

Before and after digitization: a critical assessment of sound collections management in Spain

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Abstract. Sound and audiovisual heritage usually follow separate tracks, as shown by their theoretical guidelines, practical plans, research projects and specialization courses in document safeguarding. In the case of sound archives, a further division between ‘music archives’ and ‘oral archives’ adds up to the difficulty of studying Spanish sound archives as a whole. This is made worse by a scarcity of relevant information sources: those available are valuable but have focused on locating and identifying centers, hardly describing collections and their management. A more thorough study has therefore been necessary, taking projects devised for other geographical areas as a reference for a new inquiry addressed to Spanish memory institutions. These were asked for an assessment of current sound recordings management. Four safeguarding issues were examined separately: surveys and global studies; individual analysis; analogue and digital preservation; and possibilities for accessing recordings and disseminating them. Respondent institutions pointed to important management shortcomings in almost all stages of that process and in many parts of Spain. Solutions for those shortcomings may be known but must not be delayed any more if sound recordings are to escape a high risk of damage and disappearance.

Keywords: Sound recordings digitization; collections management; document processing; spanish cultural heritage.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The problem of studying sound archives

Sound archives are usually separated from audiovisual archives as regards several areas such as preservation, research and dissemination. The two classes of archive are sometimes mentioned together, as happens with the name of the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA); but they are seldom taken care of at the same time in either theoretical guidelines, strategic projects or practical plans, when intending to safeguard a nation’s documentary heritage.

It would be quite interesting to investigate the causes for that dissociation and to study its advan-

tages and disadvantages. But for now, let us point out that one of its consequences is an often quite sharp separation as regards training activities, as well as literatures both general and specialized, that study and intend to disseminate sound and audiovisual heritage.

As examples of their separate training activities, a couple of master courses given by the Facultad de Ciencias de la Información at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid may be mentioned here: one deals with *Audiovisual Communication in the Digital Era*², while the other is about *Audiovisual heritage: History, Preservation and Management*³. Similar instances can be found in many other universities. Judging only from the courses’ names, it might be concluded that sound archives are quite neglected in

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² Comunicación Audiovisual en la Era Digital, <https://www.ucm.es/estudios/2019-20/master-comunicacionaudiovisualeradigital>

³ Patrimonio Audiovisual: Historia, Recuperación y Gestión, <https://www.ucm.es/estudios/2019-20/master-patrimonioaudiovisual>

comparison to audiovisual archives; nevertheless, each case should be examined separately for a better assessment.

As regards scientific publications, here follows a very recent example of the divorce between sound and audiovisual archives, though in this case there is a known reason for it. Several of the Spanish researchers currently taking part in RIPDASA, a project for a Latin-American network for digital preservation of sound and audiovisual archives⁴, recently wrote a paper for a book that is to describe the situation of such archives in each of the countries involved in that project (Fernández-Bajón and López Yepes, 2020). Having plenty of information on both classes of archives in Spain, they decided to focus on the audiovisual ones while assigning to the paper you are now reading the task of describing the specific situation of the country's sound archives. Therefore, separating sound from audiovisual archives obeyed in this particular case to a definite strategy that intended anything but to reinforce unnecessary borders.

The dissociation mentioned above is nevertheless quite frequent and, furthermore, becomes aggravated by the fact that also two different tracks show up for archives dealing only with sound: one for supposedly "musical" archives and the other for all the rest. These are generally called "oral archives", even though the class may include other types of archive. Such a subdivision of sound archives echoes the one stated above between sound and audiovisual archives, and does not seem to obey to substantial differences as to the documents themselves: nor their carriers nor the topics to which their contents are related to are dissimilar enough. In fact, the needs of all those archives are akin, if not the same, when it comes to locating documents, describing them, preserving its carriers and contents, giving access to users, and disseminating recordings while respecting intellectual property rights. All these resemblances would rather support having both classes of archives taken care of together.

But having signaled that state of affairs, it must now be left aside, for our concern here is the current situation of sound archives. When doing so, the expression 'sound collection' will be used for any set of one or more phonograms grouped by a certain, unifying criteria, and having heritage characteristics, i.e., sets formed by documents with outstanding value, considerable age, or both. So, without further delay two fundamental issues will be addressed now as to the portion of Spanish cultural heritage under discussion: where its sound collections are, and what do they include.

1.2. Information resources

For helping us a few years ago in the task of locating and identifying Spanish sound collections, few information resources were available. Two of them stood out, regarding 'music' and 'non-music' archives, respectively; a separation of resources that should not surprise us much, after what was stated above.

For 'music archives', the Documentation Centre for Performing Arts and Music (CDAEM)⁵, a part of the

Spanish Ministry of Culture, has been issuing successive editions of a Spanish music heritage map⁶, whereas for 'non-music' sound archives the website of the Spanish Cultural Heritage Institute (IPCE)⁷ offers a hard-to-find but very valuable resource, a non-musical sound heritage map of Spain⁸. The first of those maps, i.e., the one by the CDAEM, gives information on many classes of heritage music holdings, but thanks to several search filters the search results can be limited to, for instance, sound archives. In this way, it allows for leaving out centers functioning only for in-site listening and the eventual loan of predominantly commercial recordings that are typically available elsewhere. As to the IPCE map, it was an outcome of a pilot project that, in its sole research stage until now –encompassing less than twelve months in 2016 and 2017– could only pay attention to certain areas of Spain, and with varied success. These facts make the project's improvement and continuation even more desirable, and they seem to have been already planned but delayed once and again by a number of causes.

The existence of those two resources show undeniable advantages: they both offer modern search interfaces in the shape of user-friendly interactive maps; they spark interest in knowing more about sound collections; and they rely on data bases that, hopefully, will grow as regards the number of registered centers, collections, and documents. In fact, a significant amount of the data already present in one or both bases will soon be shared with the new and international database currently under creation by the RIPDASA project mentioned above. That sharing should give Spanish data a wider, international dissemination, while facilitating larger, comparative studies among the Latin-American countries involved.⁹

But some less favorable features must also be pointed out for both maps. Leaving aside their usefulness for locating centers and obtaining their contact data, former editions have shown limitations that prevent us from being wholly satisfied with their current state (as of July 2020). Two of these limitations stand out:

- 1) The tools that have been made available are provisional or not fully operative, for instance because the data they are based on do not stem from thorough surveys but result, on the contrary, from internal choices that can be changeable and therefore difficult to be assessed from outside the centers involved.
- 2) Information on the document collections themselves may be not sufficient, at least for responding to important questions about the sound documents involved: ¿what were they produced for, and how are they being managed? ¿what topics are their contents related to? ¿can

⁶ <http://cdmyd.mcu.es/mapatrimoniomusical/>

⁷ ipce.mcu.es/

⁸ https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1HhW_rzRE36w-1mOeuGVuP0IBFf98&ll=40.7810450571126%2C-4.231458754917634&z=7

⁹ The set of data that has been kindly shared by one of the two centers mentioned in the main text shall be analyzed in a separate article.

⁴ <http://www.cytod.org/es/ripdasa>

⁵ <http://musicadanza.es/>

we trust in their being preserved without damage or disappearance? and ¿which users can enjoy them, use them for dissemination, or reuse them as a basis for new creations?

For answering those questions, we had to go beyond the aforementioned maps and look for other studies that could address them in a fuller way.

1.3. Inquiries of reference

The Eresbil inquiry

There have been very few attempts at globally studying the various features of sound documents management in Spain. One of them was a study that Eresbil –the Basque Music Archive– started in 2012 for Basque-tradition areas in Spain and France. The questionnaire devised for that study was not publicly available, but its contents could be deduced from a document kindly given to this researcher by Jon Bagües, director of Eresbil until 2020. The document is about a presentation given in November 2013, in the framework of an encounter on traditional music that took place the same year and centered on audiovisual collection management –including that of sound archives. Details about the topics discussed in the inquiry were described there, as well as some of its results (Bagües and Landaberea, 2013).

The structure of that questionnaire cannot be discussed here, but mention must be made of the six broad topics that were dealt with: physical carriers (classes and number of documents); growth of the collections; collection classes –from three points of view: chronological, functional and thematic–; access to documents (possibilities and limitations); catalogues or inventories for document classification and identification; and, lastly, digitization (either done or pending). Such a list shows a will to go beyond purely quantitative data (i.e., number of carriers, recording date, etc.), and reach instead more complex features of document management. Consequently, the topics addressed in that study included: causes or criteria explaining the formation of sound collections; data- or information-resources regarding the collections; possibilities of accessing the documents themselves; and the state of such documents as to their digitization. All in all, the aim was to achieve, at least as a draft, a threefold view of the sound holdings being safeguarded: *chronological* (i.e., regarding the start date of collections or holdings); *functional* (i.e., depending on the main objective for taking care of the documents); and *thematic or content-driven* (i.e., taking into account what the documents were pointing to).

In spite of the methodological merits of the Eresbil study, its geographical and temporal limitations were strong, and the number of replies it achieved was relatively low. Because of that, we felt the need to study other, more ambitious projects, ideally supported by more ample means, destined to larger geographical areas, and that had left behind a larger number of documents about their planning, development and results. Among the documents found that pointed to such projects, two of

them stood out: a questionnaire prepared by French researcher Véronique Ginouvès as part of an international inquiry¹⁰, and a report published by the British Library and regarding the situation of sound collections in the United Kingdom (Tovell, Knight and British Library 2015b).

The Ginouvès inquiry

The form prepared by Ginouvès could be found online in at least three languages: French, English¹¹ and Italian¹². None of those versions provided detailed information regarding the inquiry or project to which the form supposedly belonged. Because of that, and in the absence of further information regarding the questionnaire’s planning and dissemination, it will be dated here as of 2004, and the related inquiry shall be labeled with the name of the form’s author.

The web page giving access to the various versions of the questionnaire outlined the inquiry’s aim or objectives, limiting the study to “the Mediterranean area”, though without stating if that area included countries of the three continents implied¹³. The choice of languages in that page supported our hypothesis that the study was meant for European Mediterranean countries only.

Judging from the date the forms were uploaded (2006), a safe guess is that Ginouvès based them on the experience she had achieved through personal research on sound archives in Latin America (Saur 2002). That research took place mainly in the framework of the CASAE Project, planned between 2001 and 2005 and carried out from 2006 to 2008. Partners were France and several Latin-American countries, mainly in the Andean area: Chile, Colombia, Perú, Ecuador, Venezuela and México. The project was markedly ethnographical in scope. Taking into account what remained published online ten years after the project’s supposed end date (2008), the results it gathered appeared quite less important than those that may have been expected for such an international enterprise. The listing of centers was uneven; many of the center’s registers were not complete; and the ensemble of the data that had been gathered was not enough to provide an informative, panoramic view of the situation and contents of sound archives in the countries involved.

The ‘Mediterranean’ questionnaires prepared by Ginouvès also seemed to be related, in dates and objectives, to a particular inquiry; this time it was one led by the sound archive of the Maison Méditerranée des Sciences de l’Homme (MMSH), a center with close links to the Université Aix-Marseille¹⁴. It would have taken place in

¹⁰ https://f.hypotheses.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/75/files/2009/04/questionnaire_francais.pdf

¹¹ https://f.hypotheses.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/75/files/2009/04/questionnaire_english.pdf

¹² https://f.hypotheses.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/75/files/2009/04/questionnaire_italiano.pdf

¹³ <https://dakirat.hypotheses.org/archives-ramses2/archives-sonores/veronique-ginouvès-enquête-archives-sonores>

¹⁴ <http://www.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/Pages/default.aspx>

1997 and updated twice, in 1999 and 2004¹⁵. Addressed to 126 oral heritage archives in ‘Southern Europe’ (meaning Spain, Italy, southern France, Greece and Cyprus), its results would have been published in a work of which instances are now quite hard to find (Ginouvés 1997). The inquiry was part of a project called *Vox Nostrum*, aimed at “making a map” of the oral archives in the Mediterranean area¹⁶.

Attention shall be paid to the fact that the Ginouvés inquiry endeavored to study, besides some quantitative issues, several less-quantifiable features of sound documents management, among them the holdings’ type of property (section 2); the holdings’ origin (section 3); their physical format, preservation state and level of description (sections 4 to 6); and their access and dissemination (sections 7 and 8).

