

User and Usage information on Websites of U.S. State Archives

미국 주립아카이브즈 웹사이트에 나타나 있는 이용자/이용 정보

이 헤 림(Hea Lim Rhee)*

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초 록

과학기술이 발전하면서, 미국 주립기록관들은 그들의 웹사이트를 이용하여 더 많은 정보를 이용자들에게 제공하고 있으며, 멀리 있는 이용자들도 그들의 웹사이트를 이용할 수 있게 되었다. 본 연구는 미국 주립기록관들이 어떻게 그들의 이용자와 이용에 대한 정보를 수집하고 있는지, 그리고 그 수집된 정보를 그들의 공고(advocacy)를 위해 어떻게 그들의 웹사이트에서 사용하는 지를 처음으로 조사하였다. 본 연구를 위하여, 모든 미국 주립기록관들의 웹사이트들을 조사하고, NVivo8 소프트웨어를 이용하여 웹사이트 내용들을 분석하였다. 본 연구 결과는 대부분의 미국 주립기록관들이 그들의 이용자와 이용에 대한 소량의 정보만을 제공하고 있으며, 미국 주립기록관들이 그들의 공고(advocacy)를 위하여 그들의 웹사이트를 좀 더 효과적으로 이용할 필요가 있음을 보여주었다.

ABSTRACT

As technology develops, U.S. state archives are using their websites to provide more and more information to state government agencies and the public, and more remote users are accessing and utilizing these websites. This study is the first to investigate how U.S. state archives collect information on their users and use of their archives and how they employ their websites to publicize these activities and their results for their own advocacy. Data was collected by examining and analyzing websites of all U.S. state archives, and the collected data was analyzed by content analysis and NVivo8 software. This study indicates that the websites of most state archives present little information on their users and usage of their archives and that U.S. state archive websites need to employ their websites for advocacy more effectively.

키워드: 공고, 미국 주립기록관, 이용자, 이용, 웹사이트
advocacy, archival user, archival use, U.S. state archives, website

* 피츠버그대학교 정보과학대학원 문헌정보학과(기록관리학 전공) 박사 후보(hlr8@pitt.edu)
논문접수일자: 2010년 7월 19일 최초심사일자: 2010년 7월 26일 게재확정일자: 2010년 8월 18일
한국문헌정보학회지, 44(3): 103-116, 2010. [DOI:10.4275/KSLIS.2010.44.3.103]

1. Introduction

In the United States, all fifty states and the District of Columbia have their own state archives for public and government use. State archives have the responsibility to preserve and make available state records to protect the property and rights of citizens. Because state archives are funded by taxes, they should publicize their operations and services to justify their budget, refine their institutional missions, and promote their usage. To improve their operations and services, state archives need to understand their users and usage.

Archival researchers have been reporting the necessity of understanding archives users and archives use since the 1980s. However, the reports of the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects conducted in the 1980s claimed that state archives did not understand their users and that their holdings were underutilized(Weber 1984; Dearstyne 1987, 82-83).¹⁾ In addition, “the posture of state archives” toward their users was apparently passive in general(Bridges 1984, 8). William L. Joyce, a consultant to the Projects, warned of a cycle of poverty in the state archives community:

Lack of public understanding and regard leads to underfunding of historical records repositories and underutilization of their holdings. This process has a circular effect in that low use perpetuates low funding which prevents repositories from upgrading the management of their collections which might in turn increase their use(Joyce 1984, 39).

The “cycle of poverty” was also of concern to a national agenda for state government records programs proposed by the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA). This agenda pointed out underutilization of state records and strongly recommended the development of strategies for more effective advocacy and improvement of use. The NAGARA’s agenda predicted that increased use would show the significance of state archives and justify their requests for necessary resources and facilities (NAGARA 1989, 2-4).

Today all state archives have websites that present a lot of information on their institutions

1) Lisa B. Weber edited reports collected in the early stage of the projects, published as the book *Documenting America: Assessing the condition of historical records in the States: Consultant reports presented at the conference of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Assessment and Reporting Grantees, Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-25, 1983*, Weber, Atlanta, Ga.: NASARA in cooperation with NHPRC, 1984.

and their states. They can be good tools for users. Websites of state archives also have digital collections, electronic documents, relevant links, and finding aids or an Online Public Access Catalog(OPAC). In addition, most state archives' websites provide some reference services, such as online reference requests and reproduction and microfilm ordering. Because of the readiness and convenience of information and remote reference services online, the number of remote users accessing the websites of state archives and contacting state archives by e-mail has increased very quickly.

