FAHS Survey of Historical Societies
Report on Stage 1 (General)

Introduction

Stage 1 (General) of the Survey was launched on 29 February 2016.

Stage 1 will be followed, during the remainder of 2016 and into 2017, by Stage 2 (Collection Management, including digitisation and accessibility) and Stage 3 (Governance including succession planning, financial management and strategic planning).

The FAHS previously conducted two surveys of Australian historical societies, in 1999 and 2000. The 1999 survey was a simple one-page pilot questionnaire that sought details of societies' memberships, buildings, collections and difficulties, and 116 societies responded. A further survey in 2000 followed up seeking some further detail in those areas but was mainly focused on collections, and 301 responses were received. In this report on the current 2016 survey, results from the previous surveys will be mentioned, where appropriate, under the relevant question in the current survey.

This report will be updated and extended from time to time, as more responses come in, and as the responses are further analysed.

The FAHS is very pleased to see that the overwhelming majority of responders have continued through to the end of the survey, and with the high quality of the information that has been provided.

Some societies responded more than once to the survey. These extra responses were identified and, for each such society, the most complete response was selected, and the others excluded from the analysis and the reporting. There were also a very small number of responses in which only the society name and perhaps only one other item of information was recorded. These were removed because they added nothing useful and they diluted the conclusions. As a result of this exclusion process, 310 different societies remained, each with one response.

Q3 Year established

There were 304 responses to this question, and 6 skips.

Pre-1920	4
1920-29	1
1930-39	6
1940-49	4
1950-59	23
1960-69	59
1970-79	49
1980-89	60
1990-99	48
2000-09	40
2010-16	9

The preponderance of societies established from the 1950s onwards is generally well known, but the sudden drop in societies being established in recent years is unexpected. This is also shown in the median year of establishment which in the Year 2000 survey was 1973, but in the 2016 survey it has only advanced by eight years to 1981 which is half of the 16 years between the two surveys.

Q4 Is society incorporated?

Q4 Is your Society incorporated?
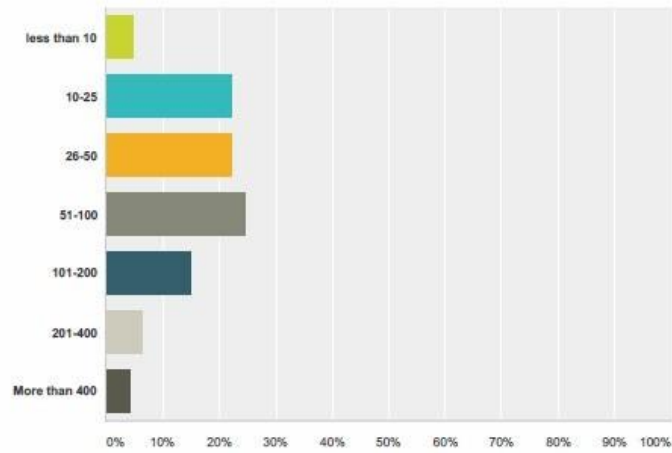
Answered: 305   Skipped: 5
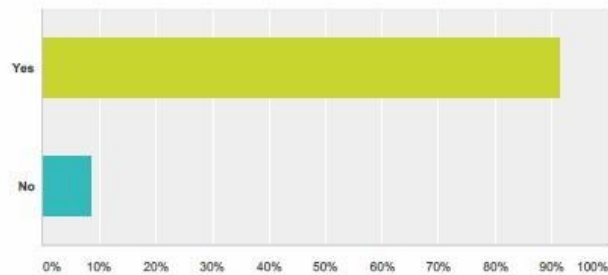
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	91.48%	279
No	8.52%	26
Total		305

Q7 Number of members

Q7 Total number of members (approximate)

Answered: 308   Skipped: 2

Answer Choices	Responses	
less than 10	4.87%	15
10-25	22.40%	69
26-50	22.40%	69
51-100	24.68%	76
101-200	14.94%	46
201-400	6.49%	20
More than 400	4.22%	13
Total		308

In the 1999 survey, 40% of respondents stated that their membership was less than 25, 40% that it was between 25 and 75 and 20% that it was more than 75. In the 2000 survey, the most common size grouping for historical societies was between 25 and 40 members.

