ARCHIVING AND CURATION

NEW CAREERS FOR MLIS AND LIS GRADUATES & ALUMNI
Are you a collector? If you enjoy finding, organizing, interpreting and presenting items of interest, a career in curation may be for you.

Or perhaps you’re a history buff or interested in a particular area of human endeavor, in which case archiving may be the right path.

This career booklet is about helping you explore the many archiving and curation avenues you could pursue. Both archiving and curation are changing radically in the digital era, opening doors to new opportunities. While if a traditional job in a museum or other institutional setting attracts you, the steps you take early in your career are critical, since those coveted positions can be highly competitive.

As leaders in library staffing and managed services and the creators of Library as a Service®, LAC Group has the inside track to employment needs and trends for skilled librarians, researchers, archivists, curators and other information management professionals.

We hope you find the guidance presented in this booklet to be useful in your own career planning efforts, and I wish you well in your job search.

Regards

Deborah Schwarz
Founder and CEO
LAC Group
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All About Archiving

Archives Bring History to Life
As a record of activities and events captured in documents and other artifacts, archives serve as a documentary of the past, offering enduring proof that these happenings occurred. Historians, journalists, authors, scientists and anybody with a personal interest can turn to archives to gather firsthand data and evidence of a topic.

Archives encompass the full media spectrum of physical and digital formats including manuscripts, documents, financial records, photographs, motion pictures, video recordings, audio recordings, drawings, maps, websites, social media accounts and more. All of these formats are susceptible to degradation, which makes preservation a critical archiving priority.

Preparing for a Career in Archiving
With responsibility for establishing and maintaining control over a collection to ensure preservation for current and future generations, archivists must bring an understanding of the context of the records, the reason for their preservation and the relationships between items and their sources. They must understand and ensure the provenance of all items in the collection.

Along with your general training in archiving principles, methods and standards, we recommend further specialized study of a particular topic or era in which you are interested. A general history background is valuable. In addition, soft skills in public speaking, communication and social networking are useful.
Typical Archiving Tasks and Responsibilities

- Identify, authenticate and assess archival-worthy materials.
- Preserve and maintain items in the archive.
- Organize and classify archival records, including computer databases.
- Ensure creation of film and digital backup copies.
- Provide user help and support.
- Plan outreach programs and campaigns.
- Set and administer policy guidelines.
- Direct and manage staff.
- Find and acquire new archival materials.

Archivists also play an active role in promoting the archive by assisting researchers, coordinating lectures and other educational programs, planning outreach campaigns such as exhibitions or publications and developing relationships with individuals and institutions for financial support.

All About Curation

Curation, Traditional and Modern

Curation is the act of making carefully honed choices to encompass the highest quality and relevance in regard to a particular category. Curation is 80% discovery and 20% interpretation and sharing, whether the collection involves precious works of art or amusing YouTube videos! In fact, we encourage budding curators to develop their eye and their expertise through meaningful use of Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr and other digital platforms.
Preparing for a Career in Curation

Curation in the Physical Domain

Curators typically have specialized focus and training in topics such as art history, archaeology, anthropology, museum studies or arts management. Those that work in the field of natural history can have a background in entomology, botany and other related sciences. This subject matter training and expertise is a requirement if you aspire to work in a major institution. A Master’s degree in a specialized field is usually required and most curators working in major museums have attained a Doctoral degree as well.

In addition, many roles using similar skills sets and backgrounds can be found in media, manufacturing, technology and other corporate sectors. The specifics of the type of content may vary but the approach and principles are similar.

Typical Analog Curation Tasks and Responsibilities:

- Authenticate, evaluate and acquire artifacts, including purchases, sales, loans and exchanges.
- Oversee restoration and cleaning.
- Manage storage and exhibitions.
- Direct the theme and design of exhibits.
- Plan tours, workshops and other promotional and educational programs.
- Manage and direct staff.
- Plan and conduct research.
- Represent the institution at meetings, conventions and civic events.

Curators design and manage the user experience and how visitors interact and experience art, artifacts and other assets within an archives collection. They may reach audiences in many ways, both traditional and non-traditional, including exhibitions, publications, websites, forums and other venues. Social networking and strong communication / presentation skills are a plus.
Curation in the Digital Domain

The goals of curation in the digital world are much the same as the physical world, but ensuring long-term preservation and access presents unique challenges. The complexity and rapidly-changing nature of technology necessitates risk mitigation for media failure, equipment and software obsolescence and ongoing version control. Regardless of these challenges, being digital creates greater transparency and opens new doors into archives that may otherwise remain dark.

