Building a National Finding Aid Network:

Info Session | 2022 Oct 6

- Chela Scott Weber (OCLC Research Library Partnership)
- Rachael Hu (California Digital Library)
- Adrian Turner (California Digital Library)

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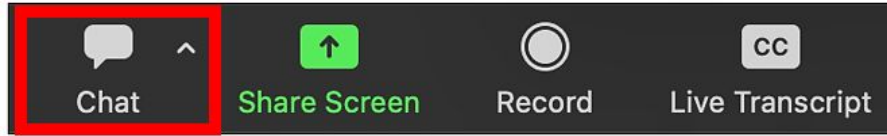
All lines are muted. Post questions via chat
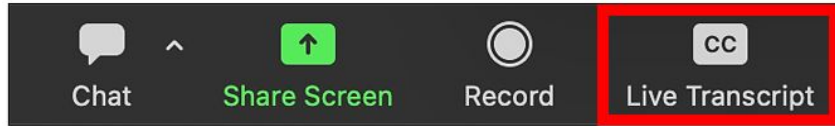
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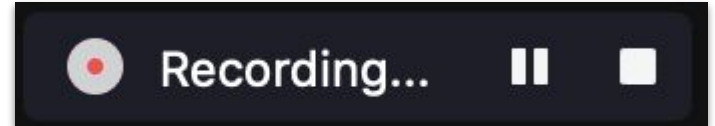
We'll post a recording of the session

Project context

Researchers

Collection guides or
"finding aids"

Collections

Vision

NAFAN is a 2-year IMLS funded research and demonstration project to create a "blueprint" for a national finding aid network

Goals:

- Support the broadest possible range of contributing institutions and minimize barriers to participation
- Scale researcher discovery and access to a broader range of collections
- Create a network that is community-driven, community-sustained, and community-governed
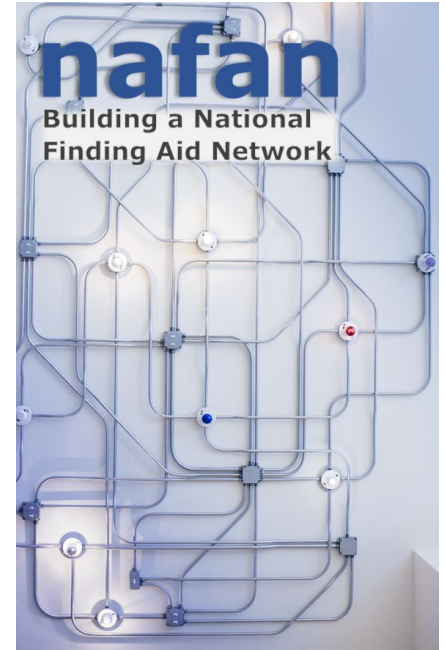
Activities and Timeline

Research

Technical assessment & prototyping

Community engagement

Sustainability & governance planning

Current R&D phase (2020-2022+)

Launch (post-2023)! 🎉

NAFAN Research Update

Chela Scott Weber (she/her/hers)

Senior Program Officer

OCLC Research Library Partnership

OCLC Research Team

Chela Scott Weber

Lesley A. Langa, Ph.D.

Itza A. Carbajal

Brooke Doyle

Janet Mason

Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Ph.D.

Merrilee Proffitt

Bruce Washburn – retired

Brittany Brannon

Research Advisory Group

- Bill Stingone, New York Public Library
- Derek Mosley, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library
- Hillel Arnold, Rockefeller Archives Center
- Holly Mengel, University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center (PACSCL)
- Lydia Tang, Lyrasis
- Molly Bruce Patterson, Rhode Island College (RIAMCO)
- Rachel Walton, Rollins College
- Ricky Punzalan, University of Michigan, School of Information

Research Goals Summary

Qualitative

Identify the **needs** of both **researchers and cultural heritage institutions** regarding finding aid aggregation.

Quantitative

Evaluate the **quality of existing finding aid data** at scale.

Research Overview: EAD data quality

Data set of 145K EAD encoded finding aids from ArchiveGrid and aggregator partners

Analyzed with a focus on discovery and meeting user needs - Can the extant data support the functionality we desire?

Aggregated Finding Aid Data

EAD Data Quality Analysis

Tag Analysis: Discovery thresholds & DACS compliance

Finding aid links to digital content

Specifying physical characteristics & genre

Connections to controlled vocabularies

Consistency of institutional contact information

Research Overview: Archivist Needs

Focus Group Interviews with Archivists
- 10 Interviews / 52 Archivists total
- Diversity of positions, archives, regions

Analysis focused on:
- Enabling and constraining factors related to creating archival description
- Enabling and constraining factors related to participating in aggregation
- Perceived value of aggregation

Archivists & Cultural Heritage Institutions

Participants by Archive Type

Academic archive	22
Museum library / archive	11
Government archive	6
Public library archive	4
Community archive	4
Historical society archive	3
Independent research library	2
International organization	1
Performing arts archive	1
Regional archive	1
Total	52

Carnegie Classifications Breakdown

- 2 worked at archives in Baccalaureate Colleges (1 Arts & Sciences Focus, 1 Diverse Fields)

- 5 worked in Master's Colleges & Universities (2 M1, 3 M2)