Q8 Types of membership

Q8 Types of membership

Answered: 306 Skipped: 4
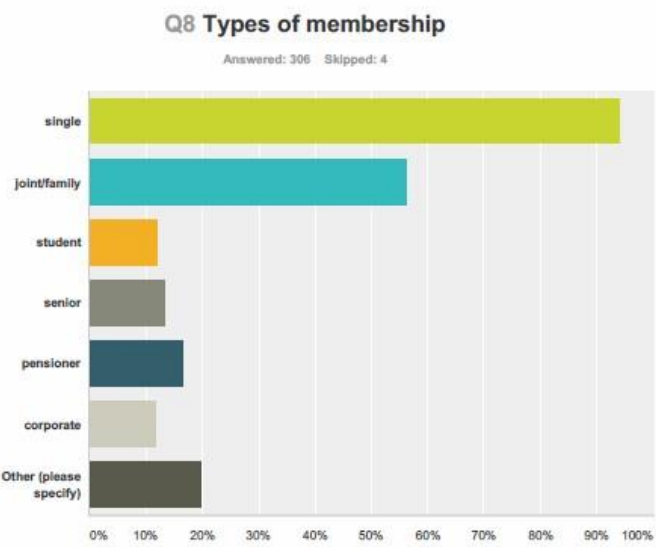
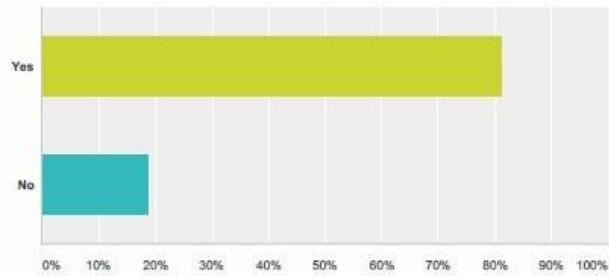| Answer Choices	Responses	
single	94.12%	288
joint/family	56.21%	172
student	12.09%	37
senior	13.40%	41
pensioner	16.67%	51
corporate	11.76%	36
Other (please specify)	19.93%	61
Total Respondents: 306		

61 responders mentioned further categories of membership under "Other", the most frequent of which was

Honorary Life membership (mentioned 19 times) followed by
Newsletter-only (6) and Friend (5). Others included
Financial Life, Sponsor,
Affiliate,
Associate,
Non-Resident,
School,
Junior,
Junior Pioneer,
Family Concession and Not-for-profit.

Q9 Occupy premises?

Q9 Does your society occupy premises?
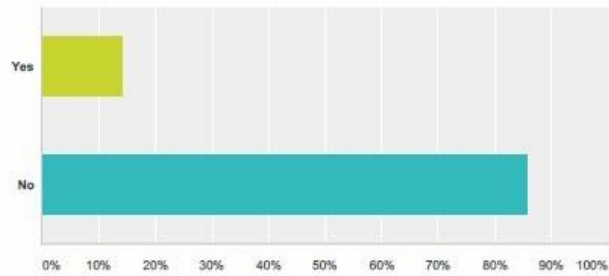
Answered: 307   Skipped: 3

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	81.11%	249
No	18.89%	58
Total		307

The above figures are almost exactly the same as in 1999 (80%) and 2000 (79%).

Q10 Own premises?

Q10 Does your society own its premises?
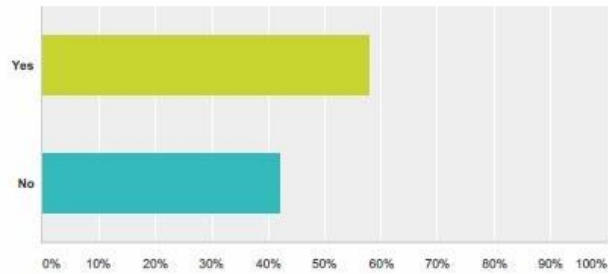
Answered: 303   Skipped: 7

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	14.19%	43
No	85.81%	260
Total		303

Q11 Space available meets current needs?

Q11 Does the space available to you meet your current needs?

Answered: 291   Skipped: 19

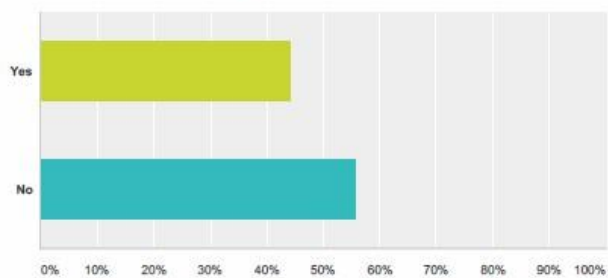| Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	57.73%	168
No	42.27%	123
Total		291

In 2000, when the question asked was "How satisfactory for your needs are the premises?", the answers were classified into

Very Satisfactory (22%), Satisfactory
(36%),
Poor/Unsatisfactory (26.5%) and Unusable
(15%).

Q12 Space available meets planned future needs?

Q12 Will the space available to you meet your planned future needs?

Answered: 287   Skipped: 23

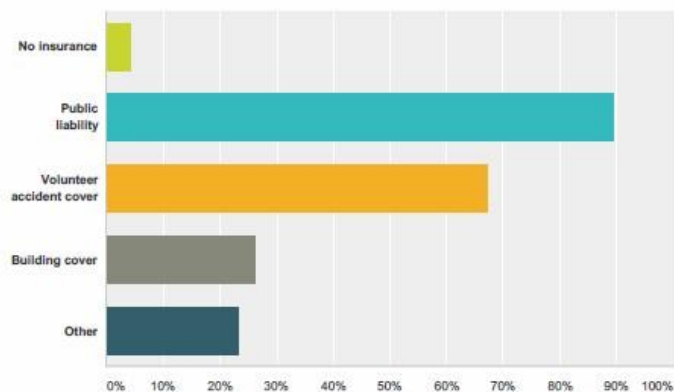| Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	44.25%	127
No	55.75%	160
Total		287

Q13 Comments about premises

161 responses were received to the request for comments regarding premises. Included was a 770-word description of the difficulties that one society has experienced in its attempts to acquire and preserve heritage properties in its area. Analysis of these 161 responses has been deferred for the time being.

