

INTERNATIONAL SCENE

China's Archival Higher Education: Its Features, Problems, and Development

Qiu-hui Xiao, Xiaojuan Zhang, and Ju Qiu

Abstract

After a brief description of the origin and overall development of China's archival higher education, this essay analyzes its characteristics, achievements, and problems from the late 1970s to the present. The authors also suggest some solutions to these problems and consider developing trends in China's archival higher education.

China's archival higher education originated in the 1930s and derived from library science higher education. It has experienced four stages: formation, regeneration, stagnation, and contemporary development. Archival higher education in China has unique characteristics, yet, at the same time, it has been profoundly influenced by the higher education systems of America and Europe. Currently, it features independent and complete degree systems in archival science with multilevel education programs, including specialized undergraduate, graduate, and PhD programs. Postgraduate education in archival science is developing and expanding rapidly, while undergraduate education continues to function as the center of China's archival higher education, which responds to the strong social demand for higher level professional graduates in archival fields.

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The Origin and Overall Development of China's Archival Higher Education

Formation (1930s–1940s)

The origin of archival higher education in China can be traced back to the 1930s, when two factors aided its germination. First, the “Movement of Administrative Efficiency,” initiated by the Kuomintang (KMT) government in the 1930s, generated an urgent need for professionals specialized in the scientific management of records and archives. This movement aimed at simplifying work procedures and improving administrative efficiency, and one of its core issues was applying scientific methods to records and archival management. Second, the development of Chinese library science nurtured its germination with basic teaching resources, such as teaching staff and facilities, as well as courses.

To meet the demands of the KMT government, in 1934, the Boone Library School (BLS) set up special instruction programs in records management sponsored by the Education Ministry of the Nanjing Nationalist Government (EMNNG). It added records management to its library science curriculum.¹ BLS was the first professional school for library science in Wuchang District (Wuhan City, China). Boone College was a private church school, financially supported by American churches and the American government through the Indemnities Fund of 1900 (Boxer Rebellion).² In 1920, Mary Elizabeth Wood³ and Samuel Tsu-Yung Seng⁴ began the Department of Library Science of Boone College, later the Boone Library School, following the model of Richmond Memorial Library in Batavia, New York.

In 1940, with the approval of EMNNG, BLS began its professional education in records management by setting up the specialty of archival management and recruiting third-year university students or university graduates. This two-year program actually marks the beginning of professional archival education in China. In 1942, BLS started to offer short-term vocational training courses in records management.⁵ During the 1930s and 1940s, BLS trained more than five hundred students. It is regarded as the cradle of many leaders in archives

¹ Jinyao Shao, “Approach to the Origin of Archival Education,” *Archives Science Bulletin*, no. 1 (2006): 71–74.

² Priscilla C. Yu and TzeHuey Chiou-Peng, “China: Libraries, Archives and Museums,” *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (2010), 1, 978.

³ Mary Elizabeth Wood, American librarian and missionary, 1861–1931.

⁴ Samuel Tsu-Yung Seng, Chinese librarian, 1884–1977.

⁵ In 1953, BLS was incorporated into Wuhan University and became the Department of Library Science.

management,⁶ including Kun Mao,⁷ Liankuan Zhou,⁸ and Changyuan Cheng,⁹ and made great contributions to the development of archival science in China.

In its formative stage, China's archival higher education

- was derived from library science higher education;
- came under the influence of library science education in terms of teaching staff, curriculum, and teaching content; and
- combined China's traditional education in compilation science¹⁰ and modern library science education.

For example, BLS set up the course Archives Management Method as a library science specialty in the 1930s, given in both Chinese and English. An American teacher, Grace P. Phillips, conducted instruction in English. She focused on the methods of records and archives management in American governments and enterprises.¹¹ In July 1939, Kun Mao, a graduate of BLS, began to offer the course Archives Management in Chinese. Later, he compiled *Archives Management Method*—the first textbook about archives management in China—in which he combines the theories and practice of American library science with the knowledge of compilation and bibliography in China's documentation tradition and the modern interest in administrative efficiency. BLS set up a broad range of disciplines involved with archival management including courses on archives management, archives classification, archives cataloging, archives administration, and arrangement of historical materials, in addition to courses in library science, such as introduction to book classification, introduction to library science, Chinese cataloging, and Western language cataloging. It also offered courses in general subjects, such as introduction to natural science, social science, and science of museums. Table 1 shows the relationship between China's early archival higher education and library science higher education.

⁶ Jianzhou Liang, "Pioneer in Professional Education of Archive Administration of China—Notes on Boone Library School," *Memories and Archives*, no. 3 (1998): 73–80.

⁷ Kun Mao was familiar with the books and archives management methods of both China and the West.

⁸ Liankuan Zhou learned classification from the Library of Congress and promoted the reformation of Chinese archives management.

⁹ Changyuan Cheng was one of the earliest librarians to implement the Dewey system and carry out archival classifications in Chinese governments and offices.

