Classroom Realities:
Results of the 2007
National Survey of Teachers

Fairbanks, AK
Los Angles, CA
Washington, DC
Lafayette, LA
Lansing, MI
Muskegon, MI
St. Louis, MO
Bozeman, MT
Rock Hill, NC
Fargo, ND
Brooklyn, NY
Merrick, NY
Roscoe, NY
Austin, TX
Fairfax County, VA
Newport News, VA
West, VA
Spokane, WA

Preface

This study, focusing on the classroom resources available to American history teachers and materials they access, primarily via the Internet, with which to enrich their students' educational experience is the result of a collaborative efforts between two Smithsonian offices. The study was initiated by the Office of Public Programs, National Museum of American History (NMAH). NMAH defined the data requirements, collected the data throughout the country, and prepared the questionnaires for analysis. The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A), refined the data requirements, developed questionnaires, analyzed the data and prepared this report. Heather Paisley-Jones, NMAH, Zahava D. Doering and David Karns, OP&A, had primary responsibility for the study. The study would not have been possible without the assistance of nearly 1,000 educators who took the time, amidst busy workshops and conferences, to complete the survey. We appreciate their help as NMAH strives to improve its service to them.

Carole M. P. Neves, Director

Office of Policy and Analysis

Introduction

In 2007, the National Museum of American History (NMAH) conducted a nationwide survey of teachers in order to learn what types of museum-produced educational resources they use or prefer to use. NMAH has a long history of producing innovative object-based history curricula and distance learning opportunities inspired by its exhibitions. Staff suspected that recent changes in America's classrooms—spurred by the *No Child Left Behind Act* and the growing availability of educational technology—meant that teachers had different needs than in the past. Teachers were canvassed to help the museum create the next generation of need-responsive resources and materials for student and teacher use.

Study Approach

Collaborating with the Smithsonian's Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A), NMAH identified data requirements, developed a survey instrument, and devised a study strategy based on a convenience sample, i.e., distributing a questionnaire to classroom teachers attending conferences and workshops sponsored by the National Council for History Education, the National Council for Social Studies, the Smithsonian Associates, and the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies. Two, slightly different versions of the questionnaire were distributed (See Appendix A for a copy of one questionnaire). In the end, 967 teachers at twenty events completed survey forms at locations ranging from Fairbanks, AK to Lafayette, LA. (See Appendix B for a list of the locations).

Given the nature of the sample, we cannot generalize these findings to the national population. We can say, however, that they form a reasonable approximation for the audience reached and intended by the museum for its offerings.

Results

Who Responded? The educators who responded to the survey are experienced classroom teachers in public (90%), private (5%), parochial (2%)

and other types (4%) of schools. Four-fifths are classroom teachers (80%); a few are lead teachers (5%) or curriculum specialists (3%). The rest reported assorted primary responsibilities. They have been teaching for a long time, with nearly two-thirds having 10 or more years of experience. And, they teach primarily in public/charter schools (90%). While tending slightly towards the upper grades, the grades they teach are distributed across the K-12th spectrum.

In the Classroom. Most teach in social science areas. About one-fifth, however, reported teaching science (18%), and another fifth reported mathematics (18%). Almost all of the overlap between teaching history and science or mathematics affects elementary grade teachers (K through 4) where one-quarter (24%) reported teaching history and science while almost none of high school teachers reported teaching both subjects (1%). Slightly over two-thirds (69%) use a history curriculum designed to meet state history standards, while a much smaller group reported that they teach to National History Standards (7%) or district/local history standards (8%).

