

Evolution of Archival Education in a Small But Complex Country Called Switzerland: Multipurpose and Threefold Approach

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ABSTRACT

As a professional in archives and a part time professor in Records management, I have noted that the attitude towards archives is changing, although slower than I wished, nowadays. To follow up with the needs of administrations and institutions, we have created different levels of education in Switzerland, which cover three main areas of responsibilities, apprenticeship, technical school (Hautes Ecoles) and post-graduate university level. Although they give a threefold sound training in archives, librarianship and documentation, they still do not match the real needs of institutions when it comes to records management. Due to new regulations on information, access, privacy, transparency, records management and quality ISO standards, organizations feel more and more obliged to include this aspect of management for good governance and citizen accountability. They often count on information managers and IT specialists to implement electronic tools, without thinking to include information specialists, like archivists and records managers, in the process. That is what we have to focus on in the near future, in order to fill a gap that Human Resources departments are looking for but do not really realize yet... : 1) specific education in records management, with hands-on experience and social skills, 2) advertising of such profiles in the appropriate professional networks.

Evoluzione della formazione archivistica in un paese piccolo ma complesso chiamato Svizzera: un approccio polivalente e triplice

SINTESI

Per essere al passo con le esigenze delle amministrazioni e delle istituzioni, gli esperti in scienza dell'informazione hanno creato diversi livelli di istruzione in Svizzera, che coprono tre principali aree di responsabilità, apprendistato, scuola di specializzazione (Hautes Ecoles) e livello universitario post-laurea. Sebbene diano una formazione polivalente e triplice in archivistica, biblioteconomia e documentazione, non corrispondono ancora alle esigenze reali delle istituzioni quando si tratta di gestione dei *records*. Questo è ciò su cui archivisti e *records managers* devono concentrarsi nel prossimo futuro, al fine di colmare un vuoto e creare una nicchia specializzata che le istituzioni devono includere nella loro gestione globale per il buon governo e la responsabilità verso i cittadini. Nuovi corsi offriranno una formazione specifica in records management come quarto campo distinto, con esperienza pratica e competenze in campo sociale, che sarà pubblicizzato nei network professionali appropriati.

Evolucija arhivskega izobraževanja v majhni in kompleksni državi z imenom Švica: večnamenski in trojni pristop

IZVLEČEK

Da bi lahko sledili potrebam administracije in institucij, so strokovnjaki s področja informacijskih znanosti v Švici razvili tri različne nivoje izobraževanja, in sicer vajeništvo, tehnične šole in podiplomski univerzitetni študij. Čeprav v arhivih, knjižnicah in dokumentacijskih centrih ponujajo večnamenski in trojni pristop pri izobraževanju, ta na področju upravljanja z dokumentarnim gradivom še vedno ne ustreza dejanskim potrebam institucij. Arhivisti in osebe, ki upravljajo z dokumentarnim gradivom se morajo v prihodnosti osredotočiti na to problematiko, da bi ustvarili specializirano nišo in jo zapolniti tako, da jih bodo institucije lahko vključile v svoj globalni management za dobro vodenje in odgovornost državljanom. Novi študijski programi, ki se bodo oglaševala v ustreznih strokovnih krogih, bodo ponujali specifično izobraževanje na področju upravljanja z dokumentarnim gradivom kot drugačen, četrti nivo izobraževanja, ki bo vključeval praktične izkušnje in druga družbena znanja.

Evolution de la formation archivistique dans un pays petit mais complexe appelé la Suisse: approche polyvalente et triple

SYNTHÈSE

Dans le but de répondre aux besoins des administrations et des institutions, les professionnels des sciences de l'information ont créé différents niveaux d'éducation en Suisse qui couvrent trois champs de responsabilités: l'apprentissage, les Hautes Ecoles et le niveau universitaire post-grade. Bien qu'ils proposent des formations polyvalentes et triples en archivistique, bibliothéconomie et documentation, celles-ci ne correspondent pas encore aux besoins réels des institutions lorsqu'il s'agit de *records management*. C'est sur cette formation que les archivistes et les *records managers* doivent se concentrer dans un proche avenir, afin de combler les lacunes et de créer un créneau spécialisé que les institutions ont besoin d'inclure dans leur gestion globale pour assurer une bonne gouvernance et la transparence envers les citoyens. De nouveaux cours offriront une formation spécifique en records management en tant que quatrième domaine distinct, avec des exercices pratiques et des compétences sociales, qui sera annoncée dans les réseaux professionnels appropriés.

