

**Bridging the gap between archival theory and practice:  
Masters in ARM practicum at the University of Botswana**

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# Roadmap

- Introduction

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- Background
- Framework
- Problem statement
- Objectives
- Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusion
- Recommendation

# Introduction

- Education and training for archivists and records managers does not have an ideal programme (Khayundi 2011)
- Various options exist and are dependent on the purpose for which training is sought.
- Extreme differences in the curriculum across continents, countries and institutions.
- Education and training can be in the form of:
  - Pre-appointment education
  - On the job introductory education and training
  - Post appointment continuing education
  - Awareness raising for non-records management staff
  - Short training courses for skill development
  - Graduate level advanced education (IRMT 2000)

# Background to archival education

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- Archival education has a long history (Cox 2015), underscoring its importance to the profession (Sweeney 1984).
- University of Bologna by 12<sup>th</sup> Century: course on Notarial Art that taught registry keeping and document retrieval (Jimerson 2010)
- 1910s: Debates on best archival preparation
- 1936: Establishment of Society of American Archivists (SAA) and concerned itself with graduate archival education.
- 1981: Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) developed and publishing guidelines for a two-year, full-time autonomous MAS with “full academic status at the University of British Columbia.
- 1988: SAA guidelines developed by Committee on Education and Professional Development (CEPD)’s Curriculum Subcommittee.

# Background cont...

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- UB MARM: 4 semesters (full time) and 6 semesters (part time), coursework and research
- **Core courses;**
- REC 601 Theory and Practice of Records Management
- REC 603 Advanced Course in Conservation and Preservation
- REC 606 Computer Applications for Archives and Records Management
- REC 602 Theory & Practice of Archives management
- REC 604 Electronic Records Management
- LIS 627 Research Methods and Proposals

# Background cont...

- **Optional courses**

- REC 603 Advanced course in preservation & conservation
- REC 605 Legal aspects of information
- LIS 620 Foundation of the Information Profession
- LIS 621 Theory & Practice of Cataloguing and Classification
- LIS 630 Technical writing, editing and Newsletter Magazine production
- LIS 634 Knowledge management for the information Professional
- LIS 635 Business information systems
- LIS 602 Database systems
- LIS 607 Web design and multimedia
- LIS 628 Information entrepreneurship skills

# Background cont...

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- **REC 611 Practical Placement**

- Semester 3 REC 700 Dissertation (Pr LIS627)

- Semester 4 REC 700 Dissertation (Pr LIS627) (University of Botswana 2017).

# Conceptual Framework

- **Contextual knowledge:** Required to understand the context in which records are created. Includes theories and practices of management and technology as these are applicable to archival work.
- **Archival knowledge:** Provides theoretical and practical basis necessary for understanding developments in the field of archives and records management as a profession, including how its practices have evolved (SAA 2016). It includes knowledge of archival ethics that promote responsibility toward the standards of the profession and the public good.
- **Complementary knowledge:** It introduces to students to other disciplines. Such knowledge deepens their understanding of archival work, support its accomplishment, and teach others how archives function for the public good. Complementary knowledge also allows students to specialize in specific aspects of archival work or to function in cross-disciplinary settings (SAA 2016).

## Framework cont...

- **Scholarly research:** Undertaken by students to demonstrate a grasp of knowledge and issues in the field. Duranti (2007) opines that to a significant degree, graduate programmes are assessed by the quality and quantity of the research output of students and faculty. Members of faculty are expected to undertake research and use such research endeavors to train their students to become researchers
- **Practicum:** Its purpose is to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It obtains in a real world of work environment. Its provides an opportunity to apply what is learnt at graduate school.

# Problem statement

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The practicum component of a graduate archival programme endeavours to empower graduates to be able to put what they have learnt theoretically into practice in the workplace.

Not much is known as to whether the practicum component of UB's MARM prepares the graduates for the world of work.

