**Question#1**

Since often it is assumed that they work in a room full of boxes and folders with little outside contact, for some people,an archivist is sometimes shrouded in a cloud of mystery. Many people do not really know exactly what an archivist dose beyond the organization of materials in boxes. Often an archivist is confused with a librarian because they have a number of things in common. For example, they both work with organizing material, answering reference and research questions and are typically seen as the gatekeepers of their collections. Although archivist’s and librarians have a variety of similar functions and goals, an archivist performs different types of work and handles a variety of materials that librarians do not typically come across. The following are some of the work and tasks that many archivists come across in their profession.

Archivists do not just organize material, but play a big part in the acquisitions process. Archivists come across all types of records but the archivist most decide which records would serve the needs of not only their users, but society as a whole. They know that saving everything is impossible and therefore look for records that contain “enduring value (Unit 2-A: What is Archival Appraisal?).**”** According to Cook (2011), about 1 to 5% of institutional records will become part of an archive (p.174). This is important because archivists need to bring relevant materials that users and patrons will use. If materials are seldom used or not being used for their secondary purposes archivists also must reappraise their collections. They must decide whether these records are serving their purposes. This is an important process because decisions made on its value are subjective and often rely on changing intuitional policies (Greene, 2006 p.9). This requires a set of procedures and criteria for material already acquired (Greene, 2006 p.13). If there initial purposes and value have changed, they are moved to elsewhere to make room for new records and materials acquired. Older records that are utilized more often based on the changing needs and demands of users are also reappraised and move to a convenient location. If some of these records are not utilized or do not fit in with the types of collections available an archivist is also part of the deaccession process. The deaccession process involves getting rid of records that are not serving the archives needs and are better suited elsewhere. Often this involves trying to find other institutions that would love to take in the materials, reselling them, sending them back to their donors/owners or destroying them (Greene, 2006 p. 8).

Once records and materials are collected for a repository, an archivist has the task of processing the materials. Processing the materials involves arranging and describing them to aid in the creation of records for later retrieval. Archivists follow a number of principles and standards when arranging and describing materials. The most important principles that archivist follow in processing is providence and original order. Providence is the principle of keeping records from the original creator together and not intermingling them with other materials from another creator. The principle of original order states that archivist must not tamper or change the order in which materials arrive. This is significant to the work that archivist preform because changing the order will hamper the original context of the materials and cause important information to lose its original meaning and value (Unit 3-A: What is Archival Arrangement?)

Arranging materials consists of grouping, ordering and physical housing. Grouping allows an archivist to group materials depending on their function and format. For example, dairies is an example of format while, personal papers is an example of function. Ordering involves the arrangement of materials in a collection based on different levels. Some examples include arranging at the series level, folder level and the document/item level. Archivists must also decide where to properly house the materials. They most consider whether climate control rooms, boxes and special folders are necessary (Unit 3-B: Three Steps in Archival Arrangement).

Another task that archivists preform is the description of materials. They describe materials creating records and finding aids using archival standards. They use standards such as MARC 21, Encoded Arvchival Description (EAD), and Describing Archives: A content Standard (DACS). These principles and standards are important because it gives the records creditability and creates consistent records throughout different archives. A user can come to any archive and know what to expect when searching and looking at records, finding aids and collections (Unit 5-A: Intro to Standards).

Another area that archivists are involved in is preservation and conservation. An archvist is trained in preservation and conservation in order to help extend the life of records for future use. Preservation and conservation sound similar but differ in application. Preservation entails an archivist to develop plans to prevent materials from being harm. Archivists work proactively to prevent damage. For example, creating a disaster plan for materials in case of an earthquake, fire or flood. Whereas, conservation focuses on the repair of materials that are already damaged. Not all archivists’ tasks include preservation and conservation due to the training and knowledge required but many archivists do need to take into consideration the current state of the materials and how materials are used and handle (Unit 11-A: Introduction to Preservation and Conservation).

Archivists are also actively interacting with users and patrons in reference activities. Like librarians, archivists do answer reference questions but the types of questions encountered differ. Many archivists deal with factual and interruptive questions (Unit 7-A: Archival Use and Users)

Not only do they assist with answering questions but assist in the research process. They retrieve material, assist with research and educate the patron on specific collections. Archivists also preform other reference duties such as showing patrons how to properly handle materials and deciphering handwriting on documents **(**Unit 7-B: The Reference Interview Process). Sometimes patrons are not able to come to the archive themselves so some archivists preform research on behalf of patrons if required (Unit 8-A: Remote Users).

