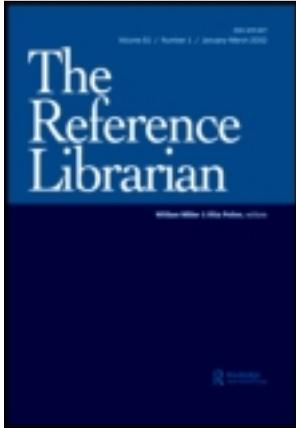


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Publisher: Routledge

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Archival Reference and Access: Syllabi and a Snapshot of the Archival Canon

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To cite this article: Ciaran B. Trace & Carlos J. Ovalle (2012): Archival Reference and Access: Syllabi and a Snapshot of the Archival Canon, *The Reference Librarian*, 53:1, 76-94

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2011.596364>

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Archival Reference and Access: Syllabi and a Snapshot of the Archival Canon

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This study investigates the nature and scope of archival reference and access education within a select number of Library and Information Science programs with specializations in archives and preservation that are accredited by the American Library Association. To do so, syllabi for archival courses offered in the 2009–2010 academic year were examined to produce a profile of the important topics, readings, and assignments in the area of archival reference and access. Implications of the findings for the archival profession and for master's level graduate archival education are also discussed.

KEYWORDS *archival reference, access, archival education, archival science, library and information science education, curricula*

INTRODUCTION

The domain of the archival profession lies within the nexus that exists between people, records, and recordkeeping systems allied to the larger sociological, historical, political, and cultural context in which they all reside. On a more practical level, archivists work to ensure that all forms of personal, organizational, and government records deemed to have long-term value are preserved, managed, and made available for subsequent use. Archival responsibilities include

. . . determining what documentary materials will be chosen and protected in the archives; evaluating or appraising the significance of these archival sources; ensuring their preservation from decay, neglect, media

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instability, and theft; organizing and describing the materials in order to make them accessible for future use; providing access and reference assistance; promoting knowledge of archival holdings through outreach and public programs; and conducting advocacy on behalf of archives and archival interests. (Jimerson, 2009, p. xiv)

It is the archivists' provision of reference and access services that provides the "essential link" (Jimerson, 2009, p. 314) between archival records and the people who wish to use them. The term *access* refers to the "terms and conditions of availability of records . . . maintained or held by an archive for evaluation or consultation by its users" (Jeremy, Woodley, & Kupke, 2008, p. 351). *References services* is the "umbrella term given to the facilities and services afforded to researchers and users of the archives and its records once access to them has been approved" (Jeremy et al., p. 351). Providing reference and access services requires an understanding of the use and users of archives; the provision of intellectual, physical, and electronic access to archival material; an engagement with the intellectual, interpersonal, and technological aspects of the reference process; and the creation of access policies and procedures (including attendant legal and ethical issues; Pugh, 2005).

The importance of reference and access as a key component of archival work is highlighted not only in the archival literature but also in several key professional documents relating to the education and certification of archivists. The Academy of Certified Archivists' (ACA, 2009) *Role Delineation Statement* (which was developed by professional archivists and archival educators and is used as a basis for the ACA certification examination) lists reference services and access as one of seven key domains or areas of practice of archival work. Similarly, the Society of American Archivists' (SAA, 2002) voluntary *Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies* (GPAS; a tool for the SAA to endorse "the development of coherent and independent graduate programs in archival studies" in the United States) identifies reference and access as a key archival function within the category of core archival knowledge (core archival knowledge providing "the theoretical and practical basis necessary to work as a professional archivist"). The importance of reference and access as a component of archival work is further supported by the findings of the nationwide survey of the American Archival Profession—the Archival Census and Education Needs Survey. A*CENSUS data indicate that reference services and access is the archival function that occupies the greatest proportion of most archivists' work time (the mean percentage of on-the-job time spent on this function was 19.9%) (SAA, 2004).

