Exploring Accessibility Practices in Institutional Repositories

Southern Mississippi Institutional Repositories Conference

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Presenters

- Colleen Lyon
  - Head of Scholarly Communication
  - University of Texas at Austin

- Laura Waugh
  - Digital Collections Librarian
  - Texas State University

- Nerissa Lindsey
  - Head of Content Organization and Management
  - San Diego State University

Background

Accessibility in IR's Presentation

- Discussed current practices
- Provided overview of accessibility tools used in current workflows
- Presentation link: https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/7229

Accessibility in IRs Project

Collaborators

- Laura Waugh, Texas State University
- Colleen Lyon, University of Texas at Austin
- Abigail Shelton, University of Notre Dame
- Kristi Park, Texas Digital Library
- William Hicks, University of North Texas
- Nerissa Lindsey, San Diego State University
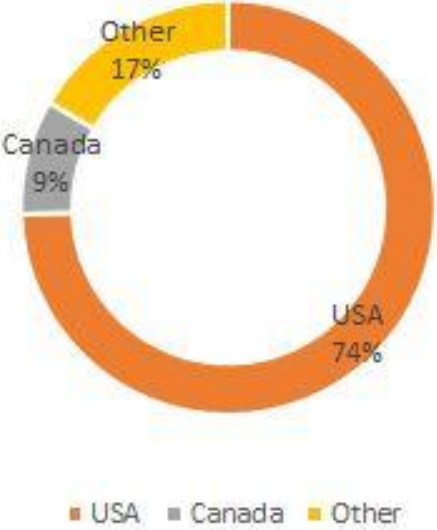
Survey: Fall 2019

Goals of this Study

- Understand the current landscape of accessibility practices in institutional repositories in academic libraries.
- Identify the average level of content accessibility implemented in institutional repositories in academic libraries.

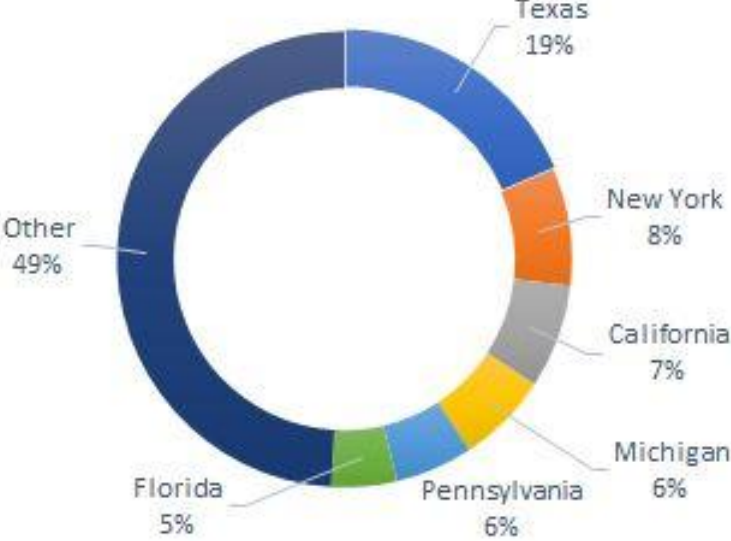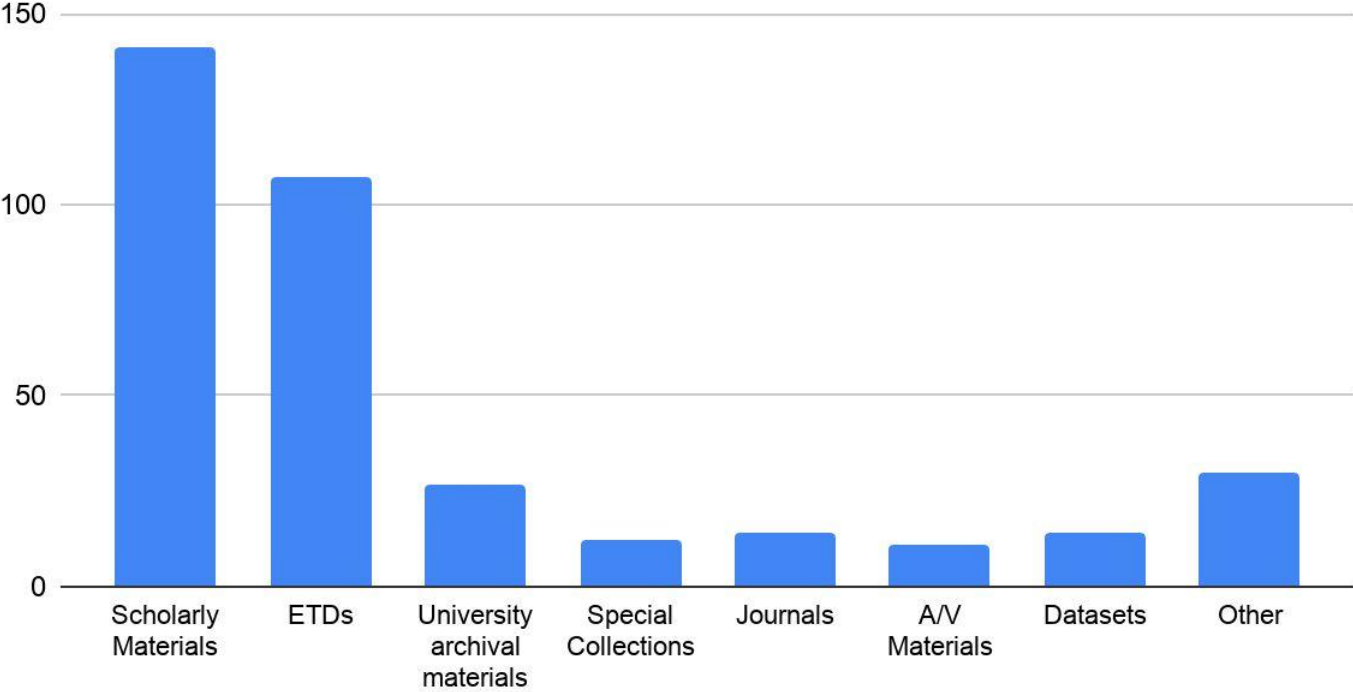## Focus on Digital Content and Workflows

