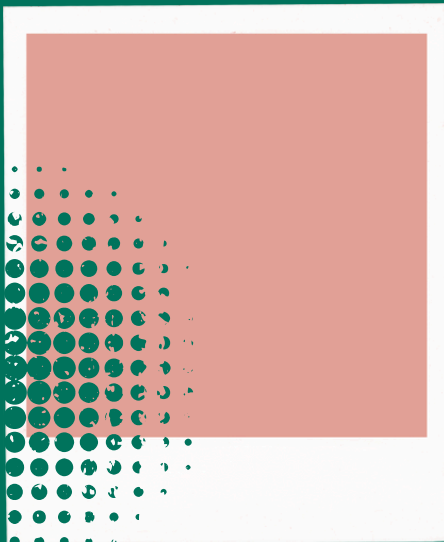
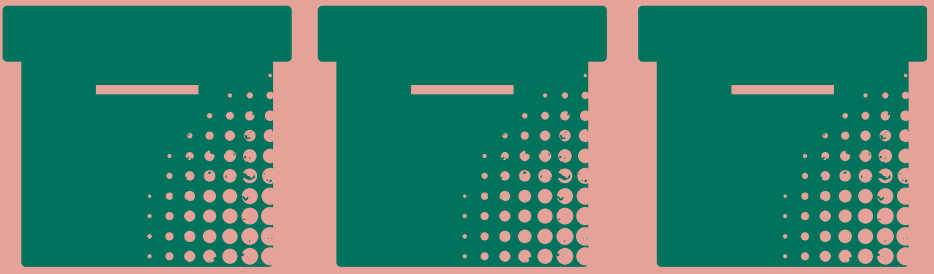


So You've Chozine a Career in Archives



Stories by the
Australian Society of
Archivists Victorian
Branch Committee



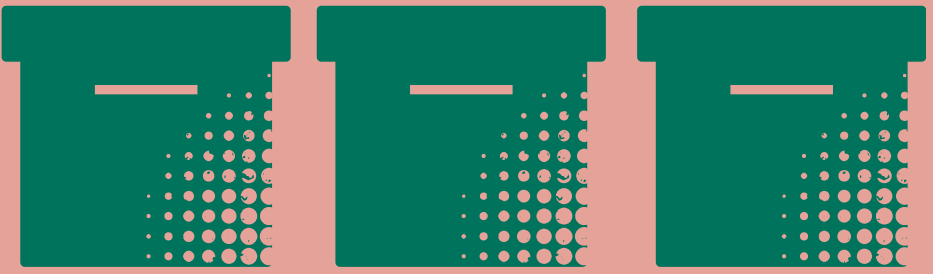
Thank you for picking up our zine! This contains all the advice we wish we had when we first started out.

Even though we're a small profession, there's a great variety of jobs in archives - especially with our GLAMRous friends from Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Records. We've got a rundown of those for you along with tips for applying and interviewing for jobs.

Don't be afraid to let people know you're looking for a job - even if you don't quite know where you want to work. They say most jobs aren't advertised, but opportunities are shared by word of mouth, and this is true for the GLAMR profession. If people know you're interested, you're on their radar for any opportunities.

We've also got ideas to get involved in the archivist community, whether as part of a committee, a small project, organising an event, or simply coming along to an event. This helps you to get to know your colleagues, and also for them to get to know you.

We recommend keeping an eye out for volunteer roles at larger events like conferences. Students and new professionals are usually wanted for basic roles like running mics or ushering people. This should get you free or discounted entry and the chance to see some great speakers. Plus, it's great for resume building! You can definitely include professional events you've attended on your resume, especially if you haven't entered the field yet. This shows you're interested and willing to learn and engage.



Attending events is an easy way to keep up your professional development and knowledge of the profession, especially for roles that are a little different. With many free or low-cost events offered, these are a great way to keep up with the latest from the field. If you're still studying or still have another job, look for events that are held outside of business hours or on weekends, and even events that have been recorded.

