

University at Albany, State University of New York

## Scholars Archive

---

University Libraries Faculty Scholarship

University Libraries

---

1-2006

## Use of General Preservation Assessments: Outputs

Karen E.K. Brown

*University at Albany*, [kebrown@albany.edu](mailto:kebrown@albany.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/ulib\\_fac\\_scholar](https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/ulib_fac_scholar)



Part of the [Art and Materials Conservation Commons](#), and the [Collection Development and Management Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Brown, Karen E.K., "Use of General Preservation Assessments: Outputs" (2006). *University Libraries Faculty Scholarship*. 7.

[https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/ulib\\_fac\\_scholar/7](https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/ulib_fac_scholar/7)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Libraries at Scholars Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Libraries Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Scholars Archive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@albany.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@albany.edu).

# Use of General Preservation Assessments

## Outputs

**Karen E. K. Brown**

*This study describes the extent to which institutions implement preservation recommendations resulting from a general needs assessment, including the time to implementation and the extent of program development. Most recommendations are preventive, with less emphasis on repair or reformatting activities. Data indicate that the majority of institutions accomplish recommended preservation actions with no neglected subject areas. Institutions with the highest rates of success spent more staff time preparing for the site visit, and had a longer site visit, compared to the population as a whole. Preparation of a preservation plan does not correlate to an enhanced capacity to implement preservation recommendations.*

The purpose of undertaking a general preservation assessment is to define need and initiate a planning process to: (1) enable an institution to reduce risks to the collection, and (2) better allocate resources for preservation over time. The popularity and persistence of several major funding initiatives, including the New York State Department of Cultural Education's Discretionary Grant Program, the Preservation Assistance Grants offered by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Conservation Assessment Program funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, suggest that general preservation assessments are valuable for guiding cultural institutions in planning for care of their collections.

In the literature are several cases in which a study of preservation issues has resulted in the improvement or establishment of a preservation program.<sup>1</sup> However, most of the literature emphasizes the survey process itself, with little research conducted to identify actual outcomes associated with these assessments. Few studies clearly define those activities undertaken as a direct result of the general assessment or demonstrate its impact over time. Funding agents have not published information about the outcomes of general surveys, despite the collection of facts about activity and effect through program reporting mechanisms.<sup>2</sup>

In fall 2003, 306 institutions in the United States identified as possibly having undertaken a general preservation assessment received questionnaires inquiring about their involvement with the process (see appendix). Most of these institutions received public funding to support a preservation project; others were identified with support and assistance from the Northeast Document Conservation Center, which receives public funding to assist institutions with preservation surveys, training, and education. One hundred twenty-five questionnaires were returned (40.9 percent), representing institutions in 29 states, including 102 located in the northeast (primarily Massachusetts and New

York), 11 in the west and midwest, and 12 in the southern United States. The data were analyzed using SPSS Version 11.5 (statistics software for Windows). Findings, previously reported by this author, were based on the first part of the collected data that characterized the assessment process and appraised key elements.<sup>3</sup> The results provide a foundation that define preservation reviews that have been undertaken since the late 1980s by a range of United States institutions, primarily colleges and universities and public libraries.

This paper continues the report of findings by describing the preservation actions, or outputs, realized from the general needs assessment process. The research addressed the following questions:

- How long after the assessment are institutions able to implement recommended actions?
- Do institutions draft a preservation plan?
- What actions, in what subject areas, are most often recommended?
- What is the success rate of implementing recommended actions items?
- Are institutions successful at obtaining their goals?
- What is the extent of preservation program development over time?

In addition, this paper will try to characterize those attributes of the general assessment methodology that are indicators of success by profiling those cases with the highest rate for implementing recommended actions.

## Literature Review

Methodologies, including both self-survey tools and those undertaken by outside experts, are designed to examine a broad range of issues that may impact the life expectancy of cultural collections.<sup>4</sup> An assessment of major topics (such as administrative support for preservation, the condition of the building and facility, and environmental monitoring and control) can help institutions develop a series of reasonable objectives to help minimize risk, manage expenditures, and prioritize preservation actions.

To what degree have institutions successfully implemented assessment recommendations? This is a persistent problem:

Once needs assessment surveys have been completed, the next step for institutions is to implement preservation actions that will meet identified needs. Many institutions, however, have difficulty doing this. Granting agencies report that applications for preservation implementation projects are often confused, revealing a lack of understanding of the

priorities identified in survey reports and an inability to develop a long-range preservation plan that relates to the institution's overall strategic plan.<sup>5</sup>

Ogden's 1997 publication, *Preservation Planning: Guidelines for Writing a Long-range Plan*, is one of the few tools specifically designed to assist institutions in drafting a preservation plan based on the findings of a general assessment.<sup>6</sup> Appendix 2 of Ogden's book, "Considerations for Prioritizing" helps institutions consider the impact and urgency of each recommended action in the survey report with the goal of prioritizing them under categories of high, medium, or low priority, using a grid developed by Darling and Webster in the early 1980s.<sup>7</sup> These actions are further organized according to impact and feasibility (i.e., the effect of the action and whether the institution has the staff, space, and funding for implementation). Final decisions are organized into a multiyear plan. Morrow suggests that the extent of program development will vary depending on the length of time the institution has engaged in developing a program and, perhaps, the level of commitment that the library administration and its host institution have made to the activity.<sup>8</sup> These suppositions are tested and reported here.

