

Measures of Success: Evaluating University of British Columbia's Master of Archival Studies Program

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RÉSUMÉ Cet article présente les résultats d'une enquête portant sur l'opinion des personnes qui ont été inscrites au programme de maîtrise en archivistique de l'Université de la Colombie-britannique relativement à sa capacité à les préparer au marché du travail comme archivistes ou gestionnaires des documents. Les résultats indiquent que, dans l'ensemble, les finissants sont satisfaits de la préparation offerte par le programme bien qu'ils en considèrent certains éléments comme moins efficaces que d'autres. L'article suggère que le succès de tout programme de formation professionnelle à préparer ses finissants à rallier le marché du travail est, règle générale, un indicateur à la fois de l'efficacité du programme et du niveau de développement atteint au sein d'une profession. On suggère de plus qu'il est important de bien examiner la formation présentement offerte en archivistique pour continuer à développer des programmes adaptés à ceux qui embrassent la profession.

ABSTRACT This article presents the findings of a survey of the attitudes of persons who have attended the Master of Archival Studies Program at the University of British Columbia towards the program's effectiveness in preparing them to enter the workforce as archivists or records managers. The findings suggest that, on the whole, graduates are satisfied with the preparation that the program provided, but that they view certain aspects of the program as less effective than others. The article argues that, in general, the success of any professional educational program in preparing its graduates to join the workforce is both a measure of that program's efficacy and the given profession's level of development. It also proposes that it is important to carefully examine the archival education currently offered in order to continue developing curricula appropriate to those entering the archives profession.

Introduction

Although there have been archival institutions in Canada for over a century, archival education has only recently been formalized in university graduate programs. Numerous articles have been written on the state of archival education and its role in supporting the profession. Analyses of what it means to be a "profession" invariably include the development of a substantial body of theory and of teaching using this theory as a basis of instruction as significant elements of professionalization. Unfortunately, it has been noted that "the lack of

good educational possibilities is the Achilles' heel of the profession."¹ Status in the community has also been considered an important element of professionalization, this status often being at least partly dependent on the quality of education received by members of the profession. Richard J. Cox states that the public has "a poor or incomplete understanding of the work of the archivist," and argues that "archivists should strengthen their educational foundation, theory, and public profile by forming full masters-level archival administration programs."² Robert Sidney Martin suggests that the development of professional education follows, rather than precedes, professionalization of a field. Noting the advanced state in the U.S. of education in librarianship compared to archival studies, the author writes that "[i]t may simply be that the retarded development of professional education for archivists in the United States is a reflection of the retarded development of the profession itself."³

One problem associated with developing archival education programs is that, in contrast to most professions, the archival field has no certification system in place to regulate the qualifications of an archivist/records manager or to dictate the content of its educational programs. There is, therefore, no accepted standard against which to measure the success or failure of a degree-granting program in this field; nor is there even consensus on what such programs should include. However, general agreement exists in the literature that an archival education program must provide a balance of theory and practice in order to ensure that graduates become professionals as opposed to skilled workers.⁴ Roy Schaeffer argues that the archival field is in the process of developing from a craft to a profession, and that, in addition to providing an introduction to the practical aspects of day-to-day archival work, the graduate archival education should also "develop what may be termed 'archival thinking,' an elaboration of an intellectual *weltanschauung* that covers all aspects of the record and society."⁵ Richard Klumpenhower, a graduate of the Master of Archival Studies program at the University of British Columbia, writes that time spent in theoretical exploration during his degree in fact forged a strong link with archival practice, insofar as the thinking and rethinking of archival principles and policies, the collecting and discarding of ideas and the critical evaluation of archival concepts and models are in fact prominent features of daily archival work. He also argues that the program provided him with enough theory and methodology to adapt to different environments, and that, in essence, it taught him not how to be an archivist, but how to become one in the course of work in the field.⁶ According to James O'Toole, however, in the United States, at least, archival education tends to suffer from a workshop mentality, emphasizing practical skills while failing to integrate them into a coherent theoretical framework.⁷

This paper presents the results of a survey of the attitudes of those who attended the Master of Archival Studies Program at UBC's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies toward how well the program prepared

them to enter the workforce as archivists and records managers.⁸ Because the MAS is a professional program, the focus of this research is on the program's capacity, as indicated by the survey results, to prepare its students to enter the workforce. The research is therefore, in a sense, narrow in scope, focusing mainly on specific practical aspects of the program rather than on general questions about intellectual content and rigor. It is hoped that the information obtained from this research may assist those involved in developing archival curricula to understand how well the MAS program has prepared its graduates to carry out the basic functions of an archivist or records manager upon completion of the program. In broader terms, it can be argued that the effectiveness of graduate education in a field is a measure of the professionalization of that field: if the graduates felt that after completing the MAS they were poorly equipped to function in the workplace, or that an MAS is no more beneficial than simply gaining a few years' experience working in archives, then surely this is a problem that urgently needs to be addressed.

