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From the Pacific Northwest to the Global Information Society: The Changing Nature of Archival Education

Randall C. Jimerson

ABSTRACT

This essay examines the development of archival education in the United States during the past forty years, in context of the increasingly globalized archival profession of the early twenty-first century. In doing so, it presents a case study of one of the first West Coast archival education programs and its development from a regional program to an international one.

The archival profession, particularly in the United States, has long struggled to define its identity and to make known its essential value to society. American archives developed independently from the European and international context. Only in the twentieth century did Americans begin to respond to the archival theory and practices that coalesced in nineteenth-century Europe, for example. Professional archival education lagged behind even more noticeably. Until the 1970s one could find few archival education programs in the United States. Where such programs did exist, they almost invariably emphasized technical training for hands-on work rather than academic and theoretical components. Thirty years after the founding of the country's first archival professional association, the Society of American Archivists (1936), virtually all of the archival education programs could be found in the Midwest and Northeast. In the western half of the country, only Denver offered a locus for archival study.

This essay addresses the question of whether one can detect a western approach to archival education amid either the early development of the field in the United States or in the increasingly globalized archival profession of the early twenty-first century. In doing so, it presents a case study of one of the first West Coast archival education programs and its development over nearly forty years. The Archives and

Records Management master's degree program at Western Washington University has never been among the most prominent university programs in the country, but it has been an important regional leader in archival education. The development of this program offers insights into the changing nature of archival education and the shift from a regional context to a more international approach to archives.

Archival Education in the United States

The origins of archival education date back to the twelfth century, when the University of Bologna first offered a course of study in “notarial art” that taught students how to keep registries and organize documents for retrieval. One of the first modern archival education programs, based on archival theory developed in France in the mid-nineteenth century, was established as the Ecole des Chartes.

American archivists have been debating the best educational preparation for the field since at least 1910, and there is an extensive literature on archival education in the United States.¹ Because the archives profession grew out of the discipline of history, much of the early focus was on historical training and knowledge of history. In 1938 a committee chaired by historian Samuel Flagg Bemis issued the first Society of American Archivists (SAA) report on archival education. The Bemis report called for courses based in history, supplemented by library science but emphasizing the need for historical scholarship.² Soon thereafter, the first formal courses on archives were offered by Solon Buck, Margaret Norton, and Ernst Posner. The first detailed curriculum proposal in 1941 outlined the components of archival education, still firmly rooted in history.³

A smattering of university courses were offered during the next three decades, with only a few fully developed graduate education programs in place. By the 1960s these included programs led by Dolores Renze in Denver; F. Gerald Ham in Wisconsin; and Philip Mason in Detroit. Archivists frequently debated whether history or library science was the preferred degree to prepare for a career in archives. Margaret Norton thought that law or political science would be preferable. But SAA did not issue any formal guidelines for educational programs until 1977.

1. Elizabeth Yakel and Jeannette Allis Bastian, “A*CENSUS: Report on Graduate Archival Education,” *American Archivist* 69, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 349–66. See also H. G. Jones, “Archival Training in American Universities, 1938–1968,” *American Archivist* 31, no. 2 (1968): 135–54; Richard C. Berner, “Archival Education and Training in the United States, 1937 to Present,” *Journal of Education for Librarianship* 22 (1981): 3–19; Jacqueline Goggin, “That we may truly deserve the title of profession’: The Training and Education of Archivists, 1930–1960,” *American Archivist* 47, no. 3 (1984): 243–54; Fredric M. Miller, “The SAA as Sisyphus: Education Since the 1960s,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 224–36.
2. Samuel F. Bemis, “The Training of Archivists in the United States,” *American Archivist* 2 (1939): 154–61. *Ibid.* 21.
3. Solon J. Buck, “The Training of American Archivists,” *American Archivist* 4 (1941): 84–90.

By the 1960s, the common expectation was that a graduate degree should be the primary preparation for entry into the archival profession,⁴ but there was no consensus on the proper discipline to study. The debate over whether history or library science departments were the best places for archival education became the focus of attention during the late 1960s and the 1970s, with some later reverberations. Thirty years ago most archival education programs were based in departments of history. In recent decades, library and information science has played an increasingly important role in archival education. This arose in part because of the similarities in function between the two disciplines: both deal with recorded information; both organize and catalog these sources; and both provide assistance to researchers.⁵ Those who argued that archival education should be grounded in history emphasized the need to understand historical contexts of recordkeeping and to provide assistance to scholarly researchers.⁶ By the early twenty-first century the number of archival education programs based in library and information science had clearly exceeded those based in history or another discipline. The move toward technology-based infrastructure (particularly the MARC format for cataloging archives and manuscripts and, later, Encoded Archival Description) accelerated this emphasis on basing archival education in schools of library and information science. This led to a conclusion reached by a recent census of the profession: “The master’s in library and information science (MLIS) is the degree of choice.”⁷ However, as the archival education programs based in other disciplines demonstrate, the MLIS is not the only route into the archival profession.

During the past three decades, surveys of the archival profession often gave evidence that those who studied library and information science lamented the lack of national standards and curriculum guidelines for archival education.⁸ Until the mid-1980s archival education emphasized practical skill development rather than an integrated theoretical foundation.⁹ Even the National Archives relied on post-

4. Yakel and Bastian, 354.

5. T. R. Schellenberg, “Archival Training in Library Schools,” *American Archivist* 31 (1968): 155–66; Nancy E. Peace and Nancy F. Chudacoff “Archivists and Librarians: a Common Mission, a Common Education,” *American Archivist* 42, no. 4 (1979): 456–72.

