

# Professional Associations and Archival Education: A Different Role, or a Different Theater?

TIMOTHY L. ERICSON

**Abstract:** In this article the author contends that as professional associations plan archival education programs they often do so from too narrow a perspective and without sufficient thought as to how their efforts mesh with those of other associations or with graduate archival education programs. He also argues that, because of the murky distinction between preappointment and postappointment education, both SAA and the regional archival associations share a common primary mission: to fill the gaps that exist in the present network of graduate archival education opportunities. To do so, archival associations need to (1) pay closer attention to the graduate programs and learn where gaps exist, (2) examine more closely some of their past assumptions concerning archival education in light of recent information, and (3) take a broader view of how their efforts may contribute to the development of the archival profession generally in addition to serving the needs of their primary constituency.

*About the author:* Timothy L. Ericson is Education Officer of the Society of American Archivists. Prior to 1987 he was for ten years the university archivist and Area Research Center director at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and for two years a project archivist and map curator at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. He received an M.A. in American history from UW-River Falls and will shortly receive an M.L.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

This article is a revision and compilation of several papers delivered at various regional archival association meetings during 1987. The author wishes to thank Donn Neal for his extensive critique of the ideas expressed in the article and many helpful suggestions. The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Society of American Archivists.

IN THE ONGOING DISCUSSION surrounding archival education, much has been said about the relationship between the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and regional archival organizations. In examining this topic, archivists seemingly have made the implicit assumption that there are, in fact, differences between what the regional associations and what SAA should be doing about archival education. If archivists believe that there are different roles to be played, then there must be reasons for this. And more important, what are the underlying assumptions that have led archivists to conclude that regional associations and national associations have different roles to play?

Some of the difficulty in defining the respective roles results from the fact that archivists often (1) frame their questions too narrowly, (2) pay scant attention to factors that merit more careful scrutiny, and (3) rely upon inadequate or outdated information. Because of this, we have become prisoners of our preconceived notions. Professional associations have often staked out their turf, without regard to how their efforts mesh with those of other associations and with the graduate archival education programs that comprise the keystone upon which all archival education depends. Archivists also have paid too much attention to the *form* of archival education, and not enough to its *content*. Too much time is spent thinking in terms of workshops, seminars, and institutes, and too little considering what techniques and skills archivists need to learn. Finally, archivists have made assumptions about the role and capabilities of regional associations based upon information that was gathered long ago.

Looking beyond preconceived notions, evidence suggests that although a regional association's role may sometimes be played in a different theater, and to a different audience, the role itself is not all that different than that of a national association. In many respects, regional associations are simply a

special interest group of archivists—like the Museum Archives Roundtable and the Archivists of Religious Institutions. It is just that their special interest is geographically based.

The purpose of this article is to examine more closely some of the evidence about archival education programs, and to challenge some of the assumptions that archivists have made about what this evidence means. It is not that the assumptions have necessarily been wrong, but that all assumptions need to be challenged periodically. If not, they become worn out from overuse, and one day one suddenly discovers that assumptions have become clichés.

### **Preappointment and Postappointment Archival Education**

In many respects, the archival professional confronts a situation similar to one described in a 1987 *Newsweek* article entitled "Back to the Basics," which began with a story of a company that "was determined to join the computer age." As the author explained, "The company thought that a few courses in trigonometry would help the crew adjust to computers. The word came back from the shop floor: 'Let's start with fractions.' " Company executives, to their dismay, discovered that the educational system through which their employees had come had not provided them with even the rudiments of knowledge needed to perform their work effectively, let alone to learn a new set of job skills. Another company found itself in the position of retraining employees every three to five years and discovered the obvious: "employees without the basic skills quickly fall behind." These companies, along with others in the same situation, tried a number of different strategies, including sending employees to night school; but they soon discovered that "for adults it is very important that training be done in a context they see as relevant." In-house programs were most successful when all of the "class problems

relate[d] to [the company's] product."<sup>1</sup>

The situation described in the *Newsweek* article has some important implications for archival education. Like the corporation that finds it necessary to retrain employees every three to five years, the archival profession is going through a period of rapid change. Like the corporation that found its workers deficient in basic education, the archival profession has within its ranks many who, for whatever reason, never received a basic *archival* education before they were employed. It is difficult for archivists who never received adequate instruction in arrangement and description to comprehend the use of the MARC format. There is a significant interdependent relationship between preappointment and postappointment education, and for archivists the latter must somehow compensate for the deficiencies of the former.

One of the most common oversights on the part of those of us who plan continuing education is to go about our business without actively thinking about how our efforts mesh with those of graduate archival education programs. For either graduate archival education or continuing archival education programs to be successful, each must cooperate with the other. This cooperation must include deciding who should be teaching what, how efforts can be coordinated, who the respective natural constituencies are.

