



Attracting and
Retaining Great
Talent:

Government Records
Archives and Records
Management as a Career

A Council of State Archivists' White Paper

**Prepared by the CoSA Education
and Training Committee**

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Council of State Archivists
PO Box 2508
Albany, New York 12220
Voice: 518-473-9098
Email: info@statearchivists.org
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ask almost any state and territorial archivist today what their number one challenge is and they'll tell you it is chronic funding reductions and the resultant loss of staffing. State government can be a tough place to nurture and grow professional staff, much less maintain a workforce these days. Wracked by budget cuts and wage/hiring freezes, shrinking benefits packages, and restrictions that can limit access to professional development opportunities, is it any wonder that state agencies generally find it a challenge to attract and retain great talent?

Within this universe are state and territorial archives – governmental agencies with the legal mandate to document and preserve the records of state government, ensuring that they are always available when needed by government and the people. While great emphasis has been placed in recent years on the technical aspects of dealing with the expanding number and formats of the records themselves, less collective emphasis has been placed on the nature and health – and future – of the archives workforce.

It almost goes without saying that without a continual stream of talent offering new and updated approaches and in doing so questioning the status quo, state archives run the risk of losing ground at a time when forward-thinking man-and woman-power is most needed. Among the challenges are funding constraints that can lead to low salaries and suppressed advancement, compounded by a general lower visibility for government careers. But there are some bright spots, too, as state archives work creatively to attract the next generation of archives professionals. This white paper also examines the skill sets and attributes archivists need now to make themselves attractive to potential employers and advance the work of archives agencies. An agenda at the end of the narrative offers some best practices and suggestions for action across the archives profession.

WHY SHOULD WE MAKE ATTRACTING AND RETAINING GREAT TALENT OUR TOP PRIORITY?

A recent survey of 195 entry-level archives jobs posted to the American Library Association JobLIST between 2006 and 2013 revealed that only 4% of those advertisements were for government positions.¹ Postings for academic institutions predominated, making up 81% of the advertisements; while museums and nonprofits (i.e., historical societies and history centers) accounted for 7% of the job listings. The *Archives & Records Management Jobs Analysis report*, an annual publication of the Master of Archives and Records Management Degree Program at San Jose State University School of Information, reported that 32% of 212 job postings tracked in 2016 came from the government sector; 24% from the corporate sector; and 44% from the academic and nonprofit sectors.² As recently as November 2017, government archives jobs represented just 10% of all listings on the Society of American Archivists' website, and just 1.25% of archivist listings on Monster.com.

These numbers illustrate the challenge facing government archives today – the challenge of attracting talented staff, and in particular, new

graduates of archives and information science programs. Employment reports from some of the leading library and archival science programs in the U.S. indicate that many, perhaps most, graduates are not following career paths into government archives. For example, the University of Michigan School of Information 2016 *Employment Report* indicates that only 5% of program graduates work in government.³ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics appear to confirm this trend. Employment statistics collected for US archivists in May 2016 indicate that federal and state government are at the bottom of industries with the highest level of employment for archivists, lagging behind academic institutions, as well as historical sites and museums.⁴

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¹ Allison Haack, "New Archivists Seeking Employment: Exploring Entry-Level Jobs in Archives," *Archival Issues* 38, 1 (2017): 27.

² Archives & Records Management Jobs Analysis, Master of Archives and Records Management Degree Program at San Jose State University School of Information. 2016. http://ischool.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/content_pdf/mara_program_jobs_analysis_final.pdf, accessed 14 November 2017.

³ Available at: https://www.si.umich.edu/sites/default/files/2016_employment_report_0.pdf.

⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes254011.htm>, accessed 15 August 2017.

What's at Stake

Government archives are charged with preserving government records that demonstrate historical accuracy and government accountability and openness. At the state level, government is empowered by the electorate to protect life, property, and the rights of citizens. The records of government, therefore,

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demonstrate the effectiveness of our democratic republic. Such essential records must be securely preserved and accessible to the people in perpetuity.

Unfortunately, many elected officials and government appointees have no understanding of archives (or records management) and, therefore, see no value of archives compared to other governmental functions. The constant refrain of “do more with less” has left many programs seriously understaffed and struggling to manage large processing projects, stay on top of digital records management, and meet growing public expectations regarding access.