In the United States, the primary way that people about to enter the archival profession acquire knowledge of archival reference and access is through courses completed as part of graduate level education. Therefore,

our study seeks to investigate the current state of graduate archival education in the area of archival reference and access. Our study is situated within a broader body of research that has examined the nature and scope of graduate archival education in the United States, a literature that has emerged since the first formal archival education courses began in the 1930s and 1940s. Within the past decade, Cox, Yakel, Wallace, Bastian, and Marshall (2001) investigated archives programs in ALA-accredited LIS schools, primarily using available online program descriptions and surveys sent to specific institutions. The study determined that the SAA's educational guidelines (GPAS) were not strongly implemented in these graduate programs; however, the authors noted that an increasing number of full-time faculty members were teaching primarily in the area of archives and that a strong archival curriculum had begun to emerge. In subsequent work by two of the study's authors, Bastian and Yakel (2005, 2006) described the development of a core curriculum in archival studies based on an examination of graduate-level archival courses offered in the 2001–2002 academic year. The authors were particularly interested in determining what subjects might constitute core knowledge in the archives field and used the GPAS to map the subject matter of individual courses and to measure the intensity of subject matter across introductory archival courses. The authors noted that there appeared to be a strong consensus of what subjects should be included in an archival core curriculum but also suggested that the archival profession should take greater interest to ensure quality graduate-level education.

For Bastian and Yakel (2005), establishing the presence of a core archival knowledge base was directly linked to issues of professionalization and the emergence of archives as a distinct profession. In our study, we build from their findings to look more specifically at what that core archival knowledge is for archival reference and access education. In doing so, we draw from literary theory's notion of the "canon," where the syllabus is regarded as a genre of academic writing—one that represents a snapshot of this community's way of knowing and being. In this way, we set out to examine the syllabus as an indicator of what archival educators currently see as the important topics, readings, and assignments in the area of archival reference and access. To complete this analysis, we examined the presence and nature of courses with a focus on archival reference and access in several master's level archival education programs in the United States during the 2009–2010 academic year. More specifically, our research examined the following questions:

- Research question 1: How is archival reference and access education situated within archival programs; and how are these archival programs, in turn, situated within larger library and/or information science schools and departments?
- Research question 2: What do archival educators see as the important topics, assignments, and readings in the area of archival reference and access?

LITERATURE REVIEW

As professional guidelines suggest and discussions of the archival core curriculum underscore, archival reference and access are key components of archival work. Despite this fact, several authors have noted a lack of archival literature on the specific topic of archival reference and reference services. Duff (2010) traced the lack of archival reference literature over a period of time and noted that reference remains an important topic despite the lack of systematic research performed in this area. Pugh (2005) noted that “this comparative lack of research and writing on reference services may have resulted from the common assumption that reference services fall at the end of a continuum of activities” (p. 272).

Because little has been written on the subject of archival reference, it is hardly surprising that even less has been written specifically on the subject of archival reference education. Discussions of archival core curricula include an examination of the teaching of reference, but few articles focus on the teaching of reference as a sole subject matter. Pugh’s (2005) extensive bibliographic essay on reference services lists only two articles on the subject of the education of reference archivists in the past two decades—Eastwood’s (1997) and Ruth’s (1988) works.

More than 20 years ago, Ruth (1988) observed that the training of reference archivists was neglected and suggested that this area be addressed through formal education so that archivists could better assist researchers in using collections. She suggested that a course on reference be undertaken early in an archivist’s education, and that such a course should include user studies or a reference practicum, readings, and classroom simulations.

Eastwood (1997) noted that reference is a secondary goal of archivists—not in importance, but in sequence. Archivists must first protect the integrity of the records in their care; reference services by necessity come after that protection. Eastwood believed in a broad interpretation of reference service and thought that the concept should include the idea of public service in general. Eastwood held that a single course could best serve the public service and reference education of archival students. Unlike Ruth (1988), Eastwood thought that the course should be undertaken at a later stage of the student’s education, after the student had the opportunity to learn about other areas related to access, including copyright and freedom of information. Eastwood described the objectives of such a course: “to understand the principles applying to the archivists’ duty to make holdings accessible” (p. 30); “to understand the use and users of archives” (p. 32); “to understand the social dynamic, organization, and provision of reference services” (p. 33); “to appreciate the ethical dimension of reference service” (p. 34); and “to understand how to develop and implement programs to promote greater appreciation and use of archives” (p. 34). Eastwood then described what a course on public services, including reference, should entail—lectures, reading, time for class discussion, and practical experience. He emphasized

these practical aspects of reference education and suggested that a practicum outside of the course could serve that purpose.

