

Position Classification Standard for Archivist Series, GS-1420

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SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes positions which involve professional archival work in appraising, accessioning, arranging, describing, preserving, publishing or providing reference service from public records and historic documents. This work requires a professional knowledge of archival principles and techniques, professional knowledge of history, and a thorough understanding of the needs, methods and techniques of scholarly research.

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

A general discussion of professional archival work and its relationship to associated occupy actions is set forth below. "Archives" are those documents officially produced or received by government agency, a public or private organization, or an individual which, taken in the aggregate, serve to record the operations or activities of that institution or individual. As the term is applied to the records of the Federal Government it embraces (1) those bodies of non-current permanently valuable records that form useful evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of Federal agencies or very important federal officials, or (2) those records that must, or should, be preserved for their informational content.

Archival records may take many forms. They may be printed documents, correspondence, reports, vouchers, maps, sound recordings, still or motion pictures, or mechanically produced records such as magnetic tapes or machine listings. Regardless of their physical form, archives are of vital importance for both public and private purposes archival records document official actions and serve as sources for official reference in the prosecution of the affairs of Government by providing a record of past actions. The information contained in archives is essential to historians, political scientists, economists, sociologists or other scholars engaged in study of various aspects of our society. Such records are also important in establishing or protecting the status or legal rights of individuals in genealogical research.

Professional archival work in the Federal Government involves the following broad, but not mutually exclusive, functions: (1) appraisal and disposition, (2) arrangement and description, (3) preservation and rehabilitation, (4) documentary publication, historical editing and exhibit of archival materials, and (5) reference service. These functions are discussed in some detail below:

1. *Records Appraisal and Disposition.* -- This involves the analysis and evaluation of public records to determine their continuing values and to provide advice or make recommendations or decisions regarding their ultimate disposition, i.e., destruction or permanent retention. Archivists engaged in records appraisal employ a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of (a) the history, organization and operations of the agency that originated the records, (b) the legislative authorities and responsibilities of the agency as these relate to the development and retention of records, (c) the organizational, functional and records relationships

of the agency under study to other Federal agencies or activities, and (d) the needs of the scholarly community.

In reaching conclusions, archivists analyze the agency records in their entirety in order to understand the interrelationships of the records and the relative significance of any particular group of records to the agency's total system of documentation. They consider (a) the position of each office in the administrative hierarchy, (b) the character of the function performed by each office, (c) the nature of the activities of each office as these relate to a given function, and (d) how the organization, functions and activities of the agency are reflected in the records.

They determine the relative value of the various series of records in providing evidence of how the agency was organized and how it functioned. In making recommendations or decisions regarding the ultimate disposition of particular series of records archivists also consider the extent to which (a) the information in the records may be available from other sources, and (b) the nonavailability of the information contained in a given set of records would impair or distort an understanding of agency organization, function or activity.

In appraising records for their informational values archivists analyze the content of the records apart from their organizational context or their agency of origin. They determine the extent to which the records involved may contain unique and significant information concerning persons, organizations, things, situations, events, problems, and the like, with which agencies have dealt.

In reaching conclusions and developing recommendations regarding the retention of records based on their informational values, archivists exercise a broad knowledge of the research sources, needs and methods of the field or fields (i.e., history, political science, economics, sociology, etc.) for which the records' have potential value. They consider such matters as (1) the arrangement and accessibility of the information in the records, (2) the legal requirements or administrative purposes to be served by their retention, (3) the volume of records involved, (4) the availability of similar information from other sources, and (5) the cost of accessioning, arranging, preserving and providing reference service from such records.

They prepare appraisal reports which include (1) description of such essential identifying attributes of the records as (a) the organizational unit or individual that accumulated them, (b) the specific functions or activities to which they relate, (c) the physical types of records involved, i.e., correspondence, reports, photographs, maps, etc., and (d) their inclusive dates; (2) analysis and explanation of their evidential or informational values; (3) nature and frequency of the probable use of the records; and (4) recommendations as to the disposition of the records either by transfer to the National Archives, by transfer to a Federal Records Center, or by destruction.

Archivists engaged in appraisal and disposition work also make or participate in studies for the preparation or revision of retention and disposal schedules for administrative records and for basic classes of substantive records common to several or all Federal agencies. They may also participate in the evaluation of agency disposition programs.

2. Archival Records Arrangement and Description. -- The appropriate arrangement of archival records is vital to (1) providing a fixed and known location for every file unit so that it can be found when needed, and (2) bringing related materials together in some logical order so that they can be used without prior knowledge of the existence of particular document or file unit. Thus, archival arrangement involves two kinds of considerations: (1) the internal relationships and arrangement of the records under study and (2) the relationship and arrangement of these records, as a body, to other bodies of records in the archives.

