

Chapter 1: Data on Institutions Holding American Art

The Heritage Health Index survey was conducted in summer and fall 2004 and involved archives, libraries, historical societies, museums, archaeological repositories, and scientific research collections of all sizes from every U.S. state and territory. In total, 3,370 institutions participated, a 24% response rate overall, with a 90% response rate from 500 of the nation's largest and most significant collections. The survey asked institutions to report on all aspects of conservation and preservation and to estimate the quantity and condition of the collections for which they take a preservation responsibility. A full explanation of the survey methodology and implementation may be found in Appendix C.

Heritage Health Index survey respondents included many of the nation's most significant collections by artists from the United States of America. The Luce Foundation provided Heritage Preservation with mailing lists of museums that had been used in conducting surveys of their grantees and other museums that hold American art. These 200 museums were included in the Heritage Health Index sample, and 66% (140) replied to the survey.

In developing the Heritage Health Index questionnaire, Heritage Preservation convened nine working groups that recommended the most essential questions to ask for each type of collection (Appendix E). All groups concluded that media (whether a painting was on canvas or paper or whether a photograph was a negative or a print) rather than genre was more relevant in determining preservation needs and priorities. For this reason and because it was important to keep the already ambitious survey as brief as possible to ensure a sufficient response rate, the Heritage Health Index did not include questions about the genre or provenance of artworks.

In the absence of concrete data on genre, Heritage Preservation isolated the Heritage Health Index data on American art in the following ways:

- selected the surveys from institutions in the top two quartiles of art holdings (more than 100 works of art, including paintings, art on paper, sculpture, and decorative art),
- excluded 11 institutions that hold primarily non-American collections,
- confirmed that all institutions identified by the Luce Foundation as having significant American art holdings were included.

These steps yielded a list of 1,243 institutions that had returned surveys—37% of the 3,370 total Heritage Health Index surveys received. In reviewing the list of these 1,243 institutions, the American art committee (Appendix A) concurred with Heritage Preservation that a significant proportion of the art collections represented were American. A list of these institutions is in Appendix B. Figure 1.1 shows how the 1,243 surveys are distributed among the types of institutions that participated in the Heritage Health Index. In other words, 88% of the art museums that participated in the Heritage Health Index have been included in the group of institutions holding American art.

To understand the full picture of institutions holding American art, the data in the group of

Fig. 1.1 Heritage Health Index Participants That Have American Art Holdings



1. Includes Historic Houses/Sites, History Museums, General Museums, Specialized Museums, and Children's Museums.

2. Includes Natural History Museums, Science Technology Museums, Nature Centers, Planetaria, Arboreta, Botanical Gardens, Aquaria, and Zoos.

1,243 returned surveys was projected to all the institutions in the total study population that have similar characteristics. By doing this, Heritage Preservation estimated that there are 9,187 institutions holding American art. In this report, “institutions holding American art” refers to this group of 9,187 institutions.

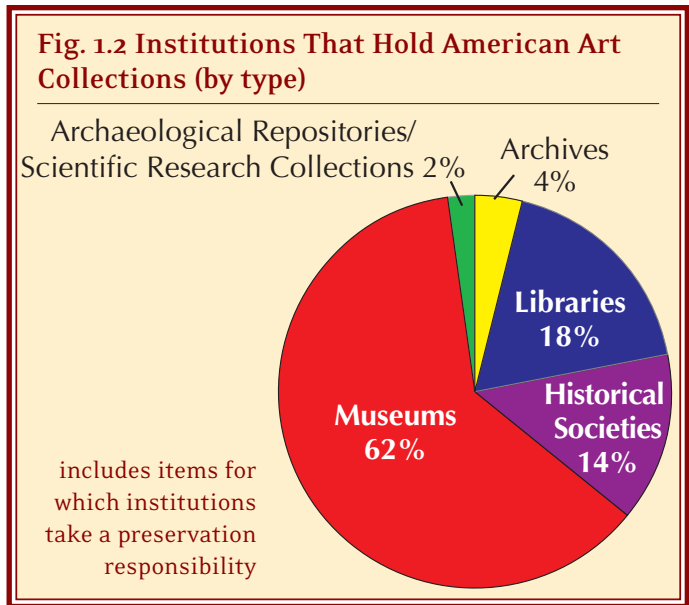
Margin of Error

The margin of error when reporting on this group in total is +/- 2.4% (assuming a 95% confidence level).¹ Heritage Preservation has data for all survey questions for the American art group, and it is possible to view the data by size and type of institution; however, the margin of error increases when this is done. Below are the margins of error for size and type of institutions that hold American art (as defined in Appendix C):