The task, however, is made difficult by the murky distinction that exists between preappointment and postappointment education. As a profession, archivists are committed to the notion that preappointment training ought to come at the graduate level

in an archival education program.<sup>2</sup> A single survey course, a one- or two-week institute, or a three-day "Introduction to Archives" workshop is insufficient. A survey course does not confer upon one knowledge sufficient to become an archivist—any more than a survey course in American history transforms one into a professional historian, or an introductory course entitled "Libraries and Information Agencies in Society" makes one a librarian. Survey courses may be essential building blocks in an archival education program, but the building block should not be mistaken for the finished product. As H. G. Jones observed in his 1968 article reviewing archival training in American universities, offering introductory coursework is "a far different proposal from one that implies that the professionally trained librarian who is permitted to take an elective course in archives administration thereby becomes qualified as a professional archivist."<sup>3</sup>

If all archivists were graduates of academic programs, the responsibilities of professional associations would define themselves very nicely: graduate programs would be responsible for preappointment training, and professional associations (whether regional or national) would be responsible for postappointment or continuing education. But since this definitely is not the case, archival education programs must respond. For the time being at least, archivists in professional associations who plan educational programs need to define postappointment education not only in terms of what *ought* to be in the best of all possible worlds, but also what it *needs* to be for the present generation of archivists.

<sup>1</sup>Jeff B. Copeland, et al., "Back to the Basics," *Newsweek* 111 (21 September 1987): 55.

<sup>2</sup>See Richard J. Cox, "Professionalism and Archivists in the United States," *American Archivist* 49 (Summer 1986): 244, as one recent example. The introduction to the revised "Society of American Archivists Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs," published elsewhere in this issue, address the increased importance of graduate archival education as opposed to the traditional mode of education that consisted of "workshops, short-term institutes and single courses with accompanying practica."

<sup>3</sup>H. G. Jones, "Archival Training in American Universities, 1938-68," *American Archivist* 31 (April 1968): 137.

"Postappointment" must be defined pragmatically to mean education for archivists who are already on the job, regardless of their background or educational pedigree. This definition still allows archival associations to fill the gaps, but not compete with graduate archival education programs.

In fact, given this state of confusion, it seems that the most important goal for all professional associations—whether regional or national—must be to fill the gaps that exist in preappointment education. Such deficiencies may exist for a number of reasons.

### Gaps in Archival Education

The first and most obvious gap results from the fact that graduate archival education programs do not have the opportunity to reach a large number of practicing archivists. The situation confronts the profession with a perplexing dilemma: what can be done about the plight of the "instant archivist?" These are the people who only yesterday were librarians, professors, administrative assistants, or secretaries and who suddenly have found themselves given the responsibility to start or administer an archives. Most begin such work with little or no formal education in archival principles or methods, and have neither the opportunity nor the predilection to return to graduate school in order to obtain the training recommended in the SAA's "Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs."<sup>4</sup>

Without some training, they will be like the people one archivist recently described:

"Untrained, inexperienced people, no matter how enthusiastic or keen who are left to somehow find their own [way] seem to inevitably do one of two things. Either they spend their time trying to work out how to attack the problem, [but] lacking confidence in their own abilities end up by doing very little . . . or they assume they understand archives theory and practice and rush ahead making irreversible decisions . . . the full ramifications of which only become obvious some time later."<sup>5</sup>

Who will provide the education people need to perform the job they will be doing anyway—with or without the blessing of other archivists? Who will provide the educational base upon which such people can continue to learn? The fact that the archival profession cannot presently control who enters its ranks in the same way that lawyers and teachers can has an enormous impact on the educational needs that must be met. Some suggest that the Society of American Archivists should not be in the business of providing introductory workshops since this perpetuates the notion that archival work can be satisfactorily learned via this route. Others have suggested that such educational offerings ought to be provided by regional archival associations.<sup>6</sup> And others contend that, given the current level of professional development, to eliminate such educational programs sidesteps archivists' responsibility to help colleagues who will continue to do archival work regardless. To discontinue such training would merely ignore the problem, pretending that it does not exist. But how can this be done

<sup>4</sup>"Society of American Archivists Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs," *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988): 380–89.

<sup>5</sup>Kevin Bourke, "Training—A Personal Perspective," *Archifacts*, Bulletin of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, June 1987, 38.

<sup>6</sup>Patrick M. Quinn, "Regional Archival Organizations and the Society of American Archivists," *American Archivist* 46 (Fall 1983): 437–38. One of the working group discussion questions debated at SAA's February 1987 Conference on Continuing Archival Education in Savannah, Georgia, was "What are the best ways to develop and maintain cooperation between SAA, established archival education programs, regional archival organizations, and major institutions in the field of archival education? Should SAA deal exclusively with advanced education, and the regionals with basic education? Should there be a mix? How can this be effected?" Notes on the discussion of this question indicate that the consensus was that such a division of responsibility was not a good idea, but opinion was not unanimous on this point.



when fewer than one-half of all participants in SAA's continuing education workshops and seminars during the past year came with the graduate archival training the profession promotes?<sup>7</sup>