In general, the arrangement of archival records is based on the principle that records should be kept in the order in which they were replaced by the creating agency on the theory that arrangement (1) has logic and meaning in relation to the agency's activities and organization, (2) will facilitate reference to the records, and (3) will best protect the legal and historical value of the records as evidence. Legal or historical "proof" that records are complete or properly identified is difficult if the records have become disarranged.

For purposes of archival management and use, records in Federal archival institutions are arranged under a classification plan based on the principle outlined above, which provides for the broad categorization of records into record groups.

These, in turn, are further subdivided into sub-groups, series and file units which are arranged in organizational or functional relationship to each other and, in so far as possible, are maintained as integral units. Archivists engaged in records arrangement study the origins, the organizational and functional history and the administrative procedures of the records producing units (i.e., agency, office, etc.) involved, as well as the records they produced. They analyze the records and their relationships to other records holdings in recommending or deciding on that classification and method of arrangement which will best (1) reveal the character, significance and relationships of the records, (2) protect their integrity as historical evidence and as evidence of organization and function, and (3) facilitate their location, description and use.

In the case of records which have become disarranged, or which have been arbitrarily rearranged prior to accessioning, archivists exercise knowledge and make judgments of the type described above in reconstructing original arrangement plans and in restoring such records to their original arrangement. If the original arrangement prevents or hampers the effective use of the informational content of the records, archivists devise that scheme of arrangement which best facilitates their exploitation by scholars, scientists or others.

The description of archival records involves the preparation of "finding aids" such as guides, inventories, lists and catalogs. Finding aids are necessary to inform users of the existence and availability of records that contain information of value to them and to provide information to the archives staff for administrative purposes and to facilitate reference service activities. Finding aids range in type from simple lists enumerating the main kinds of records in a records group to definitive analytical subject guides which cover many types of records in different record groups which bear on a particular broad topic. Archivists employ an intensive knowledge of (1) the evidential or informational values of particular bodies of records, (2) the interests of the using community, and (3) the needs of the archival staff engaged in reference service work in

determining the need for and planning the scope and content of finding aids and in conducting the necessary research and authorizing such documents.

3. *Preservation and Rehabilitation* -- The preservation of archival material involves safeguarding the records from deterioration, damage, destruction, or from impairment of their value through disarrangement or alteration. They consider (1) the condition of the records, (2) the nature of their evidential or informational values, (3) the extent of their use, and (4) the cost of repair or rehabilitation.

They make recommendations or decisions as to the action that should be taken to preserve the records through repair or other rehabilitation for by microfilming or photocopy.

4. *Documentary Publication, Historical Editing, and the Exhibit or Archival Materials*. -- Archival holdings may be published either comprehensively or selectively in printed volumes, as facsimiles, or on microfilm, or may be exhibited in the interest of greater popular understanding of events and persons in American history. Archivists engaged in publications work exercise a thorough knowledge of values, uses, volume and physical condition of records in selecting those suitable for publication and in determining the form and scope (i.e., printed volume vs. microfilm; comprehensive vs. selective; full texts. abstract) of the publication. Recommendations and decisions regarding these matters are influenced by such considerations as (1) the breadth and depth of interest in and the importance of the documents as primary sources for scholarly research, (2) whether the subject matter of the publication requires bringing together in different arrangement a variety of documents dispersed among many record series of the same or of several records groups, and (3) limitations of cost.

Archivists involved in publication work carefully study the documents to be published to insure their proper order and identification, to resolve questions of origin and authenticity, and to determine similar matters. They conduct extensive research in secondary works and in a number of record groups or collections of private papers, when such research is necessary to bring together or make known the existence of relevant or related documents. They employ thorough knowledge of the substance of the documents involved and of the persons, circumstances or events to which the documents relate, and skill and judgment in (1) selecting documents for inclusion in the publication, (2) writing introductory narrative material of descriptive character, and (3) creating an arrangement of the material, with such explanations as are necessary, that will best reveal its substantive content and insure ease in the use of the publication.

In addition, archivists involved in the publication of archival materials in printed volumes are required to possess a thorough knowledge of: (1) traditional and modern documentation as source material of history; (2) the canons of textual criticism; (3) scholarly annotation; (4) the value and use of non textual (pictorial, cartographic, etc.) documentary material for explanatory or illustrative purposes; and (5) copy-editing, proofreading and indexing.

Archivists engaged in exhibit work consider the timeliness of proposed exhibit themes, their potential educational and popular appeal, and the cost of preparing exhibits. This involves (1) surveys of the holdings of archival and manuscript repositories and of museums for materials for

exhibit and (2) extensive scholarly researching both primary and secondary sources to determine the origin and authenticity of documents selected for exhibit.

5. Reference Services -- This consists of making records, and the information in or about them, available in response to individual requests, as distinct from the publication of documents for all users. Reference services range from providing specific information from or about records in response to explicit inquiries, to providing professional research support, advice and consultation to government officials or to scholars concerned with ascertaining the facts and locating and studying the documentation relating to broad or complex subjects.