The land of the Swiss, Switzerland, born of three little rural areas in 1291, is neutral and not part of the European economic union. It has three main national languages, German, French and Italian, plus a very old one spoken in Grisons, Romansch of rhaeto-romance origin. Its educational system is also very different from surrounding countries, as it is a federation of 26 "cantons" or counties having the autonomy to organize themselves. Three levels of authorities apply, the federal for the administration in Bern and general topics like foreign affairs, cantonal for matters of the region and municipal rights for every city. Three is also the magic figure for the number of levels of education that have been created in archival science, after decades of "hands-on" and "in-house" training.

Professional positions in historical archival repositories, like the cantonal archives, were few and taken by historians with a university background. Some of them had gone to the French Ecole des Chartes or the German Institute of Marbourg, but most of them had learned the trade in an empirical way. Although the field of librarianship was well organized, the archivists did not feel the need of having a specific training, as the possibilities of work were scarce. In smaller institutions, the archives were mainly the responsibility of administrative staff.

With the widening of the archival field, the need of having professional training was felt and the Swiss Association of Archivists (AAS) was the first, in 1954, to organize annual work days on specific topics. In 1976, the AAS training commission started an introductory course for young professionals, lasting one or two weeks (first called "Einführungskurs", than "Grundkurs") and giving a general overview of the different aspects of the profession. The cantonal archives prepared basic courses on how to manage archives for the administrative staff of local municipalities, in order to receive well-prepared fonds and series of documents.

Training in Geneva: first full archival program

With the hiring of a younger generation of archivists, some having done their training abroad, the latent idea of creating a proper school training resurfaced. This became possible in 1990, when the venerable School of librarians, founded in 1918 in Geneva, became the Ecole Supérieure d'Information Documentaire (ESID). In order to answer the need of middle management in information centres, and expand job opportunities, the School decided to create a multipurpose training, wider than traditional librarianship, that included a full program in the three areas of librarianship, archives and documentation (or reference) services¹.

As planned, the archival program was assessed in 1993 and a professional archivist was finally hired full time to join the permanent staff. The archival part of the program has been developed with a group of active local archivists and is regularly modified in order to follow the evolution of the profession.

Basic notions are usually taught the first school year: definitions, principles, history, introduc-

1. François BURG, *Archivistique et polyvalence professionnelle: dix ans de formation en archivistique à Genève*, "Arbido", 7-8(2000), pp. 17-20.

tion to management of archives. The second year, records management and its cycle is shown: detailed study of the management of archives from its creation to its public access, with a practical seminar of filing and description. An internship of minimum two months is asked at this time. Students interested in archives usually choose it in the field to get experience and get to know archivists who might help them find a job at the end of their studies. The third year brings more specificity: institutional archives, audiovisual and electronic archives, relationship with history, etc.

Apart from the permanent professor, many professionals teach regularly, bringing their practical experiences to the young students. They form a dynamic and cohesive team of practitioners coming from the French and German part, and also from France, who have supported and pushed the recognition of the archival training in the institutional world. Teachers rely on theories and methods elaborated in other federal countries, like the USA and Australia, similar in a certain pragmatism. The other important influence is archival science from Québec. The concept of records management, the integrated cycle of the life of the document has become a milestone in the program. This influence is spreading, even for non-French speakers coming from the German and Italian part of Switzerland, who have different traditions.

The HEG included the Bologna standards in its curriculum and accordingly modified its general program. It has even created a bilingual course for German and French speakers. Its goal is not to specialize in one of the three branches but allow students to have a general view of the similarities and differences and be able to work in any of the three professional sectors when they finish their studies. Moreover, eighty percent of the job offers on the market are in the area of librarianship. For those who have found a regular job in archives, it is usually in private institutions, international organisations and public administration².

