



ACADEMY OF CERTIFIED ARCHIVISTS

The 2003 Role Delineation Statement Revision

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Introduction

The Role Delineation Statement for Professional Archivists is one of the Academy of Certified Archivists' greatest contributions to the profession. Developed by archivists and archival educators, it defines the knowledge and skills necessary for archival work. The Role Delineation is a unique and uniquely valuable contribution to the field because it was created according to rigorous standards under the direction of test-development professionals. The systematic formulation of a statement describing the general responsibilities of professional archivists, and the skills and knowledge that they need to perform those responsibilities, is the foundation upon which to build a viable and legally defensible certification examination.

Panels of archivists and archival educators wrote the original Role Delineation statement under the guidance of test development professionals. These outside experts ensured the objective, impartial, and non-political nature of the drafting process. A random sample of professional archivists then validated the document for fairness, accuracy, and thoroughness. The result was a series of test specifications known as the Role Delineation Statement for Professional Archivists. It encompasses more than one hundred commonly accepted duties and responsibilities that professional archivists perform in the course of their work.

The Academy regularly reviews the Role Delineation to ensure it remains a valid basis for the certification examination. Accordingly, in June 2002 President Leon Miller appointed a Role Delineation Review Task Force consisting of Edie Hedlin (chair), Thomas Brown, Gregory Hunter, Gerrienne Schaad, and Deborah Skaggs. After recommending editing and wording changes to reflect recent changes in the field, the task force concluded that the Role Delineation remains a relevant and valid definition of professional archival practice.

At its meeting in March 2003, The ACA Board accepted the revised Role Delineation, which will become the basis for the archival certification examination beginning with the test to be administered in August 2004.

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Role Delineation Statement for Professional Archivists

Preamble

These specifications for the certified archivist examination delineate the major domains of archival practice. Within each domain a series of tasks and related knowledge statements are defined. Together these elements encompass commonly accepted duties and responsibilities that professional archivists perform in the course of their work. This document assumes that individuals seeking certification recognize that (a) their professional practice is performed within the context of an institutional mission and is directed to the achievement of goals consistent with that mission, and (b) their

professional practice has an ongoing effect on the emergence and evolution of that overall mission and its associated goals, as well as the development of the archival profession.

In addition, although those seeking certification do not necessarily control how archival policies are set that relate to activities such as acquisition, access, preservation, and security, it is assumed that archivists understand that the elements contained in such policies are important in carrying out in a professional manner the tasks specified below.

Each of the seven major domains is comprised of task statements which outline the duties included within each domain, as well as knowledge statements that describe generally what archivists need to know in order to complete each of the tasks. Preceding the domains is a listing of General Knowledge Statements applicable to several or all of the seven areas.

The ACA Role Delineation uses the definitions and distinctions found in the Society of American Archivists' Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies: "Archival records and papers are recorded information, regardless of physical format or type of creator (public or private), that is created or received by an individual or organization carrying out its activities and that is set aside for preservation and future use. Archival records and papers are instrumental for evidence and accountability as well as for social and cultural memory. The phrase 'records and papers' will be used to encompass documentary evidence produced by organizations and individuals in all media (paper, digital, audio, and visual) and in any format."

General Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

K-1 the impact of social, cultural, economic, political, and technological factors on the evolution and characteristic of records and papers and their management.

K-2 the origins, development, and definitions of archival concepts, terms, principles, practices and methods.

K-3 the development of archival institutions and programs in society.

K-4 the similarities and differences between the nature and administration of organizational records and personal papers.

K-5 the physical and technological characteristics of records and papers and how these characteristics influence their appraisal, acquisition, preservation, and use.

K-6 archival theory, methodology, and practice appropriate for records and papers on all media: paper, digital, audio, and visual.

K-7 the standards and accepted professional best practices that apply to archival work, including their rationale and implications.

K-8 the concepts of the life cycle of records and the records continuum.

K-9 the relationship between accepted professional policies and practices and institutional applications of these policies and practices.