In their study of practicing reference archivists, Duff and Fox (2006) called for both formal and informal reference training for archivists. They described earlier suggestions for archival reference training, which included offering instructional material from other disciplines, school-related role play, and practical exercises. They also suggested that some specific skills were suitable for formal education. These skills included the use of finding aids, online searching skills, the conduct of reference interviews, and knowledge of the provenance method and information-seeking behavior. Duff (2010) later called for educational institutions to offer more archival reference courses and for researchers to pay increased attention to the subject of archival reference.

Bastian and Yakel's (2005) comprehensive study of archival courses in LIS schools and history departments indicated that few programs taught specific reference courses at that time. Of the courses reviewed, 6 (1.6%) of 373 courses specifically focused on archival reference, all from LIS schools. However, when examining introductory syllabi, Bastian and Yakel (2005) noted that 78.79% (26 of 33) of the syllabi examined included teaching about "Reference/Access/User Services," taking between 4 and 6 hours of the allocated course time. They noted that "while introductory courses might cover core knowledge, the need for this knowledge has not yet been translated into many full-scale courses" (p. 105). In their 2006 piece, Bastian and Yakel stated that the low number of reference courses was a concern—but so was the low number of archival courses overall, with few schools offering more than four archival courses in total.

If archival studies on reference and access education have generally been lacking, our LIS colleagues have been more productive in this area. Several LIS studies have examined aspects of core curricula, including reference. Hall's (2009) examination of core curricula found that 69% (38 of 55) of the ALA-accredited library programs examined required a reference course, which indicated a trend of removing reference courses as a core requirement. A few LIS studies have specifically examined reference syllabi. For example, Sproles, Johnson, and Farison (2008) examined the teaching of user instruction at ALA-accredited LIS schools and used syllabi from reference courses to determine the goals and desired proficiencies from those courses. The study evaluated course outcomes and compared these outcomes to professional organization standards. In contrast, Mon et al. (2008) studied the teaching of remote reference in LIS programs. By examining reference syllabi of ALA-accredited schools (including associated readings and class assignments), the authors were able to compare in-class course instruction to both the real-world practices of reference librarians and to guidelines from several professional associations.

METHOD

Our study draws from methodologies outlined in prior research by Bastian and Yakel (2005), DuBois and Burkemper (2002), Joswick, Bauerly, and Johnson (2004), Nicholson (2005), and Pomerantz, Oh, Yang, Fox, and Wildemuth (2006). Because a goal of this research project was to look at exemplars in archival reference and access education, reputational case selection criterion was used as a means of selecting the nine schools that served as data collection sites. The nine schools (University of Texas at Austin, School of Information; University of Michigan, School of Information; University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences; University of California–Los Angeles, Department of Information Studies; University of Maryland, College of Information Studies; University of North Carolina, School of Information and Library Science; Simmons, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Wisconsin–Madison, School of Library and Information Studies; and University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, School of Information Studies) were drawn from the most recent *U.S. News and World Report* (2009) ranking of American Library Association-accredited master's degree programs in the United States with programs in archives and preservation. The rankings were based on the results of a fall 2008 survey sent to the dean, the program director, and a senior faculty member in each program asking individuals to choose up to 10 programs noted for excellence in this specialty area.

We began our data collection by examining the public Web sites (including online course catalogs and course schedules) for each of the nine schools. Information gathered about each school consisted of data about the schools' general curriculum (including the number of credits required to graduate, a listing of core/required courses, and a note of the number of electives and exit courses required), as well as data about their archives curriculum (including a list of archival courses considered part of the archives program, a description of each archives course as listed on the Web site, when the course was last taught and by whom, and whether course syllabi were available online).

During this process, we also solidified the criteria for choosing course syllabi to be analyzed as part of the research project: the course had to be part of a school's self-identified archives program (a required or recommended archives core course or one of a number of required or recommended archives electives), the course had to be specifically tailored to archives, the course had to include some reference and access component, and the course had to be taught during the 2009–2010 academic year (including the summer of 2010). These criteria meant that our analysis was limited to courses with a specific archival focus while excluding courses that were tailored to the broader LIS community. For the purposes of this study,

we also excluded courses such as practica or internships that did not have a fixed center of inquiry or a substantial teaching component.

