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SYSTEMATIZATION OF THE AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVAL PROFESSION IN TELEVISION IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Abstract

Purpose: *The digital transformation of the television industry has significantly altered the professional landscape of audiovisual archiving. Traditional job classifications no longer reflect the competencies required for managing digital content, prompting the need to revise existing frameworks. This study aims to analyse the evolving professional roles and emerging competencies within audiovisual archiving, with a focus on the impact of digital transformation on job classification structures at Radiotelevizija Slovenija (RTV Slovenia). The objective is to develop a revised classification model that reflects the current demands of digital archival practice.*

Method/approach: *A qualitative, descriptive, and analytical approach was used, combining normative analysis of legal and institutional documents (e.g., the Employment Relationship Act and Job Classification Act) with a critical review of scientific and professional literature. Existing job roles were assessed in relation to technological changes and international best practices.*

Results: *The findings revealed significant discrepancies between existing archival roles and the requirements of digital workflows, such as metadata management, digital preservation, and the application of artificial intelligence tools. Based on this analysis, a new classification model was proposed, comprising seven professional and three technical levels, differentiated by educational attainment and task complexity.*

Conclusions/findings: *The proposed model addresses the need for a modernized job structure that supports the integration of digital technologies and interdisciplinary collaboration. It ensures alignment with both institutional needs and international standards for archival competence. The framework promotes sustainable human resource development and enhances the strategic role of audiovisual archivists in the digital era.*

Keywords: *audiovisual archiving; digital transformation; archival profession; job classification; archival workforce development*

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the emerging tasks and evolving professional roles within the field of audiovisual archiving in the context of digital society. The impetus for this research stems from the need to revise the job classification system within the archival services of Radiotelevizija Slovenija (further referred to as RTV Slovenia), prompted by the drafting of a new Job Classification Act (2009) (Akt o sistemizaciji delovnih mest). In accordance with Article 22 of the Employment relationship act (2013) (further ZDR-1), organizations are required to "meet the prescribed conditions as defined by collective agreements, general employer acts, or as required by the employer" to ensure appropriate job performance.

The classification system represents an organizational and human resources act that serves as a structural basis for aligning programmatic and business processes, institutional organization, and human resources (Job Classification Act, 2009, Article 2). One of its fundamental objectives is the organization and distribution of work and definition of operational procedures (Job Classification Act, 2009, Article 3). With the introduction of digital television, the current act adopted in 2009 has become obsolete. Although job descriptions were updated in 2013, the revision failed to incorporate the technological shift in the archival profession, and the current roles no longer reflect contemporary professional requirements.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical approach, aimed at examining the adequacy of the current job classification system at RTV Slovenia in the context of the digital transformation of archival work. The analysis focuses on the categorization of archival positions according to educational requirements, task complexity, and the incorporation of emerging technological competencies. The methodological framework includes a normative analysis of legal and institutional documents, particularly the ZDR-1 (2013) and the Job Classification Act (2009), to ensure the proposed classification model is aligned with applicable regulatory standards. In addition, the study draws on international scientific and professional literature to contextualize the evolving nature of archival professions.

A comparative analysis is conducted between existing and proposed job profiles, with particular attention to the gaps created by digital technologies such as digitization, metadata management, and artificial intelligence–supported workflows.

3 REDEFINING THE ARCHIVAL PROFESSION IN RESPONSE TO TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Traditionally, the role of the archivist was primarily defined by the core functions of archival management, with a central mission focused on the preservation and facilitation of access to archival materials. In the contemporary context, however, the archival profession is undergoing significant transformation, shaped by both the growing recognition of its societal relevance and ongoing technological advancements (Şentürk, 2021, 87). The management of electronic records poses significant challenges, both in terms of the volume and complexity of the materials involved, as well as the advanced technical skill set required to ensure their proper handling, preservation, and accessibility (DCMS et al., 2009, 8).

Archivist is in the dictionary of The Society of American Archivists defined as an individual responsible for appraising, acquiring, arranging, describing, preserving, and providing access to records of enduring value, according to the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control to protect the materials' authenticity and context, and as an individual with responsibility for management and oversight of an archival repository or of records of enduring value (Pearce-Moses, 2005, 33).

