

Archivists and Librarians: A Common Mission, A Common Education

NANCY E. PEACE and NANCY FISHER CHUDACOFF

IN TODAY'S SOCIETY, programs and services are often evaluated in terms of the "bottom line." The bottom line for archivists and librarians is not profit or loss but our ability to provide information to those who need it. Although the material we handle varies in format, our basic goals have been to collect, organize, conserve, and provide access to information. In spite of this similarity of goals, archivists and librarians have traditionally regarded themselves as two separate professions. But the common ground remains and is becoming increasingly important as the problem of handling ever-growing amounts of information requires cooperative efforts to develop systems for providing information effectively and efficiently.

In developing new education guidelines, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) should seek to create a program that will provide archivists with a

comprehensive professional education. The framework for such a program exists already in graduate library schools. Given their common goals and problems, archivists and librarians can be educated most effectively together. We must examine what has separated them and work at designing a single professional program that can meet the needs of both archivists and librarians.

In 1977 SAA approved education guidelines to establish minimum standards for beginning archivists.¹ We believe that these guidelines are too narrowly conceived in relation to the larger problem of information control and therefore fail to direct archives education in the most effective manner. In their present form, the guidelines will result in continued separation of archivists from their colleagues in information management, the librarians and information scientists.*

¹ "Archives Education Guidelines Approved," *SAA Newsletter* (May 1977): 4-5.

*Within the context of this article, *archivist* should be understood to include manuscript curators, and *librarian* to include information scientists and audiovisual specialists.

Almost immediately after its organization in 1936, SAA asked historian Samuel Flagg Bemis to head a committee on training. The Bemis Committee recommended a rigorous training program, but the Society never formally sanctioned the guidelines nor did it work to establish programs. Various committees considered archives education over the next forty years and numerous articles on the subject appeared in the Society's journal.²

Although SAA's early efforts to establish guidelines recognized the utility of certain aspects of library methodology and several people have advocated library education for archivists, focus on the unique character of archives has diverted the attention of archivists away from objectives and principles shared with librarians.³ Before it implements the guidelines, SAA should reexamine the direction the profession has taken to determine if this independent path is, in fact, the most beneficial.

Why did SAA take so long to set educational guidelines? Why have archivists been unable to agree on the amount and type of training required? We believe the problem involves the

question of professional identity. Many archivists have believed that the best preparation for their profession is advanced training in an academic field such as history or political science. While the Bemis Committee acknowledged the need for some technical training, the emphasis was on scholarly credentials.⁴

In fact, many archivists have training and experience in scholarly disciplines such as history and have retained ties to their academic fields. Until recently this identification with the scholarly world has prevented archivists from developing education programs that provide necessary professional training. The new guidelines represent SAA's recognition of the need for professional education; but they do not solve the problem of the professional identity of the archivist, because they fail to integrate archives education into the larger field of information services.

Several articles and recently an entire book have been published on the need for cooperation between archivists and librarians. In his introduction to *Archive-Library Relations*, Robert L. Clark noted that "librarians and archi-

² Samuel Flagg Bemis, "The Training of Archivists in the United States," *American Archivist* (hereafter cited as *AA*) 2 (July 1939): 157; Karl L. Trevor, "The Organization and Status of Archival Training in the United States," *AA* 11 (April 1948): 154-63; T. R. Schellenberg, "Report of the Committee," in Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965); Allen du Pont Breck, "New Dimensions in the Education of American Archivists," *AA* 29 (April 1966): 173-86; Philip P. Mason, "The Society of American Archivists in the Seventies: Report of the Committee for the 1970's," *AA* 35 (April 1972): 193-217; Wilfred I. Smith, "Broad Horizons: Opportunities for Archivists," *AA* 37 (January 1974): 3-14; James B. Rhoads, "One Man's Hopes for His Society, His Profession, His Country," *AA* 39 (January 1976): 5-14.