Q14 Types of insurance

Q14 Does your society have the following types of insurance (check the ones that apply)

Answered: 305   Skipped: 5

Answer Choices	Responses	
No insurance	4.26%	13
Public liability	89.51%	273
Volunteer accident cover	67.21%	205
Building cover	26.23%	80
Other	23.28%	71
Total Respondents: 305		

Under "Other", 8 indicated that the local Council paid the insurance. 33 responses mentioned Contents insurance.

Q15 Does your society have paid support?

In retrospect, the FAHS has concluded that it designed this question poorly. 9 responders ticked the "Admin support" box only, 28 responders ticked the "Other support (e.g. IT, web maintenance, curator)" box, and 8 responders ticked both boxes. In the open-ended box, which was intended for those who had selected "Other" to indicate the type of support they paid for, 73 societies indicated that they have no paid support. For those using the box for its intended purpose, there were

web maintenance (9),
IT (5), curator
(3), accounting
(2), archivist (2),
lawn mowing (2) cleaner (2)
and one each for research
officer,

history officer, membership
assistant and gardener.
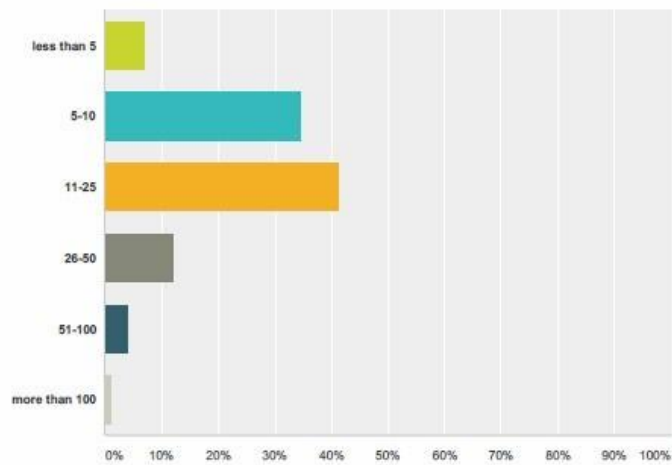
Q16 Person-hours per week of paid support

Only nine quantitative answers were provided to this question. These were

2,
18,
2,
5-10,
5,
1,
35,
1,
2, and 4.

Q17 How many members volunteer?

Q17 **How many of your members volunteer in some way?**

Answered: 305   Skipped: 5

Answer Choices	Responses	
less than 5	6.89%	21
5-10	34.75%	106
11-25	41.31%	126
26-50	12.13%	37
51-100	3.93%	12
more than 100	0.98%	3
Total		305

By analysing, for each responding society, the answer to Q7 (Total number of members – approximate) in conjunction with the answer to Q17 (How many members volunteer in some way?), the percentage of members volunteering can be estimated, with the following results:

Societies with 10-25 members,   62% of members volunteer on average
            25-50   35%
            51-100   22%
            101-200   17%
            201-400   13%
with an average across all of the above groups of 22%.

Societies with more than 400, or less than 10, members were not included in the analysis, but it is expected that the average volunteer rate would exceed 62% in societies of less than 10 members, and be less than 13% in societies of more than 400 members, and that the greater weight of numbers on the over 400 group would drag down the average rate for all historical societies to below 22%.

The inverse relationship between number of members and percentage volunteering was not predicted, but it makes sense.

Q18 Total volunteer person-hours

Q18 Estimated average number of volunteer person-hours per week.This is the SUM of the hours for all volunteers (averaged because it is likely to vary from week to week).Include work of any kind - e.g., producing and distributing newsletters, cataloguing collections, organising and running events, writing grant applications, opening the premises or museum for access, working bees, time spent by councillors on any of their duties.We know that accurate figures for this are unlikely to be available, so please do not spend more than about a minute thinking about it, but just give us your best guess.

Answered: 304   Skipped: 6
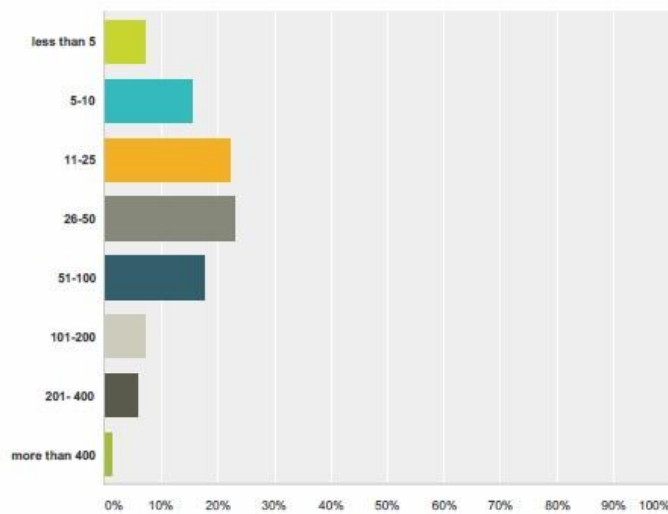
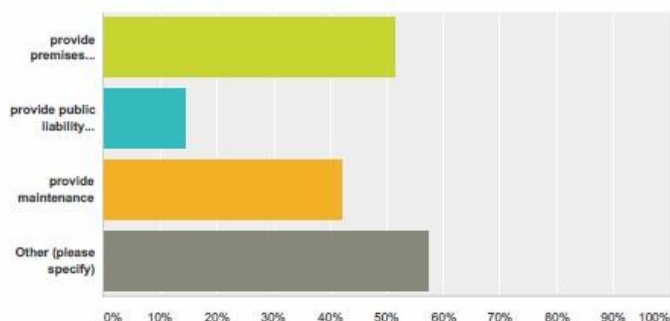| Answer Choices	Responses	
less than 5	7.24%	22
5-10	15.46%	47
11-25	22.04%	67

