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Forum

To the editor:

I could not resist making a few comments on the articles and first edition of the American Archivist under its new editorship. Congratulations—the journal's move to an archival education program may mark a significant step in the maturation of the entire field.

It was especially gratifying to see Robert Reynold's historical work on American archival theory as the research article. One only hopes that more such contributions are produced—indeed, that we might develop a true historiography and schools of thought.

The perspectives pieces were more troubling. Tyler Walters correctly argues for an open door to public history programs. Fine—but why should that imply watering down archival education below even the 1977 Graduate Education Guidelines, let alone those from 1988 or the new push toward a separate masters? For acceptance of public history programs, archivists must at least expand to include automation and information science along with the necessary jolt of history.

Bruce Bruemmer makes a more convincing case for oral history and the MARC AMC format (the latter, we trust, is in Walters' concept of public history for archivists). I also agree with Bruemmer's criticisms of sections of my *Management of Oral History Sound Archives.* Written basically between 1982 to 1984, that was a pioneering study to fill a vacuum. The microcomputer revolution was just dawning and AMC protocols and even initialisms in the process of development. Still, the other sections and underlying theory in the outdated parts should have informed Bruemmer toward a more complex view of access for oral history. Like Frank Burke, for example, I tend to view MARC in perspective as a necessary evil—a technological dinosaur that must be used. Effective internal access calls for more modern data constructs. And, without dealing with present physical limits to getting their MARC records in the national utilities, I suggest that archivists not turn to simplistic library approaches in which every item is listed in an equal manner and irregardless of its value. The descriptive theory for archives does not abandon appraisal and variable description for the sake of MARC. Not every interview merits a full record. We might do well with collective or project level listings in many cases—or even exclude relatively worthless sessions from the networks. I imagine that Bruemmer might agree with such sentiments, but I thought that more clarification and depth were due the reader.

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With the exception of editing for conformity of capitalization, punctuation, and citation style, letters to the Forum are published verbatim.

From the Editor

Education and the Archivist: Views and Reviews

WHAT CONSTITUTES THE appropriate education for an archivist in North America has long been a fixation, as it should be, for the archival profession.[1] From workshops and institutes, to single courses and multicourses in graduate schools, to full-fledged Masters in Archival Studies degrees, the array of educational opportunities has been varied and, yes, at times confusing. At present, in North America, there remain two distinct educational cultures (one more pragmatic and workshop-oriented and the other more focused on education and archival knowledge, theory, and methodology) for professional archivists. Although the essays in this current *American Archivist* don't fully reflect these two cultures, they do exhibit the abiding interest in education by archivists, an interest so intense that it seeps into most discussions on virtually any archival topic. There is a common thread of this interest in all the essays in this issue.

Frank Burke's Presidential Address concentrates directly, of course, on the education of the archivist in his characterization of four archival dogmas. Burke starts by reminding us, as have others, that the discussion and debate on the education of archivists have gone on for a half-century and more. But Burke goes far beyond rehashing a sometimes weary debate on educational priorities and practices by placing education within a broader context of the information professions (or sciences) and thrashing away at some very old and cherished stereotypes held by archivists. Burke points to a very new and different future, populated by more comprehensive graduate programs taught by individuals with doctorates in archival science. A decade ago Burke argued for the connection of archival theory and research to the development of graduate programs with archival educators, a prediction we are just beginning to see come to fruition.[2] It will be interesting to

[1]For a brief bibliography, with writings from 1939 into the mid-1980s, refer to the appendix in Paul Conway, "Archival Education and the Need for Full-Time Faculty," *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988): 262–65.

[2]Frank Burke, "The Future Course of Archival Theory in the United States," *American Archivist* 44 (Winter 1981): 40–46. I suggest it is coming to fruition because we are beginning to see the published products on archival theory and methodology from

reflect again on Burke's present set of predictions in the year 2002.