- Report: https://digital.library.txstate.edu/handle/10877/12389
- Data: https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/LUGYPO

Total Responses: 145

Country of Institution

USA 74%
Canada 9%
Other 17%

■ USA ■ Canada ■ Other

US States

Texas 19%
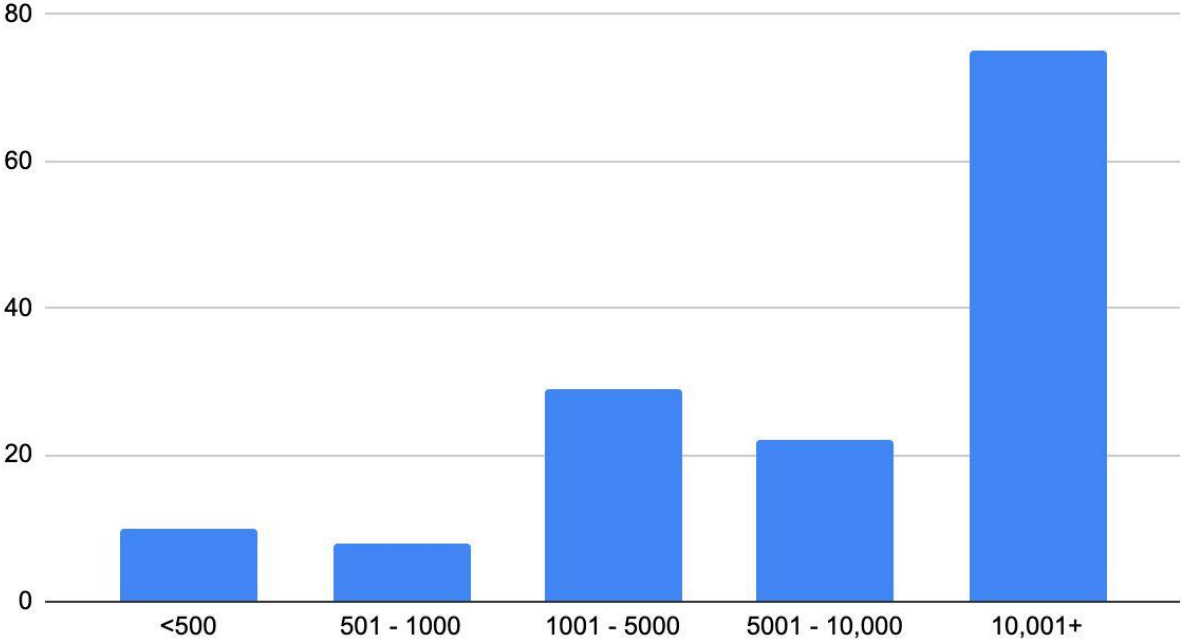New York 8%
California 7%
Michigan 6%
Pennsylvania 6%
Florida 5%
Other 49%