³ John C. Colson, "On the Education of Archivists and Librarians," *AA* 31 (April 1968): 167-74; "Report of the Committee on Education and Training, 1964-65," (T. R. Schellenberg, Chairman) *AA* 29 (January 1966): 136-37; Schellenberg, "Archival Training in Library Schools," *AA* 31 (April 1968): 155-65. Colson, in particular, anticipated many of our own arguments. We believe his idea of a common professional education for librarians and archivists in graduate library schools deserves reexamination. We have attempted to extend his arguments by citing specific examples of areas of library education applicable to archives, and by outlining a sample program of study.

⁴ Bemis, 157-61.

vists are of the same family," and Philip Brooks asserted over twenty-five years ago that "the real basis of common interest among archivists, librarians, and many other allied disciplines is our concern for the control of information."⁵

Although the need to communicate and cooperate has been acknowledged, barriers continue to obscure the link between archivists and librarians. We find that some archivists perceive librarianship as a profession of low status in comparison to the academic world. This perception may cause them to fear identification with librarians. Recognizing that they cannot be purely academics, yet not wanting to be identified as librarians, archivists have shied away from prescribing whether archives education should take place in history departments or library schools.

Some archivists have a conception of librarianship as concerned only with books. While this may have been true in the past, current library thinking focuses on organization and dissemination of information regardless of format; thus librarianship can and should encompass archives.

If archivists and librarians are indeed of the same family, and if control of information is a common goal for both, then it seems to us that the *two professions proceeding* along different educational paths *represent* not only duplication of effort but waste of money and resources. An archivist, according to SAA's basic glossary, is "a person responsible for or engaged in one or

more of the following activities in an archival repository: appraisal and disposition, accessioning, preservation, arrangement, description, reference service, exhibition, and publication."⁶ The definition applies equally well to a librarian. Although their specific methods for describing materials may differ, in all other areas librarians and archivists are engaged in identical activities.

Because archivists and librarians share the same goal of information control and dissemination, we think that both are therefore members of the same profession and should receive the same type of professional education. The two or three course program prescribed by the SAA guidelines would permit neither an adequate level of practical training nor the broad philosophical and ethical framework necessary for educated professionals. We believe that the master of library science (M.L.S.) program, with an increased archives component, can provide the most effective education for archivists and librarians.

Although past M.L.S. programs have been heavily oriented toward training people to work with book collections, this bias is rapidly disappearing. Now, as library school curricula are being broadened to include instruction on information in all its formats, archivists should encourage the introduction of archival issues throughout the curriculum, and the inclusion of specialized courses in archives. In fact, the SAA Committee on Education and Professional Development has begun

⁵ Robert L. Clark, Jr., ed., *Archive-Library Relations* (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1976), p. 20; Philip C. Brooks, "Archivists and their Colleagues: Common Denominators," *AA* 14 (January 1951): 41.

⁶ Frank B. Evans, et al., "A Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscripts Curators, and Records Managers," *AA* 37 (July 1974): 418.

to address this very issue.

In suggesting that an M.L.S. program can provide the best education for archivists, we wish in no way to minimize the importance of archival methodology or the special problems unique to archives. These subjects can be treated in depth in archives courses within the library school curriculum in a manner similar to other specialized subjects such as medical or rare books librarianship.

As outlined, SAA guidelines actually present a program compatible with library school curricula. Most of the necessary elements already exist in library schools. If archivists will accept the idea of common concepts, then they will see that it is inefficient and uneconomical to develop entirely separate courses for such subjects as administration and reference services when there are existing courses in library schools, taught by specialists in these areas. In this period of rising costs and shrinking education budgets, such avoidable duplication seems fiscally irresponsible.

In addition, SAA's guidelines imply that a single archivist would teach all recommended subjects. To expect one person to have adequate comprehensive knowledge of such specialized topics as administration and reference is unrealistic.

Let us outline, within a library school setting, a sample program for archivists that both satisfies requirements for an M.L.S. and meets educational needs of archivists. Although it would vary from school to school, the program should include such basics as cataloging, reference services, adminis-

tration, and archives, along with a selection of electives.

