

Section
3

Role Delineation

The role delineation, developed by archivists in coordination with archival educators, defines the knowledge and skills necessary for archival work. Therefore, it is one of the Academy of Certified Archivists greatest contributions to the archival profession.

What is a role delineation?

The ACA's role delineation is a series of test specifications that describe the major "domains" (or areas) of archival practice. Within each domain we have defined a series of tasks and related knowledge statements. Together, these elements encompass commonly accepted duties and responsibilities that professional archivists perform in the course of their work.

This document assumes individuals seeking certification recognize their professional practice:

- a) is performed within the context of an institutional mission and is directed to the achievement of goals within that mission, and
- b) has an ongoing effect on the emergence and evolution of that overall mission and its associated goals, and the development of the archival profession.

Additionally, although persons seeking certification do not necessarily control how archival policies are set relating to activities such as acquisition, access, preservation and security, we assume 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 that outline the duties included within each domain, as well as knowledge statements describing 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.

As used hereafter, the term "document(s)" means records of both public and private institutions as well as personal or private papers and manuscripts and refers to all media (e.g., print, electronic, photographic) in which information is recorded.

General knowledge statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

- K-1 the impact of social, cultural, economic, political, and technological factors on the evolutions and characteristics of documents and their management
- K-2 the origins, development, and definitions of archival concepts, terms, principles, 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 archives and manuscripts
- K-5 the physical characteristics of documents and how these characteristics influence the value, acquisition, preservation, and use of documents
- K-6 archival methods and practices appropriate for different media such as electronic, microform, paper, photographic, cartographic, etc.
- K-7 the standards and accepted professional practices that apply to archival work, including their rationale and implications
- K-8 the concept of the life cycle of records
- K-9 the relationship between accepted professional policies and practices and institutional applications of these policies and practices
- K-10 the core archival functions of appraisal, accessioning, arrangement, description, preservation, reference, and public programs and how these relate to each other and influence the administration of documents
- K-11 the different institutional settings in which archival programs may exist and the implications of placement within a particular institution
- K-12 the practices and objectives of such disciplines as records management, information resources management, librarianship, information science, museology, and oral history and the ways in which they relate to and differ from the administration of archives

Domain 1: selection of documents

- Task 1** Identify sources of documents by applying knowledge about subjects, individuals, organizations, and others that create, receive and accumulate documents appropriate for acquisition.
- Task 2** Establish, maintain, and keep a record of communication(s) with creators and/or potential donors of documents.
- Task 3** Determine by survey and examination the characteristics of documents pertinent to their acquisition, such as form, uniqueness, quantity, availability, and information content.
- Task 4** Make retention recommendations or decisions concerning documents by appraising such characteristics as their:
 - a) legal, fiscal, and administrative value;
 - b) evidential and informational value; and
 - c) intrinsic value.
- Task 5** Implement disposition recommendations or decisions through legal instruments of

transfer such as schedules, deeds of gift, purchase contracts, and deposit agreements.

Task 6 Promote cooperative acquisition and scheduling strategies when appropriate.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

- K-101 how acquisition and holdings of archival repositories relate to the appraisal of records
- K-102 techniques for surveying and locating potential acquisitions
- K-103 the evolution, nature, and variety of recordkeeping systems and practices
- K-104 techniques for locating information about the history of document creating and accumulating sources
- K-105 factors that should be considered when defining collecting or accessioning areas and developing an institutional collecting or accessioning policy
- K-106 solicitation and negotiation techniques, including ways of educating document creators about the importance of preserving documents
- K-107 laws, policies, regulations, procedures, legal instruments, and ethical standards relating to acquisitions
- K-108 the concept of document values such as evidential, informational, administrative, legal, fiscal, and intrinsic
- K-109 the past, current, and potential uses of documents
- K-110 inventorying, scheduling, appraisal, and disposition techniques
- K-111 selection, sampling, weeding, and other techniques to reduce volume
- K-112 methods of deaccessioning and other techniques of internal disposal
- K-113 impact of technology on traditional methods of surveying, scheduling, appraisal, and disposition

Domain 2: arrangement and description of documents

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

Task 2 Design and implement an arrangement plan to either establish or perfect the manner in which documents are arranged.