On the topic of studying - where have all the archives courses gone? We still need archivists - whether it's in archives roles, or using those skills in another sector. Our transferable skills are always relevant, so you never know when what you've learnt might come in handy. There are still courses in Australia, so if you've picked up this zine because you're thinking of becoming an archivist, we've got you covered with a list of available courses.

Finally, we want to welcome you to our awesome archivists community. Our advice and support doesn't end here. Want to know more about what a person does in their role, but not sure if you should ask? Definitely ask! People are very happy to share their knowledge, expertise and experiences, especially with students and new professionals. Our Victorian Committee is always happy to help out, and we're just an email away. Those details are on the last page.

We're thrilled you've cho-zine a career in archives! We hope you find some great advice in these pages. And we're sorry for the punny title.

What does working in archives look like?

- From the outside, it's easy to make assumptions about what working in archives looks like. It's a romanticised profession, the archivist alone in a quiet room silently putting on a pair of pristine white gloves. They walk over to a shelf and gently remove an old book, blowing the dust off the spine to get a better look at the title.

That's not at all what working in an archive is like! It's not like Indiana Jones or National Treasure, archivists don't hoard everything, and not everything we work with is old.

It's actually a lot of spreadsheets on a screen. And talking to people, because it's a service job. Whether you're providing a service to the public or the rest of an organisation, the purpose of maintaining an archive is that people can access and better understand historical records and other sources of information.

You can get an idea of the variety of jobs archivists do by looking at the sorts of places they work, including:

- Large government archives like Public Record Office Victoria and the National Archives of Australia
- Libraries and museums
- Churches and faith organisations
- Schools and universities
- Businesses and corporations
- Community organisations

But working in archives is even more varied than this suggests. People in large government archives might have quite specific roles within large teams, like working directly with users and the general public, or having responsibility for managing volunteers, or running specialist digitisation programs, or working with government departments on transferring records.

Archivists in schools and small organisations may be the only specialist in that area in their organisation. This can mean that as well as managing the archives and current records, they could be responsible for mounting exhibitions, assisting with marketing and outreach programs, writing histories, preserving historical artefacts and objects, presenting at open days, and more.

Universities often have their own archives and records units. Some also collect archives from people and organisations. Others teach archivists, or provide a home for academics who develop and collaborate on research projects which include a focus on archives and records.

Some archivists work with kilometres of boxes of physical records, others are experts in digital preservation, and many work with both. Some work for large multi-national corporations; others support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, not-for-profits, or social activists.

This variety means we get to use a lot of skills that they didn't teach us in archives school:

Communication

We give presentations, speak to visitors to the archives, write blogs and newsletter articles, and develop and write conference presentations and academic articles.

Creative thinking and problem solving

We need to deal with what comes through the door and try to get the most out of our archives and collections, often with limited staff and other resources which means getting creative.

Knowing what your strengths are

We need to understand the value of archival ways of thinking and working, including for many jobs that don't mention 'archives' in their job descriptions

Teaching

We teach our own organisations and staff about archives and records, train other archivists, and teach volunteers.

Writing

We often need to prepare manuals, processes and 'how to' guides for other staff, clients, donors, and users.

Strategic thinking

We often need to connect the archives to the strategic direction of the organisation to obtain funding.

Negotiating

We need to advocate for the needs of the collection and the value of archivists.

Though there's lots of variety, the archives industry is also small, so networking is important. We learn a lot from other archivists, and also from other professions. We're good friends with our respective legal and IT departments, who we work with a lot. We archivists are collaborative people out of necessity because it helps with creative thinking and problem solving.

A day in the life of an archivist isn't slow, blowing dust off old books. It's a vibrant, varied, and social job that is very rewarding.

What
does
working
in
archives
look like?



Where have all
the archives
courses gone?

...and do we
still need
archivists?

If there are fewer information management courses, a reasonable question to ask is: Do we still need archivists?