The success or failure of the archival institution and its resilience in the face of internal and external constraints depend upon finding the best-qualified applicants. Failure to do so inhibits the capacity of the institution to achieve its legal mandate. The government archives administration cares about the caliber of talent and education of the applicant pool because the impact and reputation of the archives rest on its staff. Without qualified staff the archives risks legal ramifications from the loss of records or failure to fulfill stated missions and legal mandates, loss of funding, and missed opportunities to educate and engage the public as records users, and life-long learners and supporters. “To ensure they remain relevant, archives need the skills to engage and enhance

their communities and dynamic leaders to create vibrant outward looking services.”⁵

While the archives profession equates internal reputation and public perception of government archives with the levels of skills and qualifications of an archives’ leadership – and their willingness to be active partners in an information-driven, knowledge-based bureaucracy and society – clearly the primary role for most archives leaders is that of advocate.

These archivists are the public face of the institution. In order to build donor relations and advance the need for funding, support, and the technical aspects of records management, they need to possess or be willing to learn the necessary skills to build and sustain credibility. Clearly, successful 21st century government archivists must be able to comfortably exert influence and embrace relationship building, thus expanding upon their subject matter competence. Selecting and hiring a qualified archivist with the level of education, talent, and disposition for collaborative and innovative thinking will help develop an archives and make it that much stronger. Those in the position of hiring will look closely at potential candidates to ensure that they match with the caliber that the institution is seeking.

The variety of work that a government archivist does on any given day is abundant and labor-intensive; flexibility, adaptability and communication cannot be emphasized enough as they are keys to the health and success of the staff as a whole, as well as to the overall program. Archivists perform many different tasks, especially the case in smaller government archives. This requires additional levels of all-

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⁵ George Mariz et al., “Leadership Skills for Archivists,” *American Archivist* 74 (Spring/Summer 2011): 117

around expertise and education. For example, an archivist position may require outreach, processing, web design, and research skills. Reported one state archivist, “I feel that I am a better archivist having been directly involved in the development of records retention

schedules and development of various records management policies.” While those unfamiliar with the slow pace of government bureaucracy may be frustrated with that environment, archives staff can develop goals and strategies to successfully operate in such a setting.



The Challenges

1. Funding Constraints and Slow Sector

Growth: The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) noted in its *2016-17 Archives and Records Management Biennial Survey*, “The primary challenge for state archives is having sufficient funding to carry out the responsibilities of archives and records management programs. This unpretentious function of government too often suffers from inadequate attention and financial support and is all too vulnerable to cutbacks. Funding is just above one-half of one percent of the total expenditures by all state governments across the nation and the result is fewer financial and human resources devoted to documenting government, promoting history, and securing citizen rights.”⁶

The same survey reported that the current state and territorial archives workforce numbers approximately 1,200 fulltime equivalents, a slight increase since CoSA’s last survey in 2014-15. When asked about issues and priorities, responding archives ranked staffing as the second highest priority area, noting

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the greatest areas of concern as maintaining current staffing levels in the face of state budget cuts, filling vacant positions to rebuild programs or restructuring staff to provide adequate program coverage, and finding qualified candidates.

2. Attracting and Keeping Qualified Staff:

Reported one state archivist, “Recruiting, training, and retaining quality staff is an ongoing process. The 2.5 FTEs dedicated to the state archives are high quality but inexperienced individuals. Through a combination of on-the-job and online training, I believe we are making solid progress in building a small but capable staff.”⁷

In some states, position descriptions are controlled at the state level, rather than the agency level; positions may not be reviewed or updated often enough to reflect the changing needs of the profession, and subsequently may adversely affect who applies, as well as compensation. In Arkansas, for example, there are no job titles or descriptions accounting for

⁶ Council of State Archivists. 2016-17 Archives and Records Management Survey Narrative Report. 2017. P 2.

⁷ Council of State Archivists. 2016-17 Archives and Records Management Survey Tables. 2017. P 98.

tasks such as digitization or electronic records management. Existing job titles for archives focus on traditional arrangement and description tasks and microfilming, as do the required skills and knowledge for these positions. Even for upper-level supervisory positions, a minimum of only a bachelor's degree in history is required. Individuals who exceed these qualifications are likely to seek employment in academia or private archives where their expertise is better compensated.

