

## Essentials in the Training of University Librarians—II

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UNIVERSITY librarians have been all too silent on the subject of training for university librarianship and many other related subjects. Too often they have put aside their modesty and have become articulate only in budget pleas, limiting their published enthusiasms to reporting donations in cash or kind. In the last part of this paper I shall suggest what might be their contributions to the solution of an obviously still unsolved problem. I shall assume that the term "university librarian" is to be taken in its common meaning, the head of a university library. To include comment on the training of members of the university library staff, bibliographers, catalogers, reference and circulation workers, would lengthen this paper too much. We shall therefore concern ourselves with the executive officer and his preparation for administration and leadership.

There is no assumption on my part that all future university librarians must have attended a library school. There should always be opportunities for superior librarians who have obtained their equipment through experience to become university librarians, and even for transfers from other fields if special, uncommon qualities are desired or if the library pro-

fession cannot interest and train just those whom the universities want. The passing over of college professors from teaching to library administration seems, however, pretty well on the wane.

That our earlier library schools turned out some competent university librarians must be granted, though I sometimes think this was in spite of themselves. Found mainly in state or public libraries, they were more agencies for the propaganda of the library faith and the preparation of its missionaries—whose salaries, incidentally, were to be also on the missionary level—than they were educational institutions appealing to men of critical and scholarly tastes who sought an outlet in university administration rather than teaching.

With the movement of library schools to universities, not only has more attention been given in the curriculum to preparation for university library service and a questioning attitude encouraged in our students, but the young men interested have been selected from a much larger number of superior students who might in other days never have thought of librarianship as a career, who have deliberately chosen our field as an interesting and promising one in which to spend their lives, not refugees from a too tough life outside the cloisters. We are now getting a considerable proportion of students who would succeed in whatever they under-

took because they have what it takes.

In the present size of our schools of librarianship and in the uncertainty of the majority of our students as to the particular specialty they will ultimately adopt, it is still necessary in the first semester of a basic or beginners' course to stick to the generalities of the four main subject divisions—administration, largely orientation; reference or bibliography; book selection; and cataloging and classification. It is evident that in the second semester when some specialization becomes possible the selection of a prospective university librarian should include an administrative course in that field, emphasis on bibliographic cataloging and on classification adapted to a scholarly library, on bibliography, including documents, and on book buying or collecting. It is, however, quite as much the manner of presentation as the subject matter of these courses which interests me. There is so much matter, just subject content in basic courses in bibliography and cataloging, that specific books and definite rules are apt to dominate; perhaps they must do so. But a frank recognition that only a limited number of titles and rules can then be absorbed seems to be growing. I would urge emphasis for university librarians on the extension of reference work into periodicals, society publications, documents and particularly printed bibliographies, while in cataloging it might well be explained even to beginners that our card catalogs were just the best available present device for making known the contents of libraries; that for large scholarly libraries there were valid criticisms against the dictionary card catalog on the score both of its complexity in use and of its cost; that much subject work is likely in the future to be done through reference to printed bibliogra-

phies; that the rapidly developing arts of photography and cheap mechanical reproduction may within the professional lives of our students bring back the printed catalog in new forms, with cards necessary only for supplements; that classifications, particularly in the biological and physical sciences and in what some optimistically call the social sciences, being concerned with the literature as it now exists, must go out of date, become inadequate, as that literature, geared as it is to the subject matter and its treatment, changes.

### *Courses Evolving*

Satisfactory courses in university library administration are still in process of evolution, perhaps they should always be. For beginners I am experimenting with an approach in which the first classes are given up to a consideration of the American university, its varied objectives and consequent diversity of services to undergraduates, real graduate students and faculty; its support, government and administrative organization. This seems to me to lead most logically to a consideration of the services of the university library to its clientele, lower division or junior college students and reserve book service, upper division and honors students requiring greater diversity of reading, graduates with their seminar and stack problems, faculty with their even greater needs for teaching and research, the special collections for professional schools, and those bureaus and institutes which seem to be developing in the university solar system. Loan desk organization and routines are considered from the standpoint of requirements. The varied means of meeting these, including the recent Texas and Harvard experiments with punched cards, are the topics for consideration. Thirty-five

years ago rules were handed down from on high. I got them, in the form of eleven tables, mimeographed outlines of charging systems then in use somewhere, to be learned by rote step by step. Soon after the finals I remembered only a twelfth unauthorized one by the late lamented Edmund Lester Pearson, closing with "attendant picks reader's pocket, stamps on reader's foot, and files reader's teeth." After some study of the still too vague duties of the reference department and the complexities of serials service, we are ready to give a little time to the ancillary departments devoted to the building up of the collection and its recording for staff and public use. With this basis we can now work on a satisfactory organization of staff, a proper system of government, and some of the administrative principles which are as applicable to a library as to a museum, a hospital, a government department. Here I wish to pay tribute to the publications which have resulted from the summer institutes organized by the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. Floyd Reeves' contribution, "Some General Principles of Administrative Organization" in the recently published *Current Issues in Library Administration*, edited by Carleton B. Joeckel, should be required reading for some university librarians as it will be in the future for all my students.

