Ontario Public Libraries in the Digital World
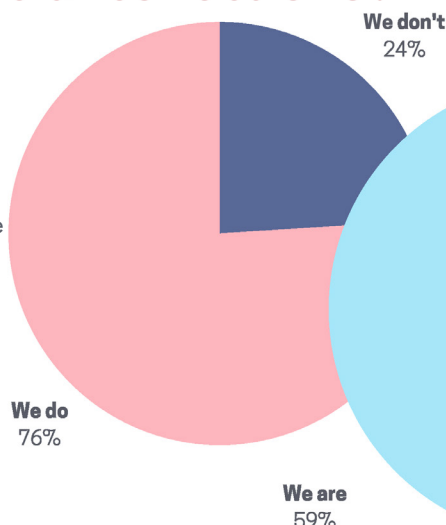## A Fresh Look

You can get fascinating historical documents, vintage photos, rare books, and old maps from archives, galleries, and museums. But what kind of special collections are available in Ontario public libraries? How are those libraries answering the demand to put everything online? We asked:

How many libraries have special collections?

55% of Ontario public libraries weighed in, covering 90% of the provincial population.

Over three quarters of these respondents have special collections of some kind.
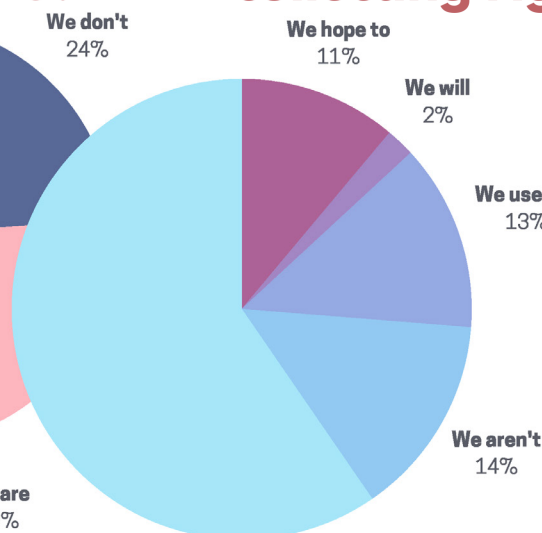
That could be the only full run of the community newspaper, a set of high school yearbooks, a collection of donated scrapbooks, or local government records.

We don't 24%

We do 76%

How many libraries are collecting right now?

More than half of public libraries are currently accepting unique collections, with another 13% thinking about it for the future.

Some libraries that used to collect have transferred their materials to a local archives, museum, or gallery.

We hope to 11%

We will 2%

We used to 13%

We aren't 14%

We are 59%

How do libraries build special collections?

Most public libraries have taken donations when offered, although lots of other collecting methods are used - including accepting digital materials, and borrowing materials to keep a digital copy.

Many public libraries are repositories for organizational records from local businesses, community groups, or municipal governments.

A quarter of responding libraries are creating materials themselves, such as by recording audio or video oral histories with community members.

80% Accepting unsolicited donations

31% Digitizing borrowed materials

30% Soliciting donations

28% Taking organizations' records

24% Taking government records

24% Making oral histories

How often do libraries digitize?

We're done! **3%**

We're planning it right now. **6%**

We last digitized more than 3 years ago. **12%**

We've digitized in the past 3 years. **15%**

We'd like to, but no plans yet. **27%**

We're digitizing right now! **37%**

Of libraries with special materials that can be shared online, more than a third of respondents said they're doing digitization right now. Another third said they're hoping to do it one day.

30% aren't currently working on it now, but have done digitization projects in the past - including four libraries that say they've already digitized all available materials!

Stay tuned for the full report in January 2019: follow OurDigitalWorld @

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