Gaps also occur because the importance of certain ideas and concepts, such as management, has just recently been recognized, and they are only gradually being incorporated into graduate curricula. Even if a course, "Managing an Archives," could immediately be established in every graduate program in the country, there would still be a generation of archivists already on the job without such training. Short of returning to graduate school, how would they receive the same training? As Mary Jo Pugh observed in a paper prepared for the February 1987 SAA Conference on Continuing Archival Education in Savannah, "In most programs of archival education there is little time for management skills, and it can be argued that it is not possible to teach such skills until novice archivists have additional practical experience and maturity."<sup>8</sup>

Gaps also occur because certain subjects either are not widely taught or are taught inadequately at the graduate level. For example, SAA's 1986 *Education Directory* lists more than seventy institutions offering graduate archival coursework. Of these, only thirteen offer elective coursework beyond the survey level in such important areas as conservation techniques or documentary preservation.<sup>9</sup> Inadequately taught courses are those in which core concepts are not

dealt with to a sufficient extent. In some cases, instructors simply try to wring too much from a single course—as with those programs that combine archival education, museum and historical society administration, historical preservation, and documentary editing.<sup>10</sup> Even in the best survey courses scant attention is given to important topics. For example, an examination made in 1988 of syllabi from survey courses in twenty-five multicourse graduate archival education programs showed that only two courses devoted more than one class session to appraisal.<sup>11</sup> And in several of the remaining twenty-three, appraisal merely was included in a session along with such related topics as records management, collection development, and accessioning. Is this adequate? Almost all registrants for SAA's appraisal workshop during the past twelve months who commented on their graduate archival education used such words as "incidental," "minimal," "limited," and "superficial" to describe its value.

Most archival graduate students face limited offerings. A program that consists of an introductory course, a seminar, and a practicum (as had been recommended in SAA's 1977 graduate education guidelines) cannot possibly offer students the opportunity to explore adequately the fundamentals of archival work. As Pugh noted, "Even . . . new archivists [with graduate training] will have only a handful of courses cobbled onto a library science or history curriculum, typically taught by an adjunct member of the host department, with little to say in

<sup>7</sup>This statistic is based upon a survey of 125 registration forms collected between October 1987 and May 1988 for the workshops and seminars "Archival Fundamentals: Appraisal" (Columbia, Mo; Atlanta, Ga; Allentown, Penn.; and Anaheim, Cal.), "Documentation Strategy Seminar" (Chicago, Ill.), and "Management for Archivists" (Oxford, Miss.). In response to the question "Check one for the primary source for your archival training," only forty-four (35 percent) listed graduate programs.

<sup>8</sup>Mary Jo Pugh, "Priorities for Continuing Education" (1/22/87 draft of an unpublished paper delivered at the Society of American Archivists Conference on Continuing Archival Education, Savannah, Ga., 13 February 1987), 18.

<sup>9</sup>Society of American Archivists, *Education Directory*, 1986.

<sup>10</sup>The 1986 *Education Directory* lists a number of courses that combine several distinct subjects together under an umbrella. Some examples are "Archives and Editing," "Archives, Historical Societies and Historical Editing," and "Principles of Archives and Museums."

<sup>11</sup>Registration forms from the four workshops mentioned in note 7 above.

the shaping of the overall host curriculum. [Employers] cannot assume a basic core of knowledge from even the best trained entry level archivist."<sup>12</sup>

The shortcomings of preappointment training—limited in scope and without the benefit of prior experience—were eloquently expressed by New Zealand archivist Kevin Bourke:

I discovered that as an archivist I was supposed to know what . . . I was doing. Nobody else seemed to want to know too much about me, as long as it looked as though I knew what I was [about]. The truth was that I didn't know much more than anyone else. [So] I concentrated on doing things that were uncomplicated . . . like [collecting], and simply left the more difficult areas, believing that eventually I would have enough knowledge and experience to tackle them. Over a period of years [a backlog] slowly but surely built up . . . [and] . . . I became increasingly depressed at my inability to find solutions to these problems. There seemed to be nobody to whom I could turn [and I didn't] feel I could seek assistance from any of the other archivists I knew. It wasn't just pride that kept me from seeking help, it was also that I couldn't define the exact problem.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, there must be follow-up courses to introductory coursework, both in graduate schools and afterward, but in most cases there are not enough graduate archival education courses to provide the depth and breadth needed. Professional associations, however, can help to provide the follow-up courses needed in the "afterward."

Gaps in archival education are also created because the profession, like many others, is developing both technologically and conceptually. One has only to consider how automation has revolutionized archivists' work during the past five years to understand how quickly required knowledge is changing. Four years ago, the 1983 *SAA Education Directory* listed only three graduate courses in North America that dealt substantively with archives and automation.<sup>14</sup> New concepts are continually emerging as well; in the area of appraisal, for example, constructs such as "documentation strategy," "adequacy of documentation," and the "black box appraisal taxonomy" were unknown just six years ago. Archivists must keep abreast of both technological and conceptual developments and must have a mechanism to do this.