Reorganisation of the professional training in Switzerland

In 1993, the Federal Council of Switzerland announced its intention to reorganize and upgrade professional training by creating new professional schools of university level, called “Hautes Écoles Spécialisées” or HES, in German “Fachhochschule”, and thus challenged local customs in which schools and other institutions gave diplomas that were not even recognized in neighbouring “cantons”. All the stakeholders of the information science profession met to discuss the possible opportunities offered by such HES in their field. The Task Force, including the three professional associations (AAS, ASD, BBS)³, the School of Geneva and the Engineering School of Coire, in the Eastern part of Switzerland, proposed a training master plan, which organized the whole information science profession in three levels of education, of which the HES was the central focus. For the first and unique time, the three professional associations in the field organized a common Congress in Lausanne in 1994. They adopted the master plan in mutual agreement⁴.

Benefits of such training were expected to give great results, as in the information field, education used to result in a patchwork of degrees delivered by associations or “cantons”, not at all structured at national level. This reorganisation allowed recognition at the federal level, and, hopefully in the long term compliancy with European professional education.

2. <http://www.hesge.ch/heg/formation-base/bachelors-science/specialiste-information-documentaire/> (last visit on June 15th, 2011).

3. AAS: Association des Archivistes Suisses, Associazione degli archivisti svizzeri, Verein Schweizerischer Archivarinnen und Archivare, Uniuon da las archivarias e dals archivaris svizzers. ASD (Association suisse des documentalistes) and BBS (Association des bibliothèques et bibliothécaires suisses) became a joint association in 2008 called «BIS» (Bibliothèque Information Suisse).

4. François BURGÉ – Barbara ROTH-LOCHNER, *Les Archives en Suisse ou la fureur du particularisme*, “Archives”, 34(2002-2003), nn. 1-2, pp. 37-80.

The 1994 master plan established three levels of education, still valid today:

Level	Access Conditions	Training Site	Delivered Degree
1	After compulsory school	Work site + professional school 1 or 2 days a week, during 3 years	CFC – Federal Certificate of Capacity
2	CFC + professional maturity or “maturité gymnasiale” + 1 year of professional experience (internship)	HES - Hautes Ecoles spécialisées, 3 years	HES diploma
3	HES diploma or University degree	HES or Universities	Postgraduate diploma

The two first levels, CFC and HES offer a threefold education in librarianship, documentation and archival science. This solution was chosen as the most suitable to the size of the country and the most favorable for future graduates in terms of job opportunities. The third level, post-graduation, offers a more specialized training, either specific to one of the three professions, or transverse to all of them.

The three professional associations and the existing schools presented the master plan to the Confederation. It allowed the creation of an information science branch of the HES in 1996, and therefore the creation of the apprenticeship as well⁵. The first students started in 1998, as assistants in information science (CFC level) and specialists in information science (HES level).

Level 1 - “Assistants” in information science, 1998 (now “agents” since the class of 2009)

The system of apprenticeship after compulsory school is a well-established tradition in Switzerland, especially for craft and commercial professions. Libraries and archives employ many commercial CFC holders as secretaries and all kinds of assistants. The creation of a specific CFC has been conceived as a necessary response to the need of staff specifically trained for the three professions⁶.

All CFC students must first find an employer in a library, archive or documentation center. It is a dual system where they work for three years as apprentices in an institution while following one or two days courses per week. They have exams each year and receive a federal certificate of capacity in information science at the end of their studies.

The first courses were given in Lausanne in 1998 for the French-speaking part of Switzerland, Zurich for the German part and Lugano for the Italian part. Due to an increasing number of candidates, Bern has started to organize courses, as well as Geneva in 2010. In the first years of its existence, many non-professional employees who had worked for years in a repository took the opportunity to register in this training and receive the CFC degree, although they were not so young. Nowadays most of the students start at around 15 or 16 years old.

The three associations have direct control on this education, particularly on the elaboration of the program and the exams. As archives are always the smallest part of the program, the Swiss Association of Archivists had to step in strongly to make things change.

The new law on professional education at federal level has resulted in new regulations for apprenticeship in general, which has induced changes also in the field of information science. The ap-

5. Regula NEBIKER TOEBAK, *Archivarische Aus- und Weiterbildung in der Schweiz*, In *Pratiques archivistiques en Suisse*, Baden 2007, pp. 231-249.

6. <http://www.ausbildung-id.ch/> (last visit on June 15th, 2011).

prenticeship is now called “agent I+D” since 2009. Here is a description of the responsibilities of an agent:

He/she performs routine tasks in his/her workplace, particularly in the following areas

- acquisition and disposal,
- classification and simple description,
- conditioning and preservation,
- reference service to users,
- checking and audits,
- administrative work.

