Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies

2020

Toward a competency framework for Canadian archivists

Anne Daniel
Western University, anne.daniel@uwo.ca

Amanda Oliver
Western University, aolive32@uwo.ca

Amanda Jamieson
ajamies9@uwo.ca

Follow this and additional works at: https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas

Part of the Archival Science Commons

Recommended Citation

Toward a competency framework for Canadian archivists

TOWARD A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR CANADIAN ARCHIVISTS

The Canadian archival workforce is overdue for a reliable and robust competency framework.[1] It is apparent in our increasingly metrics-centric environment that a profession-specific competency framework is a tool that affords archivists an opportunity to communicate professional skills and knowledge while providing a benchmark for comparison among archivists and institutions.[2] A competency framework is a necessary tool to guide careers and provide direction when setting meaningful professional development goals.[3] Moreover, it is used to express educational and/or professional benchmarks and is beneficial to seasoned practitioners, educators, and students.[4]

The literature on competencies and the development of competency frameworks has largely emerged from the organizational management, human resources, and education sectors. David McClelland originated the theory of competency in 1973 within the field of psychology, and it was further expanded by his peers Richard Boyatzis, Lyle M. Spencer, and Signe M. Spencer.[5] Their work in the areas of competency model development has been adopted by many disciplines over the last thirty years. As such, it can be challenging to identify one overarching definition of "competencies" as "the definition of competencies has evolved over time and may be impacted by disciplinary, geographic, and cultural contexts."[6] We define competencies as the application of the combined knowledge, skills, behaviors, and abilities of an individual that have a measurable and observable outcome. By extension, a competency framework is a tool designed to identify and describe the competencies required to perform a role and organize those competencies into overarching themes. Furthermore, the term captures the general, transferable knowledge and skills required of a position.

Information management fields routinely apply competencies and competency frameworks. Primarily, reputable authorities established these frameworks. For instance, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries, the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA), and the Canadian Museums Association have all developed robust frameworks to define competencies for their practitioners.[7] If we reflect on competency documents from those allied

---

[1] Previous iterations of this research were presented at the Society of American Archivists annual meeting in 2017 and the Association of Canadian Archivists annual conference in 2018. The authors acknowledge the generous feedback provided by audiences at both conferences, which helped inform this article.

[2] This is evident in the publication of various metrics tools for archivists including Archival Metrics (produced by Elizabeth Yakel et al.), Standardized Statistical Measures and Metrics for Public Services in Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries (produced by the Society of American Archivists and the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College Research Libraries), the Impact Playbook (produced by Europeana), and Evidencing the Impact and Value of Special Collections (produced by Research Libraries UK).

[3] Canadian Association of Research Libraries, "Core Competencies for 21st Century CARL Librarians," Canadian Association of Research Libraries, 2010, http://www.carl-abrc.ca/doc/core_comp_profile-e.pdf.

[4] Karl-Rainer Blumenthal et al., "What Makes a Digital Steward: A Competency Profile Based on the National Digital Stewardship Residencies," *LIS Scholarship Archive* (2016), doi:10.31229/osf.io/tnmra.

[5] David McClelland, "Testing for Competence Rather Than Intelligence," *American Psychologist* 28 (1973): 1–14; Richard Boyatzis, *The Competent Manager* (New York: Wiley, 1982); Lyle M. Spencer and Signe M. Spencer, *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance* (New York: Wiley, 1993).

[6] Melissa Fraser-Arnott, "Competencies for Information Specialists in Emerging Roles," *Library Management* 38, no. 1 (2017): 66.

[7] Canadian Association of Research Libraries, "Core Competencies for 21st Century CARL Librarians"; ARMA International, Education Development Committee, *Records and Information Management Core Competencies*

information fields, we start to see trends that we might utilize in the creation of our own framework. Globally, within the archival profession, the professional associations in Australia, the Netherlands, and the United States offer competency guidelines on which to model our work. Still, it seems prudent to develop our own roadmap to guide our development as a profession.