Both curators and archivists need to become format and hardware experts by necessity as technology and tools evolve. A computer science / information management focus that emphasizes digital asset and content management technologies is helpful and advised.

The digital world of curation is relatively new and encompasses a variety of forms and specialties:

**DATA CURATION:**
The management of data throughout its lifecycle, from creation and initial storage to the time when it is either archived or deleted.

**DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT:**
The management of digital media assets like photographs and video recordings for future use and monetization, using technology and information protocols like metadata development.

**CONTENT CURATION:**
The collecting and sharing of web content arranged around a particular theme or subject area.

**DIGITIZATION AND DIGITAL PRESERVATION:**
Digitization is a one-time process of creating a digital representation of an item. It’s the precursor to digital preservation, which is the active management and long-term commitment to ensure the technological and economic sustainability of the information.
Typical Digital Curation Tasks and Responsibilities:

• Capture and migrate content to platform-neutral and new digital formats.
• Evaluate the organization’s needs and review and make recommendations on tools and services.
• Develop and manage policies, procedures and workflows for all digital media formats.
• Identify and inventory physical/removable digital media collections.
• Participate in the design, implementation and management of new systems.
• Assess user needs and provide training, advice and support.
• Assign and review the work of programmers and other computer-related workers.
• Identify and implement digital preservation strategies to minimize risk of information loss.
• Organize, catalog, and classify existing digitized and born-digital materials.
• Prepare and maintain finding aids using best practices and standards.

The ongoing pace of innovation and rapid obsolescence requires digital curators to stay abreast of technology trends and advances.
Day In the Life

MICHAEL CAHILL – Film Archivist

Art and Cultural Anthropology,
Wichita State University

Photography and Chemistry of Photography,
Rice University

As a film archivist for PRO-TEK Vaults, a division of LAC Group, Mike Cahill is part of a nine-person team involved in a project for a major entertainment company that involves millions of still photography images and negatives. The work is estimated to take fifteen years, which is long-term in a business world of quarter-by-quarter horizons but not out-of-the-ordinary in the world of preservation and archiving.

The team follows a rigorous process, examining every negative, print and transparency, one-by-one. Some images are nearly a century old; some depict 20th century cinematic icons like Clark Gable and Judy Garland. Each item is cleaned, placed in archival sleeves, labeled, categorized and scanned.

A Quality Control technician removes scratches and makes other digital repairs, being careful to preserve the photographer’s original intent. Metadata are created to capture a record of the content that will serve as a roadmap for future discovery. One of the greatest challenges to the team – and one of the greatest pleasures – is the accurate identification of celebrities and production staff in many of the rare photos, which is vital information to include in the metadata. The finished, high-quality digitized images will go into the client’s content management system for easy access and retrieval.
ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Mike offers the following words of career wisdom to future archivists:

1. Put your passions first. Pursue a career where you can work with materials you appreciate and enjoy.

2. Develop a strong sense of the history and chronology in your area of interest. Understanding how the past has influenced and continues to inform the discipline today will help you distinguish yourself.

3. Keep learning as much as you can. Continued curiosity about your craft is the bedrock of its longevity.

Going through each item in a collection requires equal amounts of focused attention and delicate care. The work can be routine and sometimes daunting, but the rewards come in the discovery and preservation of rare, one-of-a-kind finds and the satisfaction of making a measurable contribution to a body of work with historical and cultural value.
The Universe of Collection Management

Archivist
Establish and maintain control over a collection in order to ensure preservation for current and future generations.

Records Manager
Manage a collection of institutional records awaiting either destruction or transfer to an archive.

Preservationist
Focus on securing the long-term viability and availability of assets, from digital media to books to art to buildings to equipment.

Curator
Acquire, care for, display or make accessible and interpret a collection, with duty to maintain its integrity.

Librarian
Maintain collections of books and other materials across a full spectrum of subject matter and facilitate easy user access.

Historian
A “power user” who needs access to a collection for research and other scholarly work and a useful background for archiving/curation.
Your Career in Archiving and Curation

Jumpstart Your Career

You need experience to get a job, but you need a job to get experience. That is the classic challenge facing every graduate. We hope the information in this section will help you overcome that hurdle and present yourself as the best possible candidate for the opportunities you pursue.

The key is to emphasize all relevant training, skills and capabilities – even those that may not seem pertinent. Cite specific accomplishments and connect your skills and experience to the needs of the position. Find ways to articulate the value you can bring to the organization.

