other. For example, in his 1994 review of several decades of *American Archivist* literature, Richard Cox urged more archivists to conduct formal research and report it in the pages of the journal. "As an applied science," he wrote, "archival science needs fully formed theory, methodology, and practice."<sup>3</sup>

**Table 7.** Q5: Why do you read the *American Archivist*? (n = 526)



In the reader survey (see Table 7), most respondents (Q5) reported that they read the current issues of the *American Archivist* to keep up on trends and developments in the profession (82.0%). Categories of reading purpose that garnered the largest responses strongly reinforce the impression that, first and foremost, the journal is optimized for practicing archivists, either those engaged

<sup>2</sup> "Announcement," *American Archivist* 1, no. 1 (January 1938): v–vi.

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Cox, "An Analysis of Archival Research, 1970–1992, and the Role and Function of the *American Archivist*," *American Archivist* 57 (Spring 1994): 278–88.

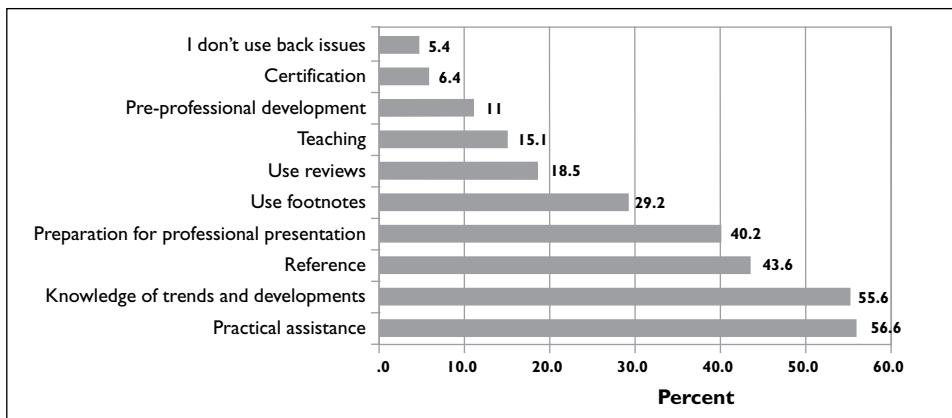


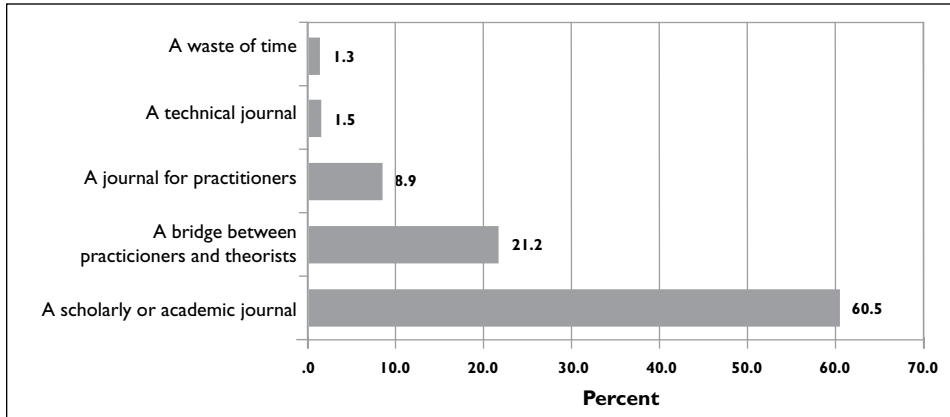
in professional development (70.9%) or those seeking certification (8.1%). The responses indicate that a substantial portion of the readership is involved in teaching and learning. Fourteen percent of survey respondents reported using the journal in teaching; an almost equal number of respondents identified themselves as students (13.2%). If these two categories can be viewed as constituting symbiotic uses, then well over a quarter of the readership is involved in archival education. This proportion of use reflects the growth in the educational sector (faculty and students) of the archival community in the past two decades. Add to this proportion the 40.5% of the responses reporting use of the *American Archivist* for research and nearly the same proportion (39.9%) of respondents reporting that they explicitly consult footnotes, and the survey makes it clear that the journal is a source for rigorous inquiry on archival issues.

