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COMMUNITY ARCHIVES AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE 2.0: WHO IS LEFT OUT OF TRUSTED DIGITAL REPOSITORIES AND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION CONVERSATIONS

Abstract

Purpose: *This article examines whose voices are missing from discussions of trusted digital archiving and argues that the digital divide has shifted from a question of who can access technology to a question of whose records survive. It focuses on community archives and on what professional archivists can do to support them.*

Method/approach: *The article combines a literature review on the digital divide and community archives with a mixed methods survey of professional archivists administered in 2016. Of 152 respondents, 139 had worked with community archives, 77 completed the survey, and respondents described 283 community archives.*

Results: *Processing was the most frequent request from community archives (61%), while preservation was the need professionals ranked highest (70%) yet only the sixth most requested. Nearly half of the community archives collected electronic records, but only 23% had a preservation or sustainability plan, 29% used collection management software and 16% had a grant writer. Three quarters of respondents said resources for supporting community archives were insufficient, and they wanted new resources to be free, accessible, written for a lay audience and focused on sustaining archives over time.*

Conclusions/findings: *Economic, technical and institutional barriers, reinforced by the positionality of those who set standards and funding priorities, exclude small, racialized, Indigenous, working-class, rural and LGBTQ+ communities from trusted digital preservation. Free plain language resources, dedicated funding and partnerships grounded in an ethics of care are proposed as steps toward a more inclusive record.*

Keywords: *digital divide, community archives, trusted digital preservation, ethics of care, professional archivists*

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ARHIVI SKUPNOSTI IN DIGITALNI RAZKORAK 2.0: KDO OSTAJA IZKLJUČEN IZ ZAUPANJA VREDNIH DIGITALNIH REPOZITORIJEV IN RAZPRAV O OHRANJANJU ZGODOVINSKE DEDIŠČINE

Izvleček

Namen: *Članek proučuje, čigavi glasovi so prezrti v razpravah o zaupanja vrednem digitalnem arhiviranju, in zagovarja stališče, da se je digitalni razkorak od vprašanja dostopa do tehnologije premaknil k vprašanju, čigavo gradivo se ohrani. Osredotoča se na arhive skupnosti in možnosti, kako jih lahko podprejo poklicni arhivisti.*

Metoda/pristop: *Članek združuje pregled literature o digitalnem razkoraku in arhivih skupnosti z anketo med poklicnimi arhivisti, izvedeno leta 2016, ki je vključevala kvantitativne in kvalitativne metode. Od 152 sodelujočih jih je 139 že sodelovalo z arhivi skupnosti, 77 jih je anketo izpolnilo v celoti, skupaj pa so opisali 283 arhivov skupnosti.*

Rezultati: *Arhivi skupnosti so najpogosteje zaprosili za pomoč pri strokovni obdelavi gradiva (61 %). Poklicni arhivisti so kot najpomembnejšo potrebo prepoznali ohranjanje gradiva (70 %), vendar je bilo to šele na šestem mestu med oblikami pomoči, za katere so zaprosili arhivi skupnosti. Skoraj polovica arhivov skupnosti je zbirala gradivo v elektronski obliki, vendar jih je le 23 % imelo načrt za ohranjanje gradiva ali dolgoročno vzdržnost delovanja, 29 % jih je uporabljalo programsko opremo za upravljanje zbirk, 16 % pa jih je imelo osebo za pripravo prijav na razpise za pridobivanje sredstev. Tri četrtine anketirancev so ocenile, da so viri za podporo arhivom skupnosti nezadostni. Želeli so si novih virov, ki bi bili brezplačni, dostopni, napisani za nestrokovno javnost in usmerjeni v dolgoročno delovanje arhivov.*

Sklepi/ugotovitve: *Ekonomske, tehnične in institucionalne ovire, ki jih dodatno utrjuje družbeni in institucionalni položaj tistih, ki določajo standarde in prednostne naloge financiranja. Iz zaupanja vrednega digitalnega ohranjanja izključujejo majhne, rasizirane, staroselske, delavske in podeželske skupnosti ter skupnosti LGBTQ+. Kot korake k ohranjanju arhivskega gradiva, ki bi celoviteje odražalo raznolikost družbe, članek predlaga brezplačna gradiva v*

jasnem in razumljivem jeziku, namenska finančna sredstva ter partnerstva, utemeljena na etiki skrbi.

