

Guide to Effective Resumes: Resources for Archivists and Records Managers

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INTRODUCTION

We hope this guide provides useful suggestions for not only fledgling archivists, but also veterans considering new employment opportunities. To aid our colleagues in job hunting, this guide covers general and profession specific information, and emphasizes practical resources and examples. Much of the following material relates to hiring, specifically what employers are looking for in an applicant.

The main authors come from academic, government, corporate, and private settings and drew from those varied personal and professional experiences to develop this resource. We thank the other contributors – Donna McCrea, Catherine Moore, and Colorado State University graduate students – who offer additional advice and examples of what job seekers should and should not do to attain success.

This guide includes three sections: [Tip Sheets](#), [Resources Bibliography](#), and [Sample Resumes](#).

TIP SHEET #1:

What You Should Do

1. BE Consistent

- Format
- Punctuation
- Capitalization

2. BE Positive

- Sell your strengths in the words *you* choose
- Use positive statements
- Show progression of responsibility and development

3. BE Clear

- Easy to read, clear layout
 - Depending on the font, use 11 or 12 point font
 - Use a common, default font – nothing fancy or hard to read
 - Bullet points are more effective than paragraphs; five to six is probably a good number
 - Don't embed url's to company websites in your resume
- Spelling – always proofread, don't just rely on spell check
- Spell out acronyms the first time and then provide the acronym in parenthesis
- Stay focused and organized

4. BE Active

- Include involvement with professional or community organizations
- Show your achievements and work product

5. BE Selective

- List past work experience IF it relates/correlates to the application
 - Retail employment shows an ability to deal with many different types of people
- You are not required to include everything you have ever done

6. BE Relevant

- List most recent, relevant work experience, emphasizing what is related to the position for which you are applying
- Respond to the job announcement – answer the criteria provided

7. BE Concise

- Provide a succinct list of work experiences with duties involved
- Be brief in descriptions – lengthy paragraphs are not helpful

8. BE Accessible

- Provide several ways to reach yourself, not just email
- Do not list a personal email account with an unprofessional name (ex. weekendlush@yahoo.com)

9. Provide educational background

- List all degrees and certificate programs completed beyond high school

10. Provide good references

- Before you list a reference, know that he/she will provide a good reference and want to do so
- Update your references – if you haven't applied for a job in a while, make sure your reference contact information is still correct

What You Should **Not** Do

1. Don't use questionable language

- Eliminate slang
- Avoid jargon (industry specific language)
- Use terminology properly (ex. oversize is common usage to describe material larger than a standard box, rather than oversized)
- Unless it is a special case, use formal language (ex. "do not" rather than "don't")

2. Don't be generic

- Tailor your resume to the position for which you are applying

3. Don't exaggerate or lie

- Never misrepresent your jobs, background or education

4. Don't be lengthy or wordy

- Stay at about two pages, particularly as a recent graduate
- If you want an exhaustive resume, develop a Curriculum Vitae (CV)
 - Few employers outside of academia request/require a CV

5. Don't misspell words used in the resume

6. Don't use negative statements

7. Don't give personal or irrelevant information

- Race, marital status, sexual orientation, family life, religion, age, hobbies and activities that don't directly apply to one of your current/past jobs, volunteer positions, professional membership, etc. (ex. including membership in Women Archivists Roundtable is relevant, making a point of being a female is not)
- If personal information directly relates to a job, you can always include it in the cover letter (ex. if you are Catholic and applying for a position in that church, your religion is applicable)

8. Don't put references into the body of your resume

- Have a separate list of references that you can provide upon request or transfer into an application

TIP SHEET #2

A Veteran Archivist on Search Committee Hiring

The following is an e-mail written by Donna McCrea, Archivist/History Librarian at the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula. Donna provides guidance to job seekers based on her experience on hiring committees.

Job seeking Listmembers,

I agree that where individuals are lacking certain job skills or experience, and/or where they may need or want additional references, and/or if they aren't finding a job in the area they want to work, volunteering can be a great way to gain the experience needed to be competitive.

Because the topic of job seeking has come up on this list again, I'd like to offer some advice based on recent searches with which I've been involved:

1. At my institution we use a matrix – all names down the left hand side of a paper, all required and preferred skills across the top. If you don't carefully address a listed qualification I can't put a check in that box, and it's as if you don't have that qualification at all. Keep in mind that I'm not the only one on the search committee – and our HR officer is going to make sure that we're all playing by the rules.
2. I'm likely reading between 60-120 applications for the position I've posted. Realistically, I'm only going to be able to spend about 5 minutes with your application. Don't make me or the other search committee members (who might not know much about archives) struggle to figure out how your skills and abilities might fit my job needs. Whenever possible, give a relevant example of how and when you've done or used a required/preferred skill/ability.
3. If I'm hiring someone to process a collection, don't spend a bunch of time in your application materials telling me how good you are at digitization unless you can demonstrate direct relevance to my position needs.
4. If you get a telephone interview be prepared. If possible, schedule the interview for a time you know you will be both awake and alert. Be familiar with some of the commonly asked questions and think through some potential responses. Ask a few relevant questions of the search committee - it helps to demonstrate that you are interested in the job.
5. If you get an in-person interview do your research before you arrive at the institution. For example, if you're being hired to digitize a collection, be familiar with what type of equipment is used; if you are being hired to process a collection, know as much as you can about the collection creator. And again, demonstrate interest by asking relevant questions.