Slightly over half (53%) indicated that recent curricular requirements and/or mandated testing changed the way they teach American history, explaining:
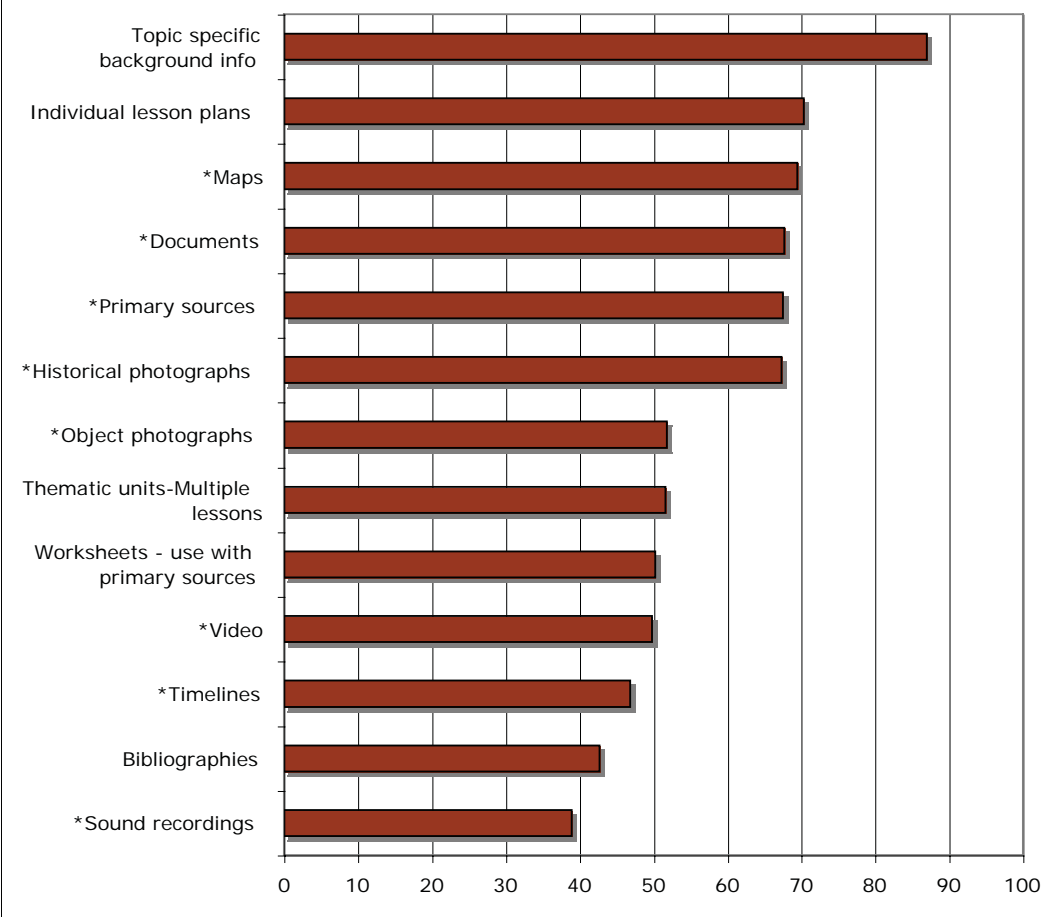
- *Basically we teach to the test per administration's mandate.*
- *Because of time constraints, I highlight all the state standards and rarely go deeper.*
- *Comprehensive curriculum mandates that you move quickly through curriculum–you can't "revisit" topics and devote more time to them.*
- *Focusing more directly on test objectives at the expense of some other things.*

Technology Resources. The majority of respondents reported adequate Information Technology (IT) resources. This includes having ready access to computers fewer than 5 years old (84%), color printers (55%), the ability to print pdf documents (76%), and access to large scale (11" x 17") copying (54%) and printing (36%). Over half of the respondents indicated ready access to at least five of these resources. Internet access, rare a few years ago, is available to 90 percent of the teachers, as is equipment that allows classes to watch internet presentations (72%). A small number (8%) still access the Internet through dial-up connections, generally they also have direct access.

**Downloaded Materials.** Over 90 percent of teachers downloaded some type of classroom materials (Figure 1), with 85% reporting that they do not need prior approval to use supplemental materials. The top six types of downloaded materials were used by nearly 70 percent of the educators, the next five items by about fifty percent, and the last two by about 40 percent. Of the types of materials specifically prepared by museum educators, the data shows that individual lesson plans were downloaded by at least 70 percent of responding educators.

