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SCHOLARS' TRUST

The Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust (EAST) Program Assessment – Final Report

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Executive Summary

In late 2020, the Project Team and Executive Committee of the Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust ([EAST](#)) undertook the first formal assessment of the shared print program since its inception in 2015/16. The goal of the assessment was to better understand the value of EAST from the perspective of member libraries and solicit feedback to inform strategic directions and future planning.

Working first with the full Executive Committee (EC) and later with two representatives from the EC, the Project Team drafted a goal statement and developed a survey focusing on overall satisfaction with EAST and its work in support of the mission, feedback on EAST policies and procedures including ongoing member communication, input on approaches to growing the EAST collective collection as well as on EAST's future strategic direction. The survey was reviewed by an assessment expert and tested before being distributed to the EAST members. Survey Monkey® was used to develop and distribute the survey.

Fifty-three of the EAST members (68% of the then 78 voting members) responded to the survey. Of the respondents, 50 are Retention Partners committed to retaining monographs and/or serials and journals. The remaining three are Supporting Partners which support EAST financially but are not retention partners. EAST requested a single consolidated response from the library and the majority of those completing the survey were Deans/Directors, AUL's or department heads.

The major themes which ran through the responses were:

Growing importance of collaboration across the larger shared print community

Respondents fully endorsed EAST's work in protecting the scholarly record and ensuring ongoing access to it. Their responses also reinforced the importance of the role EAST plays in allowing libraries to reclaim and repurpose space. Equally important to this space reclamation from the perspective of the members is EAST's participation in shared print at the national and continental level. Specific initiatives across both the [Rosemont Shared Print Alliance](#) and the [Partnership for Shared Book Collections](#) were endorsed and members' comments indicated a growing understanding of the role shared print can play in the life cycle of collection management. EAST's work in supporting the development of best practices for shared print, its advocacy for a more robust and open infrastructure, and the focus on cooperation and collaboration across programs are seen as important and strategic initiatives.

Increased emphasis on access

In addition to acknowledging the importance of access as a component of the EAST mission, members stressed the need to expand shared print lending networks and emphasized the need for EAST to facilitate digitization of retained collections as a way to further access to shared print content. The impact of the pandemic in shuttering physical collections would have been top of mind as members encouraged EAST to work to further opportunities for shared print content to be more easily discoverable and accessible across the member libraries.

Concern over budgets and staffing

Not surprisingly, members raised concerns over the impact that reduced budgets and shrinking staff will have on their ability to contribute to or even participate in shared print. While the vast majority of EAST members acknowledge the value their participation in shared print has brought and will continue to bring them, it is clear that EAST must continue to provide value in ways that minimize the impact on local budgets and staffing.

Emphasis on growing the diversity of shared print

As has been seen in the program assessments of other shared print programs (see, for example, the [2019 WEST Program Assessment](#)), EAST members emphasized the need to expand the diversity and inclusiveness of the membership and to grow the collective collection through specialized and rare collections.

General appreciation of the quality of EAST overall

Overall, members rated EAST as effective and see shared print as playing an increasingly important role both operationally and strategically in the future of their libraries. The depth of expertise and professionalism of the Project Team and EAST's focus on its mission have allowed it to grow to become an established and sustained effort that reflects the commitment of its member libraries to protecting and preserving the print scholarly record.

As we move to a post-pandemic time, it will be important for EAST to evaluate its future directions in light of the above themes and to continue to evolve the value it provides to its member libraries.

As one member commented:

“Shared print and initiatives like EAST figure prominently into strategic and operational planning, allowing strategy around collection building based on availability of print collections in local/national/international networks accessible via resource sharing.”

Process and Methodology

With assistance from the EAST Executive Committee, the Project Team drafted a goal statement for the program assessment, determined that the first step would be a comprehensive survey of the member libraries, and drafted a high-level outline of the major sections of the survey to include:

- Perspectives on the importance of EAST initiatives in support of its mission;
- Overall satisfaction with EAST, including the value membership provides, and likelihood of continuing to participate;
- Feedback on the integration of EAST into library operational workflows;
- Input on policies and procedures;
- Value of various forms of communication;
- Input on approaches to collection analysis and appetite for future participation in group collection analyses that would result in making additional retention commitments;
- Input on future strategic directions for EAST including interest in participation in new initiatives such as digitization;
- Feedback on EAST's participation in collaboration with other shared print programs through the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance and the Partnership for Shared Book Collections, as well as its advocacy for shared print more generally.

Once this outline was endorsed by the full Executive Committee (EC), the Project Team worked closely with two EC members, Peggy Seiden of Swarthmore College and Scott Warren of Syracuse University, to develop the specific survey questions.

The original plan had been to create two versions of the survey: one focused somewhat more on strategic issues which would be completed by the delegated EAST Voting Member (often but not always a Dean/Director or AUL) and a second version with more operationally oriented questions that would be sent to the EAST operational contact (typically a collections or technical services staff person). After developing drafts of the questions, the EC and Project Team agreed that having a single survey would better serve the goals and that asking the members to consult with relevant staff and provide a single response would be optimal.

Once a draft of the survey questions was completed, the EAST Project Director consulted with Dr. Margarita Corral, PhD and Data Analysis Specialist at Brandeis Library, Brandeis University. Dr. Corral reviewed the survey including its built-in logic and provided valuable feedback to ensure consistency in terminology and labeling. Prior to distribution, the EAST Project Team asked members of the EAST Executive Committee to test drive it as a final step.

The survey was distributed to the full EAST membership via email in the late fall of 2020. As EAST had scheduled its annual membership meeting for early December, initial responses were

requested by the end of November to provide time for an analysis of preliminary results and presentation as part of the annual meeting. The survey itself was closed on December 31st, 2020. The total elapsed time from initial drafting of the goals of the program assessment to receipt of final results of the survey was approximately five months.

Findings

Results from the responses to each of the major sections of the program assessment survey are provided below. Additional information on the responses to each of the questions on the survey is provided in the [Survey Results](#) appendix.