He/she assists the professional staff in its work.

Level 2 - Specialists in information science, HES 1998

When the Confederation announced its decision to recognize the sector of information science in the HES system, it had to decide where to locate it in Switzerland. The ESID school of Geneva took naturally the lead for the French part, as it was already well established.

The situation in the German part was more delicate. The School of Coire was finally chosen, against Luzern, as the Federal administration wanted to promote peripheral regions. This situation created a difficult beginning for the School, as it had difficulties recruiting professors and gaining credibility. Nowadays it is a recognized HES of Eastern Switzerland.

The passage of the ESID School of Geneva into the HES system brought good value to the profession. It came with a team of permanent and part time professional teachers and a sound educational program. From 1500 hours, it was increased to 2500 hours, including strengthening technical, management and computing disciplines. More general culture and languages were included, as well as project management in the third year, leading to a final dissertation.

The teaching in archival matters also gained from the change, increasing its program to 250 hours, and including new preservation courses. If all the parallel subjects that contributed to the education of an archivist were taken into account, like computing, management, project management, the year 2000 amounted to a total of 1900 hours of intensive training.

The School of Geneva underwent a big structural change when all HES had to adjust to the Bologna agreements. Studies organized by modules, students having to follow the credit system, which allowed them to modulate their individual career and obtain a Bachelor degree: that was the challenge of the new class of 2005. It also opened the possibility to study one year abroad, with the Erasmus grant. Many students have already gone to Germany, Italy or Great Britain.

Very dynamic, the HEG-ID regularly improves its program according to the needs of the profession and, always keeping in mind the multipurpose approach of teaching librarianship, archives and documentation, now thinks of reorganizing the program of studies in two freer phases: common basic matters for the first two years and specialized modules to choose from in the third year, in order to allow students interested in a particular subject to study it more in depth.

Level 3 – Postgraduate studies

From 1987 to 2009, 11 classes followed a two-year program at the University of Geneva, called CESID (University Diploma in Continuing Studies in Information Science), especially designed for BBS librarians and university students who wanted to acquire management skills in the profession. The archival field was barely mentioned. It was supported by the HES and the University of Geneva, but stopped in 2009 when new postgraduate programs were created.

Unlike other countries, there is no university degree in archival sciences in Switzerland. Senior executives, like directors of cantonal archives, still come from a History background, with a master or PHD in their hands, and years of practice behind them. The Swiss Association of Archivists⁷, wanting

7. <http://www.vsa-aas.org/fr/> (last visit on June 15th, 2011).

to improve the professionalization of archival science and theoretical education for senior management in big administrations, created a working group on the matter in 1999. It resulted in the launch of a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Archival Science supported by the University of Lausanne, with the help of the universities of Bern and Geneva. There were two editions, starting in 2002 and 2004, specifically for working archivists with a history degree. The certificate included 200 hours dispatched on three semesters, with four modules organized on fundamental subjects like archival methods, information science, theoretical basis and records management⁸.

Supported by AAS and important Swiss institutions, it was considered as a first step towards education taught at university level. Courses and professional literature were given in three languages by local and foreign professors (German, French and English).

The University of Bern took over and offers since October 2006 a two-phase training program. The whole program leads to the degree of Master of Advanced Studies in Archival, Library and Information Science (MAS ALIS). The first part brings to the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Archival, Library and Information Science (CAS ALIS)⁹. It replaces the certificate recognized by the University of Lausanne, which supports this new program jointly with Bern.

The continuing education program is designed for people with a university degree, or an equivalent level, and who wish to acquire, while working, training based on archival and information sciences and who are future-oriented. Their goal is to qualify for executive positions in an archive, library or as information managers in an administration or a business¹⁰.

The HES of Geneva, analyzing the possible job market and willing to increase the offer of the Bologna system, has also created since 2008 a consecutive Master of Science in Information. Unique possibility in the French part of Switzerland, it offers a specialization in strategic management, organization of big structures like multinationals, NGOs and institutional libraries. It is meant for students who have a Bachelor degree or university students who want to specialize in the profession (in that case they have to follow a program of 60 credits before joining the master program, in order to study the basics of information science). It will enable graduates to make a career in the field of information science as senior managers¹¹.