With the exception of the University of Texas at Austin (where the syllabi were all available online as required by university policy), this background data was then used as a resource to generate personalized e-mail that was sent out to select faculty at the remaining eight schools to solicit their help in gathering data (syllabi) for the study. E-mails were sent to senior faculty of each of the archives programs in addition to the faculty listed as teaching courses of interest during the 2009–2010 academic year. In each case, the e-mail included a list of the school's archival courses that we felt included components on archival reference and access. In the e-mail, we asked the faculty whether we were correct in our identification of these courses, and we asked for the names of any other courses that we had failed to list but that the faculty believed included an archival reference and access component. We concluded the e-mail by requesting electronic copies of relevant syllabi (to include reading lists and course assignments). Syllabi were received from all nine schools. Overall, of the 37 syllabi from 34 courses we identified as having content relating to archival reference and access, we were able to obtain copies of 35 syllabi for 32 courses.

The specific type and manner of data analysis was tied to our research questions. To explore the more macro-level question of how archival reference and access education was integrated in archives programs within LIS departments or schools, we listed and then categorized by type all of the archival courses from all nine schools that had a reference and access component. In instances where a course was taught more than once by the same instructor during the 2009–2010 academic year, only the most recent syllabus was taken into consideration. In the case where a course was offered more than once during the 2009–2010 academic year but was taught by different instructors, we included all instances where the course content differed. Nine courses and eleven syllabi from the nine schools were categorized as introductory archives courses. Eight courses and nine syllabi from six schools were categorized as reference and access courses. Eight courses and eight syllabi from six schools were categorized as electronic/digital records courses. The final seven courses and seven syllabi from six schools fell into an "other" category, including courses on management, preservation, museum archives, photographs, technology, and a taught archives practicum. After this initial sort, we chose to more fully analyze how reference was taught in the first two types of courses mentioned above—introductory archives courses and those categorized as reference and access courses.

We then examined whether there was a core group of topics covered in archival reference and access courses across schools and looked more specifically at the nature of assigned readings and assignments within these two course types. To complete this analysis, we read each syllabus (which

included course descriptions, goals and objectives, assignments, schedules and course outlines, and required readings lists) and coded the syllabi to note the course format (face-to-face or online), whether the course had any prerequisites, the status of the instructor (tenure track or non-tenure track), whether the objectives/learning outcomes of the course referred to reference and access, and the number and types of assignments with a specific reference and access component.

Within the syllabi, we also looked at course titles and descriptions and required readings to ascertain the number of class periods where reference and access was covered (looked at as a percentage of total class periods, excluding vacation days and examination weeks), as well as the specific reference and access topics mentioned in these syllabi (where this could be ascertained). For these two categories of courses, we also extracted the following information from the syllabi into a spreadsheet: a list of textbooks and other assigned required readings related to reference and access, the author(s) of the required readings, the number of pages of these assigned readings, the format of the readings (journal articles, book or book chapter(s), edited collections of readings), and publication date.

Incomplete or unclear citations were verified using bibliographic databases. Multiple references to different articles from the same book of collected readings within a syllabus were counted as individual citations. In instances where an instructor assigned only part of a book chapter or part of a journal article, the citation included was to the complete unit. Finally, in determining the rank order of required readings from syllabi, coauthored publications were counted as one publication rather than as a publication for each individual author. However, in determining the rank order of authorship, coauthored publications were counted as separate items. To analyze the assignments from these two course types, we adapted a classification scheme from Mon et al (2008). As such, assignments were labeled as direct experiences, simulated experiences, or indirect experiences. Direct experience involved working with real users and archivists; simulated experiences involved classroom simulations (role play), and indirect experience involved reading, discussion, papers, projects, presentations, and presentations from guest lecturers.