Findings: Demographics

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of EAST libraries responded to the survey. Of these, three are Supporting Partners and the others all Retention Partners. We asked for a single, consolidated response from each EAST member library. Some 40% of those completing the survey were Deans/Directors, 21% department heads and 16% associate or assistant deans. Other roles included cataloging/metadata librarian, collections librarians, and systems staff. See Question 37 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

The majority of the respondents consider themselves a part of library administration (60%), 50% identify their primary role as collections, 32% technical services, and 18% access services. See Question 38 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

Findings: Participation in Other Shared Print Programs

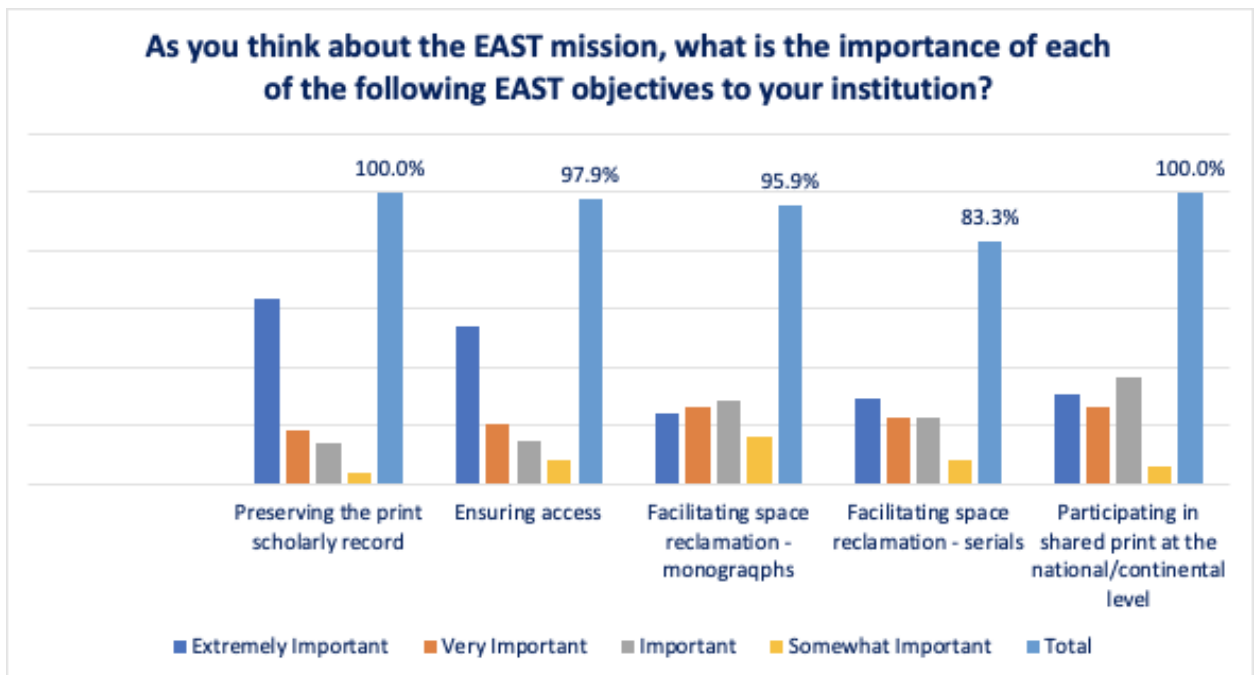
Of the respondents, almost 60% participate in at least one other shared print program, the majority of these – 43% - in the HathiTrust Shared Print Program. See Question 1 in the [Survey Results](#) for details. With increased pressure on library budgets, it will be increasingly important for EAST to focus on collaborative efforts that are not simply redundant of other shared print affiliations.

Of those who are involved in multiple shared print programs, a majority see opportunities for coordination across the programs with 64% supporting shared retention commitments and joint recording of retention commitments, 60% believe collaboration on collection analysis and providing a shared interlibrary loan lending network are important and 53% support commonly developed best practices. See Question 2 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

The two major themes of collaboration and access come through in this response.

Findings: Perspectives on the Importance of EAST Initiatives in Support of its Mission

This major section of the survey asked members to comment on the importance to their institution of specific EAST objectives and to then rate how well EAST is doing in achieving these same objectives. The chart below indicates those objectives seen as most important. The theme of collaboration comes through here along with the more common objectives of preservation, access, and space reclamation. See Question 4 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.



In rating how EAST is doing in achieving these top four objectives, the members responded:

- **On preserving the print scholarly record** – 34% extremely well, 51% very well, and 11% well or somewhat well for a total of 96% with 4% who don't know.
- **On ensuring access** – 25% indicated extremely well, 38% very well, 10% well and 2% somewhat well for a total of 75%. However, some 19% did not know, thus providing EAST with opportunities to improve communication on access opportunities.
- **On space reclamation** – 18% indicated extremely well, 36% very well, 24% well and 4% somewhat well for a total of 82%. On the monograph side, over 14% did not know and on the serials/journals side, over 27% did not know. Clearly there

are opportunities here for EAST to better communicate ways in which libraries can use the registered retention data as they undertake deaccessioning programs. Responses to this question likely also indicate that some EAST member libraries have not yet undertaken any major de-accessioning or space reclamation projects.

- **On participation in shared print nationally** – 38% indicated extremely well, 42% very well and 14% well for a total of 94%.

See Question 5 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

Overall, at least 75% of the respondents believe EAST is doing well in achieving these important objectives, although there remain clear opportunities in expanding access.

Members were also asked to comment on anything they believe EAST could be doing or doing differently to achieve its mission. Among the responses to this open-ended question were:

“Analyzing print acquisitions by member libraries since 2011/2012 to better predict the scale and trends that might shape a next phase of print retention.”

“I think looking more into CDL options for out of print materials could be one step moving forward.”

“Has there been any thought about partnering with HathiTrust to add digital preservation into the program? While print preservation is extremely important, maybe EAST could think about digitizing as another way to ensure ongoing access to these materials.”

“Build digitization and digital access strategies into shared print. Embrace collective collections as dynamic and multifformat. Facilitate close-to-real-time updating of retention holdings.”

See Question 6 in the [Survey Results](#) for details. Clearly, digitization is a theme that runs through these open-ended comments.

Findings: Satisfaction with EAST

Early on in the survey members were asked to comment, via an open-ended question, on how shared print generally and EAST specifically figure in strategic and operational planning. As the quotes below show, those who chose to respond saw EAST's value in collection management and development as well as in expanding uses of library space. However, some who responded indicated that they have not yet taken EAST into account as strategically as they hope to in the future. See Question 7 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

Member quotes:

"It is key to our space planning and collection development."

"Allows us to withdraw certain print materials from our collections knowing that they are being retained by other EAST partners/members. This provides us with opportunities to remove low-use and outdated print books, while also reimagining library spaces."

"Participation in shared print programs complements a general strategy of ensuring broad access for local users while collections decisions necessarily favor digital resources in the present environment."

"Politically, and in general, the commitment to print retention demonstrates our intention to include print monographs in our long-term strategic goals. In terms of operational planning, we never know when the administration will need current library space for other needs or natural disasters will damage our libraries--it is reassuring to know that should the need arise (even suddenly), we have a clear workflow for deaccessioning while still knowing the books are 'out there' at partner libraries."

"Our major print deaccessioning projects are on hold due to the pandemic, but shared print/EAST and the documentation nationally of print commitments is a strategic pillar of those deaccessioning plans."

