



NHPRC Grant Award RQ-102995-19
'Small and Diverse Archival Organization Needs Assessment Project'
LYRASIS Inc.
Final Performance Report
6/29/20

LYRASIS received a National Historical Publications and Records Commission Records Cooperative Agreement Grant beginning on October 1, 2019, for a "Small and Diverse Archival Organization Needs Assessment Project."

As of June 30, 2020, principal investigators Tom Claeson and Leigh Grinstead of LYRASIS have completed all of the project's nine performance objectives.

1. Prepare a survey methodology to collect information on the sustainability needs of smaller archival organizations.

Following a phone discussion with NHPRC Program Officer Daniel Stokes on October 29, 2019, which helped to determine the scope of the project, Claeson and Grinstead began research into past surveys and current key issues about which we could collect useful information to develop a snapshot of current practices in small and diverse archives.

The two consultants reviewed past archival survey efforts including:

- Connecting to Collections Statewide Surveys from 2008-2012
- The Society of American Archivist's A-CENSUS
- Pennsylvania Hidden Collections Project
- Preservation and Archives Survey Instruments from NEDCC and LYRASIS

Grinstead developed an initial draft of the survey, which is an amalgam of successful past instruments and new targeted questions. She and Claeson forwarded the survey to Stokes, who reviewed the instrument to help determine if the questions would collect information to satisfy NHPRC's needs. Incorporating Stokes' comments, the survey concepts was ready for further development and testing by early January 2020.

2. Define and document target audiences for the survey project and develop a survey dissemination strategy.

Claeson and Grinstead determined that one of the best ways to ensure distribution of the survey to an audience of small and diverse archives was to target the instrument distribution to diverse geographic areas of the U.S. and a variety of different types of archives.

With the help of LYRASIS Digital & Preservation Services Department Administrative Assistant Alicia Johnson, the consultants reached out to the State Archivists of all U.S. States and Territories, and to national, regional, and state associations related to the archival field.

The results of this outreach during February 2020 were excellent. A total of 18 states and 7 archival organizations agreed to distribute the survey to their constituents and/or members.

3. Develop a survey instrument

Another key step in the development of the survey was to have a number of reviewers look at both the survey instructions and the instrument itself.

The consultants felt that their colleagues at LYRASIS working on projects such as ArchivesSpace and other LYRASIS staff with survey and preservation/archives experience would be excellent reviewers of the tool. The internal LYRASIS reviewers went above and beyond what was asked of them, commenting on the survey content, mechanics/structure, and introductory messaging on the survey. The level of detailed review was the best the consultants have seen in working on surveys during the past 20 years. After a test period in late February, the survey was ready for launch.

4. Launch and monitor the survey utilizing Survey Monkey

The survey was launched on March 4, 2020, with an initial deadline of March 25. Eighteen state and seven regional and national archival organizations distributed the survey, and a number of them featured articles about the survey, with a link, in their state or association newsletters. By March 22, the survey had received a good amount of responses (approximately 180), but due to the unprecedented situation caused in the work environment by COVID-19, the consultants decided to offer a deadline extension until March 30 to increase the number and diversity of the respondents. As of the date the survey closed (March 30), 229 responses had been received. These responses came from a variety of states, archives types, and sizes of archives.

Grinstead also received six individual inquiries regarding various questions about the survey, including could it be distributed it more widely to the “LA (Los Angeles) as Subject” listserv? Was the survey meant for corporate archives as well? Would an all-volunteer-run religious archives be a good candidate to take the survey? The answers to these and all similar questions posed to Grinstead were positive.

5. Aggregate, code, and document Result sets from the survey and utilize methods to allow comparisons across populations.

Aggregation, coding, and documentation of the result sets began on March 31, 2020. LYRASIS staff member Alicia Johnson worked to provide data from SurveyMonkey, and Claerson coded and analyzed all of the open-ended questions in the survey.

6. Provide and document initial data results analysis

Documentation and analysis of initial data results began on March 31, 2020. Clareson developed the initial draft of the Survey report, covering the data analysis in narrative form. Grinstead then added further analysis and all report recommendations. NHPRC Program Officer Dan Stokes reviewed the draft Survey Report Document between May 28-June 10, 2020, asking several questions about the survey process. Grinstead and Clareson worked with LYRasis staff to have the report edited and graphically designed by June 29, 2020. The completed Survey Report is attached.

7. Hold two live, in-person and two virtual listening session/focus group meetings to gather additional feedback for the study.

In late Fall 2019, at the same time Grinstead and Clareson were developing the survey, they began to reach out to potential focus group/listening session host organizations to hold a spot at their Spring 2020 conferences. Dates were set for Focus Groups to be held at the Western Archivists Meeting in San Francisco in April 2020 and the Midwest Archives Conference in Omaha in May 2020. However, because of the Coronavirus pandemic and the shutdown of many hotels, conference centers, and archival institutions, the associations decided to cancel these scheduled conferences. Grinstead and Clareson moved forward to hold the two virtual sessions they originally planned, and added two more in June 2020. This situation did not affect the scope of work in that the consultants held 4 focus groups, although all were virtual. It also did not change the anticipated project completion date. Focus group sessions were held with members of the following regional archives associations, who were extremely supportive in promoting the focus groups to their members:

- a) Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, 6/4/20 (17 attendees)
- b) Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists, 6/8/20 (6 attendees)
- c) Midwest Archives Conference, 6/10/20 (10 attendees)
- d) Society of California Archivists, 6/15/20 (5 attendees)

A report on the results of the focus group discussions, and the list of discussion questions is provided in the Focus Groups report document.

8. Document the sustainability needs of the surveyed community in a report for distribution.

As noted, work commenced on reporting the survey results on March 31, 2020. Additionally, after the focus group sessions wrapped up on June 15, Clareson developed a report of key findings from the sessions. Finally, an analysis of overall findings has been developed – the project Summary Report.

All reports can be distributed by LYRasis following NHPRC review and provision of permissions. LYRasis would post approved reports to its website and distribute notice of availability by email to those who have participated in the project as well as via publicity to the broader archival community.

9. Develop a brief plan for future/continued data collection.



The final “Summary Report” of the project includes a brief plan for continuing and future data collection. During the survey promotion and distribution process, several states expressed interest in utilizing parts of the survey tool for more in-depth state projects, and LYRISIS will be following up with these groups beginning in July 2020.

LYRISIS appreciates the support of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in funding and providing review and advice for this project, and hopes to continue its work with NHPRC to support small and diverse archival repositories.