

REGISTRATION PORTFOLIOS: WHAT NOT TO WRITE FOR FORMAL TRAINING COURSES

The following tips have been provided by a Registration Scheme assessor

Most candidates are good at describing the motivation for going on a course and the course content. But they often come unstuck when doing the follow up. The assessors believe that writing a good follow-up section for a training course is one of the hardest things to do in the whole scheme. Dated comments are particularly useful here. Poor follow-ups in the past include the following kinds of submission:

- *'Going on the course made me much more confident.'*
This is often stated by candidates. But if this phrase is used too many times without any explanation can make assessors wonder just what kind of quivering wreck you are. If you genuinely did feel more confident after attending a course, then analyse why in much more detail. For example:
'I used the practical exercise we did to good effect several months later by...'
'The workshop part of the course showed me where I had been going wrong, and I took the following steps to remedy the situation back at work...'
'I came away with a huge reading list. Back at work I found the following resources to be especially helpful because...'
- *'It was good to network and hear the experiences of others over coffee.'*
This is frequently stated by delegates to conferences, or by those working in singleton posts. It is a valid point if your work makes you feel isolated or out of touch, but the way it is expressed here is not convincing. Networking is about fostering contacts, not just sharing a break together. The follow-up needs to show how you put this networking to good use, for example:
'Since the event, a couple of us have corresponded on this issue by email, resulting in...'
'As a result of contacts made at conference, I invited X to visit us and explain...'
'I got involved in a discussion over lunch and this gave me a new perspective on Z which led to...'
- *'I haven't yet used this course at work but I'm sure I will someday...'*
Why, then, are you submitting it as a piece of professional development which requires you to show the on-going benefits you have experienced, and why did you go on the course in first place?

ARCHIVES & RECORDS ASSOCIATION

REGISTRATION SCHEME

LEARNING OUTCOMES FORM

Place a completed copy of this form at the front of the evidence for each credit

DEVELOPMENT AREA: 1. Formal training courses

ACTIVITY: 1.1. Managing photographic collections course

DATE(S): 14 October 2008

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description / Motivation:

The XXX Visual Archives Group organised a one-day course to examine the issues surrounding the management of photographic collections. My motivation for attending the course was to improve my knowledge of different photographic processes in order to identify them accurately when cataloguing and to select the best storage methods prior to working on a large and varied photographic collection. The morning consisted of sessions that put the development of photography into context, explained the physical properties of photographic media and appropriate care, looked at how to describe this material and how copyright legislation applies to photographic collections. In the afternoon, delegates were able to put their newly learned knowledge into practice through an identification and preservation workshop and case study.

What I achieved / learnt from the activity:

I soon realised that my knowledge of photographs was sound, but limited when it came to other photographic formats. The session on the care of photographic collections was especially useful and relevant as I knew little about the physical composition of photographic images and the mechanical processes used to create them. By the end of the day I had learnt how to identify these different processes, how to identify signs of deterioration and the best methods of storing and handling different photographic materials. The workshop sessions served to reinforce what we had been told by getting the group to examine examples of photographic media and to suggest solutions to problems. The presentation on cataloguing photographs provided me with a broader perspective of how libraries, museums and archives arrange and describe photographic collections. I came away from the course with more accurate terminology to use when describing photographic media and an awareness of how the use of photographs can differ from paper records.

Follow up / continued benefit:

Attending this course helped me to successfully complete the cataloguing of the photographic collection. The knowledge I gained enabled me to identify the different types of photographic processes, select the appropriate care and describe them accurately and clearly. After attending the course I revised the Careful Handling Guidelines I had previously written, updating the section about the care of photographic collections. I feel that the knowledge I have learned will be relevant throughout my career.

January 2010: I incorporated the methods and terminology used to describe photographic media into the cataloguing rules I produced for my current place of work.