One of the most important tasks archivists take on is enforcing access regulations and policies. Archivists know that copyright and privacy laws affect the utilization of materials, so it it important for archivists to let their users and patrons know which materials have restrictions. Users do not understand the barriers of access, so archivists must set up polices and processes on how to handle certain restrictions and implement them (Peterson, 2007 p.6-7). Archivists know the importance of making materials accessible to the public, but understand that laws must be enforced in order for the archive as an intuition to stand as a credible and reliable source of information. Archivists also are involved in public relations’ in order to promote the archive and its collections. This includes creating events for collections, educating the public and using social media to attract users (Unit 9-A: Public Relations and Public Programming).An archive is not serving its purpose if no one is utilizing the materials available so it is important for archivists to take an active role in public relations and outreach.

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**Question#4**

With the advent of computers and the web, technology has developed rapidly encouraging many to develop and adapt to the new technologies created. The development of technology in the past three decades has made sufficient changes and updates to the information profession field. Archivists had the opportunity to utilize these new technologies to better standardize and manage collections. Not only with the tools used, but with the ways in which archivists choose, and handle material. Although the rapid pace of technology has lead to great advancements, there are some issues and problems that arise from the use of new technology in the archival field. The ways in which technology affects archivists and the issues that arise are discussed because it is important for future archivists to understand how these technologies will affect the archival field in the future.

One of the most important technological developments to the archival field is the development of accessible and affordable computers coupled with the fast utilization rates of the web. Archivists soon acknowledged the fact that these technologies were beneficial to not only the archive, but to users. Early developments caused many archives to create catalogs on computers and then later, create catalogs accessible from the web. Records on computers are seen as stable and reliable formats for many archivists (Cook, ? p. 40-43). The creation of catalogs accessible from computers and networks led to the development of data structure and data content standards when describing records. They use standards such as MARC 21, Encoded Archival Description (EAD), and Describing Archives: A content Standard (DACS). These standards were created because there needed to be standardization in how records are created in the electronic environment. It also facilitates reliable and consistent retrieval for users and patrons no matter which catalog, database and search engine they are utilizing (Unit 5-A: Intro to Standards). Reference questions also can be answered effectively and consistently with standards in place. Further advances in technology have introduced archivists to web 2.0 technologies. Archivists recognize it’s importance in the field and many archives use social media sites, blogs, wiki’s and other interactive tools. Mary Samouelian (2008) also speaks about users having the ability to review and comment on records, and finding aids. Samouelian (2008) also explains that these types of tools are creating continuous interactive relationships with patrons outside of the archive.

One problem that arises is that the knowledge of some standards, such as MARC 21 and Encoded Archival Description (EAD) and the utilization of web 2.0 technologies is that it requires new sets of skills to implement its use in the electronic environment. Not everyone is technologically savvy so time and money are required for training that not all archives can spare for current employees. Some archivists my not be familiar with social networking and feel different kinds of pressures not experienced before. This will create greater expectations for future archivists in the field and place bigger demands for archivists who are already trained in the implementation of these standards and tools (Samouelian, (2008); New Skills for a Digital era, 2006). Although users who are utilizing web 2.0 technologies are familiar with these tools, another problem is that users are not familiar with the complicated languages in MARC 21 and Encoded Archival Description (EAD). It becomes clear that it is a two way street when it comes to adapting to different types of technologies.

There are a number of devices available such as, mobile phones, PDA’s, tablets and laptops that allow easy access from any location. The availability of records and finding aids online from any location is beneficial to users, but without an archivist near or onsite users do not have immediate access to the knowledge that archivists can share. Because users are becoming accustomed to instant access to resources and materials, users are expecting immediate types of services (Pearce-Moses , 2007 p. 18) The problem is addressed with the creation of 24/7 reference services, such as, text, email and chat. Reference services are now created to serve patrons around the clock and many reference questions are related to tectonically services, issues and questions (Unit 8-A: Remote Users**).**

Reference is not the only area affected by technological changes. The advent of the web has lead users to become accustomed to information readily available at any time or location. Many archives are now digitalizing their collections to allow easy access. As a result, there are a lot more electronic records available for users. One problem that arises is that users expect all materials to be available in an electronic format. This is not always possible due to financial and time constraints in archives (Haftner, 2007). Another problem that archivists face is that as electronic formats change and develop, new ways of preservation and conservation need to be developed or anticipated. Archivists must make sure that electronic formats are consistently updated or transferred to other formats so that these types of records will survive as they become outdated (Unit 6-C: Digital Preservation).

Despite any issues that have arisen, technology fosters cooperation between different archives and intuitions. Information, records and materials can easily be interchanged and shared among different archives and neighboring institutions. This cooperation is beneficial because users can learn about different institutions and repositories that suit their needs and even access resources from beyond the archive.