¹⁰ A subject involved with the collation of documentation, compilation, and historical research.

¹¹ Shao, "Approach to the Origin of Archival Education," 71–74.

Table 1. Courses for Archives Professional Degree in the Academic Year 1943–1944

Compulsory (90 credits)				Optional (14 credits)	
Course	Credit	Course	Credit	Course	Credit
The Three Principles of the People	4	Introduction to Book Classification	4	Subintroduction to Book Classification	2
P.E.	4	Character Index	4	Western Language Cataloging	4
Chinese	8	Sequence Method	2	Chinese Catalog Science	4
English	2	Personnel Registration	4	Chinese Cataloging	4
Ethics	2	Administrative Management	4		
Introduction to Literature and Philosophy	2	Chinese Archive Science	4		
Introduction to History and Geography	2	Western Archive Science	4		
Introduction to Natural Science	2	Museum Science	4		
Introduction to Social Science	2	Introduction to Library Science	4		
Archives Management	4	Typing	4		
Archives Administration	4	Practice	4		
Archives Classification	2	Official Document Research	4		
Archives Cataloging	2	Reference Book	2		

Regeneration (1950s to mid-1960s)

China established a socialist system after 1949. Due to ideological differences and international politics, China focused on developing its relationships with the Soviet Union. In the 1950s, the Soviet model exerted great influence on most, if not all, areas in China, from the economy to politics, from the military to education, and China's archival higher education was no exception.

Wuhan University absorbed the Boone Library School, which became a department of library science. In 1953, the first department of archival education—the Department of Historical Archives in Renmin University of China (RUC) also known as the People's University of China¹²—was established, following the model of Moscow Historical Archives College. From 1952 to 1955, M. S. Seleznev, a Soviet archival scholar, introduced Soviet archival theories and methods. He set up courses in Soviet archival theory and practice and archival history, as well as documents publishing (also known as literature

¹² It was founded in 1952, the predecessor of the Department of Historical Archives, RUC.

release).¹³ Seleznev's teaching and lecturing activities in China profoundly affected both China's archival education and the early development of China's archives. The teaching materials he used in these courses were formally presented in *Soviet Archival Theory and Practice*, first published in 1953 and reprinted many times. It was an essential source for Chinese students learning Soviet archival theories in the 1950s. China's archival theory and practice were significantly influenced by the whole set of Soviet theories, principles, and methods, including archival appraisal and centralized management.¹⁴ The concept of *fond* was introduced to China through the Soviet Union.

Soviet archival higher education emphasized the historical ties between the disciplines of archives and history, and it established the specialty of archive science as a complementary subject in the college of humanities and history. Founded in 1930, Moscow Historical Archives College (now School of Historical Archives, Russian State University for the Humanities) was the largest and oldest archival education institution in the Soviet Union. Moscow Historical Archives College had four departments, each with several teaching and research offices. The department of archives governed eight teaching and research offices, namely, the office of Russian medieval history, Russian contemporary history, Russian general history, local history, historical documents science, foreign languages, archival science, and compilation science of ancient literature.

In the 1950s, the Department of Historical Archives in RUC emulated the model of the Moscow Historical Archives College in its organization, teaching materials, and teaching contents. RUC's curriculum consisted of two types of courses. First were specialized courses, which included document processing, the theories and practices of archival science, history of Chinese archives, history of Soviet archives, history of foreign archives, document publishing, management and organization of technology archives, and archives preservation science. Second were courses related to politics, history, and language, which included the theories of Marxism-Leninism, history of Chinese revolution, Chinese general history, world history, oriental history, ancient Chinese language and culture, history of Chinese literature, and Russian language.¹⁵ The Soviet education model supported training of many specialists, which greatly facilitated the development of China's archival science. With the gradual deterioration of political relations between China and the Soviet Union in the late 1950s, China's learning from the Soviet theory and practice of archival science came to an end, but their impact on China continues today.

¹³ Yumei Han, "Reminiscence about My Beloved Teacher—Written on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Archival College," *Archives Science Newsletter*, no. 5 (2002): 5–7.

¹⁴ Xinde Fang, "On the Problem of Learning from Soviet for the Archival Work in the Early Period after the Founding of the PRC," *Archives Science Study*, no. 4 (1995): 6–11.

¹⁵ "The Introduction to the Enrollment in the Department of History Archives in RUC," *China Archives* no. 4 (1956): 3–4.

Stagnation (1966–1976)

During the “Cultural Revolution” in China between 1966 and 1976, all colleges and universities stopped student enrollments. China’s archival higher education system was damaged and driven into stagnation.

