Measuring Collections Care: Survey, Self-assessment, Consultant, or Index?

Lesley A. Langa, PhD
A little bit about me...

Heritage Preservation,
National Endowment for the Humanities,
National Endowment for the Arts,
OCLC Research...
Why is this important?
In 2014, HHI found that 47.6% of U.S. cultural heritage institutions have no general condition assessment, and of those that had an assessment, 14% completed a general condition assessment once and do not regularly update it.

HHI 2014 also found that 51.9% do not have paid staff dedicated to conservation/preservation.

In the 2017 program evaluation, 70% of respondents said MAP assessments improved their collections stewardship by a great or considerable extent.
How can we measure Collections Care?

- Survey
- Self-assessment
- Consultant
- Index
Let’s talk about the options
How can you measure how you care for your collections?

- **Consultants**
  - Purpose is to provide expert assessments and advice for improving collections care and operations

- **Self-assessment & study**
  - Purpose is to enhance collections care learning and feedback through community platforms and ongoing training

- **Survey of each responsibility for collections care**
  - Purpose is to provide a deep dive for the survey respondent allowing them to self-assess and to provide a national picture of what is being done and what still needs work
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultants</th>
<th>Self-assessment/Study</th>
<th>Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collections Assessment Program (CAP) - FAIC</td>
<td>Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs) - AASLH</td>
<td>Heritage Health Information (HHI) - Heritage Preservation/AIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum Assessment Program (MAP) - AAM</td>
<td>Connecting to Collections Care (C2CC) - FAIC</td>
<td>Preservation Statistics - ALA/ALCTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants - for private hire (e.g., Preserve This, CIPP)</td>
<td>Preservation Self-Assessment Program (PSAP) - UIUC</td>
<td>Preservation Statistics at ARL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lyrasis online classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEDCC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
But what about the index?
Index:

An index is a way of compiling one score from a variety of questions or statements that represents a belief, feeling, or concept.
Collections Care Index Overview

• Builds one summary measure for collections care
• Parsimonious approach
• How can it be used:
  • Organizations can benchmark their scores
  • Fundraising tool for organizations
  • Education about collections care practices
Source Data: HHI 2014

- Heritage Health Information (HHI) is the only comprehensive survey to assess the condition and preservation needs of U.S. collections.
- Archives, historical societies, libraries, museums, archaeological repositories, and scientific research organizations
- Collecting institutions of all sizes and from every U.S. state and territory
- 1,714 responses
Collections Care Practices in the Index

- Temperature controls for exhibits and storage
- Light controls for exhibits and storage
- Humidity controls for exhibits and storage
- Storage
- Emergency planning and training for staff
- Digital preservation
- Digitization
- Security
- Budgeting
- Donations/fundraising for preservation
- Staffing
- Conditions assessment
Index Construction

• Select collections care practices from HHI 2014 (based on prior preservation studies)
  • 32 in total
    • 12 topic questions
    • 20 follow-up questions
• Check validity of each for the index
• Score responses to each care variable
• Sum the scores by respondent
Scoring example

• Topic Question
  • Do you have an emergency plan?
    ▶ Yes = 1

• Follow-up Questions
  • Do you have an update schedule for the emergency plan?
    ▶ Yes = 0.5
  • Is your staff trained to carry out the emergency plan in the event of a natural disaster?
    ▶ Yes = 0.5
So how does this help us?
Index as a Tool

Advantages

- Self-directed assessment
- Starter point for further assessment
- Gut check for annual, biannual, 5-year periods
- Comparison to peer institutions
- Valuable data about your practice for grant applications

Disadvantages

- Not an action plan
- Provides a starting point for further self-study or consultant
- Comparison to peer institutions
Let’s look at the tool

www.CollectionsCareIndex.com
Questions?
Thank you!

Lesley A. Langa, PhD

lesleylanga@gmail.com

Collectionscareindex@gmail.com
Back Matter
Scoring Results - 2014 HHI Respondents
## Distribution by Collection Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index Score</th>
<th>Archive</th>
<th>Historical Society</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Museum</th>
<th>Scientific Collection/Archaeological Repository</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15.5</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20.5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Predicted Index Scores by Large Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Collection Items Count</th>
<th>Staff Count</th>
<th>Predicted Index Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archive</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical society</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific collection</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>