Types of Collections in the IR

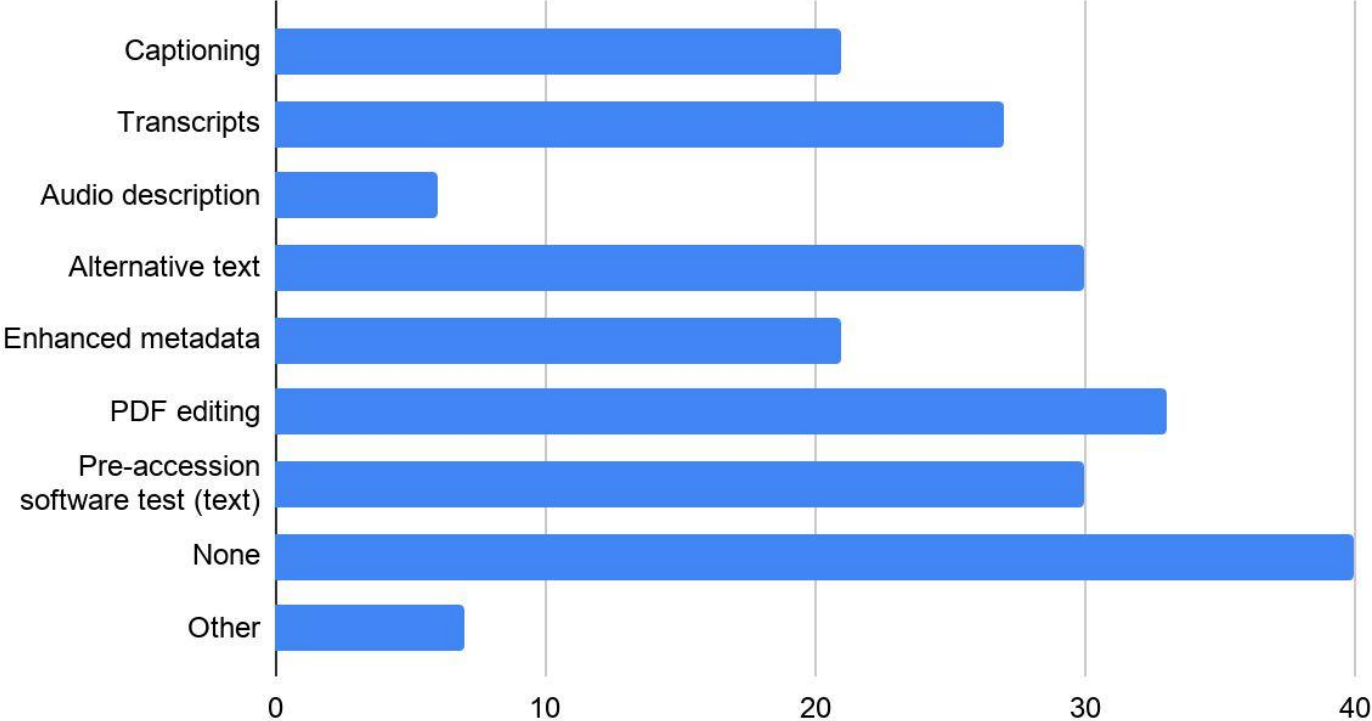