

Perspective

The Development of Professional Education for Librarians and Archivists in the United States: A Comparative Essay

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Abstract: The author compares the historical development of professional education for librarians and for archivists in the United States. While librarians have developed a formal graduate education program for preparing practitioners for entry into the profession, archivists in the United States are only now beginning to develop such a program. The author identifies the funding provided by the Carnegie Corporation and the leadership provided by the American Library Association as the critical elements in the successful development of professional education programs for librarians, and he contrasts this situation with the lack of leadership provided by the Society of American Archivists in developing archival education. The article concludes with a discussion of some possible future directions for archival education.

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IN 1909, AT THE FIRST GATHERING of archivists in the United States, Waldo Gifford Leland asserted that “we must disabuse ourselves of the idea that anyone can be an archivist.” He pointed out that there had been a time “when anyone who liked books and was unfit for anything else could be a librarian, but that time is long since passed.” He predicted that “the evolution of the archivist will proceed somewhat as has the evolution of the librarian.”¹

Since the time of that statement, the library school has evolved from the status of an independent trade school to one of the constellation of professional schools that characterize the modern university. Meanwhile, archivists have failed to establish a similar program or curriculum to prepare students for entry into the profession, with serious deleterious effects on the competence of practitioners, the availability of resources with which archival institutions achieve their goals, and the status of the profession.

The principal objective of this article is to explore this discrepancy in the development of professional education of two fields that, in many other respects, have so much in common. Why have librarians and archivists, who share so many characteristics, ideals, and activities, followed such different approaches toward professional education?

The literature of the sociology of professions is vast, and a discussion of that literature is beyond the scope of this paper. Richard J. Cox has already aptly analyzed the application of that literature to archivists.² Whether one ascribes to taxonomic

models of professions or believes that focusing on the process of professionalization offers more useful interpretive power, the role of education in defining both the profession and the professional is central to understanding the concept of professions. For the purposes of this essay, a *profession* is simply an occupation that exhibits one or more of a set of characteristics ascribed to an ideal type. Chief among those characteristics are that a profession lays claim to a knowledge base that can be learned during a period of formal education prior to entry into professional practice.³

Professionals generally acquire their specialized knowledge in three different circumstances or environments: formal pre-appointment course work in colleges and universities, on-the-job training, and post-appointment workshops or other instructional programs offered by specialists outside the workplace. As Paul Conway points out, “The standard notion of professional education arranges these three environments in a linear time line. Namely, individuals seeking a professional career first pursue the recognized entry-level de-

pertinent to this discussion are Kathleen M. Heim, “Professional Education: Some Comparisons,” in *As Much to Learn as to Teach: Essays in Honor of Lester Asheim*, edited by Joel M. Lee and Beth A. Hamilton, (Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1979), 128–76; and Margaret Stieg, *Change and Challenge in Library and Information Science Education* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1992), 45–60. Andrew Abbott takes a very different approach to analyzing professions and professionalism in *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

³Abbott rejects both the taxonomic approach and the professionalization model, but his definition of professions as “exclusive occupational groups applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases” (p. 8) emphasizes the importance of the knowledge base in establishing the identity and domain of a profession. His book includes an extensive meditation on the interaction between the university and the professions (pp. 195–211).

¹Waldo Gifford Leland, “American Archival Problems,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1909* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911), 348.

²Richard J. Cox, “Professionalism and Archivists in the United States,” *American Archivist* 49 (Summer 1986): 229–47. Additional useful reviews of the part of the literature of the sociology of professions

gree.”⁴ After acquiring the normal preappointment credentials, the professional then receives additional training by the employer in specific technical or administrative procedures germane to that organization. “Finally, as their career needs dictate, professionals seek specialized continuing education to maintain or broaden skills.”⁵ The focus of this essay is the first in this series of experiences: formal, preappointment degree programs.

These formal degree programs do not appear overnight. Charles D. Churchwell, library administrator, educator, and author of a classic history of library and information science education, has demonstrated how formal degree programs evolve.

Professional education for an occupation has always been a subsequent development of the occupation itself. As the knowledge of an occupation accumulated and its techniques became more complex, the methods of education evolved from that of apprenticeship programs, the earliest and simplest form of professional education, to the highly organized professional school. Professional education has become, therefore, the most widely used method of transmitting knowledge and techniques of an occupation from the skilled practitioner and theoretician to the unskilled beginner.⁶

Over the course of time most professions have evolved rather formal mechanisms for

entry into the profession, based on the successful completion of a specific course of study within the university, usually at the graduate level.⁷ Almost all these programs have appeared during the course of the past century.⁸