Archivists engaged in providing reference service employ (1) knowledge of archival, library and other research resources, (2) grasp of the subject matter and substance of the inquiry, and (3) an understanding of the point of view and the needs of the researcher. They identify and locate germane source materials; explain the administrative background or interrelationships of source documents; suggest secondary sources such as published works which would be useful in providing added background or perspective to the use of primary source documents; and provide information and suggestion regarding other archival or manuscript collections containing relevant materials.

DISTINCTIONS FROM RELATED OCCUPATIONS

The hallmark of positions in this series is the requirement to apply thorough knowledge of the theories and principles of professional archival work and the needs and methods of the scholarly community in (1) analyzing the values and inter-relationships of non-current records and (2) making substantive value judgments of the type described above.

At full performance levels, patterns of assignment in professional archival work are not uniform. Some archivists may specialize by function, e.g., appraisal, others by kinds of records or subject matter such as cartographic records, records relating to a President and his administration, or Civil War records. Depending on the subject matter or area of assignment, archivists may draw upon one or more other fields of knowledge such as political science, economics, sociology, international relations, science or law, and use such tools as historiography or foreign languages. However, for positions classified in this series, these knowledge and skill requirements are subordinate to the requirement for knowledge of the theory, principles and methodology of archival science. Positions for which the reverse is true should be classified to the appropriate subject-matter series.

Professional vs. technical positions

The distinction between those archival positions which require full professional knowledge and those which do not is not always obvious. The determination as to whether a given position should be classified to this series or to the [Archives Assistant Series, GS-1421](#) should be based on consideration of the following:

1. whether the organizational context and career pattern in which the position exists permits and requires professional staffing, and
2. whether the position requires
 - (a) the application of knowledge of the fundamental principles and theoretical concepts of professional archival work,
 - (b) the ability to apply such knowledge to practical archival problems with versatility, judgment and perception,
 - (c) the ability to use archival materials and related manuscript and published sources in performing the research that underlies and is fundamental to the accomplishment of all archival functions at the professional level,
 - (d) the ability to organize, analyze and interpret non current records and to assess their values for historical or other scholarly research, *and*
 - (e) for positions which specialize by subject matter, the ability through study (1) to keep abreast of scholarly research in their particular area of interest, (2) to exercise judgment in recognizing the potential research values of a group of records, and (3) to make known the results of research to other scholars concerned with the same field.

Positions which at full performance levels require the application of knowledge and abilities of the type described above should be included in this series.

It should be noted that possession of an academic background of the kind described in the qualification standard for this series does not of itself assure that the position is professional. The critical distinction as to whether a given position is "professional" or "technical" centers on the requirement for the application of the fundamental principles and concepts of archival science in analyzing on-current records and in making discriminating value judgments in their appraisal, arrangement, description and use for research and reference purposes.

Relationship to historian positions

The relationship between the work of archivists and that of historians is particularly close. Many archivists have been trained in historical research methodology and apply such training as a basic tooling making judgments regarding the relationships and values of non-current records. Archivists and historians both evaluate records and conduct research in archival collections. Both may edit historical documents for publication. The key to the distinction between archivist and historian positions lies in the basic nature of their concern with non-current records. The archivist is concerned with the inherent values of such records as they relate to the needs of both government officials and scholars from a variety of fields. The concern of historians with such records usually is more restricted anymore specifically related to their values as source materials in particular historical study. When viewed over a span of time and variety of assignments positions in which the former concerns predominate should be classified to this series. Positions in which the latter concerns predominate should be classified to the [History Series, GS-0170](#).

Relationship to Librarian positions

Distinctions between the work of archivists and librarians rest on fundamental differences both in the nature of the material with which they deal and in the methods which they employ. As stated earlier, archival materials are aggregations of non-current records which reflect the organization and functions of the body which produced them. They derive much of their significance from their relationships to the activity that produced them and to each other. Library materials, on the other hand, are discrete items which have significance independent of their relationship to other items in the collection. (See [Librarian Series, GS-1410](#).)

Both archives and libraries may contain printed matter or manuscripts. However, archival materials are received from and bear an organic relationship to the agency, organization or individual that produced them or that is served by the archives. Library materials maybe collected from any source. Methodological differences relate to the appraisal, arrangement and description of materials. Unlike archivists, whose work in these areas has been described in some detail above, librarians apply a knowledge of library science and the bibliography of a particular subject-matter field in evaluating individual items for acquisition. They arrange materials in accordance with a predetermined logical scheme of subject classification such as the Dewey Decimal System and catalog books or manuscripts as individual items.

Relationship to positions concerned with management of current records

Archivists, as well as records managers, are concerned with what records an agency develops and why, as well as how such records are organized and used. The interest of the records manager centers on the efficient and economical development and maintenance of active records to meet the current operating needs of an agency. The archivist's interest in such matters derives from his need to understand the relationship of the records to agency organization and function in order to appraise their evidential or informational values and preserve their arrangement should they become "archives." Archivists and records managers consult regarding (1) the near and long-term values of records from the standpoint of agency operations, (2) methods and

systems or the identification of records of permanent value, and (3) for the scheduling of non-current records for transfer into archival custody. Positions in which the concern for current active records predominates should be classified to the appropriate management series in the [GS-0300 group](#).

