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Professional development and competency standards: unravelling the contradictions and maximising opportunities

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Introduction

This paper explores and unravels the complex and sometimes contradictory relationships between current concepts of learning, professional development and competency standards.

> It is essential that archivists and records managers understand the theory that underpins their professional practice. Competency-based training alone will not provide this understanding. It is static training, tied to the practices of today, providing little if anything in the way of insights or tools to meet future challenges. Professional education should be based on sound pedagogical principles that encourage students to analyse and synthesise information and stimulate critical thinking.[1]

If we accept this statement as applicable to professional development, as a form of archival education, then we need to question how performance-based competency standards could make any contribution to professional development. The central argument of this paper is that there is a very precarious relationship between the objectives of performance-based competency standards and those of professional development. Professional development is about challenging theory and practice, not just reinforcing current practice, one of the key tenets of the implementation of competency standards. Reasons for the apparent contradictions lie in language and paradigms, which once unravelled, can present a more coherent picture of the relationship between competency standards and professional development.

Part I of this paper explains the core concepts of professional development and competency standards, then tries to clarify the reasons for this precarious relationship and explore implications for the archives and records profession. Part II presents options for the design and evaluation of professional development, applying current learning approaches, to ensure it is holistic, relevant and adaptive. It presents a framework of learning to help archival institutions match outcomes of professional development with different learning strategies. Part II also presents an option for mapping organisational goals and functions to external standards to ensure the content of professional development programs reflects theory and practice, and helps the profession see the broader context of its work.

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[1] K Anderson, 'Access and partnerships: issues in professional education', *Proceedings of the Archives and Records Education Stakeholders (ARES) Forum*, Melbourne, Australia, 12–13 June 2003, ARES Website:
http://www.archivists.org.au/events/ARES2003/K%20Anderson%20Access_and_partnerships.pdf (accessed 15 May 2004), p. 10.

Part I: Understanding the concepts and setting the context

Definitions and core concepts

Given the potential for varying interpretations, it is important to clearly define the key concepts to be addressed in this paper:

- Archival institutions

- Learning

- Professional development

- Competencies and capabilities

Archival institutions

This term is intended to be as broad as possible so includes;

- archival institutions;

- professional associations;

- educational institutions that provide education or work in partnership with an archival institution; and

- organisations or persons that employ archivists or records managers.

Learning

There are two main interpretations of learning in current educational and organisational development literature. In some contexts, learning has replaced training as the more narrow concept of skills acquisition to perform set tasks:

> Learning encompasses the processes by which job-related skills are acquired, as demonstrated by changed behaviour on the job, whereas development focuses on cultural change and career preparation. It has a relatively long time for payback and a higher risk of ever achieving that payback than does training.[2]

However, equally in education and organisational development literature, 'learning' is used more widely, to mean both the acquisition of basic skills and

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[2] Australian National Audit Office, *Management of Learning and Levelopment in the Australian Public Service,* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2002, p. 28.

knowledge and the more critical reflection of theory and practice.[3] Concepts such as lifelong learning are also broad and are increasingly being used to cover formal, informal and workplace learning.[4] For the purposes of this paper, I will use learning in its wider sense to cover both training and development.

Professional development

Beaty, in discussing development of professional occupations, defines professional development as a structured process involving people, experiences and reflection:

> A systematic approach to learning involving reflection, conceptualization and planning. In this way the new experience will be informed by learning from the past and from the experience of others.[5]

Professional development is about improving practice over time, by learning from others, from past experience, through reflection and by being actively and creatively involved in learning processes. Professional development can happen in the workplace, through research and publication, with colleagues in a professional association environment or through formal education such as higher degrees.[6] Terms such as 'continuous learning' and 'continuing education' are similar to concepts of professional development, so have been subsumed under the above definition.

In the context of archives and records, Hedstrom's discussion about the impact of information technology on curriculum development confirms why professional development has to encourage critical and reflective thinking of theory and practice:

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[3] L Field, 'Organisational learning: basic concepts', in G Foley (ed), *Understanding Adult Education and Training,* 2nd Edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 2000, p. 167; C Argyris & D Schon, *Organisational Learning II: Theory, Method and Practice*, Addison Wesley, Massachusettes, 1996, p. 35.

[4] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'Policy Brief: Lifelong Learning', 2004, OECD Website: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/11/29478789.pdf (accessed 5 June 2004).

[5] L Beaty, 'The professional development structure of teachers in higher education: structures, methods and responsibilities', *Innovations in Education and Training International,* Volume 35, Number 2, 1998, p. 99.

[6] A Cossham, 'Gaining knowledge and expanding the skill base: the professional development of New Zealand's records managers', *Proceedings of the Archives and Records Education Stakeholders (ARES) Forum*, Melbourne, Australia, 12–13 June 2003, ARES Website: http://www.archivists.org.au/events/ARES2003/A%20Cossham.pdf (accessed 15 May 2004), p. 2.

> These developments [information technology] are a testament to the continuing need for archivists to catch up and keep up with innovation in information technology and evolving archival theory and practice.[7]

Competencies and capabilities

The definitions of competency standards, competencies and capabilities are not clear cut in either education or archival literature. The National Training Information Service (NTIS) of the Australian Government has defined competency standards as follows:

> Competency Standards describe the skills and knowledge required for a person to operate effectively in the workplace. The standards have been defined by industry, are nationally recognised and form the basis of training for that specific industry. Standards contain descriptors of outcomes to be achieved and criteria for performance.[8]

This definition reflects a positivist paradigm, assuming that skills and tasks can be broken down into objective parts, separate from the person, their values and experiences.[9]

Another interpretation of competencies or descriptions of practice reflects a more humanist paradigm. Competencies define skills and knowledge in a more holistic way, by considering context and social relationships, not confusing performance with competence, and not being so closely tied to a particular occupation.[10] In this paper, I will use the terms:

- *competency standards* to refer to the vocational or occupational aligned skills and knowledge that can be measured through demonstrated performance against current tasks;

- *competencies* when making general references to the concept of skills and knowledge, developed through the humanist or positivist approaches; and

- *capabilities* to cover the attributes needed for more abstract thinking, reflection, analysis and creation of new knowledge. These are

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[7] M Hedstrom, 'Teaching archivists about electronic records and automated techniques: a needs assessment', *The American Archivist*, Volume 56, Number 3, Summer 1993, p. 425.

[8] National Training Information Service (NTIS), 'Competency Standards', NTIS Website: http://www.ntis.gov.au (accessed 4 June 2004).

[9] C Chappell, A Gonczi & P Hager, 'Competency–based education', in G Foley (ed), *Understanding Adult Education and Training,* 2nd Edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney, 2000, p. 192.

[10] Chappell, Gonczi & Hager, p. 194.

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sometimes called competencies, but also capacities, behaviours or qualities.