Task 3 Design and implement a description plan that includes:

- a) establishing the level of control required with consideration of the level of the needs for access to media;

- b) developing such appropriate finding aids as guides, inventories, registers, series descriptions, and folder lists; and
- c) disseminating descriptive information through paper-based and electronic publications and through electronic communications such as Internet sites and discussion lists.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists should know and can apply knowledge about:

- K-201 the complementary principles of provenance and original order
- K-202 the history and variety of records-keeping 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 documents
- 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 such standards as the MARC format, Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2), Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), Government Information Locator Service (GILS), and Standard Generalized Mark-up Language (SGML).

Domain 3: reference services and access to documents

- Task 1** Define the informational needs of users by customer surveys and analysis of requests and provide consultation and access to finding aids and documents.
- Task 2** Determine appropriate action(s) regarding user requests by relating them to available resources, access policies, availability of finding aids, and other pertinent factors.
- Task 3** Make an appropriate response to user requests by providing information about documents, information from documents, access to documents, making copies, making referrals 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, actions taken, and documents used.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

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

- K-302 the laws and ethical principles governing access and confidentiality
- K-303 the research strategies, needs, past and current research interests, and trends of genealogists, scholars, journalists, and other major users of documents
- K-304 reference strategies based upon varying holdings, format and user needs
- K-305 the subject areas of an institution's holdings and how they relate to holdings of other repositories
- K-306 accepted practices for safeguarding documents 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 or documents through such tools as reference files or reports

Domain 4: preservation and protection of documents

- Task 1** Analyze the current physical condition of documents and determine appropriate preservation actions and priorities.
- Task 2** Make and implement decision about reformatting, handling techniques, technology migration, appropriate laboratory treatments, phased conservation, and referral to technical experts.
- Task 3** Ensure correct storage of documents through such means as using proper containers and shelving and by maintaining acceptable environmental controls.
- Task 4** Ensure the security of documents from damage, destruction, theft, and other forms of loss.
- Task 5** Prepare and implement procedures for disaster prevention, reaction, and recovery.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

- K-401 supplies, storage equipment, and environmental standards
- K-402 the causes and consequences of the deterioration of paper and other media
- K-403 the elements of preservation management and preservation planning, including environmental monitoring, disaster preparedness, in-house conservation activities, and service available through outside vendors
- K-404 the elements of security management and risk assessment
- K-405 when to preserve documents in their original form and when to replace originals with other media
- K-406 the range of preservation options and the application of each to different media

Domain 5: outreach, advocacy, and promotion of documentary collections and archival repositories

- Task 1** Promote the use of documents 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, and allied professional groups. Establish alliances with related functional entities within the archival program's organization, such as information or library services and information resource management.
- Task 3** Participate in programs that draw directly on documents to support such activities as exhibitions, conferences, publications, and editorial projects.
- Task 4** Participate in efforts to publicize documentary collections and repositories in print and broadcast media.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

- K-501 the variety of uses of documents, the benefits of such uses, and methods of imparting this information to potential users
- K-502 the different techniques such as publicity, educational programs, exhibitions, publications, and public presentations that can be employed to communicate with potential users, donors, supports, resource allocators, and the public
- K-503 methods of preparing news releases, press kits, and other media-targeted publicity tools
- K-504 methods of articulating to resource allocators the benefits of establishing and supporting the continued operation of an archival program in an organization

Domain 6: managing archival programs

- 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 work together to fulfill the institution's mission.
- Task 3** Plan, gain approval of, and administer 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 Utilize appropriate technologies to manage an archival program.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

- K-601 strategic 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 current trends in human resource management and their role in creating an archival team
- 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 the range of legal requirements that affect access to collections and impact policies and procedures of archival programs
- K-607 basic space and equipment management techniques
- K-608 the 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.

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 oral presentations, writing for publication, and participating in professional organizations.

Task 3 Respect all statutory and regulatory requirements relating to documents, such as copyright, freedom of information, privacy, and records disposition requirements.

Task 4 Conform to professional ethical standards.

Knowledge Statements

Archivists know and can apply knowledge about:

K-701 the variety of international, national, regional, and local organization whose activities include archival concerns

K-702 the research and literature relating to archival history, theory, methodology, and practice

K-703 the laws, regulations, and ethical considerations governing copyright, freedom of information, privacy, and equality of access

K-704 the laws, regulations, and ethical considerations governing loans, deposits, exchanges, and gifts of property to institutions, including tax consequences

K-705 the Code of Ethics of the Society of American Archivists

K-706 the uses of documents as legal evidence in courts and the standards applied for legal admissibility

K-707 laws defining public records and governing their retention and disposition

K-708 the laws and policies regarding personal papers of public officials

K-709 the SAA/ALA joint statement on Standards for Access to Research Materials in Archival and Manuscript Repositories