

Reflections on Further Aligning Archival Science Talent Cultivation with Party and State Strategies

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Abstract

The first-level discipline has been renamed from “Library and Information Science, and Archival Science” to “Information Resource Management,” facing a broader space for disciplinary development. The Party’s 20th National Congress unequivocally called for deepening the implementation of the strategy for invigorating the country through science and education, emphasizing that “education is a fundamental plan for the country and the Party,” once again injecting strong impetus into disciplinary construction. In 1952, against the backdrop of a severe shortage of professional talents for the national archival undertaking, and with the cordial care of Party and state leaders such as Zhou Enlai, Renmin University of China was entrusted by the Central Committee to establish archival higher education in new China. It can be said that cultivating talents for the Party and nurturing talents for the country constitutes the red gene of archival science, and the needs of the archival undertaking constitute the fundamental reason for the establishment and development of the archival discipline. This article explores how archival science talent cultivation can inherit the red gene and further serve the strategies of the Party and the state, against the backdrop of the first-level discipline renaming and the implementation of the spirit of the Party’ s 20th National Congress.

Full Text

Reflections on Advancing Archival Science Talent Cultivation to Serve Party and State Strategies

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The first-level discipline has been renamed from “Library, Information, and Archival Management” to “Information Resource Management,” opening up

broader horizons for disciplinary development. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China unequivocally called for deepening implementation of the strategy for invigorating the country through science and education, emphasizing that “education is a fundamental plan for the nation and the Party,” thereby injecting powerful momentum into disciplinary construction once again.

In 1952, against the backdrop of a severe shortage of professional talent for the national archival undertaking, and under the personal care of Party and state leaders including Zhou Enlai, Renmin University of China was entrusted by the Central Committee to establish archival higher education in New China. It can be said that cultivating talents for the Party and the country constitutes the red gene of archival science, and the needs of the archival undertaking represent the fundamental reason for the establishment and development of the archival discipline. This article explores how archival talent cultivation can inherit this red gene and further serve Party and state strategies under the context of the first-level discipline renaming and the implementation of the spirit of the 20th Party Congress.

1. Appropriately Expanding the Scale of Archival Education

Appropriately expanding the scale of archival education manifests in increasing the number of archival programs, expanding enrollment, and growing the faculty. This expansion is necessitated by a serious supply-demand gap in archival professional talent.

On the supply side, according to a survey by Professor Feng Huiling’s team, 38 institutions of higher education enroll students at various levels in archival science. During the 13th Five-Year Plan period, these universities enrolled nearly 2,000 students annually, including approximately 1,582 undergraduates, 309 master’s students, and 27 doctoral students. On the demand side, according to National Bureau of Statistics data, by the end of 2020, there were over 29.389 million legal entities nationwide. If more than 5% of these entities require high-level archival management talent, the demand would be “in the millions.” Even if this estimate were reduced a hundredfold, the annual talent gap would still number in the tens of thousands. According to statistics from a central enterprise group, by the end of 2021, among nearly 3,000 archival personnel in its subsidiaries, only 0.05% possessed an archival professional background. Such an enormous talent gap fully explains why the employment rate for archival graduates nationwide exceeds 97%.

In stark contrast, foundational and supporting positions such as accounting and human resources management—needed by all organizations—demonstrate markedly different talent cultivation capacity. According to Baidu data, as many as 680 universities offer accounting programs, while a university information website reports that 334 universities offer human resources management programs. More concerning, in first-level discipline rankings and competitions,

some universities have canceled undergraduate or master's programs in archival science for various reasons, slowing or even halting the recruitment and development of archival faculty. If this trend continues, it will not only affect archival disciplinary construction achievements to some extent but also seriously impact the Party and state's demand for archival professionals. The 20th Party Congress report states: "Cultivating large numbers of high-quality talents with both moral integrity and professional competence is a long-term major plan for the country and nation." This long-term plan must begin in the present. Appropriately expanding the scale of archival education requires joint efforts from education authorities, universities, and academic departments.

