

Archival Training in Library Schools

By T. R. SCHELLENBERG

Broad Run, Virginia

IN ORDER to place in proper perspective the role of library schools in the education of archivists, I wish to discuss briefly (1) the nature of the functions that American archivists must perform, which I believe, are determined by the nature of the records that they administer, and (2) the nature of the training courses that will prepare American archivists to discharge their functions effectively. Thereafter I wish to consider where training courses should be taught—whether in history departments, library schools, or elsewhere.

THE NATURE OF RECORDS

It is obvious, is it not, that training should be designed to make an archivist capable of handling the tasks assigned to him? It should teach him how to accession, pack, store, arrange, describe, repair, reproduce, and make available for use the records in his care. It is further obvious, I believe, that the nature of an archivist's tasks is determined by the nature of the records with which he deals.

In Europe, archivists are concerned in the main with ancient and medieval documents. In order to interpret them, the archivists must be trained in the auxiliary sciences of history. They must have a knowledge of paleography and diplomatics, to be able to analyze how the records came into being; of sigillography or sphragistics, to analyze the seals attached to them; and of linguistics, toponymics, and chronology, to analyze the languages, place names, and dates mentioned in them.

The training given in continental Europe has little applicability to the work of an American archivist. A knowledge of the auxiliary sciences of history, which is the substance of European archival training, is not required in dealing with most American records. It is important, therefore, to consider briefly the nature of the records with which American archivists deal. The overwhelming mass of records in American repositories is of quite recent origin. Even a cursory examination of American finding aids will verify this fact. Admittedly, many important historical societies, such as those of Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania, and many important libraries, such as the Library of Congress, the New

This paper was read before the Society of American Archivists at Atlanta, Ga., Oct. 6, 1966, in a session of the Society's 30th annual meeting. Following his long and distinguished career as a Federal archivist, Dr. Schellenberg is now devoting himself principally to writing and teaching. His books *Modern Archives* and *The Management of Archives*, translated into many languages, are indispensable to the work of every archivist. A Fellow of the Society, Dr. Schellenberg has taught archival courses in the library schools of Columbia, Illinois, Syracuse, Texas, and Washington Universities.

York Public, the Detroit Public, and the Huntington and Clements Libraries, have extensive collections of papers relating to the Colonial and Revolutionary periods of American history. But even institutions of such eminence were admonished by Charles Francis Adams, when he was president of the Massachusetts Historical Society, in 1898, not to sit down "in a spirit of self-complacent content, wrapt in the contemplation of [their] own dignity," and were urged to strive for "new and higher standards of scholarship and investigation." Many important institutions heeded this warning and began to collect records for the national period of American history.

The newer collecting agencies—and their number is legion and is constantly increasing—came on the scene too late to collect early American documentation. They therefore acquired what was available and, from the point of view of present-day historians, what is as important for research purposes as are 17th- and 18th-century documents. They collected recent records on the assumption that such records were historically valuable. In a sense, they belied the observation of an American librarian, made during the centennial of American independence, that historical institutions "are occupied in collecting what ought to have been preserved in previous years, and while they thus laboriously correct the mistake of those who neglected to preserve their own annals they are committing the same mistake with reference to the present."

The repositories in which documentary material is maintained are of all kinds: archival institutions, historical societies, and libraries. And most of these repositories have private as well as public records. This is true even of archival agencies, few of which are concerned exclusively with public records. Some State archival agencies grew out of historical societies or were made part of them and for this reason are custodians of private records. Other State archival agencies were created to preserve both private and public records of a historical character. Alabama's Department of History and Archives, established in 1901, served as a model for many State archival agencies, and the archival institutions later established in the South usually became repositories of private papers. Even at the Federal level, archivists—perhaps unfortunately—are now concerned with the administration of private papers in presidential libraries.

Most modern private records, however, also have organic characteristics and are thus archival in character in respect to their most fundamental attribute. They relate to activities that are generally much more fully documented than those of the Colonial and Revolutionary periods of American history. They are often composed of series pertaining to specific activities or transactions or consisting of specific record types. And they are often produced by economic, religious, cultural, social, and other types of institutions and organizations.