Following this model, librarians have developed a well-defined structure of professional schools, offering a curriculum leading to a master's degree, in programs accredited by a national association. This master's degree—which goes by many names but will be referred to here by the normal designation of M.L.S.—is the requisite credential for entry into the profession. Without it, no one can claim status as a member of the library profession. As Jane Robbins and Charles Seavey note in their review of the development of the M.L.S., it “has evolved . . . to the point where it is today *the* credential for entry into the ranks of the professional library practice.”⁹

Archivists have as yet developed no such structure. As Cox notes, “Archivists have . . . virtually no control over or even influence on archival education.”¹⁰ Individuals may claim the status of archivist without having completed any specific course of study and without any specific educational credentials. A recent review of archival education programs by Timothy Ericson documents their weakness and lack of uniformity.¹¹ David Murrah claims that

⁷William J. McGlothlin, *Patterns of Professional Education* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), xii–xvii.

⁸Heim, “Professional Education,” provides a good overview of the development of professional education in the United States.

⁹Jane Robbins-Carter and Charles A. Seavey, “The Master's Degree: Basic Preparation for Professional Practice,” *Library Trends* 34 (Spring 1986): 578.

¹⁰Cox, “Professionalism and Archivists,” 236.

¹¹Timothy L. Ericson, “‘Abolish the Recent’: The Progress of Archival Education,” *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 34 (Winter 1993): 25–37.

⁴Paul Conway, “Effective Continuing Education for Training the Archivist,” *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 34 (Winter 1993): 39.

⁵Conway, “Effective Continuing Education.”

⁶Charles D. Churchwell, *The Shaping of American Library Education* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1975), 1.

one cause for this lack of uniformity is that "the profession at its best is indeed a hybrid product of multiprofessional training."¹² This assertion is further supported by empirical data provided in a recent study by Alan Gabehart of the credentials desired by employers of archivists, which shows an extremely wide variety of differing educational backgrounds.¹³

Professional Education for Librarians

The development of education for librarianship has followed a pattern that, as library educator Kathleen Heim pointed out, "parallels, and at times even anticipates, the other professions."¹⁴ Prior to 1887, preparation for a career as a librarian was the responsibility of the practitioner, who engaged in a sort of apprenticeship common to other professions.¹⁵ Would-be librarians first acquired a good basic liberal education, and then learned library skills in self-directed reading programs, by observing practice in a library, or sometimes by a more formal apprenticeship in a college or large public library. Advice to prospective librarians from such leaders in the profession as Justin Winsor stressed reading,

seeking advice from experienced librarians, and commitment to self-improvement.

The expansion of library service in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, particularly the growth of public libraries and academic institutions, increased the demand for professional librarians. With this expanding market in mind, Melvil Dewey founded the first formal school for librarianship at Columbia University in 1887. As Margaret Stieg has observed, "this event marked the beginning of a transition from haphazard, personalized preparation to formal standardized instruction and testified to growth and maturing within the new profession."¹⁶

The Columbia school, which moved with Dewey to the New York State Library in Albany in 1889, was part of a larger movement away from apprenticeship and toward formal training programs as the basis for entry into the professions. Although Dewey's program emphasized training in the technical aspects of librarianship, it laid the foundation for an eventual shift from training to education.¹⁷

The ensuing two decades witnessed the establishment of a number of additional programs, including those at Pratt Institute, Armour Institute, Drexel Institute, and Simmons College. The University of Wisconsin and Syracuse University were the first (after Columbia) to provide a home for a library school in a university setting. These schools coexisted with training programs run by large public libraries like the New York Public Library and the Los Angeles Public Library.

Practitioners in the field were closely involved with the development and manage-

¹²David J. Murrah, "Employer Expectations for Archivists: A Review of a 'Hybrid Profession' ", *Journal of Library Administration* 11 (1989): 170.

¹³Alan D. Gabehart, "Qualifications Desired by Employers for Entry-Level Archivists in the United States," *American Archivist* 55 (Summer 1992): 420-39.

¹⁴Heim, "Professional Education," 131.

¹⁵This discussion of the history of library education is based in large part on Carl M. White, *A Historical Introduction to Library Education: Problems and Progress to 1951* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1976); C. Edward Carroll, *The Professionalization of Education for Librarianship, with Special Reference to the Years 1940-1960* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1970); and Charles D. Churchwell, *The Shaping of American Library Education* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1975). Margaret Stieg provides a very useful summary in *Change and Challenge*, 24-30.

¹⁶Stieg, *Change and Challenge*, 25.

¹⁷The distinction between *education* and *training* is important, and it is often missing in the discussions about archival education. The focus of this essay (as its title indicates) is professional education for librarians and archivists.

ment of these library training programs, which often were little more than formalized apprentice-training classes. They were all operated by former or current practitioners, and their goal was to provide a source of trained librarians to serve in the growing number of library organizations. Their curriculum varied widely, as did their entrance requirements.