This information can be used to show the extent to which historical societies are kept functioning with volunteer labour. Assuming average figures mid-way through the above ranges, and assuming "more than 400" to mean exactly 400, the above figures give a total of 15,916.5 hours per week for the 304 societies that responded to this question, which is equivalent to 827,658 hours per year.

Based on there being about 1200 "historical societies" in Australia, the voluntary labour of historical society volunteers across Australia has a value of about $144 million per annum.

Q19 Support from local government authority

Q19 Does your society receive any support of the following kinds from the local government authority? (check the ones that apply)

Answered: 233   Skipped: 77

Answer Choices	Responses	
provide premises rent-free	51.50%	120
provide public liability insurance cover	14.59%	34
provide maintenance	42.06%	98
Other (please specify)	57.51%	134
Total Respondents: 233		

134 responses included some comment in "Other", many of which referred to multiple kinds of support. "Grants" were mentioned 25 times of which

9 were grants for a specific purpose; in 16 cases the grant comment did not mention a purpose. Several said that grants may be given "if we apply".
7 responders mentioned peppercorn or $1-a-year rental and some others reported reduced rental.
5 said that Council rates were waived.
4 said that costs of printing their newsletter were met by Council. One each mentioned
"running costs", "operational
costs" and "operating
allowance".
4 said that they did not have to pay for electricity and 3 for water.
18 said they receive no local government support of any kind and one said "None needed".
In the 2000 survey, the question was asked "How supportive is your local council (authority)?" and 68% of responders indicated "Very supportive" or "Satisfactory support" (that question was not included in the 2016 survey).

## Q20 Support from state or territory government

This open-ended question attracted 143 responses of which 30 were nil, zero, nothing or 0.

One said "None. We used to receive the Federal GVESHO grant for administrative purposes, but this has been discontinued. We are scraping through."

Another referred to the National Library's grants for Significance Assessments.

There were many comments along the lines that state government grants were available if you apply, but with occasional success - e.g. "grants if you are lucky". HistorySA was mentioned 10 times by South Australian societies as a source of grants.

Q21 Types of income received

Q21 Types of income received (in last financial year)

Answered: 300   Skipped: 10
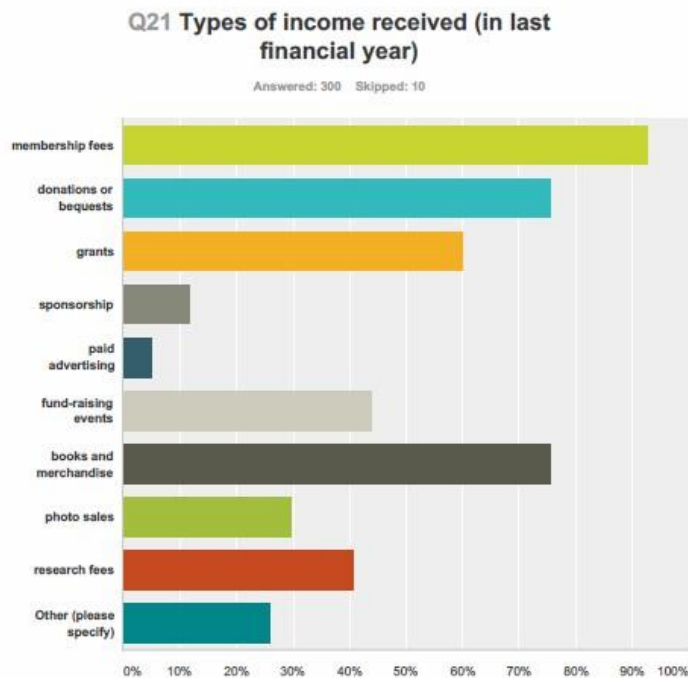
Answer Choices	Responses	
membership fees	92.67%	278
donations or bequests	75.67%	227
grants	60.00%	180
sponsorship	11.67%	35
paid advertising	5.00%	15
fund-raising events	44.00%	132
books and merchandise	75.67%	227
photo sales	29.67%	89
research fees	40.67%	122
Other (please specify)	26.00%	78
Total Respondents: 300		

Under "Other",

26 responses mentioned museum entry fees, 6 mentioned walks, tours or excursions, and 3 the hire of site for events.