Contemporary Development since 1978

In 1978, as China started its reform and opening-up policy, its archival higher education began its rehabilitation. Since the 1980s, because of the implementation of the policy of reform and opening up and the development of a market economy, and with the gradual increase in demand for archival specialists, China’s archival higher education has entered a period of continuous development. During this period, Chinese archivists and archival educators have sought to abandon the Soviet model and to open to the international world to learn as much as possible from other countries, especially the United States and those in Europe. For instance, more attention is now paid to general knowledge, and general courses are required for all university students to enrich their background knowledge. To respect students’ learning interests, universities have implemented the credit system, optional course system, and dual-degree system. More programs attempt to avoid spoon-feeding knowledge and to explore question-oriented, inductive teaching. Since the 1990s, China’s bachelor of archival studies (BAS) has reached a plateau and the master of archival studies (MAS) has been developing rapidly. In the meantime, the academic requirements and comprehensive skills of archival professionals are increasing continuously.

Features of China’s Archival Higher Education since 1978

From the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 until today, the School of Archives, RUC, has served as the leader of China’s archival higher education. As the biggest and most influential department in archival higher education in China, the development of the School of Archives illustrates the vigorous growth in contemporary China’s archival higher education. RUC has also contributed to the development of an independent archival discipline.¹⁶ In 1955, RUC founded the Department of History and Archives, established the bachelor’s degree, and began to enroll undergraduate students majoring in archival science. In 1978, it established the Department of Archival Science. In 1982, it established its master’s program and admitted the first group of China’s

¹⁶ For the history of the School of Information Resource Management, RUC, see Remnin University of China, School of Information Resource Management, “History,” <http://en.irm.cn/about/history/index.html>, accessed 17 May 2010.

master's students of archival science. In July 1985, the Department of Archival Science was expanded to become the School of Archival Science. In 1993, the school established a doctoral program in archival science, and the first group of China's doctoral candidates of archival science enrolled in the following year. In December 2003, the School of Archival Science became the School of Information Resource Management.

The 1980s witnessed the rapid development of China's archival higher education outside the School of Archival Science, RUC, as twenty universities and colleges established programs of archival science.¹⁷

Complete Education System with a Range of Disciplines

The most distinctive characteristic of current archival higher education in China is its complete education system ranging from specialized subject and undergraduate courses to master's and doctoral programs. By 2008, thirty-one universities had established bachelor's degree programs of archival science, and twenty-five universities had set up master's degree programs. Six universities had established doctoral programs: RUC, Wuhan University, Beijing University, Nanjing University, Yunnan University, and PLA Nanjing Institute of Politics.¹⁸ The number of undergraduates majoring in archival science in China today is 4,268, including 500 master's students and 38 PhD students. Nationwide, China has about a hundred thousand archival professionals, but only 39.6 percent of them hold bachelor's degrees or above. The State Archives Administration of China has set up a training system for working archival professionals to improve their knowledge and skills.¹⁹ The program is for those who are working as archival staff without at least an undergraduate archival degree. In the past few years, the average number of participants in this training program has been about forty thousand each year.²⁰ Working archival staff also have some continuing education opportunities for on-the-job training.

¹⁷ Yuyu Sang and Yin He, "Analysis of China's Archival Higher Education," *Archives Science Study*, no. 4 (2003): 24–27.

¹⁸ See the Academic Degree Commission of the State Council, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, <http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/info18244.htm>, accessed 10 September 2008.

¹⁹ Bo Jian, "The Active Development of China's Archival Education," *China's Archives Weekly*, 29 December 2008, in print or at http://www.wdjj.cn/info/info_544.html (in Chinese), accessed 15 February, 2009.

²⁰ Xincai Wang and Biyong Tan, "Archival Professional Certification System and the Future of the Archival Education in China," *Document, Information and Knowledge*, no. 6 (2005): 18–22.

Bachelor of Archival Studies—Reform Bred from Stability

After the rapid development of the 1980s, China's bachelor of archival studies reached a plateau. In 1998, an important milestone in archival higher education was passed when the Ministry of Education of China published the new *Undergraduate Specialty Catalog of Colleges and Universities (USCAU)*. In the new catalog, archival science shifted from the discipline of history to the discipline of management, thus undergraduates receive a BA in management.²¹ The new *USCAU* emancipated archival science from the discipline of history and marked an important step in defining the archival profession. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education proposed a new "primary subject"—library, information, and archival management science—with each of the three disciplines as its subordinate subjects. The discipline of scientific and technological archival management was discontinued, and only the discipline of archival science remained in the framework of the primary subject.

This reorientation greatly broadened the horizon of the discipline of archival science and led to the readjustment of objectives and curriculum. The *Undergraduate Specialty Catalog of Colleges and Universities* stipulates that the objective of education is to cultivate practical and versatile specialists equipped with a basic understanding of archival science and other relevant knowledge, as well as modern information technology skills, who are competent to work in the information services and management industry and to do research.²² All colleges and universities in China also adjusted their curricula, by increasing the proportion of general knowledge, preliminary courses, and management courses, while shrinking historical literature courses and creating a new core course system for archival science. Many universities substitute electronic records management for scientific and technological archives as the core curriculum. Today, the core curriculum for undergraduate students majoring in archival science includes

- introduction to archival science,
- archives management,
- electronic records management,
- archives protection,
- archival documents compilation (the study of archives for research purposes),
- automation of archival functions, and
- archival history in China and abroad.