The American Library Association (ALA), established in 1876, had long maintained a high level of interest and involvement in library education. An effort to formalize this interest was the creation of the Committee on Library Training in 1903. The committee was charged "to investigate from time to time the whole subject of library schools and courses of study, and report the results of its investigations, with recommendations."¹⁸ Subsequently, in 1909, the ALA established the Section on Professional Training for Librarianship, to serve as a forum for discussion of issues related to professional education and training.¹⁹

The faculty and staff of a number of the library schools believed it was necessary to have a separate organization to facilitate discussion of internal problems, and they formed the independent Association of American Library Schools (AALS) in 1915. Membership in AALS—which approximated a rudimentary sort of accreditation—was predicated on an institution's meeting a few basic criteria: requiring a high school diploma for admission, offer-

ing one full year of technical and professional library courses, and having two full-time instructors and two faculty members who had themselves been trained in a library school.²⁰

As Churchwell points out, "These groups—the Committee on Library Training, the Professional Training Section, and the Association of American Library Schools—all had as their chief objective the improvement of library education."²¹ The control over quality in library education remained rather low, however, and few were satisfied with the system. By 1919 this dissatisfaction with the system reached the point of widespread public discussion. A significant stimulus to this discussion was a paper at the ALA annual conference that year, presented by Charles C. Williamson, a Columbia University Ph.D. in political economy who had been head of the Division of Economics and Sociology in the New York Public Library's Reference Department. Williamson observed that librarians were being trained in a wide variety of library schools, training classes, apprenticeships, and summer institutes. No meaningful coordination existed between these various training agencies, and their standards were so low that there could be no expectation that their graduates had received an adequate education. He asserted that the present state of library education was nothing more than "a variety of valuable parts scattered around waiting for vital machinery not yet constructed or even planned."²² Williamson was convinced that these "valuable parts" could be transformed into a working system of

¹⁸American Library Association, "Annual Report of the Committee on Committees," *ALA Bulletin* 17 (July 1923): 179. For a review of some of the activities of the Committee on Library Training, see Charles A. Seavey, "Inspection of Library Training Schools, 1914: The Missing Robbins Report," University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science *Occasional Papers*, no. 186, February 1989.

¹⁹"Conference Proceedings of the American Library Association, June 26–July 3, 1909," *ALA Bulletin* 3 (September 1909): 442.

²⁰Donald G. Davis, Jr., *The Association of American Library Schools, 1915–1968: An Analytical History* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1974), 25.

²¹Churchwell, *Shaping of American Library Education*, 10.

²²Charles C. Williamson, "Some Present-Day Aspects of Library Training," *ALA Bulletin* 13 (July 1919): 120.

library education *only* if the American Library Association did its duty and took the leadership in such a movement. He proposed the establishment of an ALA training board to undertake this task.

Four years later, in April 1923, Williamson's recommendation bore fruit when ALA created the Temporary Library Training Board, charged to investigate the needs of the profession, document the inadequacies of library education, and solicit advice from other professions on standards, accreditation, and structures.²³

At this juncture a significant new participant, in the form of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, inserted itself into the development of library education. Beginning in 1886, Andrew Carnegie had given millions of dollars to American communities (and not a few colleges and universities) to underwrite the construction of library facilities. Carnegie's association with the construction of library buildings is so strong that, in the minds of many Americans, the word *library* is always preceded by the name *Carnegie*. In 1911 Carnegie founded the Carnegie Corporation to carry on his various philanthropic pursuits, and the corporation continued funding library construction for several years.

By 1915, however, the officers of the corporation came to question the wisdom of continuing the Carnegie library building program, and they commissioned Alvin S. Johnson, professor of economics at Cornell University, to conduct a study of the program. Johnson found that, although the provision of library buildings had made a great impact on American life, many of these libraries were not giving good service, due in large part to the dearth of well-trained librarians to operate them. He noted that most of the existing library training

programs were weak, that they tended to spend entirely too much time on technical and procedural matters, and that they were chiefly concerned with the needs of large libraries rather than those of the smaller libraries that were the mainstay of the Carnegie benefactions. Johnson concluded that "one year of technical training superimposed upon a high school education is not sufficient to place a librarian in a position to assert for the library its proper place in the community."²⁴ He recommended that before the Carnegie Corporation spent more money for library buildings, it should do something about the education of librarians, citing the rapid progress that had been made in medical education in the five years following the Flexner report. He stressed that—in the words of Carl White—"the standing of professional workers, no less than the social worth of their profession, follows—but does not precede—the development of professional training of high standard."²⁵

The Carnegie Corporation followed up Johnson's report with a study aimed specifically at library education. Charles C. Williamson, commissioned to undertake that study, focused primarily on the institutional members of the Association of American Library Schools, which were presumably the best library education programs in the country. He studied their reports and catalogs and, during the 1920–21 academic year, he visited each campus and studied their organizations and methods. He compiled all of this information into a report to the corporation, an expurgated version of which was published in 1923.