Although there are differences between private and public records, such differences pertain to characteristics that are relatively unimportant

in their arrangement and description. They pertain mainly to volume, organization, and composition. While these differences should be taken into account in the management of records, archival methods should be applied to private records whenever the records are organic in character. Archival techniques should be applied to all records produced by persons who engaged in extended activities and to all records produced by corporate bodies.

A last fact that I wish to point out about records with which American archivists are involved is this: Many archival agencies are concerned with the administration of current as well as research records. The agencies are, in a word, involved to an important degree in current records administration activities.

Even when not directly involved in the administration of current records, archivists can profit by training in their management. Almost every operation on public records while they are in current use has a bearing on archival work. Current records administration determines the quality of archives, that is, their integrity, completeness, and usefulness. It also determines the methods that should be employed with respect to archives, that is, how they should be appraised, arranged, described, and serviced. The practices followed in classifying and filing current records determine how effectively records may be serviced once they come to an archival institution.

In brief, then, American archivists should be trained to manage recent research records, most of which are organic in character. Since they are concerned with both public and private records, they should be trained to deal with both classes. Since they are involved with current records, they should be trained in the fundamentals of records management.

THE NATURE OF TRAINING

Let me now briefly discuss the nature of archival training. There are four kinds of courses to which archivists should be exposed if they are to deal effectively with modern records. These courses are in the fields of history; archival methodology; technical methods of preserving, repairing, and reproducing documentary material; and library science and records administration.

Historical Training

In Europe, a broad general education is a prerequisite to admittance to archival schools. In the United States, where there are no archival schools as such, archival institutions have relied upon universities to give students the basic training that will make them effective archivists. According to Samuel Flagg Bemis, eminent American historian,

The existing instruction in American history, leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, offers fundamental elements for a sound preparation for archival careers, but the student intending to go into professional archival work should be directed

into a thesis which would cause him to handle manuscript material of some considerable range and out of official archives, thus affording him training in such problems of diplomatics and paleography as can be associated with American history.

Since the formulation of the basic archival principle of provenance in the middle of the last century, archival institutions in all countries have stressed the importance of historical training for archivists.

The best basic training that an archivist can have, in my opinion, is thorough training in history. Such training has a twofold value for him. It will lead him to appreciate the value of archives and manuscripts, for they are the source material used in producing historical monographs. It will also fit him for his work. His courses in the history of his country will provide him with a knowledge of its development, and of the documentation pertaining thereto, that is basic to any evaluation of the research values in private and public records. His training in research methodology will teach him to look into the origin, development, and working of human institutions. And this training is just what he needs in all the work he does in rationalizing records, or making known their significance and content. In all phases of his work he is concerned with learning how records came into being. In order to appraise records he must analyze their source, for analysis is the essence of appraisal. He must follow a similar course while arranging and describing records.

Methodological Training

The second kind of training is methodological. Here I refer to specialized courses that are related directly to the principles and techniques that should be employed in the archival profession. I believe that archival principles and techniques, as they apply to modern records, should be systematized and to a very large extent standardized, if work with such records is to become truly professional. To be professional, archival work must be disciplined. Its methodology should be taught in special courses. Such courses should include, initially, an introductory course, followed by an advanced course on arrangement and description that includes laboratory work as well as lectures. A comprehensive curriculum of archival courses should also include courses on the history of archival institutions and historical societies.

The introductory course should acquaint the student with the basic facts about archival management. It should include lectures on the following topics: archival terminology, archival literature, the development of archival institutions in the United States, and the evolution and the present status of the archival profession; archival relationships with historians, librarians, manuscript curators, and documentalists; archival interests in the management of current records, including discussions of filing systems, the techniques of surveying records, and the arrangements for an archival review of records proposed for disposal; archival legislative requirements, archival functions and responsibilities, and the organization of archival institutions; archival buildings, equip-

ment, and storage facilities; principles for the evaluation of records; acquisition and accession policies and practices; the evolution and meaning of principles and techniques of archival arrangement; principles and techniques of archival description; repair and rehabilitation of records; microfilming and other reproductive techniques; exhibits and publications programs, including historical editing; reference service policies and practices; the management of special classes of archives such as cartographic and audiovisual; and the management of special types of archival institutions—church, university, business, State and local, and so on.

