

A survey of archaeological archive selection practice in Europe



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About EAC

The primary mission of the Europae Archaeologiae Consilium is to support the management of the archaeological heritage throughout Europe and to serve the needs of national archaeological heritage management agencies by providing a forum for organisations to establish closer and more structured co-operation and exchange of information.

Membership of the Council is open to all national bodies charged with the management of the archaeological heritage throughout Europe, including where appropriate agencies in a federal context (e.g. German Länder, Swiss Cantons, Spanish autonomous regions etc).

Membership is corporate rather than individual and subscriptions will follow the contribution system employed by the Council of Europe.



A STANDARD AND GUIDE

RÉFÉRENTIEL ET GUIDE DES BONNES PRATIQUES

GAGNAVARSLA

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STANDAARD EN LEIDRAAD VOOR

STANDARD I PRZEWODNIK PO NAJLEPSZYCH PRAKTYKACH SPORZĄDZANIA I PRZECHOWYWANIA DOKUMENTACJI BADAŃ ARCHEOLOGICZNYCH ORAZ POZYSKANYCH ŹRÓDEŁ W EUROPIE

EAC GUIDELINES 1



Kathy PERRIN, Duncan H. BROWN,
Guus LANGE, David BIBBY,
Annika CARLSSON, Ann DEGRAEVE,
Martin KUNA, Ylva LARSSON,
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Aurélië ROGALLA VON BIEBERSTEIN



Archaeological Resources
in Cultural Heritage
a European Standard



NORMAS E ORIENTAÇÕES PARA O ARQUIVAMENTO ARQUEOLÓGICO NA EUROPA

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ARCHÄOLOGISCHE ARCHIVIERUNG IN

STANDARDY A PŘÍRUČKA K DOBRÉ PRAKTIČESKÉ

STANDARD OCH VÄGLEDNING FÖR UPPRÄTTANDE OCH BEVARANDE





The subject of ‘decision-making’ is a key theme in meeting the current challenges facing archaeological heritage management in Europe.

The EAC’s 18th Symposium, in March 2017, gave EAC members and other archaeological stakeholders a welcome opportunity to explore the variety of approaches in decision-making mechanisms and actions and consider how they may become embedded in general archaeological policy and practice over the next few years.

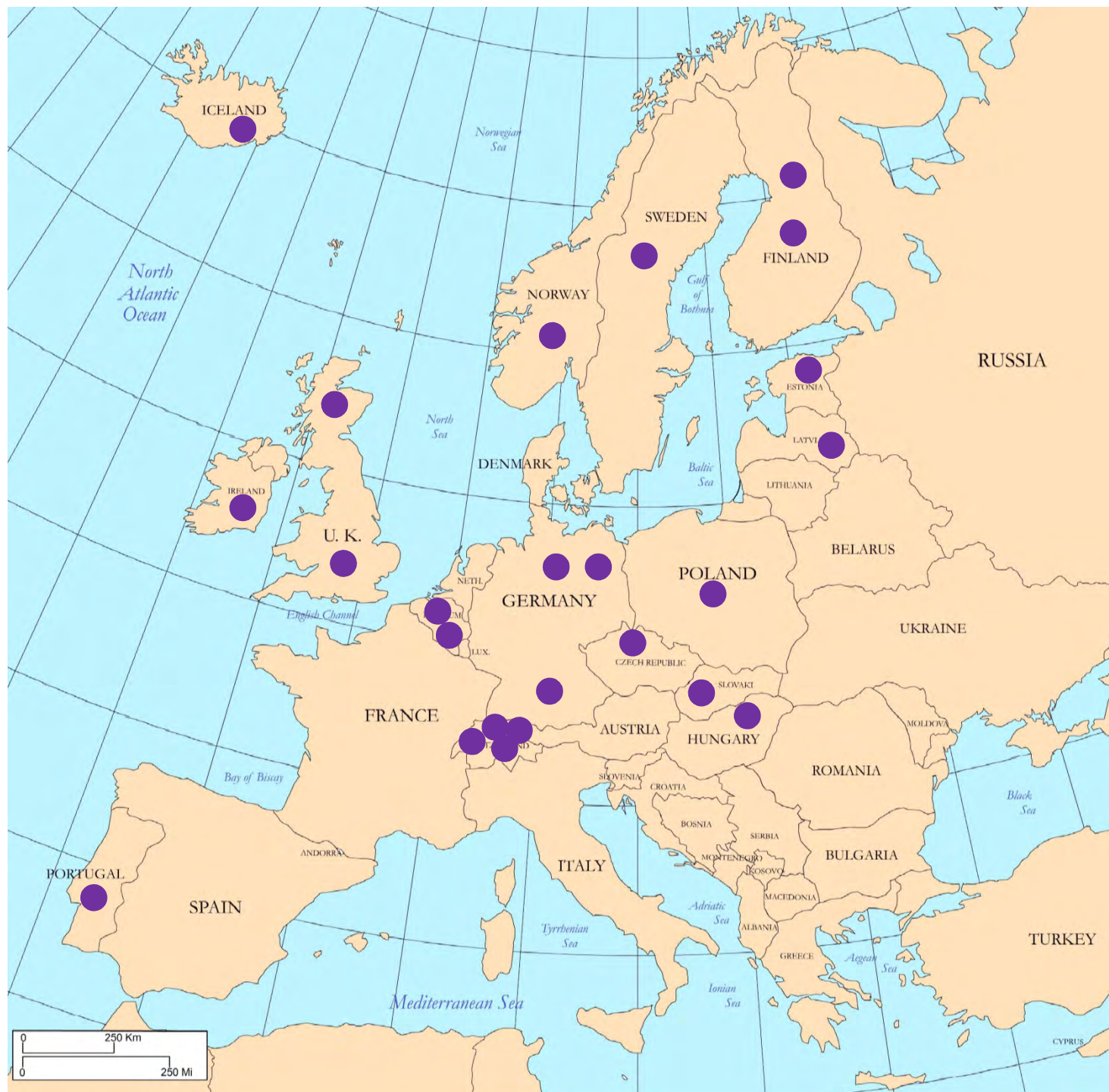
P27 ‘Making choices for archaeological archives in Europe’.

