Rhode Island's History and Heritage Sector:
A Call for Collaboration and Investment

November 2013

The Rhode Island Historical Society
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Executive Summary

Opened to European settlement in 1636, Rhode Island has one of the richest and most diverse historical patrimonies in the United States. Despite its small size, Rhode Island has played an exceptional role in American history. It was the first entity in modern times to allow full religious freedom; a leader in 18th-century maritime commerce; the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution and the most urbanized American state in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; the first state with a Roman Catholic majority; and the 'Queen of Resorts' in the mid-19th century through World War I. Rhode Island was also a pioneer in establishing the American neighborhood historic preservation movement, through efforts undertaken in the Benefit Street and College Hill neighborhoods of Providence in the 1950s and 60s.

The abundance of history in this tiny space, combined with Rhode Islanders' intense local pride and powerful sense of individual independence, has led to the formation of 464 historical sites and organizations, many with significant historical collections. These range from the three organizations (including the Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS)) that have achieved accreditation from the American Association of Museums, to scores of loosely structured ethnic, religious, preservation, military and other cultural organizations, plus a constellation of house museums. The majority of these entities subsist with little public or professional support, their very existence and contact information unknown except to a handful of people. Therefore, their holdings and the value of their collections are often imperfectly identified to the public, to colleagues, to scholars, and sometimes even to themselves. Invisible to donors beyond their immediate local community, they also miss out on the benefits of shared experiences and cost-saving synergies which come from membership in peer networks. Until now, no comprehensive survey has ever been conducted of Rhode Island's history and heritage sector. Yet, the state government recognizes that history and heritage are not only valuable economic assets but also have the potential to unify communities and instill civic pride and engagement.

In a state where tourism is an important part of the economy, contributing $5.8 billion (out of a GDP of just $47 billion) and 66,000 jobs, Rhode Island's history and heritage sector plays an important role. In 2009, Rhode Island's 1,163 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations had expenditures of over $324 million, and provided jobs for approximately 5,200 people.[1] We also know that cultural tourists (travelers who engage in cultural activities) are generally reported to stay longer and spend more per day than the average tourist. With the largest concentration of historic landmarks in the nation, the state "packs a cultural and scenic punch," according to the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation. We at the RIHS hold that with an investment in training and infrastructure, this sector could be a driving force within the state and the region's tourism economy.

Rhode Island also has become the second state in America to adopt the principles of geotourism, tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place. Indeed, studies have shown that strong community attachment is correlated to local GDP growth and that aesthetics – the physical beauty of a community – play a large part in fostering these positive feelings. Rhode Island arts and culture assets are substantial and varied including a concentration of higher educational institutions with strong arts programs. Overlap with other sectors such as manufacturing and tourism presents interesting opportunities for collaboration and growth.

History and heritage are sometimes considered irrelevant or secondary to social needs, particularly when funding is scarce. Yet, cultural heritage organizations are not only a prized economic asset but an essential part of any vibrant local community, providing a strong rallying point and a means to build inclusion. The challenge is to ensure that these organizations are viable, well managed, and dynamic players. While Rhode Island's compact geography makes certain statewide arts and culture initiatives more easily achievable than in other states, the proliferation and small size of its history and heritage organizations pose a considerable challenge. Creative, efficient solutions are needed to ensure that the organizations receive the funding, technical support, and participation that they require in their role as stewards of the state's history.

The Rhode Island Historical Society contends that creating networks and sharing resources is an important way to strengthen the cultural heritage sector, and therefore strengthen the state. To this end, the RIHS obtained a $160,000 grant in June 2012 from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to identify, survey and assess the state's cultural heritage sector. The 16-month process, named RHODI (Rhode Island History Online Directory Initiative) produced a web-based directory of all the history and heritage organizations in the state, as well as this White Paper.

Data gathered through the RHODI survey process revealed the following issues:

- Organizations feel threatened by irrelevance unless they can increase audience/membership/volunteers.
- Organizations have a misperceived notion that digitization is the "magic bullet" that will solve their problems.
- Organizations are eager for training—particularly in marketing/outreach, strategic planning, and human resources; but they also need to improve their fundraising capacity.
- Organizations need to make collections care and management a priority.
- Organizations are eager to collaborate and share resources, but they need a guiding hand.

The Heart of the Matter, a report from the American Academy of Arts & Sciences's Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2013, highlights the need to form public and private partnerships in order to support the creation of a broadly educated and empathetic citizenry. The report calls for attention to be given to just the type of organizations participating in RHODI:

> *No single person, no single institution, no single intellectual approach offers an answer—it can be discovered only through cooperation. Public programs and cultural institutions, connecting people of all ages and backgrounds, provide opportunities for contact, growth, and collaboration—the very essence of a civil society. They should be included among our highest educational priorities.*[1]

By undertaking RHODI, the RIHS has already demonstrated a strong appetite for collaboration, and this drive was seen throughout the sector. Since inclusion in the online directory will automatically mean membership in a virtual network, previously isolated groups now will be able to learn about and contact peer organizations. Those organizations with no web presence will now have their own web page; those with a website or Facebook page will find themselves among peers with common areas of interest.

At its heart, RHODI works to **define the resources** of the history and heritage sector in RI and **demonstrate the economic value** of this vital sector. We at the RIHS and RHODI believe that the strength of this sector is in the diversity of its resources and its willingness to collaborate.

Saunderstown Weaving School

1. American Academy of Arts and Sciences. (2013). *The Heart of the Matter*. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Overview

The state of Rhode Island boasts a unique concentration of historic sites, collections and heritage organizations. Yet the state's history and heritage sector — potentially one of its key economic assets — remains a fragmented mosaic of small, isolated groups. Many subsist on precarious financial and human resources, with little public or professional accountability, their holdings imperfectly identified to the public, scholars or colleagues.

In its role as a platform for connectivity and participation, the Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS) obtained in June 2012 a $160,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to identify, survey, and assess the state's cultural heritage sector. The 16-month process, named RHODI (Rhode Island History Online Directory Initiative), produced two deliverables: this report and www.RHODI.org, a web-based directory of all the history and heritage organizations in the state. Each directory listing contains descriptive information, photos, links to other websites, and an online giving feature. The directory is searchable through a mix of drop-down menus and interactive maps.

In the process of gathering the necessary data for RHODI, field teams conducted 122 interviews. Although we initially projected that we would conduct 250 surveys of individual sites, we realized during the course of the project that a single survey frequently encompassed multiple sites. Thus, although 122 interviews were conducted, the RHODI directory includes 191 organizations and 352 individual properties, including those that could not be reached in order to schedule a survey. The goal of the survey was to define the types of historical entities that exist in Rhode Island, the services they provide and sources of their funding; to provide a better picture of the variety of audiences served across the state; to tabulate the types, quantities and ranges of their collections; and to assess their needs, institutional priorities, and aspirations. The resulting report will allow donors, service organizations and RHODI members to better tailor capacity building, skills development, and funding to the specific needs of Rhode Island's history and heritage sector —— information that is essential to any future initiatives to ensure the sector's sustainability. The manageable size of Rhode Island's territory, coupled with the plethora of historical organizations that need strategic, operational or technical assistance, make this initiative an ideal pilot project to be replicated elsewhere.

Data gathering for the RHODI website was launched on July 1, 2012. While a master list of all potential participating organizations was being compiled, the RIHS hired four staff (a Project Coordinator, two Field Surveyors, and a Technical Director) and formed an Advisory Committee (Appendix A), representing a cross section of Rhode Island cultural heritage organizations. As the initial master list grew to 464 names, the Advisory Committee was asked in its first meeting in late August 2012 to define specific parameters for inclusion in RHODI. The Committee determined two broad criteria: organizations must have collections or programming related to Rhode Island history and they must be accessible to the public. Based on the first criterion, the master list was refined to approximately 200 names. The second criterion, public accessibility, was applied during the process of contacting the organizations. Throughout the autumn of 2012, the RHODI team developed its technical processes and the survey questionnaire (see Appendix B and C), which it tested on four Advisory Committee member organizations. By the end of 2012, the team had resolved a number of software and procedural issues, such as how to address organizations owning several semi-autonomous sites, and fieldwork began in January 2013. We were ultimately able to reach 125 organizations, and of these organizations, only three declined to participate. Over the next eight months, the field teams conducted 119 on-site interviews and three telephone surveys to organizations based solely online.

To develop awareness and interest in the project, the RHODI team used social media outlets. Notes from survey visits about items of interest or upcoming events were posted to the RHODI blog (located at www.RHODI.org), and promoted on Facebook and Tumblr. Additionally, photos from surveyed sites were stored and shared on Flickr (Appendix B).

While the RHODI website was being developed and tested in September and October, 2013, the data gathered by the field teams was tabulated and analyzed.

Survey Results

An analysis of RHODI survey results appears in the main body of the white paper in two sections: Sector-wide Assessment and Sector-wide Interventions. These sections highlight significant themes and topics that emerged from the surveys, including: Audience and Visibility, Digital Literacy, and Collaboration. The survey results are presented in Appendix D. Finally, the RHODI team created **A Call to Action and Investment** based on the sector-wide assessment and intervention.

The full, detailed survey results are broken into two sections and located in Appendix D:

The first section of the survey results is an **Overview** of Rhode Island's history and heritage sector: the type, size (in terms of operating income, staff/volunteer numbers and membership), and location of the organizations, as well as the sources of their funding and the top grant-making funders to which they have applied in the past year. While RHODI was unable to undertake a comprehensive cataloguing effort, the survey defines general categories of collections held by the 111 organizations that identified themselves as "collecting organizations." It also notes the percentage of collections that are catalogued, the levels of physical control (the ability to locate and access materials within the collection) and intellectual control (understanding the ownership and rights management of the collection), as well as storage conditions.

The second section of the survey results includes the responses to three sets of questions concerning:

Institutional Priorities — Respondents were asked to discuss their major, overarching concerns regarding the long-term prospects of their organization such as public perception, access to funding, or governance. Because the surveyors posed these questions in an open-ended manner, the responses are a relatively accurate reflection of the "big issues" facing the history and heritage sector, but they are difficult to quantify.

Wishes — The surveyors asked respondents what specific resources they wished for, such as space, staff, professional development training, or technical resources. Like those in the Institutional Priorities section, these were open-ended questions.

Technical Assistance — In contrast to the above questions, surveyors gave a multiple choice list of training and professional development options from which organizations could select as many responses as they saw fit. The correlation, or lack thereof, between the three sets of responses is indicative of areas that may be poorly understood by the cultural heritage sector. They also provide a blueprint for the best ways to train and educate organizations, while remaining sensitive to their stated priorities.

Finally, Appendix E outlines the current statewide initiatives within the history and heritage sector.