We need archivists now more than ever. Digital storage keeps getting cheaper, allowing a proliferation of digital information, with the attitude of keeping it 'just in case'. We've all seen what happens when over-retained data is breached, and the lasting impacts of the lack of action. Most of that information doesn't have long-term value, and what does has to be actively preserved.

Sure, there are now tools to automate disposal. But programming and training those tools requires a human with the right expertise - someone who can create and interpret a retention and disposal schedule. If there is more data being disposed than kept, the decisions need to be sound.

In an era of mis- and dis-information, having people with skills to navigate fact from fiction is essential. As an archivist, you've developed a sixth sense for disreputable sources. Those skills are valuable for life in general, particularly for information management jobs, and even for jobs in other fields. Archival skills are useful to ensure that IT systems run efficiently, that government policy is sensitive to information and data issues, that research data is managed effectively, that privacy and ethics are maintained in any organisation.

Keen to study? We've got you covered with archive, information management, and information science courses over the next page.

Of course
we still
need
archivists!



Where to study to become an archivist

While the number of courses are decreasing, those that remain are quality courses that will both support your introduction to the profession, and upskill your existing knowledge.

The ASA currently has three accredited courses from Charles Sturt University (CSU), Curtin University and the University of South Australia (UniSA). The rigorous accreditation process ensures the content that is being taught reflects the profession today. In recent years, ASA has joined ALIA and RIMPA for a collaborative process, with each organisation contributing to the overall process.

Alongside the fewer number of degrees available, there has also been a shift towards online teaching across the discipline. Online study gives you the opportunity to choose a degree that suits your life circumstances and study style, ensuring you have a sustainable work and study balance. Self-paced open study style courses, such as Open Universities Australia's (OUA) degrees, replace live online classes with online learning activities that can be undertaken asynchronously when your schedule allows. Some OUA courses allow single subject enrolment, enabling students to study one class at a time, every 12 weeks throughout the whole year, greatly decreasing the length of degrees.

Most of these courses include one or two practicum placements and internships, which are integral to developing archival skills and making industry contacts. Opportunities to undertake postgraduate research projects are also offered in some archives courses, particularly Curtin's Extended degree and UniSA's Master's.

Charles Sturt University

CSU offers both undergraduate and postgraduate options for prospective students, with their Bachelor being the last remaining undergraduate degree that is ASA accredited. Both degrees have a broad information studies focus, meaning students will learn librarianship, information management and data management skills, alongside their records and archives specialisation classes. The inclusion of a professional study visit and 80-hour work placement means that students will have the opportunity to experience a myriad of professional archival and records environments throughout their studies.

Bachelor of Information Studies (Records and Archives Management)

3 years, Part time 6 years
32 hours professional study visit
80 hours professional placement
Early graduate option into Associate Degree in Information Studies

Master of Information Studies (Records and Archives Management)

1.5 years, Part time 3 years
32 hours professional study visit [PG]
80 hours professional placement
Early graduate option into Graduate Diploma of Information Studies/Graduate Certificate in Information Studies

Curtin University

Since the phasing out of Curtin's undergraduate archive and library degree, the postgraduate offerings have been revamped and updated in line with changes in the industry. Many of the units are shared across the graduate programs, meaning that early graduate options and opportunities for further study are easy to undertake. Students can simply add-on library units and practicum to their Grad Diploma in Archives, to graduate with a Master of Information Science. Graduates of all courses are eligible for ASA accreditation, and Masters graduates are eligible for ALIA accreditation as well. All courses can also be attended through OUA using their open study style and single subject enrolment. All degrees include professional practicum. The Masters degrees require students to undertake one of their practicums in a library environment, which can be invaluable to new graduates as a way of making contacts within the broader GLAM sector.

