



Charter

EUROPEAN CULTURAL
HERITAGE SKILLS ALLIANCE

Profile: **Reading room staff member**

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Purpose

One of the key objectives of CHARTER is encouraging exchange, capacity building and movement within Europe. For this purpose, CHARTER has developed a methodology which can be used to draft competency profiles in collaboration with international focus groups of professionals.

These samples are done under the workplan of Work Package 2 in drafting occupational profiles. This is an ongoing work that will be concluded in 2024 and will be incorporated in a larger official report.

Context

This profile was developed during four online meetings with between March and June 2023.

Output

This profile is an example of how the CHARTER methodology can be used for drafting profiles fit for ESCO.



A - Identify your focus group

Organisations, institutions, sub-sectors and professionals represented

Céline Ben Amar – KBR Koninklijke bibliotheek Belgium
Caterina Guiducci - Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze
Gorazd Vodeb - Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica
Jarle Aadna - Det Kongelige Bibliotek
Mariette Roelvinck – KB Nationale bibliotheek
Renate Gömpel - Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Countries and regions represented

Belgium
Italy
Slovenia
Denmark
Netherlands
Germany

B - Identify your occupation

Name of the profile and synonyms

Reading room staff member

Short description/explanation of how the profile should be understood (max 200 characters)

Reading room staffmembers are mediators between the heritage collections and their users. They support the users by optimizing their search-strategy while consulting digital and physical collections helping them to make optimal use of the services the library offers, and by providing access to the collections.

Scope of the occupation (Clarify the boundaries of this occupation and describe what distinguish it from existing profiles to make things less ambiguous)

This profile is designed for heritage libraries which is not the same as the profile of a librarian. In this occupation the connection between the collection and the users is crucial.



C – Level of autonomy and responsibility

The reading room staff member has a supervisor. He or she develops and researches new ideas for the reading room which may also be used for strategic purposes. However, this professional does not design the library policy in general.

On the one hand, these professionals must follow strict guidelines (for computer systems, guidelines reading room, ...). While, they, on the other hand, need creativity to answer the user's research questions.

The professional works in varying contexts: reading rooms can have very different guidelines depending on the type of collection and their material specificities.

The work imposes a certain level of routine but it can also be unpredictable. User questions can be very different. Customer contact differs (users can be challenging) and the collections can also pose unpredictable issues.

D - Design the profile

Give an indication of the sources used to build the profile

- The persona exercise of the first meeting (and our conversation about it)
- Two profiles from the Koninklijke Bibliotheek Den Haag
- Two profiles from the German national library
- A Danish job advertisement (2019) in the google drive
- Two profiles from the KBR
- A Job advertisement for an Information Specialist, reading room, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- Flemish profile [library officer/information broker](#)
- [Reading Room assistant Morgan Museum](#)
- <https://careers.insidehighered.com/job/2784567/public-services-reading-room-assistant>
- <https://metro.org/jobs/reading-room-assistant>
- <https://cocis-jobline.simmons.edu/2022/05/11/reading-room-student-assistants-part-time-schlesinger-library-cambridge-ma/>

Define the key activities/tasks to be performed by an average professional that differentiate your occupation from other jobs.

CORE TASKS/ACTIVITIES

Assisting users by optimizing their search strategy while working with both digital and traditional collections

Solving specific research questions from users and staff

Processing document reservations and digital reproduction orders for users



Developing and implementing new initiatives to innovate the user services

Organizing the work planning

Developing one's own skills and expertise and keeping up to date with developments in the sector

TASKS LINKED TO THE PHYSICAL READING ROOM

Introducing users to the reading room's code of conduct, the library facilities and services

Supervising the appropriate use of the (technological) infrastructure in the reading room

Ensuring correct object-handling of the collections

SITE SPECIFIC TASKS

Registering and cataloguing the digital and traditional collections

Developing public programming for the reading room

Communicating about the reading room and the collection



Profile itself

* **Essential knowledge and skills:** needed to perform in this occupation in whatever the context is.

