



Royal Historical Society of Victoria
Digital Engagement Survey Report

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A. Introduction

This survey was designed to fill an information gap about the level of digital engagement of the member groups of the RHSV. In particular, we are interested in the proportion of our member groups that are connected to the internet and the software they are using (if any) to catalogue their collections. Groups were also asked other questions such as about their web presence and digitisation projects.

The survey was distributed to 304 historical groups. 299 were distributed by email and five were posted to historical groups without an email address.

We received 99 responses – a response rate of over 30%. “Surveys that you distribute internally (i.e. to employees) generally have a much higher response rate than those distributed to external audiences (i.e. customers). Internal surveys will generally receive a 30-40% response rate (or more) on average, compared to an average 10-15% response rate for external surveys.” (Survey Gizmo, 2015) As an external survey, 30% would be a reasonable response rate.

This was a free Survey Monkey survey and so there were limitations on the number of questions (and therefore the scope and detail) and on the analysis of data. I have attempted to cross check some information in this report, and if further analysis is required please let me know.

I have included some quotes from the survey in italics under the relevant questions, but all the raw data can be accessed here so all comments can be viewed:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/user/sign-in/>

Click the link *RHSV Affiliated Groups Survey - Digital Engagement*

Click the *Analyse Results* tab on the right then scroll down the *Question Summaries*.

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B. Responses to Individual Questions

1. Name of historical group, and contact name (99 responses)

It's important that we are able to follow up with individual groups if we need anything clarified, or if we want to ask for further details about the circumstances of particular groups. An alphabetical list of the participating groups is given in Part D of this report.

2. Does your group have access to the internet at its premises? (99 responses)

Yes	53	54%
No	46	46%

3. If your group has internet access, please state whether your connection is via cable or dialup and whether you are happy with your internet service. (54 responses)

NBN / cable	17
Wireless / mobile / wireless to connection of other	10
ADSL	10
Dongle / prepaid wireless	9
Dialup	8
Personal connection at home	3

Unhappy:

Of the above respondents, nine said they were either not happy with their internet, or that their arrangements (e.g. dongle) were not ideal. Of these, three commented that they were looking forward to the NBN reaching their area. One says it's not far away, another says it could be 18 months away, no time frame is given for the third. There were a couple of comments about slow ADSL connections.

"We have a 'dongle' so it works via mobile technology if I am correct. Moe is currently being connected to NBN so in future we may use that."

"Cable Yes happy with the service. Our ordinary committee meetings are conducted online through www.padlet.com"

"DODO phone and ADSL internet through phone line (not dial up) - happy with service approx \$30 per month"

“Access via Bunnings free WIFI or Via Telstra wireless 4GB plan a month. Not ideal, WIFI not secure and 4GB needed just to update one laptop running Windows 10”

“We do not have our own premises but use the local library for some meetings and connect to the library wifi which we presume is cable. However 95% of our connectedness to the internet is through the goodwill of the committee to their own internet connections.”

“We do not have cable or dialup internet. Instead, we use a USB device that can provide Wi-Fi to the facility. We'd much rather have a better system in place.”

4. If your group does not have internet access at its premises, what would you say is your main hindrance to connection? (52 responses)

Many respondents gave multiple reasons for not being connected, so I have included all and the total will amount to more than 52.

Cost (installation and ongoing)	19
No phone line ; reception or internet poor or non-existent	10
Group doesn't currently have premises, or premises not permanent	9
Members cataloguing & researching at home	7
Group's premises only open a short time each week so cost not justifiable	7
Not required for their work / not enough members with computer skills	5
Poor location / don't own building	3
Group is transitioning to new premises which will be connected	2
Use library computers	1
No electricity in building – generator in use	1
Security	1
n/a	3

“CCHG has no permanent premises and we rely on private internet access by members of the executive. Public internet access is available at the local library, which provides limited support to our group.”

“Most members do not see the need to have a internet connection as a priority. Three Members are cataloguing items on their own computers”

“No phone line, black spot for transmission towers.”

“The council has declined to connect our facility to the internet.”

“Only a small group and not enough members know how to use it. Also no-one is at the museum full time.”

5. How many catalogue records does your society have? (99 responses)

0-500	24	24%
500-1,000	9	9%
1,000-5,000	31	32%
5,000-10,000	17	17%
Over 10,000	18	18%

6. Is your catalogue computerised? (99 responses)

Computerised and available online	15	15%
Computerised but not available online	51	52%
Not computerised	33	33%

7. What cataloguing software does your group use? Do you run it on a PC or a Mac? Is your cataloguing software serving your needs and is it user friendly? (69 responses)

Not everyone answered the PC/Mac part of the question. Where Victorian Collections and Textworks are shown with no computer brand I will count it as both/either and PC respectively.