"Shared print is an important part of our strategic framework for preserving the scholarly record as well as enabling us to reduce the size of our open stacks collection to improve its browseability."

"The very concept of shared print, and EAST in particular has become one of the foundations of our collections strategies. We believe not just in the preservation of the print record, but in the sharing of resources as a way to target our collections strategies to both strengthen our collection for our scholars and help with resource allocation."

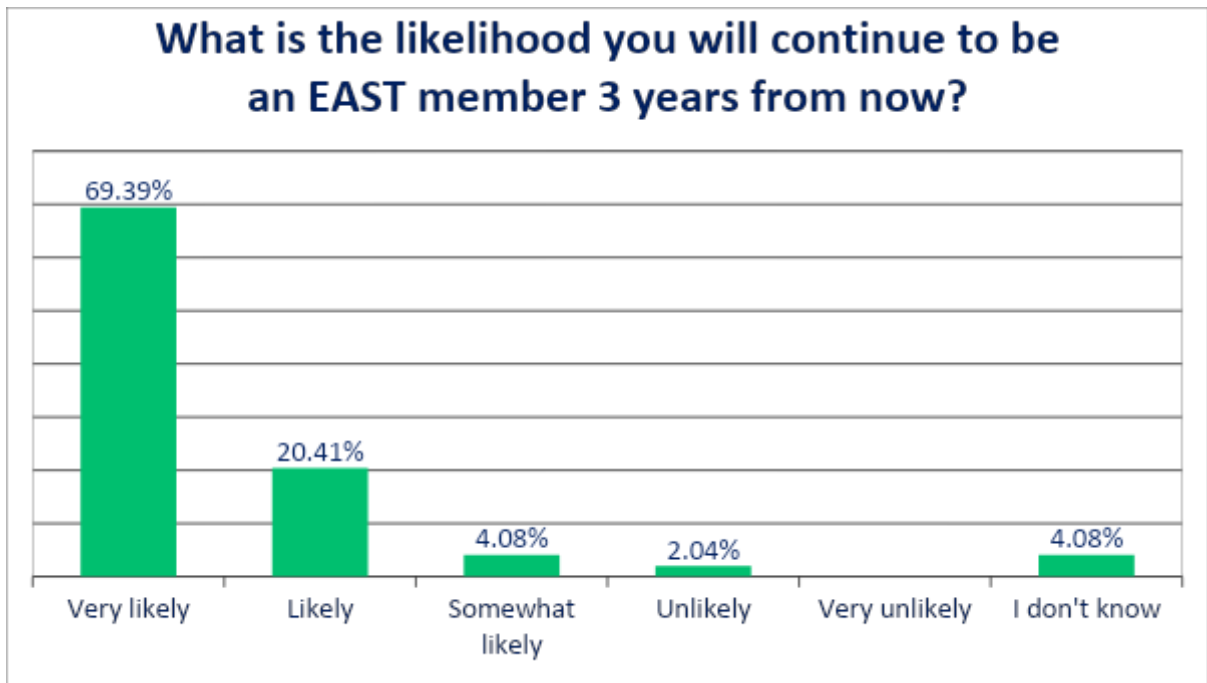
“We are considering several deaccession projects and use EAST holdings as a key category when generating weeding candidates.”

“Just beginning to take shared print into account.”

Sustainability of EAST

On the question of the EAST membership dues 69% felt the dues were low or just right, 12% felt they were a little high and 4% felt they were high. Those who found the dues high were concerned that as library budgets tighten and electronic resources are cancelled, it may be difficult to justify the investment. See Questions 8 and 9 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

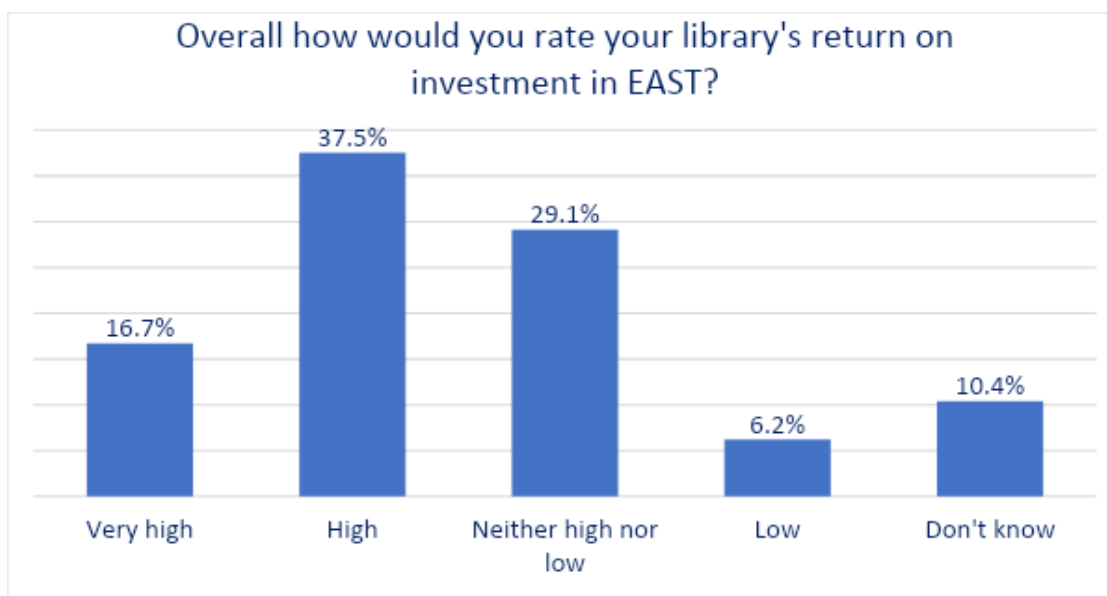
In response to the likelihood that the respondent would be a member of EAST in 3 years' time, as the chart below some 90% are likely or very likely with only 2% unlikely. See Questions 10-12 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.



Return on Investment

As the chart below shows, 54.2% of EAST members rate the overall return on investment (ROI) as high or very high with only 6.2% indicating they felt the ROI is low.

In commenting on the “low” and “don’t know” ratings, members indicated they believe they have not fully realized the operational value of EAST, particularly as relates to deaccessioning print content. See Questions 13 and 14 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.



Member quotes:

“EAST has accomplished what we thought it would when we committed to join. We anticipate our return on investment will continue to increase as we make space decisions locally and increasingly come to rely on a distributed collection model.”

