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## **Building Out the MLIS: Beyond Records Management**

Alex J. Toner

One of my best friends is a proponent (albeit somewhat selectively) of radical honesty. Perhaps I've been spending too much time with him recently, but here goes: I have been contemplating a professional life beyond traditional records management. \*RECORD SCRATCH\*. Huh? Does he know what this blog is about?

Don't get me wrong – I enjoy the archival and records management profession a lot. The work is interesting, challenging, and (most days) rewarding. I've developed many friendships and connections over my eight years in the field, from which I've grown personally and professionally. I would consider myself fortunate to continue to advance within the field.

However, lately I've been wondering what the retention period is (had to folks) for someone in my position. As university records manager at a major research university, how do I advance? Am I making an impact? How can I prepare myself through training or further education to reach my career goals? What *are* those goals?

As archivists and records managers we do a good job of defining what types of training, experience or expertise professionals **within** the genre require - digital this, archival that, record thing this. Continuing to improve as a record keeping professional is top priority, certainly, and something I continue to desire. But do we talk enough about how to leverage our MLIS and similar degrees to position ourselves beyond the traditional boundaries of our professional genre?

I recently thought to myself “there have to be people who have naturally transitioned from archives and records management roles to something larger, right?” I figured it would be easy to identify degree or certificate offerings that would complement my MLIS. Wrong! I was surprised to find out that identifying appropriate professional development or educational opportunities that would supplement my existing MLIS-based skill set was more difficult than I thought. *Note: I'm specifically not addressing opportunities like CRM, CRA, or IGP here, one because I want to push past our profession's boundaries and two because my current institution offers wildly good tuition benefits.*

I turned to SAA's RMS listserv for insight. Some common answers to my inquiry (what have you found to be professionally valuable in complementing a traditional MLIS-based skill set?) were as follows:

- Business offerings (change management, organizational development, MBA)
- Law or paralegal offerings
- Project Management Certification (PMP or PMBOK)
- Leadership Development
- Information Governance Professional (IGP) via ARMA

This got me thinking even more. If I were to seek out professional opportunities that didn't explicitly have "archives", "records management", or even "records" in the description, what would they be? What types of opportunities are we, allied recordkeeping professionals, even qualified for? Project management? Heck yeah. Grant writing. Instruction. Governance modeling. Policy creation. Donor Development. Information management. You get the idea.

Admittedly, this is sort of a frightening thing to consider. I'm trained in this *specific thing*. I practice this *specific thing*. People know me (ok, some people) in the context of this *specific thing*. How could I leave that community, with shared interests and a collective sense of purpose? I'm not even entirely certain of the professional genre I would be interested in moving into if I put records management in the rearview.

That's part of what makes thinking about expanding out of a traditional records management role or archival setting so difficult. Nevertheless, I find myself continuing to think critically about how one can effectively build out from the MLIS **without starting over**. If necessary, how can one leverage the skill set acquired through archival and recordkeeping work into different professional genres? What types of training or degrees would allow this to happen in a successful way?

It's a question I have yet to find a good answer for. Maybe you have?