ARCHIVES TASK FORCE

Education, Training and Development

Discussion paper 6a: A further discussion document

1. The ATF was provided with an initial discussion document designed as a 'starting point for a discussion of workforce issues and development needs'. It provided an indication of most of the important issues and posed a number of key questions. Its overall diagnosis of the current problems and issues pertaining to the workforce in the domain cannot be challenged. Subsequent discussion was however, inconclusive.

2. The ATF is expected to make major recommendations and to provide a framework for education, training and development, - the domain would be disappointed (at best) should it not do so, and this document seeks to offer a framework for workforce training and development, but only as a basis for further discussion. It should be noted at the outset that the discussion in this document relates to education, training and workforce development for the archives domain, including records management and conservation.

3. There can be very little doubt that the creation of a well educated, diverse, strongly motivated and appropriately trained workforce at all levels is essential to the implementation and achievement of the vision and ambitious strategies that the ATF will develop for the domain. However, responsibility for creating and delivering a workforce training and development strategy must rest with all domain stakeholders - employers, HE educators and trainers, professional bodies and organisations, and commercial trainers. Between them they must

   • Agree a training framework and relate all training and development activity to that framework
   • Create the circumstances whereby that framework can work

4. The essential characteristics of a workforce education, training and development framework and strategy for the domain should include

   • A range of activities to ensure the recruitment and retention of an appropriate workforce, - appropriate numerically and in terms of its skills and competencies, and which would address and provide career progression and development opportunities at all levels
   • The provision of appropriate training opportunities and modes to meet a range of needs at all levels that could accommodate unforeseen needs as well as known needs
   • The provision of training and development opportunities to suit the circumstances pertaining to the workforce and its characteristics. This is probably a key factor in the archives domain
   • The provision of a range of inducements or motivating factors to encourage recruitment and workforce participation in CPD
The provision of a range of inclusive, progressive recognised and accredited professional and academic qualifications. It has been shown that the award of a formal qualification is an essential motivator for successful and willing participation in training and CPD programmes.

The involvement of educators, trainers and practitioners, contributing to the overall framework and strategy by undertaking particular tasks and working in a collaborative manner, not duplicating or competing with each other.

The creation of greater training and development capacity and viability in a relatively small profession (in terms of overall numbers and critical mass), having many different kinds of organisations, with different missions and cultures, and securing sustainability.

5. The one area in which the first discussion document was perhaps a little reticent was in its consideration and assessment of the current initial training scene. Dominated by the HE sector, recruitment and training of archivists are inevitably activities that are exposed to the vagaries and priorities of that sector. Most courses are conducted at the postgraduate level and changes to postgraduate student funding models have resulted in greater competition for bursaries with little scope for overall increase in numbers of awards, even though the value of vocational individual awards has been increased and the demand from potential recruits is increasing; the emphasis on promoting research studentships for the domain appears to be a greater current concern. The loss of any quota system for areas of study has created some uncertainty and frustration over the capacity of HE departments to develop and expand provision to meet the challenges presented by the domain’s needs. Even though postgraduate students have, ostensibly, a higher ‘value’ within institutions, the relatively small number of students on archival courses rarely enables institutions to make additional investment in capacity – such as additional lectureships. In some senses therefore the current pattern of initial training could be deemed to be constantly challenged by HE managerial benchmarks such as staff : student ratios and costs per head of providing programmes. The ATF in any framework that it promotes, needs to address the issue of strengthening the capacity of current initial training provision and recruitment, together with the necessary advocacy and promotion of the domain’s needs and attraction among potential archivists and records managers.

As the only formal identifiable providers of training, the HE departments find themselves in severe difficulties in attempting to meet additional and new specialised needs in the domain. Courses therefore become overburdened with content in order to provide broad based core training, while the employers and the domain also need narrower specialisation. It is unlikely therefore that the HE sector, offering one kind of programme of training, albeit with certain variations and differences in content, can ever hope to address the needs of the profession in their entirety. That must be a consideration in any framework.

