

ARLIS/NA

ART LIBRARIES SOCIETY of NORTH AMERICA

ARLIS/NA Core Competencies for Art Information Professionals (Feb. 2017)

The revised edition of the Core Competencies was created by Karen Stafford, Maggie Portis, Amy Andres and Janine Henri, with input from the Professional Development Committee and the ARLIS/NA Executive Board. The new edition has been revised to emphasize the specialized skills needed by art information professionals that are beyond general competencies expected of all information professionals. The first edition (2006) was written by Heather Ball and Sara Harrington with members of the ARLIS/NA Professional Development Committee and Core Competencies Subcommittee.

Objective

The Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) is committed to increasing the effectiveness of art librarians and art information professionals by focusing its efforts on professional and continuing education, as well as professional development activities. This document aims to identify the fundamental knowledge, behaviors, and skills currently essential to most professional positions within the art information field. It is intended to be a flexible document that can be revised as the field evolves and changes.

Methodology

The standards contained within this document are based on information and data collected from a variety of sources, including: an analysis of recent position descriptions in the art library and visual resources fields; a perception survey of ARLIS/NA, Visual Resources Association (VRA), and Association of Architecture School Libraries (AASL) members; interviews with hiring managers and faculty teaching arts librarianship courses at American Library Association (ALA) accredited programs; and a review of relevant core competency literature, including the competency documents of other professional library organizations.

What is an Art Information Professional?

For the purposes of this document, an art information professional is a librarian or visual resources curator who is a specialist skilled in organizing and providing access to information on the visual arts, architecture, design, and related subjects. Art information professionals work in a variety of settings, including but not limited to: college and university libraries, public libraries, art and architecture departments, architecture and design firms, art museums and research institutes, archival repositories, government agencies, and art and design schools. The competencies in this document apply to professional positions, generally requiring an ALA accredited master's degree in the field of library and information science, or an equivalent professional practice degree. Certain competencies may also apply to staff who work in the art library or visual resources fields.

What are Core Competencies?

The competencies identified in this document represent the fundamental knowledge, skills, and abilities currently essential to most professional positions within the art information field. The focus of this document is on competencies that are specific to art information professionals and that are above and beyond general competencies expected of graduates from an ALA accredited master's degree program in the field of library and information

science (or equivalent). The ALA core competencies can be found at: <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/careers/corecomp/corecompetences>.

Do I Need to Acquire All of the Competencies Listed?

Each individual's competencies will develop within the context of one's own position. What competencies are necessary for an individual will also depend on specific career focus and goals. In addition, art information professionals are expected to demonstrate continuous and proactive learning in each of the core competency areas. Many of the competencies listed will apply to most individuals working in the art information field, while other competencies will not hold the same relevance. Some competencies listed in one area of this document will naturally apply to competencies listed in other areas of the document. For instance, foreign language skills are broadly applicable and may apply to competencies in the areas of reference, collection management, cataloging, and other areas.

How Can I Use This Document?

There are many practical applications for core competency guidelines. These guidelines will be useful to anyone planning a career in art information, and to anyone who wants to further develop a career already underway. The guidelines can also be used to develop employee performance plans, position descriptions, and interview questions for job candidates. Core competencies can be used as a starting point to design mentoring and recruitment programs, and to develop library and information science curricula. Employers can design employee training programs and continuing education curricula can be written, based on core competency guidelines. Members of ARLIS/NA committees, divisions, sections, round tables, regions, and chapters are encouraged to build on this document and create related competency guidelines, work with other professional organizations on competency initiatives, and assist the ARLIS/NA Professional Development Committee with the amendment of this document as needed. ARLIS/NA members may also consider using this document to help prepare professional development workshops and for conference planning.

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

1. Art Information Professionals have broad and specialized subject knowledge in the fields of art, architecture, design and related fields.

Evidenced by a combination of the following:

- a. a familiarity with the creative inquiry, practice-based, historical, social, and critical research methodologies employed in the fields of art, architecture, and design, including but not limited to: critical review, empirical inquiry, precedent studies, case study analysis, user-behavior research, formal analysis and description of visual forms, image/work and building identification, comparative analysis of works, iconography and iconology, biographical study, social context analysis, building and site program analysis, digital humanities, drawing as a form of inquiry, etc.
- b. the ability to identify major movements, periods, exemplary works, and "masters" in the fields of art, architecture, and design from around the world, as well as awareness of current trends and emerging media, artists, architects, and designers
- c. a basic knowledge of media, materials, and techniques employed in the fields of art, architecture, and design
- d. a working knowledge of terminology commonly employed by artists, architects, and designers, as well as by art and architecture theorists, critics, and historians

- e. an awareness of trends and developments in the art fields and trends in art historical scholarship, including but not limited to: areas of study in global art, the art of traditionally under-represented groups, emerging media, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary resources that examine the history of art from a variety of perspectives, and emerging technologies such as GIS/geospatial tools and data-intensive technology required for digital art history practices
- f. a working knowledge of or familiarity with the languages most commonly used in the literature of these fields, or working knowledge of specific languages needed to support a library's special geographic or historical focus, which may be non-Western; building and cataloging collections focusing on art and architecture history (and assisting researchers with these collections) generally necessitates reading knowledge of a Germanic language and a Romance language (commonly German and either French or Italian); other language skills may be substituted depending on career and library focus

TEACHING, INSTRUCTION, REFERENCE, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

2. Art Information Professionals recognize users' information needs and teach users to locate, evaluate, access, acquire, and critically assess the information they need.