The advanced course should pertain chiefly to arrangement and description, which are the archival equivalent of library classification and cataloging. They are the two most important substantive functions of the archivist, and special attention should be given them. The course should consist of lectures on and demonstrations of the principles and techniques of managing private and public records. The lecture topics should include the following: the relation of archival work to librarianship; the application of archival techniques to private records; the nature of archival arrangement; the principles of archival arrangement; notational systems; the arrangement of archival groups; the arrangement of manuscript collections; the arrangement of record items; physical arrangements; the character of a descriptive program; record attributes; the preparation of archival inventories and guides; the preliminary description of private papers; the description of manuscript collections; the preparation of indexes and item catalogs; the preparation of lists and calendars; the arrangement and description of cartographic records; and the arrangement and description of pictorial records.

Technical Training

The third kind of training is technical. It relates to cleaning, repairing, and reproducing documents and to the physical facilities for maintaining documents. While basic training in history is desirable, it is not indispensable for technicians concerned with the various physical aspects of handling documents. In many archival institutions the technicians who are in charge of such work have specialized training in chemistry; in other institutions they have merely on-the-job training in the application of repair and photographic techniques.

Auxiliary Training

Auxiliary training should be in the fields of records management and library science.

Records management courses should include, initially, an introductory course, which should be followed by specialized courses in the filing and classification of current records, data processing, and the like. The introductory course should include lectures on the following topics: classification principles; filing systems; filing equipment and supplies; the

design and control of forms; the control of reports and issuances; record surveys and inventories; retention planning; microfilming; the preparation of disposal schedules; and the functions, policies, procedures, equipment, and supplies of record centers.

A number of library science courses can be taken with profit by archivists. A course on library classification principles and systems will be useful if for no other reason than that certain of these principles and systems are applicable, with modification, to the filing of current records. Courses relating to reference tools and reference service are useful for the bibliographical information they provide, which is needed in the study of the origins of records, especially public records. A course in Government documents should also prove useful to the Federal archivists.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF TRAINING

Archival training may be provided in single courses, as it is in most places in the United States, or through a comprehensive series of courses.

The training courses, whether singly or in a comprehensive series, may be given under the auspices of any one of several departments of a school. The departments may be a library school, a history department, or a school of public administration. The courses on archival methodology should usually be given by those in charge of documentary material in the school.

Prof. Allen du Pont Breck of the University of Denver, in his article on "New Dimensions in the Education of American Archivists," suggests that the Society develop a comprehensive curriculum and "*then* see what schools are willing to tackle the work." This suggestion is highly meritorious, but it will be difficult to find a school in which the several departments involved in archival training have the interest, the willingness to collaborate, and, most important, the professional competence to teach a series of archival courses; and in which also a manuscript repository exists in which methods are followed that should be promulgated in archival courses.

While archival courses will always have to be the exclusive responsibility of one department in a school, they will always require the active collaboration of several departments. The history department will always be involved because it provides the basic training on which specialized training should be superimposed. The manuscripts division of the institution should also always be involved because its documentary resources should be used to demonstrate methods of arrangement and description. The library school may be involved to provide specialized training in archival management; and the department of public administration, to provide specialized training in records management.

While the active collaboration of several departments is required in the teaching of archival courses, the question still remains: Which department should have major responsibility for the courses? Let me consider briefly some of the difficulties in having archival methodology

taught by the faculties of the history department and the library school, for such courses are likely to be taught at either of the two places.

Training by Historians

In a history department a student will receive the basic training, as I have noted, that is required to make him an effective archivist. Historians have a real interest in archives and manuscripts, for these are grist for their mill. They cannot grind out scholarly monographs without having source material available. They thus have a natural concern about the preservation and availability of such material. They, more than any other professional class, have sponsored the establishment of archival institutions and historical societies. They should, therefore, have an interest in archival training, and they should either give training courses themselves or collaborate with other academic departments in giving such courses. Because of their interest in research material, they will bring to archival courses an enthusiasm not found among professionals that do not use such material in their work. And, if they restrain their penchant for definitive historical research, they can, with effort, familiarize themselves with the methods by which such material should be administered.