²⁴Alvin S. Johnson, *A Report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York on the Policy of Donations to Free Public Libraries* (n.p., n.d), 47, quoted in Sarah K. Vann, *The Williamson Report: A Study* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1971), 20.

²⁵White, *Historical Introduction to Library Education*, 169.

²³Churchwell, *Shaping American Library Education*, 20.

Williamson's conclusions and recommendations touched on all aspects of library education, including such items as qualifications of students, salaries of instructors, need for textbooks, and the like. He saw clearly the distinction between professional and clerical aspects of library work, and he understood the need to distinguish between them in the programs of education for the profession. His most important recommendations were that library schools should confine themselves to educating professional librarians and should leave the training of clerical workers to the libraries; that library schools, like other professional schools, should be organized within universities and not at libraries; and that a college degree should be required for admission.²⁶ In short, he recommended that library education be established as graduate professional education in the university. He also recommended that the American Library Association work out a system of voluntary certification for librarians and establish a national accreditation agency for library schools.²⁷

The Williamson report struck the American library world like a thunderbolt. It had a profound impact on education for librarianship in the United States and Canada, and it set the stage for a period of dynamic growth and development. Both the Johnson and Williamson reports must be seen, however, in the overall context of Carnegie philanthropic efforts aimed at the improvement of the rising professions in American society by strengthening professional education. The various Carnegie philanthropic organizations, including the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Carnegie Corporation of New

York, were operated by a small inner circle of like-minded individuals who shared this common goal. These interests had already established a pattern of involvement with the reorganization of professional education throughout America. Carnegie money had already funded transformational studies of professional education for medicine,²⁸ engineering,²⁹ teachers,³⁰ and law.³¹ These studies were all aimed at promoting the common welfare by raising professional qualifications through education. The Carnegie Corporation was therefore primed to take immediate action on the recommendations of Johnson and Williamson.

In 1925 the Carnegie Corporation embarked on a ten-year program of library improvement, earmarking \$5 million for a special program of support for library service. The intention of the program was to continue the corporation's special interests in the library field by providing endowments for library schools and for the American Library Association.³² Under this program, between 1925 and 1941 the Carnegie Corporation provided funds totaling \$3.8 million in direct subsidies or endowments

²⁸Abraham Flexner, *Medical Education in the United States and Canada: A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching* (New York: The Foundation, 1910).

²⁹Charles R. Mann, *A Study of Engineering Education, Prepared for the Joint Committee on Engineering Education of the National Engineering Service* (New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1918).

³⁰William S. Learned, *The Professional Preparation of Teachers for American Public Schools: A Study Based Upon and Examination of Tax-Supported Normal Schools in the State of Missouri* (New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1920).

³¹Alfred Z. Reed, *Training for the Public Profession of the Law: Historical Development and Principal Contemporary Problems of Legal Education in the United States, with Some Account of the Conditions in England and Canada* (New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1921).

³²White, *Historical Introduction to Library Education*, 167; Churchwell, *Shaping American Library Education*, 42.

²⁶Charles C. Williamson, *Training for Library Service: A Report Prepared for the Carnegie Corporation of New York* (Boston: Merrymount Press, 1923), 136-42.

²⁷Williamson, *Training for Library Service*, 145.

to library schools at ten different institutions.³³

The American Library Association was also primed and ready to act on many of Williamson's recommendations. Its first major step was transforming the Temporary Library Training Board into the Board of Education for Librarianship (BEL). The BEL established standards for library education in 1925 and began to accredit individual programs. By 1932, twenty-five schools had been accredited under the 1925 standards. One historian has acclaimed the establishment of the BEL as "one of the high points in the professionalization of library education because by this action the national organization accepted its responsibility for establishing and maintaining academic and training standards for its members."³⁴

Another major event was the establishment of the Graduate Library School (GLS) at the University of Chicago in 1926, with \$1.44 million of Carnegie Corporation money. The GLS was explicitly intended to do for education for librarianship what Johns Hopkins had done for medical education and Harvard had done for legal education.³⁵ For the first time, there was a graduate, professional school for preparation of librarians, with a faculty dedicated to scholarship and research. The graduates of the Chicago school became the leaders in librarianship and the education of librarians for more than a generation.

The development of library education did not stop with the momentous events of the 1920s. In the 1940s a series of conferences focusing on key issues in library education set the stage for the eventual adoption of the 1951 *Standards of Accreditation*, which firmly established library education at the graduate level and set the master's degree as the basic professional credential. Schools that did not require a college degree for admission disappeared, and undergraduate programs in library science survived only in the context of teacher education.