There are gaps because effective ways of teaching certain archival concepts have not yet been discovered, or relevant teaching materials do not exist. Security, outreach, and reference are good examples of conceptual areas that suffer from under-developed teaching techniques and strategies. All areas of archival education lack much in the way of curricular materials. Much of the content of archival education is determined either by new developments in the field or by the ease with which a subject can be taught effectively. Without effective teaching strategies and materials, certain aspects of archival work receive short shrift in educational programs.<sup>15</sup>

Gaps also have been created because archivists have not yet defined a core of skills to be taught in all graduate programs. Thus, two students may graduate with "archival degrees" from different programs, having learned widely different sets of skills.

<sup>12</sup>Pugh, "Priorities for Continuing Education," 9–10.

<sup>13</sup>Bourke, "Training," 38.

<sup>14</sup>The three courses listed were "Automation and Archives" (University of British Columbia), "Management of Machine Readable Data" (University of Michigan), and "Computers and Archives Administration" (New York University).

<sup>15</sup>The lack of curricular materials is a common complaint—not only among graduate archival educators, but among those who teach workshops, seminars, and institutes as well.

Comparing the curricula through which archivists are trained, one finds considerable differences beyond the survey course. Those programs based in library schools typically offer such electives as library automation, conservation, special collections, micrographics, rare books, file and data base management, and organization of nonprint materials. Within history programs, there are few such courses; elective coursework tends to include documentary editing, institutional archives, community/local history, historical methods, historic preservation, genealogical research, exhibits, and management of historical institutions.

Although some diversity is both inevitable and healthy, the extremes of graduate programs strain the limits of such virtue. The 1986 *Education Directory* includes one library-based program that offers four courses beyond the survey level: "Literature of the Social Sciences," "Analytical Bibliography," "History of the Book," and "Library Practicum." Another training program for archivists, based in history, is similar only in that it also offers four courses beyond the survey level: "Historical Editing," "Historic Preservation," "Museum Studies," and "Internship in Applied History."<sup>16</sup>

The dominance of such coursework is evidence of the compromises that archival educators have had to make over the years. The point is not so much that most archival education programs are appended to either history or to library science departments, but that they are appended in the first place. As such they are add-ons, frills in the minds of many, and heavily populated by adjunct

faculty. In fact, SAA's 1988 survey of graduate archival education programs revealed that more than two-thirds of all instructors in such programs have only adjunct status and of these, 40 percent have less than the Ph. D. degree that is such an important credential in any graduate program.<sup>17</sup> Adjunct instructors hold other fulltime jobs, and this leaves less time to recruit promising students, to help place graduates, and to act as academic advisors. Few adjunct instructors are full participants in faculty governance; most are not in the position to act as advocates for their programs or to promote curricular development. As add-ons, archival education programs are more vulnerable to cutbacks in times of financial crisis.

Finally, educational gaps also can be created by geography. The recent explosion of regional, state, and even local archival organizations points to the importance of easy access to archival education. When archivists are urged to take advantage of existing educational programs at colleges and universities, what constitutes "convenient?" Is it within a fifty- or one-hundred mile radius? Even though there are many graduate archival education programs, most are concentrated in a relatively small geographical area. Most graduate educational opportunities are inaccessible to a large percentage of the archival community.<sup>18</sup>

### Graduate Archival Education Coursework

Another way to consider gaps is to examine how, and to what extent, archival concepts are taught at the graduate level. Using the SAA graduate education guide-

<sup>16</sup>*Education Directory*, 1986.

<sup>17</sup>The survey of graduate archival education programs was taken in December 1987 and January 1988 as part of an effort to update the 1986 *Education Directory*. The survey inquired about courses that were offered, the background and appointment status of instructors, and other information about individual graduate programs. Copies of the survey instrument are available from the SAA office in Chicago.

<sup>18</sup>The 1986 *Education Directory* listed only thirty-one states with any graduate archival education programs. Of the sixty-six American programs, fifty-one were located east of the Mississippi River. Even within states that reported at least one graduate archival education program, the distances involved for archivists wishing to enroll in a graduate program can be considerable.

lines as a conceptual framework, coursework falls into four general categories: (1) survey courses in which students are introduced to archival terminology, history, methodology, and related subjects; (2) elective courses that concentrate on a particular concept or technique, such as conservation or records management, or that deal with archival knowledge or practice in a particular institutional setting, such as a college or university archives; (3) seminars, independent study, or readings courses that are primarily research oriented, allowing a student to explore a particular concept at length over the course of a semester; and (4) practica or internships that allow students to apply their knowledge in a hands-on fashion in an archival setting.<sup>19</sup>

If one bears this in mind and looks more closely at the coursework offered in graduate archival education programs, the results are interesting. SAA's 1986 *Education Directory* lists 75 institutions that offer archival education of some kind, with a collective total of all courses, practica, workshops, internships, and other opportunities numbering 275. Since 25 of these are workshops, undergraduate offerings, or institutes, in effect the directory lists only 250 *graduate* archival courses. Of these, 61 can be described as education that might benefit an archivist rather than archival education in its purest sense. Such courses include historical preservation, history of the book, museum management, internships in public history, oral history, and documentary editing, as well as courses in which the treatment of archival issues is so watered down as to be plainly inadequate.