Don’t exclude soft skills, especially those that are useful for the 21st century librarian. For example, some employers may be interested in your social media expertise if you can translate those skills to their needs, and not to convey the possibility that you’ll be disappearing regularly to check Facebook. For example, the ability to uncover relevant information using social media networks or your promotional skills that resulted in hundreds of likes and followers for a particular project could be an advantage worth noting.

Develop a Personal Project

Create your own collection, one that you develop and manage with the same judgment, consideration and care you would give to an organization’s collection. The ability to not only tell but show your curation and archiving capabilities will demonstrate your passion. Most importantly, it will help you stand out and be remembered among competing job candidates.
Volunteer

Make connections with people who can advance your career. Demonstrate your work ethic. Gain credibility and useful experience. All these advantages and more can be gained when you volunteer. Many libraries and other institutions that hire archivists and curators are understaffed and grateful for volunteers. We know – you would rather join them as an employee, plus you need to pay the bills, but it’s a way you can meet people who could help you while gaining experience to add to your resume.

Check out organizations near you, and also explore the following opportunities to volunteer from anywhere for prestigious organizations like the Smithsonian Institute:

Smithsonian Digital Volunteers – Projects include the Smithsonian Transcription Center, the Smithsonian Wikipedian Program and the National Postal Museum Researcher Program.

National Archives Citizen Archivist – Transcribe historical documents, subtitle videos, join the History Hub and more.

World Archives Project – If genealogy is a passion, contribute to the Ancestry.com database of family records and get a free account as well.

Join a Professional Association

We cannot overemphasize the value of joining a professional organization, especially in the small communities of archiving and curation.

Networking within the professional community is invaluable. This includes social media. Connect with industry leaders, influencers and groups via LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Meetup and others.
Join the listservs, participate in virtual discussions, ask questions, engage. Participate in professional conferences and attend regular meetings, presentations and social events. In short: Get yourself known.

Following is a list of well-respected associations related to archiving and curation that have student or associate membership levels, as well as resources to help you make the transition from student to working professional.

**Society of American Archivists (SAA)**
Founded in 1936, the Society of American Archivists is North America’s oldest and largest national archival professional association. SAA offers student and associate memberships, as well as a scholarship and mentoring program. Dues for full membership are salary-based.

[www2.archivists.org/membership](http://www2.archivists.org/membership)

**ARMA International**
When it was established in 1955, ARMA was the acronym for Association of Records Managers and Administrators. Today the organization is now known simply as ARMA International, serving as the authority on managing records and information. Associate and professional memberships are available, as well as a free “Friend of ARMA” level with limited access and benefits.

[www.arma.org/r1/membership/membership-structure](http://www.arma.org/r1/membership/membership-structure)

**American Alliance of Museums (AAM)**
The American Alliance of Museums supports museums through advocacy, resources and development of standards and best practices. AAM offers flexible membership opportunities for students and provides a list of excellent museum-related career
management guidance and resources, including tips for carving out a freelance or consulting career.

www.aam-us.org/membership

**Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)**
The stated mission of IMLS is “to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement.” Not a professional association but rather a nonprofit created to offer research, policy development and grant making resources and guidance for libraries and museums to ensure they continue to be community anchors and centers of knowledge and cultural heritage.

https://www.imls.gov/

**Northeast Document Conservation Center (NDCC)**
NDCC is an independent conservation laboratory specializing exclusively in the conservation and preservation of paper-based collections, providing treatment for books, maps, photographs, documents, parchment, papyrus, manuscripts, architectural plans, and works of art on paper. While not an association, NDCC is an excellent resource for ongoing professional development.

www.nedcc.org/

**International Council on Archives (ICA)**
Emphasis on international as ICA is headquartered in France and “dedicated to the effective management of records and the preservation, care and use of the world’s archival heritage.” Members span the globe, with institutional categories as well as individual membership for students or professional archivists.

www.ica.org/108/our-members/join-us-now.html
International Records Management Trust (IRMT)
Also international in scope, IRMT is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving government records management as a way to protect civil rights, strengthen democracy, promote economic and social stability and establish greater accountability and transparency. IRMT offers valuable research and educational resources, particularly in Public Sector and Electronic Records Management.
www.irmt.org

Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA)
The Association of Moving Image Archivists is concerned with the acquisition, preservation, description, exhibition and use of moving image materials. Membership encompasses film, television, video and interactive media, everything from classic and contemporary Hollywood productions to documentaries to local television production to public affairs. Student and Individual memberships are available.
www.amianet.org/member-central/join

Local Archiving Associations
In addition to the major national and international associations, a variety of regional groups offer even more relevant connections as they are smaller and closer to where you live and work – or where you might like to live and work. Following are several regional groups within the United States (sorted roughly from west to east) as well as a link to additional groups in the U.S. and Canada:

• Northwest Archivists (NWA)
• Society of California Archivists (SCA)
• Society of Southwest Archivists (SSA)
• Conference of Inter-Mountain Archivists (CIMA)
• Midwest Archives Conference (MAC)
• New England Archivists (NEA)
• Archivists Roundtable of Metropolitan New York (ART)
• Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC)
• Additional local archiving groups

Consider Archiving Certification

Certification requires experience and time, but it may be a professional development goal worth pursuing.