Respondents reported visiting more than 300 web sites in search of resources. The most visited sites were the Library of Congress (20%) and the National
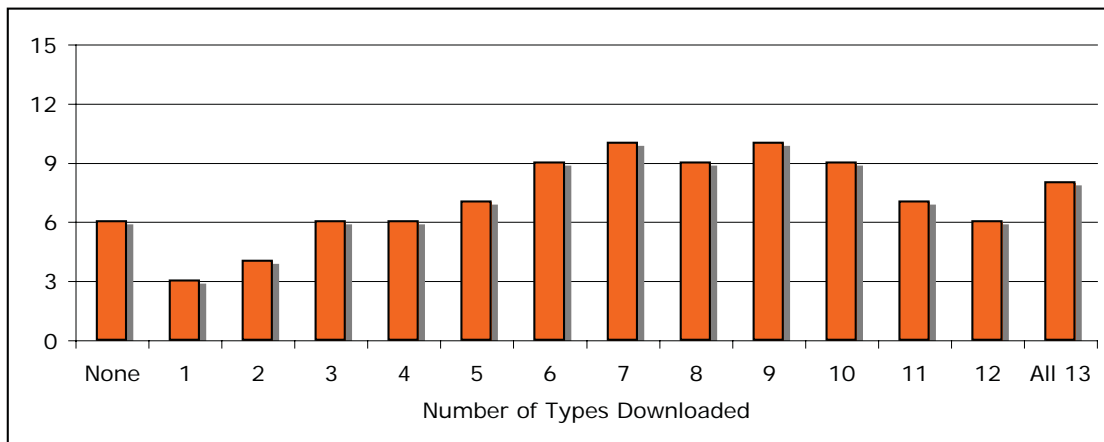
Figure 1:
Types of Materials Downloaded
(In Percent)

Archives (16%); other frequently mentioned sites included Google (8%), United Streaming (5%), PBS (5%), and the National Museum of American History (5%). (See Appendix C for a listing of the most visited web sites).

A crude measure of the extent of downloading is reflected in the number of different types of materials that educators downloaded. On average, educators downloaded six different types of materials, with 20 percent downloading three or fewer and thirty percent reporting that they downloaded 10 or more different types (Figure 2).

Figure 2:
Number of Types of Materials Downloaded from the Internet (In Percent)

Respondents were asked to identify which formats of curriculum materials were convenient for their needs. Materials that could be downloaded electronically (pdf, audio, movies, images) were popular with teachers while DVD's were most popular with teachers who were asked about that mode, with VHS video, CD-Rom, and printed or "hard-copy" materials available by mail were much less popular in each of the surveys.[1] A need for non-English materials was identified by nearly a fourth (23%) of respondents. Overwhelmingly, the main non-English language noted was Spanish (145 teachers; XX%) compared to the next most often cited languages (each less than 1%): Chinese (9 teachers), Vietnamese (9), Russian (8), and French (8).
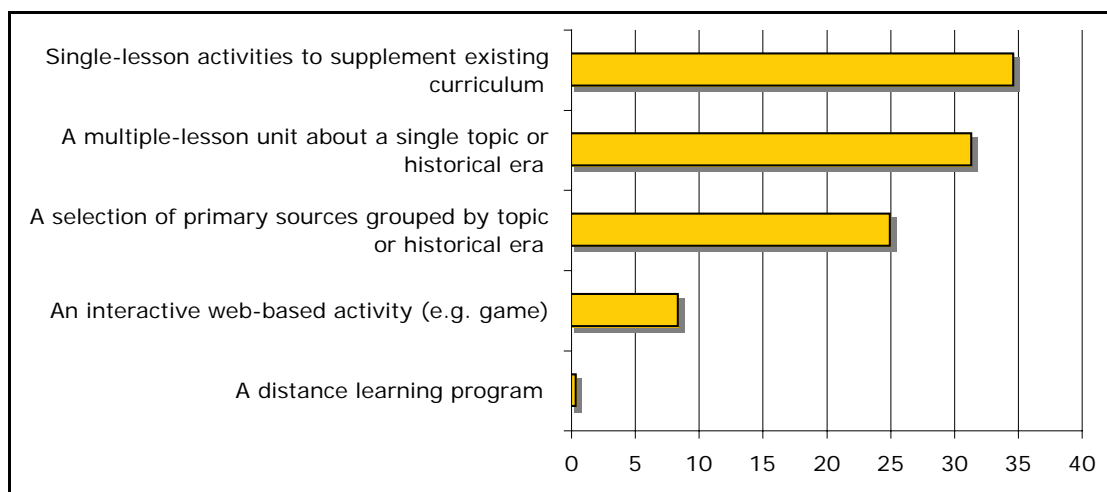
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[1] The two surveys asked slightly different questions. One survey asked teachers to rank delivery modes (without including DVD's) while the other asked teachers to mark two modes