6. Jones, 1968; F. Gerald Ham, Frank Boles, Gregory S. Hunter, James M. O’Toole, “Is the Past Still Prologue? History and Archival Education,” *American Archivist* 56, no. 4 (1993): 718–29.

7. Yakel and Bastian, 349–50.

8. Philip P. Mason, “The Society of American Archivists in the Seventies: Report of the Committee for the 1970s,” *American Archivist* 35, no. 2 (1972): 193–217; Robert M. Warner, “Archival Training in the United States and Canada,” *American Archivist* 35, no. 4 (1972) 347–58.

9. Ruth W. Helmuth, “Education for American Archivists: a View From the Trenches,” *American Archivist* 44, no. 4 (1981): 295–303.

appointment training rather than graduate education,¹⁰ as it still does today.¹¹ Canadian archivists achieved an important milestone in 1981 with the establishment of the Master of Archival Studies program at the University of British Columbia.¹² This semi-autonomous archival education degree program is based on solid grounding in archival theory and research.

As archival education matured in the 1980s, universities began to hire full-time archival educators to direct their graduate programs.¹³ With the resulting expansion of curriculum offerings, archivists began to examine specialized needs for education regarding reference,¹⁴ management,¹⁵ and the increasingly important technological issues of electronic records and computer applications.¹⁶

With growing numbers of full-time archival educators, North American archivists increasingly emphasized archival theory rather than practical experience.¹⁷ Archivists focused more attention on the content of archival courses rather than on their form or structure,¹⁸ and developed research agendas on educational issues.¹⁹ This increasingly sophisticated approach to education called for teaching students to think

10. Frank B. Evans, "Post-appointment Archival Training: a Proposed Solution for a Basic Problem," *American Archivist* 40, no. 1 (1977): 57-74.
11. Adrienne C. Thomas, "New Two-Year Program Trains Next Generation of NARA Archivists," *Archival Outlook* (November/December 2009): 12.
12. Terry Eastwood, "The Origins and Aims of the Master of Archival Studies Programme at the University of British Columbia," *Archivaria*, 16 (1983): 35-52; Eastwood, "Nurturing Archival Education in the University," *American Archivist* 51, no. 3 (1988), 228-51.
13. Paul Conway, "Archival Education and the Need for Full-time Faculty," *American Archivist* 51, no. 3 (1988): 254-65.
14. Janice E. Ruth, "Educating the Reference Archivist," *American Archivist* 51, no. 3 (1988): 266-76.
15. Susan Davis, "Development of Managerial Training for Archivists," *American Archivist* 51, no. 3 (1988): 278-85.
16. Committee on Automated Records and Techniques, "Special Issue on the Curriculum Development Project," *The American Archivist* 56, no. 3 (1993): 410-512.
17. Luciana Duranti, "The Archival Body of Knowledge: Archival Theory, Method, and Practice," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 34 (1993): 8-24; Duranti, "The Society of American Archivists and Graduate Archival Education: a Sneak Preview of Future Directions," *American Archivist* 63, 2 (2000): 237-42; "Reforming the Archival Curriculum to Meet Contemporary Needs," *Archivaria*, no. 42 (1996): 80-88.
18. Timothy L. Ericson, "Professional Associations and Archival Education: a Different Role or a Different Theatre," *American Archivist* 51, no. 3 (1988): 298-311.
19. Richard J. Cox, "A Research Agenda for Archival Education in the United States," in *American Archival Analysis: the Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States*, (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990); Cox, "The Master's of Archival Studies and American Education Standards: an Argument for the Continued Development of Graduate Archival Education in the United States," *Archivaria*, no. 36 (1993): 221-31.

as archivists instead of simply teaching how to practice a craft.²⁰ In developing a self-consciously professional approach to education, archivists in recent years have increasingly focused on research and analysis as part of the graduate curriculum.²¹ In order to understand the impact of education programs, recent studies have examined the experiences and opinions of students and recent graduates.²² Comparisons can be made between North American educational programs and those in Europe²³ and Australia,²⁴ showing an increasingly global conception of archival education. Although the current status of archival education in North America is stronger than it has ever been, concerns about the future remain.²⁵ Conflicts or differences still exist between archival educators and practitioners, theory and practice, education versus training, and the contrast between “new” recordkeeping- and technology-based educational models and “traditional” cultural and historical approaches.²⁶

The Development of Archival Education Guidelines

Graduate education guidelines are an important means of defining what qualifications are needed to become a professional archivist. They constitute one of many ways in which we define ourselves as a profession. SAA has developed

20. James M. O'Toole, “Curriculum Development in Archival Education: a Proposal,” *American Archivist* 53, no. 3 (1990): 460–66; Tom Nesmith, “‘Professional Education in the Most Expensive Sense’: What Will the Archivist Need to Know in the Twenty-first Century?” *Archivaria*, no. 42 (1996): 89–94; Carol Couture, “Today’s Students, Tomorrow’s Archivists: Present-day Focus and Development as Determinants of Archival Science in the Twenty-first Century,” *Archivaria*, no. 42 (1996): 95–104.
21. Barbara L. Craig, “Serving the Truth: the Importance of Fostering Archives Research in Education Programmes, Including a Modest Proposal for Partnerships with the Workplace,” *Archivaria*, no. 42 (1996): 105–17; Terry Eastwood, “Archival Research: the University of British Columbia Experience,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 243–57; Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, “Archival Research: a ‘New’ Issue for Graduate Education,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 258–70; Peter Wosh, “Research and Reality Checks: Change and Continuity in NYU’s Archival Management Program,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 271–83.
22. David A. Wallace, “Survey of Archives and Records Management Graduate Students at Ten Universities in the United States and Canada,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 284–300; Elizabeth Yakel, “The Future of the Past: a Survey of Graduates of Master’s-level Archival Education Programs in the United States,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 301–21.
23. Eric Ketelaar, “Archivistics Research Saving the Profession,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 322–40; Angelika Menne-Haritz, “Archival Training in a Changing World,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 341–52.
24. Sue McKemmish, “Collaborative Research Models: a Review of Australian Initiatives,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 353–67.
25. Richard J. Cox, *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000).
26. Terry Cook, “‘The Imperative of Challenging Absolutes’ in Graduate Archival Education Programs: Issues for Educators and the Profession,” *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 380–91.

increasingly demanding and more specific guidelines for archival education. These guidelines have affected all members of the profession, both those preparing for careers in the field and those hiring — or working with — graduates of archival education programs. A brief overview of the history of archival education guidelines will provide context for this case study of the WWU Archives and Records Management MA program.