Several limitations exist for this study. The use of reputational case selection as a methodological approach comes at the expense of gaining a more holistic perspective on archival reference and access education, one that could have been achieved through a representative sample of all graduate level archival programs in the United States and Canada. The study parameters also meant that, in the case of UCLA and UNC, two particular courses that covered reference and access that were offered only once every two years, and not in the year of our study (2009–2010), were excluded. Another limitation of the study relates to inherent differences in the research data gathered from the nine schools, including differences in the quantity of

material posted online about each archives program, as well as differences in the extent to which the course topics and assignments were described in the syllabi themselves. Making distinctions between what topics, readings, and assignments covered the area of reference and access was also subjective in certain circumstances. In particular, we decided to exclude readings and assignments relating to standards and methods of creation of Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) and Encoded Archival Description (EAD) records (a topic we felt was more akin to archival description than to archival reference and access). In addition, in a study such as this, we are all too aware of the dangers of making pronouncements about the teaching of archival reference and access based solely on an examination of course syllabi. The study can more accurately be described as a snapshot of what archival educators believe are important topics, readings, and assignments in the area of archival reference and access, rather than a look at what actually goes on in the teaching and learning environment of the classroom.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1

We found a great deal of diversity among the schools and departments with regard to the requirements for archival concentrations or specializations, in particular whether a separate enrollment process was required, whether there was a set of core courses (covering core archival knowledge) that were required to complete the concentration or specialization, and the degree of integration of the specialization or concentration with the larger LIS or information studies program.

All nine schools offered general core courses that all students, no matter what their specialization or areas of interest, were expected to take. In four schools (UCLA, Michigan, Texas, and UW-Milwaukee), there was an integrative core in which all students were expected to take the same general set of core courses. The remaining five schools showed evidence of a more tailored core in that archival courses either featured as options or as substitutions for some or all of the courses offered in the general core. Seven of the nine schools had at least one reference-related core course, although the course did not necessarily relate to archives. We were not able to determine whether this general course was intended to provide reference training for archivists in lieu of more specific archival instruction. One potential danger of relying on this approach is that, as Hall (2009) noted, the current trend appears to be that LIS schools are moving away from offering a specific reference core course.

Based on the information that each school or department posted on its Web site, we were also able to ascertain that at least two of the nine schools had a separate enrollment process for their archives specialization. The question of whether there was a mandatory set of core courses covering

core archival knowledge to complete the concentration or specialization was more difficult to ascertain. According to GPAS, the body of knowledge that a student should master as part of a graduate archival education is comprised of both core archival knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge. Core archival knowledge provides “the theoretical and practical basis necessary to work as a professional archivist” (SAA, 2002). Interdisciplinary knowledge “introduces students to other disciplines, knowledge of which will deepen their understanding of archival work” (SAA, 2002).

Two schools did not appear to require students interested in an archives specialization to complete any particular number of archival courses (whether consisting of core archival knowledge or interdisciplinary knowledge), although specific archival courses were recommended. The remaining seven schools all had a credit requirement for their archives specialization. Two of these seven schools confined their required archival courses to those composed of core archival knowledge. The remaining schools took a much more varied approach, including mixing core archival knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge as part of required courses for the archival specialization or allowing students to tailor their course work to such a degree that the ratio of required courses falling into the archival knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge category was not fixed.

Overall, we found that the model of the school where students are required to formally declare their specialization and follow a prescribed set of archival core courses to graduate was overshadowed by schools where students had more discretion in selecting courses for an archival program and where any student in the program could include much more of a combination of core archival knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge.

Research Question 2

NATURE OF THE COURSES

Despite earlier comments about the difficulty of isolating that which is purely archival in some of these programs, we did uncover interesting data specifically about archival reference and access education. In the 2009–2010 school year, the nine schools offered a total of 34 archival courses that included components on reference and access (of which we were able to look at the syllabi for 32). Nine courses from the nine schools were categorized as introductory archives courses, eight courses from six schools were categorized as reference and access courses, and eight courses from six schools were categorized as electronic/digital records courses. The final seven courses from six schools fell into an “other” category, including courses on management, preservation, museum archives, photographs, technology, and a taught archives practicum. Overall, the majority of schools offered between three and five courses that covered archival access and reference, with the

University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences, as the outlier, with an offering of eight courses that included content in this area.

