Archives & Records Association
Cumann Cartlann agus Taifead
Ireland/Éire

Report on the 2020 Skills Survey by ARA, Ireland

March 2021

Executive Summary

- **80 %** of respondents satisfied with training/learning opportunities provided by ARA Ireland.

Background

In October 2020, the Archives and Records Association, UK and Ireland, launched a skills survey, which was open to all ARA members and non-members across the UK and Ireland.

Since the ARA North West Region survey and report in 2018, ARA, Ireland have been supporting the value of a skills survey for the UK and Ireland sector. ARA, Ireland recognise the importance and value of a skills survey to assess the experiences and concerns of members and non-members alike.

The purpose of the 2020 skills survey was:

- to determine the current skills
- to determine the confidence in skills
- to determine the future skills/training needs
- to identify skills deficits or gaps

Task Force

In July 2020 ARA, Ireland appointed a taskforce to communicate and coordinate the skills survey in Ireland. The committee recognised that the survey findings would create a base of evidence to support strategic planning of ARA Ireland training for current and future ARA members.

The task force was made up of the following ARA, Ireland committee members:

- Joanne Carroll, Newsletter Editor
- Killian Downing, Honorary Treasurer
- Fionnuala Parfrey, Training Officer
- Niamh Scannell, Recording Secretary

Methodology:

The task force coordinated feedback on a draft skills survey with input from various stakeholders Including members across Ireland, non-members, cultural heritage institutions and organisations, professional groups and societies and academic partners (September-October 2020). Stakeholders included;

- National Archives, Ireland
- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
- Irish Records Management Society, Ireland
- Institute of Conservator and Restorers in Ireland

- Association for Church Archives of Ireland
- Irish Society for Archives
- University College Dublin
- Sample of regional members/non-members across Ireland

The task force also coordinated publicity and promotion of survey to ARA members in Ireland and Northern Ireland (November 2020); issued key findings report (March 2021) and plans to use findings to inform future training planning (2021 onward)

Survey Structure

This survey is based on the skills audit undertaken by the North West Region (UK) of the Archives and Records Association with Caroline Williams in 2018. The scope of this survey was to find out people's perceived training needs by asking how confident they are in undertaking specific skills. We also want to gauge how *needed* certain skills are for current roles and future careers.

In this survey, the 65 skills investigated were divided into the following areas:

- Archives and Records skills (11 questions)
- Preservation and Conservation skills (8 questions)
- Digital and Technical skills (11 questions)
- Access and Engagement skills (14 questions)
- Business and Personal development skills (21 questions)

As a result of feedback from ARA, Ireland members, the task force requested the inclusion of survey sections 3 and 4, to gain feedback around the satisfaction of training/learning opportunities undertaken by ARA, Ireland and also understand how the committee could better support members during COVID-19 and in normal times. These two requested sections were approved by the ARA UK and Ireland Board and included for all nations and regions.

SURVEY RESULTS

Section 1: Profile of Contributors

65 respondents of the overall survey identified themselves as being from Ireland.

Of these, **51 or 78 %** were ARA members and **14 or 22 %** were non-members.

80 % of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with training/learning opportunities provided by ARA Ireland**.**

Chart 1. Which disciplines/areas do our contributors come from?