<https://www.europae-archaeologiae-consilium.org/archaeological-archives>

EAC Working Group for Archaeological Archives

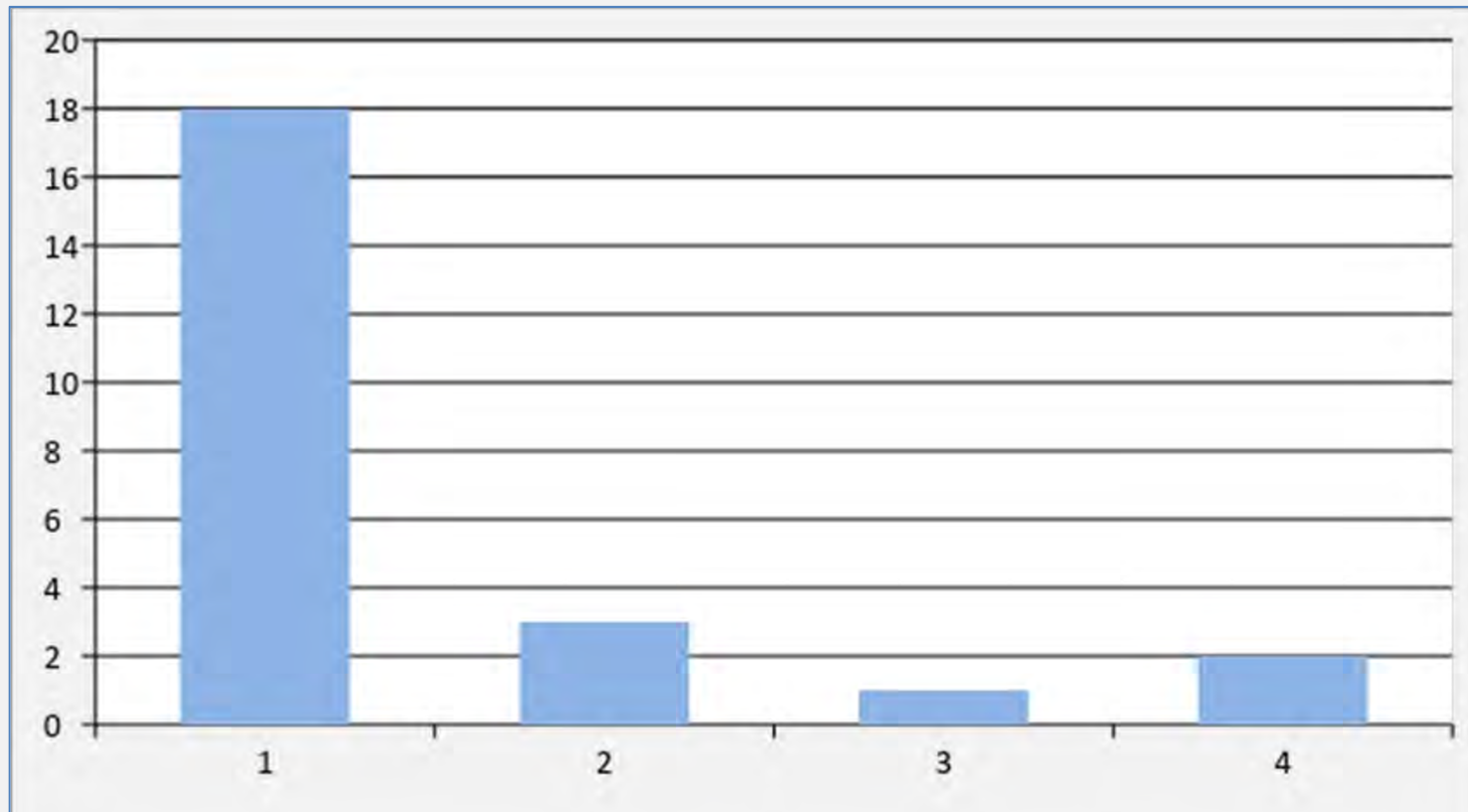


- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Ownership | – is it legally permissible to dispose of material? |
| Storage conventions | – which types of stores curate archaeological archives?
– how is it decided which stores will collect an archive? |
| Rationale for selection | – what are the reasons for selection?
– how are selection strategies developed (if at all)? |
| Selection methodologies | – who is involved in developing a selection strategy?
– how is the selection strategy developed?
– how is the selection strategy carried out? |
| Sustainability | – has there been research into the results of selection? |



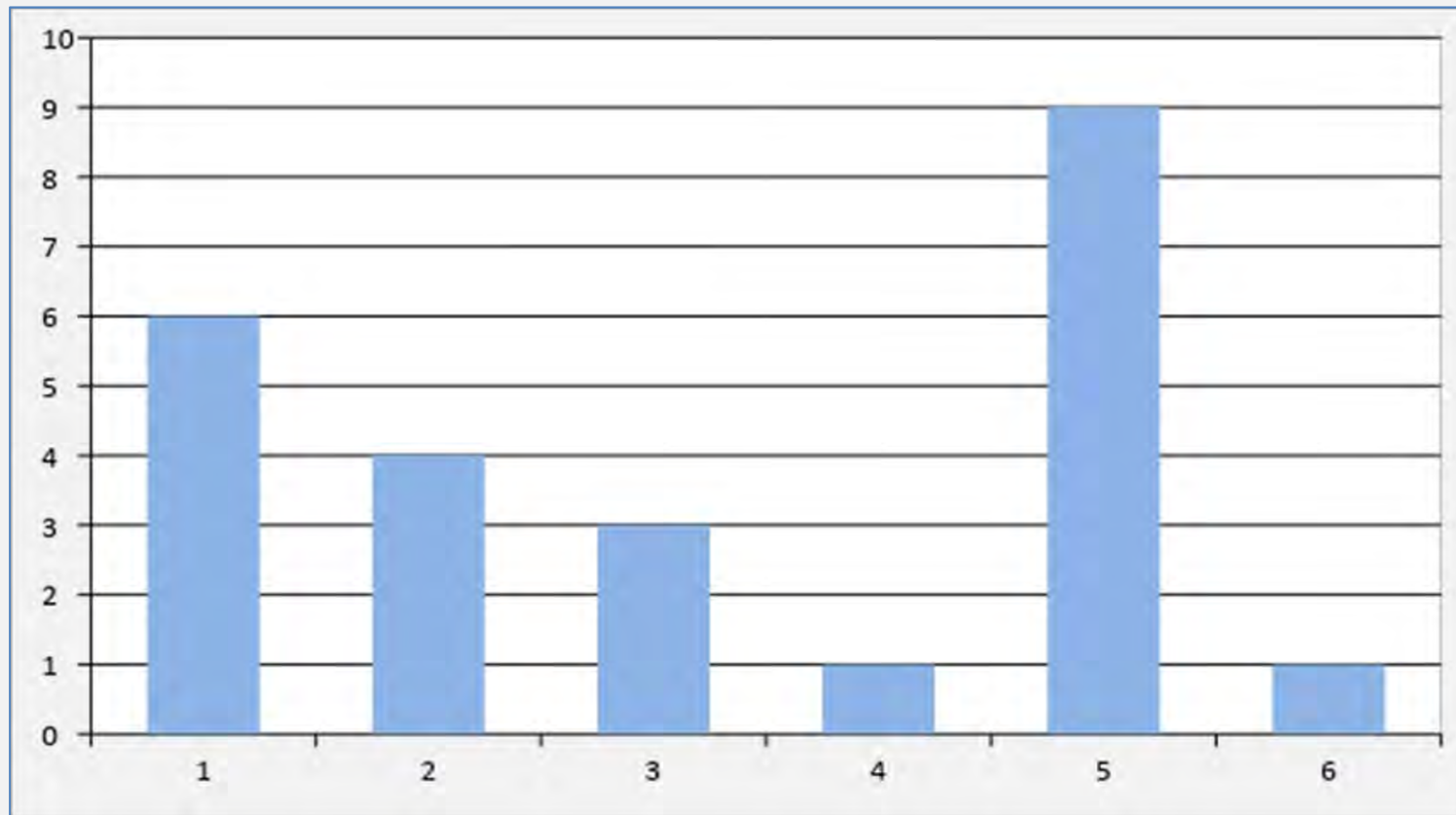
24 responses to the survey from central, state or cantonal institutions.