But there are two dangers inherent in having methodological training given by historians. The first is that historians, while discussing methodology, will excessively emphasize historical developments. Historians, by and large, are not concerned with methodology. They speak of their work as being professional because of the principles they follow in interpreting source material, not because of the techniques they employ in accumulating information from it, though these techniques admittedly are important. The historians' work is more analytical in character than that of archivists. They are prone to consider techniques either as unimportant or as a kind of restraint that will stifle scholarly initiative.

In archival courses in Europe and the United States, even historically trained archivists have concerned themselves to a greater extent with the history of institutions than with the history of methodology. While they have carefully traced the evolution of the principle of provenance and corollary archival principles, they have paid little attention to the way in which archival principles have been applied in arranging public and private records. A knowledge of archival institutional developments is not a substitute for a knowledge of archival methodology, both past and present. Such knowledge has little value to the practicing archivist. It profits the latter little to know, for example, when the National Archives of the United States was founded, how it was originally organized, and how it was recently reorganized. What matters to a student is: How does one obtain a control over the records holdings to make them available for use? How does one accession them, pack them, store them, arrange them, describe them, repair them, reproduce them, and service them? If historians are to teach specialized courses in archival method,

they must familiarize themselves with methodology. They must learn about the practical, and often menial, tasks an archivist must perform.

The second danger inherent in methodological training by historically trained archivists is that such archivists will excessively emphasize the historical work required in appraising, arranging, and describing documentary material. While performing such tasks an archivist must do a great deal of historical work, but this work should not be made an end in itself. It is historical inquiry that is directed to finding out the source of documents, not their meaning. It is work that is merely preliminary to the performance of the physical tasks of eliminating records, putting them in order, and preparing finding aids for them. When historians become archivists, they must stifle their desire to do definitive historical research while analyzing how records came into being. They must learn to limit the amount of information they provide about the history of records to that which is essential to an understanding of the records' content and significance.

Training by Librarians

There are also dangers inherent in having methodological training given by librarians. The first is that librarians will mistakenly apply the techniques of their own profession to archival material, which differs from publications in both its physical and substantive attributes. Librarians may become preoccupied with single record items because almost their whole methodology of classification and cataloging relates to the treatment of discrete published items. They may also attempt to arrange records by subject because they are accustomed to classifying and cataloging publications by subject. Library techniques of classification, when applied to archives, have invariably had undesirable results and should not be taught in archival courses. In order to teach archival courses properly, librarians must literally change their thinking about methodology. "Training in library science," observes Bertha E. Josephson, an American archivist with library training, "is not adequate preparation for historical society work except in the limited capacity of book cataloging; museum objects, archives, manuscripts, and maps offer problems which no Dewey or Cutter could answer to satisfaction." In a word, librarians must learn about dealing with collective record units, such as are found in the archives of governmental and corporate bodies, instead of dealing only with discrete items. They must learn to describe record units by analyzing their organizational and functional origins, not by analyzing their subject relationships. For there are two basically different approaches in the descriptive techniques of the library and archival professions, one being a functional approach, the other a subject approach.

The second danger inherent in methodological training in library schools is that librarians will become so engrossed with method that they will lose sight of the scholarly aspects of archival work. The more any

given line of work is concerned with the manipulation of physical things as distinct from purely intellectual matters, the more is it possible to follow precise methods of doing things. In the library profession the work of classifying and cataloging publications has been reduced to a routine procedure, governed by rules that are so refined as to cover every aspect of the work. In a word, the work has become largely a matter of physically manipulating publications. Archival work cannot be governed by precise rules. While the procedures of arranging and describing records can be made fairly precise, they can never become as precise as library procedures, for the reason that records lack the attributes, which publications acquire in the course of their manufacture, in relation to which precise rules can be formulated. Every aspect of archival work requires an element of judgment.

However, once they recognize and understand the basic differences between the methods of dealing with publications and records, librarians can effectively teach archival courses. And there are several reasons why they should do so.

Library schools will reach a very important class of record custodians; that is, the librarians themselves. Both in Europe and the United States, libraries contain extensive and highly significant collections of documentary material. Large manuscript holdings are found in the British Museum in London, the National Libraries in Paris and Madrid, the State Library in Leningrad, and many other libraries of France, Spain, Italy, and Germany.

