

**VRA Slide and Transitional Media Task Force
Summary of Survey conducted in Fall 2014 (Total respondents: 112)**

	Responses	Percentage
Question 1: What kind of slide collection do you manage? (check all that apply)		
Academic department, College, or school	95	85%
Archives	6	5%
Library	17	15%
Museum	5	4%
Commercial vendor	1	.8%
Architecture firm	0	0%
Other cultural institution	2	1.5%

Question 2: Describe your collection (size, content, type of holdings); open-ended response.

Collections range from 80,000-550,000 35mm slides. Western and non-Western, all media. Most collections under 100,000 items, next largest in the 150,000-200,000 range. Lantern slides range from 10,000-30,000 items. Some photo collections. Most slide collections built through copy photography and vendor purchases, some small donations. Primarily support art and art history curricula.

Culling: kept original photography, vendor purchases, historic materials, “rare or irreplaceable” images, legacy/donated materials.

Question 3: How would you describe your analog collection? (112 responses)

Intact	27	24%
Undergoing some culling	29	26%
Undergoing aggressive culling	17	15%
Culling has been completed	19	17%
Other	20	18%

One received approval to decommission collection. Four were dismantled and remaining slides distributed to faculty and students, or sent to library for digitization. Some stated culling complete, remainder removed to storage. Others have done some culling. One collection is intact but rarely used. Three collections archived intact and removed to storage.

Question 4: Approximately how many items are still part of the collection? (112 responses)

- 35mm slides 107 95%
Collection numbers ranged from 2,000 to 550,000 35mm slides. Only 5 collections no longer had slides, with reasons ranging from “completely culled” to “collection was disbanded/space taken over”. There were 27 collections that reported being “intact” – no culling done yet. All other responses were somewhere in the process of being culled.
- Print photographs 28 25%
Collection numbers ranged from 100 to 35,000 (some respondents included negatives in the count).
- Other: 43 38%
Reponses that indicated the following in their holdings: DVDs and Videos (5), films and tapes (8mm, 16mm, reel to reel - 1), lantern slides (17), negatives and transparencies (3), books and periodicals (3), postcards (2), student architectural drawings (1), artists’ books (1), film scripts (1), museum brochures (1), and digital images (5 *reported, but presumably all collections now contain these – unclear from question*)

Question 5: Describe the primary function of the collection (e.g. teaching, research, circulating, archive, etc.)

- Was used for teaching but no longer used
- Now, existing slides a source for digitization
- Archive
- Research
- Some indicated a few faculty still use slide to teach
- Not active any more
- Bibliography for cataloging and image sources
- Exhibits and publication
- Undergraduate and graduate art thesis record
- Art student assignments
- Documentation of exhibitions and events
- “Talisman” function to relieve faculty anxieties

Question 6: Has your collection space been reduced? If yes, has the space been re-purposed by your institution, and how is the space now used? If no, how are you using the space formerly allocated for slide cabinets, etc.?

A few departments were moved into other buildings or spaces. VR spaces either moved with them or were lost.

Yes	57	51%
No	55	49%

Existing VR spaces repurposed for:

- VR consultation or work space
- VR scanning lab
- Media teaching lab
- Digital and media labs
- Administrative, faculty, or grad student offices
- Classroom or studio space
- Research commons, collaborative research/teaching space
- Meeting space
- Book storage
- Other types of collections

Question 7: If you are culling your collection what are the reasons? (check all that apply) (93 responses)

Administrative request/pressure	33	35%
Reduced space	34	37%
Part of ongoing collection maintenance	46	49%
Lack of funds for staffing and/or processing	8	9%
Other	50	54%

Respondents most commonly noted lack of space (existing and future allocation) and lack of use; also facility closure, and deterioration of collection.

Question 8: What criteria are you using to cull materials? (check all that apply) (95 responses)

Image quality	78	82%
Image condition	78	82%
Availability of image in digital format	70	74%

Equivalent or better images available in print	49	52%
Lack of permission to digitize	34	36%
Other	36	38%

- Low usage/circulation
- Duplicates
- Poor quality images
- Black-and-white images
- Unlabeled
- Uncataloged
- Not unique
- Slide that were already scanned
- Slides from books
- Is image available already in digital format?
- Not relevant to current curricular needs

Noted comments:

“We spend the most time going through subject areas of our collection that faculty have specifically asked us to look through. We gave them a full semester to come identify areas of importance to them before we began culling.”

“We digitized all the slides that were used in teaching over the last six years, and also any additional slides of special collections that were unique to our institution. When we disbanded the collection we opened the library to anyone on the faculty who wanted slides and allowed them to take the slides along with drawers.”

Question 9: What criteria are you using for slide retention? (check all that apply) (97 responses)

Originality of image	85	88%
Unavailability of digital format elsewhere	69	71%
Administrator or faculty requests/instructions	51	53%
Donor/photographer instructions	26	27%
Lack of immediate pressure to cull	43	44%

- Original slides
- Vendor slides
- Good quality slides
- Gift slides
- Slide still used by professors to teach
- Slides that document previous state of art work
- Images not in ARTstor
- Slides still used for cataloging
- Faculty want the slide collection kept
- Faculty selected slides
- Local content

Question 10: Who will have input on your culling and retention policies? (check all that apply) (96 responses)

Users within my department	85	89%
Users outside my department	15	16%
Administrators	37	39%

- Department head
- VR curator
- Dept. faculty (if dept. collection)
- Administrators
- Administrators decreed nothing is to be kept
- Departmental committee (formed by VR curator)
- Some users may have specific requests
- Consulted with library (not interested)

Question 11: What are some of the content strengths of the slides you have retained? (92 responses)

Summary: Responses focused on images not yet digitized, and strongly trended toward non-Western art and architecture (Inuit, Aboriginal, African, Asian, Oceanic, Islamic, MesoAmerican), and original photography of the built environment (worldwide, vernacular, buildings which have undergone change or destruction since time of photo). Other areas included original MFA and faculty art, fieldwork photography, historic photography, material arts, design, architectural plans and drawings, didactic material; also history of the respondent's institution, or prominent figures associated with the institution. Several respondents noted that some slides were kept as reference (slide label information) to whatever catalogue or text they were photographed from.

