DASH SURVEY RESULTS 2020

Describing the digital attitudes, skills and organisational support of people working across the UK heritage sector

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Timmus Research

HERITAGE FUND

Contents

Forward

I'm delighted to introduce the Digital Attitudes and Skills in Heritage (DASH) survey findings. As well as mapping digital competencies and confidence across the UK heritage sector for the very first time, the results uncover a creative sector, committed to developing its use of digital to better connect and engage the public. Delivering this work during the lockdown prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic adds to the research team's significant achievement. Huge thanks are also due to everyone in the heritage sector who took time to explore their experiences with technology and their aspirations for the future. The report highlights how volunteers, staff and trustees across the UK are working together to ensure as many people as possible can benefit from our richly diverse heritage. It shows that - even in lockdown - heritage is about people and practice, with digital tools in a supportive role.

This work was commissioned as part of our Digital Skills for Heritage initiative, which has become a key way in which The Fund works with and listens to the sector. We will carefully consider the recommendations made here and it's gratifying that we are already delivering in relation to many of the areas highlighted. Through Digital Skills for Heritage our partners are providing resources and training across the UK to help organisations take their first and next digital steps – including using social media platforms, building websites, creating content and hosting activities online. We've produced a range of resources on the fundamentals of working online, addressing accessibility, safeguarding, privacy, security, intellectual property and open licensing.

Moving forward, we will be providing the support the sector has told us it needs. This includes support to build resilience through online networking and collaboration, to create new digital services, to provide new digital volunteering opportunities, and to embed digital into business planning and staff development.

As well as forming an important part of The National Lottery Heritage Fund's ongoing work, we believe that the report equips the sector with the insight and information needed right now to support strategic planning. Digital is already a critical part of the heritage sector, and we hope that this report will play a positive contribution to developing creative and effective heritage practice for the future, and to the role that digital tools can play.

Josie Fraser

Head of Digital Policy

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

A note from the authors

When we set out on this project, we were excited to be taking our work on digital skills and attitudes into a sector that we hadn't studied in depth before. Six months later, we've learned so much about heritage and heritage people. We've been inspired by the commitment of volunteers and trustees, awed by the expertise of staff, and put in our place by some frank opinions on the digital world. So, what else have we learned?

First, we learned to sit comfortably with the notion that heritage organisations are undefinable. The process of running DASH was purposefully inclusive: it aimed to attract engagement from all sizes of organisation; and all types, ages and roles of people who work or volunteer their time within it. This allowed us the opportunity to capture some of the variety of ways in which heritage is interpreted, and the many contexts in which its value is described, shared and preserved. You can learn more about the breadth of heritage we discovered in the 'Introducing the DASH survey' and 'Sign-up data' sections of this report.

Second, harnessing digital technologies is as much about people as it is about tech'. People want to share experiences with others. Technology can facilitate these discussions – especially in 2020, in a world dominated by video conferencing – but it is people who discover new ways of harnessing it. Our hope is that this report helps to begin and sustain conversations about digital in all types and sizes of heritage organisation. We suggest organisations discuss what 'good' digital skills look like in your context. Find those who are happy to support others to use digital. Discover what other organisations like you are doing. Try something new and report back on what does and does not work. Make a short action plan and update it regularly. Keep thinking about how digital can practically help you to improve the way you work or the way you interact with your intended audience. This is how to stay focussed on your digital priorities and avoid being overwhelmed with possibilities or distracted by the 'new' and 'shiny'.

Third, this project showed just how much value there is in including a diversity of people in discussions about digital. Thank goodness we decided to include

volunteers and trustees within the scope of DASH; those people gave us so much valuable information and identified issues and opportunities that employed staff sometimes miss. Different perspectives matter and including everyone in discussions about digital will undoubtably help to get the most from it.

We want to thank all the people who took time to share their thoughts via DASH. We hope you enjoy reading the results as much as we enjoyed summarising them.

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Key findings

The DASH (Digital Attitudes and Skills in Heritage) survey aimed to better understand the attitudes and skills of people working in UK heritage, and to learn more about the organisational support they received in relation to using digital technologies. Data from this survey, carried out between April and July 2020, revealed that the way people considered their digital skills was heavily influenced by their role. Listening to the experiences of people in different roles allowed organisational issues and opportunities to be viewed from different perspectives, and we therefore found it of value to summarise data for volunteers, trustees and staff separately.

We collected data from a broad and diverse set of 4,120 people working across UK heritage, representing organisations from all UK countries, regions, organisation sizes and sub-sector areas. We are confident that the data summarised here are an accurate and authentic representation of the breadth of digital attitudes and skills of people working and volunteering in the UK heritage sector, and as such are of interest to all those working across heritage. Summary statistics are most likely to reflect smaller heritage organisations as 63% of DASH data came from people in organisations with fifty or fewer employed staff.

Across all roles (volunteer, trustee and staff), attitudes to digital were mainly positive and seen through a pragmatic lens. Technology was considered useful, but people tended to focus their interest only where it could offer clear and tangible gains to them in role. The level of digital skills was relatively high, especially for employed staff and in relation to activities such as video conferencing, but confidence in using social media or collaborative digital platforms was lower. Volunteers rated their digital skills as lower than trustees or employed staff.

Many participants lacked awareness of key issues such as accessibility and copyright. Whilst access to online resources would be of use in relation to these kinds of issue, numerous people reported a lack of personal, face to face support and interaction as a barrier to learning more about ways to use digital. They wanted opportunities to share practice and swap skills with others working in similar circumstances.

Recommendations for the heritage sector

The results from this analysis lead to the following recommendations for organisations:

- Organisations would benefit from embedding conversations about digital into recruitment and appraisal and identifying the digital skills that their volunteers, trustees and staff have (eg via skills audits, internal surveys)
- People want to know what 'good' digital skills look like in the context of their role; it would help for organisations to discuss expectations with their staff, trustees and volunteers, and identify examples of best practice in these roles
- Many people working in heritage are looking for support from other people and not access to resources. They want to talk, share, and be mentored by others working in their context. The creation and support of local and sub-sector communities of practice would provide a useful mechanism that enables these interactions
- Organisations should consider creating a digital action plan that identifies their digital priorities. Start small: this living document can grow and evolve through time. What's important is to begin having conversations about where digital can add value

For those supporting the sector, we recommend that:

- Heritage organisations are supported to develop skills regarding accessibility, licensing and strategy, and training should be focused in particular on content development and use of social media
- Role and context are the lens through which people understand digital skills and practices, so an appreciation of typical user groups and their needs would help to engage people with the support available, for example via suggested roadmaps through content
- The creation of new types of voluntary role that attract digital enthusiasts could help engage and support heritage organisations. This support could be offered remotely, allowing rural organisations to benefit from skills more available in metropolitan areas

Details of these recommendations, together with suggested 'quick wins' are shared in the Conclusions section.

Introducing the DASH survey

Survey aims

The DASH (Digital Attitudes and Skills for Heritage) survey was funded as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's 'Digital Skills for Heritage[1]' initiative. Its aim was to better understand the digital attitudes and skills of people working in the UK heritage sector, and to learn more about the organisational support they felt they received in relation to using digital technologies.

Our core focus was to collect data about digital skills and attitudes that helped:

- People to better understand their own digital skills and attitudes
- Organisations to identify useful, feasible and practical ways to support their people and improve their efficiency and/or effectiveness through the use of digital
- Funders to identify opportunities to support the sector to harness digital technologies usefully and appropriately

The brief was to attract participation from organisations representing the full breadth of UK heritage (in terms of region, size and sub-sector), and we aimed to reflect the attitudes and skills of all types and levels of staff and volunteers working within them.

Collecting data about digital capabilities

There are three fundamental things that we have learned in nearly two decades working in the field of digital literacies:

1. One person working at an organisation is highly unlikely to have access to information about their people's digital capabilities; yet this one person is often the only target of one-off surveys or audits
2. A person's engagement with digital technologies at work depends on a combination of their attitude to digital, their motivation to learn about digital in the context of their working role, and the organisational support they receive (including matters such as their access to hardware/software/wifi, training,

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[1] For more information see The Fund's Digital Skills for Heritage project

support, and the way in which their organisational culture values and responds to all things digital)

3. Whilst an organisation might offer training or resources to support their people, it is only possible to discover whether those people know and use them by asking the intended recipients - not the providers.

Our approach to this project was therefore to gather data from individuals within organisations, rather than attempt to audit organisations via a single representative. This knowledge guided our decision-making throughout this project.

Defining UK heritage organisations for sampling

In order to identify organisations to involve in this project, we wanted to know how best to define, interpret and quantify UK heritage organisations.

The Oxford Dictionary definition of heritage is "the history, traditions, buildings and objects that a country or society has had for many years and that are considered an important part of its character". Whilst this definition has clarity, we quickly realised that the definition of a 'heritage organisation' is far more diverse and complex.

There are tens of thousands of heritage sites in the UK. English Heritage represents just over 430 historic places including palaces, houses, hill figures, statues, castles, abbeys, industrial sites, forts, bridges and agricultural sites, and The Museums Association estimate there are about 2,500 UK museums. Historic England manages a list of all scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered landscapes and battlefields, and protected wrecks, and this list now holds over 400,000 individual entries. Similarly, Historic Environment Scotland lists over 56,000 individual sites (described as either battlefields, gardens and designated landscapes, historic marine protected area, listed building or scheduled monuments), Cadw lists over 4,000 scheduled monuments in Wales, and the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record holds information on over 16,000 different archaeological sites and historic monuments. So here alone we have just six heritage organisations responsible in some way for just under half a million individual UK heritage sites.

Then there are heritage organisations that focus on support that is not directly related to physical sites, such as The British Association for Local History (BALH, who support 1,161 local history society groups and 99 institutions such as museums, heritage centres and libraries), The Community Archives and Heritage Group (who bring together bodies and organisations to support and promote 690 different community archives in the UK and Ireland), and The Heritage Trust Network (a

membership organisation supporting UK not-for-profit groups working on restoration projects).

In addition to these issues and unlike other sectors in which we have previously worked, not all heritage organisations employ staff. Organisation size also varies hugely, from a lone volunteer to national organisations with thousands of staff and volunteers. Precisely because of this complexity, The National Lottery Heritage Fund does not define heritage and instead adopts a broad and inclusive approach. In its Strategic Funding Framework, Sir Peter Luff says:

"Heritage illuminates history. It includes buildings and landscapes, museums and memories, objects and species, but we do not define or limit its scope. While our work is informed by experts, we ask people to decide what they value from the past and wish to hand on to the future. That is the heritage we support."

Representativeness and sampling aims

For the reasons summarised above, we quickly realised it was not possible to define a 'UK heritage organisation' other than as a body of one or more people, paid or voluntary, living within the United Kingdom, who self-identify as working in heritage. Multiple individual organisations could be represented by one umbrella organisation, alternatively one site could be represented by multiple organisations. Unless we restricted our sampling to a clear definition of heritage organisation (which would go directly against the ethos of The Fund), we had to allow organisations to self-identify. In choosing to describe UK heritage organisations in all their rich diversity, we recognised that we would not be able to provide an accurate figure for their size and number.

For this first year of running DASH we therefore adapted our initial stratified sampling plans and instead aimed to collect data that was as inclusive and diverse as possible, ensuring we heard from all types of heritage organisations. This approach was very successful, although the numbers of organisations that were able to both sign up and then use DASH was lower than hoped due to the impact of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown and furloughing.

Our core aims were to collect data that:

- Focused on the voices of people working and volunteering in heritage, rather than one data point per organisation; after all, only individual people can truly report on their perceived digital attitudes and skills

- Represented people working across diverse roles, including voluntary positions
- Included a broad diversity of organisations in terms of their size, region and focus
- Focussed specifically on smaller organisations, who are often overlooked but who are the recipients of significant funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund

The data collected and summarised in this report succeeds in achieving these aims. It has allowed us to hear from a broad and diverse set of people, with a particular focus on smaller organisations working in heritage. This initial year of data collection has provided us with a far better understanding of the full breadth of the heritage sector and those people working within it, and laid the foundations allowing a better understanding of valid, realistic and appropriate ways to collect data in future.

We are confident that the data summarised here are an accurate and authentic representation of the breadth of digital attitudes and skills of people working in the UK heritage sector. Summary statistics presented here are likely to most reflect smaller heritage organisations, because 89% of those who signed up to DASH, and 63% of those whose people completed DASH, came from organisations with 50 or fewer employed staff.