- 15 worked in Doctoral Universities (10 R1, 4 R2, 1 D/PU)

Participants by US Region
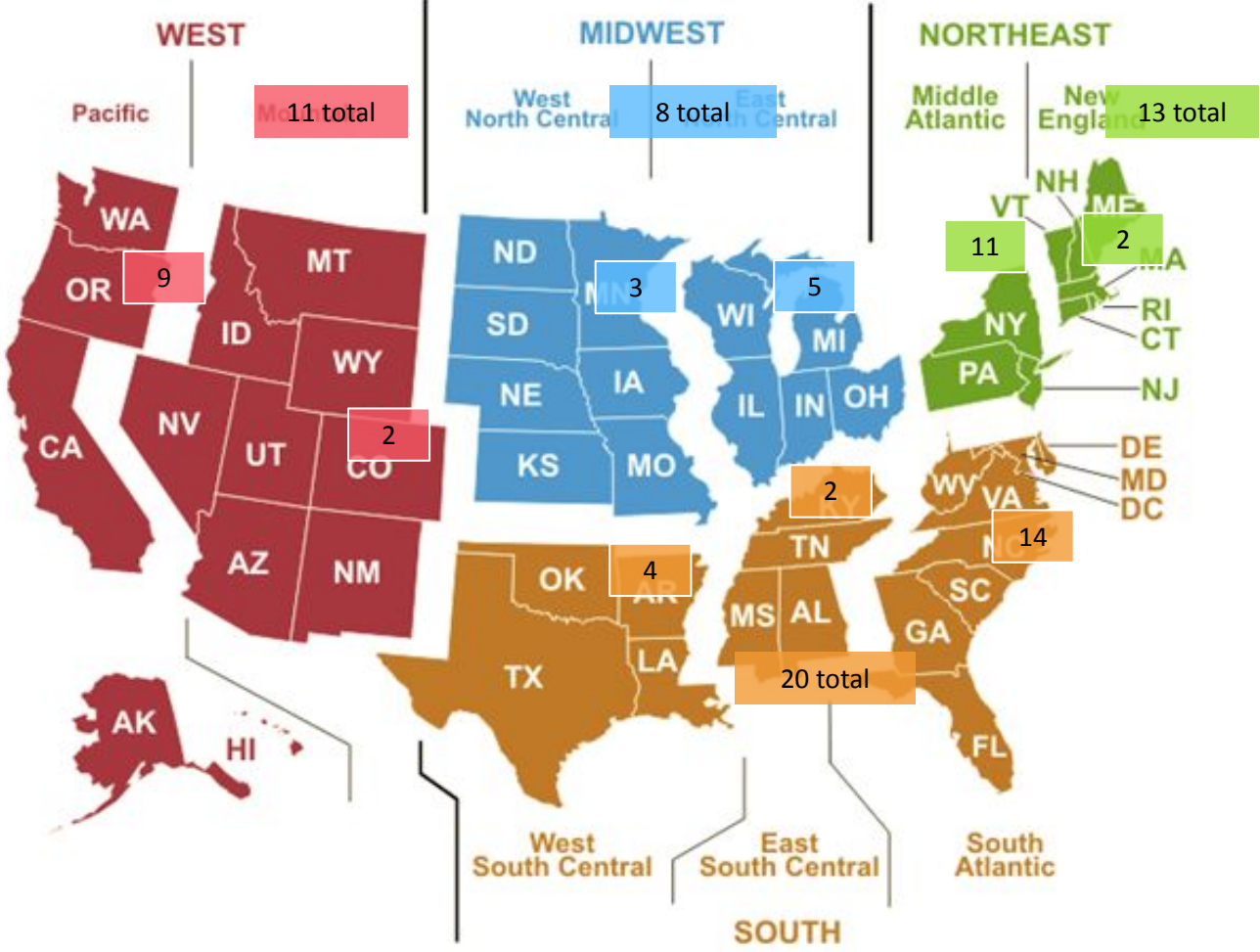
Focus Group Findings Themes

1. **Things that constrain creating archival description**

2. **Things that enable creating archival description**

3. **Incentives to participate in aggregation (current or perceived)**

4. **Disincentives to participating in aggregation (current or perceived)**

Description constrainers

- Complex workflows / workarounds (n=29)

- Dealing with legacy description (n=19)

- Lack of financial resources / staffing (n=18)

"we're doing a lot of manual encoding, which means that for us, EAD encoding does not happen as a priority...I'll be honest."   -*Curator, Public library archive, Northeast*

n=number of focus group interview participants

OCLC

Description enablers

- Collection Management Systems (n=21)

- Worksheets / templates (n=14)

- Documentation / manuals (n=8)

"ArchivesSpace makes it easy for us...It's been a sea change for us in terms of time savings."
-Supervisory Archivist, Academic archive, West

n=number of focus group interview participants

Disincentives to participate

- Data requirements (n=19)
- Difficult to edit / update (n=14) or submit (n=8) records
- Cost (n=8)

"We joined the [aggregator], and I have not put anything there yet because I have to reformat and redo the data that I have done already so that their system can read it and it's so time-consuming..."