The Context: A Brief History of the Master of Archival Studies Program at the University of British Columbia

The MAS program was inaugurated in the 1981–82 school year, granting its first degrees in the spring of 1983. Terry Eastwood, for four years the only full-time faculty member, identified three purposes of archival professional education that the program was designed to address: the establishment of a theoretical framework, the learning of practical knowledge, and the development of specific skills. He added that the program could be characterized as “decidedly generalist.”⁹ Although at that time part of the School of Librarianship,¹⁰ the MAS was administered jointly by that school and the Department of History, a fact which reflected a closer philosophical relationship between the archival field and historical studies than is typical today.¹¹ The brief introduction to the program appearing in the Calendar of the University of British Columbia for 1980/81 reflects some of the principles guiding its creation:

The profession of archival work is beginning to develop in Canada and is already well developed in many other areas of the world. There is certain to be an increasing need for specialists in this field. It is not only that archival repositories themselves will need staffing as they are established and expand, but archivists are needed in many other areas of activity. Many large libraries, as distinct from archival repositories, hold collections of archival and manuscript material especially in rare book and special collections. It is also an important adjunct to bibliographical work where no borderline is drawn between archival, manuscript, and printed book materials. It is therefore envisaged as an area of growing importance and in Canada may well be linked closely with the growing emphasis on Canadian historical and literary studies.¹²

The program offered a core curriculum in archival studies, including "Introduction to Archives," a course which, as its description suggests, provided the basic groundwork for an understanding of archives:

The principles, terminology and literature of archival work. Types of materials collection and their characteristics. Acquisitions policy, programs, strategy, and techniques. Accessioning, sorting and arrangement of archival materials. Compilation of finding aids, inventories, calendars, card catalogues and indexes. Shelving and storage. Service to the public. Exhibits.¹³

Other courses included "Automation and Archives" described as:

An introduction to the concepts and terminology of automation. Machine based means of storing and manipulating finding aid data. Problems of controlling machine readable materials as a type of archival holding.¹⁴

Two additional courses were "Conservation and Repair of Materials" and "Advanced Archives." "Advanced Archives" included elements of laws governing archives and records, principles of appraisal, and management principles which, in turn, included "archival administration, planning, budgeting, workflow and staffing." Another course entitled "Records Management" embraced "records classification, storage, transfer, scheduling, disposal, circulation and use."¹⁵ The program contained, as well, a required course entitled "Canadian Historiography and Historical Methods." Finally, candidates were to take three to four one-term elective courses, constituting nine to twelve credits – the Calendar providing a list of examples of acceptable courses. These included Canadian history, Canadian literature, historical geography of Canada, oral history and genealogy, rare books and special collections, local government, and the like. Requirements for the degree also included a practicum, to be completed "at an archival repository which is approved by the Coordinating Committee of the program,"¹⁶ and a thesis.

The program retained this structure, with minor changes, into the late 1980s. Although more courses with a largely library science focus (such as indexing and "Information Retrieval Systems") were added, it continued to emphasize the close relationship between the study of history, broadly defined, and the study of archives. The 1988/89 UBC Calendar stated that "because of the close link between archives and historical studies of all kinds, prospective students should acquaint themselves especially with history and allied disciplines which take an historical perspective such as anthropology, economics, geography, and sociology."¹⁷ The introductory section in the Calendar for the following year, however, points to an expanding concept of archives and archivists within society:

Archivists' work increasingly involves them in promoting and administering systematic management of records throughout their life cycle, in acquisition of a broad range of materials of all media, in a complex of legal and regulatory concerns, and in application of automation to problems of retrieving information from archives. Thus, while maintaining close links with the study of history, professional archival studies also have interdisciplinary links with administrative studies, legal studies, media and communication studies, and library and information studies.¹⁸

That year also saw an expanded core curriculum which included the specialist courses "Organization and Administration of Archival Institutions," "Description and Indexing of Archives," and "Reference Service and Access to Archives." Elective courses for second-year students included, in addition to the types of courses mentioned earlier, "Diplomatics," "Management of Libraries and Archives" and "Elements of Law for Archives." Further expansion in the 1994/95 year saw the addition of courses entitled "Selection and Acquisition of Archival Documents," "The Juridical Context of Canadian Archives," and "Records in Office Systems." The last of these was a records management course which covered the "structure and characteristics of integrated office systems, design and implementation of records classification and scheduling; [and] legal, security, and access issues."¹⁹ The gradual expansion of archival and records management courses in the program was accompanied by a reduction in the number of electives (from twelve to six) that a student was permitted to take outside the department. Beginning in 1994, the practicum became an optional rather than mandatory part of the degree; additionally, students now had the option of substituting additional coursework and a major or graduating essay for the thesis.