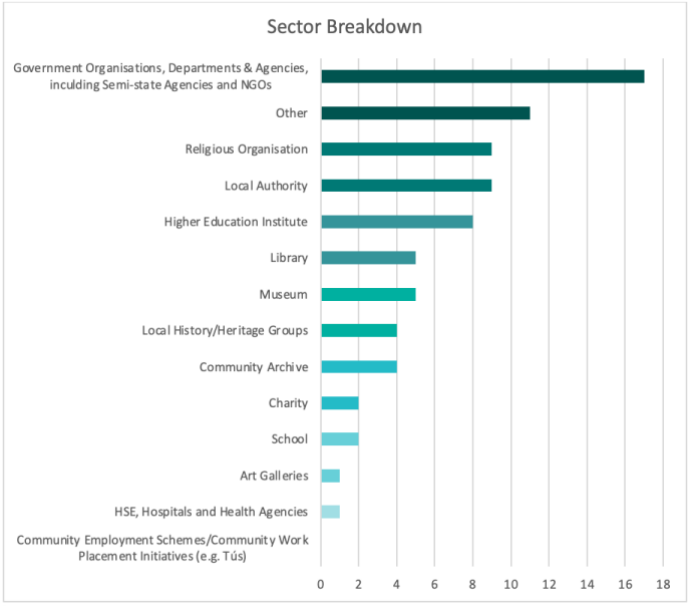


Fifty-seven out of 64 survey responses came from people working in **archives**. Given that it was possible to pick more than more discipline/area, and there were a total of 122 answers, the indication is that many respondents work across more than one area.

Twenty respondents indicated that they work in **records management** in some capacity, 12 work in the area of **information governance/information management**, 11 in **digital curation/digital preservation**, 9 in **learning and interpretation**, and 7 in **public history**.

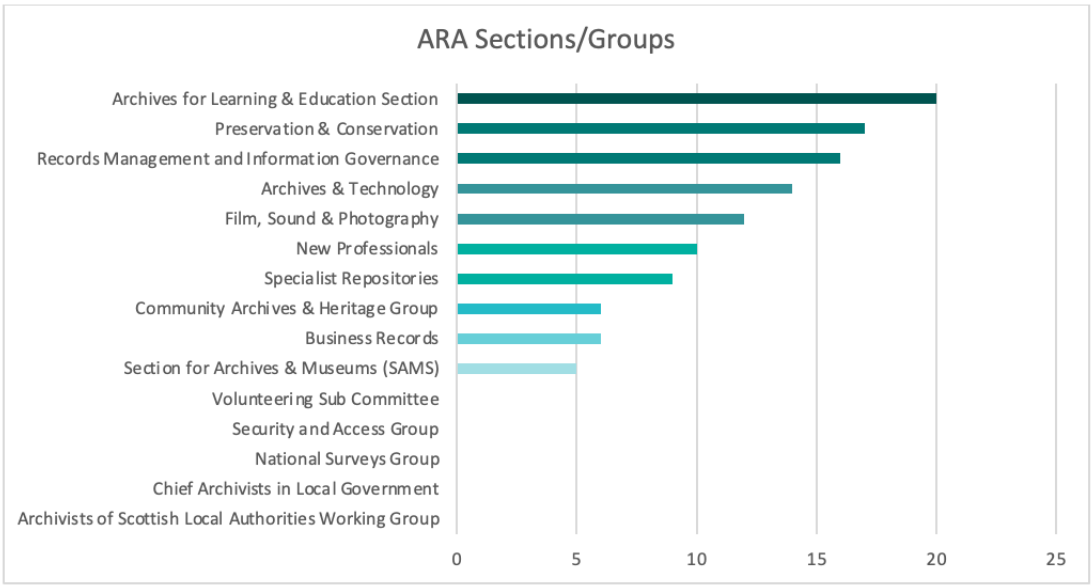
Analysis of the 6 comments supplied in the 'Other' category, where job titles were refined, highlighted professionals whose roles encapsulated more than one specific area. We also received responses from a student, a web archivist. someone working in information compliance and someone working in digitisation.

Chart 2. What sector do our contributors work in?



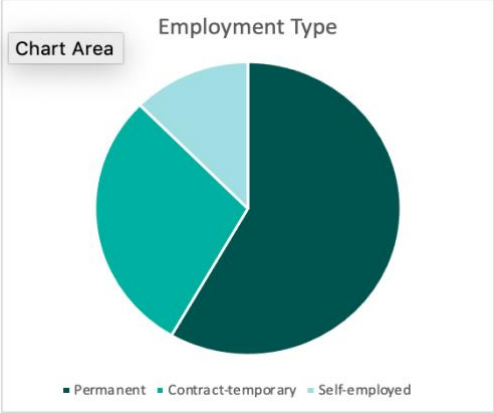
Government organisations, departments & agencies, was the most heavily represented sector (17), followed by the **Local authority** sector and **Religious organisations** (9 each), **Higher education institutions** (8), **Museums** and **Libraries** (5 each), **Community archives** and **Local history/heritage groups** (4 each). Other sectors identified were **Schools** and **Charities** (2 each), **HSE, hospitals and health agencies**, and **Art galleries** (1 each).