Selecting Organizations for RHODI

The Master List

The first master list of over 464 names was generated initially from the following sources:

- The RIHS's own internal mailing list
- An in-house list of 45 historical societies
- The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission's list of 100 historical sites and organizations
- The State Archives of Rhode Island (a division of the Rhode Island Secretary of State's office) list of 150 archival organizations
- The "Visit Rhode Island" website list of 203 museums and attractions
- Attendees to the Statehouse Lawn Heritage Festival

After a first round of culling for redundancy, the team identified a list of 464 names in the following categories:

Culture and Heritage — Organizations based on a common cultural background (e.g., Rhode Island Swedish Heritage Association, Society of Stukely Westcott Descendants);
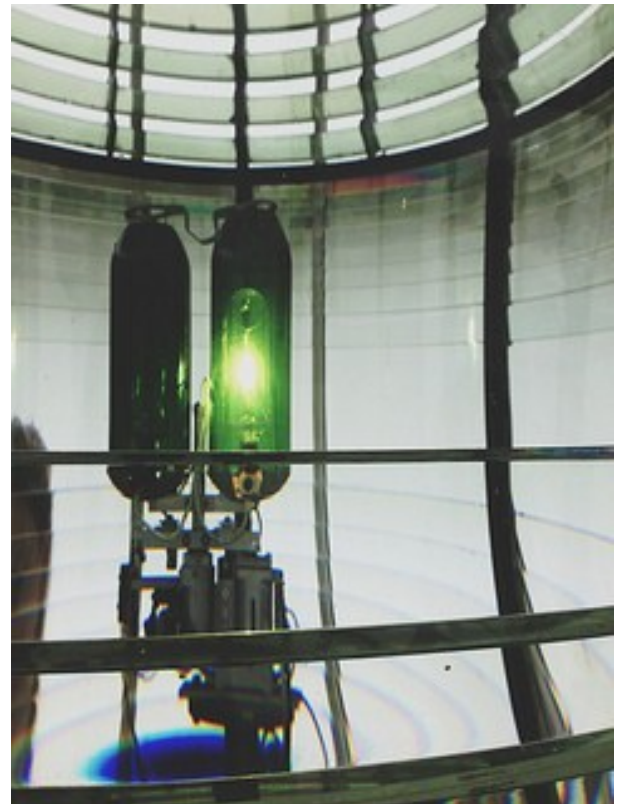
Archive — Organizations who identified *primarily* as an archival repository where historical materials can be accessed for research (e.g., Providence City Archives, Rhode Island State Archives, Salve Regina University Archives);

Historical Society — Organizations that collect, preserve, and make available for research materials, often focused on a specific geographic area (e.g., Rhode Island Historical Society, Newport Historical Society);

Library — Organizations that work primarily with printed publications, both circulating and reference (e.g., Providence Public Library);

Living History — Organizations that provide educational programming taking the form of historical reenactment both inside and outside of the classroom (e.g., 14th Rhode Island Regiment);

Museum — Organizations in which historical and cultural artifacts are stored and displayed for public viewing (e.g., Newport Art Museum, the Providence Children's Museum).

Block Island South East Lighthouse

While RHODI wished to incorporate as many organizations as possible in its database, it was necessary for the Advisory Committee to establish two basic criteria for inclusion in Phase 1:

1. It must hold collections or programs relating to Rhode Island's history and heritage, and
2. The organization must be accessible to the public.

Once the first criterion was applied, the list of potential organizations decreased dramatically from 464 to just over 200. In keeping with these standards, we decided not to include churches (unless they hold archives or are in historic buildings), land trusts, monuments and landmarks that are not managed by a history or heritage organization, and cemeteries (although the Rhode Island Cemeteries Index is included). Libraries were included if they hold historical collections (university libraries with historical archives are included if they are open to the public). Heritage organizations with no physical presence were treated as online organizations (though they may hold events or possess collections). City and state organizations were included (such as the State House Library, the Roger Williams Memorial or the Judicial Archives).

The RHODI team applied the second criterion, public accessibility, during the process of contacting the organizations. If contact could not be made with an organization (either via email, telephone or even in some cases visits to the physical location), those organizations would not be included in the initial directory, but we marked them for future research. Final numbers would fluctuate throughout the course of the project as some organizations never followed up after initial contacts were made, and some were added during the course of the survey process.

We were ultimately able to reach 125 organizations, and of these organizations, only three declined to participate. Ultimately, the field teams conducted 119 on-site interviews and three telephone surveys to organizations based solely online. Because a single survey frequently encompassed multiple sites, the RHODI directory includes 191 organizations and 352 individual properties.

Sometimes the RHODI team encountered pleasant surprises as it began weeding through the initial master list, such as the Museum of Natural History and Planetarium at Roger Williams Park in Providence. As the museum covers natural history with a global scope, and does not specifically state a Rhode Island focus, it was considered to fall outside the project criteria. However, the team learned upon contacting the museum that it holds an extensive archival collection on the park, the zoo, and all the buildings on the park site, including photographs, blueprints, and the correspondence of all zoo and museum directors from inception. Though not described on the museum's website, these materials are open to public access and are one of Rhode Island's "hidden history collections" that have been uncovered by RHODI.

Sector-wide Assessment

According to the State of Rhode Island's Economic Development Corporation, the travel and tourism industry, which includes many of the organizations surveyed as part of RHODI, is a $5.8 billion industry that supports more than 66,000 jobs. Although the RHODI data paints a similarly dynamic picture of our state's history and heritage sector, we believe that there are three issue areas that define the field and its limitations. These areas are Audience and Visibility, Digital Literacy, and Collaboration. For each consideration, we will explain the overarching topic, followed by the survey results with an analysis of the field.
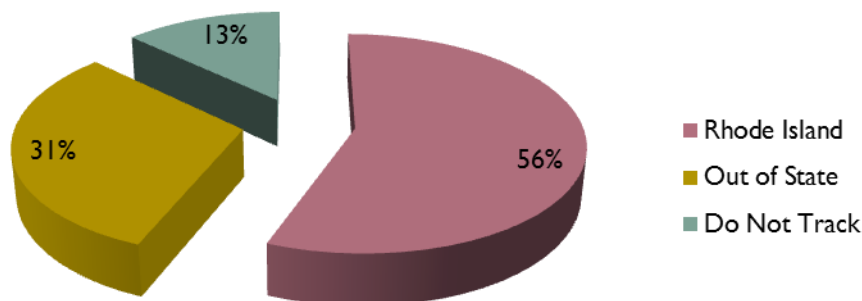
Audience and Visibility

As detailed in *The Heart of the Matter*, from the American Academy of Arts & Sciences's Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2013, our cultural institutions have a fundamental and essential role to play in educating both children and adults—but the organizations participating in RHODI have expressed grave concerns over diminishing visitation and volunteer numbers.

They note that younger people are not interested in their organizations. They also stated that they do not know how to or have the funding to promote and market the programs they are hosting.

"We have tried several times to reach the youth population through educational programing for younger ages, but three programming development attempts have failed."

Visitation

Rhode Island — 56%
Out of State — 31%
Do Not Track — 13%

"Young people still come in for story times; teens don't come in as much. As the older population fades away, readership [of library materials] is down."

Age Groups Served

Almost half of organizations surveyed (55 out of 122) want to attract a younger audience.

In some instances, organizations felt that they were reaching broad populations, but would like to bring in more visitors. In other instances, organizations identified specific populations that they would like to serve more efficiently, including a younger population (45%), more of their local community (20%), and more culturally and economically diverse population (14%).

"How do we keep up subscription members with an aging membership population?"

Types of Programs

Of the 122 organizations surveyed, 83 offer programs. Those that do not offer programs are primarily focused on preserving collections. The RHODI team proposed a list of multiple choice answers and amalgamated these into the following categories: exhibitions (73%), lectures and readings (83%), productions and performances (95%), tours (66%), and programs specifically for youth (69%). Respondents checked all categories that pertained.

Education Programs

Half of all organizations offering programs undertake specific educational programs; of these, two-thirds provide formal curriculum materials. Of these 41 organizations, 87% developed their own in-house materials. However, many organizations are not current on the latest curriculum requirements! Most organizations offering educational programs find that budget cuts in public education – particularly for buses and school outings – are their biggest constraint.

Visibility

Organizations were asked how (or where) they primarily connect with and engage their audiences.

Online – includes websites, social media and email blasts
On-site – includes events and programs, exhibitions and tours, walk-in visitors
Off-site – includes traveling exhibits, school visits
Marketing – includes newsletters, newspaper ads, other print advertising

The question of how organizations engage with their audience was open-ended, and organizations could choose multiple responses if they felt that they connected with their audience through multiple avenues. Of 122 surveyed organizations, interacting with the **public on-site** was the predominant method of audience interaction for 114 organizations. Nearly as many organizations (110) named online interaction as a primary method, though they often added the concern that they were not using their websites and social media outlets as effectively as they could be.

Digital Literacy

For the purposes of RHODI, digital literacy refers to the skills needed to engage effectively online, both from an organizational perspective and as a user. In addition to the technical skills involved with the digitization of collections, digital literacy encompasses the creation of effective website and social media content for conveying information and communicating with users, sharing digitized collections through an online content management system, and adding context to those materials in their online environment. Technical digitization (scanning and photography) should be viewed as a subset of digital literacy.

"We have a system in place but no one to implement it."

In conducting the surveys, the RHODI team found a high degree of confusion and misperceptions regarding the role and potential of technology in the cultural heritage sector. To better understand the technology needs of the sector, the team distinguished between two aspects of digital literacy:

- The use of technology for outreach by which organizations increase visibility and communicate with a target audience and
- Digitization capacity, including scanning, reproduction, and providing online access to collections.

Communicating via the Internet

Each of the 122 organizations surveyed has a website. Of those 122, 97% (117 organizations) stated that they interact with their audience online as a method of outreach. The RHODI team found that many of websites featured out-of-date information. Seventy-two percent of surveyed organizations (88 organizations) use Facebook to interact with their audience in addition to a traditional website. However, only a quarter of organizations replied that they believe that they use social media consistently or on a frequent basis. As cultural heritage groups seek to reach a younger audience, learning to harness the potential of new media technology is an important area for training and skill development.

Of the total number of organizations surveyed, 85% expressed interest in an increased online presence. The 15% that did not see the need to increase their online presence, but that they lack sufficient infrastructure, staff, or funding to do so.

Online engagement is a core activity for many successful non-profit organizations as it provides an effective and inexpensive way to communicate with specific stakeholders and with the general public. However, many of Rhode Island's history and heritage groups are not taking advantage of the benefits of digital technology – increased visibility, dissemination of messages ranging from education to advocacy, access to peer networks and grassroots support, improved fundraising capacity, and heightened transparency. Making online engagement a priority is an important step for the cultural heritage sector to realize its potential as one of Rhode Island's key economic assets, and more training and access to affordable support are needed to do so.

Digitization

Of the 111 organizations surveyed that hold collections, 46 (41%) are currently digitizing materials. However, this figure does not include the libraries that are part of the Ocean State Libraries (OSL), which has formed a digitization task force that currently is assessing standards, best practices, and digitization vendors in the state to establish a system-wide digitization plan. Thus, the current figure of 46 organizations could be increasing in the near future.