Evidence:

Example page of notes from course

Example page from revised Careful Handling Guidelines

Example page from cataloguing rules (using acquired photographic cataloguing terminology)

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DEVELOPMENT AREA: 1. Formal training courses

ACTIVITY: 1. 2 Copyright and Data Protection Training Course

DATE(S): 17 October 2009

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description / Motivation:

This was a one-day training course organised by the Archives & Records Association focusing on the application of copyright and data protection legislation within archives. Regularly faced with questions from researchers about copyright and issues of data protection when cataloguing, I felt that I should maintain my general knowledge of these subject areas. In addition, I was negotiating the acquisition of a collection containing a large volume of audio-visual material and recorded interviews with living individuals at the time of the course. Before dealing with the issues of copyright and data protection with the donors, I felt I needed to understand how they applied to the material and what rights the donors held. At the time of the course, my department was reviewing how it dealt with personal data and how to ensure that those it related to were made aware of the reasons for the collection and retention of this data.

What I achieved / learnt from the activity:

I realised that I had a good working knowledge of copyright, but limited to literary works. I learnt how copyright legislation applied differently to various types of material, how its duration varied, as well as how to identify and deal with situations where multiple copyright holders existed and when copyright did not apply. The course gave me the confidence to deal with copyright issues and showed me where to find further guidance if required. I found the practical exercises for data protection particularly relevant as they focused on the documentation used by archives to collect personal data, an issue my department was discussing at the time. In addition, I left the course with specimen texts for data protection declarations that could be adapted for use in my department.

Follow up / continued benefit:

My further understanding of copyright and data protection enabled me to deal better with these issues at work because I was able to apply what I had learned to current acquisition negotiations as well as to general enquiries about the copyright, especially for

photographs and audio-visual material. I passed on the examples of data protection declarations to colleagues drafting the departmental forms. Most importantly the course made me aware that neither piece of legislation is static.

23 March 2010: Attended in-house copyright workshop to bring myself up to speed with the new legislation.

July 2010 onwards: Since moving to my current place of work in July 2010, I have been responsible for reviewing the researcher access requirements. Knowledge acquired on this course has been useful when drafting the Data Protection statement on our application forms and has enabled me to offer advice to others in the organisation with responsibility for personal data. My knowledge has also been useful when dealing with problems surrounding the copyright of audio-visual material.

Evidence:

SoA certificate of attendance

Draft DP statement on access application form

Course notes from 2009 data protection workshop

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DEVELOPMENT AREA: 1. Formal training courses

ACTIVITY: 1. 3 Accounting records

DATE(S): 12 September 2007

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description / Motivation:

This was a one day workshop based at a Record Office in London, which was designed as an introduction to accounting records and the history of accounting methods. I suggested to my boss that I thought it would be a good course to attend because I work in a business archive which holds the nineteenth and twentieth century records of a London merchant bank: this course seemed ideal to teach me some of the basics and to enable me to better explore and explain the records in the collection. I have no banking or economic background and I also felt it had been an area not covered during my archives administration diploma. I hoped that the course would enable me to conquer my fears of accounting and to aid me to better understand our collection.

What I achieved / learnt from the activity:

The course was excellent, if too short. The morning was a theoretical session, learning about the history of accounting methods and various book-keeping systems; this was followed by a practical session in the afternoon where we were free to examine various examples of accounting records which had been provided by the Record Office. One of the most important things I learnt was that the principles and reality often differ greatly! The practical session took the format of a quiz, in which we worked in pairs or small groups. This enabled me to apply the theory I had learned in the morning in an informal and enjoyable way.

The workshop also examined the use of records usually seen as outside a strict definition of 'accounting records', but which, nevertheless, can often provide a key insight into the accounting methods of a particular organisation. This was an interesting subject and will, I am sure, be very useful to me in future appraisals of business records.

Follow up / continued benefit:

On returning to the work place I attempted to apply the knowledge which I had learned by examining some of the many accounting records we hold in the archive. I was very pleased to discover that rather than viewing the huge 19th century ledgers with uncomprehending horror, I can now actually make sense of them and the data they contain. As was explained on the course itself, all companies applied the principles of accounting in different ways and the records we hold are certainly idiosyncratic at times. As with many company records, there are significant gaps in the collection, making analysis even harder. Nonetheless, I felt confident enough to organise a training session for my colleagues, summarising what I had learned on the workshop and using examples of our own collection. As such, the course was of benefit to the entire team in the archives.

My improved skills in dealing with the accounting records which we hold mean that I can help researchers more fully, and I hope to build upon the basics I have learned to enable further exploration of this aspect of our collection.