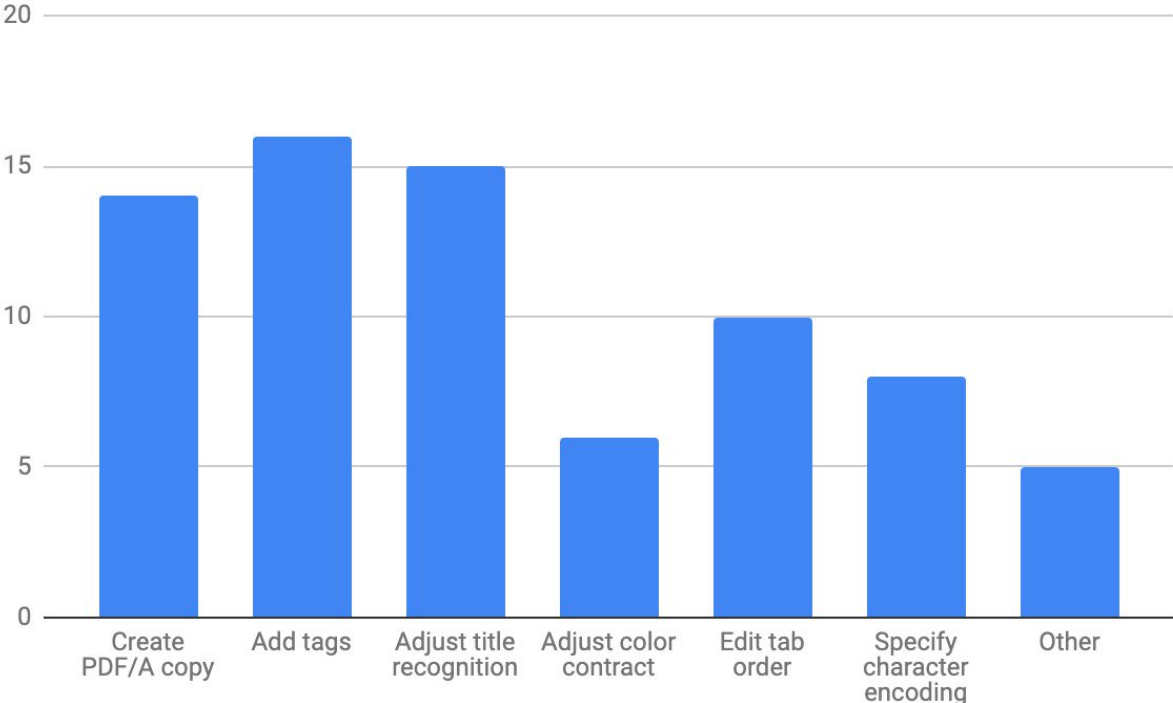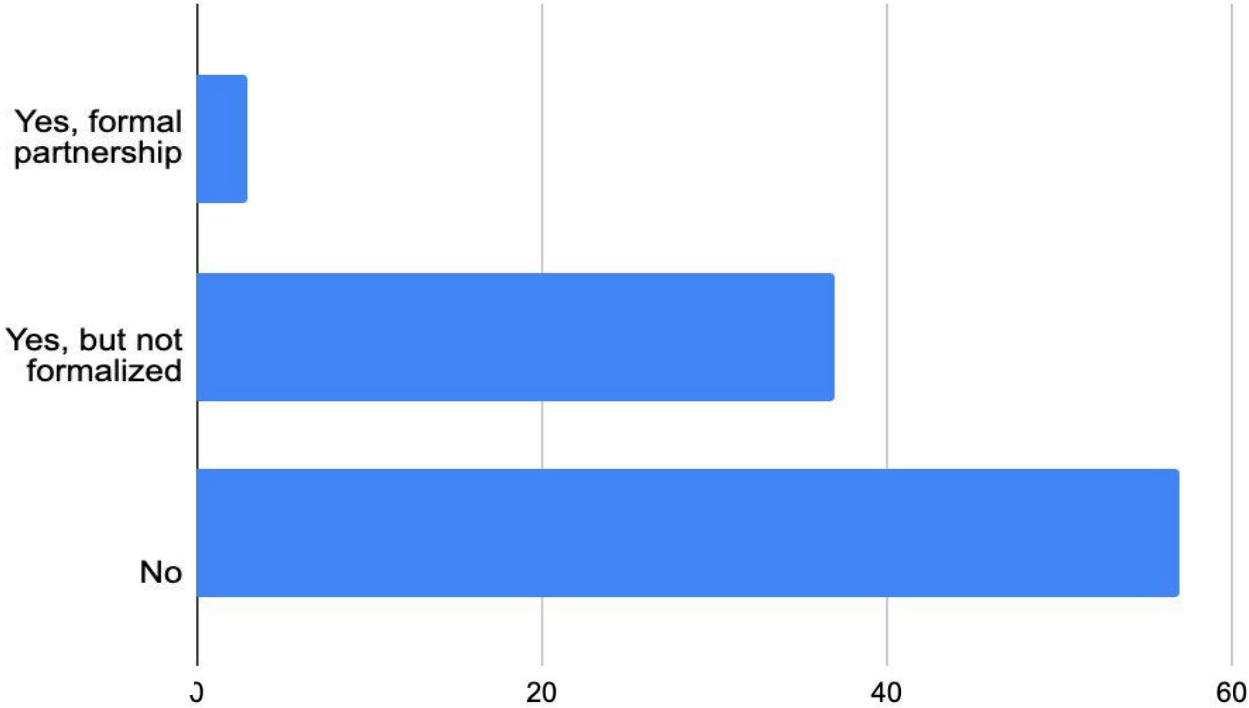# Total Number of Items in the IR