How is ownership of archaeological material resolved?



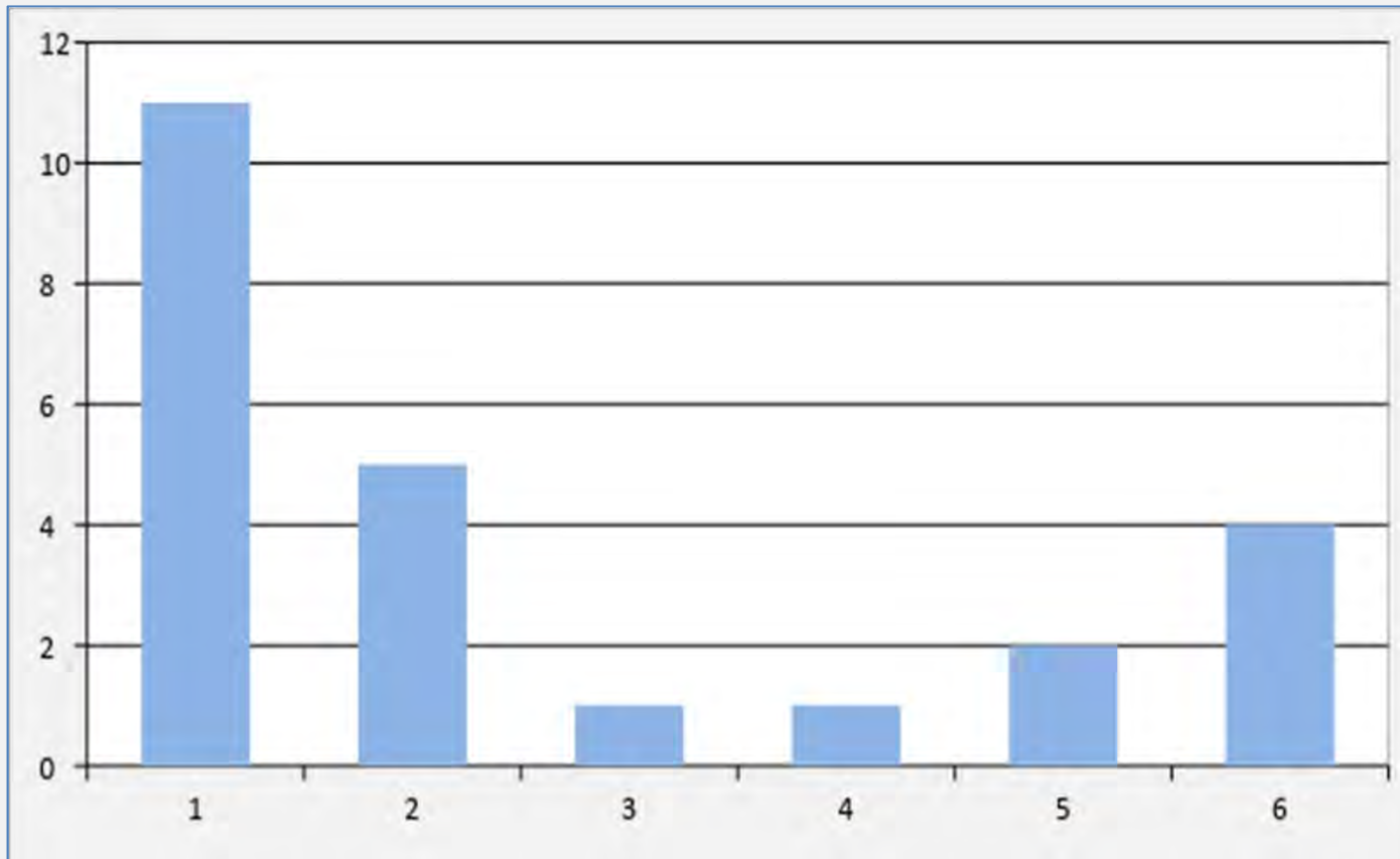
1	All archaeological objects are automatically owned by the state and transferred to a selected repository
2	All archaeological objects are owned by the landowner, who is expected to transfer title to the archive repository
3	Ownership is shared between the landowner and the finder
4	Title to archaeological material is never considered and everything just goes to the repository

Where is the material archive curated?