Collecting data that are consistent across institutional types and that demonstrate the impact of any new initiative or, perhaps even the extent to which any single program has achieved its intended goals, can be difficult. For example, although a large number of preservation processes, outputs, or outcomes may be reported to funding agents or other umbrella organizations, the data about them may not be comparable without standards for gathering them or for measuring how practices may have changed over time. Benchmark schemes developed for studying levels of performance for collections preservation and other activities in cultural institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia address this deficiency.<sup>9</sup> These tools may prove useful in changing practices and aggregating data to assist preservation strategies on a national level. The North American model of the general preservation assessment does not readily allow for this, as methodologies typically emphasize the individuality of the review, paying less attention to summative data and more to specific actions that are required to reduce risk.<sup>10</sup>

To review the results reported in the first phase of this research, most of the institutions that participated in this study were small (19 or fewer staff) or medium (20 to 69 staff) in size and received funding to hire an outside expert to conduct their review. Each institution defined its total institutional staff size as an indicator of the size of the parent organization, scope of the collection, and scale of the general assessment. This indicator was chosen, as opposed to other options, such as size of the collection, because comparing different types of collections is difficult. Kenney and Stan

report, “ARL libraries are well along in establishing separate preservation programs. More than two-thirds of them staff such programs with at least a half-time preservation administrator, and more than half report having a full-time preservation administrator.”<sup>11</sup> Large academic institutions (200 or more staff) would therefore not be likely to conduct a general assessment if their programs were already established. In the Kenney and Stam analysis, the University Library Group averaged 104 total full-time equivalent (FTE) staff; non-ARL Land Grant libraries averaged 84.5 staff; and the Oberlin Group averaged 42.9 staff. For the purposes of this paper, 100 staff was taken as the upper limit for a large institution. NEH does not define the small and medium size institutions that it serves through its Preservation Assistance Grants program, but does require a minimum of 1 FTE paid or unpaid staff member.<sup>12</sup>

The majority of respondents reported less than 0.5 FTE of staff time devoted to preservation; a larger staff did not correlate to significantly more time spent on preservation activities. The time invested by the host institution in preparation for the assessment, and in reviewing the findings of the subsequent report, was less than 2 full weeks in staff time per institution. The results are a good indicator how much staff time is expected to be devoted to the process. Most assessments were broad in scope and favored the study of preventive activities. The three most cited goals were to develop a preservation plan, improve storage practices, and improve the environment. The time for most site visits, 1 or 2 days, was considered adequate in the majority of cases. Report content was consistent across the population studied, and most often included a list of preservation actions by priority, observations from the site visit ordered by preservation topic, and an executive summary. However, a review of follow-up services suggested that collaborative analysis and strategic planning with the assessor was seldom undertaken and worth further investigation.

## Findings

### Implementation of Recommendations

The Getty Conservation Institute and the National Institute for Conservation suggest one “method of ordering information [in the report] is to identify which projects can be done by current staff and within present resources, which might be accomplished by reallocating institutional funds, and which will require additional resources,” and further, that it “is especially useful to identify problems that can be solved quickly, so that the institution has an immediate opportunity to make an improvement.”<sup>13</sup>

Respondents therefore were asked to estimate how long after the conclusion of the assessment (e.g., report delivery) they began to implement recommendations. Of

125 responses, most reported implementation before the end of 3 months (64 institutions, or 51.2 percent); the most frequently reported time to implementation was within 2 weeks (27 institutions, 21.6 percent). Only 7 institutions (5.6 percent) took as long as 2 years for implementation, and 8 institutions (6.4 percent) reported no implementation to date (7 of these were surveyed since 2000). Note that those that reported not knowing how much time elapsed before implementation (10 institutions) had been surveyed before 1999. The data are summarized in table 1.

The high percentage of respondents who were able to implement findings within 6 months (77.6 percent) suggest that report content was, by and large, appropriate to the host institution, and that the information to achieve preservation actions was suitably provided by the assessor. These actions may have included low-cost actions that require limited staff time to implement but can make a significant difference in terms of collections protection, such as cleaning shelves, locking unmonitored exits, or removing bulbs in overly lit storage areas. Immediate implementation also is an excellent indicator that staff has read the report and that recommendations are in line with institutional expectations.

### Preservation Planning

Respondents were asked whether they had drafted a preservation plan based on the information provided by the assessment, and whether goals and objectives had since been updated (table 2). The majority of institutions (81, or 64.8 percent) had not drafted a written plan. Only 37 (29.6 percent) reported that a plan had been prepared, although 71 institutions (56.8 percent) reported that their preservation goals and objectives had been updated since the assessment was conducted. This suggests that some respondents may have had a preservation plan prior to their review.

The idea that formalizing a preservation plan may take several years is supported by comparing the assessment year with plan preparation (table 3). For the period between 1985 and 1999, 18 out of a 49 institutions had drafted a plan (36.7 percent), whereas only 18 of 69 institutions (26.1

**Table 1.** Time to implementation

Time to Implementation	Freq.	%
< 2 weeks	27	21.6
2–4 weeks	16	12.8
1–3 months	21	16.8
3–6 months	14	11.2
6 months–1 year	19	15.2
1–2 years	4	3.2
> 2 years	3	2.4
Do not know	10	8.0
No implementation	8	6.4
No answer	3	2.4
Total	125	100.0

percent) assessed between 2000 and 2003 had one. A further analysis of those who reported on plan preparation and updating goals indicates that 38 institutions had no plan, and no update (table 4). Of these 38, 25 were surveyed between 2000 and 2003.

A further sort of the data regarding preparation of a written preservation plan reveals that of the 97 institutions that reported developing a preservation plan as one of their goals, 32 were successful drafting a written plan (33.0 percent), and 60 were unsuccessful (61.9 percent); 5 did not know or did not answer (5.2 percent) (see table 2). Despite plan preparation as the leading objective of the population studied (77.6 percent), drafting a preservation plan was not an outcome accomplished by most institutions that had a general preservation assessment. Those reporting plan preparation as a goal were only marginally more likely than others to draft a preservation plan.