When organizations were asked to identify their main challenge, many responded that the lack of digital literacy was a greater concern than cataloguing issues. This contradicts most scholarly research which identifies the cataloguing backlog as the biggest obstacle to digitizing collections. One possible explanation is that many small organizations lack a full understanding of the processes involved and mistakenly believe that digitization is a "magic bullet" that will increase participation and make cataloging unnecessary. In fact, cataloging is a prerequisite for a digitization effort. Physical records must be organized in order to establish an organized digital repository.
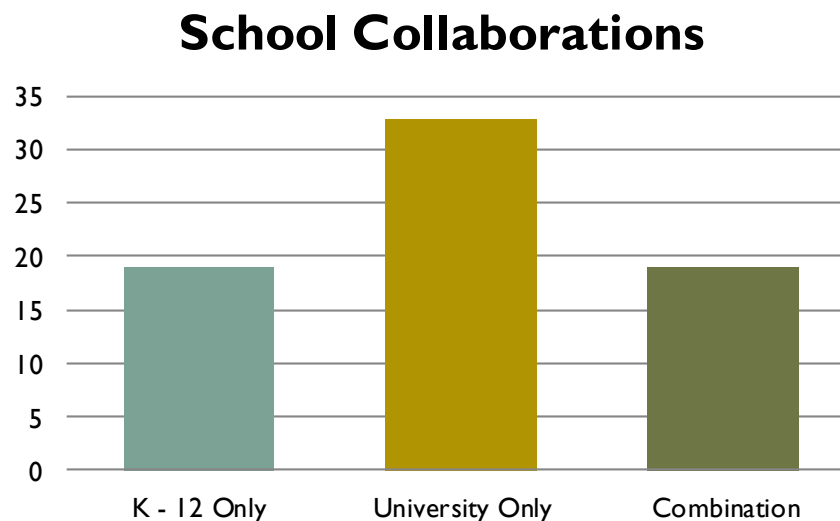
Once materials are digitized, their management requires ongoing care and maintenance. If the purpose of digitization is to increase access to collections, the data must be stored in a compressed format in an online collections management system of some kind. If the purpose of digitization is preservation of materials in a secondary format, then an understanding of digital asset management and digital preservation standards and best practices is required, and additional hard drives, servers, or cloud storage space may be needed. Beyond simply purchasing equipment and scanning materials, these additional skillsets are essential to a successful digitization program. For organizations with no IT staff, or minimal technical skills in general, this is an intimidating undertaking. Access to IT support and training in collections software can begin to chip away at this feeling of intimidation.
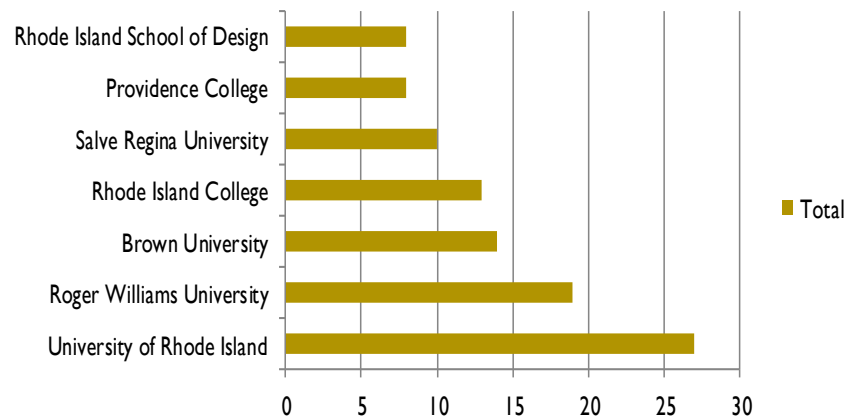
Collaboration

Rhode Island's institutions have long been characterized by their fractured nature. For example, though geographically small, Rhode Island boasts 36 school districts with 36 separate and distinct superintendents. In the non-profit sector, intense local pride and a powerful sense of individual independence have hampered the creation of networks and other collaborative efforts. With funding in short supply, dwindling membership and attendance, and the challenge of technology to overcome, many small organizations must join forces to survive. Fortunately, the RHODI survey has indicated a paradigm shift in organizations' assessment of the value of collaboration. When questioned by the RHODI team, 90% of organizations claim to be interested in partnerships, and 81% currently cooperate in some way with other peer organizations. The RHODI project was designed precisely to nurture this growing impulse and has fostered a number of exciting collaborations even before the website's launch.

School Collaborations

The survey revealed that educational collaborations are the most common: 58% of organizations (a total of 71) are currently working with schools and universities. Of these, 36.5% partner exclusively with K-12 schools, 27% cooperate exclusively with universities, and 36.5% partner with both. The decrease in K-12 collaborations is a recent phenomenon resulting from the drop in funding for the social sciences (down to 17 minutes per week in many districts) and field trips in Rhode Island schools.

Frequent University Collaborations

Rhode Island School of Design
Providence College
Salve Regina University
Rhode Island College
Brown University
Roger Williams University
University of Rhode Island

0   5   10   15   20   25   30

■ Total

Collaborative Projects

A number of projects have taken place in recent months that demonstrate the growing desire for collaboration among cultural heritage organizations. For example, the Newport Historical Society, Salve Regina, Rhode Island Historical Society, and the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University have just completed a major project entitled "The Spectacle of Toleration," funded by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, in celebration of the 350th anniversary of Rhode Island's Charter. Additionally, Roger Williams University, the Rogers Free Library, and the Rhode Island Historical Society have collaborated on the digitization of local Bristol historic newspaper collections.

To date, RHODI is the only collaborative initiative to invite all players in the state's history and heritage sector, regardless of size or function. The online directory will unite Rhode Island's fragmented sector through a virtual network, with all synergies and benefits that such inclusion provides. Even before its launch, the RHODI team was pleased to informally identify several opportunities for collaboration:

- The Cranston Historical Society owns a large, empty former carriage house that — with appropriate grant funding — is in good enough condition to be turned into exhibition space or storage space for other organizations.
- Salve Regina University makes its large format scanner and other digital reproduction equipment available to historical organizations. Thanks to RHODI, the Jamestown Historical Society and the Haffenreffer Museum have been able to make use of this resource, and Salve Regina hopes that other organizations will follow suit.
- The Warwick Historical Society recently gathered 20 other historical societies in the state to produce a combined display at a local shopping center for the Fourth of July celebration. The Warwick Historical Society would like to build on this first initiative to develop a more structured program.

RHODI aims to find ways to foster this spirit of mutual aid and collaboration, and to support future initiatives similar to those born during the survey process.

Potential Local Leaders

Additionally, organizations have alerted the RHODI team that they are willing to share unique skills and resources with sister organizations. In a sector that is dominated by a small number of "giants," it is extremely important to shine a light on the accomplishments of small and mid-size organizations. Such potential leaders within the history and heritage community include:

Collections Care:

The Block Island Historical Society, which has developed an in-house technique to create custom archival housing for fragile books, a more cost-effective solution than most pre-made archival housings

Digital Literacy:

The Cranston Historical Society (moving collections databases to PastPerfect), the Barrington Preservation Society (placing collections online), and the Little Compton Historical Society (e-commerce)

Audience and Visibility:

Coggeshall Farm (agricultural events and strong tie-ins with the slow/local food movement), the Massasoit Historical Association (showcasing local artists), and the Providence Athenaeum (prize-winning salon series)

Educational Programs, Engaging Youth:

The 14th Heavy Artillery of Rhode Island (Civil War re-enactment for high school students), the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum (artist-in-residence program for young artists), and the Newport Art Museum (Project MUSE, museum studies for high school students)

Collaborative Scholarly Programs:

Newport Historical Society received funding from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities to hold the Spectacle of Toleration program in 2012-2013. The program marked the 350th anniversary of Rhode Island's 1663 Charter, and examined issues of tolerance in modern times and throughout Rhode Island's history. The Newport Historical Society partnered with a second history organization — the Rhode Island Historical Society — as well as two scholarly institutions, Salve Regina University and the John Carter Brown Library, affiliated with Brown University.
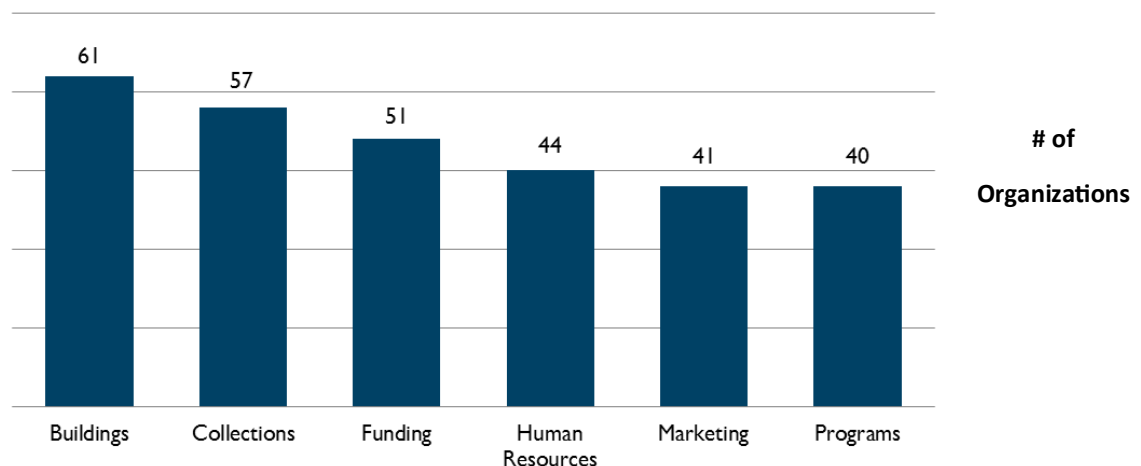
Sector-wide Interventions

The RIHS proposes a number of meaningful interventions in response to the needs expressed by history and heritage organizations so that this sector may become a more sustainable and economically viable part of our state.

Technical Assistance

As opposed to open-ended questions regarding "Concerns" and "Wishes," our survey team presented organizations with a multiple-choice list of possible areas in which they might want technical assistance. They selected as few or as many of the following areas as they liked: Collections (maintenance and cataloguing), Funding (grant writing and fundraising), Human Resources (staff recruitment and volunteer training), Marketing (and Public Relations), Programs, and Buildings or Structural Concerns (maintenance, renovation, disaster planning, environmental controls, etc.).

