Re-shaping the Identity and Competency of Archivists In a Climate of Change

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Abstract
In a climate of change and facing new demands and challenges, archivists need to explore a new way of thinking, building a new competency and establish a new image, so as to make new contributions.

1. Reshaping the multiple identities of archivists

The paper will discuss: archivists as custodian of history as well as protector for future; archivists familiar with both traditional methods and new technologies; archivists as managers of both historical sources and information on new media; archivists as practitioners in specific positions as well as professional advisors; archivists as behind-the-screen heroes as well as public relation experts…

2. New Requirements for Professional Competency
    (1) "Six knows", including institution's history, leadership, key figures and major events; the organizational structure and bodies; the institution's main functions; the types, quantities and locations of archival holdings; conditions of archival transfer and access demands; laws, regulations, rules and standards relating to records management and archives administration.
    (2) Being experts in reading and writing.
    (3) Introducing and applying new technologies and media.
    (4) Broad public communication and promotion.
    (5) Consultation

3. Ways to Improve
    (1) Change and readjustment in formal archival education;
    (2) Climate of Change in on-the-job training;
    (3) Continuing archival education designed to raise overall capability;
    (4) Expanding and improving outreach activities;
    (5) Making professional contributions to institutions, business, and society.

I. New Circumstances and New Challenges

(I) For archivists, new circumstances and challenges they face include:
(1) The extensive application of electronic technology and internet;
(2) The application of new technology and new carriers;
(3) Information explosion;
(4)Inadequate repositories or human resources;
(5)Soaring demand on archive utilization;
(6)Increasing social awareness;
(7)Relatively insufficient knowledge structure or abilities of archivists;
(8)Constantly updating contexts and topics;
(9)The oncoming Internet of Things, Cloud Computing and Sensor Technology.

The human society has entered into the information age. Some believe that we have come to the digital age and "paperless age", replacing by the "electronic age" and "internet age", which we don't totally agree on. In fact, at the current phase and for a long time to go, we are and will be in an era where traditional and electronic technologies coexist , which can be called a "dual era" in other words.

To be specific, on one hand, though we have an immense number of traditional archival materials in the store house, we cannot afford to lose any single one of them. On the other, we have unceasingly incoming different carriers of a large quantity of electronic files. In the meantime, for the sake of security and convenience, we have to back up the records in time by various means and in different locations.

During the "dual era", the recognition of identities and elevation of capabilities for archivists should comply with such environment.

(II) Our viewpoints and responses
（1）In view of the historical course of human development, the evolution of the recording carriers of any written language is progressing in a slow rather than abrupt way. Therefore, we need not worry that one morning we will wake up to find everything familiar gone and find ourselves in an incomprehensible world. And there is no need for panic and blindly going with the tide. Instead we should take it easy and keep a cool mind, and do a good job of archiving.

（2） "Paperless office", e-filing and e-inquiry are great conveniences, but limited to the fields of producing, disseminating, and utilizing of records and information. For us archivists, what we care is whether the carrier of records and information is original, authentic, endurable, secure and convenient. In fact, we should intensify the research efforts in such fields.

（3）Electronic records and internet are being improved and developed and have many strengths, but they also have fatal weaknesses and have caused many problems unsolved, such as the dependence on machinery, equipment and electricity, huge input, risk of information security, easily modifiable content, unstable recording carrier, etc. Traditional mode and carriers for recording and preserving still have many advantages and they are the most familiar, safe and convenient, and thus the favorite

way for human beings.

（4）Of course, we archivists cannot be indifferent to new carriers and technological application. It's proven that our understanding of and response to external changes are comparatively lagging due to the nature of our work and our established knowledge structure. Therefore, "making-up lessons" are quite necessary.

II. Remolding the multiple roles of archivists

In a climate of changes, there are new requirements and challenges facing archivists; to make more contributions, we need to make timely adjustment, foster new thinking, have a new understanding, develop new capabilities and build up a new image.

(I) The multiple identities of archivists:
1. Archivists and social members;
2. Archivists as custodian of history as well as protector for future;
3. Archivists as judges and promoters of the archives' value;
4. Archivists familiar with both traditional methods and new technologies;
5. Archivists as managers of both historical sources and information on new media; archivists as practitioners in specific positions as well as professional advisors;
6. Archivists as behind-the-screen heroes as well as public relation experts.

(II) Contribution-based social status

The social status, social value and social recognition of archivists are not self proclaimed but determined by our undertakings, our clients and our contributions.

Like other social members, we contribute to the society; the difference is that we answer for both the past and the future. Consequently, we shoulder more social responsibilities. In a normal society, we certainly deserve social recognition, acknowledgement and respect.