As in other aspects of American life, the 1960s were a time of ferment, growth, and upheaval in the education of librarians. The influx of federal money into education fed the need for more librarians and simultaneously provided the wherewithal for expanded programs of education for librarianship. Indeed, twenty-three library schools were founded between 1961 and 1975, representing more than a third of the current number of accredited programs.³⁶

"But in the middle 1970s," Margaret Stieg notes, "contraction replaced expansion almost overnight."³⁷ Retrenchment in higher education and shriveling federal funds for libraries squeezed the job market for library school graduates. The Library School at the University of Oregon closed in 1978, and in the subsequent fifteen years at least fifteen more schools have followed suit.³⁸ There is widespread speculation in the literature about the causes for these closures, including at least one full-length

³³This figure is taken from table 2 in Robert M. Lester, *A Thirty-Year Catalog of Grants* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1942). The institutions were Chicago, Columbia, Michigan, Emory, North Carolina, California, McGill, Denver, Hampton, and Atlanta.

³⁴Carroll, *Professionalization of Education for Librarianship*, 47.

³⁵John V. Richardson, *The Spirit of Inquiry: The Graduate Library School at Chicago, 1921-1951* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1982) is a thorough account of the founding of the GLS.

³⁶Stieg, *Change and Challenge*, 28.

³⁷Stieg, *Change and Challenge*, 28.

³⁸The Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of California at Los Angeles recently just missed being "disestablished"; it was merged with the College of Education ("GSLIS 'Disestablished' at UCLA; Task Force Acts to Save MLS and Ph.D.," *American Libraries* 24 [July-August 1993]: 598).

study of four specific instances,³⁹ but there is little agreement about what the trend portends.

Another quite notable trend has been the impact of rapid developments in information technology on the library profession and, consequently, on the programs of library education. Beginning in the 1970s many "schools of library science" have added the word *information* to their names in an effort to expand or define the domain of the profession. Recent developments at Berkeley and UCLA seem to indicate the abandonment of the "L word" entirely in the names of these programs.⁴⁰ One may only speculate on the ultimate outcome of these changes, but there can be little doubt that the profession of librarianship is now in a period of major change, which is naturally reflected in the programs of education for the profession.

Professional Education for Archivists

Let us turn now to the system for providing professional education for archivists. As Stieg points out,

archival education is more difficult to summarize neatly than library education, primarily because it has yet to come up with anything remotely approaching a standard. It suffers from more unresolved questions, and trends are more difficult to discern. By comparison, library education ap-

pears mature, to have solved, or at least to have come to an accommodation with, problems that archivists are only beginning to address.⁴¹

Indeed, a review of the history of archival education in the United States reveals that, as Cox notes, "many of the concerns and issues about archival education have remained virtually unchanged for nearly half a century."⁴²

Those concerns and issues date from the first gathering of archivists in the United States, organized by Waldo Gifford Leland at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1909, at which the statements quoted at the beginning of this essay were made.⁴³ Subsequently, archivists met regularly under the auspices of the AHA and discussed topics of mutual concern, including proper training for archivists. As Jacqueline Goggin points out, however, "it was not until the National Archives was established . . . that systematic and standardized training for archivists was seriously discussed."⁴⁴

Because of its size, its position, and its location, the National Archives dominated

³⁹Marion Paris, *Library School Closings: Four Case Studies* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1988).

⁴⁰See Stieg, *Change and Challenge*, 10–16, for a discussion of the impact of technology and the role of information science. Abbott's chapter on the information professions aptly and convincingly describes this evolution in terms of the competition for jurisdiction among the various information professions. This competition has been brought about in part by rapid changes in technology. (Abbott, *System of Professions*, 217–25).

⁴¹Stieg, *Change and Challenge*, 30.

⁴²Richard J. Cox, "Archival Education in the United States: Old Concerns, But New Future?" in Cox, *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1990), 98.

⁴³The account that follows is based primarily on the following sources: H. G. Jones, "Archival Training in American Universities, 1938–68," *American Archivist* 31 (April 1968): 135–54; Richard C. Berner, "Archival Education and Training in the United States, 1937 to Present," *Journal of Education for Librarianship* 22 (Summer–Fall 1981): 3–19; Jacqueline Goggin, "That We Shall Truly Deserve the Title of 'Profession': The Training and Education of Archivists, 1930–1960," *American Archivist* 47 (Summer 1984): 243–54; Richard J. Cox, "Archival Education in the United States: Old Concerns, But a New Future?" in Cox, *American Archival Analysis*, 98–112. Stieg presents a useful summary in *Change and Challenge*, 30–32.