To close this summary of concepts, this paper takes the position that professional development is primarily concerned with developing the capabilities and knowledge of professionals rather than demonstrating performance. Furthermore, the purpose of professional development is to support a profession, which Cox argues has to:

- constantly challenge and develop theory and practice;

- promote the behaviour of its practitioners for the benefit of the community, through a sense of altruism or service; and

- believe in a sense of identity through a culture that has shared values and norms.

Cox believes it is these qualities that separate a profession from an occupation.[11]

Discussion about current and emerging landscape

Having defined some key concepts, I will now address the issues concerning the contribution of competency standards to professional development. I will look at trends, problems, new initiatives and sources of hope.[12]

Question 1: What are some key continuities and trends that will impact on the education of archivists and records managers in the future?

The quest to articulate the skills and knowledge needed for archives and records professionals has engaged the archival community for many years. The literature in this area is considerable and I can hope only to describe some in this paper. Table 1 illustrates the range of different interpretations of what archives and records professionals need to understand but is by no means comprehensive.

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[11] R Cox, *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States*, The Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, New Jersey, 1990, p. 26.

[12] R Slaughter, *Futures for the Third Millennium*, Prospect Media, St Leonards, Sydney, 1999, p. 242.

Table 1: Examples of guidelines or frameworks for understanding archives and records principles and practices

Institution	Comment
1991: Association of Canadian Archivists[13]	Guidelines for the Development of Post-Appointment and Continuing Education and Training Programmes were developed to support practicing archivists who did not have tertiary qualifications in archival theory and practice. The guidelines covered knowledge and content in all areas of archival theory and practice at basic and advanced levels.
1993: Committee on Automated Records and Techniques (CART) (United States)[14]	The Committee identified four clusters of learning objectives to support management of automated records at a post first degree level. The *Foundation Cluster* interpreted archival concepts in the context of information technology. The *Automated Applications Cluster* examined organisational objectives and requirements. The *Electronic Records Cluster* aimed to gain sufficient knowledge of archival concepts for electronic records (appraisal, access etc). The *Management Cluster* covered strategic thinking and planning.
1997: National Finance Industry Training Advisory Body (Australia)[15]	This set of competencies covered vocational and tertiary levels and was developed by professional associations, such as the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and the Records Management Association of Australia (RMAA) and the archives and records industry. Its approach sought to reflect the growing importance of the continuum approach to recordkeeping in Australia. It was also used for accreditation of vocational and tertiary courses.
1998: DLM European	The purpose of this set of competencies was to ensure archivists and records managers could take a strategic

[13] Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA), 'Guidelines for the Development of Post–Appointment and Continuing Education and Training Programmes', 1991, ACA Website: http://archivists.ca/committees/std_edu_documents.aspx (accessed 6 June 2004).

[14] V Walch, 'Final report: automated records and techniques curriculum development project', *The American Archivist*, Volume 56, Number 3, Summer 1993, pp. 468–506.

[15] National Finance Industry Training Advisory Body, *Records and Archives Competency Standards*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1997.

Monitoring Committee[16]	role in the management of digital records. Competencies covered archival, legal, organisational, methodological, information technology, and system design. The focus was on capability, influencing, and understanding the related professions, but still defending the archives and records principles. The set builds on work from United States led work summarised above.
1998: National Archives of Australia[17]	This set of competencies covered skills and knowledge for current practice for reference archivists, including communication skills, knowing the collection, records creation and administrative history. These were not used to assess performance, but to inform in-house professional development.
2000: Information Management Forum (National Archives of Canada)[18]	This was a detailed list of practitioner based skills and knowledge for information and records management. Includes archival (access, description, appraisal, preservation) and electronic services competencies, such as those for information technology programmers. Also covered were generic management, interpersonal and personal skills.
2000: ARMA International[19]	The set described clusters of competencies, developed to measure performance in records and information management, technology, management, interpersonal and personal skills. There were also very detailed descriptions of competencies for different levels and positions.
2001: G4 Electronic	This framework described skills, knowledge and competencies specifically relating to management of

[16] M Wettengel, 'Core competencies for electronic record–keeping', *Electronic Access: Archives in the New Millenium*, Conference Proceedings, 3–4 June 1998, Public Record Office, London, 1998, pp. 96–101.

[17] R Summerrell, 'Improving the education and professional development of reference archivists', *Archives and Manuscripts, Journal of the Australian Society of Archivists*, Volume 27, Number 1, May 1999, pp. 74–95.

[18] Information Management Forum, 'Information and Records Management: Competency Profile', 2000, National Archives of Canada website: http://www.imforumgi.gc.ca/products/comp/comprofile1_e.html (accessed 16 April 2004).

[19] ARMA International, 'RIM Industry Competency Requirements: A Baseline for Education', 2000, ARMA International website: at http://www.arma.org/pdf/RIMcompetencies.pdf (Accessed 25 May 2004).

Records Working Party[20]	electronic records in archival institutions, covering identifying recordkeeping requirements, capturing records, preserving records, and accessing and retrieving records. The framework included capabilities to develop new policies and methods for digital records. It would have relevance to any archival institution (using the broad definition) dealing with digital records.
2001: Business Services Training Australia[21]	This set updated the 1997 version produced by the National Finance Industry Training Advisory Body (see above) and contained core recordkeeping competencies with performance criteria and prescribed assessment processes. Categories covered all formats of records, policy and operational tasks. It reflected continuum thinking about archives and records being a single profession. The competencies were linked directly to vocational qualifications, but unlike the 1997 set, excluded tertiary level competencies. The ASA and RMAA contributed to these competencies.
2001: Marbug Archivschule Curriculum (Germany)[22]	The curriculum for the Marbug Archives School covered a range of units and indicated extent of time for each topic. Themes included archival theory and methods, legal and organisational contexts, managing electronic records, current ICT tools and historiography.
2002: Society of American Archivists[23]	These guidelines for graduate programs in archival studies covered core archival knowledge (including theory, context, evolution of the profession) and interdisciplinary knowledge (including information technology, conservation, organisational theory). The guidelines also suggested time allocated to core subjects and nature of study (course work, research, practical experience).

[20] G4 Challenge of Electronics Records Conference, 'Challenge of Electronic Records', *G4 Challenge of Electronics Records Conference,* Canberra, Australia, 3–5 November 1999, Meeting of the National Archives institutions of Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and the United States of America, 1999 (unpublished).

[21] Business Services Training Australia, *BSB01*: *Business Services Training Package, Units of Competency Recordkeeping*, Business Services Training Australia, South Melbourne, 2001.

[22] H Scheurkogel, 'Curriculum development', *Reading the Vital Signs: Archival Training and Education in the 21st Century,* European Conference for Archival Educators and Trainers, Marbug, 24–25 September 2001, International Council of Archives website: www.ica.sae.org/mrconfpaper2.html (accessed on 22 April 2004).