The 1977 SAA “Guidelines for a Graduate Minor or Concentration in Archival Education”²⁷ offered only a tentative and limited conception of the educational preparation needed for archivists. For starters, archival education would be only a minor or concentration, not a fully developed program. The guidelines emphasized practical skills more than intellectual content. The program director “must be an archivist” with at least five years experience “administering an archival program.” The guidelines listed requirements for “Theory Elements,” “Laboratory Elements,” and “Independent Study,” with the statement: “The program must consist of at least one year’s study which includes an equal emphasis on instruction in archival theory, laboratory work, and . . . independent study.” The lab work or practicum “must be project-oriented,” with a minimum of 140 hours. The expected curriculum would thus consist of one class in archival theory, a practicum, and a vaguely defined opportunity for independent study, which “should provide for specialized archival experience.”

In 1980 SAA added a separate statement, “Program Standard for Archival Education: the Practicum.”²⁸ Significantly, this further emphasized practice over theory. Although requiring prior instruction in five “theory elements,” the practicum would be “project oriented,” of “limited duration” (140 hours), with “close supervision” by an experienced archivist. Projects should emphasize acquisition, processing, preservation, and/or reference service, and be “selected for instructional value.” This clearly projected a continuation of apprenticeship instruction, focusing on “how to” projects.

In 1988 SAA issued more ambitious requirements, in its “Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs.”²⁹ There was a need for updated and improved guidelines, due to the profession’s continuing growth; the increasing complexity of its mission in the information age; and the challenges in gaining adequate resources and developing a stronger theoretical basis for professional work.

The 1988 statement reveals a more self-confident and intellectually secure profession. “The work of an archivist represents that of a profession, not a craft or

27. Society of American Archivists, “Guidelines for a Graduate Minor or Concentration in Archival Education,” *American Archivist* 41 (January 1978): 105–6.

28. Society of American Archivists, “Program Standard for Archival Education: the Practicum,” *SAA Newsletter* July 1979.

29. Society of American Archivists, “Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs.” Approved by SAA Council, February 1988.

applied vocation. Theory is not only just as important as practice but guides and determines that practice.” Archival education, it stated, is based on the concept that “archivists have developed their own core of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”

For the first time, the 1998 guidelines identified core curriculum elements:

- Nature of information, records, and historical documentation
- Archives in modern society
- Basic archival functions
- Issues and relationships that affect archival functions
- Managerial functions

Perhaps most significantly, these guidelines called for archival educators dedicated to instruction rather than adjunct instructors. Archival education faculty “requires a director who is a regular faculty member in the school or department.”

An even more ambitious statement, based on the Canadian model pioneered at the University of British Columbia, came in 1994, with SAA’s “Guidelines for the Development of a Curriculum for a Master of Archival Studies Degree.”³⁰

These MAS guidelines stated SAA’s objectives:

- To define the body of knowledge that characterizes the archival profession.
- To identify the curricular components of a self-contained, complete, and internally consistent archival studies program.
- To outline the academic infrastructure required in supporting an archival studies program.
- To assist universities and colleges in developing archival studies programs.
- To assist prospective students and employers in evaluating available programs of archival education.

According to the MAS guidelines, a separate MAS degree would deliver knowledge based on the following criteria:

- The nature of the materials for which the archivist is responsible.
- The nature of the activities that generate these materials and the contexts in which they are generated.
- The nature of archival work.

Because the field of archival studies is “dynamic and evolving,” the 1994 guidelines sought to “leave room for a variety of different curricular implementations

30. Society of American Archivists, “Guidelines for the Development of a Curriculum for a Master of Archival Studies Degree.” Approved by SAA Council, June 1994.

and for curricular innovation and specialization.” The MAS curriculum recommendations identified five main elements:

1. Contextual Knowledge, including the U.S. Legal System, Organizational History, and Financial Systems.
2. Archival Knowledge, including: History of Archives, Archival Organization and Legislation, and the Character of the Archival Profession; Records Management; and Archival Science.
3. Complementary Knowledge, such as: Conservation, Library and Information Science, Management, Research Methods, and History.
4. Practicum.
5. Scholarly Research.

The MAS guidelines also addressed infrastructure elements and stated that MAS teaching and research staff should include “at least one full-time tenure-track position,” with full academic qualifications.

It soon became clear that American universities were not ready to establish a separate degree for archival studies. In 2001 SAA established a committee, which I chaired, to revise its education guidelines. The “Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies,”³¹ still current, are built upon the foundation of the 1994 MAS guidelines. Three significant changes, among other less prominent revisions, characterized these guidelines.

First, the guidelines do not specify a separate MAS degree. Rather, the goal has been to identify what constitutes a strong academic program regardless of what the degree is called.

Second, the three broad knowledge areas — contextual, archival, and complementary — have been restructured into two broad areas with several subheadings: core knowledge and complementary knowledge. Contextual knowledge was incorporated within these two headings.

