Swiss Competency Model for the Archivist of the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the competency model for archivists that the Swiss Association of Archivists (AAS) has written and published in 2012 to create a common model for all the parts of Switzerland including its different German, Italian and French traditions. The goal was to define the profession at the Swiss level, including its new aspects, and also communicate a positive picture of the profession, which remains mainly unknown outside specialized circles. Challenges between different linguistic traditions, new requirements of the professions, and a threefold set of competencies are explained through examples given in French and German, and translated into English, in the AAS documents Les métiers des archives: Le profil professionnel des archivistes (Profession in Archives: Competency Model of the Archivist) and Archiviste: un métier (Archivist: A Profession). Archival activities require specialized knowledge, professional competencies and social competencies, a new area for the first time taken into account and officially recognized.

Key words: competency, model, archivist, records manager, skills

Modello di competenza svizzero per l’archivista del XXI secolo

SINTESI

Il documento disquisisce sul modello di competenza degli archivisti che l’Associazione svizzera degli archivisti (AAS) ha scritto e pubblicato nel 2012 per creare uno standard comune per tutte i Cantoni della Svizzera, incluse le diverse tradizioni tedesche, italiane e francesi. L’obiettivo era quello di definire la professione a livello svizzero, compresi i suoi nuovi aspetti, e anche comunicare un quadro positivo della professione, che rimane prevalentemente sconosciuta al di fuori della cerchia degli specializzati. Le sfide tra le diverse tradizioni linguistiche, i nuovi requisiti delle professioni e un triplice insieme di competenze sono spiegati attraverso esempi in francese e tedesco e tradotti in inglese nei documenti AAS Les métiers des archives: Le profil professionnel des archivistes (Profession archivista: modello di competenza dell’archivista) e Archiviste: un métier (Archivista: una professione). Le attività
archivistiche richiedono conoscenze specializzate, competenze professionali e competenze sociali, una nuova area per la prima volta considerata e riconosciuta ufficialmente.

Parole chiave: competenza, modello, archivista, gestore di archivio, capacità

Švicarski model kompetenc za arhiviste 21. stoletja

IZVLEČEK
Članek obravnava model kompetenc za arhiviste, ki ga je švicarska zveza arhivov (AAS) pripravila in objavila leta 2012, da bi ustvarila skupni model za vse dele Švice, vključno z različnimi nemškimi, italijanskimi in francoskimi tradicijami. Cilj je bil opredeliti poklic na ravni Švice, vključno z njegovimi novimi vidiki, in prikazati tudi pozitivno sliko o poklicu, ki ostaja zunaj specializiranih krogov v glavnem neznan. Izzivi med različnimi jezikovnimi tradicijami, novimi zahtevami poklicev in trojnim setom kompetenc, so pojasnjeni s primeri v francoskem in nemškem jeziku, v dokumentih AAS Les métiers des archives: Prof profil professionnel des archivistes (Poklic v arhivih: Model kompetenc za arhiviste) in Arhiviste: un métier (Arhivist: poklic) pa so prevedeni v angleščino. Arhivska dejavnost zahteva specializirana znanja, strokovne kompetence in socialne kompetence, ki so novo področje, ki se prvič upošteva in uradno priznava.

Ključne besede: kompetentnost, model, arhivist, delavec, ki dela z dokumentarnim gradivom, spretnosti

1 Introduction
The Association of Swiss Archivists (AAS) decided in 2009 to create a common competency model for all the parts of Switzerland including its different German, Italian and French traditions. The goal was to define the profession at the Swiss level, including its new aspects, and also communicate a positive picture of the profession, which remains mainly unknown outside specialized circles.

The success of the French document «Référentiel métier: La profession d’archiviste ou les métiers des archives» was also an incentive (2017).

In 2010, a group of 5 people coming from the AAS working group in Training worked on a draft, based on the French one. Integrate the Swiss reality was a challenge; it had to give space to French and German-speaking traditions. In 2011, it was translated into German. In 2012, the last modifications were brought in order to give an overview of the profession in Switzerland. The competency model also had to get away from the French system, rather traditional and centralized, whereas Switzerland is a federal country with independent levels (federal, regional and local communities). Moreover, there was a search for a balance between records management, new aspect of the profession, and the other more traditional dimensions of the profession like preservation, better known by specialists and non-specialists.

Three documents were produced, in paper and electronic form, in French and German (in which the term "archivist" includes also "records manager").


“Schéma de formation en archivistique et offre de formation de l’AAS” (2012), a one-page training map and AAS training offer explaining the professional three-level education available in Switzerland.