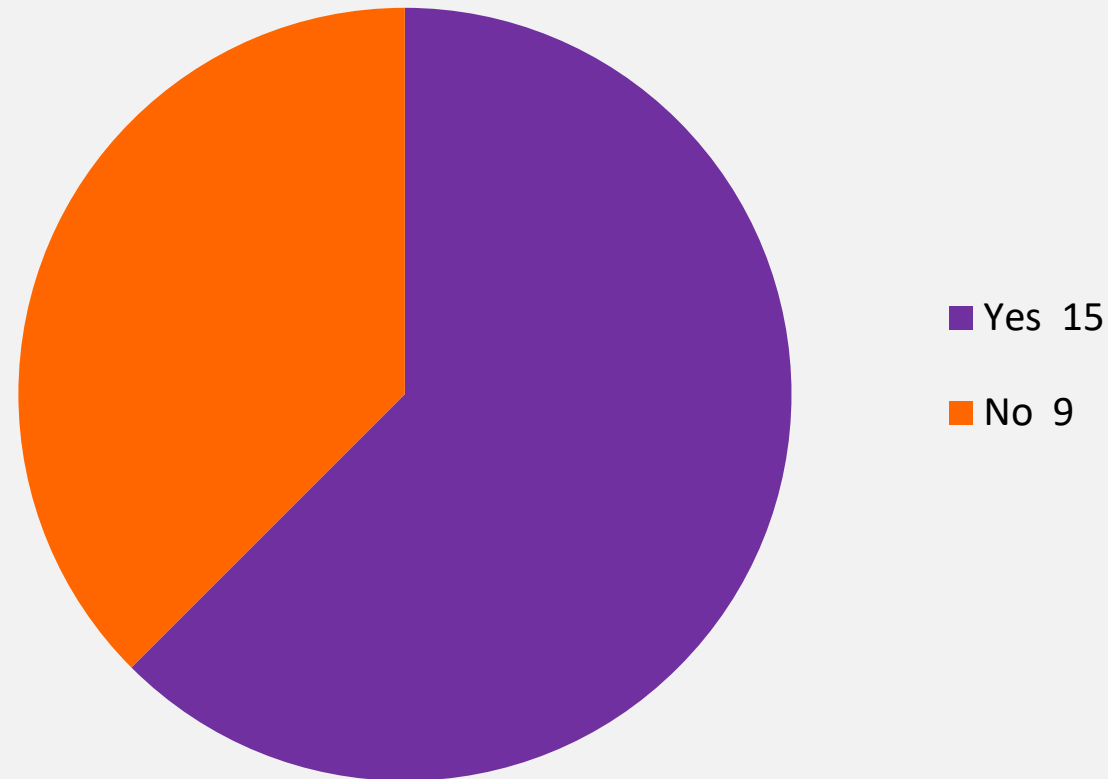
1	Central (state) archaeology repository
2	Regional (state) archaeology repository
3	Regional (state) documentary archive facility and archaeology repository
4	Publicly funded local museum / archaeology repository
5	Multiple types of repository
6	There is no defined system of storage

How is it determined which repository will collect an archaeological archive?



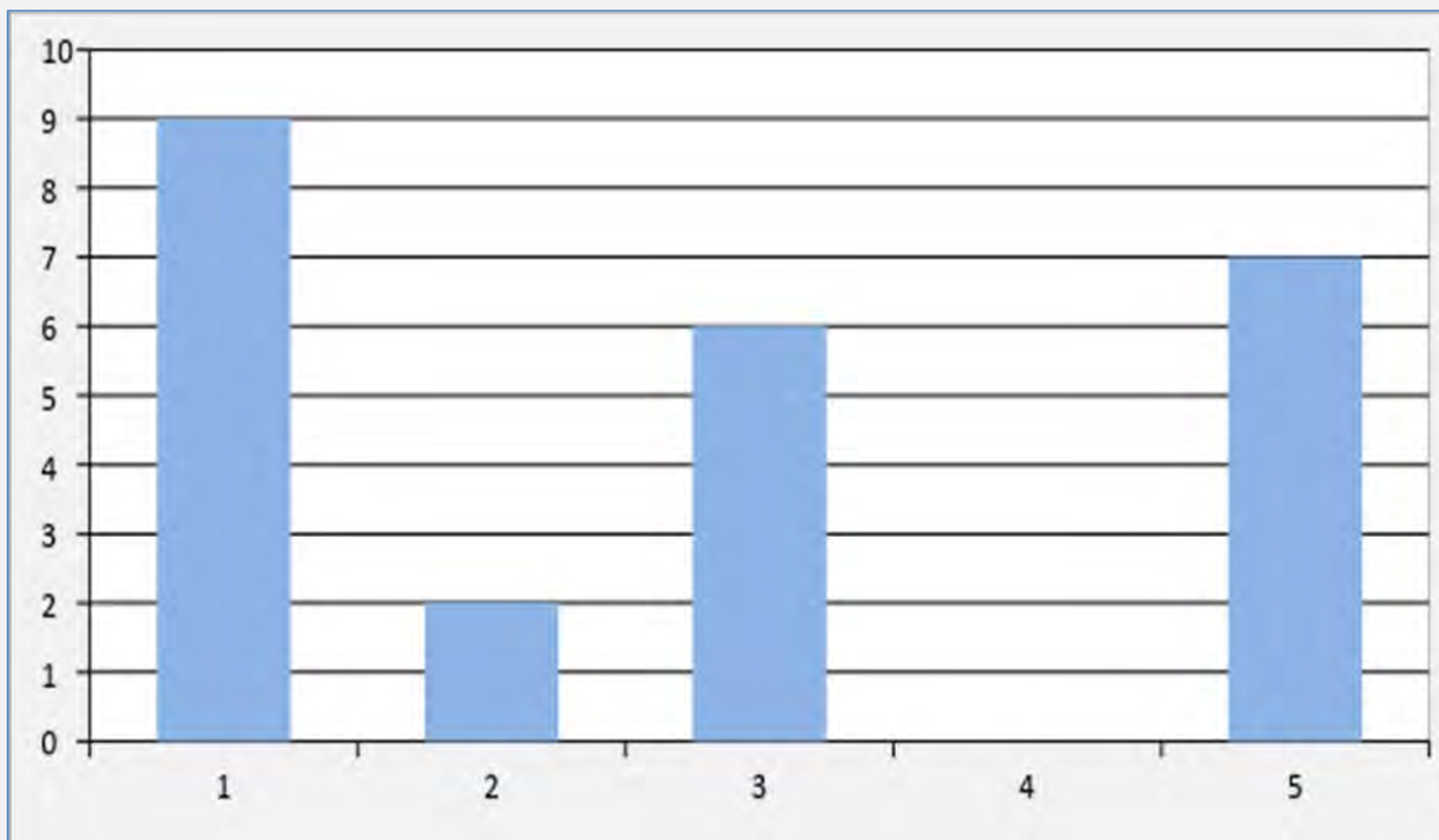
1	All archaeological archives automatically go to the central (state) repository
2	All archaeological archives automatically go to the regional (state) repository
3	The project is within a local museum's collecting area
4	The documentary archive is always curated at a local records office, the material archive at a museum
5	The state determines which museum will receive the archive
6	Other (please specify - university)

In most archaeological projects, are the material and documentary products subject to a selection process prior to the compilation of the archive?