No apparent consensus exists on the ideal length for a single supplemental history lesson or activity. Fifty-minute units were the most favored unit length (40% first choice) followed closely by 30-minute units (36% first choice). In all likelihood, teachers are selecting a length consistent with the time available to them in a single class session; thus, those with 60-minute sessions marked 50-minute units and those with 45-minute sessions marked 30-minute sessions. More than half rejected multiple session units; while more than 90 percent did not choose fifteen-minute units or twenty-minute units included on one version of the questionnaire.

As Figure 3 shows, single-lesson supplementary activities (35%) and multiple lesson units (31%) were the curricular materials most likely to be used, followed by internet web-based activity (26% in the survey where asked) and a selection of primary materials (25%). It should be noted that nearly half of the respondents in one version of the questionnaire marked "A selection of primary materials" as their second choice. Thus, the use of primary materials is most likely to be higher than indicated here. Distance learning programs trail far behind.

Focusing specifically on possible NMAH materials, respondents were very favorable inclined (80%) towards using a reading/language arts curriculum based on stories from American History in their classrooms.

Figure 3
Preference for Formats of Materials
(In Percent)

Discussion

The data collected in the survey can provide NMAH with guideposts to use as they develop new materials for classroom use.[2] The data show a need for such materials and a receptive audience of teachers. At the same time, the data underscore the diversity of needs on the part of teachers. Therein are the challenges and the opportunities for NMAH.

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[2] Survey frequency distributions are in Appendix D,

Appendix A:
Questionnaire

Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

NATIONWIDE TEACHER SURVEY 2007

The National Museum of American History (NMAH) is conducting this 4-page survey to discover how to best serve the education community. Help shape future Smithsonian education activities and curriculum by completing this brief survey. <u>Please answer each question only as it applies to you.</u> All answers are confidential.

START HERE:

1. **In which ZIP CODE is your school located?** _____

2. **As an educator, what is your <u>current, primary role</u> at your school?** *Select one.*
   - ☐ Classroom Teacher
   - ☐ Lead Teacher or Lead Content Teacher
   - ☐ Curriculum Specialist
   - ☐ Librarian/Media Specialist
   - ☐ Administrator
   - ☐ Home Schooler
   - ☐ Other _____

3. **For which grade levels are you responsible?** *Select all that apply.*
   - ☐ K - 4
   - ☐ 5   ☐ 6   ☐ 7   ☐ 8   ☐ 9
   - ☐ 10 - 12
   - ☐ Advanced Placement
   - ☐ International Baccalaureate
   - ☐ College/University

4. **Which subjects do you teach?** *Select all that apply.*
    - ☐ U.S. History
    - ☐ World History
    - ☐ Government
    - ☐ Social Studies
    - ☐ Science
    - ☐ Math
    - ☐ English, Reading, or Language Arts
    - ☐ Other _____

5. **At which type of school do you teach?**
    - ☐ Public/Charter
    - ☐ Private
    - ☐ Parochial
    - ☐ Home school
    - ☐ Other _____