### Assessment Recommendations

The questionnaire listed 38 recommendations that represent a range of actions, outputs, or services that might be suggested in a report of findings. These recommendations have been assigned to 6 subject categories: (1) the administration (e.g., mission, collecting policies, intellectual control, staffing and training needs, budgets); (2) the building and facilities; (3) environmental factors (monitoring and control of temperature, relative humidity, light, pollutants); (4) protection against loss (pest management, emergency preparedness and prevention, and security); (5) condition, storage and handling of collections in various formats (including exhibition); and (6) remedial treatment (reformatting, repair, conservation, and library binding). A summary of the number of institutions to which each recommendation was made, and its associated category, is presented in table 5.

Three-quarters of the institutions received recommendations to improve storage systems, improve or install environmental controls, and improve the care of specific collection formats (i.e., photographs, rare books, and magnetic media). More than half received recommendations that they improve or increase the use of proper storage enclosures (74.4 percent), improve or install environmental monitors (73.6 percent), provide staff with preservation training (72.0 percent), write an emergency prevention and response plan (68.8 percent), improve collection handling (68.8 percent), obtain funding for preservation (61.6 percent), improve or

**Table 2.** Preservation planning

	Yes		No		Do not know/ no answer		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Preservation plan drafted	37	29.6	81	64.8	7	5.6	125	100.0
Goals and objectives updated	71	56.8	47	37.6	7	5.6	125	100.0
Plan as goal	97	77.6	28	22.4	0	0.0	125	100.0
Plan as goal (n = 97) and output	32	33.0	60	61.9	5	5.2	97	100.0

**Table 3.** Year of assessment by written preservation plan drafted

Year of assessment	Written preservation plan drafted							
	Yes		No		Do not know		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1985–1989	2	1.6	6	4.8	0	0	8	6.4
1990–1994	5	4	8	6.4	1	0.8	14	11.2
1995–1999	11	8.8	14	11.2	2	1.6	27	21.6
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>18</b>						<b>49</b>	
2000	6	4.8	15	12	0	0	21	16.8
2001	7	5.6	13	10.4	0	0	20	16.0
2002	3	2.4	19	15.2	0	0	22	17.6
2003	2	1.6	3	2.4	1	0.8	6	4.8
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>18</b>						<b>69</b>	
Missing	1	0.8	3	2.4	3	2.4	7	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>64.8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 4.** No plan or update of goals

Year of assessment	No plan or update	
	Freq.	%
1985–1989	2	5.3
1990–1994	2	5.3
1995–1999	7	18.4
2000	4	10.5
2001	8	21.1
2002	11	28.9
2003	2	5.3
Missing	2	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>

install security features (60.8 percent), improve or install proper lighting (58.4 percent), and increase storage space (51.2 percent). No repair or reformatting activities are recommended to the majority of institutions, and none of the most frequent recommendations fall into the category of improving the building or facility.

Table 5 includes the recommendation response by institutional type. Those apart from academic institutions or public libraries (11 museums, 8 historical societies, 6 archives, 2 independent research libraries, and 11 “other”) have been combined as into one category labeled “Other” to assist analysis. The data indicate that 88.4 percent of public libraries were advised to improve storage systems; 84.1 percent of academic institutions were advised to improve

the care of specific formats, and 83.7 percent were advised to improve or install environmental monitors. In addition, specific activities worth noting are those that have a much higher, or lower, number of recommendations compared to other types of institutions. Academic institutions were

more likely to have received recommendations to form a preservation committee (30.2 percent), relocate to a better facility (39.5 percent), and improve in-house repair operations (52.3 percent), but were significantly less likely to have microfilm reformatting recommended as a needed action

**Table 5.** Analysis of recommendations

Action	No. of institutions receiving recommendations (n=125)		Academic (n=43)		Public libraries (n=44)		Other (n=38)	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Administration</b>								
Form pres. committee	21	16.8	13	30.2	5	11.4	3	7.9
Include preservation in mission	37	29.6	18	41.9	11	25.0	8	21.1
Conduct further assessments	60	48.0	23	53.5	18	40.9	19	50.0
Have collections appraised	32	25.6	13	30.2	13	29.5	6	15.8
Obtain funding for preservation	77	61.6	28	65.1	26	59.1	23	60.5
Reallocate resources	48	38.4	13	30.2	22	50.0	13	34.2
Hire additional staff	41	32.8	18	41.9	9	20.5	14	36.8
Train staff in preservation	90	72.0	32	74.4	32	72.7	26	68.4
Assign preservation job responsibilities	41	32.8	19	44.2	11	25.0	11	28.9
<b>Building/facility</b>								
Improve structural design	59	47.2	19	44.2	22	50.0	18	47.4
Improve structural integrity	51	40.8	17	39.5	15	34.1	19	50.0
Construct better facility	45	36.0	19	44.2	17	38.6	9	23.7
Relocate to a better facility	36	28.8	17	39.5	10	22.7	9	23.7
Install/improve plumbing	20	16.0	10	23.3	6	13.6	4	10.5
Improve physical access	50	40.0	15	34.9	17	38.6	18	47.4
<b>Prevention from loss</b>								
Write an emergency plan	86	68.8	32	74.4	32	72.7	22	57.9
Improve/install security	76	60.8	25	58.1	28	63.6	23	60.5
Improve/install fire alarms	43	34.4	18	41.9	12	27.3	13	34.2
Improve/install sprinklers	43	34.4	20	46.5	11	25.0	12	31.6
Improve pest management	59	36.0	23	53.5	15	34.1	21	55.3
<b>Environment</b>								
Improve/install lighting	73	58.4	27	62.8	26	59.1	20	52.6
Improve/install environment controls	99	79.2	35	81.4	35	79.5	29	76.3
Improve/install environment monitors	92	73.6	36	83.7	27	61.4	29	76.3
Improve/install air filtration	56	44.8	24	55.8	15	34.1	17	44.7
<b>Condition, storage &amp; handling</b>								
Improve collection handling	86	68.8	29	65.9	36	83.7	21	55.3
Improve storage systems	100	80.0	33	75.0	38	88.4	29	76.3
Increase storage space	64	51.2	24	54.5	20	46.5	20	52.6
Improve/increase use of enclosures	93	74.4	30	68.2	35	81.4	28	73.7
Improve care of specific formats	98	78.4	37	84.1	35	81.4	26	68.4
Improve exhibition practice	41	32.8	13	29.5	14	32.6	14	36.8
<b>Remedial care</b>								
Improve commercial binding	28	22.4	10	22.7	9	20.9	9	23.7
Improve in-house repair	50	40.0	23	52.3	14	32.6	13	34.2
Increase outside conservation services	41	32.8	15	34.1	13	30.2	13	34.2
Reformat/microfilm	43	34.4	9	20.5	19	44.2	15	39.5
Reformat/photographic	15	12.0	4	9.1	6	14.0	5	13.2
Reformat/photocopy	54	43.2	16	36.4	21	48.8	17	44.7
Reformat/digital	32	25.6	14	31.8	10	23.3	8	21.1
Reformat/other	9	7.2	3	7.0	4	9.1	2	5.3



