Archival Education and the Need for Full-Time Faculty

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Abstract: A healthy system of professional education has three complementary components: professional associations, practitioners in the field, and faculty in academic settings. The lack of a sufficient number of full-time faculty is the weakest aspect of the current system of education for archivists. Drawing on the extensive literature on education for professions, especially librarianship, the author speculates on the advantages for the archival profession of a larger number of faculty, sketches an appropriate role for such a faculty, and encourages further development of a more complete system of archival education.

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IMAGINE, IF YOU WILL, three people sharing the task of transporting an important, but weighty cargo over uncertain terrain. To progress most efficiently, the threesome would stay a similar course, in step, each bearing a fair share of the load. Even if the troika does not know the destination, it can proceed if all three can see a path and support each other's actions. Educational programs in most professional fields resemble such a system, although they are rarely free of tension. Practitioners in the field combine with professional associations and faculty in graduate programs to develop a base of knowledge and skills focused on a common mission. Without these three healthy components, professional education is limited and a profession limits itself.

In the last two decades, archivists have made great strides in clarifying their primary mission and in building on-the-job training programs, continuing professional education programs, and a variety of formal archival administration courses in colleges and universities. Many talented professionals are committed to educating new archivists and improving the skills of their colleagues; however, the long tradition of one- or two-course sequences, peripherally located in library schools or history departments and largely taught by adjunct staff, has limited the development of needed links with the higher education community. Today's archival education system is a drag on the development of the archival profession, because it is tied too closely to the very practitioners it serves. Simply put, the archival profession needs a larger corps of full-time faculty committed to a career of teaching, research, and service.

Strong statements such as these will come as no surprise to archivists who have studied the burgeoning literature on education for the profession. (See the Appendix for a bibliography of some of the more interesting writings on the subject.) Drawing on that literature, this article will speculate on the advantages for the archival profession of a larger number of credentialled faculty, sketch the proper role for such a faculty, and encourage the further development of a more complete archival education system.[1]

A renewed look at the relationship of archival educators and the higher education system is particularly timely in view of the Society of American Archivists's (SAA) controversial decision to develop a system for certifying individual archivists, and the release of new guidelines for graduate archival education programs.[2] A decade ago, when SAA issued the first version of its guidelines,[3] a spirited debate suggested that for archivists individual certification, institutional evaluation, and the accreditation of educational programs were intimately related; none stands alone.[4] As in other professions, faculty in formal education programs have an important role to play in all three areas: providing part of the foundation for initial certification, doing research to help identify standards of practice

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[1]It seems only fair, in an article mixing rhetorical arguments in the archival and library literature with liberal doses of personal opinion, that my biases be clear from the start. For the past two years, I have been actively pursuing a Ph.D. in library and information studies. I am convinced that archival theories and practices, especially in the areas of documentation strategies, preservation management, and reference service, have real value for the library profession. Similarly, archivists can benefit from the experiences of the library community with automated access systems, descriptive standards, and community service. There are many advantages to joining forces with the other information professions, but only if the archival profession's educational system is vigorous and dynamic.

[2]"Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs," *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988): 380–89; "Report of the Interim Board for Certification," *SAA Newsletter*, January 1988, 10–15.

[3]"Guidelines for a Graduate Minor or Concentration in Archival Education," *American Archivist* 41 (January 1978): 105–06.

[4]Trudy H. Peterson, Patrick M. Quinn, and Hugh A. Taylor, "Professional Archival Training," *American Archivist* 40 (July 1977): 315–20; Hugh A. Taylor, "The Discipline of History and the Education of the Archivist," *American Archivist* 40 (October 1977): 395–402.

underlying institutional evaluation, and administering the formal academic programs mandated by the profession's future accreditation process.[5]

The archival education system only recently has reached a stage of maturity where it can and should include a full cadre of faculty. For more than fifty years, opportunities to acquire basic training in archival principles and techniques have evolved and expanded. Solon Buck taught the first course in 1938 at Columbia College, where Melvil Dewey had pioneered library education fifty years earlier.[6] By 1968 H. G. Jones was able to identify only eight course sequences in universities, one-half of which were in library schools and the remainder in history departments.[7] This even balance in placement of courses remained fairly constant through the phenomenal growth of the next decade.