The development of a competency framework for archivists is one step in the journey to professionalize and legitimize archivists' work. Historically, the path to professionalization has been to create training programs specific to archivists. Within Canada, the Public Archives of Canada offered the earliest notable archives course in 1959.[8] In the last thirty years, there have been numerous efforts to develop dedicated professional archival education programs, and several graduate-level programs have been established though they are typically accredited through the American Library Association.

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) has a long history with attempting to create an accreditation process for archival educational programs. It met with limited success, and as such in 1984 decided to create a certification process for archivists, known as the Academy of Certified Archivists: "This put the onus not on institutions, but on individual archivists to be responsible for obtaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed and to maintain professional standards." The organization offered its first certification examination on October 26, 1989.[9] Since the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) does not offer a certification program, some Canadian archivists choose to be certified through the academy. While archivists may choose to become certified, it is not a requirement, as the field is not regulated in North America.

Related to the discussion of certification is the discussion of professional identity. Evidence indicates that archivists need to continually reflect on professionalism in their work. The SAA lists professionalism as a core value for archivists, stating, "Archivists adhere to a common set of missions, values, and ethics."[10] Do archivists model professionalism as a core value? Much has been written on the journey toward professionalizing archival work and the development of a shared professional identity for archivists. Matt Gorzalski argues that "archivists continue to struggle with their professional identity and notions of professionalism. Much of this anxiety has been fueled by a lack of public recognition of the purpose and value of archives within society."[11] Scott Cline states, "Professionalism is a much larger concept than acquiring and applying education, and it certainly transcends discussions of whether the archival endeavor qualifies as a profession."[12] This is particularly evident while examining the historic and current demographic of archivists. Dominique Luster proposes that "true professionalism demands a balance of personal

---

(Overland Park, Kans.: ARMA International, Education Development Committee, 2017); Canadian Museums Human Resource Planning Committee, *The Workforce of the Future: Competencies for the Canadian Museum Community* (Ottawa: Canadian Museums Human Resource Planning Committee, 1997).

[8] Edwin Welch, "Archival Education," *Archivaria* 4 (1977): 57.

[9] Mott Linn, "Not Waiting for Godot: The History of the Academy of Certified Archivists and the Professionalization of the Archival Field," *American Archivist* 78, no. 1 (2015): 101, 109.

[10] Society of American Archivists, "SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics," Society of American Archivists, https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics.

[11] Matt Gorzalski, "Reflections on Professionalism and Its Continuing Importance for Archivists," in *Archival Values: Essays in Honor of Mark A. Greene,* ed. Christine Weideman and Mary A. Caldera (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2019), 240.

[12] Scott Cline, "'Things of the Spirit': Professionalism as an Archival Virtue," in Weideman and Caldera, eds., *Archival Values*, 260.

and theoretical knowledge because archives are social (and often political) constructs of power that tend to privilege some narratives and marginalize others despite all of our education and standards."[13] Additionally, Glenn Dingwall argues, "Professionalism is not regarded by all as an inherently good thing. The concentration of expertise and exclusive access to knowledge can be regarded as monopolistic."[14] Archival professionalism needs to be looked at in a holistic way to ensure it reflects the ideology of our current and future workforce. The development of a nationally accepted competency framework is a necessary mechanism to endorse professionalism as a core value for archivists and to legitimize our skills and value.

In 2011, the ACA's Education Committee was tasked with revamping the 1989 educational guidelines. As a result of this work, in 2013–14 the committee submitted a report to the ACA's board of directors that included a competency framework for archivists and records managers. The report was approved by the membership at the 2015 ACA annual general meeting. However, this framework was never treated as a standalone document or guideline independent of the Education Committee report.[15] The competencies presented in the framework are high-level and relevant to archivists and/or records managers. As a consequence of adding records managers to this framework, it lacks specificity for the profession. Thus, it is necessary to revisit the idea of a Canadian competency framework for archivists. In 2016, the Steering Committee on Canada's Archives identified a strategic need for archivists and other information professionals within Canada to develop critical competencies and to recommend steps to develop the current and future workforce. This work will be completed by the Archival Workforce Taskforce, whose objective is to "ensure that the competencies of archivists and information professionals are better aligned with the current and anticipated needs and challenges of the marketplace."[16] In 2019, the ACA endorsed the SAA's "Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies" (2016) as an interim measure until the Education Committee writes its own thorough educational guidelines.[17]