The Academy of Certified Archivists is a certifying organization of professional archivists, granting certification to individuals who have met educational and experience requirements and passed the Archival Certification Examination.

DAS is Digital Archives Specialist, a curriculum and certificate program established by the Society of American Archivists for additional training and credentials in managing born-digital records.

Consider other professional certification programs listed on the National Archives website.
Your First Job

The single most effective thing you can do to get your first job is to explore all reasonable options, even those that don’t appeal to you in the long term. Remember that “first job” does not mean last job. It’s the way to prove that you can meet employment expectations and responsibilities and to gain the work experience that all employers value.

Since virtually all archiving and curation work now requires information technology skills, consider a job that is more IT-related, particularly if it involves digital asset management, content management, records management and data curation. Not only will you gain experience, but these positions generally pay well and you may end up liking the work!

Put Your Resume to Work

Create multiple versions of your resume to emphasize different aspects of your background, depending on the types of jobs you are interested in. Emphasize the training, personal projects, volunteer activities and experience that are relevant to those jobs.

Equally important is to include specific details. For example, “Trained in DACS and EAD” is better than “Familiar with archiving standards”.

Explore and incorporate a variety of job title keywords for you online search of entry-level curation and archiving positions. Following are several to get you started:

- Archival Consultant
- Archiving Associate
- Archival Researcher
- Assistant Archivist
- Assistant Curator
- Catalog Associate
- Digital Archivist
- Digital Curation Specialist
Identify all Potential Employers

Most archiving and curation job seekers look for work at places like museums or historical societies. While it’s fine to start there, don’t let you search end there, especially when looking for your first archiving/curation job. Virtually every industry and every type of organization needs archiving and curation workers:

- Digital Preservation Technician
- Exhibition Designer
- Electronic Archivist
- Electronic Records Analyst
- Film Archivist
- Institutional Historian
- Interpretive Guide
- Metadata Librarian
- Metadata Specialist
- Museum Technician
- Records Analyst
- Records Management Assistant
- Interpretive Manager

- Museums and Other Collections
- State and Local Historical Societies
- Universities and other Educational Institutions
- Corporations (from long-established companies to online startups)
- Information Service Providers (e.g. Consulting firms, Outsourcers)
- Media & Entertainment (e.g., television, publishing, film)
- Federal, State and Local Government
- Non-Profits
- Associations and Societies
- Churches

Consider and explore all of these, even if they don’t seem appealing. Remember a first job is just that – the first step that launches your life-long professional journey.
Seek Internships
A wide range of internships are available across all industries. We recommend you start first at your university’s placement office for assistance in locating an opportunity near you.

In addition, following are a few internship programs in major federal government institutions that would give you some great experience and your resume some recognized clout.

Federal Government Hiring Authorities for Students and Recent Graduates
Smithsonian Associates Internship Programs
National Archives Voluntary Internship Programs

Earnings Expectations
Average Annual Income

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics and DAM Foundation.
The industries with the highest levels of employment are colleges and universities, museums and historical sites, and state and federal government. If salary matters, industries that pay the most include the federal government executive branch, motion picture/media companies and the commercial business sector.

For more compensation and other employment information, explore the archivist and curator pages on the Bureau’s website. Also explore the survey results on the DAM Foundation website.

BLS employment and compensation data for archivists.
BLS employment and compensation data for curators.
Employment and compensation survey data for digital asset managers.

The Job Board Dedicated to Library and Information Science Careers

No doubt you are familiar with the big online job boards, but did you know there is a career development website dedicated to MLS/MLIS students, as well as working librarians and information professionals? It includes an active job board. It’s called LibGig and it’s a part of LAC Group, the creators of this booklet. We invite you to check it out and share the link with your fellow students and colleagues!

www.libgig.com
Day In the Life

JAMIE SECOR
– Media Resource Assistant
B.A. English,
Ohio State University

A typical day for Jamie Secor begins with the start of her shift at 8:00 a.m. working for one of LAC Group’s clients in television news and entertainment. Her customers are involved in daily programming production and because the news never stops, staffing is around-the-clock, seven days a week. In news, a “typical” day is never typical and often includes unexpected events. It’s not uncommon to have the editorial focus of the day completely change on a breaking news story.