According to Screenskills (2025)[2] film archivists serve a crucial function within the film and television industry, operating in a role that closely parallels that of librarianship, but specifically oriented towards audiovisual media. They are typically employed by major film studios, broadcasting organizations, national film institutions, or dedicated film archives. Their work encompasses the management, preservation, and accessibility of both historical and contemporary audiovisual materials. A central task of the film archivist involves the systematic catalogue of content. This includes the insertion of detailed metadata into digital

2 ScreenSkills is the industry-led skills body in Great Britain for the screen industries. It offers sector insight, training and career advice for existing and emerging talent. ScreenSkills also conducts consultation work with industry, publish research and strategic documents, runs funding schemes and project work, and provides information about the challenges that face the industry.

files to facilitate efficient retrieval and long-term discoverability. In addition to descriptive work, archivists are also engaged in the physical and digital preservation of media. This includes the restoration and digitization of film reels, magnetoscopic tapes, and other legacy formats, often with the objective of migrating content to stable, future-proof digital platforms to ensure sustained access and archival integrity. Moreover, film archivists frequently interact with a wide range of stakeholders including producers, researchers, and editors responding to requests for footage in a timely and organized manner. Their ability to locate and provide specific materials swiftly is a valued skill in production and research contexts. Notably, the archival profession within the film sector is one of the few roles that generally adheres to standard working hours, distinguishing it from the often-unpredictable schedules of other film industry professions.

Within the field of audiovisual archiving, professional roles can be categorized into several hierarchical levels, each associated with distinct responsibilities and expertise.

At the entry level, roles such as processing technicians, project archivists, assistant archivists, and shippers are primarily concerned with the preliminary handling and preparation of archival collections. Their responsibilities typically include tasks such as surveying materials, organizing content, performing basic conservation, rehousing items, cataloguing, preparing media for playback, digitizing materials for access, and managing the physical movement and storage of archival items.

Mid-level positions include archivists, cataloguers, reference specialists, vault managers, librarians, project coordinators or managers, consultants, and curators. Professionals at this level usually possess greater experience in project management and tend to specialize in specific areas of archival practice. These may involve public engagement through research support, coordinating preservation workflows, managing acquisitions, or developing curatorial and programming initiatives.

Specialist and engineering roles, which may fall within the mid- to upper-level range, are characterized by advanced technical proficiency. These professionals often focus on specialized domains such as photochemical film processing, color timing, digital image restoration, sound and video preservation, database architecture, and digital asset management. Their expertise is essential in maintaining the technical integrity and longevity of audiovisual materials.

At the upper level of the profession, leadership roles are typically held by directors, senior managers, or department heads within large archival institutions or private preservation and restoration firms. These individuals are responsible for strategic oversight, organizational leadership, and the development of long-term preservation policies and practices (Arton, 2015, 2). All occupational levels are progressively integrated with technological applications.

The practice of archival work is becoming increasingly reliant on technological systems and while archivists continue to play a key role in core archival functions, their responsibilities are increasingly embedded within multidisciplinary teams. These teams may engage not only in records management but also in areas such as cybersecurity, blockchain-based distributed ledger systems, digital forensics, electronic discovery, and information governance. Moreover, archivists are required to perform their duties within the broader context of evolving societal expectations and technological advancements (Franks, 2021, 1).

Archivists operate within the historical and technological frameworks of their time, and their professional identity is shaped accordingly. The current information environment differs significantly from that of earlier archival practice. Although foundational functions such as appraisal, acquisition, arrangement, description, storage, access, and preservation remain integral to the profession, their implementation is now profoundly influenced by digital technologies and evolving societal demands. Furthermore, archivists must increasingly engage with domains traditionally considered external to archival practice, including cybersecurity, digital forensics, digital curation, cloud-based distributed systems, and decentralized trust technologies such as blockchain, all of which have a growing impact on archival activities. (Franks, 2021, 9). The archival profession must broaden its skills base to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving digital and organizational landscape. This expansion includes the integration of new competencies, particularly in digital technologies and entrepreneurial practices. While collaborative service models where a single professional supports multiple services may partially address these needs, they do not represent a comprehensive solution. Nonetheless, increased opportunities for collaboration with external institutions create valuable potential for skills exchange and the cross-pollination of professional knowledge and expertise. (DJS Research, 2015, 52). In the modern

digital era archivists must possess a thorough understanding of how information technologies are applied within the contexts of recordkeeping and records management. These two domains are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Education and professional development in both areas should be grounded in a robust foundation of archival theory and methodology to safeguard the authenticity, reliability, and evidentiary integrity of archival records as documentation of decisions and actions (Eastwood, 1993, 458).

In the 21st century, technological innovation serves as a foundational driver across professional domains, including the field of archival management, where advancements in information technology play a central role. From a practical standpoint, these developments have led to new baseline expectations for archival institutions (Şentürk, 2021, 90).

