



# The Continuing Education of Archival Professionals in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Archives Planning During the “14th Five-Year Plan”

Xiuqin Wu<sup>1</sup>(✉) and Tong Wang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shandong Technology and Business University, Yantai, Shandong, China  
201511353@sdtbu.edu.cn

<sup>2</sup> Jinan Vocational College, Jinan, Shandong, China

**Abstract.** Based on the “14th Five-Year National Archival Undertaking Development Plan”, this paper analyzes the current composition of archival professionals in colleges and universities by listing a table, discusses the necessity and feasibility of continuing education for archival professionals in colleges and universities, and expounds the main content, educational methods and management methods of continuing education.

**Keywords:** “14th Five-Year National Archival Undertaking Development Plan” · University archives · Archival professionals · Continuing education

## 1 Introduction

The 2015 edition of the “People’s Republic of China Occupational Classification Decree” defines “archive professionals” as professionals who are engaged in the reception, collection, arrangement, catalogue, identification, preservation, protection, utilization, editing and research of archives. Based on this definition, the staff who are engaged in business processes such as archives reception and arrangement in colleges and universities are also archival professionals. However, due to their own components, archival professionals in colleges and universities generally lack professional knowledge and skills in archives and need to receive professional and informative continuing education urgently. But at present, most colleges and universities don’t pay attention to school archives work at the school level, so the continuing education of archival professionals can’t get enough attention and training.

On June 9, 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the “14th Five-Year National Archival Undertaking Development Plan” (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”). The “Plan” clarifies the development goal of “forming a new situation for the development of archives that is compatible with the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era” until 2025 in the construction of national archives. To this end, the “Plan” proposes to

increase the training of archives talents, promote the diversification of continuing education forms, and cultivate and support archives vocational education. As a result, the continuing education of archival professionals in colleges and universities has obtained policy opportunities and guarantees.

Regarding the continuing education of archival professionals, the “Provisions on Continuing Education for Archival Professionals” (hereinafter referred to as the “Provisions”) promulgated by the National Archives Administration of China on May 5, 2019 has detailed regulations and description. Based on the perspective of the “Plan”, this paper discusses the continuing education of archival professionals in colleges and universities.

## 2 The Need for Continuing Education

The “Table 1” is a survey on the current situation of the archival departments and archival professionals in the university where the author works.

After investigating some colleges and universities in Yantai-Weihai region, the author verified that this situation is universal in many colleges and universities. From “Table 1”, the following conclusions can be drawn.

### 2.1 The Marginalized Nature of Archival Positions

In “Table 1”, from the analysis of the number of staff of department, establishment and institutional setup, the school archives department is small in scale, low in level, short in independent organizational system time, and oversimplified in institutional functions.

Most of the archives centers in colleges and universities originally belonged to the school office, which were departments within the school office—comprehensive archives, and later developed with the independent organizational system through breaking away from the school office, and became specialized institutions to preserve and provide access to archives in colleges and universities. The nature of the archives (center) room determines that the archives work in colleges and universities is carried out around the central work of school teaching, collects, organizes, maintains and develops archives resources for teaching, personnel management and other work, and then provides information resource services for school development. Therefore, the archives work in colleges and universities is a basic guarantee work. Most colleges and universities position the work of the archives (center) room as an auxiliary professional technical department. Archives are the original records and the information of archives resources is relatively lagging behind, so the archives work in colleges and universities can't keep pace with the teaching and scientific research of the school, which eventually leads to the gradual marginalization of archives work in colleges and universities.

### 2.2 The Age Structure is Aging

In “Table 1”, the youngest archives professional is 40 years old, the mean age of archival professionals is 47 years old, and there are more females than males, which is enough to show that the age structure of archival professionals is aging. According to the 2007

**Table 1.** A survey on the current situation of the archival departments and archival professionals

Number of people			5	Years of working	5 to 10 years	Male	1
Age range			40 to 55 years old			Female	1
Mean age			47		10–20	Male	1
Gender	Male	2	Job nature			Female	1
	Female	3		≥30	Male	1	
Level of educational attainment	Bachelor degree	4			Female	1	
	Master degree	1		Original job	1		
Degree and Major	Major of archives	1	Job rotation	1			
	Non-archive major	4	Job transfer	3			
	Professional title	Associate research librarian	2	Unit organizational system		Deputy department director level	
	Lecturer	1	Time of organizational system		2015		
	Librarian	1	Institutional setup	Director	Deputy department director level	1	
	First-grade kindergarten teacher	1		Deputy director	Department level	1	
Years of working	≤1	Male		1	Collection Management Section		Deputy department level
		Female	1	Information Technology Section			
	1 to 5 years	Male	1	Establishment		5	
	Female	1					

“Investigation Report on Archives Work in Colleges and Universities Directly Under the Ministry of Education”, the age structure of archives staff tends to be aging. Among the full-time archival staff of the archives institutions in colleges and universities directly under the Ministry of Education, the staff over the age of 50 accounted for 30.4% of the total number, the staff aged 35–49 accounted for 52.27%, and the staff under the age of 34 accounted for only 17.33%. The reason is that the university itself is a public institution and there is a shortage of establishment. As the university grows older, the

proportion of older employees will be relatively high and the archives (center) room has become an ideal place to deal with such teaching and administrative staff, resulting in an aging age structure of archival professionals.