Ključne besede: *digitalni razkorak, arhivi skupnosti, zaupanja vredno digitalno ohranjanje, etika skrbi, poklicni arhivisti*

ARCHIVI COMUNITARI E IL DIVARIO DIGITALE 2.0: CHI VIENE ESCLUSO DAI DEPOSITI DIGITALI AFFIDABILI E DAL DIBATTITO SULLA CONSERVAZIONE STORICA

Abstract

Scopo: *Questo articolo esamina quali voci manchino nelle discussioni sull'archiviazione digitale affidabile e sostiene che il divario digitale si sia spostato da una questione di chi possa accedere alla tecnologia a una questione di quali documenti sopravvivano. Si concentra sugli archivi comunitari e su ciò che gli archivisti professionisti possono fare per sostenerli.*

Metodo/approccio: *L'articolo combina una rassegna della letteratura sul divario digitale e sugli archivi comunitari con un'indagine condotta nel 2016 utilizzando metodi misti tra archivisti professionisti. Dei 152 intervistati, 139 avevano lavorato con archivi comunitari, 77 hanno completato il questionario e gli intervistati hanno descritto 283 archivi comunitari.*

Risultati: *l'elaborazione è stata la richiesta più frequente da parte degli archivi comunitari (61%), mentre la conservazione è stata l'esigenza che i professionisti hanno classificato al primo posto (70%), pur essendo solo al sesto posto tra le richieste più frequenti. Quasi la metà degli archivi comunitari raccoglieva documenti elettronici, ma solo il 23% disponeva di un piano di conservazione o di sostenibilità, il 29% utilizzava un software di gestione delle collezioni e il 16% si avvaleva di un responsabile per la redazione delle domande di sovvenzione. Tre quarti degli intervistati hanno affermato che le risorse a sostegno degli archivi comunitari erano insufficienti e hanno espresso il desiderio che le nuove risorse fossero gratuite, accessibili, redatte per un pubblico non specializzato e incentrate sulla sostenibilità degli archivi nel tempo.*

Conclusioni/risultati: *Barriere economiche, tecniche e istituzionali, rafforzate dalla posizione di chi stabilisce gli standard e le priorità di finanziamento, escludono le comunità piccole, razzializzate, indigene, della classe operaia, rurali e LGBTQ+ da una conservazione digitale affidabile. Risorse gratuite in linguaggio semplice, finanziamenti dedicati e partnership fondate su un'etica della cura sono proposti come passi verso una documentazione più inclusiva.*

Parole chiave: *divario digitale, archivi comunitari, conservazione digitale affidabile, etica della cura, archivisti professionisti*

1 INTRODUCTION

Professional archivists are often approached by community members who ask, in effect, "Our group has an archive, or would like to start one; can you help?" As government websites vanish, historical documents face digital decay and institutional memory disappears with each server migration, the answer to that question has never mattered more. Yet the discourse on trusted digital archiving remains dominated by well-funded institutions, while entire communities and their histories slip through the digital cracks. The digital divide, once focused on access to technology, has become a systematic exclusion from the infrastructure that determines whose stories survive (Van Dijk, 2020). If Digital Divide 1.0 was about who could get online, Digital Divide 2.0 is about whose lives, once online, are remembered and whose disappear.

This article examines the voices missing from these conversations and the economic, technological and institutional barriers that create a hierarchy of historical importance. It takes community archives as its focus and presents, for the first time, the results of a 2016 survey of professional archivists who work with them, originally designed by the author with Sonia Yaco and Kris Bronstad (Survey, 2016–22). Professional and community archives often work in parallel universes: their practices intersect, but their resources, networks and priorities rarely meet. The article also revisits the author's early work on digital library development, which argued that librarians could help bridge the digital divide, and her more recent experience of long-term, cross-professional collaboration in digital humanities.

2 THE TRADITIONAL DIGITAL DIVIDE REIMAGINED

The digital divide concept, first articulated in the 1990s, focused on disparities in access to computers and the internet (Norris, 2001). From the Communications Act of 1934 to the National Information Infrastructure initiative of 1994, United States policy encouraged the development of communication technology, supporting global information sharing and collaborations that improved digital services and collections (Library of Congress, 2001). By 2000, the U.S. Department of Commerce described the divide as "one of America's leading economic and civil rights issues" (Goldsborough, 2000, 46).