-Archivist, Museum archive, Midwest

n=number of focus group interview participants

Incentives to participate

- Increased visibility / awareness of collections (n=25)
- Uncovering connections between collections (n=22)
- Ease of contributing existing records (n=21)

"**For the institution, it makes our resources more discoverable, and it also puts them in a conversation with other resources in other institutions that are similar.**"

- Curator, Academic archive, West

n=number of focus group interview participants

Research Overview: End User Needs

Two major sources of user data:

- Pop-Up survey
  - Hosted on 12 Regional Aggregator sites
  - 3300 complete, usable responses
  - Gathered demographic and research needs info
- Semi-structured individual interviews
  - 25 interviews, 45-60 min

Analysis focused on:

- Describing and classifying users, based on needs, motivators, behaviors
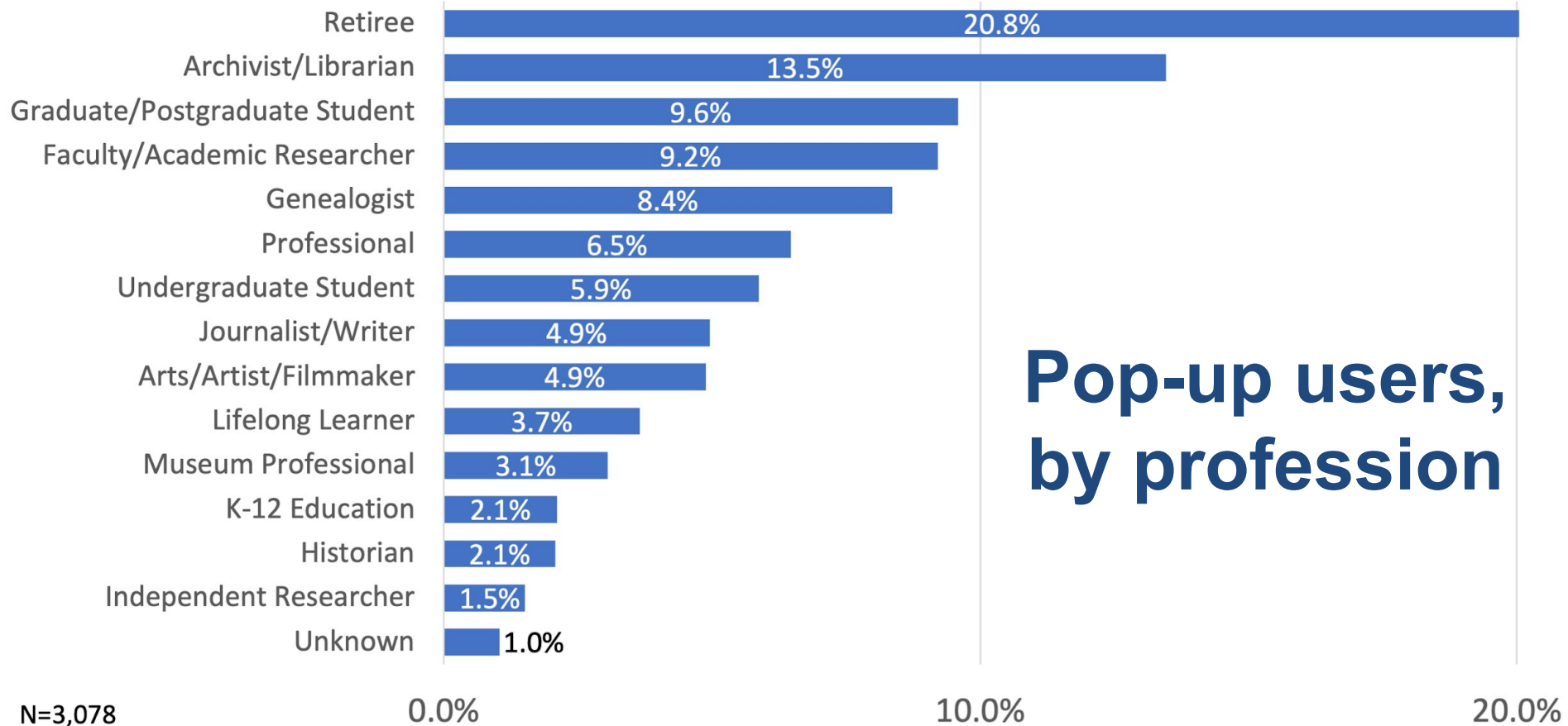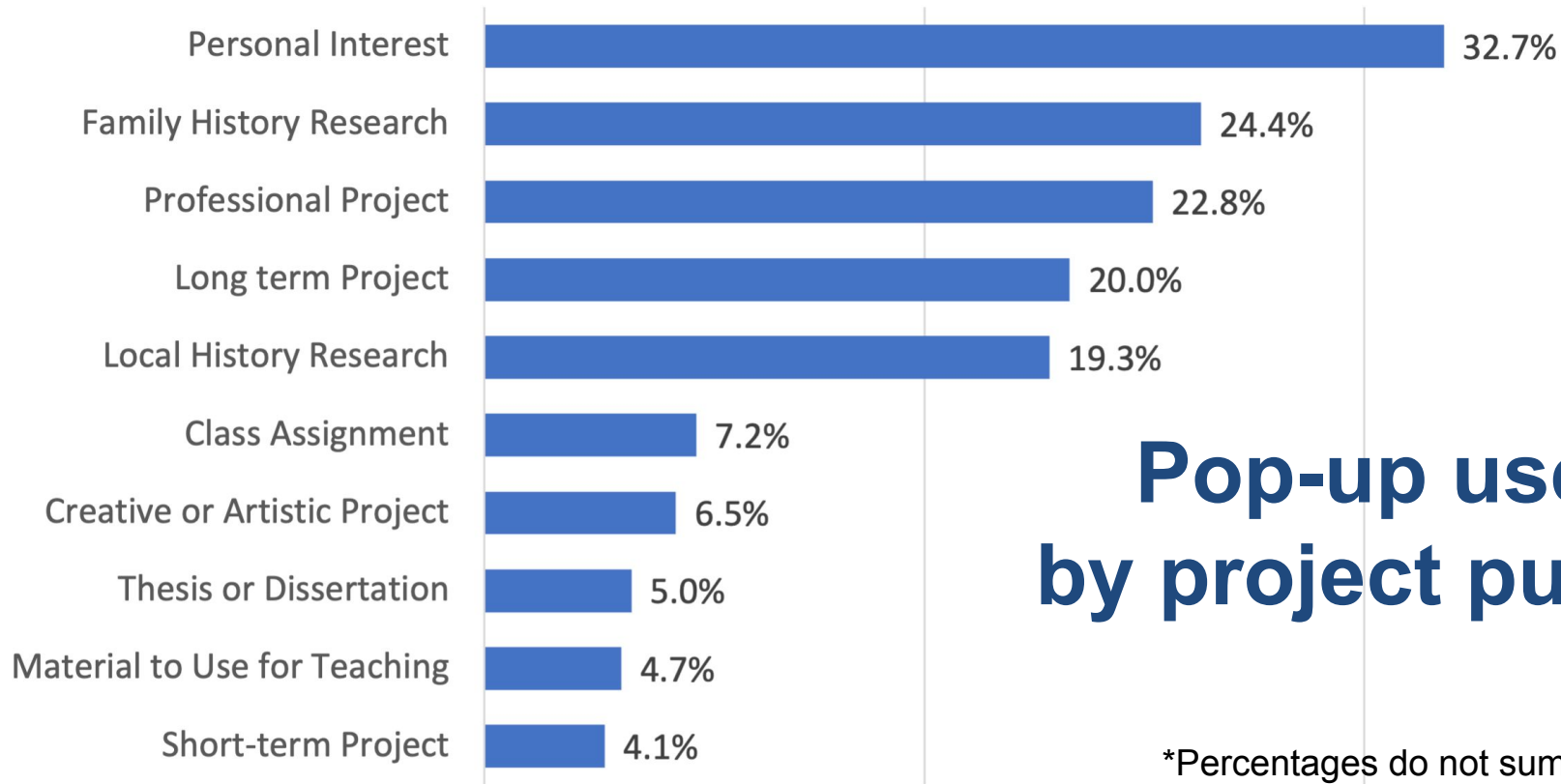- Benefits and challenges of using aggregators

