

Building Archival Talent Teams in Independent Colleges: Strategies for the New Era

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Abstract

The archival work of independent colleges faces new challenges and opportunities in the new era. In the face of issues such as the increasing youthfulness of faculty and staff and the frequent changes of part-time archivists in various departments, the archival management departments must take the initiative. They should start with newly hired faculty and staff and extend their efforts across the entire college to build a team of archival personnel. Taking Changzhou University Huaide College as an example, this paper analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the younger faculty and staff in independent colleges. It is suggested that the archival management department should focus on new employee training, departmental training, and specialized training. By actively participating in training programs at all levels of the college and departments, the department can conduct multi-level, multi-faceted, and comprehensive archival training to popularize archival knowledge. This approach aims to promote the “All-Staff Archivist System” and reduce the reliance on part-time archivists, thereby exploring new ways to build an archival talent team in independent colleges under the constraints of limited personnel and funding.

Keywords

Independent College, Archival Workforce Construction, All-Staff Archivist System

1. Introduction

University archives primarily consist of historical records generated in activities such as enrollment, teaching, scientific research, and management. These archives are not only testimonies to the construction and development of universities but

also valuable assets for social development and an integral part of the national archives (Li & Ning, 2024). As a component of China's higher education institutions, independent colleges have not only cultivated a large number of outstanding talents for society but also achieved numerous academic and scientific research outcomes. Although the archival work of independent colleges lags behind that of public universities in terms of both the level of development and the scale of achievements, well-organized archival work can still serve students and faculty, support teaching and educational research activities, and play a positive role in the development of independent colleges (Xue & Sun, 2020).

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current status and challenges in the archival work of independent colleges, this study selects Changzhou University Huaide College as the research object. Through interviews with archival managers and faculty members, and by integrating advanced experiences in archival management from domestic and international universities, this research proposes innovative pathways for the construction of archival talent teams and the management of archives in independent colleges.

2. Current Status of Archival Work in Independent Colleges

Compared with public universities, the archival work of independent colleges and private universities generally started later and faces numerous challenges. For instance, there are fewer full-time archival staff members, and their professional competence needs to be improved. Part-time archivists are frequently replaced, resulting in poor work continuity. The funding allocated for archives is limited, and the space available for archival rooms is insufficient, with shorter lifespans for storage facilities. The collection of archives is not comprehensive enough, and some creators of archival materials are reluctant to file them. The utilization rate of archives is low, and the level of informatization needs to be enhanced (Han & He, 2019). These problems are not only widespread but also difficult to resolve in the short term.

Under these circumstances, how to build a sufficient, stable, and highly competent archival workforce by accurately grasping the key links under limited resource conditions has become an important issue that independent colleges urgently need to address.

3. The Dual Impact of a Young Faculty on Archival Work

3.1. New Opportunities for Archival Talent Development

3.1.1. Strong Learning Abilities and Innovative Mindset

The faculty of independent colleges typically exhibit high academic qualifications and a relatively young age structure. These young employees possess several advantages: they have strong learning and practical skills, flexible thinking, enthusiasm, and a proactive attitude towards learning, with significant potential for personal development. Additionally, they generally possess a high degree of innovation and proficient computer operation skills, enabling them to quickly adapt to

the requirements of archival work and effectively identify, analyze, and solve problems in practice.

3.1.2. High Political Quality and Solid Team Foundation

Archival work has a distinct political nature, with the principle of party spirit being the fundamental guideline for archival activities. Identifying and cultivating a team of high-quality and skilled archival personnel is the driving force and source of development for the archival cause of every higher education institution (Gu, 2023). In terms of talent recruitment, independent colleges implement strict political screening (e.g., a 100% proportion of party members among counselors), which provides a solid foundation for the archival management department to absorb, develop, build, and strengthen a team of highly conscious and qualified archival personnel who are responsible, capable, and able to innovate while maintaining core values.