Eliminating these marginal courses from the directory leaves only 189 graduate archival courses.<sup>20</sup>

The introductory or survey course is certainly a valuable and necessary part of the graduate curriculum, but alone is insufficient in itself as training. As Terry Eastwood noted in an *Archivaria* article, many of these courses are not part of a program; they are "designed with the limited object of familiarizing people who [are] expected to be librarians with archival materials and procedures." Sixty-five of the more than 70 institutions represented in the SAA directory offer such survey courses. After subtracting this figure from the total, 124 courses remain.<sup>11</sup>

Twenty-nine courses are listed in the practica or internship category; 35 courses are seminars, independent study, or directed study; and one is a thesis course—for an aggregate total of 64. Thus only 59 courses out of the original 275 deal intensively with particular concepts or techniques of archival work. These are scattered among 75 institutions. Of this number, more than one-half—32 to be exact—are either conservation or records management, leaving only 27 to cover appraisal, reference, access, arrangement, description, and other specific topics. There are six graduate archival education courses on the North American continent that focus on automation; there is one course on law, one course on reprography.<sup>22</sup>

### The Role of Professional Associations

These course offerings of graduate programs help to define the environment in

<sup>19</sup>1988 "Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs," pp. 380–89.

<sup>20</sup>*Education Directory*, 1986.

<sup>21</sup>Terry Eastwood, "The Origins and Aims of the Master of Archival Studies Programme at the University of British Columbia," *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 38; *Education Directory*, 1986.

<sup>22</sup>The automation courses are "Automation in Archives" (Catholic University of America), "Archival Automation" (University of Maryland), "Introduction to Machine Readable Records" (University of Michigan), "Automation and the Control of Archives and Manuscripts" (University of Missouri-Columbia), "Computers and Archival Administration" (New York University), "Automation and Archives" (University of British Columbia); other courses also deal with information management and library automation generally. "Law, Society and Historical Resources" is taught at George Mason University. "Introduction to Reprography" is taught at the University of Maryland.

which all professional associations—SAA and the regionals—must operate. The foregoing discussion should not only have suggested some specific areas in which professional associations may fill gaps, but also have demonstrated that there is plenty of turf for both regional and national archival associations to plant their respective flags.

To do so effectively, professional associations must look again at some long-held assumptions and then confront a number of important issues. The first and second of these assumptions relate to the two terms “archival education” and “regional”; as archivists update their thinking, they should sharpen their terminology. When using the term “archival education,” archivists often lump together an amorphous mass of workshops, seminars, graduate classes, and tours; actually, more careful distinctions should be made. Workshops and seminars are simply the means, not the goals, of archival education. What archivists need to learn and the means they will use to obtain this knowledge are two different, although related, issues.

Another important step will be to abandon the two beloved adjectives “basic” and “advanced.” These imprecise and confining terms express the educational needs of archivists inadequately. For example, most people refer to the SAA’s appraisal workshop, offered once at the 1987 SAA annual meeting and four times in conjunction with regional association meetings, as a “basic” workshop. The characteristics of participants, however, indicate this is not necessarily so. Newcomers to the profession—those who have been archivists for two years or less—constitute the smallest participant group (28 percent). Thirty percent of the participants reported more than eight years of archival experience—scarcely newcom-

ers. The percentage of beginners was little different in the three documentation strategy seminars; 24 percent of the participants reported less than two years of archival experience.<sup>23</sup>

As professionals, archivists are always learning skills, techniques, and methods that are basic to different levels of responsibility. Because of this, it would be well for archivists to modify their use of the simplistic basic/advanced framework and incorporate other, more accurate terminology. As now used, “basic” actually means “introductory” and “fundamental.” For example, the concept of appraisal may be introduced in an hour or two during a workshop designed to cover the essential aspects of archival administration in two or three days. A similar amount of time may be spent on appraisal in a graduate survey course that devotes one lecture and perhaps a short reading assignment to the topic. These are only introductions that provide students with an overview of appraisal; the lectures and readings will enable them to speak the language.

