

The Archives Conference as a Venue for Professional Communication: Trends and Opportunities in Session Topics



Melissa Gottwald, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Introduction

As professionals we have a responsibility to keep current on issues within our field and to contribute to the development of the profession. A traditional area for professional communication is participation in professional conferences.

This study analyzes conference programs from professional archives associations with reference to the domains identified in the Academy of Certified Archivists' Role Delineation Statement.

Method

Conference Programs

- Programs from 5 associations: 1 national (SAA), 3 regional (Midwest Archives Conference, New England Archivists, Society of Southwest Archivists), and 1 state (Society of Georgia Archivists)
- Conference dates: 2004-2011

Role Delineation Statement

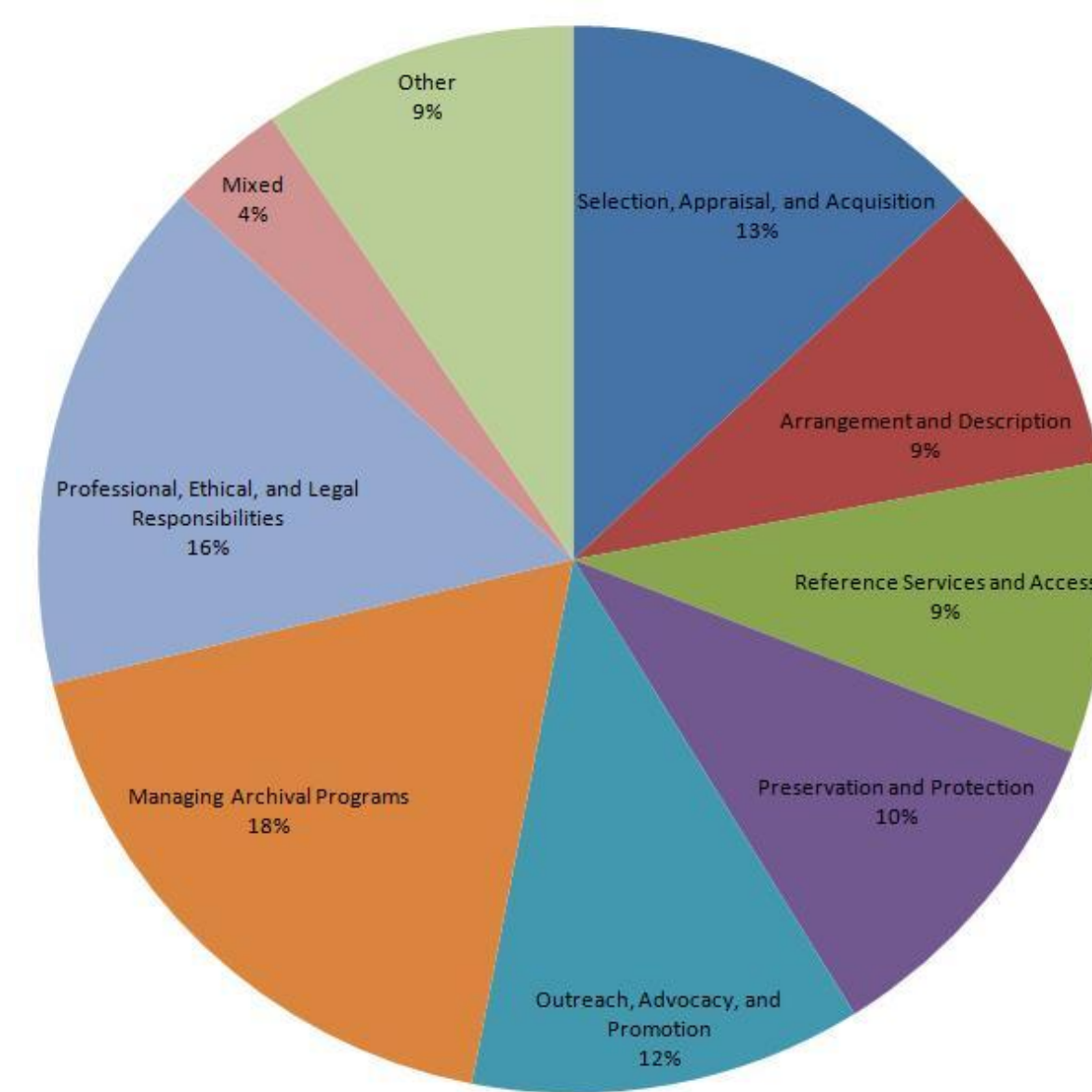
- 7 domains:
 - Selection, Appraisal, and Acquisition
 - Arrangement and Description
 - Reference Services and Access
 - Preservation and Protection
 - Outreach, Advocacy, and Promotion
 - Managing Archival Programs
 - Professional, Ethical, and Legal Responsibilities

Methods, cont.

- Session descriptions for 988 sessions
- Categorized by predominant domain
- In addition to the 7 domains, used “mixed” (for two domains equally covered) or “other” (for topics that could not be categorized by domain)
- Also assigned keywords to indicate which tasks and knowledge statements within each domain were represented

Findings

All Domains Represented



The New and The Troublesome

Areas receiving more attention include:

- Managing change and diminished resources
- Legal and ethical issues
- Technology
- Timely issues (e.g., disaster preparation and recovery following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita)
- Minimal processing

Perennial and Popular

Selection, Appraisal, and Acquisition

- Electronic records

Arrangement and Description

- Minimal processing
- New standards

Reference Services and Access

- Collaboration
- On-line services and access

Preservation and Protection

- Digital preservation
- Disaster preparedness and recovery

Outreach, Advocacy, and Promotion

- Advocacy
- K-12 education programs
- Web 2.0

Managing Archival Programs

- Institutional mission and role of the archives program
- Diminishing/limited resources
- Technology
- Volunteers and interns

Professional, Ethical, and Legal Responsibilities

- Laws and legal issues (HIPAA, USA PATRIOT Act, replevin)
- Ethics
- Archivists' responsibilities and the social/cultural/political environment

Opportunities

Perennial interest

Some topics appear frequently on conference programs because they continue to be of high interest. One area of opportunity to participate in a conference program is to choose a topic sure to be of interest. Examples include:

- Collaborative projects and approaches
- Technology
- Legal issues

Give it a focus

Approaches that are focused around a particular subject or format provide an opportunity to provide real-life examples.

- Collection area or subject (e.g., architectural records; performing arts collections)
- Format (e.g., audio-visual)
- Type of repository

Make a connection

Many sessions consider the relationship between two or more domains.

Find something new

Some areas that do not get as much attention could be opportunities for conference participation. Examples:

- Reference techniques for handling repeat requests
- Security and protection
- Advancing public understanding of archival work
- Managerial techniques
- Archival history and theory