Optional knowledge and skills: can be required in specific working environments

Task	Skill (be able to)	Knowledge	Attitude
1. Assisting users by optimizing their searchstrategy for both digital and traditional collections (Engagement and use)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Retrieving relevant data/information in search engines, catalogues and other digital and analogue repositories *Coaching and training users in order to to optimise their search strategy for both digital and traditional collections *Coaching users remotely via an on-line help desk *Using specialized knowledge to find out the (underlying) (information) needs of users Developing specialized tools to support specific target groups within the population of readers and colleagues (flowcharts, manuals, wikis,...) *Using the right tone of voice for different target groups (formal and informal language) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Knowledge of the logic behind search strategies *Knowledge of search engines, catalogues, and other digital and analogue repositories *Knowledge of the network in which the library operates (i.e. the network of organizations with similar or complementary collections) Knowledge of the broader cultural network in which the library operates (e.g. Knowledge of the heritage sector on a local, regional, national and international level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Being customer friendly e.g. Being hospitable Being patient



<p>2. Solving specific research questions from users and staff</p> <p>(Research, development, education)</p>	<p>*Retrieving relevant data/information in search engines, catalogues and other digital and analogue repositories#</p> <p>*Reformulating research questions to fit search engines, catalogues and other digital and analogue repositories</p> <p>*Reporting about the result of the inquiry and formulating advice for future research possibilities</p> <p>*Referring researchers to other colleagues or institutions if needed</p> <p>Using specialized knowledge to find out the (underlying) (information) needs</p> <p>*Using the right tone of voice for different target groups (formal and informal language)</p>	<p>*Knowledge of the logic behind search strategies</p> <p>*Knowledge of search engines, catalogues and other digital and analogue repositories</p> <p>*Knowledge of the network in which the library operates (the network of organizations with similar or complementary collections)</p> <p>Knowledge of the broader cultural network in which the library operates (e.g. Knowledge of the heritage sector on local, regional, national and international level)</p>	<p>*Being customer friendly Being patient</p>
<p>3. Processing document reservations and digital reproduction orders for users</p> <p>(Engagement and use)</p>	<p>*Being able to work with the Library Management System to process the reservations and/or digital reproduction demands*</p> <p>*Communicating with other services within the organization, like the digitization service and the stack assistants/library shelvees*</p>	<p>*Knowledge of the rules and laws of reproduction within their library*</p> <p>*Knowledge of the Library Management System*</p> <p>Knowledge of IFLA's code of ethics for librarians concerning processed user data</p>	<p>*Being precise*</p> <p>*Accommodating the user/being user friendly*</p> <p>Being ethical</p>



	<p>*Communicating with users*</p> <p>Using the right tone of voice for different target groups (formal and informal language)*</p> <p>Arranging interlibrary loans</p>	<p>Knowledge of the logic and logistics of the stacks where the collections are kept</p>	
<p>4. Developing and implementing new initiatives to improve the user services</p> <p>(Engagement and use)</p>	<p>*Evaluating the current user services (e.g. by gathering statistical)*</p> <p>Designing new services</p>	<p>Basic knowledge of quality management</p> <p>Basic knowledge of service design</p> <p>*Knowledge of customer friendly management*</p> <p>Knowledge of IFLA's code of ethics for librarians concerning processed user data</p>	<p>*Being innovative*</p> <p>Thinking strategically</p> <p>*Having a growth mindset*</p> <p>*Being user friendly*</p>
<p>5. Organizing the work planning</p> <p>(Management)</p>	<p>Respecting the deadlines and planning in the organization</p> <p>Proposing planning and timings for daily work and new projects</p>	<p>Basic knowledge of project design and planning</p> <p>Knowledge of time management</p>	<p>Being Flexible</p> <p>Being precise</p>
<p>6. Developing one's own skills and expertise and remaining up to date with developments in the sector</p> <p>(Research, development, education)</p>	<p>*Participating in learning activities, inside the organization and outside.</p> <p>Building a network inside and outside the organization</p>	<p>Knowledge of the network in which the library operates (i.e. the network of organizations with similar or complementary collections)</p>	<p>Being open to continuous learning attitude</p> <p>*Having a growth mindset*</p>



	<p>Self-evaluating your own work</p> <p>Staying informed on new (international) developments, like data enrichment, legislation, European projects, ...</p> <p>*Developing your language skills (mother tongue and other languages)</p>	<p>Knowledge of the main training providers (e.g. professional societies and institutes of higher education)</p>	
<p>7. Introducing users to the reading room's code of conduct, the library facilities and its services</p> <p>(Engagement and use)</p>	<p>*Explaining the importance of the code of conduct of the reading room to users and why they must respect it</p> <p>*Advising users on the services and facilities they can use</p>	<p>*Profound knowledge of the library in which one operates, its history, mission, values, function, services and facilities</p> <p>Knowledge of IFLA's code of ethics for librarians when concerning processed user data</p>	<p>*Being customer friendly</p> <p>*Being communicative</p> <p>**Being cooperative</p>
<p>8. Supervising the appropriate use of the (technological) infrastructure of the reading room</p> <p>(Engagement and use)</p>	<p>*Guarding the safety of people and objects in the reading room</p> <p>*Following the safety procedures of the organization</p> <p>*Informing users when they break the code of conduct</p> <p>*Calling for assistance in case of an emergency</p>	<p>Knowledge of the safety procedures of the organization</p> <p>*Basic knowledge of the potential risk factors to the library collection*</p>	<p>Being vigilant</p> <p>Being authoritative</p> <p>*Being careful</p>
<p>9. Ensuring correct object handling of the collection</p>	<p>*Recognizing the potential risks to the library collection*</p>	<p>*Basic knowledge of the potential risk factors to the library collection*</p>	<p>*Being careful</p>