Evidenced by a combination of the following:

- a. an understanding of the different kinds of information-seeking behaviors, learning styles, and research goals of users in general, and particularly the behaviors of artists, architects, designers, historians, students, museum professionals, and other users of art, architecture, and design information. This may include experiential learning or the application of information literacy and visual literacy concepts in a variety of forms, including point of need reference, virtual reference, and various instructional technologies in order to help users develop the skills to find and assess the most relevant, reliable, accurate, and useful information resources available
- b. a working knowledge of research methods in art, architecture, and design information, including: biographical research; auction and sales information research; case study analysis; literature review; identification of precedents; critical reviews; creative browsing for visual content, for inspiration, or to identify trends; big data research, visualizations, digital mapping, and digital humanities projects, etc.
- c. a command of teaching information retrieval techniques, search strategies, and their appropriate use, as well as knowledge of pedagogical theories and the ability to develop and utilize effective instructional tools and services that are oriented to the art, architecture, and design fields, with particular emphasis on the challenges presented by the retrieval of visual information within text-based systems or reverse image searching
- d. a working knowledge of specialized discovery tools and types of information in art, architecture, and design, including but not limited to: subject-specific databases and online encyclopedias, auction and sales catalogs, exhibition and collection catalogs (from museums, galleries and private collections), core journal and serial publications, image collections (digital and analog), historical surveys and chronologies, catalogues raisonnés and oeuvres catalogs, visual dictionaries, art films, sources of electronic art, artists' books, architectural drawings, collector's price guides, archival materials and other primary sources, product reviews, patents, product catalogs, exhibition and show reviews, museum and gallery directories and

calendars, building codes and standards, building cost estimating guides, ephemera, design annuals, fashion trend forecasts, etc.

- e. a working knowledge of research tools in the social sciences, humanities, engineering, and other areas as they relate to interdisciplinary study of art, architecture, and design research
- f. an understanding of the access services needs specific to the visual arts and design community, including: image capture and presentation technology, digital interfaces, image management systems, and proper handling of archival materials, photographic media, oversize formats, special collections, art work, altmetrics, etc.

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND ORGANIZATION

3. Art Information Professionals develop, organize, and manage collections responsive to the mission of their organizations and the needs of their users in support of research, learning, user engagement, outreach, and institutional programs.

Evidenced by a combination of the following:

- a. the critical evaluation of the textual and visual quality, content, currency, and relevance of both contemporary and historical materials in all formats. Such evaluation necessitates knowledge of a wide variety of sources for effective collection development, including but not limited to: publishers' catalogs, small press catalogs, approval plans, specific art publishers and vendors, publication reviews, as well as an understanding of the legal framework surrounding electronic resource licensing
- b. recognition and implementation of the preservation and handling requirements and proper environmental conditions and controls for specialized publication formats and materials in the arts, which may include archival materials, photographic media, artists' books, kits and multi-format publications, ephemera, oversize materials, fragile collections, original prints, light sensitive formats, moving image materials, multimedia and interactive media, digital assets, online publications, and/or digital collections, as well as an understanding of the attributes of trusted digital repositories
- c. the analysis and evaluation of collections according to the tools and best practices of the profession, particularly those developed by and for art information professionals, such as standard bibliographies, as well as an awareness of practices developed by the records management, digital curation, digital stewardship, and preservation fields, such as digital preservation assessment frameworks and certification and audit frameworks
- d. the knowledge and application of approved standards for descriptive cataloging, subject analysis, and classification of art-related publications, image collections, and resources, paying attention to specialized vocabularies (e.g., the Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), the Thesaurus for Graphic Materials I and II (TGM), the Built Works Registry (BWR)) and positions formulated by the ARLIS/NA Cataloging Advisory Committee (CAC)
- e. knowledge of current digital art history technologies for organizing and displaying art and art research data, which might include various coding languages, GIS, and Linked Open Data, as well as technologies for digital preservation, digitization, contextual presentation of digital assets, shared collections, open access publications, digital asset management systems (DAMs), etc.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

4. Art Information Professionals have knowledge of trends in the fields of library and information science relevant to arts and/or visual resources librarianship and are prepared to contribute to the advancement of the art library and visual resources professions.

Evidenced by a combination of the following:

- a. general knowledge of the theories and history of art librarianship, visual resources and digital media management, and familiarity with best practices and developments in art, architecture, and design documentation
- b. specialized knowledge of the current economic, legal, and social issues that shape the production, access, dissemination, preservation, and ownership of visual material, artistic works and products, and art publications, including but not limited to issues of intellectual property, copyright, provenance, use and application, licensing, trademarking, preservation or digital reformatting, and other duplication issues
- c. an understanding of the role of professional associations in the art information field, including their impact on the profession, their advocacy roles, and their role in fostering diversity and mentoring
- d. the ability to research, assess, manage projects, and develop services, products, and resources that directly and indirectly advance knowledge in the arts, the creation of works of art, the exploration of avenues of artistic discovery, the preservation of cultural and artistic heritage, and that help to create a broad understanding and appreciation of the arts and its associated discourse
- e. the ability to contribute to the scholarly discourse surrounding art librarianship and visual resources management through knowledge sharing, including publication and presentation of research findings, professional networking, and participating in other activities to advance the profession
- f. the ability to collaborate with library stakeholders, including artists, gallery owners, faculty, students, curators, collectors, funding agencies, advocacy organizations, authors, and independent researchers to promote library services and collections, which may include fundraising, grant writing, marketing, blog-writing, social media, promotion, and audience development

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