Graduate Diploma in Archives and Records Management

Full time 1 year, part time 2 years
15-day archives and records management practicum

Master of Information Science

Full time 1.5 years, Part time 3 years
15-day archives and records management practicum
15-day library practicum
Early graduate option into Graduate Diploma

Master of Information Science (Extended – by research or internship)

Full time 2 years, part time 4 years
30-day internship OR substantial research project
15-day archives and records management practicum
15-day library practicum
Early graduate option into Graduate Diploma

University of South Australia (UniSA)

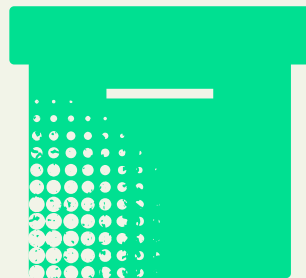
Both courses offered by UniSA provide students with the opportunity to gain professional experience by undertaking a 75-hour professional placement, as well as working as a team under the supervision of industry partners to carry out an archival project. Graduates will have not only industry experience in archives, but also professional group project experience to take into the workforce. Students of both degrees also receive not only ASA accreditation, but also ALIA and RIMPA recognition, neither of which are found in similar Grad Diploma courses from other universities.

Graduate Diploma in Information Management (Archives and Records Management)

Full time 1 year, part time 2 years
75 hours professional placement
Capstone project to work with an industry partner on a project

Master of Information Management (Archives and Records Management)

Full time 2 years, part time 4 years
75 hours professional placement
Professional research project in collaboration with industry partners
Substantial academic research project with an academic supervisor
Early graduate option into Graduate Diploma



There are also other courses available that are not accredited by the ASA, and these include:

Edith Cowan University

Bachelor of IT (Information Services)
Full time 3 years, part time 6 years

Various TAFE across NSW, QLD, WA and SA, who offer a Diploma of Library and Information Services, including:

Swinburne University of Technology

Full time 1 year, part time 2 years

Victoria University

Full time 1 year, part time 2 years

Box Hill Institute

Full time 1-2 years, part time 2-3 years

Use your skills! Transferable skills are always relevant

Have you had a job while you're studying, or are involved in a community group, or even helped family members solve IT issues?

You build skills and experience from outside a professional work environment that will help you in your new role - you just need to know how to sell it!



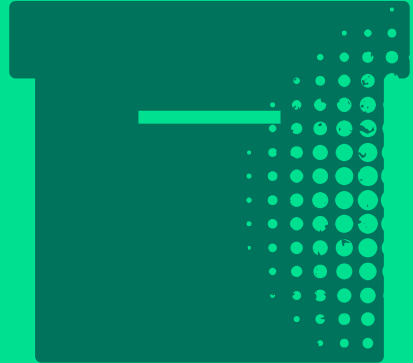
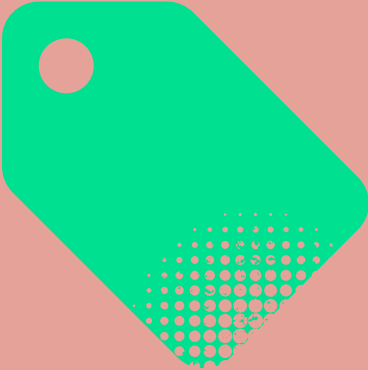
Recognise the
skills you have

You may not think some skills you've learnt are relevant, like working in retail or hospitality, but don't forget these are still workplaces and the skills you learn are incredibly useful. Don't be afraid to include these experiences on your resume.

Our work in the profession can be varied from actual archivist or information management professional, to IT support, to maintenance worker, to all around master of all knowledge at all times. You'll pick up skills along the way, and might not even know you have a certain skill until it comes time to use it. People are constantly impressed by the range of skills in our profession, so use what you know to your advantage.

#2

Know how to use these skills



#3

Customer service is a necessary skill

Customer service is a major part of any role in any profession, whether this is internal to where you work, or external with members of the public. Do not discount this as a skill, as it will be part of most job applications and roles.



Key selection criteria responses can make or break your application

I've been on both sides of the government recruitment fence. Here are a few tips that I've learned through shortlisting applications that will help you get to the interview stage.

