ACA EXAM

Study Guide 2025

# About

Divided into sections based on the [Role Delineation Statement for Professional Archivists](https://www.certifiedarchivists.org/index.php/25-Role-Delineation-Statement) (RDS), this guide is intended to help you prepare for the Academy of Certified Archivists certification examination. It includes study tips and highlights select archival terms and concepts that may be found on the ACA exam. Keep in mind that this study guide will not include all items that may be found on the exam.

# Study Tips

These are general tips that you can choose to use; they are not specific instructions that guarantee success in passing the exam.

***Study for your learning style.***If you’re a visual learner, using pictures can help. Auditory learners can record their notes and recite them afterwards. If you are a physical person, lecture to yourself (out loud) while also using your hands or moving around; this way it will be easier for you to memorize. Creating flashcards (on paper or using an app like Quizlet) enables quick and easy review.

***Focus on the domains you feel less confident about.***You do not necessarily need to have read every resource on the suggested reading list but do pay attention to concepts and terms that may not be as familiar to you. Don’t ignore the ones you are more confident about; take time to skim/review the literature for a refresher.

***Find the main concepts in the literature and delve into the ones that don’t make sense to you.***Below are some concepts and terms within each domain but add your own! Make notes, create flashcards, find multiple definitions, and so forth to learn the breadth of the concepts. Focus on synthesizing the information in a way you can remember it instead of trying to remember exact wording.

***Ask questions!*** There are [Teams Channels](https://teams.microsoft.com/v2/?tenantId=9b0c809d-9070-4162-9202-fdce84c8129e) available for you to connect with other exam candidates and ACA members.

***Create a study group*.** Also on the [Teams Channels](https://teams.microsoft.com/v2/?tenantId=9b0c809d-9070-4162-9202-fdce84c8129e), ask if anyone wants to be a study partner or form a study group. Sharing study tips and talking about the content can help, whether via chat, virtually, email, or other means.

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# General Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | **Definition/Explanation** | **Source** |
| record |  |  |
| provenance |  |  |
| archival standards |  |  |
| records management |  |  |
| life cycle of records |  |  |
| value of archives |  |  |
| archival administration |  |  |
| functions of archives |  |  |
| records management vs.archives |  |  |

# Domain 1: Selection, Appraisal, and Acquisition Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | **Definition/Explanation** | **Source** |
| appraisal |  |  |
| macroappraisal |  |  |
| functional analysis |  |  |
| acquisition |  |  |
| selection |  |  |
| deaccessioning |  |  |
| accessioning |  |  |
| documentation strategy |  |  |
| collecting policy |  |  |
| accessioning |  |  |
| enduring value |  |  |
| retention schedule |  |  |

# Domain 2: Arrangement and Description Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | ****Definition/Explanation**** | ****Source**** |
| arrangement |  |  |
| description |  |  |
| provenance |  |  |
| respect de fonds |  |  |
| original order |  |  |
| levels of arrangement |  |  |
| finding aids and their components |  |  |
| MPLP |  |  |
| levels of description |  |  |
| types of descriptive standards |  |  |

# Domain 3: Reference Services and Access Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | **Definition/Explanation** | **Source** |
| reference interview  |  |  |
| reference |  |  |
| digitization |  |  |
| use permissions  |  |  |
| user’s information needs  |  |  |
| public programming  |  |  |
| digital access  |  |  |
| virtual reading room |  |  |
| access policy and procedures |  |  |
| access restrictions |  |  |

# Domain 4: Preservation and Protection Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | **Definition/Explanation** | **Source** |
| **preservation** |  |  |
| **conservation**  |  |  |
| **disaster and emergency preparedness, response, and recovery**  |  |  |
| **environmental controls**  |  |  |
| **handling procedures** |  |  |
| **reformatting** |  |  |
| **preservation management**  |  |  |
| **digital preservation**  |  |  |
| **OAIS reference model** |  |  |

# Domain 5: Outreach, Advocacy, and Promotion Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | **Definition/Explanation** | **Source** |
| **outreach** |  |  |
| **advocacy** |  |  |
| **activist archivist** |  |  |
| **loan agreement** |  |  |
| **exhibition** |  |  |
| teaching with primary sources |  |  |
| fundraising |  |  |
| crowdsourcing |  |  |
| community archives |  |  |
| public relations |  |  |

# Domain 6: Managing Archives Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | **Definition/Explanation** | **Source** |
| space/facilities planning  |  |  |
| grant writing  |  |  |
| project management  |  |  |
| archival policies and procedures |  |  |
| mission and vision statements |  |  |
| donor relations |  |  |
| assessment  |  |  |
| **solo archivist** |  |  |
| **interpersonal communications** |  |  |
| **personnel and volunteer management** |  |  |
| **strategic planning** |  |  |

# Domain 7: Professional, Ethical, and Legal Responsibilities Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | **Definition/Explanation** | **Source** |
| **professional core values**  |  |  |
| **ethics** |  |  |
| **copyright** |  |  |
| **fair use** |  |  |
| **privacy** |  |  |
| **U.S. laws governing archives: e.g., FERPA, HIPAA, FOIA** |  |  |
| **rights statements** |  |  |
| **National Archives Act** |  |  |

# Domain 8: Cultural Competency Key Terms and Concepts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term/Concept** | **Definition/Explanation** | **Source** |
| **repatriation** |  |  |
| **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act** |  |  |
| **community archives** |  |  |
| **postcolonial** |  |  |
| **cultural competency** |  |  |
| **radical empathy** |  |  |
| **cultural property rights** |  |  |
| **decolonize** |  |  |
| **archival silence** |  |  |
| **diversity, equity, and inclusion** |  |  |
| **reparative description** |  |  |