

Routes of entry to the archives profession

Work in the archives sector now covers a multitude of areas, from research to IT expertise, and from engaging with your local community to understanding dead languages and ancient handwriting.

The archives workforce includes professional archivists, archive assistants and an increasing range of specialists that support particular areas in archive-related work such as information management, conservation, education, outreach, interpretation, online development and digital preservation. Many people begin their career through volunteering in the sector.

[Archives for the 21st Century](#) identified the formation of ‘a responsive, skilled workforce’ as one of the key strategic priorities for the archives sector. *‘Activities to support the development of leadership and professional skills will be promoted to create a diverse, vibrant and skilled workforce that can respond to consumers’ needs in even more creative and imaginative ways.’*

Projects to widen access to skilled work in archives are ongoing in several Heritage Lottery Fund-supported projects including Opening up Archives, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Cloch. These projects seek to recruit people from diverse backgrounds, who might not otherwise have come into the archives workforce.

Qualifying as an archives professional

Becoming a qualified archivist requires postgraduate study, either taking a one-year full-time course or various part-time options including distance learning. Archivists study for a postgraduate diploma, and many take a full masters degree.

The following UK universities run postgraduate courses for archive professionals which are accredited by the Archives and Records Association:

- [Department of Information Studies, University of Aberystwyth](#)
[The Archives Administration course](#) is designed to prepare you for work in any archive or records management environment. You will learn professional principles and techniques and acquire the core skills to enable you to play a part in the preservation, management and exploitation of an invaluable informational and historical resource. Other options

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include masters qualifications in International Archives, records and Information Management, and Information Governance and Assurance.

There are on site and distance learning options.

- **University of Dundee Centre for Archives and Information Studies**
[CAIS](#) provides archival education and research opportunities, offering Masters degrees, courses for Continuing Professional Development and PhD study in Archives, Records Management, Information Rights and Digital Preservation. Individual modules can also be taken for professional development.

This is for distance learning only.

- **University of Glasgow [Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute](#)**
The MSc in Information Management and Preservation provides an understanding of contemporary information and records management issues against the background of historical needs and goals of information and record users. It pays special attention to the management of digital records and electronic resources.

This is available on site only.

- **University of Liverpool [Centre for Archive Studies](#)**
The Masters programme provides the necessary theoretical underpinning for successful practice and the opportunity to follow a career either in research or as a practitioner in a varied work environment, including commercial, business, central and local government, university and specialist sectors.

This is available on site only.

A distance-learning diploma or certificate at undergraduate level is also available. *It aims to provide a thorough grounding in, and a broad perspective view of the theory and practice of archives and records management, chiefly for those already in the workplace.*

- **University College London [Department of Information Studies](#)**
Students learn to manage, organise, describe, interpret and provide access to records created in the present and those inherited from the past, and also to maintain and preserve records for use in the future. The main focus of the programme is on written records and archives, created by a wide range of organisations and individuals, in both digital and hard copy format. Teaching and learning give equal emphasis to the management of records for business purposes within the organisations where they are created, and to their longer-term preservation and use for historical research and other cultural purposes.

This is available on site only.

What next?

More information about careers in archives is available on the [Careers page of the Archives and Records Association](#) (UK & Ireland), the professional body representing those who work in archives.

For information around becoming a professional conservator, please see the [Institute of Conservation website](#).

If you are specifically interested in a career in Information and Records Management, the [Information and Records Management Society website](#) will be of interest.

The [Creative Choices](#) website also contains career profiles and pathways for people working in archives and allied professions.