State archives can also use their websites as a tool for advocacy and promotion. State archives can show their efforts to understand their users and use of their collections and to shape their services according to their users' needs. Also, with state governments currently suffering historically tight budgets, state archives need to show that their public funding benefits the public. State archives can use the collected information on users and usage of their archives as evidence to justify their operational budget. Despite the potential power of state archive websites for advocacy and outreach, there is no research on how state archives collect information on their users and usage and how they employ their websites to publicize this process and its results.

This study explores how U.S. state archives collect information on their users and usage in an effort to understand them. It also investigates how websites of state archives present these efforts and how they could be used for state archives' advocacy.

2. Terms

- State Historical Records Advisory Board(SHRAB): A State Historical Records Advisory Board is appointed to each state and plays a chiefly advisory role for historical records planning in its state. Each SHRAB has a close relationship with its state archives in regard to protecting and preserving the state's historical records.
- U.S. state archives: In this paper, U.S. state archives include the state archives of all fifty states and the District of Columbia.
- User and usage information: This term is employed as a broad concept referring to any information related to users and their usage of state archives. This includes information on user types, the number of users, user information needs, and frequency of records use.

3. Research Methodology

From October 23, 2009, through December 28, 2009, the author examined and analyzed the websites of all U.S. state archives listed in CoSA's *Directory of State and Territorial Archives and Records Programs*(Council of State Archives 2009).²⁾ Furthermore, the author visited websites of other government agencies that linked to state archives' websites. These other websites were relevant to the study for two reasons. First, as a government entity, a state archives interacts with other government agencies that influence its roles, functions, practices, and projects. Second, because U.S. state archives are housed within their respective state governments in many different ways, their websites are also housed in many different places, as shown in CoSA's *Directory of State and Territorial Archives and Records Programs*.³⁾ According to the 2007 CoSA report *The State of State Records: A Status Report on State Archives and Records Management Programs in the United States*, a state archives can be categorized 1) as an independent organization, 2) under the secretary of a state, 3) under a historical society, 4) under a state library, 5) under a department of administration, and 6) as "other"(Council of State Archives 2007). In addition, state archives and records management programs are joint in many states and split in others. This variety of state archives produces complicated links between the website of a state archives and the websites of related state agencies. However, several state archives' Web pages were inaccessible because they were under construction, had errors, or required permission to access.

As the author examined websites of state archives, she recorded how each archives collects its user and usage information and where that information is stored on those websites and other websites linked to them. The author copied and annotated the content(including text and images) about how the archives collect their user and usage information, and she downloaded relevant electronic documents. This work resulted in a 500-page Microsoft Word file.

For data analysis, the author employed NVivo8 qualitative data analysis software. She divided the single 500-page document into 51 files(one for each state archives), imported the files into NVivo8, and made them case files. Key concepts extracted from the collected data were represented as free nodes and tree nodes in a coding structure. The author did coding with imported files, and the coding structure continuously evolved as data analysis progressed.

2) Note that some state archives have changed their website address since this study was conducted.

3) <<http://www.statearchivists.org/states.htm>>.

4. Literature Review

There is little literature describing users, usage, and the collection of user and usage information in state archives. Almost all of the existing literature was written based on state archivists' impressionistic experiences. Nationwide surveys investigating state archives since the 1960s do indicate that, as time passes, more state archives keep statistics about users and use — at least who uses their archives and their methods of access (e.g., visit, telephone, fax, and e-mail). For example, Ernst Posner's survey reports that few state archives categorized types of users in the 1960s (Posner 1964, 333). The reports of the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects in the 1980s show that a number of state archives kept annual reference service statistics on numbers of users. However, most of those archives did not "interpret the numbers or attempt to draw conclusions about or report on their significance" (Dearstyne 1987, 78-79). Those reports also indicate that some state archives conducted user surveys (Bridges 1984, 8). The FY2004 CoSA survey to all state archives indicates that almost all state archives collected information on the types of their users and use of their holdings and kept statistics on the numbers of users and uses (Council of State Archives 2007b).