[23] Society of American Archivists (SAA), 'Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies', 2002, SAA website: www.archivists.org/prof−education (accessed 14 April 2004).

Different approaches to the development of competency standards and capabilities relating to archives and records emerge from this overview. The Canadian and ARMA International competency standards include several related professions. The statements developed by the Committee on Automated Records and Techniques (CART), the G4 Electronic Records Working Party and the DLM European Monitoring Committee for digital records tried to define what is unique to the archival profession and so provide a foundation for collaboration with other professions or interests, without being subsumed by them. They addressed operational understanding and capabilities to analyse, develop partnerships and influence change at a strategic level.

The Australian perspective on continuum thinking about the archives and records being a single profession, was reflected in the 1997 and 2001 sets of Australian competency standards.[24] The collaboration of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and the Records Management Association of Australia (RMAA) on the development of the two sets of competency standards demonstrated a commitment to the continuum approach.[25]

The need to distinguish between operational and strategic approaches to learning for the archives and records profession was recognised over 10 years ago:

> All of the talk about educating archivists in information technology is a discussion of education for mature learners, people with at least one university degree, many of whom cannot abide a how-to, technique orientated approach. Rather, they need ideas to animate the thought processes they bring to every situation they face or will face in their daily work as archivists.[26]

In addition to the considerable work undertaken on developing statements of competence and capabilities, other issues facing the archival profession over the last 20 years illustrate some common threads that are relevant to competency standards and professional development.

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[24] S McKemmish, 'Yesterday, today and tomorrow: a continuum of responsibility', *Proceedings of the Records Management Association of Australia 14th National Convention*, Perth, 15–17 September 1997, pp. 18–36.

[25] Business Services Training Australia, 'Preface'; National Finance Industry Training Advisory Body, 'Preface'.

[26] T Eastwood, 'Educating archivists about information technology', *The American Archivist*, Volume 56, Number 3, Summer, 1993, p. 465.

The way adults learn in the workplace is currently receiving much attention. Environmental factors such as organisational renewal, ageing workforces, increasing mobility and the need for adults to keep learning have prompted major publications from organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.[27] Adult education authors such as Billett and Chappell, argue that adults in the workplace need time to think and reflect, not just learn the routines and achieve pre-determined outcomes. Even within a competency framework, learning should be a mixture of structured courses, modifying work arrangements, regular learning times within the work schedule and mentoring.[28]

There is continuing support in many countries for national competency standards for vocational level qualifications, delivered by institutions and training providers, including the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The focus continues to be on highly regulated learning structures, with increasing numbers of industries falling under a regime of accredited qualifications.[29]

Education has been steadily moving away from a curriculum structure that concentrated on delivering a fixed body of knowledge, and this applies equally to the archival profession. It is no longer practical to have grasped all the knowledge possible in the field. Anderson and Thomassen argue that the education process needs to help students learn how to acquire knowledge, transfer knowledge and connect learning components.[30] This is supported by

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[27] CEDEFOP, 'Getting to work on lifelong learning: policy, practice and partnership', *International Conference*, Thessaloniki, Greece, 2–3 June 2003, CEDEFOP website: www.cedefop.eu.int/current_act.asp (accessed 25 May 2004); Organisation for Economic Co–operation and Development (OECD), 'Beyond Rhetoric: Adult Learning Policies and Practices–Highlights', 2003, OECD website: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/18/57/18466358.pdf (accessed 13 May 2004).

[28] S Billett, *Learning in the Workplace: Strategies for Effective Practice*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, Sydney, 2001; Chappell, Gonczi & Hager, pp. 191–205.

[29] Australian National Training Authority, 'VET – What Is It?', 2004, ANTA website: http://www.anta.gov.au/vetWhat.asp (accessed 16 May 2004); New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA), 'National Qualifications Framework', NZQA website: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications/ (accessed 25 May 2004); Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 'Providing the Framework for National Qualifications', 2004, QCA website (United Kingdom): http://www.qca.org.uk/ (accessed 25 May 2004).

[30] K Anderson, 'Greater than the sum of the parts: educating professional recordkeepers', *Past caring: What Does Society Expect of Archivists?, Proceedings of the Australian Society of Archivists Conference*, Sydney, 13–17 August, 2002, p. 56; T Thomassen, 'Modelling and re–modelling archival education and training', *Reading the Vital Signs: Archival Training and Education in the 21st Century,* European Conference for Archival Educators and Trainers, Marburg, 24–25 September 2001, International Council of Archives website: http://www.ica–sae.org/mrconfpaper1.html (accessed 22 April 2004), p. 10.

the persistent belief in the literature that professional development needs to continue in the workplace or through professional associations once initial qualifications have been obtained.[31] Aspin and Field, writing about adult education, both explore the metaphor of banking and midwifery in relation to learning. Education is no longer a bank, passively handing out a set body of knowledge. It is more like a midwife, supportive of the efforts of the individual and encouraging a sense of purpose and achievement.[32]

The use of competency standards for course recognition and accreditation has been a recurring theme:

- The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) has used competency standards for course recognition, but this is creating concern in terms of resources and relevance.[33]

- The Society of American Archivists (SAA) guidelines on graduate archival education described course content and percentages in some detail. [34]

- Thomassen argued that professions should not be designing courses but identifying archival competencies (which I argue to be more like capabilities).[35]

- Anderson expressed concern about accreditation using competencies that were too focused on performance and did not account for the study of theoretical concepts.[36]

This overview of trends reveals changing approaches to learning and a depth and diversity of resources on curriculum development for the archives and records profession. Use of these resources for future professional

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[31] Anderson, *Issues in Professional Education*, p. 10; Cox, p.141; Eastwood, p. 465.

[32] D Aspin, 'The learning revolution: knowledge, learning, technology', *Leading & Managing*, Volume 3, Number 3, 1997, p. 185; L Field, p. 169.

[33] S McCausland, 'Accreditation: purpose, process and value', *Archives at Risk: Accountability, Vulnerability and Credibility*, *Proceedings of the Australian Society of Archivists Conference*, Brisbane, July 1999, p. 55; K Anderson & D Cuddihy, 'Consulting our constituency: an account of the Australian Archives and Records Education Stakeholders Forum, 2003', *Asia and Pacific Conference on Archival Education*, Renmin University, Beijing, 17–19 April 2004, p. 4.

[34] Society of American Archivists, p. 2.

[35] Thomassen, p. 11.

[36] Anderson, *Issues in Professional Education*, p. 10.

development initiatives should be encouraged, rather than ignored and the research work repeated.

Question 2: What are some of the uncertainties or problems with using competency standards for professional development?