Only after we make efforts and due contributions can we acquire the social status we want.

(III) The value orientation, form and effect of making contributions

III. New requirements on the professional competency of archivists

(I) We propose a basic competency framework for archivists
1. Archivists are supposed to strive to **familiarize themselves with the following "Six Knows":**
(1) Institution's history, leadership, key figures and major events;
(2) The organizational structure and bodies
(3) The institution's main functions;
(4) The types, quantities and locations of archival holdings;
(5) The types, quantities and locations of archival holdings;
(6) Conditions of archival transfer and access demands; laws, regulations, rules and

standards relating to records management and archives administration.

2. Expert in reading and writing

3. Advocating and applying new technology and materials

4. Extensive social communication and publicity

5. Consultation and advisory services

(II) Of course, different kinds of archival departments, which can be classified into the following three types, have different demands on the abilities and qualities of archivists.

       1. Archives

       2. Records Office

       3. Archives Bureau (Division, Section)

(III) In archival departments, the requirements on capabilities and qualities for **leaders and working personnel** are different.

       1. Leaders

       2. Working Personnel

(IV) Strive to effect transformations

       1. From "obscurity" to "frontline";

       2. From passive to active;

       3. From backstage to the stage;

       4. From "dead archive" to "living information";

       5. From "one lock" to a "master key";

       6. From a storehouse of archives to an intellectual tank;

       7. From labor-intensive to sci-tech intensive.

IV. Approaches and measures for elevation and reinforcement

 (I) The transformation and adjustment of college education in archival studies

So far over 30 higher education institutions in China have set up archival departments or undergraduate programs, and some even set up graduate and doctoral programs in archival studies, with dozens of students enrolled every year. Based on the faculty resources of different universities, and their diverse understanding to social needs and development trend, the basic teaching mode and curriculum orientation can be roughly divided into the following three types:

      （1）Emphasis on historical studies;

      （2）Emphasis on management;

      （3）Emphasis on information.

All of the designs are still undergoing exploration. The aim is to cultivate qualified talents to meet social needs and serve future development, i.e., inter-disciplinary archival talents who have an extensive and solid knowledge base, and multiple choices.

 (II) On-job training for archivists in line with new circumstances and changes

China has a huge number of organizations and institutions on its vast territory, and therefore the need for records managers and secretarial staff at the grassroots level is extremely high. Almost every working unit needs at least one such personnel, which cannot be sufficiently provided by colleges and universities. In the meantime, records offices/archival departments have relatively low entry requirements, and the records managers/archivists often receive training after they get the job. Therefore, the workload of on-job training is rather heavy. To address this issue, the State Archives Administration of China sets up the Training Center for Archivists in Beijing and regional training institutes at provincial level across China.

For instance, the State Archives Administration has launched eleven consecutive qualification training programs for records managers/archivists in China's state organs in Beijing, covering basic records management, archival and secretarial knowledge and courses necessary for relevant personnel. The courses include:

（1）Records Management;
（2）Archives Management;
（3）Sci-tech Archives Management;
（4）Specific Archives Management;
（5）Archives Compilation;
（6）Archives Preservation;
（7）Digital Records Management;
（8）Development and Exploitation of Archival Information;
（9）Archival Appraisal;
（10）Archival-related Laws and Regulations;
（11）Code of Ethics.

(III) Continuing archival education with the purpose to enhance comprehensive skills

Continuing archival education is designed to update and increase the knowledge of records managers/archivists according to external changes and job demands. It has achieved very good effect. The training content is flexible, and each training session will, in forms of teaching, seminar and consultation, focus on the cutting-edge, needed and useful topics such as:

（1）Developing the archival-related legal system;
（2）Acquisition strategies;
（3）Development and exploitation of archival information;
（4）Development and use of information technology;
（5）Archival publicity and exhibition;
（6）Security measures for archives;
（7）Hot issues on archival development;
（8）Latest trends in the international archival community.

(IV) Extensive and effective social publicity on archives

1. Press spokesman mechanism;
2. Permanent display of archival documents;

3. Archival theme exhibition echoing social commemorative events;
4. Editing and publishing the compilation of archives;
5. Producing documentary films based on archives;
6. Setting up education base for students in archives;
7. Archives Week or Archives Day;
8. Soliciting historical materials from the public.

(V) Archival professionals' contribution to the government organs, enterprises and the society.

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Graduated from Archives Department of Renmin University (1982), he later got his master degree in administrative science and engineering from the Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Science. He used to act as deputy chief of Promotion Division of SAAC, and participated in, as person in charge, the organization of exhibitions during the 1996 ICA Congress.