#### *Beyond the Basic Year*

For work beyond the basic year, which is now all too crowded and perhaps should be extended into a two-year curriculum, most schools seem to be groping; the second year most of them now offer a variety of courses not all of them wholly satisfactory to their relatively few takers. Broadening and deepening the students'

knowledge of cataloging, classification and bibliography, and seminars in administration in which students have to do more of the digging than in a basic course are pretty common to all. We have experimented in methods whereby librarians might systematically develop a good knowledge of the literature of particular subjects, and next year a specialist from Stanford University is going to offer a seminar in the literature of science as related to its history, a project long in contemplation which I hope in fruition will do something to orient our future university librarians in the most characteristic literature of their century. For the growth of their own critical ability, for the understanding of faculty research work, and to help them in analyzing, perhaps in solving their problems, a course in methods of research and a special study or thesis seem very desirable. I am glad in this connection to note the publication of Waples' *Investigating Library Problems*, based on the methods offered currently at Chicago. This concludes what I have to say about library school training, though a faint echo of the theme may recur at the end of the second section.

With reference to academic education, we always start out by saying that the incipient librarian should have a good general education, a solid cultural background. Unfortunately, under any widely elective system in the five-ring circus which passes for a college of letters in many places the technique of avoiding this has been more highly developed by students than that of getting it. In all fairness I should add that transcripts of records of graduates of many denominational and teachers colleges seeking training in librarianship here show denominational substitutes for basic work in

such subjects as history of foreign missions, and in teachers colleges vocational and practical courses. Since the mild purge of such things in our own college of letters we can largely cut these off the record in establishing the applicant's full graduate standing. All we can hope for is a radical change, particularly in lower division requirements, so that it can be safely assumed all graduates of respectable colleges have had an adequate introduction to science, the humanities, the social sciences, and have a basis of language in some college Latin, French and German. In the major requirements doubtless group majors would often be more in a librarian's interest than more specialized ones.

### *A Strong Trend*

There is a strong trend toward the taking of graduate academic work on the part of young men hoping eventually to be university librarians. There is also a noticeable diversion of promising material from university teaching among those who already possess the doctorate in some subject field. I cannot neglect the evidence in our correspondence files of the preference of many college presidents for candidates for the head librarian's position who have been through "a discipline comparable to that of our faculty." This is less noticeable in the better universities. Rather than discuss this question I shall avail myself of still unpublished statements from young university librarians, all, or nearly all, products of both such academic discipline and library school training, giving their opinions of the better subjects for advanced study, its contribution to their equipment, their estimate of its value. These comments have been edited from long statements written me. As some asked that they be anonymous I have made

them all so, merely numbering the different contributions.

Contributor (1) says:

The Doctor's degree for librarians should be in an established field in the humanities, and preferably as broad as possible; e.g., language and literature which takes into account the cultural history of a people, influences from other countries, or history in its various branches, or philosophy, or the classics. A degree in one or other of these is broad in scope and cuts across related fields; it would be of most benefit to the greatest number of the library's users. Of course, a good solid background in foreign languages is presupposed.

Degrees in the fields of mathematics, economics and even sociology seem to me to be too narrow in both time and interest to be of any particular value for a librarian who hopes to equip himself for the greatest service. Libraries are storehouses of the materials of the past, and above all things the librarian's academic training should instil a feeling for the historical approach to knowledge. He should be more than aware of the long historical continuity of scholarship. It is on this account that I rule out mathematics, economics and sociology—not that they are not good training in themselves. A degree in science, too, falls in the same category.

### *Advocates Degree in Science*

Contributor (2) says:

Of the three broad fields of knowledge, the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences, it would seem that the librarian would obtain the greatest advantages from a formal training by taking a research degree in the natural sciences. By so doing he would be able to master the most difficult of the scientific methods, and attain a broad background knowledge in the sciences that would enable him to assist directly investigations in the natural sciences and to some extent in the social sciences. The knowledge of mathematics that it would be necessary for him to have would aid research in many library problems where the facts sought are dependent on so many variables

that it is necessary to employ the statistical method.