(20.5 percent). Public libraries were the least likely type of institution to receive recommendations to hire additional staff (20.5 percent).

### Successful Outputs

This investigation attempts to discover the number of institutions for which an action was both recommended and accomplished. In order to distinguish only those preservation actions that were a direct result of the assessment process, participants were asked to indicate if an action was recommended, and, if they answered “yes,” to indicate whether or not the activity was accomplished or partly accomplished. One assumes that not all activities

need to be fully realized in order to be considered part of a successful preservation program. Only where the answer was “yes” (an action had been recommended) was information about accomplishment tabulated. “Yes” answers were always tabulated, even if data were not provided about whether it was accomplished or not. If the participant answered “no” or “do not know” about whether a listed action was recommended, all responses regarding its accomplishment was tabulated as “no answer” to avoid skewing the results. The findings are summarized in table 6, sorted starting with the highest percentage of accomplishment for a given action.

The data suggest that, with few exceptions, preservation action items are accomplished by the majority of

**Table 6.** Accomplished/recommended actions

Action recommended	Total reporting		Academic libraries		Public libraries		Other	
	No. acc./Rec.	%	No. acc./Rec.	%	No. acc./Rec.	%	No. acc./Rec.	%
Collection handling improved	75/86	87.2	27/29	93.1	30/36	83.3	18/21	85.7
Improved/increased proper enclosures	77/93	82.8	27/30	90.0	28/35	80.0	22/28	78.6
Reformat/photocopy	43/54	79.6	11/16	68.8	18/21	85.7	14/17	82.3
Improved exhibition practices	32/41	78.1	9/13	69.2	13/14	92.9	10/14	71.4
Preservation assigned to job responsibilities	32/41	78.1	13/19	68.4	9/11	81.8	10/11	90.9
Improved storage systems	78/100	78.0	25/33	75.8	31/38	81.6	22/29	75.9
Improved pest management	45/59	76.3	20/23	87.0	14/15	93.3	11/21	52.4
Improved physical access	38/50	76.0	14/15	93.3	12/17	70.6	12/18	66.7
Improved in-house repair	38/50	76.0	18/23	78.3	11/14	78.6	9/13	69.2
Provided staff with preservation training	74/90	75.6	28/32	87.5	21/32	65.6	19/26	73.1
Improved care specific formats	74/98	75.5	28/37	75.7	25/35	71.4	21/26	80.8
Reformat/digitization	24/32	75.0	12/14	85.7	7/10	70.0	5/8	62.5
Conducted further assessments	44/60	73.3	19/23	82.6	13/18	72.2	12/19	63.2
Increased conservation services	30/41	73.2	11/15	73.3	10/13	76.9	9/13	69.2
Preservation in mission	27/37	73.0	16/18	88.9	6/11	54.6	5/8	62.5
Improved/installed fire alarms	30/43	69.8	13/18	72.2	9/12	75.0	8/13	61.5
Improved commercial binding	19/28	67.9	8/10	80.0	7/9	77.8	4/9	44.4
Installed/improved plumbing	13/20	65.0	6/10	60.0	5/6	83.3	2/4	50.0
Obtained outside funding	50/77	65.0	12/28	42.9	17/26	65.4	21/23	91.3
Increased storage space	41/64	64.1	13/24	54.2	15/20	75.0	13/20	65.0
Emergency plan written	55/86	64.0	24/32	75.0	18/32	56.3	13/22	59.1
Reallocated existing resources	30/48	62.5	9/13	69.2	12/22	54.5	9/13	69.2
Improved/installed physical security	46/76	60.5	16/25	64.0	15/28	53.6	15/23	65.2
Improved/installed environmental monitors	55/92	59.8	24/36	66.7	13/27	48.2	18/29	62.1
Relocated to a better facility	21/36	58.3	9/17	52.9	5/10	50.0	7/9	77.8
Improved/installed environmental controls	57/99	57.6	20/35	57.1	18/35	51.4	19/29	65.5
Improved structural integrity of facility	29/51	56.9	12/17	70.6	7/15	46.7	10/19	52.6
Improved/installed lighting	41/73	56.2	14/27	51.9	15/26	57.7	12/20	60.0
Improved/installed sprinklers	24/43	55.8	10/20	50.0	8/11	72.7	6/12	50.0
Reformat/other	5/9	55.6	1/3	33.3	4/4	100.0	0/0	0.0
Improved structural design of facility	32/59	54.2	12/19	63.2	12/22	54.5	8/18	44.4
Improved/installed air filtration	30/56	53.6	12/24	50.0	8/15	53.3	10/17	58.8
Reformat/microfilm	23/43	53.5	5/9	55.6	10/19	52.6	8/15	53.3
Formed a preservation committee	11/21	52.4	8/13	61.5	1/5	20.0	2/3	66.7
Had collection appraised	16/32	50.0	7/13	53.9	8/13	61.5	1/6	16.7
Reformat/photographic	7/15	46.7	2/4	50.0	3/6	50.0	2/5	20.0
Constructed a better facility	20/45	44.4	7/19	36.8	9/17	52.9	4/9	44.7
Hired additional staff	16/41	39.0	8/18	44.4	2/9	22.2	6/14	42.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,396/2,089</b>	<b>66.8</b>	<b>530/774</b>	<b>68.7</b>	<b>469/709</b>	<b>66.2</b>	<b>397/606</b>	<b>65.5</b>