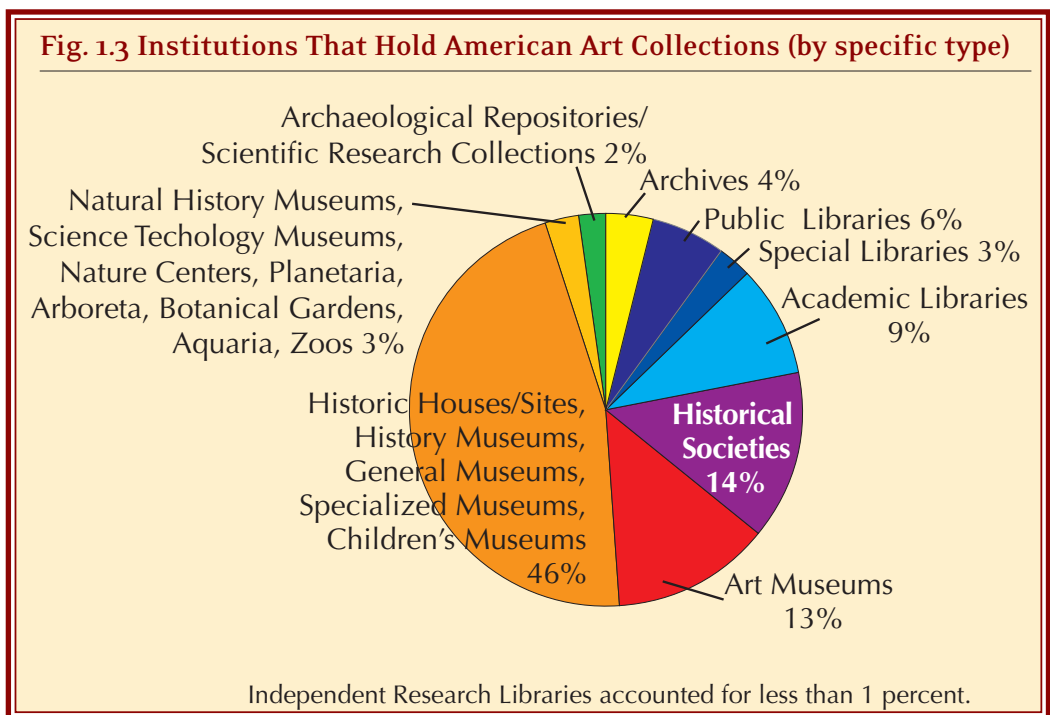
- Large +/-3.0%
- Medium +/-5.2%
- Small +/-4.1%
- Archives +/-9.9%
- Libraries +/-5.1%
- Historical Societies +/-6.9%
- Museums +/-3.2%
- Archaeological Repositories /
Scientific Research Collections +/-15%

Characteristics of Institutions Holding American Art

Of the institutions holding American art, 62% are museums, 18% are libraries, 14% are historical societies, 4% are archives, and 2% are archaeological repositories/scientific research collections (figure 1.2). Considering museums with American art holdings, 13% are art museums, 46%

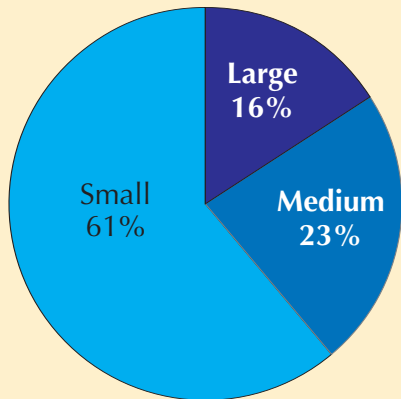


are history-related museums (including history museums, historic house/sites, general museums, specialized museums, and children’s museums), and 4% are science-related museums (including natural history museums, science technology centers, botanical gardens, zoos, arboretums, nature centers) (figure 1.3). Thirty-two percent of institutions holding American art indicated they had one additional function; 23% have two additional functions; and 28% have



1. The margin of error was calculated using the following formula: $1.96 \cdot [(0.5 \cdot 0.5) / n] \cdot [(N - n) / N - 1]$ where n assumed 100% item response rate.