TITLE

The title for positions in this series is "Archivist." Those archivist positions which include supervisory responsibilities of such significance as to require supervisory qualifications will be identified by the addition of the prefix "Supervisory" to the basic title. Archivist positions charged with team leadership in the accomplishment of a particular project typically do not include continuing supervisory responsibilities of such magnitude as to influence the basic qualifications requirements. Normally, therefore, a supervisory designation will not be used for such positions.

While supervisory archivist positions are included in this series, the guides described herein are confined to the coverage of the nonsupervisory aspects of such positions. Supervisory functions are covered by the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#).

EVALUATION OF NONSUPERVISORY ARCHIVIST POSITIONS

There are two fundamental classification factors, each composed of several elements, which taken together provide a means for measurement of the relative grade value of work in this series. These are (1) the nature of the assignment, and (2) the level of responsibility of the position. Discussion of these factors and their component elements follows:

Nature of the assignment

This factor incorporates those elements of complexity inherent in the assignment which make it more difficult or less difficult to accomplish. The other components of this factor include the knowledge and skills which the archivist must possess to accomplish the work and the mental demands involved.

Professional archival work ranges in scope and complexity from the simple to the highly involved. The work is influenced by such considerations as: (1) the nature and stability of the organizational structure and functional responsibilities of the agency that produced the records; (2) the kind and quality of the information available about the evolution of the organization or functions to which the records pertain; (3) the extent to which the records are in good order or are in good order or are in disarray; (4) the span of time covered by the records; (5) the age of the records; (6) the subject matter of the records; (7) the way in which the subject matter of one records unit, series or group relates to information contained in other records units, series or groups; and similar matters. These considerations, in turn, affect the breadth or depth of organizational or subject-matter knowledge which the archivist must bring to bear on the

resolution of the technical archival problems presented by the assignment, and the intensity of the intellectual endeavor involved.

Level of responsibility

This factor includes consideration of the nature and extent of the supervisory control exercised over the work, the nature and extent of the archivist's responsibility for personal work contacts and for making recommendations or decisions, and similar matters. The degree of "authoritativeness" with which the work of an archivist is viewed by his agency and by the scholarly community and the extent to which his opinion is sought and given weight within his area of competence also are indicators of the level of his responsibility. These elements are treated in some detail in the grade-level discussions which follow.

NOTES TO USERS OF THIS STANDARD

1. The nature of archival work offers considerable opportunity for the archivist to influence the dimensions of his position. The breadth and depth of knowledge and experience, and the judgment, perceptiveness and ingenuity which an archivist brings to his work may have a material influence on the scope of his assignment. This influence will be reflected in the kind and complexity of the assignments which he receives and the "authoritativeness" which attaches to his completed work. *The classification criteria in this stand are intended to measure these considerations.* However, in order to insure that the influence of this relationship is considered in its proper perspective, the evaluation of an archivist's position should be based on sufficient span of time to reflect the norm of his current assignments rather than be based on an isolated or atypical project.
2. This standard does not include grade-level guides for nonsupervisory positions above the GS-13 level because of the small number and highly individualized nature of such positions

ARCHIVIST, GS-1420-05

This is the basic trainee level. Work assignments are preselected to provide (1) orientation and training in professional archival policies, concepts, methods, techniques and procedures, (2) familiarity with patterns of arrangement, physical types, subject-matter content, available finding aids and the historic and administrative background of the record groups, (3) a knowledge of the values, uses, availability, reliability and sources of pertinent information, data or records, and (4) training in research methodology.

The supervisory archivist, or archivist of higher grade, provides specific and detailed guidance in and definitive review of all aspects of the work. Typically, personal work contacts are limited and usually are confined to obtaining information and receiving instructions.

Work assignments are very narrow in scope and limited in complexity. Typically, they consist of such tasks as (1) searching for, locating and withdrawing pre-designated materials from specified records series or files units, (2) drafting correspondence in response to requests for

specific information which can be readily located, (3) restoring the arrangement of records in a series or files unit when the original is well described or obvious, (4) identifying and composing brief descriptions of the content of records containers, or (5) gathering background data regarding organization and function to be used by archivists of higher grade in the development of inventories, finding aids or administrative histories.