6. **Have you taken your students on history-related field trip(s) during the last year?**
    - ☐ Once a year
    - ☐ Twice a year
    - ☐ More than 3 times per year
    - ☐ Never

7. **Which of the following requirements is your school's history curriculum <u>primarily designed to meet</u>?** *Select only one.*
    - ☐ National History Standards
    - ☐ State History Standards
    - ☐ District/Local History Standards
    - ☐ National Council for Social Studies Standards
    - ☐ I don't know
    - ☐ Other _____

8. **Which of the following are <u>readily available to you at school</u>?**
    Select all that apply.
    - ☐ A computer less than 5 years old
    - ☐ Internet access: ☐ high-speed   ☐ dial-up
    - ☐ A color printer
    - ☐ 11" x 17" printing
    - ☐ 11" x 17" copying
    - ☐ Capability to print a *pdf* document
    - ☐ Equipment that allows your class to view internet together (TV, digital projector, or Digital blackboard)

9. **Are you permitted to use supplemental materials that are not pre-approved by your school district?**
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

10. **<u>During the current academic year</u>, which of the following types of curricular materials have you downloaded from a website for use in your classroom?** *Select all that apply.*
    - ☐ Thematic units containing multiple lesson plans (i.e. The Civil War)
    - ☐ Individual lesson plans
    - ☐ Background information on a specific topic
    - ☐ Bibliographies
    - ☐ Worksheets used to analyze primary sources
    - ☐ Primary sources
        - ☐ Documents
        - ☐ Maps
        - ☐ Historical photographs
        - ☐ Photographs of objects
        - ☐ Timelines
        - ☐ Sound Recordings
        - ☐ Video

11. **Have you and your class ever participated in an electronic fieldtrip?**
    - ☐ Yes.   ☐ via internet   ☐ via satellite
    - ☐ No. If no, why not? _____

12. Which websites do you visit most often to obtain curricular materials?

13. Which websites do you most often recommend to your students?

14. Which formats of curriculum materials are most convenient for your needs?
Please rank your top choices 1–3.

- ☐ VHS/video (available by mail)
- ☐ CD-ROM (available by mail)
- ☐ Pre-printed materials (available by mail)
- ☐ Electronic downloads (*pdf*, audio, movies, images)
- ☐ Other _____

15. What percentage of your students speaks English as a second language?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 25% or less
- ☐ 26 - 50 %
- ☐ 51 - 75%
- ☐ 76 - 100%

16. Do you need curricular materials in languages other than English?

- ☐ No   ☐ Yes. If yes, which one(s)? _____

17. Which type of curricular material are you most likely to use?

- ☐ A multiple-lesson unit about a single topic or historical era
- ☐ Single-lesson activities to supplement existing curriculum
- ☐ A selection of primary sources grouped by topic or historical era

18. Based on your schedule and your experiences with your students, what is the ideal length for a single supplemental history lesson or activity?

Please rank from 1 (most useful) to 4 (least useful).

☐ Several class periods
☐ 50 minutes
☐ 30 minutes
☐ 15 minutes

19. Have recent curricular requirements and/or mandated nationwide testing influenced your teaching of American History? *Select only one.*

☐ Yes
☐ No

Please explain:

20. Would you be interested in using a reading/language arts curriculum based on stories from American History in your classroom?

☐ Yes
☐ No

21. If you would like to receive the Museum's electronic newsletter for educators, please provide us with your e-mail address.

22. Please use the space below for any additional comments.

Thank you for participating! The results of the survey will published in the Museum's Educators' electronic newsletter.