End Users

Survey Questions

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

Pop-up users, by profession

Profession	Percentage
Retiree	20.8%
Archivist/Librarian	13.5%
Graduate/Postgraduate Student	9.6%
Faculty/Academic Researcher	9.2%
Genealogist	8.4%
Professional	6.5%
Undergraduate Student	5.9%
Journalist/Writer	4.9%
Arts/Artist/Filmmaker	4.9%
Lifelong Learner	3.7%
Museum Professional	3.1%
K-12 Education	2.1%
Historian	2.1%
Independent Researcher	1.5%
Unknown	1.0%

N=3,078

Pop-up users, by project purpose

*Percentages do not sum to 100%

Project Purpose	Percentage
Personal Interest	32.7%
Family History Research	24.4%
Professional Project	22.8%
Long term Project	20.0%
Local History Research	19.3%
Class Assignment	7.2%
Creative or Artistic Project	6.5%
Thesis or Dissertation	5.0%
Material to Use for Teaching	4.7%
Short-term Project	4.1%

N=3,172

How pop-up users found aggregator websites
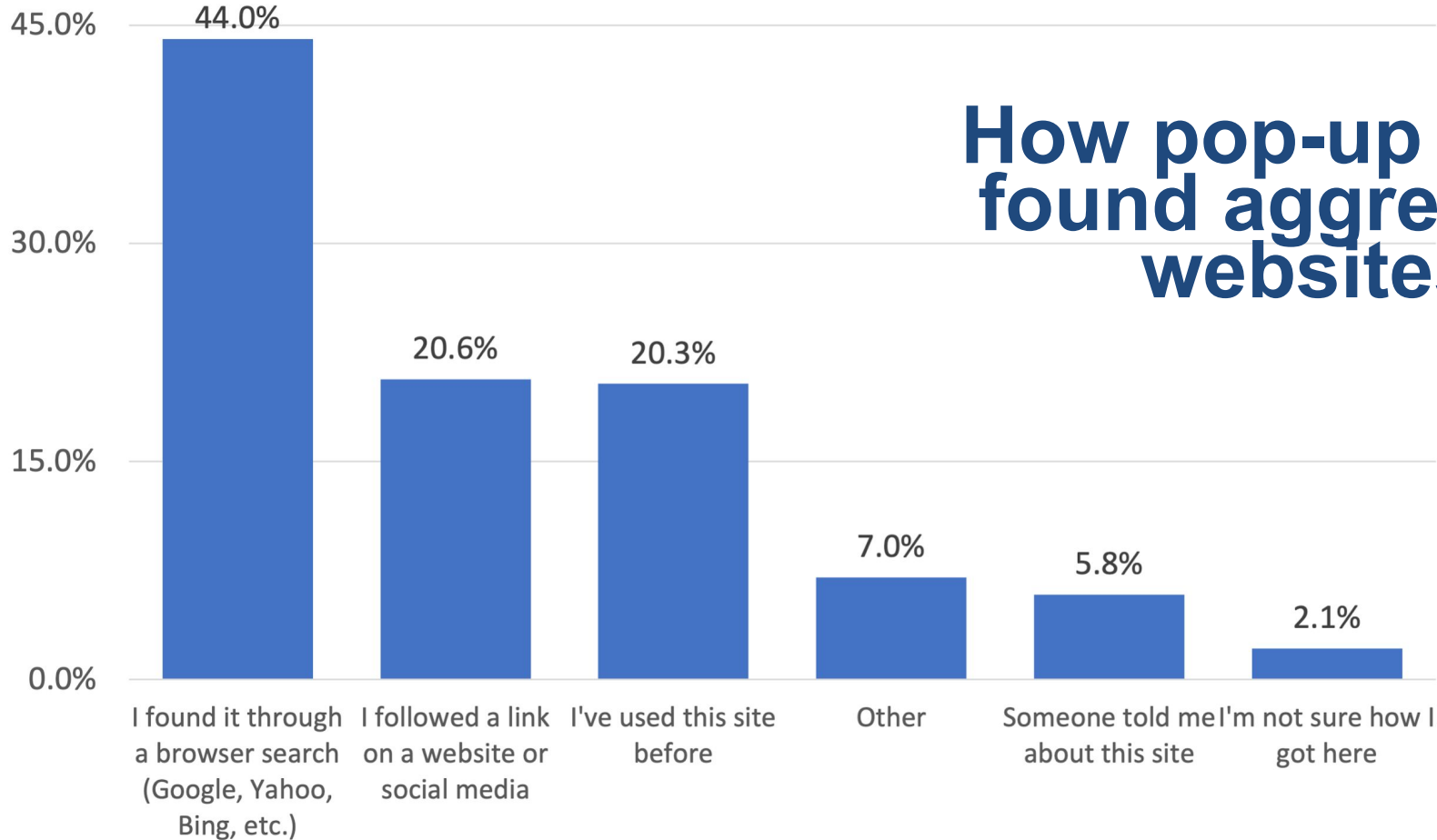
How frequently pop-up users visit aggregator websites

Other, 4.5%

Less than monthly, 16.3%

This is my first time, 55.4%

Monthly, 12.1%

Weekly, 9.0%

Daily, 2.8%
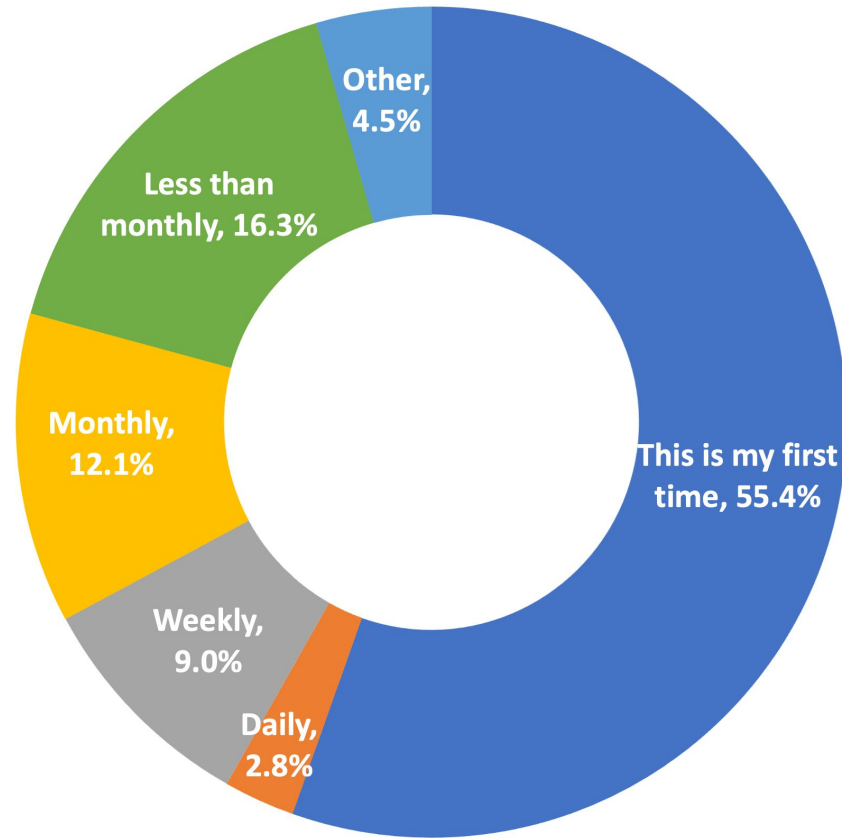
N=3,172

Individual Interviews with Users

In-depth, 1:1, 60-minute interviews

25 interviews, 5 per persona type
- Archivist/Librarian
- Faculty and Doctoral Degrees
- Family History Researcher
- Personal Interest Researcher
- Undergraduates/Postgraduates

Focus on **why** and **how** they are discovering and accessing archives, **what** they want from aggregation.