The inquiry of the British Library

The so-called *Final Report* published by the British Library in 2015 (Tovell, Knight and British Library 2015b) was based on the replies to an inquiry that took place between 2014 and 2015 and aimed at sound collections in the entire United Kingdom, as a first stage in a project called *Save Our Sounds*¹⁷. As stated in several web pages, some of them still active in 2018 or later, a questionnaire had been addressed to sound collection holders¹⁸. Once the inquiry was over, it was not possible to find a copy of that questionnaire, but many of its contents could be guessed from the aforementioned report, which furthermore allowed to gain knowledge on a perhaps even more important aspect: the methodology put into practice.

This methodology was based on several principles:

- Available ways for sending replies to the inquiry should be attractive for all holders, independently of the size of their collections; and easy to fulfil as well, without assuming any technical preparation in the respondents.
- Data gathering and processing should ask for a minimum of manual intervention from the project team.
- Tools for registering data and information should be free of charge, publicly and easily accessible, and quickly adaptable to any type of holder.
- The data fields should be clearly defined and restricted to certain values when necessary, facilitating later statistical studies.

For data retrieval, the British Library chose to offer two different but equivalent channels: a form accessible via internet browsers –and to be replied online as well– and a spreadsheet that once filled offline had to be returned by e-mail. We did not succeed in finding copies

of those data-gathering instruments, but many relevant details about them were in the Final Report (Tovell, Knight and British Library 2015b:13).

The ensemble of results collected by the inquiry were published in a separate ‘directory’ (Tovell, Knight and British Library 2015a) and the British Library considered that they offered a global view that, though not being altogether complete, was quite populated and gave enough precisions about extant collections of recorded sound in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the inquiry had –in the British Library’s opinion– increased an awareness of the importance owed to holding, preserving and disseminating the heritage under study, thus allowing to better shape a strategy for carrier conservation and contents digitization that the prestigious institution would be putting into practice shortly afterwards.

2. Objectives of the research

Thanks to the projects described above, we were better equipped for undertaking a study on the present situation of heritage sound documents management in Spain. It had to collect qualitative comments on that management, so that both its strengths and its needs could be assessed. Studying such a management implied an exam of the various stages of sound document processing, with a particular effort in identifying their main aims and the level to which these were being attained by the professionals involved.

The study was started with a belief in that its results, coupled with actions aimed at surveying sound holdings in Spanish documentary heritage, would considerably enlarge the knowledge of these cultural assets in at least two areas: preserving the documents and assessing their impact in society.

The main objective of our research was to have a selection of reference institutions in the field of Spanish document heritage rate the present management of sound collections in their corresponding geographical areas. That objective turned into four secondary objectives, related to as many stages of document processing: (1) location and identification; (2) formal and contents description; (3) preservation, including conservation and digitization; and (4) access and dissemination.

Such secondary objectives could be expressed as the will to know what answer was being given by institutions to the four following questions or question groups:

1. To what level have documents that can be labeled as part of the Spanish sound heritage been located and identified.
2. What formal features of those documents have been catalogued; to what level have their sound contents been adequately described; and how much have the topics or themes represented been identified.
3. How the conservation needs of the diverse sound carriers are being met –and the same as regards preservation of sound contents in sustainable formats. This implied an assessment

¹⁵ <https://dakirat.hypotheses.org/archives-ramses2/archives-sonores/voxnstrum>

¹⁶ <http://lodel.imageson.org/dakirat/document.html?id=65>

¹⁷ <http://www.bl.uk/projects/save-our-sounds>

¹⁸ Outside the British Library but also in one of this institution’s blogs: <http://blogs.bl.uk/music/2015/02/directory-of-uk-music-sound-collections-1.html>

of both the digitization of contents in analog carriers and the transfer of digital contents to emerging reference formats.

4. What possibilities for accessing sound contents do exist for different user types; and what is the quality and level of the dissemination given to those contents by either their holders or external documentation centers.

For giving an answer to all those issues, an inquiry was planned, undertaken and its results subjected to analysis between 2017 and 2019. Addressees of the inquiry were a selection of Spanish documentary institutions of particular relevance. Thanks to them, a critical assessment was achieved for present-day management of sound heritage in different autonomous communities of Spain.

Essentials of the consultation will be described below, with an emphasis on its results. Extension limits for this paper prevent us to give details about the inquiry's design and development, but it followed recommendations expressed in several reference titles (Gobierno de Cantabria 2009:17; Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado and Baptista Lucio, 2010:230).

3. Methodology

The new consultation regarding sound heritage management in Spain was the first of two giving shape to an inquiry addressed to institutions whose geographical areas were, in most cases, one of the Spanish autonomous communities. Institutions were chosen after their relevance in the field of general documentation, upon checking available databases –notably those published by the Spanish Ministry of Culture at its internet website. An effort was made to include institutions most-actively involved in sound heritage, as this should be a sign of their bigger informative capacity about documents of the class at stake. But such a fact did not imply that chosen institutions themselves were holders of sound collections, for no attempt was being made to know definite features of the existing documents. What was rather sought after was the degree of information that respondents had on the situation of collections and holders in their corresponding geographical area.

This first inquiry took the shape of a written, online form (Páramo, 2004). Decisions on the structure and contents of the form were a major concern, for “success of a research is to a great extent linked to elaborating an adequate form. This must meet the requirements that will make its analysis possible and has to allow fulfillment of the project's objectives” (Gobierno de Cantabria 2009:34). Once the form was ready and the chosen institutions had confirmed participation, they were told the internet address where the form could be found. Enclosed was a brief explanation of the inquiry's aims and the usage intended for the data to be collected (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado and Baptista Lucio, 2010:237-239).

It was an essentially qualitative inquiry that centered around two features: (1) the opinions that respondents

had on the present situation of sound collections management in their corresponding autonomous communities; and (2) the actions that those institutions considered either advisable or compulsory for improving the situation they were witnessing.

Unlike that online form, the main document devised for the second of the planned inquiries was to be sent by e-mail and included tables in which the surveyed were offered the opportunity to state how many centers in their area hosted heritage sound recordings. That inquiry and its results are described in a separate publication (end 2020).

The online form submitted to institutions consisted of five groups of questions, belonging to two of several possible classes (Gobierno de Cantabria 2009:35). There were closed-type questions that expected definite, numerical values regarding the various features of sound documents management; but also, open-type questions that allowed respondents to extend their replies at their discretion (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado and Baptista Lucio, 2010:221). The intention of that double asking was to achieve both objective and subjective assessments of the present situation of the cultural heritage at stake.

Closed-type questions predominated in the first part of the two that composed the form, and were distributed in four groups, related to as many stages in document processing. Although replies to them should be quantitative, they were meant to express the satisfaction level of the surveyed as to the different aspects of sound collections management. The open-type questions allowed for overtly qualitative replies and were present in just one group, forming the second part of the form.

For ease of answer, most of the closed-type questions expected numerical integers in the range from 0 and 9 (either a single value or two correlative); values at the bottom of that range would signal unfavorable conditions for the feature inquired upon, and vice-versa (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado and Baptista Lucio, 2010:244). Consequently, registering a zero value would not mean that no answer was given but, on the contrary, the lowest of all possible scorings. If no value at all was given to a question, it would be interpreted as the respondent not having enough information for answering it.

The questions were grouped after the secondary objective they dealt with. Thus, the first group had to do with locating and identifying sound collections and consisted in two questions; the second group addressed cataloguing and classifying issues of sound collections, with five questions (in two groups of two and three each); the third group referred to conservation and digitization of sound collections, with eight questions (in four pairs); and a fourth group dealt with accessing and disseminating sound collections, with four questions (in two pairs). That total of nineteen closed questions was followed by a group of four open-type questions; and the form was concluded by two more questions (closed-type) about the consultation itself.

The sixteen institutions or centers that filled the online form are detailed in Table 1. The name of each

respondent is followed there by the abbreviation – in parentheses– with which it will be identified in the rest of this publication. In all cases, answer was given to the four open-type questions, because they had been marked as compulsory, unlike the closed-type questions. Therefore, leaving one or more of the open-type questions without an answer unqualified for the docu-

ment being sufficiently filled, and prevented its being sent back, no matter how many closed-type questions had been replied. Forcing the institutions to include definite proposals for improving the situations they were describing owed to a desire for getting constructive assessments from them, and not mere scorings or criticisms.

Area	Answers	Institutions or centers	Abbreviation
Andalucía	2	Centro Andaluz del Flamenco (Andalusian Flamenco Center), Jerez de la Frontera	And_CAF
		Centro de Documentación Musical de Andalucía (Andalusian Music Documentation Center), Granada	And_CDMA
Aragón	0	–	
Cantabria	0	–	
Castilla and León	2	Biblioteca Regional de Castilla y León Joaquín Díaz Foundation	CyL_BibCyL CyL_FJD
Castilla–La Mancha	0	–	
Cataluña	0	–	
Ceuta	0	–	
Community of Madrid	2	Biblioteca Regional de Madrid “Joaquín Leguina” Biblioteca Musical Municipal (City Musical Library)	Mad_BR Mad_BMM
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	0	–	
Valencian Community	1	Instituto Valenciano of Cultura (Valencian Culture Institute)	Val_IVC
Extremadura	1	Biblioteca de Extremadura	Ext_BibExt
Galicia	0	–	
Balearic islands	2	Arxiu del Só i de la Imatge of Mallorca (Majorcan Sound and Image Archive)	Bal_ASI–Ma
		Arxiu del Só i de la Imatge of Menorca (Menorcan Sound and Image Archive)	Bal_ASI–Mn
Canary Islands	1	Asociación de Compositores Sinfónicos y Musicólogos de Tenerife (Association of Orchestral Composers and Musicologists in Tenerife)	Can_COSIMTE
La Rioja	1	Biblioteca de La Rioja	LaR_BibLaR
Melilla	0	–	
País Vasco	1	Eresbil – Archivo Vasco de la Música (Basque Music Archive)	PV_Eresbil
Principado de Asturias	1	Biblioteca de Asturias	Ast_BibAst
Region of Murcia	2	Biblioteca Regional de Murcia Conservatorio Superior de Murcia (Main School of Music)	Mur_BR Mur_CS

4. Analysis of the answers

Replies to the four topics mentioned above, associated to different stages in document management, shall be analyzed separately. For each of them, replies to the corresponding group of closed-type questions will come first, and replies to the related open-type question will follow. In italics are English translations as close as possible to the original questions.

4.1. Locating and identifying sound collections

Closed-type questions

In order to gather assessments about the present situation of locating and identifying sound collections, the first group of closed-type questions was as follows:

As regards sound collections in your autonomous community,

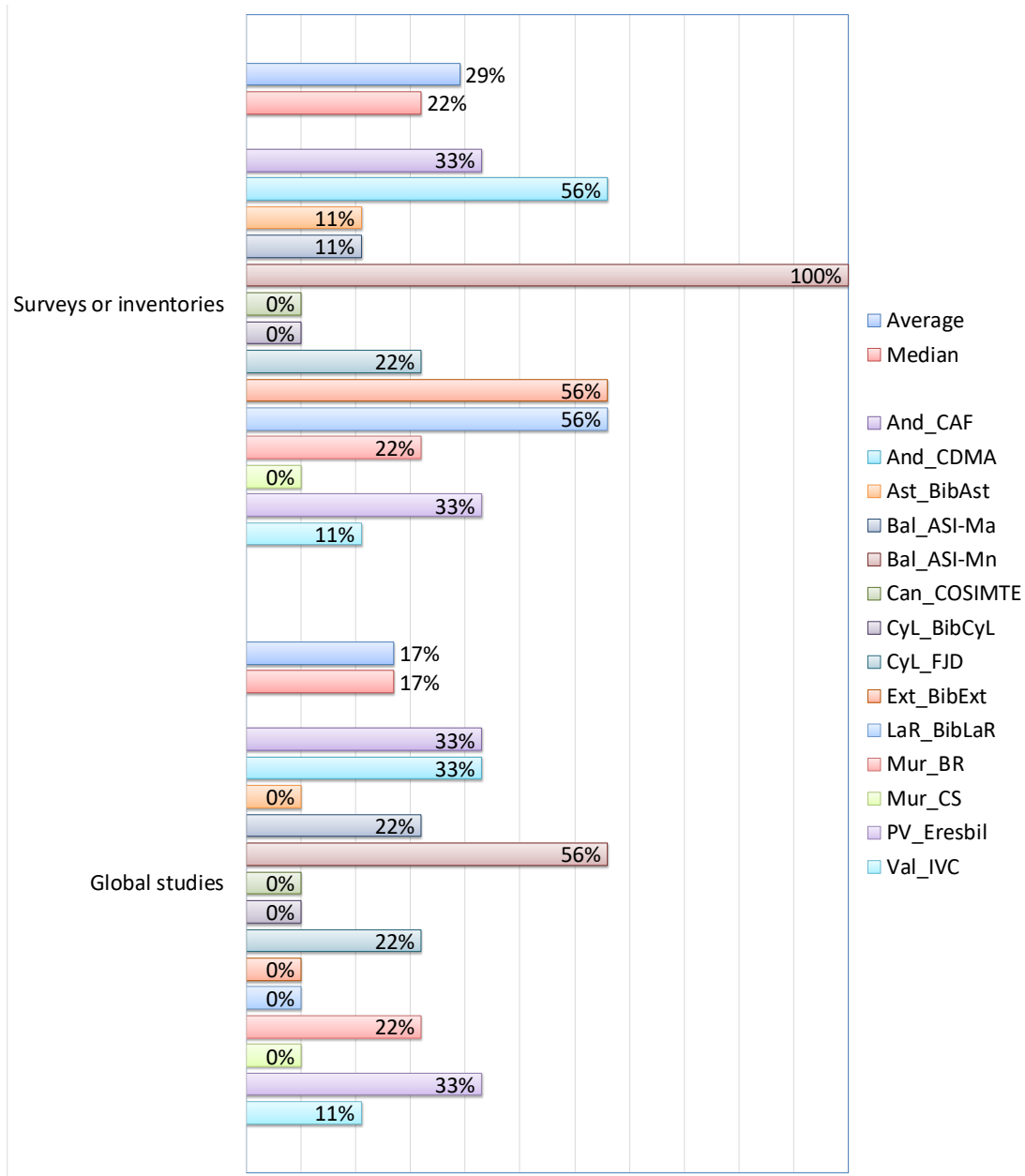
1.1. ¿Are surveys or inventories available?

1.2. ¿Have global studies been undertaken? (On: recorded topics, recording usages, recording and publication dates, state of conservation, etc.)

Chart 1 shows the satisfaction level, expressed as a percentage, of surveyed centers, as regards two issues

in their autonomous communities: the surveys or studies already done, and the available tools or resources about sound documents. Respondents are labeled with abbreviations explained in Table I. The chart shows, above the ratings given by them, their median and average values.

Chart 1. Satisfaction level as to surveys, inventories and global studies on sound collections. Source: own work.



In this first chart we can see that ratings given by respondents point to an important paucity not only of surveys and inventories of sound recordings but also of global studies about them. A total absence of them is registered by some of the respondents, three for the first question and six for the second. For some autonomies, the situation is better though only slightly above 50% of the optimal situation; and only one respondent considered that surveys –though not global studies– covered almost completely the sound heritage that existed in the area –a statement that may be regarded as too optimistic,

at least without further information. The average value for the satisfaction level concerning available surveys of sound collections in autonomous communities was slightly below 30%, and less than that as regards global studies, where it did not reach 20%.

Open-type question about locating and identifying sound collections

The first open-type question in the fifth group of the online form was: *For better locating and identifying sound*

collections in your autonomous community, ¿what definite actions would you recommend?

The answers given to it are discussed below, grouped after the main feature each one pointed to.

a) Mentioning information resources

Answers dealing with information resources were predominant among those given to the first of the open-type questions. They were as follows:

- *To prepare, at least, a list of existing collections.*
- *[Carry out an] Inventory.*
- *Creation of a unified catalogue featuring all sound documents in an autonomous community.*
- *To prepare a catalogue.*
- *A survey undertaken by librarians or document managers.*
- *Carrying out a map of sound collections' owners for each autonomous community.*
- *An efficient map of sound collections.*
- *Need for an inventory and a map of sound collections with data regarding whereabouts and preservation status.*
- *Carry out an official survey based on unified criteria and dealing with both public and private collections.*
- *Outsourcing a survey of existing collections.*

The list above shows that a subset of the answers dealt with achieving information resources that were considered necessary. These resources would have to do with either internal control of data regarding sound holdings or their holders, or their description and dissemination. Such answers used various expressions for labeling the desired information resources, among them those of *list*, *inventory*, *catalogue* and *survey*. As a complement to some of these expressions –or even in place of them–, the word *map* was also used. This implied software apps –or their visual interfaces– that let their users visually find the whereabouts of heritage holdings or holders, using an administrative map to be zoomed in and out at will. Icons signaling each location would allow direct access to data on a particular collection or holder. An example of such a map is the *Spanish music heritage map*, an online resource maintained by the CDAEM (see Bibliography).

Some of the answers above gave details about the geographical area that should be covered by the suggested resource (e.g., *autonomous communities*), while others specified the qualification of the staff that should be in charge of that resource (e.g., *document managers*).

Other aspects were also addressed:

- the kind of institution that should undertake the proposed action (e.g., *local governments*, *private enterprises*).
- the guidelines that should be followed for producing the desired resource (e.g., *unified criteria*).
- the types of holdings that should be featured in the resource (e.g., *public collections*, *private collections*); and

- the resource's domain (e.g., *existing collections*, *all sound documents*, *holders or owners of sound collections*).

b) Mentioning wide-ranging actions

Answers that suggested to undertake actions of a certain scope, although generally without giving further details, were as follows:

- *To carry out a campaign from the relevant documentation centers in [here follow some administrative sections of the corresponding autonomy].*
- *Above all, [to achieve] an increased awareness of the importance this heritage has [...]. The cultural documentary heritage is not as esteemed as it deserves. [...] Coordination from higher institutions is missing [...] Holdings are scattered and frequently there is little communication between centers and individual holders.*
- *Joint actions of the administrative units involved.*
- *Cooperation and coordination plans for institutions that might host and curate sound collections.*
- *To increase budgets specific to sound archives.*

The preceding answers touch upon essential features of the actions suggested by respondents, e.g., what institutions should be in charge of launching such actions –and eventually also of coordinating them. Documentation centers are mentioned in that respect, as well as 'higher levels'. The need to achieve a coordination implying several *administrative units* is also envisaged.

One more facet of the desired actions is the class of users that should profit from them: *the various institutions that might be hosting and preserving sound collections*. The word *might* in the preceding sentence is worth noting, as a remark that new actions should reach all possible holders of sound collections and not only those already known as such.

c) Mentioning the transfer of contents

One of the answers pointed briefly to the problem of transferring contents of sound documents:

- *Digitization of the collection.*

It is not clear why such a mention appears among the actions would improve location and identification of sound collections: knowing where the collections are is rather a pre-requisite for having their contents transferred to digital files. But before neglecting such an answer as irrelevant, it could be understood as a proposal to offer holders such an attractive digitization plan to make them willingly provide data they would otherwise be reluctant to share –for instance, due to privacy issues or to eventual added taxes.

4.2. Cataloguing and classifying of sound collections

Closed-type questions

In order to gather assessments about the present situation of cataloguing and classifying sound collections, the second block of closed-type questions included three of them about available means, and two more about achievements:

- A) *As regards human and material means for classifying and cataloguing sound collections,*
 - 2.1. *¿How specialized is the staff in charge of those tasks?*
 - 2.2. *¿Has training in those tasks been fostered through specific activities or training courses?*
 - 2.3. *¿What role do software tools already have?*
- B) *As regards what has already been classified and catalogued,*

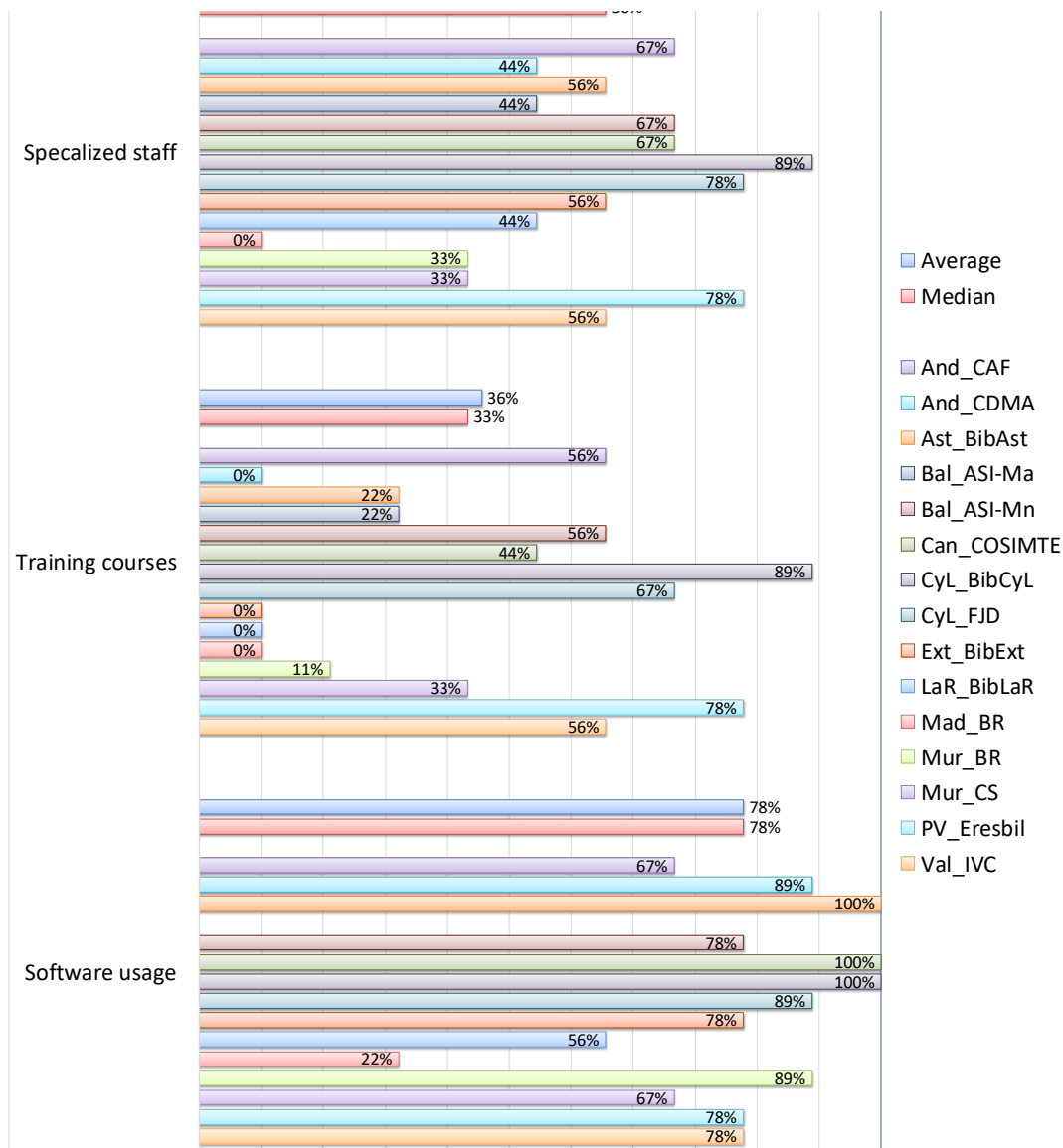
- 2.4. *For classifying and cataloguing sound collections in your autonomous community, ¿have standards or criteria been agreed upon?*
- 2.5. *In your opinion, ¿what percentage of sound collections in your community has been classified and catalogued? [N.B. Not an exact percentage but a value between 0 and 9 representing it]*

The answers given to questions in this group, aimed at an assessment of the current descriptive analysis of sound documents, are represented in Charts 2 and 3. All values are percentages. Median and average values are included for each question. Surveyed centers are labeled with the abbreviations that were introduced in Table I.

a) Human and technical means

Chart 2 shows the satisfaction degree of surveyed centers as regards the available means for cataloguing and classifying sound collections in their autonomous community.

Chart 2. Satisfaction level as to the means for analyzing sound documents. Source: own work.



