

Archives and Special Collections Pathway

A specialization within the Master of Library and Information Science Program
St. Catherine University

Updated: Spring 2016

Introduction

Archivists and special collections curators/librarians collect, organize, preserve, provide access to and maintain control over a wide range of collections deemed valuable for permanent safekeeping. The collections include a range of textual, graphic, audio--visual and artifact primary source materials in both analog and digital formats. Materials may include rare books, manuscripts (personal papers), newspapers, photographs, films, maps, video, sound recordings, software, computer files, artworks and unique artifacts.

Archivists and curators/librarians for special collections serve both researchers and members of the general public in understanding the past and the present. Appraisal, access and preservation are vital issues to archivists and special collections librarians.

Archivists and special collections curators/librarians work in a variety of cultural, academic, government, for profit and non-profit institutions. These include archives, historical societies, academic libraries, religious institutions, government agencies and corporations.

Professional Associations

MLIS Students interested in a career in archives or special collections are highly encouraged to join any of these local, regional and national associations while pursuing a master's degree in order to learn more about the profession and have contact with those already working in profession.

The [Society of American Archivists](#) is the primary professional organization for archivists. Background on the archival profession is available on their web site. Student annual membership is \$50.00. The MLIS Program has a SAA Student Chapter.

[Twin Cities Archives Roundtable](#) (TCART) is the organization for area archivists. Annual membership for all is \$10.00.

The [Rare Books and Manuscripts section of the Association of College and Research Libraries](#) (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association, represents and promotes the interests of librarians who work with rare books, manuscripts, and other types of special collections. Check the ALA website for membership information.

[ARMA International](#) is the primary association for professionals working in records information management, both paper and electronic. Its members include records managers, archivists, corporate librarians, imaging specialists, legal professionals, IT managers, consultants, and educators.

[Twin Cities ARMA](#) Chapter is the local ARMA chapter; Student annual membership for ARMA TC is \$25.00.

The [Midwest Archives Conference](#) is the regional organization covering the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Individual annual membership is \$45.00.

Professional Competencies

Professional competencies are the knowledge, skills and attributes you develop to engage in a profession.

Society of American Archivists Guidelines

The Society of American Archivists' current Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies require that students completing a specialization in archives must possess:

- Knowledge of archival functions including the theory and methodology associated with specific areas of archival work;
- Knowledge of the profession including the history of the archival profession and the evolution of archival practice;
- Contextual knowledge including the contexts within which records are created, managed and kept.

In addition, each of the three components—knowledge of archival functions, the profession and contextual knowledge—should contain an international and multicultural perspective.

Archival functions include appraisal and acquisition, arrangement and description of materials, preservation, reference and access services, outreach and advocacy, management and administration. Knowledge of the archival profession includes the history of archives and the archival profession, understanding of records and cultural memory, an understanding of the ethics and values of the profession. Contextual knowledge includes social and cultural systems, legal and financial systems, records and information management and digital records and access systems (From: <http://www2.archivists.org/gpas>).

Academy of Certified Archivists

Individuals may become certified by the [Academy of Certified Archivists](#) by meeting a series of defined professional standards. Students interested in taking the examination to become a Certified Archivist after completion of their degree should consult the requirements available on the organization's web site. FYI: Not all archival positions require certification; job opening notices will specify if certification is a requirement.

ACRL Competencies for Special Collections Librarians

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) board has approved competencies for special collections professionals as of July 1, 2008. The [full list of competencies](#) is available on the ACRL website. A list specifically for [fundamental competences](#) also is available.

Courses

Core Requirements:

- LIS 7010 Introduction to Library and Information Science
- LIS 7030 Organization of Knowledge
- LIS 7040 Information Access Services
- LIS 7050 Research Methods for LIS
- LIS 7700 Management of Libraries and Information Centers
- ~~LIS 7990 Touchstone*~~
- ~~LIS 8990 Capstone*~~

*Touchstone and Capstone longer required for MLIS students starting the program after Spring 2015.

Highly Recommended Courses:

- LIS 7130 Preservation Management
- LIS 7750 Introduction to Archives and Special Collections
- LIS 8810 Advanced Archival Management
- LIS 8820 Metadata for Internet Resources

Suggested Elective Courses:

- LIS 7120 History of Print, Early Books and Manuscripts (recommended for focus in rare books and manuscripts)
- LIS 7530 Internet Fundamentals & Design (recommended for basic skills in website development)
- LIS 7590 Digital Libraries (recommended for skills in building and organizing digital collections)
- LIS 7693 Special Topics (courses related to archives and special collections may be offered from time to time)
- LIS 7993 Practicum (strongly recommended for students needing practical experience)