ARCHIVIST, GS-1420-07

Nature of the assignment

This is the advanced trainee level. Work assignments are selected to provide training in the judgmental aspects of professional archival work and in research methodology. Such assignments become progressively more difficult as knowledge and experience advance. Assignments typically are narrow in scope and limited in complexity but are diversified to provide training and experience in the variety of tasks associated with archival functions. The following are illustrative: (1) searches for, locates and withdraws materials authorized for disposition, (2) perfects or restores the arrangement of small records series and files units within series, (3) in response to specific reference service requests such as a request for information regarding (a) hostilities with an Indian tribe, (b) the history of merchant vessel, (c) the first homesteaders in a particular State, or (d) the history of a Court of Claims case, searches among a number of record groups or series within groups, selecting records and evaluating data pertinent to the subject and writing abstracts or summaries of such information, (4) participates in preparation of preliminary inventories or similar finding aids by identifying the limits of specified component series within a record group, determining the chronological time span and volume of the series and writing brief descriptive statements of the subject-matter content and type of records included in the series, and (5) searches records for data regarding the organization, functions and activities of the creating agency and writes reports on such data for use in compiling the administrative history of the agency.

Typically at this level the content of the records is generally known and the relationships among records, both within and between series, is generally clear. Offices of origin are readily identifiable and considerable background information regarding the organization and functions of the originating office or agency is available. However, archivists at this level must possess or obtain working familiarity with the content and organization of the records in order to carry out the work. Problems relate to the location of all the records pertinent to the assignment, and may require the archivist to expand or modify his field of search to be sure that the data is complete. Assignments involving the presentation of information require the archivist to exercise judgment and selectivity in identifying and determining the relative importance of pertinent documents and in abstracting or summarizing those most germane to the subject.

GS-7 archivists are expected to possess a good background knowledge of the history of the United States or another area or region and its governmental institutions, and the ability to use this background in acquiring an understanding of the substance, organization and relationships of archival records.

Level of responsibility

Typically, assignments are accompanied by a full discussion of the purpose and scope of the work and any problems which may be anticipated. Within this framework the archivist plans the approach and determines the methods for the accomplishment of the assignment. He discusses them in detail with the supervisor, or an archivist of higher grade, before proceeding with the work. Guidance is available as questions are encountered in the course of the work. Depending on the nature of the assignment, the supervisor or other archivist may review the judgmental aspects of the work through discussions at various stages of completion. Completed work is presented in draft form and is reviewed in detail for adherence to instructions, completeness, thoroughness of research, soundness of judgment and selectivity, adequacy and appropriateness of presentation, and evidence of understanding of the requirements, concepts and techniques of professional archival work.

Personal work contacts may include contacts with archivists and others responsible for the maintenance of files and records, or with individuals who have requested reference service. Such contacts are for the purpose of obtaining and transmitting factual information.

ARCHIVIST, GS-1420-09

Nature of assignments

Assignments differ from those at the preceding level both in their scope and complexity and in their emphasis on archival function as opposed to tasks within functions. The following assignments are illustrative of this level:

1. Analyzes and arranges bodies of records which may be somewhat disorganized. This involves (a) studying the origin and subject-matter content of the records, (b) conducting research both in the records themselves and in secondary sources such as published works, to obtain information regarding the administrative history of the creating agency, its organization, functions, activities, programs and key officials, and (c) reconstructing the original classification or filing scheme of the records.
2. In cases where the original filing scheme cannot be reconstructed because of limited information about the creating agency, or when the original filing scheme is found to be impractical or undesirable for purposes of providing reference service, devises and recommends an arrangement scheme that will indicate, in so far as impracticable, the origins of the records and provides for their most efficient and economical maintenance and use. Such work involves (a) studying and identifying individual documents as to type or kind in accordance with the subject-matter content, (b) determining the source and relationship of the document, i.e., determining which activity or function of the creating agency originated the record and which organizational unit had official custody of it, and (c) arranging the documents within functional or organizational categories in alphabetical, chronological, numeric, subject or other order.

3. Prepares a complete preliminary inventory for the records of an agency having a limited variety of functions and a fairly stable organizational and administrative history, e.g., the records of the selective Service System, 1917-1919, or of the Office of the Inspector general of the War Department, 1914-1939, or a special list of particular documents with record groups such as a subject listing of the published and unpublished reports of the National Resources planning Board, 1933-1943. The preparation of such finding aids involves (a) conducting background research in the records and other source materials and preparing an administrative history of the agency that created the records, (b) outlining the organization, functions and activities of the agency and any changes which have occurred, (c) studying and analyzing the records to determine the limits of series within the record group, (d) preparing analytical descriptive statements regarding the subject-matter content, location, volume and chronological span of the individual series, and (e) supplying cross references to related sources of information in other records groups.
4. In response to reference service requests conducts necessary research and provides information on such subjects as (a) the administration, operations and financing of the National Reemployment service, (b) the role of the Interior Department in the plans and arrangements for President Abraham Lincoln's funeral, and (c) the location among War Department records of evidence -- that arms and ammunition were issued to the Pony Express Company in 1860 with the department's approval. Assists scholars and researchers in finding significant records relating to such subjects as (a) the history of labor relations in a specific industry during the 20th century or (b) the history of pardon and amnesty during the Civil War and reconstruction. Advises them of relevant records among those in the national Archives and in such collections of private papers as the Robert Todd Lincoln collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. Such assignments are non-repetitive, require search among several record groups to locate the information and require evaluation of the information selected for its authenticity, completeness, significance and relevance to the subject.