The 2000 survey included the question "What sources of income do you have beyond membership?" 30% of respondents had donations (donations and bequests are 76% in 2016), fundraising is up from 32% to 44%, and the number with grants is up from 53% to 60%.

Although the number collecting entry fees appears to be down from 39% to 9%, this number must be treated with caution as this was not offered as a box to be ticked in 2016 (although with hindsight it should have been).

Q22 Types of items in collection

Q22 **Please indicate which of the following are held by your society. If none, please check the top box.**

Answered: 291   Skipped: 19
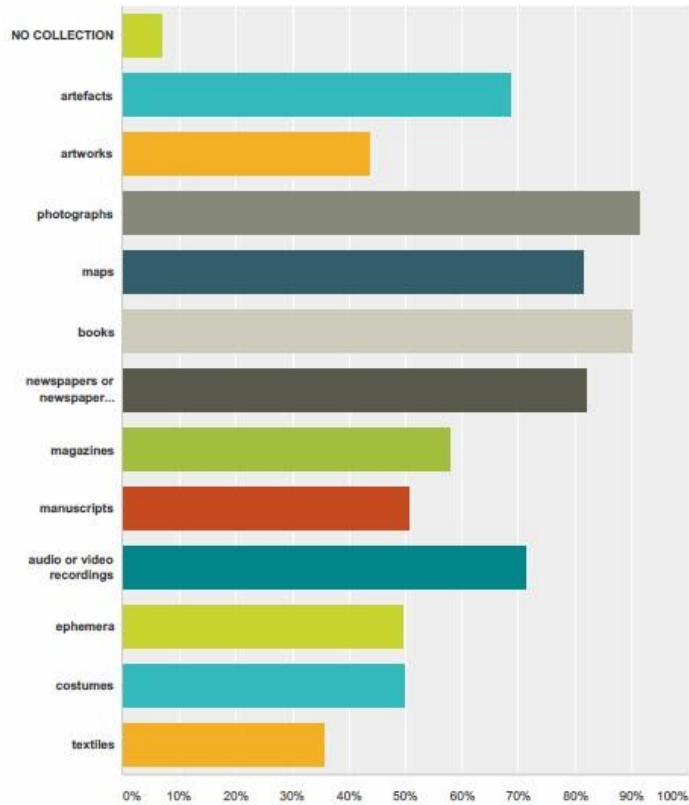
Answer Choices	Responses	
NO COLLECTION	6.87%	20
artefacts	68.38%	199
artworks	43.64%	127
photographs	91.41%	266
maps	81.44%	237

Between 2000 and 2016, the percentage of societies

with manuscripts has increased from 35% to 51%, with books from 66% to 90%, and with photographs from 75% to 91%.

Q23 Have museum?

Q23 **Does your society have a museum?**

Answered: 279   Skipped: 31
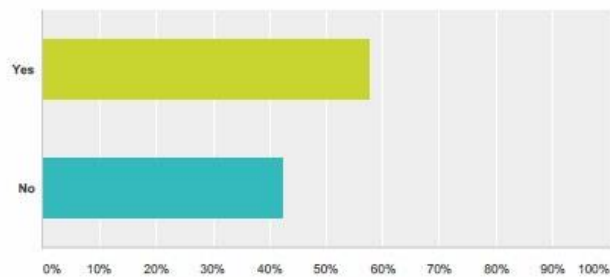
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	57.71%	161
No	42.29%	118
Total		279

In 2000, in response to the question "Do you have a museum or public archive area?", 72% of respondents answered Yes and 28% No, but the questions in 2000 and 2016 are not equivalent.

Q24 How often is museum open?

All of the respondents who answered Yes to having a museum also answered this question, which revealed a huge range of opening times, from "daily" to "by appointment only". Many have a regular opening schedule combined with the ability to open on request.

The question did not ask for further comment, but one replied: "3 half days per week - ie 12 hours per week. This is completely inadequate for the level of patronage and research enquiries."

Q25 Is there a catalogue of your collection?

Q25 **Is there a catalogue of your collection?**

Answered: 270   Skipped: 40
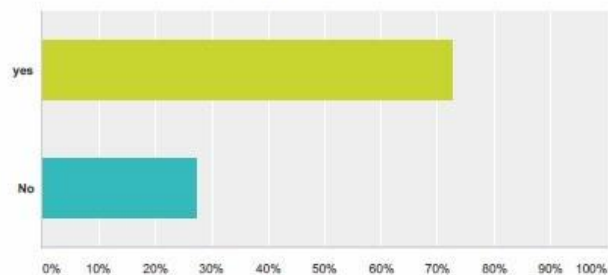
Answer Choices	Responses	
yes	72.59%	196
No	27.41%	74
Total		270

In the 2000 survey,

80% of societies said that their collection was fully or partially catalogued and 20% said they had no catalogue.
Sixteen years later, in 2016,
73% are saying that their collection is catalogued and 27% are
saying their collection is not catalogued.
That is, between 2000 and 2016, the proportion of societies saying that they have no catalog has increased from 20% to 27%.