Areas of Desired Assistance

There are some discrepancies between the **unprompted** responses to questions regarding institutional priorities and wishes, and the **prompted** responses regarding technical assistance:

- While 48% of organizations "wish" for a new building or help maintaining their building, they are looking for *funds*, "not help learning how to do it." However, they are interested in receiving assistance in disaster planning and environmental controls as well as professional development in the area of grant writing.
- Once organizations are prompted to think about their collections, 57 organizations do request training and assistance to better care for and maintain them, even though when asked in an open-ended format they do not ask for assistance with their collections.
- 65% of respondents are very concerned about increasing their audience, membership, and visibility, yet only 46% (41 of 90 responding organizations) are interested in receiving help with their marketing and 44% (40 of 90 organizations) with assistance to improve their programs.
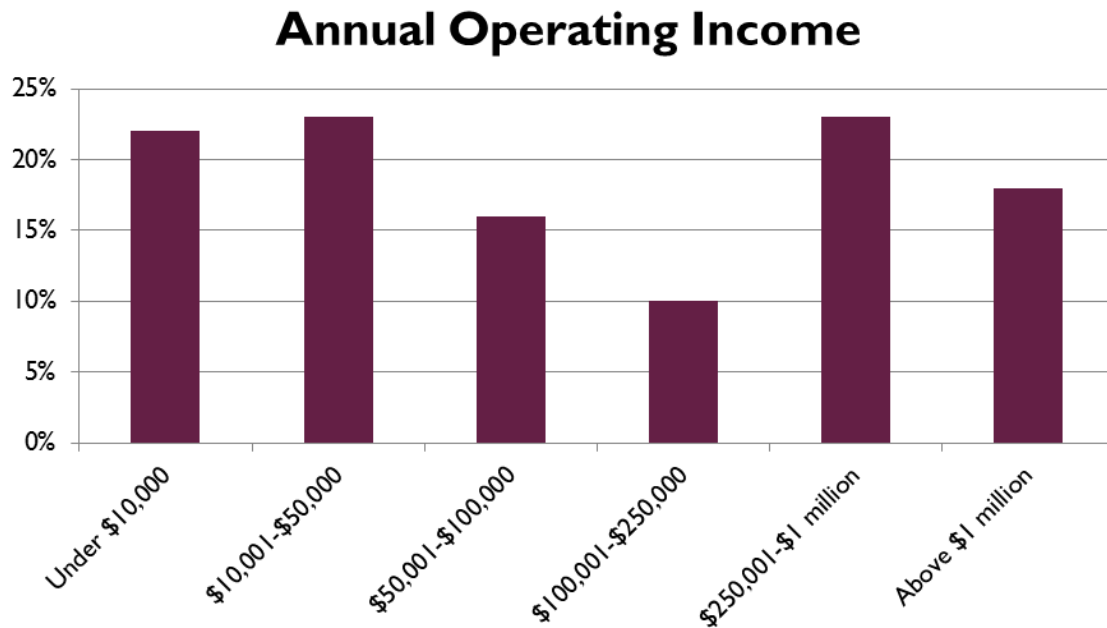
We at the RIHS see this desire for training as a void that RHODI can help to fill. The RIHS is uniquely positioned to continue this initiative with its strong background in collaboration and professional development. The RIHS has eleven years of experience with developing and implementing content and delivery-based teacher training through the Teaching American History grant program. Directing TAH projects not only helped the RIHS staff develop the skills to implement engaging educational workshops, it also embedded us within a broader community of resources. We have access to the academics, content providers, finance specialists and many more skilled areas because of our statewide nature, but we also know how to bring them together in an enjoyable environment for successful adult education.

In 2009, the New England Museum Association (NEMA) asked two staff members of the RIHS, Kirsten Hammerstrom, Director of Collections, and then-director of the Goff Center for Education and Public Programs, Dr. C. Morgan Grefe, to host a two-day program for NEMA member organizations entitled, "Sustain your Mission, Save your Collection." It was during this period that we realized the common needs some of our state's smaller sites were expressing: concerns over aging buildings, a disconnect with new history and civics standards, an aging volunteer population, and an inability to secure grant funding. The problems were overwhelming to many of these volunteer-run organizations, and it made us ask the question: what can the RIHS do to become a better resource for them?

In 2012, the RIHS partnered with several RI cultural organizations to offer a statewide Docent Symposium. Wildly successful, the symposium sold out quickly and received extremely positive reviews from attendees. Nearly 150 staff and volunteers from 34 different institutions attended the sessions, including art, craft, history, science, and children's museums; historic societies and buildings; restoration and preservation organizations; and a zoo and a botanical garden. The sessions covered a variety of topics including story-telling, collaboration, and the use of technology. The success of the Docent Symposium demonstrates the clear need for additional, formalized professional development opportunities for volunteers across south-eastern New England, as well as the opportunity to network and connect with other institutions and educators. After the success of this day, the organizing volunteers met and asked the RIHS to consider taking ownership of the Docent Symposium process to assure its continuation and high standards.

While the RIHS, through its RHODI Project, is eager to step into the role of convener of professional development opportunities for and with our fellow history and heritage organizations, the role of funding becomes a central part of any conversation. In Rhode Island, 61% of organizations in the history and heritage sector have operating budgets under $100,000, according to the RHODI data. The chart below shows the operating income as reported by RHODI organizations. See page 32, Appendix D, for more details.

Annual Operating Income

Bar chart showing Annual Operating Income percentages:
- Under $10,000: 22%
- $10,001-$50,000: 23%
- $50,001-$100,000: 16%
- $100,001-$250,000: 10%
- $250,001-$1 million: 23%
- Above $1 million: 18%

Grant Funding

Survey data indicates that 62% of organizations receive grants funding, but we wanted to know to which foundations and agencies members of the history and heritage sector were applying.
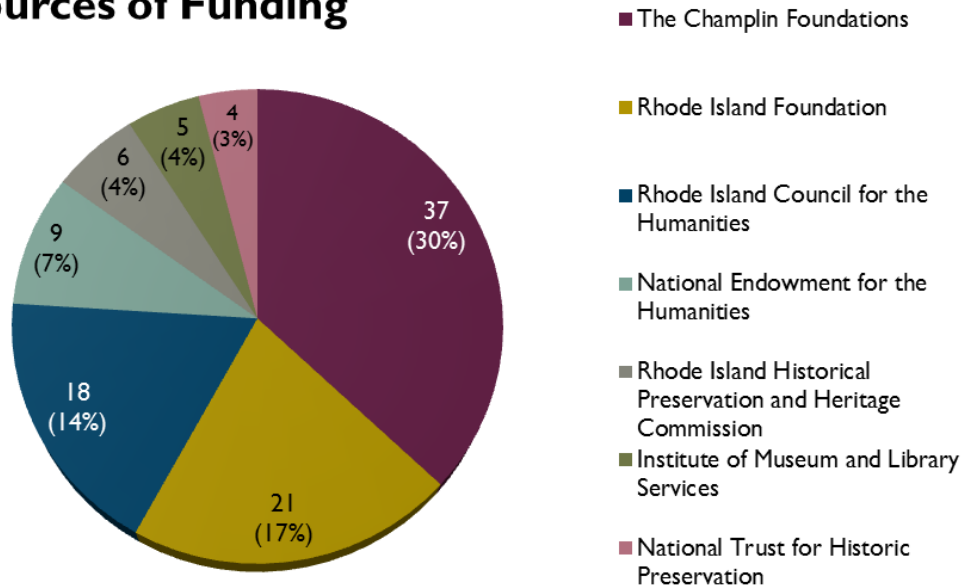
As illustrated in the chart that follows, a disproportionate number of organizations are applying to one funder: the Champlin Foundations. As the only consistent source for capital funds in Rhode Island, it is not surprising that Champlin would be in receipt of these requests. However, this means that all of the history and heritage organizations are in direct competition with one another for the monies needed to rehabilitate their historic structures.

Additionally, an organization like The 1772 Foundation, a major and significant funding source for historical infrastructure needs, redirected its funding to New Jersey and Connecticut to address the destruction wrought by Hurricane Sandy. These projects are undeniably imperative to address, yet such a situation creates a void of funding for Rhode Island institutions which continue to sustain wear and tear to their facilities. With the increase of natural disasters affecting all of our states, and our structural stock being hard hit by those events, it begs the question, do we need more sources of funding for the capital needs of Rhode Island history and heritage organizations?

From our survey findings, we believe it is, in fact, imperative that we identify or create more of such resources if the state wishes to sustain its history and heritage organizations.

Sources of Funding

Legend:
- The Champlin Foundations
- Rhode Island Foundation
- Rhode Island Council for the Humanities
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission
- Institute of Museum and Library Services
- National Trust for Historic Preservation

Pie chart values: 37 (30%), 21 (17%), 18 (14%), 9 (7%), 6 (4%), 5 (4%), 4 (3%)

The information collected by RHODI can assist private foundations in understanding the historic landscape they fund and provide information to help them make educated, informed and nuanced choices about whom to support and how best to do it.

There is also an increased role for the state and municipalities to play in support of these organizations that add so profoundly to the quality of life of their communities. While no other state model can be immediately applicable to Rhode Island, it is useful to look at our immediate neighbor in Massachusetts to examine two statewide initiatives to support its historic and cultural resources, either directly or through the empowerment of local communities.

Two Sources of Inspiration

Massachusetts State law (M.G.L.) Chapter 44B, passed in 2000, created the Community Preservation Act (CPA). When a community adopts this law, it gains the ability to raise funds to create a local, dedicated fund for open space preservation, preservation of historic resources, the development of affordable housing, and the acquisition and development of outdoor recreational facilities.

These funds are not appropriated from existing state agencies, but rather they are raised locally for the expressed purposes through a voter-authorized surcharge on local property tax bills and are capped at 3%. Local implementation of the CPA by a community prompts annual distributions from the state's Community Preservation Trust Fund, a statewide fund held by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, which the law also established. The statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund is created and maintained by the deed recording fees charged by the state.

Given the high number of RHODI participants who need support for their historic structures, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF) might also provide the basis for a creative solution for the state's historic building woes. The State of Massachusetts created the CFF as part of a major economic stimulus bill that was approved by the Massachusetts Legislature in July 2006. The most recent capital budget appropriation to the CFF in Fiscal Year 2013 is $5 million.

As supported by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences call, the Cultural Facilities Fund continues to increase investments from both the public sector and the private sector to support the sound planning and development of cultural facilities in Massachusetts.

In the past seven years the CFF has awarded $55 million, in 399 separate grants, to 269 cultural organizations throughout the state. These organizations range from the internationally known Plimoth Plantation and Mass MoCA to volunteer-run community theaters. The state invests these funds because its legislators and citizens recognize the power of cultural institutions as "economic engines" for towns, cities, and the state. These organizations attract visitors from inside and outside of the state; they support the state's education system; they create and sustain tens of thousands of jobs; and, the grants for these institutions put architects, contractors and tradespeople to work.

We know that Rhode Island's cultural organizations employ thousands of men and women, attract hundreds of thousands of tourists every year, and provide affordable educational programs to our state's students. And they are in serious need of support to protect and share our state's unique history.

The State of Rhode Island and its cities and towns have an opportunity to make an investment in its history and heritage sector that will produce a ripple effect felt throughout every community and across generations.