Nevertheless there are some important features that make the situation more encouraging, as the initial discussion document indicates, and which seem to confirm the central role that HE institutions must play in any future training and development strategy:

- Evidence of continuing recruitment of potential archivists of a high intellectual calibre with high levels of motivation and a satisfactory public service ethic.
- Evidence of greater flexibility in provision via open and distance learning modes, and increased use of a modular and credit bearing...
approach, so that education and training can exploit the same resources and provide more opportunities for a greater number of people with inducements and the possibility of real qualification enhancement, professional competence and general progression

- Evidence of realignment to include undergraduate provision, creating potentially greater critical mass and reducing aspects of vulnerability
- Evidence of greater HE interest in and care for programmes which have clear employment destinations for students and which often have employer inputs
- Evidence of successful implementation of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms
- The HE sector is now producing graduates with a range of competencies and skills not provided hitherto
- More HE institutions are becoming involved in the provision of training in essential aspects of skills and competencies needed by the archives domain

It is also pertinent to note that HE institutions are producing graduates in many cognate or related and relevant disciplines, but they do not appear to be attracted in any significant numbers to the archives domain, perhaps for good reasons, but it is also possible that current promotional activities are selling the domain short. There is very little evidence either that they are being actively pursued in any coherent and pro-active way by the profession, perhaps on account of a natural fear of blurring traditional undergraduate discipline requirements and professional boundaries, or a professional belief that they require further training before they are competent to work in the domain. They are then probably lost to the more burgeoning and less ‘choosy’ sectors of the ICT industries. Graduates in ICT and related disciplines are not few in number, yet ICT skills are deemed to be in short supply in the archives domain. Many more examples could be cited. Any framework that may emerge as a result of the ATF’s work should provide flexible solutions to meet the needs of the domain, society in general and business.

6. However, in order to provide and maximise training and CPD opportunities, some fundamental weaknesses in the current pattern of provision will have to be solved. Employers might be encouraged to

- Ensure that employment circumstances facilitate training and development. This can be achieved through arrangements such as traineeships, secondments, internships, and by securing adequate training budgets. Inducements and rewards for effective CPD would also be seen as a vital contribution from employers
- Participate in and commit themselves to a formal training framework and to activities that will be a part of the framework. This may require for example, the formal accreditation of the organisation or institution as a provider of training or a suitable host for secondments and internships and student placements, whether it is for its own staff or as part of a training programme in collaboration with others. Such a system should not be bureaucratic or burdensome, rather the emphasis should be on encouraging participation in the scheme
- Ensure that training and CPD opportunities are available for all staff according to needs, the organisation’s effectiveness and other circumstances, national, regional or local, as they arise
HE training providers should be encouraged to

- Continue to develop flexible modes of delivery to create sufficient critical mass and capacity, ensuring that training and CPD opportunities relate to different strata within the domain, providing coherent programmes and learning and training materials to achieve a situation whereby training and CPD can be structured, continuous and progressive
- Consider exchanging courses or modules of study according to student/trainee needs, particularly when they are available in open/distance formats
- Continue to involve the professional bodies in the accreditation and validation of training programmes, and be prepared to ‘delegate’ a proportion of the training to archival institutions and organisations on a formal and planned basis
- Develop undergraduate schemes of study to ensure that a higher number of recruits to the profession are obtained, and from a range of cognate or complementary academic disciplines, including those outside the more traditional arts and humanities base
- Address the issue of providing programmes in archival training at a higher level than the ‘first’ or ‘initial qualification level that has been the main emphasis hitherto, particularly for those archivists who will have been in practice for 7 to 10 years, so as to deliver programmes of training that reflect the need for enhanced skills, improved levels of competence in key areas, an ability to relate to new developments, and strategic and leadership issues. At this level, bearing in mind current trends, the primary emphasis at the highest level (for the sake of argument, what could be called ‘high flyer’ training) should be on culture or heritage management, the management of information, and developments in an academic environment
- Continue to develop programmes of training, in association with other stakeholders, that address the needs of archive assistants and para-professionals. Such programmes should be free standing entities offering recognised accredited qualifications, but they should also provide exit points at which suitable participants could progress to the next level of training and so on.

