historycouncilnsw

Executive Summary: History Sector State of Play Survey

Background

In April 2013 the History Council of NSW (HCNSW) conducted an online survey of the history sector in NSW. The survey was run using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. To date no comprehensive survey of the history sector has been undertaken, although some parts of the sector have been researched in detail, such as Anna Clark's *History's Children* in 2008, which examined students and teachers responses to the NSW History Curriculum. It is anticipated this survey will be run periodically as a monitoring tool.

Purpose

The purpose of the HCNSW History Sector State of Play Survey was to take a snapshot of the history sector today in order to better understand who it involves, how it is functioning and inform planning for how to make improvements and address key issues.

Objectives

The objectives of the HCNSW History Sector State of Play survey were as follows:

- Fulfil the role of the peak body in understanding our constituents.
- Strengthen relations with our constituents and raise awareness of the role and services of the peak body.
- Ascertain an informed understanding of what constitutes the 'history sector'. What do we mean by history and what organisations are we servicing as the peak body?
- Encourage cohesion across the sector.
- Communicate with organisations that don't necessarily identify with the sector.

History Council of NSW
PO Box R1737 Royal Exchange NSW 1225
T 02 9252 8715 F 02 9252 8716
E admin@historycouncilnsw.org.au

What is the History Sector?

Our definition of the history sector encompasses organisations and individuals working in both professional and voluntary capacities to make and communicate history. Some elements of our sector are focussed on the creation of new knowledge and primary research; others concentrate on the communication of our historical knowledge to general audiences. Others are involved in history for personal interest or passion.

Method

The History Sector State of Play survey was sent to 1714 individual email addresses and circulated by 41 sister organisations including: universities; cultural institutions; three levels of government; professional historians; education sector; museum professionals; local and community history; genealogists and publishers.

739 respondents participated over a three week period.

The results are slightly skewed towards tertiary sector professionals, as these individuals are/were simpler to reach by direct means. Conversely many older people working as volunteers in community organisations proved difficult to target because of reduced digital access and capability. As a small organisation with limited resources, currently online surveying is the only plausible research method. Alternative qualitative approaches could be considered for groups unlikely to complete an online survey such as some members of the Aboriginal community and elderly volunteers.

Despite these influencing factors on the respondents to the survey the broad reach of the HCNSW membership is also indicated in a diverse number of respondents.

Results

Individuals

The first section of the survey gathered demographic information on individual respondents.

The results indicate that 59% of respondents are over 50 years of age, with 29% in the 36-50 age bracket. Anecdotally we know that many history organisations are concerned with the aging population of their members and actively seek younger members. In addition this result raises the question of where younhistory graduates are finding work.

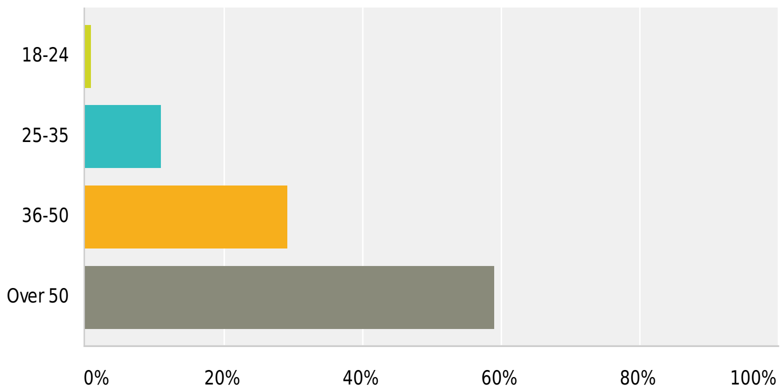

Figure 1 - Age bracket of respondents

Of the respondents, 64% were female.

Of the respondents 36% hold a PhD, 22% a Master's Degree and 28% a Bachelors Degree: this was a highly educated sample. 58% of those degrees are in History, with an additional 43% of respondents holding degrees in Arts or related history disciplines. These results indicate that the history sector is a highly educated one, that is specifically trained in history or related disciplines such as museum studies or the arts.