### 2.3 The Career Development is Hindered

In “Table 1”, the archival professionals all have a bachelor’s degree or above, and they have a high degree of educational attainment, but most of them are from non-archive science majors, and their archives knowledge system, professional skills and professional quality are relatively blank and lacking, and their years of working are not long. The number of them with a senior professional title is only 2, indicating that their career development is hindered.

With the rapid development of the school, the team of teaching and administrative staff is getting larger and larger, and the institutional setup of the school is basically fixed, so the promotion space for various management personnel in colleges and universities is narrow. Another way for personal development—the professional title appraisal for research series, has also been abolished. As a result, the career development of university staff engaged in various types of management is less likely to move up the career ladder. This phenomenon is defined as career plateau by American occupational psychologist T.P. Ference.

In order to realize their own interests and career development, the staff choose to rotate to the archives department to engage in department management and use the archives department as a springboard to achieve job promotion. Personnel with professional titles will choose the opportunity to transfer to the school archives department, engage in archives management work, become full-time archives personnel, and transfer to the archives series for professional title appraisal, so as to achieve professional title promotion.

### 2.4 The Archival Positions Are of High Mobility

In “Table 1”, 3 of the 5 archival professionals have been working for less than 5 years, and 1 of them has just been transferred and has been employed for less than 1 year. The mobility is relatively high.

Career plateau will bring down the enthusiasm of teaching and administrative staff, affect work efficiency and work quality, challenge the school’s human resource management, and be detrimental to the school’s development. Teaching and administrative staff need to improve their development space and break through the career plateau. No matter what kind of promotion, it is win-win for self-interest and work level. There is a saying that “moving water doesn’t stink and rotating door spindles don’t rot”, but this phenomenon is an exception to archives work. Archives work is not simply the collection and preservation of materials and the viewing of archives. It is not only highly professional and technical, but also has its own business process periodicity, and the period is also very long. This requires archival professionals to be stable, but from “Table 1”, it can be analyzed that the mobility of archival positions is very high. The huge mobility makes it impossible for archival professionals to be proficient in the collection and arrangement of archives in a short period of time, let alone the compilation, research, development

and utilization of archives resources. This not only affects the development of school archives work, but also restricts the professional development of archival professionals to a certain extent.

Based on the above analysis, whether it is for the development of school archives or for the improvement of personal career space, it is necessary for archival professionals in colleges and universities to carry out continuing education, to cultivate, expand and improve their professional knowledge of archives, business skills and professional ethics, and to improve their enthusiasm for work, business creativity and professional technical level.

### 3 The Feasibility of Continuing Education

#### 3.1 Personnel's Own Accomplishment

In “Table 1”, although the age of archival professionals is aging and the original knowledge system is not compatible with the archival profession, their educational attainment is very high. Among the 5 people, 4 have a bachelor degree and 1 has a master degree. This is enough to show that university teaching and administrative staff have strong procedural learning ability and comprehensive application ability no matter what the reasons are for job transfer (rotation). On the basis of the existing knowledge system, they can expand and learn new knowledge system, cultivate new business, new skills, extend new knowledge, and transform existing knowledge into incremental knowledge. This is the basis for continuing education for archival professionals in colleges and universities.

At present, some “aged teaching and administrative staff” in the archives (center) room of colleges and universities still have quite a long time to retire. In their family life, their children have grown up, they themselves are in a gap, and they have accumulated rich qualification and work experience. If colleges and universities can innovate management methods, guide “aged” employees to change their work concepts, provide them with opportunities for continuing education, and promote their learning, work enthusiasm and performance capabilities, it is possible to reverse the disadvantage of the aging staff structure and improve the effectiveness and quality of archives work.