²¹ Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, "The List of Discipline and Professional Subjects of the Ordinary Higher Schools" (Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2001).

²² Shumei Zhao, "Develop China's Archival Higher Education in a Lasting and Healthy Way," *Archives Science Bulletin*, no. 1 (2005): 57–59.

For example, in the School of Information Management (SIM) at Wuhan University, the curriculum prescribes three general categories, each with several subject areas (see Table 2). All students majoring in all fields take general educational courses to develop their basic knowledge of politics, military, history, English, and computer proficiency. All students in the school take a second category of information core courses, and students majoring in archival science study specialized archival courses grouped in four categories: archival science, government information resources management, information technology application, and other related courses.

More universities are now implementing the primary subject of library, information, and archival management science by amalgamating library and information science. In 2003, RUC transformed the School of Archives into the School of Information Resource Management, setting up the major of library and information science. Since 2006, SIM, Wuhan University has offered some departmental general educational courses, which provide more opportunities for students to be exposed to cutting-edge information technologies.

Many colleges and universities have established the major of government information management, or they offer some related courses. Some even

Table 2. The Curriculum System for Undergraduate Students Majoring in Archival Science in SIM, Wuhan University¹

University general educational courses		The Curriculum of Thought: Morals and Legal Foundation; Basic Principles of Marxism; Chinese Modern History Outline; Overview of Mao Zedong's Thought; Deng Xiaoping's Theory and the Important Thought of "Three Representations"; PE; Military Theory; English; Computer and Application
Parent department general educational courses		Information Systems; Information Retrieval; Advanced Language Program Design; Database Principles and Applications; Website Design and Construction; Higher Mathematics
Specialized courses for archival science	Courses for archival science	Fundamentals of Archival Science; Document and Secretary Study; Archives Management; Electronic Records Management; Documentary Heritage Preservation; Archives History Home and Abroad; Archival Documents Compilation; Archival Information Organization; Archival Laws and Regulations; The Exploration of Archival Information Resources
	Courses on government information resources management	History of Chinese Political System; Government Information Resources Management; Introduction to E-Government; Introduction to Administration; Civil Servant System; Modern Human Resources Management
	Courses on information technology application	Technique and Application of Multimedia; Office Automation; Document Copying Technology; Introduction to Digital Archives
	Other comprehensive courses	Introduction to Chinese Traditional Culture; Internet Culture; Chinese Classical Poetry Composing and Appreciation; Secretarial Profession in Foreign Affairs; Specialty English; Intellectual Property Law; Counseling Theory and Practice

¹ Qihui Xiao, "Study on the Mode of Training Undergraduate of Archival Specialty in Research School," *Transformation: Development Prospect—Proceedings of the 2nd Sino-U.S. Symposium on Library and Information Science Education in the Digital Age* (Wuhan: Wuhan University Press, 2006), 491.

renamed the major of “archival science” as “government information management science.” Two developments contributed to this innovation. First, in 1999, China’s Government Online Project and the implementation of government information publicity, or opening access to government information, created a demand for archivists specializing in government information management. However, since no major existed to train archivists in this field at that time, there was a huge gap. Second, since government information is located in current files and documents, archival science and government information management developed a close relationship. Research in government information management from the perspective of records management has become a hot issue in China’s archival higher education. More and more undergraduate and graduate students majoring in archival science choose government information resources management or e-government information resources management as the topics for their theses.

The Rapid Development of Master of Archival Studies (MAS)

China’s graduate-level archival education started in 1982, when the Ministry of Education qualified the former School of Archives, RUC, to grant the master’s degree of archival science. Before the 1990s, however, China’s archival higher education focused on undergraduate education. With an annual 30 percent increase in graduate enrollment since 2003,²³ graduate programs in archival studies have expanded and matured. While the size of the BAS stays relatively stable, the ratio of BAS student recruitment to that of the MAS dropped from forty-two to one in 1996 to five to one in 2005 (see Table 3). By 2005, the total number of graduate students majoring in archival science increased to two hundred per year, and twenty-five colleges and universities were qualified to grant a master’s degree in archival science.²⁴

²³ “Much Public Attention Given to the Enlargement of Graduate Enrollment in China,” *China Education Newspaper*, 1 May 2004, <http://www.jyb.com.cn/gb/2004/05/02/zy/jryw/10.htm> (in Chinese), accessed 30 July 2008.

²⁴ Yantao Pan, “Advances in Education in Library, Information and Archival Science in China,” *Journal of Library Science in China*, no. 4 (2008): 51–58. They are the RUC, Wuhan University, Nanjing University, Sun Yat-Sen University, Yunnan University, Nanjing Political College Shanghai Branch, Liaoning University, Jilin University, Zhejiang University, Sichuan University, Guangxi University for Nationalities, Anhui University, Nankai University, Shandong University, Suzhou University, Heilongjiang University, Shanghai University, Hebei University, Fujian Normal University, Nanchang University, Hubei University, Xiangtan University, Zhenzhou University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, and Shanxi University.