2 Official definition of an archivist in Switzerland
Archivist: a profession. Archivists deal with information of extremely varied types. They evaluate, collect, support documents and communicate them. They work with originals and unique pieces, important in legal, historical or scientific terms. They ensure the preservation and enhancement of the value of written, electronic and audiovisual documents (Archiviste: Un métier, 2012, p. 2).
Archivists work in public archives (federal, cantonal, communal or ecclesiastical archives), in archives dedicated to specific themes and in other public institutions, private companies and associations.

3 Special skills and varied activities

Archival work requires specific professional skills. Those who practice it have followed different paths. Entry to the field often involves a university course - mostly in history - or by learning as a records information officer, followed by postgraduate studies in an Haute Ecole de Gestion. Various institutions offer post-graduate courses and the Swiss Association of Archivists (AAS) itself organizes professional development courses and professional days dedicated to the profession and its actors.

The activities of archivists vary greatly, determined by the type of enterprise employing them, their specifications, their training, their personal qualifications and inclinations. They are subdivided into five main categories, and a sixth one concerning communication, which is a fast growing area.

![The activities of an archivist](image)

Archival institutions do not necessarily carry out all the activities related to the profession, and these activities do not have the same importance everywhere: they depend on the type of archives, their institutional links, the characteristics of the funds they own, direction and strategy of the institution, the means available, and of course the staff. Very often, archival staff specializes in one of the five main categories.

The synoptic table “Les métiers des archives: Le profil professionnel des archivistes” gives a detailed overview of all the activities that it encompasses, based on the specialized knowledge and social and professional skills to which they rely.

The original idea of this document is to give advice on the kind of interpersonal skills to cultivate to be able to maximize the effects of archival work in an institution, where nowadays archivists are in
constant contact with other co-workers who know nothing about archives, and have to give them rules on how to manage records. The “best” archivist will both show professional competencies and interpersonal skills to maximize its impact.

The objective of an archival professional profile is to establish a list of activities that are carried out within an archive. Professionals who run or carry out these activities have specialized knowledge. This theoretical knowledge constitutes the basis of the professional competences through which they carry out their activity. In order for these professional skills to achieve the desired goal and achieve their full potential, it is essential that archivists also have social skills. This is how the document is presented with each activity.

4 Advocacy for a changing profession

This professional profile is designed as information for people and training institutions, employers and co-workers, those interested in the trade and for the general public. However, it is also thought of for archivists, as a point of reference which allows, within the profession, to orientate, position and find themselves.

One of the Spanish associations, the Asociación de Archiveros de Navarra, found it so interesting
that it translated it to Spanish for its members in 2014. The French Association of Archivists has dedicated a whole issue of *Gazette des Archives* on the subject “Changes in the profession of archivist and his environment” (*Les mutations du métier d’archiviste et de son environnement*, 2016). Their site has also evolved, now proposing job descriptions for most of the existing archival positions¹.

Our profession, as well as its profile and image, continues to evolve...

### Examples of main activities taken from the Swiss competency model

#### 1 Records management (French and German figures) (see Les métiers des archives, (2012), p. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activité</th>
<th>Connaissances spécialisées</th>
<th>Compétences professionnelles</th>
<th>Compétences sociales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### 2.1 Records Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fähigkeiten</th>
<th>Fachwissen</th>
<th>Fachkompetenzen</th>
<th>Soziale Kompetenzen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

An essential part of the archivist’s specifications is to design and implement classification plans, as well as systems for optimal management of records and their life cycle. It implies that the archivists active in the records management are people who have the sense of communication and service and who are able to motivate, to create networks, to carry out projects and to negotiate with pedagogy and tenacity.

Today, archivists try to analyze the duties and competences of authorities, companies or organizations in order to decide about archiving procedures, even before documents are created. The archivists active in appraisal have the sense of analyzing tasks and processes. They are aware of legal issues and legal retention periods and base their decisions on sound archival and historical knowledge.