In the United States the single greatest collection of manuscript material is in the Library of Congress; but numerous other important libraries, some of which have already been mentioned, have great quantities of such material in possession. In recent decades university libraries have carried on very active and very successful programs of collecting manuscripts. The extent to which libraries have entered the field of manuscript collecting is strikingly revealed in the *Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States*, published by the National Historical Publications Commission in 1961. Among the kinds of repositories listed in the *Guide* are archival institutions, historical societies, libraries, and record centers. Over half of the 1,343 holdings described in the *Guide* are identified as library holdings. This situation is confirmed by the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections*, published by the Library of Congress beginning in 1962. It lists 7,300 collections of manuscripts, chiefly documentary or archival, that are held by libraries.

Existing archival training courses have influenced only a very small proportion of the librarians of this country. Relatively few librarians have attended the summer institutes that, until recently, were the sole means of providing archival instruction. Existing courses, moreover, do not provide information, in any degree of depth, on the management of the class of records with which librarians are chiefly concerned. In them

attention is focused on public records while little attention is given to the practices that apply to private records.

Archival courses taught in library schools will improve the quality of work on records in the custody of libraries and will thus make the records more readily available for use. Their introduction into the curricula of library schools—and, incidentally, they will be introduced in only a very few schools because of the many other specialized courses competing for inclusion—should be a matter of gratification, not apprehension, to the archival profession. Is it not, moreover, rather shortsighted for archivists to object to training that will improve the management of manuscripts in libraries? Is it not also improper, since archivists have failed to provide adequate training in their management, or have mistakenly provided instruction in the methods of the library profession instead of their own, or else have questioned the efficacy of any sort of methodological training?

Librarians should be taught to deal with manuscripts in their custody according to archival principles and techniques. As Armando Petrucci, lecturer in paleography and diplomatics at the University of Rome, points out in the March–April 1966 issue of the *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries*, “librarians . . . have the task of classifying and cataloguing documentary material, and it is rightly held that archivist principles must be applied in doing so.” Citing an interesting example of the observance of such principles in England, he says:

the admirable Summary Catalogue of manuscripts in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, following a method that remained unchanged from 1895 to 1953, respects the integrity of every modern collection and even places it in its historical background, classified and listed according to archivist principles, with advantages for the scholar and research worker which can easily be imagined.

Archivists, peculiarly, often question if archival principles and techniques should be applied in managing manuscripts. They raise no objection to the imposition of library techniques on the management of private records—to which, incidentally, the techniques are not applicable without major modification. But they are seemingly averse to the proposal that private records should be managed according to archival methods, which are applicable to them with minor modification.

There is another reason why library schools should introduce courses on archival management. Such schools are concerned with methodology, and they are the only place in which attention is likely to be given to methodological training. Their curricula include courses on the methods of classifying and cataloging publications; there is no reason why they should not also include courses on the methods of arranging and describing records.

There is a final and rather intangible reason why library schools should provide archival training. Through the years librarians have developed an attitude of service to the public, and they have followed the

practice of unstintingly making available the material in their custody. In regard to their holdings, they have emphasized use, not possession. In their profession they have emphasized cooperation, not competition. Their views, if inculcated in training courses, will greatly benefit the archival profession. They will promote cooperative effort in the development of methodology, as well as the cooperative use of material in the possession of documentary repositories.

The library and archival professions are not inseparable. While the principles and techniques of the two professions are distinctive, they are also in a sense complementary. And the objectives of the two professions are obviously the same, namely, to make available the research resources of the country. The two professions should thus collaborate with each other—in the administration of their holdings, in the development of their methodology, and in the provision of training facilities. Neither profession should regard the training provided by the other as an arrogation of its own responsibilities. And since neither profession has developed adequate training programs, each profession should welcome training developments within the other.

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS ANNOUNCES THE

INDEX TO THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST

VOLUMES 21–30

1958–1967

COMPILED BY

MARY JANE DOWD

Publication date July 1. \$5 a copy.*

*Order from A. K. Johnson, Jr., Treasurer,
Society of American Archivists,
P.O. Box 7993, Atlanta, Ga. 30309.*

* Postponed from April 15, previously announced.

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 2, APRIL 1968