Chart 3. What are the most popular ARA Sections/Groups?



The three most popular ARA Groups among contributors were the **Archives for Learning and Education Section**, the **Section for Preservation and Conservation** and the **Section for Records Management and Information Governance**.

Chart 4 and 5. Type of employment

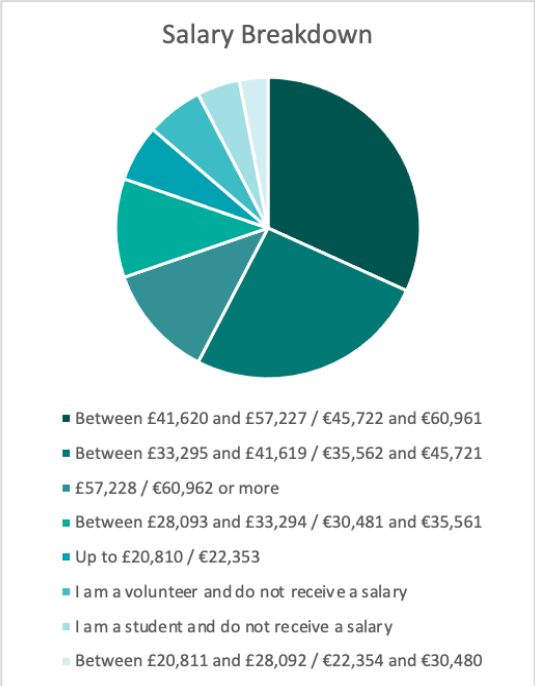


More than half of respondents were in permanent employment.



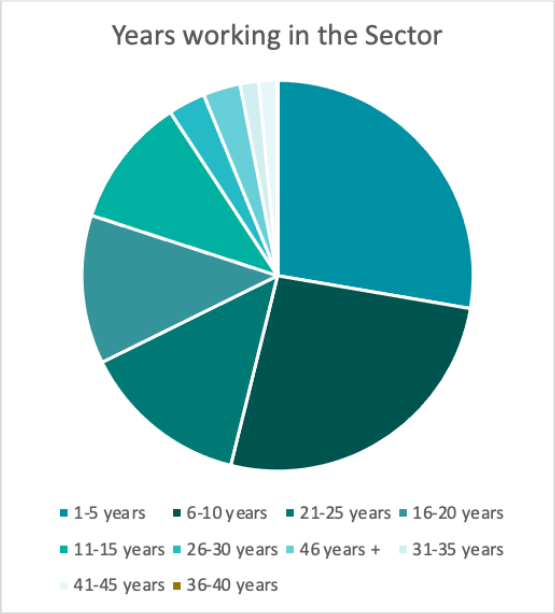
More than 80 % of respondents were in full-time employment.

Chart 6. Salary range



Data from the question about salary levels showed that 53 out of 65 respondents (over 80 %) were earning salaries at, or above, Level 1 of the **ARA Salary Recommendations** (between £28,093 and £33,295 / €30,481 and €35,561).

Chart 7. Years working in the archives and records management sector



Most of those who engaged with the survey have been working in the sector for less than ten years.

Section 2: Summary of Feedback and Comments

Q3 Are you satisfied with training/learning opportunities provided by your ARA Nation/Region?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 13

80.77% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with training/learning opportunities provided by ARA Ireland.

Summary of feedback:

- Majority of responses were constructive and appreciative, recognising the ARA Ireland committee are volunteers.
- More online training desired
- More diverse training should be considered (Use this for follow up survey)
- Online training allows accessibility and negates time and costs associated with physical trainings
- Physical training locations are too Dublin-centric; hold training in other regions; Belfast, Galway, Limerick.