### 2 Appraisal (French and German figures) (see Les métiers des archives, (2012), p. 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tätigkeiten</th>
<th>Fachwissen</th>
<th>Fachkompetenzen</th>
<th>Soziale Kompetenzen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bewertungslisten und Archivierungsstan</td>
<td>Archivrecht und auf das Archiv anwendbare Vorschriften</td>
<td>Abteilungsverzeichnis verfassen</td>
<td>Sinn für die Analyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archivierungskonzept</td>
<td>Geschichtliche allgemeine</td>
<td>Betrieb und Organisation der unterlagenbildenden Stellen</td>
<td>Geselligkeit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geschicht der Institution</td>
<td>Aufbewahrungsfrist für die amtliche Nutzung erarbeiten</td>
<td>Fähigkeit zu ganzheitlichem und konzeptionellen Denken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Konzepte und Methoden der archivistischen Bewertung</td>
<td>Archivische Auswahl von Unterlagen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vorschriften zur Verwaltung von zeitgenössischen Archiven</td>
<td>Informationen hierarchisieren</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aufgaben, Aktivitäten und Funktionen der unterlagenbildenden Stelle</td>
<td>Aktivitäten der unterlagenbildenden Stellen in einen Kontext setzen, um die Zuteilung zu einem Archiv zuzumachen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rechtliche Interpretationen</td>
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<td>Juristische Überwachtung</td>
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<td>Redaktionelle Fähigkeiten</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3 Acquisition (French and German figures) (see Les métiers des archives, (2012), p. 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activités</th>
<th>Connaissances spécialisées</th>
<th>Compétences professionnelles</th>
<th>Compétences sociales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspects archivistiques (à récollement au bord du réservoir)</td>
<td>Théorie et pratique des règles de classement archivistique</td>
<td>Contrôler les documents versés</td>
<td>Esprit critique</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Cadre législatif et prescriptions applicables aux archives</td>
<td>Méthodes de tri et d’archivage d’archives contemporaines</td>
<td>Esprit de synthèse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Règles de traitement des archives contemporaines</td>
<td>Techniques, normes et standards pour la conservation à long terme des documents électroniques</td>
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<td>Techniques, normes et standards pour la conservation à long terme des documents électroniques</td>
<td>Gérer des stocks de fournitures</td>
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<td>Gérer des stocks de fournitures</td>
<td>Sens du dialogue</td>
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<td>Gérer des stocks de fournitures</td>
<td>Sera du dialogue</td>
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<td>Gérer des stocks de fournitures</td>
<td>Sens de la négociation, qualités relationnelles</td>
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<td>Gérer des stocks de fournitures</td>
<td>Capacité d’organisation</td>
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<td>Gérer des stocks de fournitures</td>
<td>Rigueur</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 4 Übernahme der Unterlagen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tätigkeiten</th>
<th>Fachwissen</th>
<th>Fachkompetenzen</th>
<th>Soziale Kompetenzen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kontrolle der Abfertigung von definitive bewegten Archivalien</td>
<td>Archivrecht und auf das Archiv anwendbare Vorschriften</td>
<td>Abteilungsverzeichnis kritisch beurteilen</td>
<td>Sinn für die Analyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theorie und Praxis der archivistischen Ordnung</td>
<td>Bewertungsstelle anwenden</td>
<td>Geselligkeit</td>
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<td>Kritischer Geist</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fähigkeit zu ganzheitlichem und konzeptionellem Denken</td>
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<td>Dialogfähigst</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4 Treatment (French and German figures) (see Les métiers des archives, (2012), p. 10)

10.2 Description archivistique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activités</th>
<th>Connaissances spécialisées</th>
<th>Compétences professionnelles</th>
<th>Compétences sociales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Rédaction d’un instrument de recherche</td>
<td>- Missions, activités et fonctionnement des producteurs de documents</td>
<td>- Capacités rédactionnelles</td>
<td>- Esprit logique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Normes et règles de classement et de description archivistique (ISAD(G), ISAAP(CPF))</td>
<td>- Appliquer le principe de respect des fonds</td>
<td>- Esprit d’analyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Culture générale</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Esprit de synthèse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Informatique</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Méthode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Typologie des instruments de recherche</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Rigueur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fonctionnement de la DTD-EAD</td>
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<td>- Ténacité</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Verzeichnen der Unterlagen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tätigkeiten</th>
<th>Fachwissen</th>
<th>Fachkompetenzen</th>
<th>Soziale Kompetenzen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Redaktion einer Findnittel</td>
<td>- Normen und Richtlinien für die Schaffung eines Thesaurus</td>
<td>- Praxis der Indexierung/Verzeichnung</td>
<td>- Sinn für Logik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>und der Liste von Autoritäten</td>
<td>- Redaktionelle Fähigkeiten</td>
<td>- Sinn für Analyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Kontrolle des Vokabulars und Regeln für die Schreibweise</td>
<td>- Verwendung einer Archivsoftware</td>
<td>- Fähigkeit zu ganzheitlichem und methodischem Denken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Normen und Richtlinien für die Ordnung und die archivistische Analyse (ISAD(G), ISAAP(CPF))</td>
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<td>- Methodisches Vorgehen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Kultur allgemein</td>
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<td>- Genauigkeit</td>
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<td>- Informatik</td>
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<td>- Haltbarkeit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Typologie der Findmittel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Funktionsweise der Dokumenttypedefinition von EAD</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Aufgaben, Aktivitäten und Funktionen der unterlagengenähten Stellen</td>
<td>- Redaktionelle Fähigkeiten</td>
<td>- Sinn für Logik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Normen und Richtlinien für die Ordnung und die archivistische Analyse (ISAD(G), ISAAP(CPF))</td>
<td>- Textverarbeitung</td>
<td>- Sinn für Analyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Kultur allgemein</td>
<td>- Provenienzprinzip anwenden</td>
<td>- Fähigkeit zu ganzheitlichem und methodischem Denken</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Informatik</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Haltbarkeit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fonds are treated in accordance with the principle of origin: records are classified according to their origin and the history of their production. A writing is more meaningful when it is kept in context than when it is extracted from it to be classified thematically. The archives are thus not limited to delivering particular facts or information, but also, by preserving the structure of the files, make it possible to understand the relationships that unite them. Knowledge of these structural contexts facilitates access to information on a long term basis.