The goal of this research project was to establish a foundational competency framework for a Canadian archival audience. This was achieved by performing a qualitative analysis of established frameworks published by reputable international archival governing bodies and associations, and generating a foundational competency framework from that analysis. The framework reflects current skill and knowledge requirements and does not present a hypothesis on the future skillset of the profession. That being said, our belief is that a robust and well-articulated framework must be nimble enough to adapt to future professional requirements.

Literature Review

---

[13] Dominique Luster, "Professionalism: As Pursuit of Archivist Identity," in Weideman and Caldera, eds., *Archival Values*, 254.

[14] Glenn Dingwall, "Trusting Archivists: The Role of Archival Ethics Codes in Establishing Public Faith," *American Archivist* 67, no. 1 (2004): 17.

[15] At the time of publication, the report is no longer available on the ACA's website or via the Internet Archive.

[16] The Steering Committee on Canada's Archives' Archival Workforce Working Group is collaborating with the Association pour l'Avancement des Sciences et des Technologies de la Documentation to create a competency portal for information professionals. The authors are looking forward to the results of this work and how this may impact the development of a Canadian archivist competency profile. Archival Workforce Taskforce, "Project Charter," 2017, https://archives2026.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/workforce-projectcharter-en.pdf.

[17] This was approved at the ACA 2019 annual general meeting. The authors would like to acknowledge that Amanda Oliver has been a member of the ACA's Education Committee since May 2017.

With few exceptions, there is little literature that directly addresses the competencies archivists require. Within the literature, many scholars have examined facets of archival identity, which is only tangentially related. Much of the literature on competencies and emerging roles for information professionals is published within the fields of librarianship and records management. Within the archival sphere, the literature is framed around graduate school curricula and the knowledge and skills taught to those entering the profession. Multiple studies have investigated the value of a core archival knowledge that stems from archival curricula and graduate education programs.[18] Similarly, numerous studies from Jane Zhang, Vandana Singh, Bharat Mehra, and Michelle Riggs have examined a variety of technological competencies in graduate programs, from the strength of information technology curricula to encoded archival description and electronic records management.[19] Additionally, Cherie Long has explored developing and implementing a Master of Archival Studies program at Clayton State University, which integrates technological competencies into every course in the program.[20]

Terry Eastwood, Laura Millar, and others have espoused a need for a redefinition of the role of archivists in the digital age, albeit without offering a discussion on the specific skillsets required in this new environment.[21] Other studies have focused on particular archival skillsets, such as digital stewardship and digital curation.[22] There is merit to these studies, though they may have limited application to the work of the general practitioner due to their specificity.

While there are reports published by professional associations and archival institutions regarding archival competencies, the conversations have, for the most part, been driven by others outside of the archival community, with archivists in a contributing and/or consulting role. There is no academic analysis of these reports in our professional literature.

For instance, the SAA published proceedings from a colloquium entitled "New Skills for a Digital Era" in May 2006. The purpose of this colloquium was to identify the specific competencies

---

[18] Jeannette A. Bastian and Elizabeth Yakel, "'Are We There Yet?' Professionalism and the Development of an Archival Core Curriculum in the United States," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 46, no. 2 (2005): 95–114; Helen R. Tibbo, "So Much to Learn, So Little Time to Learn It: North American Archival Education Programs in the Information Age and the Role for Certificate Programs," *Archival Science* 6, no. 2 (2006): 231–45; Terry Eastwood, "A Personal Reflection on the Development of Archival Education," *Education for Information* 33, no. 2 (2017): 75–88; Jeannette A. Bastian, "Towards the Development of an Archival Core Curriculum: The United States and Canada," *Archival Science* 6, no. 2 (2006): 133–50.