Edwards and Knight, in discussing competence in relation to higher education, articulated the ongoing contest between the positivist and humanist paradigms of competence:

> The tension lies in a distinction between an emphasis on the assessment of key aspects of performance in context and an emphasis on the developing knowledge and culture of the subject or profession into which the student is being inducted.[37]

Beattie in the 1990s argued that competencies did not have to be reductionist and mechanistic, but could reflect learners' perspectives, their ethics and values.[38] This would indicate that the concept of competencies is sound, but the criticism is more directed to implementation models. The same criticisms were being made some nine years later suggesting a slow rate of change in the implementation of competency standards. Submissions to a 2003 study on skill shortages in the Australian workforce expressed concern that the:

> Competency based approach has been applied in a simplistic, mechanistic fashion, at the expense of a broader focus on foundation skills and knowledge that promotes innovative, flexible responses and problem solving.[39]

Other concerns expressed about competency standards include:

- narrow or single outcome-based learning that did not necessarily prove understanding; and

- complexity of the documentation, which sometimes exceeded the literacy abilities of those attempting to use it.[40]

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[37] A Edwards & P Knight, 'The assessment of competence in higher education', in A Edwards & P Knight (eds), *Assessing Competence in Higher Education*, Kogan Page, London, 1995, p. 19.

[38] A Beattie, 'A case study in project–based learning and competency profiling', in A Edwards & P Knight (eds), *Assessing Competence in Higher Education,* Kogan Page, London, 1995, p. 148.

[39] Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee, 'Bridging the Skills Divide', 2003, Senate website (Australia): www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eet_ctte/skills/report (accessed 1 May 2004), p. 114.

[40] Chappell, Gonzi & Hager, p.19; Field, p. 68.

Competency-based standards that focus on the ability to do set tasks, while neglecting the more general attributes such as communication, attitudes and cooperation, seem inappropriate to the concept of a profession and how professional development might be structured. There is little room in such a narrow framework for Cox's emphasis on a profession developing shared values, ethics and a sense of altruism.[41]

In 2003 the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) conducted a review of training packages, which are essentially sets of competency standards for specific industries or sectors. The review revealed how the current structure of training packages was orientated towards individual qualifications with teacher-centred learning.[42]

However, the workplace is increasingly being seen as a context driven environment, where collective ways of working and learning are used and learner-centred development is encouraged.[43] The relatively rigid structure of training packages does not facilitate learning in this changing workplace environment. Options other than training packages need to be developed to reflect the increasing diversity of learning experiences.[44] The review found evidence that the concept of competency was moving away from the traditional performance-based approach.

> The concept of skill can no longer be simply defined in terms of the knowledge and skill required for a job or occupation. The new concept includes an array of general and personal capacities and attitudes deemed essential for the world of work, in addition to job and occupational knowledge and skills.[45]

The review of training packages also found that regional contexts or environments were very important, and competency standards needed to be more readily adapted.[46] Another issue lies in the need for industry-based competencies to cover a wide spectrum of skills and knowledge. For some

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[41] Cox, p. 26.

[42] Australian National Training Authority, *High Level Review of Training Packages: An Analysis of the Current and Future Context in which Training Packages Will Need to Operate*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2003.

[43] ANTA, *Training Package Review*, p. 9.

[44] ANTA, *Training Package Review*, p. 40.

[45] ANTA, *Training Package Review*, p. v.

[46] ANTA, *Training Package Review*, p. 34; Senate, *Bridging the Skills Divide*, p.114.

organisations, such competencies may be too generic.[47] For example, following the issue of *AS ISO 15489-2002 Records Management*, the IT 46/SC11 Committee on Records Management proposed that a set of competencies be developed. This was rejected on the basis that it would be too broad to have meaning and difficult to take account of different cultural or community perspectives.[48]

3. What are some new factors in the pipeline with competencies and capabilities and archival education in general?

One of the recommendations of the 2003 Australian Senate Committee on development of skills in the Australian workforce articulated a new direction for competency standards or training packages that seems to reflect a more humanist, developmental approach, and thus closer to the concept of capabilities:

> Training packages [should] address the full range of concerns about their design and implementation, including: the need for greater focus on the development of underpinning knowledge, critical thinking and generic skills.[49]

In contrast to the highly structured, very comprehensive competency standards framework, with very detailed descriptions and performance criteria, a number of public sector jurisdictions (Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Canada) are developing sets of capabilities that do not focus on defined knowledge to perform a particular job that can be measured.[50] The key difference between capabilities and competency standards is that capabilities are developmental, future orientated in nature and seek to extend knowledge and thinking in a values-based environment, rather than seeking to reinforce current knowledge and practice. Dearstyne's belief in the need for leadership in electronic archives and records areas reflects this concept of capability:

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[47] Field p. 168.

[48] J Caldwell, member of IT46/SC11, personal communication, May 2004.

[49] Senate, *Bridging the Skills Divide*, p. 118.

[50] Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), *Public Service Leadership: Emerging Issues*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2004, p. 5.

> While retaining a strong sense of their obligations to history and posterity, leaders of programs in the electronic records and archives arenas need to exemplify the traits of the future-orientated dynamic leaders in other fields.[51]

Questions have been raised about the ability of archivists and records managers to achieve this dynamism. A survey on the temperament of archivists in Australia sought to answer these questions.[52] The results showed that the temperament of archivists in Australia is not an impediment to operating in a strategic environment, rather their traits show they can provide leadership and take their place in the strategic decision making circles of their employers.[53]

Globalisation and enabling technology offer more opportunities for archival institutions, professional associations and educators to develop partnerships with each other and with other networks, to learn from each other and tap into resources that can be shared.[54] It is critical that archives and records professionals continually look outward:

> Shared knowledge and collaboration will strengthen our profession everywhere, and will better prepare us in addressing critical archival emergencies world wide.[55]

The importance of collaboration continues. McKemmish shows how collaboration can be structured; using the continuum model to identify how different professions involved in recordkeeping in its broadest sense can move out of their traditional boundaries or dimensions and look beyond to

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[51] B Dearstyne, 'Riding the lightning: strategies for electronic records and archives programs', in B Dearstyne (ed), *Effective Approaches for Managing Electronic Records and Archives*, The Scarecrow Press, Maryland, 2002, p. 147.

[52] A Pederson, 'Understanding ourselves and others: Australian archivists and temperament', *Archives at Risk: Accountability, Vulnerability and Credibility, Proceedings of the Australian Society of Archivists Conference*, Brisbane, 29–31 July 1999, p. 61.

[53] Pederson, p. 73.

[54] Anderson & Cuddihly, p. 6; Council of Federal, State and Territory Archives (COFSTA), 'COFSTA Meeting Report' email to AusArchivist Listserve, 28 April 2004. As well as discussing education issues, this email reported that from 1 July 2004 this organisation would change its name to Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA) to better reflect the need to give attention to both archives and records management issues, and to include New Zealand.

[55] T Hickerson, 'Ten challenges for the archival profession', *The American Archivist*, Volume 64, Number 1, Spring/Summer 2001, p. 9.