Having obtained a thorough knowledge and training in the natural sciences, a librarian can informally train himself in the historical method and broaden his knowledge not only of the humanities and social sciences but also broaden his knowledge of the methods of attaining knowledge. A knowledge of the various methods of research is particularly important for a librarian if he expects to be able to make accurate evaluations of the results of research, to say nothing of being able to criticize and select facts.

The history of science would be an excellent field in which to obtain a doctorate degree because in this field it is necessary to have both a scientific and historical training. In addition, the history of science or learning, being as it is a core of the progress of human culture, affords a central point of reference with which a broader knowledge may be integrated. In any event a familiarity with the various scientific methods as employed in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences is desirable, and the history of science admirably bridges the gap between the natural sciences and the humanities.

Contribution (3) is a composite statement from two members of a university library staff:

1. If his interest were primarily in the sciences, he might profitably pursue at length the history of science, a relatively undeveloped field; but to do that he would need additional work in cultural and institutional history. Since a scientist is likely to be weak in the humanities he might well round out his information there with bibliographical courses in at least English, and possibly other languages; and with such things as history of religions, history of art, methods of literary study, the problem of knowledge and philosophical method, and other subjects of a distinctly cultural nature.

2. If his major were in the humanities he should have a good language equipment and cultural background, but would be almost

sure to be weak in the exact sciences, and probably not too well informed in the social sciences. He might then pursue the history of science, the history of psychology, and extend his work in any particular science in which he had an interest. In the social sciences he might well include the history of ideas, ethnology, comparative institutions, archeology, history of economic thought, historical bibliography and method, history of political theory and bibliography in the social sciences.

### *Should Strengthen Weakest Field*

3. If his major interest were the social sciences, his secondary interest might lean either toward the physical sciences or toward the humanities. In any case he would need to strengthen his weakest field.

For library purposes emphasis might best be placed first on:

(a) Bibliography. Most universities give in many departments courses in bibliography and method for that particular subject, which any prospective candidate of reasonable ability and background could handle. He should take as many of these as possible. He should also have work in the history of the book and printing, in archives, documents, and paleography.

(b) He should have a general comprehension of the development of knowledge which could be obtained from philosophy courses and from the history of various subjects and fields.

(c) He should have a good comprehension of the social structure, both past and present. This involves archeology; ethnology; history, political, intellectual, and social; and political and social theory.

(d) Finally he should have an understanding of the present, and to this end might include economics, government, business practice, administration, and possibly international law and relations.

This attempt to cover all knowledge in a general way is contrary to all present conceptions of the doctorate as a research degree given for minute investigation. This conception would have to be changed so that such a candidate could receive a degree for

his contribution to the integration of knowledge and to its systematic interpretation, rather than to its minute analysis.

Contributor (4) says:

Frankly a librarian may not use his higher degree in the actual work of management, but it certainly helps him to gain the necessary insight into the true nature and workings of an academic institution, and the needs, viewpoints, strength, and weaknesses of the professors who make up the academic body.

### *Managerial Qualities Essential*

Some teaching might be very useful, and like the possession of a degree, it helps to win ready acceptance of status. In this regard, one should remember that there are many good axioms to the effect that it is necessary to go to great lengths to demonstrate the obvious. Hence, the possession of a degree, teaching experience, some research, publications, public lectures, are very helpful, although they certainly do not prove that a man possesses the managerial qualities which are essential, I think, in a good librarian.

We need a man with "managerial ability" plus an appreciation of scholarship. It is obvious that the Doctor's degree should give the latter. The relations above will vary in degree and emphasis in accordance with the proportion of these two qualities. I believe that the good librarian might well be something of a doctor of universal knowledge instead of a good scholar, i.e., limited specialist in a narrow field. His Doctor's degree would, I believe, give him an appreciation of the work of the specialist and permit him to become a respectable dilettante in various fields.

The work of the librarian might aptly be compared with the work of a college president, where managerial functions are uppermost, but insight into and appreciation of scholarship and the true nature of academic institutions are very important.

These correspondents raise the question as to the programs for a doctorate in librarianship. Ultimately I suppose the practical question of whether or not to

make it possible to obtain this on both edges of the continent as well as near its present population center may have to be faced, perhaps not for a long time, unless someone offers California and Columbia half a million each to try out their ideas. Frankly, it would embarrass me today, but if the present promise of liberalizing the plans and widening the areas within which a doctorate might be given are carried forward my successor might well be advised not to follow the models of schools of education or business, but to seek closer integration of librarianship with subject fields, with technical ones like public administration and even with such professional schools as law.