Within the introductory archives courses, access and reference was generally divided into three main components taught across at least three different class periods—reference, access, and customer service; description/representation; and legal, policy, and ethical issues. Readings on reference and access also showed up in the syllabi of introductory courses as part of topics that were covered less frequently in classes (e.g., classes on “use and users” and on “future trends”). On average, reference and access was included as a topic in 25% of the classes within any one introductory archives course (13.3% at the low end and 35.7% at the high end, with a median of 29%). In contrast, on average, subjects that formed part of our definition of reference and access were included as a topic in 57.62% of the classes we have designated as primarily reference/access courses (28.47% at the low end and 100% at the high end, with a median of 50%). Such topics included the use of technology to facilitate access to archival material, examination of legal issues related to archival access, and examinations of user needs.

The composition of the faculty teaching these courses suggests that archival programs are still reliant both on tenure-track faculty members and additional full and/or part-time faculty. In the introductory archives courses, seven out of eleven teachers (63.63%) were tenured or tenure-track faculty; in the reference/access courses, six of nine (66.67%) teachers were tenured or tenure-track. In seven of the nine schools, we found that the introductory archives course was a requirement for anyone interested in an archival specialization. In the case of the reference and access courses, this figure dropped, with only three of the six schools that offered such a course requiring students to take it as part of the specialization.

READINGS

An examination of the required readings on reference and access in the introductory courses shows that faculty wields a good deal of discretion in assigning readings, although pockets of continuity do emerge. An analysis of the required readings related to reference and access from eleven syllabi for the nine introductory courses produced a list of 117 readings, of which 77 (66%) were unique items. Of the 77 unique readings only three (less than 4%) were required reading in five or more syllabi. The vast majority (70%, or 54 readings) appeared as required reading in one syllabus only (Table 1).

In general, the six most common readings show the most diversity in publication type: they run the gamut from a book and three refereed articles to a newsletter article and a code of ethics. There is continuity in the fact that five of the six required readings emanate from the publication program of the SAA. Regarding content, it may come as no surprise that the SAA's basic manual on archival reference written by Mary Jo Pugh (2005) tops the

TABLE 1 Most Common Readings on Reference and Access in Introductory Archives Courses

Rank	Reading	No. of instances
1	Pugh (2005)	9
2	Conway (1986)	6
3	Society of American Archivists (2005)	5
4	Freeman (1984)	3
4	Kaplan (2006)	3
4	Yakel (2003)	3

TABLE 2 Most Commonly Cited Authors Writing about Reference and Access Issues in Introductory Archives Courses

Author	No. of instances
Elizabeth Yakel	12
Mary Jo Pugh	10
Paul Conway	6
Society of American Archivists	6
Richard Cox	5
Diane Kaplan	5
James O'Toole	5
Wendy Duff	4
David Bearman	3
Elsie Freeman Finch	3
William Maher	3
Jennifer Schaffner	3
Deborah Torres	3

list as the most required reading. Along with this general book on reference services, the remaining top ranked required readings cover more specific aspects of reference and access (including use and users of archives, archival representation systems and processes, and administrative, legal, and ethical issues).

Although no core set of readings emerged, an examination of the required readings on reference and access in the introductory courses did reveal, as suggested by Zipf's law, a small cadre of authors from whose writings faculty assigned the most required readings. Of a total of 83 different authors represented in the introductory courses who wrote on the topic of reference and access, 52 (63%) were cited just once in the required readings, with the remaining 31 (37%) cited more than once across the syllabi examined. Thirteen authors formed the core of the required readings, contributing three or more citations each. The most frequently cited authors included Elizabeth Yakel, Mary Jo Pugh, Paul Conway, the Society of American Archivists, Richard Cox, Diane Kaplan, James O'Toole, and Wendy Duff (Table 2).