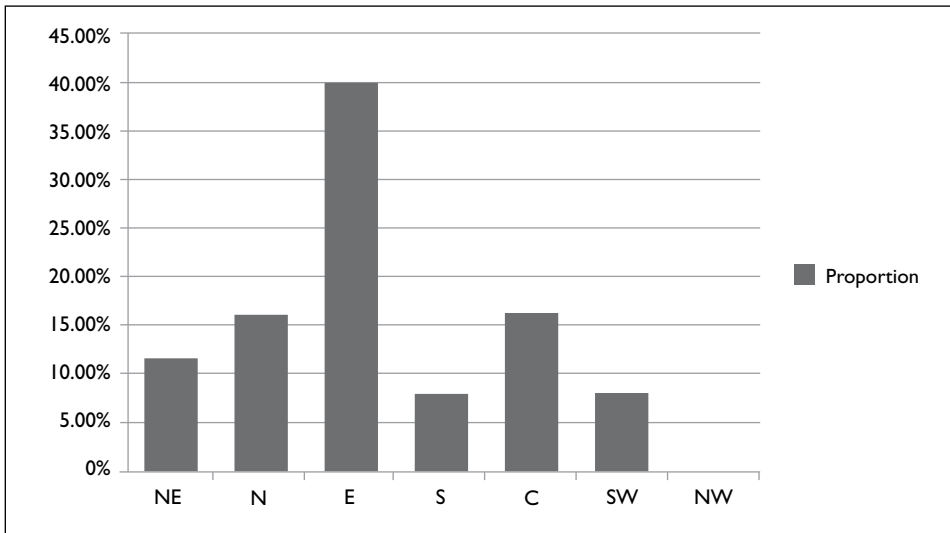
Table 3. China's Recruitment in Archival Science (1996–2005)¹

Year	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	Doctoral Students	Proportion of Undergraduate Students to Graduate Students
1996	962	23	3	42 : 1
2000	1039	61	9	17 : 1
2001	968	85	11	11 : 1
2002	973	98	14	10 : 1
2005	1000	200	24	5 : 1

¹ Yuyu Sang and Yin He, "Analysis on China's Archival Higher Education," *Archives Science Study*, no. 4 (2003): 24–27.

The development of archival graduate education in China varies from one area to another, and the distribution of master's degree programs of archival science in China is unbalanced (see Figure 1). There are three master's degree programs in Northeast China, four in North China, ten in East China, two in South China, four in Central China, two in Southwest China, and none in Northwest China. The ten master's degree programs in East China account for 40 percent of the total.²⁵

China's MAS degree provides many research specializations. The twenty-five archival master's degree programs in China comprise nine fields. Most master's degree programs include traditional research fields, such as theories of archival

**FIGURE 1.** The distribution of the master's degree of archival science in China (n=25).

²⁵ Sihui Tang, "Current Situation and Developing Trend of Archival Graduate Education in China," *Archives Science Bulletin*, no. 5 (2006): 13–16.

Table 4. Research Directions for Each Master's Degree Program¹

College or University	Research Directions
RUC	Archival discipline, archives protection technology
Wuhan University	Theories of archival science, files and records management, informationization and digital information management, records management and intellectual property, e-government, information resources management, computer-based records management
Nanjing University	Electronic and technological archives management, methods and technology of records management, exploration of archival information resources, basic theories of archival science
Liaoning University	Archival discipline
Zhejiang University	Archival discipline
Sichuan University	Theories of archival science, modern files management and e-government, enterprise files and records management, exploration and research of historical archives
Sun Yat-Sen University	Basic theories of archival science and modernization of records management, current files and archives management
Yunnan University	Theories and practices of archival science, ethnic archival study, archives protection technology
Nanjing Political College Shanghai Branch	Military records management, application of archival information technology, protection of military information
Jilin University	Theories of archival science, modernization of records management
Shandong University	Theories of archival science and the historiography of modern and contemporary history of China, the management and exploration of archival information resources, modern secretary study and e-government, archival resources and the management of culture and art industry
Suzhou University	Theories of archival science, modernization of records management, exploration of information resources, e-government and government documents, document study technology of archives management
Heilongjiang University	Theories of archival science, exploration of archival information
Shanghai University	Modernization of records management, history and theories of archival science, archival documents compilation and utilization
Guangxi University for Nationalities	Theories and practices of archival science, computer management of archival information, information resources management
Anhui University	Basic theories and history of archival science, modernization of records management and protection technology
Nankai University	Basic theories of archival science, modernization of records management, e-government
Hebei University	Basic theories of archival science, exploration and communication of archival information, e-government and information management, enterprise files and records management
Fujian Normal University	Basic theories of archival science and preservation of documents, management and exploration of archival information resources
Nanchang University	Archival documents compilation and utilization, theories and practices of archival science
Hubei University	Theories and practices of archival science
Xiangtan University	Theories and practices of archival science, modernization of records management, archival information management and services

¹ Data sources: graduate directories from the university websites.