Problem Statement

Although the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies (SLAIS) recently has begun to conduct surveys of current students to ascertain levels of satisfaction with course selection, content, assigned readings, etc.,²⁰ no comprehensive study of *graduates'* attitudes towards the MAS program specifically has been conducted until now.²¹ The school consequently has no reliable data on its students' level of satisfaction with the program once they take their place in the workforce as archivists or records managers.

Research questions for this study included:

- How well do those who attended the program feel it prepared them for specific tasks they were subsequently required to conduct in the workplace? Did they feel more prepared for some tasks than for others?
- How useful do graduates consider the practicum and thesis components of

the program to have been to their subsequent activities as archivists or records managers?

- What is the overall level of satisfaction with the program among those who attended it? Are higher levels of satisfaction reported among certain groups, such as recent graduates, archivists as opposed to records managers, or those employed in government institutions?

Data Gathering Methods

The survey was conducted by means of a mailed questionnaire²² which was sent to graduates and those students who had completed at least the coursework program of the MAS by 1996 and whose time allotted for completion of the thesis component had not elapsed. (The survey excluded those who had entered the program in the fall of 1995 and who commenced work on the thesis portion of the program in January 1997.) A mailing list was obtained from the Alumni Association at the University of British Columbia and was supplemented by a list, compiled by SLAIS office staff, of those who have not yet completed the thesis. It is recognized, however, that some names and addresses may not have been included in these lists, and that some of the addresses may not have been current. In total, 104 questionnaires were mailed in January and February 1997, with follow-up reminders and second questionnaires being sent in March 1997. A total of eighty-two subjects, or 78.9 per cent, responded to the questionnaire; thus, the data can be considered accurate to the level of plus or minus five per cent, nineteen times out of twenty. The data was encoded and analyzed using SYSTAT 5.0.

Results

Part I – Question 1 to 7 – of the questionnaire (see appendix) was designed to obtain data on respondents' year of completion of coursework, the type and size of institution in which they were employed, and their present position. The next set of questions, contained in Question 8, asked respondents to rate how effectively they felt the MAS program had prepared them to conduct certain activities in the workplace, on a scale ranging from "very effectively" to "not at all effectively." Respondents were requested to answer "does not apply" only if they had not had occasion to conduct that particular activity in the workplace. The activities listed were as follows: (1) arrange and describe archival records; (2) assess the physical preservation needs of records; (3) provide reference services to records users; (4) design acquisition policies; (5) implement acquisition policies; (6) appraise records for retention or destruction; (7) design and implement records retention and disposal schedules; (8) manage electronic records; (9) manage electronic databases; (10) assume the

position of manager of an archives; and (11) conduct activities designed to increase public awareness and use of archives. The results for Question 8 are presented in the following table:

Table of Results for Question 8

	Very Effectively	Somewhat Effectively	Not Very Effectively	Not At All Effectively	Does Not Apply	Total Answering
Arrange and Describe Records	50	25	1	1	5	82
Assess Preservation Needs	24	42	9	3	3	82
Provide Reference Services	20	42	11	2	7	82
Design Acquisition Policies	29	26	5	5	17	82
Implement Acquisition Policies	17	35	7	3	20	82
Appraise Records	26	45	8	1	2	82
Design Records Schedules	19	29	18	9	7	82
Manage Electronic Records	1	21	20	24	15	81
Manage Electronic Databases	3	16	18	31	12	80
Manage Archives	6	28	20	6	22	82
Increase Public Awareness	10	36	21	3	12	82

The table shows that, among the various categories, arrangement and description was the activity for which the greatest number of respondents felt highly prepared after completing the program. Written comments, as well, point to this aspect of the program as the most successful. One respondent rated "the principles and processes of arrangement and description [as] one of the strongest parts of the program" along with training in the "nature of archives/records." The respondent also noted that "although *RAD* had not yet been published, it was easy to learn it on my own, based on my knowledge of arrangement and description principles." Another respondent wrote that "I was in the MAS program in 'pre-*RAD*' days, but the grounding I received in A & D was good enough to allow me to click into the *Rules* after taking only a couple of upgrade workshops." Others also commented that the program provided them with a solid basis of theory which allowed them to adapt to different arrangement and description needs, while one person noted that "the hands-on exercise was an essential addition to the theory."