One step beyond the simple introduction is a “fundamental” level of education that concentrates on a concept or topic for an extended period of time and conveys both how a particular concept relates to other aspects of archival work and how it may be applied to other ideas and concepts. Such coursework offered in a workshop or seminar setting will deal with appraisal for an entire day, or a day and a half, and include a rather extensive reading component as well as exercises and extended discussion. Participants in SAA’s “Archival Fundamentals: Appraisal” workshop have spent more actual time discussing appraisal and have read more about appraisal than the vast majority of graduate students taking a survey course in a graduate archival education pro-

<sup>23</sup>The three documentation strategy seminars were held in New York, N. Y. (August 1987); Denver, Col. (March 1988); and Chicago, Ill. (May 1988). The one additional appraisal workshop not noted in note 7 above was held in New York City in September 1987.



gram.<sup>24</sup>

Likewise, as archivists have come to use the term “advanced,” it can refer either to applying concepts from other disciplines, or building upon fundamental archival concepts to achieve a higher level of understanding or practice. This encompasses both concepts from management or automation applied in an archival context, as well as documentation strategies or collecting policies, both of which rest upon a specific application of the fundamental concept of appraisal.

### Issues for Professional Associations

Other questions, however, remain to be addressed: (1) what should the archival profession do with skills from academic disciplines that archivists have only recently embraced, and (2) at what point do we distinguish between archival education and education that might benefit an archivist? Should archivists assume responsibility for teaching management and budgeting, or, as some suggest, leave such subjects to colleagues in business and public administration programs? Should archival associations be teaching marketing or should business administration educators develop curricular materials and teach these concepts? And what about reference? Should archivists simply take reference courses taught in library schools and apply what they learn to their own situation? Should oral history, history of the book, and historical editing—useful courses already taught in many graduate programs—continue to occupy the place they now do in graduate archival education programs? If so, must

the responsibility of continuing education programs—whether at the regional or national level—be to “fill the gaps” with coursework pertaining to topics such as automation, security, reference, and archival law that are not as widely taught at the graduate level? These are questions that graduate programs and continuing education programs—whether national or regional—must ask, not only about archival science’s relationship to other disciplines but also as these programs relate to one another.

The term “regional” is another about which archivists have made certain unconscious assumptions and generalizations. As some archivists toss it about, “regional” has come to mean anything smaller than “national.” This is an imprecise usage of the term. As Patrick Quinn observed in his 1983 *American Archivist* article, there are at least three distinct subspecies of regional organizations: multistate, state, and metropolitan. Regional associations, according to Quinn, are “smaller and more intimate organizations” than SAA and are “particularly attuned to the needs of their members.” They “serve an important constituency outside of SAA” and are an affordable alternative for beginning archivists and those who cannot afford SAA. Quinn correctly foresaw the tremendous increase in the number of local archival organizations.<sup>25</sup>

Although there is no reason to quarrel with these conclusions, it is erroneous to generalize too much from them. Rather than “small” and “intimate,” some of these regionals now number around one thousand

<sup>24</sup>A 1988 SAA survey of graduate archival education programs asked respondents to return a syllabus for each course listed. Those with useable information about the amount of time spent teaching appraisal in an introductory course included course outlines from the University of Connecticut, Rosary College, Simmons College, the University of Louisville, the University of Massachusetts-Boston, the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, the University of Southern Mississippi, Columbia University, New York University, Syracuse University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Western Washington University, the University of Texas-Austin, the University of South Carolina, North Carolina State University, Duquesne University, George Mason University, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Brigham Young University, the University of Kansas, West Virginia University, and Rutgers University. Only courses at the University of Michigan and the University of Texas-Austin apparently spent more than a single class session on the subject of appraisal.

<sup>25</sup>Quinn, “Regional Archival Organizations,” 434–35.



members and command considerable resources, not to mention geographical territory. Each of the two largest regional archival associations, the Midwest Archives Conference (MAC) and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC), has an individual membership that is nearly as large as SAA's was in 1972 when MAC and MARAC were founded!<sup>26</sup>

It is also tempting, and equally erroneous, to generalize that the metropolitan/state/regional framework translates into small/medium/large. Of the ten largest regional associations for which current membership figures are available, only four are multistate groups. Of the remaining six, four are statewide organizations and two are based in metropolitan areas.<sup>27</sup>

Some regional associations attract a significant number of members from outside their primary service area and have a national audience through their publications. In the Society of Georgia Archivists, for example, only 57 percent of the individual members are from Georgia; if one adjusts for institutional memberships, the resident percentage drops to scarcely 40 percent.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to distinguish between these types of so-called regional associations because of another long-accepted archival assumption: regional associations are important because they reach a constituency that a national association such as SAA does not. Although there is no reason to believe that this is not true (or at least based on truth), archivists—with their sloppy use of the term “regional”—have missed one of the important assumptions behind this statement. We seem to have assumed that

there are *two* constituencies: the one SAA reaches and the one regional organizations reach. In reality, the situation is more complex. For example, 70 percent of the respondents to the Midwest Archives Conference recent membership survey also belonged to SAA.<sup>29</sup> Is there a significant percentage of the archival community that is a member of neither a regional nor a national organization or does the combined membership of both organizations represent most of the Midwest's archival community?