TIP SHEET #3

A Veteran Historical Society Manager on Hiring

Catherine Moore worked at a large New England genealogical society before earning her MA in History at Colorado State University-Fort Collins in 2009. At the genealogical society, she often hired employees and the following are her tips on resume writing.

Catherine's Resume Tips

- 1) Your resume should tell me what your ideal job is. Do this by emphasizing the skills and experience that qualify you for that position. If you're applying for a different position, use your cover letter to tell me how your skills/experience apply to this other position.
- 2) State your accomplishments in the most active, positive terms you can use without misrepresenting your work. I (hiring manager) want to know that you will seek out opportunities to contribute something of value, not just do the basics of the job I'm hiring for.
- 3) Quantify your accomplishments – how many artifacts did you re-house? How many kids attended the summer program, and was it one session or several different sessions? Give me a sense of the size of your organization, your audience, your program.
- 4) Tell me the outcome of your work – was a publication produced? A website – give me the URL so I can take a look. Did the radio program receive positive feedback? Did your work save the organization money, make resources easier to access, introduce a new segment of the community to your organization, increase program attendance?
- 5) Use detailed descriptions to explain your work – I might not be familiar with the process or terminology used at your organization. So, instead of "Aided exhibit installation" you might say "Exhibit installation skills: selecting, arranging, and captioning artifacts; implementing climate and security controls; creating lighting plans and soundscapes."
- 6) Put your experience in terms that relate to what the hiring manager is looking for. I probably don't want to hire you to write a thesis, but I'm definitely interested in someone who can "formulate a research design, conduct documentary research and field investigation, analyze data, prepare reports and present findings."

- 7) Proofread. Proofread again. Have someone else proofread for you.
- 8) List your references and their contact info on a separate sheet of paper, not on your resume itself. Give your references a copy of your resume so they can see how you've described your work. Always let them know when you've applied for a position and given their name so they will be prepared for a phone call from the prospective employer. Make sure they can actually talk to your prospective employer – a lot of organizations restrict what information can be shared about former employees, and who can share it.
- 9) MS-Word has templates that can take the agony out of choosing the right font and layout. I always use them, because page design is NOT one of my skills!

RESOURCES

Print:

Career Coward's Job Hunting Series, Katy Piotrowski.

- *The Career Coward's Guide to Changing Careers*, 2008
- *The Career Coward's Guide to Interviewing*, 2007
- *The Career Coward's Guide to Job Searching*, 2008
- *The Career Coward's Guide to Resumes*, 2008

The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Perfect Cover Letter, Susan Ireland, 1997.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Perfect Resume, 2nd Edition, Susan Ireland, 2000.

Job Hunting for Dummies, 2nd Edition, Max Messmer, 1999.

"Six Steps to your Successful Career Path," Alan Andolsen, *Information Management Journal*, July/August 2008.

What Color is Your Parachute? 2009: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career Changers, Richard Nelson Bolles, 2008.

Online:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/641/01/>

Purdue Online Writing Lab, guide to writing a CV

<http://www.archives.gov/careers/jobs/forms/resume-guide.pdf>

For those interested in applying for federal government jobs

www.lisjobs.com/jobseekers/resume-advice.asp

Resume advice for library and information service professionals

http://www.midwestarchives.org/assets/documents/mac_newsletter_2012_01.pdf "The Hiring Manager's View," Mark Greene, MAC Newsletter, January 2012

SAMPLE RESUMES

The following resumes come from the Colorado State University Spring 2009 Archival Methods graduate level class. One class session each semester is devoted to resume writing and job hunting. The first resume is a “good” example while the other two clearly need improvement. The students gave permission for use of their resumes, although names and other identifying information have been changed to protect the innocent.