We firmly believe that archives students need a basic cataloging course. We are not suggesting that book cataloging *techniques* be used with manuscripts and archives, but that certain *principles* of library cataloging are applicable to describing archives and manuscripts. Focus on the unique aspects of archives has prevented some archivists from understanding the application of these principles.

To understand these applications it is important to distinguish between two types of description that archivists use. What we are talking about here is not the detailed description of an individual collection or record group in a register or inventory; this type of description has no parallel in book cataloging. What we are talking about is informing potential users of a collection's existence through a brief general description. As with books, this brief description, which may appear in an in-house card catalog, published guide, or eventually a computerized data base, is designed to inform the users of a collection's existence. It should direct the user to existing inventories or registers, not substitute for them.

In book cataloging, the description customarily follows a standardized format as prescribed by the Anglo-American cataloging rules. For archives and manuscripts, however, no single format has been widely adopted.

Potential for a standardized format for manuscripts and archives has existed since the 1950s when the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* format was created.⁷ This format was further codified in the 1967 *Anglo-*

⁷ Kenneth W. Duckett, *Modern Manuscripts* (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1975), p. 138.

American Cataloging Rules (AACR). In our opinion the *AACR* format has not been widely adopted because archivists and manuscript curators have tended to misunderstand its applications. Once again we must emphasize that the *AACR* format should not be a substitute for registers or inventories, but rather is designed to inform readers of a collection's existence by providing a brief general description.

In our experience, archivists and curators have shied away from using *AACR* also because of their belief that its underlying philosophy was too heavily biased toward book description. While there is some truth in this criticism, the developers of the recently published second edition of *AACR* have invested considerable effort in removing the bias toward books. As one of its editors has indicated, "The rules in part 1 of *AACR2* deal with print and nonprint materials on an equal basis. Descriptions for nonprint materials are not formulated as if a particular item were a deformed book, but in terms of the particular material within the context of a neutral and comprehensive framework."⁸

At present the primary use for standardized formats such as that prescribed by *AACR* is in-house control at the collection level. While we recognize that *AACR* may not be useful in large governmental, business, or institutional archives such as the National Archives or IBM, we believe that it is the most effective system for recording the diverse collections in historical societies and manuscript repositories. Use of *AACR2* format—specifying what information about a collection is to be recorded and in what order—insures a

consistent level of descriptive data about each collection in every repository. Adoption of such a format means that each institution need not waste time devising its own system. A good standardized system should still provide enough flexibility to meet the needs of individual institutions.

Also, adoption of *AACR2* can provide a readily available format for entering archives and manuscript holdings into national or regional computerized data bases. Some archivists may argue that SPINDEX already provides a model for a data base for archives and manuscripts. We believe that use of SPINDEX does not preclude reporting holdings to other data bases, such as the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC), that cover material in a variety of formats. Libraries without major manuscript holdings are unlikely ever to subscribe to SPINDEX. Yet their users may wish to use manuscript or archival materials to meet their information needs. A single system such as OCLC has the capability of providing information about all types of material. Most libraries of any size will eventually participate in a system like OCLC. Archivists should become familiar with such systems.

We have included this discussion of standardized formats in an article on archives education to illustrate why we believe a basic cataloging course should be a cornerstone of any archives education program. In addition to teaching standardized descriptive formats, cataloging as taught in most library schools also introduces students to principles of subject access—principles with which many archivists are unfamiliar. Although both Kenneth Duck-

⁸ Michael Gorman, "The Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition," *Library Resources and Technical Services* 22 (Summer 1978): 214.

ett and David Gracy acknowledge the importance of subject access, their treatment of this topic is perfunctory.⁹ Archivists need to know much more about subject access than archives literature currently provides.