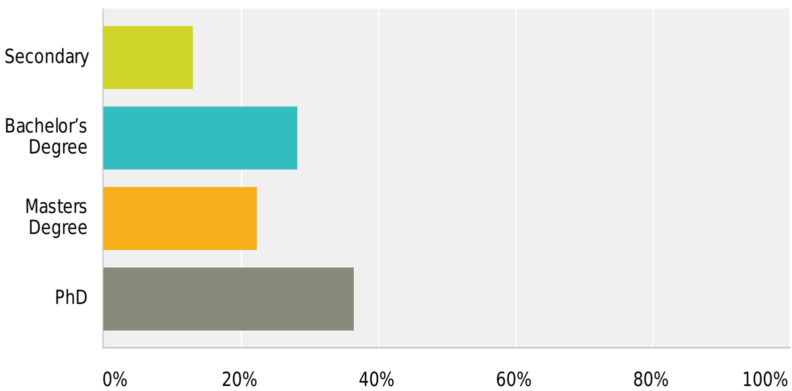

Figure 2 - Education level of respondents.

The spread of survey respondents across different roles in the history sector was quite even and diverse:

Curator	10.55%	77
Professional Historian	15.07%	110
Tutor/Lecturer/Senior Lecturer	16.99%	124
Associate Professor/Professor/Emeritus Professor	10%	73
Undergraduate Student	0.68%	5
Postgraduate Student	7.26%	53
Consultant	5.48%	40
Project Manager	5.89%	43
Event Manager	4.52%	33
Administrative Support	4.38%	32
Managerial/Executive	10.14%	74
Librarian	6.44%	47
Archivist	12.74%	93
Publisher	5.75%	42
Film Maker	0.96%	7
Community Volunteer	12.74%	93
Personal Interest Researcher/Family Historian	15.75%	115
Teacher	6.30%	46
Tour Guide	4.93%	36
Heritage Tourism Operator	2.19%	16
Other (please specify below)	7.81%	57
Total Respondents: 730		

Figure 3 - Primary roles of survey respondents.

More than 50% of respondents held more than one role in history. 40% of respondents were employed in Permanent Full Time position as their primary form of engagement with history, with 22% engaging on a voluntary basis and 11 % on a contract basis. These results could indicate that while full time history sector professionals are well paid that they also work in roles, often in a voluntary capacity in addition to their full time roles, which would suggest that much community sector volunteer run history has the involvement of professionally trained historians. This is an area that could be explored further.

The majority of those in paid employment are earning over $71,000 per annum (36%). The top pay bracket option was $91,000+ per annum.

A diverse area of practice was represented, with academia, archives and libraries, museums and local history reflecting the lion share. The majority of paid roles in the history sector are located within the government and tertiary sectors.

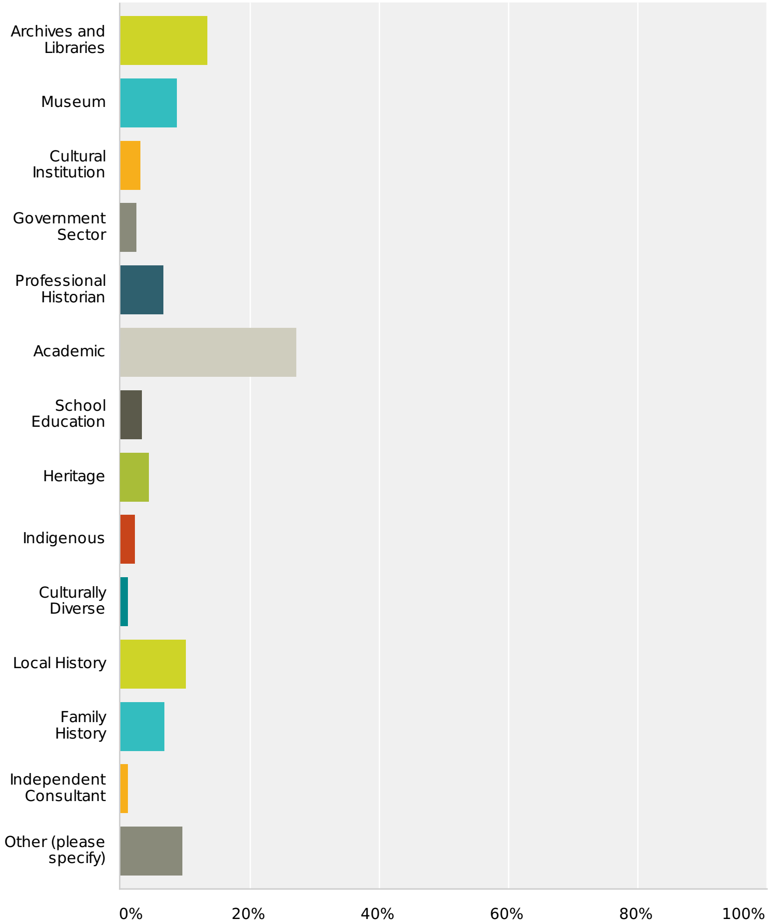

Figure 4 - Respondents area of practice.