Good resume exemplifies the “should” portion of the guide:

- Appropriate font and size
- Clearly labeled and defined sections and points; concise job descriptions
- Did not include all positions, just those with potential relevance for archives/RM jobs

Need Improvement examples have deficiencies:

Resume #1

- Overall unattractive style – font size too large, sloppy spacing
- Inaccurate information – Naropa is in Boulder, not Fort Collins
- Website addresses unneeded
- Relevant Coursework has too much overlap with Internship and Practicum Experience
- References – should make a statement that they will be provided upon request

Resume #2

- Doesn't provide contact information on resume (no phone or email)
- Sloppy Relevant Coursework section; could also improve spacing uniformity in Work Experience section
- Bicycle jobs not relevant – either eliminate entirely or only mention customer service and people skills
- Publications section doesn't relate to archives/RM work – if a position requires publishing and presentation skills, include it in the cover letter

GOOD EXAMPLE:

N A M E
C I T Y , S T A T E
Phone:
Email:

EDUCATION

Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

M.A. in History, Concentration in Historic Preservation - Anticipated: Aug. 2009

Coursework included historic preservation, federal preservation law, archival methods, historical archaeology, and material culture

Western New England College, Springfield, MA

Graduate study in accounting, finance, business law and human resources (1991-1995)

Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA

B.A. in History, cum laude (1985)

EXPERIENCE

Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

January, 2008 – present

Center for the Environmental Management of Military Lands (1/08 – present)

Cultural Resources Management Research Associate

Center for Public History and Archaeology (6/08 – present)

Research Associate

For both CEMML and CPHA, conduct historical research and field investigation, prepare documentation, presentations, and reports on various projects for the National Park Service and the Department of Defense.

Colorado Springs Philh. Orchestra, Colorado Springs, CO

July, 2006 – June, 2007

Director of Development

Implemented a comprehensive fundraising strategy, raising more than \$500,000 in individual contributions and more than \$200,000 in corporate, government and foundation grants.

New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA

January, 2002 – May, 2006

Interim Chief Operating Officer (11/05 – 5/06)

Assistant Executive Director (1/05 – 10/05)

Director of Finance (1/02 – 12/04)

Directed finance and human resources functions of a national membership organization with 50 FTEs and an annual operating budget of \$5,000,000. Developed and implemented new budget strategies, improved compliance with employment and tax regulations, created and facilitated an employee advisory committee which led to significant improvements in internal communication. Promoted to Assistant Executive Director, assuming additional responsibilities for sales and marketing, membership services, and administration. Worked with board committee to create a new investment strategy and managed the move of \$18 million endowment from one to seven investment managers. Teamed with Chief Operating Officer to develop a strategy to outsource one significant line of business and to close another, to restructure operations throughout the organization, update the existing strategic plan and close an ancillary facility. As Interim Chief Operating Officer, helped to successfully guide the organization through its first leadership transition in 25 years.

The Bostonian Society, Boston, MA

October, 2000 – January, 2002

Director of Administration

Performed all finance and human resources functions for the historical society operating an internationally known historic landmark. Coordinated annual giving program. Participated in the development and implementation of a strategic plan.

Colorado Springs Symphony, Colo. Springs, CO

July, 1998 – September, 2000

Director of Finance

Served as finance officer and human resources manager for a professional, unionized orchestra with 100 employees. Played a critical role in the successful negotiation of the collective bargaining agreement.

Other professional employment includes non-profit arts management, administrative support and management consulting.

PUBLICATIONS

National Parks Conservation Association, Center for State of the Parks Assessment Reports:

Pea Ridge National Military Park [AR] (forthcoming – May, 2009)

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve [AK] (forthcoming – May, 2009)

SKILLS

20 years experience in non-profit administration, including finance, grant writing and management, human resources, and strategic planning

Excellent communicator and group facilitator, with strong presentation skills

Computer and internet proficient

Strong documentary, archival, and internet research skills

MEMBERSHIPS

Member, National Parks Conservation Association

Member, The Trustees of Reservations (Massachusetts)

Member, New England Historic Genealogical Society

Member, National Council on Public History

Member, National Trust for Historic Preservation

NEED IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLES:

RESUME #1

Name
Home Address
Cell
Email

EDUCATION

Master of Arts 2008-present

Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

Currently pursuing Masters in History, with focus on public history, specifically museum studies and archives/records management

Bachelor of Arts 2003-2007

Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

Majored in History and Anthropology

WORK EXPERIENCE

Fort Collins Museum, Fort Collins, CO 08/06 - Present

<http://www.fcgov.com/museum/>

Collections Assistant

- Assist in various aspects of museum work including collections and exhibits
- Handle the processing of new objects into the collection, entering them into ContentDM, photographing them, and housing them
- Help with the construction of new exhibits including painting, constructing displays, and mounting objects
- Research objects and history of Fort Collins as needed

Windsor Museum, Windsor, CO 09/08 - 11/08

<http://www.ci.windsor.co.us/index.asp?NID=464>

Collections Assistant

- Assisted in the processing of objects affected by a tornado
- Created detailed accession records for museum objects, mainly consisting of books and medical equipment
- Entered records into PastPerfect database