institutions for which they are recommended. The activities accomplished by the highest percentage of those to which they were recommended were to improve handling of collections, improve or increase the use of proper storage enclosures, reformat holdings as photocopies, improve exhibition practices, assign preservation responsibilities as part of staff job descriptions, and improve storage systems. These were accomplished by 75 percent or more of the population studied. Over all, 66.8 percent of recommended actions were accomplished by the institutions to which they were recommended, averaging 11.2 actions per institution overall.

The action least likely to be implemented by those institutions to which it was recommended was to hire additional staff to assist with preservation activities. Only 16 of the 41 institutions (39.0 percent) that received recommendations to hire staff accomplished this. The questionnaire requested that institutions report on hindrances that prevented the implementation of preservation actions (see table 7). Second only to decreased institutional funding was reduced staffing levels organizationwide. The findings are therefore consistent. Otherwise, even those activities least successfully accomplished, such as constructing a better facility or reformatting holdings to a photographic film format, still approach a 50 percent success rate.

A review of actions accomplished according to institutional type indicates that academic institutions were most successful improving physical access to the facility, including preservation in their mission, and providing staff with preservation training. Public libraries were best at improving exhibition practices, improving or installing plumbing, and improving or installing sprinkler systems. "Other" institutions excelled at obtaining outside funding, assigning preservation responsibilities as part of job descriptions, and relocating to a better facility for storage and use of the collection. Compared to their peers, "other" institutions were less likely to improve pest management, have their collections appraised, and reformat their holdings to a photographic film format (not including microfilm). Public libraries had difficulty hiring additional staff and forming a preservation committee. Finally, the frequency with which recommended actions were accomplished is almost the same for the 3 types of institutions studied, and is comparable to the average overall: 66.8 percent of recommended actions were accomplished by all respondents, 68.7 percent by academic institutions, 66.2 percent for public libraries, and 65.5 percent by "others."

### Goals and Achievements

The results were sorted to discover if the institutions surveyed successfully accomplished the goals of their assessment (table 8). The principal interest for this population

was to prepare a preservation plan (see table 2). The second most often cited goal was to improve storage practices (by 95, or 76.0 percent of the population), and the third was to improve the environment (82, 65.6 percent). The actions, listed under each goal, are those listed in the questionnaire most related to that subject area. The data regarding implementation of these actions are reported only for those cases where the related goal was cited.

The majority of institutions with the goal of improving storage practices were successful improving storage systems, improving or increasing their use of proper enclosures, and improving collection handling. The rate of accomplishment ranged from 24.2 percent for improving exhibition practices, to 67.4 percent for improving storage systems. Just fewer than half the respondents were successful at improving storage practices (49.7 percent). Of those institutions interested in improving the environment as a goal of the assessment, 52.4 percent succeeded in improving or installing environmental controls and half improved or installed environmental monitors. The average rate of accomplishment for the recommendations in this category is 39.9 percent. The data

**Table 7.** Hindrances to Implementation

Hindrance	Freq.	%
Decreased institutional funding	71	56.8
Reduced staffing levels organization wide	58	46.4
Need for further preservation training	34	27.2
Other	34	27.2
Shift in organizational priorities	28	22.4
Reduced staffing levels in preservation	19	15.2
Change in administration	18	14.4
Need for further information about best practices	16	12.8
Change in organizational structure	9	7.2
None	6	4.8
Disaster resulting in significant loss	1	0.8
Transfer of collection to other institution	0	0
Change in mission	0	0

**Table 8.** Goals and achievements

	Freq.	%
<b>GOAL: Improve storage practices (n=95)</b>		
Improve collection handling	56	58.9
Improve storage systems	64	67.4
Increase storage space	36	37.9
Improve/increase use of enclosures	61	64.2
Improve care of specific formats	57	45.6
Improve exhibition practice	23	24.2
Average rate of accomplishment:	49.7	
<b>GOAL: Improve the environment (n=82)</b>		
Improve/install lighting	27	32.9
Improve/install environmental controls	43	52.4
Improve/install environmental monitors	41	50.0
Improve/install air filtration	20	24.4
Average rate of accomplishment	39.9	



indicate a relatively high rate of achievement in meeting the most frequently stated goals.

### Program Development

Administrative and staff support for preservation is critical to program success and development. The California Preservation Clearinghouse addresses the larger planning process of which preservation needs assessment is a part by suggesting that institutions should determine what kinds of resources they have to devote to establishing a preservation program before the needs assessment is undertaken.<sup>14</sup> Morrow says that “the single most important indicator of success in . . . implementing comprehensive preservation programs is leadership from the library administration,” and that if “the administration supports the development of the preservation program, then even without the resources needed to launch a multifaceted, well-endowed program, the library can still implement the most important elements and make significant progress in preserving its collections.”<sup>15</sup> Those responding to this study were asked to report whether support for preservation had increased, decreased, or stayed the same because of their general needs assessment (table 9). Of the 125 respondents, 65 (52.0 percent) report increased preservation support as a result of the general assessment, and 47 (37.6 percent) report that it had stayed the same. Ten institutions reported decreased preservation support.