(cont.)

College or University	Research Directions
Zhenzhou University	Basic theories of archival science and modernization of records management, files and records management, archival culture in ancient China
Shanghai Jiaotong University	Archives management, archival documents compilation
Shanxi University	Theories and practices of archival science, archival information management

science, modernization of records management, file management, exploration of archival information resources, archives protection technology, and archival documents compilation. Most colleges and universities offer two to four fields, while a few universities, such as Wuhan University and Suzhou University, offer as many as six. In contrast, Liaoning University and Zhejiang University have only one. For more detail, see Table 4.

The Problems of China's Archival Higher Education

Three problems arose during the vigorous development of archival education in China.

Emphasis on Theory rather than Practice and the Development of Skills

A common weakness of China's higher education programs is an emphasis on imparting theoretical knowledge while ignoring the hands-on training of practical skills. In-class teaching takes up much of the time, leaving little time and opportunity for students to obtain knowledge through practicum or internship.²⁶ In China, hands-on training usually comprises in-class practica and internships. Teachers lead in-class practica, in which students carry out hours of experiments complying with course assignments. Some courses, like archives management and archival documents publication, require students to undergo systematic practical training to equip them with hands-on experience in basic archival procedures (arrangement, classification, appraisal, cataloging, description, preservation, access, and advocacy). However, most in-class practica fail to achieve the desired goals because they lack effective guidance, sufficient numbers of hours, suitable work sites, and necessary preparation. Internships are usually in an organization away from school, such as archives of governments, businesses, or universities. Seniors carry internships with a minimum timeframe

²⁶ Wei Li, "Thoughts about Problems and Countermeasures of China's Archival Education," *Archives Science Bulletin*, no. 3 (2006): 66–68.

of six weeks before their graduation. Still these requirements are not enough for students to master the whole set of records management procedures.

Furthermore, China's universities and professional archival associations have not developed effective exchange or communication mechanisms. Exchanges and cooperation between education and practice are far from sufficient. Most of the instructors in the archival management field are full-time teachers who become teaching staff or faculty members immediately after fulfilling their BAS, MAS, or DAS programs. Thus they lack actual hands-on working experiences in archival organizations, which contributes to the students' unfamiliarity with hands-on skills and their failure to obtain the desired balance between theory and practice.

Divorce of Archival Higher Education from Archival Professional Entry Qualification

China has not yet constructed a system of archival professional certification, which results in low qualification of archival managers. Many people without professional archival education or archival expertise are still able to obtain archival management positions through the back door. In many archival organizations, staff may be relatives of party leaders or veterans who have not received any professional archival education.²⁷ For example, in Hebei Province, 2,061 people work as archives staff at the municipal and county levels. Of the 385 people in the municipal archives, only 42 (10.9%) have a BAS degree or higher. At the county level, 56 people out of 1,676 (3.3%)²⁸ have a BAS degree or higher. In contrast, a large number of university graduates majoring in archival science cannot find a job in an archives. As a result, most of them divert to other sectors. This waste of talent may severely hinder the healthy development of China's higher archival education.

Quality of Master of Archival Studies Needs Improvement

While China's bachelor of archival studies programs have reached a consensus on educational goals and are striving for maturity and steady development, the master of archival studies programs are in chaos regarding educational goals, research directions, and curriculum systems. Individual colleges and universities haphazardly go their own ways. Although the rapid development of China's archival graduate education is beneficial for cultivating

²⁷ Xincan Wang and Biyong Tan, "Archival Professional Certification System and the Future of the Archival Education in China," *Document, Information and Knowledge*, no. 6 (2005): 18–22.

²⁸ Caixia Gao and Chili Wei, "Analysis of Archive Staff in Hebei Province after the Reform of Government Structures," *Archives World*, no. 4 (2003): 8–9.

Table 5. Organizations and Employment Posts for the Graduates Majoring in Archival Science in China and in America

Country	Employment Organization	Position
China	Enterprise archives	Archives management
	Institutional archives	Archives management
	National comprehensive archives	Archives management
	Government	Archives management, secretarial, civil service
	College or university	Archives management, teaching
	Enterprise information center	Information consulting, service staff
United States	Cultural organization such as archives, library, or museum	Manuscript curating, special collections
	Educational organization	Archives management, teaching
	Government department	Document and archives management
	Business	Document and archives management, information management
	Historical association	Cultural heritage protection, history research
	Religious group	Archives management
	Medical or technical organization	Document and archives management

specialists in archival science, some defects in quality remain.²⁹ What's worse, due to the rapid expansion of student enrollment in recent years and the shortening of the educational curriculum from three years to two years, the quality of entrants and of master's dissertations has suffered.³⁰ Setting reasonable MAS educational goals and programs and establishing a core MAS curriculum nationwide have become hot issues among China's archival educators.