Survey structure, methodology and timescale

The 23-question survey ran for ten weeks during the lockdown period (April - July 2020). The survey was advertised online via the National Lottery Heritage Fund website and social media (in particular LinkedIn and Twitter), and participants were asked to share widely within their circle of contacts. We also carried out desk research to identify organisations via grant.nav that had been funded in the last 10 years, which represented each sub-sector, and which had a web presence allowing us to contact them via email or an online contact form. Of the 325 contacted, 24 (7%) signed up to use DASH. We also reached out to another 300 organisations via lists available on the British Association for Local History, the Community Archives and Heritage website, the Heritage Trust Network and Visit Britain; a further 18 (6%) signed up. Most organisations were contacted during the first four weeks of lockdown, and this is likely to have affected uptake. However, the desk research

allowed us to explore a breadth of funded and active heritage organisations, and this is discussed in more detail via a DASH blog post.[2]

Interested organisations signed up via an online form and were then provided with a bespoke web link for them to share with their staff and volunteers (see Figure 1). In return for participating, organisations that collected 10+ responses were sent a copy of their data to assist with monitoring and improvement efforts.
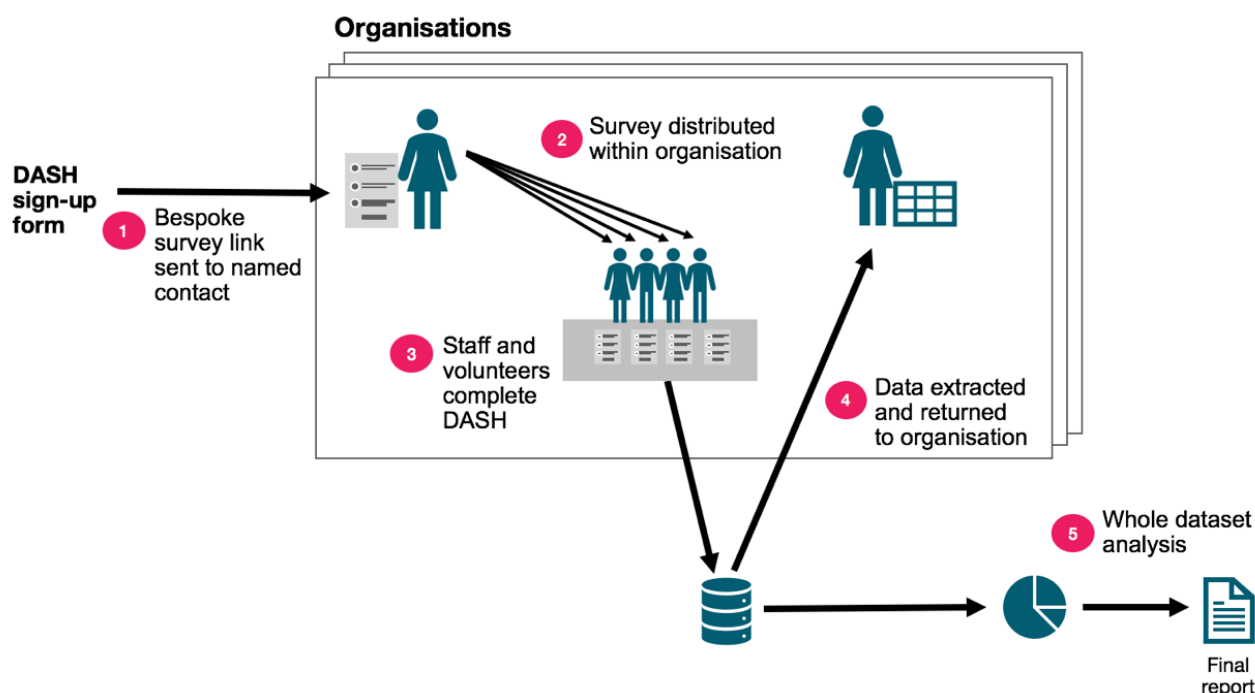

Figure 1. The DASH survey service process

The question set was designed to be lightweight (to maximise response rates) and to feel relevant to individuals and provide actionable data for organisations. Questions focused on individual digital attitudes, individual digital skills (relevant to heritage), and organisational support for digital. They were based on extensive previous research regarding individual and organisational digital capabilities in the

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[2] See blog post 'What do you do when you are asked to create a list of as many different heritage organisations as possible?' by Lorna Clarke

UK higher and further education sector, the UK health sector, and the European primary, secondary and vocational schools' sector[3].

All questions were optional. The questions relating to digital skills were shaped by a review of digital in the UK heritage sector, summarised in a separate blog post article on the DASH website[4], and are available to download, together with other resources for participating organisations[5].

The whole DASH survey website was designed to act as an example to other organisations on how to rapidly and cost-effectively build a website and interactive map, and this was summarised in a further blog post[6] alongside others offering advice on using collaborative digital tools to manage projects across teams[7].

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[3] See the Timmus Research project portfolio
[4] See blog post 'Designing the DASH survey: how we did it' by Helen Beetham
[5] See DASH download page
[6] See blog post 'Creating the DASH project website on a shoestring' by Stuart Church
[7] See blog post 'Using free digital tools to manage a project remotely' by Tabetha Newman

Sign-up data: describing heritage organisations

A total of 523 organisations signed up to use DASH, and 281 organisations had staff or volunteers that then answered the DASH survey itself. The DASH survey collected a total of up to 4,120 individual staff and/or volunteer survey responses (questions were optional, hence individual sample sizes varied per question). From feedback received, lockdown and furloughing affected how many organisations could disseminate their DASH link to their people, and this ultimately affected the number that could participate.

During the sign-up process, data were collected about the organisation's size, type, and location. This data acts as a useful summary of the huge variety of organisations that work under the banner of 'UK heritage'. In this section of the report we have summarised the data collected from the sign-up sheet, which represents the largest data set relating to organisation size, type, location and needs.

Organisation size

The DASH survey attracted a lot of interest from what are sometimes called 'micro' organisations. In the heritage sector, organisation size is typically defined in terms of visitor numbers or annual income (with micro organisations often defined as having an annual income of under £10,000). In contrast, for this survey we quantified organisation size in terms of the number of staff and volunteers. Data were collected by asking the key contact to estimate the number of paid staff, and the number of volunteers; this was collected as part of the sign-up process. When it comes to supporting organisations to use digital, this often translates to training people, and is facilitated or hampered by access to hardware and software. This is why we were more interested in defining organisational size in terms of the number of people.

We found that, of those organisations that signed up to use the DASH survey:

- On average, an organisation that signed up to DASH had 5 employees and 25 volunteers (the average ratio per organisation was 0.13 staff to volunteers)
- About 50% had between 1 and 10 employed staff and only 5% had more than 100 staff
- 20% said they had no paid employees and were entirely staffed by volunteers

- 20% said they had 100+ volunteers
- Only 6% said they did not use any volunteers and only had paid staff

Later in this report we have split heritage organisations into four size categories based on the number of staff they employ. These categories, together with their relative proportion in the data, are shown in Table 1.

Category	Percentage of organisations that signed up to DASH	Percentage of organisations that used DASH
Led only by volunteers	18.5%	13.1%
1 - 10 individuals employed part/full-time	48.6%	23.7%
11 - 50 individuals employed part/full-time	22.2%	26.2%
Over 50 individuals employed part/full-time	10.8%	37.0%

Table 1. Four categories of organisation size used in this report, as defined by the number of employed staff. The percentage of organisations that signed up and which then had at least one person who used DASH are shown per category

Heritage organisations are hugely reliant on volunteers. There are significant challenges to consider in equipping a largely voluntary workforce with up-to-date technologies and skills.

Organisation type

There is no doubt that the umbrella term 'heritage' covers a hugely broad and diverse set of organisations both in terms of their intended goals, and their physical presence. The very definition of an 'organisation has many interpretations across the sector: some exist as entities created for one off or annual events, others as a national body or federation representing smaller regional groups or physical sites, or as the heritage component of a local council. That said, there were commonalities across the titles of organisations signed up to DASH, with the word 'trust' featuring heavily, followed closely by 'museum', then 'heritage', 'arts', 'council', 'society', 'church', 'cathedral' and 'centre'.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund describes types of heritage organisations in a number of different ways. For this project we chose to use one of their most commonly used categorisation methods. We were interested to see whether the six categories in this system (see Figure 2) were usually used singly, or whether organisations often described themselves as falling within two or more of the groups. Our data revealed:

- Overall, 'Community Heritage' was the most commonly used category (see Figure 2); but this choice was often used in conjunction with at least one other category, usually one that described a physical space (eg museum, building or landscape)
- Only half (274 of 523; 52%) of organisations that signed up to DASH chose to identify with one category; the remaining organisations selected two to six categories to describe themselves (selecting an average of 1.9 categories per organisation, with ten (2%) choosing all six categories)
- Organisations that only selected one category were most likely to describe themselves as 'Collections (museums, libraries, archives)' (86 of 274; 31% of organisations choosing just one category; 16 of all 523 organisations that signed up)

> This data suggests an opportunity to describe heritage organisations by defining their physical attributes (eg museum, nature area, virtual space) separately to their activities and/or intended aims and outputs (preservation, conservation, community heritage, education).
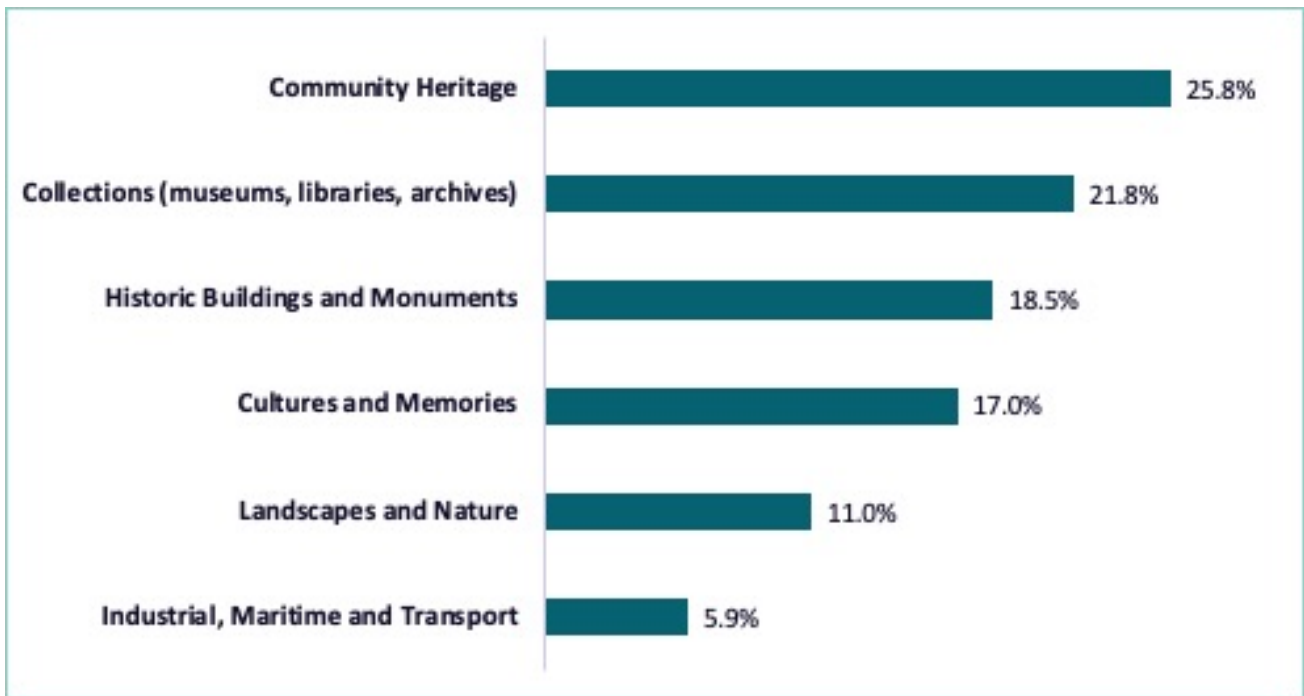
Figure 2. The six sub-sector groups used to describe heritage organisations, and their relative use by organisations when signing up to use DASH (N=523)

Organisation location

The DASH sign-up data revealed a good representative sample from all six areas of the UK (as defined by National Lottery Heritage Fund). Of the 523 organisations signed up from across the UK: 31% were from South East, South West and London, 23% from Northern England, 19% from Midlands and East England, 7% from Wales, 7% from Scotland, 6% from Northern Ireland, and the remaining 7% from organisations working nationally across all regions (rounded up to nearest %).

Digital support needs

During the DASH sign up process, organisational lead contacts were asked **"What one thing would your organisation like to do with digital in the next two months that it is currently struggling with, or has never done before?"** Examples of the breadth of answers to this question are given below:

- "We have lots of photographs and documents of our village history over the years and it would be great to make this available digitally"
- "Coordinate river monitoring data so it is publicly available and easily digestible"

- "A digital tour offering would be good to develop, enabling people isolating at home, to see and acquire an understanding of the site... It would also be good to convert our Audio/App tours into online content for those with sight problems who wouldn't be able to fully engage with an online video tour"
- "Webinars, organising an online conference for our members, a crowdfunding platform for our members"
- "Creating digital fundraising / marketing campaigns"
- "Improve digital confidence among Board members and other volunteers to spread workload of digital tasks - website maintenance, preparation of e-newsletter, social media etc"
- "We are now turning to deliver our content online as the museums have been shut due to Coronavirus"
- "We would like to use digital to get the local community more involved with the regeneration/heritage of the … area"
- "Create schools' resources, available online, explaining our history and heritage; learn how to make the most of web and social media analytics to best target our content and grow our follower base"
- "Use social media to increase awareness of our activities and engage with community and heritage organisations in promoting the art of church bell ringing"
- "Expand Zoom poetry readings and stream them to Facebook and/or YouTube"
- "Community consultation and engagement, linked to project development work"
- "Creating an ambitious transmedia piece which maps our project activity over current-short future, and archive materials"
- "Increase membership and donation conversions"
- "To develop a more proactive and digitised method of facilitating supporters' journey towards membership of their local Wildlife Trust"
- "Cataloguing our collection of photos, documents, magazines, archaeological artefacts"

Key themes in these requests for support were:

- Creating content (video, podcasts, virtual tours, social media etc) (25%)
- Marketing and communications (23%)
- Community building (18%)
- Strategy (13%)
- Events and activities (10%)
- Online learning (6%)
- Working at a distance (4%)

- Working with data (2%)

The National Lottery Heritage Fund responded directly to these requests by cascading the relevant information across into other projects supported by the Digital Skills for Heritage initiative, and by providing all those that signed up with relevant links to online support matching their needs. Further details about the support requirements and the The Fund response are available via their blog post[8].