The professional bodies and other national and regional agencies with domain responsibilities (such as those advised by the Regional Archives Councils and their equivalents in the devolved administrations, enhanced by the ATF’s own strategy of emphasising the value of regional centres of expertise) would need to be encouraged to

- Continue to undertake an accreditation role, but with a more robust approach, particularly to Registration and CPD
- Adopt a more suitable approach to the cyclical review of HE education and training providers. It would probably need a change of emphasis when accreditation of placements, secondments and internships are developed
- Contribute to the development of the framework by promoting circumstances and activities that would ensure that training and CPD is inclusive, progressive, attractive and well rewarded
- Become heavily involved in advocacy, recruitment and advertising via careers information services and beyond, in order to more
effectively offer the archive and records management domain as an attractive career choice to young people

Commercial training providers
- should be viewed as an integral part of any future framework because they are able to respond more quickly and often in a more flexible manner than other providers to specific and emerging needs
- have a particular and complementary role to play, and their programme of activity should be absorbed into a framework, provided that a means can be identified of accrediting the training and giving it a value and a ‘worth’ in the overall progressive or ‘stratified’ schema (such as a formal contribution to credit accumulation or a value in terms of pre-course learning and entry requirements)

The current confusion and uncertainty surrounding the domain’s NTOs needs to be resolved before they can also be part of any future framework. Hitherto the contribution has been regarded as disappointing and often peripheral, a situation unlikely to be improved if current trends towards having more than one Organisation are pursued. The case for having one effective Organisation straddling the information sector would appear to be overwhelming. In addition, close engagement with the Sector Skills Councils (and their equivalents in the devolved administrations) is very necessary, if only to obtain access to funds that may be available under its auspices.

7. The initial discussion document provides valuable guidance and suggestions as to how additional capacity and resources can be obtained. It makes a valuable suggestion that the experience of other domains in the area of a workforce training and development frameworks should be investigated further. This is particularly necessary in relation to the NOF People’s Network ICT Training initiative, and the more advanced leadership and management requirements. Anecdotal evidence and observation of NOF trainees in practice would suggest that the scheme – in its concept (dedicated, high intensity, formal training) and content (ICT), allied to massive additional investment, has been an outstanding success, but it may need to be modified for the archives domain to ensure that

- the domain with its relatively small numbers of employees and its innumerable one-person or few-persons operations, can create the time, technical capacity, space in overloaded work timetables, and opportunities for the training of staff
- training of the kind can be sustained and offered on a continuous basis

8. An initial attempt at providing a continuous, inclusive, progressive, stratified and, hopefully, coherent framework is offered overleaf. It should be read and interpreted in the context of comments made above. Some further commentary is also offered, together with some examples of the manner in which the framework might work in practice.

We are aware that the NCA Review into the domain’s workforce issues is at an advanced stage, but interim findings would appear to suggest that they will support the broad thrust and priorities of this paper. The review is covering issues of recruitment, education, training and development, retention and leadership within the sector (archivists, records managers and conservators). Work done so far includes a questionnaire to heads of services, followed up by one-to one interviews, and focus
groups. Issues raised by the respondents have included the difficulty of getting on the courses (student debt, cutbacks in AHRB bursaries), low salaries, short career paths and the consequent lack of promotion prospects, poor image of the profession as a whole and the effects of years of cutbacks in funding of services. On the positive side, there is still a great commitment to the public service and a wish to be involved in this aspect of the work. It is clear that many people are still attracted into the profession, but not enough of them to fill the jobs available. It will be necessary to consider ways in which a larger, and more diverse group of people can be persuaded to enter the profession, and, more importantly, to stay.
A broad accommodating ‘stratified’ framework for workforce training and development in the archives domain

A: Unqualified, clerical assistants

B: (para-professionals inc. undergrad programmes inc. archives)

C: Post grad/initial 1st qualification programmes in

D: Advanced post graduate or post

E: High-flyer Strategic or Leadership

Signifies progression
9. Commentary

There is a pressing need to address the shortage of applicants with appropriate skills for jobs in the archive domain as quickly as possible without compromising professional standards. There is growing recognition that many jobs currently available do not require the post-holder to have the full gamut of skills traditionally taught on the MA course, and there are also posts for which new skills are required that many in the archives profession need to acquire. The need to deal effectively with documentation and organisational records is also a feature of jobs in many related domains. The proposed framework offers these solutions:

Level A would be training designed for and directed at unqualified assistants and other clerical members of staff, delivering modules in areas such as ICT (such as ECDL or its equivalent, with a specific emphasis on ICT in an archives/records management context), and basic archive administration and records management. A range of training activities offered at this Level would also be directed at developing the skills and competencies of the volunteer workforce in the domain, and those working in organisations in the charity sector who are required to assume responsibility for records management within their organisations. Consideration could be given perhaps to developing collaborative working relationships with the NVQ framework (or its equivalent) in this context.