To learn more about the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund go to: http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/facilities/facilities_about.htm

A Call to Action and Investment

The Rhode Island History Online Directory Initiative (RHODI) began as an attempt to better understand the varied and fluid landscape of the history and heritage sector of the Ocean State. The Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS), as the lead investigator of RHODI and the only state-wide history organization in Rhode Island, sought to survey the field to define the sector's resources, demonstrate the economic value of the domain, and to assess what needs are keeping organizations from reaching their full cultural, social, and economic potential.

The survey of 122 distinct organizations yielded five consistent responses:

- Organizations feel **threatened by irrelevance** unless they can increase audience/ membership/volunteers.
- Organizations have a **misperceived notion that digitization is the "magic bullet"** that will solve their problems.
- Organizations are **eager for training**—particularly in marketing/outreach, strategic planning, and human resources; but they also need to improve their fundraising capacity.
- Organizations need to make **collections care and management a priority**.
- Organizations are **eager to collaborate and share resources, but they need a guiding hand**.

The RIHS, along with our RHODI partners, is prepared to address these needs through collaborative workshops, seminars, and initiatives—and this began with the launch of the RHODI website on October 29, 2013 (www.RHODI.org). Now all participating sites are linked and can be communicated with in an instant.

But this site can and will be more: it will be a space to highlight events, share best practices, post educational resources, and even interpret our collections and stories together.

To take these bold steps, and to shift our industry's paradigm from competition to collaboration, we will need the visionary support of leaders in both the public and private sectors.

We know that this is a state rich in history, dynamic in heritage and faith. In fact, in many ways this is what has defined Rhode Island from its very beginnings. And nothing embodies this ideology than the 464 organizations (nearly one organization for every 2.5 square miles) that make up the history and heritage sector.

Investing in Rhode Island's past will build its future, but we must expend our time and resources wisely. RHODI provides a way to harness our sector's data so that we may recognize and pursue the possibilities of this field for our educational and economic well-being.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Project Participants

The RHODI Advisory Committee

RIHS staff invited the executive directors of historical organizations, representatives from state agencies, scholars, and non-profit leaders from a wide cross section of organizations across the state to serve on the RHODI Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee members are as follows:

Val Talmadge - Preserve Rhode Island, Providence
Marjory O'Toole - Little Compton Historical Society, Little Compton
Katrina L. White – Former Travel Trade Manager, Rhode Island Tourism Division, Rhode Island Economic
       Development Corp.
Kathy Hartley - Historic Hearthside Homestead, Lincoln
Ruth Taylor - Newport Historical Society, Newport
Lori Urso - Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, Kingston
Jennifer Smith - Roger Williams National Memorial, Providence
Maxine Goldin – RI Jewish Historical Association, Providence
Zulie Catir - Colonial Dames of RI, Providence
Carl Becker - Rhode Island 1st (re-enactors), Swansea
Annie Valk - The John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage
       (Brown University), Providence
Barbara Carroll - Association of Professional Genealogists, Cranston
Nellie Gorbea - former Executive Director, HousingWorks RI, Providence
Theresa Woodmansee - Protecting the Past, Office of Library & Information Services, Providence

The Advisory Committee first met on August 23rd, 2012 to define the parameters for inclusion in RHODI, on March 12th, 2013 for a progress update and a discussion of challenges faced by the field teams, and on August 25th, 2013 to evaluate and test the proposed RHODI website. Between meetings, the Committee was consulted via email to review the content of the survey and website. The Advisory Committee has played an invaluable role in advising the RHODI team, as ambassadors for the project, and in serving as pilot tests for the survey.

Project Staff

Project Manager - Tim Wade
With a Masters of Science in Historical Administration/Public History from Florida State University, Tim brought over ten years of museum collections and database experience to the project. His first-hand experience creating databases at the "World War Two and the Human Experience Archive," the Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science, and the Providence Children's Museum proved valuable in creating the RHODI database, and experience working in archives and museums gave him useful insights into the challenges faced by cultural heritage organizations.

Field Surveyor - Chelsea Gunn
Chelsea, who earned her Masters of Science in Library and Information Science, with a concentration in archives management, brought to the RHODI Project experience with the Salzburg Global Seminar (including collections management within the library and the appraisal of archival manuscripts for transfer to Harvard University); the Rhode Island School of Design's Archives, where she developed a visual database for browsing student portfolios; the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and Snell Library of Northeastern University; and the digitization departments of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and the Digital Ark Corporation, where she became familiar with digitization best practices and guidelines.

Field Surveyor - Lindsay Selin
Lindsay joined the RHODI Project team in the Spring of 2013, coming from a background in design and digital communications. A graduate of Middlebury College, she has worked previously as a videographer and multimedia storyteller for the Middlebury College Communications Office. As a freelancer, her work has been largely focused within the Humanities. Her storytelling and strong interpersonal skills were vital to the in-person process of conducting the surveys.

Additional Assistance
Protecting the Past, Rhode Island - The Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS).   The RHODI team also received valuable assistance from Theresa Woodmansee and intern Sarah Hudson of Protecting the Past, Rhode Island, a statewide project for disaster preparedness for cultural sites. While the RHODI project was in its early stages, OLIS was conducting an IMLS-funded, sector-wide disaster preparedness program. The teams of both projects were able to join forces in tracking down elusive organizations, sharing information, and coordinating phone calls and emails to avoid redundancy. This collaboration proved a useful example of productive synergies in the history and heritage sector.

APPENDIX B: Survey Methodology

Multiple Sites

One of the most difficult questions the RHODI team faced in developing the survey methodology was how to handle organizations spread over multiple properties. Surveyors finally established two basic categories: Organizations and Properties. An Organization may have multiple Properties, and this is reflected within the directory. The entry for the Rhode Island Historical Society, for example, contains information about the organization as a whole, in addition to property-specific information about the Aldrich House, Library, John Brown House Museum, and the Museum of Work and Culture sites. The "Organization" portion of the survey included data concerning overarching issues such as budget, organizational documents, and projects. The "Properties" section included information unique to each site, such as programs offered or collections held at that specific location. Survey questions relating to "Properties" addressed specific collection items or programs specific to the site.

Open-ended questions

In order to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, the RHODI team included both multiple choice and open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire. The open-ended questions encouraged respondents to speak freely without undue influence from the expectations of the field surveyors. The conversations that ensued from the open-ended questions often provided richer, deeper responses than those that involved simply selecting answers from a pre-determined list. However, while this methodology produced a broad picture and a plethora of anecdotal evidence, it did not necessarily translate directly into easily usable raw data. In sifting through responses to distil relevant facts or detect trends, the RHODI team inevitably resorted to imprecise techniques such as tabulating the repetition of key words (knowing that different words could express the same concept such as "sailor/maritime/ships"), and using professional judgment.

The Test Surveys

Four site visits were conducted in the Fall of 2012 to test the survey process. While the team initially had anticipated needing a two hour block to conduct the survey, the field surveyors determined that the entire interview could take place in 90 minutes: a 15 minute introduction, a 30-minute tour of the facilities, and 45 minutes for the survey.

Making Appointments

RHODI staff sent an initial email describing the project to all of the 200 organizations that met the established criteria describing the project. About one third responded within five days. Those that did not respond were then contacted by phone over the course of the surveying period. Of those organizations, approximately half to two-thirds scheduled a survey in the initial conversation, while some waited for board approval, or until a project ended, to schedule a meeting. Many people remembered the initial email, even if they had not responded. Thus, the prior written contact made explaining the process and goals of the project much easier, and made recipients of phone calls more receptive to scheduling survey meetings.

Due to budget constraints, the field teams were expected not to exceed 20 hours of work per week, which allowed them to complete six to seven surveys in a week. The field surveyors scheduled surveys based on location, so that multiple sites within a town could be visited on the same date whenever possible in an effort to maximize the time available. Some surveys took only 60 minutes (especially libraries), while a few lasted as long as three hours. On average they were completed in the anticipated 90 minutes.

Though it had originally been planned for the field surveyors to work independently, having two team members present during the survey allowed one person to record data on a tablet computer, while the other conversed with the organization's representative. When team members worked alone, surveys took far longer to complete and did not flow naturally as the surveyor had to stop frequently to record responses. Having one surveyor speak while another took notes also allowed the note taker to transcribe the surveys verbatim (which produced richer, more comprehensive data).

Site Visits

Of the 122 surveys conducted, five were performed by phone and email, ten took place at Aldrich House, (headquarters of the Rhode Island Historical Society), and five in neutral locations (primarily coffee shops or restaurants) in the case of organizations with no physical headquarters, such as re-enactment groups. The remaining 102 interviews were conducted on site. This allowed the field teams to take photographs and engage in informal conversation, which was sometimes more revealing than the prepared questions.

RHODI teams generally spoke with the executive director, who was sometimes accompanied by a chief curator or head of special collections. Depending on the nature of the organization, the head of educational programs or special events might also attend. In rare cases, at larger organizations, five or six representatives from different divisions of the organizations would participate in the interview.

Since 90% of the organizations visited had a website, the RHODI team looked to the website (and a Facebook page if it existed) to pre-populate the survey questionnaire with basic contact information. Approximately one-third of the websites were found to be out of date; sometimes the Facebook links were more accurate. The RHODI team soon concluded that the one to two hours spent preparing a survey was well worth the effort: contact information and basic facts could be verified rapidly, so that more time could be spent having an in-depth quality discussion.

Challenges

An important, but unexpected, obstacle was the driving time required to visit organizations. It had been anticipated initially that surveys could be grouped geographically. However, scheduling conflicts and delays in obtaining responses often meant that the team had to make several trips to outlying areas. In the future, the RHODI team feels that organizations that have completed a survey should be used as "ambassadors" to convince their neighbors to cooperate. And, in hindsight, the RHODI team could have conducted more than five surveys by phone or email. However, it cannot be overstated that the goodwill and contacts generated through site visits have been critical to the success of this project.

Raising Awareness

Social Media

Simultaneous to the survey process, the RHODI team conducted a public relations campaign focusing primarily on social media outlets, including the RHODI blog (located at RHODI.org), Facebook (on which the team posted weekly interview schedules), Tumblr (preferred by cultural organizations because it is so visual), Flickr (for photos and editing), and Pinterest. Typically, the RHODI team would announce its schedule on Facebook, post photos of the site survey on Tumblr and Flickr, and blog about the visit on the RHODI website. Positive feedback arrived regularly, particularly when unique treasures were uncovered by the RHODI team.

One blog commenter noted that on a visit to the Roger Williams Natural History Museum he was delighted to see a display on Elizabeth Dickens, the Bird Lady of Block Island, whom he had first learned about via the RHODI blog post about the Block Island Historical Society. He stated that this occurrence spurred him to "...think about how fragmented some of RI's collections and stories are…" He continued on to say "...thanks for getting on the path of pulling it all together."

Through the RHODI Tumblr account, contact was made with Erin Chapman of the American Guide (www.theamericanguide.org) regarding an episode of a PBS Digital Series on Rhode Island's maritime history. The RHODI team was able to provide Chapman with information about organizations with oral histories on the subject. This experience was a preview of the kind of functions that RHODI will serve.