Q26 Comments about catalogue

170 societies left comments in this open-ended box.

Of the 74 societies who in answer to Q25 said they had no catalogue,

6 said that they had made some kind of a start to it,
3 said they had a register or list, one said they actually did have a card catalogue
(but very out of date) and one said they would need expertise to do anything.
146 societies who replied Yes to Q25 also left comments here. Of these, 91 expressed some kind of dissatisfaction with the situation in regard to their catalogue. The general picture is one of a laborious, slow, constant struggle to catch up with the work that needs to be done - the phrase "work-in-progress" was mentioned frequently. Many societies noted that their catalogue is not complete and that parts of their collection are yet to be included. Some say that the work is too difficult for volunteers to perform, and others said that the work cannot be done until funds are found to enable professionals to be engaged for the purpose.

While making their comments, some societies identified which software they are using, although we did not ask for that here (it was asked in Q31). The answers in Q31 are more complete.

The numbers shown in answer to this question (Q26) are

Mosaic (21),
InMagic DB/TextWorks (9),
Victorian Collections (4),
Excel (3),
Access (2), Spydus
(1), e-Hive (1),
LibraryThing (1),
Bookcollectorz (1) and
Monash University's Digital Dilemmas (1).
One society said that, for its catalogue, it uses a database "designed for our particular use and needs".

One society wrote as follows - (submitted in upper case, which we have retained) :

WE DON'T LIKE THE SOFTWARE OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND WOULD LIKE TO KNOW OF A USER-FRIENDLY CATALOGUING SOFTWARE THAT OUR VOLUNTEERS CAN USE .

The FAHS has been aware of this need for some time and has been looking for a solution. An extensive study of collection management software has been undertaken in conjunction with the RHSV. The RHSV is on the point of announcing eHive as its recommendation and has acquired eHive

software for a trial period. FAHS will follow with its recommendation as soon as possible after receiving the results of the stage two survey on Collection Management in the next few weeks.

Q27 Does your society have a website?

Q27 Does your society have a website?

Answered: 292   Skipped: 18
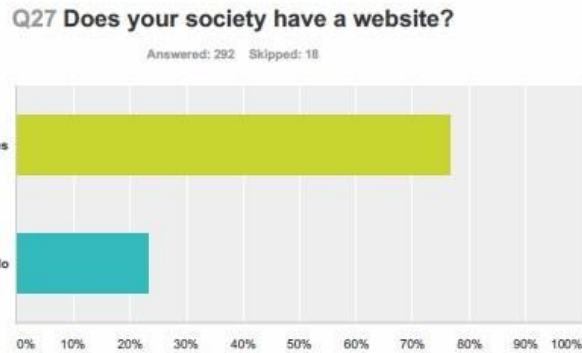
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	76.71%	224
No	23.29%	68
Total		292

In Survey 2000, the question "Do you have a website or a shared website?" was asked. Although 301 societies responded to the survey, less than five answered this question.

That is, from virtually none to 76% in 16 years.

Q29 Use of social media

Q29 Your society's use of social media

Answered: 188   Skipped: 122
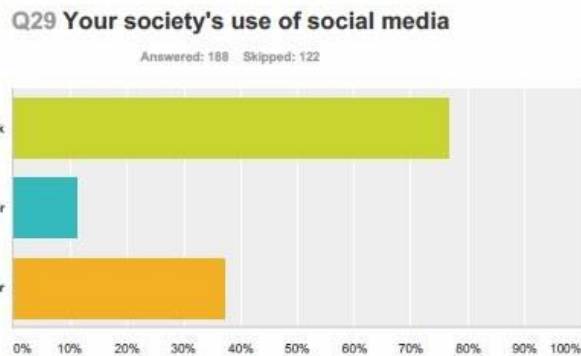
Answer Choices	Responses	
Facebook	76.60%	144
Twitter	11.17%	21
Other	37.23%	70
Total Respondents: 188		

18 societies used the "Other" box to tell us that they do not use social media, and in three of those cases it was because they don't have have anyone to maintain it. Mention was made in "Other" of the following:
Instagram (5)
Pinterest (4)

Flickr (4) blog
(3)
Google+ (2)
LinkedIn (1)
Email (6)
SMS (1)
"individual members access Shire's social media" link
to town's website community newsletter
"various history sites through historian"
local newspaper (5)
TripAdvisor izi.travel
distributed newsletter Yahoo Groups
local community FM radio station
ABC radio
LibraryThing
SoundCloud
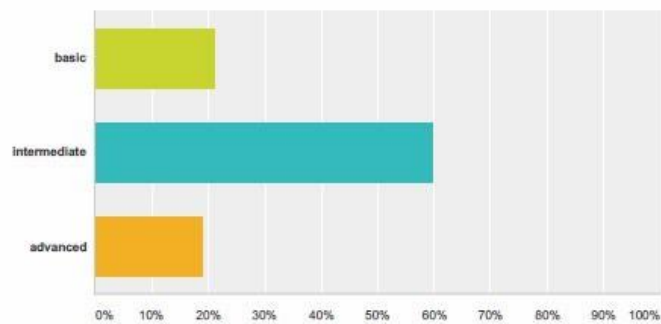Issuu
Visitor info website
"we are going to be put on a local Facebook when we have events and exhibitions"