Community workshop findings

Increasing discovery of archives
A project to provide better pathways to archival records in cultural heritage collections

A report for NAFAN documenting the community engagement workshop hosted by Shift Collective on Dec. 14 and 15, 2021

Shift Collective
February 2022

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0kd7d5m0

About the Workshop

Hosted by Shift Collective in December 2021 to gather input from individuals working in community-based cultural memory organizations

Inform NAFAN's development and implementation of a national network of archival descriptions

- 2 day workshop via Zoom
- 14 participants representing 12 cultural memory organizations
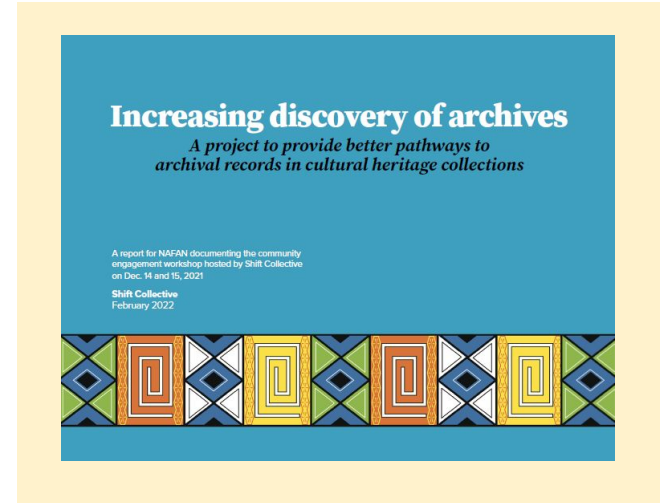- Full group sessions and small breakout activities

Increasing discovery of archives
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A report for NAFAN documenting the community engagement workshop hosted by Shift Collective on Dec. 14 and 15, 2021

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February 2022
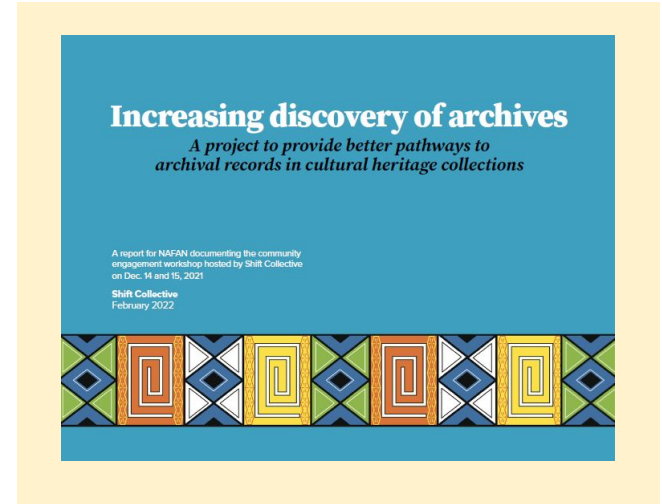
Common Themes

- Community knowledge is key to the success of community memory projects, but is undervalued in grant writing and project planning.

- Community-based archives (CBAs) enrich their communities, but are underfunded, lack basic resources, and are consumed with the day to day work of sustaining their organizations, often at a bare-bones level.

- Community memory project funding needs to target CBAs directly.

Needs, Concerns, and Opportunities

- Finding aids for who or what?
- Resources and sustainability
- Misrepresentation, security, and control of collection descriptions
- Managing collections and mutual support
- Discoverability and promotion of archival content

Increasing discovery of archives
A project to provide better pathways to archival records in cultural heritage collections

A report for NAFAN documenting the community engagement workshop hosted by Shift Collective on Dec. 14 and 15, 2021

Shift Collective
February 2022

Finding Aids for Who or What?

"[There are] assumptions about amplification, that people just don't know about collections... There are researchers in Germany, New York, wherever, who have more access to our collections than in the public high school less than a block away from where we are. And so, having this national finding aid is not necessarily going to address that. It'll create more access for people who already have access, in a way. This is not about finding aids. It's much deeper. These are systemic issues that are still related to social justice issues."

— workshop participant

Resources and Sustainability

"In terms of there being just such a need for fundamental resources, it makes it hard to even think about transferring our information to such a large aggregator."

— workshop participant

Misrepresentation, Security, and Control of Collection Descriptions

"The more we participate in national things, the less we have control."

— workshop participant

Managing Collections and Mutual Support

"One benefit of the workshop was all of us being online together sharing information, processes, and approaches."

— workshop participant

Discoverability and Promotion of Archival Content

"Yes, [safety is important], but you don't want to be excluded from something that could be very important to represent different sides of America, or people and cultures."