The reports of the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects and the FY2004 CoSA survey show a tendency toward slight diversification of user groups. Although those reports show genealogists as a dominant user group, they report genealogist usage in different proportions. While the findings of the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects report that the percentage of genealogists is far greater than the total percentage of the other user groups combined, the FY2004 CoSA survey reports that the same proportion does not apply in many states (Bridges 1984, 8; Council of State Archives 2007b).

Even though the percentage of genealogists among all users has decreased in the 2000s compared to the 1980s, the FY2004 CoSA survey indicates that state archives' holdings are still used for limited purposes by limited user groups. It shows that the primary use of state archives' holdings is for genealogy in most states, for state government administration in five states, for property and legal research in four states, and equally for genealogy and property and legal research in one state. Genealogy and state government administration together make up a large percentage of use in each state.⁴⁾ This fact implies that state archives need to be

4) See Council of State Archives, *Profiles of state archives and records management programs*. This profile is a supplement of the CoSA's 2007 report, Council of State Archives, 2007. *The state of state records: A status report on state archives and records management programs in the United States*, Iowa City,

more active in courting more diverse user groups who might benefit from utilizing their archives.

The 2007 CoSA report describes changing user access to and use of records in state archives by demonstrating and comparing statistical data collected in its 1994, 2004, and 2006 surveys (Council of State Archivists 2007a).⁵⁾ They indicate that most surveyed state archives collect the number of users and uses. However, the 2007 CoSA report does not more specifically describe the collected information or how it is collected. Moreover, it is not known whether or not state archives analyze the collected information.

Using the results of the 2007 CoSA report, CoSA's Blue Ribbon Panel gave useful, if not thorough, recommendations for improving user studies in state archives(Council of State Archivists, Blue Ribbon Panel 2007).⁶⁾ The panel recommended developing methods to collect information about in-person users, Web users, and potential users: collecting reliable statistics on website usage and investigating qualitatively the types of Web users and their reasons for using the websites; and investigating user satisfaction via user surveys, focus groups, and marketing plans. It is noteworthy that the panel recommended the examination of how to serve specific groups better("K - 12 students and their teachers," "professional historians," "faculty and students in other scholarly disciplines," and "other nonscholarly special interest communities who care about history") to improve the user base of state archives(Council of State Archivists, Blue Ribbon Panel 2007, 8-9). This seems to emphasize the need for state archives to exercise proactively their responsibility to serve users other than government officials.

The changing access tools to and use of state archives has stimulated new research topics and methods for investigating state archives' users and usage. For example, a few state archives started collecting information about their own website usage. According to the 2007 CoSA report, fewer than half of the archives surveyed retain statistics on their website usage(CoSA

Iowa: Council of State Archivists.

- 5) *The State of State Records* report contains several tables related to this issue, including "numbers of requests received for information about or to use archival records in reporting period, FY 2006," "number of requests for information about and/or access to archival holdings received by state archives through 'person-to-person' contact, i.e., surface mail, e-mail, telephone, in-person, during 1994, 2004, and 2006," "comparison of website activity for states reporting in both FY2004 and FY2006," and "estimates of the percentage of total usage of government records holdings, by purpose, FY2004."
- 6) The CoSA convened a Blue Ribbon Panel to "consider the results of its surveys of state archives and records management programs and make recommendations on how to improve the management, preservation, and use of state government records." It selected the panel members to "represent the primary constituents and partners of state archives and records management programs nationwide." Council of State Archivists, Blue Ribbon Panel, 2007, *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel: A supplement to the state of state records: A status report on state archives and records management programs in the United States*, Iowa City, Iowa: Council of State Archivists, 1.

2007a, 34). The case of the Oregon State Archives highlights the necessity and the benefit of investigating archives' website usage. By analyzing its website logs, the archives identified the purposes of their online users, who got the majority of their archival information from the website, and their preferred forms of information sources. Moreover, this data on increased use was employed to request resources (Turnbaugh 1997, 189). As can be seen in this literature review, outside of CoSA's surveys — and even they do not provide much detail — there is little literature describing how state archives collect their user and usage information and utilize their websites.

5. Findings

State archives' websites indicate that state archives generally collect user and usage information by one or more of three main approaches: reference services, Web-based tools, and user studies. They also indicate that State Historical Records Advisory Boards (SHRABs) investigate historical records users and hold public meetings by themselves or with their state archives.

