

Archival Education, Present and Future: Evaluating Curriculum for Critical Archival Practice

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Abstract: Archival education in the United States has seen greater institutionalization within graduate-level academic programs over the last several decades. Although the Society of American Archivists has provided specific guidelines for core competencies and skills for archival programs, in the absence of a formal accreditation process or oversight, the question of how foundational archival principles are articulated and transmitted to new practitioners is of increasing importance. Simultaneously, the larger social visibility and focus on systemic injustice and violence forces reconsideration of how social justice and anti-oppression struggles are being reflected in archival curriculum given the relevance of records in documenting and perpetuating the marginalization of disempowered groups. Building on Jeannette Bastian and Elizabeth Yakel's foundational 2005 study¹ defining core archival curriculum, this exploratory study will use qualitative content analysis to evaluate a sample group of syllabi from introductory archival courses in master's level programs as defined by the SAA's Directory of Graduate Archival Education. By examining syllabi structure, content, assignments and readings, this study seeks to understand how archival students are being prepared to work with new types of archival records, contexts and users. Defining and analyzing this relationship is critical to understanding how archivists currently entering the profession are being prepared to work with diverse collections and materials and understand their roles in perpetuating or resisting the systemic structures which document and obscure the further marginalization of disempowered groups in society.

1 Bastian, J., & Yakel, E. (2005). '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(2), 95-114. doi:10.2307/40323864

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