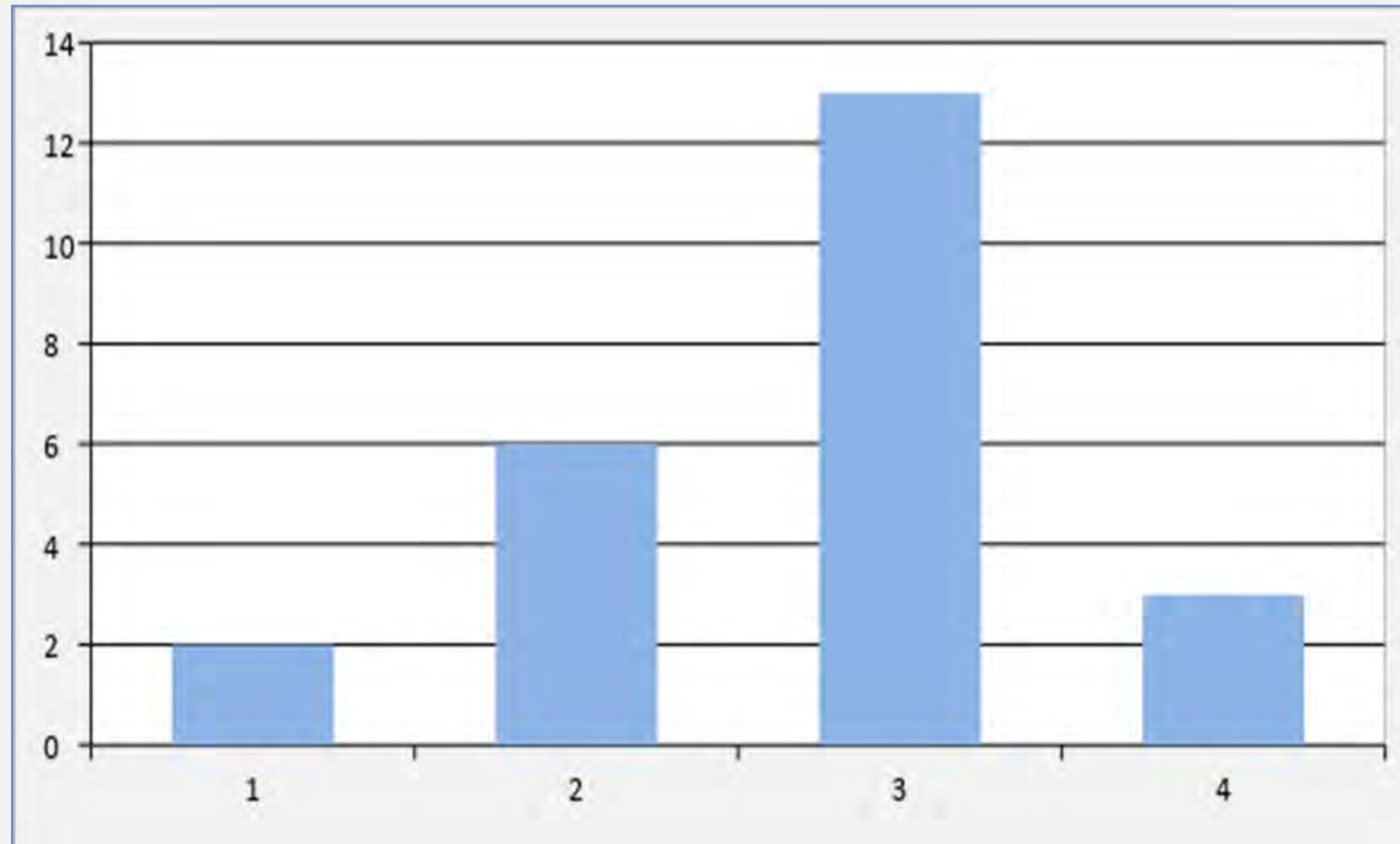
It would seem that where the state automatically assumes ownership, archive selection is not necessarily a priority, although it can be applied informally during the course of a project, as shown in subsequent answers.

What are the usual reasons for requiring selection?



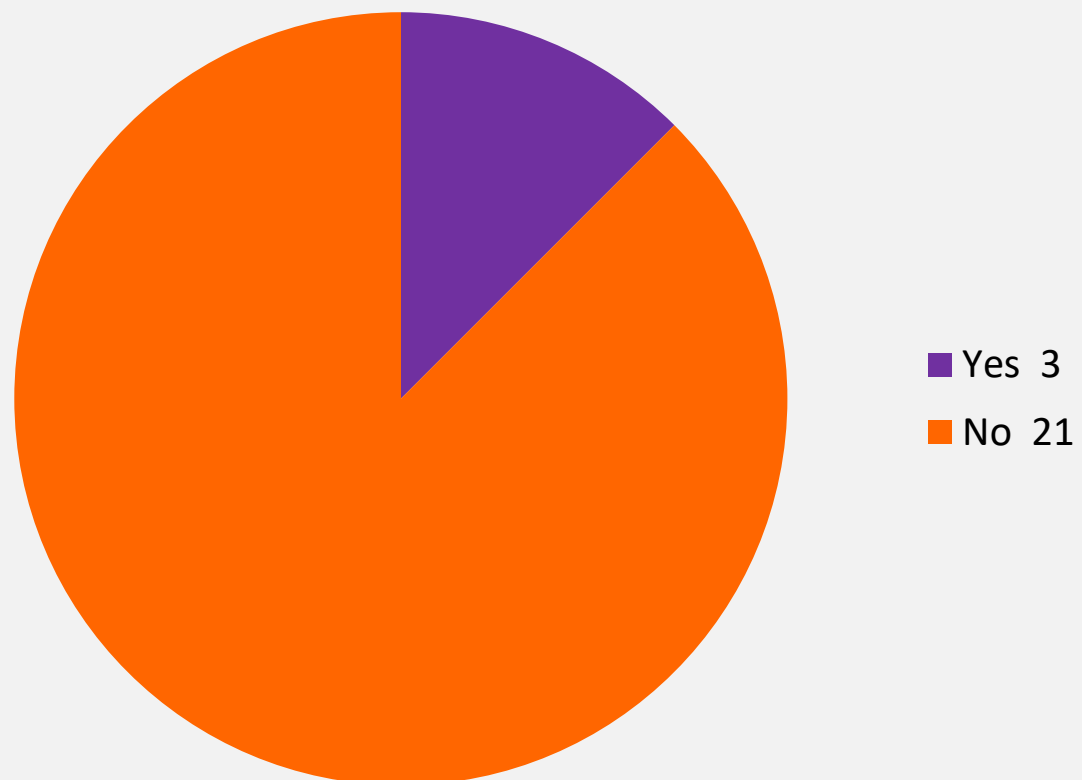
1	Pressure on storage space at the repository
2	To minimise the cost of archive transfer and storage
3	To ensure the academic integrity of the archive
4	To facilitate access to the archive
5	Other (please specify)

For each archaeological project, is the selection strategy...