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[8] 'Digital Skills for Heritage receives funding boost',13th August 2020

DASH data: role, age and gender of survey participants

Role

The DASH survey collected a total of 4,120 individual staff and/or volunteer survey responses; 4,084 provided data about their role (see Table 2).

A total of 56% of data came from people employed in heritage organisations (working part or full-time), 33% from volunteers, and 11% from trustees/board members. Volunteers were actively encouraged to complete DASH because of their importance in supporting heritage organisations; we were therefore very pleased to see their significant contribution to this dataset.

We decided to summarize data in relation to role categories because the differences between roles were robust and consistent across DASH questions. Separating data by role has meaning in terms of the way heritage organisations manage, equip, support and train people to use digital technologies, and we felt that the organisational expectations in terms of digital skills required for each role would be very different.

We grouped all four types of employed staff into one category of "staff" because their data showed consistent similarities. In contrast, volunteer and trustee data were very different.

Rather than merging 'trustee' with 'senior staff' we kept 'trustee' as a separate category for the following reasons:

- Trustees were typically retired (65+) whereas senior staff were younger (most commonly 45 - 54)
- Two thirds of trustees were male; senior staff were more likely to be female
- Trustees usually work in a voluntary capacity whereas senior staff are paid
- Trustees had opinions about digital that were often more in line with volunteers than staff

When asked **'Do you use any assistive technologies day-to-day (e.g. screen reader, text magnifier)'** A total of 4.6% of staff, 3.2% of trustees and 5.3% of volunteers said that they used assistive technologies day-to-day (such as screen readers or text magnifiers).

Category	Frequency	Percent	Percent (grouping all staff)
Volunteer	1,364	33.4%	33.4%
Trustee/Board member	456	11.2%	11.2%
Staff: CEO/Director/Senior Leader	298	7.3%	-
Staff: Specialist role	1,196	29.3%	-
Staff: Non-specialist role	684	16.7%	-
Staff: Freelancer	86	2.1%	-
Staff: ALL	-	-	55.8%
No role information	36	-	-
Total	**4084**	**100%**	**100%**

Table 2. The breakdown of DASH survey participants by organisational role (N=4,084)

From this point forwards, questions are summarized in relation to the three main role categories: staff, volunteers and trustees[9].

Age

Data are summarised in Figure 3. Key findings were:

- Staff were spread relatively equally across four age categories ranging from 25 to 64; roughly half were aged under 45
- 60% of volunteers were aged 65+; only 12% were under the age of 45
- Half of all trustees were aged 65+; only 9% were under the age of 45

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[9] From this point on, the role of 'Trustee/Board member' is simplified to 'trustee', and 'CEO/Director/Senior Leader' is simplified to 'senior staff'

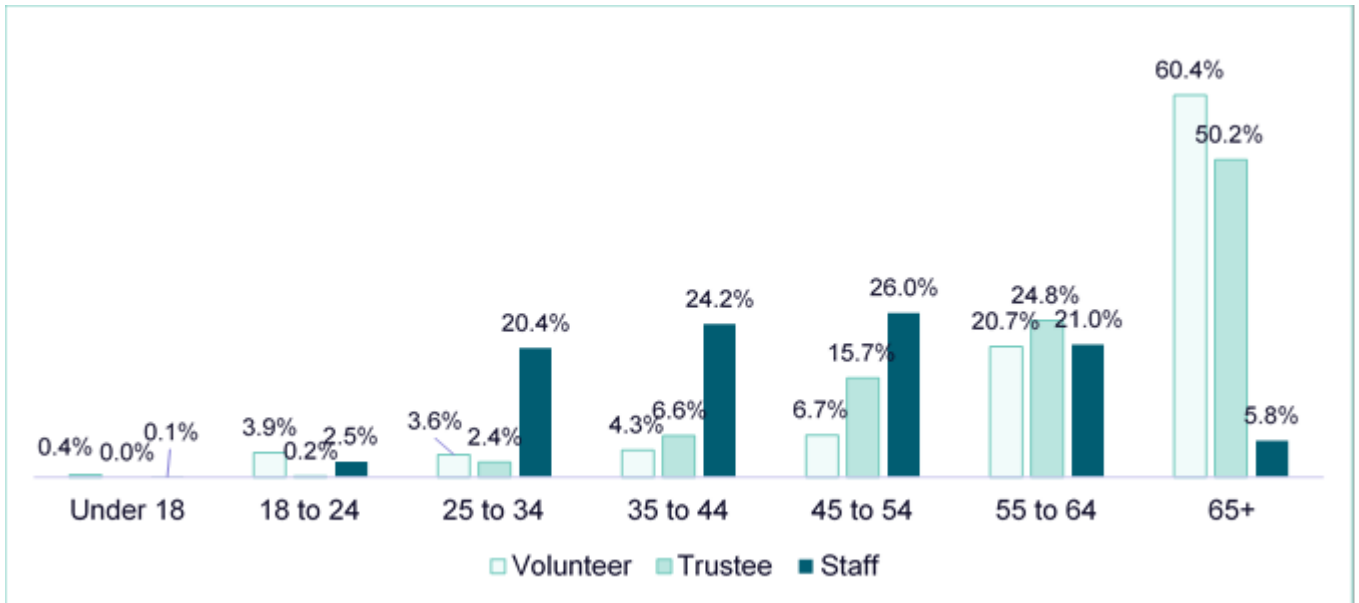- Only 7% of all DASH responses came from people aged under 25

Figure 3. Age of DASH participants in relation to their role (N=4,094)

DASH was widely distributed online to all staff and volunteers, but very few people under 25 replied. How might we engage more young people? This consideration is important because so many respondents felt that younger members would bring new digital skills to their organisation, especially in relation to using social media effectively.

Gender

Data are summarised in Figure 4. Key findings were:

- There was a relatively equal gender split for volunteers, with a slight female bias (54% female v 46% male)
- Most trustees (61%) were male, whereas most staff (69%) were female
- Two thirds of all employed staff were female
- 0.5% of people chose to identify their gender as 'other' and 3% chose 'prefer not to say'
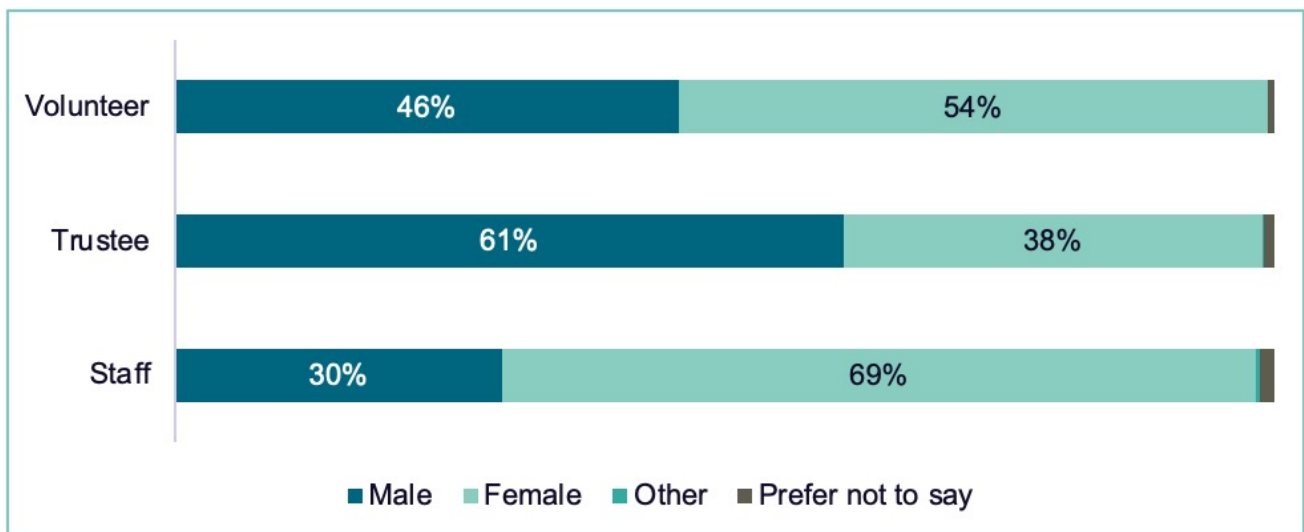

Figure 4. Gender of DASH participants in relation to their role (N=4,095)

Heritage organisations may benefit from increasing gender/age diversity; it is interesting to note the high proportion of male trustees given that from staff numbers, this is otherwise a female-dominated profession

DASH data: individual attitudes to digital

Questions 5 to 9 focused on individual attitudes to digital, starting with a question asking **'Are you someone who…'** followed by four statements. Data are summarised in Figure 5.
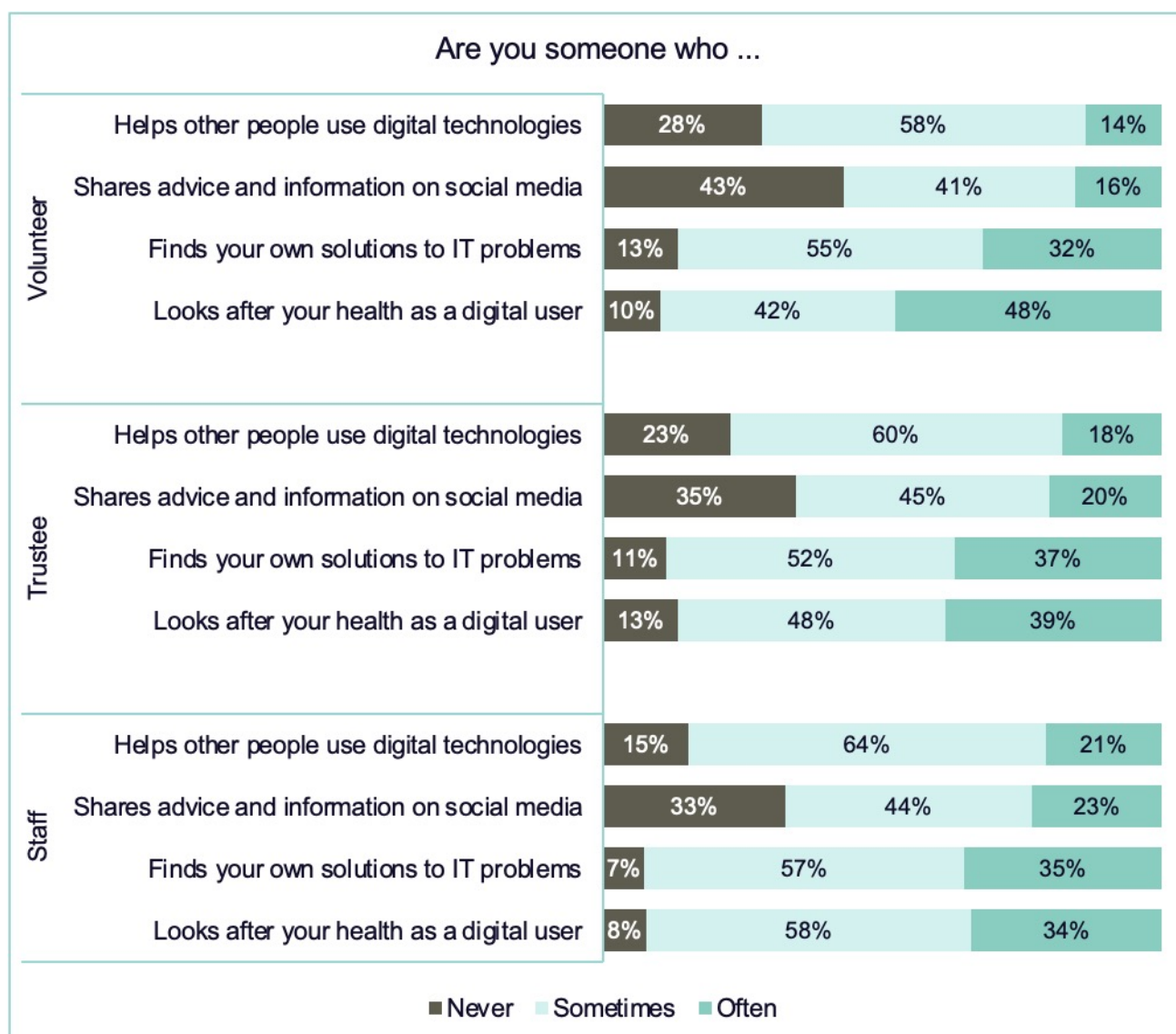

Figure 5. Attitudes and personal engagement with digital (N=3,929)

Key results (Figure 5) were:

- 80% of staff and trustees and 70% of volunteers said they sometimes or often helped others to use digital technologies
- 70% of staff and trustees, and 60% of volunteers said they sometimes or often share advice and information on social media
- 90% of staff, trustees and volunteers said they sometimes or often found their own solutions to IT problems; and looked after their health as a digital user (eg took screen breaks)

These data suggest that, regardless of role, the majority of people that answered this survey felt that they engaged regularly with digital technologies and felt it was a necessary part of life that added value to them.