Q4 What can your local ARA Nation/Region do better to support members? during COVID-19 pandemic and in normal times?

Answered: 65 Skipped: 0

With all respondents answering this question, extensive feedback was provided on COVID-19 issues, challenges and also concerns and consideration around support during normal times. Below the two aspects are divided, and dominant feedback trends are summarised.

COVID-19 feedback

- More online training desired
- Provide access options for potential attendees when training is at max capacity
- Regular communication by ARA, Ireland to members. Increase dialogue with members.
- COVID-19 specific guidelines for access, closure, re-opening, document handling.
- Advocacy on COVID-19 impact of cultural heritage institution or organisation closure.
- Consider guidance on opportunities for online volunteering/internships
- Provide better guidance to students, low paid workers and freelancers.

Normal feedback

- Guidance on issues around job casualisation and temporary contracts.
- More online training desired
- Student-oriented training
- Give statements and guidance on dealing with experience and records of people in direct provision and survivors of abuse
- More informal meetups, networking and social events
- Regular communication by ARA, Ireland and wider promotion needed for online training
- Advocacy to the wider public on sectoral issues.
- Keep ARA, Ireland website up-to-date

- Coordinate training on sector wide basis, not region/nation, more cooperative ARA approach to online training. (i.e. avoid duplication of training individual regions/nations)
- More seminars and talks desired
- Explore mentoring opportunity online
- Develop Archivist's Forum to allow collective action and advocacy on issues affecting the profession and lack of access to the documentary heritage of Ireland
- Encourage more dialogue between members and local communities. (Be open to and encourage dialogue between members and local committees. There seems to be a disconnect between how ordinary members feel and the work of ARA nations, regions and HQ)
- Provide persistent access to online webinars
- Increased regional communications on issues affecting specific regions
- Cooperate with other professional bodies/societies - such as IRMS with regard to training.
- Desire for online CPD opportunities.
- Provide guidance to new professionals online.
- Activate an ARA, Ireland forum
- Challenge value for money of ARA membership

Key Takeaways

- Online Training
  - ⇒ Many respondents expressed appreciation for online training events. Moving forward we will aim to continue to provide remote access to training. If we return to hosting in-person events we will also try to make these accessible via recording/live stream.
- De-centralised Training
  - ⇒ Similarly, many respondents expressed that in the past most training events took place in Dublin, which made it difficult for members around the country to attend. Before COVID-19, ARA, Ireland addressing this issue by planning physical training events in Belfast and Galway in 2020. Virtual training has lessened the importance of geographical location, but when we do return to in-person events in some capacity, we will endeavour to de-centralise these events as much as possible.
- Keeping in touch and making members aware of training in other regions/sections
  - ⇒ Training Officers across all ARA Nations, Regions and Groups met recently to discuss the survey feedback and in particular the fact that online training is making events across all geographical locations accessible to all members. We acknowledged that historically we have not been that well informed about training in other locations and that this is something that should improve. It is intended that the new ARA website will have a specific training page where all upcoming events will be listed and where the recordings of all previous training events will be made available to members.
- Further qualitative training surveys

  Survey results and response indicated more nuance is needed around identifying particular training needs and deficits, for example, around digital collections management and preservation. We envisage to undertake follow up surveys to better understand members needs in specific skill areas.
- AGM March 2021

  This report will be circulated on 30 March 2021, at the online ARA, Ireland AGM, and we welcome discussion on this skills survey, ARA Ireland training opportunities and welcome your continued feedback to ara.irelandregion@gmail.com

Section 3: Your Training Needs – Questions 11-15

To establish a ranking of skills according to priority, a score was assigned to each skill based on how many respondents chose the option 'I am OK but could improve' and how many respondents expressed *need* for the skill (whether for current role or for future career). The skills with higher scores are those that are most in need *and* with which people are the least confident.

The tables below rank the skills in each section according to priority.