Another question in the survey concerned the use of back issues (see Table 8). As with current issues, the most commonly expressed reason for using back issues is to search for ideas or information to solve practical problems (55.5%). Close behind it is to understand developments in theory or practice in the profession (54.5%). The use of back issues for teaching (15.1%) or learning (11%), research (29.2%), and reference (44.1%) suggests that the journal is a very significant source of knowledge on archival issues. The survey did not parse the use of back issues of the journal over its nearly 75-year history, so the extent to which historical content influences current practice is not yet known. As readers discover the full run of the *American Archivist* in digital form, it is likely that the back issues of the journal will begin to have higher levels of use and greater impact on readers. A strong intellectual dependence on a historical publication record marks the archival profession's humanistic sensibilities.

The survey asked respondents to express a general opinion on how the archival profession perceives the journal (Q27). Table 9 demonstrates that some

**Table 8.** Q11: Why do you use back issues of the *American Archivist*? (n = 512)



**Table 9.** Q27: How is the *American Archivist* viewed within the archival profession? (n = 494)

individuals appreciate the *American Archivist's* current balance between theoretical papers and practical articles. Over one-fifth of respondents (21.2%), the second-largest group, feel that the profession sees the journal as a bridge between practitioners and theorists. The largest group, however, feels that the *American Archivist* is viewed primarily as a scholarly or academic journal (60.5%), and many of the comments reflect dissatisfaction with this situation. Few respondents (10.4%) perceive the *American Archivist* as largely oriented toward purely practical or technical issues. The survey instrument establishes the opinions of readers as a theory-practice dichotomy, rather than providing respondents with a wider categorization of article types, including empirical research and case studies. This approach limits the interpretive possibilities of the survey.

Although, aside from this question, the relationship between practicing archivists and academic researchers was not the primary focus of the survey, strong feelings about that relationship and about the role the *American Archivist* plays in relation to those groups emerged from the open-ended responses. Comments provided both in the open-ended option for this question and in others suggest that the path between theory and practice is not necessarily smoothly paved. Forty-one respondents used open-ended comment blocks to express opinions about the balance between theoretical content and practical content. Of those comments, 5 were neutral, 4 expressed positive opinions, and 32 said that the *American Archivist* skews too far in one direction or the other and that this is problematic. For example, one respondent described the archival profession as “a breed apart,” citing the “bifurcation” between those who are mostly concerned with archival theory and those who are primarily interested in practical lessons. Another respondent noted, “There is not much there for practitioners, the focus is theoretical and academic.” Another person reported

that the journal had been more relevant while she was in graduate school. One respondent indicated that now that she is actively working in the archival field, the articles “don’t relate to what I do.” This theme—a tension between theory and practice—was articulated in nearly every free-text option in the survey questions.

By far, survey respondents most commonly requested that the *American Archivist* cover topics of a practical nature (Q14). Particularly popular are those relating to the management of electronic records and born-digital material. Next in popularity are archival tools and software, including emerging and new technologies, followed by more general archival functions; arrangement and description, which include metadata concerns; outreach to a variety of communities and users; and appraisal of materials of all types. While some call for theoretical explorations in these areas, respondents particularly want case studies in these areas, as well as advice on how to do these activities on a limited (or non-existent) budget. At the same time, a smaller group (8.9%) felt that the *American Archivist* is geared mostly toward practitioners, and some respondents argued against this kind of orientation in their open-ended commentary. One respondent suggested that instead of “technical how-to” articles, there should be more on the “implications of technical how-to on why archivists do what they do” and more articles to “[e]ncourage self reflection on the profession and its institutional practices.”

To some, the *American Archivist* is an unhelpful hodge-podge of material. Wrote one respondent, “I find it a strange amalgam of a scholarly journal and a collection of random first-hand experiences, meeting minutes that I’ve likely already read online a long time ago, book reviews of books published two years ago, etc.” Acknowledging that all the different content types current in the journal are important in different contexts but perhaps do not work well all together, one respondent suggested a solution: “We certainly do not want to jettison our theoretical and investigatory interests—and *American Archivist* must exist in some form—but as the sole vehicle for distributing information on the applied aspects of modern archival and records work, it needs to be teamed with an alternative publication, and I do not mean a newsletter.”