TABLE 3 Most Common Readings about Reference and Access in Reference/Access Courses

Rank	Reading	No. of instances
1	Samouelian (2009)	4
1	Society of American Archivists (2005)	4
1	Yakel & Torres (2003)	4
4	Duff & Johnson (2003)	3
4	Hendry (2007)	3
4	Hodson (2004)	3
4	Johnson & Duff (2005)	3
4	Krause & Yakel (2007)	3
4	Prom (2004)	3
4	Schaffner (2009)	3
4	Yakel (2002)	3

An examination of the courses designated as reference and access courses showed a similar diversity in readings selection. Instructors assigned 208 readings in the nine syllabi examined. Of these readings, 157 (75%) were distinct works. Of all readings, 123 (59%) were referenced in only one syllabus. The only reading to appear on both the introductory and reference and access lists is the SAA's Code of Ethics (Table 3).

We found 140 different authors for the reference/access courses. Of these, 103 (74%) were cited once. Fifteen were cited four or more times. As with the introductory courses, Elizabeth Yakel topped the list. However, other differences did exist; for example, Pugh (2005) was cited only five times. Because Pugh's book was required for all introductory courses, it is perhaps not surprising that it was required less often in these specific reference/access courses. However, as in the introductory courses, a cadre of authors was cited more often than others. Several of these authors overlap with the authors from the introductory courses—Elizabeth Yakel, Wendy Duff, Mary Jo Pugh, SAA, Richard Cox, Jennifer Schaffner, and Deborah Torres (Table 4).

ASSIGNMENTS

Analyzing the nature and types of assignments across these two course types was a difficult task given that not all syllabi contained detailed assignment information. To recap, direct experience assignments involve working with real users and archivists; simulated experiences involve classroom simulations (role play); and indirect experience involve reading, discussion, papers, projects, presentations, and presentations from guest lecturers (Mon et al., 2008). From what we could gather, the most common type of assignment, for both types of courses, was indirect experience assignments. Every introductory archives course and every archives reference and access course

TABLE 4 Most Commonly Cited Authors Writing about Reference and Access Issues in Reference/Access Courses

Author	No. of instances
Elizabeth Yakel	26
Wendy Duff	18
Catherine Johnson	10
Magia Krause	5
Mary Jo Pugh	5
Helen Tibbo	5
Deborah Torres	5
Joan Cherry	4
Richard Cox	4
Barbara Craig	4
Peter Hirtle	4
Menzi Behrnd-Klodt	4
Mary Samouelian	4
Jennifer Schaffner	4
Society of American Archivists	4

had indirect experience assignments in the form of required reference- and access-related readings. Three of the introductory archives courses and one of the access and reference courses required students to write a précis or review of course readings, which seemed to include reference- and access-related material. One school also included an assignment in the introductory archives course and in the access and reference course in which students had to turn in written discussions on case studies, including cases that appeared to have an access and reference angle. Another school included an assignment in the access and reference course in which students had to give formal presentations on the role of technology and the technological aspects of providing access to archival material.

We also inferred that reference and access was a feature of two other types of indirect experience assignments—classroom discussion (students were graded for class participation in nine of the eleven introductory archives courses and in at least seven of the nine reference and access courses), and examinations (a feature of four of the introductory courses). Another indirect experience assignment that featured in both introductory and reference and access courses was the student paper. Six of the eleven introductory archives courses had a major paper component, but only one introductory archives course specified that the student had to write on the topic of reference services. Four of the nine archives access and reference courses had a major paper or literature review component, three of which were tailored to a discussion of the archival access and reference function (including one specifically on the reference interview).

Some assignments in the introductory archives courses included a direct and an indirect experience component. Eight of the eleven introductory

archives courses required the student to visit or use an archive in person or to analyze the Web presence of an archive. Combined with this direct experience, students had to write a report on what they had found (an indirect experience). Although not explicitly stated in the syllabi, we inferred that completing such an assignment would most likely require an analysis of access and reference services. One school had an internship as part of its two introductory archives courses and its access and reference course; but we were unable to ascertain from the syllabi what aspects of archival work were covered in these internships.