Acquisition policies design was another aspect of the program receiving high ratings. For example, one respondent termed the training "effective in

that the program made clear the issues around acquisition and what was an archival record & what was not." Other respondents stated that the program provided a good background of theory on the subject. However, one person argued that "no allowance [was] given in courses for compromises that [the] real world requires." This was a type of comment found elsewhere as well.

Assessing records' physical preservation needs, appraising records, and providing reference services all received more qualified ratings of satisfaction than arrangement and description and acquisition policy design. With regard to physical preservation, several respondents noted that the coursework offered a useful blend of theory and practice. Others, however, argued that it focused on details at the expense of overall planning. According to one person, "the one conservation course I took focused more on specific methods (tape removal; tear repair; deacidification) and not really on assessing records and developing *preservation* plans." Another wrote that "we needed more instruction on how to *implement* a preservation program, including assigning specific media for preservation in a case study format."

With respect to appraisal, some respondents appeared to feel that theory was emphasized at the expense of practice. One subject wrote that "although the theoretical component provided me with the arguments for/against appraisal decisions, I would have benefited from practical experience – or exposure to thorough case studies." Similarly, another respondent stated that "we learned all the theories/pseudo-theories but needed to have it made real by being given scenarios or using case studies in order to grasp the compromises inevitable in this function." By contrast, a number of respondents appeared to feel that the practical functions of providing reference services could not be taught thoroughly and effectively in the classroom. A couple of typical comments were that "providing reference service can only be taught to a point, as familiarity with the collection contributes far more to the provision of reference services," and that "reference service is best learned through experience rather than at school." One respondent suggested, however, that "training could be effective if it concentrate[d] on the actual reference interview – techniques on how best to elicit what the researcher needs."

Respondents felt that the program was weak in providing the skills needed to prepare them to assume positions as managers within archives, although several commented that they had not taken the archives management elective. One respondent wrote that "I had no knowledge or preparation to deal with human resource issues (ie hiring, disciplining, dismissal) or budgeting processes. These are areas where hands on experience and trial and error in the workplace are not effective means of acquiring management skills." Another argued that "in coursework, there needs to be more emphasis on the management of not only records, but also people (staff), budget, physical facilities, etc." Nevertheless, several respondents indicated that the program had provided them with a useful start on which to build experience. One wrote "I

found the archives mgt course very good & it helps me understand how things *should* be run!“

The records scheduling component generated a number of critical comments (although nineteen of the respondents indicated that the program had handled scheduling “very effectively”). In general, respondents appeared to feel that the program failed to provide them with the practical information necessary to carry out this function. The following comment was typical: “I came out of [the records management course] with only a vague idea of how to prepare records classification and retention schedules; I didn’t really have a clear idea of what such a schedule was supposed to *look* like.” Another characteristic comment was that “more practical experience in researching statutes & regulations would be helpful, also knowledge of publications/examples of other institutions’ schedules.” Surprisingly, management of electronic records and management of electronic databases, which recorded the lowest levels of satisfaction with the program, received fewer negative comments than did records scheduling. Several respondents suggested that electronic records and database management have changed so rapidly since they completed the MAS that it would have been difficult for the program to provide useful, up-to-date information on these topics. Others stated that the program provided them with some theoretical information which proved useful in learning specific applications on the job in these areas. For example, one respondent wrote that “there was very little information specifically about electronic records when I did my coursework; however, I feel that the fundamental archival theory and principles that I learned have helped me to adapt to working with electronic records better than my colleagues without a similar background.” Nevertheless, another wrote that “the only real short-coming of the MAS course ... was the glaring omission of in-depth, practical method of managing electronic records,” while another stated that there was “not enough focus on computers & technology in general.”

The next section of the questionnaire, Questions 9 and 10, asked student to rate how useful the practicum or internship and thesis components of the program were to their subsequent activities as archivists and records managers. The scale ranged from “essential” to “not useful.” Of the 78 students who had completed a practicum or internship, 46 answered “essential,” 23 “very useful,” 6 “somewhat useful,” and 3 “not useful.” Reflecting these high ratings, many of the comments indicated that students felt that the practicum had been the most valuable part of the program, especially as it allowed them to apply theory learned in the first year of the program in a practical workplace setting. One respondent wrote that “for me, it was very valuable to have time to work on specific, limited projects, with regular supervision before I started my first job, where I was expected to jump in and know what I was doing right away. The practicum also gave me an opportunity to work with the theory I had

learned in first year and to reflect on, and work out, ideas that had gone by quickly in class.” Another noted that “the practicum provided an invaluable forum to apply theoretical principles to the real world and to gain working level knowledge of managing an archives.” Respondents also noted that the practical experience gained during the practicum/internship provided a solid basis on which to proceed to the second year of the program. One wrote that “It was a much-needed reality check & made 2nd year make sense,” while another stated that “I really feel this experience gave me important perspective for my 2nd year of studies, my thesis, & even my current work.” Others pointed out that the practicum allowed them to network. According to one respondent, “The practicum led to later full-time employment at the sponsoring institution and created some useful contacts for me.”