⁴⁴Goggin, "Training and Education," 245.

virtually every aspect of archival life in the United States, from the moment of its inception in 1934 until well into the 1960s. The compelling need for a trained and experienced staff to manage the records accumulated from a century and a half of national government created an immediate demand for archivists. "Now suddenly," H. G. Jones observes, "there was a great National agency to be staffed, but not a single institution in the United States offered archival training."⁴⁵ Given this fact, coupled with the close affiliation of archivists with historians in the United States, it was small surprise that the vast majority of the first recruits to the National Archives staff were historians. And that staff, largely devoid of any archival education or experience, required a great deal of training.

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) was organized in 1936, thus establishing a claim for a separate professional identity for archivists. From the outset, issues of education and training were a central focus of concern for the SAA. One of its first actions was to appoint the Committee on the Training of Archivists, chaired by Samuel Flagg Bemis, a distinguished historian. The Committee addressed its charge with alacrity, and Bemis issued his report in July 1937.

Bemis recommended a two-tier system of archivists. At the top—"the more exalted group" in Bemis's words—would be the planners and administrators. This group should be trained in American history, having demonstrated their competence as historians by earning the Ph.D., in the course of which they would have completed a dissertation requiring extensive use of manuscript and archival sources. They should also have a thorough command of both French and German. The second tier would be the technicians. Their preparation would

include a master's degree in history or social science, which might be supplemented by a course in cataloging or bibliography. "It is the historical scholar . . . who dominates the staff of the best European archives," Bemis noted. "We think it should be so here." He admitted that "a course in 'library science' would be useful, particularly for purposes of cataloging . . . libraries auxiliary to archival practice." As for the employment of actual librarians in an archives, Bemis warned that

there is a distinct danger in turning over archives to librarians who are not at the same time erudite and critical historical scholars. They tend to put the emphasis upon cataloging and administration, on mechanics rather than on archival histology and the sacred *principe de provenance*, to which they are usually oblivious.⁴⁶

As Jones has pointed out, "the significance of the Bemis report lies not so much in its specifics as in its philosophy."⁴⁷ Bemis strongly asserted that archivists must be historians and that they must be trained in university graduate history programs. SAA warmly endorsed this approach, which went without serious challenge for more than thirty years. The condescending, patronizing tone Bemis adopted toward librarians laid an unfortunate foundation for the relationship between the two professions.

An alternative approach to archival education, based on a direct alliance with library education was formulated at about the same time. In 1936 Margaret Cross Norton, the state archivist of Illinois, advocated the establishment of a two-year de-

⁴⁶Samuel Flagg Bemis, "The Training of Archivists in the United States," *American Archivist* 2 (July 1939): 157.

⁴⁷Jones, "Archival Training," 137.

⁴⁵Jones, "Archival Training," 136.

gree program leading to a master's of library science in archives. The first year of the program would be the standard library school curriculum, and the second year would be devoted to archival methods. The idea apparently was never taken seriously.⁴⁸ Norton did offer a course in "archival economy" at Columbia's School of Library Service in 1940, but the course was not repeated. She continued to insist, however, that the "great scholar" approach to archival education, as advocated by Bemis, was not the best approach. In 1940, she wrote,

Justin Winsor is frequently cited as the example of a great librarian who was also a great scholar and our young archivists are urged to emulate him. It is no disparagement to the memory of Justin Winsor to point out, however, that no one today would tolerate the standards of service in Winsor's library.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Solon J. Buck tried to lead archival education in a slightly different direction. In 1937 he had taught a course in archives administration at the Columbia University Graduate School. The course apparently did not attract sufficient enrollment, and it was not repeated. But in 1939, with Ernst Posner, Buck persuaded the American University in Washington, D.C., to initiate a program of archival education in its School of Social Science and Public Affairs. The program consisted of a two-course sequence offered in the evening, and the vast majority of the students were employees of the National Archives.

The success of this program led to a grant from the Carnegie Corporation for the development of a more comprehensive archival training program. This program grew and expanded over the years. In 1955 it began to offer a certificate in archival administration for completion of an eight-course sequence in history, archives, and records management. By the late 1960s it was offering an M.A. in public administration, with the possibility of archives as one of two major fields of study. Because the program has been consistently staffed by lecturers from the National Archives, however, and because the vast majority of the students are employees of the Archives, it has constituted little more than an in-house training program for that institution.⁵⁰

Thus, by 1940, the predominant characteristics of American archival education were well established. These characteristics, as articulated by Stieg, were "domination by the National Archives; division between those favoring history and those emphasizing library techniques as training; and random *ad hoc* courses."⁵¹ The problems were equally clear:

the smallness of a profession that required few postulants and that could not support a full, independent training program; and the lack of attention to preparation for anything other than governmental archives. The needs of manuscript collections were virtually ignored.⁵²

What was SAA's role in these developments? After the Bemis report, SAA dissolved the Committee on the Training of Archivists. Although archival education issues continued to be discussed and de-

⁴⁸Goggin, "Training and Education," 248.