Q30 Level of computer skills

Q30 Please indicate the level of computer skills in your society

Answered: 291   Skipped: 19

Answer Choices	Responses	
basic	21.31%	62
intermediate	59.79%	174
advanced	18.90%	55
Total		291

Q31 Purposes for using computers. If you can, it would help if you could name the software you use for that purpose

Answered: 293 Skipped: 17

Answer Choices	Responses	
correspondence/minutes of meetings	98.29%	288
keeping accounts	79.52%	233
cataloguing of collection	75.09%	220
producing a newsletter	77.47%	227
producing a magazine or journal	39.25%	115
desktop publishing	49.83%	146
membership details	82.94%	243
email distribution to members	83.62%	245
website maintenance	60.75%	178
digital photo processing	65.53%	192
high resolution scanning	57.34%	168
graphic editing	33.45%	98
ANY OTHERS ?	16.72%	49

NOTE: In answering this questions, many societies indicated that they use more than one piece of software in the various categories. These combinations of software are not noted in this report, but each time a particular software was mentioned, it was counted. This is particularly the case for software used for cataloguing their collection, perhaps because they use different software for different parts of their collection, and/or they started using one package and are migrating to another. Some items of software with very small numbers have been omitted.

Correspondence/minutes of meetings (288).

248 use Word. A further 10 use Word in combination with something else. 3 use Open Office.
28 did not specify what software they use.
One society stated that it does not have formal meetings.
Keeping accounts (233).
Excel 82.
MYOB 51.
QuickBooks 8.
QUICKEN 5.
35 did not state which software.

Cataloguing of collection (220).

Some societies specified their cataloguing software in answer to Q26, but the information given here in Q31 is more complete.

Excel 46.
Mosaic 32.
InMagic DB/TextWorks 24, Access 15.
FileMaker 5.
Victorian Collections 5. eHive
(Vernon) 3.
9 societies indicated that they had constructed their own"software" or "database" for their cataloguing.

27 societies did not identify the software they use.

Producing a newsletter (227).
Word 79.
Publisher 59.
InDesign 9.
MailChimp 3.
28 did not state which software.

Producing a magazine or journal (115).
Word 29.
Publisher 19.
InDesign 9.
10 did not specify software.

Desktop publishing (146).
Publisher 48.
Word 38.
InDesign 8.
20 said yes but did not specify software. One said yes AND no but did not specify software.

Membership details (243).
Excel 121.
Word 45.
Access 18.
28 did not specify software.

Email distribution to members (245).
Outlook 52.
Gmail 15.
Windows Live Mail 6.
MailChimp 5.
Outlook Express 4.
Thunderbird 4.
Hotmail 3.
87 did not specify software.

Website maintenance (178).
The answers to this question were wide-ranging, but not sufficiently focused on one type of software to be able to be summarised easily.

Digital photo processing (192).
Photoshop 43.
Photoshop Elements 3.
69 did not specify software.

Others provided answers that were not specific enough, or missed the mark, such as telling us about their scanner.

High resolution scanning (168).

In retrospect we should perhaps have put more thought into asking this sub-question, as the answers were too wide-ranging to be easily summarised.

Graphic editing (98).

Photoshop, Photoshop Elements,Photo Editor, Publisher, Illustrator, Photo Gallery, The Gimp, Photoscape, InDesign, OmniPage8 Editor, Irfanview, paint.net, Paint Shop Pro, Corel Draw, and Picasa 3 were all mentioned, but none in sufficient numbers to warrant further analysis.

In response to our question "Any others?" the following additional purposes for using computers

were suggested by respondents:

recording and storing oral histories touch screen and interactive exhibits in museum transcribing handwritten minute books producing brochures responding to public queries by email map making audio visual presentations

and the following software:
Flipscanner
Prism
Super Base
Corel Video Studio
Cyberlink
Audacity
ABBYY Fine RFeadr OCR software
DocFetcher

Q32 Society's activities

Q32 Does your society?