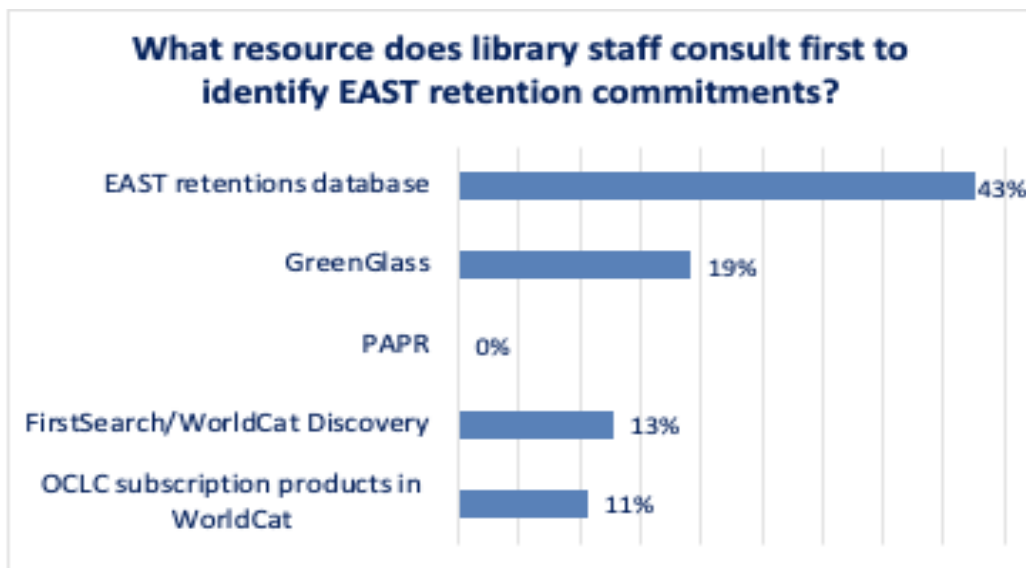
“Joining EAST has provided us a great look into our collections. We have been able to make some very smart, targeted de-selections, and develop some new collections strategies to improve the strength of our collection in other areas. We are very happy that the print record is being preserved and strongly believe in the concept of sharing our collections to help provide all scholars access to materials while sharing the collections cost with our peer institutions.”

“I haven't been able to really ascertain ROI yet, but so far, I'm very pleased with the information on our collection that we've gathered, and I can see that we have reliable data to inform space planning and collection maintenance.”

“EAST has allowed the library to meet college administration's demands on building re-purposing without losing our status as a scholarly resource provider.”

Findings: Library Operations and EAST

While not all EAST libraries have integrated EAST into local operational workflows, the survey did ask libraries to indicate what resource they would consult first to identify EAST retention commitments. As the chart below shows, members still consult the EAST retentions database (which EAST built to compensate for the lack of the ability to register in WorldCat during our first few years of operation) and the GreenGlass database used for collection analysis. As we complete registration of the EAST commitments in WorldCat, we expect that will become the resource of choice for most libraries in the future. See Question 17 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.



The survey also asked members to comment on any ways in which they have used EAST commitments in collection building, de-accessioning projects, etc. The open-ended responses focused primarily on ways in which EAST had assisted in weeding/de-accessioning projects, but also referenced acquisitions decisions. For a number of the respondents, such work is just now being considered, so we would expect to see more of this in the future. See Question 16 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

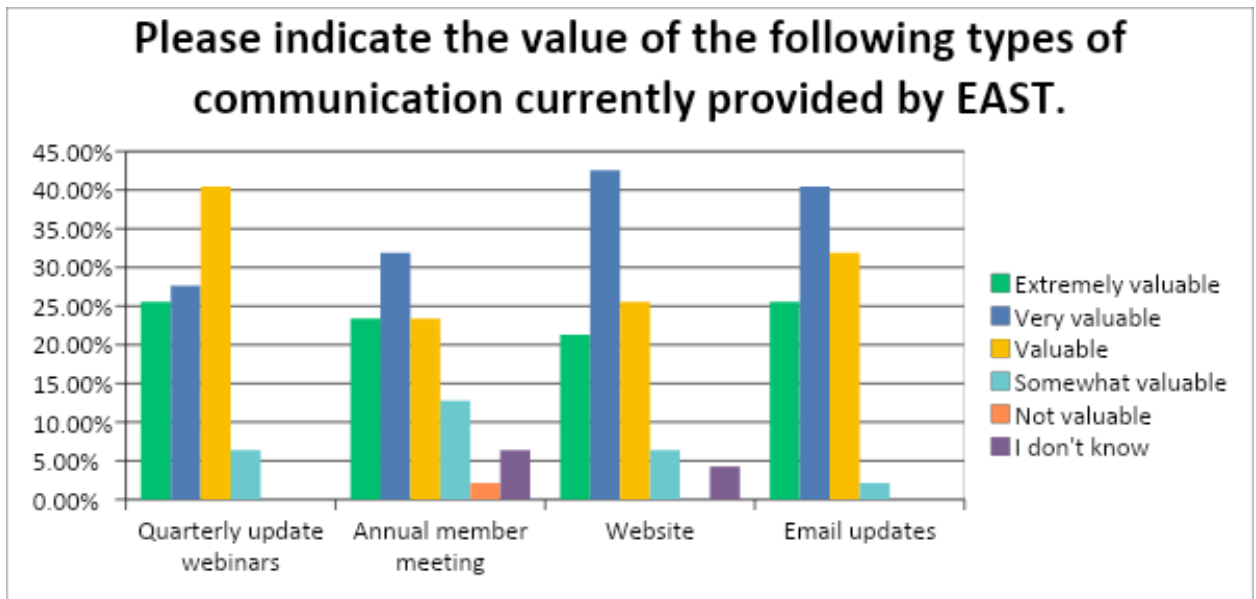
Finally, on the operational side, the survey asked respondents to indicate what factors are important to them as they consider withdrawing monographs and serials/journals titles from their local collections. Digital availability in a database or package was at the top of the list at 47%, with availability in the HathiTrust also important at 21% and 32% of those responding indicated that a retention commitment at another EAST library was a factor. See Question 18 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

Findings: Input on Policies and Procedures

Members had no major feedback on the current governance, policy, and procedures documents made available although they believe them to be helpful. However, what comments there were will provide the EAST Project Team opportunities to consider how to improve onboarding as well as expanding FAQ information. See Question 15 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

Findings: Value of Communication

The respondents believe that EAST provides proactive and useful communication to its members. As the chart below shows 100% of respondents find the quarterly update webinars and occasional emails provided by the Project Team valuable, very valuable or extremely valuable. The EAST website is also seen as valuable or very valuable by over 95% of members responding and the annual member meetings are valued by over 91% of respondents. See Question 24 and 25 in the [Survey Results](#) for details. Question 26 provides member suggestions for improvements to EAST communications.