Appendix B:
Survey Locations

National Conferences
1.   National Council for History Education in Austin, TX
2.   National Council for Social Studies Washington, DC
Regional History Conferences
3.   Regional History Conference Spokane, Washington
4.   Regional History conferences Fargo, North Dakota
Smithsonian Events
5.   Teachers Night
Teaching American History Grant Teacher Workshops
6.   Teaching American History Grant Workshop Washington, DC
7.   Teaching American History Grant Workshop Fairfax County, VA
8.   Teaching American History Grant Workshop Newport News, VA
9.   Teaching American History Grant Lafayette, LA
10.   Teaching American History Grant Rock Hill, NC
NCHE Workshops
11.   NCHE Workshop Lansing, Michigan
12.   NCHE Workshop St. Louis Missouri
13.   NCHE Workshop Roscoe, New York
14.   NCHE Workshop Bozeman, Montana
15.   NCHE Workshop Brooklyn, New York
16.   NCHE Workshop Merrick, NY (Long Island)
17.   NCHE Workshop West, VA
18.   NCHE Workshop Los Angles, CA
19.   NCHE Workshop Fairbanks, Alaska
20.   NCHE Workshop Muskegon, Michigan

Appendix C:
Most Visited Web Sites

Source	Web site URL
The Library of Congress	http://www.loc.gov/index.html
National Archives and Record Administration	http://www.archives.gov/
Google	http://www.google.com/
Untied Streaming	http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm
PBS	http://www.pbs.org/teachers/
National Museum of American History	http://www.Americanhistory.si.edu
Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies	http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/
The History Channel	http://www.history.com/classroom/guides/
Thinkfinity	http://thinkfinity.com/
National Geographic	http://www.nationalgeographic.com/
Discovery Channel	http://dsc.discovery.com/
Edhelper	http://edhelper.com/
Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History	http://www.gilderlehrman.org/
Smithsonian Institution	http://www.si.edu/
Enchanted Learning	http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html
Wikipedia	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
Kids Yahoo	http://kids.yahoo.com/
Scholastic Teacher	http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/home.jsp
Colonial Williamsburg	http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/history/
History Teacher	http://historyteacher.net/
National Endowment for the Humanities	http://edsitement.neh.gov/
New York Times Learning Page	http://www.nytimes.com/learning/
ABC Teach	http://abcteach.com/
History Matters	http://historymatters.gmu.edu/

Appendix D:
Frequency Distributions

Note: Order of frequencies does not follow order of questionnaire in Appendix A, as several slightly different versions of the questionnaire were used.

How long have you been an educator?

	Combined Surveys
Less than 1 year	2%
1 to 5 years	19%
5 through 10 years	16%
10 or more years	63%
Total	100%

As an educator, what is your current, primary role at your school?

	Combined Surveys
Classroom Teacher	80%
Lead	5%
Curriculum Specialist	3%
Librarian/Media Specialist	2%
Administrator	2%
Home Schooler	0%
Other	8%
Total	100%

For which grade levels are you currently responsible?

	Combined Surveys
K-4th	19%
5th	14%
6th	20%
7th	27%
8th	28%
9th	17%
10-12th	38%
AP	10%
"International BA"	1%
"College/University"	4%

Which subjects do you teach? (Select one or more)

	Combined Surveys
U. S. History	52%
World History	30%
Government	22%
Social Studies	41%
Science	18%
Math	18%
English, Reading, or Language Arts	32%
Other (specify)	24%

At which type of school do you currently teach?

	Combined Surveys
Public/Charter	90%
Private	5%
Parochial	2%
Home school	0%
DoDDSs	0%
Other	4%

Have you taken your students on history-related field trip(s) during the last year?

	Combined Surveys
Once a year	36%
Twice a year	12%
More than 3 times per year	6%
Never	46%
Total	100%

Which of the following requirements is your school's history curriculum primarily designed to meet?

	Combined Surveys
National History Standards	7%
State History Standards	69%
District/Local History Standards	8%
National Council for Social Studies Stand's	2%
McREL	0%
I don't know	10%
Other	4%
Total	100%

Which of the following are readily available to you at school? Select one or more.

	Combined Surveys
A computer less than 5 years old	84%
Internet access: high-speed	90%
Internet access: dial-up	8%
A color printer	55%
11" x 17" printing	36%
11" x 17" copying	54%
* Black and white printers	79%
Equipment that allows your class to view internet together (e.g. TV, digital projector, or Digital blackboard)	72%
* Capability to print a pdf document	74%
* NOTE: Only asked on one questionnaire.	