The majority of people report being engaged in history due to personal interest, passion or enjoyment, with work conditions being secondary motivations.

In summary the history sector is made up of highly educated individuals who are driven by passion for history.

Organisations

Section Two explored the organisations that make up the history sector.

Of the respondents the majority were based in academic institutions (34%) with cultural institutions (10%), community organisations (11%) and local government (8%). The large number of respondents employed in academic and cultural institutions reflects in the pay scales outlined in section one. 80% of respondents consider their organisations to be a part of the history sector, with 51% describing history as 'very important' and 31% 'important' to their core business. The large number of people who identify with the history sector and described their work as very important or important to their organisation perhaps demonstrates something about the way respondents view their work - they see their work as important, but do not necessarily conceive of how others within and outside of their organisations might view it. This could be followed up in research into other fields.

The outcomes of work were varied and demonstrate that history sector organisations are producing multiple outcomes. The majority of history sector organisations are operating on small staffing resources with 55% of respondents working in organisations with under 20 staff. These results are supported by anecdotal evidence that people within the history sector are often simultaneously working on multiple projects and overloaded in their work.

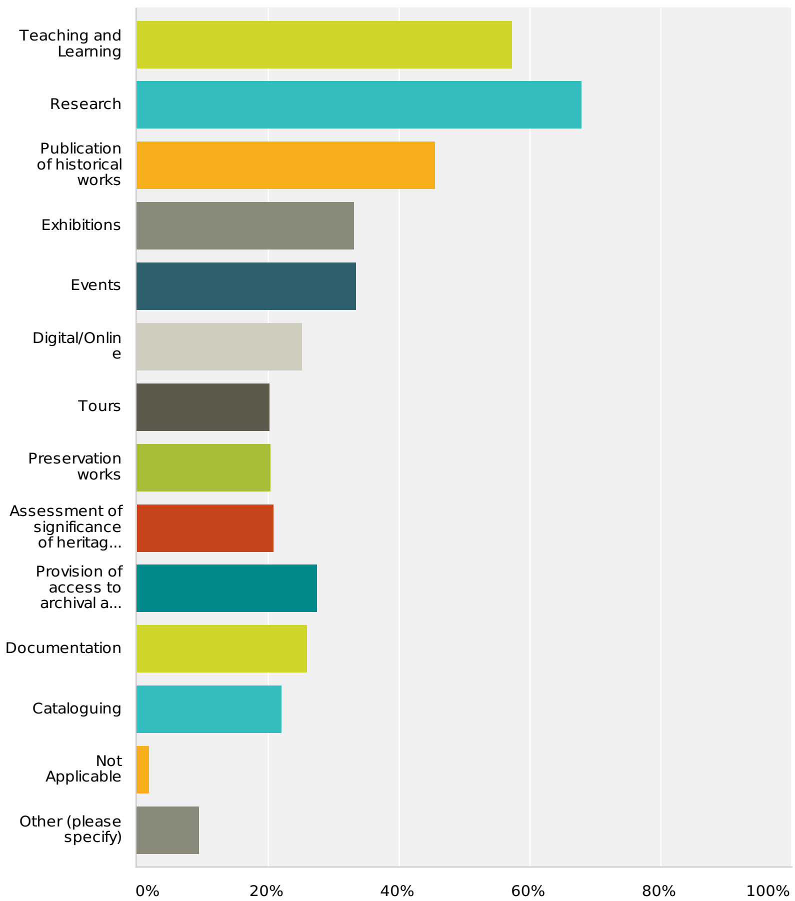

Figure 5 - Work outcomes of respondents.

History Audiences

Few respondents had considered specific audiences for their history work outcomes and output. 50% of respondents nominated ‘everyone’ as their target audience and 11% admitted to having ‘no specific audience’.

Those who did have a clear idea of audience nominated people over 36 and tertiary educated as their primary audience. This reflects HCNSW research into the audience for History Week, generally termed ‘traditional history followers’. Income bracket is not generally considered to be important.

While people working within the history sector are highly dedicated and passionate about their work; and produce multiple outcomes with lean resources, it is clear that audience development has not been as considered. It would seem the majority of history products are not being developed with consideration of demographics such as audience, age and income. The HCNSW would like to conduct further research on the market value and appeal of history products that target specific audiences.