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new partners. The framework and rationale are in place, the next step is how to implement them.[56]

Ivanco, in debating links between the archival and information management sector does not see that collaboration or partnerships would de-professionalise the archives and records sector, and indeed, encourages it as a way of strengthening the profession in the longer term.[57] Beghtol also sees reasons for some convergence between the sectors, but believes they should retain their domains of expertise.[58] Cunningham canvasses the issues of a future merger of the Australian Society of Archivists and the Records Management Association of Australia (RMAA) by discussing areas of collaboration.[59] Two examples of this include the Joint ASA/RMAA Education Committee and the 2003 Archives and Records Education Stakeholders (ARES) Forum, a meeting of educators, employers and professional associations, where issues of common interest and concern were debated.[60] Ultimately, however, it will be the compatibility of professional values that will determine the extent of mergers between associations, as values dictate the culture and identity of associations, which in turn inform the goals of professional development.[61]

4. What are the sources of inspiration and hope for the archives profession?
The work of the Committee on Automated Records and Techniques (CART), G4 Electronic Records Working Party and DLM European Monitoring Committee offers a new direction for how we define and develop understanding of our profession. While the focus of their work was on digital

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[56] McKemmish, p. 30.

[57] J Ivanco, 'Archival education and information management: rivals or allies?' *Reading the Vital Signs: Archival Training and Education in the 21st Century, European Conference for Archival Educators and Trainers*, Marbug, 24–25 September 2001, ICA website: www.ica.sae.org/mrconfpaper4.html (accessed 22 April 2004), p. 3.

[58] C Beghtol, 'In interesting times: from the twentieth century to the twenty–first', *The American Archivist*, Volume 64, Number 1, Spring/Summer 2001, p. 154.

[59] A Cunningham, 'What's in a name?: broadening our horizons in the pursuit of a recordkeeping profession that cherishes unity in diversity', *Archives and Manuscripts, Journal of the Australian Society of Archivists*, Volume 29, Number 1, May 2001, pp. 110–17.

[60] Archives and Records Education Stakeholders (ARES) Forum, 'Facilitator's summary', *Proceedings of the Archives and Records Education Stakeholders (ARES) Forum*, Melbourne, Australia, 12–13 June 2003, ARES Website: http://www.archivists.org.au/events/ARES2003/facilitatorssummary.html (accessed 15 May 2004).

[61] Cox, p. 27.

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records, the paradigm they presented would also be relevant for other areas of the profession. I would like to see their work used as a guide, to ensure that professional development is more than just reinforcement of current practice.

Governments are starting to pay a lot more attention to lifelong learning, to equip all agencies and groups to participate in future knowledge generation and growth. Concepts associated with lifelong learning have moved out of personal contexts to support long term economic investment strategies for our ageing population and changing labour market. The Organisation for Economic Co-peration and Development (OECD) also recently reported that higher educated people were more likely to continue learning, and that a high proportion of workplace or enterprise training focused on upgrading professional status. I believe the archives and records profession could benefit from the increased value being placed on lifelong learning.[62]

In the second half of 2004, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) is scheduled to review of the current recordkeeping competency standards. This is an opportunity for the archives and records profession to broaden the scope of competencies to the tertiary level, should there be sufficient interest by the recordkeeping industry, and also to consider how the competencies can be adapted for professional development. The review should be mindful of the concerns documented in the literature about not focusing too much on performance, but instead consider the humanist paradigm, emerging theories about adult learning and the importance of values in the learning process.[63]

AS ISO 1548–2002 Records Management has the potential to be a source for collaborative but culturally sensitive development of theory, knowledge and professional practice. This standard is the closest we have to a functional road

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[62] OECD, *Lifelong Learning Highlights*, p. 4; OECD *Policy Brief on Lifelong Learning*, p. 2. Other publications about lifelong learning include: R, Fryer (Chair), 'Learning for the 21st Century. First Report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning', 1997, Lifelong Learning website (United Kingdom): http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/nagcell/part3.htm (accessed 7 June 2004) and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 'A Policy for Continuous Learning in the Public Service of Canada', 2002, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat website: http://www.tbs—sct.gc.ca/media/nr—cp/2002/0515_e.asp (accessed 7 June 2004).

[63] Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), 'BSB01 Business Services (Recordkeeping) Training Package', 2004, ANTA website: http://www.anta.gov.au/trainingPackage.asp?qsID=304 (accessed 16 May 2004). Effective 1 July 2004, the industry training advisory functions of Business Services Training Australia (BSTA), including Training Package development, review and sales of training products, will be transferred to the Business and Innovation Industry Skills Council. The effect of this administrative change may delay the planned review, but it is still expected to proceed. More details can be found on the ANTA website: http://www.anta.gov.au/vetitabs.asp.

map for the sector and could be a starting point for designing learning frameworks.[64] If the frameworks could map back to the standard, then different cultural or community values could be reflected. The planned review of the standard may be an opportunity to explore how it could support professional development.[65]

The statement of intent arising out of the Archives and Records Education Stakeholders (ARES) Forum recognised the importance of professional development and discussed several initiatives currently being developed to help inform future directions.[66] The Forum's recommendations reflect a similar view held in the International Council of Archives (ICA) community. A recent survey by the ICA of its members' priorities for the period 2004–06 revealed that six of the seven recommendations related directly to professional development, such as:

- training and guidance in electronic records and automation of archival processes;

- promotion of professional education and research on professional responsibilities;

- training in restoration of traditional materials;

- development of archival capacity action plans, which would include professional development;

- promotion of networks or communities of practice to exchange experiences and learn from each other; and

- standards and best practice in training and education.[67]

My own hope is that the profession reflects on the nature and impact of the variety of competencies and capabilities that have been developed so far, in much more detail than has been possible in this paper. Much that has been written over the past 10–15 years is still very relevant for identifying operational and strategic level responsibilities. The writings could provide

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[64] Beattie, p. 134.

[65] International Council on Archives (ICA), 'Flash: What's New?' Number 3, April, 2004, ICA website: http://www.ica.org/biblio/Flash3E.pdf (accessed 5 June 2004).

[66] ARES Forum, p. 5.

[67] International Council on Archives (ICA), 'Flash: What's New?' Number 2, December, 2003, ICA website: http://www.ica.org/biblio/Flash2E.pdf (accessed 5 June 2004).

models for national and regional programs and help inform learning and development schemes.

The threads that have emerged from this analysis of the current and emerging landscape will help us make sure professional development supports the challenges that will face us in the future and ensure we have the foundation of skills and knowledge to support our endeavours.

Firstly, as we have seen, the language surrounding competency standards and capabilities is open to different interpretations, so it is important to define the concepts and how they will be applied to specific contexts.