K-10 how the core archival functions (selection, appraisal, and acquisition; arrangement and description; reference services and access; preservation and protection; and outreach, advocacy and promotion) relate to each other and influence the administration of records and papers.

K-11 the different institutional settings in which archival programs may exist and the implications of placement within a particular institution.

K-12 how the administration of archives is related to, different from, and draws upon the theory, methodology, and practice of such allied professions and disciplines as: history, library and information science, records management, museology, historic preservation, historical editing, and oral history.

The current Role Delineation revision was conducted by a blue-ribbon task force of distinguished professional archivists composed of Edie Hedlin (chair), Thomas Brown, Gregory Hunter, Gerrienne Schaad, and Deborah Skaggs.

K-13 how archival theory, methodology, and practice have been influenced and affected by computer technologies and applications such as electronic communication, including e-mail; and online information exchange, including the World Wide Web.

Domain 1: Selection, Appraisal, and Acquisition

Task 1 Identify sources of archival records and papers by applying knowledge about subjects, individuals, organizations, and others that create, receive and accumulate records and papers appropriate for acquisition.

Outside experts ensure the objective, impartial, and non-political nature of the drafting process.

Task 2 Establish, maintain, and keep a record of communication(s) with creators and/or potential donors of records and papers.

Task 3 In determining the acquisition of records and papers, identify and evaluate record characteristics.

Task 4 Appraise records and papers for their long term retention.

Task 5 Implement disposition recommendations or decisions through legal instruments of transfer such as schedules, deed of gift, purchase contracts, and deposit agreements.

Task 6 Promote cooperative acquisition and disposition strategies when appropriate.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

K-101 how the mission and holdings of archival repositories relate to selection, appraisal and acquisition.

K-102 techniques for locating and surveying potential acquisitions.

K-103 the evolution, nature, and variety of recordkeeping systems and practice.

K-104 the history of record-creating and record-accumulating sources.

K-105 factors that should be considered when defining collecting or accessioning areas and developing an acquisition policy.

K-106 solicitation and negotiating techniques, including ways of educating document creators about the importance of preserving records and papers.

K-107 laws, policies, regulations, procedures, legal instruments, and ethical standards relating to acquisitions.

K-108 the values of records such as evidential, informational, administrative, legal, fiscal and intrinsic.

K-109 the past, current, and potential uses of records and papers.

K-110 inventorying, scheduling, appraisal, and disposition techniques.

K-111 selection, sampling, weeding, and other techniques to reduce volume.

The Role Delineation is a unique and uniquely valuable contribution to the field because it was created according to rigorous standards under the direction of test-development professionals.

K-112 methods of deaccessioning and other techniques of internal disposal.

K-113 impact of technology on traditional methods of inventorying, scheduling, appraisal, and disposition.

K-114 selection and appraisal methodologies, including documentation strategy and functional analysis, on all media: paper, digital, audio.

K-115 the characteristics of records and papers such as trustworthiness, authenticity, reliability, usability, and comprehensiveness, as well as form, uniqueness, and quantity.

Domain 2: Arrangement and Description

Task 1 Analyze the existing arrangement and description of records and papers and make decisions about any further arrangement and description that may be necessary.

Task 2 Design and implement an arrangement plan to either perfect the existing arrangement or establish a new one.

Task 3 Design and implement a descriptive plan to identify and explain the structure, context and content of records and papers to promote their accessibility.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

K-201 the complementary principles of provenance and original order.

K-202 the history and variety of recordkeeping systems and practices for all media.

K-203 the role of access and retrieval in making arrangement and description decisions.

K-204 the concept of hierarchical levels of arrangement.

K-205 the distinctions and relationships between physical and intellectual control of records and papers.

K-206 the impact of technology on policies, practices, and methods for archival arrangement and description.

K-207 the levels, types, and components of finding aids within an overall description program.

K-208 the applicability of such standards as the MARC format, Encoded Archival Description (EAD), Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR2), and Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCHS), SGML, XML, HTML/XHTML, and Dublin Core.

K-209 the use of descriptive standards for records and papers stored in any form or medium.