During the 1970s, archivists responded to a series of studies, reports, and recommendations by establishing dozens of courses.[8] James Geary identified twenty-three one- or two-course sequences in 1973, thirty-six in 1977, and forty-five in 1978.[9] The SAA education directory for 1986 lists offerings in sixty-eight universities, one-third of which are single-course introductions or summer institutes.[10] Restricting the count to the same methodology used in the Geary study yields a total of fifty-nine programs, rather modest growth in eight years.

Since 1936 over 130 journal articles, reports, and books have been written about educating archivists. "The literature on this subject has not only been volatile, with numerous expressions of strong and differing opinions regarding the content and placement of archival education," writes Richard Cox, "but has grown nearly geometrically in quantity over the last half century."[11] There is little consensus within this literature on how to improve the quality of basic education for archivists. Writers have shown a remarkable persistence in recycling old themes and focusing on peripheral issues.[12] By dwelling almost exclusively on the structure of limited course offerings and their placement in universities, archivists have largely ignored a central question—one that must be confronted before satisfactory solutions to related issues can be identified. What is the relationship of archival faculty to the profession and the higher education community?

Lawrence McCrank and Richard Berner were two of the first to identify a specific need for full-time faculty in archival education. McCrank saw the wide use of adjunct instructors as detrimental: "This reliance on practicing archivists overemphasizes practice at the expense of theoretical research and retards the profession by not providing the pool of research scholars available to other professions." In building his case for dual degree programs in history

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[5]Michael F. Winter, *The Professionalization of Librarianship* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1983), 37–41.

[6]Solon T. Buck, "The Training of American Archivists," *American Archivist* 4 (April 1941): 84–90.

[7]H. G. Jones, "Archival Training in American Universities, 1938–1968," *American Archivist* 31 (April 1968): 135–54.

[8]Philip P. Mason, "The Society of American Archivists in the Seventies: Report of the Committee for the 1970's," *American Archivist* 42 (October 1979): 443–55; Robert M. Warner, "Archival Training in the United States and Canada," *American Archivist* 35 (July/October 1972): 347–58; Ruth Helmuth, "Education for American Archivists: A View from the Trenches," *American Archivist* 44 (Fall 1981): 295–303.

[9]James W. Geary, "A Fading Relationship: Library Schools and Preappointment Archival Education Since 1973," *Journal of Education for Librarianship* 20 (Summer 1984): 243–54. Geary's sample populations for 1977 and 1978 were drawn from his own survey and the SAA *Education Directory*, respectively, accounting for the variation between years.

[10]SAA *Education Directory*, 1986.

[11]Richard Cox, "An Annotated Bibliography of Studies in English on Archival Education" (Unpublished, March 1986).

[12]See, for example, Lawrence J. McCrank, "Public Historians in the Information Professions: Problems in Education and Credentials," *Public Historian* 7 (Summer 1985): 7–22.

departments and library schools, however, McCrank mentioned only in passing that the ability of a program to thrive in either location is dependent to a large degree on the status of the instructor.[13]

Berner amplified McCrank's ideas when he highlighted the self-defensive tone of authors on the subject. He suggested that the primary contributors to the perennial debate on the nature, scope, placement, and quality of archival education are themselves adjuncts, intimately involved in the process of archival education.[14] In viewing adjuncts as the source of weakness in archival education, both Berner and McCrank undervalue the important practical perspectives of dedicated adjunct instructors. Full-time regular faculty, however, have additional functions to serve; they are the educational innovators, leaders, and researchers for the profession.

Frank Burke recognized that the knowledge base of the archival profession suffered for its lack of strong academic ties. "If the profession is to progress," he warned, "certain archivists must make the move from the workplace to the academy, not just for one day a week, or one week a year, but as a permanent career commitment." Burke saw this needed academic connection as fundamentally interdisciplinary and integrative in nature. Archivists in universities "must realign themselves with the academic historians and those in related disciplines that touch on the nature of in-

formation, the management dynamics of corporate bodies, such as governments and the church, and meld their concepts into the new philosophy of archives as records of human experience."[15] While reflecting the clear bias toward historical studies that characterizes much of the writing on the subject,[16] Burke nevertheless brought into relief the importance of faculty as a prerequisite to the development of a recognizable base of knowledge and theory. His comments were also important for expanding the discussion to encompass professional knowledge.