#1 – The application pack is full of hints

An application pack will have some combination of these sections:

- Features of the role (salary, super and hours; location; conditions)
- About the organisation and team
- Key selection criteria (KSC)
- Documents to include in your application (cover letter, responses to selection criteria, resume)

Additionally, jobs in the public service usually link to a skills framework for the level of the position (APS use the Integrated Leadership System and VPS use the Capability Framework). All of this information is included because *you're meant to use it in your application*, so read all of it and make references to it at every opportunity.

#2 – KSC are the most important part of your application

A recruitment that has KSC is probably going to be highly structured throughout the process. In particular, public service recruitments usually have a rubric for the KSC that is used to shortlist applicants.

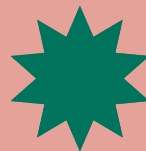
KSC responses shouldn't simply restate the criteria - saying "I have excellent communication skills" is only telling the recruitment panel that *you* are confident in your communication skills; *they* won't have confidence in you unless you tell them exactly how you've used your excellent communication skills in the past.

An easy way to ensure you're including enough detail in your responses is to use the STAR method:

#3 – Weave additional relevant information into your KSC responses

A+ responses to job advertisements also include how you align to the mission or values of the organisation (check the annual reports or strategic plans if available) and the skills from the applicable skills framework that you possess.

If the application pack indicates a page or word limit, try to reach as close to the limit as possible. This is a fairly good indicator of how much detail they expect it will take to sufficiently respond to the job advertisement.



STAR

Situation

Describe the situation, including any issues and how you were involved.

Task

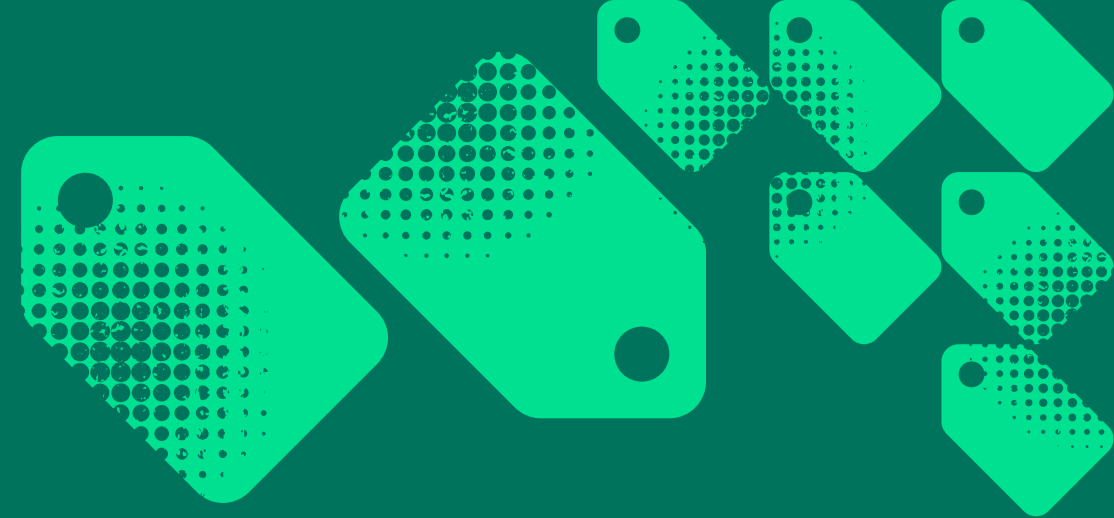
State how you could influence the situation, and why you decided on this course of action.

Action

Describe the actions you took to achieve the task and rectify the situation.

Result

Describe how your actions impacted the situation.



I don't pretend to be an expert at job interviews, but I've had my fair share. Maybe some of these tips and anecdotes will help you prepare for your next interview.

Be prepared!

One interviewer asked me to explain Retention & Disposal Authorities. Even though I knew the subject, I got a bit muddled in my explanations of function specific RDAs versus general RDAs. I was ready for behavioural questions like, 'what are your strengths and weaknesses?; how do you prioritise tasks under pressure?' I even knew the STAR (situation, task, action, result) method of responding.