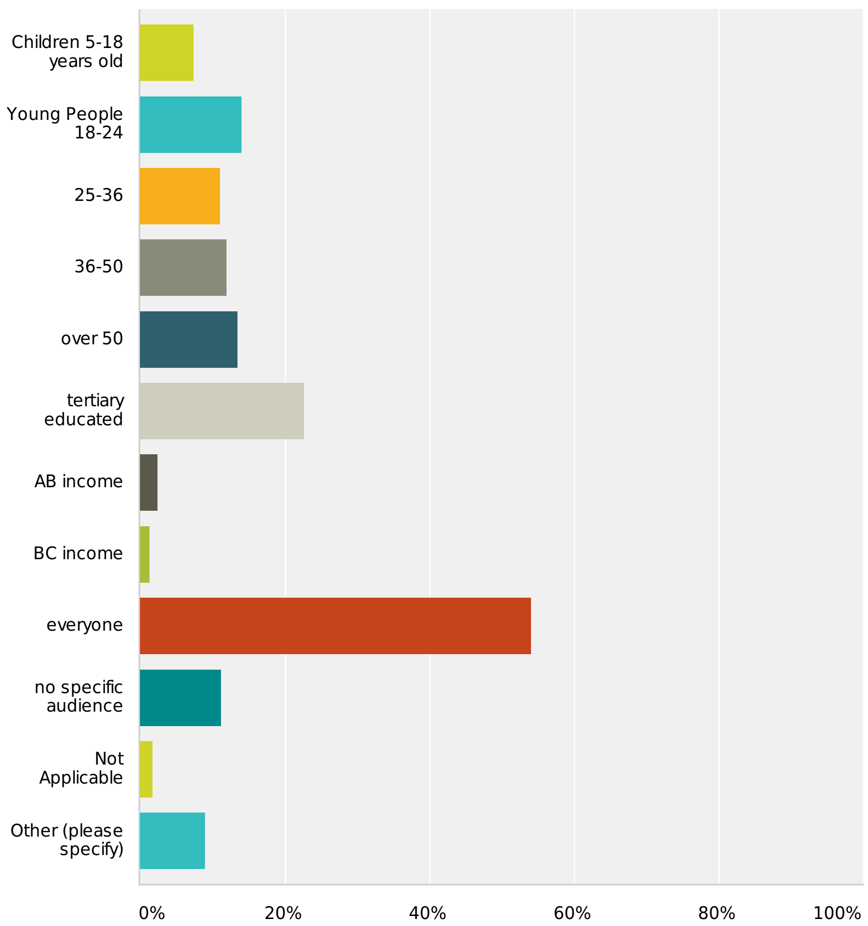

Figure 6 - Target audience categories of respondents.

Funding and Partnerships

The vast majority of funding to the history sector comes from government funding. Around 80% of respondents reported some level of government grants as a source of their income. Other key revenue sources included membership and tuition fees. Only 15% of respondents reported success in gaining sponsorships. The reliance on government funding could indicate why respondents were unable to define their audiences.

606 out of a total of 739 respondents reported working in partnership with other organisations. The majority of these partnerships were with government, education and arts and culture sector organisations.

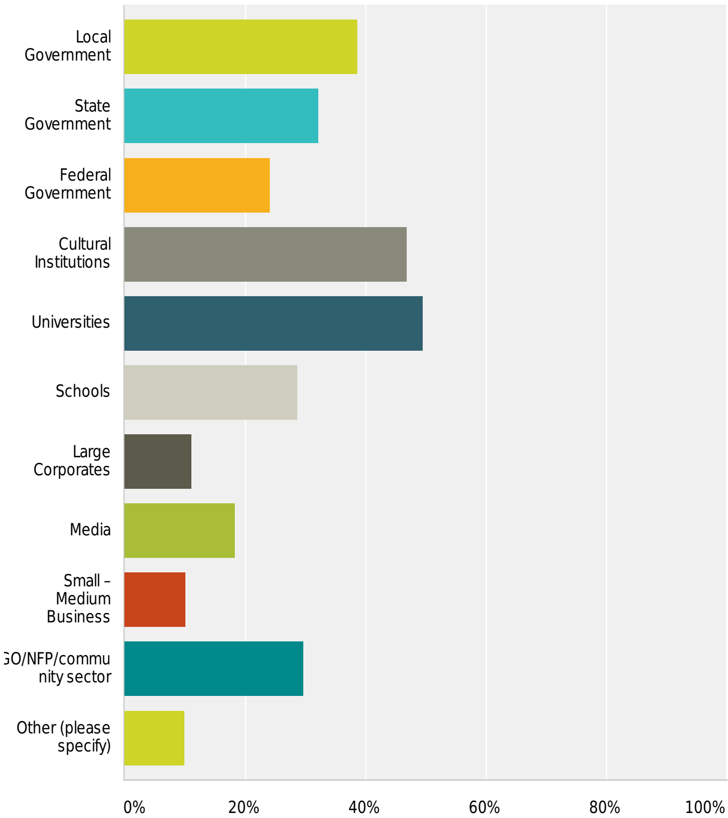

Figure 7 - Organisations respondents have worked in partnership with.