Answered: 295   Skipped: 15
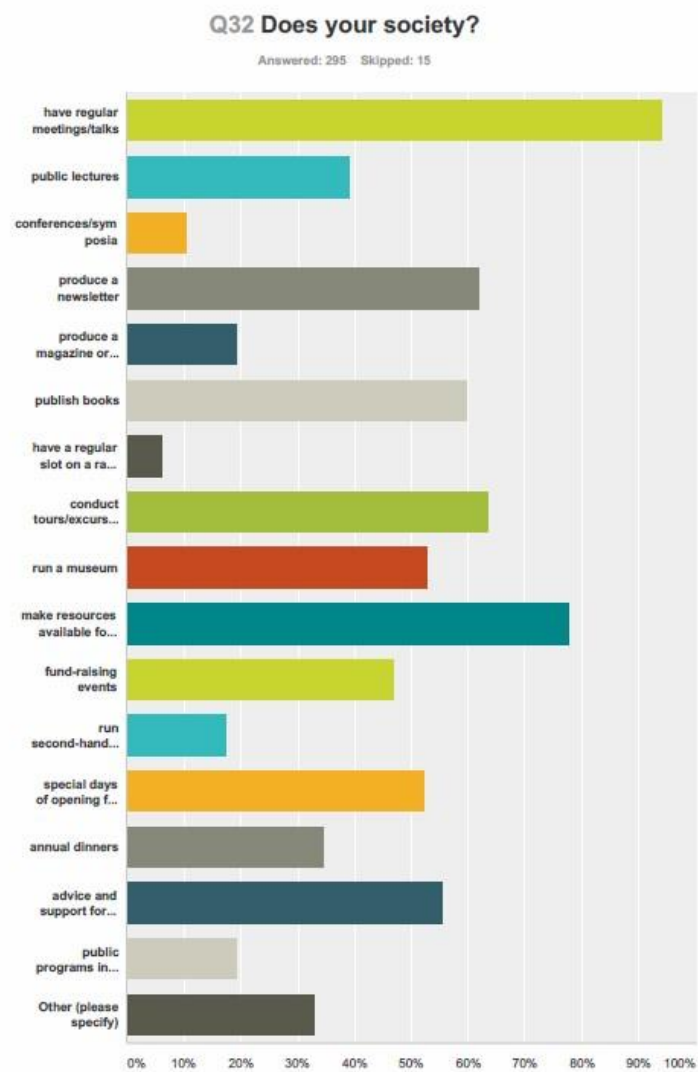
Does your society?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
have regular meetings/talks	93.9%	277
public lectures	39.3%	116
conferences/symposia	10.5%	31
produce a newsletter	62.0%	183
produce a magazine or journal	19.3%	57
publish books	59.7%	176
have a regular slot on a radio station	6.1%	18
conduct tours/excursions	63.4%	187
run a museum	52.9%	156
make resources available for research	77.6%	229
fund-raising events	46.8%	138
run second-hand book sales	17.6%	52
special days of opening for general public	52.2%	154
annual dinners	34.6%	102
advice and support for other community organisations	55.6%	164
public programs in general	19.3%	57
Other (please specify)	32.9%	97
answered question		295
skipped question		15

The "Other" box attracted 97 contributions; the following is an incomplete attempt at categorising them:

(1) schools: school education program; school group functions; provide speakers to schools; travelling exhibition for schools (many under this heading)
(2) provision of research service: we had a box in this question for "make resources available for research" but many societies wished to add activities in this general area
(many under this heading)
(3) participation (including stalls) in local community events
(4) exhibitions and displays, regular or otherwise
(5) contributing articles to local newspaper or newsletter, regular or otherwise(several under this heading) (6) heritage preservation
  (6)   building a local history collection

Q34 What are the major problems faced by your society?

286 societies responded to this open-ended question. Initially, we attempted to identify the main problems by counting certain key words. On this basis, the most common concern was the maintenance of volunteer numbers ("volunteer" occurred 133 times) including attracting younger volunteers and volunteers with skills. Next common was the word "fund" (including funds, funding) (occurred 64 times), then "aging" or "ageing" (occurred 55 times) followed by "space" - mostly the lack thereof (occurred 41 times).

Subsequent reading of each of the responses to this question, confirmed that those subjects were the ones most commonly raised, and that "succession planning" should be included in the top bracket. The references to ageing referred both to the membership generally, and to office-bearers.

By comparison, technical issues were raised less often: "computer" (16), "collection" (24), "catalog" (8), "digit" including digitisation (12).

Various other issues were mentioned, and we will summarise these later, and we will make a selection of illustrative (anonymous) quotes from the numerous responses.

The image displayed above is the result of applying SurveyMonkey's cloud analysis to the text supplied by societies in response to this question (Q34). Below is how SurveyMonkey explain their method. We are not entirely convinced about Survey Monkey's explanation, and we will be looking at alternative ways of analyzing the information received, both in this question and in the Survey generally. We are showing the image because it gives food for thought. The software's analysis of the responses to the following question Q35 is also shown (in the image below) but without any commentary by us at this stage.

We intelligently sift through the full text of all of your open-ended responses, analyzing the frequency with which terms are appearing and also applying linguistic rules such as stemming, clustering, and scoring words and phrases based on uniqueness. In other words, we don't just count

words. We apply intelligent analysis to pull out the most important things that your respondents are telling you.

We display the Most Important Words and Phrases in a word cloud. The sizes of the words and phrases represent the frequency with which those words and phrases appeared in your text responses. The bigger a word is, the more times your respondents used that word. This is a quick way to visually scan your responses to spot trends.

Q35 Anything further you wish to mention?

Q35 Is there anything further you wish to mention relating to the questions answered, or that you may wish to add that might help the FAHS in supporting you with collections, public programs, succession planning, etc. ?

Answered: 121   Skipped: 195

Trying Involvement Software Questions Activities
Vandalism Survey Premises Groups Assessment
Museum Level of Computer
Volunteers Good Idea Society Editor
Succession Planning Larger
Collection Sign Support Communication
Heritage Digitisation Stage Rural Promote
Committee Members