

Archivist

Decide what a country, a company or a family keeps forever, then make sure people can find it.

TYPICAL PAY

\$64,550

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$111k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 7 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Universities, museums,
government archives, companies,...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
History, English and any computer class. Volunteer at a local historical society or library to see whether the work suits you.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
History, English, American studies or anything that teaches you to read old documents carefully. A second language helps.
- 3 Master's degree** 2 years
Usually a Master of Library and Information Science with an archives concentration, sometimes a master's in history or public history. The Society of American Archivists keeps a directory of archival education programs.
- 4 Practicum, internship or assistantship** During school
Processing a real collection end to end is what gets you hired. Do this during the master's, not after.
- 5 First professional job** After graduation
Often a grant-funded processing position. Expect to move for it.

Pros and cons

- + You handle real history with your hands
- + Calm, focused, largely indoor work
- + Public sector jobs come with pensions and loan forgiveness
- A master's degree for a median around \$64,000
- Lots of temporary grant-funded jobs before a permanent one
- You will probably have to move for work

Good to know

The founding documents live in an archive

The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are held by the National Archives and Records Administration and displayed in its rotunda in Washington. Archivists, not curators, a...

The job is mostly deciding what to discard

Archivists call it appraisal. Only a small slice of any organization's paperwork is worth keeping forever, and choosing that slice is the most consequential thing an archivist does. Everything future histori...

Optional boosts

Digital preservation. Records management. Audiovisual and film archives. Oral history.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Archivists (25-4011.00)

Society of American Archivists

Academy of Certified Archivists: get certified

National Archives and Records Administration: careers

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/archivist>



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