INTERNSHIP AND PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

Local History Archive, Fort Collins, CO

08/08 - 05/09

<http://history.fcgov.com/>

Intern

Project includes work with the Archive's photography collection

- Reorganize photography collection using Library of Congress categories
- Re-house photographs in acid-free folders
- Transfer records from old database system to ContentDM, checking for accuracy and missing information
- Complete smaller projects such as inventories, container lists, and re-housing glass plate negatives

Naropa University Archives, Fort Collins, CO

02/09 - 04/09

<http://www.naropa.edu/archive/index.cfm>

Practicum Student

Completed 25 hours work with Syllabi collection

- Re-folded and organized syllabi in acid-free folders
- Categorized folders chronologically and alphabetically according to class
- Created a finding aid for the collection through Archon

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

Care and Exhibit of Museum Collections

- Learned proper methods of conservation and display of museum objects through both class work, as well as hands-on experience in textile collection at CSU
- Researched objects for the premier exhibit at Avenir Museum
- Presented "How to Properly Pack Textiles" for public workshop at Avenir Museum
- Completed an inventory and identified concerns for several textiles in the Avenir collection

Archival Methods

- Learned archival theory and practices

- Processed a collection by inventorying, assessing needs, and completing a finding aid
- Completed a Practicum with Naropa University

Material Culture

- Completed research assignments involving the interpretation of material culture in relation to history, historical archeology, and public history
- Researched grave art on a selection of gravestones in a Fort Collins' cemetery
- Conducted research on the history of Italian families buried in Denver's Riverside Cemetery

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Member

Colorado Wyoming Association of Museums
Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists
Organization of American Historians

REFERENCES

RESUME #2

Name
City, State

EDUCATION

Master of Arts, History December 2009
Foothills State University, Fort Collins, CO

Bachelor of Arts, History and Anthropology June 2005
Depew University, Noville, IN
cum laude

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

Master's Thesis – “Why Can't We Just Make More Water?”

Research Paper – “Water in the Valley”

Sociology of Water Resources
Principles of Watershed Management

Water Resources Seminar
Historical Method: Archives

WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Northern Colorado Water District June 2008-Present

- Researched W. D. Farrington and his wide ranging interests including water, cattle, sheep, and agriculture
- Used the *Greeley Tribune*, Board Meeting Minutes, and visited various archives to find pertinent material

Project Assistant, Western Digital Library June 2008-Present

- Chose documents from the Water Archives for inclusion in the WDL project
- Scanned documents and created metadata

Research Assistant, Ricardo Britton May 2008-June 2008

- Examined Ival V. Goslin and the Upper Colorado River Commission
- Used Water Archives at Colorado State University, personal interviews, and Mr. Goslin's writings

Graduate Teaching Assistant, FSU History Department Aug 2007-May 2009

- Assisted professors with grading, creating assignments, and administrative tasks
- Met with students individually to help with writing and study skills

Paleobotany Intern, Denver Museum Jan 2005-Aug 2007

- Aided researchers in classification, organization, and identification of fossil leaves
- Managed a complex database of over ten thousand specimens
- Created geologic maps using a wide variety of computer programs

Senior Mechanic, Bicycle World May 2004-Aug 2004

- Repaired, overhauled, and built bicycles
- Supervised tune-up quality
- Resolved customer service issues

Mechanic/Salesperson, Bicycle Planet Oct 2001-Aug 2002

- Quickly learned the basics necessary to build and repair bicycles
- Independently mastered further bicycle repair through hands-on experience

Salesperson, Cycle City June 2000-Aug 2001

- Maintained merchandise stock in organized and accessible environment
- Guided customers in making educated decisions regarding their cycling needs

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Intern for Water Resources, State University Feb 2009-May 2009

- Processed and updated the finding aid for a new addition to an existing collection
- Assisted the archivist with miscellaneous duties including research, writing summaries, creating inventories, and moving boxes.

Historical Interpreter, Lakewood Historical Museum June 1997-Aug 2001

- Dressed in period costume and spoke to visitors about daily life in the 1800s in character
- Gained a wide base of knowledge to answer even the most unexpected questions

PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, AND POSTERS

Spatial and temporal distribution patterns of fossil plants from the Basin. Contributor #1, Contributor #2, Contributor #3, Contributor #4, and Contributor #5.

Poster presented at Advances in Paleobotany Conference

Gainesville, Florida United States

March 12-15, 2006

Snapshots in time: Floral change in the Basin from 68-64 Million Years Ago. *Geological Society of America Abstracts with Programs*, v. 50 no. 2, p.26. Contributor #1, Contributor #2, Contributor #3, Contributor #4, Contributor #5, and Contributor #6.