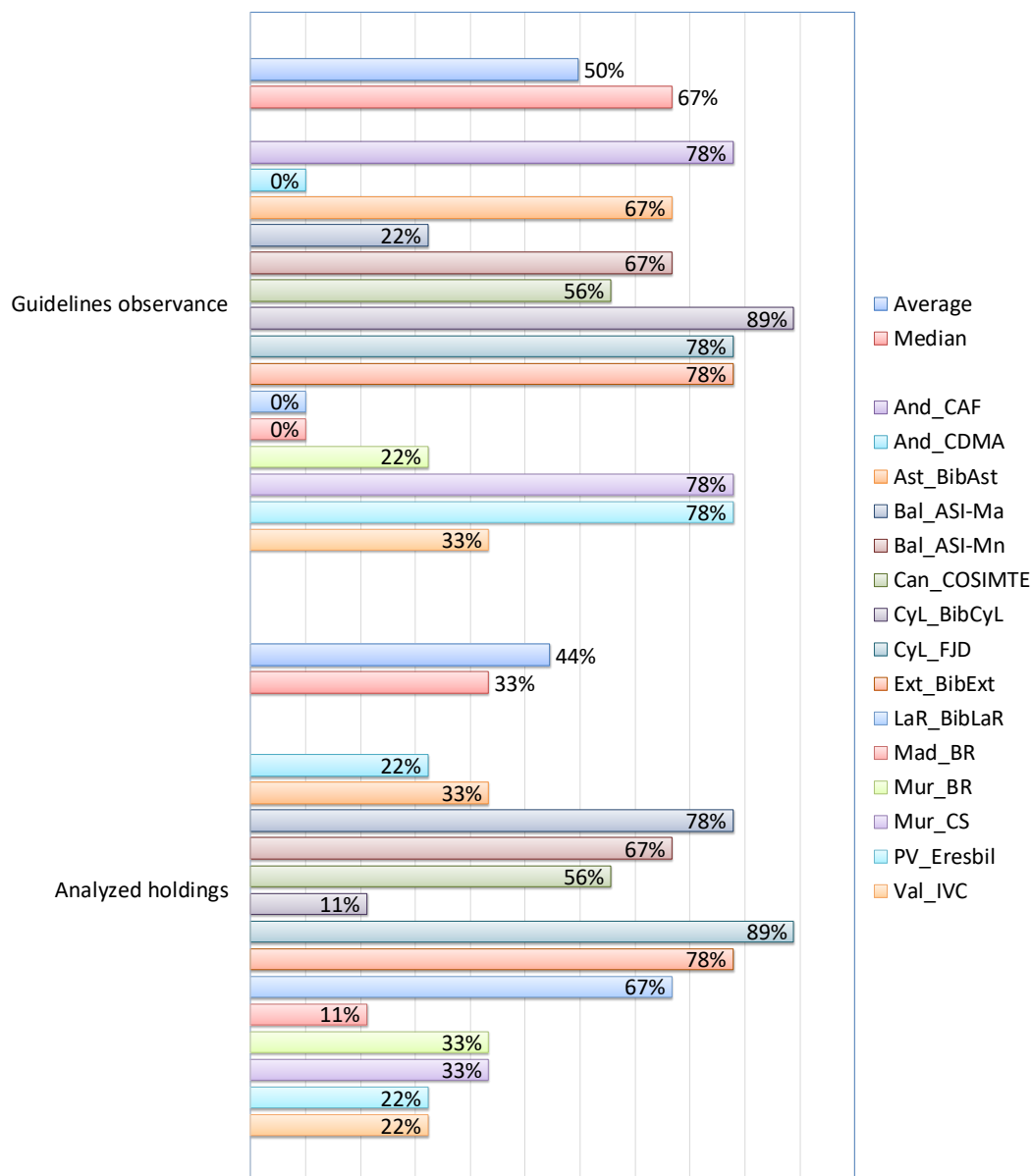
Values given to available analysis means in the corresponding autonomies were quite high as to its level of specialization, although there were significant differences between autonomies from where replies came. A much less favorable scoring was assigned to training courses in cataloguing and classifying sound recordings: they were far from ideal, something that respondents would also point out when addressing the open-type question towards the end of the questionnaire. As to the present usage of software tools for sound recording analysis, it received one of the highest scorings in all the inquiry, as it expressed a satisfaction close to 80%. Nevertheless, it must be said here that

the surveyed were probably thinking of apps aimed at cataloguing formal features of sound documents, for the tools that in recent years have been developed for analyzing the contents of those documents still have very little presence among the institutions that would benefit most from them.

b) Relevance of cataloguing and classification achievements

Chart 3 shows the satisfaction level expressed by respondents as regards descriptions of sound collections in their geographical areas.

Chart 3. Satisfaction level as to the bibliographic analysis of sound collections. Source: own work.



The usage of rules, standards or other pre-convened criteria for sound recording cataloguing scored quite high, similarly to what had happened for the preceding question (*Usage of software tools*), even if values given now by respondents were more heterogeneous (i.e., showing a higher statistical dispersion). But poor ratings reappeared when it came to assessing the amount of catalogued sound recordings, relative to those identified in

each geographical area. Here, percentages given by the surveyed left no room for doubt, as the average value did not reach 50% of the existing recordings, and both median and mode values pointed to just one third of the total. All that suggested that a big number of recordings had not been properly analyzed yet, i.e., were insufficiently described in either their formal features or their sound contents.

As a conclusion, cataloguing was not one of the least well valued processes in sound recordings management, but several of its features still needed much improvement.

Open-type question regarding descriptive analysis of sound collections

The second open-type question in the fifth group of the online form said: *For a better cataloguing and classifying of the sound collections of your autonomous community, ¿what definite actions would you recommend?*

The answers to that question may be grouped under headings that correspond to the following topics: (1) standards or shared criteria; (2) specialized knowledge; (3) personnel hiring or task outsourcing; (4) for coordination needs; and (5) information needs.

a) Mentioning standards or shared criteria

Answers dealing with the usage of rules or standards for cataloguing and classifying were as follows:

- *Start by knowing what there is, and then decide uniform criteria for cataloguing and classifying so that coordination, exchange and uniformity are reinforced.*
- *Dissemination of collective catalogues of public libraries.*
- *Have all staffs in charge of technical processes affecting the collections follow definite guidelines, rules or standards previously adopted by the network of public libraries of [the respondent's autonomous community].*
- *To prepare a normalized catalogue.*
- *To prepare shared cataloguing criteria and a collective catalogue.*
- *When integrating collections and legacies in library holdings, do not separate their documents physically nor fail to indicate, in catalogue registries, the existing links between them; the grouping criteria once followed for documentation in their places of origin must be kept as much as possible.*

The first of the preceding answers includes an important detail: *Start by knowing what there is*. Far from being obvious, the remark is relevant, for there are holders unfamiliar with rules or standards in cataloguing and classifying, or at least not quite used to their recent updates. Because of that, they might be applying or devising criteria that, although they may suit the targeted collection, would make things difficult when trying to exchange data between institutions. Both the export of data about collections thus described and the import of data about other, related holdings, could suffer from the lack of shared criteria. Consequently, the same answer mentioned above makes clear that it is a matter of achieving *coordination, exchange and uniformity*.

Other answers in the group alluded to definite collective catalogues, such as those involving a number

of public libraries in a certain geographical area –one or more autonomous communities, for example. In this case, an information resource –already existent or created on purpose– could be the adequate framework for hosting data about sound collections still poorly catalogued.

Mention was also made of *guidelines, rules or standards* adopted by reference institutions or networks. A sufficient usage of those guidelines would ensure the possibility of bi-directional data exchange between holders and reference centers; and profit would be derived from works already done, for instance in adapting international criteria to the needs of precise geographical areas. Some answers had in mind, rather than preexisting rules or standards, the preparation of cataloguing criteria on the basis of new agreements. It is to be understood that these would only be necessary when such criteria had been altogether absent or were ill-suited to the case under discussion.

The last of the answers above was quite specific, for it dealt with the problem of library cataloguing practices not fully coinciding with those pertaining to archives. Two necessities closer to archives than to libraries were mentioned here: keeping together all documents stemming from the same agent (*Principle of Provenance*) and preserving the order in which they had been arranged (*Principle of Original Order*). This would be applicable to all classes of documents, and therefore to any sound documents that might arrive at libraries, for example as part of personal legacies.

b) Mentioning specialized knowledge

Answers dealing with the needs of the staff involved in managing sound documents were as follows:

- *Staff specialization.*
- *Training.*
- *To undertake intensive courses, especially for those in charge of private collections, who frequently lack enough preparation.*

Two needs are implied in the preceding answers: first, to ask those involved in cataloguing and classifying to have a specialized knowledge; and second, to offer them adequate training courses with which to gain such a knowledge. The last of those needs is connected expressly to a certain group, namely ‘those in charge of private collections’; an observation that may suggest that the lack of training had been noted among members of the aforementioned class of holders.

c) Mentioning personnel hiring or task outsourcing

As an extension of the preceding aspect, here follow the answers related to hiring new staff or to outsourcing tasks dealing with sound document cataloguing:

- *Create jobs for new staff that is able to properly catalogue collections and to apply a unified cataloguing system.*

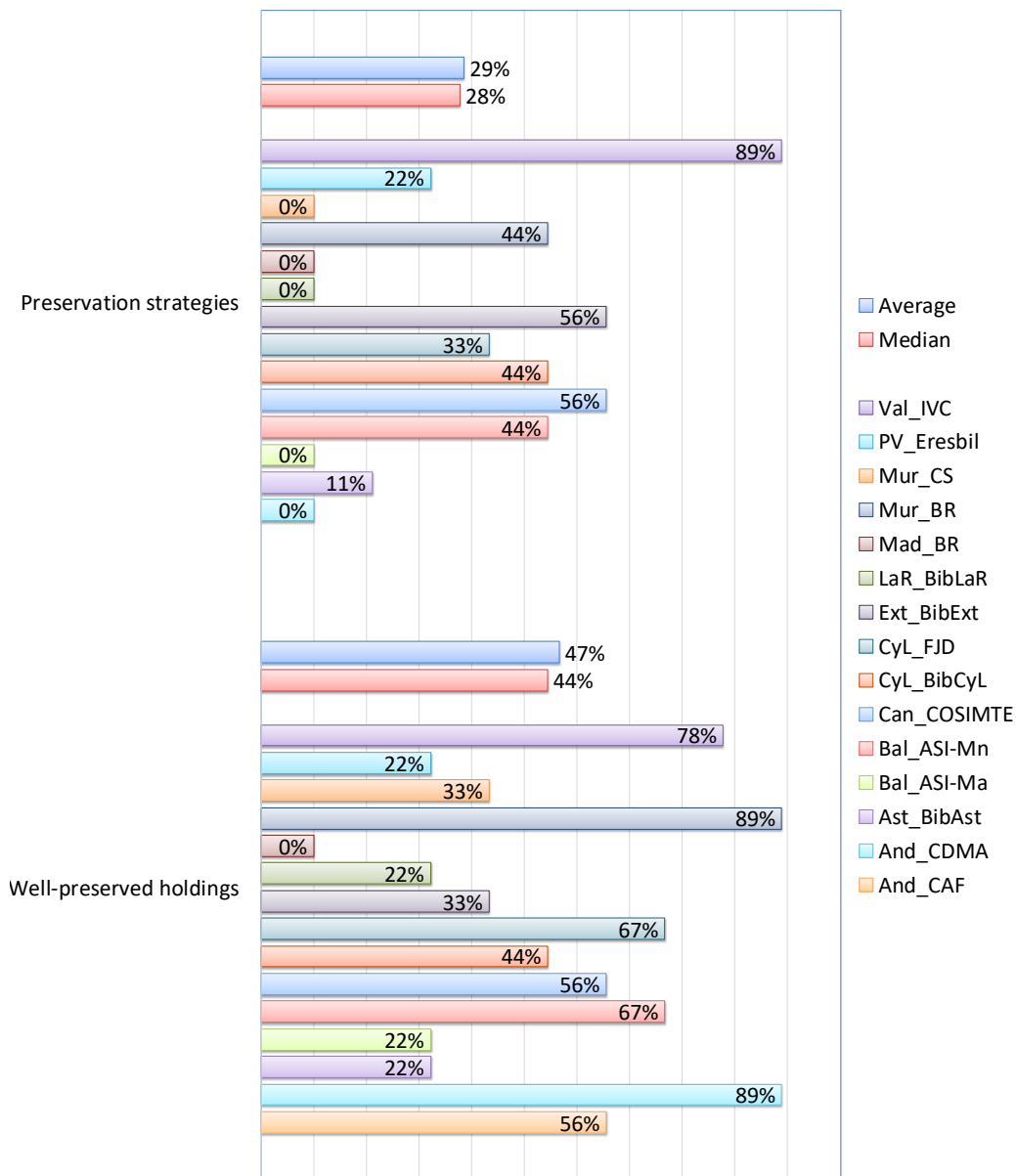
- *Increasing budgets, hiring document managers.*
- *Hiring qualified staff.*
- *Asking external experts in cataloguing and classifying collections.*
- *Hiring external companies for describing and cataloguing sound holdings outside public libraries.*

It is apparent that, for many respondents, the ability to undertake the document processing activities stated above meant having a high level of specialization. Consequently, several solutions were suggested to achieve it: enlarging the staff expressly for that end; consult-

ing experts, either external or in-house (the latter via rewards to be determined); and even the outsourcing of tasks. For this third solution, an answer alluded to sound collections ‘not in public libraries’; this relevant remark could mean that in such libraries there is staff able to carry out the tasks discussed, but that it would be unfair –or unpractical– to ask that staff to add to their usual tasks, focused on the institution’s holdings, the task of describing holdings foreign to it, however interesting they might be. If such an assumption turns out to be correct, staff in public libraries would be, in

theory at least, capable of training external holders in need of it, but in order to have that staff fulfil such a mission, adequate compensations should be agreed upon.