The HES of Coire is working on a similar proposal to provide additional knowledge with a Master degree¹².

Perspectives and concerns: a fourth level, a fourth branch?

In several decades, the archival education in Switzerland has evolved from a very practical profession learned “in house”, with no centralized structure, to an elaborate threefold program concerning three kinds of students, young apprentices, specialists with a Bachelor and university Master students. Some programs are very practical and are meant to train practitioners who will assist others in basic tasks, others are more theoretical and are meant to train future managers in organizational skills. Swiss task forces had moreover to work with two different educational logics, the federal master plan of three levels, which had to be later conjugated with the Bologna agreement, subdivided in two levels, bachelor and continuous master.

Most of the programs cover the study of the life cycle of documents in its later phases, preservation of media and organization of repositories. The electronic media is becoming a real concern for everyone and educational programs are making an effort to update accordingly. The same is true with new laws on access and right to information, versus protection of personal data, that are passed in

8. Gilbert COUTAZ, *Le Certificat de formation continue en archivistique et en sciences de l'information: une étape obligatoire et de référence*, In *Actualité archivistique suisse. Travaux du certificat en archivistiques et sciences de l'information*, Baden 2008, pp. 13-16.

9. <http://archivistique.ch/frz/index.html> (last visit on June 15th, 2011).

10. Gilbert COUTAZ, Gaby KNOCH-MUND and Peter TOEBACK, *Introduction*, In *Sciences de l'Information: théorie, méthode et pratique. Travaux du Master of Advanced Studies in Archival and Information Science, 2006-2008*, Baden 2010, pp. 11-24.

11. <http://www.hesge.ch/heg/formation-base/masters-science/> (last visit on June 15th, 2011).

12. <http://www.fh-htwchur.ch/en/htw/informationswissenschaft/> (last visit on June 15th, 2011).

many countries nowadays. The management of contemporary archives on one side and current and semi-current archives in institutions, on the other side, is also starting to be studied, linked as well to the shortening of access periods.

The visibility of the profession is increasing slowly in the professional world, but not as it should as its mission is still unclear for most of the employers. They don't seem to know that these aspects can be dealt by a part of archival science called records management. Although Swiss education gives a threefold sound training in archives, librarianship and documentation, it still does not match the real needs of institutions when it comes to records management. Unlike the United States or Australia, there is no separation of terms or training in the matter of archives and/or records management up to now.

Due to new regulations on information, access, privacy, transparency, records management and quality ISO standards, administrations and businesses feel more and more obliged to include these aspects of management for good governance and citizen accountability. They often count on information managers and IT specialists to implement electronic tools, without thinking to include information specialists, like archivists and records managers, in the process.

Job offers in traditional repositories don't come often, especially nowadays with the budgetary crisis tending to reduce the number of employees in administrations. The potentiality of job opportunities lies more in public and private institutions having to deal with paper and electronic current and semi-current archives in their offices. The need for records managers, currently still latent, will manifest itself more and more during the next five to ten years. The success of the Information Society strongly depends on records management and knowledge management. There are still very few professionals working in this field and having the necessary expertise. Governments, businesses and other organizations are in the process of setting up projects and related posts. Continuing education opportunities will therefore be increasingly looked for and appreciated by a wider audience.

Some suggestions and latest developments

This aspect of records management (RM) education needs to be focused on in the near future, to answer crucial needs in business, widen the scope of the profession and open the possibility of a strong niche to be filled by specialized students. Human resources departments are looking for that kind of profile, but they don't know how to call it or where to send their job offers... especially when they do not have an archivist in the institution to advise them.

Two main actions have to be undertaken to improve the training and knowledge of records management. First, create specific education in RM as a fourth main branch. RM is often only taught in one or two theoretical modules in archival programs. It needs to offer practical modules with hands-on experience, allowing students to work with EDRM systems (Electronic Documents and Records Management) and vendors, write RFP (request for proposals), create filing plans and retention schedules, etc. The education should also focus on social skills, as the archivist or records manager / officer is bound to be proactive and work in the beginning of the life cycle of documents, which means meet employees in their offices and propose strategic changes in the document management process.