From the perceptions of graduates, this study sought to determine the extent to which the practicum component of MARM bridges the gap between archival theory and practice, thus giving the graduates the confidence to perform the job roles of an archivist or records manager

# Objectives of the study

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- Determine the purpose of the MARM practicum component
- Establish from MARM graduates, their views on its capability to expose them to the real world of archival practice.
- Recommend improvements to the practicum

# Methodology

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- **Research approach:** Qualitative research.
- **Sampling strategy:** Snowball sampling .
- **Data collection instruments:** Interviews supplemented by document analysis. The respondents were University of Botswana's MARM graduates who graduated between the years 2008 and 2017.

# Findings

## Objective 1: Purpose of the practicum

To provide students with hands-on experience under the guidance of an information professional in a work setting. It is also meant to benefit the host institution

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Specific objectives are to:

- Develop student's ability to synthesize knowledge acquired during lectures, practical field visits and fieldwork.
- Give students opportunities to practice skills as well as apply concepts learned in the classroom.
- Initiate new entrants into the information work (professional socialization).
- Provide students with valuable insights into the day-to-day operations of library and information services.
- Provide the students with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience of many library and information tasks and processes (UB Prospectus 2017)

# Findings cont...

## Objective 1: Purpose of the practicum (Participants views)

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- *It is meant to apply theory learnt in the classroom to the actual work in the office*
- *To give students exposure to the records management field.*
- *To put the theory into practice, thus to seek knowledge and depth understanding of a wide range of organizational issues such as the organization environment, the organization's legal framework and mandate and the organization's information environment amongst others.*

# Findings cont...

## Objective 2: Practicum capability to bridge the gap between archival theory and practice

- *It was more than enough because I was attached to my work place. I was not learning anything new. My view is that serving students in the field of records management should be exempted from the practicum*
- *There are many aspects to recordkeeping practices which one cannot learn in six weeks. I feel the attachment period should be extended to 3 months. This will allow students to learn about development of records classification, retention schedules, present the challenges discovered and possibly implement some initiatives in the host organization*
- *Not enough. Needs a whole semester*

# Findings cont...

- *I learnt how to administer access to archival materials to the researchers. I was also engaged on acquiring and processing of the private archives of Mr. Michael Kitso Dingake (a prominent retired Botswana politician who also fought against apartheid in South Africa and was even jailed at Robben Island). I also learnt how to transcribe oral history at BNARS*
- *Yes, the practical was still relevant to me, as the archival skills I acquired assisted me during the processing of Dr. Ian Khama's personal archives. I had an objective at Gaborone Records Centre which required me to appraise records and I did so at the State House. During the practicum I assisted with setting up the President's Archival Office and that was the time I used the skills of processing of archives. I also developed some finding aids to aid retrieval of archives*

# Findings cont...

- *The recommendations from the report submitted at the end of the report formed part of the documentation for the consultancy undertaken for the improvement of the records management system*
- *Though I had archives and records management work experience, the practicum gave me the opportunity to do something I never did. I was able to design a Records Management Policy for the host institution*
- *I spearheaded a records appraisal exercise and the people at my host institution were happy with my contribution*
- *It is not relevant to those who already have records management experience. It was just waste of time*

# Conclusion

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- The practicum is necessary as it exposes students to real archives and records management in a work setting e.g.
- Exposure to:
  - Records classification
  - Appraisal of records
  - Records policy development
  - Processing of archives
  - Describing archives
  - Transcription of Oral History
  - Records survey

# Recommendations

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- Students exposed to archives administration should be attached to a records management environment
- Students exposed to records management should be attached to an Archives Administration environment
- The University should consider extending the practicum from 6 weeks to a semester
- Students exposed to RM should be attached in an archives environment
- Writing a long paper in place of the practicum for those grounded in archives and records management work should be considered as an option
- Prior to undertaking the practicum the University should conduct a gap analysis among students in order to attach them appropriately

# The End

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