4 AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVISTS AND THE CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Despite the transformative impact of the digital revolution manifested in the emergence of new file formats, storage media, and evolving requirements for long-term preservation the core functions of film archives have largely remained consistent. Archives continue to define their role as custodians of audiovisual heritage, with a mandate to manage, preserve, and provide access to their collections. Addressing the demands of this expanded mandate entails the adoption of new preservation and access strategies, infrastructural adaptations, and continuous professional development. Nevertheless, existing standards and accumulated professional experience can be effectively recontextualized and applied within the digital domain. The fundamental objective persists: to ensure the secure storage of archival holdings, the provision of adequate metadata for their description, and the facilitation of public access in appropriate and sustainable formats (Heftberger, 2014, 137).

Film archive personnel are increasingly required to develop and implement new metadata frameworks that enhance the description of their collections, support emerging forms of access such as online platforms and enable interoperability through data exchange with other institutions. Historically, such practices have not been widespread in film archives, often due to varying national and cultural

traditions. However, the previously rigid division of labor particularly the separation between technical and curatorial roles, is gradually becoming more fluid. Furthermore, new professional profiles are emerging within film archives, notably those of information specialists who operate in interdisciplinary capacities. These roles transcend traditional binaries such as analogue versus digital or film versus non-film, reflecting the evolving complexity and convergence of archival work in the digital era (Heftberger, 2014, 138). All organizations are increasingly confronted with the growing complexity of managing digital information. Addressing this challenge necessitates a reorientation of priorities and the development of relevant competencies across all administrative levels. It is essential to establish robust systems for the comprehensive capture, management, and long-term preservation of digital records to ensure that critical information remains accessible in support of the organization's operational and strategic functions (DCMS et al., 2009, 17).

5 STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO ARCHIVAL JOB ROLES IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Over the past fifteen years, audiovisual archives have been increasingly engaged in the digitization of analog holdings, the management of born-digital content, and the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in professional processing and access workflows. In 2013, RTV Slovenia updated its job classification scheme; however, this update did not sufficiently address the new competencies and responsibilities necessitated by digital archival processes.

The proposed revision of job classifications is based on the necessity of moving beyond traditional analog paradigms. Archivists must assume a proactive role in redefining the strategic significance of archives, archival institutions, and the professional identity of the archivist in the context of a rapidly evolving digital landscape. This requires abandoning introspective approaches in favor of collaborative models that enable sustainable and long-term management of archival materials (Millar, 2017, 60). The modern archivist's challenge lies not only in preservation but in responding to technological and societal changes through interdisciplinary knowledge and adaptable solutions (DCMS et al., 2009, 6).

5.1 ANALYSIS OF EXISTING ARCHIVAL JOB ROLES AT RTV SLOVENIA

Existing job positions in the audiovisual archive of RTV Slovenia are categorized based on the required level of education and the complexity of associated tasks. The current classification includes the following roles:

- RTV Archivist (Secondary technical education / Upper secondary): responsible for physical preservation of archival and documentary media, inspection and technical maintenance of materials, coding and cataloguing, preparation for use, and both technical and content-based inspection of returned materials. Tasks focus primarily on physical carriers such as film reels, videotapes, and Beta cassettes.
- Media Archivist VI (Short-cycle higher vocational education): responsible for receiving and storing audiovisual content on various carriers, classification and indexing, creating metadata records, and facilitating access to users. Tasks still involve handling physical carriers but also include preparing material for digitization.
- Media Archivist (Higher professional education): performs more extensive tasks, including acquisition of content on various carriers, evaluation and processing, classification, copyright clearance, preparation for long-term preservation, digitization, and access provision.
- Documentation Archivist (First-cycle professional higher education): leads archival and museum operations, oversees collection and management of museum materials, digitizes broadcasts, guides visitors through the archival exhibitions, collaborates on exhibitions and loans, and provides data to users. This role includes the responsibilities of the Media Archivist but also assumes curatorial and public engagement duties.
- Documentation Specialist – Information Officer (Second-cycle degree / master's degree): selects material for programming, processes archival data analytically, and prepares it for large-scale projects. The role focuses primarily on content curation and research support.
- Documentation Specialist – Researcher (Second-cycle degree / master's degree): occupies the highest level of archival work. Tasks include project-based research, acquisition of archival material, international and private collection verification, reproduction acquisition, and thematic research in archive and related fields.

The existing classification does not encompass responsibilities related to the use of LTO tape libraries, metadata frameworks, archival system operations, or AI supported processing. These areas form the core of the proposed updated model.