The data were sorted by subject category and by year of assessment in order to gauge the degree of program comprehensiveness over time (table 10). Despite data indicating limited preparation of preservation plans, the findings here suggest that the implementation of activities based on the assessment are well-distributed among the six subject categories; none are neglected. Note that the average total number of actions accomplished per institution, year-to-year, increased over time, with the most accomplishments per institution for those surveyed during the earliest time period

under review (15.4), and the fewest accomplishments per institution in 2003 (6.6). These data suggest that many of the institutions that have undergone general assessments have succeeded in developing sustainable programs, supporting suggestions in the literature that the implementation of actions, activities, or services should result in “a continuous process of definition, planning, and priority-setting keyed to the needs of a particular library and its users.”<sup>16</sup>

Respondents were asked to consider what might have hindered their ability to implement preservation actions (table 7). Decreased institutional funding, reduced staffing levels in the organization overall, and the need for further preservation training were the three top items that were reported as having interfered with program success. Many respondents took the opportunity to submit written comments under the item “other” for this question. To summarize, 6 institutions reported building design problems, or had renovation or construction projects underway that hindered progress; 5 institutions specifically stated problems with staff or administrative support; and 3 had no preservation plan or only recently received their assessment report. Most of those that commented (17 of 34 institutions) reported a lack of resources; i.e., staffing, time, space, and funding. This lack of resources is a problem that the general assessment should assist institutions to address. However, as reported in the author’s earlier paper characterizing the assessment process, only 23 institutions (18.4 percent) reported that increasing staffing for preservation was one of

**Table 9.** Support of administration after assessment

Support	Freq.	%
Increased	65	52.0
Decreased	10	8.0
Stayed the same	47	37.6
Do not know	2	1.6
No answer/missing	1	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 10.** Program development: Subject category by year of assessment

Year of assessment	No. of institutions surveyed (n=125)		Total action accomplished or partly accomplished				Building/facility		Loss prevention		Environment		Condition, storage, and handling		Remedial	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1985–89	8	6.4	123	15.4	25	20.3	17	13.8	16	13.0	18	14.7	29	23.6	18	14.6
1990–94	14	11.2	183	13.1	41	22.4	21	11.5	29	15.9	27	14.7	43	23.5	22	12.0
1995–99	27	21.6	362	13.4	78	21.6	37	10.2	55	15.2	46	12.7	95	26.2	51	14.1
2000	21	16.8	213	10.1	38	17.9	22	10.3	29	13.6	19	8.9	68	31.9	37	17.4
2001	21	16.8	205	9.8	48	23.4	20	9.8	25	12.2	27	13.2	62	30.2	23	11.2
2002	23	18.4	217	9.4	47	21.7	26	12.0	30	13.8	30	13.8	55	25.3	29	13.4
2003	7	5.6	46	6.6	11	23.9	5	10.9	6	13.0	8	17.4	11	23.9	5	10.9
No answer	4	3.2	47	11.8	6	12.8	5	10.6	10	21.3	8	17.0	14	29.8	4	8.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,396</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>13.5</b>

their goals for the study, and only 36 (28.8 percent) reported the goal of increasing their budget for preservation.<sup>17</sup>

### Indicators of Success

The data were sorted to discover if any trends could be detected among those institutions that had been most successful in implementing preservation actions subsequent to their general assessment. The 20 institutions with the highest number of accomplished actions, and no neglected subject categories, were segregated for examination. This example group, representing 16.0 percent of respondents, had an average of 23.7 actions implemented per institution, compared to 11.2 for the population as a whole. Characteristics of the example group are summarized in table 11, and characteristics of the assessment process are presented in table 12.

The institutions with the highest success rate include these characteristics:

- Those with a greater number of staff are more successful than those with a smaller number of staff at accomplishing preservation action items. Of those having more than 40 staff, 45 percent are represented in the example group, versus 30.4 percent for the population. Fewer public libraries are represented in the example as compared to the population under review.
- In the example group, 35.0 percent devote 1.0 or greater FTE to preservation activities, versus 22.4 percent for all respondents.

- A slightly higher number of institutions spent more than 20 hours preparing for their site visit in the example group (75.0 percent) than the population (61.7 percent). Significantly, fewer institutions in the example reported spending fewer than 20 hours at preparation (5.0 percent), compared to the population (37.6 percent).

Several factors may influence an institution's ability to implement preservation recommendations:

- A longer site visit correlates positively to the success of the assessment, with 55.0 percent of the example group reporting 2 to 5 days for the review, versus 38.4 percent of all respondents.
- A slightly greater number of report components (a mean of 4.75 for the example, and 4.48 for the population), as well as follow-up services (2.75 for the example group, and 2.42 for all respondents) may assist in the implementation of findings.
- An assessment that results in increased administrative and staff support for preservation may result in an enhanced capability to implement recommendations. Overall, 65.0 percent of the example group reported an increase in support as a result of their assessment, compared to 52.0 percent of all responding institutions.
- Updating preservation goals and objectives after the assessment positively influences an institution's ability to implement findings. Data indicate that 80 percent of the example group report updating their goals, compared to 56.8 percent of all respondents. The percent of

**Table 11.** Characteristics of the institutions—example group (n=20)

Institution type	Example %	Population %	No. of staff	Example %	Population %	Year of assessment	Example %	Population %
Academic	40.0	34.4	> 100	10.0	14.4	1985–89	15.0	6.4
Public Library	20.0	35.2	70–100	10.0	4.8	1990–94	15.0	11.2
Other	40.0	30.4	40–69	25.0	11.2	1995–99	35.0	21.6
			20–39	35.0	20.0	2000	5.0	16.8
			10–19	10.0	27.2	2001	5.0	16.8
			5–9	0.0	9.6	2002	20.0	18.4
			<5	10.0	12.0	2003	5.0	5.6
			No Answer	0.0	0.8	No Answer	0.0	3.2
Mean No. Goals	5.95	5.49						
<b>Staff time for preservation (FTE)</b>	<b>Example %</b>	<b>Population %</b>	<b>Time to prepare/hours</b>	<b>Example %</b>	<b>Population %</b>	<b>Time after site visit/hours</b>	<b>Example %</b>	<b>Population %</b>
>5	5.0	2.4	< 20	5.0	37.6	<20	40.0	44.8
4.0-5.0	5.0	2.4	20–0	40.0	36.0	21–40	40.0	33.6
3.0-3.9	5.0	4.0	41–100	15.0	10.5	41–100	0.0	4.0
2.0-2.9	0.0	3.2	>100	20.0	15.2	>100	5.0	1.6
1.0-1.9	20.0	10.4	Do Not Know	0.0	15.2	Do Not Know	15.0	14.4
0.5-0.9	15.0	24.8	No Answer	0.0	0.8	No Answer	0.0	1.6
<0.5	50.0	51.2						
No Answer	0.0	1.6						