Public Sharing

RHODI also participated in a session of the Rhode Island Historic Preservation & Heritage Commission conference entitled "Think Globally, Preserve Locally: Protecting and Promoting our Collections" session. The RHODI team was able to highlight the needs assessment aspect of the survey, as well as demonstrate the benefits of the online directory.

Field Surveyor Chelsea Gunn attended a meeting of the Narragansett Bay Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America as a guest speaker, providing a general overview of RHODI, with a special focus on the historic armories visited over the course of the survey process.

Additionally, Executive Director Dr. C. Morgan Grefe has met with various iterations of the Rhode Island Economic Development Council (EDC) as it seeks to better understand the Arts and Culture sector, in which the state positions the History and Heritage community. At these meetings, the EDC sought data to demonstrate need and areas of strength. RHODI is a tool the EDC can use to better grasp this understudied and poorly understood group of disparate non-profit organizations.

Dr. Grefe also provided members of the East Greenwich Historical Society with an overview of the benefits of the RHODI project at that organization's monthly meeting, and did the same for the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society's Annual Meeting.

APPENDIX C: Summary of the Questionnaire

Open ended-questions in italics

Structure and Governance:
Governing Documents, Date of Last Annual Report, IRS Code for Tax Exemption
Designated Staff (IT, Curator, etc.)
What are five words that describe your organization?

Finances and Facilities:
Total operating budget, Sources of funding, Endowment
Number of unique structures, Number of unique properties
Current/Recent Site Projects
What are the strengths/deficiencies of the site?
Are your storage facilities sufficient to your needs? What areas are climate controlled?
Are you ADA compliant? Are there issues with ADA compliance?
Do you participate in environmental initiatives?

Staff and Operations:
Number of staff – full/part time, Number of volunteers, Number of interns
Onsite visitors for last FY, Web visitors for last FY
For what services do you charge a fee?
Do you offer facility rentals?

Collections Information
Collection Item types
Strengths/deficiencies of collection?
What percentage is cataloged?
What type of database/technology is used for collections management?
What themes are covered?
What geographic areas do you cover?

What items are on your wish list?

Public Access and Outreach Information

What or who is the community that you serve? Is there a specific age range you serve?

Whom do you want to serve – what community?

Does your board reflect that community?

What brings an audience through your doors?

Do you have educational programming? If so, do you have curriculum materials?

Do you hold an annual event?

Collaborations

Who are your collaborators?

Are you interested in collaborating with other members of the RHODI directory?

Are you familiar with the Cultural Data Project?

Are you familiar with Protecting the Past – RI?
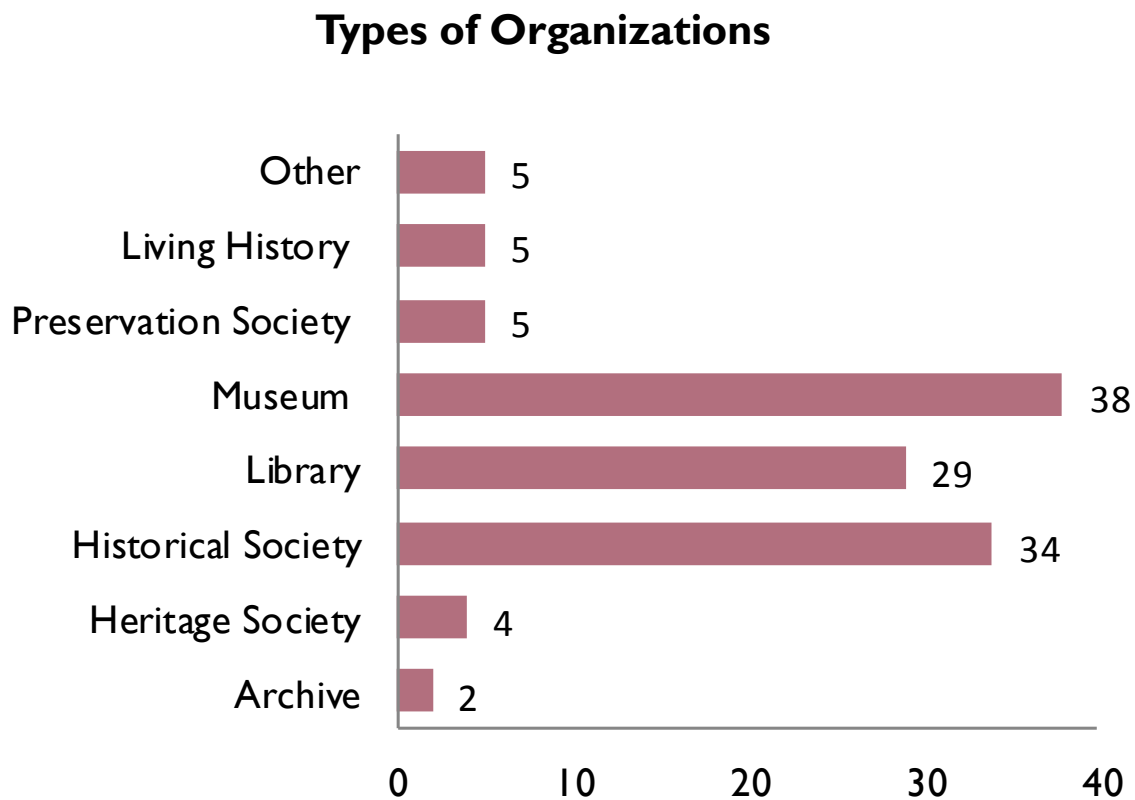
What are your biggest concerns?

Section I: Sector Overview

Types of Organizations

Definitions are based on how the organizations described themselves. While most organizations are involved in several different activities, they are grouped under the following headings:
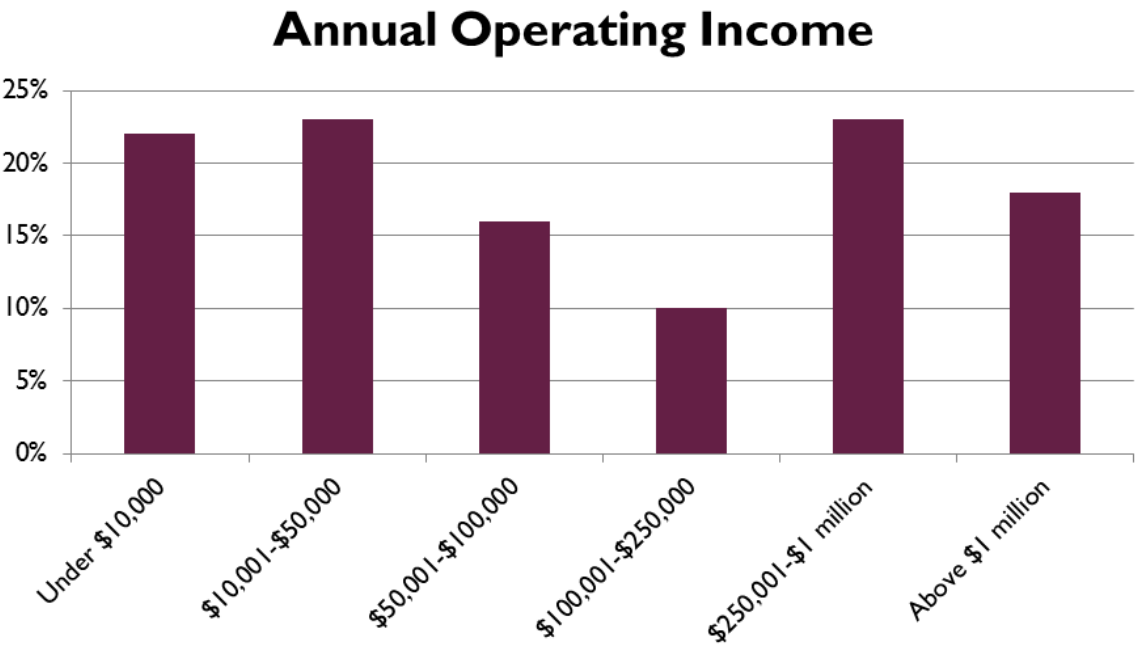
Types of Organizations

Of the 122 organizations interviewed, 57 are located within historic houses. This has a major impact on the survey results, as historic structures are often expensive to maintain. Frequently, funding needed for programs, marketing, collections care, or staff is spent on maintaining the physical structure. The heavy stewardship responsibilities of many of Rhode Island's cultural heritage organizations should be taken into consideration when developing grants and capacity building programs.

Operating Income

In Rhode Island, 61% of organizations in the history and heritage sector have operating budgets under $100,000, according to the RHODI data. However, a closer look at the RHODI data indicates that nearly half of the organizations in this sector fall within the two lowest brackets (under $50,000). Further, of the 20 organizations that operate on budgets under $10,000, 4 or 20% operate on $700 or less annually. Within the highest bracket of over $1 million, most organizations like the Rhode Island Historical Society work with budgets between $1 million and $3 million, while the Preservation Society of Newport County operates the Newport mansions on an annual budget of $19 million.