The literature on the place of education in a profession has a long and controversial history.[17] Richard Cox recently summarized the implications of this literature for archivists.[18] He has shown that scholars disagree on the definition and description of a profession—establishment and growth patterns are not always clear-cut and definable. There is general agreement, however, that how a profession educates its practitioners and controls entry to the field is crucial and that educational systems evolve from the joint efforts of universities, professional associations, and practitioners.[19]

Faculty in professional schools within universities are the key link between the academic community and the professions. In essence, they hold a unique position as intermediaries between a scholarly community, which has the resources and intel-

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[13]Lawrence J. McCrank, "Prospects for Integrating Historical and Information Studies in Archival Education," *American Archivist* 42 (October 1979): 449.

[14]Richard C. Berner, "Archival Education and Training in the United States, 1937 to Present," *Journal of Education for Librarianship* 22 (1981): 15–16.

[15]Frank Burke, "The Future Course of Archival Theory in the United States," *American Archivist* 44 (Winter 1981): 40–46.

[16]George Bolotenko, "Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well," *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 5–25. See also subsequent issues for stimulating responses to this article.

[17]For a good analysis of the literature, see Magali S. Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

[18]Richard J. Cox, "Professionalism and Archivists in the United States," *American Archivist* 49 (Summer 1986): 241–44.

[19]Representative of this consensus are William F. Frankena, *The Philosophy and Future of Graduate Education* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980); Cyril O. Houle, *Continuing Learning in the Professions* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 1980); Michael Eraut, "Knowledge Creation and Knowledge Use in Professional Contexts," *Studies in Higher Education* 10 (1985): 117–33.

lectual orientation to tackle complex problems comprehensively, and professional practitioners, who have specialized approaches to problem solving, knowledge, and skills. It is this intermediary role that allows faculty to make large contributions to professional development.[20]

There are advantages and liabilities associated with this role. Among the advantages are full access to academia's intellectual and physical resources, freedom to pursue research interests in a supportive environment, and career development opportunities. Despite the continuing problems of funding higher education, and perennial questions about the tenure system, a faculty career has become a profession of some note.[21]

In addition to these positive circumstances are two basic difficulties: the faculty's relationship with practitioners and its status within the university. These limit the professional school faculty's capability to develop a base of widely acceptable knowledge and creative educational programs. Professional faculty derive their identity in part from their ties to practitioners and leaders in the field, for, ultimately, professional schools are in the "business" of training generations of practitioners. The need to stay attuned to professional skill requirements and to respond to market forces sometimes brings faculty into conflict with the mandate of higher education that places research ahead of training.[22]

The special circumstances of professional faculty, therefore, give rise to an inevitable tension between academics and the professional. This tension, however, is a source of great potential benefit to professions. In the case of the library profession, Thomas Childers sees the tension between practitioners and library schools mirrored in the debate on the importance of academic research versus the "art" of librarianship: "That relationship is one of dynamic tension. It is inherent to the field and is not simply the result of political, economic, or personality struggles among the human proponents of art and science." Childers urges both practitioners and faculty to support basic research, to "render the inevitable tension functional, rather than dysfunctional, so that practice seeks to be informed by academic research, so that practice provides a friendly locus for academic research."[23]

Cyril Houle, a leader in the area of continuing education, has also identified a vital role for faculty in the process of professionalization. The educator has "both the opportunity and the challenge to use the active principles of learning to help achieve the basic aims of the group with which he works. He becomes not merely the reinforcer of the status quo, as he so often is now, but the needed colleague of all who work to further the power and the responsibility of the profession."[24] In calling for a strengthened education system, Richard Cox makes the same case for the archival profession.[25]

Though the emergence of a faculty component is tremendously useful for a profession, the process by which this occurs is not clear. Building a professional education system is not always a cooperative effort, as can be seen in the case of medical ed-

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[20]Eraut, "Knowledge Creation and Knowledge Use," 120.

[21]Michael Brooks and Katherine German, *Meeting the Challenges: Developing Faculty Careers*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report No. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1983).

[22]W. Boyd Rayward, "The Problem of Connections: Education for the Practice of Librarianship," *Journal of Librarianship* 16 (July 1984): 152–54.

[23]Thomas Childers, "Will the Cycle Be Unbroken? Research and Schools of Library and Information Studies," *Library Trends* 32 (Spring 1984): 522, 533.

[24]Cyril O. Houle, "The Comparative Study of Continuing Professional Education," *Convergence* 3 (1970): 9.