Third, for the first time, the curriculum guidelines stipulate a minimum number of credits required in areas of core archival knowledge. This set a baseline for archival content, in an effort to separate well-developed and integrated programs from those that cobbled together a smattering of quasi-related courses.

From this brief overview, we can see several trends and developments in SAA’s archival education guidelines: First, each successive iteration of the guidelines has been more detailed and complex than its predecessors. This reflects a growing sophistication and broader concept of archival education. Second, the guidelines have gradually shifted from an emphasis on practice to a focus on theory. The archival curriculum has broadened from teaching basic functions and practical how-to

31. Society of American Archivists, “Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies,” Society of American Archivists, <http://www2.archivists.org/gpas> (accessed September 9, 2010).

knowledge to more theoretical concepts, ways of thinking, and incorporation of knowledge from related disciplines. Third, by the mid-1980s archival education programs required (and began to hire) full-time faculty. Some programs could not make this transition. For example, the University of Connecticut ended its archival management MA program because it could not commit to hiring a full-time faculty member. The growth in recent years of archival programs that grant the PhD is another strong development. These changes have brought about a strengthening and maturation of archival education, both conceptually and institutionally. However, the profession still has some way to go to establish a thorough and rigorous educational foundation for the discipline.

A Case Study: Western Washington University

Graduate programs in archival studies can take on diverse forms under broad academic guidelines. As one example, the Archives and Records Management program (ARM) at Western Washington University (WWU) demonstrates the benefits of flexibility in program design. Established in 1972 by the Department of History, the WWU program is one of the longest running archival education programs in the United States. Beginning with the classic model of courses in theory, practical experience, and independent study, the WWU program has developed over the years in response to changes in the profession, to academic considerations, to student needs and demands, and to the evolving SAA education guidelines.

The ARM program grew out of a collaboration in 1972 between history professor Roland DeLorme and Paul Kohl, regional director of the National Archives and Records Service in Seattle. There was no archival education program on the West Coast in the 1970s, and the Department of History at WWU saw this as a means of distinguishing its graduate program. Kohl stressed the importance of combining course work with an internship. Students needed to understand the real world, he thought, rather than being dropped into a job after learning only archival theory. In addition, he stressed the essential connection between archives and records management. This combination, teaching the two in tandem, set the ARM program apart from most archival education programs in the country at that time.³²

To fund the internships, in 1976 Kohl and Professor George Mariz obtained grant funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for the Pacific Northwest Public Power Records Survey. This was the first of several grants awarded to WWU, and the first regional project supported by NHPRC.³³ The project received encouragement, cooperation, and assistance from the state archivists of Washington (Sidney McAlpin), Oregon (J. D. Porter), and Idaho (Merle Wells), and

32. George Mariz, interview by author, Bellingham, WA, February 17, 2010.

33. Paul A. Kohl, "Foreword," *Guide to Historical Records of Pacific Northwest Public Power Utilities* (Bellingham, WA: Graduate Program in Archival and Records Management Administration, History Department, Western Washington University, 1981), i.

it “blossomed into a regional survey of the public power agencies of the Pacific Northwest.”³⁴ In this project, “the records management interests of a number of agencies merged with archival and historical interests of the academic community, [and] the requirements of an educational program with needs of state archivists.”³⁵ The one truly Western feature of this early development of the ARM program, thus, was the choice of a distinctively Western type of government agency as the focus of this archival survey project. The Public Utility Districts had grown out of the need to harness the hydroelectric potential of the Columbia Basin, through a combination of state legislation and New Deal funding in the 1930s. These PUDs played major roles in the political and economic development of states in the Pacific Northwest.³⁶ The public power movement altered the face of the Pacific Northwest. As Paul Kohl observed, “Cheap energy changed the region’s economy from an extractive base to manufacturing and services.”³⁷

Some forty years later, the WWU grant project gained cooperation from these PUDs by providing assistance with their mounting records management problems.³⁸ This further strengthened the ARM program’s commitment to linking archives with records management. Another benefit of the grant project was providing ARM graduate students with both valuable hands-on experience and job opportunities. All of the students working on the grant project found work immediately afterward. Several student interns went on to direct and staff the follow-up Washington State Historical Records and Archives Project, and others joined the staffs of the Washington Public Power Supply System, investor owned utilities, the Washington State Archives, Presidential Libraries, municipal governments, and private business firms.³⁹ In fact, Mariz recalls, some students “were hired out from under us” during the grant project.⁴⁰ As the students discovered, “Their exposure to the real world of the profession was invaluable and, more important, something no classroom setting could provide.”⁴¹ The success of the ARM grant projects convinced the WWU administration that the archival education program was both viable and distinctive.

34. Kohl, i.

35. George Mariz, “Multiple Uses of a Survey: Training, Guides, Records Management, and Beyond,” *American Archivist* 42, no. 3 (July 1979): 302.

36. See William E. Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932–1940* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963): 11, 87, 156–57, and 164; and Philip J. Funigiello, *Toward a National Power Policy: The New Deal and the Electric Utility Industry, 1933–1941* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

37. Kohl, ii.

38. Mariz, “Multiple Uses of a Survey,” 304.

39. Kohl, ii.

40. Mariz interview.

41. Mariz, “Multiple Uses of a Survey,” 306.

This made the ARM faculty position permanent as a part-time appointment.⁴²

The ARM program thus developed prior to the first SAA guidelines for archival education being instituted. Its early emphasis on combining theory and practical experience mirrored the 1977 SAA guidelines and the 1980 statement on the archival practicum. After the sudden death of Paul Kohl in 1981, WWU hired James B. Rhoads, former Archivist of the United States, to teach the ARM courses. With the 1985 appointment of Rhoads as a regular member of the history faculty, WWU became one of the first American universities to hire a full-time archival education program director. This preceded SAA's 1988 guidelines, which called for full-time archival faculty positions.