“When news of actor and comedian Robin Williams’ death came in, everyone else in the video group had left for the day, and I was covering the shift alone. The phone started ringing off the hook with an onslaught of research requests for archive footage. Everything else I had worked on that day was pushed aside. I ultimately gathered hundreds of hours of content from over 25 years or so for that night’s productions.”

Then there was the day a giant crate that was big enough for her to stand in arrived from Hong Kong, holding years’ worth of tapes for adding to the archive and digitizing. Jamie’s role is to create new records as well as update and maintain the news archives, which includes content arriving from bureaus around the globe, often in various states and with varying degrees of information. In these cases, Jamie must take steps to identify
the content, which sometimes she can do by simply viewing it. Otherwise she taps into a variety of resources for deeper research – this sleuthing is one of the more interesting aspects of her job. The footage is then digitized into the digital archive for easier access and availability.

When she’s not doing actual archiving work, she is often asked to lead training for new employees and coordinate and oversee special projects. Yet Jamie says the most interesting aspect of her work is everything she learns watching raw news coverage and human interest stories. She would be a valuable addition to any team in a current events trivia contest!

ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Jamie offers the following career advice to college students and recent graduates:

1. Be open to learning as much as you can across a variety of areas. Beef up your skills, especially in software and other areas of information technology. Also work on ‘soft’ skills like time management, communication and client service.

2. Cast a wide net. Libraries can be anywhere, not only where you think you will find them. Keep in mind that the word ‘library’ increasingly is being replaced with terms like resource center or knowledge center, and collections can include a wide range of formats, including film, video, audio and photography.

Finally, once you do get your first job, find ways to get things done simply because they need getting done. Librarians are good at responding to needs, but being proactive is what modern librarians, archivists and curators must do to distinguish themselves and demonstrate their value.
The Future of Curation and Archiving

Traditional curators and archivists are prized for having deep knowledge of their collections, as well as the world of art, history, science, law, medicine or wherever their collections belong.

Modern curators and archivists have this knowledge as well. Increasingly they must strive to truly understand the cultural meaning and context of their collections in order to serve the people and communities who value them. The new breed of curators and archivists are no longer bound by the walls of the institution they work for – the internet has opened the doors to the world.

Meanwhile, the volume and scope of collections continues to grow. According to YouTube, 300 hours of new videos were uploaded to the site every minute in 2014 and the site now has over 800 million unique users a month.

Doors are opening to new archiving and curation jobs:

• Behance, an online platform for creative professionals, employs a team of curators to ensure that the best work is elevated for a discerning audience.

• YouTube employs curators to add culturally significant film and video created by the world’s best directors to relevant channels and networks.

• Online publishers in music, literature, news and other genres are focusing efforts on curation and making their archives available to a wider audience.

You could fill one of these new positions. You could work on temporary projects and assignments. You could become a solopreneur, creating your own archiving or curation work.
Or, you could find the business, museum or other institution that speaks to you.

It’s an exciting time to pursue a career in curation and archiving, and we wish you well!
MLIS and LIS Careers Resource Series

This is an exciting time to be a librarian and information professional, where jobs now span a wide range of environments, both physical and digital.

The following career resource guides describe new and challenging career opportunities for MLIS and LIS graduates and alumni.

1. COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE
2. LANDING A JOB WITH AN LIS/MLIS DEGREE
3. ARCHIVING AND CURATION

NEXT: KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

MLIS and LIS Career Resources

LibGig is the #1 job site for information professionals, offering jobs, interview tips, resume help and much more. It’s a place to connect with employers and network with other information professionals. Established in 2008, LibGig has earned its reputation as a proven leader in the information professionals community.

LibSource delivers flexible, cost-effective knowledge and information management solutions via the company’s Library as a Service® platform, which includes a virtual model, delivering research and other reference services on-demand through a web-based Knowledge Services Portal, and an outsourcing model to reap the benefits and maintain the presence of an onsite library without the administrative burden. Whether temporary projects or long-term relationships, LibSource utilizes librarians, researchers and other information professionals with specialized training and experience to help organizations excel in today’s knowledge-driven economy.

To receive other career resource guides in this series, contact your university’s career service center or visit www.lac-group.com/library-career-guides