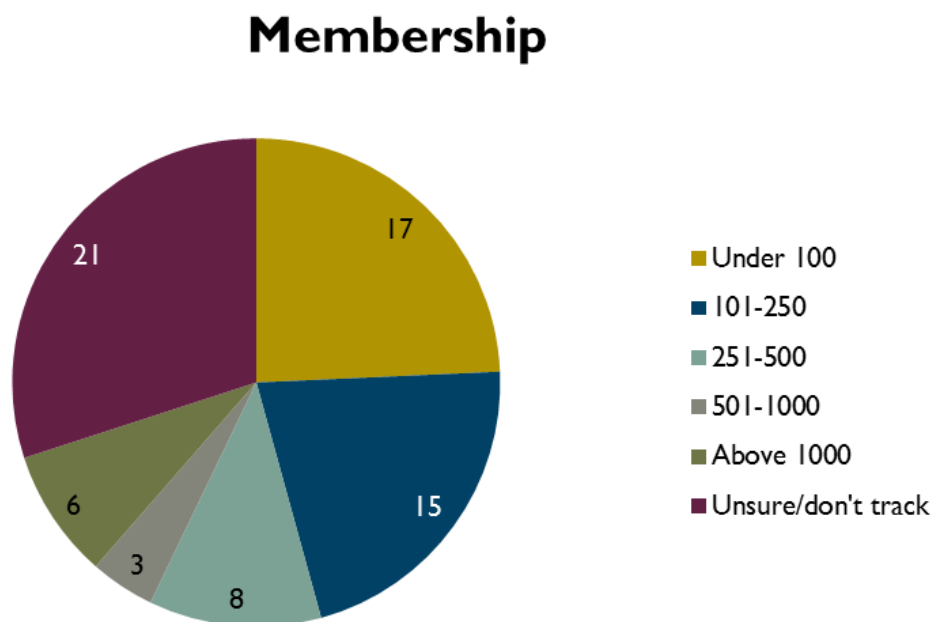**Annual Operating Income**

501(c)(3) Status

Of the 122 organizations surveyed, 92 are registered 501(c)3 non-profits. That accounts for 75% of the surveyed organizations. Of the 30 organizations (the other 25%) that are not, most are online-only presences, small cultural heritage groups, or government or university subdivisions.
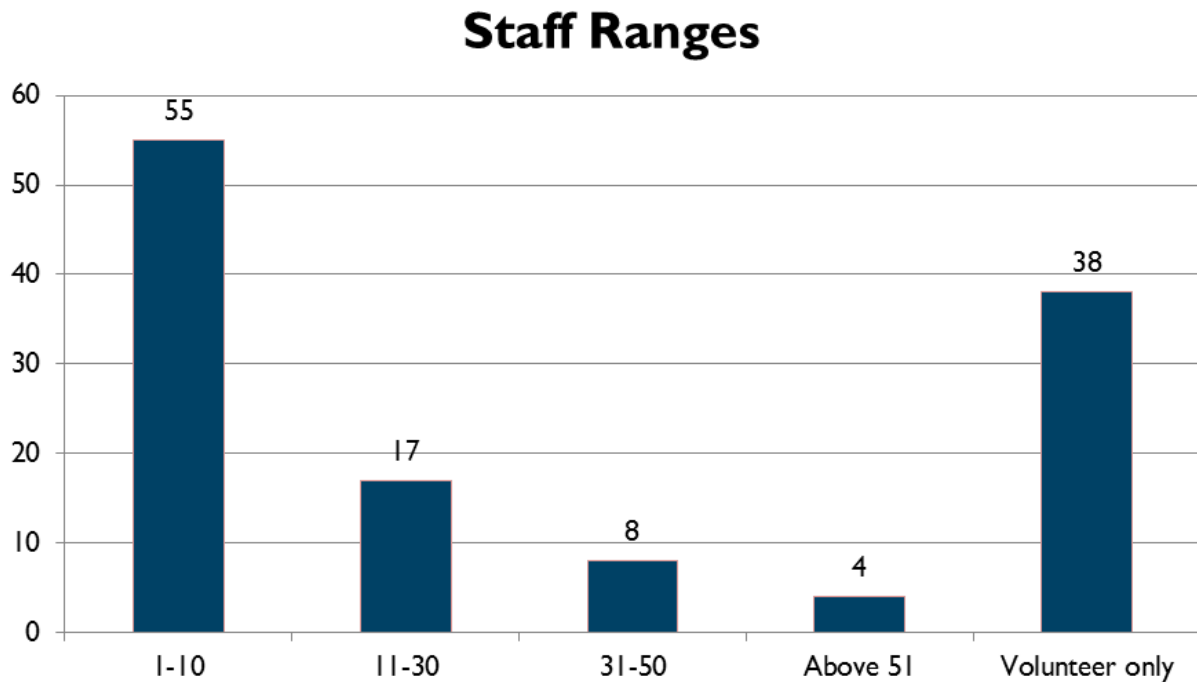
Membership

Out of the 122 organizations surveyed, 70 have fee-paying members. Since each defines members in different ways, ranging from an individual to an entire household, these figures reflect "membership" rather than individual members.   Again, membership numbers are skewed towards the handful of large organizations that dominate the state.

Membership

- Under 100
- 101-250
- 251-500
- 501-1000
- Above 1000
- Unsure/don't track

Size of Staff

The majority of organizations have fewer than ten staff members. Almost every organization relies on volunteers in some capacity, even if there is also paid staff. The three organizations with the largest paid staff numbers include one museum group and two library systems.
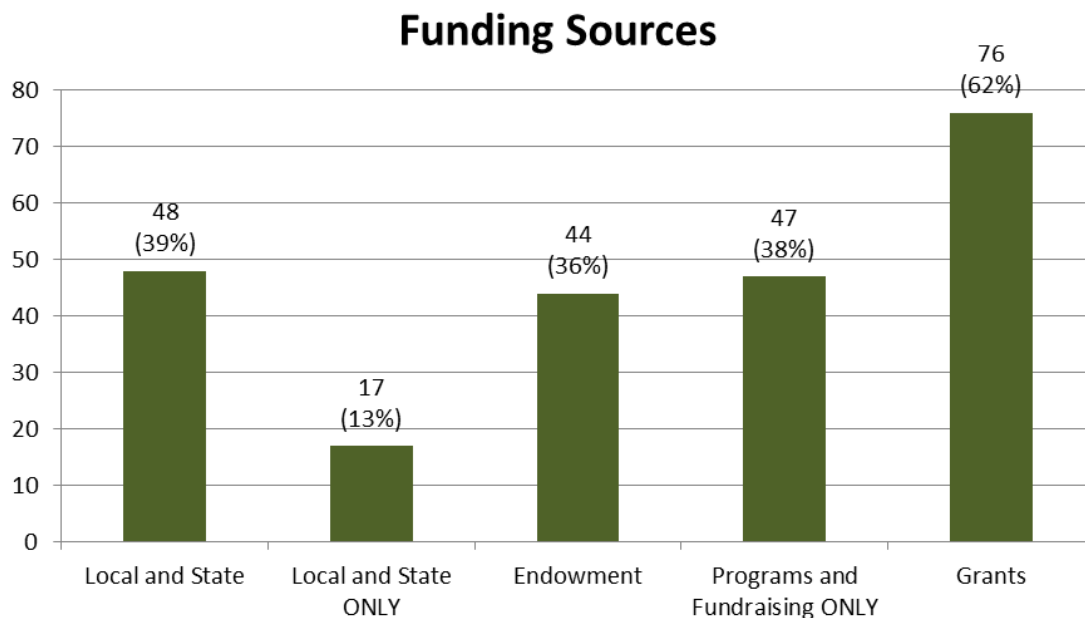
Staff Ranges

Sources of Funding

Most organizations receive funding from a combination of state and local support, an endowment or parent organization, earned income, and revenue from fundraising and/or membership fees. However, over a third (38%) of organizations received *only* earned and fundraised income, making them heavily reliant on sustaining public interest. Conversely, 17 organizations (13%) depend *exclusively* on local and state funding, making them vulnerable to budget cuts in times of economic downturn. Recent major cuts in state and local funding have been felt acutely by the 39% of surveyed organizations which depend in some measure on local and state grants.

Only 36% of the organizations have an endowment.

62% of surveyed organizations receive grants. However, these are often tied to specific projects and are not available for general operating expenses.

A frequent topic of conversation at many meetings was the adoption of the Cultural Data Project (CDP) in Rhode Island. The City of Providence, the Rhode Island Foundation, the Rhode Island State Council for the Arts, and the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities now require potential grantees to complete the CDP to be considered for funding.

The RIHS is now in its third year of participation in the CDP and we find it a useful tool not only for grant applications, but also for benchmarking. However, as of the Fall of 2013, the benchmarking tool is greatly limited because of the small number of history and heritage organizations participating. In fact, of the 109 RI organizations that have completed the CDP, it is estimated that the number of History and Humanities organizations is only between 11% and 17% (because of the self-reporting nature of the CDP, they are unable to give an exact number of history organizations).

The failure to complete the CDP has three major implications: (1) the organization cannot apply for funds from at least three of the major funding organizations in RI; (2) there are only a limited number of sites against which to benchmark any organization; (3) statewide and national organizations will have only a small window into the operations of history and heritage organizations in Rhode Island, and those that do report to the CDP are disproportionately large and therefore inaccurately reflect the status and welfare of the organizations within the sector.

Facility Rentals

An additional source of income identified during the survey process was that of facility rentals. Forty-one of the surveyed organizations currently offer facility rentals for weddings and events. Sixty-two organizations do not offer rentals. The remaining nineteen organizations fell under the "Not Applicable" category, due to either having no physical location at all, or having only a small office space that would not support events or meetings.

Audience

Organizations were asked to identify the age groups that they feel make up the majority of their audience. Their responses (out of 122):

All ages - (61)
Ages 0-11 - (4)
Ages 12-19 - (4)
Ages 20-30 - (6)
Ages 31-50 - (15)
Over age 50 - (12)
Unsure - (12)

Of the surveyed organizations, 55 added that they would like to reach a younger audience than they are currently reaching. Those organizations who serve ages 31-50 are typically geared toward families; thus, adults between 31-50 are bringing their children to these sites. Also, those who primarily serve teenagers are organizations that see a high percentage of high-school groups.

Outside of age, the survey looked at the geographic area from which visitors were coming. 38 organizations replied that the majority of their visitors are tourists from outside of the state; 68 replied that the majority of their visitors were coming from within the state of Rhode Island. Sixteen of the surveyed organizations were unsure, or did not track this kind of information.

Public Interface and Outreach

Organizations were asked what methods they use regularly to interface with their users. The question was multiple choice, and frequently organizations employ a combination of interactions (out of 122):

Online - 110
On-site - 114
Off-site - 27
Marketing (e.g. formal print promotional materials like brochures or ads in newspapers) - 48

What brings an audience to the site?

Ninety-nine of the surveyed organizations responded to the question of what draws an audience to the site. This was an open-ended question, and the answers fell into the following categories:

Interest in history - 32
Interest in site-specific subject matter (architecture, maritime history, etc.) - 20
Programs offered - 19
Marketing, social media - 12
Genealogical research - 10
Curiosity - 3

New Audiences to be Served

Nearly all of the surveyed organizations want to reach new audiences. In some instances, organizations felt that they were reaching broad populations, but would like to bring in more visitors. In other instances, organizations identified specific populations that they would like to serve more efficiently. The themes that emerged were (out of 122):

Younger population - 55
Local community - 25
More diverse (culturally & economically) - 17
None - happy with current audience - 12

Board of Directors and Community

Of the 119 organizations that have a board of directors, 50 feel that their board accurately represents the community that they serve. Sixty-nine feel that their board could more accurately reflect their community.

Accessibility

Organizations with physical locations were surveyed about their ADA accessibility status. Of the 110 organizations with physical locations, 58 had full accessibility, and 38 had partial accessibility. Eighteen organizations felt that they were not ADA accessible, and 9 were unsure.

For those organizations with partial or no accessibility, 39 identified their location within a historic building as the barrier to access. In many cases, steep staircases in particular were an issue; the first floor would be accessible, while second and third floors would not be.

Types of Programs

Of the 122 organizations surveyed, 83 offer some form of public programming. Organizations indicated all of the types of programming that they offer:

Exhibitions - 61
Lectures and readings - 69
Productions and performances - 79
Tours - 55
Programs for children and teens – 57

Educational Programming and Curriculum

Of the 122 surveyed organizations, 62 organizations provide educational programming for elementary, middle, high school, and/or college students. Of those organizations, 41 provide curriculum materials, and of those, 36 develop those curriculum materials themselves in-house.