[25]Cox, "Professionalism and Archivists," 244.

ucation. As Kenneth Ludmerer charts in *Learning to Heal*, modern medical education did not spring fully formed in the aftermath of the 1915 Flexner report and similar practitioner-based reform efforts, but evolved from the conscious policies of educational leaders in key universities. Charles Eliot at Harvard, James Angell at Michigan, and Daniel Gilman at Johns Hopkins saw the future of the modern university in the symbiosis of fundamental research and clinical (i.e., practical) education. Their efforts to wrest control of medical education from practitioners and professional medical associations took twenty-five years and were neither neat nor clean. Central to the process was the development of a faculty with advanced research degrees, wedded to the norms of higher education, yet committed to the highest standards of professional practice.[26] While the medical profession may not be typical of all professions, the underlying transformation of the educational system may be a common and necessary phenomenon.

Education for librarianship is perhaps a better example for archivists. Today, the system that Melvil Dewey established at Columbia College in 1886 has grown to encompass over 572 full-time faculty in sixty library schools accredited by the American Library Association in the United States and Canada.[27] The development of education for librarianship has been marked by concerted efforts to clarify a mission, strengthen the cohesion of schools, improve the image within the profession, and survive financial challenges from university administrators.[28]

Perhaps foremost among these efforts was the establishment and growth of the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s, and the consequent growth of a professional faculty.[29] Increasing emphasis on faculty qualifications has been at the center of the growth of library education. The perceived need for faculty with doctoral degrees in librarianship underlay the establishment of Chicago's Graduate Library School. By 1987, 81 percent of all full-time library school faculty in North America held the earned doctorate, an increasing trend since statistics have been maintained. Twenty ALA-accredited schools offer the doctorate in library or information science.[30]

Underlying this structural development are at least three fundamental transformations in education for librarianship that have implications for archivists. A first change was the recognition that the maintenance of high-quality education programs required generally accepted standards. The most obvious manifestation of this transformation was the establishment of standards for accrediting library schools in 1952 and their subsequent revision in 1972. Library educators are once again engaged in efforts to revise and update educational standards by diversifying the accreditation process.[31]

The second transformation was the revision of the concept of professional education from training to academic preparation.

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[26]Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Learning to Heal: The Development of American Medical Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

[27]*Libarary and Information Science Education Statistical Report, 1987* (State College, Penn.: Association for Library and Information Science Education, 1987), 2.

[28]As part of the centennial celebrations of library education in 1986, entire issues of several journals were devoted to assessing the profession's progress. See esp., *Library Trends* 34 (Winter and Spring 1986), *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 26 (Winter and Spring 1986), and *Special Libraries* 77 (Fall 1986).

[29]John Richardson, *The Spirit of Inquiry: The Graduate Library School at Chicago, 1921–51* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1982).

[30]*Library and Information Science Education Statistical Report, 1987*, 28; Kathleen M. Heim, "The Changing Faculty Mandate," *Library Trends* 34 (Spring 1986): 581–606.

[31]Robert M. Hayes, "Accreditation," *Library Trends* 34 (Spring 1986): 537–60; "Accreditation: The Way Ahead" (Unpublished; American Library Association, Committee on Accreditation, 1986).

This process was marked by a change in the location of teaching from libraries to university classrooms, a change in focus from an emphasis on technical skills to generalized principles supplemented by situation-specific examples, and a change from practitioner-instructors to full-time faculty.

A third transformation was the movement away from a homogeneous approach to education toward an approach that welcomes and even encourages diversity. The deemphasis of "core" curricula and the integration of perspectives of allied information professions into the basic M.L.S. program reflect this change. Whether this intellectual space leaves room for faculty with archival expertise, for revisions in curriculum outlines to include archival perspectives, and for the development of truly comprehensive specializations and majors in archives administration depends as much on the positive and confident actions of archivists as it does on changes within the library profession's educational system.

After fifty years, education for archivists has reached a new stage of maturity. A multitude of courses are taught by talented instructors, enthusiastic about their work. More significantly, seven experienced archivists have full-time appointments as faculty with responsibility for archival education programs.[32] The Society of American Archivists now has a full-time staff member charged with improving and increasing continuing education opportunities for practicing archivists. Finally, there appears to be a consensus developing among the employing institutions, professional organ-

izations, and individual archivists that educational issues are fundamental to the profession's image and status in society.[33] Currently, however, the archival education system as a whole has yet to complete the necessary, fundamental transformation that has occurred in education for librarianship and other professions.