Fig. 1.4 Institutions That Hold American Art Collections (by size)



three or more additional functions. Archives is the most common additional function; 58% of institutions holding American art have one, which indicates that these institutions are likely important repositories of documentary materials related to American art. Other common additional functions are libraries (35%), historic house/sites (27%), and museums (22%).

Considering other characteristics of this group of institutions holding American art, 16% are large, 23% are medium, and 61% are small (figure 1.4). Figure 1.5 shows representation by region,

which is within one or two percentage points of the figures of the Heritage Health Index data overall. Representation by governance is illustrated in figure 1.6; 20% of institutions included are governed by academic entities (about equally split between private college/universities and state college/universities). While Heritage Preservation has the capability to view the Heritage Health Index data by six regions and six types of governance, this was not done in the case of the institutions holding American art. Because the American art subgroup is already less than half the size of the entire data set, the higher margins of error in such specific views would reduce the usefulness of this data.

Survey Respondents

All institutions selected to participate in the Heritage Health Index were contacted by phone before surveys were sent. All institutions received a hard copy of the survey but had the option of completing the survey online. Unless the institution specified otherwise, Heritage Preservation sent the survey to the director of the institution so that he or she would be aware of the project and could approve staff time to complete it. In the case of the targeted group of 500 largest and

Fig. 1.5 Institutions That Hold American Art Collections (by region)

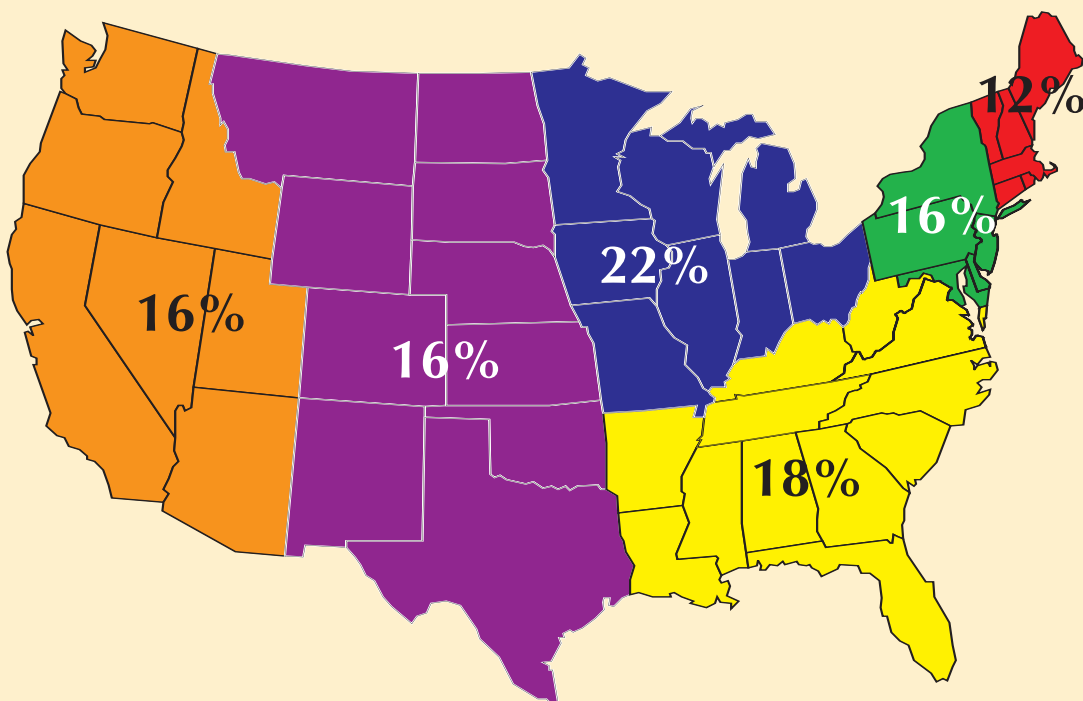
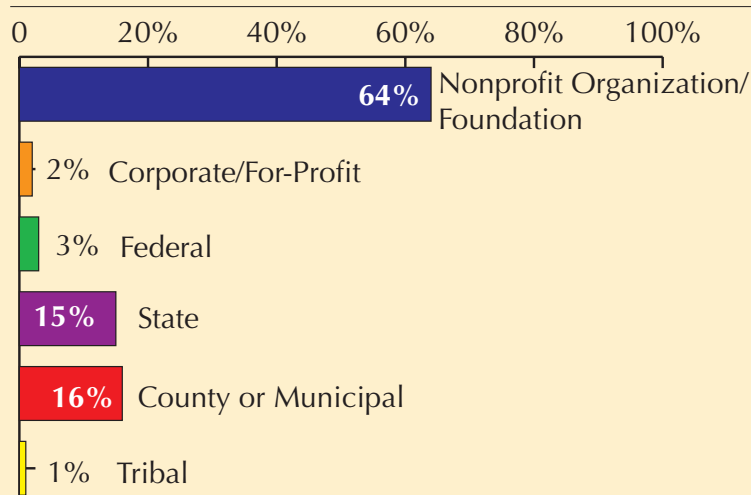