The ARM program has continued to develop as quickly and as fully as the limited funds of a medium-sized publicly supported university allow. When Rhoads retired in 1994, the author left the University of Connecticut to become the ARM program director. Since WWU is not a PhD granting university, the program will not be able to develop a doctoral option for archival students. Students completing the program thus receive an MA in history with a certificate in Archives and Records Management.⁴³

WWU represents one of many possible models for comprehensive archival studies programs, which should be distinguished from those that offer a smattering of archives-related courses. Comprehensive programs offer a curriculum that encompasses core archival knowledge, including (1) basic archival functions (appraisal, acquisition, arrangement, description, preservation, reference, access, outreach, and advocacy) and (2) professional knowledge (history of archives and the profession, records and cultural memory, ethics, and values). In addition, such programs provide opportunities to study complementary knowledge areas, which may include such concerns as records and information management, information technology, conservation, history, management, and organizational theory. In various combinations, these elements form the basis for archival studies.

Universities offering fully developed and integrated master's degree programs (and a growing number of doctoral programs) emphasize various aspects of an archival curriculum, based in a variety of disciplines and reflecting the different perspectives of individual faculty members. As Anne Gilliland of UCLA observes, "These individual positions are crucial because they are what bring an enriching diversity of approaches and perspectives to archival education."⁴⁴

42. Mariz interview.

43. Western Washington University History Department, "Graduate Program in Archives and Records Management," Western Washington University, <http://www.wwu.edu/history/archivalstudies/index.shtml> (accessed March 9, 2010).

44. Gilliland-Swetland, 258.

Distinctive Features of Archival Education at WWU

The WWU archival education program currently describes its philosophy this way:

Since 1972, the Graduate Program in Archives and Records Management has prepared students for professional careers in both archives and records management. The curriculum emphasizes the interdependence of these two disciplines, both of which are essential to the challenges of documenting and preserving essential evidence of modern organizations and individuals. Grounded in the study of History, the program recognizes the value of historical knowledge and understanding as a basis for identifying and preserving records of enduring value to society. The curriculum integrates automation and electronic records issues with traditional methods for textual records. Students examine basic principles of archives and records management, learn methods of selecting, organizing, and using recorded information, and gain practical work experience in applying these techniques through an extended internship. A required master's thesis provides opportunity for original research and writing. The purpose of this program is to prepare students for a career, not just their first job, and to enable them to learn to think and function as professional archivists and/or records managers.⁴⁵

There are seven key features of the WWU program in Archives and Records Management that, in combination, provide a learning experience distinctive from other archival studies programs. This case study does not argue that this is the “best” or preferred combination of features. Students will have a variety of needs, interests, and career plans, which may be met in different ways by programs based in history, library and information science, education, or another discipline. Rather than elaborate the full offerings of the WWU program, the following discussion focuses on its particular features in seven curricular features that WWU emphasizes in defining its own niche in archival graduate education. Four of these emphases have been part of the ARM curriculum for more than twenty-five years (history and context, archives and records management, hands-on experience, and scholarly research). The other three distinctive features of ARM have been added in the past fifteen years (management and leadership principles, information technology, and archives and society). Each of these elements is continually updated and revised.

1. History and Context

The long-standing debate within the archival profession concerning which discipline is “best” for archival education long ago ceased to be productive. Both

45. Western Washington University History Department.

library and information science and history have advantages. Archivists gain valuable insights, theoretical concepts, and skills from many disciplines—library and information science, history, law, political science, education, management, and information technology, among others. On a national level the profession is best served by a diversity of programs with differing emphases. There are many benefits to studying archival theory and practice through the lens of library and information science, or education, or political science. Each of these disciplines can provide a disciplinary home for archival studies, which can be enriched by the variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. Each offers a different potential career path or emphasis.

This case study describes a history-based archival studies program. Its focus is on the specific perspectives and benefits of this particular discipline, rather than on a comparison of different disciplines. The historical perspective provides

- an understanding of the historical context in which records were created;
- knowledge of record-keeping practices and historical events that help improve our appraisal decisions;
- a perspective from the researcher or “consumer” of archives;
- a disciplinary methodology that includes theories and techniques common to political science, sociology, cultural anthropology, material culture studies, and literary criticism—all part of historical methods;⁴⁶ and
- an emphasis on the historical development of the profession and of its basic principles.

Many of these perspectives can be obtained through study of core archival knowledge. In a history-based program, however, they receive special consideration and emphasis.

2. Archives and Records Management

The second valuable element in the structure of the Western Washington program is its emphasis on integrating archives and records management as a single expanded discipline, rather than as two separate and competing disciplines. This linkage between archives and records management was a cornerstone of the ARM program from its inception. Paul Kohl, the first director of the program, emphasized the mutual interdependence of these disciplines and built the WWU curriculum around the close relationship between managing active records and ensuring the preservation of archival records.⁴⁷ Both Kohl and his successor, Dr. James B. Rhoads, came from the National Archives and Records Service (now National Archives and

46. Wosh, 272.

47. Mariz interview.

Records Administration) system, and this was a natural linkage for them. Although for many years students could choose between archives and records management as their focus, the program now more closely integrates the two fields. Two of the core courses in the master's program — “History and Principles of Archives and Records Management,” and the “Advanced Seminar in Archives and Records Management” — combine archives and records management, so that even students who wish to pursue only one of the disciplines must have experience in both. Many other archival programs are now emphasizing this perspective, once nearly unique to Western Washington.