1	Generic according to national criteria?
2	Generic according to regional or local criteria?
3	Individually tailored to the research aims of every project?
4	Other (please specify)

Is there a definition for 'selection' in place in your country/region/system?



Assessment of the scientific and historical significance

Deciding what will be transferred

Eliminating unwanted objects and/or documents after fieldwork; applies to material with no apparent information value.

Not all the archaeological finds are kept; Parts of it are possibly documented and rejected or even eliminated without documentation (in the case of missing resources).

Non-archaeological material and indeterminable atypical finds could be selected, digital photo-documentation (duplicate and poor quality shots)

Scientifically relevant

Selection can be which finds you collect and which you don't collect.

Selection depends on the finds, sampling only when necessary

Selection is a documented process of discarding archaeological evidence regarding specific needs (academic, practical, economical) in order to optimise composition of the resulting archaeological archive.

Selection is assessing which materials will give the maximum amount of knowledge and which have given no added information

Selection is whether or not to retain an object or dispose of it.

Selection of finds to be collected during the field work supported by technical and scientific principles

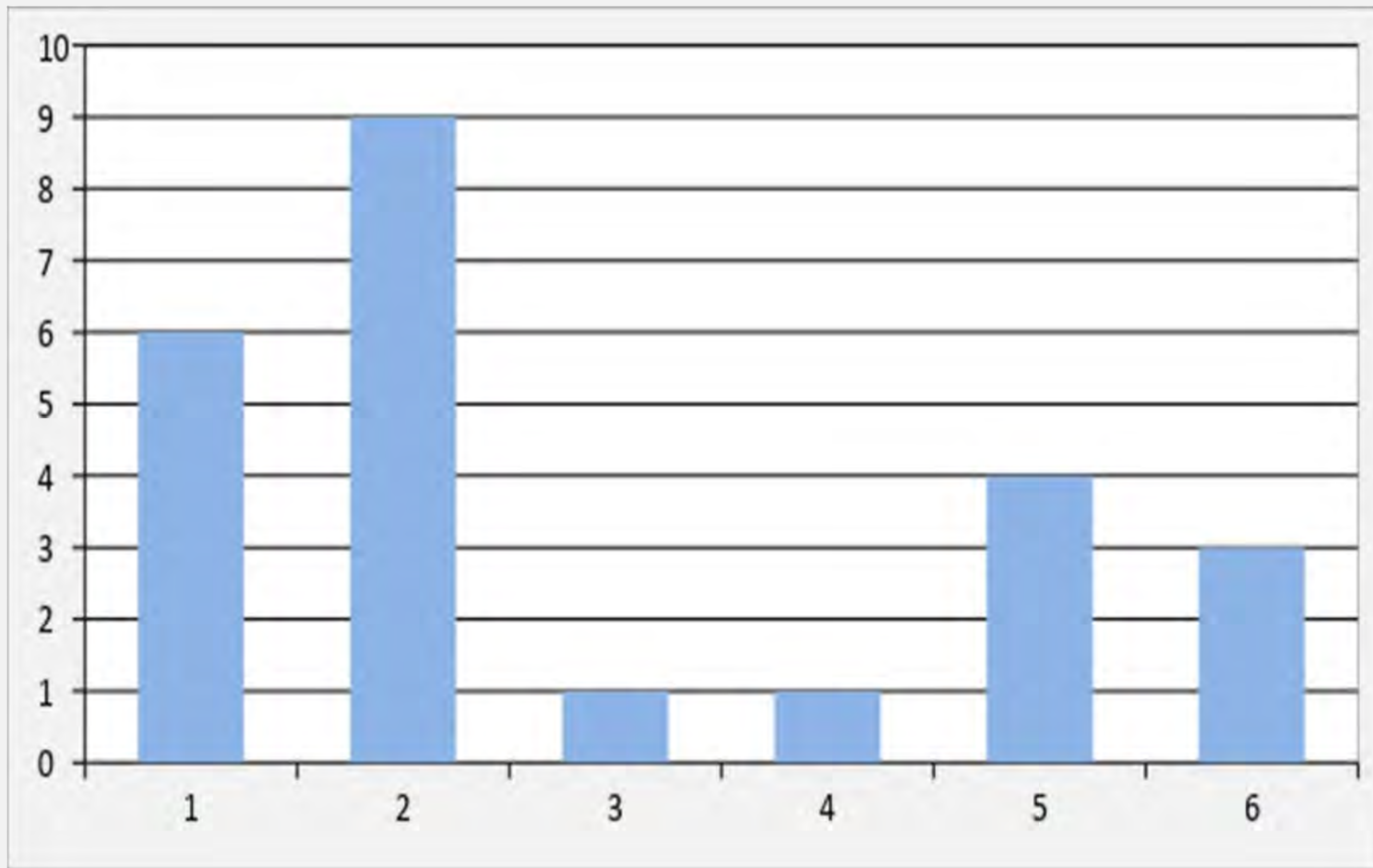
Something which has been chosen

The main principle is to collect all the material that is made by humans or describes the human activity, but selection is the normal process during the archaeological excavation. It is important to pick up all possible artefacts and ecofacts from older and untouched layers. The younger (historical time, industrial time) layers and mixed layers contains a lot of mass material and in the cases is aim to collect all the artefacts which describes best the particular layer and left beside mass material (for example it is important to collect rim- or base sherds but it is understandable if there will be left indeterminable small pieces).