⁴⁹Margaret Cross Norton, "Discussion of Dr. Buck's Paper," in *Archives and Libraries*, edited by A. F. Kuhlman (Chicago: American Library Association, 1940), 125.

⁵⁰Jones, "Archival Training," 140-42.

⁵¹Stieg, *Change and Challenge*, 31.

⁵²Stieg, *Change and Challenge*, 31.

bated, SAA took no formal action in the arena for more than thirty years. Jones could observe in 1968 that, "notwithstanding the urgent need for adequately trained archivists, the Society of American Archivists has done little officially to encourage the establishment of training courses." He went on to note that "the professional Society having failed to offer leadership, inauguration of academic training for archivists in the United States was left to private initiative," such as those of Buck, Norton, and others.⁵³

The results of these private initiatives was a fragmented array of ad hoc courses, some in history departments, some in schools of library science, with no standards, no common curriculum, and little impact on the profession. Jones summarized this state of affairs:

Thus we archivists have failed in our responsibility to our profession—to if we are a profession—to provide adequate, regular, and comprehensive training. . . . [B]oth individually and collectively we have failed to build a true foundation of professional education through which we might become progressively more proficient ourselves and through which others might be prepared to join us.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, the debate between those who favored archival education programs in schools of library science and those who favored history departments as the appropriate locus continued. The foremost proponent of the library school was T. R. Schellenberg, who had taught a course at the School of Library Science at the University of Texas in 1960 and had subse-

quently established a lasting relationship with the Columbia University School of Library Service. Schellenberg summarized his point of view in his textbook *The Management of Archives*, published by the Columbia University Press in 1965: "Library schools are the proper places in which to provide archival training. . . . [T]he training provided in [existing archival training course] has usually been too discursive and too theoretical to be meaningful."⁵⁵ Schellenberg did not make many converts in the archival community.

In the 1970s the SAA exhibited an increased engagement in archival education. Frank Evans and Robert Warner surveyed the condition of the profession and reported that few archivists had any formal training in archives. As Terry Eastwood notes, "either the universities were not offering courses or . . . prospective archivists were not taking them, and evidently employers did not require them."⁵⁶

In 1970, the SAA created the Committee for the 1970s to plot the course of the Society for the coming decade. Education was one of the areas investigated by the committee. The Report of the Committee for the 1970s admitted that "as a Society we have taken little positive action" in the critical area of archival education. Echoing Jones, it went on to concede that "in the absence of leadership and direction provided by the Society, the matter of education and training has been left to the initiative of concerned members."⁵⁷ The evidence presented by the committee was rather damning: "Appointments to respon-

⁵⁵T. R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 70.

⁵⁶Terry Eastwood, "Nurturing Archival Education in the University," *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988): 233.

⁵⁷Philip P. Mason, "The Society of American Archivists in the Seventies: Report of the Committee for the 1970's," *American Archivist* 35 (April 1972): 206.

⁵³Jones, "Archival Training," 138–39.

⁵⁴Jones, "Archival Training," 148.

sible positions as archivists, manuscripts curators, and records managers too frequently are made without regard to academic preparation, training, or experience." The committee asserted that "if the members of our Society are to achieve their full potential and recognition as professionals, the Society must address itself directly" to the problems of archival education.⁵⁸

The committee made seven detailed recommendations for improving archival education. It is interesting to note that it recommended rather strongly that the Society not attempt to establish separate degree programs for archivists at that time.

Following one of the specific recommendations of the Committee for the 1970s, the SAA proceeded to develop guidelines for archival education programs, first promulgated in 1977 and revised in 1988. These guidelines provided fairly basic minima for the wide variety of programs offered by schools of library science and departments of history. The guidelines were evidence, among other things, of an emerging consensus on the content of archival education.

The first formal program of education for archivists in North America was established in 1981 at the University of British Columbia, allied with the library school, which changed its name to the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies. A full program leading to a master's of archival studies is provided. The success of this program has demonstrated the viability of the concept of a separate degree program in archival studies. There can be no doubt that the program has succeeded in large part because of the commitment of Canadian archivists, working through the Association of Canadian Archivists, to establish a program of professional education

for archivists at the graduate level in a university setting.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the number and variety of programs in the United States continued to expand: thirty-six multicourse programs are listed in the 1991 *SAA Directory of Archival Education*. But as Ericson points out in his recent article, growth does not necessarily imply improvement; he adduces a number of disturbing data that leave one questioning the state of archival education in the 1990s.⁶⁰

Summary and Conclusions

The contrasts between the development of education for librarians and education for archivists could scarcely be stronger. Both professions, beginning about the turn of the century, embarked on an effort to provide for appropriate preappointment education for entry-level practitioners. By the 1930s librarians were served by a host of thriving schools offering similar curricula and leading to similar degrees, the minimal quality of which was ensured by accreditation from the national professional organization. Archivists, in contrast, wedded themselves to the historians, whose handmaidens they were apparently content to be; as late as the 1970s, they had not yet reached consensus on what archivists needed to know, much less on where and how they could learn it.