Participants were asked **'What is your attitude to learning new digital skills?'** and could rate their response from 0 (expect to find it very difficult) to 10 (expect to find it very easy). Average results are shown in Table 3 and Figure 6 and reveal that:

- Staff rated their attitude to learning digital skills the highest, followed by trustees, and then volunteers; this difference was statistically significant[10]
- Those aged under 25 had an average rating of seven in comparison to an average rating of five for those over 65. This difference was statistically significant[11]; the older people were, the more they expected to find learning new digital skills difficult.

[10] Kruskal-Wallis Test for role v rating for attitude to learning new digital skills: N=3,879, H=53.8, df = 2, p<0.001
[11] Kruskal-Wallis Test for age category v rating for attitude to learning new digital skills: N=3,859, H=410.7, df = 6, p<0.001

Category	Mean & SD	Median average
Volunteer	5.8 ± 2.4	6
Trustee	6.1 ± 2.2	6
Staff	6.4 ± 2.2	7

Table 3. The average ratings (mean, standard deviation, median) that volunteers, trustees and staff to the question "What is your attitude to learning new digital skills?" where 0='expect to find it very difficult' and 10='expect to find it very easy'. (N=3,879)
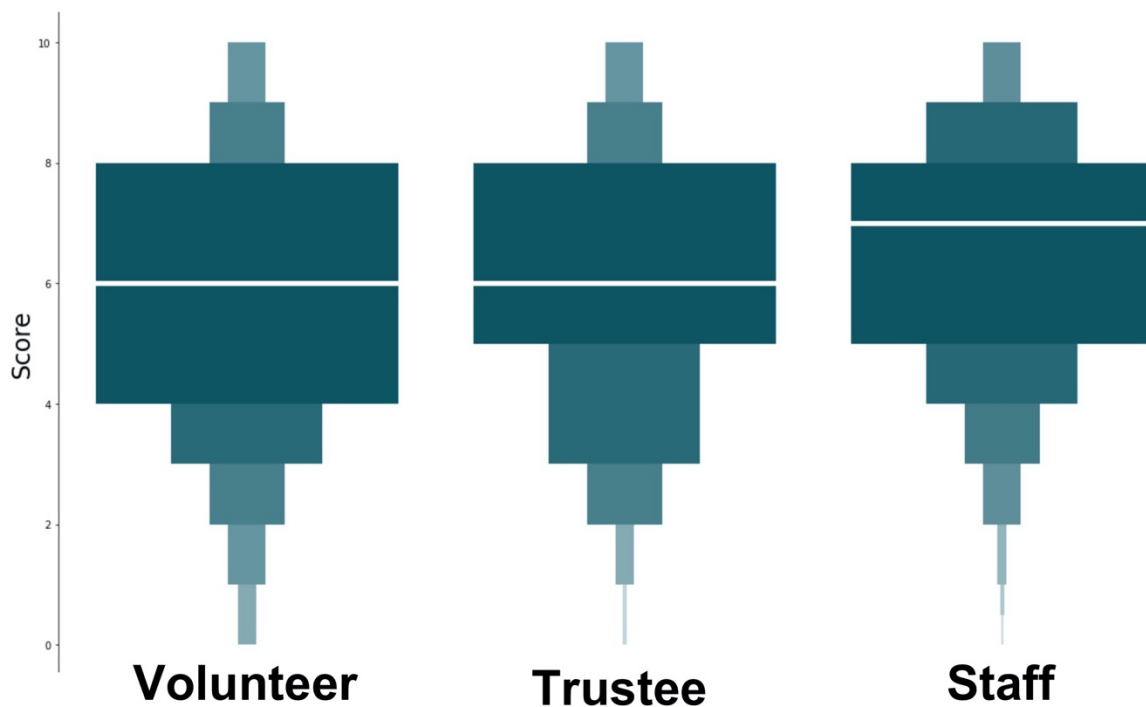

Figure 6. Enhanced box plots describing the rating that volunteers, trustees and staff gave in answer to the question "What is your attitude to learning new digital skills?" where 0='expect to find it very difficult' and 10='expect to find it very easy'. The white line marks the median average, and the colour blocks represent the distribution of the data around it.

Participants were asked **'What motivates you to develop your digital skills?'** and were given four answer options, plus the opportunity to develop their thoughts in a free text box. Results are summarised in Figure 7 and key findings were:

- Some results were very similar across the three roles: most people said they were motivated to develop their digital skills when trying to solve immediate tasks or problems, about half said they were motivated to try new things, and only about one in six said they were motivated by the desire to make new contacts

- There was a noticeable difference in responses to the option "developing myself / my career, with 66% of staff choosing this in relation to 40% of trustees and 32% of volunteers
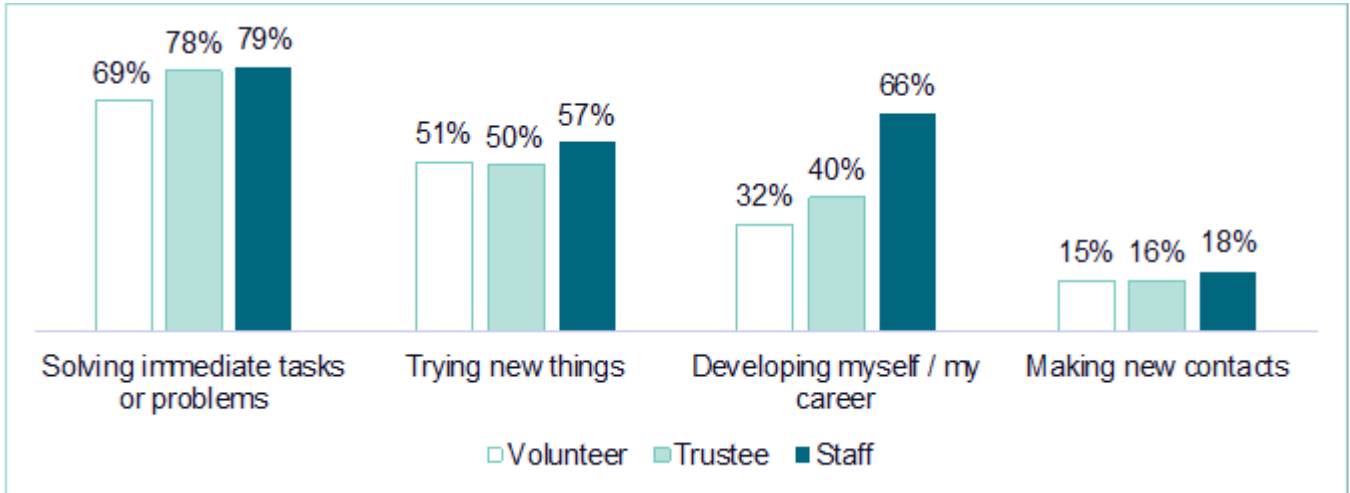

Figure 7. People's motivation to develop their digital skills (N=4,120)

Participants could also describe their motivation to develop skills in an 'other' free text box. There were clear differences between the three organisational roles:

- **Volunteers** often made comments about wanting to "keep up" with today's world
- **Trustees** often commented that developing digital skills better helped them to support their organisation
- **Staff** were more pragmatic in identifying good digital skills with work efficiencies and improved employability

Representative quotes from participants are shown below, grouped into the three organisational roles:

Volunteer:

- "Necessary in today's world. Would be very isolated if no internet"
- "I don't want to develop new digital skills!"
- "I don't want to be left behind"
- "I am disabled so use everything I can to make myself independent, and to make my life easier"

27

Trustee:

- "Although I have a pretty modern outlook on most things, I much prefer face to face, using the phone, or writing letters to doing things remotely but I use digital because life is increasingly moving this way and for many things I have to - and for the most part it works really well and is an asset"
- "To promote our charity and basically thence raise more money"

Staff:

- "I need to be more digitally literate to be more competent at my job and keep up with changing trends"
- "To speed up my work processes"
- "Being digital savvy often seems to just save time!"
- "When I have to if I'm being honest"

We added a question to this section of the survey in response to the pandemic, because the survey was run during the first ten weeks of lockdown. This asked **'In the current coronavirus crisis, what new digital skill(s), have you learned (if any)?'**. Answers to this question were strikingly similar across the three roles, with the majority of people focusing on the use of video conferencing software. A tag cloud of common terms is shown in Figure 8. 'Zoom', 'Teams', 'Video', Conferencing and 'Meetings' dominated the responses. To a lesser extent, some participants had also learned some skills relating to social media use.

Figure 8. A tag cloud of the most common terms used when asking participants what new digital skills they learned during the coronavirus lockdown period (N=3219; tag cloud represents top 80 terms used)

Participants were then asked **'Please give an example of a digital tool or app that you find really useful in your daily life'**. **Volunteers** were most likely to find communication apps useful, particularly Zoom, WhatsApp, Email, Teams and Facebook (as well as a good old-fashioned phone!). Office apps such as Word and Excel were also considered useful, as well as online banking and apps or websites for checking the weather. The BBC appeared to be the main source of news. Facebook was the only social media platform mentioned as being used often in daily life.

Trustees followed a very similar pattern to volunteers, although Zoom was elevated to the most frequently cited tool.

Collaboration tools (e.g. Zoom and Teams) were even more prevalent among **staff**, and there were more terms relating to specific work-based tools e.g. Slack, Trello and Office 365.

DASH data: individual digital skills

Questions 10 to 16 focused on individual digital skills. Participants were presented with a list of five digital activities and asked, **'Are you able to carry out these digital activities?'**. Data are summarised in Figure 9. Key findings were:

- Approximately 90% of all participants were able to 'use video conferencing for remote meetings', 'digitally record an activity, place or object' and 'analyse data from a spreadsheet or database'
- 75% of staff and 67% of trustees felt both able and confident at using video conferencing for remote meetings, doubtless prompted by the pandemic
- 70% of staff (but only 50% of trustees and volunteers) felt able to 'use a collaborative digital workspace such as google docs, Basecamp or Slack'; this was the activity with the lowest perceived ability and confidence
- Perceived ability and confidence to 'use social media to promote an event' was also low with only 53% of staff, 38% of trustees and 28% of volunteers feeling both able and confident to complete this activity

Overall, there was a surprising level of consistency across role types in the skills that were prevalent (remote meetings, digital recording, data analysis) and in those less prevalent (using social media, online collaboration). In terms of levels of confidence, staff tended to be more confident than volunteers and trustees.

Most people feel confident team-working via video conferencing, and DASH data showed this was very much accelerated by the pandemic and associated lockdown. Fewer people felt comfortable using digital platforms that offer ways for a team to collate and share digital assets, hold asynchronous discussions, or share 'to do' lists (eg Miro, Slack, Padlet, Basecamp). Confidence in using social media for outreach activites such as event promotion was also low.
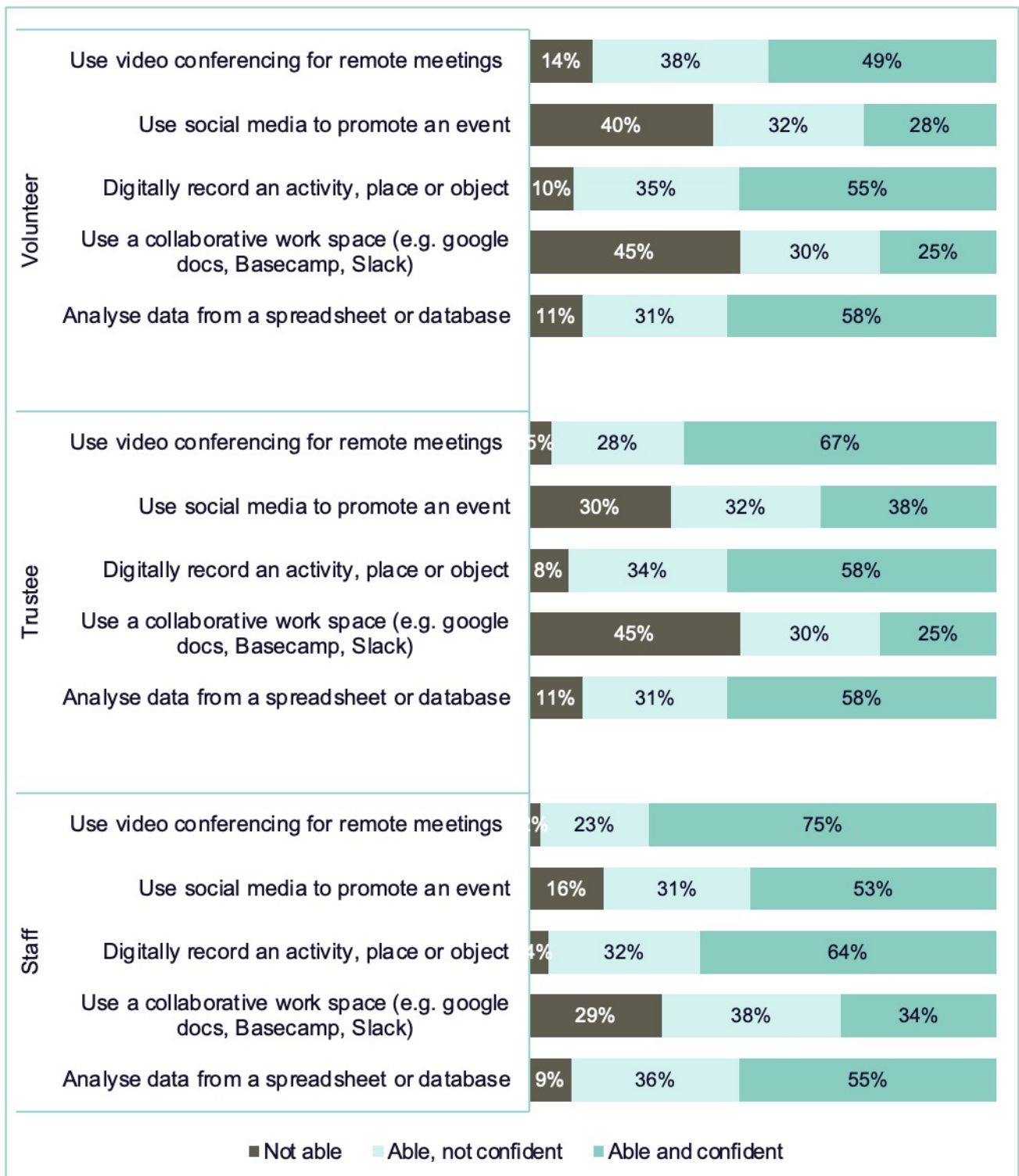
Figure 9. Ability and confidence of participants in relation to five digital skills and activities (N=3,800)

Participants were then asked, **'Do you have any of these digital skills?'** and could tick all that applied from a list of ten. Answers are summarised in Figure 10.

