

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEY DATA COMPILATION

The data about local/family history materials compiled in this document comes from a recent web-based survey of the public libraries in Georgia conducted by the Georgia HomePLACE project. The HomePLACE (Providing Library and Archives Collections Electronically) mission is to support and encourage participation by public libraries in The Digital Library of Georgia (DLG), thus providing a mechanism for getting local history and family history materials into the DLG through digitization. The purpose of the survey is to generate useful information that might be relevant to planning future digitization activities that could provide improved access to these important historical materials. The HomePLACE project is supported by an LSTA grant through the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS).

All the survey information included in this data compilation was gathered between June and November, 2003. To date, 82 valid responses, covering 90 counties and representing 50 library systems, have been received and are included in this compilation. Please note that most of the responses refer to a single county or perhaps a single library within a county, although some represent the multiple libraries or counties that make up a regional library system. HomePLACE staff will continue to accept survey responses.

The survey was designed to quickly gather information and to allow for follow-up. Survey participants generated responses via an online survey form (*please see copy appended to this report*). Most of the survey questions are structured in a checklist format (allowing for straightforward analysis of the resulting data), although some survey questions seek information in a more open-ended, free format, to allow respondents to speak more fully to complex situations. For example, for various categories of materials the respondents could provide straightforward answers about whether they hold those materials, actively collect them, what formats are involved, etc. The free format questions allow librarians to more freely address such matters as patrons' preferences, their own sense of priorities, etc. And of course several opportunities are provided for respondents to offer additional narrative information which might not fit into the preconceptions inherent in the form design.

Due to the survey form's length, we had to limit the types of materials respondents were asked to address. For example, there are several types of governmental records which we did not include in the survey. Moreover, there are obvious omissions of some widely held private historical materials – most notably photography, omitted because the Vanishing Georgia photography project has just been completed and it was felt that other types of materials should receive greater emphasis. However, respondents were encouraged to describe whatever materials were not directly elicited by the form in the “other” questions.

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Because the survey data is so extensive, we decided to present the compilation as a series of 38 separate Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, each of which includes all the responses to a specific question (or set of related questions) on the survey form. In order to keep the type size readable in the paper version of the report, we have reproduced each spreadsheet as a document of two pages; of course, this arrangement does not apply to readers who examine the electronic version, as they will see a single spreadsheet (although it may be necessary to scroll to see all of the spreadsheet).

The first data spreadsheet lists the respondents in the order in which they were received. Within data spreadsheets 2 through 38, the respondents are sorted alphabetically by library name as submitted by the respondents.

It is important to mention that the survey data has been left intact as it was received wherever possible – consequently readers will occasionally encounter original typos, misspellings, grammatical errors, etc., but these do not seriously detract from the value of the information. More subtle discrepancies are a few instances of inconsistent replies within the checklist sections – in some cases, these have been adjusted to more accurately reflect the probable reality – but such editorial changes have been enclosed in brackets so that the raw data remains intact and can still be identified by report readers.

For those who may wish to examine the totality of the survey information, the HomePLACE staff will be happy to provide an electronic spreadsheet upon request that includes all the valid survey data in a single file. Also, we can provide a complete set of data for a single respondent (in simple text format only).

***Many thanks to Merryll Penson for guiding development of the survey structure and for inviting (and reminding) participants, to Jay Forbes for developing the online survey form and the database mechanism, to Laura Carter for suggesting data categories and testing the form, to GPLS staff for getting the word out to potential participants, and of course to all those librarians who submitted their survey responses!***