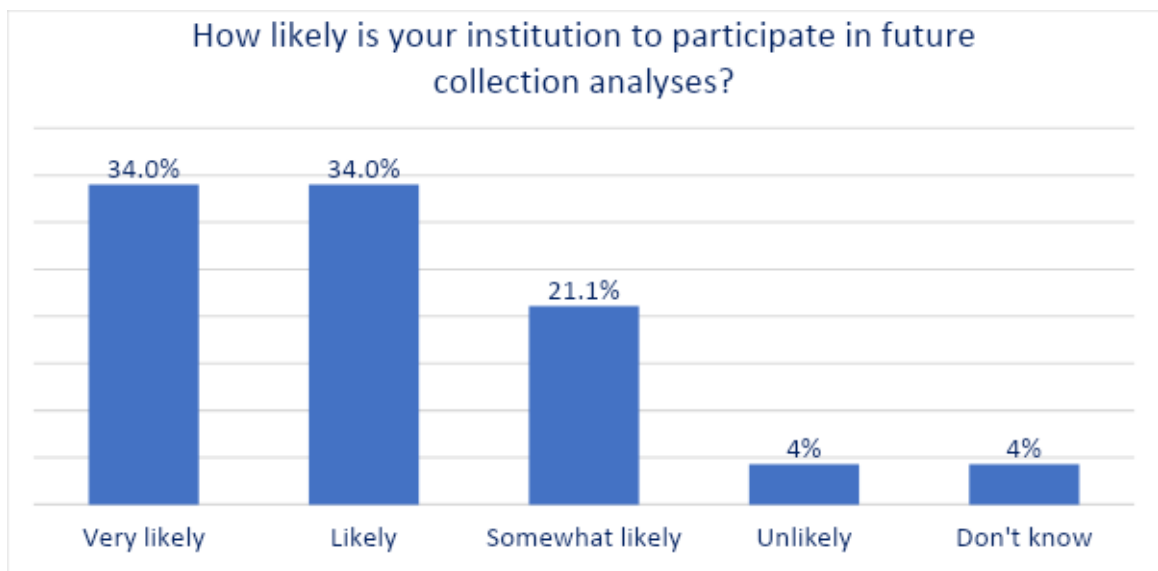
Member comments confirm that the majority of EAST members believe they are kept well informed and that documentation and other resources are easily available.

Findings: Approaches to Collection Analysis and Appetite for Making Additional Retention Commitments

The survey included a number of questions relating to the members' appetite for participation in future collection analyses, the approaches they would prefer to take in such analyses, factors that would prevent their participation, and the impact current retention commitments have had on the library.

Future Collection Analysis and Retention Commitments

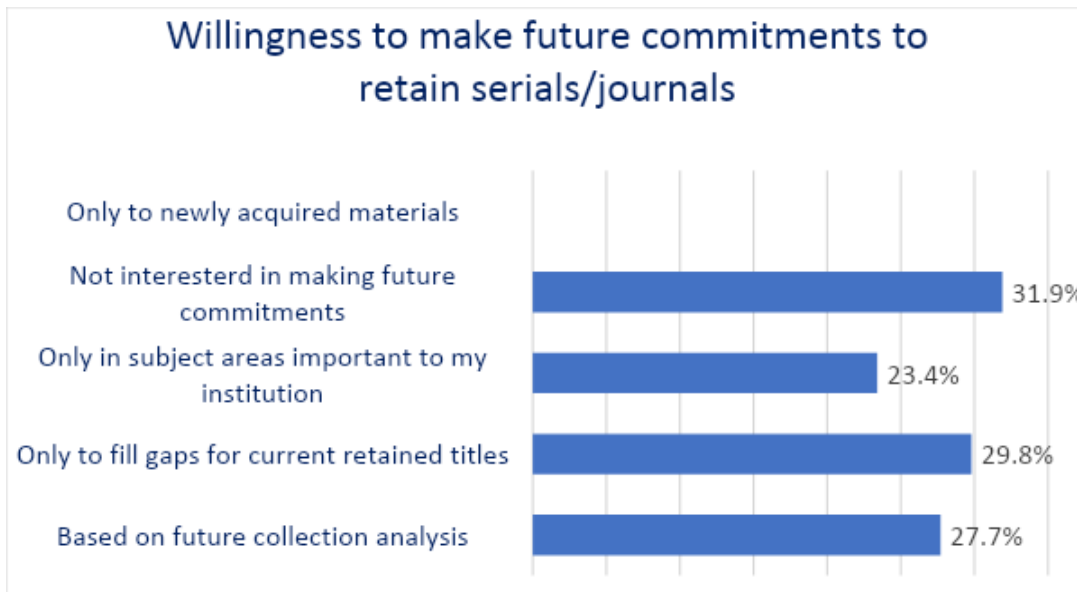
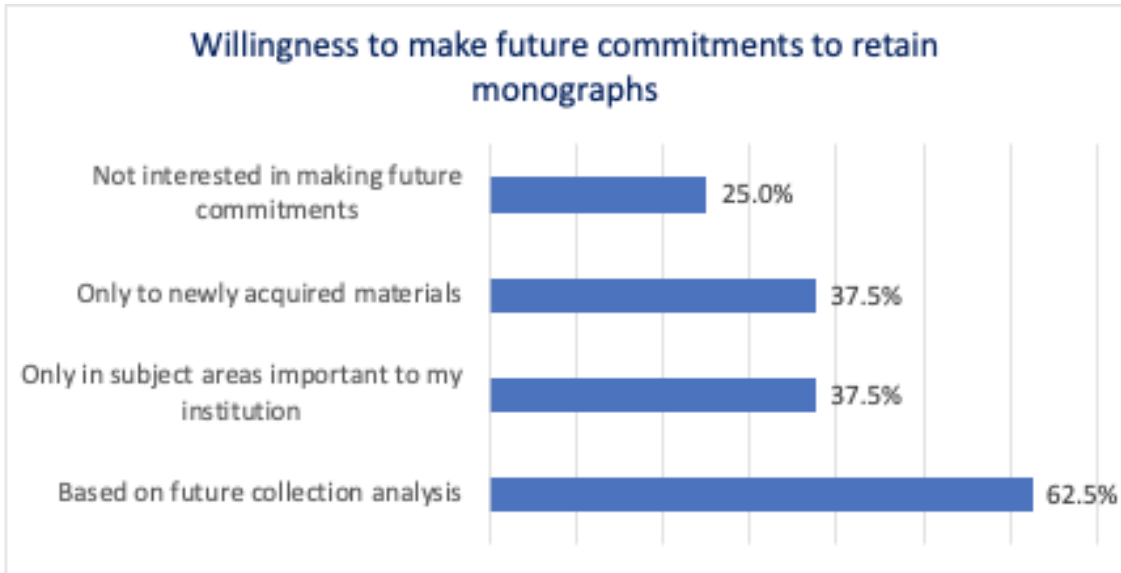
Slightly more than 68% of members would be likely or very likely to participate in future collection analyses with an additional 21% somewhat likely. Only 4% indicated they would be unlikely as the chart below demonstrates. See Question 32 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.