Figure 10. The percentage of each role who reported having each of the ten digital skills (N= 4084)

Data from this question showed that:

- The most common two digital skills across all three roles were 'carry out online research eg for funding opportunities' and 'write relevant digital copy'

- Staff and trustees were much more likely to have these digital skills than volunteers
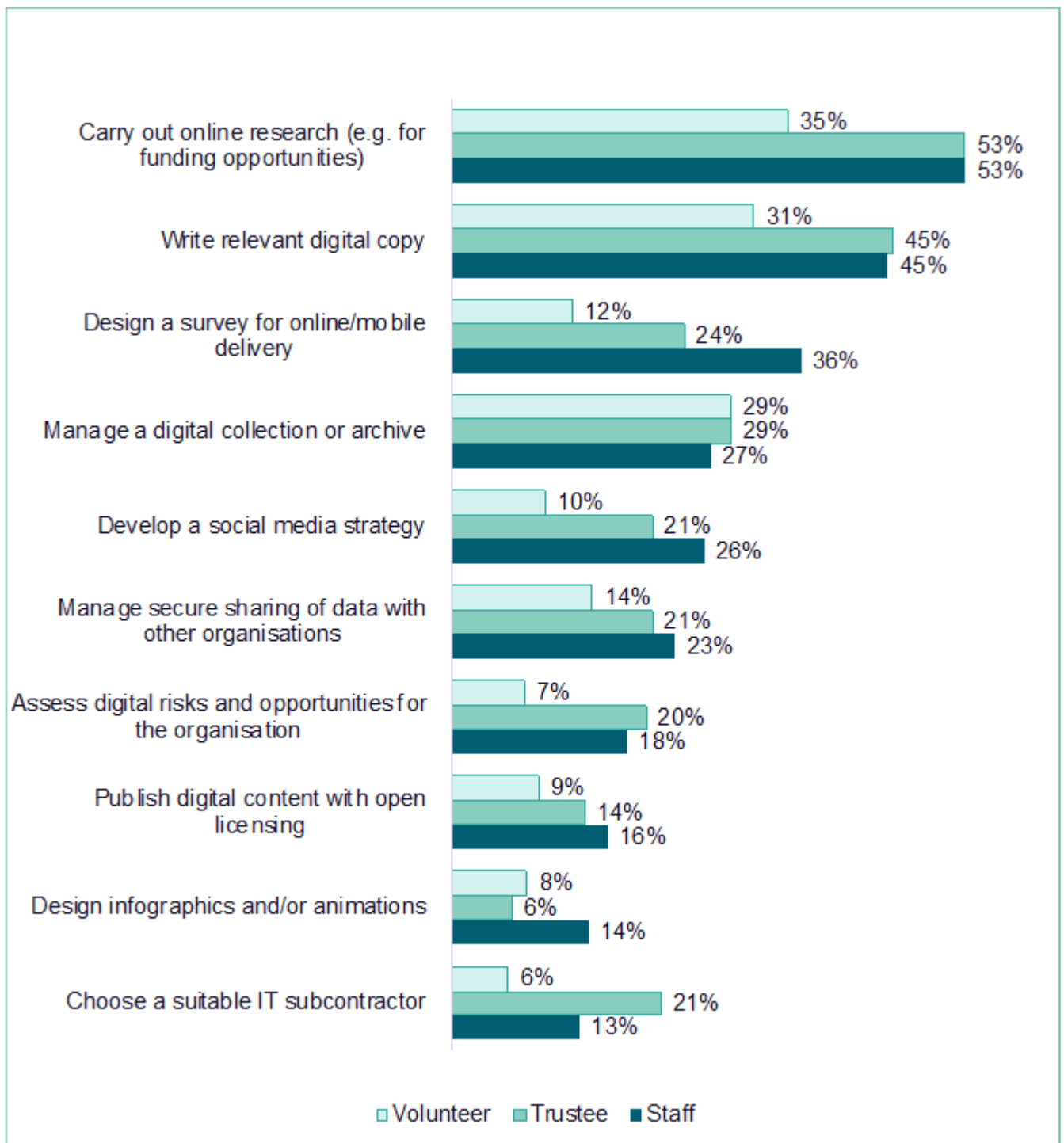- 21% of trustees felt they had the skills to assess suitable IT contractors in comparison with just 13% of staff and 6% of volunteers, perhaps reflecting the expectations of their position and their senior leadership experience outside of their role as trustee
- The third most common skill varied with role: for volunteers and trustees it was 'manage a digital collection or archive' whereas for staff it was 'design a survey for online/mobile delivery'
- Fewer than one fifth of staff felt they could choose a suitable IT subcontractor, design infographics and/or animations, publish digital content with open licensing, or assess digital risks and opportunities for their organisation
- Participants could also describe other digital skills they had via an 'other' box. This showed that a small proportion of people in all roles and across all organisation sizes had specialist digital skills, in particular relating to creative digital activities such as video/photo editing, CAD, web and graphic design

Participants were asked **'What digital skills would you most like to develop in your role?'**. We used a standard sub-sample methodology[12] to identify the top ten themes for each role, summarised in Table 4 and visualized in

Figure 11. Key findings were:

- Use of social media was by far the most common digital skill that all roles wanted to learn more about. Volunteers focused on both administration of social media accounts and creation of content, whereas trustees were more likely to take a strategic view of how social media could help their organisation. Staff also considered this aspect in a strategic context: as well as general skills of administration and content creation, they were interested in setting up engagement platforms and monitoring analytics (indeed, using data analytics was also a separate theme identified in the answers from 10% of staff)

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[12] A random sample representing 25% of each of the three role types was selected and analysed using a grounded method, where coded items were grouped and reviewed to consolidate and rationalize codes. Some responses were double coded, meaning that the number of coded items adds up to more than the number of responses in each category. Post-hoc testing confirmed the sample was sufficient, with saturation at between 10-20%.

- Volunteers also wanted to contribute more effectively to an organisation's web presence via video editing, web design, photography and graphic design
- Trustees and staff were interested in understanding how to use spreadsheets, mainly in the context of accounting and project management
- Staff also mentioned an interest in improving their use of spreadsheets, but several also mentioned more specialist digital skills such as managing and archiving digital content and collections or managing administrative data, as well as how to communicate and collaborate effectively in groups using tools such as Slack, Miro or shared work/file spaces

Figure 11. Word cloud of the eighty most common bigrams (i.e. two words written together) in answer to the question "What digital skills would you most like to develop in your role?" (N=2,362)

- Some volunteers and trustees mentioned a desire to contribute by creating digital assets (images, audio, copy) for the organisation, and several said that a better understanding of web design would help them to use these assets effectively; similarly several staff mentioned digital skills relating to creative outputs including video editing, web design and graphic design. These people can be found in all sizes of organisation from those that are exclusively run by volunteers, to those with 50+ employed staff

Themes	Volunteers	Trustees	Staff
Social media	17%	17%	20%
Video editing	7%	13%	17%
Spreadsheets	-	15%	10%
Analytics	-	-	10%
Graphic design	5%	-	9%
Web design	11%	10%	7%
Archiving	11%	-	7%
Database	10%	10%	6%
Communication	-	-	6%
Design	-	-	5%
Video conferencing	9%	11%	-
Photography	6%	-	-
Presentations	5%	8%	-
Online events	5%	-	-
Audio	-	8%	-
Content writing	-	8%	-
Photo editing	-	8%	-

Table 4. The themes and frequency of each theme shown in a random subsample of free text data (separated by role) when people were asked what aspect of their organisation could be improved with digital ways of working

When asked **'What makes it difficult for you to develop digital skills in your role?'**, 61% of staff and 43% of trustees reported a lack of time as the main cause; in contrast for volunteers the main issue was 'not enough personal face to face support for digital skills' (Table 5). Over a third of staff also reported lack of personal support and lack of access to reliable devices/software as barriers to developing their digital skills.

Category	Volunteer	Trustee	Staff
Not enough time	21%	43%	61%
Not enough personal (face to face) support for digital skills	27%	34%	36%
Not enough online training and resources	18%	23%	25%
Lack of access to reliable devices and/or software	15%	15%	32%

Table 5. The key difficulties preventing the development of digital skills in role (N=4084)

One third of all participants report a lack of personal, face to face, support as a barrier to improving their digital skills. Online resources alone are unlikely to be enough to engage, encourage and support these people, who also report they don't have enough time to develop their digital skills.

When it came to describe the difficulties to developing digital skills in their role, participants could also offer a free text response. Their answers varied considerably according to their role. Many volunteers stated that they had no need or desire to develop their digital skills in the context of their role, and/or that they volunteered in order to interact with people and not to learn digital systems. Representative quotes from **volunteers** include:

- "Due to volunteer role, this is not really called for"
- "I don't enjoy online training. I like face to face, one to one teaching and that's hard to come by"
- "Completely not interested"
- "Age: I tend to forget things more these days"
- "I used to work in learning technology sector but actually since retiring prefer not to use some of it (social media) use tools for my own purposes. I wouldn't be interested in making this a major part of my volunteering role I'm afraid!"

Age, and/or a lack of interest in digital skills were common themes in many answers from trustees. Many also identified slow (rural) broadband connectivity as a key barrier, alongside a lack of confidence and a lack of information about what is possible, what digital skills could add value to their role, and where to go to get support. Representative quotes from **trustees** include:

- "Getting too old to learn too many new tricks, don't want to use social media"
- "Not knowing where to go for signposting for suitable resources. Have had bad experiences with online training sessions which were not relevant or as advertised"
- "We need to find more members who have the relevant skills to help us move forwards"
- "Understanding of how my development of digital skills might lead to immediate benefit for organisation"
- "I feel I need a skills audit and support to fill in gaps - I have OK skills in record keeping, texts, emails I used at work but don't know what I don't know and get stuck"
- "Lack of interest and enthusiasm… I don't enjoy learning new digital skills"
- "Poor connectivity both in my home (no mobile signal and very week internet signal) Erratic internet signal in the place where I am a trustee and a volunteer"
- "Mae'r we yn araf ofnadwy (0.5MB) ac felly mae llawer o'r meddalwedd yn araf neu ddim yn gweithio o gwbwl. Pan yn dysgu pethau newydd mae hyn yn achosi trafferth gan nad YES i'n gwybod a'i fi sy'n gwneud rhywbeth yn anghywir ai peidio." (The web is awfully slow (0.5MB) and so a lot of the software is slow or doesn't work at all. When learning new things this causes trouble because I don't know whether I am doing something wrong or not")

When **staff** were asked to describe other issues that prevented them from developing their digital skills, there was a much wider diversity of answers. Many mentioned that out-of-date or inappropriate technology and/or organisational culture were barriers to their individual skills and potential:

- "Clunky IT software used by my employer that is counterintuitive and unfit for purpose"
- "Organisational culture, too small to afford/justify the cost of some of the digital technologies"
- "Being tied into a corporate technology which is not designed to accommodate specialist needs"
- "Competing priorities, lack of budget to change digital ways of working and cultural mindset"

Others said that wanting to develop digital skills either felt not relevant in their role, or dependent on context or personal motivation rather than organisational opportunities:

- "I think if I wanted to develop digital skills further, I would do this autonomously and not rely on the organisation"
- "Development entirely dependent on need - I don't feel in my current role any skills are specifically lacking, but more common use/sharing of digital resources & skills would probably enhance certain aspects"
- "New, more advanced skills would be a bonus rather than essential for my role"

Some staff felt underconfident, whilst others were not keen to invest time because it was not something that was vital to their role and/or they were unsure what to focus on and benefits were unclear:

- "I'd like to know which digital skills would improve my effectiveness in my role without needing to be a specialist in all areas"

Several mentioned either a lack of knowledge about what could help, or no budget to invest in training:

- "There's lots of online training out there; the time-consuming bit is tracking down what you want"
- "Not being aware of what digital tools / resources are out there. So you end up developing an extremely long-winded solution, only to discover that "there's an app for that!""
- "Not enough budget (or time) allocated to digital software or ways of working. In the past I have attended digital conferences, i.e. Culture Geek and NESTA events which were great for inspiration and to hear what peers were up to in terms of digital marketing"

