*This month’s Muse-ing comes from the University of Delaware’s Director of Museum Studies and Public Engagement, Kenneth Cohen:*

Hello MuseWeekly readers! After several months on hiatus as our MuseWeekly staffing went through a re-organization, Muse-ings are back. As MuseWeekly returns again to weekly service, once per month the edition will lead off with one of these brief commentaries offering insight or advice based on real-world experience. So, if you’ve learned a lesson or two this summer (or longer ago), and you think sharing them would benefit our more than 8,000 MuseWeekly readers – who are mostly students and young professionals – please send an email to museumstudies@udel.edu pitching your topic and point in two sentences. Muse-ings must be shorter than 600 words.

Speaking of subscribers, I thought we’d restart Muse-ings with some insight from you all *en masse*. Last fall, we wrote a Muse-ing that asked you all to respond to a survey about the state of professional training, and a whole whopping 1.5% of you answered the call! But, hey, 122 responses are a pretty good sample size compared to lots of published visitor studies, so we wanted to share some highlights.

First, the demographics. Reflecting our general subscriber base, over half of respondents had earned their graduate degrees since 2010. Additionally, 86-percent identified as female and 88-percent as white non-Latinx, figures which are slightly higher than those reported for the field by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and which indicate our need to share MuseWeekly with more diverse audiences and list more positions related to culturally specific institutions. We are taking steps to ensure our listing processes and outreach are revised in response to this information.

Importantly, though, the answers to key questions about “what did you learn that has most helped your career” and “what do you wish you had learned more about” cut across these demographics and others like age and current job or sector of the field (curatorial, conservation, etc). For instance, more than 25-percent of respondents wished they had learned more about management and administration, from budgeting and grantwriting to organizational dynamics and “managing people” or “leading organizations.” For comparison, the next most common lament was for more “hands-on” skills, which 16-percent of respondents referenced, sometimes vaguely. Yet, even on this subject, 12-percent of responses noted that “hands-on” skills were the thing they learned that most helped their career. The point here is that the retrospective demand for business and administrative training was overwhelming and unequivocal. And it runs headlong into low enrollment numbers for electives on these subjects at several leading programs (I asked several colleagues). So, if you’re reading this and you’re either still in school or have the opportunity to take structured training on the business and administration side of the field, take it! Your later self will probably thank you.

One place where there was differentiation on the topic of what was valuably learned from training programs sprang from those whose graduate degrees were in Public History, History, or Art History in comparison to those from Museum Studies, Library Sciences, Preservation, or Conservation. Perhaps predictably, the former cited writing and research skills, while the latter cited specific skills related to collections care and management. This, despite the fact that, aside from Conservation and Preservation (which of course lead to highly specialized careers), respondents from the other range of programs were just as likely to be curators, collections managers, educators, or senior administrators. One takeaway here, I think, is that there are many valuable skills in each sector of the field. Moreover, as our own parsing of the job listings themselves makes clear, there is a gradual “convergence” going on, in which positions are increasingly combining elements of all those jobs – often combined with a digital component. Jobs listable under more than one “type” in MuseWeekly have gone up from three to seven-percent since 2018. The GLAM sector is demanding multi-faceted workers (and even mid-sized and larger institutions are increasingly overloading them with unrealistic expectations for wide-ranging skill sets and types of work they are expected to do).

I’ll conclude with some of the insights from the 45 subscribers who responded to this survey and also have listed jobs on MuseWeekly in the last two years. First, in terms of career planning, 40-percent of respondents said they expected to community outreach or engagement positions to see the most growth in the next three to five years. Twenty-six-percent said digital positions. Understanding that these skills may be combined with others as convergence rises, training programs ought to take this into consideration and beef up offerings in these two sub-fields.

We’re continuing to mine this data and may come back with some more sophisticated analyses down the road, but thanks to those who participated and let us know if you have questions or comments!