Libraries responded by reimagining their educational role. Resource-based learning held that lifelong learners "must be able to access, evaluate, organize, and present information from all the real-world sources existing in today's information society" (Breivik, 1998, 25), and it made collaboration between faculty and librarians essential (Breivik, 1998, 30). Saunders (1993) placed the emerging virtual library within librarianship's purpose of bringing people and recorded knowledge together, and anticipated strategies later adopted by digital libraries, including shared resources, collaborative projects and campus-wide infrastructure. These frameworks, however, assumed an institutional host. How communities without such hosts would preserve their own digital records was rarely asked.

In 2026 the divide operates on multiple levels. Basic access has improved dramatically, but meaningful participation in trusted digital archiving requires technical expertise, financial resources and institutional knowledge that remain concentrated among privileged groups (Hargittai, 2002). International efforts such as InterPARES Trust have developed standards that archival institutions can adopt across cultures and contexts (InterPARES Trust, 2016), yet they also expose the gap between international standard setting and grassroots practice.

3 COMMUNITY ARCHIVES AND THE ARCHIVAL PROFESSION

Community archives engage in "the (often) grassroots activities of creating, collecting, processing, curating, preserving, and making accessible collections related to a particular community or specified subject" (Flinn, 2007, 153). They have strategic connections within their communities, they allow communities to document their own history, and they rest on trust already built with the people they document. As Hedstrom (2014) observes, archives are mobilized "to discover and recover evidence that has been lost or denied to communities seeking memory" (p. 228). Such archives form in response to documentation gaps in traditional repositories, a lack of trust in established institutions and a desire to control how a community's history is preserved (Flinn, 2007; Flinn et al., 2009; Nestle, 1990), and some are created as an explicit strategy of social activism (Flinn et al., 2009).

Many are founded with no models, manuals or trained archivists to guide them. Scholars have urged the profession to lend assistance and to develop best prac-

tices for supporting groups that preserve their history outside institutional repositories (Caswell, 2014; Grimm & Noriega, 2013; Paschild, 2012). Stevens et al. (2010) describe a range of engagement, from lending expertise to learning from communities and forming partnerships that equalize power, while cautioning that help must not impose hegemonic values or dilute a community archive's autonomy. Case studies have identified sustainability (Wakimoto et al., 2013), the digital preservation of online communities (Oiarzabal, 2014), space, staffing, collection development and description as recurring challenges. Existing manuals such as Millar (2010) cover appraisal, access and preservation, but they are written primarily for professionals, and few studies have asked what community archives actually need.

4 METHODOLOGY

To address that gap, a mixed methods survey was administered through Qualtrics from April 27 to June 27, 2016. It targeted professional archivists who work with community archives or wish to support them. Professionals rather than community archivists were surveyed for pragmatic reasons: there was then no national network of community archives through which to reach them, while professional archivists could be reached through established channels and often serve community archives as advisers, founders, funders and grant writers. Because the boundary of "professional" is itself unclear, respondents who self-identified as professional archivists were included.

Invitations were sent to the Society of American Archivists (SAA) "Archives and Archivists" list and to the lists of its sections on archivists and archives of color, human rights, issues and advocacy, labor archives, Latin American and Caribbean cultural heritage, lesbian and gay archives, Native American archives and women's collections, and were shared through archives-related Twitter accounts. The Institutional Review Board of Texas A&M University approved the study, informed consent was obtained, and no personally identifiable information was recorded. The questionnaire, pretested on six people whose responses were discarded, had five sections: employment and archival involvement; characteristics of each community archive the respondent had worked with; time spent assisting community archives; respondents' views of community archives' needs and of

the resources required; and demographics. Closed questions were analyzed descriptively; for the three most important features of new resources, first, second and third choices were weighted at 60%, 30% and 10%. Open responses were read thematically.

Of 152 people who answered the employment questions, 139 (91.5%) had been involved with, advised or researched community archives, and 77 completed the survey. Questions were analyzed regardless of completion, so denominators vary. Because community archives are described through professionals' eyes, the findings represent professional perceptions rather than community archivists' own voices, which is the survey's principal limitation.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 RESPONDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY ARCHIVES THEY DESCRIBED

Of those answering employment questions, 42% worked at academic institutions, 19% at government agencies and 26% at nonprofit organizations. All 77 completing respondents held a master's degree, 10% held doctorates and about a quarter were certified archivists. Compared with the A*CENSUS of U.S. archivists (Walch et al., 2006), respondents were younger, more likely to be women and more ethnically diverse. Most lived in the United States, followed by Canada, with others in New Zealand, Australia, Italy and Austria. Forty-seven percent said working with community archives was part of their job, and about 60% had spent fewer than 50 hours assisting community archives in the previous six months.