3.2. New Challenges for Archival Management

3.2.1. Frequent Staff Turnover and Increased Training Costs

The youthfulness of the faculty and staff in independent colleges brings innovation and vitality to the institution to some extent but also increases the overall instability of departments and the college as a whole. Influenced by the current employment situation, independent colleges face new challenges in talent team building. New recruits are mostly postgraduates or above, and they still have ample time before reaching the upper age limit for civil service examinations. Combined with changes in the post-pandemic employment environment, the attractiveness of stable positions has significantly increased, with “iron rice bowls” becoming the preferred choice for many job seekers. This has put immense pressure on independent colleges in retaining talent (Li et al., 2023). Under these circumstances, the attractiveness of independent colleges to talent has further weakened, and some employees only regard independent colleges as a transitional choice. This situation directly leads to frequent personnel changes, poor stability, and high mobility within the faculty and staff of independent colleges, making the frequent replacement of part-time archivists the norm. The frequent turnover of part-time archivists requires the archival management department to continuously train new replacements, which is time-consuming, disrupts the normal progress of archival work, and is repetitive and inefficient.

3.2.2. Irregular Handovers and Hidden Risks to Archival Security

Although universities have a complete set of procedures for work handovers during personnel changes, the focus is mainly on fixed assets and keys, with no unified requirements for the handover of work content, especially in the transfer of documentary, electronic, and physical archives. The archival staff's access to information on personnel changes and departmental staff transfers is relatively slow, preventing them from timely follow-up or on-site guidance on the key points of archival handovers. If the person taking over is new to the department or has a

weak archival awareness, it may increase the risk of losing departmental archives, which will have a negative impact on the orderly conduct of departmental work and the complete preservation of college archives.

4. Innovative Pathways for Archival Talent Development in Independent Colleges in the New Era

As noted in (*Archive Cause Needs Youth to Relay, Inherit, and Develop*, 2019), the youth are the future of the motherland, the hope of the nation, and the promise for the development of China's archival undertakings. Young people constitute a significant proportion of archivists across various industries and play an important role in all aspects of archival development. Enhancing the quality of young archivists and stimulating their vitality is crucial for the sustainable and healthy development of the archival cause and for fulfilling the mission of "managing archives for the Party, safeguarding history for the country, and serving the people". Therefore, in the new era, the development of archival talent teams in independent colleges must break away from conventional approaches, be bold in innovation, and establish new methods.

4.1. Strengthening the Archival Awareness of All Staff and Consolidating the Work Foundation

4.1.1. Enhancing Organizational Leadership and Elevating Political Awareness

Archival work bears the important responsibility of "managing archives for the Party, safeguarding history for the country, and serving the people." The Party committee of independent colleges should correctly position itself politically, adhere to the political characteristics of archives, deeply understand and grasp the political nature of "archival work being under the leadership of the Party," and always prioritize the political construction of the Party (Lu & Ji, 2023). Independent colleges must insist on Party leadership over archives and resolutely implement the decisions and plans of the central government and higher-level Party organizations. In the areas of archive preservation, development, utilization, and publicity, political standards should be placed first, with careful political considerations and strict political scrutiny. This ensures that the college fulfills its political responsibilities in serving the Party, society, and faculty and students. At the same time, the development of the archival cause should be integrated into the college's development plan, with adequate support for funding, personnel, and facilities and equipment.

As middle and senior managers in independent colleges and heads of various functional departments, it is essential to unify thinking and fully recognize the significant role of university archive management. They should pay close attention to the progress, level, and trends in the development of the college's archive management. They must actively cooperate with the promotion of the "All-Staff Archivist System" initiative, disseminate the concept from top to bottom, take the lead in carrying out archive publicity and supervision work, and ensure the

smooth progress of archive management in independent colleges.

4.1.2. Improving Institutional Design and Implementing the All-Staff Archivist System

Top-level design provides a solid foundation for the smooth conduct of archival work. However, to truly implement archival work, institutional support must be extended to the grassroots level. Under the current reality of tight staffing in independent colleges, simply expanding the number of professional archivists is neither feasible nor in line with the principle of cost-effectiveness. Meanwhile, the drawbacks of the traditional model of relying solely on part-time archivists are becoming increasingly evident. Part-time archivists have to balance both their department's core business and archival management tasks. They face numerous difficulties in tasks such as archive collection and organization. Even if they receive some economic compensation, it cannot offset the increased workload and pressure. With the refinement of departmental division of labor and the increasing requirements for archival management, the enthusiasm and initiative of part-time archivists will gradually decline, leading to reduced archival work efficiency and inconsistent quality. In the long run, this will seriously restrict the sustainable development of the department's and college's archival undertakings.