K-210 how the descriptive process may begin at or before records creation and continue throughout the life of the records and papers.

A random sample of professional archivists then validated the document for fairness, accuracy, and thoroughness.

Domain 3: Reference Services and Access

Task 1 Define the informational needs of users by such techniques as customer surveys, analysis of user requests, and keeping abreast of current research trends and strategies.

Task 2 Develop policies and procedures designed to serve the information needs of various user groups, based on evaluation of institutional mandates and constituencies, the nature of the collections, relevant laws and ethical considerations, and appropriate technologies.

Task 3 Make an appropriate response to user requests by: providing information about records and papers, providing information from records and papers, providing access to records and papers, making copies, referring to other sources, or denying the requests for information.

Task 4 Create, maintain, and periodically review, for self-evaluation and planning purposes records of user requests.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

K-301 issues and elements of archives user services, including policies and procedures governing access, reference services, and reproduction.

K-302 laws, regulations, and ethical principles governing copyright, freedom of information, privacy, confidentiality, security, and equality of access.

K-303 research strategies, needs, and past and current research interests and trends of genealogists, scholars, journalists, and other major users of records and papers.

K-304 reference strategies based on varying holdings, formats, media, and user needs.

K-305 the subject areas of an institution's holdings, and how they relate to holdings in other repositories.

K-306 accepted best practices for safeguarding records and papers while in use and accommodating researcher-owned technical equipment in research rooms.

K-307 techniques for expediting the handling of repeated requests on the same or similar topics through such tools as reference files, reference reports, frequently asked question pages on web sites, or surrogates of actual documents.

"The certification program provides a means for employers to identify individuals who have both appropriate academic preparation and documented breadth and depth of knowledge essential to being an archivist. Everyone -- employers and archivists -- benefits."

David B. Gracy II

School of Information,
University of Texas at Austin

Domain 4: Preservation and Protection

Task 1 Analyze the current physical condition of records and papers, and determine appropriate preservation priorities and actions.

Task 2 Make and implement decisions about reformatting (e.g., digitization or microfilming), handling techniques, data migration, data conversion, appropriate laboratory treatments, phased conservation, and referral to technical experts.

Task 3 Ensure the correct long-term storage of records and papers by such techniques as using proper containers and encasements, using acceptable shelving, and maintaining acceptable environmental controls.

Task 4 Ensure the security of records and papers in all media and formats from damage, destruction, theft, and other forms of loss.

Task 5 Prepare and implement procedures for disaster prevention, response and recovery.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

K-401 research on the nature of materials' treatment and current preservation techniques.

K-402 the causes and consequences of the deterioration of various media and formats.

K-403 the elements of preservation management and preservation planning, including environmental monitoring, disaster planning, in-house conservation, reformatting, data migration, data conversion, and services available through outside vendors.

K-404 the elements of security management and risk assessment.

K-405 when to preserve records and papers in their original format or structure, and when to replace originals with reproductions in the same and/or different media or format.

Our "You Pick Your Site"

program allows student organizations and regional associations to sponsor an exam site in their area.

It also allows non-US archivists to hold the examination in their country.

K-406 the range of preservation options and the application of each to records and papers on different media.

Domain 5: Outreach, Advocacy, and Promotion

Task 1 Promote the use of records and papers by identifying potential users and uses, by analyzing and describing the benefits of use, and through public and educational programs.

Task 2 Develop an understanding of, and support for, the archival program among resource allocators, key constituents, potential donors, allied professionals, and within related functional areas (IT, library, etc.) of the archives' parent organization.

Task 3 Participate in programs that draw directly on records and papers to support such activities as exhibitions, conferences, publications, and editorial projects.

Task 4 Participate in efforts to publicize archival collections and repositories through print, electronic, and broadcast media.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

K-501 the variety of uses of records and papers, the benefits of such uses, and methods of imparting this information to potential users.

K-502 the range of approaches that might be taken to advance public understanding of archival work and programs, such as news releases, websites, exhibitions, press kits, and curriculum packages.