PC	47
Mac	3
Both/either	8

DB/Textworks	26
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Victorian Collections / 'Museum Archive free software 2009' / MAV system	10
MS Excel or Word	11
Unspecified, in-house designed software	7
Filemaker	5
MS Access	3
Vernon (eHive)	2
Library Thing	1
Copernic Desktop	1
Tabularium	1
Collection Mosaic	3
Small Library Organiser Pro	1
IBM Notes	1

Most were happy with their software, or expressed no opinion about it, apart from:

Unhappy with DB/Textworks	3
Unhappy with Victorian Collections	2
Unhappy with in-house software	1
Unhappy with Mosaic	1

"We have designed our own software. It runs on Ubuntu, Windows and Mac. We find it user friendly and adapt it to our needs."

"Software designed for our society only, run on a PC. It is not serving our needs and is not user friendly for most of our members."

"PC and laptops, InMagic. It's good because we still use the 1990s MA system. We're on Victorian Collection but only slightly and badly, as we're too busy to improve it. We catalogue on paper first, then one member is responsible for database entry"

“We do not use any formal cataloguing software but use a structural flowchart arrangement for retrieving information.”

“Use PC's. Attempted to use Inmagic but software not friendly and not enough skills available. Now use Copernic Desktop search extended names for files/photos to find information.”

“We trained to use Victorian Collections, but found the organisation required was beyond the time we had available.”

“We started cataloguing using Maxus DB/TextWorks but have transferred to Victorian Collections due to cost constraints. We run on PC and are happy with the software but miss some of the extras provided by DB/TextWorks”

“MOSAIC Collections Runs on pc laptop Very satisfactory - but has steep learning curve”

“MOSiAC on PC, still setting up V10. Cataloguing is incomplete: forever ongoing = quite complicated. Currently updating PC's from WindowsXP/7”

8. Does your group have a website? (99 responses)

Yes, a website maintained by the group	60	61%
Yes, a web page hosted by the local municipality or other organisation	21	20%
No	18	18%

9. Does your group undertake any collection digitisation projects? Please specify. (99 responses)

(Note: Many groups mentioned multiple material formats digitised or undergoing digitisation, I have included all.)

Images / negatives	31
Documents (e.g. rate books, member cards, court records etc)	14
Entire collection	9
Newspaper	9
Special collections	5

Audio interviews / sound archives / video	5
Journal	1
Maps	2
As needed	4
In the planning stages	10
No / 'what's that?'	28

"Occasionally via Victorian Collections"

"All photographs being digitised, other records as required. All 3D objects are photographed. (It could have been useful to break down catalogue records into archival material and 3D objects above. RHSV has a poor record of recognising that most regional collections are blended archival and 3D objects)"

"Yes. Nearly all our images are digitised. Those prior to about 2006 are available on TROVE (Picture Victoria). Those after 2006 are only available via the Society as we have yet to find a suitable host to store them 'on the cloud'. It would need to be no-cost or a one off very, very low cost fee."

"Some years ago onto Inmagic (?) but we were unable to maintain software updates."

10. Have you sought and/or received any grants for the digital engagement of your group in the past 5 years? If so, please specify. (99 responses)

(Note: if grants for more than item were mentioned I have listed all.)

Digitisation projects (specific)	10
Equipment (computer, scanner)	6
Unspecified, NLA, Community Bank, PROV, ongoing support of local council, DSS volunteer grants	8
Software upgrades/installation (DB/Textworks)	1
Website construction	1
Training (Collections Mosaic)	1
Applied, but unsuccessful	6

No

68

“Yes but unsuccessful. Have recently bought \$24000 scanner from our own funds. We have had small local volunteer grants that have purchased new computers over the period.”

“All applications have been unsuccessful”

“No. We don't have a collection as such. We upload digital records to Victorian Collections, and with a logon are able to download large conservation files from the Melbourne Museum Server”

C. Conclusions & Recommendations

General

It seems clear from these results that an absence of an internet connection at a group's premises does not necessarily equate to an absence of digital engagement.

That 299/304 groups had an email address (albeit many private email addresses of office bearers) amongst their contact details is positive.

That 61% of respondents have a website that is maintained by the group is also positive. Concerning that 18% have no website.

It is concerning that 33% of respondents have not computerised their catalogues. Of those: 17 have 0-500 records ; 4 have 500-1000 records ; 10 have 5,000-10,000 records and 1 has 5,000-10,000 records.

Groups not connected

Of the 42 groups without a connection at their premises, 28 reported cost and/or lack of phone line/reception as reasons for not being connected. As more of the NBN is rolled out around Victoria, we can expect connection to be cheaper and easier in many places.

Other groups either didn't have premises or felt no need for connection because members carry out cataloguing and online research at their homes. Other groups said that the group's premises is only open a short time each week so, while the cost may well be affordable to some, it would not be justifiable for such a short period. Some groups are using dongles to access the internet at their premises during those very limited opening hours.

Some of the groups that don't have premises are operational as an historical society but the collection is looked after by another body e.g. council archives in Stonnington and Port Phillip, Uniting Church Historical Society / the Synod Archives. There are also new groups (such as Victorian Interpretive Project, Inc.), which deal only in digital material, and we will see more of these kinds of entities in the future.

Cost of Connection vs Funding Applications

Of the 18 groups which cited cost as an inhibitor to internet connection, only one had applied for a grant for digital engagement in the last 5 years, and the purpose of that grant (DSS) was not specified (we do not know whether it was for infrastructure or digitisation).