Environmental Initiatives

Sixty-six of the surveyed organizations currently participate in at least one type of environmental initiative. Those initiatives are:

Recycling - 30
Efficient lighting - 25
Efficient heating - 14
Composting - 3

Collections

Of the 122 organizations surveyed, 111 (90%) describe themselves as having archival collections. This includes virtual organizations whose primary presence is that of their online collections. Those without collections are primarily re-enactment units or heritage groups that may own materials that are used for events or publications, but are not accessible to the public. The survey identified collection item types and subject areas. These questions were intended to be used in the directory, rather than in the white paper, and organizations are able to edit and update these categories on the website to keep them current in the future.

RHODI identified the following collection types:

Archives – Paper-based collections including manuscripts, family trees, blueprints
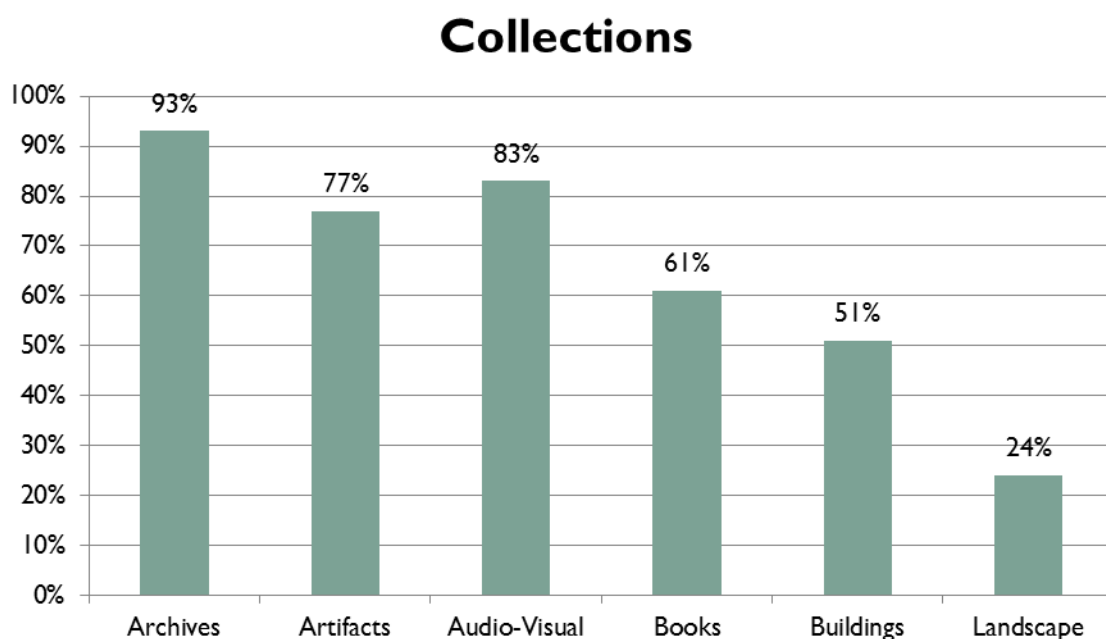
Artifacts – Furniture, housewares, clothing and dress accessories, paintings and artistic renderings

Audio-visual – Photographs and negatives, films, audio recordings

Books – Published materials, whether reference or circulating

Buildings – Historic houses and other buildings, sites, landmarks belonging to a cultural heritage organization

Landscape – Historic arboretums, gardens

Collections

Category	Percentage
Archives	93%
Artifacts	77%
Audio-Visual	83%
Books	61%
Buildings	51%
Landscape	24%

Collections Care and Management

Only 44% of surveyed organizations have catalogued at least 75% of their collection. However, half have a good sense of what they own and where it is located.

Many organizations (66%) were unsure about intellectual control. Yet, understanding rights management is necessary to putting collections on-line or reproducing materials for revenue generating projects such as books or decorative prints.
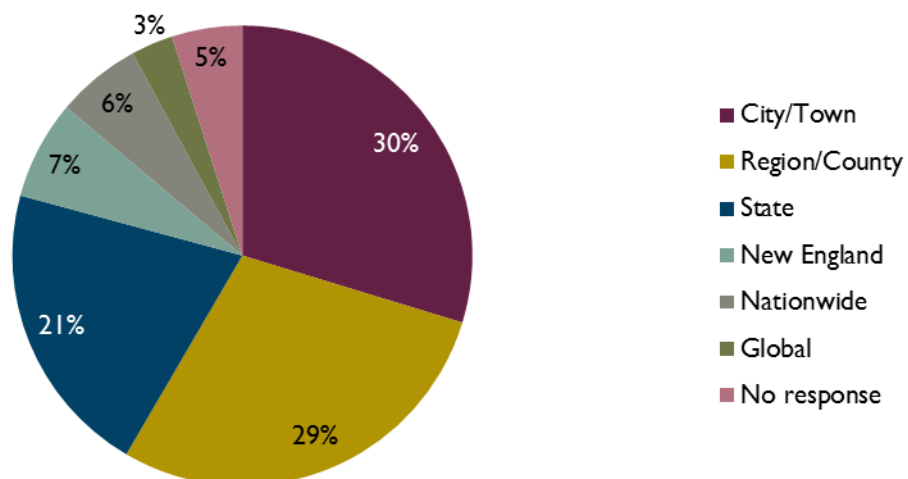
Only 66% of surveyed organizations have climate control.

Geographic Coverage of Collections

City/town - 38
Region/county - 36
State - 27
New England - 2
Nationwide - 8
Global - 4
No response - 7

Organizations were asked to identify the geographic scope of their collections in order to determine whether or not the collections are rooted primarily in their town history or Rhode Island history, or dedicated equally to nationwide or global history. The responses:

Geographic Coverage of Collections

Legend:
- City/Town
- Region/County
- State
- New England
- Nationwide
- Global
- No response

How Organizations Describe Themselves

Organizations were asked to generate five key words that describe their organization. Despite the fact that organizations were not prompted with possible key words, many organizations described themselves in similar terms. This word cloud demonstrates the most frequently used key words (the larger the font size, the greater the frequency that a key word was used).

Section II – Needs and Desires

Institutional Priorities

Participating organizations were asked to voice their main concerns, i.e. their major, overarching apprehensions for the long-term prospects of their organization. Since the question was posed in an unprompted, open-ended manner, the responses are a relatively accurate measure of the "big issues" facing the history and heritage sector as seen from the front line. The RHODI team amalgamated responses into four main areas, based on the use of key words and similarity of concepts.

65% of the 122 respondents cited **audience and visibility**: growing their audience, recruiting members, building a youth audience, finding volunteers, marketing their site/programs, rebranding themselves, changing public perceptions about their organization.

59% are concerned about **governance and policy development**, including strategic planning, collections policies, disaster planning, mission statements and by-laws.

34% fear that **cuts to funding** (both government and private donors) will make grants even harder to obtain in the future.

11% are anxious about their lack of **digital literacy** and not harnessing the potential of current technology.

Wishes

When asked what resources organizations wished they could access, they gave the following responses. Again, the RHODI team amalgamated these responses into four main areas, using key words.

74% of organizations surveyed wished they could obtain more funding for collaborations, marketing/ outreach, and policy development/strategic planning.

54% would like human resources - more paid staff, interns, and volunteers – as well as professional development for current staff.

48% wished for a new building or to expand their current building, more funding to maintain their building, install climate control, or comply with ADA requirements.

32% would like support for technology – creating a database, purchasing digitization equipment, training in digital literacy, or developing online collections and virtual tours.

It is striking to note that none of these unprompted responses related to the direct care of collections or collections cataloging. Yet, recent scholarship in archival studies has indicated that "cataloguing and processing backlogs have long been the bane of the cultural heritage institution, and calls for addressing them have been around almost as long as the backlogs themselves."[1] Indeed, when the RHODI concept was initially discussed with representatives from several of Rhode Island's largest cultural heritage organizations, the universal desire was for a "catalogue of all the collections in Rhode Island." In developing RHODI, the Rhode Island Historical Society was advised and inspired by another program funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania's "Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories" (HCI-PSAR) to uncover hidden archival collections and to determine the collection needs of small, primarily volunteer-run historical organizations in two Pennsylvania counties.

However, based on the survey findings, it appears that worries about collections care and management are being dwarfed by other concerns perceived to be "more urgent," notably:
- Relevance, dwindling attendance and membership
- Care and maintenance of historic buildings
- The notion that digitization is the "magic bullet" that will solve most problems

APPENDIX E: Statewide Initiatives within the Sector

In addition to RHODI, there are currently several networks or collaborative efforts ongoing in Rhode Island. The following have some overlap with RHODI:

Regional Initiatives

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (http://www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/the-corridor-commission.htm) works in partnership with Federal, State and local agencies (including the National Park Service) as well as non-profit and private organizations in the Blackstone Valley, the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners have undertaken a variety of tasks, from creating a system of Visitor Centers and interpretive sites to working with local communities on restoring Main Streets and protecting open spaces.

The Culture Coalition (http://www.culturecoalition.com/) links eight sites in Southern Rhode Island to provide networking opportunities as well as promote artistic and historical events that enhance cultural tourism and education. Its website offers a calendar of events for these sites.

Newportal is a consortium still in the planning stage that will connect the collections of five major cultural heritage organizations in Newport: The Preservation Society of Newport County, the Newport Historical Society, the Newport Restoration Foundation, the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, and the Newport Art Museum.

Type-specific Initiatives

The Historic Sites Coalition (http://www.preserveri.org/hscri), founded in 2007 by Preserve Rhode Island, is a network of fifty-nine stewards of historic sites that encourages cross-promotion, the sharing of resources, and the exchange of ideas to advance the sustainability of Rhode Island's historic structures and unique places. The coalition has undertaken a number of projects, including an email-based HSCRI listserv, business planning, a historic site census, staff retreat, private rentals marketing and a family programs marketing campaign, Rhody Ramble (http://www.rhodyramble.org), supported by the Rhode Island Foundation, which links 25 member sites to develop child and family-friendly events.

HELIN Consortium (http://www.helininc.org), comprised of eleven academic libraries and eleven specialist libraries, this consortium provides shared state-of-the-art library systems and collaboratively-developed collections. It also provides contracting agent services for its member libraries with vendors, including discounted consortium-wide negotiating licensing agreements and pricing for shared hardware, software, databases and electronic resources for member libraries.

State-wide Best Practices Initiatives

Ocean State Libraries Digitization Task Force is developing a uniform digitization model for the state's libraries and assessing digitization practices already in use in Rhode Island to determine what standards/best practices should be applied.

Protecting the Past - RI (http://www.olis.ri.gov/grants/c2c/) is a collaborative project of cultural heritage and emergency management organizations led by the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services to build and sustain alliances for communication and collaboration between the cultural heritage community and emergency management community to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from events that may adversely impact the cultural resources of Rhode Island. The undertaking is funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services as part of its Connecting to Collection: Statewide Planning and Implementation Grant program.

Contact:

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