Q11 – Archives and Records Skills

Rank	Skill	Score
1.	Managing information risk (e.g. risk register)	48
2.	Contemporary collecting	36
3.	Managing current and semi-current records	35
4.	Applying appraisal and retention processes	31
5.	Managing sensitive collections/information	25
6.	Managing sensitive collections/information and identifying records which reflect or provide information on underrepresented communities	25
7.	Collecting and appraising archives	19
8.	Working with objects	18
9.	Cataloguing archives	13
10.	Oral History	12
11.	Understanding archives and records processes	11

Q12 – Preservation and Conservation Skills

Rank	Skill	Score
1.	Emergency prevention; disaster preparedness	34
2.	Strategic / forward planning	34
3.	Evaluating conservation options	31
4.	Integrated Pest Management	27
5.	Undertaking processes relating to buildings, environments, security, storage	22
6.	Assessing preservation needs	22
7.	Applying conservation methods	20
8.	Assessing stability and condition of archives and records	18

Q13 – Digital and Technical Skills

Rank	Skill	Score
1.	Undertaking digital preservation processes	49
2.	Using Digital Preservation Software	47
3.	Managing born digital data	35
4.	Online user experience	34
5.	Undertaking evaluation and user testing of digital tools and platforms	34
6.	Digitisation	28
7.	Managing audio visual collections	27
8.	Using platforms e.g. CALM, AtoM and Adlib for archives management	17
9.	Creating and maintaining web pages	17
10.	Web archiving	15
11.	Reading and understanding archives (e.g. palaeography, Latin)	10

Q14 – Access and Engagement Skills

Rank	Skill	Score
1.	Designing, creating and evaluating activities and projects	48
2.	Understanding statutory requirements to meet specific needs (physical, intellectual), and providing equitable access and engagement	47
3.	Community engagement/audience development	38
4.	Planning and delivering learning outreach activity/audience development for all audiences or specific social and community groups	34
5.	Using digital tools and platforms to support/enhance engagement activity (e.g website, social media, image hosting, etc)	33
6.	Effective partnership working in a consortium or different groups e.g. community groups, libraries, creative practitioners	29
7.	Creating and maintaining web pages	29
8.	Effective meetings using Teams/Zoom/Blackboard	28
9.	Managing access for users of recordkeeping systems, and managing security classifications	24
10.	Providing online access to archives and records	22
11.	Displaying and exhibiting archives	17
12.	Loaning material or contributing to external events/exhibitions	13
13.	Providing onsite access to archives and records	10
14.	Using social media to engage with audiences	8

Q15 – Business and Personal Development Skills

Rank	Skill	Score
1.	Copyright	46
2.	Negotiation	43
3.	Influencing and leadership/advocacy	40
4.	Unconscious bias	40
5.	Understanding and practicing cultural competence	35
6.	Strategic planning	35
7.	Measuring and quantifying impact	33
8.	Stakeholder management	28
9.	Data Protection legislation (data protection principles, special category data, etc.)	27
10.	Regulatory compliance (GDPR, FoI)	24
11.	Staff management and development	20
12.	Business management and project planning	19
13.	Managing/planning budgets	18
14.	Time Management	17
15.	Producing and delivering presentations	17
16.	Marketing and event planning	17
17.	Volunteer management and development	15
18.	Fund-raising and grant application	14
19.	Oral and written communication skills	11
20.	Interpersonal skills	9

Conclusions and Work Ahead

Training in the following areas should be prioritised as the data showed these were skills that respondents were *least confident* in and had *most need* for:

- Undertaking digital preservation processes (49)
- Managing information risk (e.g. risk register) (48)
- Designing, creating and evaluating activities and projects (48)
- Understanding statutory requirements to meet specific needs (physical, intellectual), and providing equitable access and engagement (47)
- Using Digital Preservation Software (47)
- Copyright (46)

ARA, Ireland will use these survey results and data to inform the planning and programming of future training events in conjunction with other ARA, nations, regions, and sections.

We welcome your continued feedback on this report or training planning to ara.irelandregion@gmail.com