#### 3.2 Policy Guarantees and Incentives

- The “Plan” proposes in Column 6—Talents Promote Archives that, the platform construction needs to rely on colleges and universities to establish a batch of archives talent training bases [1], hold training courses for archival cadres in national cadre colleges and institutions of higher learning, and build a national archives continuing education network platform. This provides policy guarantees for archival professionals.
- The “Plan” proposes to improve the talent evaluation mechanism and promote the effective connection between talent evaluation and talent training, which can be an approach for the promotion of archival professionals’ professional titles. The “Plan” promotes the two-way temporary post of cadres in the national archives system, which is a way to promote the promotion of archival professionals. This series of policies can open up the career plateau of archival professionals in colleges and universities, give

them enough development space and way to rise, and stimulate the work enthusiasm and career potential of archival professionals. This is not only conducive to personal development, but also to the smooth development of school archives work. After all, the archives work in colleges and universities is the basic guarantee and support for the development of colleges and universities. School archives can visually present and reflect the real development of a university.

- The performance of basic education in archival science theory in colleges and universities is that the “Plan” proposes to deepen the cooperation between archival authorities and colleges and universities for the implementation of the plan to enhance the professional capacity of archives. College archival professionals themselves are in the college system. There are no barriers for exchanges between local places and universities. It is a convenient way for college archival professionals to continue their education in colleges with archives majors.
- The “Plan” emphasizes improving the continuing education’s credit hour system, optimizing continuing education courses and teaching materials, strengthening the development of digital courses, promoting the sharing of educational resources, and promoting the development of archives education and training and the integration of the Internet [1]. This points in the direction of continuing education for archival professionals who have been on the job for a long time. With the development of social informatization, the knowledge update speed is getting faster and faster, archival professionals in colleges and universities are getting older, and their knowledge reserves are obsolete. Because these people have been engaged in the basic archives business work with relatively closed work links for a long time, they are relatively out of touch with the development pace of the outside world, and they can’t keep abreast of the update of knowledge points. The “Plan” provides a knowledge education system for the continuing education of archival professionals and solves the confusion and doubts about what to learn, how to learn, and where to learn.

## 4 The Content of Continuing Education

### 4.1 The Operation Procedure of Archival Business

The collection, classification, arrangement, identification, statistics, preservation, utilization and other business links of archives are essential skills that archival professionals must master. This is the basic content of the archival business for continuous learning and education, whether it is a new entrant or an old archival professional. Hu Hongjie talked about “the operation methods and business links of Chinese archives higher education originating from archives work” in “On Archival On-the-Job Education”. This essential skill is indeed the foundation of archives work, but it is also true that it should not be used as the source of continuing education for archival professionals. According to the author’s experience, this content can be learned and mastered in practical operation through the way of “mentoring” in this unit, exchanging experience with each other, learning from each other, and improving operation skills and operation ability, because conscious learning is one of the ways of continuing education.

## 4.2 Strengthening Professional Ethics

The professional ethics of archives refers to the basic code of conduct and norms of the archives profession that archives practitioners should abide by when engaging in archives management activities. The professional ethics of archives also has distinct characteristics of the times, occupation and class. When proposing to increase talent training, the “Plan” emphasizes that it is necessary to “strengthen the construction of political capacity, temper the political character of archival cadres who are loyal, upright and responsible, and strive to improve political judgment, political comprehension, and political execution”.

The professional ethics of university archival professionals directly affects the effective development of university archives management, the quality of university archives and the efficiency of archives governance. In particular, the level of archives utilization service work is directly determined by the professional ethics of archival professionals. College archival professionals who are loyal to their duties, abide by laws and regulations, and have corresponding professional knowledge and skills are the foundation for the sound development of archives work as well as the guarantee for archives to serve the majority of the teachers, students, staff members and workers. Therefore, it is one of the key elements of continuing education to strengthen the professional ethics of university archival professionals.

## 4.3 Improving the Ability of Informatization Operation

The “Plan” proposes that the national archives should speed up the strategic transformation of archives informatization, accelerate the digital transformation of archives resources, and vigorously promote the “incremental electronization”, and the digitization rate of archives in comprehensive archives at or above the county level is required to reach 80%. Referring to the “Archives Construction Standards” (Construction Standards 103-2008), university archives, of the National Archives Administration of China, it means that the archives work of colleges and universities should gradually complete the goal of the “14th Five-Year Plan” during the entire “14th Five-Year Plan” archives planning period—“the digitization rate of digital archives reaches 80%”. To accomplish this task, the existing university archival professionals must receive continuing education to cultivate their informatization operation ability and improve their informatization operation ability, such as the ability to build electronic archives resources, the ability to digitize paper archives, and the ability to service informatization. The current society is a society with rapid development of informatization, and archives construction must get rid of the traditional development model and transform to archives informatization combat readiness. Therefore, the existing archival professionals in colleges and universities must take the strengthening of informatization education as an important content to continue.