Another respondent came to a similar conclusion: “If *American Archivist* does not want to be a fully dedicated research journal, SAA should consider creating a new journal.” The variety of commentary and the lack of consensus on the proper balance in the journal between theory and practice may be a symptom of the intellectual diversity of the archival profession itself. In a growing organization whose professional base supports a narrow and limited range of journal literature, perhaps no single journal can hope to meet all of the intellectual needs of the SAA membership.

### Print Journal versus Online Access

The Society of American Archivists inaugurated online access to the *American Archivist* in August 2007 by making 8 years of journal content available through the MetaPress hosting service. Three years later, in September 2010, SAA completed the digital conversion of the back files of the journal, providing free online access to over 70 years of journal content. The survey of readership was administered in the midst of the phased release of the journal back files, so not all readers may have had experience using the *American Archivist* in its online manifestation. The survey should thus be seen as an important benchmark of reader opinion at the start of the journal's online era.

The survey inquired about the mode of access to the *American Archivist* (Q2). A majority of respondents have access to the *American Archivist* through a personal membership in the Society of American Archivists (61.8%). The next largest group has access via multiple modes, for example, both personal and library subscriptions (14.2%), followed by employer subscriptions (10.2%) and student memberships (7.4%). A small group of respondents (3.2%) claim to have no access to the *American Archivist*. This group might be unaware of the access that comes with membership or may not have ready access to the Internet.

**Table 10.** Q6: Which version of the *American Archivist* have you consulted more frequently? (n = 528)

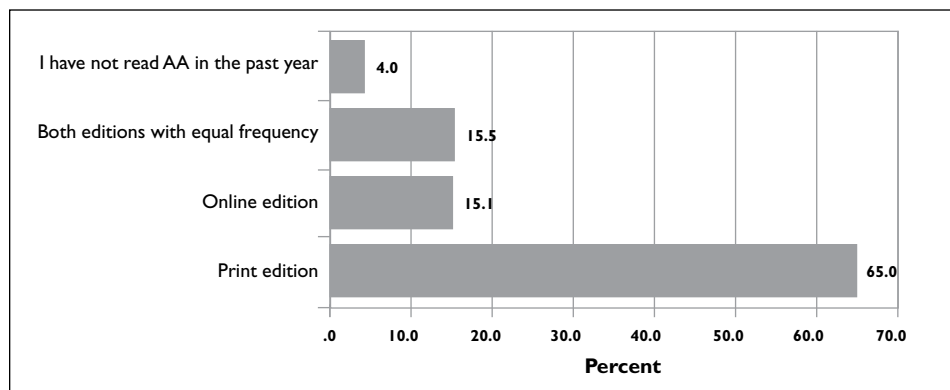


Table 10 (Q6) shows that in the year of the survey (2010), most respondents used the print edition of the journal most frequently (65.0%). If readership of both online and print editions is added to the replies of respondents who read the online version most frequently, some 30% of the survey population are consulting the online version either as their primary mode of access or as a supplement to the paper version. The proportion of survey respondents

who read the journal only in print dwarfs this relatively large proportion, however.

Survey respondents (525) favor a print version of the journal. When asked whether SAA should continue to publish the *American Archivist* in a paper format, 68.4% say yes; only 38 respondents (7.2%) are now ready to see the journal move to online-only publication. Nearly a quarter of the respondents (24.3%) have not made up their minds about the print versus online issue.