An insufficient number of full-time faculty may indeed be a key component, or even *the* key component limiting this transformation. Simply identifying a deficiency, however, will not increase the academic component in the archival profession. The joint efforts of instructors and students in academic programs, practitioners in the field, and leaders in national and regional archival associations are required. Over the long run, each of these contributors to the archival education system has steps to take.

Practitioners are overdue in heeding Frank Burke's advice on career changes. The archival profession could support immediately at least seven additional full-time faculty in either departments of history or government or in schools of library science, business, or public administration. In addition, a goal of thirty faculty, fully involved in research and teaching, is not unrealistic, given the size of the faculty cadre in the library profession.[34] Such faculty will require credentials appropriate to the discipline in which they are based, matched with a strong personal commitment to the archival profession. Rich opportunities for focused studies on archival issues exist within a broad range of academic fields.[35] The intellectual and practical contributions

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[32]Those with appointments in library schools are David Gracy, University of Texas, Austin; Frederick Stielow, Catholic University; Frank Burke, University of Maryland; and Luciana Duranti and Terry Eastwood, University of British Columbia. Those with appointments in history departments are James O'Toole, University of Massachusetts, Boston; and James Rhodes, Western Washington University.

[33]Sidney J. Levy and Albert G. Robles, "The Image of Archivists: Resource Allocators' Perceptions" (Report prepared for the Society of American Archivists, Task Force on Archives and Society, by Social Research, Inc., 1984), 31–36.

[34]These figures are very conservative estimates based on a comparison of the ratios of ALA membership (45,000) to library school faculty (572) and SAA personal membership (2,443) to potential full-time faculty in archives administration (x).

[35]Richard J. Cox, "American Archival Literature: Expanding Horizons and Continuing Needs, 1901–1987," *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1987): 316–17.

of the archival profession will be enhanced, not undermined, by research and teaching based within the educational programs of allied professions. Archivists need not make Faustian bargains in order to construct a multidisciplinary approach to their professional education.

Archival associations at the national and regional levels also have key roles to play. As a necessary complement to the individual certification program, the SAA should develop a way to enhance the structure, content, and quality of archival education programs. The recently approved guidelines for graduate programs are a major, positive step, even if a full-time faculty is not yet the accepted standard. Educational guidelines, however, are only as good as the system for monitoring the achievement of expressed goals. A monitoring system, implemented at the national level, would enhance the abilities of full-time faculty to integrate their ideas into the larger programs of which they are a part.

Regional archival associations, with long-standing and deep ties to the full range of practicing archivists, can assist archivists in articulating their education and training needs. Through the regionals, as well as at national meetings and conferences, archivists can clearly identify the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes needed to tackle current and future problems. Archivists in regional associations can help develop and support efforts to broaden the entire education system.

The profession needs more visible leadership from archival educators, especially those with full-time appointments in library schools and history departments, to bring the profession closer to the academic disciplines of which it is a part. Educators can develop, test, and distribute model course outlines, and publish textbooks for use in archival administration course sequences.

They can help develop and support a system for monitoring and improving the quality of education for archivists. Most importantly, archival educators can recruit, train, and encourage the group of experienced archivists who will join them as full-time faculty.

In 1979 Herbert White challenged the library profession with the question: "Is there a point in terms of faculty size and cumulative competence below which the offering of the necessary diversity in library education becomes impossible?" In answering affirmatively, White expressed concern about the prospect of fewer and fewer students attending more and more library schools. He suggested that a critical mass of faculty and students was needed to maintain quality education programs. The recent wave of library school closings and the expansion of curricula in surviving schools to encompass information science and other perspectives seem to demonstrate the wisdom of White's perception that professional education systems will survive, but not without difficult and sometimes painful changes.[36]

White's message applies today to the archival profession. Archivists need a critical mass of full-time academic faculty within the profession to complement and counterbalance the important contribution of practical knowledge now dominating the profession. The unique combination of research, teaching, and service endows faculty with an essential professional function—a role that is diluted by the small number of full-time faculty and the wide array of educational programs that exist today. Fifty years of progress in archival education, however, provide ample cause for optimism that archivists are willing and able to establish a new balance in their archival education system by developing and supporting a strong base of full-time faculty.

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[36]Herbert S. White, "Critical Mass for Library Education," *American Libraries* 10 (September 1979): 479.

Appendix
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[1]The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Richard J. Cox. His extensive annotated bibliography on archival education served as the foundation for this bibliography.

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