5.2 PROPOSAL FOR A MODERN CLASSIFICATION OF ARCHIVAL POSITIONS AT RTV SLOVENIA

To address contemporary professional needs comprehensively, we propose a new classification framework comprising seven levels of audiovisual archival positions. These levels are differentiated by educational requirements and the complexity of assigned tasks:

- Level I (Secondary technical education / Upper secondary): responsible for the physical safeguarding of materials, coding and cataloguing, preparation of materials for use and reintroduction into the archive, technical inspections, and maintenance. Includes keeping records and preparing status reports on archival holdings.
- Level II (Short-cycle higher vocational education): in addition to Level I tasks, responsible for the preparation and execution of basic digitization processes.
- Level III (Higher professional education): in addition to Level II tasks, perform digital acquisition, quality control of ingested materials, metadata creation (cataloguing, classification, indexing), content description, selection of materials for production and external users, and applies artificial intelligence tools.
- Level IV (First-cycle professional higher education/ First-cycle university degree): in addition to Level III tasks, responsible for the acquisition, selection, and appraisal of materials and ensuring user access.
- Level V (Second-cycle degree / master's degree): in addition to Level IV responsibilities, performs analytical and content-based metadata description, uses AI tools for selection and appraisal, facilitates user access, provides information on authors and performers, and guides archival visits and exhibitions.
- Level VI (Second-cycle degree / master's degree): in addition to Level V tasks, conduct research and select content for programming and external projects, collaborate with public and private institutions, prepares expert documentation, and processes requests from external users.
- Level VII (Second-cycle degree / master's degree): the most advanced level, includes responsibilities of Level VI along with drafting expert guidelines, or-

ganizing workshops and training, negotiating usage contracts, curating archival collections and systems, and participating in the procurement, implementation, and maintenance of archival applications.

5.3 PROPOSAL FOR TECHNICAL ARCHIVAL POSITIONS AT RTV SLOVENIA

The current technical job profiles do not adequately address tasks related to the digitization of archival material. To bridge this gap, we propose three levels of specialized technical positions:

- Technical Level I (Short-cycle higher vocational education/ Higher professional education): responsible for receiving, sorting, cataloguing, classifying, and indexing material for restoration and digitization. Tasks include basic conservation and restoration interventions, preparation for digitization, execution and quality control, and documentation of restoration and digitization processes.
- Technical Level II (First-cycle professional higher education/ First-cycle university degree): in addition to the tasks of Level I, participates in production projects involving digitized content and manages the organization of restoration and digitization procedures.
- Technical Level III (Second-cycle degree / master's degree): in addition to the responsibilities of Level II, monitors professional literature and the latest restoration and digitization methods, and collaborates with related institutions and archives domestically and internationally.

The proposed model ensures the alignment of archival practice with the demands of the digital era, broadens the required knowledge base, and supports long-term human resource planning. It emphasizes digital competencies, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the implementation of advanced technologies for audiovisual preservation and access.

6 CONCLUSION

The digital transformation of television archives encompasses the adoption and implementation of digital technologies within the fundamental workflows and strategic frameworks of audiovisual archiving. This shift facilitates improved preservation, greater accessibility, and more effective management of archival materials. It involves moving away from conventional, primarily analog practices toward digi-

tal systems, thereby enabling more streamlined storage, retrieval, and distribution of media content (Taurino & Aitaki, 2024, 4). Archivists must pursue continuous professional development through multiple established avenues, including formal education, technical training, the use of professional guidelines, and workshops that emphasize the enhancement of technical competencies. In parallel, a shift in mindset is required moving from traditional, paper-based approaches to practices aligned with electronic records management. To remain effective, archivists must demonstrate the capacity to adapt to ongoing technological advancements and integrate them into archival theory and practice (Rahmadanty et al., 2023, 207).

The proposed revision of the job classification system within RTV Slovenia's archival services directly addresses the emerging needs arising from the digital transformation of the television sector. Technological progress has significantly reshaped the field of archival science, introducing new responsibilities related to digital content management, artificial intelligence tools, and complex information systems.

Modern archival requirements must be divided into two primary domains within audiovisual archives: content-related tasks and technical tasks.

In the content domain, audiovisual archivists are increasingly responsible for managing metadata structures, applying AI in professional processing, understanding archival systems and applications, and contributing to the development and integration of archival and broadcast software solutions. Archivists are no longer merely custodians of material but active stakeholders in the planning, maintenance, and enhancement of archival infrastructures.

Simultaneously, there is a growing need for specialized technical profiles that combine elements of editing, production, and archival competencies. These professionals must master software tools for conservation, restoration, and digitization processes. Their roles support technical execution and ensure high-quality preservation of digital content in accordance with professional standards and long-term storage requirements.

In conclusion, the digital transformation of the archival field necessitates a comprehensive renewal of competence profiles, a redefinition of archival roles, and the adoption of modern approaches to managing audiovisual content, encompassing both professional and technical dimensions of archival work.

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