[19] Jane Zhang, "Teaching Electronic Records Management in the Archival Curriculum," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 57, no. 1 (2016): 57–68; Vandana Singh and Bharat Mehra, "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Information Technology Curriculum in Library and Information Science Graduate Programs," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 45, no. 3 (2013): 219–31; Michelle Riggs, "The Correlation of Archival Education and Job Requirement since the Advent of Encoded Archival Description," *Journal of Archival Organization* 3, no. 1 (2008): 61–79.

[20] Cherie Long, "Developing and Implementing a Master of Archival Studies Program: A Collaborative Effort of a State University, a State Archives, and the National Archives and Records Administration," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 52, no. 2 (2011): 110–21.

[21] Terry Eastwood, "Building Archival Knowledge and Skills in the Digital Age," *Archival Science* 6 (2006): 163–70; Laura Millar, "Coming Up with Plan B: Considering the Future of Canadian Archives," *Archivaria* 77, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 103–39.

[22] Blumenthal et al., "What Makes a Digital Steward"; Jeonghyun Kim, Edward Warga, and William E. Moen, "Competencies Required for Digital Curation: An Analysis of Job Advertisements," *International Journal of Digital Curation* 8, no. 1 (2013): 66–83.

required by information professionals to work with digital materials, but "consensus among the participants focused more on the needs we share than the specific skills we must have."[23] The colloquium did not result in a set of specific competencies that could be used as a tool for archivists working in the digital era.

Similarly, the Royal Society of Canada published a report in 2014 reviewing the current and future status of Canadian libraries and archives. It lists seventy recommendations for specific library and archives groups across Canada. A theme among the recommendations is the need for continuing education for archivists to keep pace with our changing environments. The report states that "practitioners must recognize their responsibility for their own development," however it is challenging to self-identify gaps in one's knowledge without a benchmark for guidance.[24]

The purpose of the Council of Canadian Academies' report in 2015 was to identify opportunities for memory institutions in the digital era. The report recommends investigating accredited education programs and professional development opportunities to obtain the required competencies in the digital environment. The report lists broad categories of competencies, such as communication and interpersonal skills, curating and preserving content, and curation technologies, among others. It notes that these competencies do not necessarily need to be in-house and that memory institutions should work together to build a network of expertise across professions.[25]

Finally, Library and Archives Canada commissioned two reports that touch on the topic of competencies. Cara Downey and Sue Franklin state in an internal report, *New Competencies in the Digital Era,* that we need to adapt to the digital environment and to acclimate our professional competencies to stay relevant.[26] In *Reframing the Canadian Archival System: A Report for Library and Archives Canada,* Sean F. Berrigan reports on the status and needs of the Canadian archival environment. He observes that the archival community requires "needs-based training to update and expand their skills and competencies."[27] He also notes that the Canadian archival system does not have a leader. Who will lead Canadian archivists in the development of a competency framework and how do we get buy-in from archivists across the country?

The overarching theme present throughout these reports is that the fundamental functions of archivists have not changed but how we fulfill these duties has. Although these reports provide an overview of the competencies required of archivists, particularly in the digital environment, none offers a fulsome competency framework.

Characteristics of an Effective Competency Framework

---

[23] Society of American Archivists, *New Skills for a Digital Era* (Washington, D.C.: Society of American Archivists, 2006), 33, http://files.archivists.org/pubs/proceedings/NewSkillsForADigitalEra.pdf.

[24] Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel, *The Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory* (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 2014), 203, 204.

[25] Expert Panel on Memory Institutions and the Digital Revolution, *Leading in the Digital World: Opportunities for Canada's Memory Institutions* (Ottawa: Council of Canadian Academies, 2015), 131, 132.

[26] Cara Downey and Sue Franklin, *New Competencies in the Digital Era* (Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada, 2017), 3.

[27] Sean F. Berrigan, *Reframing the Canadian Archival System: A Report for Library and Archives Canada* (Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada, 2014), 17.

What are the characteristics of an effective competency framework? It must be endorsed and maintained by the archival community. Many archivists have an affiliation with professional associations at the provincial, territorial, state, and/or national levels, and members often look to their associations for guidance and leadership, especially when it comes to matters of professional development. The maintenance of a competency framework must be a collaborative effort between associations and members. Such a framework must be supported by archivists, employers, and educators in order for it to have significant impact on the profession.