Job interview tips & anecdotes

Essentially, be ready for any question, but most of all, keep a cool head (if possible), so you don't muddle yourself. I can say that after a few interviews, it will get easier. Maybe see if a friend can practice with you.



You'll also find lots of resources online about types of interview questions, and if you know the organisation [annual reports] and job [job description] that you're applying for, you might be able to predict some of the questions the interview panel [panel of 2-5 people] will ask you.

I've had interviews with a scenario [advised before interview] that I had to present on [e.g. 'how would you prioritise tasks for this role for the next 5 years using the job description?'], or a demonstration I had to give [e.g. 'here is a book, please

describe how you would register the book in the archive, and feel free to use items on the desk, such as the ruler']. I think you can really shine with these presentations and demonstrations, but only if you prepare well, and don't forget to breathe.

**Be confident!
Remember the lesson
from the 80s classic,
The Neverending Story:**

**"Don't start to doubt
yourself. Be confident.
Be confident.
Be confident!"**

Explaining your job to non records people

Looking down at my security pass, reading my name and the word 'archivist' under my name, the security guard asked me: "are you an activist, are you?"

I quickly explained, "no archivist, not activist, they wouldn't let an archivist behind the wall" [at Parkville Youth Detention]. I saw that I needed to explain further.

My job is to look after physical records stored in the control room, listing records, transferring closed files to PROV (Public Record Office Victoria). I thought it best to leave it there, no point trying to explain what I do further, especially as I was already getting puzzled looks.

I've heard other archivists getting confused with archaeologists and even architects. Non-archivists must hear 'arch' and get confused from that point on!

I guess when I get asked what I do, I generally say I'm an archivist, then quickly explain, I look after historical records, mostly letters.

If more information is required at this point, I explain that I collect, catalogue, describe, and preserve physical and digital records to be kept permanently-forever. I promote the collection, provide access, answer enquiries, supervise students and volunteers, train staff in using our database system, and help colleagues transfer their physical and digital records from network drives and email inboxes into our database.

Sometimes this starts an interesting conversation about working in the GLAMR sector. I try not to romanticise what it is I do, but I also explain that I love my work, and I hope that I'm contributing positively to a sector that I believe can make a difference.



Making connections in the Victorian archives community

Students and new graduates in the Victorian archive community can make connections with archivists in a variety of ways, especially in Naarm/Melbourne.

You might find fewer opportunities to meet archivists in regional areas, but if you have a local archive, library, museum, gallery, or historical society, you will find like-minded people to connect with, and who may be able to help connect you to archivists they know.

Our first recommendation is to attend as many in person and online events in our sector, beginning with ASA VIC Branch events, and events more broadly in the GLAMR sector including newCardigan, AMaGA VIC, ALIA and beyond.

The sector is small in Victoria, so you will soon find your place in the community by attending as many events as you can find out about through newsletters, community groups on social media and the 'what's on' pages of ASA and other GLAMR sites. It's an inclusive and friendly community, very welcoming to newcomers.

The community has a wealth of knowledge. If you have questions about anything from conservation to finding a mentor, email ASA VIC Branch and/or attend an in person event, and you will have experienced people from the community willing to help and provide advice.

Volunteering as professional development

Volunteering can be a great way to see if you enjoy working in archives before you commit to studying. You may be a history buff, or a researcher extraordinaire, but working in archives isn't just about uncovering juicy historical gossip. As other people have written about, working in archives is about spreadsheets, databases, and people, so it's a good idea to see if that work is enjoyable and rewarding to you.

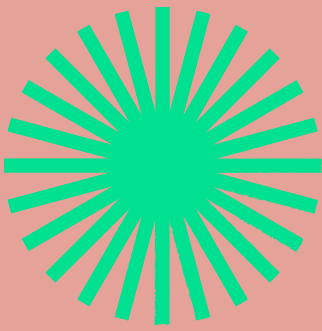
Experience
different kinds of
archives

Volunteering can also help you to find your niche. Do you enjoy assisting researchers, or processing collections? Do you like treating mould on old documents, or running checksums on born-digital collections? Would you prefer to handle paper, or care for audio-visual collections? Or do you like doing a little bit of everything—perhaps a lone arranger in the making.