Almost 90% of the respondents indicated they would be willing to make future commitments to retain monographs but only 68% would be willing to make future commitments to retain serials and journals. For monographs, collection analysis was seen as the best approach although there is also interest in focusing exclusively on subject areas important to the institution or only to new acquired materials. Over 83% of respondents felt a group collection analysis approximately every 5 years was the best approach.

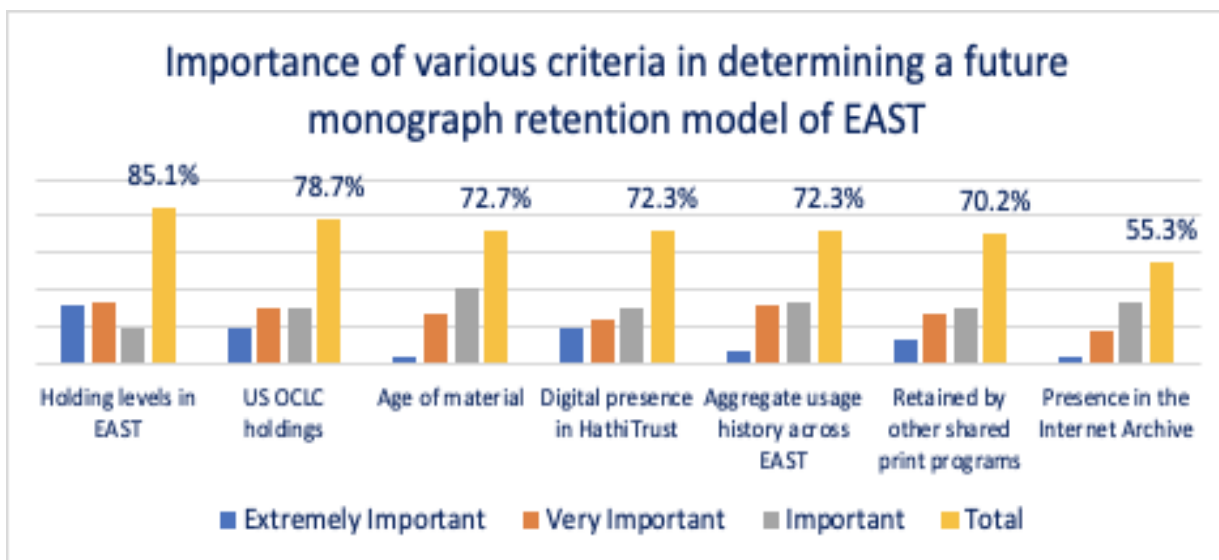
For serials/journals, gap filling was rated slightly higher than collection analysis as the best approach with some interest in focusing on subject areas of importance to the

institution. Since respondents could select multiple responses, however, all are seen as important. See the two charts below. Questions 30 and 31 in the [Survey Results](#) provide detail as does Question 33.



Monograph collection analysis tools allow a variety of criteria to be used to develop a retention model. We asked respondents to indicate the importance of various criteria. As shown below, holdings levels within EAST and OCLC as well as the age of the

materials and digital equivalents were rated most important. See Question 21 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.



When asked what factors might prevent a library from participating in future collection analyses, over 78% responded that the upfront cost would be the major factor with 66% indicating staff time for the project would be a barrier and some 10+% were concerned about institutional buy-in. Over 34% felt they would be unable to make additional retention commitments. See Question 34 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

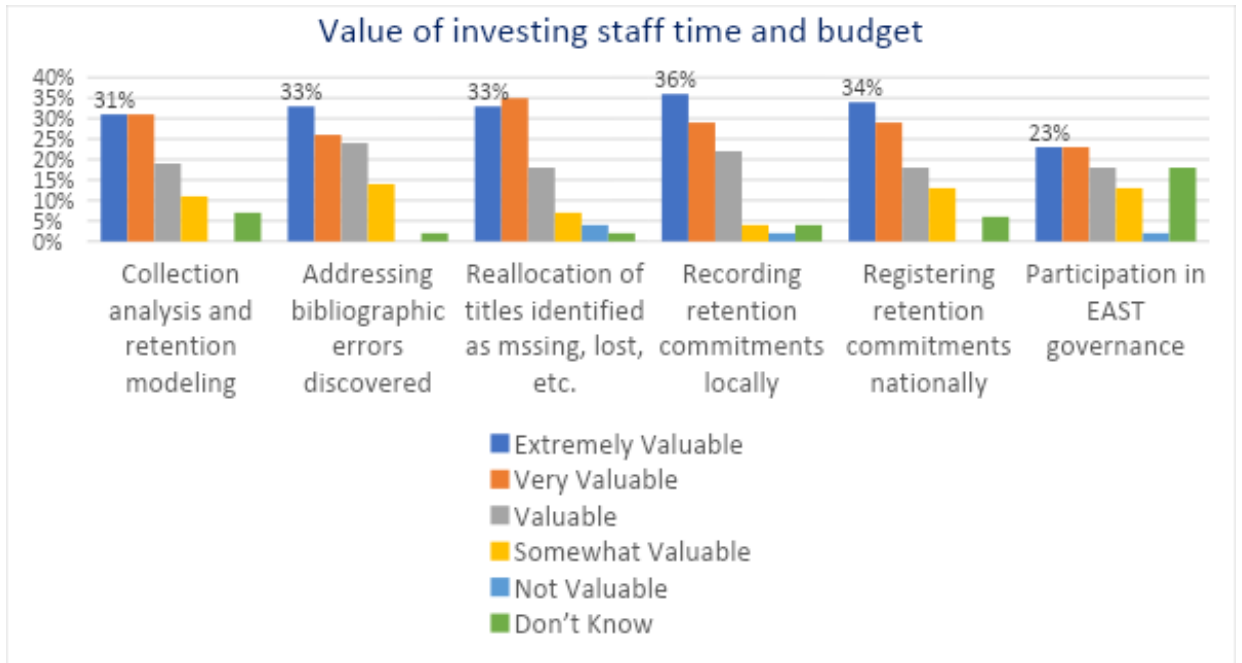
Note that there are slightly different levels of interest in participation in collection analysis than in making future retention commitments. This is likely due to the fact that the collection analysis work offers additional local benefits (such as a deeper understanding of collection strengths, input into any de-accessioning plans, etc.) over the commitment to retain additional titles.