Three Suggestions for Improving China's Archival Higher Education

Intensify Practical Teaching and Build a Skills-Oriented Practical Teaching System

Archival science is an application-oriented discipline with high practicability. In China, weak practical teaching results in a shortage of practical skills among students, a long-standing problem. Therefore, archival educators are reaching a consensus that archival higher education programs should not be limited to

²⁹ Jiazhen Liu, "Diagnosis on Educational Demand of Archival Science in China," *Wuhan University Journal (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 56 (2003): 528–32.

³⁰ Erming Sun and Tao Pang, "On China's Graduate Archival Education: Its Problems and Countermeasures," *Archives Science Study*, no. 5 (2007): 28–30.

Table 6. Ability Structure of Archival Specialists

Basic Skills and Abilities	Requirements
Archival professional skill	Proficient in the operation of archives management; practical writing ability; documents management skill based on OA; archives preservation technique; management technique regarding such special-carrier archives as audio-visual archives, microform archives, and electronic records; archival statistics methods; archival compilation and research ability
Information management skill	Basis of computer application; database management and maintenance; easy programming; Web page design and website building
Ability to analyze and solve problems	Independent learning and critical thinking
Organization and teamwork ability	Teamwork awareness and cooperation skills

teaching systematic professional knowledge but should also pay attention to the training of practical skills. Based on teaching experience and analysis of the social demand for professionals, the authors of this paper propose a list of competencies composed of skills in archival management, information management, analysis and problem solving, and organization and teamwork (see Table 6). Also, in association with teachers of archival science, the authors propose a curriculum for imparting practical teaching skills (see Table 7) to build a practical teaching system involving diversified formats, methods, and contents, such as discussion on specified topics in class, in-class exercises and experiments, volunteer opportunities, internships, and so on. At present, undergraduate practical teaching at Wuhan University is based on Table 6 and delivered according to the teaching content and plan shown in Table 7. We propose a similar program at the MAS level.

Furthermore, the following measures should be pursued:

- Construct archival audio-visual and electronic records laboratories.
- Build a network of archival internship opportunities.
- Lengthen the period of internships, now three credits.
- Engage archives experts as part-time professors.
- Invite archives managers from businesses and government institutions to give lectures regularly.

Build a System of Archival Professional Certification and Reinforce the Integration of Archival Higher Education and Archival Work

A system of archival professional certification is urgently needed in China, and archival managers must require all practitioners to have archival higher education or training. Only in this way can we shut nonprofessionals out of archival work and provide graduates from archival higher education programs

Table 7. Practical Teaching Contents and Plan of the Specialty of Archival Science¹

Semester	Contents of Practice	Period	Purpose	Auxiliary Curriculum
1–4	Visiting archives	1–3 time(s)	Understanding the structure, functions, and collection of the archives	Basics of Archival Science, Archives Management
Unlimited	Topic discussion in class	Unlimited	Promoting independent thinking and exchanging thoughts	All specialty curriculum
5–6	Teaching experiment	Not less than 12 class hours for each curriculum	Preservation of different media archives, scientific archives management	Archival Preservation, Scientific Archives Management
Unlimited	Curriculum practice	Determined according to the curriculum need; not less than 12 class hours for each curriculum	Archives and documents management, electronic records management, government information management	Archives Management, Document and Secretary Science, Literature Compilation and Research, Electronic Records Management, Government Information Management
1–6	Computer and Internet practice, curriculum project	Determined according to the curriculum need	Information management skill	Computer Basics, Programming Language, Database Principles and Application, Information Retrieval, Website Design, Multimedia Technology
5–7	Scientific research training	Determined according to the need	Scientific research capacity	Most specialty curricula
Winter and summer vacations	Social practice	1–2 month(s)	Social adaptability, organization, and teamwork skills	
7	Graduation practice	6–8 weeks	Comprehensive ability	
7–8	Dissertation	18 weeks	Ability to analyze and solve problems	

¹ Yuyu Sang and Yin He, "Analysis on China's Archival Higher Education," *Archives Science Study*, no. 4 (2003): 24–27.

with positions. An interactive relationship needs to be built between archival work and archival higher education to facilitate sustainable and sound development of archival higher education.

To a certain extent, China is ready to initiate a system of archival professional certification. In the early 1990s, China began to enforce two certification

systems—academic diplomas and vocational qualifications—and initially built the legal system of vocational qualification authentication by issuing and implementing such relevant laws and regulations as Labor Law, Interim Methods for Vocational Qualification Certification System, and Vocational Education Law. The employment admission system is now in practice in eighty-seven professions.³¹ In China, vocational qualification authentication pertains to the publishing industry, and a vocational qualification certification system is now being discussed for China's libraries. These vocational qualification authentication systems can serve as references for building an archival vocational qualification authentication system. Furthermore, for promoting a system of archival professional certification, China can also learn from the experience of developed countries like the United States, France, and Britain.