Respondents described 283 community archives, 70% in the United States and 18% in Canada. Roughly equal numbers were independent (47%) or part of a larger organization (46%). They documented regional culture (30%), events, movements or topics (25.5%), shared cultural backgrounds such as LGBTQ+ or religious communities (24.8%), shared ethnic or racial backgrounds (19%), common interests (16%), political interests (11.6%) and diasporas or people displaced by war, oppression or disaster (6%), often in combination. Most collected print, photographs and ephemera, 65% collected audiovisual materials created by the community, and 48% collected electronic records.

5.2 INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE

Table 1 shows that more than half of the community archives had dedicated space and storage, staff or supplies, but far fewer had the policies, tools and plans on which trusted digital preservation depends.

Table 1: Infrastructure in place at the community archives described by respondents (n = 262)

Element in place	Share of archives
Dedicated space for archives	64%
Storage, staff and/or supplies	51%
Public access	49%
Finding aids, inventories or other discovery tools	46%
Accession policy documentation (e.g., deed of gift)	39%
Collection management software	29%
Preservation or sustainability plan	23%
Training procedures	18%
Grant writer	16%

Source: Author's survey (2016).

5.3 REQUESTED HELP AND PERCEIVED NEEDS

Community archives most often asked for help with processing (61%), followed by getting started, designing policy, discovery tools and storage, supplies or staffing (43% each). Preservation ranked only sixth among requests (37%), yet it was the need respondents themselves ranked most pressing (70%). Born-digital records show a similar gap: requested by 21% of archives, but identified as a pressing need by 52% of respondents (Table 2). Two respondents added that archivists must be equipped to build relationships before any other need can be addressed.

Table 2: Help requested by community archives compared with needs identified by respondents

Area	Requested (n = 283 archives)	Pressing need (n = 77 respondents)
Processing	61%	68%
Designing policy	43%	67%
Getting started	43%	57%
Preservation	37%	70%
Funding	31%	61%
Collection management software	24%	43%
Training	23%	56%
Born-digital records	21%	52%

Source: Author's survey (2016).

5.4 RESOURCES NEEDED

Seventy-five percent of respondents said there were not enough resources for archivists working with or advising community archives; another 10% said resources existed but were hard to find, and 9% said community archives were important, but career archivists were too overworked to help. Asked for the single most important feature of new resources, 49% chose "accessible and free." In the weighted ranking, accessible and free resources came first (35%), followed by a focus on maintaining archives over time (20%), writing for a lay audience (19%), guidance on getting started (13%) and step-by-step instruction (12%). Open responses were blunt: "resources behind paywalls do no good for community archives which generally have little to no funds," and because community archives "are generally run by people who do not have formal training," plain language is key. Another respondent described an archive that was "non-profit, all volunteer, and not archival trained" and could "barely afford materials, let alone expensive resources on how to run/maintain the archive."

6 THE EXCLUDED VOICES

The survey's community archives mirror the communities most at risk of digital erasure. Local historical societies, grassroots organizations, and Black, Hispanic and Indigenous communities hold irreplaceable documentation of neighborhood change and social movements, often on fragile media without adequate backup (Flinn, 2007). Official records already undercount many of these populations: the United States Census Bureau (2022) reported that the 2020 Census undercounted the Black, Hispanic and reservation-based American Indian and Alaska Native populations. Undocumented people may disappear from the record through removal or the need to go underground, and when volunteer archivists move on or servers fail, whole segments of experience vanish (Flinn et al., 2009).

Indigenous communities face challenges rooted in centuries of appropriation, and their materials require approaches that respect sovereignty and cultural protocols (Christen, 2011, 2015). SAA endorsed the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (First Archivists Circle, 2007) in 2018, a turning point in cultural sensitivity, but the Protocols treat digital materials mainly in terms of access and say little about the authenticity and reliability central to trusted repositories.