The Value of Investing Staff Time and Budget

Since participation in collection analysis and making commitments to retain titles involve work on the part of the participating libraries, the survey asked for feedback on the value to the library of investing staff time and budget in various components of the collection analysis and retention process. While over 62% believed this investment for the work involved in collection analysis and retention modeling was extremely or very valuable, the value of investing staff time paid off even after the original collection analysis was completed. That includes the value of addressing bibliographic errors identified during the analysis, recording commitments in local and national catalogs, the ability to reallocate titles later identified as lost, missing, in poor condition or otherwise

inappropriate for retention and participation in various aspects of the governance of EAST including standing committees and working groups.

This data makes clear that a library’s participation in collection analysis pays off locally in ways well beyond simply making retention commitments. See Question 28 in [Survey Results](#) for details and Question 29 for further comments by the respondents.



Expanding to Other Formats

The final question relating to future collection analyses and retention commitments asked what formats, other than monographs and serials/journals, EAST should consider in future analyses. Although none of the options was rated over 50%, scores and sheet music were highest at 44%, with sound and video recordings at 38% and cartographic materials at 36%. See Question 22 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

Findings: Future Strategic Directions for EAST

One of the primary goals of the program assessment was to seek members' feedback on future strategic directions for EAST. As one member indicated:

“EAST is extremely well run. It has succeeded in part by keeping to a focused mission. Its challenge now will be to decide what the next step(s) are in that mission.”

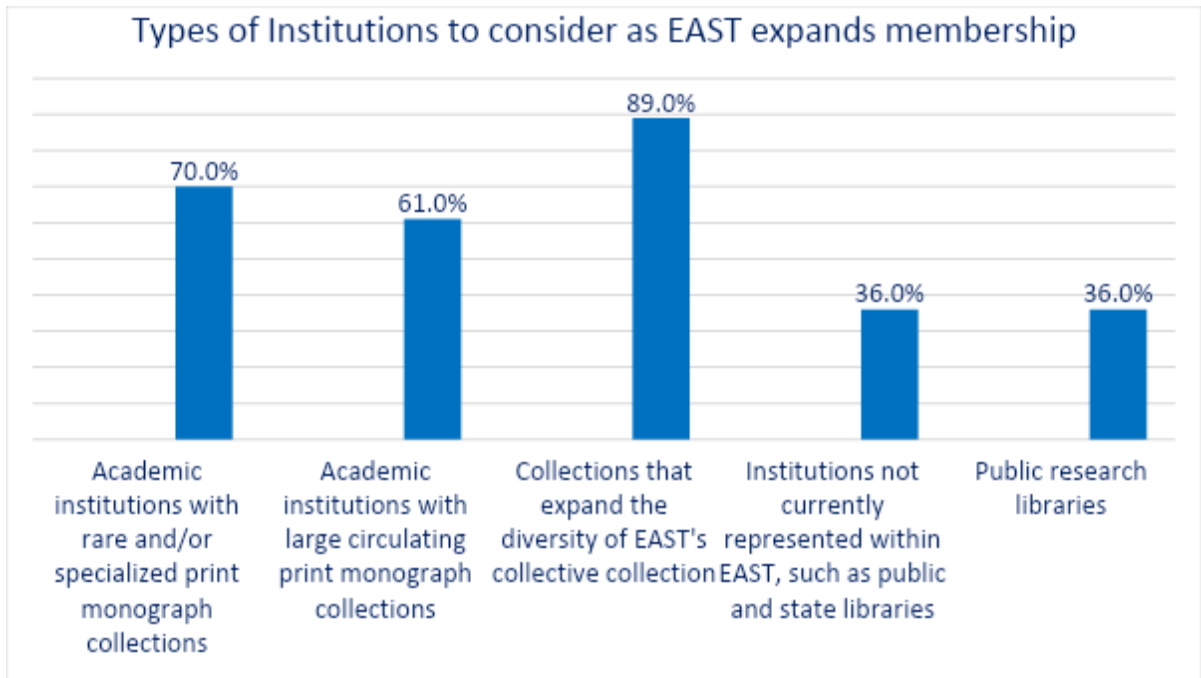
Expanding the Membership and the Collective Collection

EAST has focused on expanding its membership since inception and has grown from the original 36 members to 79. Adding new members is more challenging now as compared to the early days when EAST had grant funding from Mellon and Davis to underwrite the collection analysis and could bring together large cohorts. But EAST believes in the advantages of scale and is likely to continue to expand its membership and its collective collection. That said, little has been done over the last few years in terms of specific, targeted outreach to libraries. The members of EAST who have joined since the work was completed with Cohort 2 have approached EAST indicating an interest in joining.

Within the survey, members were asked to indicate which types of institutions EAST might specifically target in any future membership drives. As the chart below indicates, collections that expand the diversity of EAST's collective collection as well as academic institutions with rare or specialized print collections and those with large circulating print collections top the list. Other types of institutions not represented in EAST such as public and state libraries were also called out. See Question 19 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.

Member quote:

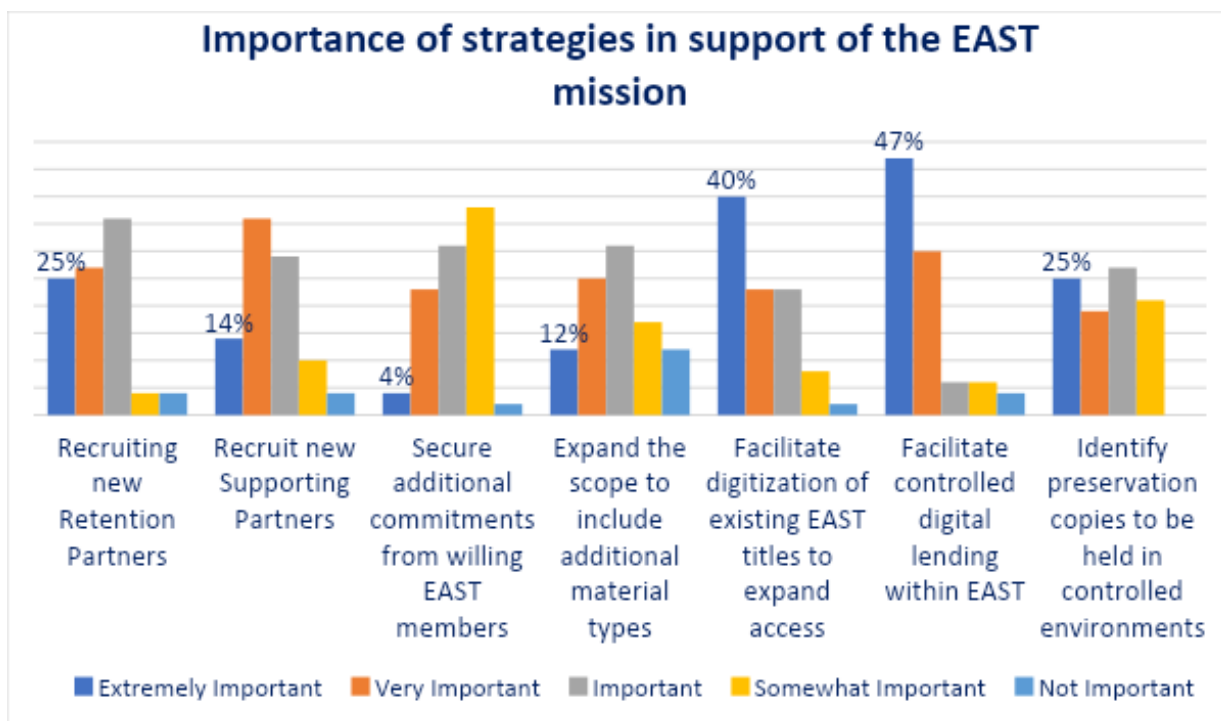
“EAST can be a big tent, as long as we remain true to our core principles of preservation and access.”