Several staff participants also mentioned poor rural broadband connectivity as a barrier:

- "Rural broadband service is absolutely inadequate - for me as a sole trader and for the organisations I work with here in rural Northumberland. Community led broadband schemes (will eventually provide 1Gbps after lots of volunteer digging) are outpacing BT Openreach (even with their fastest supply we are lucky to get 13Mbps download and about 3Mbps upload speeds, with four people trying to work and study from home, it is at times impossible)"
- "Painfully slow internet speed makes anything more intensive than answering emails very difficult"

- "Top of the list is awful broadband, between 0.1 and 0.00 at the office. Home is 1-2 Mb"

Rating personal digital skills and organisational support to develop them

Participants were asked **'What level of digital skills does your current role require of you?'** followed by **'What level of digital skills do you bring to the role, or to the organisation?'** (zero being 'none' and ten being 'advanced'). Later, they were asked **'How would you rate your organisation's support to develop your digital skills?** (zero being 'none' and ten being 'excellent'). The mean and median averages are shown in Table 6 and Figure 12. They reveal that:

- There was a statistically significant difference between volunteers, trustees and staff in the average ratings for digital skills required in role[13], with volunteers rating themselves an average 3/10, trustees 5/10, and staff 6/10
- When it came to perceived digital skills brought to their role, 24% of staff, 21% of trustees and 13% of volunteers rated their digital skills as 8/10 or higher; with 3% rating themselves as a 10/10
- Comparing their responses to these two questions, staff, trustees and volunteers all tended to say that their digital skills were at a higher level than their role required. This suggests individuals may have untapped skills that organisations could benefit from and which are not currently being used
- There was a statistically significant difference between volunteers, trustees and staff in average ratings for digital skills brought to role[14], with volunteers averaging 5/10 in comparison with 6/10 for trustees and staff
- There was a statistically significant difference between volunteers, trustees and staff in average ratings for organisational support to develop digital skills[15], with volunteers averaging 3/10, trustees 4/10, and staff 5/10
- The average rating for organisational support was less than or equal to 5/10 for everyone, regardless of role

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[13] Kruskal-Wallis Test for role v rating for digital skills required in role: N=3607, H=611.1, df = 2, p<0.001
[14] Kruskal-Wallis Test for role v rating for digital skills required in role: N=3515, H=288.8, df = 2, p<0.001
[15] Kruskal-Wallis Test for role v rating for digital skills brought to role: N=3138, H=263.6, df = 2, p<0.001

- About 15% of all volunteers gave a zero rating (0/10) for both digital skills required in role and digital skills brought to role, in comparison with fewer than 3% of staff and trustees
- Organisation size (as defined by number of employees) affected the ratings people gave in answer to these three questions, and these differences were statistically significant16 (Table 7). People working in organisations with under 50 staff rated the skills their role required as lower than those working in large organisations (50+ employees).
- Voluntary run organisations had the lowest ratings; they are run by volunteers who, on average, tended to rate their digital skills and organisational support as lower than trustees and staff. These voluntary run organisations might benefit from external support to learn how digital could help their organisation, as some may not have anyone likely to lead

Category	Level of digital skills required in role (Mean & SD)	Level of digital skills required in role (Median)	Level of digital skills brought to role (Mean & SD)	Level of digital skills brought to role (Median)	Organisational support to develop digital skills (Mean & SD)	Organisational support to develop digital skills (Median)
Volunteer	3.6 ± 0.8	3	4.4 ± 0.8	5	3.5 ± 0.1	3
Trustee	5.2 ± 0.1	5	5.4 ± 0.1	6	4.0 ± 0.1	4
Staff	5.9 ± 0.5	6	6.1 ± 0.0	6	4.5 ± 0.0	5

Table 6. Participants' average (mean, standard deviation, median) ratings by role, when asked to rate the level of digital skills (0 to 10) required in their role, the level of digital skills they bring to their role, and the level of organisational support to develop their skills. Zero was described as 'none' and 10 as 'advanced' (for skills required/brought to role) or 'excellent' (for organisational support) (N=3607 (Q14); 3515 (Q15); 3138 (Q22))

All organisations would benefit from asking their people – staff, trustees and volunteers – if they have any experience or expertise that could help the organisation to embrace new digital ways of working, or use current systems more effectively.

[16] Kruskal-Wallis Tests: organisation size v rating for digital skills required in role: N=3482, H=40.0, df = 3, $p<0.001$; organisation size v rating for digital skills brought to role: N=3394, H=25.7, df = 3, $p<0.001$; organisation size v organisational support to develop digital skills: N=3028, H=70.8, df = 3, $p<0.001$
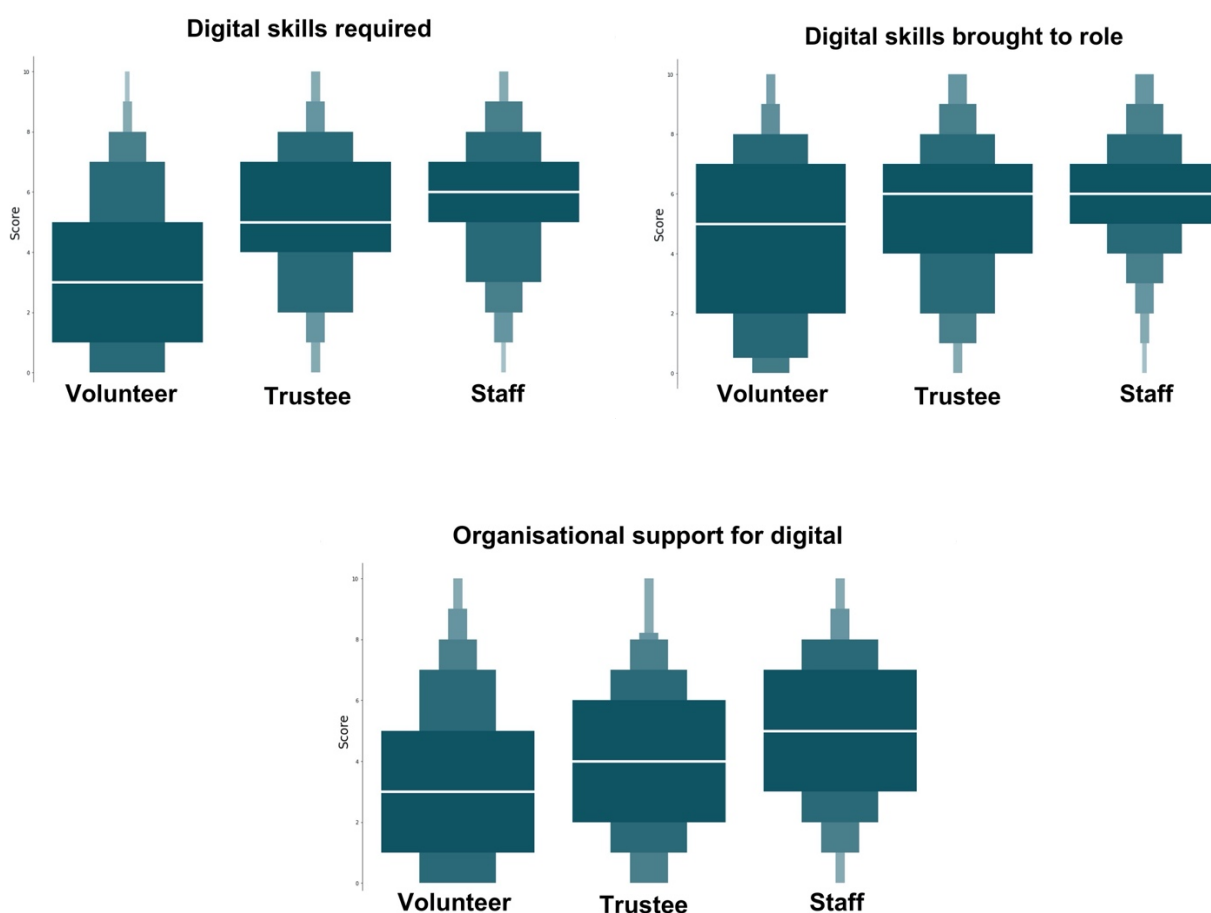
Figure 12. Enhanced box plots for 'required', 'brings to role', and 'organisational support', showing the median average (white line) and the variation of data around it. Zero was described as 'none' and 10 as 'advanced' (for skills required/brought to role) or 'excellent' (for organisational support). (N=3607 (Q14); 3515 (Q15); 3138 (Q22))

Targeted organisational support to develop digital skills could empower individuals and positively impact on organisations. Volunteer-run organisations may need external support and face-to-face mentoring to begin to consider how digital could help their cause.

Category	Level of digital skills required in role (Mean & SD)	Level of digital skills required in role (Median)	Level of digital skills brought to role (Mean & SD)	Level of digital skills brought to role (Median)	Organisational support to develop digital skills (Mean & SD)	Organisational support to develop digital skills (Median)
Volunteer only	4.5 ± 2.6	5	5.1 ± 2.6	5	3.6 ± 2.7	3
1 to 10 staff	5.2 ± 2.4	5	5.4 ± 2.4	6	4.7 ± 2.6	5
11 to 50 staff	5.1 ± 2.5	5	5.5 ± 2.4	6	4.5 ± 2.5	5
Over 50 staff	5.2 ± 2.5	6	5.7 ± 2.4	6	4.9 ± 2.4	5

Table 7. Participants' average ratings (mean, standard deviation, median) by organisation size, when asked to rate the level of digital skills (0 to 10) required in their role, the level of digital skills they bring to their role, and the level of organisational support to develop their skills. Zero was described as 'none' and 10 as 'advanced' or 'excellent' depending on question (N=3482 (Q14); 3394 (Q15); 3028 (Q22))

Trustees often want to enhance organisational (digital) strategy; volunteers are often motivated by improving the visitor experience, and staff want to be more digitally enabled and effective in their specific context. Roles are united in their desire to harness social media and other forms of digital outreach activities.

DASH data: organisational support

The remaining questions focused on organisational support to use and access digital. Participants were asked **'When have you discussed your digital skills?'**. Results are summarised in Figure 13 and key results were:

- 63% of staff and 54% of trustees discuss their digital skills informally with their colleagues or peers; this is the most common way in which these people discuss their digital skills
- Only about one third of staff said they discussed their digital skills when they were recruited and during formal appraisal meetings
- 46% of volunteers say that they never discuss their digital skills with others: this was the most common answer to this question for volunteers
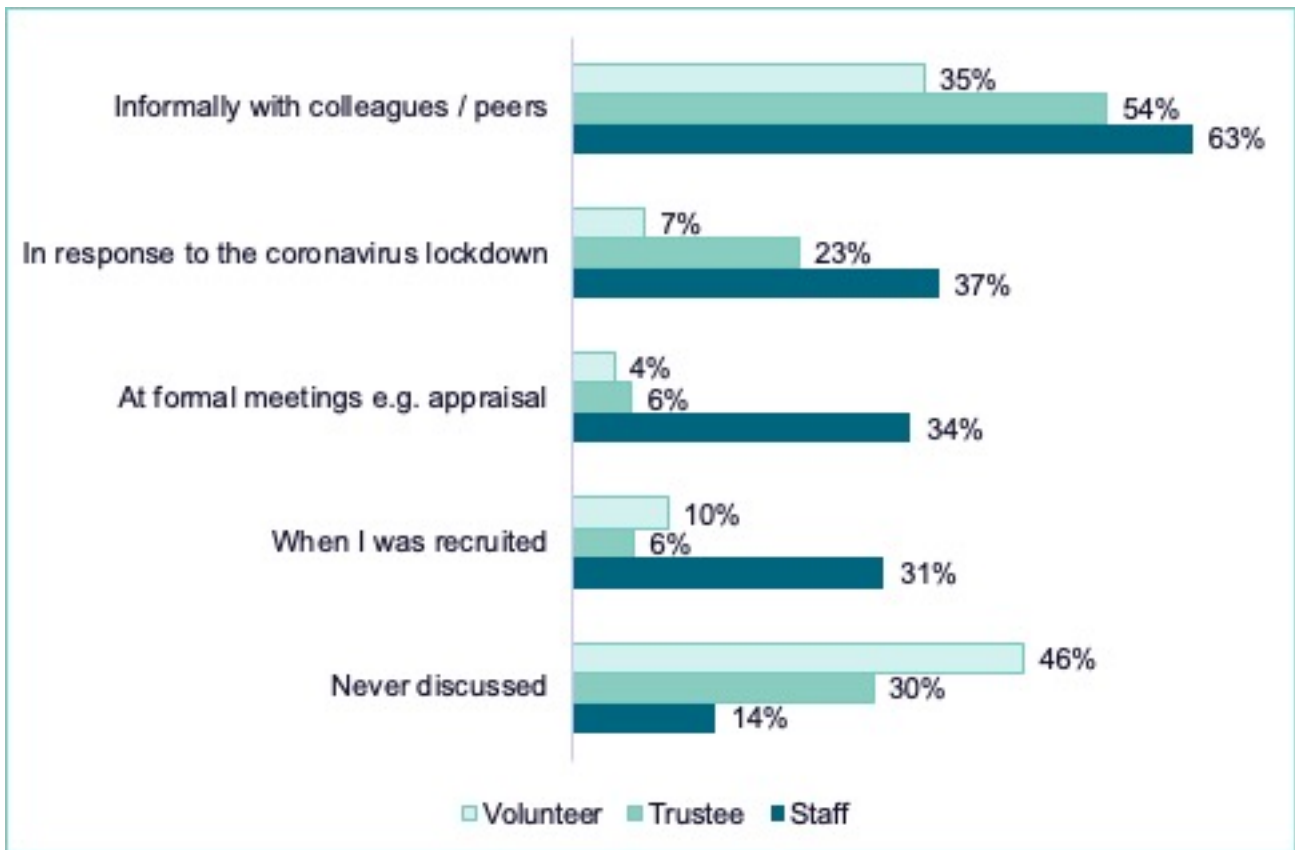

Figure 13. Occasions within an organisation when people speak to others about their digital skills, broken down by role (N=4084)

Participants were asked **'What software application(s) or data system(s) do you use most in your role?'** and could answer via a free text box. Microsoft came out on top in terms of applications that people used, although it's exact use was determined by role. **Volunteers** were most likely to use Word, followed by email and Excel. **Trustees** focused on Word and Excel, while **staff** embraced the entire Office suite, with Excel being the most used single application. **Trustees** were more likely than other groups to use HR systems and create PowerPoint presentations. **Staff** were more likely to use more technical, database-driven or bespoke systems (e.g. GIS, CRM, CMS, finance systems).