Chart 4. Satisfaction level as to conservation of analog sound documents. Source: own work.



d) Mentioning coordination needs

Answers that mentioned the need to coordinate centers as regards cataloguing and classifying their sound collections were as follows:

- *Cooperation and coordination plans for institutions that might host and curate sound collections.*
- *Joint action of the different administrative units.*

- *Coordination with the Biblioteca Nacional de España.*
- *Behaving in a coordinated way under supervision of competent centers, so that guidelines, rules and standards are effectively shared.*

The preceding answers point to the essential role that several respondents endowed to cooperation between centers; a cooperation that should take place in a framework of activities coordinated either by the centers themselves or by any other institution commissioned for it. In one of the replies, that coordinating or referential role was assigned to a specific center, the Biblioteca Nacional de España, perhaps taking into account what this library may be already doing in that respect. The rest of replies gave no further details as to the manner of achieving the desired coordination.

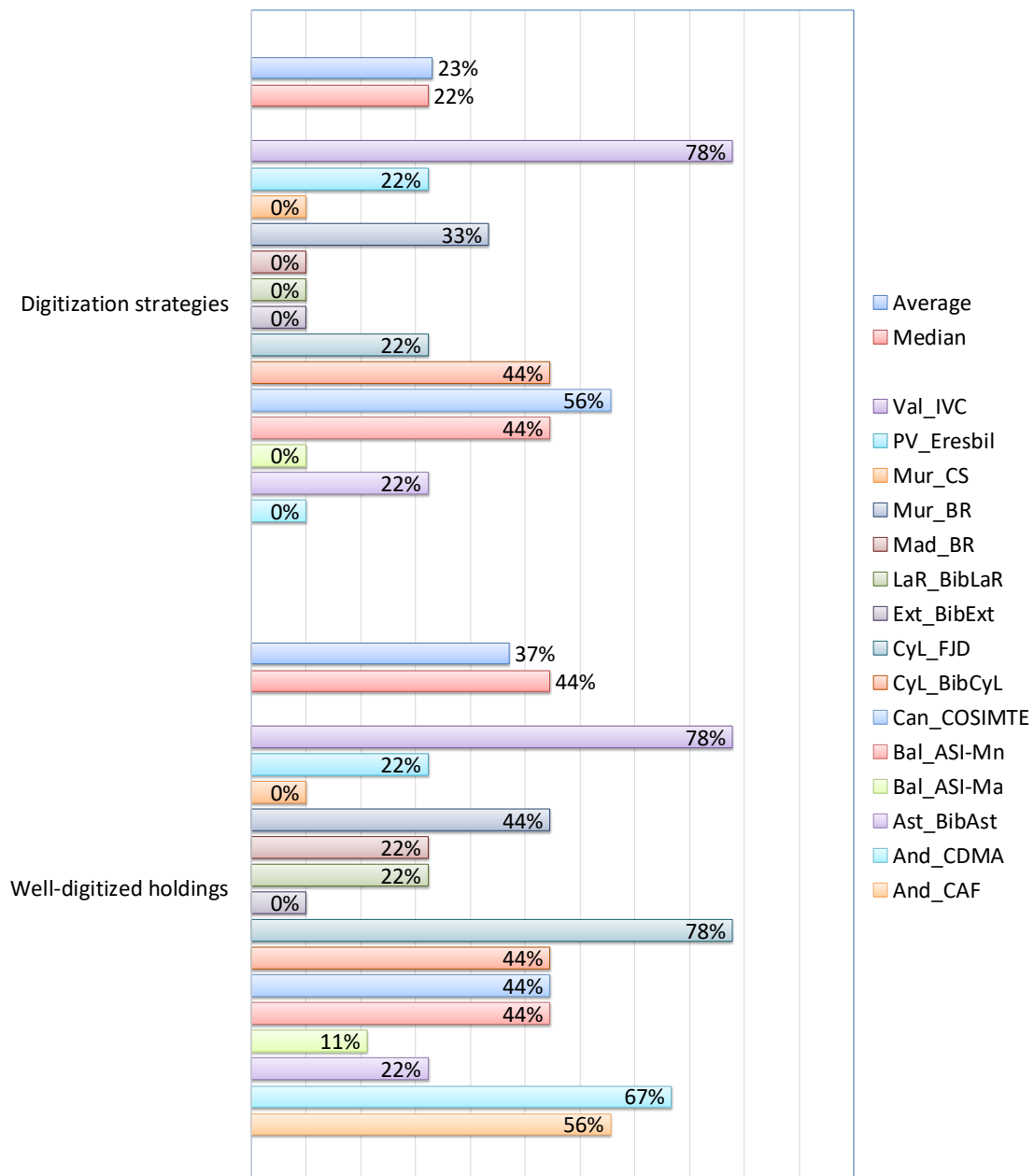
e) Mentioning information needs

Only one of the replies dealt with information resources devised for sound documentation holders:

- *Devise a system so that collection managers have where to put the forward questions and consultations stemming from their tasks [in describing sound collections].*

It is certainly difficult to point out centers or departments currently able to offer that kind of information, and in a way that can be understood easily by the non-specialized, for it implies a certain knowledge of a number of technical features. The creation, for such information needs, a physical place, a virtual online resource, or both, would foster more participation from holders in the description at stake. Besides, it would help in getting closer to what many other replies above recommended, i.e., to gain a uniform practice as regards cataloguing and classification.

Chart 5. Satisfaction level as to digitization of analog sound documents. Source: own work.



4.3. Conservation and digitization of sound collections

Closed-type questions

In order to get ratings about conservation and digitization of sound collections, questions were distributed in four pairs: the first two had to do with analog sound documents, whereas the rest dealt with digital sound documents either resulting from digitization of analog recordings or entirely born digital.

a) Questions about analog documents

In a first group about document conservation, questions were as follows:

- A) *As regards conservation of analog carriers,*
 - 3.1. *¿Are there unified strategies?*
 - 3.2. *¿What percentage of analog sound carriers is properly kept?*

- B) *As regards digitization of analog carriers,*
 - 3.3. *¿Are there unified strategies?*
 - 3.4. *¿What percentage of analog sound carriers is properly preserved?*

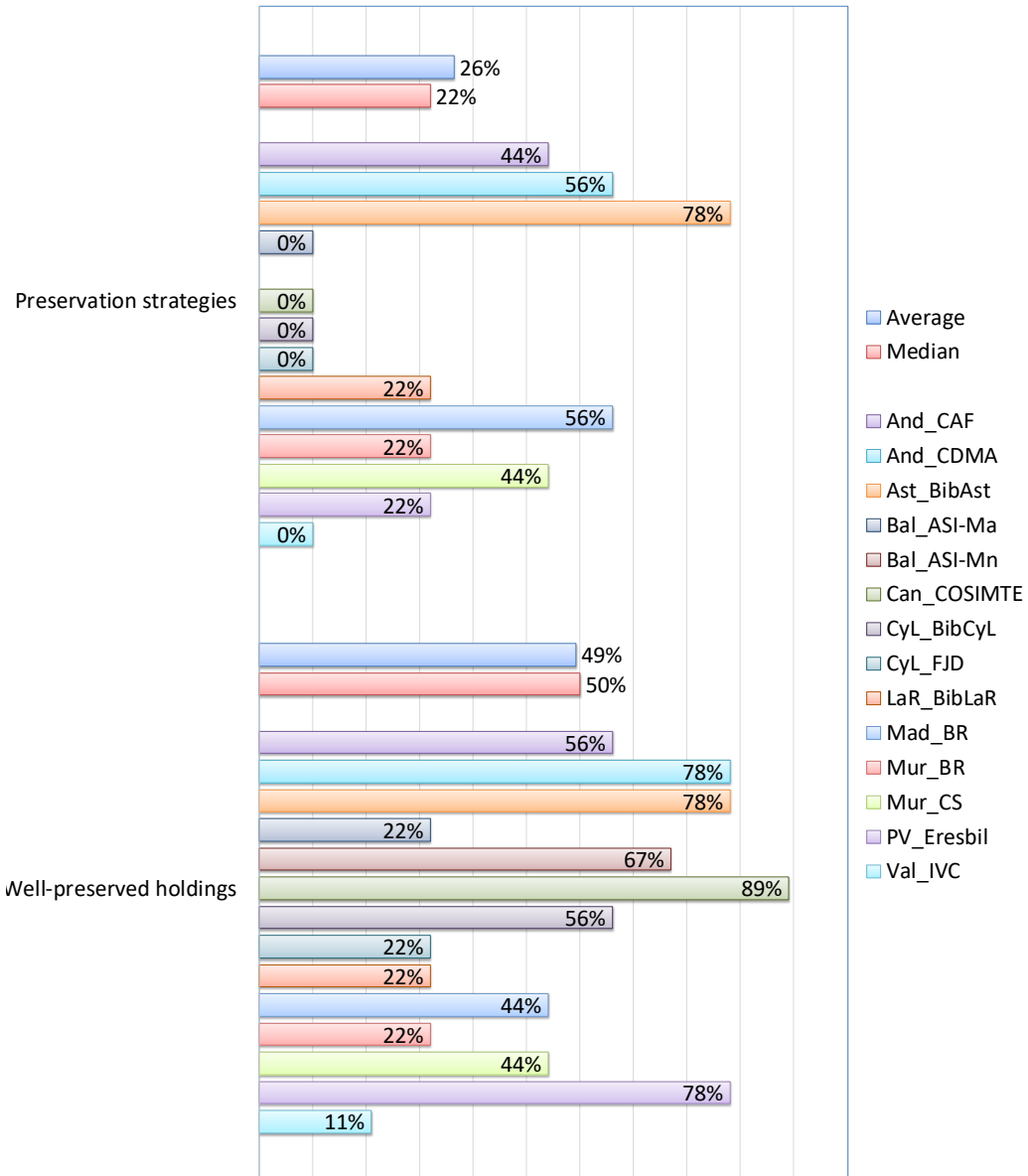
Note: questions 3.2 and 3.4 had to be replied with scorings between 0 and 9, representing percentages between 0 and 100.

Charts 4 and 5 show the answers given to those questions. All values are percentages. Median and average values are included for each question. Surveyed centers are labeled with abbreviations stated in Table I.

Chart 4 represents the results for the two questions about conservation of analog carriers, dealing respectively with the framework in which conservation was done and the results achieved up to the moment.

As to Chart 5, it shows the results for questions similar to those in Chart 4 but referring now to digitization of analog documents.

Chart 6. Satisfaction level as to conservation of digital sound documents. Source: own work.