Some assignments in the archival access and reference courses also included a combination of direct and indirect experience components. At least three of the nine archival access and reference courses required an assignment in which students had to look at online access systems or online finding aids to evaluate their effectiveness from an archival or user perspective. In one access and reference course, students were required to sign up for time on the reference desk of a local archive, allowing students to see some of the issues involved with offsite reference, to observe what happens in an archives research room, as well as giving students the opportunity to discuss with staff the “whys” and “hows” behind the observed interactions with the researchers. Despite their generally accepted benefit, no assignment in either the introductory archives courses or the archives courses that were more tailored to reference and access appeared to involve simulated or role-play exercises on the topic of access and reference services either in or out of the classroom.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study of select ALA accredited LIS programs with specializations in archives and preservation produced a profile of the important topics, readings, and assignments in the area of archival reference and access. We found that archival reference and access education was concentrated in 34 courses spread across the nine schools. In particular, reference and access education featured in all introductory archives courses, indicating that archival educators continue to view this area as constituting core archival knowledge for the profession. The importance of archival access and reference is also reflected in the fact that this topic was featured as a component of other courses across the curriculum, including courses devoted to electronic/digital records.

Although our sample is not a representative one nor is it close to the scope of Bastian and Yakel's (2005) study, we found more individual instances of specific access and reference-related courses in our small sample than they found in their 2005 study. This result indicates that more opportunities are now provided for students to engage with this topic at

a deeper and more extensive level through dedicated coursework. On the other hand, the fact that not all schools offered a distinct archival reference and access course (or the fact that such a course, when offered, was not always required) may indicate that archival educators, whether for pragmatic or pedagogical reasons, do not always see the necessity of offering, or at least requiring students to take, a distinct archival course on this topic. This may be due to the fact that in many instances a reference or user course is available to all students as part of the general core curriculum in a school or department. Indeed, particularly in the case of UCLA, the ethos seems to be to push more archival content into the general core courses rather than to always separate out such topics into distinct archival courses. Archival educators may also assume that students can pick up additional experience and knowledge in archival reference and access through practica or internships.

An analysis of the required readings on reference and access for both the introductory and access and reference courses indicated that archival faculty had a great deal of discretion in assigning readings, although pockets of continuity emerged in terms of the most cited authors. The most common type of reference and access assignment for both course types was the indirect experience assignment: readings, discussion, papers, and projects. Direct experience assignments, where students had the opportunity to interact directly with the physical or online archive and, in some cases, with archivists themselves, also featured in both course types. Although the existing literature about archival reference education suggests that simulated experiences and role play would be beneficial for students, we did not find any instance of this type of assignment in our study. Why these types of assignments do not feature as part of the archival curriculum is as yet unknown and needs to be the focus of further research.

Overall, these findings add to an ongoing discussion of the current state of graduate archival education in the United States. In previous studies, establishing the presence of a core archival knowledge base was directly linked to issues of professionalization and to the emergence of archives as a distinct profession. In looking at the current degree of integration of archives specializations with the larger LIS studies program, we were struck by the fact that, in many cases, the teaching of core archival knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge has become either so interwoven or at least so juxtaposed that attempts to isolate that which is purely archival from the curriculum is becoming increasingly difficult and perhaps is no longer as meaningful. The question remains whether we should completely merge or continue to collaborate while identifying and respecting the separate disciplines. At least, for any future analysis of archives curricula, it would seem appropriate and necessary to study both that which is purely archival along with a study of the broader curriculum. Only in this way can researchers fully understand the whole picture of what students learn while completing a master's degree program. Such a holistic approach to the study of archival

curricula would also need to include an examination of student practica and other such learning opportunities in recognition of the fact that student learning also occurs in situations that are not classroom focused.

There are many avenues for future research based on our initial work here. As Duff (2010), Eastwood (1997), and Ruth (1988) observed, we also see the need for additional research on the general subject of archival reference and access. Given that we have good data on publication patterns on archival reference and access, a follow-up study could reveal to what extent we are seeing a growth in research in this area. In the process of examining course readings and assignments, we did notice an emphasis on studying the users of archives and on studying the use of technology in archival reference settings. It seems likely that additional research on these subjects would be well-received. In terms of archival education in particular, one approach would be to continue on our current path and fill in the gaps in our knowledge of how access and reference education forms part of electronic or digital records courses (a topic not covered in the current study). An alternative approach would be to take the more expansive view argued for earlier, and in doing so broaden this research agenda to look more holistically at how archival reference and access education forms part of the entire curriculum of a master's program.

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