A framework is a snapshot of the current environment, but it also needs to be a dynamic, living document that is updated regularly by archivists, employers, and educators as the profession adapts to our ever-changing working environment. Input is therefore required from the archival community to build on and endorse a framework.

Adaptability is a key element to an effective competency framework. The landscape of our profession will continue to change as recordkeeping practices and record formats evolve over time. An archivist competency framework must be adaptable to meet the current needs of our profession and must be agile enough to respond to future concerns as well. It must be regularly updated to reflect the changes in abilities, skills, and knowledge required to complete archival work. An effective competency framework must also be adaptable to different work environments. Although specialized skills may be required for specific types of archival institutions or archival records, a competency framework is meant to capture the transferable abilities, skills, and knowledge required to work as an archivist in any institution. Adaptability is a necessary personal characteristic for those working in the archival profession, as archivists must adjust to new professional requirements and standards. Adaptability is a marker of an agile professional capable of tackling future challenges.

Why Are Competency Frameworks Important?

Competency frameworks can be linked to standardized education and professional accreditation. As previously discussed, archival education curricula are not standardized in North America and archivists have many different options available to them at the graduate education level. This results in new archivists entering the profession with varying levels of knowledge and experience. In the absence of standardized education, a competency framework is one tool that could serve as a basis for consistency among educational institutions. Educators can use a competency framework to establish curricula and learning objectives for their individual courses and for their programs as a whole.

A competency framework can inform employers as to what they should be asking for in job postings. It gives employers a guide to use when hiring archivists. Research in this area has shown that employers ask for a range of skills when hiring archivists, such as from basic computer to in-depth technical skills.[28] The framework would be a mechanism to allow employers and human resources professionals to look outside of themselves and their institutions for guidance. Having

---

[28] Amanda Oliver, Amanda Jamieson, and Anne Daniel, "Archivists and Technical Competencies: A Conversation about Archival Education," panel session, Association of Canadian Archivists Annual Conference, Edmonton, Alb., June 9, 2018.

access to a competency framework would allow employers to craft effective job postings and in turn recruit archivists who have broad skillsets.

It is also a tool for our stakeholders to reference to increase their understanding of archival professional identity and archivists' abilities, skills, and knowledge. A framework demonstrates archivists' value and contributions to their institutions and funding bodies. In the absence of a competency framework, we are at risk of marginalizing our professional identity. This could impact the profession's ability to attract donors, researchers, and future members. A competency framework will help shape our professional identity as it helps define who we are as a profession and our role and work activities.

Methodology

Identification of the research method.

This study utilized content analysis to evaluate four authoritative competency frameworks in order to systematically review and summarize the content into a document for wider use. We drew on Melissa Fraser-Arnott's work published in 2017 titled "Competencies for Information Specialists in Emerging Roles."[29] Additionally, we consulted "Sources Relating to Archival and Recordkeeping Competency and Certification and Accreditation Programs" created by the International Council on Archives (ICA) in order to identify possible frameworks for inclusion in our analysis.[30] While competency frameworks for other allied information professionals, such as records managers and librarians, could provide some direction for our work, archivists require competencies that are unique to the profession.

Only English-language competency frameworks specific to archivists were included.[31] The following four competency frameworks were analyzed: (1) ACA, "Competencies for Archivists and Records Managers" (2014);[32] (2) Academy of Certified Archivists, "Role Delineation Statement for Professional Archivists" (updated 2014);[33] (3) Archives and Records Association of the United Kingdom and Ireland (ARA), "ARA Competency Framework Summary" (updated

---

[29] Fraser-Arnott, "Competencies for Information Specialists in Emerging Roles," 65–76.

[30] International Council on Archives, "Sources Relating to Archival and Recordkeeping Competency and Certification and Accreditation Programs," International Council on Archives, 2007, https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/-SPA_2007_Report_archival-practices_EN.pdf.