The basic characteristics of the records dealt with by Archivists GS-9 are similar to those described at the GS-7 level in that the record groups are usually homogeneous and their general content known. At this level, however, the records may present some problems arising from their age or from gaps in the available background information. Thus, in addition to the problems described at the GS-7 level, GS-9 assignments involve some difficulties in (1) establishing the internal or external relationships of record groups or series, (2) tracing the history of the originating agency or the organizational and administrative evolution of particular functions, or (3) the location, selection, analysis and abstracting of information or in the establishment of its authenticity or completeness. Resolution of these problems requires the Archivist GS-9 to possess a good knowledge of (1) basic archival principles, concepts, methods and procedures, (2) historical research methodology, (3) the values of various types of records for administrative, legal and research use, (4) the subject-matter content, arrangement and interrelationships of the records worked with, and (5) the history, structure and functions of the agencies producing those records. In addition, archivists at this level must exercise (1) persistence and imagination in seeking out additional sources of information, (2) critical judgment in the analysis and evaluation of documents in order to determine their relationships and establish their evidential or informational values, and (3) considerable skill in expository writing in the organization and presentation of the results of the work.

Level of responsibility

Work assignments of the type described above are accompanied by definition of the scope and objectives of the assignment, but are not accompanied by detailed preliminary instructions regarding sources of information or the methodology to be employed. GS-9 archivists are expected to plan their approach to the assignment and to follow recognized professional techniques in the accomplishment of the work. However, professional archivist assistance is available to provide guidance should problems not previously encountered by the incumbent arise in the course of the work. Typically, completed work is reviewed in detail for completeness, adequacy of planning, soundness of judgment, adequacy of presentation and conformance to professional standards.

Assignments which are not susceptible to such review upon completion, may be spot-checked in the course of their accomplishment.

Personal work contacts are similar to those at preceding levels. However, at this level the archivists relationships with his fellow archivists outside the supervisory chain, and his contacts with students or others seeking reference service, begin to take on the color of independent professional consultation, in that they may involve conferring on problems of mutual interest, or providing suggestions as to possible alternative sources of information.

ARCHIVIST, GS-1420-11

Nature of the assignment

GS-11 assignments may involve continuing responsibility for the performance of a variety of archival activities for a moderately large number of record groups which are related by administrative connection or by subject matter such as the record groups of the land units of the department of Interior, or they may be confined to one or two archival functions such as records appraisal or reference service. In the latter case the limitations imposed by lack of functional breadth are compensated for by more intensive subject matter knowledge. The following are illustrative:

1. Appraise the potential archival value of records recommended for disposal by agency records managers when this involves (a) studying agency prepared disposal lists and schedules with accompanying samples of records and reasons for disposal, (b) determining the purposes for which the records were created, (c) ascertaining their further informational or evidential value to the creating agency, (d) analyzing their potential significance for scholarly or other research, (e) assessing the costs of archival preservation, and (f) preparing reports setting forth recommendations regarding the preservation or disposition of the records.
2. Plan the microfilm or other publication of complete series of records, or of selected records within series when this involves (a) determining the records to be filmed, (b) conducting the

requisite historical research, and (c) writing introductory descriptive narrative relating the administrative history of the agency of origin and of the records.

3. Develop finding aids for archival records having the characteristics described below when this involves (a) conducting research in the records and other source materials, (b) preparing administrative histories of the creating agencies, (c) determining the limits of series within the records groups involved, (d) preparing descriptive and analytical statements regarding their subject-matter content, location, volume and chronological span, and (e) supplying cross references to related sources of information.
4. Provide reference and research service in response to requests for information about records on specialized subjects or topics such as (a) the social influence of malaria on American history, (b) U. S. policy and practice in providing a given class of aid to an ally in world War II, or (c) precedents throughout U. S. history for technological missions to foreign countries. Such assignments require the archivist to employ a good grasp of the primary subject matter involved and of related subject-matter fields and a good knowledge of germane archival records in order to achieve complete coverage of significant archival sources.
5. Analyze and plan for the arrangement or rearrangement of records when the records present problems, or the assignment requires research of the type described below.

GS-11 assignments typically involve records which present major problems in one or more of the following respects: (1) the subject matter of the records is complex in that it relates to one or more major topics or themes of history and may include several related topics, (2) the administrative history of the originating agency or the history of the substantive functions represented by the records is deficient in one or more respects, thus requiring the archivist to conduct extensive or intensive research in the records and in secondary sources which may themselves be obscure, in order to establish the facts surrounding the creation of the records, (3) the organization of the records is complicated as a result of significant changes in the substantive functions or organizational or administrative structures of the originating agencies, thus obscuring the "natural" relationships of the records, both within and across the boundaries of record series and groups. Research in the records may be complicated by the age of the records or the state of their preservation thus making them hard to decipher or difficult to handle without damage.