Specify Objectives and Improve the Quality of Postgraduate Education

Postgraduate education in China has dramatically expanded in a short time. However, educational objectives and curricular systems are varied and the quality is spotty. To improve the quality of archival postgraduate education, special attention should be paid to the following aspects:

- Specify the objectives of archival postgraduate education. Archival postgraduate education for a master's degree falls between undergraduate education and doctoral education, and the students should be capable of both practical work, teaching, and scientific research. Accordingly, postgraduate education for a master's degree should be both research and application oriented, particularly nurturing application-oriented talents, while archival postgraduate doctoral education should aim at nurturing senior research-oriented archivists who will mainly engage in scientific research and teaching.
- Standardize the curricular system of archival postgraduate education for a master's degree. This system should include cutting-edge courses on theoretical research in archival science, practical courses for archives management, and courses regarding information science and information technology application.
- Encourage the students who change their original specialty to archival science. This measure will help to enrich the knowledge of China's archival professionals and nurture archivists with special professional backgrounds and comprehensive knowledge structures.

³¹ See Ministry of Labor and Social Security, People's Republic of China, http://www.molss.gov.cn/gb/ywzn/2006-02/14/content_106387.htm (in Chinese), accessed 8 May 2009.

Developing Trends in China's Archival Higher Education

Archival higher education in China shows the following trends with regard to educational objectives, breadth and structure, education mode, and curricular system.

Educational Objectives

In the digital environment, archival higher education is expanding toward the information domain. The educational objectives for the specialty of archival science will be based on digital information resources to nurture interdisciplinary archivists who are equipped with systematic basic knowledge of archival science and related subjects; who have mastered basic skills for using modern information technology; who possess an ability for independent or cooperative research; and who are capable of working in archives management, information management, and information services in government, businesses, institutions, and various information organizations.

Breadth and Structure

China's archival higher education first needs to plan a reasonable geographic distribution for programs of archival higher education. At present, the approximately thirty-one archival undergraduate programs and twenty-five master's programs in China are unevenly distributed, concentrated in East China, North China, and Central China. In the northwest, archival education resources are scarce with only one archival undergraduate program and no master's programs.

Second, China needs to further increase the enrollment in archival higher education. The number of undergraduates and graduates majoring in archival science is still far behind the overall demand for archival professionals. At the same time, however, we have to remember that improving the quality of postgraduate education is as important as simply increasing enrollment in the short term. For example, our archival department at Wuhan University has been increasing the number of recruits by five students each year over the past four years, which made a class of around twenty-five in 2005, and we added about fifty first-year students in 2009. We have also set up a professional master's degree program for working archival and information management staff.

Third, China needs to redesign the educational structure. It should steadily evolve undergraduate education and focus on the multilevel educational system of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, while vigorously promoting advanced doctoral education. Combining the degree education of colleges and

universities with nonmaster's programs such as continuing education, authentication education, and distance education would meet the social demand for archival professionals at different levels.

The education model should be combined with the archival vocational qualification authentication system. Vocational qualification authentication is not only needed but may also guarantee specialized and socialized archival work.

Curricular System

The development of the curricular system of archival science programs should follow the principle of "solid foundation and large caliber" and be based on the first-class subject—library, information, and archival management science. It has two main development directions: first, expanding toward the information domain on the basis of core courses in archival science; consolidating the integration of information science and public management disciplines while keeping the independence of archival discipline; and increasing the proportions of technical and management courses gradually. Second, it should emphasize professional training according to changes in vocational needs. The curriculum must keep pace with technical development and meet social demand. The courses and teaching contents required by the archival occupation should be increased over time, and archival education should be closely related to archival occupation, providing graduates with high professional quality and practical competence. China's archival profession faces a series of realistic requirements, including long-term preservation and access to the electronic records of e-government, construction of digital archives, business archives management, government information disclosure and archives opening, and so on. It is necessary to add some correlated courses and teaching contents, such as e-government file and archives management, business archives management, digital archives, and archives opening and utilization.

Conclusion

Since the 1980s, China's archival higher education has entered a period of favorable and sustainable development, resulting from the intrinsic demand for professional archivists resulting from China's social and economic development, political stability, and cultural prosperity. However, some defects and problems still exist in the country's archival higher education systems. Most needed are reform measures, such as adjustment and optimization in training objectives, breadth and structure of training, training modes, the contents of the curricular system, and teaching areas, to better archival education's adaption to the

requirements of social, political, economic, and technological development in China.

From our point of view, instead of relying on the archival higher education system alone to solve these problems, better cooperation with archives, government institutions, and communities is needed. At the same time, it is essential to learn from the experience of the archival higher education systems of developed countries, especially the United States and those in Europe, in terms of the ideology, methodologies, and content of teaching.