Participants were then asked, **'If you use specialist software, do you find it fit for purpose, reliable, and sector standard?'**. For those who use specialist software, most agreed that it was fit for purpose (average was 'agree'), but when asked if it was 'reliable i.e. works consistently on the device and network you use' the average answer for staff was 'neutral', whereas for volunteers and trustees the average answer was 'agree'. This suggests that for staff, whilst their specialist software and data systems are on average considered fit for purpose and sector standard, there is room for improvement when it comes to their reliability.

Participants were asked **'Which of the following does your organisation make you aware of?'** and were provided with a list of six options plus the option 'none of these'. These tended to relate to providing access to information that could often be presented in written, remote formats. Results are summarised in Figure 14. Key findings were:

- Heritage organisations appear good at supporting staff awareness of fundamental issues relating to safe and legal use of digital systems and technologies: 72% of staff reported being told how to handle data securely and within the law, 58% were advised about how to behave safely and respectfully online, and how to look after their health and wellbeing as a digital user
- 20% of staff were aware that their organisation had a digital strategy

- Only 18% of staff said they were made aware of how to make digital media accessible to all and about issues relating to digital licensing
- 40% of volunteers and 35% of trustees said that their organisation had not made them aware of any of the issues identified in this question
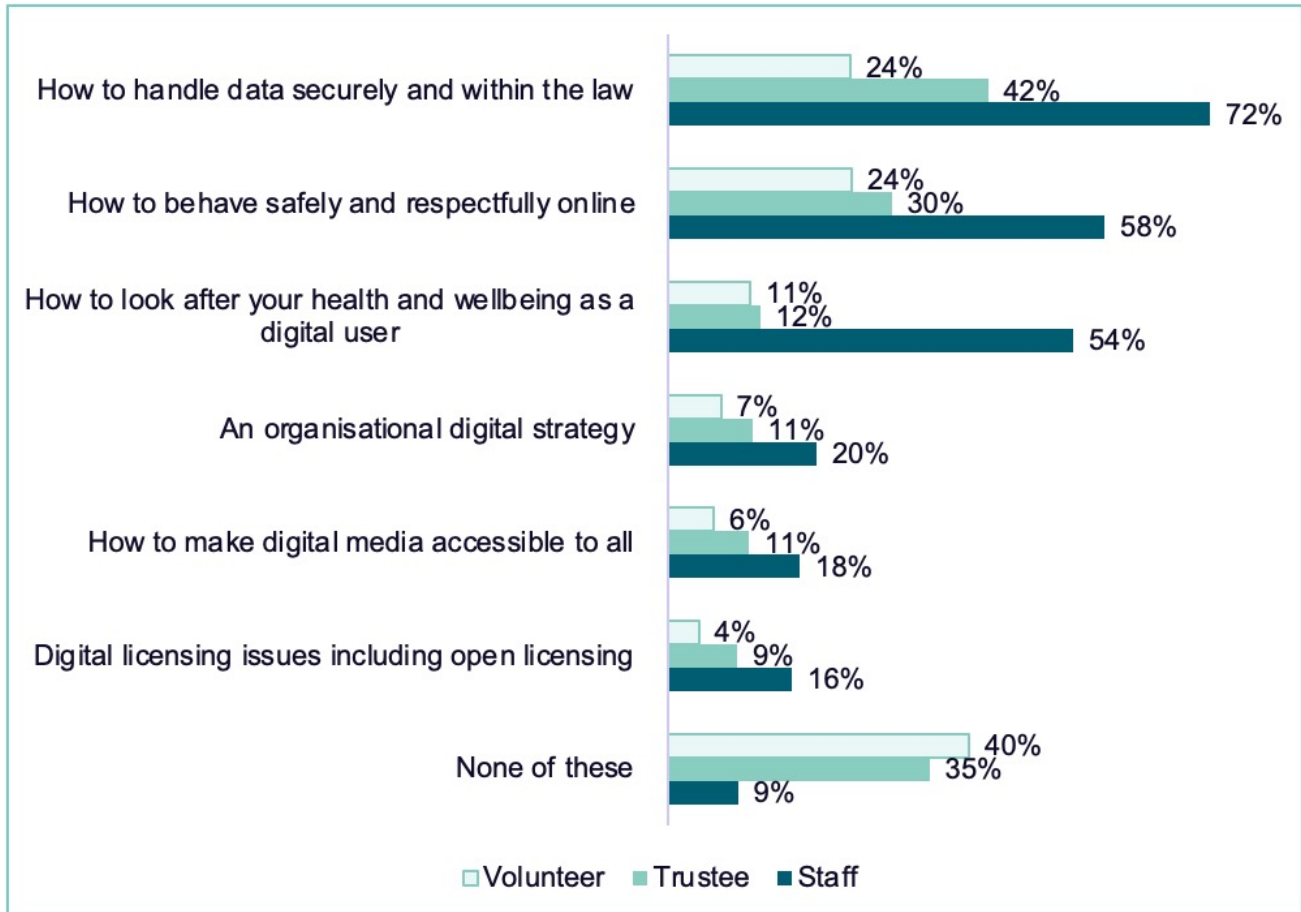
Figure 14. The proportion of people who have been informed by their organisation about six digitally relevant issues, broken down by role (N=4084)

People working in heritage would benefit from signposting to resources providing guidance about accessibility, digital licensing, and how to start a digital strategy

Participants were asked **'Which of the following does your organisation provide you with?'** and were presented with six options, or 'none of these'. Most activities

summarised in this question would require time, training and/or strategic planning to organise.
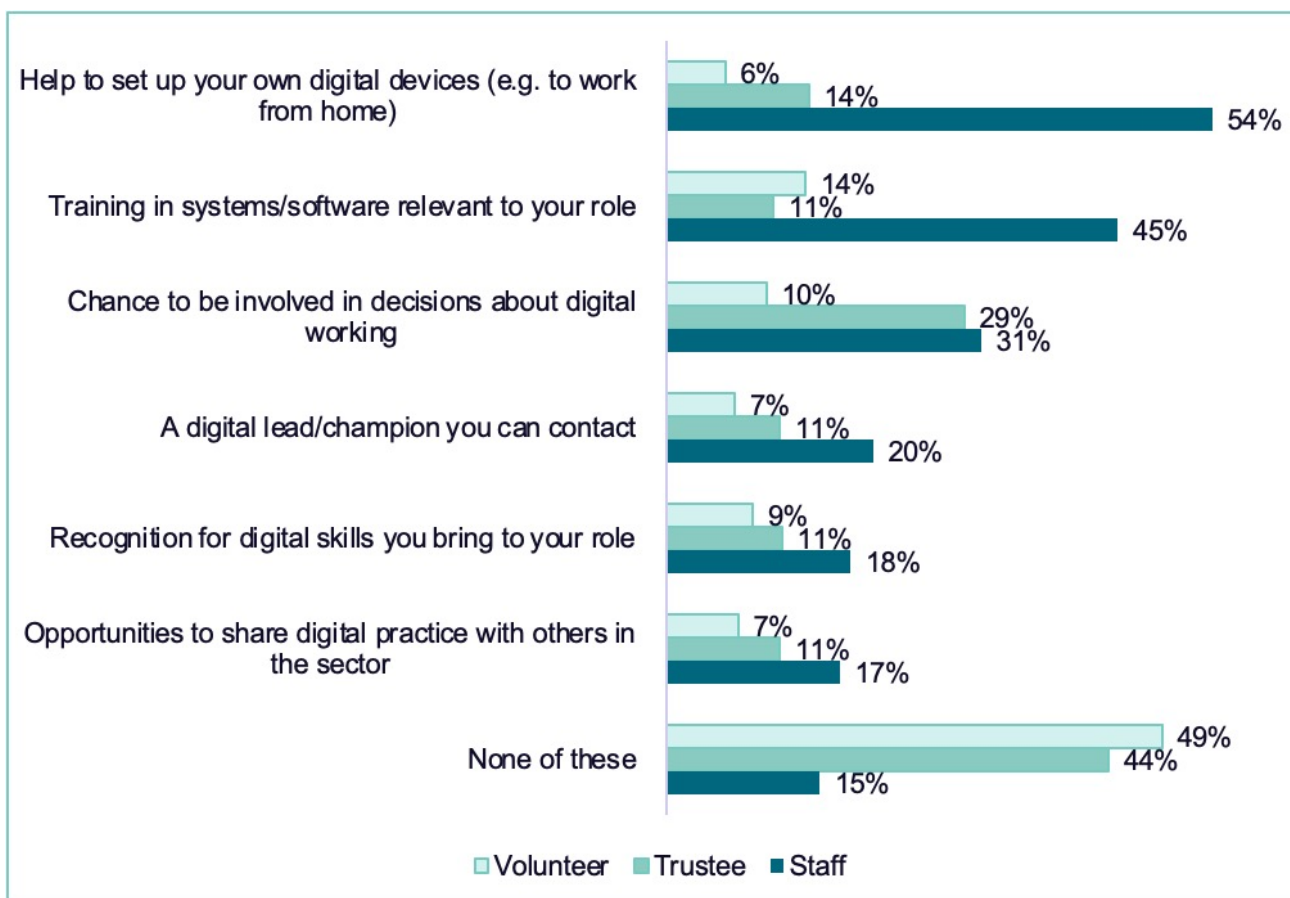

Figure 15. The proportion of people who have been provided with each of six digitally relevant activities or support, broken down by role (N=4084)

Results are summarised in Figure 15 and show that:

- Heritage organisations are often not supporting these activities for volunteers, trustees or staff
- Only half of staff have had help from their organisation to set up their own digital devices, for example to work from home
- Only 45% of staff work within an organisation that provides them with training in systems or software relevant to their role; just 20% have access to a digital lead they can contact for support, and only 18% feel they receive recognition for the digital skills they bring to their role
- Only 17% of staff say get the chance to share their digital practice with others in the heritage sector

- A third of staff and trustees said they have the chance to be involved in decisions about digital ways of working. This is a relatively high proportion when compared with other sectors where we asked this question (e.g. education, healthcare)
- Nearly half of trustees and volunteers said they receive no organisational support for any of the issues covered in this question, in comparison with only 15% of staff

> Only one in six heritage sector staff get the chance to share their digital practice with others. There are opportunities here for funders and informal federations of organisations to provide ways for people to swap and share skills, eg via regional/virtual meet-ups.

Participants were asked **'What aspect of your organisation could be improved with digital ways of working?'** and could answer via a free text box. As before, a random subsample was used[17], and key themes were identified within the comments. These are shown in Table 8 and reveal that:

- Issues under the theme of 'outreach' were the most common aspect identified by all roles, with each role viewing this issue through a different lens. Volunteers talked about issues relating to user engagement such as virtual tours and better public access to digital collections. Trustees talked about webinars, video conferences, live public events and collaborations. Staff talked about virtual tours, online digital content, and the opportunity to use the pandemic as a catalyst for them to reach new and more diverse audiences
- 20% of staff mentioned the need for better technology: they wanted more reliable and better integrated systems with up to date hardware and networks. Several also mentioned a need for IT support. Some staff clearly had specialist digital knowledge and could see potential for improvement if given the opportunity to share their ideas

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[17] A random sample representing 20% of each of the three role types was selected and analysed using a grounded method, where coded items were grouped and reviewed to consolidate and rationalize codes. Some responses were double coded, meaning that the number of coded items adds up to more than the number of responses in each category.

- 10% of trustees explicitly mentioned meetings, and the need to improve live video conferencing in order for them to fulfill their role, for example one trustee said "I am not qualified to answer this question. As a Trustee meeting only every two months or so, do not know how the staff are working digitally!"
- In answer to this question, 18% of volunteers and 6% of trustees said they did not feel able or qualified to answer this question given their role and experience
- It is also worth taking a look at the gaps where some roles have not mentioned a theme, for example 'improving the visitor experience' is an important consideration for volunteers, but this isn't mentioned at all by trustees. Technology availability, suitability and reliability is mentioned by staff and volunteers, but not by trustees. This shows how important it is to hear from all perspectives in order to understand digital issues in the round

When it comes to identifying where digital could improve ways of working, organisations should ensure that they listen to the experiences and perspectives of volunteers, trustees and staff in order to fully understand problems and opportunities.