Future developments in computerized data bases may foster more sophisticated methods of subject analysis, or change present thinking about standardized formats. Modern technology offers both librarians and archivists new potential for effective bibliographical control of information in all forms. As H. T. Hickerson, Joan Winters, and Venetia Beale have acknowledged, archivists "can learn a great deal from library experience with authority files, thesauri, and network development."¹⁰ For developing networks or independent systems, rational decisions are more likely to result if archivists are well trained in current principles of descriptive cataloging and subject analysis—training that a library school cataloging course can provide.

Although archives present special problems, basic components of administrative theory and reference work do not differ between archives and libraries. Library school administration courses include all elements noted in SAA's guidelines—goals and priorities, program planning and evaluation, budgeting and finance, appropriations, grants and fund raising, staffing and personnel. The guidelines also recommend familiarity with problems of reference service, access, security,

research techniques, and public relations. These topics are covered in most library-school reference courses. Such courses also focus on reference sources. Knowledge of the wide range of reference tools is important to archivists in both research and processing.

Of course, archivists need specialized training—history of archives, appraisal, arrangement and description—as prescribed in the first three elements of SAA's guidelines. These elements could be contained in a series of archives courses. These courses would focus on unique aspects of archives work, building on the basic administration, reference, and cataloging courses. The 140 hour practicum recommended in the guidelines should also be a required course.

Most library schools require an introductory course on the nature of librarianship. Such a course should be expanded to encompass all types of information professions, including archives. The remaining program should include such courses currently offered in library schools as conservation, oral history, administration of special collections, audiovisual materials, descriptive bibliography, microphotography, computer science, and independent study when appropriate.

Archivists may argue that placing archives education in library schools would subordinate archivists to librarians or the SAA to the American Library Association. Sharing a common educational background should not imply subordination of any sort. Ar-

⁹ Duckett, *Modern Manuscripts*, p. 137; David B. Gracy II, *Archives and Manuscripts: Arrangement and Description* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977), p. 31.

¹⁰ H. Thomas Hickerson, Joan Winters, Venetia Beale, *Spindex II at Cornell University* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Libraries, 1976); *Report on the Conference on Automated Guide Projects*, sponsored by the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators in cooperation with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, 19–20 July 1977, St. Louis, Missouri.

chivists should not fear that library methodology would engulf archives. By adopting program accreditation or approval, SAA would have final authority to set requirements for archivists and to evaluate professional competency. The Medical Library Association operates in a similar manner and has been successful in establishing education standards for medical librarians within the library school curriculum.

As in the recent guidelines, SAA should require that a university offering archives education have an established archives or formal arrangements with nearby archival agencies. The archives courses should be taught by a qualified archivist who would hold a regular appointment as a full or part-time library school faculty member and who would act as advisor for the archives program. (Students successfully completing the program could receive a certificate of archival competence from the Society of American Archivists entitling them to be designated as certified archivists.)

As Bemis and others have noted, graduate level academic training is desirable for many archivists. The current SAA guidelines do not specify such academic training. We agree with this approach. The focus of the first step toward implementing formal educational requirements should be on professional training. While we believe that a second master's degree in an academic discipline is desirable, an ad-

vanced academic degree should be, for the present, an individual choice related to specific jobs and career goals. In the future, SAA may wish to include an advanced academic degree as one of the requirements for certification.

Throughout this article we have focused on the need for archivists to acknowledge their commonality with librarians. We recognize that many librarians still fail to understand that archives and manuscripts are as important as published materials and should be considered an essential part of the information resources of this nation. Archives training in graduate library schools would increase librarians' knowledge and appreciation of archives and archival methodology. Providing archivists and librarians with a common educational background would encourage each to realize the value of the other's contributions to shared goals of information control and dissemination.

If archives education proceeds according to current SAA guidelines, archivists are likely to remain isolated from other information professionals. We believe archives education resulting in the degree of master of library science can more effectively provide archivists with a broad and deep professional education while encouraging them to work together with librarians to develop rational systems which include all types of information sources.

Formerly librarian at the Rhode Island Historical Society, NANCY CHUDACOFF is attending the Boston University School of Law; NANCY PEACE is a professor at Simmons College, School of Library Science.