Level B would be training for those recruits to undergraduate schemes, at least 50% of which would be in modules regarded as being core to archival studies, accredited by the professional bodies, and could include periods of practical training (up to one academic year) as trainees of approved and accredited archive services, pursuing agreed and accredited programmes of activities for trainees. Consideration could also be given to the feasibility of permitting cross-sectoral cognate studies. The practical attachments or internships would be credit-rated as a formal contribution to a student's total studies in archives. Trainees from Level A who had shown ability and potential in studies at that level could be permitted to pursue modules from schemes offered at Level B either full-time or part-time (by day release, open or distance learning, according to suitability to the candidate, the organisation's interests and geographical availability). Exit points which award Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma qualifications already exist in many HE institutions, and the student's employment record and accrual of credits in Level A studies could also be a contribution to the achievement of qualifications at Level B. By this means currently unqualified assistants with potential, but who are unable for personal and domestic arrangements to pursue full-time courses, could develop their careers and qualifications up to graduate level. It is also suggested that this is the most effective (if not the quickest) method by which certain key shortages already identified in practice and reflected in the initial discussion document, can be addressed.

Level B would also be the level at which custom-designed specialised training modules would be delivered to address specialist needs, such as digital records, film and sound archives and conservation and preservation, delivered by the HE sector (and not just by the existing archival schools) and accredited private sector providers. Such accreditation has already happened in the library domain in the context of the NOF ICT training The accumulation of training in this way would be signified by the accruing of relevant credits, either to obtain a recognised Certificate or Diploma or as a contribution to the award of a degree should additional modules be completed. Such modules could also form part of studies at Level C as many modular schemes
of postgraduate studies can and do accommodate undergraduate modules of a suitable kind.

A course of studies at Level B leading to graduate (archive assistant) status would therefore normally take four years or the part-time equivalent period to complete. Students completing Levels B and C would be required to formally Register and complete a more rigorously scrutinised CPD programme.

Within the pattern of education and training at Levels A and B (and consequent opportunities for CPD) there would appear to be a strong case for developing a Modern Apprenticeship approach. To this end, it would be expedient to consider what existing structures and funding strategies for the provision of training through apprenticeships are already in existence in other disciplines, which could be used as the basis for archive provision. These schemes provide trainees with an income, but also provide employers with financial incentives to take on trainees. This would encourage people who are unable or unwilling to undertake full-time or part-time study, or who wish to develop their skills on a para-professional basis to be employed whilst receiving on-the-job training. It would be necessary to work with the current course providers to ensure that training was to agreed and accredited standards, and for which points would be put towards a recognised qualification at the successful conclusion of the apprenticeship. It should also be possible, however, for training modules to be undertaken in combination with those of other disciplines, and cross-domain accreditation be resolved, so that skills can be matched to jobs and the pool of trained staff able to take on a variety of tasks is widened, whilst professional standards and specialisms are retained where appropriate.

Consultation with the Learning and Skills Councils, through whom training money is channelled, should be undertaken as a matter of urgency to explore how this model can be developed and implemented.

Level C provision maintains current recruitment patterns and provision, but with the expectation that more flexible modes of delivery will continue to be developed, so that full time and part-time and open and distance learning modes shall be available to respond to the needs of the workforce, and generate larger numbers of qualified archivists to meet the demands of the domain. More graduates of disciplines other than the arts and humanities need to be recruited. Again, staff who are already long-standing graduates, released full or part time for archival study/training purposes, should have pre-course experience or secondments credit rated against the requirements of a course of study.

Students on existing courses report that

- It is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain suitably remunerated pre-course traineeships. It is apparent therefore that employers must have a formal role to play in this context and commit themselves to being recognised and accredited training centres. The other alternative is for existing requirements to be dispensed with.
- Some existing training schemes are not always successful or satisfactory learning experiences. An agreement will have to be arrived at therefore as to the content and conduct of traineeship programmes with approved centres and organisations. Such accreditation or approval would be jointly organised between HE institutions, The Society of Archivists and a suitable number of host organisations and institutions. A draft document outlining Guidance to applicants seeking, and organisations providing, pre course work experience in archives and records management has been drawn up by FARMER for the
SoA’s Education and Training Development Committee, and it should be considered in the context of any recommendations in the ATF’s strategy

- The workload expected of students on existing programmes is often much greater than that expected of students on comparable Masters programmes in other disciplines. There would therefore appear to be a case for the reduction in the broad based workload and greater opportunity for specialisation in these programmes
- Specialisation during initial training is a matter of concern, because students have not yet discovered which area of archival work is their preferred choice. Initial specialisation is therefore seen as a limiting factor that could prevent professional mobility and promotion, unless the means to add further core skills were readily accessible when necessary. Also the small size of the profession dictates that only large services can employ specialists; small services need generalists who have core competence in the full range of archival responsibilities.