[31] The Association des Archivists du Québec includes a competency framework on its website for archival professionals. The competencies are only available in French and were therefore outside the scope of this research. Association des Archivists du Québec, "Devenir Archiviste," Association des Archivists du Québec, https://archivistes.qc.ca/devenir-archiviste/.

[32] Association of Canadian Archivists, "Competencies for Archivists and Records Managers," Education Guidelines Review Task Force Report, June 2014, 1–4, copy in authors' possession.

[33] Academy of Certified Archivists, "Role Delineation Statement for Professional Archivists," Academy of Certified Archivists, https://www.certifiedarchivists.org/get-certified/role-delineation-statement/.

2016–17);[34] and (4) Australian Society of Archivists (ASA), "Professional Capabilities Matrix" (2017).[35]

"Competencies for Archivists and Records Managers" was created by the ACA's Educational Review Task Force from 2011 to 2013. It focuses on three core areas of responsibilities and action: to govern, to communicate, and to lead. These core areas are further defined by nine specific functions. Professional archivists and educators created the Academy of Certified Archivists' "Role Delineation Statement for Professional Archivists." It "defines the knowledge, responsibilities and competencies necessary for professional archival work, and it encompasses more than one hundred commonly accepted duties and responsibilities of a professional archivist."[36] These obligations are divided into seven overarching groups, or "domains," which include skill statements that archivists should understand and to which they can apply knowledge.

The ARA's set of national standards for recordkeeping are outlined in its "ARA Competency Framework." The thirty-nine competencies are divided across three work areas: organizational, process, and stakeholder/customer. This framework goes a step further than the others and describes the skills required for five separate levels of expertise, from novice to expert.

Finally, the ASA articulates competencies as "capabilities" outlined in its "Professional Capabilities Matrix." These capabilities are linked to the ASA Recognized Professional or ASA Accredited Professional levels. Examples of these include professionalism, values and ethics, and leadership and innovation.

Data collection and analysis.

A content analysis of each of the four competency frameworks was completed. This included a review of each competency framework for the identification of keywords and common themes. The result of this content analysis was the identification of 166 individual competencies. Each of the competencies were placed in an individual row in the spreadsheet. They were reviewed and assigned a code based on the predominant themes of the competency. The competencies were coded based on keywords and themes.

We reviewed the 166 competencies four times and refined the coding on each review to remove duplication and to combine similar codes. We appraised the coding until consensus was reached. The final result was ten functional areas with thirty-four individual competencies. We then synthesized and summarized the competencies for clarity and consistency.

Findings

---

[34] Archives and Records Association of the United Kingdom and Ireland, "ARA Competency Framework," Archives and Records Association of the United Kingdom and Ireland, https://archivesandrecords.smapply.io/res/p/-competencies/.

[35] Australian Society of Archivists, "Professional Capabilities Matrix," Australian Society of Archivists, https://www.archivists.org.au/membership-information/professional-recognition/professional-capabilities.

[36] Academy of Certified Archivists, "Statement on Role Delineation," Academy of Certified Archivists, https://www.certifiedarchivists.org/get-certified/role-delineation-statement/.

Once the data had been collected from the four frameworks, it was evident that the competency frameworks were not fundamentally different from each other. There were many commonalities among the frameworks, and it is possible that they were influenced by one another. It is worth noting, however, that the frameworks are each structured differently. Some were more general and allowed for greater interpretation and application of the competencies, while others were more granular in their approach. For example, the competency framework from the ACA is grouped around three main functional areas, whereas the competency framework from the ARA is grouped around ten functional areas.

As such, the framework created out of our research and analysis takes a generalist approach (table 1). It can be applied at all levels of responsibility or function, be that entry-level or manager archivist. It was not the intent of this research to create a framework for specialized roles. It was prudent, given the dearth of authoritative sources on archival skills and knowledge within Canada, that a foundation be built on generalist competencies as a jumping-off point for the future development of a framework for specialized roles. This will no doubt become increasingly imperative for our profession given the direction of technology development and recordkeeping in the modern world.