Response to the usefulness of the thesis was less favourable: of the 71 who had completed the thesis or were in the process of doing so, 10 answered that it was “essential” to their subsequent activities as archivists/records managers, while 22 answered “very useful,” 25 answered “somewhat useful,” and 14 answered “not useful.” However, some respondents did find that aspects of their thesis research held direct relevance to their subsequent workplace activities. According to one, “My thesis allowed me the opportunity to explore a number of key issues in great depth, and probably prepared me for several challenges I faced in the first 1–3 years of work.” Nonetheless, many respondents commented that they felt the thesis to be valuable in less tangible ways. One respondent wrote that “while the topic of my research is not something I deal with daily, the conduct of a major research project contributed to my intellectual growth and development.” Another wrote that “my thesis subject has had no relevance or only indirect relevance to my work, in the practical sense. However, it did teach me what is involved in examining an issue thoroughly – and that skill can be applied to other things.”

The final question on the survey asked subjects to rate how effectively the MAS program as a whole prepared them to enter the workforce as archivists or records managers. The scale ranged from “very effectively” to “not at all effectively.” Of the 81 subjects who answered the question, 37 responded “very effectively,” 41 “somewhat effectively,” and 3 “not very effectively.” No respondent answered “not at all effectively.” Some respondents felt that the program, although strong on theory, did not prepare them successfully to face the practical day-to-day realities of the workplace. One wrote that “the principle [sic] weakness with the program concerns the enormous lack of appreciation for the fiscal realities facing archives.” Another stated that “one major failing of the program is that it does not teach students how the real world works. Most students end up working in bureaucracies without any idea of how bureaucracies work.” However, overall, remarks in the “Additional Comments” section were favourable. One respondent wrote that

In general, the MAS program provided me with invaluable training for me, providing a forum to:

- learn and apply the basic theory and practice of archives administration;
- examine and analyze the role of archives in our society, including the fundamental goals, the current issues, and the challenges ahead; and
- gain working knowledge of the Canadian archival community through exposure to professional standards and associations established to provide leadership and to represent the needs of the archival profession in Canada.

In essence the program provided a solid foundation upon which to build and further my knowledge.

Another stated that

The longer I work in archives and interact with archivists with a variety of backgrounds, the more I appreciate the solid foundation of archival theory, principle, and practice that I gained from the MAS program. Understanding the nature of records and records-creation processes has given me flexibility to do different kinds of archival work and to adapt to new kinds of records (especially electronic records).

The data provided by Section I of the survey, in which respondents were asked to indicate their year of completion of the program, type of institution of employment, current position, and other information, supports an analysis of overall satisfaction of the program by specific groupings of graduates. One of the research questions for the study, for example, was whether overall level of satisfaction with the program had changed over time. Given that the number of students completing coursework each year is small, year of completion was broken down into two groupings: those who completed the program in 1990 or earlier, and those who completed in 1991 or later. The results show a slightly higher overall rating among those in the former group: of the 35 respondents to the question who finished in 1990 or earlier, 19 thought the program prepared them to enter the workplace "very effectively" and 16 "somewhat effectively," while, of the 45 respondents who finished in 1991 or later, 18 answered "very effectively," 25 "somewhat effectively," and 2 "not very effectively."²³ In Section I of the survey, respondents were also asked to name the type of institution in which they had been employed the longest. Since the majority (45) reported they had worked the longest in government institutions while the rest were spread out among corporate, private non-profit, educational, and other bodies, the data was reorganized under two categories: government and non-government institutions. The results show no important difference between these two groups.²⁴ However, an analysis by position within institution of present employment shows that the majority of respondents who were categorized either as archivists or as contract workers and others rated the program as having been very effective in preparing them

to enter the workforce, but that the majority of those who are records managers rated the program as only somewhat effective. Results are presented in the following table:

Ratings of Effectiveness of MAS Program by Position Within Institution

	Very Effectively	Somewhat Effectively	Not Very Effectively	Total Answering
Archivists	20	14	0	34
Records Managers	2	10	1	13
Contract/Other	9	4	1	14

Comments in the Additional Comments section at the end of the survey reflect this finding. One respondent remarked that "I felt that the program provided a very good preparation for archival work ... but it was weak or uneven on Records Management, which is what I ended up doing for a year." Another commented that "the school prepares students very effectively for archival work. The same can't be said for records management work." Still another said that "the weakest part of the MAS program during my years of course work was records management ... Certain basic concepts, such as records classification systems and scheduling, were not presented effectively at all."