Therefore, this paper suggests abolishing the role of departmental part-time archivists and implementing the "All-Staff Archivist System", integrating archival work into the routine tasks of every position. All administrative staff in a department should be both the handlers and processors of archives as well as the organizers and transferors of archives. Only by distributing archival filing tasks to each position, making the collection and organization of archives a routine and fixed process, and treating the transfer of archives as a summary and presentation of job performance, can the archival work of departments and the college be advanced from within and in a step-by-step manner. This also provides the possibility for talent reserves in the construction of archival talent teams in independent colleges. When combined with the constraints and supervision of archival work assessment in the annual performance evaluation of faculty and staff, it can effectively promote the archival work of departments and the college.

4.2. Constructing a Systematized Training System to Enhance Team Quality

To realize the concept of "All-Staff Archivist System," a supporting and systematic training program must be implemented throughout the career development of faculty and staff. This paper proposes that the archival management department of independent colleges set up three types of training: onboarding training for new employees focusing on basic archival knowledge, departmental training for faculty and staff on department-related archival organization and filing standards, and specialized training on archival filing knowledge for different target groups.

These systematic and targeted trainings cover both the macro-level archival management philosophy and the micro-level specific operations, involving vari-

ous types of archives from all departments of higher education institutions. Progressive and continuous training enables every faculty and staff member to understand and become familiar with the types of archives they handle or come into contact with, and to firmly grasp the basic procedures and requirements for archival organization and transfer. This truly leverages the role of popularizing archival knowledge and training archival skills.

4.2.1. Onboarding Training for New Employees

The onboarding training for new employees is conducted by the archives department during the pre-service training organized by the college for new employees (including faculty members, administrative staff, and counselors). Based on the “Measures for the Management of Archives in Higher Education Institutions” (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China & State Archives Administration, 2008), the training content covers basic requirements such as archive classification, filing scope, retention periods, and security and confidentiality. It aims to enhance new employees’ awareness and sense of responsibility regarding archives, standardize their daily office behaviors, and cultivate the habit of filing documents promptly. The training also focuses on the daily teaching and office scenarios of higher education institutions, popularizing the management standards for the entire life cycle of documents and materials. This includes the circulation process of official document issuance, writing standards for departmental summaries and plans, format standards for official documents, and storage requirements for electronic and audio-visual archives.

4.2.2. Departmental Archival Business Training

Departmental archival business training is designed for newly hired staff and those without prior archival work experience in various departments. The training materials, developed by the archival management department in compliance with the “Measures for the Management of Archives in Higher Education Institutions,” are tailored to meet each department’s specific needs. The content includes filing scope, document pagination and stamping, naming conventions for electronic directories, transfer requirements for electronic, audio-visual, and physical archives, and other relevant topics.

The training is presented in the form of slide presentations or documents. It is characterized by its strong relevance, high professionalism, and flexibility in scheduling. It is not restricted by the number of participants or venue requirements, making it suitable for small group meetings or self-study. By saving on human resources and time, this training plays a crucial role in advancing the “All-Staff Archivist System”.

4.2.3. Specialized Archival Skills Training

Specialized training is conducted for faculty and staff from different departments with similar archival filing content. It is an important supplement to achieving full coverage of archival training. The target group for specialized training is relatively broad, covering faculty and staff from different departments. Such training is usu-

ally conducted in specialized sessions according to actual needs, with no limit on the number of participants, and mainly adopts a centralized training approach. For example, for the counselor team, specialized training can be conducted on the procedures for checking and borrowing student archives, the norms and requirements for transferring student archives, or the filing standards for audio-visual archives such as student award certificates and graduation photos. Another example is specialized training for communicators from various departments on the transfer standards for news articles, photos, or audio-visual archives.