Evidence:

Copy of Certificate of Attendance

Pages from notes used for colleagues' training session

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DEVELOPMENT AREA: 1. Formal training course

ACTIVITY: 1.4 SoA Seminars for recently qualified professionals

DATE(S): 1-2 May 2004

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description / Motivation:

I attended these seminars firstly to meet other people at a similar stage in preparing their Registration Scheme portfolios, and secondly because I thought that an intensive refresher course on a diverse selection of topics would be beneficial. Fortunately I was able to obtain a small bursary from the Archives & Records Association which paid for the course fee and my travel costs to London. The programme was wide ranging: from talks and workshops on oral history, film archives and the role of archivists in education, to the technical aspects of EAD and data exchange, and the practicalities of records management and the preservation of digital collections.

What I achieved / learnt from the activity:

I particularly enjoyed the sessions on what teachers want from archivists, as outreach is an area which we want to develop at my current place of work. The speaker from the Public Record Office gave an interesting and useful talk on getting started with EAD. Although I briefly covered EAD during my archival training, I had not yet had the opportunity of using EAD at work. In overall consideration, the seminars demonstrated how varied the role of archivist can be, and how many areas of expertise exist within the field, requiring future training.

Follow up / continued benefit:

At the seminars I made several useful contacts, including [X], Assistant Archivist at a university archive which cares predominantly for trade union records which complement the holdings of my place of work. I kept in touch with [X] and, later that summer, I made a visit to the university which, in turn, led to a successful application to the Sharing Museum Skills Millennium Awards for a six week secondment there. The goal of my secondment was to become proficient in EAD, a desire which was directly inspired by the EAD presentation included in the Seminars.

January 2005. I have reread the notes and handouts from the Seminars' paper on 'Managing and Preserving Digital Collections' and have found them to be extremely relevant and useful to my secondment to the [Y] project.

Evidence:

SoA attendance certificate

Example page of course notes on 'Managing and preserving digital collections'

Example page of EAD cataloguing, completed whilst on secondment to university archive

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DEVELOPMENT AREA: 1. Formal training course

ACTIVITY: 1.5 TFPL course on British Company Law

DATE(S): 26 November 2005

NO. OF CREDITS: 1

Description / Motivation:

This one-day course for information professionals promised to provide a distillation of the legal principles governing corporate activity, backed up with examples of how these rules are followed in practice. Although my company archive is located within the Corporate Relations department, over the previous few months there had been an increased need for us to support the Legal and Secretarial departments and legal consultants, working on record keeping and evidential aspects of several large projects. There was therefore a clear need to gain a thorough understanding of the legal background against which this work was taking place.

What I achieved / learnt from the activity:

The content of the course was wide-ranging, covering elements such as the evolution of company law, types of corporate entity, law-making bodies and procedures, as well as statutory records, types of share capital, and the duties and powers of directors and other officers. Although a few parts repeated what I had learned about company records during my archive Masters, much of the course was completely new ground for me, and it was interesting to consider the impact of relatively recent developments such as deregulation. Since my organisation has a number of overseas operations, the provision of comparative information on the law of Europe and the US was very relevant, and the tutor was happy to provide details of further resources for international company law.

This was not a course specifically for archivists, and many of the other delegates were based at legal firms, or worked as company researchers. Some areas covered on the course (such as recognising signs of insolvency in a company and how to find biographical information on shareholders) were therefore not so immediately relevant to my work, but it was still useful to gain an insight into the work of my colleagues. The whole day was taught in slide presentation format, and although there were some opportunities for discussion, I would have preferred a more interactive approach;

however I appreciate that this would be difficult to achieve given the rather dry subject matter.

Follow up / continued benefit:

As part of our course notes we were given a volume containing photocopies of around fifty types of company record, and this has proved to be an invaluable reference tool for appraisal and listing work for understanding statutory records, the laws governing their structure and content, and recognising the elements within them (balance sheets, director's reports etc.). We also covered the role of Companies House and were provided with references for numerous web-based company research resources. Both the day itself and this follow-up work not only improved my knowledge of business records, but also gave me a much better grasp of issues such as compliance and shareholder value, at a time when I was still fairly new to the corporate and financial services environment.

Evidence:

Example of slides' handout and notes taken during course

Example of cataloguing work, using skills and knowledge gained during course