What is delivered to the National Museum and what is discarded

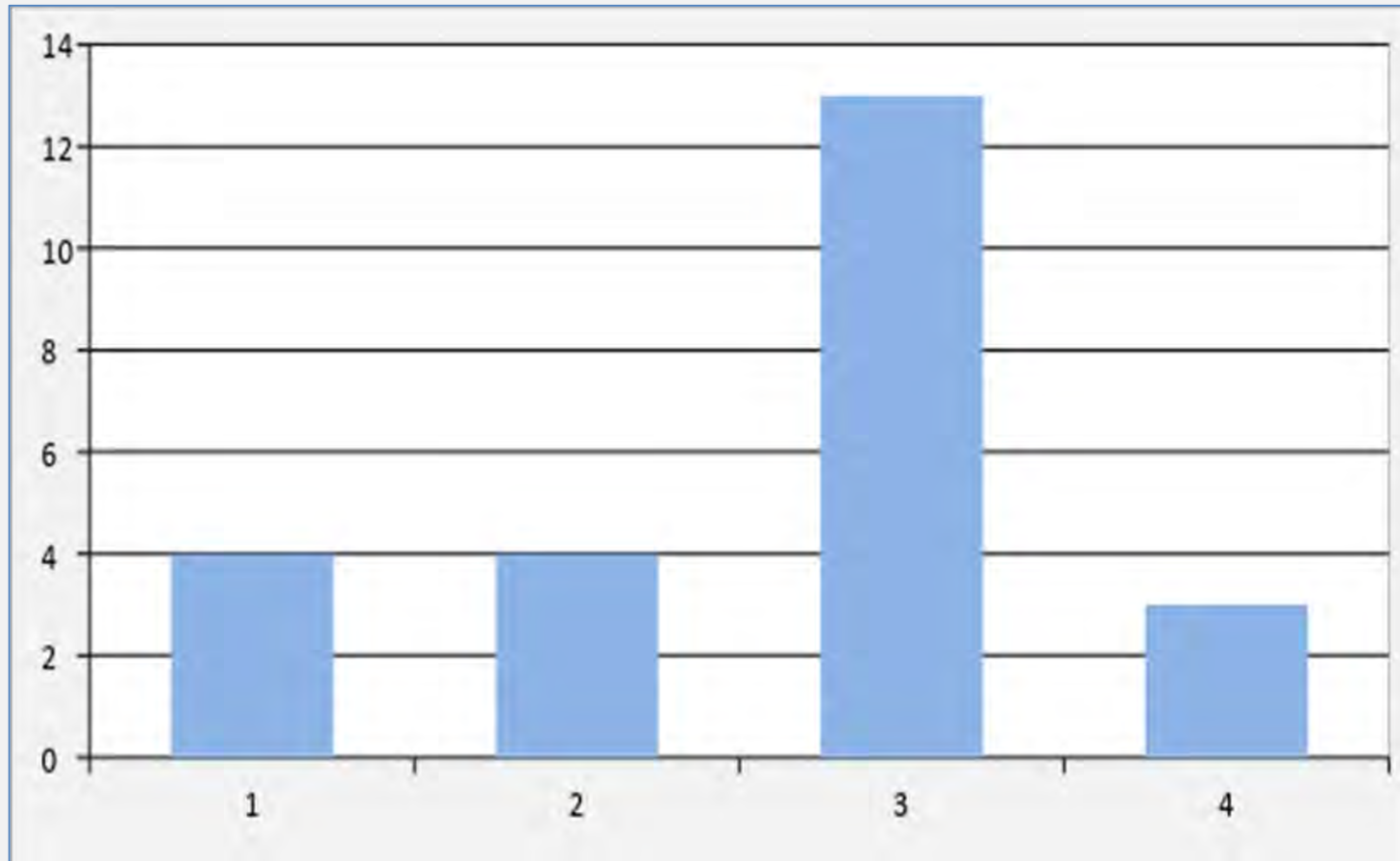
When a certain category or type of finds are removed from the collection. Also when only a representative part of finds are archived.

Who is involved in developing the selection strategy?



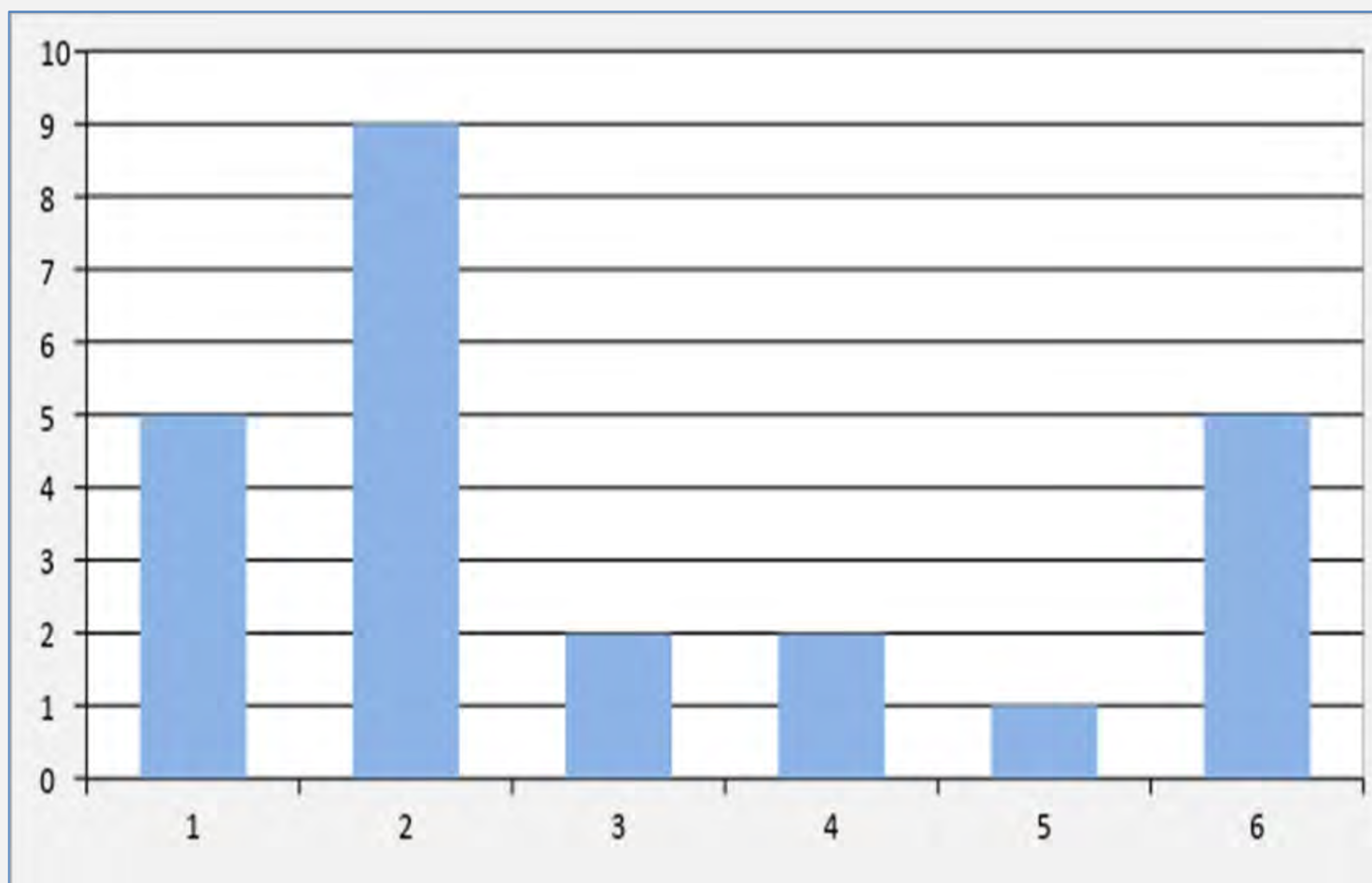
1	The project lead
2	The project manager
3	Finds specialists
4	Digital archive specialists
5	Multiple project personnel
6	Selection does not take place

Who is involved in amending the selection strategy if the project changes as a result of unexpected discoveries?