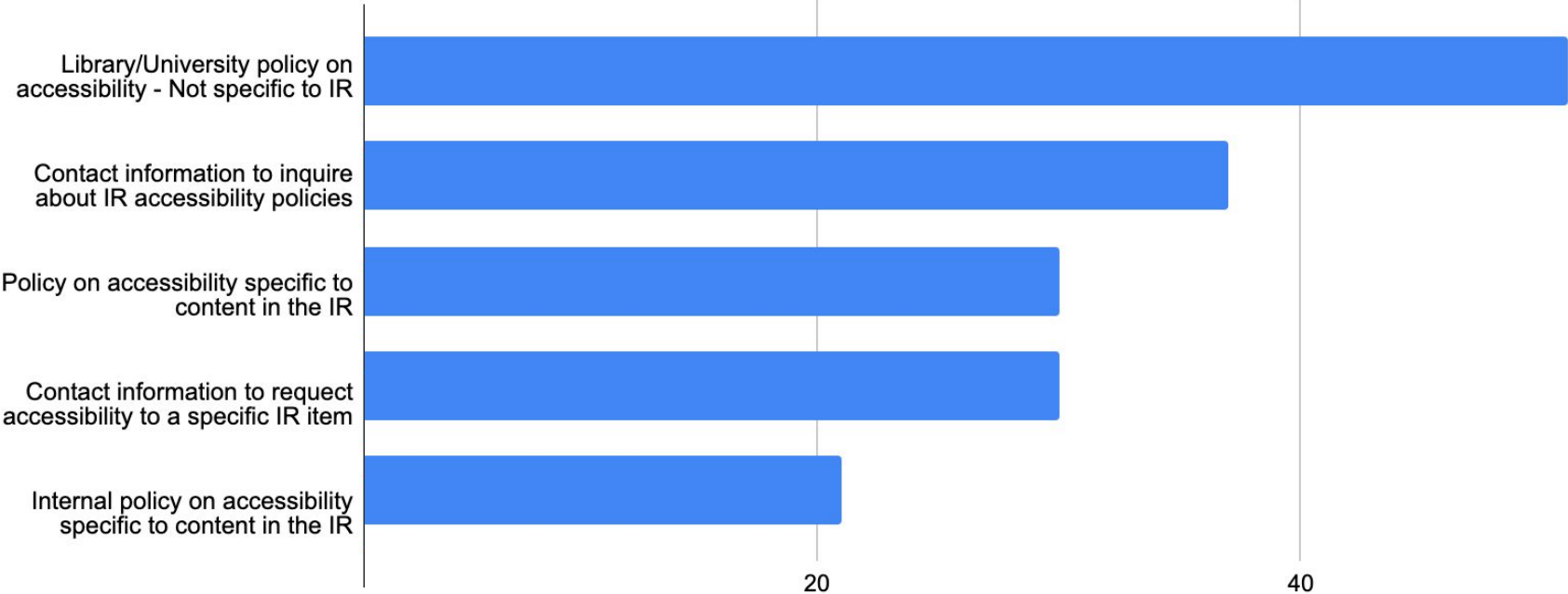
Current Accessibility Practices

