

# >> *Pro Path Guide* >>

## for History Majors & Graduate Students

# Archivist

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**Sources:** Interviews with a professional in the field—Professor Jay Trask of UNC’s Archives—and research on professional websites.  
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### Overview of the Profession

Traditionally, an archivist works with the staff and donors of their parent institution—often a university, library, research center, or museum—to organize and enhance existing collections, acquire new collections, and assist researchers in using the collections. Because of their interface with the public, archivists and curators at public institutions are often the first to uncover hidden gems of local history. In larger institutions, archivists may specialize in acquisition, management, description, or preservation of documents, photography, electronic records, or audiovisual materials. Other aspects of archival work may include records management, digitization, public relations, giving tours, mounting exhibitions, and teaching. In a smaller archives, a few individuals may “wear many hats” while, in a larger archives, archivists may specialize in specific aspects of the collection.

### Examples of Professional Fields and Employers

- State & local government archives
- Universities & college archives
- Archives in museums & libraries
- Religious archives – For example, Catholic & Latter Day Saints (Mormon) Archives
- Corporate Archives – Many medium and large corporations manage their own archives.
- Corporate Records Management – Financial records for corporations and public institutions

### Is any additional training, education, or certification/qualification required?

- A master’s degree in history as well as an additional professional master’s degree is highly recommended. An example of a professional master’s degree to consider include a Library and Information Science with a specialty in archival work.
- Joining the Academy of Certified Archivists is recommended (must pass test for certification)

### Are internships during undergrad necessary or recommended for employment in this field?

UNC has a limited number of internships to qualified students and job shadowing opportunities available in some of the fields listed above, based on local availability. Internships, which are usually competitive and unpaid, are highly recommended. They can be taken during the academic year for 1–3 credits or performed during the summer. Contact Dr. Melish, [jacob.melish@unco.edu](mailto:jacob.melish@unco.edu)

### Description of the typical career path

Undergraduate degree in history and relevant internships, graduate degree(s), followed by entry level openings. Entry level Archivist Assistant positions are often at smaller local museums and libraries.

### What is the message to undergraduates?

Do well in your History BA and relevant internships then get a professional master’s degree (*and* a history master’s if possible) while getting in more internships and relevant entry-level employment whenever possible.

**What are chances for employment in this field?** Competition is steep for the small number of jobs available. In practice, that means being willing to relocate and take one or more temporary positions to better qualify you for an entry level position. Few people are able to do that or stay the course.

### Average pay

Archivist: Early career (1–4 yrs) \$46,500/yr., Experienced \$54,000–\$57,500/yr.

National Park Service Archivist: \$56,000/yr.

Sources: <https://www.learnhowtobecome.org/arts-humanities-careers/history/>, <https://www.geteducated.com/career-center/best-jobs-for-history-majors/>, <https://www.bestcolleges.com/careers/history-majors/>, [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm#25-0000](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#25-0000), <https://www.usajobs.gov/Search/Results?k=national%20park%20service&p=1> accessed Dec. 2020

**Websites and/or books relevant to this career**

- Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists – website: <https://www.srmarchivists.org/>
- Society of American Archivists – website: <https://www2.archivists.org/>

**Are there paid positions for undergraduate or graduate students in this field?**

Very limited opportunities as an Archivist Assistant are available.

**UNC History Department or other UNC contact for students interested in employment in this field**

Professor Jay Trask, Head of UNC Archives & Special Collections: [jay.trask@unco.edu](mailto:jay.trask@unco.edu). If you do an internship, your supervisor or colleagues will also be good sources of information.