Table 1. Preliminary Competency Framework

Access and Discovery	1. Providing intellectual and physical access to, and retrieval of, records
	2. Providing reference services based on archival holdings and on user needs
	3. Applying the principles of arrangement and description
	4. Understanding and applying descriptive and metadata standards
	5. Analyzing holdings use and user requests for planning and prioritizing
Collections Care	1. Understanding the impact of obsolescence and degradation on archival materials
	2. Applying preservation and conservation measures to archival materials in all formats
	3. Establishing and maintaining disaster preparedness and recovery and risk management policies and procedures
	4. Ensuring appropriate environmental conditions, storage, and handling of records
Collections Development	1. Building and maintaining donor relationships
	2. Understanding the relationship between the archival repository mandate and the acquisition policy
	3. Understanding how the acquisition policy guides the selection, appraisal, acquisition, accession, and disposition of records
	4. Appraising records based on evidential, informational, administrative, legal, fiscal, and intrinsic values
	5. Understanding the principles of records management, recordkeeping systems and practices, and the lifecycle of the records

Fundamentals and Principles	1. Understanding and applying the principles of provenance and original order 2. Understanding characteristics of records such as trustworthiness, authenticity, reliability, usability, comprehensiveness, uniqueness, and quality (integrity of the records) 3. Understanding archival value (evidential, informational, administrative, legal, fiscal, and intrinsic) 4. Establishing and maintaining physical and intellectual control of records
Governance	1. Managing human and financial resources 2. Establishing policies and procedures for the archival program 3. Identifying partnerships and fostering relationships to support collaboration 4. Assessing the impact of services and activities 5. Participating in strategic and operational planning
Information Systems	1. Designing, implementing, evaluating, and maintaining the information technology used to manage archives 2. Awareness and understanding of evolving technology and its impact on archives
Legislation	1. Understanding of legislation and ethical practices, including privacy, confidentiality, copyright, and freedom of information relating to all aspects of archival work 2. Understanding of legislation and ethical practices relating to gifts, loans, and deposits
Outreach and Advocacy	1. Promoting archives through educational programs, events, press releases, websites, social media, exhibits, and marketing materials 2. Developing and sustaining community networks across heritage and cultural sectors
Standards, Service, Scholarship (Stewardship)	1. Commitment to professional development, such as attending conferences, reading literature, participating in continuing education, and engaging and contributing to scholarship 2. Accountability to professional codes of ethics and codes of conduct 3. Commitment to the profession through participation in service activities
User Experience	1. Evaluating the information needs of user groups 2. Designing services to meet the information needs of user groups

Several points should be noted about our foundational competency framework. First, this framework is grouped into ten functional areas. Grouping similar or related activities together makes it a user-friendly document that can be read at a glance without in-depth navigation or interpretation. Second, the language used is meant to be easy to understand to eliminate ambiguity. In the analysis, we did not add any competencies that did not exist outside of the four frameworks. Our aim is to create competencies that are general enough to be understood regardless of the

context (e.g., setting, program, record format, etc.) and nimble enough to be adapted to changes in our working environments. Third, it is intended to capture all aspects of managing an archive, including activities such as governance and human resources. Further, it moves beyond traditional archival tasks. In many institutions, archives have a small number of professional staff and archivists are expected to take on varying levels of administrative responsibility in addition to their archival work. It acknowledges that archivists have a wide scope of professional activities and require broad areas of knowledge to function effectively. The competency framework does not demand an archivist be an expert in all areas. It is meant to reflect an awareness of knowledge and activities. It assumes archivists will have access to expert networks. As articulated in the literature review, memory institutions need to establish networks of professional expertise where knowledge sharing can occur.[37]

Fourth, this competency framework has a focus on a commitment to professional service. It should be noted, however, that professional service was present in some but not all of the reviewed competency frameworks. The greater number of archivists that actively contribute to the profession—by volunteering with professional associations, contributing to archival scholarship, and participating in archival conversations, as examples—expands the perspectives included in archival discourse. Including these activities in this competency framework acknowledges the need for diversification in the profession and professional growth.

Lastly, this competency framework is also intended to strike a balance between behind-the-scenes activities, such as collections care, and outwardly facing activities, such as user experience. Historically, the focus of our professional practice has been on collections-related work, whereas this framework recognizes the importance and necessity of addressing user needs. It attempts to strike a balance between the collections and the users.