See if you enjoy
working in
archives

Volunteering can also allow you to experience different kinds of archives. Working at the National Archives is very different to a community archive, or an organisational records unit. It's a good idea to get a diversity of experiences to see what kinds of collections (and people) you like working with.

Find your niche



Gain some practical experience



Once you've decided that a career in archives is something you want to pursue, volunteering can also be a great way to get some practical experience, develop a diversity of different archival skills, and build up your resume. Answering Key Selection Criteria will be much easier if you have some practical examples to refer to. Even the most "basic" tasks like data entry are core archival skills, and showing you have this foundational knowledge and experience is important.

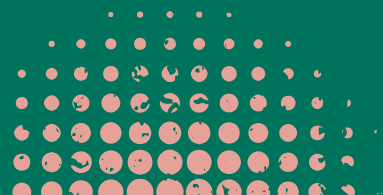
Volunteering is also a fantastic way to make some professional connections, and meet industry friends and mentors. Everyone knows everyone in archives, so volunteering can be a great way to get your name out there. You never know when someone might send a job opportunity your way!

Make professional connections

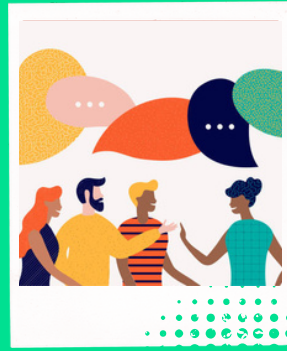


If you want to start volunteering in archives, some great places to start are:

- State records agencies like Public Record Office of Victoria, State Records of South Australia, or Western Sydney Records Centre through Museums of History NSW
- National Film and Sound Archive
- Local history organisations like your state's Royal Historical Society
- Community archives like Australian Queer Archives (AQuA)



Hear from our community



Archivist profiles

We asked Victorian Branch members – how did you get started in archives?

Look at this friendly bunch of archivists! We asked them where they studied, how they got their first job, and what volunteering helped to get them there.

The varied experiences of each person demonstrates that there are many ways to get started in the industry.

Thank you to everyone who submitted their profiles.



Marian Jenkinson

College Archivist at two Catholic Secondary Colleges



How did you get your first job?

My first job in this field was at an Independent secondary school which I had been working part-time at whilst I was completing my studies. In March 2020 I got a phone call out of the blue that their previous archivist had to leave “for family reasons”, and the school had a number of events lined up to celebrate their Centenary which required the archival collection being used for displays etc. As luck would have it, two weeks after I accepted the two day a week job, Victoria went into the first Covid-19 lockdown.

Where did you study?

I completed a Graduate Diploma of Museum Studies at Deakin Uni (Burwood) – I was involved in an internship with the University Archives, and Head Archivist, as part of a special project.

Did you volunteer?

The Internship at Deakin Uni was for a semester in my second year of study, and then I got accepted into a volunteering program at a museum connected with University of Ediburgh for 10 weeks as I finished my final semester of study. Whilst that was working with museum staff most of the time, I did get to meet the University Archivist and learn a little about how they operated as well.



Luisa Moscato

Archivist, Melbourne
Grammar School



How did you get your first job?

Was introduced to potential employers by my lecturer; argued the transferable skills of registration in archaeology (major of my undergrad degree) to Archives; worked at the University of Melbourne in Records Services (responsible for university archives) under Margaret Jennings and then Jenni Davison for 7 years.

Where did you study?

University of Melbourne for the Post Grad Diploma in Information Management (Archives and Records).

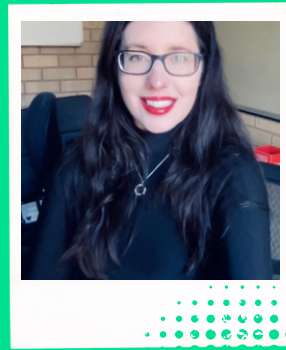
Did you volunteer?