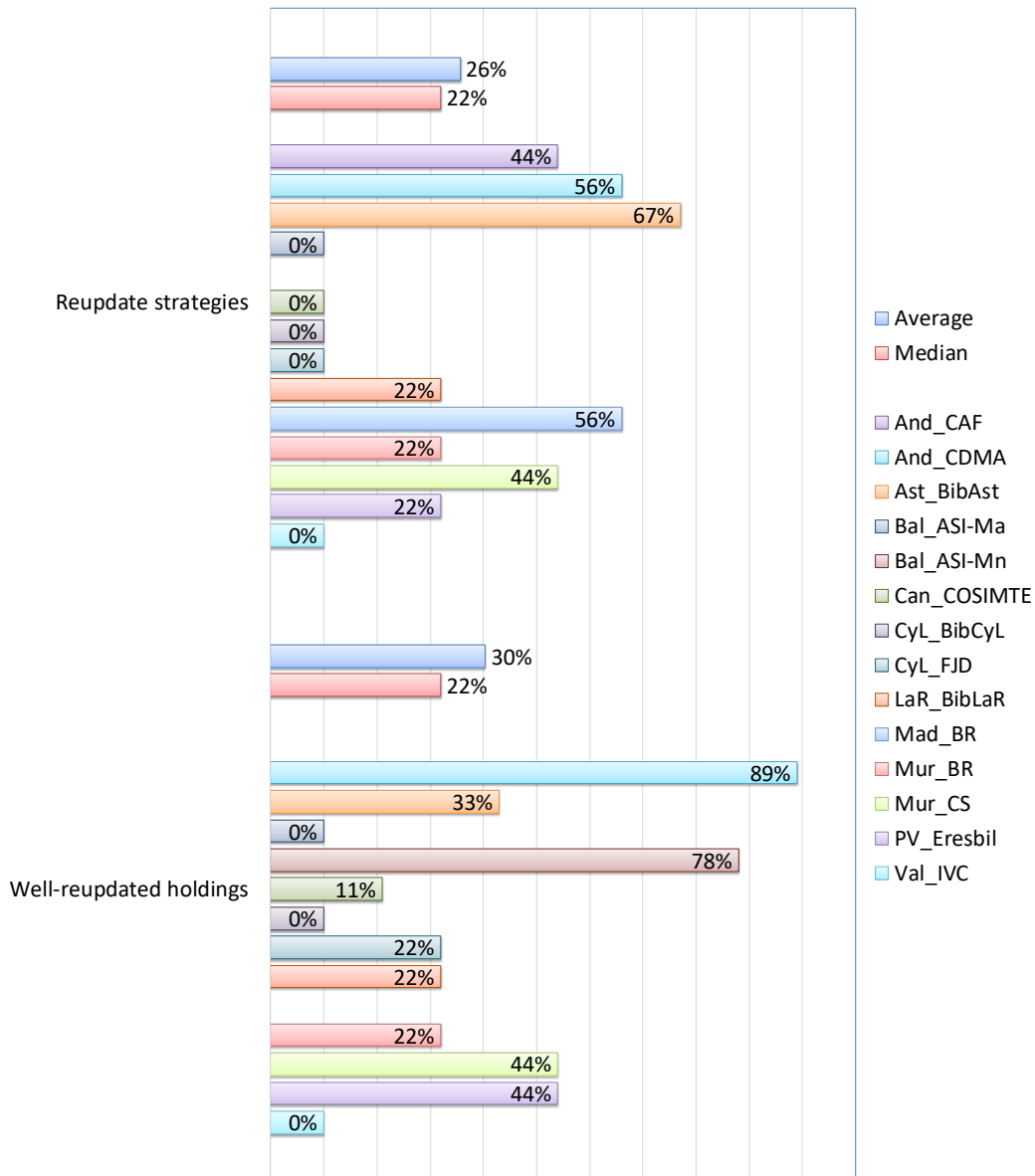


The presence of unified strategies for either conservation or digitization of analog recordings received quite low ratings, as shown in the upper part of charts 4 and 5. According to the replies, those strategies would be altogether absent in more than one third of the surveyed autonomous communities; only in one of them did they receive good ratings.

A somewhat better scoring was given to the second of the questions represented in each of those

charts 4 and 5. It was an estimate of what percentage of analog sound carriers had already been properly preserved and digitized in the corresponding autonomous community. Here, almost all values were above zero but both their median and average values were still below 50%, signaling an unbalance between what was already accomplished and what is still pending as regards preservation and digitization of analog documents.

Chart 7. Satisfaction level as to a regular update of digital files. Source: own work.



b) Questions about digital documents

The second group of questions in the third part of the form were as follows:

- C) *As regards conservation of digital files,*
 - 4.1. *¿ Are there unified strategies?*
 - 4.2. *¿ What percentage of digital sound carriers is properly preserved? [See note to questions 3.2 and 3.4 above]*

- D) *As regards a regular update of digital files,*
 - 4.3. *¿ Are there unified strategies?*
 - 4.4. *¿ What percentage of the digital sound carriers is regularly updated? [ibid.]*

Replies to those questions are represented in Charts 6 and 7. Digital recording being much more recent than analog technologies, ratings for the former were expected to be higher than those given to the latter (see Charts 4 and 5), but they would not

be so: answers assessing the state of preservation and transfer of digital sound documents continued picturing a far from ideal situation.

Regarding the existence of unified strategies for conservation of digital sound documents (Chart 6), more than one third of the surveyed gave a scoring of 0% –i.e., the lowest possible value, not to be interpreted as an absence of any reply. That scoring denotes a frequent and notorious lack of such strategies. As to the estimates of how much digital sound was being properly updated to new formats, they did not evidence such a poor situation as for the previous topic, but the resulting average value showed that hardly 50% of existing documents had been subject to format updates.

Particularly alarming were the low ratings received by issues dealing with updating digital sound files (Chart 7). There were modest scorings not only about the eventual shared strategies for such an updating, but also when estimating how much digital sound was periodically updated. It all suggests that many institutions, once in possession of digital versions of their analog documents, could be relying on a false sensation of safety: they might feel too free from preservation cares, and therefore postpone them for too long, if not indefinitely. The true situation is quite the opposite: certain digital carriers and file formats are, in contradiction to their short age, among those materials most exposed to quick obsolescence.

Taking as a whole the answers pictured in Charts 4 to 7, they provide an overview where not only analog sound documents, but digital documents as well do suffer from important shortcomings as regards proper carrier conservation; and the same applies to transferring contents to new formats that would increase their life expectancy.

Open-type question regarding conservation and digitization of sound collections

The third open-type question in the fifth group of the online form was: *For a better conservation and digitization of the sound collections in your autonomous community, ¿what definite actions do you recommend?*

Replies given to that question will be analyzed in the following four sections, dealing respectively with: (a) plans or coordinated programs; (b) human and technical means; (c) guidelines or *good practice*; (d) decisions regarding what to digitize; and (5) the need to locate sound documents and to assess their condition.

a) Mentioning plans or coordinated programs

An important proportion of the answers given when demanding improvement suggestions for preserving and digitizing sound collections, mentioned –either explicitly or implicitly– the need to properly coordinate any new activities that could be launched:

- *Coordinated programs for preservation and digitization.*
- *A preservation and digitization plan surveyed by a coordinating center that would unify tasks and actions.*

- *A joint action from the various administrative units involved.*
- *Initiatives from the public sector.*
- *Design of a preservation and digitization plan in the autonomous community.*
- *Cooperation and coordination plans for institutions that might host and curate sound collections.*
- *Operate in coordination from relevant centers [autonomic or local] so that shared guidelines, rules and standards are observed.*
- *Maintain communication between institutions in order to digitize and thus preserve the information present in sound collections. In the case of [a certain library], we are in a project together with [a second, digital library].*

The preceding answers show that the plans or programs in question would sometimes stem from a coordinating center unifying the tasks involved, and in other cases they would result from autonomic initiatives in the corresponding culture department or equivalent section. Plans could also be the result of agreements between centers in the same hierarchical level. It is also worth noting, in the replies above, the need they express for a regular communication between institutions, instead of their being content with an occasional contact resulting from isolated initiatives.

The last of the answers reproduced above mentions a solution already put into practice by some centers: connecting physical, traditional libraries with virtual ones. The latter, as repositories of digital, online-accessible documents, would function as showrooms for the former, allowing users to remotely access their sound holdings. An access that in the case of sound documents still cannot be, however, as open as for other classes of documents: there are indeed frequent restrictions regarding recorded contents, owing to intellectual property rights or other considerations that frequently hinder a total or partial dissemination.

b) Mentioning human and technical means

Answers dealing with the need to improve available means for preservation and digitization were as follows:

- *Financial support.*
- *Budget increase.*
- *For public libraries, a better financial support.*
- *Means.*
- *Better-equipped preservation facilities and not shared for photographic holdings [i.e., for sound only].*
- *Training new generations so that research done by their predecessors, including their accomplishments, does not get lost.*

Some of the preceding answers did not give details about the type of the desired means nor about the manner in which they could be achieved; on the contrary, they just used brief expressions such as means, financial support,

or budget increase. But other respondents did specify the means that eventual budget increases should make available, giving priority to two features: (a) preservation rooms, that should be adapted to sound documents (and preferably independent from any other classes of holdings that might be stored in the same rooms); and (b) staff training, more precisely the transmission of knowledge from *senior* professionals to newer professionals in the memory institutions. A knowledge not recorded in documents but rather, it could be said, an exponent of oral tradition.

c) Mentioning guidelines or ‘good practice’

The answers dealing with either the adequacy or the need to follow written manuals –or any other kind of reference documents– dealing with *good practice*, were as follows:

- *Prepare written rules or guidelines for both tasks [i.e., conservation and digitization].*
- *Publish conservation and digitization parameters previously agreed upon, so that any col-*

lection holder can access them easily, be it at the beginning of those tasks or, should doubts arise, later on.

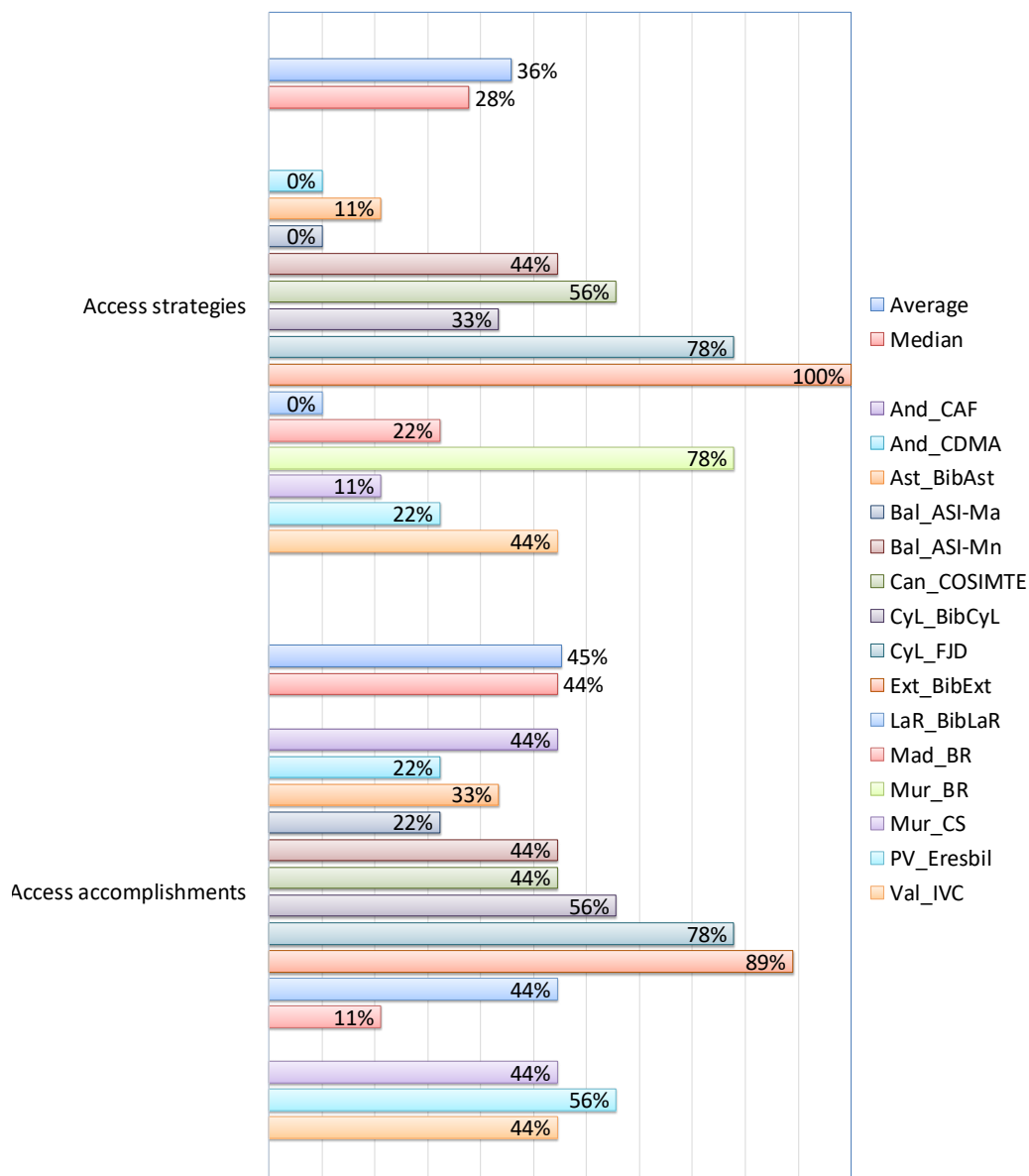
Although the preceding replies do not use the expression *good practice*, they nevertheless make reference to guidelines previously agreed-upon, and to the fact that these guidelines should be easily accessible by potential users, either before attempting any preservation task or when already started.

d) Mentioning decisions regarding what to digitize

The answers that dealt with setting up priorities when planning to digitize holdings were as follows:

- *Digitization of all extant pre-vinyl recordings that have not been already digitized for other public collections.*
- *[...] digitization of lacquer discs, especially recordings between 1930 and 1950.*

Chart 8. Satisfaction level as to accessing sound documents. Source: own work.