Secondly, the highly regulated competency standard environment that operates predominantly for vocational education in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom needs to heed the proponents of the humanist paradigm which reflects values, cultural and geographical perspectives, and adult learning principles. The mechanistic, narrow performance on-the-job paradigm of competence should not be considered the only way to achieve learning outcomes and, as we have seen, is contradictory to current concepts of learning.

Finally, there is already a sound body of knowledge about what the profession needs to understand, so the next step is to work out how to implement the learning objectives, at operational and strategic levels. This is the aim of Part II of this paper.

Part II: Putting it all together through the design of professional development

In developing curricula for professional development, Hedstrom reflected the tensions that will continue to face the archives and records profession:

> The challenge for curriculum developers is to strike a balance between teaching known methods and techniques – built around traditional archival functions – and preparing archivists for the unknown challenges that lie ahead.[68]

The danger is to stay within comfort zones and choose strategies that only reinforce current practice, rather than engage in 'continual proactive

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[68] Hedstrom, p. 427.

learning'.[69] Learning outcomes and strategies for professional development need to consider all the issues we have discussed so far, including the:

- connections between professional principles and values;

- differences between competencies and capabilities;

- links between professional development and formal education;

- need to continually look beyond our current level of understanding; and

- need for a flexible, learner-centred approach that is appropriate in multiple contexts.

Professional development design principles

Professional development needs to abide by sound design principles, irrespective of whether or not the learning process is self-directed or facilitated. It has to work for all professionals, wherever they are located and whatever their experience and knowledge. Effective professional development programs are based on:

- professional theory and practice;

- organisational goals and values;

- adult learning principles; and

- clear outcomes that can be evaluated.

Professional development has to be applicable to different cultural environments, to help learners explore what is relevant to them. Knowledge and skills are gained through learner-centred research, reflecting cultural relativities and problem-solving, not through delivery of pre-determined content.[70] Nor is professional development a solitary process. Literature on distance and online learning is unequivocal as to the need for learners to have relationships with people, for reflection, feedback and support.[71] This contact

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[69] Dearstyne, p. 155.

[70] Aspin, p. 185; Field, p. 169; M Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species,* 3rd Edition, Gulf Publishing, Houston, 1984, p. 65.

[71] Knowles, p. 57; G Salmon, *E–moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*, Kogan Page, London, 2000; O Simpson, *Supporting Students in Open and Distance Learning,* Kogan

does not have to be face-to-face, but it has to be reflective, engaging and sustainable over time and place. Mentoring relationships are also considered essential, especially for providing dialogue between lone professionals and others.[72]

An example of a distance-based course that emphasised learner support was an in-house professional development program, *Records Management and Archives Skills Training Program*, implemented by the National Archives of Australia in 1998. This course was conducted by Monash University for over 100 Archives staff in seven offices. It was dynamic in its design, combining online debates, face-to-face discussion, group and individual work, to engage participants and encourage reflection using the new 'learn how to learn' principles. The curriculum was challenging and gave the National Archives of Australia the confidence to change direction, culminating in, amongst other achievements, the ability to produce an integrated set of new policies and procedures for recordkeeping, launched through the *e-permanence* website.[73]

Model for learning outcomes and strategies

There is no single option or pathway for professional development, so it is important to plan for different, but workable options that can be adapted as the environment and expectations change.[74] The following diagrams and explanation seeks to show how we can build different learning scenarios. Figure 1 below, shows a model with two axes as the key variables in designing professional development.

1. Learning outcomes from demonstrated performance or competence for *current needs* through to adaptive skills and knowledge or capabilities for *future challenges*.

2. Learning processes from *on-the-job* through to formal or *accredited study* leading to individual qualifications.

Page, London, 2000 ; D Rowntree, *Preparing Materials for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning*, Kogan Page, London, 1994.

[72] Anderson & Cuddihly, p. 7; ARES Forum, p. 6.

[73] National Archives of Australia, *Annual Report 1998–99*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1999, p. 13; National Archives of Australia (NAA), 'e-permanence', 2004, NAA website: http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/ (accessed 1 June 2004).

[74] Slaughter, p. 262.