PDF Editing Methods

Partnerships with Campus Disability Services

Information and Policies

Accessible Content Requests (2018-2019)
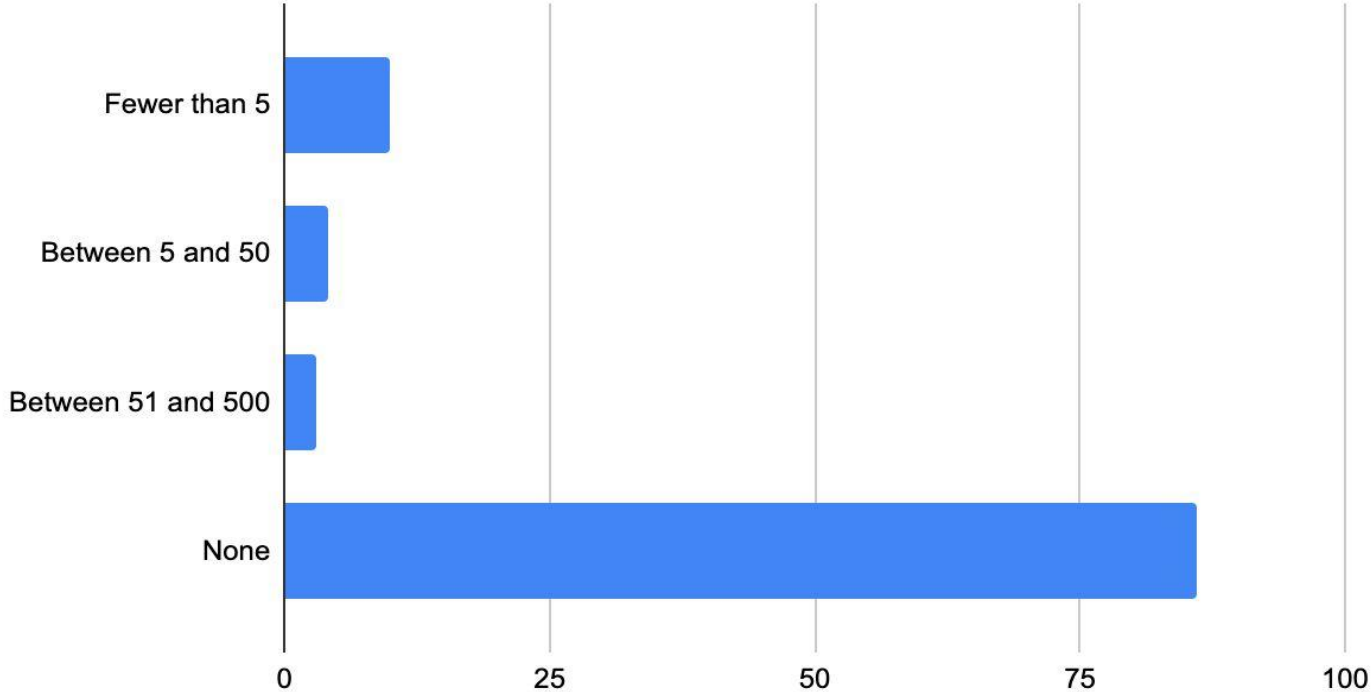
Ranking Challenges to Accessibility in the IR