Students completing studies at Levels B and C by whatever means (including those who might progress from Level A) should be encouraged to pursue CPD and should be eligible for Registration. That in turn would permit them to progress up the ladder to the higher Levels.

Level D training is perceived to be the kind of training necessary for archivists (who may have qualified some 7 to 10 years ago) who aspire to middle to higher management or who are given particular new or additional managerial roles and responsibilities by their organisations. Such training has been available in the library domain for some time in both full and part time modes, usually with a noticeable emphasis in content on developing management skills and competencies in particular contexts. There could therefore be scope for cross-domain work at this level. Such studies/training could be modelled on high quality MBA programmes, with the content reflecting the profession’s needs. Inputs from commercial trainers could also be approved and accredited. Areas such as project management for example, would be appropriate at the present time with the domain awash with special projects and externally-funded initiatives. The professional organisations would have significant responsibility for identifying these specialist needs and for making timely representations to providers. Again it is argued that a higher academic qualification at the Masters level is necessary to generate interest and involvement with career development at this level among the workforce. It would develop skills and abilities in the management areas, facilitate some cross-sectoral work, and help to define the leadership potential of certain staff. The involvement of major organisations and institutions in the domain, and across the sector, with studies at this level could be significant by means of secondments, project work, and in the provision of training materials and test bed facilities.

Level E training, probably leading to a Doctoral qualification (the ‘Taught’ Doctorate model), has been identified in the initial discussion document. It could be argued that it should relate to leadership and management in the heritage sphere if the framework is to address the needs and the situation on the ground. Advanced studies of the kind are being developed by the HE sector in the UK; the exposure to the ‘high-flyer’ dimensions could be catered for whilst the ‘sensitivity to the needs of the archive domain’ could be accommodated in project and thesis work. The ultimate stopping point on the career path for an archivist is to head a major culture directorate within which archive services may be placed, or even into other spheres of management. The problems with designing and delivering a suitable programme have been identified by the first discussion document, but a model for ‘taught’
Doctorates already exist, and could be linked to studies or specialist modules at Level D studies to obtain progression and coherence. The number of participants at this level is unlikely to be large, and the only possible way forward is a collaborative agreement with a lead HE institution allied to commercial training providers and cross-domain organisations and institutions in the sector that could provide some of the research and development materials and situations – problems to solve, case studies, the need for blueprints and so on.

10. The suggestions offered above have sought to impose a framework on stated needs, requirements and aspirations, namely recruiting and retaining a suitable workforce, retaining the essence of current good practice as well as identifying means by which other aspirations could be achieved. They also seek to incorporate the most important drivers to successful training and CPD, - creating suitable conditions for training and development, identifying the most appropriate roles for the domain’s stakeholders, permitting cross-domain activity, identifying means of recruiting, motivating and rewarding the workforce, and ensuring that the domain has a coherent, progressive, inclusive and enabling framework which would not become afflicted by a range of qualifications and training activities of variable quality.

10. There are, however, two fundamental issues or questions that need to be addressed if the framework is to develop:

- Who should assume responsibility for its development?
- Who should be responsible for identifying or securing the resources that are, quite obviously, necessary?

It should be readily apparent that the lack of a robust and sustainable executive capacity among any of the domain’s individual stakeholders at the present time is a problem. This problem also has a historical dimension, and we should not repeat past mistakes. Supporting a designated lead body or organisation from within the domain would also appear to present problems – it could have real or perceived conflicts of interest, such is the domain’s diversity.

The Archives Task Force could therefore properly conclude that the appropriate body to carry out the necessary roles and functions in the first instance is Resource itself (acting in collaboration with its partner organisations in the devolved administrations in accordance with its Concordats). As the development of the workforce in the domain is of such critical importance to the delivery of the ATF’s strategies, it would also appear necessary to obtain a resourcing commitment to the development of the workforce strategy for a period of at least 3 to 5 years.

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