Level of responsibility

Within the limitations imposed by the scope and objectives of the assignment which are clearly defined by the supervisor or reestablished by specific directives, GS-11 archivists are responsible for developing working plans and blocking out the assignment. They determine approaches and techniques to be employed and make such modifications to approaches and techniques as may be required in the course of the work.

Typically, only those changes in working plans which would have the effect of modifying the scope or coverage of the assignment are discussed with the supervisor prior to implementation. However, supervisory archivists are available for consultation in the resolution of unusually

difficult problems presented by the assignment. Completed work is subject to review for completeness, soundness of judgment, adequacy of presentation and similar matters, though GS-11 archivists are held accountable for the professional adequacy of their work.

Archivists engaged in records appraisal work are responsible for making recommendations as to the disposition of the records under study. These recommendations are carefully reviewed for the thoroughness of the analysis and soundness of the conclusions which support the recommendations, since records, once destroyed, cannot be replaced.

In addition to personal work contacts of the type described at lower levels, GS-11 archivists establish and maintain continuing consultative relationships with fellow archivists and others both within and outside the Federal Government. These contacts include librarians, agency records managers and scholars and are for such purposes as (1) maintaining current information regarding other archival work as it relates to their area of interest, (2) obtaining information regarding secondary sources of information requisite for archival studies, (3) providing information regarding the records resources in the archival collection, or (4) providing advice as to additional sources of information.

ARCHIVIST, GS-1420-12

Nature of assignment

GS-12 assignments are distinguished from those at preceding levels by their broader scope, greater depth of treatment, more varied subject matter, greater need for sound critical judgment, and the increasing number of considerations which must be taken into account. The following assignments are illustrative:

1. Provide reference and research service with respect to large bodies of permanently valuable records preserved as documentary evidence of major Federal activities pertinent to a general subject-matter area, such as records of agencies concerned with (a) labor relations including labor supply, wages, hours, working conditions or minority groups, (b) business economics including regulation of competition, fair trade practices, aid to business, industry and trade statistics, patents and foreign trade, or (c) the conservation and administrations of the land, mineral, water, power and energy resources of the country. Such work requires (a) a comprehensive knowledge of the administrative organization of the Federal Government as it relate to the functions involved, (b) a thorough knowledge of the classification, arrangement and substance of archival records bearing on the subject, and (c) a good understanding of the general subject-matter field and alternate or additional sources germane to it.
2. Analyze records in relation to function, background, content and use to appraise their inherent evidential or informational values and make recommendations regarding their accessioning for temporary or permanent retention or their destruction, when this requires (a) taking into account evidence appearing in the records themselves (most of which will not previously have been analyzed from this point of view), (b) considering available historical sources relating to the same subject or field, (c) assessing the extent to which the records are

central to an understanding of the substantive functions or organization of the producing agency and similar matters.

3. Develop definitive analytical subject guides ("finding aids") for selected groups or series of records such as a calendar of the records in the War Department collection of Revolutionary War records, or following broad subject-matter themes such as the microfilm publication of a heterogeneous collection of Civil War telegrams. This involves (a) conducting search in original records and published sources for information on the organization and functions of the creating agency and those agencies into whose custody the records may have been transferred, (b) discovering the purposes for which the records were created, (c) delineating changes in their use, form or other characteristics, and (d) synthesizing and presenting the results of this research in the form of inventories, calendars, reference information papers or introductory narrative to microfilm publications.

Assignments of the type described above present substantial planning problems. The magnitude of some, but not all assignments requires the archivist to segment the work, either for accomplishment as a team effort, or to reduce the assignment to component parts of manageable proportions. This requires the archivist to employ a good knowledge of the subject-matter fields involved and potential sources of documentary evidence, to anticipate the major difficulties as a part of the planning process in those cases where the project is to be accomplished by team effort, planning is further complicated by the necessity to define precisely the scope and purpose of each segment in order to preserve the emphasis and perspective demanded of the whole. Conversely, those GS-12 archivists engaged in projects which are to become parts of a broader study, must possess a thorough understanding of the objectives of their portion of the study and its relationship to the broader whole.

At this level the records, and the studies associated with them, usually are defined in terms of some period and activity, such as the history of the army in westward expansion in the 19th century, or the mobilization of industry in World War II, or in terms of broad subjects such as geography and cartography or economics.

Level of responsibility

Work assignments usually are expressed in terms of the subject areas to be covered or the objectives to be served by the work. Within this framework and such limiting factors as time and cost, GS-12 archivists usually are free to set the perimeters of their studies. They are responsible for developing and modifying working plans as necessary to meet the objectives of the assignment. As at the preceding level their completed work is subject to review for completeness, soundness of judgment, adequacy of presentation and similar matters and they are held accountable for the professional adequacy of their work.