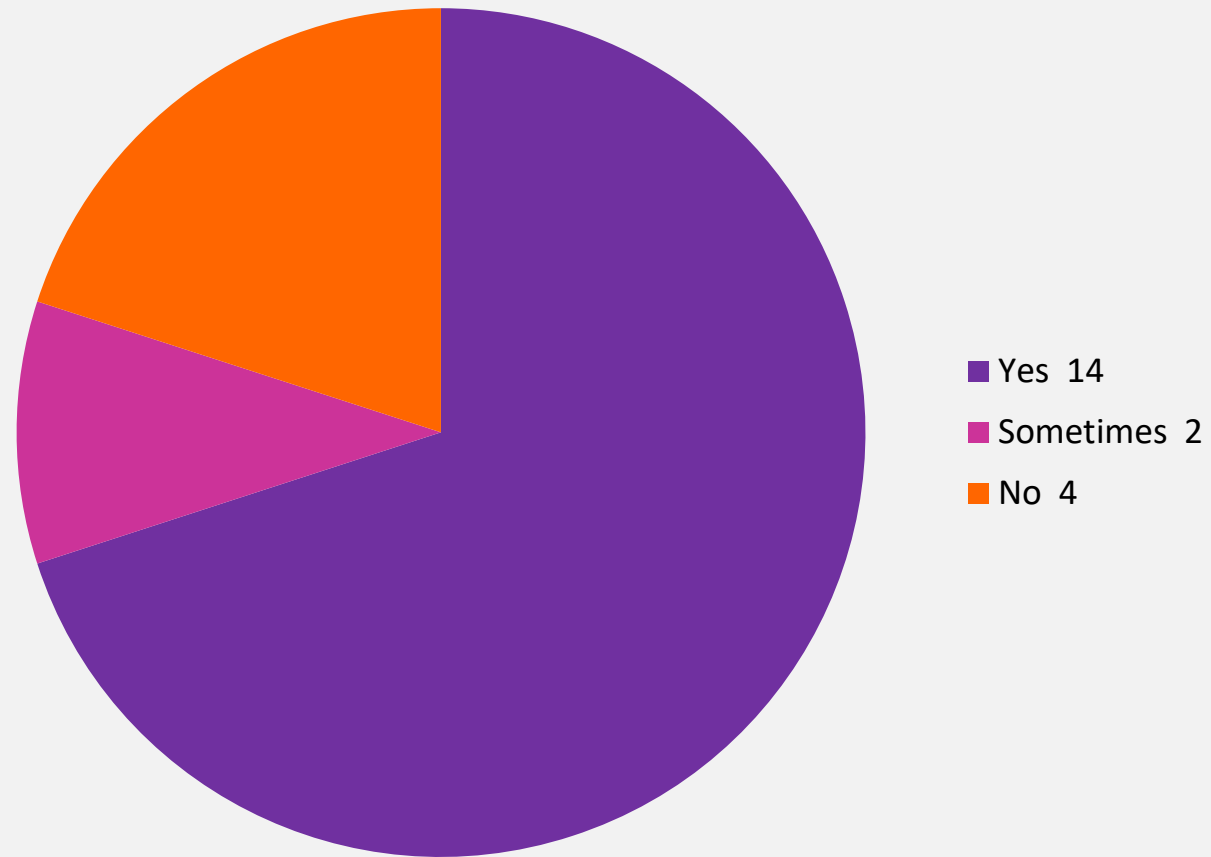
1	The project lead
2	The project manager
3	Multiple project personnel
4	Selection is not carried out

Who ensures that selection has been carried out in accordance with the selection strategy?



1	The project lead
2	The project manager
3	Project archive manager
4	Museum curator / collections staff
5	Multiple project personnel
6	Selection is not carried out

Are discarded items documented?



How are discarded items documented?

Appendix list

Discards are listed in an Excel sheet and this documentation is part of the site documentation.

In the excavation report

In the same manner as the catalogued finds with addition of photographic documentation.

Individual decision

It depends on the project manager- all the items must be documented and the report must contain information about where they left

Material objects will be recorded in the finds recording process; early version or duplicate digital files will probably not be documented.

Mostly archaeologists take a picture of the artefacts that they don't include in the collection, and/or describe literally the discarded artefacts in the report

Noted in database. For some find categories, the discarded items are weighed, counted and photographed (for example roman tile fragments)

On site: through assessment. In a later stage (or repository): everything must first be registered and studied before it can possibly be discarded

Partially. Written and photographic record

Photography and description of discarded items added to general description of the objects collection of a given site

The remains are documented in the project archive. And museums should document the de-accessions in their inventories.

The weight is recorded and a photographic documentation is done

They should always be registered in the list over collected finds

No general rule can be described.

Recommendations

1. Acknowledgment of selection as an inherent element of archaeological practice and archive production.
2. An agreed and concise definition of selection.
3. A comprehensive consideration of the rationale for selection which cites scientific, archaeological reasons over economic drivers.
4. A full description of the selection process, including the creation, development and application of selection strategies and procedures for disposing of deselected material.
5. Definition of the appropriate scope of selection strategies, referring to the research aim and objectives of an archaeological project and the stages through which it will progress, from planning to archive transfer.
6. A list of all stakeholders involved in developing, monitoring and executing the selection process for an archaeology project, with a description of their individual roles and the mechanisms for ensuring best practice is followed.
7. Guidelines for the documentation of the selection process and inclusion in the documentary archive.
8. Provision of a selection strategy checklist.
9. Discussion of the need to resolve issues of copyright to documents and data, as well as ownership of material objects, as part of the selection and disposal process.
10. Guidelines for selection and curation of digital archaeological archive material.