- Assessment," *College & Research Libraries* 64, no. 3 (2003): 211–27; Randall Bond et al., "Preservation Study at the Syracuse University Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 48 (Mar. 1987): 132–47; D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, Office of Management Studies, 1987); Jane Dalley, *The Conservation Assessment Guide for Archives* (Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Council of Archives, 1995); Barclay Odgen and Maralyn Jones, *Calipr: An Automated Preservation Needs Assessment Instrument Created for California Libraries*, Version 3.0xp: June 1997; updated for Windows 98–2000 (Sacramento, Calif.: 1997). Accessed October 25, 2004, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/CALIPR/documentation.html>; Getty Conservation Institute, *The Conservation Assessment: A Proposed Model for Evaluating Museum Environmental Management Needs*, Version 9/99 (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1998); Beth Patkus, *Assessing Preservation Needs: A Self-Survey Guide* (Andover, Mass.: Northeast Document Conservation Center, 2003).
5. Shereyn Ogden, *Preservation Planning: Guidelines for Writing a Long-range Plan* (Andover, Mass.: Northeast Document Conservation Center, 1997), 2.
  6. *Ibid.*
  7. Ogden, *Preservation Planning*; Pamela W. Darling and Duane E. Webster, *Preservation Planning Program: An Assisted Self-Study Manual for Libraries* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, Office of Management Studies, 1982).
  8. Carolyn Clark Morrow, "Defining the Library Preservation Program: Policies and Organization," in *Preservation Issues and Planning*, eds. Paul N. Banks and Roberta Pilette (Chicago: ALA, 2000), 1–27.
  9. Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, *Benchmarks in Collection Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries* (London: Resource, 2002); Heritage Collections Council, *Development of a Best Practice Model for Conservation and Preservation Assessment Plans for Cultural Collections, Final Project Report, v. 1: Methodology and Analysis*. Accessed May 25, 2004, [http://sector.amol.org.au/\\_data/page/147/best\\_practice\\_voll.pdf](http://sector.amol.org.au/_data/page/147/best_practice_voll.pdf); Heritage Collections Council, *A Best Practice Model for Conservation and Preservation Assessment Plans for Cultural Collections, v. 2*. Accessed May 25, 2004, [http://sector.amol.org.au/\\_data/page/147/best\\_practice\\_voll.pdf](http://sector.amol.org.au/_data/page/147/best_practice_voll.pdf).
  10. Getty Conservation Institute, *The Conservation Assessment; Heritage Preservation, Best Practices for General Conservation Assessments*, 2002. Accessed June 1, 2004, [www.heritagepreservation.org/PDFS/BestPractices.pdf](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/PDFS/BestPractices.pdf).
  11. Anne R. Kenney and Deirdre C. Stam, *The State of Preservation Programs in American College and Research Libraries* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2002), 19.
  12. National Endowment for the Humanities, "Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions." Accessed Aug. 14, 2005, [www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/pag.html](http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/pag.html).
  13. Getty Conservation Institute and the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, *The Conservation Assessment: A Tool for Planning, Implementing, and Fundraising* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property and the Getty Conservation Institute, 1990), 7.
  14. California Preservation Clearinghouse, *Preservation Needs Assessment*. Accessed Nov. 18, 2004, <http://cpc.stanford.edu/management/needs-assessment.html>.
  15. Morrow, "Defining the Library Preservation Program," 18.
  16. *Ibid.*, 3.
  17. Brown, "Use of General Preservation Assessments: Process," 98.

## Appendix: Questionnaire on Use of General Preservation Assessments

Please answer each question to the best of your ability. You may choose not to answer any question(s) you do not wish to. Please leave these questions blank.

I PREFER NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

MY INSTITUTION HAS NOT HAD A GENERAL PRESERVATION ASSESSMENT

If you checked either of the boxes above please return the questionnaire now. Thank you.

### PART I: THE GENERAL PRESERVATION ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. Which of the following most closely defines your institution? Check one

- |                                                       |                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> College or university        | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public library               | <input type="checkbox"/> Historical society       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independent research library | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archives                     |                                                   |

2. What is the total number of your institutional staff?

- > 100       10 – 19  
 70 – 100       5 – 9  
 40 – 69       < 5  
 20 – 39

3. How much staff time is devoted to preservation activities?

- More than 5.0 FTE       1.0 – 1.9 FTE  
 4.0 – 5.0 FTE       0.5 – 0.9 FTE  
 3.0 – 3.9 FTE       Less than 0.5 FTE  
 2.0 – 2.9 FTE

4. When was your most recent assessment conducted?

- 1985 to 1989       2001  
 1990 to 1994       2002  
 1995 to 1999       2003  
 2000

5. Did you receive grant funding to pay for the assessment?

- Yes       No       Do not know

6. How much time do you estimate was spent in advance of the site visit preparing for the review? Include committee time, application/contract preparation, etc.