<p>(Preservation and safeguarding)</p>	<p>*Handing [and monitoring] the collection correctly*</p> <p>Checking the collection before and after use by readers</p> <p>Monitoring the manipulation of the collection by users</p> <p>Signaling any damage to the person with overall responsibility</p>		
<p>10. Cataloguing the digital and traditional collections</p> <p>(Recognition)</p>	<p>Formulating the relevant metadata when registering the digital and traditional collections in databases*</p> <p>*Managing digital information</p>	<p>*Knowledge of the relevant metadata in library catalogues of the digital and physical collections</p> <p>Profound knowledge of relevant (international) standards, insights and methods for describing and dealing with heritage and digital files</p> <p>Knowledge of (book) history</p> <p>Knowledge of materials</p>	<p>*Being precise</p>
<p>11. Developing public programming for the reading room</p> <p>(Engagement and use)</p>	<p>Developing for and implementing projects in the reading room, whilst working together / collaborating with all kind of organizations and people</p>	<p>*Knowledge of the collection</p> <p>*Program and project management</p> <p>Methodology of Design Thinking</p>	<p>Being communicative</p> <p>Being creative</p> <p>Being flexible</p> <p>Being hospitable</p>



	<p>*Organizing Events: working SMART, crowd management</p> <p>*Developing and organizing small exhibitions in the reading room</p> <p>Developing “out-of-the-box” solutions</p>	<p>Basic knowledge of the potential risk factors to cultural heritage</p> <p>Basic knowledge of relevant European legislation around data protection and online privacy</p> <p>Basic knowledge of Knowledge of collection</p>	<p>Having a Can do - mentality</p>
<p>12. Communicating about the reading room and the collection</p> <p>(Engagement and use)</p>	<p>*Writing user friendly texts about the collection (blogs, articles)</p> <p>Designing posters, flyers and leaflets to support work in the reading room</p>	<p>* Profound knowledge of the library in which one operates, its history, mission, values, function, services and facilities</p> <p>*Knowledge of the communication media of the Library</p>	<p>Being communicative</p> <p>Being creative</p>

E – GAPS and needs

Indicate which skills should be developed and where extra training should be foreseen for the future

Social skills (working sometimes with difficult users)

Coaching and training users by optimizing their search strategy when dealing with both digital and traditional collections

- Explaining the importance of the code of conduct of the reading room to users
- Informing users when they break the code of conduct
- Using the right tone of voice for different target groups (formal and informal language)

Communication skills

- Designing posters, flyers and leaflets to support work in the reading room
- Writing user friendly texts about the collection (blogs, articles)

Innovation and development skills:

- Evaluating the current user services (e.g. by gathering statistical data via forms)
- Designing new services
- Staying informed about new (international) development, such as data enrichment, legislation, European projects, ...
- Building a network inside and outside of the organization

Project management skills:

- Developing and implementing projects in the reading room, whilst working together / collaborating with all kinds of organizations and people
- Organizing events: working SMART, crowd managing

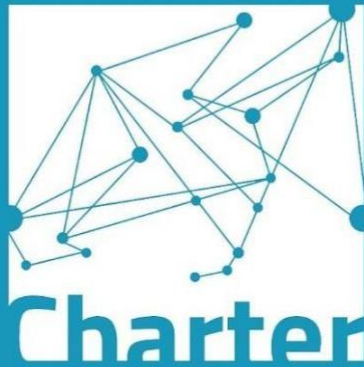
Preservation skills

- Handling [and monitoring] the collection correctly

Indicate how these skills should be developed

Training should be best organized in person (not online sessions) because it is about things one must experience, see, feel (like user communication or materials in the collection).

- Through informal workshops organized by the library staff itself (e.g. conservators-restorers demonstrate certain materials and explain the risks that they are prone to, security staff, ...) or with external trainers (communication)
- Through the coaching and mentoring of new staff members (or those who want to learn new things)
- Through job shadowing in different departments of the library or other external libraries



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