### *An Important Pamphlet*

Finally, I want deliberately to throw the problem into the laps of the university librarians. For an appreciation of scholarship, even productive scholarship itself, will hardly avail the university librarian if he have not that managerial ability referred to by my last contributor. Long association with university professors, outstanding scholars and research workers has taught us all that you may not find it in a carload of Ph.Ds. Doubtless a good deal of it is inherent in individuals; its discovery and development are not effected in professional or graduate schools but on the job, and you librarians control the conditions, provide the climate, springlike or wintry, in which it thrives or withers. About all the library school can look for is the symptoms. Had not one of my former students brought to my attention a quite new little pamphlet I should have felt I had little that was conclusive to offer you. Now, if I can persuade you to get, read and inwardly digest *Administrative Ability, Its Discovery and Development*,

by W. V. Bingham, director of the Personnel Research Federation, published April, 1939, by the Society for Personnel Administration, Washington, D.C., P. O. Box 266, price 25 cents, I will not have lived in vain for the cause of training university librarians. On his very first page Bingham raises the query: Who can fill the top posts in public service? Is it necessary to turn again to the business world—to the legal profession—or could some of these administrators be found close at hand if pains were taken to comb carefully? If the discovery and development of this talent is considered a function of government administrative units, should it not be even more a duty of university librarians whose whole institutions are associated with education?

*Indulged in a Sort of Professional  
Race Suicide*

I have to accept the responsibility for being not personal but institutional when I question what the libraries of our four leading endowed universities, Harvard, Yale, Chicago and Columbia have done, let us say between 1910 and 1930, to discover in their midst and develop university librarians. They indulged in a sort of professional race suicide, not even raising enough professional children to provide for their own succession headships, let alone helping out other librarians naturally less favorably fitted for this educational service. I believe, according to a rather recent educational survey, Wisconsin and California rated highest in tax-supported universities. I would at once lump the former with the big four. California has done a little better in developing at least potential university librarians. It is, I am sure, easier for the university librarians not to consider this as any function of

theirs; to buy wherever best available the services of new librarians when they are needed; to keep their staffs stable by so limiting the spheres or the opportunities of the better members that they will be neither embarrassed by their ambitions nor incommoded by their withdrawal to executive responsibilities elsewhere. The easiest way to do both is professionally to inbreed by adding to a staff only local, untrained assistants, who will accept everything from above and, being fitted for one job and one library, will be allowed to stay there. Another device whereby the librarian may achieve the leisurely life is to follow the example he will find in all probability in his own university whereby deans of divisions or colleges take on a capable young woman as secretary—she is often practically as permanent as their professional lives—and let her gradually take over the responsibility for policies and decisions, work which would do much to develop assistant deans. This practice is more understandable among scholars, who seem to think that the light will just naturally come to any of their members when they are appointed to administrative posts, than it would be among librarians, who know how hard it is to raise an executive officer.

*Good Way to Train Head Librarians*

The present organization of most university libraries does not seem to be of a character particularly fitted to develop administrative talent. It is generally based on a number of functional departments, order, cataloging, circulation, reference, the heads of which necessarily are specialists and all too likely to think in the narrower terms of their departmental duties than in those of the whole organization. With the apparent ability or preference of

many university librarians for doing without the services of an assistant librarian who is more than some departmental head, I have no quarrel. However, as a library grows, a wise executive will learn the difficulty of singly supervising the work of many detailed departments and may profitably consider the more logical administration organization which provides two assistant librarians—call them divisional heads if you prefer—one to have oversight of all the collecting and recording processes, the other all direct services to the library's clientele. Such positions would provide excellent training for future head librarians. Another aid equally justifiable from a standpoint of pure administration would be the creation of positions for younger men, professional librarians, as executive assistants, assistants to the librarian, having no authority over divisional or departmental heads but working as personal aides to the head, trouble shooting, investigating and reporting, carrying out certain executive duties and orders as a third hand for the head librarian. Such positions would doubtless have to be refilled rather regularly, as they would hardly lead to direct promotion within the

hierarchy of the library staff, but the change and movement are hardly separable from an educational institution.

To pass from the specific to the general, let me quote a passage taken almost at random from Colonel Bingham's little pamphlet—his description of a good administrator:

He had formulated a little nucleus of well-thought-out purposes and basic policies, so that every proposal could be challenged and put to the test of harmony with these fundamental aims of the agency he was administering. If it jibed, he was for it and said so, definitely. But he didn't depend solely on his own judgment. He did not cast himself in the role of God Almighty, laying down the ten commandments. On the contrary, every important matter of policy was threshed out with his staff.

In conclusion I quote Bingham's judgments regarding the executive's training: "The desired abilities must, to a large extent, be learned. The knowledge, judgment, common sense and habits of thinking and of action characteristic of able administrative practice, all have to be acquired."

Are university librarians ready to contribute their share to the training?