Future Directions

Upon reflection and close examination of the synthesized competency framework, we identified two additional areas that merit inclusion in a competency framework: regional-specific and emotional labor competencies. Neither was included in the four frameworks analyzed. Evidence suggests these two areas are necessary requirements for archival practice.

A comprehensive competency framework must reflect regional practices in order to be meaningful to individuals in their local environments. For a Canadian competency framework, this may include Canadian-developed practices such as total archives, Rules for Archival Description, Indigenous recordkeeping practices, and macro-appraisal, for example. While the ACA's "Competencies for Archivists and Records Managers" was included in our analysis, it did not include any Canadian-specific competencies as it was based on a framework developed by the Association of Italian Archivists and the Italian Institute for Standardization.[38]

Emotional labor is a well-researched element of archival professional practice that merits inclusion as it runs through every aspect of professional practice, from acquisition to arrangement and

---

[37] Expert Panel on Memory Institutions and the Digital Revolution, *Leading in the Digital World*, 131.
[38] Association of Canadian Archivists Education Committee, "Competencies for Archivists and Records Managers," Association of Canadian Archivists, 2014, 4, copy in authors' possession.

description to reference.[39] It may be defined as "the process by which workers are expected to manage their feelings in accordance with organizationally defined rules and guidelines."[40] Emotional labor theory has its roots in sociology, and archival theorists are contextualizing it within the archival construct.[41] It is a disservice to archival professional practice to exclude emotional labor from the competency framework. This is an opportunity to explore emotional labor and archival professional practice further and to acknowledge this inherent aspect of archival work.

Notwithstanding the scope of this analysis, it may also be beneficial to look to and collaborate with other information professionals to further develop archivist competencies. Although we referenced competency frameworks from related professions, such as librarianship and records management, to inform our work, perhaps a more fulsome investigation into information professionals' competency frameworks would help identify any potential gaps in this or future frameworks.

Conclusion

Historically, there has been a struggle in our profession to establish a shared understanding of the skills necessary for effective archival practice. A competency framework is a tool used to define the skills, knowledge, and abilities required of an archivist. Because archivists are working in an increasingly competitive, metrics-driven environment, a competency framework can be used as evidence of the skills and knowledge archivists bring to their institutions as well as justification for resource requirements.

By not defining ourselves, we are giving others the power to define us. Archivists have long contemplated professional identity, but there are few practical applications of these reflections. While self-reflection can be useful, we cannot rely on this to guide professional practice and growth. There is merit in defining our purpose and our roles, for ourselves as individuals within the context of our institutions and for the broader profession. We need to be more transparent so we can continue to attract individuals with diverse skills and not be seen as an esoteric subset of information specialists. A competency framework is one such mechanism that should be used to build a strong professional foundation.

This competency framework is intended to define and communicate our skills and knowledge. Ideally, it will be adopted and adapted by the Canadian archival community. Its implementation will shape the training of future archivists, inform professional development, and guide employers in job description development. To do this, it needs to be endorsed and sustained by the archival community through our provincial, territorial, state, and national archival associations. Competency frameworks are living documents, and members of the Canadian archival community must review and update this framework on a regular basis. Our professional associations can help foster a collaborative process. All voices from all areas of the archival community should be welcomed as contributors to the framework so as not to create an exclusionary power structure and

---

[39] Important contributions have come from authors in this and related areas of study (e.g., ethics of care and secondary trauma, among others): Michelle Caswell, Jennifer Douglas, Michaela Hart, Nicola Laurent, Katie Sloan, and Jennifer Vanderfluit, among others.

[40] Amy S. Wharton, "The Sociology of Emotional Labor," *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009): 148.

[41] Arlie Russell Hochschild conceived the term "emotional labor" in 1983. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling,* rev. ed. (1983; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

privilege some forms of knowledge over others. Acceptance and implementation of a competency framework will benefit our community, our stakeholders, and our collections and will support the longevity and prosperity of the archival profession.