Current needs

A. Competency-based learning

Outcomes

B. Workplace learning

Accredited study

Learning

paths

On the job

D. Self-directed learning

C. Reflective learning

Future challenges
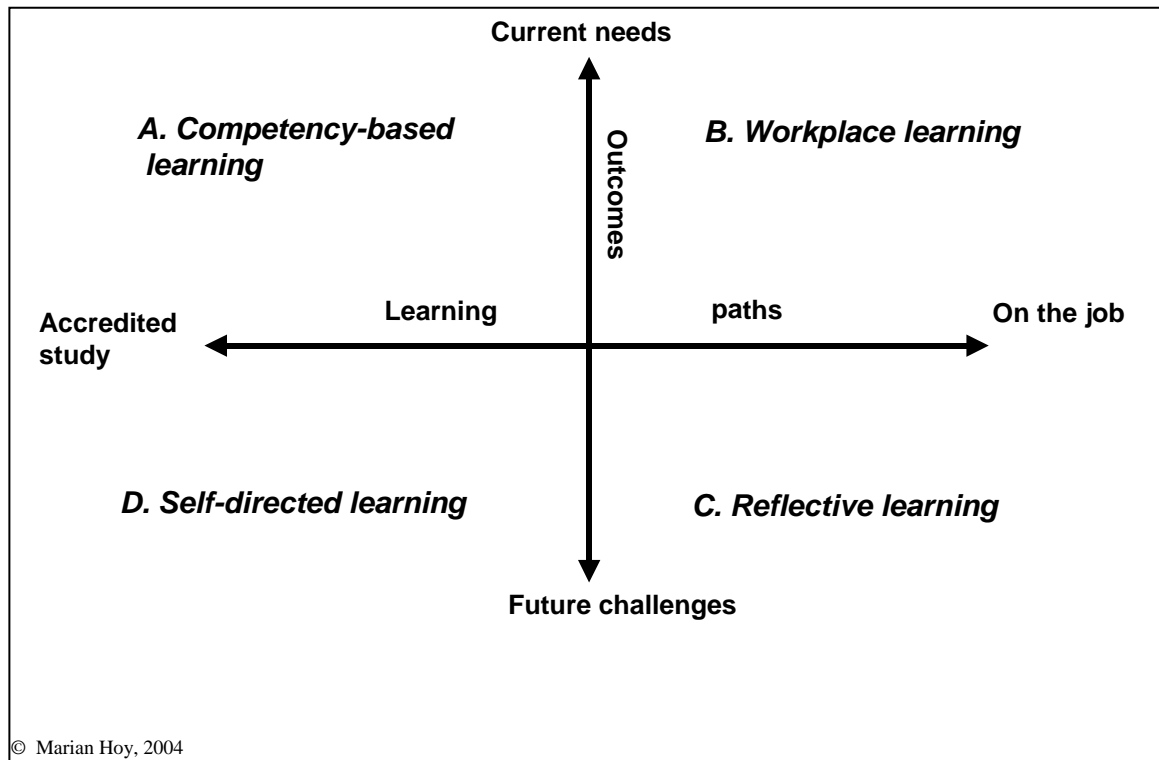
© Marian Hoy, 2004

Figure 1: Model for a learning outcomes and strategies framework

These axes produce four scenarios. Figure 2 below labels and describes the four scenarios to show the different learning approaches and types of learning strategies. There is some overlap between the approaches.
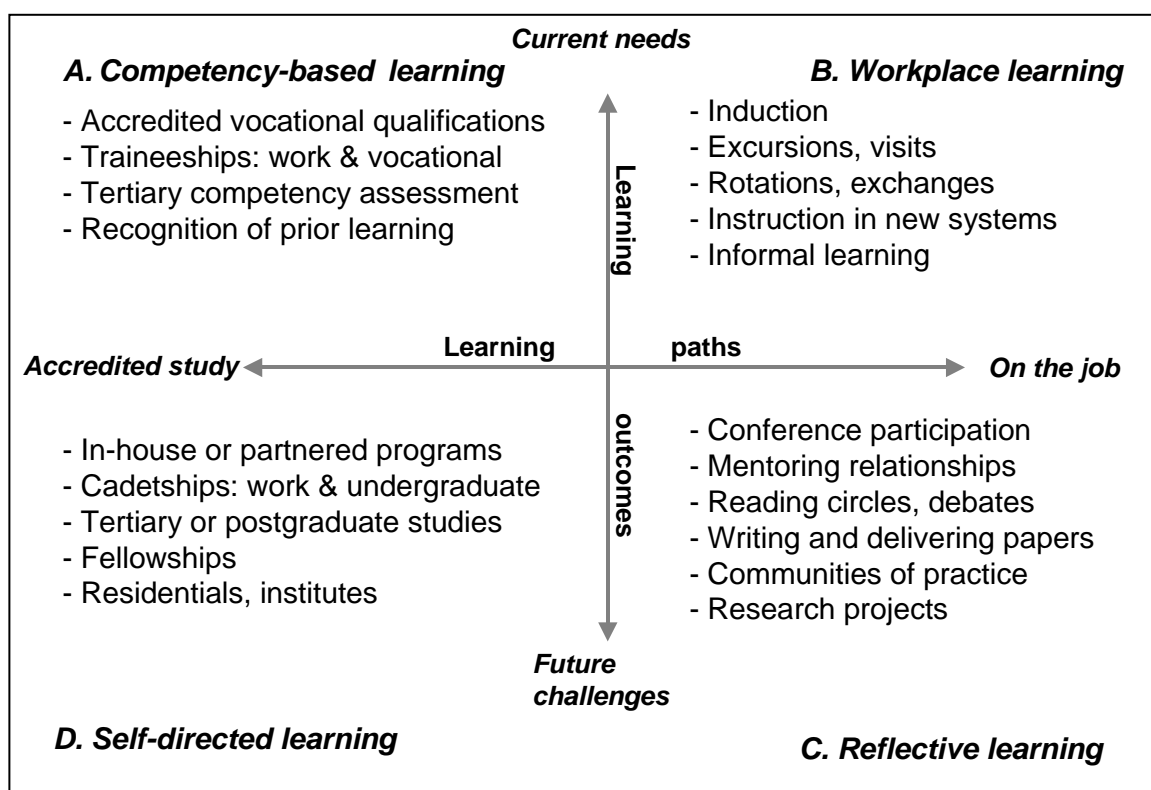
Current needs

A. Competency-based learning

- Accredited vocational qualifications
- Traineeships: work & vocational
- Tertiary competency assessment
- Recognition of prior learning

B. Workplace learning

- Induction
- Excursions, visits
- Rotations, exchanges
- Instruction in new systems
- Informal learning

Learning

Accredited study ← **Learning** **paths** → **On the job**

outcomes

- In-house or partnered programs
- Cadetships: work & undergraduate
- Tertiary or postgraduate studies
- Fellowships
- Residentials, institutes

- Conference participation
- Mentoring relationships
- Reading circles, debates
- Writing and delivering papers
- Communities of practice
- Research projects

Future challenges

D. Self-directed learning

C. Reflective learning

Figure 2: Learning outcomes and strategies framework

The four scenarios are described below.

1. *Scenario A, Competency-based learning*: This covers the vocational level qualification and training package framework, apprenticeships and traineeships, which are associated with vocational qualifications, but also with tertiary level assessment. Recognition of prior learning is normally assessed on past experience against criteria, or could be based on tertiary or vocational level learning.

2. *Scenario B, Workplace learning:* This covers most of the on-the-job strategies that we are familiar with as working professionals. The focus here is very much on current practice. One danger with this type of learning is that it can become the only focus of learning.

3. *Scenario C, Reflective learning:* This covers strategies that seek to develop capability, challenge theory and practice, and generate new knowledge. These strategies would be familiar to those undertaking professional development through employers or professional associations. Learning is collaborative and knowledge is shared.

4. *Scenario D, Self-directed learning*: This covers the more formal education at the tertiary or post-appointment level. Similar to Scenario C, it is about extending and challenging knowledge, theory and practice. It is learning that leads to individual accreditation or formal qualifications.

Once these options are fully developed, paths can be plotted through one or more of the four scenarios to develop programs that meet the desired outcomes. The options can change according to different contexts and choices. For example, newly recruited graduates in the National Archives of Australia:

- will undergo an induction (workplace learning);

- have on-the-job rotations (workplace learning);

- may complete a course in project management (competency-based learning);

- have a mentor (reflective learning); and

- may complete postgraduate qualifications (self-directed learning).

An archival institution wishing to develop a program to cover a particular issue, such as managing digital records, could use this framework to map the different kinds of roles and experiences that are needed, such as:

- development of leadership capabilities for managers through research projects, mentoring others and giving external presentations (reflective learning);

- intensive residentials for experienced practitioners to challenge and even change theory (self-directed learning); and

- competency-based courses for understanding the basics of managing digital records when new systems are implemented (competency-based learning).

The need for multiple approaches, especially in relation to managing digital records is emphasised by Dearstyne:

> No single book, report, seminar, university course, or research/development initiative will produce the unique set of tools to adequately deal with all aspects of electronic records and archives management.[75]

By considering different approaches, programs could consist of a variety of strategies, depending on the desired outcomes. The framework could help establish what kind of partnerships would be best matched with different strategies, such as educational institutions for accredited learning, cross-institution initiatives for research projects, and a mentoring scheme for new or

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[75] Dearstyne, p. 155.

lone professionals. Walch explores in some detail the links between learning objectives, delivery methods and possible partnerships, specific to digital records, but relevant to all aspects of archives and records.[76]

Mapping standards

As well as choosing strategies, there must be some way of ensuring the content is relevant and meets organisational goals, and current internal or external professional principles. One effective way of doing this is through mapping functions within an organisation to those principles. In Table 2 below, two units of competency from the *BSB01Business Services (Recordkeeping) Training Package* have been mapped to the work environment of the National Archives of Australia.[77] This mapping process could drill down to a more detailed level than is presented here and have different starting points.