Given the fact that government hiring is highly regulated and, thus, largely proscriptive, state archivists are required to work closely with human resources departments to advocate for and craft job descriptions that not only attract the "right" skillsets but also the necessary attributes for a vibrant, 21st century knowledge-based workforce. Noted one state archivist, "We need to better understand how to use the rules to our advantage" so that they can be put to effective use in advocating for change, as well as in talent recruitment.

3. Low Salaries; Access to Professional Development and Advancement: State archives are also often hindered in their recruiting efforts by the salaries they can offer. Despite these obstacles to attracting and recruiting great talent, state archives do manage to hire some very good people. However, in many cases the situations employees find in state archives often result in high turnover among those looking for opportunities to advance professionally. Likely the single most significant factor affecting job satisfaction of state archives staff is the low

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salary. The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook reports that the annual median wage for government archivists is almost \$4,000 lower than for

those working in educational institutions; and in some states the gap is much wider. Closely aligned to the issue of low salaries is the lack of professional development support that many archivists find in state government institutions. While academia was established on the concept of collaboration with other professionals to advance knowledge and exchange ideas, state government tends to focus on accountability of funds and stewardship of taxpayer monies. This is evident in many states' travel policies, which restrict use of government funding for professional development opportunities for employees.

Compounding recruitment, hiring, and professional development constraints is the reality that state archives tend to be very lean agencies with

little opportunity for advancement. Career advancement often requires moving from state to state or to federal government, or into the academic, museum, or corporate arenas. It's worth noting, also, that apart from those archives in larger, urban state capitals, location often inhibits an agency's ability to recruit and sustain a diverse workforce.

4. Low Visibility for Government Careers:

The placement of archives within government agency organizational structures may also send a signal about the value of the program. While many state archives enjoy high visibility in their secretaries of state's offices, cultural resources or education departments, state libraries or state historical societies, others are found in departments with less of a natural affinity to their work, such as administration, finance or IT departments. Collaborative efforts among archives, records management, IT, and other allied government professionals have evolved out of CoSA's Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records (IPER)

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and State Electronic Records Initiative (SERI) projects, as well as grant-funded collaborative projects. These have improved the visibility of archives within government and demonstrated the value of archives and archival programs to key individuals that have been quietly yielding results in a few states.

For many job seekers, awareness of jobs and careers in state archives is relatively low, in part because there are so few positions available when compared to academic and private archival jobs. Raising the profile of government records

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as a career is a critical role for state archives and state archivists, but as one iSchool faculty member pointed out, “There must be positions to fill to be able to launch a full-fledged campaign to raise the profile of a government career.” This

may seem like swimming against the tide as government employment and public service are no longer seen as synonymous in this political climate. Said one state archivist, “The term ‘civil servant’ connotes neither civility nor service, but employees are viewed as over-compensated bureaucrats and purveyors of unfunded mandates for business or those lower on the pecking order.”

Library, archives and information science programs may not promote careers in government archives as readily as they do positions in academic institutions; nor are state government position openings posted as frequently in places where recent graduates are likely to see them, such as the SAA Online Career Center or the ALA Job List. Cost may be a consideration for state archives in

selecting where to post job advertisements, while other state archives are impeded from conducting national searches because of state or departmental policies that prohibit paying for applicant travel costs. Furthermore, the candidate pool may be adversely impacted if state archives are prohibited from providing relocation costs for the successful applicant.

5. Succession Planning Issues: As with many sectors, state and territorial archives are experiencing a retirement wave of long-tenured state archivists and archives staff – a wave that will accelerate sharply over the next decade. Since late 2013, state archivists in eleven states and the District of Columbia have retired or left to pursue new careers. State archivists report recent staff turnover running anywhere from 20-80%.⁸ On the one hand, the loss of institutional knowledge is a very real concern as veteran state archivists and archives staff leave; grappling with succession is a top-rated training topic among CoSA’s members as few, if any, state systems allow for overlapping positions. On the other hand, retirements afford the potential for upward mobility in the organization for existing staff and for new – and often younger – staff to move into institutions. Workforces now represent Boomers, GenXers, and Millennials, and while combining their various work styles, skills and attitudes presents a challenge, it isn’t necessarily disruptive. Each generation possesses valuable skills that, when properly encouraged and melded together, can be extremely beneficial for both the institution and its stakeholders.