Growing Importance of Access

In addition to this strategic focus on continuing to expand the EAST collective collection with an emphasis on increasing its diversity, is a focus on digitization and access in general. This is not surprising since the EAST program assessment survey was distributed to the member libraries in the middle of a worldwide pandemic and the vast majority of EAST libraries' physical print collections were inaccessible except to local users. Even standard inter-library loan was often severely limited. Digital resources including those of digitized print collections such as HathiTrust and Internet Archive were used extensively, and libraries began to experiment with controlled digital lending and undertook wider digitization for inter-library loan.

As the chart below indicates, both digitization of existing EAST retention commitments and facilitation of controlled digital lending were seen as high priorities for the member libraries. See Question 20 in the [Survey Results](#) for details.



The above data also demonstrate that continued recruitment, particularly of Retention Partners, rated high in comparison to securing additional commitments from current members, although both had support. Despite earlier data that seemed to discourage a focus on expanding the scope of EAST beyond monographs and serials/journals, this question saw respondents indicate some level of importance in such expansion.

To date the majority of EAST retention commitments are in circulating collections in open stacks. Another focus rated highly by the members is to begin to identify preservation copies held in controlled environments. This could also foreshadow a focus on EAST playing a role in some form of collaboration on regional storage for its collective collection, long seen as an important goal in protecting the scholarly record.

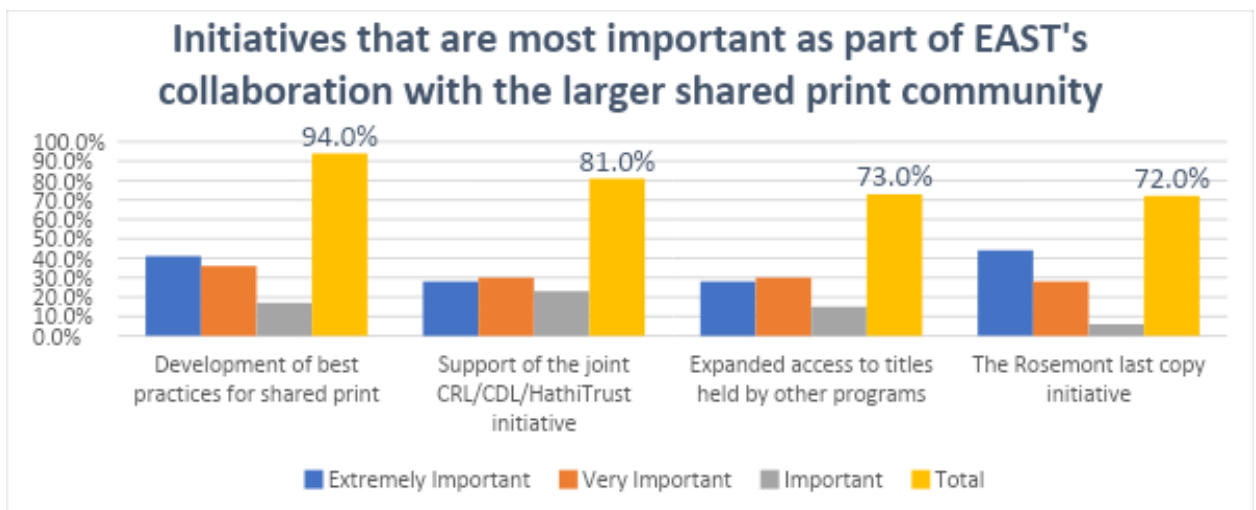
Findings: Participation in Collaboration

Over the last three years EAST has played an important role in expanding collaboration across shared print programs. Joining the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance in 2017 allowed EAST's then fledgling serials/journals program to become part of a large and growing collaboration of well-established archiving initiatives. This expanded access provided EAST members, by 2020, to a collective collection of over 100,000 serials and journals titles.

As part of its final no-cost extension work under the original Mellon funded grant, EAST also played a major role in the founding of the Partnership for Shared Book Collections which to date has grown to 17 monograph shared print programs representing hundreds of libraries in the U.S. and Canada. The Partnership has played a major role in developing best practices for shared print in a number of important areas and has worked with Rosemont colleagues to advocate for better tools and metadata infrastructure to support shared print.

As was made clear in the members' response to early questions on the importance of various aspects of the EAST mission, participation in shared print at the national and continental levels ranked high with almost 94% of respondents indicating that this collaborative work is important, very important or extremely important.

Later in the survey, respondents were asked to rate the importance of current initiatives being undertaken in collaboration with this larger shared print community. As the chart below shows, work on joint best practices and support of specific initiatives such as the infrastructure and tool development work being undertaken by the Center for Research Libraries, California Digital Library, and HathiTrust were ranked the most important in addition to expanding access to titles held by other programs. See [Question 23 in the Survey Results](#) for details.



This growing focus on expanding shared print's reach through collaboration across programs directly supports the EAST mission of protecting the scholarly record and ensuring its ongoing accessibility.

Next Steps

Following preliminary discussions with the EAST Executive Committee (EC), it was agreed that follow up on particular issues which surfaced as part of the program assessment is warranted and that small focus group discussions would be the best approach.

A working group that includes members of the EC and EAST Project Team was formed and will be developing plans to bring together representatives from EAST member libraries to discuss issues relating to:

- The direction of future collection analyses
- Approaches to digitization of the EAST collective collection
- How best to leverage the EAST lending network to further ensure access
- Strategies for expanding the diversity and inclusivity of the EAST membership and collection.

Following these smaller discussions, the EC and EAST Project Team will develop a set of strategic priorities for EAST for the next 2-3 years with a goal of having a new strategic directions document for presentation and discussion with the membership in late 2021.

Appendices

To view Appendix A: EAST Program Assessment Survey, which includes the full set of questions and/or Appendix B: Survey Results, which has the results for each of the questions anonymized, see <https://eastlibraries.org/news-events/east-2020-program-assessment>