In the comments, many respondents detailed why they prefer a print copy. Some concerns have to do with reading habits: "Having the print version enables me to make notes in the margins of specific articles relevant to my research. Yes—this is an old-school approach but it never fails me when the power goes out." People also like to read the print edition while commuting or eating lunch. Others noted that the print version is easier to share and can even become a vehicle for patron outreach: "I also make it available in my public areas for the general public to read. It is the only way the public knows about the organization and possibly supports it." The clearly stated advantage of the online edition is ease of searching back issues for research or reference. One respondent explained why having both versions available is helpful: "The print and electronic editions work together nicely. I can search electronically to find things that memory or quick scan of paper does not identify, but I can pick up a volume from the shelf behind me in an instant."

In a supplemental analysis, we compared responses to the preference for reading the print versus online editions of the journal, on the one hand, and their commitment to publication on paper or their expression of interest in a rolling deadline for the online edition of the journal on the other. The purpose of these cross-tabulations is to expose a more subtle commitment to an evolving online publication, while clarifying the position of readers who expressed a preference for print as a reading source. The results show that readers who prefer to read in print have a significantly greater ( $p < 0.01$ ) expectation for print publication in the future (74.2%) than the respondent population as a whole (68.3%). Readers who read the online version of the *American Archivist* are more willing to entertain the cessation of the print edition (44.5%) than the respondent population as a whole (31.7%).

Table 11 shows a similar division among respondents regarding the prospects of a rolling publication model for journal articles, in which articles are posted online when editorial work is complete and then compiled into discrete print and online issues twice a year. Readers who read either the online or both editions of the journal welcome a rolling publication model to a greater extent than readers who favor the print edition exclusively ( $p < 0.05$ ). Even more telling is the fact that 25 survey respondents did not answer the question about rolling publication (Q16). When this group is added to the opponents of the

**Table 11.** Preference for Online Reading and Opinion on the Format of the *American Archivist*Q6: Which version of the *American Archivist* have you consulted more frequently in the past year?Q16: Would you prefer a rolling publication cycle? ( $n = 488$ )

		Which version of the <i>American Archivist</i> have you consulted more frequently in the past year?			Total	Percent
		Print edition	Online or both editions	Have not read AA in past year		
Would you prefer a rolling publication cycle?	Yes	171	99	12	282	57.8
	No	148	54	4	206	42.2
	Total	319	153	16	488	100
	Percent	65.4	31.4	3.3	100	

rolling deadline, over half of the survey respondents seem particularly wedded to the print edition of the journal.

### Discussion and Implications

The first-ever survey of readership of the *American Archivist* set out to establish a benchmark of opinion on the present and future of the form and substance of the journal. The results are preliminary in scope. With a 10% response rate, the findings cannot be projected to the overall membership of the Society. And yet, equipped with the expressions of over 540 SAA members, we can speculate on the current state of the journal and raise a number of issues for further consideration.

Even while allowing for favorable bias of most self-administered reader surveys, it is clear that SAA members value and read the *American Archivist*. At least half of the respondents reported reading the journal in some form, in all or in part, as soon as it is published. Additionally, at least half of the respondents consult the back issues of the journal at least 3 or more times per year, with 16% consulting older issues more than 10 times per year. Readers find research articles, case studies, perspectives, and other content that is rigorously vetted in a peer-reviewed editorial process to be most valuable. The journal has emerged in the past two decades from its foundation as a record of the Society's progress to become a scholarly journal that provides well-researched and well-documented insight into the major issues facing the archival profession as it matures.

Readers are quite divided, however, on the value of a journal that has attempted to advance the theoretical foundations of the profession while resonating with archivists in search of practical advice. The path between theory and practice is tread issue by issue and article by article. Although the survey was not designed to ferret out the value in individual articles, it is clear that the respondents to the survey of *American Archivist* readers have strong opinions about their information needs and the extent to which the journal meets those needs. On balance, it is fair to proffer a tentative conclusion that the journal is largely successful in its publication record, but that the existence of an online edition will present new challenges and opportunities for readers.