K-503 methods of presenting archival records and papers, or information from or about them, in a user-friendly manner that reduces the need for on-site visitation to the repository.

K-504 methods of articulating to resource allocators the benefits of establishing and supporting the continued operation of an archival program in an organization.

K-505 methods of collaborating with functional units within the archives' parent organization to enhance or further archival work.

Domain 6: Managing Archival Programs

Read how one new member prepared for the examination in the article "[Encouragement from a New Member](#)" in the March/April 1999 News Highlights.

Task 1 Participate in the development of a strategic vision for an archival program, establish priorities, continually assess progress toward that vision, and make adjustments as environments and resources change.

Task 2 Assess staffing needs, recruit appropriate personnel, and train staff; support professional development; and ensure that the staff works together to fulfill the archives' mission.

Task 3 Plan, gain approval of, and administer a budget; assess financial performance; and monitor progress.

Task 4 Identify facility and equipment needs and prepare and implement plans to meet those needs.

Task 5 Create policies, standards, and procedures that facilitate the range of activities in archival programs.

Task 6 Use appropriate technologies to manage an archival program.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

- K-601 planning models and assessment tools and their role in an archival program.
- K-602 institutional structures, cultures, and values; and the role of archival programs within these institutions and structures.
- K-603 basic principles and procedures in human resource management appropriate for an archival program.
- K-604 current archival education standards for graduate and continuing education as well as other professional development options and certification programs.
- K-605 basic financial planning techniques appropriate for an archival program.
- K-606 legal requirements that affect the management of archival programs.
- K-607 space and resource management techniques.
- K-608 the application and impact of evolving technologies and information systems on the overall archival program.
- K-609 methodologies for gathering and evaluating data about archival functions within one's own program and programs at other institutions.
- K-610 sources of professional and technical advice and assistance, internal and external funding agencies, and other forms of potential program assistance.

"Academy certification demonstrates a commitment to the archival profession. As a hiring manager, when I weigh the differing backgrounds of candidates, the CA is a tangible and positive credential."

Becky Haglund Tousey
Archives Manager
Kraft Foods, Inc.

Domain 7: Professional, Ethical, and Legal Responsibilities

- Task 1 Keep abreast of current issues in the field of archival history, theory, and practice through such activities as reading professional literature, attending conferences, and participating in continuing education programs.
- Task 2 Contribute to the development of the archival profession through such means as conducting research, making public presentations, and participating in professional organizations.
- Task 3 Respect all statutory and regulatory requirements relating to records and papers.
- Task 4 Conform to professional standards.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

- K-701 the variety of international, national, regional, and local organizations whose activities include archival concerns.
- K-702 research and literature relating to archival history, theory, methodology, and practice.
- K-703 the influence of social, cultural, economic, and legal systems upon the responsibilities of archivists.
- K-704 laws, regulations, and ethical considerations governing loans, deposits, exchanges, and gifts to institutions, including tax consequences.
- K-705 laws, regulations, and ethical considerations governing reference services and

access to records and papers, including copyright, freedom of information, privacy, confidentiality, security, and equality of access.

K-706 the uses of records and papers as legal evidence in courts, and the standards applied for legal admissibility.

K-707 laws and regulations defining public records and governing their retention, accessibility, integrity, and disposition.

K-708 laws, regulations, and ethical considerations governing personal papers.

K-709 archival and information professional codes and standards, such as the Code of Ethics of the Society of American Archivists and the SAA/ALA joint statement on Standards for Access to Research Materials in Archival and Manuscript Repositories.

"The 'CA' is the distinguishing mark of the most proficient and effective archival professional."

Bruce Dearstyn
College of Information Studies
University of Maryland

Revised 2003

"Archival certification is one of the key measurements I use in evaluating the professional credentials of candidates for archival positions in my department. Individuals who have sought and obtained

the CA designation demonstrate
a commitment to the highest
standards of the archival
profession."

Philip F. Mooney
Director,
Archives Department
The Coca-Cola Company



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Please [let us know](#) of updates, corrections, and
potential improvements to our web site.

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