Working-class family and labor archives sit in basements and attics, deemed less worthy of investment than elite collections (Sheffield, 2016). Rural communities contend with limited broadband, about 22% of them lacking high-speed internet (Federal Communications Commission, 2026), and only 76% of rural students have fixed broadband at home (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). LGBTQ+ and religious minority communities, a quarter of the archives in the survey, maintain archives that remain fragile and underfunded (Caswell, 2014), while their organizing increasingly takes place on ephemeral social media platforms.

7 THE QUESTION OF POSITIONALITY

These exclusions are shaped by positionality: the social, cultural and institutional positions that determine whose voices are heard in archival decision making (Cook, 2013). Faculty, government archivists, executives and foundation officers bring their own assumptions about what is significant, feasible and worthy of investment (Dunbar, 2006), while community organizers, undocumented immigrants and formerly incarcerated people are rarely present where priorities are set. Those with lived experience of exclusion have the least influence over whose stories are preserved, while those with power often lack understanding of communities' needs and protocols (Bastian & Alexander, 2009). The gap in Table 2 between what community archives ask for and what professionals prioritize is one expression of this tension.

8 BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

8.1 ECONOMIC BARRIERS

Trusted digital archiving demands sustained investment in infrastructure, software, expertise and maintenance (Digital Preservation Coalition, 2015), and the long-term costs of migration, redundant copies and continued access typically exceed the cost of digitization several times over (Ross, 2012). For volunteer-run archives with little or no budget, these costs are prohibitive. With only 16% able to draw on a grant writer, and with many funders requiring existing capacity, partnerships or matching funds, community archives are caught in a cycle in which they cannot build the capacity needed to compete for the resources that would build it.

8.2 TECHNICAL COMPLEXITY

Format migration, metadata standards such as Dublin Core or PREMIS, checksums and redundant storage demand specialized training (Gilliland, 2014; Ross, 2012). The survey shows the consequence. Nearly half of the community archives collected electronic records, yet fewer than a quarter had a preservation plan and fewer than a third used collection management software. The low number of requests for help with born-digital records likely reflects not a lack of need but a lack of awareness, or of the vocabulary to name it. Because formats and software become obsolete quickly, the burden of learning is continuous and falls on volunteers who change frequently. Legal and ethical questions of copyright, privacy and Indigenous data sovereignty add further complexity.

8.3 INSTITUTIONAL BIAS AND REPRESENTATION

Institutions that dominate archival discourse prioritize materials aligned with their missions, so well-documented communities attract further resources while others remain invisible. Most respondents worked in academic or government settings, which shaped the support they could offer; the 9% who said career archivists are too overworked to help point to how rarely this work is resourced. The committees and boards that set standards and funding priorities seldom include representatives of marginalized communities (Gilliland, 2014), and even international projects can reproduce these gaps if their networks connect institutions rather than grassroots organizations.

9 THE STAKES OF EXCLUSION

When marginalized communities' archives disappear, it becomes easier to deny their contributions and erase evidence of injustice (Caswell, 2014). As transparency decreases and institutional archives face cuts, community preservation grows more important for democratic accountability (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010). Monitoring of federal websites has shown how quickly government information can disappear (Sunlight Foundation, 2017). When official channels fail, community archives are often the last line of defense against historical erasure.

10 TOWARD INCLUSIVE DIGITAL PRESERVATION: AN ETHICS OF CARE

The survey found no clear relationship between what a community archive documented and what it needed; at a basic level, needs were shared across very different archives. Most fall within traditional archival practice, which suggests that existing professional literature could be adapted rather than reinvented, provided it is freed from paywalls and specialist language. The survey points to concrete priorities. Community archives need free, discoverable resources written in plain language that cover processing, preservation and born-digital records, and that address sustaining an archive over time. One practical resource would be a checklist of policies and forms, including bylaws, accessioning, collection development, storage, print and digital donation protocols and deeds of gift, linked to templates. Videos, webinars and unconferences could supplement written guides. A clearinghouse could match community archives with archivists by subject or geography, and a professional body could keep resources current. Because funders favor collaborations between community and institutional partners, grants that pay professional archivists to build such resources with communities would be an effective use of public funds (Thorpe, 2019).