5. Suggestions for Enhancing the Competence of Archival Personnel in Independent Colleges in the New Era

5.1. Maintain the Advanced Nature of the Team and Regularize Ideological Learning

In addition to ensuring that all faculty and staff are familiar with the content and scope of archival work, as well as the processes and requirements for organization and filing, independent colleges should also strengthen the ideological construction of the archival personnel team (Huang, 2023). Archival management personnel in colleges and universities should have a full sense of responsibility and commitment, and shoulder the responsibility of managing archives for the Party, preserving archives for the university, and serving teachers and students.

5.2. Adhere to the Confidentiality of Archives and Manage and Govern Archives in Accordance with the Law

Archives have certain political and confidential nature. Therefore, it is necessary to attach importance to and strengthen the confidentiality awareness of archival management personnel, and strictly control the political quality of archival management personnel in confidential departments. In addition, a scientific and complete set of confidentiality work systems for archival management can be formulated to urge archival management personnel to study and implement the requirements of the "Archives Law" and the "Confidentiality Law", and manage in strict accordance with relevant national and institutional laws and regulations, strictly abide by confidentiality discipline and principles, and require all departments to manage and govern archives in accordance with the law (Xu, 2023).

5.3. Cultivate a Learning-Oriented Team and Provide Opportunities for Learning and Exchange

The archival management department of independent colleges should adhere to the people-oriented principle, fully mobilize the enthusiasm of archival management personnel for lifelong learning, and ensure that archival management personnel not only continuously learn knowledge related to archival management, but also strengthen learning and application in computer technology and information technology. Colleges and universities should encourage archival management personnel to take advantage of the provincial archival remote education

platform to take relevant courses online to enhance their knowledge reserves in archival management. They should also create conditions and provide opportunities for archival management personnel to go out for learning and exchange in batches, so that archival management personnel can broaden their horizons, increase their knowledge, absorb and learn from advanced experiences and successful cases in other provinces and cities, and share what they have seen and learned with other archival management personnel.

5.4. Break the Barrier of Emphasizing Collection Over Utilization and Optimize the Efficiency of Archival Services

Archival work in colleges and universities generally emphasizes collection over utilization. Although there is no requirement for college and university archives to be open to the public for the time being, there are still many teachers, students, and alumni who need to query archives within the university. With the increasing number of archives in colleges and universities every year, the archival management department should enhance service awareness and innovation awareness, continuously optimize and simplify processes, be good at using information technology to innovate the ideas and methods of archival work, improve service efficiency, and communicate and coordinate with other departments more often to listen to their feedback and suggestions on the collection, transfer, and utilization of archives. Through identifying and solving problems, they should constantly summarize experience and improve the level of archival services.

6. Potential Risks and Mitigation Measures

While the “All-Staff Archivist System” offers numerous advantages, it also presents certain potential risks and drawbacks.

Firstly, when implementing the “All-Staff Archivist System”, the specific circumstances of different independent colleges must be considered to ensure effectiveness and feasibility. In smaller colleges with fewer staff members, the limited number of full-time archivists and their divided attention may hinder the comprehensive and effective implementation of the system. In contrast, colleges with highly specialized disciplines and complex archival management requirements will need more refined training and management measures to ensure the smooth rollout of the system. Therefore, each independent college should flexibly adjust its implementation plan based on its own situation to ensure the system’s effectiveness and feasibility.

Secondly, the involvement of all staff may lead to a diffusion of responsibility, with some employees neglecting the quality of archival work due to a lack of sufficient emphasis. Additionally, the all-staff filing system may face significant coordination challenges, as different departments may have varying archival management standards and procedures. To address these issues, colleges should establish unified archival management standards and procedures, clarify the responsibilities of each department and employee, and utilize information technology to

automate and standardize archival work, thereby reducing human error and enhancing the efficiency and quality of archival management. At the same time, colleges should strengthen regulatory mechanisms, incorporate filing quality into the performance evaluation system of faculty and staff, and establish clear reward and punishment mechanisms to motivate employees to improve the standardization and accuracy of their filing work. The archival department should regularly publish filing quality reports to disclose the performance of each department and reinforce quality awareness and accountability.

Moreover, the “All-Staff Archival System” may encounter significant coordination challenges, as different departments may have varying archival management standards and procedures. Colleges should establish unified archival management standards and procedures. At the same time, information technology should be utilized to automate and standardize archival work, thereby reducing human error and enhancing the efficiency and quality of archival management.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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