Table 2: Mapping organisational goals and functions to standards

National Archives of Australia goal or outcome[78]	National Archives of Australia guiding source of knowledge/ policy [79]	AS ISO 15489.1 -2002 Records Management[80]	BSB01 Business Services (Recordkeeping) Training Package[81]
Managing the collection: To develop the collection and increase its accessibility	CRS System Policy Statement, CRS Manual Transfer, Location and Lending User Guide	9.3 Records capture 9.4 Registration 9.8 Tracking	*Control records*: Work required to classify, register and track records and information about records within a business or records system.

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[76] Walch, p. 490.

[77] Business Services Training Australia; National Archives of Australia, *Corporate Plan: 2004 to 2006*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2004.

[78] National Archives of Australia, *Corporate Plan.*

[79] National Archives of Australia, 'e-permanence' website. The *Transfer, Location and Lending User Guide* is a procedure for internal use by Archives' staff.

[80] Standards Australia, *AS ISO 15489–2002 Records Management*, Standards Australia International, Sydney, 2002.

[81] Business Services Training Australia.

Supporting good recordkeeping: To improve recordkeeping practices across the Australian Government	The DIRKS Manual: A Strategic Approach to Managing Business Information	8.4 Design and implementation methodology	*Prepare a functional analysis for an organisation*: Processes of identifying, defining the boundaries of, and analysing the function(s), activities and transactions of an organisation or business unit.

Once this mapping is completed to whatever level is relevant to the organisation or specific program, it can help determine the right mix of curriculum, audience and learning strategies. This kind of mapping exercise was undertaken by National Archives staff as a prelude to the in-house professional development program *Records Management and Archives Skills Training Program*, mentioned above. Staff mapped their roles to the different levels of the 1997 set of archives and records competencies. It was a challenging exercise, but as a participant, I can say that it helped link our work to a common standard which, in turn, helped the course developers tailor the curriculum and strategies.

The combination of sound design and relevant content, derived from mapping roles and functions to common standards or principles, offers an integrated approach to professional development. This approach will help to:

- make sure the design and content suits the purpose and the roles performed within archival institutions;

- facilitate review in the event of standards changing; and

- enable systematic evaluation of expectations and achievements.

Evaluation

Archival institutions (including professional associations) should evaluate the success of professional development and critically reflect on the program's relevance to organisational goals and values.[82] Evaluation of professional

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[82] Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) & Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), 'Building Capability: A Framework for Managing Learning and Development in the Australian Public Service', APSC website: http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications03/capability.htm (accessed 11 June 2004), p. 24; Cox, p. 143.

development must be built into the design process, to measure quality and effectiveness, not just numbers of students and funds allocated.[83]

A report into recruitment and training in the Australian Public Service emphasised the lack of evaluation in public sector training and education. One area identified in the report as lacking was evaluation of the long term effects of programs, as most evaluations relied on the more immediate participant response.[84] This concern is echoed by Kelly who recommends four levels of evaluation:

1. *participant reaction* through the evaluation forms;

2. *learning through feedback* to identify what participants thought they had learnt;

3. *behaviours and attitudes* through longer term feedback on what participants did once back in their own workplaces; and

4. *impact on the organisation* through strategic level assessment of longer term benefits of educational programs.[85]

There are numerous other evaluation models which can be accessed. Qualitative evaluation models suggest that we ask reflective questions that consider the wider context of the particular program. Such models should gather information by asking questions about what is working and what is not, rather than only what happened.[86] For professional development, evaluation could ask questions like:

- Is the professional development program continuing to be relevant to the organisation and to the profession?

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[83] OECD, *Lifelong Learning Highlights*, p. 10.

[84] Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee, 'Recruitment and Training in the Australian Public Service', 2003, Senate website (Australia): http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/fapa_ctte/aps_recruit_training/index.htm (accessed 24 May 2004), p. 145.

[85] D Kelly, 'Planning and running events', in P Kahn & P Baume (eds), *A Guide to Staff and Educational Development*, Kogan Page, London, 2003, p. 49.

[86] APSC & ANAO; J Owen & P Rogers, *Program Evaluation: Forms and Approaches*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney, 1999; D Baume, 'Monitoring and evaluating staff and educational development', in P Kahn & P Baume (eds), *A Guide to Staff and Educational Development*, Kogan Page, London, 2003, p. 93.

- Are employees or association members changing, and do they have different expectations?

- What is happening in the profession or in other environments that is not being covered in the program?

Conclusion

If competency standards are seen as inflexible, and unresponsive to different work environments, constantly changing practices and new challenges, they will be rejected as irrelevant for professional development. They will also be rejected in tertiary or vocational institutions. We must guard against narrow, mechanistic competency standards being the only measure of learning, as these will not help the archives and records profession adapt to new challenges and remain viable into the future.

Archival institutions working with competency standards for professional development must make sure their objectives are clear and that any frameworks they develop do not stifle enthusiasm for learning or offer chequered, unconnected pathways. Archival institutions want expertise, but they also need thinkers who will use foresight to explore plausible futures or directions. If competency standards are to be useful to the profession in the long term, they have to support critical thinking about concepts and procedures and accept that these cannot be measured through demonstrated performance or quantitative indicators alone.

Archival institutions also need some kind of statement about core archival principles to underpin the reasons for engaging in professional development, and to provide a framework for designing programs that challenge and renew theory and practice.[87]

I believe Beghtol best answers why professional development must challenge theory and practice, be innovative and take us out of our comfort zones. Beghtol reflects that information professionals (in which she includes archivists) have the responsibility for 'guiding society and its institutions safely through the shoals of the technology and information revolutions', and that the profession needs to demonstrate its 'intellectual, technical and ethical competencies to the rest of society'.[88] Extending Beghtol's metaphor just a little further, professional development is like Doctor Stephen Maturin in the motion picture *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*. He cared for and nurtured young Midshipman William Blakeney as a mentor, but he also

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[87] Eastwood, p. 465.

[88] Beghtol, pp. 55–56.

challenged Captain Jack Aubrey, questioned his motives and decisions, and forced him to rethink his goals and values. The relationship between the Doctor and Captain was tested, but they continued debating and showed the courage to learn from each other.[89]

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[89] *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, (motion picture), Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, distributed by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment South Pacific, Sydney, 2003, starring Russell Crowe and Paul Bettany. This motion picture was based on a series of novels by Patrick O'Brian.

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