A closer look reveals some surprising evidence. A 1985 archival directory published by the Library Committee of Metropolitan Milwaukee (LCOMM) lists sixty-four repositories with archival holdings and the names of sixty-two contact persons. Of the people listed, only fourteen (19 percent) were MAC members, and eight (13 percent) belonged to SAA. Of these twenty-two individuals who were either MAC or SAA members, six belonged to both organizations. Seventy-two percent of the individuals listed were members of neither.<sup>30</sup> This suggests that many persons with archival responsibilities have not been reached by any professional association, and that professional associations can play an important role in reaching out to such colleagues and meeting their educational needs.

Another area in which archivists' assumptions can be questioned concerns the varying needs of persons who attend regional meetings and those who attend SAA meetings, of archivists from different geographic regions, and of those from different types of repositories. Are there specific types

<sup>26</sup>The 1970 SAA membership directory listed approximately 1,100 individual members. Both MAC and MARAC now report memberships of approximately 1,000 members.

<sup>27</sup>The ten largest are the Midwest Archives Conference, Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, Society of California Archivists, Society of Georgia Archivists, New England Archivists, Archival Roundtable of Metropolitan New York, Michigan Archival Association, D.C. Archivists, Society of Ohio Archivists, and Conference of Inter-Mountain Archivists.

<sup>28</sup>“*Society of Georgia Archivists Membership Directory*,” 1986.

<sup>29</sup>“MAC Membership Survey,” *MAC Newsletter*, 15, #1 (July 1987): 5.

<sup>30</sup>Archives Group of the Library Council of Metropolitan Milwaukee, *Directory of Archives in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, Washington, and Waukesha counties—State of Wisconsin* (1985).

of educational offerings more needed at the regional level than at the national level? Some colleagues say that there is a greater need regionally for the so-called basic workshops, basing this assertion on the assumption that people who attend national meetings do not need such basic training and those who do not attend do need it. The contention is, at best, unproven. It overlooks the value of introductory training to paraprofessionals, clerical workers, and volunteers who work in archival agencies, as well as to supervisors whose responsibilities include archival programs.

Others believe that professional associations should offer special workshops for museum, religious, and performing arts archivists, and other groups with special interests. Admittedly, these areas are underdeveloped in graduate archival education programs—and probably for a good reason. Committing the time and intellectual energy to create a completely different workshop for each of the atomic components comprising the archival community is not a good investment of time and resources. Graduate programs and professional associations alike should teach the archival principles, concepts, and methods that are used in all archival repositories, tailoring the curricula to special interests when that is appropriate, but without reinventing the wheel for each constituency in the archival community.

Finally, some archivists say the very nature of educational needs differ from place to place. They point to regional surveys that ask members what types of workshops they would like to have in the future. Although such surveys might be useful in de-

termining perceived educational needs within one region, they are not very useful when comparing the needs of different geographical areas because the surveys do not ask the same questions. SAA's 1986 Survey of Educational Needs, in fact, indicates little regional difference in archivists' priorities.<sup>31</sup>

A few percentage points notwithstanding, and despite all the individual differences that may separate archivists from universities, museums, government agencies, or religious institutions, one overriding factor unifies the entire archival profession: archivists everywhere are bound together by collective ignorance. Any significant differences in regional needs are more likely to be in the area of how best to deliver the needed education rather than in the actual content of that education.

A related assumption is that SAA is hobbled in its effort to reach a greater portion of the archival community because of the high cost of its membership, annual meetings, and other activities. This has led regional associations to place a premium on providing low-cost educational opportunities. This in turn, has had a pronounced effect on the programs and priorities in regional archival associations, although cost consciousness has influenced SAA's educational initiatives as well. A similar line of reasoning has also been used by state archival organizations to argue against participating in multistate cooperative efforts.<sup>32</sup>

Believing that cost is so important, archivists have been careful to keep the length of meetings short, reducing the cost of meals and lodging. Planners likewise have worked

<sup>31</sup>There are a host of examples from which one may choose, beginning with the survey of educational needs administered by the Society of American Archivists in 1986. The results of this survey were analyzed in Frederick J. Stielow, "Society of American Archivists 1986/87 Continuing Education Survey: A Preliminary Analysis" (Unpublished paper delivered at the SAA Conference on Continuing Archival Education, Savannah, Ga., February 1987). For another recent example see "Ontario Association of Archivists Education Survey, November, 1987."

<sup>32</sup>This argument was advanced during a discussion at the September 1987 Tennessee Archivists and Kentucky Council of Archives joint meeting as they considered whether or not to join the newly formed Southern Archives Conference.

to charge the bare minimum for workshops and for curricular materials, sometimes to be the detriment of the product.