In summary, the history sector represents a broad range of organisations with a diverse and extensive output. It works frequently in partnership with other organisations and is heavily reliant on government funding. It is facing serious challenges in securing funding as the public sector is reducing its expenditure leading to tight resource environments and heavy workloads. The sector

needs to critically assess and develop its audiences to assist marketability of products and gain sponsorship support.

The HCNSW

Section Three gathered information about the respondents knowledge of the HCNSW. The results were positive but demonstrate that the HCNSW can communicate better about its advocacy role. In summary:

- 86% of respondents were aware of the HCNSW prior to taking the survey.
- 92% were aware of History Week, with 88% having participated as audience members or in events.
- Only 26% of respondents are members of the HCNSW. 33% requested information on membership.
- 59% of respondents were aware of the HCNSW's advocacy role.
- 61% of respondents are happy to receive correspondence from HCNSW and 37% would like to receive the e-news.

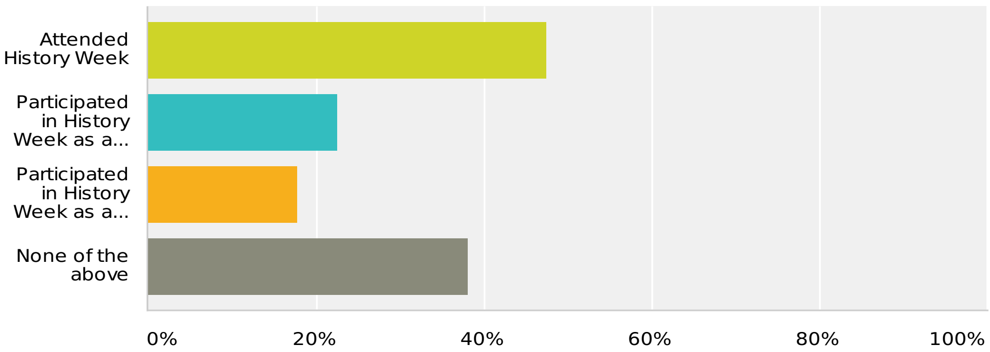

Figure 8 - History Week participatiion of respondents.

historycouncilnsw

Key Findings and Recommendations

The overwhelming response to this survey shows that people are invested in the history sector, committing long term through extensive tertiary studies and work outside of their main roles.

This survey has confirmed much anecdotal knowledge that the HCNSW has about the history sector such as the age bracket of the majority of its participants and the healthy participation of women. It has also confirmed that many people feel overloaded and are concerned about funding.

More revealing is that while funding is perceived to be the greatest challenge facing the history sector, it is in fact audience development. The decline in government funding for history and the arts is set to continue. In this context it is imperative that the history sector finds ways to prove its value and worth beyond that which is obvious to its participants. A critical assessment of the outcomes of work in the history sector and how those outputs are accessed by people outside the sector could be an avenue for further research. In particular this should be considered in light of the under-resourcing within the history sector. It could be worth asking questions about what projects connect better with audiences and why.

The survey also did not consider in much detail the issue of career progression and development in the sector. This is an important area considering the majority of respondents were over 50 years of age. In addition the changing demands of the sector will need to be met by forthcoming graduates.

The HCNSW will be taking the following steps in response to these survey results:

- Presentations of the results will be offered to key sector bodies and this report will be made available for circulation.
- A peak body roundtable discussion will take place in November to discuss the findings of the survey and stakeholder feedback from the presentations.
- Identification of strategies to address key issues raised in the survey will be incorporated into our strategic and business plan.
- Further research could include qualitative research and follow up surveys on particular elements.
- A general population survey could be developed to gain insights into how people outside the sector are accessing and responding to history sector outputs.
- It is envisaged that this survey will provide a springboard to further research and discussion on the broader history sector as a whole, not just across the state but nationally as well.