

# Preservation Education Needs for the Next Generation of Information Professionals

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**Project website:** [http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~kgracy/Pres\\_Edu\\_Study.htm](http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~kgracy/Pres_Edu_Study.htm)

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## *Project summary*

In the last decade, the LIS community has witnessed many changes in the goals and concerns of preservation programs. The first major transition was the increased emphasis placed on digital reformatting as a tool in preservation work, accompanied by steadily growing concerns about how these electronic resources thus created would be maintained. Another area of increasing concern for preservation administrators is the presence of “non-book” materials in library and archival collections; this category encompasses everything from photographic images, architectural drawings, and maps to audiovisual material such as records, cassettes, reel-to-reel tapes, motion pictures, and videotapes. Preservation educators often find that they cannot provide sufficient coverage of the preservation issues and challenges of these electronic and “non-book” media. Although some specialized programs have emerged to address the training needs of preservationists in these areas, many libraries and archives which do not have easy access to such expertise will require preservation administrators to have more than a cursory understanding of the preservation challenges inherent in these media.

*This study hypothesizes that current preservation education within traditional library and archival studies programs does not provide adequate preparation in the areas of technical and managerial expertise to deal with the preservation of digital collections, audiovisual media, or visual materials.*

With the hypothesis of this study in mind, the investigators sought to address the following research questions:

1. What is the composition of the curriculum at university-based degree programs and field service programs in preservation education? How has that curricula changed over the past decade?
2. How do educators plan to keep pace with new formats and technological advancements?
3. Do preservation educators provide students with the opportunity to put theory into practice? If so, how is this achieved?
4. What do preservation educators see as the key knowledge and values in preservation education? How are these values reflected in the curriculum?

This assessment of preservation education was directed toward academic institutions and continuing education providers in North America. Educators teaching preservation education in either graduate LIS programs or field service programs were sent a survey, which asked questions about a number of topics.

For university education providers, investigators asked questions about type and number of courses offered, frequency of course offerings, enrollment statistics, presence or absence of preservation specialization as part of degree program, content of preservation coursework, incorporation of preservation into related coursework, faculty resources, future plans for curricula, fieldwork/internship opportunities in preservation, and postgraduate employment data.

For continuing education providers, questions were divided into the following subject areas: type and number of workshops offered, frequency of workshop offerings, enrollment statistics, existence of credential in preservation and/or award of continuing education credits, content of preservation workshops, incorporation of preservation into related workshops, faculty resources, future plans for curricula, and audience for workshops.

In total, 102 surveys were sent to potential participants and sixty-three were returned to investigators. Response rates for the surveys were 71.9% for academic institutions and 50% for continuing education providers. All resulting data was analyzed using SPSS, a standard statistical software package. Frequency tables were generated and examined for significant trends. The extremely small population size under study led investigators to be extremely cautious in interpreting results and their potential implications, however

**Results of this study will be available online at the project website:**

**[http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~kgracy/Pres\\_Edu\\_Study.htm](http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~kgracy/Pres_Edu_Study.htm)**

While investigators noticed several potentially encouraging trends in this area, such as continued interest in preservation through steadily increasing enrollment figures, other data show that institutions, particularly graduate education programs, are not ready to make a commitment of resources (through new courses or faculty hires) to grow preservation beyond its current coverage in library schools. Continuing education appears to be picking up much of the “slack” that LIS programs are creating, offering programs on multiple topics not given sufficient coverage at the graduate level; additionally, CE courses often provide the only preservation education for paraprofessionals and administrators who did not have the benefit of such a course in their graduate program. Preservation education in the areas of electronic resources, visual materials, and audiovisual resources appears to be in short supply at both the graduate and continuing education levels.

*The Next Step ...*

This study represents the first phase of a larger research project yet to be completed. Building upon the initial results of the survey, the investigators will be following up with in-depth interviewing of key informants at selected sites. Individuals to be interviewed in the second phase of the study will be faculty and professionals involved in providing preservation education, in both the formal and continuing education settings. We also plan to interview deans and directors of LIS programs and managers of continuing education services at the library resource-sharing networks with the goal of ascertaining the attitudes of upper-level administration to preservation education.

After analyzing the interview data and comparing its results to that of the survey, the investigators hope to have a more complete picture of the state of preservation education in North America. The final phase of the study will be devoted to the identification of the most critical needs, as identified through the survey and interview data, and the creation of recommendations for directing preservation education in the next decade.