3. Hands-on Experience

Another issue that has been significant in discussions of archival education is the desired balance between theory and practice. There has been a long-running debate over the nature of archival theory, with some writers even questioning whether there is any such thing. The argument that anti-theory advocates sometimes make is that archivists should learn practical skills so that they can “do” archives.⁴⁸

At the other end of the spectrum, some advocates of archival theory suggest that archival education should only teach theory, not practice. Some archival education programs no longer teach processing methodology, because it is a skill best learned on the job. Their emphasis is on the theory of appraisal, information systems, and other broad conceptual aspects of the discipline.

Canadian archivist Terry Cook presents a more balanced assessment, stating that theory is “the complement to practice, and theory and practice should interact and cross-fertilize each other.”⁴⁹ Archival theory guides practice and provides the reasons “why” archivists approach records in particular ways, which are different from how a historian, a librarian, or a researcher approaches records. But archival education should also prepare students for “the real world.” Archival education should include, then, a solid introduction to both theory and practice.

This is why WWU's graduate program still requires both a master's thesis and a 550-hour internship. Students typically complete two academic quarters of study in theory of archives and records management before undertaking their internships. They thus have background for understanding why and how archivists and records managers do what they do. The internship experience is intended to do several things:

- Provide practical experience in the work of archives and records management.

48. John Roberts, “Archival Theory: Much Ado About Shelving,” *American Archivist* 50, no. 1 (1987): 66–74.

49. Cook, 390.

- Enable students to gain a sense of the institutional culture and values of archives.
- Offer a variety of experience rather than a single “project” to work on—students should gain some experience in at least three aspects or functions of the workplace.
- Give students the opportunity to work under supervision of an experienced professional, who can offer a new perspective on professional work and theory.
- Encourage students to compare and evaluate theory, methodology, and practice so that they can learn about the inter-relationships of these aspects of professional life.

As George Mariz observed in 1979 of the early ARM interns, “Their exposure to the real world of the profession was invaluable and, more important, something no classroom setting could provide.”⁵⁰ This remains true for ARM graduate students; however, their hands-on experience with archival and records management internships can also be enhanced through follow-up academic courses. After the internship, students return to campus for a second year of classes in archival theory and methodology, history, and electives.

4. Scholarly Research

One casualty of many archival education programs has been the master’s thesis. Even well-established programs such as the University of British Columbia no longer require a master’s thesis, but simply offer it as an option.⁵¹ At Western Washington we still require students to undertake the rigorous research process required for a sustained master’s thesis. This involves identifying a topic for a research project, designing an appropriate research methodology, conducting the research process, and writing a clear analysis of the research in an original master’s thesis.

In a profession that increasingly must establish its significance and relevance to current issues in the broader field of information management, archivists can no longer be passive recipients of knowledge. We must also contribute by generating new ideas, testing theories, and moving the profession to a higher level of understanding and analysis of contemporary issues. As Anne Gilliland states, “The need for students in graduate archival education programs to receive training and gain experience in the conduct of research has become more pressing as both the theory and the practice bases of the archival profession have developed.”⁵²

This emphasis on research and analysis has enriched the professional

50. Mariz, “Multiple Uses of a Survey,” 306.

51. Eastwood, “Archival Research: the University of British Columbia Experience,” 246.

52. Gilliland-Swetland, 270.

literature. Both at WWU and other universities, many graduate students have presented research papers at regional and national conferences and others have published their master's theses or articles based on original research.

5. Management and Leadership Principles

Because of the importance of leadership and management skills for those entering the archival profession, the graduate studies program in Archives and Records Management (ARM) at Western Washington University incorporates a significant introduction to basic principles of business management, organizational structures, and leadership. Sooner or later most archivists will find themselves faced with managerial responsibilities. In addition, our professional work requires an understanding of organizational structures and systems so that we can provide proper records appraisal, retention scheduling, and support services to our own institutions—even if we work for a county historical society. Thus all archivists need to know the basics of management and leadership.⁵³

Western Washington's ARM program therefore emphasizes management theory and practice, particularly in the Advanced Seminar in Archives and Records Management. Readings include business literature such as Peter Drucker on managing nonprofit organizations and gaining management skills as an information professional.⁵⁴ Michael Kurtz's archival fundamentals manual of management and *Leading and Managing Archives and Records Programs: Strategies for Success*, edited by Bruce Dearstyne, are among the few books that examine management and leadership in an archival context, although a growing body of professional articles provide valuable contributions.⁵⁵ Historical perspectives on management and leadership provide an additional lens through which to understand these important aspects of archives and recordkeeping.⁵⁶

53. Davis, 279.

54. See, for example, Peter F. Drucker, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Drucker, *Managing the Non-profit Organization* (New York: Harper, 1990); James Champy, *Reengineering Management: The Mandate for New Leadership* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1995); G. Edward Evans, P. Ward and B. Rugass, *Management Basics for Information Professionals*, (Neal-Schumann, 2000); Thomas H. Davenport and Laurence Prusak, *Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998).

55. See Michael Kurtz, *Managing Archival and Manuscripts Repositories* (SAA, 2004); Bruce W. Dearstyne, *Leading and Managing Archives and Records Programs: Strategies for Success* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2008); Bruce W. Dearstyne, ed., *Effective Approaches for Managing Electronic Records and Archives* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 2002); William Saffady, *Records and Information Management: Fundamentals of Professional Practice* (Lenexa, Kansas: ARMA, 2004).

56. There is an extensive literature on the history of archives and recordkeeping, much of which provides valuable perspectives on leadership and management of archives. See, for example: Ernst Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993);

Here are some of the key topics discussed in the Advanced Seminar in Archives and Records Management :

- Managing electronic records.
- Identifying mission, goals and planning.
- Leadership skills.
- Managing resources.
- Organizational structures and recordkeeping.
- Advocacy, public policy, and accountability.