Of the 10 groups which cited the lack of a phone connection or poor reception, only two had applied for a grant for digital engagement in the last 5 years. One was the recipient of the DSS grant (unspecified) mentioned above and the other group said 'Support of the Mornington Peninsula Shire which does not require seeking of grants'.

Some groups said they were looking forward to the arrival of the NBN in their region, but one of those stated that could be 18 months into the future.

Cataloguing Software

DB/Textworks is, predictably, the cataloguing software most used by the responding groups. On reflection, it would have been useful to ask the groups what version of cataloguing software they are using, as only a handful of groups gave this information.

There are also a dozen other systems in use, and there are just as many respondents using ordinary MS office applications as Victorian Collections. Two groups have their collections on eHive.

Recommendations

The RHSV is already doing much to encourage groups to be digitally engaged – perhaps this might include efforts to:

- increase awareness of funding sources for digital infrastructure to their premises if they require it (including grants, and other ways of raising funds)
- encourage expenditure of group funds from one expensive brand of software to internet connection - this needs to be shown in light of other benefits such as
 - free social media
 - increasing awareness of their collections by listing and displaying online
 - capacity for networking with other groups and collections online
- be a leader in moving to an internationally compliant cataloguing system, so that when the NBN is fully rolled out, and more societies than ever before become connected, they will have a great example to look to and assist them in realising their online potential.
- advocate for compliance with international standards for describing collections and for data harvesting – give groups a list of questions for their prospective software providers.

D. Groups that participated in the Survey

Adam Lindsay Gordon Commemorative Committee	Koroit Historical Society
Andrew Ross Museum (ARM) Kangaroo Ground	Lake Bolac & District Historical Society
Apollo Bay & District Historical Society	Landsborough & District Historical Group
Ararat & District Historical Society operating at Langi Morgala Museum	Lang Lang & District Historical Society
Australian Garden History Society	Learmonth & District Historical Society
Ballan Shire Historical Society	Leongatha & District Historical Society
Ballarat Historical Society	Lilydale & District Historical Society
Balnarring & District Historical Society	Little River Historical Society
Birchip Historical society	Maffra & District Historical Society / Maffra Sugarbeet Museum
Boisdale & District History Group	Maldon Museum & Archives Association
Boolara & District Historical Society	Mallacoota & District Historical Society
Box Hill Historical Society	Malmsbury Historical Society
Bright & District Historical Society	Melbourne Athenaeum Archives
Brighton Historical Society	Merrigum Historical Society
Bunyip Historical Society	Military Historical Society of Australia (Victorian Branch)
Canterbury History Group	Minyip & District Historical Society
Carlton Community History Group (CCHG)	Mirboo & District Historical Society
Castlemaine Historical Society	Moe & District Historical Society
Castlemaine Pioneers & Old Residents Association	Monbulk Historical Society
Cinema & Theatre Historical Society of Australia	Mt Dandenong & District Historical Society
Civil Aviation Historical Society	Mt Evelyn History Group
Coburg Historical Society	Murchison & District Historical Society
Colac & District Historical Society	Murtoa & District Historical Society
Croydon Historical Society	Myrtleford & District Historical Society
Daylesford & District Historical Society	Narre Warren & District Family History Group
Dimboola & District Historical Society	Nepean Historical Society
Eaglehawk Heritage Society	Nhill & District Historical Society
Echuca Historical Society	Ouyen District History & Genealogy Centre
El Dorado Museum Association	Paynesville Maritime Museum
Euroa Historical & Genealogical Society	Pioneer Aviator Society
Falls Creek Historical Society	Port Fairy Historical Society
Fannie Bay History & Heritage Society	Port Melbourne Historical & Preservation Society
Footscray Historical Society	Ringwood & District Historical Society
Friends & Relations of Gulf Station	Rochester Historical & Pioneer Society
Friends of Cheltenham Regional Cemeteries	Rod Jenkinson Horsham Historical Society
	Rupanyup Historical Society
	Rushworth & District Historical Society

Friends of the Collins Settlement,
Sorrento
Geelong Maritime Museum

Gisborne & Mount Macedon Districts
Historical Society
Glenthompson Historical Group
Harcourt Valley Heritage & Tourist Centre
Hawthorn Historical Society
Heidelberg Historical Society
Huntly & districts' Historical Society
Inverleigh Historical Society
Katamatite Historical Society
Katandra & District History Group
Keilor Historical Society
Kilmore Historical Society

Sandringham & District Historical Society
Sovereign Hill Museums Association
Springvale & District Historical Society
St John Ambulance Historical Society
(Victorian Branch)
Stawell Historical Society [listed only as
'Jim Melbourne']
Terang & District Historical Society
The Salvation Army Heritage Centre
Torquay Museum Without Walls
Uniting Church Historical Society, Synod of
Victoria & Tasmania
Upper Yarra Valley Historical Society
Victorian Interpretive Projects
Whittlesea Historical Society
Woolsthorpe & District historical society
Yarrawonga Mulwala Historical Society