Partnerships, however, can easily become extractive, with the institution gaining collections, publications or grant credit while the community bears the labor. Nowviskie (2015) describes an ethics of care that fosters "an appreciation of context, interdependence, and vulnerability," and Muñoz (2012) urges librarians to "claim identities as researchers" rather than service providers. Both arguments apply to community archivists, who should be recognized as knowledge holders and intellectual partners. The author's own team of a digital librarian, archivist and two instructional faculty members (all faculty at the Texas A&M University) has sustained such a partnership since 2011, from a project on Alex Haley and Malcolm X materials to a tool for visualizing Black bibliographies that was name *Digital Black Bibliography* (Earhart, et.al., 2018). This project was in the forefront of a group of scholars, archivists, and librarians attempt to address important problems of representation and accuracy of the digital cultural record. It relies on a written public collaboration statement (DiBB, 2019), value statements, continual conversation and a flexible model of authorship that credits every participant.

For community archives, this means written agreements specifying who owns and controls records, how credit is shared and what happens if a partnership ends; shared or consortial infrastructure of the kind Saunders (1993) anticipated, so that communities gain storage and expertise without surrendering custody; and Lougee's (1998) principles of collaboration, sustainable architecture, durable collections and leveraging activity, measured by communities' continued control of their history. Finally, as one respondent insisted, archivists need training in relationship building, cultural competency and avoiding microaggressions, which graduate programs, archival educators and community groups can provide together.

11 CONCLUSION

The traditional digital divide has evolved into a preservation divide that threatens to produce a historical record dominated by those with resources and institutional power. The survey shows that professionals closest to community archives see the gaps in funding, policy and preservation clearly, and that their priorities do not always match those of the communities they serve. It also has a clear limitation: community archivists did not speak for themselves. Future research must listen to them directly, through ethnographic and participatory work, and include archival educators.

Digital preservation is not a neutral technical process but a political act that shapes whose stories survive. Resources alone cannot remove the power disparity between the profession and community groups, but they can help democratize knowledge long held inside professional walls. The question is not whether we can afford to include these voices, but whether we can afford to keep excluding them as shared history vanishes one server crash, one budget cut, one election cycle or one closing organization at a time.

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SUMMARY

This article argues that the digital divide, first understood in the 1990s as unequal access to computers and the internet, has become a divide in who participates in, and benefits from, trusted digital archiving. If the first digital divide concerned who could get online, the second concerns whose lives, once recorded digitally, will be remembered. The discourse on trusted digital preservation remains dominated by well-funded institutions, while small organizations and marginalized communities are largely absent. The article focuses on community archives, the grassroots initiatives through which communities collect and preserve their own histories, and on the relationship between these archives and the archival profession, which often operate in parallel with little contact.

Historically, federal policy encouraged technological development, and by 2000 the digital divide was described as a leading economic and civil rights issue. Libraries responded with resource-based learning and early digital library models built on collaboration and shared infrastructure, but these models assumed an institutional host. The literature on community archives shows that such archives arise from gaps in traditional collections, distrust of institutions, a desire for control and social activism, and that many are founded without models or trained staff. Scholars have urged the profession to help, while warning against imposing institutional values.

The empirical core of the article is a mixed methods survey of professional archivists conducted in 2016 and approved by the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board. Of 152 respondents, 139 had worked with community archives and 77 completed the survey; together they described 283 community archives, mostly in the United States and Canada, documenting regional culture, movements, cultural, ethnic and racial communities, and diasporas. Because professionals reported on community archives, the findings reflect professional perceptions, which is the study's main limitation.

The findings reveal both capacity and fragility. More than half of the archives had space and staff or supplies, but only 29% had collection management software, 23% a preservation plan and 16% a grant writer, even though 48% collected electronic records. Community archives most often requested help with processing, while respondents ranked preservation as the most pressing need, although it was only the sixth most frequent request. Seventy-five percent of respondents said resources were insufficient, and they wanted new resources to be free and accessible, focused on sustaining archives, and written for a lay audience.

The article connects these findings to the groups excluded from preservation conversations, including communities of color, Indigenous nations, working-class, rural and LGBTQ+ communities, and explains their exclusion through positionality and through economic, technical and institutional barriers. It concludes with recommendations: free plain language resources and checklists, a clearinghouse matching archives with archivists, dedicated grants for collaborative resource building, shared infrastructure that leaves custody with communities, and training for archivists in relationship building and cultural competency. Drawing on the ethics of care and on the author's decade-long collaboration among librarians, archivists and faculty, it argues that partnerships must credit all participants and respect community control. Future research must hear community archivists directly. Digital preservation is a political act, and the profession must decide whether it can afford to keep excluding these voices.

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