5.1 Collecting User and Usage Information through Reference Services

The websites of almost all state archives indicate directly or indirectly that their state archives collect user and usage information through reference service forms (e.g., registration forms, reference research forms, duplication order forms, and call slips). By employing those forms, many state archives can collect and record basic user and usage information including names and contact information (e.g., address and telephone number), the number of users, the number of records used, the number of reference requests, the number of served reference questions, and the number of rolls of microfilm used. The numbers on users and uses are kept as statistics.

The websites of a few state archives (e.g., Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington) indicate that their state archives analyze collected data on users and uses beyond just raw numbers. For instance, the online document *Michigan Historical Center 2004 Annual Report* indicates that the Archives of Michigan collects and analyzes information on users and use with respect to reference services (Michigan Historical Center 2005). This document briefly reports who users were, how many users were served on-site or off-site, and what records they used and why. However, little is written about how this archives gained that information.

The “Usage levels and patterns” Web page of the Oregon State Archives indicates that this archives analyzes uses and use patterns via statistics on research requests, including walk-in, mail, telephone, and e-mail requests. It also presents a chart showing “the growth in the total annual number of research requests from 1990 to 2000” and explains the factors that caused the growth.⁷⁾

The collection of some user and usage information by many state archives is indicated by policies and rules for using archives or reading room guidelines(e.g., Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Oklahoma), newsletters of state archives(e.g., *The Archivists’ Bulldog: Newsletter of the Maryland State Archives*), and annual reports of state archives and SHRABs(e.g., Arizona, Kentucky, and Vermont). In particular, some state archives employ the numbers of users, uses, and requests as “performance indicators,” particularly service performance, in their annual reports. For instance, online annual reports from 2004 to 2009 indicate that the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration(VSARA) observed and analyzed requests and uses in order to measure its performance.⁸⁾

Websites of most state archives do not indicate how or if state archives apply user and usage information collected through reference services to their archival programs and practices. The VSARA is the exception. The online annual report *The Vermont State Archives Annual Report January 30, 2004* describes how Howard Dean’s presidential campaign influenced the VSARA.⁹⁾ The next year’s annual report *Vermont Secretary of State Office of Vermont State Archives: Second Annual Report on Archival Records Management* used this evidence to demonstrate an increase in use and a lack of research space in the state archives facility.¹⁰⁾

5.2 Collecting User and Usage Information through Web-based Tools

The websites of many state archives(e.g., Arizona, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Washington) show that their archives collect and keep some user and usage information through Web-based tools. The information includes the number of hits on a state archives’ website, uses of state digital archives, and users’ comments. For instance, the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives’(KDLA) 2004-2005 and 2006-2007 annual reports indicate that the KDLA

7) <<http://www.sos.state.or.us/archives/tour/storageusage.html>>.

8) <<http://vermont-archives.org/publications/annual/index.htm>>.

9) <<http://vermont-archives.org/publications/annual/pdf/1stAnnualReport.pdf>>.

10) <<http://vermont-archives.org/publications/annual/pdf/2ndAnnualReport.pdf>>.

investigated its website usage. Those annual reports present the number of KDLA's homepage hits.¹¹⁾ The online document *KDLA's 2004-2005 Annual Report* presents the most often used online resources. In South Carolina, the "Comments" in the *On-line Records Index* Web page links to an Outlook email message sent to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History(SCDAH).¹²⁾

5.3 Collecting User and Usage Information through User Studies

Websites of five state archives(Alabama, Delaware, Maryland, New Mexico, and South Carolina) indicate that these archives conducted user studies. Those websites provide brief information about the purposes, methods, and/or results of their user studies. The purposes of the user studies mentioned are to develop a future plan for the state archives(Alabama and South Carolina); to assess the services of the state archives(Delaware and New Mexico); to assess a specific online index, to improve the index, and to seek additional funding for the index(South Carolina); and to assess the website of the state archives(Maryland). The SCDAH also conducted user studies to help the South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board(SC SHRAB) develop its new strategic plan.

All five state archives conducting user studies(Alabama, Delaware, Maryland, New Mexico, and South Carolina) employed a paper-based survey and/or a Web-based survey. The SCDAH also conducted a focus group session with its reference room researchers as well as on-site and online surveys of its reference room researchers.