Discussion of Results

The title of this article, "Measures of Success," reflects the survey's attempt to quantify the MAS program's level of success, centering on the experiences and perspectives of those on whom it naturally has had its greatest impact. Some aspects of the MAS program garnered high satisfaction ratings while others were considered less satisfactory. Arrangement and description of archival records and design of acquisition policies showed the highest levels, with somewhat less satisfaction being recorded for implementation of acquisition policies, appraisal, records scheduling, preservation, and provision of reference services. Lower ratings were recorded for archives management and public programming (Question #8k). The components of the program receiving the lowest ratings were electronic database management and management of electronic records.

Thus, on the whole, while more traditional archival activities were accorded high levels of satisfaction (with the exception of public programming), those elements which centre on electronic records and incorporate a strong focus on computer technology were considered to be less satisfactory. This pattern becomes more pronounced when it is recognized that records managers gave the program a considerably lower overall rating than did archivists. The application of records management principles to electronic records and databases is

increasingly an important element of modern records management work. It must be noted that courses devoted entirely to the management of electronic records and databases were added to the program only recently (1994/95). Most graduates have needed this training: only fifteen respondents reported that they have never had occasion to apply skills in the management of electronic records and only twelve in management of electronic databases. It is clear that it has taken some time for the program to catch up to the needs of the profession.

This finding is indicative of a larger trend in archival education towards failing to keep pace with developments in automation in the field. In an article surveying the types of courses available to students in the library and archival fields, one author has noted that, in the period between 1978 and 1991, the number of automation courses in archival education increased minimally (from two to seven), "even though," he wrote, "employers obviously rate these skills very highly."²⁵ The development of courses aimed at familiarizing students with specific software applications for archival work is clearly something that should receive very serious consideration by educators in the archival field. For UBC, given the fact that records scheduling also received relatively low ratings, it may be useful to introduce training in using database and other software to assist in the creation and maintenance of records schedules, including support for related functions. In addition, an ability to understand evolving records concepts and technology continues to be critical for the purposes of appraising and acquiring electronic records and maintaining their long-term accessibility.

Notably, while the program received a low rating for management of archives, it has in fact offered a joint MLIS-MAS course on library and archives management for nearly a decade. However, the course is an elective; it may be worthwhile to make it a mandatory part of the curriculum. It may also be useful to place greater emphasis on exposure to management issues during the practicum.

One important finding is that a large majority of respondents considered the practicum to have been an integral part of their archival education. Thus, while this study cannot answer the question of what balance to strike between theory and practice in a graduate archival studies program, the study's conclusions can be used to argue that the inclusion of a practicum, in which students apply the theory they have learned in the classroom in a workplace setting, is important to a program's overall success. It is unfortunate, therefore, that because of funding cuts, UBC can no longer afford to pay students for practicum work and has therefore had to make this element of the program optional. Fortunately, those who elect not to take the practicum still sometimes find paid jobs as student archivists or records managers. Also, in an effort to compensate for the loss of the paid practicum, in 1996-97 the program began offering an elective "Professional Experience" course which allows students

to apply their theoretical knowledge to a specific problem in an archival or records management setting. In addition, students are required to complete a hands-on arrangement and description project in an archives in the first year.

It is not surprising that respondents generally rated the thesis as being less useful to their subsequent activities as archivists and records managers, since the purpose of a thesis is not primarily to teach specific skills applicable in the workplace but to develop critical thinking about some aspect of the field of archival science. Interestingly, beginning in 1994, students have been given the option of completing several courses and a major essay in place of the thesis, mainly for administrative reasons. This option gives them exposure to a wider variety of subjects, which may have a positive effect on their transition from students to archivists or records managers. However, not writing a thesis may have a detrimental impact on their ability to conduct research, contribute scholarly writing, and engage in other similar work which is also part of the profession. The impact of this change on graduates' abilities to fulfil their functions as archivists and records managers and on the development of the archives and records management professions are potential topics for future research.

