

Competency reference number and title	B9 Arranging, cataloguing and/or describing archives
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

Every stage of my career so far has involved some form of cataloguing, which has gradually developed in complexity until I am now firmly within the level 2. The various relevant roles include volunteering placements at the ██████████ Archives and the ██████████ Archives, as well as my archive traineeship at the ██████████ and my recent cataloguing placement at the ██████████.

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.

Firstly, at the ██████████, I catalogued repertory leaflets into CALM under moderate supervision. I was then able to take a more independent role in cataloguing the ██████████ Archive for the ██████████; although I consulted the archivist throughout the process, I chose the series and item levels into which the archive was split and wrote descriptions where necessary. I also wrote Name Authority Records for ██████████ and various other relevant individuals. During my traineeship at the ██████████, I formally participated in three different cataloguing tasks; lantern slides from the ██████████ collection, postcards from the ██████████ collection, and awards from the ██████████ collection. Although I was adding to an already established hierarchy within these collections, not creating my own, the task required thorough focus and attention to detail. Furthermore, I was able to suggest improvements to various collections which presented a confusing hierarchy to users, such as the ██████████ Society collection and the ██████████ archive. My most recent experience of cataloguing was also my most useful, during a placement at the ██████████ in May 2019. During this placement, I catalogued the papers of ██████████ and ██████████, which had not been previously appraised by an archivist and was generally disorganised. It was my task to determine whether there was an original order to be salvaged, which items were worth keeping within the archive, and creating a thematic hierarchy which would make sense to users packaging of archives. I have also chosen to take on increasingly in depth tasks to further my understanding of how archives work and how I can best improve my work practices.

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.

One particularly useful training exercise I undertook during my time in ██████████ was a two day course in the advanced operation of the cataloguing software Adlib. This not only guided me through the basics of building a hierarchy in the catalogue database, but also improved my knowledge of accessions, the advanced search function and fields not marked as 'essential' by ISAD(G). The theoretical practice of arrangement and description was also discussed during my MA course, as we discussed whether a basic hierarchy was truly

optimal or whether records should be more interconnected. Finally, my ability to catalogue a collection through CALM improved immensely throughout my placement at the [REDACTED]; for example, I was able to make use of the 'Allied material' field to link records together via metadata

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?

I believe that one success I have enjoyed in this area is my ability to pick up new systems and methods of cataloguing swiftly, as I have switched between CALM, Adlib, and cataloguing into Excel frequently. I have been able to apply the same high standard of descriptive practice in all of these systems. I have also been commended on my accuracy and consistency whilst cataloguing large amounts of material; whilst it is near impossible to make no mistakes, I was able to correct any errors via proofreading and consultation with colleagues.

In future, a change I would make to my approach to cataloguing is to begin the process with a looser adherence to original order. The most important outcome for a cataloguing archivist is that a user can clearly navigate through the collection, they know exactly what they are getting, and they can find related material. Trying to shoehorn unrelated items together simply because they arrived in the same box does not serve this purpose. Grouping items thematically, rather than by form, is an ideal way to avoid this (particularly with regard to personal papers which may show no clear organisational mind worth preserving).

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?

I intend for my next period of employment to be spent undertaking a cataloguing project, and so experience with a role that has cataloguing at its core will no doubt further improve my proficiency in this area. Through my dissertation, I am also questioning some elements of archival description, by discussing whether we need greater provision for providing context for the presence of offensive language within our catalogues; this may manifest as a need for pop up content warnings which would significantly change the way in which we catalogues potentially sensitive collections.