Fig. 1.6 Institutions That Hold American Art Collections (by governance)



most significant collections, Heritage Preservation made contact with a member of the conservation/preservation staff and asked whether the survey should come to that department or to the director's office. Occasionally they noted that their director would want to receive it first, but often they requested the survey be sent directly to their department. Considering the completed surveys from institutions holding American art, the following professionals were the lead persons completing the Heritage Health Index survey:

Conservator/Preservation Manager	8%
Registrar/Collection Manager	10%
Curator	13%
Archivist/Librarian/Historian	11%
Director/High Level Administrator (e.g., director, CEO, dean, deputy/assistant director, park manager, board president) . .	47%
Low Level Administrator/Other	7%
Question Left Blank	5%

The survey was written to be comprehensible to all types of professionals at all kinds of collecting institutions. Furthermore, in testing the survey instrument, institutions indicated that usually several staff members collaborated in providing responses to the survey. Therefore, while a high level administrator was frequently listed as the lead person completing the survey, that person likely had input from staff members who work directly with collections. Heritage Preservation is confident that the information provided on the surveys is accurate and reliable.

Data Review

In April 2006, the Heritage Health Index data pertaining to American art was reviewed by a committee of nine members, with Ellen Holtzman representing the Luce Foundation. The committee's members were selected in consort with the Luce Foundation and included representatives from major U.S. museums with strong American art collections. To provide a variety of perspectives, the individuals included three leading conservators, three curators, a collections manager, and an administrator who works closely with collections (Appendix A). Group members were

also intentionally varied by their knowledge of the Heritage Health Index: some had participated in the meetings to draft the survey questionnaire, others had completed the survey for their institutions, and others were just learning about the project.

The one-day meeting included an overview of the Heritage Health Index purpose, methodology, and major findings and then focused on the data from institutions holding American art. The committee agreed that the five key findings of the Heritage Health Index also applied to institutions holding American art. However, within each area of concern, the group's observations from working with art collections added specificity to these recommendations. Summaries of these discussions are included throughout this report.

For many data points, the results show that institutions holding American art may be providing slightly better care than U.S. collecting institutions overall. For example, at 38% of collecting institutions nationwide there are no environmental controls to meet the temperature specifications of collections; at institutions holding American art, that figure is 22%. However, as this example also demonstrates, the situation at institutions holding American art requires immediate attention to ensure the preservation of collections. This report will make occasional comparisons to the Heritage Health Index data overall, when significant, but will primarily focus on the American art data. ♦