On the whole, satisfaction with the MAS program among its graduates is fairly high. A strong majority indicated that it prepared them either very effectively or somewhat effectively to enter the workforce as archivists or records managers. Although records managers appear to be less satisfied with the program than archivists or those who categorized themselves as contract workers or falling within the "other" field, the results cannot be considered conclusive since only thirteen of the respondents gave their current position as "records manager." Further research into the attitudes of graduates who work as records managers may help generate a more complete analysis of this issue. There also appears to have been a slight decrease in the overall level of satisfaction among more recent graduates. It is not possible to determine, however, whether this is due to specific changes in the program or to less tangible factors such as the instability of the current job market or a higher level of insecurity in the workplace experienced by relatively new graduates.

Conclusion

The Master of Archival Studies program at the University of British Columbia is one of very few such programs in North America.²⁶ It is therefore important that archival educators be aware of it, understand its guiding principles, and obtain reliable information on how successfully it has achieved its goals. Research studies, including comparative studies, on various aspects of this and other archival programs may be used to provide useful information for those developing archival curricula and for all those connected in some way to the education of archivists, with the possible objects being standardization of archival education and certification of archivists and records managers.

Whether or not these goals are achieved, it is highly likely that the trend towards expansion of the archives and records management professions will continue as the information needs of society increase. We must focus our time and resources on developing educational programs designed to meet the ensuing demands.

Notes

- 1 Liv Mykland, "Protection and Integrity: The Archivist's Identity and Professionalism," *Archivum* XXXIX (1994), pp. 106–7.
- 2 "Professionalism and Archivists in the United States," *American Archivist* (Summer 1986), p. 244.
- 3 "The Development of Professional Education for Librarians and Archivists in the United States: A Comparative Essay," *American Archivist* 57 (Summer 1994), p. 557.
- 4 See, for example, Education Committee, Association of Canadian Archivists, "Guidelines for the Development of a Two-Year Curriculum for a Master of Archival Studies Programme," *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989–90), pp. 128–41; Terry Eastwood, "Nurturing Archival Education in the University," *American Archivist* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 228–52; Paul Conway, "Archival Education and the Need for Full-time Faculty," *American Archivist* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 254–65; James M. O'Toole "Curriculum Development in Archival Education: A Proposal," *American Archivist* 53 (Summer 1990), pp. 460–66.
- 5 Roy Schaeffer, "From Craft to Profession: The Evolution of Archival Education and Theory in North America," *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994), p. 29.
- 6 Rick Klumpenhauer, "The MAS and After: Transubstantiating Theory and Practice into an Archival Culture," *Archivaria* 39 (Spring 1995), pp. 88–95.
- 7 O'Toole, "Curriculum Development in Archival Education," p. 465.
- 8 The survey was conducted independently by the author and was not commissioned by the University or by the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies.
- 9 Terry Eastwood, "The Origins and Aims of the Master of Archival Studies Programme of the University of British Columbia," *Archivaria* 16 (Spring 1983), p. 36.
- 10 The School's name was changed in 1984 to The School of Library, Archival and Information Studies (SLAIS).
- 11 The Department of History and the Archival Studies Program were separated in 1989.
- 12 *University of British Columbia Calendar*, 1981/82, p. 92.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 225.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 226.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- 17 *University of British Columbia Calendar*, 1988/89, p. 166.
- 18 *University of British Columbia Calendar*, 1989/90, p. 170.
- 19 *University of British Columbia Calendar*, 1994/95, p. 289.
- 20 This student run survey, conducted annually and entitled *The Student Program Assessment Survey*, was begun in 1995/96.
- 21 *Archivaria* previously published the results of a survey by Elizabeth Eso and Robin G. Kierstead entitled "A Survey of Students of the Master of Archival Studies Program at the University of British Columbia, 1981–88." However, the survey was designed to obtain general information on student backgrounds, education and post-graduation employment, among other things, and did not address the issue of satisfaction with the program itself. *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989–90), pp. 104–27.
- 22 The author wishes to thank Christopher Leach for his help in designing the original prototype

of the questionnaire and Dr. Mary Sue Stephenson for her guidance during all stages of this project.

- 23 Although three respondents answered "not very effectively" to the question of the overall effectiveness of the MAS program, one of these did not fill out the year of completion in part I of the survey and thus is not included in this analysis.
- 24 Of the forty-five employed in government institutions, twenty answered "very effectively," twenty-three answered "somewhat effectively," and two answered "not very effectively." Of the thirty-five in non-government institutions, seventeen answered "very effectively," seventeen "somewhat effectively," and one "not very effectively."
- 25 The author was comparing the number of courses on automation to that of courses in oral history, historical preservation and documentary editing, which rose from two to twenty-seven in the same period. Timothy L. Ericson, "'Abolish the Recent': the Progress of Archival Education," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 34 (Winter 1993), p. 31.
- 26 The program currently offers the only Master of Archival Studies degree. However, other universities include archives and records management specializations within their Information Studies departments. Examples are the University of Michigan (Master of Information Science) and, more recently, the University of Toronto (Master of Information Studies).