Both statements have to do with the impossibility for immediately digitizing all sound holdings in need of it. Therefore, guidelines must be defined for establishing digitization priorities among those holdings, so that batches of documents are sequentially transferred to new carriers. Carrier type, carrier age, and the presence or absence of digital copies in other institutions were among the factors suggested by respondents in order to decide such priorities. These factors were not mutually exclusive.

e) Mentioning the need to locate sound documents and assess their condition

As a previous step to actions aimed at improving sound collection conservation and digitization, one of the replies gave this advice:

- *Set up a plan for locating analog documents and determining their condition.*

That is indeed an important step prior to carrier conservation and content digitization; mentioning it in this part of the questionnaire points to the importance of carrying out sound collection surveys of some kind.

4.4. Accessing and disseminating sound collections

Closed-type questions

The fourth group of questions in the online form dealt with the present state of accessing and disseminating sound collections:

- A) *As regards accessing sound collections:*
- 5.1. *¿Are there unified strategies?*
 - 5.2. *¿How would you rate the current possibilities for accessing sound collections?*
- B) *As regards disseminating sound collections:*
- 5.3. *¿Are there unified strategies?*
 - 5.4. *¿How would you rate the current dissemination of sound collections?*

Charts 8 and 9 represent the answers given to the preceding four questions by the institutions surveyed. The first of those charts shows their satisfaction level as to accessing sound collections in their autonomous community, whereas the second does a similar job as to the dissemination that has already been achieved for them.

Chart 8 evidenced a general opinion that accessing collections had up-to-now been better addressed than most other features in sound documents management. We may venture that such an appreciation could result from most of the respondents being libraries, the class of institution where one of the main objectives is giving access to holdings to a generally high number of external users belonging to very different types. But an added cause for such a better scoring could reside in the fact that the task of managing access to holdings may ask for less technical, specialized training as other tasks in the document management process.

Whatever the causes for that higher satisfaction among the respondents, there are still features to be much improved as regards giving access to sound holdings. This may be concluded from values given not only to the presence of unified strategies for regulating that access, deemed as insufficient, but also to the current possibilities – generally rated as modest– for accessing holdings.

The degree of dissemination that sound collections are supposed to be enjoying draws a definitely better situation (Chart 9). Respondents considered that the presence of memory institutions in society –i.e., how evident their social importance is– was something to which enough care was being given by institutions devoted to safeguarding sound document heritage. However, that should not lead us to lower the guard and think that those cultural assets are reaching the general public in fair amount and quality; for we are dealing here only with document collections that were fortunate enough to be located, identified, described, preserved, and digitized, to an extent that made it possible to offer users proper digital copies for access or dissemination –e.g., through online repositories.

Open-type question about access and dissemination of sound collections

The fourth open-type question in the fifth group of the online form was: *For a better access and dissemination of sound collections of your autonomous community, ¿what definite actions would you advise?*

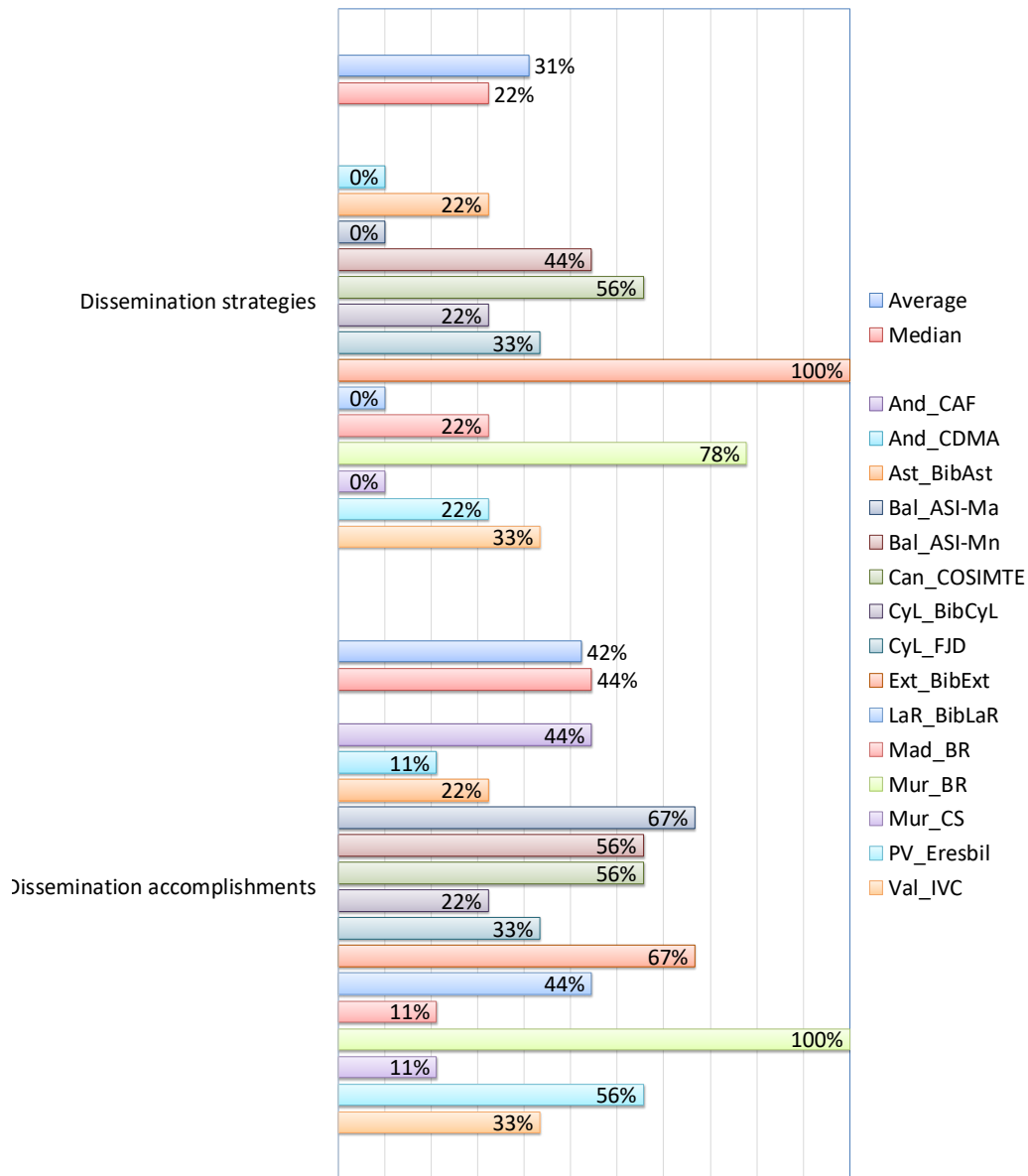
The replies to it will be now grouped according to the main issue they pointed to: (1) definite actions; (2) digital libraries or the like; (3) ways for instrumenting improvement actions; (4) dissemination channels; (5) information resources; and (6) methodology

a) Mentioning definite actions

Answers that featured specific actions aimed at improving access and dissemination of sound collections were rather frequent; because of that, they will now be further grouped according to the class of action implied.

- 1) Exhibitions, either permanent or temporary, the latter in successive places or at the holder's facilities:
 - *Preparation of an itinerant exhibition about [a certain musical style or a particular class of works].*
 - *To envisage activities for publicizing the collection. [In order to do so,] [...]exhibitions are regularly prepared to show parts of our holdings; one of them has been devoted to [...]vinyl discs.*
- 2) Actions aimed at definite groups of users:
 - *We also have activities for children as part of the program [a definite program was mentioned here], including one related to sound recordings. It deals with having an overview of how music has been listened to in the last 200 years.*

Chart 9. Satisfaction level as to disseminating sound documents. Source: own work.



3) Actions profiting from the curating institution’s web page:

- One more way for disseminating our sound collections is via internet. Thanks to a joint project [with a certain digital library], our web page offers a selection of lacquer discs that can be listened to; in this way, recordings are first recovered and then retrieved, something that implies both preservation and dissemination tasks.

achieved through selling and spreading the collections. These hardly have any visibility. Sale spots have gradually disappeared –shops, spaces in general stores–, and the few places that remain open are not enough and, besides, hard to be found –e.g., museum shops.

4) Actions using a certain communication channel:

- A wider dissemination should be achieved through the broadcasting of recordings from our autonomous community as well as from beyond.

6) Actions for controlling online dissemination:

Internet has turned into a threat for intellectual life, because it goes against retrieving documents in libraries and archives, and because digital copies of those documents can be disseminated in poorly controlled ways. [...] Besides, there is a minimum or null financial return for those who produced the documents. The recording industry seems to be doomed to disappear.

5) Actions based on the commercial use of recordings, e.g., those stemming from campaigns for the safeguarding of that cultural heritage:

- Investment in recordings has been significant, so an adequate retribution should be

7) Actions based on preparing certain information resources:

- *In the case of private collections, a survey as thorough as possible should be done.*

The replies above show an ample set of recommended actions. Because of that, improvements suggested for accessing and disseminating sound collections should take many facts into account, in order to achieve fuller, more satisfactory results.

b) Mentioning digital libraries

Answers dealing with creating or improving digital repositories of sound documents were as follows:

- *Hispana, Europeana, ...*
- *Inclusion of digitized recordings in [a definite, already existing virtual library in an autonomous community].*
- *Once sound collections are catalogued and digitized, our opinion is that the best way for disseminating them would be through a web site, ideally shared by [institutions of the same level in the corresponding autonomous community].*
- *Implementing a digital library for [the autonomous community of the respondent].*
- *Digitization and dissemination.*
- *On-line retrieval.*

The answers mention digital repositories of different geographical scopes: sometimes of autonomic range, but others international –e.g., Europeana– or at least of a national level –e.g., Hispana, a Spanish data hub for Europeana. Some of the answers mention already-existing digital libraries, while others request or advise the creation of such a resource for the corresponding autonomous community. A last subset of replies shows a lack of definition as to which geographical area should be covered by the digital dissemination they are recommending.