Legend:
- Limited staffing
- Finances
- Lack of expertise
- Difficult to address for existing content
- Not high on the priority list
- Lack of guidance from institutional administration
- Lack of guidance from library administration
- Scaling up
- Lack of guidance from library community
- Lack of available tools (e.g., JAWS, WAVE, Adobe Acrobat, etc.)
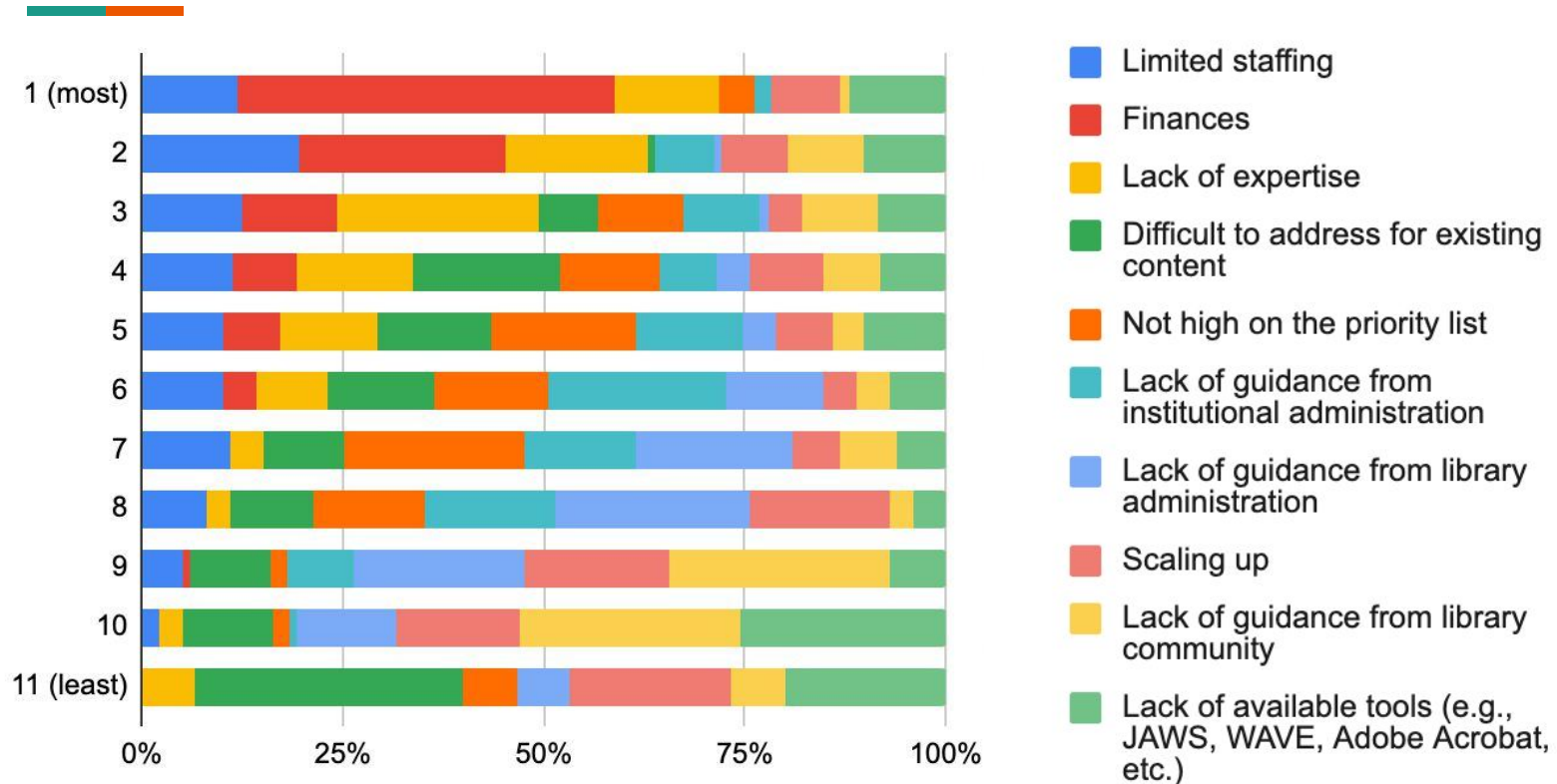
Factors Impacting Current Accessibility Practices

1. Personal commitment to accessibility

2. Institutional or library pressures for legal compliance

3. User requests

4. Library administration emphasis

Discussion & Next Steps

Gaps Identified by the Survey

Most often a personal commitment

> *"At my mid-sized institution, limited staffing and resources means that it's up to me alone to educate myself and others about accessibility. I do what I can as I have to juggle other non-IR responsibilities (e.g., collection management, instruction, research, committee service, reference)."*

Gaps Identified by the Survey

Establishing Uniform Policies and Standards

> *"One of the biggest challenges has been to establish [a] threshold for accessibility that is consistent with our institutional standards, because at this time there is no institutional standard. In that regard, we have been the driving force for an accessibility standard that addresses content produced by the university."*

Gaps Identified by the Survey

Self-deposit Models

> *"It's up to the faculty [or graduate students] who submit to make their work accessible when they publish it. It's hard enough to get them to submit without having to require them to do a lot of work to the file(s). We don't edit the files afterwards because of trust. We want faculty [or graduate students] to trust we won't edit their work."*

Limitations and challenges

- Limited staffing with multiple priorities
- Amount of content often exceeds 5,000 items (upwards of 10,000)
- Scalability, limited partnerships and resources
- Lack of resources and standardized policies
- Self-deposit models common for IRs

Areas to Improve

Sharing and Establishing Policies (both public and internal)

- Some respondents indicated existing accessibility policies
- Useful to review and compare to identify commonalities
- Create example policies that institutions could customize
- Community best practices for IRs, with particular attention to content accessibility

Possible Next Steps for Data

- Look at size of institution and/or size of repository related to accessibility responses (i.e. are smaller repositories more likely to have accessible content?)
- Redo survey to look for pandemic related changes
- Create follow-up survey to look more at policy related issues

Questions?

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