In addition to personal work contacts of the type described at preceding levels GS-12 archivists are required to establish and maintain continuing working relationships with (1) scholars, historians and other research workers, (2) administrative and operating personnel in their own and other Federal agencies and (3) representatives of other public or private agencies or organizations including libraries, archives and professional societies. These contacts are for the

purposes of (1) obtaining and disseminating information, (2) initiating or conducting special studies, (3) providing technical assistance in interpreting or applying archival concepts, principles, methods, procedures and techniques, or (4) to negotiate for the transfer or disposal of records.

ARCHIVIST, GS-1420-13

Nature of assignment

GS-13 level assignments embrace broad and varied subject matters and involve a substantial number of considerations as illustrated by the following:

1. For publication, compiles (a) comprehensive analytical inventories of such massive Federal archival holdings as those relating to the Civil War period or to the multilateral foreign relations of the United States during a specified time period, e.g., records of relationships with Great Britain, France and Germany for the decade preceding World War I, or (b) compiles and annotates records and documents relating to a major theme, event or public figure in American history. This requires (1) comprehensive knowledge not only of the history of the period and the significant events involved, but also of the documentation practices for the total period or subject area, (2) exacting research in a very wide range of record groups or series to locate and study original records, (3) extensive research in published sources to fill in significant gaps in the available information relating to the subject, (4) critical judgment in the analysis of the documents to insure their authenticity and relevance to the central theme or themes involved in the assignment, and (5) substantial skill in the arrangement and presentation of the documentary evidence so as to provide an objective, comprehensive picture of the total subject under consideration which clearly establishes the relationships and relative values of the many and varied collections of documents involved.
2. Analyze the documentation systems of a Federal department, bureau or agency which has a variety of functional responsibilities and an extensive or intricate organizational structure to appraise the evidential or informational values of the records and develop records disposition plans and schedules. This involves (a) extensive researching the legislative, administrative, organizational and functional history of the agency, its operating practices, key personnel, etc., (b) critical analysis of its documentation systems and practices both to identify those aggregations of documents of sufficient historical value to warrant archival preservation and to devise means of insuring their segregation from ephemera prior to transfer to archival custody, and (c) developing plans and justifying recommendations regarding the disposition of the non-current records of the agency.

In addition to problems of the kind described at the GS-12 level, GS-13 assignments present major planning problems. Assignments of the scope and complexity described at this level frequently are stated only in terms of broad topics or areas to be covered. Within this framework, GS-13 archivists employ a highly specialized knowledge of the subject- matter or organizational areas to be covered and a thorough understanding of the purposes to be served in defining the perimeters of the study and in making determinations regarding those aspects of the

assignment to be given particular emphasis. Typically, assignments of the type described above require the archivist to employ an exceptionally high degree of imagination and ingenuity in the location of obscure but potentially vital documentary evidence.

Level of responsibility

Work assignments typically are expressed in terms of the objectives to be served by the study. GS-13 archivists are responsible for determining the perimeters of their studies and for developing and carrying out all phases of the working plan. In the case of studies conducted on a team basis they are responsible for the direction of the team efforts and the integration of supporting studies into a cohesive and meaningful whole. As at lower levels, archivists at this level are held accountable for the professional adequacy of their work.

GS-13 archivists engaged in records appraisal work make recommendations relating to the total documentation system of a Federal department or agency of the type described above. These recommendations relate to the disposition of all categories of records. They are given substantial weight by archivists at higher organizational echelons in making their own recommendations which are presented to Congress, regarding the approval of records disposition plans.

Personal work contacts are of the same type as described at lower levels but assume particular importance at this level because of the recognized standing of the archivist as a specialist in his field. GS-13 archivists are called upon to provide advice and counsel to their professional fellows both within and outside the Federal Government in their particular areas of competence. Their contacts with representatives of the scholarly community assume considerable importance at since they may use these contacts as a basis for identifying additional areas in which archival research and publication should be undertaken in support of the needs of scholarly research. Contacts with agency management officials assume additional importance since they center on consultation relating to the archival values of agency records and influence both current record keeping practice and subsequent archival management of those records designated for accessioning.

REVISION SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 2005

The series definition and the nature of the assignment for grade 7 were changed to reflect the changing nature of the occupational series, by broadening the required knowledge areas. These changes were made in conjunction with changes to the qualifications standard.

Summary of Changes:

- The required professional knowledge in the series definition was changed from “a comprehensive knowledge of the history of the United States and the institutions and organization of the Federal Government” to “professional knowledge of history.”
- The knowledge requirement addressed in the Nature of the Assignment at grade 7 was broadened. Previously, it included only background knowledge of history of the United States. The revision prescribes, as an alternative, knowledge of the history of “another area or region.”
- The date of revision was added to the cover page and page headers.
- The Revision Summary was added to indicate changes to the standard.