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⁸ CoSA Calls to the States, 2017.

6. Lack of Workforce

Diversity: While the holdings of state and territorial government archives are highly diverse – more so than one might think at first glance – the employees of state archives are overwhelmingly white. This lack of racial diversity is a critical issue across the archives profession, as well as within graduate programs. Many rightly argue that the definition of diversity needs to be expanded well beyond race and ethnicity. That said, greater diversity enhances an archives’ mission by providing broader perspectives when shaping its collections and allows it to serve fully the needs of all potential users. Fortunately, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), through its adoption of a diversity and inclusion policy statement (2013) and related strategic plan (2012)⁹, provides one model for institutions to adapt. In 2010, the Society of American Archivists (SAA)

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approved the first iteration of its Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, which underpins many years of SAA initiatives, actions and resources that reach back to 1999.¹⁰

On another front, the Association of Research

Libraries/Society of American Archivists (SAA) Mosaic Program recently received funding to continue its work promoting “much-needed diversification of the archives and special collections professional workforce by providing financial support, practical work experience, mentoring, career placement assistance, and leadership development to emerging professionals from traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups.”¹¹ Clearly, this is but one forward step in an area where the profession needs more concrete ways to address all types of diversity in practice.



⁹ National Archives and Records Administration website: policy statement, <https://www.archives.gov/eoo/policy/diversity-inclusion-policy-statement.html>; strategic plan, <https://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/strategic-plan/diversity-inclusion>, accessed 17 August 2017.

¹⁰ Society of American Archivists, Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-statement-on-diversity-and-inclusion>; initiatives and actions, <https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy/diversity-and-inclusion-initiatives>; accessed 17 August 2017.

¹¹ Society of American Archivists. “ARL/SAA Mosaic Program.” <http://www2.archivists.org/arl-saa-mosaic-program>. Accessed June 4, 2017.

The Bright Spots

Despite obstacles to recruiting and maintaining a talented workforce, government archives have found ways to address and counteract some of these challenges. Some government archives have created internship programs with archives, schools of library and information science, and public history programs to introduce emerging professionals to government archives as a career path. In Arkansas, state archives staff works with the state's four university public history programs to recruit interns, volunteers, and arrange staff appearances at job fairs and in classrooms. The Illinois State Archives offers a one-year paid internship program for individuals interested in working in the archival field. The intern receives orientation and training in the application of archival and records management techniques to programs of the Illinois State Archives. Spending time in each unit of the Archives (reference, conservation, publications, etc.), the intern performs increasingly responsible professional archival

work. Interns work on special projects designed to develop work skills and knowledge.

Government archives also are reaching out to even younger audiences to introduce the concept and promote the value of archives.

In Connecticut, archives staff works with National History Day students and teachers to connect them to sources, while some of the staff serves as judges at the regional and state-level competitions. Through school field trips, and volunteer and internships programs for youth, institutions are also planting seeds that may yield future government archivists. These options have little material cost but they do require archives staff to invest time in establishing contacts at educational institutions and when developing meaningful volunteer and internship experiences.

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WHAT DOES GREAT TALENT LOOK LIKE?

In order to address the issues facing government archives, administrators and managers in charge of staffing look for certain traits and skills that most benefit the archives. A study of entry-level archival job advertisements found that a majority of archives jobs require providing both technical and public services.¹² Archives in general, and government archives specifically, seek out employees who have the ability to meet those diverse requirements. While specific job responsibilities require different skill sets, government archives need employees with a broad range of both hard and soft skills, and these skills (particularly the soft skills) can be used as recruiting strategies to attract creative and flexible professionals.

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Hard Skills

1. Basic archival principles and best practices:

Government archivists need to have a solid understanding of basic archival principles and best practices. This knowledge reaches across all areas of archives management and includes the areas of selection and appraisal; acquisitions and accessioning; arrangement and description; management of electronic records; preservation and conservation; and access and reference services. In an increasingly digital world, a basic understanding of born-digital records, digitization, and technologies associated with records management and archives is also essential. In fact, CoSA's 2016-17 Archives and Records Management Biennial Survey saw a 42% decline in the number of positions dedicated solely to electronic records management, signaling a shift toward all archivists possessing some level of skill in this area.¹³

2. Technical Expertise:

Depending on the assigned role, the archivist will have greater technical expertise in a specific area. For example, an archivist working with electronic records should know best practices for ingesting, storing and preserving those records. A conservator will have the skills necessary to mend tears, to humidify and flatten rolled or folded documents, and will know how to properly store the items found in their collections.