Are you permitted to use supplemental materials that are not pre-approved by your school district?

	Combined Surveys
Yes	85%
No	15%
Total	100%

During the current academic year, which of the following types of curricular materials have you downloaded from a website for use in your classroom? (Select all that apply.)

	Combined Surveys
Thematic units containing multiple lesson plans (i.e. The Civil War)	52%
Individual lesson plans	70%
Background information on a specific topic	87%
Bibliographies	43%
Worksheets used to analyze primary sources	50%
Primary sources Select that apply.	68%
Documents	68%
Maps	69%
Historical photographs	67%
Photographs of objects	52%
Timelines	47%
Sound Recordings	39%

Have you and your class ever participated in an electronic fieldtrip? (Mark one or more)

	Combined Surveys
Yes, Internet electronic fieldtrip	26%
Yes, Satellite electronic fieldtrip	4%
No	72%

Which websites do you visit most often to obtain curricular materials?

	Combined Surveys
Named website	72%

Which websites do you most often recommend to your students?

	Combined Surveys
Named website	52%

Which formats of curriculum materials are convenient for your needs? (Any rank)

	Combined Surveys
VHS/video (available by mail)	49%
CD-ROM (available by mail)	55%
Pre-printed materials (available by mail)	53%
Electronic downloads (pdf, audio, movies, images)	80%
DVD	72%

Which formats of curriculum materials are convenient for your needs? [Ranked first]

	Prototype	NCSS*
VHS/video (available by mail)	14%	29%
CD-ROM (available by mail)	16%	36%
Pre-printed materials (available by mail)	17%	36%
Electronic downloads (pdf, audio, movies, images)	36%	57%
DVD	**	72%
Other	2%	2%
Total	100%	***

* NOTE: Teachers were asked to rank two. During Data entry check marks, rather than ranks, were coded "2". The results show the combination of the few "1" ranks plus "2" ranks.

** NOTE: Not asked on questionnaire.

*** NOTE: Could select more than one.

What percentage of your students speaks English as a second language?

	*Prototype
None	28%
25% or less	40%
26 - 50 %	10%
51 - 75%	9%
76 - 100%	14%
Total	100%

* NOTE: Only asked on one questionnaire.

Do you need curricular materials in languages other than English?

	Combined Surveys
Yes	23%
No	77%
Total	100%

Which type of curricular material are you most likely to use?

	Prototype	NCSS*
A multiple-lesson unit about a single topic or historical era	32%	31%
Single-lesson activities to supplement existing curriculum	34%	35%
A selection of primary sources grouped by topic or historical era	7%	34%
An interactive web-based activity (e.g. game)	26%	*
A distance learning program	1%	*
Total	100%	100%

* NOTE: Not asked on questionnaire.

What is the ideal length for a single supplemental history lesson or activity? [Marked for all ranks; i.e. acceptable]

	Combined Surveys
Several class periods *	47%
50 minutes	68%
30 minutes	65%
20 minutes *	10%
15 minutes	42%

* NOTE: Only asked on one questionnaire.

What is the ideal length for a single supplemental history lesson or activity? [Ranked as first choice]

	Combined Surveys
Several class periods *	16%
50 minutes	40%
30 minutes	36%
20 minutes *	9%
15 minutes	7%

* NOTE: Only asked on one questionnaire.

Have recent curricular requirements and/or mandated testing changed the way you teach American History?

	Combined Surveys
No	47%
Yes	53%
Total	100%

Would you be interested in using a reading/language arts curriculum based on stories from American History in your classroom?

	NCSS Survey
Yes	81%
No/not marked	19%
Total	100%

* NOTE: Only asked on one questionnaire.

Already using a curriculum?

	NCSS Survey
No	86%
Yes	14%
Total	100%

* NOTE: Only asked on one questionnaire.