When a state archives conducts its own user studies, the target population is usually all users of just that state archives(as in Maryland, New Mexico, and South Carolina). However, the Alabama Department of Archives and History(ADAH) conducted surveys of the Alabama historical records repositories' users and the repository's staff. The Delaware Public Archives seems to survey only government officials, not the whole group of public users.

On websites of five state archives, the majority of information on user studies is contained in downloadable electronic documents such as publications of state archives(e.g., *Technical Bulletin: The Florida Bureau of Archives and Records Management*),¹³⁾ SHRAB reports(e.g.,

11) <<http://www.kdla.ky.gov/AR05.htm>>; <<http://www.kdla.ky.gov/ar.pdf>>.

12) <<http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/>>.

13) <<http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/barm/techbull/Jan-Mar99.PDF>>.

Plan for Preserving Alabama's Historical Records 2008),¹⁴⁾ and meeting minutes(e.g., *Minutes of the Alabama Historical Records Advisory Board February 21, 2007*).¹⁵⁾ Also, four state archives(Alabama, Delaware, Maryland, and South Carolina) display their online survey forms on their websites. For example, <Figure 1> and <Figure 2> show online surveys of the Maryland State Archives and the Delaware Public Archives, respectively.¹⁶⁾ The online surveys are simple and ask a small number of questions. The Maryland State Archives' online survey <Figure 1> asks users' opinions about the website, and the Delaware Public Archives' online survey <Figure 2> asks about the quality of service of the archives' Government Services Team.



<Figure 1> An online survey on the website of the Maryland State Archives

14) <<http://www.archives.state.al.us/hrb/stratplanfinal.pdf>>.

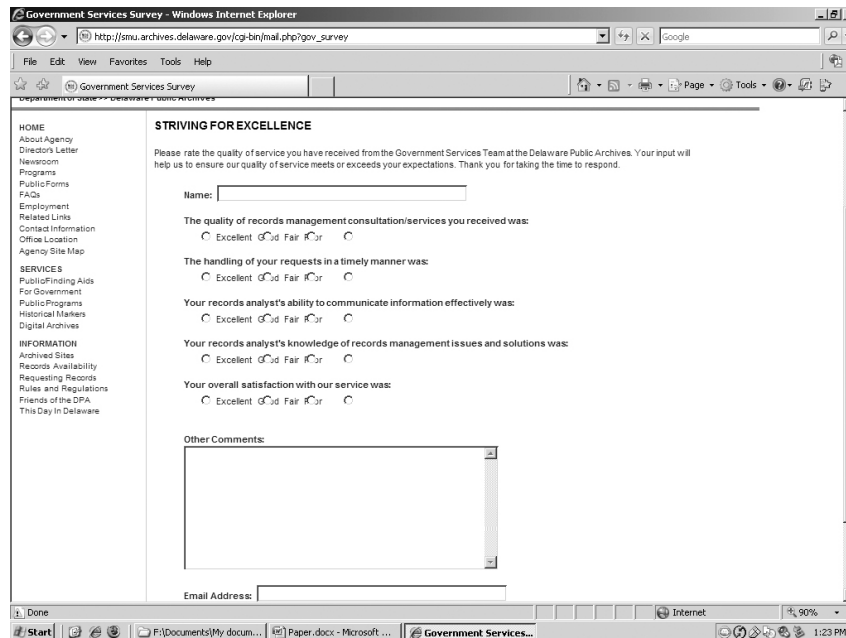
15) <<http://www.archives.state.al.us/hrb/feb07.pdf>>.

16) Source of <Figure 1>: Maryland State Archives, "Maryland State Archives Tell Us What You Think About Our Website!" Web page. [online]. [cited 2010. 07. 08].

<http://census.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/homepage/feedback/cfm/dsp_feedback.cfm>. Source of

<Figure 2>: Delaware Public Archives, "Striving for excellence" Web page. [online]. [cited 2010. 07. 08].

<http://smu.archives.delaware.gov/cgi-bin/mail.php?gov_survey>.