To be frugal is a virtue, but it need not override all other considerations. Information on the archivists who attended SAA workshops between September 1987 and June 1988 suggests that a large majority enjoy heavy support from their employing institutions. Overall, 76 percent had more than one-half of their workshop-related expenses paid. Of this group, almost 80 percent reported that *all* of their expenses had been paid.<sup>33</sup> It may be tempting to argue that such figures simply illustrate that only those who receive institutional support attend workshops and seminars. There may be some accuracy to this interpretation, and only further research will tell for sure if that is the case. It is worth noting, however, that, the next largest group after those whose expenses were paid in full was composed of archivists who received *no* institutional support whatever. They paid their own expenses and in many cases took personal or vacation time as well. Thus 96 percent either enjoyed heavy institutional support, or valued an archival education highly enough to commit personal resources toward obtaining it.

One might also argue that such strong institutional support probably results *because* the cost is relatively low. There may be some truth in this, but when almost 80 percent of workshop participants have more than half their expenses paid, perhaps it is time to rethink what archivists can afford to spend for the development of high quality educational programming at professional meetings. Innovative archival education may be available cheaply, but it cannot always come free. Quality education takes time, money, and energy to produce. While archival education programs should be done as inexpensively as possible, they also must be done well. Quality,

furthermore, need not be sacrificed at the altar of frugality. Fees must cover development costs of curricular materials such as readings, exercises, and case studies. Educators need the support necessary to develop new teaching techniques such as hands-on learning; they should be encouraged to create audiovisual or computer-assisted support materials. Those who develop and teach workshops and seminars should be compensated fairly.

This is not to say that professional associations simply should begin spending and charging more money, but, rather, that archivists are in the position to begin making some changes. We should consider changing the format of meetings. Perhaps more preconference workshops could be scheduled, even though that would stretch out the meeting and add to the cost for some participants. Perhaps longer workshops or seminars could be held concurrently with regular meeting sessions. Associations could provide more financial support such as honoraria for instructors, a greater investment in teaching materials, and funding to defray copying costs or equipment rental. In many respects developing one-time workshops and seminars is simply to perform triage. The development of curricular and teaching materials that ultimately can serve professional educational needs more effectively is a better investment of archivists' resources than conducting a series of singular events. Just because there are archivists who cannot afford or are not willing to contribute to their continuing education does not mean that the educational needs of those who can and are willing to make such a contribution should be ignored. Archivists at the regional level especially need not be immobilized by the prospect of spending some money to provide quality educational opportunities, or limited by the image of the underfunded archivist.

---

<sup>33</sup>This is the same group as noted in note 7 above.

Professional associations, both national and regional, have a crucial educational role to play in filling the many gaps that exist in the network of archival education. This can be accomplished not only by providing continuing archival education through short courses such as workshops or seminars that concentrate on specific ideas, techniques, new developments, or problems, but also in other ways.

Associations might first identify gaps in their own program by examining the substance of what has been taught at recent meetings in workshops, seminars, institutes, sessions, or other forms. It is likely that some subjects such as automation and preservation have appeared regularly over the years, while others such as appraisal, reference, security, and ethics have appeared much less frequently.<sup>34</sup> Regional education committees with easy access to information about their own programs and using the basic knowledge and theory framework outlined in the 1988 SAA "Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs" are in an excellent position to undertake such an analysis and apply the results. Using this information about gaps in regional education programs, sessions at professional meetings might be planned as part of a series rather than as solitary events. Such planning need not strait-jacket what is done, but would ensure that certain subjects do not slip between the cracks. In short, professional associations may benefit by looking beyond the next annual meeting and giving their educational programs a sequential and intellectual structure that takes into account both short-term and long-term needs.

At the same time, building upon the 1988 "Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education," regional associations and graduate archival educators might work together and create a more comprehensive set of guide-

lines for *all* archival education that includes not only graduate programs and practica but continuing education as well. Such guidelines might incorporate work recently begun by SAA's Committee on Education and Professional Development to identify common archival competencies and skills.

Finally, it would behoove all professional associations, including SAA, to stop thinking in such exclusive terms. Already SAA's continuing education program is being restructured to accommodate regional as well as national needs. Workshops have been developed for one- and one-and-one-half days, so they can be more easily scheduled in conjunction with regional meetings. Likewise, regional associations might try not thinking of everything in regional terms. Regional associations and SAA could share information-gathering techniques such as evaluation or registration forms and membership surveys so that the same questions are asked and the same information is collected. Many regional projects have national significance. MARAC's "Hiring an Archivist" brochure, the University of Wisconsin System Archives Council's "Core Mission and Minimum Standards for University Archives," the grant-funded New England Archivists Education Project, and the Society of California Archivists' Western Archives Institute are just a few examples.

With heavily overlapping membership, regional and national associations are not distinct entities in the educational process. Rather, they are parts of a continuum that encompasses both preappointment and postappointment archival education for all segments of the archival community. By translating this overlap into more effective cooperative mechanisms, archivists can develop more responsive and innovative educational programs.

<sup>34</sup>A recent such analysis by the author considered the programs of one regional association from 1973–1986. Of the 141 sessions, workshops, and seminars held in conjunction with regional meetings during this period of time, only four had dealt specifically with the subject of appraisal. The last of these was in 1975.