3. Understanding of Government Organization:

As a government employee, the archivist also should be familiar with the organization of government on various levels. This knowledge is necessary to "provide proper records appraisal, retention scheduling, and support services"¹⁴ to those the archivist serves. As part of that understanding, archivists need to understand and comply with laws and regulations as they relate to government records.

¹² Allison Haack et al., "New Archivists Seeking Employment: Exploring Entry-Level Jobs in Archives," *Archival Issues* 38, no. 1 (2017): 27.

¹³ Council of State Archivists. 2016-17 Archives and Records Management Survey Report. 2017. P. 13.

¹⁴ George Mariz et al., "Leadership Skills for Archivists," *American Archivist* 74 (Spring/Summer 2011): 117.

Soft Skills

While technical competencies are undoubtedly important, the successful archivist will have skills that go beyond traditional archival knowledge. The SAA “Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies” recognizes that archivists “have increasing responsibility to engage and educate the public, to diversify the historical record and the profession, to solve problems and use archival materials creatively, to perform in the digital realm, to advocate for the profession, and to enhance the public good.”¹⁵ Talented archivists will have the ability to address these changing demands.

1. Adaptability: Perhaps the most beneficial “soft” skill a government archivist can have is adaptability. Budgets shrink and expand; staff numbers and strengths are always in flux; rules and regulations constantly change; and priorities often shift. Being able to recognize those

changes and effectively react is essential, however, being proactive is critical to healthy sustainability. Anticipating what’s next and creating connections and communicating with various stakeholders inside and outside of government are skills that need to be in every archivist’s toolkit in the

21st Century. Archivists must be able to adapt to changing roles and responsibilities, drawing on a broad knowledge base and seeking out opportunities for continuing education.

Archivists must be able to adapt to changing roles and responsibilities, drawing on a broad knowledge base and seeking out opportunities for continuing education.

2. Flexibility: Great archivists are flexible and embrace a dynamic work environment, and they share expertise and cross-train where possible. As state archives are asked to do more with less, a common response is to share skills employees have in one part of the agency to help another part. For example, an archivist at the Connecticut State Archives, part of the Connecticut State Library, spends a couple hours each week on the History and Genealogy reference desk in the State Library. In return, a unit reference librarian, who has archivist training, schedules regular time to process State Archives records. This type of collaboration helps to break down silos that form in agencies by fostering greater understanding about what other departments do and ensuring that the best skills are available when needed.

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¹⁵ Society of American Archivists, “Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies (2016),” <http://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/graduate/gpas>, accessed 24 May 2017

3. Communication: The successful government archivist also must be able to communicate clearly and effectively. The ability to communicate with the public is essential to provide good customer service. Communicating effectively with other state agencies is necessary to build relationships with those agencies and to build trust. The archivist should be able to persuasively advocate for the relevance of the archives within the government structure and with the community at large. Additionally, the 2016 *Archives & Records Management Jobs Analysis* report showed the need for those with 'records management'

in the title to possess the ability to facilitate training, communicate with stakeholders, and analyze existing processes.¹⁶

A number of other skills, as outlined by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, can also be attributed to the successful archivist.¹⁷ Archivists must have **critical thinking skills** and be able to make decisions based on a variety of information sources. The capacity to **work collaboratively** as well as **independently** as necessary is also critical. The talented archivist will have the ability to **find creative ways to overcome constraints** and to **think across disciplines** in order to benefit the archives.

¹⁶ Archives & Records Management Jobs Analysis, Master of Archives and Records Management Degree Program at San Jose State University School of Information. 2016. http://ischool.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/content_pdf/mara_program_jobs_analysis_final.pdf, accessed 14 November 2017.

¹⁷ Institute of Museum and Library Services, "Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills: Definitions," <https://www.imls.gov/issues/national-initiatives/museums-libraries-and-21st-century-skills/definitions>, accessed 24 May 2017.