Appendix

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 The University of British Columbia
 Room 831, 1956 Main Mall
 Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1

**SURVEY OF ARCHIVISTS/RECORDS MANAGERS WHO ATTENDED
 THE MASTER OF ARCHIVAL STUDIES PROGRAM AT
 THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Please answer the following questions about how effectively the M.A.S. program prepares its students to enter the workforce as archivists/records managers. We strongly encourage you to offer your comments on any aspects of the program given below, and to add further specific or general comments at the end of the questionnaire. Please feel free to attach further comments if you wish. All handwritten comments will be transcribed into typewritten format, and all surveys destroyed following transcription and coding of data, to ensure complete anonymity.

This questionnaire is directed to those who completed at least the coursework portion of the Master of Archival Studies at the University of British Columbia. If you completed the coursework but did not submit a thesis, and have subsequently worked as an archivist or records manager, we still value your participation in this study and urge you to fill out and return this questionnaire.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Please return the survey in the self-addressed envelope by [], 1997].

PART I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1) In what year did you complete your coursework for the Master of Archival Studies degree?

2) In which type of Institution have you worked the most to date (in total months or years, full- or part-time) since completion of M.A.S. coursework? Please check only one.

- | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> government | 3. <input type="checkbox"/> private non-profit | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> other |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> corporate | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> educational | |

If other, please specify: _____

3) Are you presently employed as an archivist/records manager?

1. yes 2. no

If you answered no to this question, please skip directly to **Part II** (p.3).

4) By which type of institution are you presently employed? If you are currently working multiple contracts or are employed part time in more than one institution, please choose all those that apply.

1. government 3. private non-profit 5. other
 2. corporate 4. educational

If other, please specify: _____

5) Indicate the total number of contract or permanent full-time archivists/records managers employed in the institution in which you are presently employed (full-time = minimum 36 hours per week). Please check only one.

- 0-1 2-4 5-6 7 or more

6) Indicate the total number of contract or permanent part-time archivists/records managers employed in the institution in which you are presently employed (part-time = fewer than 36 hours per week). Please check only one.

- 0-1 2-4 5-6 7 or more

7) What is your position within the institution in which you are presently employed? If you are the only archivist/records manager within an institution, check head archivist or head records manager. Please check only one.

1. head archivist 3. head records manager 5. contract worker
 2. archivist 4. records manager 6. other

If other, please specify: _____

PART II: EVALUATION OF MASTER OF ARCHIVAL STUDIES PROGRAM

8) How effectively did the M.A.S. program prepare you to conduct the following activities in the workplace? Mark "does not apply" only if you have not had occasion to conduct the activity in the workplace Please check only one attribute for each of the following activities:

8a) arrange and describe archival records

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively
3. not very effectively
4. not at all effectively
5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8b) assess the physical preservation needs of records

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively
3. not very effectively
4. not at all effectively
5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8c) provide reference services to records users

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively

3. not very effectively

4. not at all effectively

5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8d) design acquisition policies

1. very effectively

2. somewhat effectively

3. not very effectively

4. not at all effectively

5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8e) Implement acquisition policies

1. very effectively

2. somewhat effectively

3. not very effectively

4. not at all effectively

5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8f) appraise records for destruction/retention

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively
3. not very effectively
4. not at all effectively
5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8g) design and implement records destruction/retention schedules

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively
3. not very effectively
4. not at all effectively
5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8h) manage electronic records

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively
3. not very effectively
4. not at all effectively
5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8i) manage electronic databases

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively
3. not very effectively
4. not at all effectively
5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8j) assume the position of manager of an archives

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively
3. not very effectively
4. not at all effectively
5. does not apply

Comments: _____

8k) conduct activities designed to increase public awareness and use of archives

1. very effectively
2. somewhat effectively
3. not very effectively

4. not at all effectively

5. does not apply

Comments: _____

9) Did you complete a practicum/internship?

1. yes

2. no

9a) If you answered yes to question 9, how useful to your subsequent activities as an archivist/records manager did you find the practicum/internship? Please check only one.

1. essential

3. somewhat useful

2. very useful

4. not useful

Comments: _____

10) Did you complete a thesis? If you have started but not yet completed a thesis, please answer yes to this question.

1. yes

2. no

10a) If you answered yes to question 10, how useful to your subsequent activities as an archivist/records manager did you find writing the thesis? Please check only one.

1. essential

3. somewhat useful

2. very useful

4. not useful

Comments: _____