Archivists active in the processing of records are able to demonstrate method; they are able to quickly identify and understand the nature and stakes of these records. They have extensive knowledge and proven editorial skills. This knowledge and skills are necessary for a proper understanding of the processes used and for the development of research instruments. Discretion, perseverance, analytical skills and a sense of order are other valuable qualities in this field.

5 Communication (French and German figures) (see Les métiers des archives, (2012), p. 15)
The archives are made of rough diamonds that history has left us, and it is up to the archivists to give them access. To allow the public to consult the archives, many technical and organizational measures are needed, including the provision of appropriate infrastructures.

The archivists also actively communicate information: the archives publish and offer guided tours, conferences and exhibitions, courses for schools and universities.

Archivists active in the field of communication appreciate contact with different groups of researchers and historians, journalists and students, genealogists and individuals. They have a sense of communication, dialogue and service. They must also have a good knowledge of the archival holdings, be able to explain the research techniques and be familiar with the data protection requirements.

5 Conclusion

Everybody knows “Information is power”, and the management of information is the basic trend of the archivist. The domain of Information science not only includes archives, libraries and documentation, but also adds aspects of law, administration history, IT and museums, for example. So, we can say that the archivist of the 21st century, with all its skills and activities listed above, has become pluridisciplinary and interdisciplinary; some even say she/he has become a superhero! This is the only way to survive in very complex and electronic surroundings.

Their common characteristic is the respect of codes of ethics regarding the management of documents (see Code of Ethics, 1996), their role as archivist (see Basic rules on the role of archivists and records managers in support of Human Rights, 2016) and the access given to researchers (see Principles of Access to Archives). It is also the conviction to contribute to human sciences, through their personal and specific work, in accordance with the selected standards and the fulfillment of the fundamental mission of archives services. The new “digital humanities” information specialist, super-connected, is on its way...
REFERENCES


SUMMARY

The paper discusses the competency model for archivists that the Swiss Association of Archivists (AAS) has written and published in 2012 to create a common model for all the parts of Switzerland including its different German, Italian and French traditions. The goal was to define the profession at the Swiss level, including its new aspects, and also communicate a positive picture of the profession, which remains mainly unknown outside specialized circles. Challenges between different linguistic traditions, new requirements of the professions, and a threefold set of competencies are explained through examples given in French and German, and translated into English, in the AAS documents Les métiers des archives: Le profil professionnel des archivistes (Profession in Archives: Competency Model of the Archivist) and Archiviste: un métier (Archivist: A Profession). Archival activities require specialized knowledge, professional competencies and social competencies, a new area for the first time taken into account and officially recognized. This professional profile is designed as information for people and training institutions, employers and co-workers, those interested in the trade and for the general public. However, it is also thought of for archivists, as a point of reference which allows, within the profession, to orientate, position and find themselves. Five main activities are described: records management, appraisal, acquisition, treatment and communication, with examples of competencies that they encompass. The archivists and records managers active in these fields should, for example, have the sense of analyzing tasks and processes. They are aware of legal issues and legal retention periods and base their decisions on sound archival and historical knowledge. They must analyze the duties and competences of authorities, companies or organizations in order to decide about archiving procedures, even before documents are created. Archivists have a sense of communication and service and are able to motivate, to create networks, to carry out projects and to negotiate with pedagogy and tenacity. It is also up to them to sensitize the persons involved in the collection process to the fact that the documents have not only legal but also cultural value. They must have a sense of negotiation and work with rigor. They possess organizational capacities and an excellent spirit of synthesis. Discretion, perseverance, analytical skills and a sense of order are other valuable qualities in these fields. The archivist of the 21st century, with all its skills and activities listed in the competency model, has become pluridisciplinary and interdisciplinary. The profession, as well as its profile and image, continues to evolve. The new “digital humanities” information specialist, super-connected, is on its way…

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