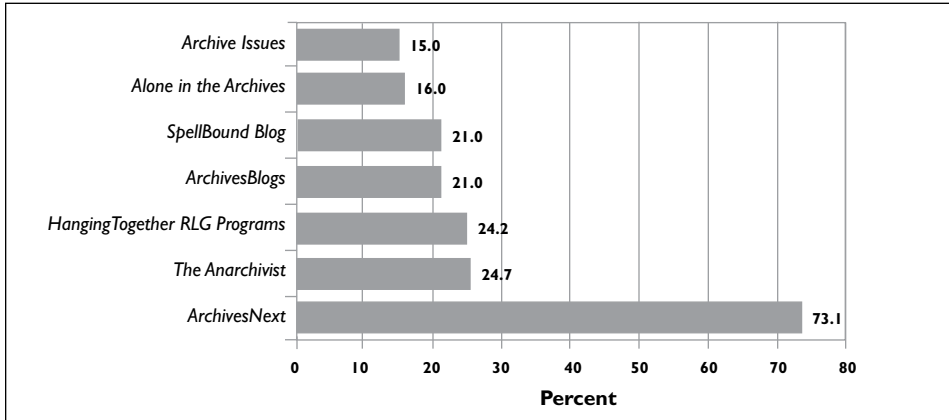
Advocates for online journal publishing often claim to be relatively neutral about the relationship between print and digital versions, arguing in part that economic models may be flexible enough to accommodate a slow transition from paper to online access. Richard Quandt pointed out in 2003 that the debate on publishing formats was taking place in the absence of hard data on costs and use. "It is a fact that no rigorous studies seem to exist as yet of the cost structure of paper versus electronic journals and most of the 'data' adduced by partisans on one or the other side are based on personal experience in a limited number of fields or with a limited number of publications."<sup>4</sup> John Willinsky writes that scholarly associations considering a move to online journal publishing must face the print versus digital issue head on. "What is clear is that any reduction in publishing costs requires phasing out the print edition, and eliminating the expenses related to the handling of the associated paper manuscripts."<sup>5</sup>

It is clear from the first SAA readership survey that the *American Archivist* is one component of a very complex information landscape for the professional archivist. Readers value and consult the journal as a useful benefit of membership but are quite outspoken in recognizing the tensions that befall a journal that strives to meet diverse and sometimes competing information needs. The survey also highlights that the Society is at the beginning of a long process of determining how to balance the expectations of readers for a paper version of the *American Archivist* that is both convenient to read and capable of long-term retention in the personal and organizational collections of SAA members. The survey was administered before a critical mass of SAA members had time to explore the online version of the journal. It is imperative that a readership survey be re-administered in two or three years, with the express purpose of judging how opinions about the format and content of the *American Archivist* have evolved.

<sup>4</sup> Richard E. Quandt, "Scholarly Materials: Paper or Digital?," *Library Trends* 51, no. 3 (2003): 370.

<sup>5</sup> John Willinsky, "Scholarly Associations and the Economic Viability of Open Access Publishing," *Journal of Digital Information* 4, no. 2 (2003), <http://jodi.tamu.edu/Articles/v04/i02/Willinsky/>, accessed 12 April 2011.

## Appendix I

**Table 12.** What archival blogs do you read at least once a month? (overall  $n = 478$ ; percentages calculated excluding respondents who indicated that they never read blogs,  $n = 219$ )

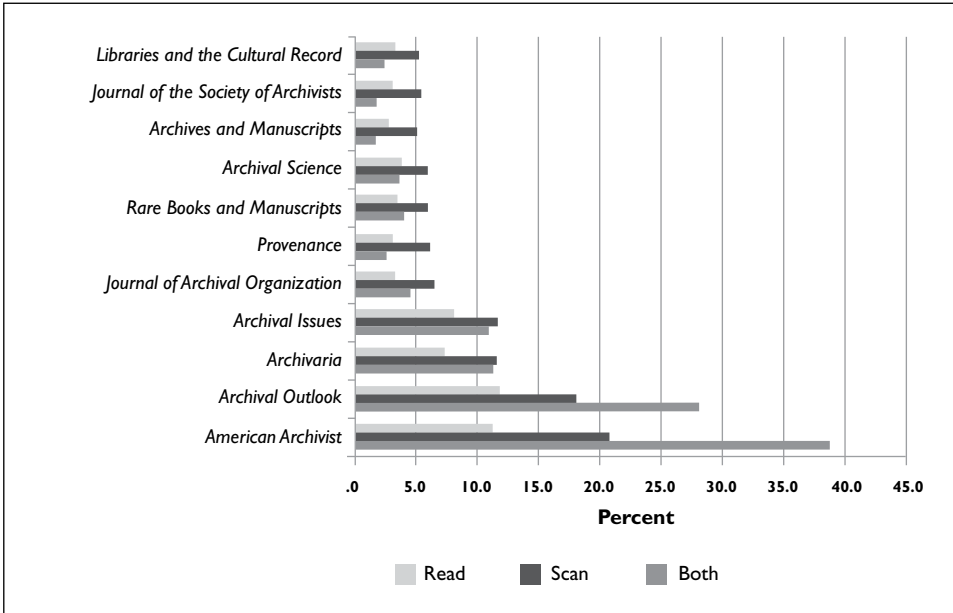
Respondents also listed a number of other blogs they read:

- *A View to Hugh*
- *ACerm*
- *AOTUS: Collector in Chief*
- *Archivematica*
- *Archives Found*
- *Archives Hub Blog*
- *ArchivesGig*
- *Archiving Schapiro*
- *Association of Catholic Diocesan Archivists*
- *AT @Yale*
- *Beaver Archivist*
- *Bits, Bytes and Archives*
- *Bone Folder*
- *Brooklyn Historical Society*
- *Container List*
- *DAVA: Digital Audiovisual Archiving*
- *De Digitale Archivaris*
- *Derangement and Description*
- *Digital Collections*
- *Digital Curation Blog*
- *Digitization 101*
- *Endangered Archives Blog*
- *Field Trip South*
- *futureArch*
- *Heretical Thoughts of an Archivist*
- *Keeping Time: A Digital Commonplace Book*
- *L'Archivista*
- *LibraryLaw*
- *Neil Beagrie's Blog*
- *NewArchivist*
- *Not Just Another Archives Blog*
- *PACSCSCL Hidden Collections Project*
- *Peeling Back the Bark*
- *Posterity Project*
- *Practical E-Records*
- *Preservation and Conservation Administration News*
- *Reading Archives*
- *Records Junkie*
- *Room 26*
- *Russell Library for Political Research and Studies*
- *SAA RAO News*
- *Southern Sources*
- *Sylvette Online*
- *That Elusive Archives Job*
- *The Anecdotal Archivist*
- *The Back Table*
- *The Canadian Archivist Blog*
- *The Documentalist*
- *The Lazy Scholar*
- *The Practical Archivist*
- *The Secret Mirror*
- *The Ten Thousand Year Blog*
- *This Day in Athens*
- *Touchable Archives*
- *University of Chicago SCRC*
- *UpNext*
- *Women's Collections Roundtable*



Appendix 2

Table 13. What other literature do you scan and read? (n = 373)



Other periodicals respondents read include:

- AIC Journal
- American Historical Review
- American Libraries
- ARL newsletter
- Art Documentation
- Cataloging & Classification Quarterly
- Chronicle of Higher Education
- CLIR newsletter
- Code4Lib
- College & Research Libraries News
- Common-place.org
- Computer in Libraries
- Daguerreian Society Journal
- First Monday
- GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies
- Guild of Book Workers
- History News
- History of Photography Journal
- Infonomics
- Information and Management
- Information Research
- Information Society
- Information Storage and Retrieval
- International Journal of Information Management
- International Journal of Project Management
- Journal for the Society of North Carolina Archivists
- Journal of Academic Librarianship
- Journal of African American History
- Journal of American History
- Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media
- Journal of Library Metadata
- Journal of Library Resources and Technical Services
- Journal of New York State Archives
- Journal of Radio & Audio Media
- Journal of Visual Culture
- Knowledge Management
- Library Journal
- Library Quarterly
- Library Resources & Technical Services
- Library Trends
- Modern Language Association Publications
- The Moving Image
- Museum News
- OCLC Systems & Services
- Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America
- Portal
- Records Management Journal
- Technical Services Quarterly
- Vectors