In addition to readings and classroom discussions, students learn about many of these topics during the required archival internship, when they are encouraged to observe, ask questions, and learn from their supervisors and colleagues.

6. Information Technology

No archivist or records manager can escape the need to master information technology. Although based in a humanistic discipline, the WWU program requires immersion in current methods and issues of information technology and electronic records. Rather than offering a separate course in electronic records, the curriculum examines electronic records and automation in parts of six individual courses. This provides a more realistic view of the need to incorporate electronic records systems in the overall approach to archival records, both in institutional archives and in collecting (manuscript) repositories.

Our goal is to incorporate electronic records issues and concerns into all courses on archives and records management. Since technological issues are changing quickly, our purpose is to prepare students for the future rather than to indoctrinate them with current practices and thinking. We want them to think for themselves, to understand the theoretical and practical issues relating to electronic records, and to see electronic records as just one part of a broader universe of documentation and evidence.

Students learn computer applications for archives, including word processing, spreadsheets, databases, e-mail, and Internet searching. For example, in the “Arrangement and Description of Archives” course students learn — and complete assignments in — both MARC cataloging and Encoded Archival Description (EAD). These skills are highly prized in the job market, and new archivists must be able to demonstrate their ability to work with MARC and EAD.

Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); JoAnne Yates, *Control Through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management* (Johns Hopkins, 1989); Eric Ketelaar, “‘Control Through Communication’ in a Comparative Perspective,” *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005): 71–89; Peter J. Horsman, “A French Legacy: The Transition from Collegiate to Bureaucratic Record-keeping in a Dutch Town, 1800–1900,” *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005).

The recent emergence of electronic social media has also led to class readings and discussions about the impact on both archives and records management of Web 2.0 applications. These include topics such as the impact of Web 2.0 on archival selection and appraisal, description, reference, and outreach, as well as on records and information management.

In addition to archives and records management courses, many of the ARM students choose to take computer science and management information systems (MIS) courses in lieu of a foreign language requirement. This option enables students to take a three-course sequence of undergraduate courses focusing on design and development of Web-based systems, learning basic programming and developing skills in Web site development and management.

The curriculum for our courses changes each year as we add new readings, topics, and assignments to meet the rapid changes in the field. Electronic records and automation comprise an important part of the overall curriculum — a larger portion each year — but have not crowded out more traditional concerns for textual and nontextual records, which most archivists still face in the real world of archives and records management.

7. Archives and Society

The ARM program emphasizes a broad view of the profession and its responsibilities in modern society. What business are we in? Traditional views suggest that archives represent “old stuff” — or history; or memory; or meeting legal and administrative needs of our institutions. These concepts are true, but they are no longer sufficient. We need to reconceptualize archives if we are to remain relevant and useful to broad societal constituencies.

The archival profession needs a new focus, a new sense of mission and purpose within the community, state, and nation. Students should gain an understanding of the importance of archives in society. The WWU program therefore focuses attention on several vital issues:

- First, archivists should focus more attention on user needs—on identifying and providing information that is useful and necessary for people from all segments of society, not just the social, political, and intellectual elite.⁵⁷
- Documentation and accountability are critical needs for protecting the public’s rights and ensuring that political, economic, and academic leaders are accountable to their constituencies. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act,

57. For example see Elsie Freeman Finch, “In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User’s Point of View,” *American Archivist* 47 (Spring 1984): 111–23; Verne Harris, *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007).

for example, specifies recordkeeping essentials to lessen the chances for more scandals such as Enron.⁵⁸

- Open government and access to vital information are critical in a democratic society. Archivists should be advocates for open access to public records, while recognizing the need for some privacy and national security protections.⁵⁹
- Archivists should embrace diversity in order to represent all voices in society — not just the political, economic, social, and intellectual elites.⁶⁰
- Archivists can serve the interests of promoting a more just and equitable society. Numerous examples of the ways in which archives contribute to the public interest can be found in recent books on archives and the public good, political pressure and the archival record, and archives for justice.⁶¹
- Archivists should consider adding social responsibility — including moral responses to the call for social justice — to their concept of professional ethics.⁶²
- Archivists' engagement with the public begins with advocacy. Advocacy engages archivists with efforts to bring archival concerns to public

58. Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace, *Archives and the Public Good* (Westport, Conn.: Quorum Books, 2002); Daniel Kadlec et al., "Who's Accountable?" *Time*, January 21, 2002; Patrice Davis, "Some Much Deserved Respect: The Impact of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act from a Records Management Perspective Focusing on Small Businesses" (MA thesis, Western Washington University, 2006).
59. OpenTheGovernment.org, "Secrecy Report Card 2007: Report Finds Expanded Federal Government Secrecy in 2006," OpenTheGovernment.org, <http://www.openthegovernment.org/article/articleview/275/1/68/?TopicID=> (accessed December 17, 2009); Thomas James Connors, "The Bush Administration and 'Information Lockdown'," in *Political Pressure and the Archival Record*, ed. Margaret Procter, Michael Cook, and Caroline Williams (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 195–208; Bruce P. Montgomery, "Presidential Materials: Politics and the Presidential Records Act," *American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 102–38.
60. For perspectives on diversity in archives and the archival profession see, for example: Kathryn M. Neal, "The Importance of Being Diverse: The Archival Profession and Minority Recruitment," *Archival Issues* (1996): 145–58; Elizabeth W. Adkins, "Our Journey Toward Diversity — and a Call to (More) Action," *American Archivist* 71, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 21–49; Jeannette A. Bastian, *Owning Memory: How a Caribbean Community Lost Its Archives and Found Its History* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003).
61. Cox and Wallace, *Archives and the Public Good*; Procter, Cook, and Williams, *Political Pressure and the Archival Record*; Harris, *Archives and Justice*; Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009). See also essays in Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006).
62. Extensive discussion of these issues can be found in the proceedings of the November 2007 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Conference on Archival Ethics, and the May 2008 conference on "Archives and the Ethics of Memory Construction," University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; links to information about both conferences is available at University of Michigan School of Information, "Memory Ethics," University of Michigan, <http://www.memoryethics.org> (accessed December 17, 2009).