Organisations would benefit from creating a digital strategy document or action plan that identifies how digital might improve day-to-day organisational efficiency and effectiveness, how the organisation could better identify skills and share practice, which steps could embed discussions about digital into regular practice (eg recruitment, staff appraisals), and achievable ways in which their staff, volunteers, trustees and visitors might benefit from better use of digital technologies.

Themes	Volunteers	Trustees	Staff
Outreach and engagement	10%	22%	**20%**
Technology (hardware, systems, networks)	7%	-	**20%**
Marketing and promotion	4%	-	9%
Meetings/remote working	-	10%	8%
Training and capacity building	-	-	8%
Archives and collections	10%	8%	7%
Document management/administrative issues	5%	8%	7%
Collaboration and teamwork	5%	-	6%
Strategy	-	8%	5%
Content (management)	-	-	5%
Education	-	-	3%
Bookings/events	-	-	3%
Visitor experience	10%	-	1%
Culture	4%	4%	1%
Communications	**21%**	**27%**	-
Data and research	8%	8%	-
Access and inclusion	4%	-	-
Retail/sales	-	4%	-
Fundraising	1%	-	-

Table 8. The themes and frequency of each theme shown in a random subsample of free text data (separated by role) when people were asked what aspect of their organisation could be improved with digital ways of working

Participants were asked **'What one thing could your organisation do to better support digital ways of working?'** and could answer via free text. A random sample methodology was employed, as per methods previously described. Key themes are summarised in Table 9 and show that:

- Issues around the theme of 'training' were the most common aspect identified by all roles, with each role viewing this issue through a different lens. Volunteers and trustees wanted more training, often at a basic and non-specialist level, with requests for support, encouragement and reassurance (many identified as lacking confidence with technology). Many tended to see 'age' as a problem and 'youth' as the solution when it came to digital skills. When staff talked about training, they focused on specific and specialist support for software, systems and areas of professional work rather than basic IT skills

- Poor technical infrastructure and/or a lack of access to suitable technologies was also a clear issue for all, with staff focusing on more specialist software and systems than trustees and volunteers. Staff wanted up to date devices, especially for home working, and more reliable networks

- 'Strategy' was a key theme mentioned by trustees and staff. Some trustees planned to use the DASH survey results to help them begin to develop a more strategic approach to understanding digital skills across their organisation. Staff wanted their organisation to engage with them around digital issues, to encourage staff who may be struggling, and to recognize the value of the digital skills they have

- A large number of staff responses were coded as concerns with organisational culture more generally – and again, this was not found among volunteers or trustees. On the whole staff wanted to work in an organisation that was digitally forward looking, responsive, innovative, and engaged. In contrast to some comments from trustees and volunteers, there were no negative comments about the use of technology per se from staff, only about unhelpful organisational practices and attitudes to it. Comments about strategy and culture generally came from staff in larger organisations (10+ employed staff). Staff in smaller organisations regularly mentioned size as a limiting factor, especially the difficulties of recruiting and developing digital skills in a small team

Themes	Volunteers	Trustees	Staff
Training	24%	**18%**	**35%**
Technology	14%	5%	18%
Culture	-	-	12%
Strategy/planning	4%	16%	12%
Time	-	-	6%
Funding	5%	2%	4%
Encouragement/support	5%	9%	3%
Mentoring	-	7%	3%
Engagement/consultation	2%	-	3%
Specialist support	-	-	3%
Recognition	4%	-	2%
IT support (general)	4%	2%	1%
Guidance/documentation	-	-	1%
Communication	5%	5%	-
Recruitment	2%	2%	-
Role development	3%	-	-
Skills audit	3%	-	-
Awareness	2%	5%	-
Other	5%	14%	-
Accessibility	-	2%	-
NA/don't know	**26%**	9%	8%

Table 9. The themes and frequency of each theme shown in a random subsample of free text data (separated by role) when people were asked what their organisation could do better to support digital ways of working

- Whilst most volunteers said they lacked confidence with technology, the responses of a minority suggested they were an untapped resource of digital

skills. They asked for recognition, skills audits, development and to be consulted about digital issues

- A significant number of staff wanted support for their digital practice that was not related to training. They wanted time to engage and practice digital skills, mentoring from experienced colleagues, and the support of digital specialists working in their context

Conclusions

The data from this survey clearly show that when it comes to learning about and using digital technologies in the heritage sector, the lens through which people consider their digital skills – and the way they might use digital technologies – is heavily influenced by their role (volunteer, trustee or staff).

Planning for a diversity of opinion and engagement towards digital is important. Many will only engage in learning new digital skills where it can clearly improve the quality or efficiency of their activities in role. Only a few people will have the time and personal interest to investigate broader digital possibilities.

Below we offer some suggestions on how we might support people and organisations working across UK heritage to better consider digital ways of working.

Embed digital conversations into recruitment and appraisal

Adding a short discussion about digital skills into recruitment and appraisal systems would be a useful way for heritage organisations to better understand the potential of their staff, and to identify untapped individual skills and interests that might benefit the organisation.

Identify what digital skills are in house already

DASH data showed there are some volunteers, trustees and staff who are genuinely interested in supporting their organisation – and the people in it – to better use digital technologies. Using DASH or starting conversations about digital skills can help organisations to identify these people and ask whether they would be prepared to be a digital champion – with appropriate reward and recognition.

Skills audits can set goals and manage expectations

Many survey participants said they don't know what 'good digital skills' look like in their role. They need guidance and advice to understand their current skills and set goals for their future. It would help if organisations discussed what they expect when it comes to digital skills in each role context and staff role, as well as identify examples of best practice. This could form part of an organisation's digital strategy/action plan.

Acknowledge this takes time, not just access to training

Many staff said that they wanted support for their digital practice that was not related to training or access to relevant resources. They wanted time to engage and practice digital skills, mentoring from experienced colleagues, and the support of digital specialists working in their context.

Invest in communities of practice, not just solo up-skilling

DASH data showed that many people working in heritage long for digital skills support from other people, not from online resources. They want to talk and share their digital practice with others. Rather than focusing solely on individual up-skilling, the heritage sector might therefore benefit more from the creation of sub-sector and/or regional **communities of practice** that recognize and support a wide variety of different skills. This offers opportunities to share practice informally, meet and talk with others, and better consider benefits and risks. This is something that has been very successful in other time and budget-poor sectors such as in UK higher and further education[18].

Resources about accessibility, licensing, strategy

People working in heritage would benefit from access to – and signposting towards - resources about advice and guidance about how to make digital media accessible to all, digital licensing issues and open licensing, and how to create a digital strategy.

Content development, social media, and collaborative working

The DASH sign-up form showed that a quarter of organisations were looking for help to create content, and/or for marketing in digital spaces. Survey data collected from individual participants matched this trend, with people seeking skills relating to

[18] For example, see Jisc's 'Communities' pages.

creating digital content and online marketing using social media. Working collaboratively in digital spaces was also an issue for many people. Using digital platforms to share and group information can really help a team to work together.

Consider role when developing training resources

A person's role influenced what they wanted to learn more about. Trustees often wanted to enhance organisational (digital) strategy; volunteers were often motivated by improving the visitor experience, and staff wanted to be more digitally enabled and effective in their specific job role.

Provide roadmaps through available online content

Most staff are using digital technology in their day to day roles already. When it comes to improving their digital skills, they are time-poor and work in organisations that they know have little if any budget for training. Many staff reference the importance of accessing digital skills that are directly relevant to their context and role.

Some staff that work in specialist roles are keen to further improve their use of specialist technologies (eg GIS, archiving, audio recording, graphic design) but are either unable to access specialist training in the right context, or feel restricted by limited technical platforms and a lack of organisational investment.

A number of resources are already out there, but many don't know where to find them. Roadmaps through online content – strings of resources centered around a relevant theme or specific to a certain job role – could help people as much as the creation of new resources.

Actively include a diversity of voices

DASH data showed that when it comes to spotting opportunities to improve, volunteers, trustees and staff often identify and value different things. The data also showed that few people under twenty-five work in heritage, and that most organisations have significantly more female staff whilst being led by trustees who are predominantly retired men. Listening to a diversity of perspectives and experiences across all roles could help organisations to better identify opportunities for improvement and increase their relevance to society as a whole.

Engage and create digital enthusiasts

One third of all participants reported a lack of personal, face to face support as a barrier to them improving their digital skills. Many organisations (especially those led only by volunteers or with fewer than 10 employed staff) did not appear to have the capacity to engage with digital at anything other than a minimal functional level, and many people (especially those aged 65+) wanted to focus on their core activities within the organisation. In order for these people to consider ways to use digital in their roles, they need digitally engaged individuals who can act as the catalyst to facilitate organisational and individual engagement.

One option, particularly for larger organisations, is to better support secondment activities between similar organisations. This would allow skills swaps and create other opportunities for collaboration.

Another suggestion would be for the sector to engage a completely new form of volunteer: those who are interested in supporting others to use digital technologies. This role is not one that requires a high degree of digital expertise in all areas, but instead needs people with some digital skills relevant to heritage, together with enthusiasm and a desire to help to support, enthuse and empower others. These 'digital heritage heroes' could work remotely in virtual spaces, support the needs of individual organisations, introduce people to relevant resources that are available, and identify gaps where other resources would add value. They could also facilitate webinars to bring people from similar organisations or situations together.

Another way to create people with the knowledge to identify ways to better use digital in heritage is to provide relevant, useful training and support for those in senior leadership positions, and this is something that is the focus of a project currently funded by The Fund[19].

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[19] 'Leading the Sector – Digital Skills for Heritage' is a professional development course in digital leadership, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Engage and support volunteers and trustees

Volunteers and trustees are giving their time for free; they want to focus on what interests them and where they feel they add value. They may not be using digital systems day to day but their role is essential, and to benefit the whole organisation they should be involved in the conversation about digital. This does not mean everyone needs to attain a specific level of digital skill to feel useful. It does mean everyone has a say, even if what they ask for is that digital is kept in the background or looked after by somebody else.

When it comes to learning new digital skills, volunteers and trustees in particular value face-to-face support and training and often look for reassurance. For these people, support to learn new digital skills should begin with people and not technology. They would benefit from hearing from other volunteers or trustees about the digital skills that have added value to their roles, and the sources of information they found of use to them. Trustees might also benefit from opportunities to talk to others in similar organisations, eg via regular national webinars or buddy/mentor systems.

Challenge the narrative about age

Volunteers and trustees tended to identify older age as a barrier to engaging with digital practices. Some explained that in retirement they chose not to take on digital roles, as their motive for volunteering was different. While respecting these motives, the narrative about older age could be gently challenged by encouraging all volunteers to reflect on the digital skills they have (e.g. from work, home life) and asking whether there are any they would like to use or develop in their role. These questions from the DASH survey could be particularly valuable for organisations to ask of new volunteers and trustees.

Quick wins with DASH

For individuals

- Answer the DASH questions (still available as PDF download via the DASH website) and reflect on your attitudes and skills, identify skills gaps, and take action.

- Ask yourself: What problems do you have that digital might help solve? What digital issues are you interested in learning more about? Who can you discuss this with in your organisation? What training opportunities or online resources are available to support your development?

For organisations

- Start discussions with your volunteers, trustees and staff about how digital is currently used. Is there anyone in your organisation willing to be your digital champion, if given some time to do it? Remember: their role is to support others to access useful digital resources and seek opportunities for improvement – not to fix the office printer
- Consider creating a digital strategy or action plan. This need not be a long, formal process. In fact, better if it is a living document focused on small, achievable steps that can be updated as you move forward. It might be led by an informal working group of interested volunteers, trustees and staff
- Invest in the best broadband and wifi connectivity that you can afford: this is the conduit through which your staff and volunteers can access a wealth of people and organisations offering support, free resources and new opportunities
- Use your DASH data to identify skills gaps across your organisation, and identify people who have skills that could benefit you

For funders

- There are clear opportunities to identify a new type of volunteer; those who could work remotely to engage and support heritage organisations in the use of digital technologies
- Offer encouraging, accessible support for trustees and staff in small heritage organisations to begin to think more strategically about digital technologies, without requiring them to undertake formal or time-consuming audits or create formal strategies
- It is extremely hard to quantify the number of active heritage organisations in England, Scotland and Wales year on year, but it would help to better clarify sub-sector groupings and to classify heritage organisations separately in terms of (a) their physical/virtual presence, separate to (b) their intended aims and outputs
- Evidence from DASH 2020 suggests there may be interesting differences in expectations of role according to organisation size, and that this could influence engagement and interest towards learning new digital skills. Further research in this area may be beneficial
- Many heritage organisations are based in rural areas, and the number of people who reported significant problems with their wifi or broadband speed was

worrying. It is difficult for small organisations to put pressure on broadband suppliers, so national bodies could make a collective case on their behalf. Otherwise, these people and organisations continue to miss out, at a time when increasing digital access is vital to their success

Other useful projects and links

If you're reading this, you're probably interested in how digital can be used across the UK heritage sector. Below we have suggested some links that could also be of use in accessing further information, training and support.

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund's 'Digital Skills for Heritage' initiative
- 'Heritage Digital' offers free skills training and support
- 'Leading the Sector – Digital Skills for Heritage' is a professional development course in digital leadership
- 'Digital Heritage Lab' is a digital skills development programme for small and medium heritage organisations
- Catalyst are an organisation that specialize in empowering charities to use digital, and offer free services, resources and funding to help organisations to transform their social impact

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