Question 12: What have you done with culled slides? (Check all that apply) (78 responses)

- | | | |
|---|----|-----|
| • Placed in off-site storage: | 10 | 13% |
| • Donated to other institutions or individuals: | 37 | 47% |
| • Recycled per institutional guidelines: | 22 | 28% |
| • Placed in regular (non-recycled) trash: | 46 | 59% |
| • Other: | | |

Several respondents checked several of the options above. Some respondents were keeping the slides in on-site storage, either for future decisions and planning, or for donation access. One museum-based respondent said all transparencies had to be removed from mounts and cut up, and later learned that all slide disposals had to be approved by their archives and records manager. Other respondents also mentioned separating film from mounts before disposal. One respondent said culled slides are freely given through an annual Slide Giveaway. Two respondents transferred slides to archival boxes, primarily for space purposes.

Question 13: If donated, where did the slides go? (45 responses)

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|---|----|-----|
| • K-12 schools | 9 | 20% |
| • Other colleges or universities | 8 | 18% |
| • Other departments at home institution | 12 | 27% |
| • Museums or galleries | 2 | 4% |
| • Libraries or archives | 6 | 13% |
| • Arts recycling organizations | 8 | 18% |
| • Artists | 21 | 47% |
| • Teachers | 20 | 44% |
| • Students | 31 | 69% |
| • Other: | | |

One respondent noted that digitized slides were kept but in another college at institution. Another gave slides to individuals with an interest in the format.

Question 14: How are you recording the culling and disposal? (81 responses)

• Documenting in a spreadsheet or other document	23	28%
• Documenting in a database	8	10%
• Deaccessioning paperwork	3	4%
• Removing slide labels	0	0%
• Stamping slide labels (e.g. “Deaccessioned”)	11	14%
• No recording being done	51	63%
• Other:		

Responses ranged from thorough (updating database records to reflect slide status) to no record-keeping. Some respondents were constrained by time or lack of staff and were only able to make cursory notes. Some recorded accession numbers (written or photocopied), while others only recorded total numbers of slides culled/disposed of.

Question 15: Who is doing the culling? (87 responses)

• You	80	92%
• Other collection staff	32	37%
• Graduate student workers	22	25%
• Undergraduate student workers	31	36%
• Volunteers	3	3%

Question 16: If you were approached by a donor with a significant slide donation would you have space to allocate for storage? (109 responses)

• Yes	36	33%
• No	73	73%

Question 17: If you were approached by a donor with a significant slide donation would you have resources to allocate for cataloging and digitization? (109 responses)

• Yes	36	33%
• No	73	67%

Question 18: Is your department providing new or expanded services as the result of the changes implemented in your traditional media collection’s space and/or staff allocations? Please describe. (85 responses)

Approximately 20 respondents stated that their services had not expanded – either they had closed, were continuing to offer the same services as in the past, or had lost staff/resources so could not expand.

Approximately 60 reported expanded services, which included (individually reported or in combination with other services):

- technical support (server maintenance; classroom equipment support and trouble-shooting; scanners; computer workstations; projectors; smart boards)
- digitizing services (scanning on request, including outside the department; scanning assistance)
- teaching support (creating and managing online course materials)
- training (one-on-one and workshops: ARTstor; Shared Shelf; Luna Insight; MDID; PDFs; Photoshop; Excel; scanning and other image management services)
- research support (assistance with image permissions for publications)
- digital projects (“visualization projects”; collaborative projects with other departments,

- other reported services and uses of the VR space: seminars, small meetings and events; exhibition space (rotating original content; history of image technology); private or make up exams; student study space; general faculty work space; live-streaming; video recording; storage; faculty offices; printing services; media equipment circulation; DVD viewing station; room and event scheduling; Tech Talks; materials samples collection; architectural drawing collection; other computer program support (3D printing, AutoCAD); online exhibition creation with Omeka; photography services (events, student projects; campus art gallery collection); departmental digital newsletter; departmental website support.
- Responses from those working in libraries generally mentioned expanded duties within the library.

Question 19: Other comments or information (47 responses):

Summary:

- Generally in the survey, and specifically with this question, responses were roughly evenly split between those reflecting anxiety, sadness, or other negative sentiments, and those expressing optimism, excitement, or otherwise positive comments.
 - With the former, the focus was on the loss of professional input regarding the direction of the VRC in recent years, and fears of where it is heading. Respondents often referred to space and resources being “taken away”, generally by administrators. One respondent emphasized the need to advocate for ourselves with administrators. Some respondents expressed difficulty with feeling “relevant”.
 - With the latter, respondents mentioned excitement about new initiatives and services.
- In terms of collection culling, several respondents expressed regret or misgivings about the way culling had been carried out, and the desire to be able to do it over in a more systematic and better documented way.
- One respondent asked about VRA guidance on the proper disposition/retention of “culturally sensitive material” (in this case, slides which support Native America studies).