No but had excellent placements during my course firstly with Dr Anne-Marie Schwirtlich at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and with Bruce Smith at the Australian Hockey Association.



Lizzy Tait

Senior lecturer at Charles Sturt University



How did you get your first job?

My first graduate job was doing statistical analysis of labour market data at a university research centre. I got it through the uni internal jobs system when I was finishing my Masters and then went on to study my PhD while working.

Where did you study?

I studied in Scotland- University of Glasgow and Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen.

Did you volunteer?

I did not volunteer but worked part-time (retail and hospo) through uni and a careers advisor helped me to articulate that experience into 'transferable skills' for job applications.



Nicola Laurent

Senior Project Archivist
on the Find & Connect
web resource at the
University of Melbourne



How did you get your first job?

For my first role post university in a library I applied through a formal application process. For my first archives role, I was recommended by one of my lecturers.

Where did you study?

I studied at Monash University – Master of Business Information Systems Professional and did a semester of study at Simmons College, Boston.

Did you volunteer?

I volunteered in school libraries - Kilbreda College Mentone and Fenway High School Boston.



Bethany Sinclair-Giardini

Archival consultant for a small consulting firm in Melbourne



How did you get your first job?

It was through an agency, and it was a temporary assignment for six months that led to a permanent post. It wasn't an archives job though, it was a heritage information role, but it included archives, so I just kind of fell into archives. That was 30 years ago and I've been working with archives ever since.

Where did you study?

I studied in the UK. I did my Postgraduate Diploma in Archives Administration distance learning through the University of Aberystwyth, prior to which my PhD in Literary Archives and Historical Manuscripts from Queen's University Belfast. I also have a Masters in Medieval and Tudor Studies from University of Kent, and an Honours degree in History and Heritage Studies from the UK's Open University.

Did you volunteer?

I volunteered for The National Trust in England and Northern Ireland. I also volunteered for a small Ulster-NZ charity in Northern Ireland and since being in Australia, I've volunteered for RIMPA, in fact I still do, as I'm one of their Ambassadors, and used to be Vice-President of their former Victorian Branch as well as Local Government Chapter Lead. I also volunteered for Municipal Association of Victoria on their Information Governance Committee (as Secretary and Vice Chair).

Alister Bennie

Records Management Officer in the Records and Archives team at the Department of Education



How did you get your first job?

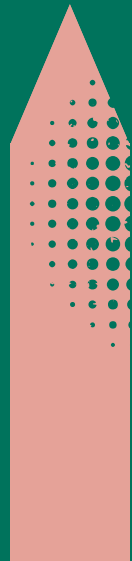
I did a course in Information Management at university and part of the requirements of the course was placement. My placement was with the AFI (Australian Film Institute) Research Collection in the RMIT University Library and they offered me some casual work after I had been doing volunteer work there.

Where did you study?

I did my undergraduate degrees at Monash University and then my postgraduate degree at RMIT University.

Did you volunteer?

I did volunteer work at RMIT University working with the AFI Research Collection, then I also volunteered at Melbourne Museum both front of house and behind the scenes in the Archives. I still do volunteer work with a historical society.



Catherine Hall

College Archivist at Xavier College, Kew



How did you get your first job?

My first job was stacking shelves in the local supermarket. I got it through my mother, who knew the owners. All my jobs have been through open applications, but I have also always known someone on the 'inside'. It is the unofficial networks that are the biggest help, in all fields.

Where did you study?

I studied for my Bachelor of Arts at Monash University (Clayton), majoring in History (Medieval and Renaissance) and Art History, with a minor in English Literature. After a few years of working as a secretary, I completed a Graduate Diploma Science – Information Services (Archives and Records Management) via distance from Edith Cowan University.

Did you volunteer?

I have never needed to volunteer. However, I do believe it is a great way to gain experience in the field. I have trained several volunteers over my time at Xavier and currently have one with me at the moment.



Thanks to our contributors:

Sophie Shilling [editor]

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