As regards the labels given by respondents to such digital repositories, some refer to *digital* or *virtual* libraries; others use the expression *web site*; others just mention what should be aimed at –e.g., *digitization and dissemination*; and a last group deals with the way for achieving it –e.g., *on-line retrieval*.

c) Mentioning ways for making decisions about improvement actions

Some calls for action deal more with the way in which definite actions are to be planned or developed than with the details of the actions themselves. These replies were as follows:

- *Cooperation and coordination plans for institutions that might host and curate sound collections.*
- *Dissemination under coordination by a main center; [and] in this case I would suggest [...] [a particular regional library was mentioned here].*

- *Joint action.*

Replies insisted on the need for an efficient coordination about actions aimed at improving access to and dissemination of sound collections, independently from the contents of those actions. Some of the answers even mention the class of center that should be in charge of such coordination and suggest a particular center for that role.

d) Mentioning ways for a better dissemination

Answers alluding to precise channels that would bring improvements to the dissemination of the sound collections were as follows:

- *Social Networks.*
- *Improvement of networks in rural areas.*
- *Money.*

Evidently, not much is said about the precise ways for improving sound recording dissemination. Some of the replies just mention a need of financial support previous to any consideration about actions. A fuller explanation would have been welcome; nevertheless, they suggest at least that new channels related to the internet –represented by social networks– are already being taken into account as relevant ways for communication. There is also an allusion to difficulties for achieving dissemination in a particular area, the rural environment, although it is not clear to what extent the networks implied would be internet-based or rather recur to more traditional communication channels.

e) Mentioning information resources

Some of the replies advised to improve dissemination of sound collections through existing information resources:

- *In the case of public collections, a better dissemination of the existing catalogues [should be achieved], including both collective catalogues as well as those of individual institutions.*
- *To place listings of collection items, linked to a collective catalogue, in the websites of the regional library and archive of [an existing autonomous community] as well as of libraries and archives in regional networks and of those centers that preserve sound collections.*

The preceding answers suggest that current usage of conventional information retrieval resources, librarian as well as archival, could be insufficient, particularly as regards catalogues open to general users. Such catalogues include not only those belonging to institutions but also collective catalogues that exist or should exist. Consequently, respondents advised to have information on the sound collections present in each of the centers included in those catalogues; and they also advised –a

no less important action— to publicize the catalogues, informing on their availability and features through existing websites of individual institutions, coordinating organizations, or reference centers present in autonomic communities.

f) Mentioning methodologies

To end with the commenting of replies to the last open-type question, it must be pointed out that, as regards actions to be undertaken in favor of accessing and disseminating sound heritage, one of the respondents gave details not about the actions themselves but about the place that these should occupy in the safeguarding process:

- *This step [e.g., giving access and dissemination] should be the last one after all mentioned above, which are pending.*

The two last words of that reply deserve particular attention: they warn about the preceding phases being far from solved, as all of them would be in need of development in order to significantly improve the safeguarding of sound documents.

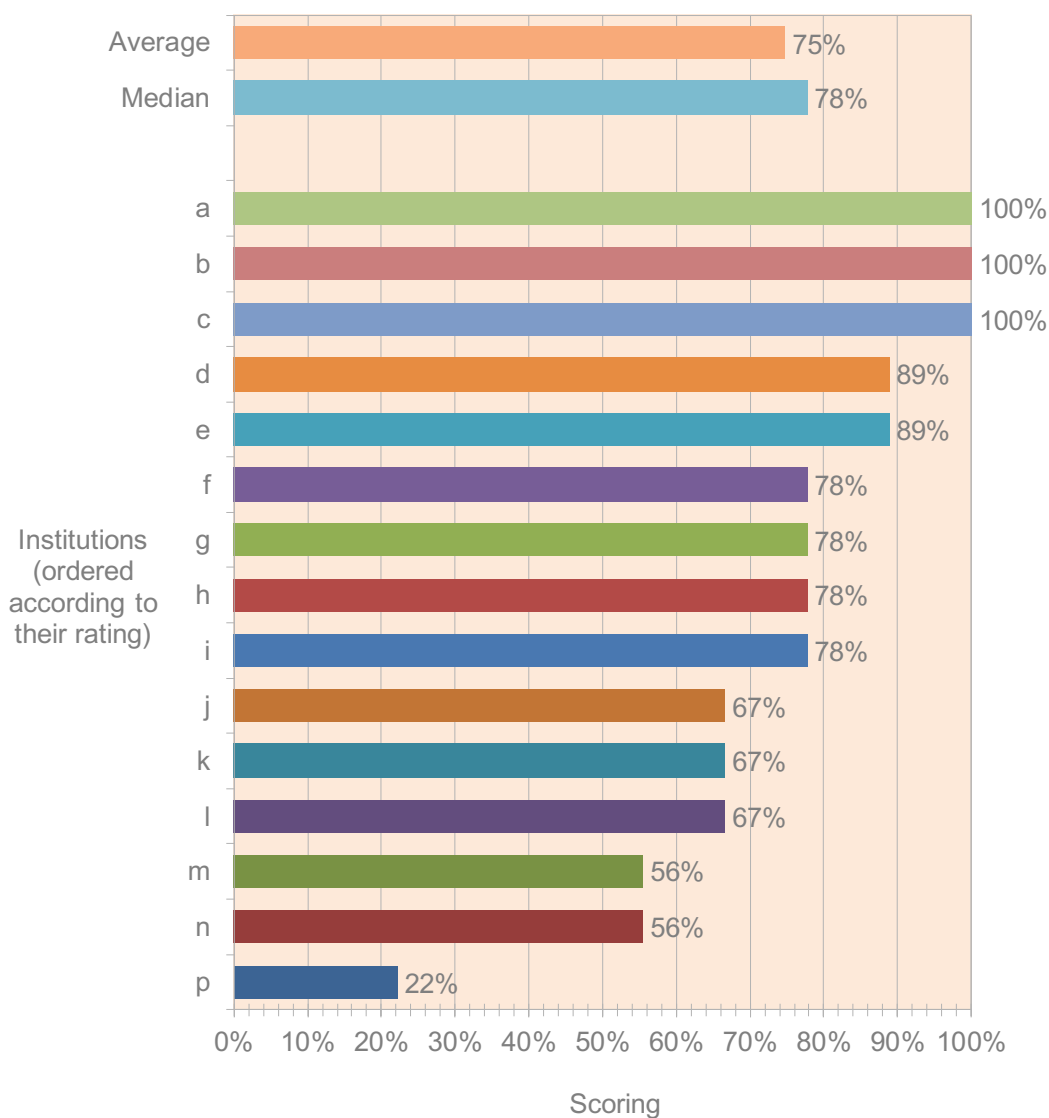
4.5. Opinions on the inquiry

As was mentioned above, at the end of the online form institutions were confronted with two open-type questions dealing with the inquiry itself. To summarize the aim of those questions: the first one intended to reinforce the respondents’ engagement with the inquiry, whereas the second one intended to get from them an assessment of the questions they had been answering. Their replies will be briefly commented now.

A) Engagement with the inquiry

Readers will be reminded that a document with tables was to be used for a second part of this inquiry addressed to institutions, the first part being under analysis here. The only question in the first part that referred to the second one wanted to know if respondents were willing or not to pay further attention to it. There were two causes for that question: first, to remind the surveyed that there was a second part in the inquiry –besides the one represented by the form they were answering to–, and second, to help the researcher in managing all of it.

Chart 10. Scoring of the questionnaire. Source: own work.



Respondents to the question were almost unanimous in their willingness to pay attention to a second part of the inquiry. Fourteen answers out of sixteen were favorable to it, what may be understood as an acknowledgment of the inquiry's usefulness. Institutions that would not be answering the inquiry's second part nevertheless explained the researcher –via e-mails– that their decision was forced by their not having any lists, inventories or other proper studies on sound collections in their autonomous communities.

B) Adequacy of the questionnaire

The last question was about the form itself and expected a rating of its structure and contents. Most of the replies expressed a marked approval (Chart 10).

5. Conclusions

5.1 General conclusion on the current situation of phonogram management in Spain

The results of the inquiry that was addressed to a selection of Spanish institutions revealed that there is still much to do for sound document heritage to be fully included in the new paradigm that memory institutions are adopting. Sufficient preservation either of pre-digital documents or of those in digital form has not been achieved; and due to their high risk of being damaged and even of becoming irrecoverable, it is unacceptable to go on delaying the actions needed for bringing them to a condition that would ensure their permanence for future generations of users.

Comment: Edmondson stated that “all memory institutions and professions have a paradigm – a world view which they bring to bear on the material of interest to them. It allows them to select, describe, arrange and provide access to material in meaningful ways [...]” (Edmondson 2016, Executive Summary, p. v).

According to that paradigm, institutions and professionals implied must make decisions both on a daily basis and for longer terms. But the paradigm is not at all immutable but quite subject to changes that have been accentuated and accelerated by a growing usage of computers and their considerable impact on activities such as document processing:

“The rise of digital technology has brought a new paradigm and new complexity to the field of archiving, as old certainties and assumptions have given way to new realities.” (Edmondson 2016, Preface to the third edition, p. viii).

Consequently, the assessments given by the surveyed institutions for each of the main steps in safeguarding heritage sound recordings must be taken into account, for they provide a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the current management of that kind of documents in Spain.

5.2. Conclusion on surveys and studies about sound collections and their holders

Research on sound documents and their curating institutions in Spain is regarded as scarce, and one of the

immediate consequences is that information resources about recordings and their holders are too few and most of them are not complete.

Comment: In some geographical areas, the lack of adequate information on heritage sound recordings is close to complete absence. This makes even more necessary to start designing and developing more, user-driven information resources about sound recordings, such as the interactive maps that have already been made available. The details that many of the surveyed institutions have given about the features that new resources should have can prove very useful as a guide in fulfilling the necessary tasks. They are about who should undertake each of the suggested actions; what geographical areas should be covered by the new tools or resources; who should carry out each task; what type of guidelines should be followed when preparing new resources; what classes of recordings should be dealt with; and what should be subjected to description –collections, their holders, or both.

5.3. Conclusion on human and material means for cataloguing and classifying sound collections

Available means for document analysis are quite heterogeneous and depend on the geographical area under study; staffs devoted to document description need more specialized training; and properly described recordings still represent less than half of the total known in Spain.

Comment: Specialized knowledge in teams devoted to document description is rated as moderately positive; but quite less favorable is the scoring given to available programs or training courses that should allow for an efficient undertaking of the tasks mentioned above, rated very low by respondents. Better ratings –inside the area of document analysis– were given to the presence of software tools and the observance of rules or standards. But the proportion that unanalyzed holdings represent, as to the sound document heritage currently known, is still very high. Shared criteria and a wider coordination between institutions should be achieved for a better description of recordings. Staffs need to achieve proper technical information and be able to gain a more specialized knowledge; if this is not possible, services will have to be outsourced.

5.4. Conclusion regarding preservation of sound recordings

For carrier conservation and content transfer of sound documents, be they analog or digital, there are not enough unified strategies, which in fact are almost missing from more than one third of the autonomies to which respondents belonged. One of the consequences is that the proportion of documents properly preserved and digitized –or transferred to newer digital formats– is less

than 50% of all known holdings of the types mentioned above.

Comment: It is necessary to design collective plans and programs; to increase human and material means; to design good practices and make them effective; and to make selections of the holdings to digitize following priorities based on objective criteria. Such actions can stem either from coordinating centers or from agreements between centers; but in any case, it is necessary to have a fluent, quality communication between institutions. Conventional and virtual libraries can be paired; and priority must be given to the creation of proper preservation facilities, besides giving specialized training to the staff that will be working in them.

5.5. Conclusion on accessing and disseminating sound collections

Management actions aimed at increasing access to heritage sound documents and their dissemination are hardly coordinated. Nevertheless, institutions are aware of the fact and can provide information about definite actions that would be instrumental in achieving such increases.

Comment: Advice from institutions is towards creating digital libraries and augmenting the usage of certain dissemination channels and information resources such as online catalogues. They suggest a step-by-step approach, and their list of actions includes organizing exhibitions for the general public or for specialized audiences; optimizing official websites and other recent communication channels; developing strategies for disseminating recordings produced by the institutions themselves; controlling online dissemination of sound documents or fragments of them; and preparing attractive information

resources. Many institutions are for efficiently coordinating any new actions to be launched, and they go as far as to propose the class of center, or the center itself, in which such a responsibility should reside.

5.6. Final conclusion on methodology

The interest that this inquiry has arisen in a selection of memory institutions has evidenced an existing concern for attaining a much better sound heritage management in Spain. Some of its geographical areas have certainly not been represented by any replies, as there was no active participation from any of their reference institutions; but it can be safely assumed that many of the facts declared by institutions from other Spanish areas will also be present in most, if not all, of those that remained silent in this occasion.

Comment: If the lack of replies from those areas is to be remedied, it would be necessary to counteract several factors. These, from less important to more, could be: (1) the difficulty for dedicating time to the inquiry, from the side of institutions that theoretically would have been able to reply to the questionnaire; (2) an insufficient concern for the inquiry addressed to them, a fact sharpened by the absence –this time– of higher-order institutions backing the initiative or making it compulsory; (3) the inexistence of institutions especially devoted to the heritage under study in the corresponding geographical area; and (4) the lack of information regarding the mere existence of such specialized institutions.

Although the research described above has not been able to cover each and every area in Spain, it offers a broad and detailed view for a deeper knowledge of present-day sound collections management in Spain, and shows that even though plenty has been achieved, there is still much work to be done.

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