## 4.4 Training Innovative Thinking

The essence of the so-called innovative thinking lies in solving existing problems with new perspectives and new thinking methods [2]. The hysteresis quality of archival

information leads to the closed-loop management of archives work, so the professional knowledge of archival professionals is relatively outdated and their professional skills are relatively traditional. In today's society, the new generation of information technology is widely used and the archives work environment, objects, and content have also undergone tremendous changes. This urgently requires innovation in archives work concepts, methods, and models, and accelerates comprehensive digital transformation and intelligent upgrading [3]. Therefore, archival professionals urgently need to carry out innovative thinking training and use new perspectives and new thinking methods to solve existing problems in archives work. For example, the "Plan" proposes to strengthen the quality control of archives resources, but it is the source collection link of archives that determines the quality of archives resources and this is the difficulty of archives work. When continuing education is carried out for archival professionals, it should guide and train them to think about how to break through the traditional collection work, use and combine modern information technology to design a set of archives management system, subvert the traditional mode of paper archives management first and then archives digital management and reverse the order, and make use of the archives management system, in order to form electronic archives first and then form paper archives according to the electronic archives, so as to control the quality of archives resources from the source. There are many challenges in archives work. To solve problems, one first needs to have problem-solving thinking. When conventional thinking fails to solve a problem, new thinking emerges to solve the current problem. The academic level and knowledge literacy of archival professionals in colleges and universities have a certain height. Guiding and training them to solve the current problems and difficulties of archives with new perspectives and new thinking methods should be the focus of continuing education for archival professionals in colleges and universities.

## **5 The Ways of Continuing Education**

### **5.1 Conferences and Trainings**

The most common educational methods are conferences and trainings and the author often receives emails from conferences on various archives training sessions. Online learning sessions and trainings have emerged after the COVID-19 epidemic. For example, the "Notice on Printing and Distributing the 2022 Archives Education Training Plan" by the Archives Cadres Education Center of the National Archives Administration of China lists 17 training plans, 10 of which are carried out online.

### **5.2 Archival Vocational Skills Competition**

The archival vocational skills competition is a new form of continuing education for archival professionals initiated by the archives system in recent years with the purpose of "promoting learning by competition and replacing training with competition". The earliest archival vocational skills competition that can be found on Baidu was on October 20, 2018, the first Archival Vocational Skills Competition jointly held by the Jiangsu Provincial Archives Bureau and the Jiangsu Provincial Federation of Trade Unions.

On July 21, 2021, the Hunan Provincial Archives Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development jointly hosted the Final of the Provincial Urban Construction Archival Vocational Skills Competition of “Learning Party’s History, Being Skillful in Profession, Enhancing Undertaking, and Promoting Development”. From November 24th to 26th, 2021, Zhejiang Provincial Archives Bureau and Zhejiang Provincial Archives hosted the Archival Vocational Skills Competition. Competitions may inspire the enthusiasm of archival professionals. As long as the personnel participate in the competition, they will have the will to win and will independently study the profession and strengthen their professional skills. No matter what the result is, the professional quality of archival professionals will be improved, the level of archives service will be improved, and the development of archives will be guaranteed with quality.

### **5.3 The Base of Continuing Education**

In terms of expanding talent training channels, the “Plan” proposes to cooperate with colleges and universities to build a national archival talent training base, cultivate and support archival vocational education, and establish a vocational skills training base. The construction of a series of continuing education bases is conducive to the development of academic theories and education and training exchange activities in the field of archival talent training. The base of continuing education can conduct long-term, medium-term and short-term qualification training in rotation for archival professionals in colleges and universities and update their professional knowledge system and professional skills in real time.

## **6 The Management of Continuing Education**

The archival knowledge proposed by archival professionals when they study the “Plan” should be incorporated into the unified management of the provincial management department, and archival professionals should take appointment with certificates like teachers. To implement the “Provisions on Continuing Education for Archival Professionals”, newly recruited archival professionals, regardless of age, education, or position, need to study full-time or half-time, and they need to implement that the study time of archival profession subjects for newly hired archival professionals should not be less than 80 h in the “Provisions”.

## **7 Conclusion**

Director Lu Guoqiang of National Archives Administration of China mentioned in his “Report at the National Conference of Directors of Archives” that, the National Archives Administration of China is formulating a method for evaluating the actual situation of the “14th Five-Year Plan”, and the provincial archival authorities should also study and formulate the implementation method or plan of the regional plan based on the actual situation [3]. This means that in order to cooperate with the national “14th Five-Year Plan”, the national archives work will definitely undergo major changes. As an

integral part of national archives, university archives work, whether active or passive, will be brought into the torrent of rapid development of archives. This urgently requires university archival professionals to carry out continuing education and improve their own professional quality, so as to improve the efficiency of archives management in the university, accelerate the strategic transformation of archives informatization, and keep pace with the country's high-quality development of archives during the "14th Five-Year Plan" period.

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