attention, to address public policy issues affecting archival and recordkeeping concerns, and to meet the societal obligations that any profession assumes by its very existence.⁶³

Future Education Needs for the Archival Profession

With the numerous changes and fresh perspectives on the archival enterprise that have emerged in recent years, it is time for us to reconsider the goals, perspectives, and components of archival education. The growing complexity of modern institutional needs and information technology options demands a greater sophistication in archival education programs. The basic components — theory, methodology, and practice — remain fundamental. But students need skills and grounding in both technology and interpersonal skills and cultural understanding in order to lead the archival institutions of the future. If archivists are to meet the vital archival needs of the future, our educational programs need to provide a fresh and vigorous approach to prepare students for their careers. Based on almost thirty years as an archival educator, I offer a few recommendations for the future of archival education:

- Archival education needs more emphasis on *why*; *what* and *how* are still important but should be secondary to the fundamental purposes of *why* archives exist and *why* archivists perform their functions.
- We should emphasize helping students to think like an archivist, more than to perform archival tasks. Hands-on experience is necessary. Students should graduate knowing both *why* and *how* to work as an archivist.
- Archivists should always remember: technology is a tool, not a goal. Understanding and using technology is essential, but it should not be the central goal for professional education,
- Education should place more emphasis on ethics and the moral values of the archival profession.
- Students should understand the roles of archives and archivists in society, including the elements that endow archives with power (or at least potential power) in society: memory and remembrance, including historical understanding; accountability and defense of democratic principles; and diversity and social justice through fuller representation of marginalized peoples.

The concept of “archives power” also suggests that we need to move beyond the culture of victimization and neglect that we have too often seemed to embrace as part of our stereotyped role as unappreciated handmaidens to history. This means that

63. For discussion of advocacy concerns for archivists see Elsie Finch, ed., *Advocating Archives: An Introduction to Public Relations for Archivists* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1994).

archivists should spend less time whining about lack of public understanding and recognition, and more time celebrating our strengths. We should also avoid begging for scarce resources, and instead focus on (1) offering to help resource allocators and other constituents and (2) on applying archival expertise to societal problems.

For the future of archival education, we need stronger independent programs that combine core archival knowledge with contextual understanding and interdisciplinary perspectives. We need to reject attitudes of subservience and second-class status for archivists. We need to ask, “Why?” constantly, in order to understand the broader role that the future will demand for archivists and our repositories.

Finally, as an educator I have come to realize over the years that my role is not to provide answers for students — not to tell them how to become effective archivists — but to help them ask questions. Learning to ask the appropriate questions is what education should be about. This is the habit of thinking we want students to develop.

From a Regional Perspective to an International Network

This case study of the Archives and Records Management graduate program at Western Washington University raises more questions than it answers. Some of these questions are about whether there is — or has ever been — a distinctly “western” perspective on archival education. In what ways has the western landscape — whether geographical, social, or political — shaped the archival program? The short answer seems to be that the emergence and initial character of the ARM program owed more to the western location of WWU than do its recent or current features.

The ARM program arose out of the need of a medium-sized regional state university to establish its educational niche in the field of history. WWU has never been a nationally prominent institution, serving mainly a regional student population. Initially this was also true of the archival students, who predominantly came from the immediate Pacific Northwest. The program also provided a training ground from which the public archives of the region were populated with a new cadre of professionally educated archivists and records managers. Unlike some other regions, the Pacific Northwest had (and still has) relatively few private manuscript repositories or large research centers. Apart from a relatively small number of college and university archival repositories, the majority of archives and records management programs are based in state and local government and the private sector of business and industry. The early grant projects sponsored by ARM illustrate this regional focus. Not only did they center on a type of governmental agency almost unique to the western U.S., they also provided a labor force for the growing number of state and local government agencies and corporations seeking to develop records management and archives programs.

As the archival profession expanded its perspective and deepened its sense of common purpose across the United States, these local and parochial limitations have

given way to a broader engagement in the national profession. The needs of the past two decades have brought American archivists into increasingly important communication with archivists from around the world. The ARM program at WWU has been engaged at this international level, at least to some extent, since the mid-1980s. James B. Rhoads, the first full-time faculty member in the ARM program, remained active in ICA and other international networks following his retirement as Archivist of the United States. His previous position as Archivist of the United States gave him both the perspective and the contacts to link WWU to the international archives profession. As WWU maintained these global connections, the growing need for standardization brought American archivists into the international arena as never before. Spurred in large part by the computer age and the application of automated techniques, this global perspective has required both a wider sphere of archival cooperation and a greater need for curriculum development in educational programs. ARM has joined this move toward national and international standards and, although based in a department of history, has provided an increasingly strong educational foundation on the technological and global aspects of archives and records management.

The Archives and Records Management graduate program at Western Washington University thus emerged from the needs and context of the Pacific Northwest region, but it has become part of the national and international archival profession. As we all face the challenges of the “global village” and the Internet and Web 2.0 information society, many of the distinctive features of regional approaches to archives have been subsumed by the needs of modern society. At WWU we are proud of our regional heritage but are committed to helping shape the global future of archival education.