Two major differences between the librarians and the archivists may account for this discrepancy in their educational endeavors. These two factors are things the librarians had got and the archivists had not: librarians had the Carnegie Corpora-

⁵⁸Mason, "The Society of American Archivists," 207.

⁵⁹Terry Eastwood, "The Origin and Aims of the Master of Archival Studies Program at the University of British Columbia," *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 35-52; Eastwood, "Nurturing Archival Education," 228-51. On the leadership of the ACA, see especially the latter, p. 239.

⁶⁰Ericson, "'Abolish the Recent,'" 25-37.

tion, with its determination to support social amelioration through the development of strong service professions; and they had an active and well-organized national association, the American Library Association, poised to take advantage of the assistance offered by the Carnegie Corporation. It was Carnegie money and ALA leadership that were the critical elements in the successful development of professional programs for librarians.

In contrast, the Society of American Archivists repeatedly failed, over the course of several decades, to exercise effective leadership in developing an appropriate structure for archival education. Even when the Carnegie Corporation provided funding for a modest graduate archival education program at American University, the SAA took no steps to build a system of professional education on that foundation. The contrast between the ALA's involvement with the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago and the SAA's lack of involvement with the American University program could scarcely be more telling.

In short, the American Library Association performed in a manner typical of a professional association: it provided leadership in defining the knowledge base on which practice in the profession is supposed to be based, and it supported the development of formal programs of graduate preappointment education for preparing prospective practitioners. In contrast, until recently the SAA has failed to function as a typical professional organization in the critically important matter of professional education.

At least part of the current discrepancy between the state of education for archivists and the state of education for librarians may be readily explained as the difference between the relative maturation of the two professions. The American Library Association was founded in 1876, the Society of American Archivists was founded

sixty years later, in 1936. The Williamson Report was published in 1923; the SAA 'Committee for the 1970s' Report was published almost fifty years later, in 1972. The ALA had a large permanent staff when it established the Board of Education for Librarianship in the 1920s, while SAA was without any full-time staff until 1974. It seems clear that archivists have lagged behind librarians, in the strict chronological sense, and that only now perhaps have archivists developed the critical mass needed to develop pre-appointment professional education programs. Nevertheless, the Association of Canadian Archivists has demonstrated what vision and commitment can achieve: ACA was founded only in 1975, but its active involvement in developing professional education for archivists led to the establishment of a successful program in less than a decade.

Today the current state of archival education in the United States appears to be analogous to the state of American library education described by Williamson in 1919, "a variety of valuable parts scattered around waiting for vital machinery not yet constructed or even planned."⁶¹ As Churchwell noted, the development of professional education follows the development of the profession itself. It may be simply that the retarded development of professional education for archivists in the United States is a reflection of the retarded development of the profession itself. In recent years the SAA has begun to exercise some leadership in archival education, in developing guidelines, culminating with the current draft for an M.A.S. degree. Perhaps we are witnessing the emergence of new consciousness of the importance of professional education and a willingness to deal with the difficult but important issues

⁶¹Williamson, "Some Present-Day Aspects of Library Training."

involved. Perhaps Williamson's "vital machinery" is now being planned.

As Richard Cox has pointed out, "The education of the archivist is fundamental to the well-being of the archival profession."⁶² What is at stake is the health of the profession itself, in terms of the proficiency of its practitioners and the quality of service they are able to provide society, and in terms of the availability of resources archival institutions must have to achieve their goals. Until a system of preappointment education has been established for archivists, and until basic entry-level credentials established, the profession will remain mired in the situation Waldo Gifford Leland decried more than eighty years ago, when an archivist was anyone who claimed to be one.

The present volatility and instability in library and information science education may be viewed as an opportunity for archival education. As library and informa-

tion science educators, increasingly concerned with their own survival, seek rational ways to diversify their enterprise, to claim an expanded domain or jurisdiction, and to fashion new coalitions, they are more and more looking at mergers or consolidation with allied professional fields. Joint-degree programs with a host of other fields have proliferated. Archival educators have already found a welcome home in many schools of library and information science, as those institutions seek to transform themselves into schools of information management, knowledge mediation, or the like.

If the Society of American Archivists adopts standards for a master's of archival studies degree, such degree programs will find a welcome home in a number of existing schools of library and information studies. Perhaps Leland's predictions of eighty years ago will yet be proven right: "The evolution of the archivist will proceed somewhat like the evolution of the librarian."⁶³

⁶²Cox, "Archival Education in the United States," 112.

⁶³Leland, "American Archival Problems."