— workshop participant

High-level design model

Our NAFAN infrastructure design process

- High level vision created and built off in-progress findings
- Data points used to create initial infrastructure design model

Community and contributor needs from user studies

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Environmental scan of aggregation use cases

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Finding aid data dashboard assessment
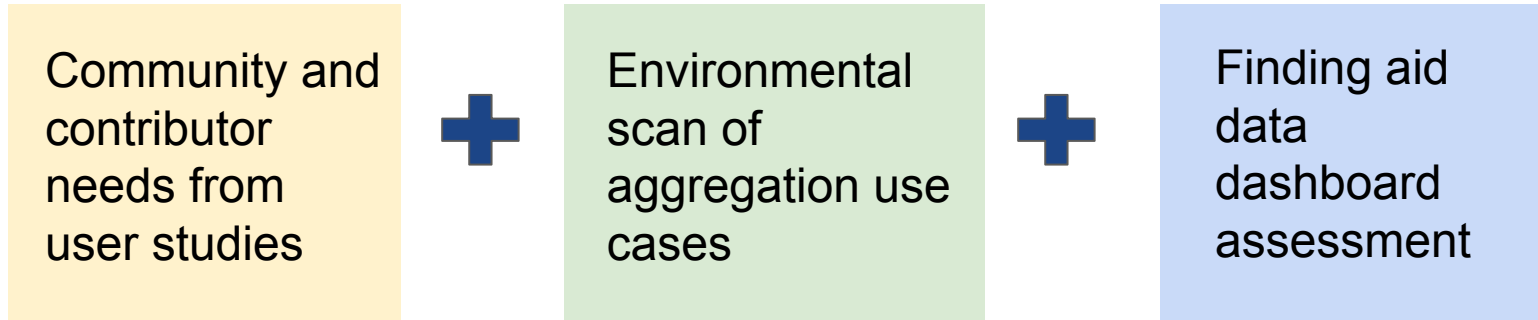
Potential contributors

Individual cultural heritage institutions

- *Academic institutions, Public Libraries, Community Archives*

Aggregators of collection descriptions

- *State*
- *Regional*
- *National*

Collection description formats

- Analog formats
- Electronic formats
  - EAD
  - HTML web pages
  - Spreadsheet
  - Word Doc
  - PDF
  - MARC
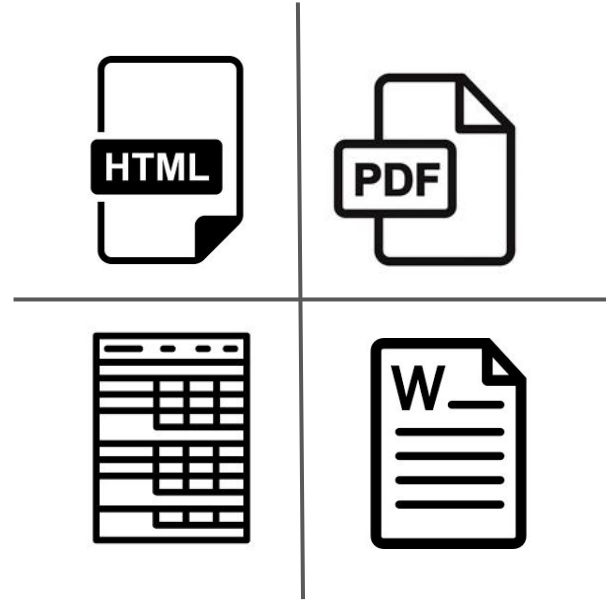
Collection description use cases

- No collection descriptions
- Analog formats only
- Archival collection management platforms (ASpace)
- Digital collection platform (CONTENTdm)
- Local institutional websites
- Local Integrated Library System (ILS)/ online catalog
- Aggregator website

Display and discovery needs
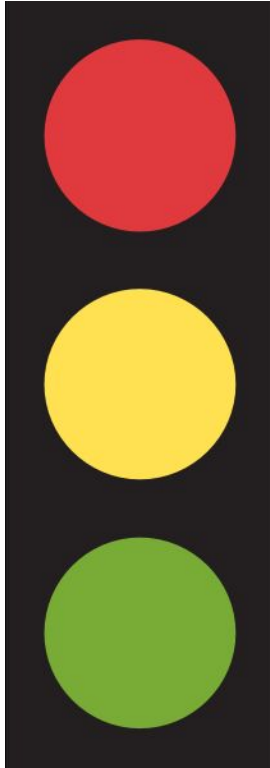
- Don't need a hosting solution or expanded discovery

- Rely on their current hosting solution or web display but want to be a part of a national discovery environment

- Need a hosting solution and want to be part of a national discovery environment

Design model for contribution flows and discovery

Repository profile

Supplied at time of sign-up

NAFAN discovery and delivery layer + Central index

Collection guides

Ways to contribute

- *Harvest (OAI-PMH)*
- *Pull from web-accessible location*
- *Web crawl*
- *Upload*
- *Webform to create and edit guides*