2. Restructuring Archival Graduate Education

According to National Archives Administration statistics, by the end of 2020, among the 40,946 full-time personnel in archival administrative departments and comprehensive archives at all levels, only 5.6% held master's degrees. Moreover, among archival staff with master's degrees, archival professionals accounted for a mere 1.34%. Master's graduates constitute the backbone of the professional workforce. Graduate education is divided into two types based on training orientation: academic degrees, which aim to cultivate research scholars, and professional degrees, which focus on developing senior professional talents. Currently, 30 universities nationwide can enroll academic master's students in archival science (two of which admit students under affiliated programs), producing just over 300 master's graduates annually, most of whom take up non-academic positions after graduation. Archival science is an applied discipline well-suited for cultivating senior professional talents—that is, professional master's students. At present, the only relevant professional master's degree corresponding to this first-level discipline is the Master of Library and Information Science, established in 2010, under which many departments train professional master's students specializing in archival management. According to statistics from Professor Wang Zhijin, among the 74 authorized Master of Library and Information Science programs nationwide in 2021, 21 expanded their training directions to cover the scope of the first-level discipline of Library, Information, and Archival Management, accounting for 28.4%. Among 49 training directions for this professional master's degree, archival management appeared 13 times, representing 26.5%—data that also reflects market demand for professional talents from one perspective.

While establishing an archival management direction under the Master of Library and Information Science has increased the output of senior archival professionals, limitations remain due to the mismatch between name and content: restricted teaching resources, limited enrollment quotas, and constrained development space. In September 2020, the Ministry of Education, National Development and Reform Commission, and Ministry of Finance jointly issued the "Opinions on Accelerating Graduate Education Reform and Development in the New Era" (Document No. [2020] 9), proposing to "optimize the training

type structure and vigorously develop professional degree graduate education,” and requiring that “new master’ s degree granting units should, in principle, only conduct professional degree graduate education, with new master’ s degree authorization points primarily being professional degree points.” This provides strong policy guidance for the formal establishment of a professional master’ s degree in archival management. Since the beginning of this century, the School of Information Resource Management at Renmin University of China has led efforts to demonstrate the necessity of a professional master’ s degree in archival management, repeatedly submitting applications to relevant departments with strong support from the National Archives Administration, peer departments, and the university itself. Under the national context of vigorously developing professional degree graduate education, the establishment of a professional master’ s degree in archival management is expected to achieve a breakthrough. It is hoped that after a period of construction and adjustment, a master’ s training structure dominated by the professional master’ s degree can be established, with academic master’ s spots reserved primarily for students in direct master’ s-to-PhD or combined master’ s-PhD programs.

3. Innovating Talent Cultivation Models

How to cultivate archival management talents who possess both a strong sense of mission and solid professional competence, who combine scientific thinking with humanistic spirit, and who can quickly become productive while also planning for the long term, remains the foremost concern for all archival educators. The 20th Party Congress report creatively proposed the concept of “promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese-style modernization.” Talent cultivation in this new journey requires innovative approaches that align with both the modernization path and the development needs of the archival undertaking. In recent years, relevant universities have undertaken diverse new practices that respond to the demands of the new era from different perspectives. For example: the School of Information Management at Wuhan University recently launched an experimental main-auxiliary degree program combining archival science and French; both the School of Information Management at Nanjing University and the School of Information Resource Management at Renmin University have adopted modular undergraduate curriculum schemes that include data management-related course modules; and a summer social practice team composed of faculty and students from the archival science program at Soochow University’ s School of Social Sciences carried out a practice activity in July 2022 themed “Recalling the Centennial, Shouldering the Mission—Archives Witnessing the History of Soochow University Youth League,” producing hundreds of thousands of records.

Through multi-party exploration, elements such as ideological and political education, technology, thinking, practice, interdisciplinary integration, and industry-education collaboration have been mentioned or attempted. To develop more effective, replicable, and scalable models for cultivating new

archival professionals, and to build consensus and synergy, it is essential to strengthen teaching exchanges and cooperation among peer departments. Compared with archival research exchanges, teaching exchange opportunities in the national archival community are limited. The annual joint conference of archival department heads, which mainly involves program leaders, needs to expand in frequency, focus on cooperative content, and produce tangible outcomes. The national archival science virtual teaching and research office project, led by Professor Zhang Bin, director of the Teaching Guidance Committee for Archival Science in Higher Education Institutions of the Ministry of Education, has launched lecture demonstrations by young and middle-aged teachers with excellent results. Relevant platforms can be utilized to further implement cooperative initiatives: (1) building upon existing ideological and political education demonstration cases and courses, explore ways to seamlessly integrate ideological and political education into professional content; (2) collaborate to develop textbooks that reflect changes in new-era archival practice; (3) discuss updating core archival science curriculum content, particularly considering the relationships among courses such as “Electronic Records Management,” “Archival Management,” and “Digital Archives,” integrating archival management across different carrier forms while distinguishing management methods between archives and offices; (4) explore the proportion and methods of experimental, practical, internship, and training components in talent cultivation.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.