〈Figure 2〉 An online survey on the website of the Delaware Public Archives

Websites of state archives in Alabama, New Mexico, and South Carolina present results of their user studies. For the SC SHRAB's strategic planning project, 1998-2000, the SCDAH staff surveyed reference room patrons in August 1999. The survey results appear on the "Reference Room Patron Survey Results" Web page.¹⁷⁾ To develop the SC SHRAB's strategic plan for 2007-2012, the SCDAH held a focus group session with reference room researchers in March 2006, and it conducted on-site and online surveys with reference room researchers. The "Researchers Focus Group Results, Department of Archives and History, 3/24/06" Web page presents the results of the focus group session.¹⁸⁾ The "Research Room Survey April 2006" and the "Survey of Online Records Index Users 4/07/06 through 5/05/06" Web pages show the results of the surveys.¹⁹⁾ In Alabama, the online document *Plan for Preserving Alabama's Historical Records 2008* provides the results of surveys and a future plan based on the survey results.²⁰⁾ The New Mexico Commission of Public Records' online annual reports, fiscal year

17) 〈<http://www.state.sc.us/scdah/shrab/refroomsrvy.htm>〉.

18) 〈<http://www.state.sc.us/scdah/researchfocus.htm>〉.

19) 〈<http://www.state.sc.us/scdah/onlineindexsurvey.htm>〉.

20) 〈<http://www.archives.state.al.us/hrb/stratplanfinal.pdf>〉.

2005(July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005) and fiscal year 2004(July 1, 2003-June 30, 2004), briefly present results of each year's customer survey.²¹⁾

In some states(Florida, Massachusetts, and New York), the SHRABs investigated historical records users not for a state archives but for the boards themselves. The purposes of the user studies conducted by SHRABs are to assess conditions and find needs in order to develop new strategic plans, to revise current strategic plans, to test the usefulness of a final draft strategic plan, and to prepare for the implementation of a new strategic plan.

5.4 Collecting User and Usage Information through Public Meetings

In addition to user studies investigating historical records users, SHRABs gain citizens' opinions and collaborate with communities by holding public meetings. Websites of a few state archives (e.g., Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York) indicate that their SHRABs held public meetings to create and revise the SHRABs' strategic planning and create awareness of the significance of historical records.²²⁾

6. Conclusion

This study is the first to examine how state archives present information on their activities to collect their user and usage information through reference services, Web-based tools, and user studies. The analysis shows that most state archives' websites give little information on the topic, particularly on how state archives utilize the collected user and usage information. Only a few state archives present even a small portion of the actual user and usage data on their websites; this information is usually reserved for state government agencies and not made available to the public.

21) <http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/pubs/annual_report/annual_report_2004.pdf> ;

<http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/pubs/annual_report/annual_report_2005.pdf>.

22) See Florida Department of State, 2000, "Florida's SHRAB Long Range Plan, Continued." *Technical Bulletin: The Florida Bureau of Archives and Records Management*, 14(1),

<<http://dliis.dos.state.fl.us/barm/techbull/Jan-Mar00.PDF>>; Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board, 2002, *Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board 2002 annual report*,.

<<http://www.idahohistory.net/SHRAB2002annualreport.pdf>>; Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board, [2001], *Preserving the records of Illinois' past for the benefit of the present and the future*, 2001,

<<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/ishrab/stratpln.html>>.

The current websites of most state archives seem to be ineffective for advocacy for two reasons. First, the relationship between a state archives and other government agencies affects how diffusely a state archives' information about collecting user and usage information is distributed across government websites. In most states, this information is not concentrated on the website of a state archives but rather is scattered in websites of related state government agencies. Second, most state archives' websites present user and usage information only in internal documents such as annual reports. They seem to record this material to inform only the staff of their archives and other relevant organizations rather than the public. They keep this information for their own organizational memory and for both internal communication and communication to related organizations.

It is hoped that the results of this study will alert the state archives community to the underuse of a potentially powerful tool for advocacy. State archives need to employ their websites more effectively, in part by showing users how the archives try to meet their needs and improve services through their investigations of archives users and usage. By doing so, state archives can demonstrate the significance of their functions and refine their missions to benefit state governments and the public. Also, better presentation of user and usage investigation could spur the enhancement of the investigatory tools and strategies within the state archives community. Information-sharing between state archives is necessary and useful for the state archives community because they have the same contexts and similar users.

As technology develops, more users will remotely access and contact state archives through their websites, and state archives will have new and more effective tools to collect their user and usage information. Therefore, websites of state archives can be an effective and significant tool for communication between state archives and their users. Future studies should address the nature and amount of information each state archives should provide on its website for public advocacy, accountability, and transparency of its operation.

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