Mary Sue Stephenson's research article on the *American Archivist*, though not directly focused on education, does concern the substance of the materials and tools archival educators have for teaching. Examining the profiles in the journal's subject content and authorship, Stephenson has shown how the *American Archivist* has revealed the activities and concerns of the North American archival profession, ranging from its debates on the nature of theory and practice to the matter of who has been producing the literature. As the author notes, her examination is very preliminary. Still, at least as regards topics represented in the articles, Stephenson points to an increased interest in professional issues and research needs, and one possible interpretation is that this may reflect the continuing concern for developing materials that can be used for didactic purposes. However, her findings relative to the large number of individuals who publish only once in the *American Archivist*, and her citations to other studies indicating the large portion of the profession that does not publish at all and the predominance of single-person authorship, return us to the kinds of concerns Burke and others raise about the viability of the archival profession's literature. How can more comprehensive graduate and continuing education programs be supported when there is a weak literature base and, perhaps, a weak structure for fostering the development of a professional literature?

Dennis East's article about the Ohio Historical Society and the state archives and Larry Hackman's description of the development of statewide archival services in New York may seem to offer little regarding archival education, if we consider this to be restricted to the education of archivists. However, I think both authors have provided some compelling reasons for the profession's broader interests in education. East's study of the efforts to establish and develop an effective state archives program in Ohio is, obviously, also about the efforts to educate legislators and citizens about the importance of archives and the nature of archives programs. While noting that success of a sort was achieved in 1959, East demonstrates how this success was marred by a continuing lack of resources and support. As East states in the article, paraphrasing an earlier commentator, the society "had achieved only partial success in reaching the people and preserving and teaching history."

Hackman's lengthy case study of the larger statewide roles of a state government archives is built on the premise of careful assessment, agenda setting that builds consensus among archivists and the creators and users of archives, public awareness, advocacy, reporting, access to archival experts, and other activities, all of which possess an educational aspect. Yet, his essay raises some stimulating questions regarding the education of archivists and provides a stark contrast of more recent state archives development to that described by East. Hackman notes that many of the matters he discusses concerning the activities of the New York State Archives have not been fully considered or resolved by the national archival community. He also suggests the issue of being able to staff new programs completely with the right kinds of administrators, analysts, and advisers necessary for their functioning. Although it is a matter he does not consider, it is possible to argue that the reasons for such concerns are

graduate archival education programs in a manner unlike the past. Heather MacNeil's *Without Consent: The Ethics of Disclosing Personal Information in Public Archives* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press and the Society of American Archivists, 1992) is a unique contribution to the archival literature which emerged from the Masters of Archival Studies program at the University of British Columbia. In my estimation, we will see more such studies, unique in perspective and contribution to the field, as graduate programs continue to develop and more doctoral students are attracted to archives as topics for dissertation studies.

the lack of adequate and appropriate educational programs for the education of archivists. Why is it, for example, that such case studies as Hackman's are completed by individuals connected with the events depicted and not by external, objective observers? Would we not learn more if doctoral and other studies posed and answered the kinds of questions set forth in this essay? None of these comments are meant to denigrate the contribution made by Hackman, but it is obvious that the pioneering work accomplished by the New York State Archives in the past two decades has been partly pioneering because of an education system that has been more apprenticeship- and programmatically-oriented (asking how and what) than focused on archival theory, methods, and practices (asking why). Sustained and objective research will tell the profession whether the lessons of New York are relevant to other states and national programs, the very action Hackman calls for in his conclusion.

The final two essays have different implications for education. Richard Carter Davis's article is a straightforward, intriguing description of an effort to build a statewide archival database in Idaho. Davis notes, among other things, how the standardized rules for archival description which emerged in the early 1980s have had minimal impact on many local repositories, and the difficulties this presented in beginning the statewide database. Ironically, arrangement and description have long been the primary focus of both graduate and continuing education programs, yet the adoption of consistent standards has a way to go. Roy Schaeffer's essay, as winner of the Theodore C. Pease Award, is both a product of an exemplary graduate education program and a commentary on the need for such educational programs. He argues that archivists have come a long way since Frank Burke's 1981 argument regarding the lack of archival theory and notes that, at least in the case of appraisal, "graduate-level programs of education have begun to define the focus of intellectual activity for archivists." Indeed, when students such as Schaeffer begin to study more thoroughly the issues raised by archival practitioners such as Hackman, East, and Davis and by archival educators such as Burke, the nature of the literature as portrayed by Stephenson will begin to change dramatically.

As always, it is hoped that these essays will stimulate readers to reconsider their attitudes toward archival knowledge and practice and contribute to the developing archival literature and body of research and opinion.

Richard J. Cox