AN ACTION AGENDA FOR RAISING THE PROFILE OF A CAREER IN GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES (AND KEEPING IT THERE)

What follows is a roadmap of best practices and specific steps for archivists, agencies, professional associations and graduate programs to address the potential opportunities and challenges cited in the narrative sections of this report. For the very reason that attracting and retaining great talent in government archives is complicated but absolutely critical to a healthy democracy, CoSA believes this must be a collaborative effort in order to be successful.

For individuals:

- Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of your current skillset and attributes, and articulate them to those who can help you figure out how to fill in gaps and work to your strengths.
- Don't wait for opportunities to sharpen your skills and advance your professional development; seek them out. Take on stretch assignments because they demonstrate initiative and independent professionalism.
- Be an advocate for training and professional development at your agency or institution.
- Assist with or take responsibility for training and professional development activities for your team, your department.
- Actively seek mentors and sponsors; mentor others in need of skill development.
- Encourage your graduate programs to offer advanced skills training and mentoring opportunities to alumni and/or to communities of practice in the field.
- Encourage your professional associations to offer leadership training, mentoring, and skill development opportunities.

For agencies:

- Share job descriptions.
- Share recruiting methods.
- Share salary/benefits comparisons and benchmarking studies to understand best practices.
- Provide opportunities to reach younger, more diverse talent through internships and partnerships, focusing, in part, on planting seeds with high school and undergraduate students.
- Go directly to where the people are who might fill these careers—for example, offer a webinar on government careers for archivists/records managers that could be part of an iSchool's webinar series.
- Work with the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) student chapters, and work with SAA to promote archives internships in state archives.
- Develop strategies for measuring the impact of recruitment programs and determine methods for maintaining the integrity of such programs.¹⁸
- Consciously and consistently nurture staff by creating and implementing written individual development plans and succession plans, and making space for leadership to take root and flourish. Diversifying and deepening the training and experience of junior staff via more effective mentoring by senior staff to better prepare the next generation to assume more responsible higher-level management responsibilities is one tactic the Maryland State Archives is using to address staff development and knowledge transfer.¹⁹
- Support cross-functional experimentation and learning within the agency to encourage staff to learn and expand leadership skills.

For CoSA:

- Continue to gather and publish workforce data.
- Work with allied organizations to foster and fund opportunities to reach a younger and more diverse demographic.
- Sponsor some type of internship service, such as web listings – at the very least post opportunities and make them known.
- Create an awareness campaign for MLIS programs and information management programs with archives tracks about careers in state archives.
- Partners with iSchools to promote or sponsor diversity in archives/records management in the government sector. Explore funding opportunities for student tuition.
- Promote advocacy for addressing long-term vacancies in state archives leadership.
- Educate appointing authorities on the importance of filling vacant leadership positions with highly qualified, experienced individuals based on well-developed job descriptions and requirements.
- Form a CoSA affinity group to discuss and promote attracting and retaining great talent.

¹⁸ From a presentation by Ayoola White, "Early Recruitment + Diversity = Access?," DERAIl 2017, <https://lisedforum.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/2017-session4b-slides.pdf>, accessed 15 August 2017.

¹⁹ CoSA Calls to the States interview with Tim Baker, Maryland State Archivist, 2017.

For iSchools/graduate schools:

- Seek and encourage state archives internship opportunities for students.
- Call upon state archivists and staff to make classroom and online presentations, and participate in class activities or iSchool events; give tours of state archives facilities, and act as mentors.
- Build relationships with state and local archives through experiential learning projects where student teams work on state archive projects and then go to the state archives to present their projects.
- Become more interdisciplinary on campus. Partnerships and curriculum sharing with law, public policy, communications/journalism will help prepare students to be flexible, adaptable, communicative professionals.
- Underscore that archival work is about navigating relationships with records creators, the public, and between people and the record, as well as with colleagues; that there is also emotional labor in the work.²⁰

FINAL THOUGHTS

There are many big challenges ahead as we think about the future of this field. Some, as we've outlined in the action agenda, are within our control. Others are not. One thing we do know: if we don't address these challenges in a united way, using the strengths of the entire archives community, we will be destined to make small, isolated, and perhaps short-lived advances. The field will always need specialists and technicians, the folks who take theory and turn it into practical application by questioning the status quo and creating solutions where others fail to see a path forward. It also needs a healthy measure of visionaries, thought leaders, and advocates – at every level – who breathe life into the importance of the work and make it accessible for every citizen.



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