The second action should be to advertise and network the profession in areas that are only slightly linked to information science, and increase the awareness of its enlarged possibilities. The time of discretion and low profile is gone... Through public relations, political circles, audits, professional networks, associations of municipal secretaries, presidents of private organizations, commercial and international schools, it should be possible to widen the offer corresponding to the increasing needs of specialists in private and public businesses.

The awareness of such needs has pushed a couple of schools to create more specific studies in records management at the level of a Certificate of Advanced Studies in RM. Is this a fourth level in the Swiss master plan, or a third one in the Bologna system, the question can be asked. The result is that archivists, IT specialists or municipal secretaries, for example, could and should follow this training, gain practical skills to implement an EDRMS in their institution, or create a team with shared skills to improve business process management for their electronic records.

The School of Business in Olten¹³ has created a certificate course in German, “CAS in information and records management”, which is self funded, as all CAS are. Its goal is to implement integration and transparency in everyday business. The course combines two interconnected issues that are of great importance for any kind of organization: how can the proper storage of business-related documents be implemented with the help of modern IT and how can (finally) the right information, at the right time, at the right place and in the right format be provided?

The focus of the program is on management of unstructured information, i.e. different formats of text documents, images, audio and video files. It also means to ensure a professional storage and digital archiving related to legal requirements. Document management is also studied as it should not be considered in isolation but as part of a comprehensive information management (which includes also well-structured data) and be integrated into the business process management of a company.

The HES of Geneva is also proposing a new Certificate of Advanced Studies in RM, starting in autumn 2011¹⁴. If the first class is ready to continue, the project manager of the HES will also create a Diploma and a Master in RM (DAS and MAS) to allow students to specialize in depth and be able to do a capacity check of their own institution at the end of their studies. A scientific committee, composed of Swiss and foreign specialists, has been appointed. Languages will be French and English mostly. This CAS is designed for people working in enterprises or public authorities that are in direct or indirect contact with the records management and knowledge management of the company and wish to acquire necessary theoretical, methodical and practical tools.

The goal of the course is for participants to design, implement and manage programs and projects of records management within their company or government agency. They will learn to control the processes and architectural systems, define the classification schemes and retention schedules, organize informational regulations and choose the right document and record management systems. They will understand the sociological, political, economic, technical and legislative contexts and be able to bring business information in structured and non-structured form under control.

Education in information science in this small but complex country called Switzerland is multipurpose and threefold, archives, librarianship and documentation. It has undergone a tremendous evolution in the last 20 years and continues to search ways, in a more structured way and at the federal level, to improve and update itself in a quick changing world. A fourth domain, records management, should be highlighted to answer new urgent business needs. Records management has to develop itself as an interdisciplinary field, e.g. in relation with knowledge management, computer science, organizational science, business management, quality management, business economy and human resources. Advanced studies, a fourth level of continuous training for working professionals, and a wider audience of specialists in related fields, is the answer to that need, allowing all of them to improve their skills and bring immediate new tools to their daily work.

SUMMARY

As a professional in archives and a part time professor in Records management, the author has noted that the attitude towards archives is changing, although slower than she wishes, nowadays. To follow up with the needs of administrations and institutions, professionals in information science have created different levels of education in Switzerland, which cover three main areas of responsibilities, apprenticeship, technical school (Hautes Ecoles) and post-graduate university level. Although they give a multipurpose and threefold sound training in archives, librarianship and documentation, they still do not match the real needs of institutions when it comes to records management. Due to new regulations on information, access, privacy, transparency, records management and quality ISO standards, organizations feel more and more obliged to include this aspect of management for good governance and citizen accountability. They often count on information managers and IT specialists to implement electronic tools, without thinking to include information specialists, like archivists and records managers, in the process. That is what archivists and records managers have to focus on in the near future, in order to create a specialized niche and fill a gap that Human Resources departments are looking for but are not always able to name yet... : 1) create specific education in records management as a distinct fourth field

13. <http://www.fhnw.ch/wirtschaft/weiterbildung/cas-informations-und-recordsmanagement> (last visit on June 15th, 2011).

14. http://campus.hesge.ch/id_bilingue/mas_rmkm/welcome_fr.asp (last visit on June 15th, 2011).

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and level of studies, with hands-on experience and social skills, 2) advertise such profiles in the appropriate and related professional networks.

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