- Less than 20 hours       More than 100 hours  
 20 to 40 hours       Do not know  
 41 to 100 hours

7. Your major goals for undertaking an assessment were to: Check all that apply

- Increase staff awareness of preservation       Improve security  
 Increase administrative support       Improve pest management  
 Develop a preservation plan       Advance repair activity  
 Increase staffing for preservation       Advance reformatting activity  
 Increase the budget for preservation       Improve exhibition practices  
 Improve the facility       Do not know  
 Improve storage practices       Other (please describe):  
 Improve the environment

8. Did your institution complete a “pre-survey questionnaire” to help familiarize your assessor with the institution in advance of the site visit?

- Yes       No       Do not know

9. The expert who conducted your general preservation assessment was a/n: Check one

- Outside assessor       Student  
 Staff member       Do not know  
 Volunteer       Other (please describe):

10. Did your assessor use a guide or tool to direct the assessment?

- Yes       No       Do not know

11. The site visit lasted:

- Less than 1 day       3 to 5 days  
 1 day       Other (please describe):  
 2 days

12. Do you feel there was adequate time to conduct the site review?

- Yes       Too much  
 Too little       Do not know



13. The assessment considered: Check all that apply

- Organizational context       Training needs  
 Collections management       Security  
 Access and use       General condition of the collection  
 Bibliographic control       Condition of special collection  
 Emergency management       Environmental factors

14. Which of the following was included in your assessment report? Check all that apply

- Executive summary       Appendices with further resources  
 Background information on preservation topics       No report was issued  
 Observations from the site visit organized by preservation topic       Do not know  
 List of recommended preservation actions organized by priority       Other (please describe):  
 Information to achieve the required preservation actions

15. After the site visit your assessor: Check all that apply

- Discussed recommendations before submitting a report       Discussed implementation strategies  
 Delivered an oral report of findings       Provided no follow-up services  
 Inquired if there were corrections, concerns, etc.       Do not know  
 Requested your evaluation of the assessment       Other (please describe):  
 Responded to requests for further information

16. How much time did the staff spend after the site visit reviewing the findings generated from the assessment?

- Less than 20 hours       More than 100 hours  
 21 to 40 hours       Do not know  
 41 to 100 hours

17. How long after the conclusion of assessment (i.e., report delivery) did you begin to implement findings? Check one

- Less than 2 weeks       1 to 2 years  
 2 to 4 weeks       More than 2 years  
 1 to 3 months       Do not know  
 3 to 6 months       No findings were implemented  
 6 months to 1 year

18. Did you draft a written preservation plan based on the information provided by the assessment?

- Yes     No     Do not know

19. Have you updated your preservation goals and objectives since your assessment was conducted?

- Yes     No     Do not know

20. Since your assessment administrative and staff support of preservation has: Check one

- Increased       Stayed the same  
 Decreased       Do not know

## PART II: OUTCOMES

21. The following are recommendations that might be reported based on findings of a general preservation assessment. Please indicate if they were recommended to you and, if yes, whether or not they were accomplished.

Recommendation	RECOMMENDED AS PART OF ASSESSMENT Check One			RECOMMENDED & ACCOMPLISHED SUBSEQUENT TO ASSESSMENT Check One		
	Yes	No	Do not know	Accomplished	Partially Accomplished	Not accomplished
Form a preservation committee						
Change the organizational mission to include preservation						

Recommendation	RECOMMENDED AS PART OF ASSESSMENT Check One			RECOMMENDED & ACCOMPLISHED SUBSEQUENT TO ASSESSMENT Check One		
	Yes	No	Do not know	Accomplished	Partially Accomplished	Not accomplished
Conduct further assessments of the building or collections						
Have collection materials appraised						
Obtain outside funding for preservation activities						
Reallocate existing resources for conservation/preservation activities						
Hire additional staff to assist with preservation activities						
Provide staff w. preservation training						
Assign preservation responsibilities as part of staff job descriptions						
Improve structural design of facility where collection is stored/used						
Improve structural integrity of facility where collection is stored/used						
Construct a better facility for storage and/or use of the collection						
Relocate to a better facility for storage and/or use of the collection						
Write an emergency prevention and response plan						
Improve or install:						
Plumbing						
Physical access						
Physical security						
Lighting						
Environmental controls						
Environmental monitors						
Air filtration						
Physical security						
Fire alarms						
Sprinkler system						
Pest management						
Improve handling of collections						
Improve storage systems (shelving, cabinets, etc.)						

Recommendation	RECOMMENDED AS PART OF ASSESSMENT Check One			RECOMMENDED & ACCOMPLISHED SUBSEQUENT TO ASSESSMENT Check One		
	Yes	No	Do not know	Accomplished	Partially Accomplished	Not accomplished
Increase storage space						
Improve or increase use of proper storage enclosures						
Improve care of specific collection formats (i.e., photographs, rare books, magnetic media, etc.)						
Improve quality and appropriateness of commercial library binding						
Improve quality and appropriateness of in-house repair methods/materials						
Increase contracting of outside conservation services						
Improve exhibition practices						
<b>Reformat holdings:</b>						
To microfilm						
To other photographic film format(s)						
As photocopies						
By digitization						
Other						

22. Which of the following may have hindered your institution's ability to implement preservation recommendations.

Check all that apply

- |                                                                                                   |                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change in administration                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced staffing levels in preservation units            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change in institutional mission                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Decreased institutional funding                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Change in organizational structure                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster resulting in significant loss of the collection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shift in organizational priorities                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transfer of collection to other institution              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced staffing levels organization-wide                                | <input type="checkbox"/> None                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Need for further information about best practices on preservation topics | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe):                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Need for further preservation training                                   |                                                                                   |

23. Please provide any comments you might have about ways that might improve the general preservation assessment in the space below.

Thank you for your input and assistance with this project. Please respond by November 30, 2003, using the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided or mail to:

Karen Brown, Preservation Librarian  
 University at Albany Libraries LE310  
 1400 Washington Avenue  
 Albany, NY 12222