Design model for contribution flows and discovery
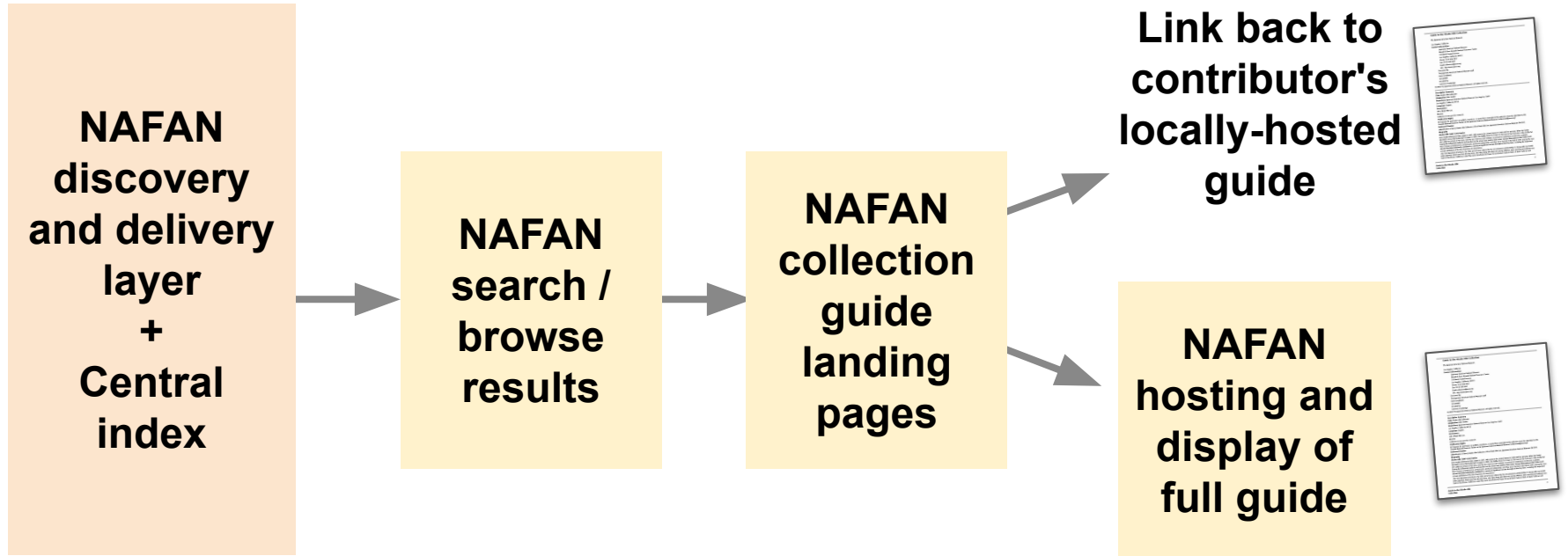
Collection guide recommendations for search and discovery

Modeled on *Describing Archives'* (DACS) single-level minimum records for structured and unstructured formats
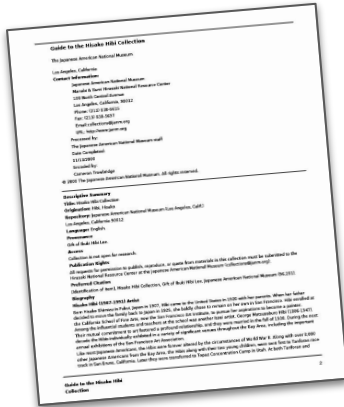
- **Identifier**
- **Repository name**
- **Title**
- **Date**
- **Extent**
- **Scope and content note**
- **Conditions governing access**
- **Languages**
- **Rights/licensing statement for the collection guide**

Please share information about your organization's collection guide context!

https://bit.ly/nafansurvey2

Get Involved

Subscribe to our mailing list for updates

Stay tuned for upcoming info sessions this winter

Feel free to contact us with any questions at **nafan@ucop.edu**

https://confluence.ucop.edu/display/NAFAN

Building a National Finding Aid Network:
Project Update Links and References | 2022 Oct 6

NAFAN project website
https://confluence.ucop.edu/display/NAFAN/
https://confluence.ucop.edu/display/NAFAN/Project+Reports+and+Resources

OCLC Research Presentations and Blog posts for work in-progress highlights
https://www.oclc.org/research/areas/user-studies/national-finding-aid-network.html

- How well does EAD tag usage support finding aid discovery?
  https://hangingtogether.org/how-well-does-ead-tag-usage-support-finding-aid-discovery/
- Connecting EAD headings to controlled vocabularies
  https://hangingtogether.org/connecting-ead-headings-to-controlled-vocabularies/
- NAFAN focus groups: Aligning participant selection with project values
  https://hangingtogether.org/nafan-focus-groups-aligning-participant-selection-with-project-values/
- Getting to know users of archival aggregation sites
  https://hangingtogether.org/getting-to-know-users-of-archival-aggregation-sites/
- How users find and visit archival aggregation websites
  https://hangingtogether.org/how-users-find-and-visit-archival-aggregation-websites/

EAD Data Dashboard / Quantitative Data Analysis Projects
https://researchworks.oclc.org/nafan/
https://researchworks.oclc.org/nafan/projects/

Shift Collective (2022) "Increasing Discovery of Archives: A Project to Provide Better Pathways to Archival Records in Cultural Heritage Collections"
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0kd7d5m0
https://www.shiftcollective.us/casestudies4/2022-nafan

Survey: please share information about your organization's collection guide context!
https://bit.ly/nafansurvey2

NAFAN mailing list and contact
https://confluence.ucop.edu/display/NAFAN/Get+Involved