

Competency reference number and title	B3 - Organising and describing records
Level of attainment claimed	Level 2
Development period: Overall dates in which competency was developed for this assessment level	██████████

Context

Give a brief outline of the context in which you developed this competency. For example, your previous and current job roles or responsibilities

I developed this competency as the digital archive trainee at ██████████. The task involved correcting, augmenting, and enhancing catalogue records for c.500 born-digital and digitised films on ██████████ Museum to Archives (M2A) repository, which had only sparse records for these items, limiting their discoverability on ██████████'s collections catalogue.

Activity

Give a brief description and examples from your professional activity and practice which demonstrate your competency at this level. Link this section to the competency definition in the Framework.

The task involved four phases.

In phase 1, by bringing in my own digital knowledge, I identified the technical metadata for each digital file and catalogued my findings onto a spreadsheet. It contained nineteen fields with the 'Current-File- Name' and 'Collection-Name' fields already populated. I used these as a reference for recording all the information in the other fields. By studying the file properties of each film, I was able to populate the technical fields such as the digital format (e.g. mp4), resolution, file bitrate (fps), and file size. By referring to M2A, I was able to record the catalogue number and format of the original film and whether the digital file of the film was already embedded on M2A. Finally, I flagged up any duplicated records.

In phase 2, I opened each digital file to ensure it was not corrupted, and then I visually assessed each film to note if it had a watermark logo (for copyright purposes) and contained the ██████████ 24-second-title clip'. I spot-checked the audio quality of each film by taking the initiative to use sound-cancelling headphones in the studio. On the spreadsheet, I rated the audio quality from 0-10, using my own judgement. I also specified if a film was mute to avoid users complaining of an audio issue when in fact, it was a silent film. (Films I identified as having poor audio quality will be re-digitised.)

Phase 3 involved transferring metadata from my spreadsheet to the M2A records. I also corrected the 'Extent' field of each film to conform to the established terminology and the 'Format Type' field because many items had been classified as a video when they were a film. Finally, I double-checked that the changes were displaying on ██████████ online catalogue.

In phase 4, I watched a selection of the films to record details of their content. The sparse records in M2A had one-line summaries that did not adequately reflect the content. By using the ██████████ Cataloguing Guidance Notes and using a previous film completed by a Digital Archivist as a working example, I created detailed summaries and for the 'Content Notes' field wrote a detailed outline using timecodes so users can find a specific point in the film effortlessly. I proofread my summaries and timecoded content notes, written in Word, before transferring them to M2A. On M2A, I added the 'Digital-Document-Link' to make the film digitally accessible on ██████████ YouTube channel.

Progression & Learning

Give a brief summary of how your skills, knowledge and experience within this competency have developed or been maintained during this period. Include examples of the different skills, knowledge and experience developed and the types of learning undertaken such as formal training, study or research, work achievements, contributions to the profession etc.

At the start of my traineeship, I had minimal knowledge of archival film and video, whether analogue or digital. I began to learn about these materials by reading a selection of academic literature and attending a [REDACTED] studio induction session, where I viewed and handled a physical example of safety film. Then I had a tutorial with [REDACTED] Content Developer, who explained the different digital formats and digital assets held. Attending the "Introduction to Identification of Archive Film and Video" online course by London's Screen Archives (LSA) allowed me to build on this knowledge. Through this course, I learned how to identify the core elements of the physical items.

To further develop my cataloguing and timecoding writing skills, I subsequently attended LSA's course called "Introduction to Cataloguing, Writing and Metadata for Archive Film and Video". It enhanced my knowledge of the different styles of descriptions and I incorporated some of their guidelines onto my [REDACTED] cataloguing work (see B3a), such as acknowledging the global context of online records by adding 'England' or 'UK' to place names and providing explanatory details for British people and organisations in the film to cater for non-UK audiences. Finally, I learnt that including a clear bulleted list (e.g. list of chronological dates) in the Scope and Content section gives the user a good idea of what to expect before they view the film, and this taught me another concise way to style my descriptions.

As I was working on M2A, there was some contention in regards to applying the correct 'Format Type' of archival films. The choice of terminology was between 'film recording' or 'video recording'. This touched on a conceptual issue: the original physical item was a film reel but I was working with a digital item and digital moving image files are typically called videos. I raised this issue with the Digital Archivist and after a discussion, we decided to use 'film recording', making sure to specify the original format of the item in a section under the 'Administrative History' tab in M2A.

Reflection

Reflect on and evaluate what you have learned from the activities you have undertaken to develop or maintain this competency. For example, what went well/not so well? What would you do differently next time?

Initially, I overloaded the summary with too much content (e.g., writing over 500 words for a summary for a 12-minute film) and thought the more information, the better content a user will receive. For example, for a film, I wrote about the camera panning a garden of yellow daffodils and went into detail of what a person said in an interview, but these did not reflect the key contents of the film.

I took a step back and realised that I needed to catalogue at two levels. The first level was the summary, and the crucial learning point here was to discern the most important parts of the film, such as key locations and key personnel, and ignore secondary information such as names of side streets. The goal was to describe the content in a concise and meaningful way. Working through this approach helped me improve my decision making skills on what to include and what to omit when writing.

In the second level, writing the timecoding enabled me to bring in further details and garner a greater level of description, such as what was actually said by a person in an interview. If they read down to the Content Notes field, users have invested time in the film's record, and I have now provided them access to detailed information so that they can easily select the specific points they are interested in.

I understood the need to be accurate and consistent when recording metadata on the spreadsheet (see B3b) and then later describing the films in detail and transferring this information to M2A (see B3c). On reflection, I believe this educated me to have a careful approach to the task in hand.

I have been commended on meeting my cataloguing deadlines and even took on additional work pertaining to this. I noticed some corrections need to be made on the Mediatheque, a standalone platform in the [REDACTED] building that provides visitors with on-demand access to the digitised films. The information on Mediatheque does not directly link with the M2A records, and I noticed that the metadata did not match my corrections on M2A. A spreadsheet was created where I reported the issues. I had to make sure it was clear and easy to read for the Content Developer to review and make the necessary adjustment to the Mediatheque records.

Through this task and gaining in-depth knowledge of M2A, I now understand all the fields in a catalogue record and am confident in filling them in. Also, although working on item-level records, I can recognise the hierarchy in which they exist on M2A. I am now able to transfer this skill to another cataloguing system, such as CALM and ADLIB.

Follow Up

How have you applied your skills, knowledge and experience within this competency since? What do you intend to do next to maintain or further develop this competency?

With the experience I have gained cataloguing at [REDACTED], I am prepared to take on another cataloguing project as I have demonstrated positively the ability to undertake such a task. The more experience that I receive, I am confident that I will become more proficient in this competency. In conclusion, after working with M2A, I now feel assured in applying the ISAD(G), NCA and ISAAR rules, and I understand how to catalogue individual fields by referring to the archive's guidelines, such as those I used for the films. Therefore, I feel confident that when I move onto another job within the Archives sector, I will be able to catalogue in whichever cataloguing system the organisation uses.