

ARCHIVAL TRAINING IN CANADA

by

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The concern of this group in archival training is at least three fold:

- 1) to ensure that professional training facilities are available for potential archivists and that educational qualifications and training standards, in the calibre of instruction, the content of courses and practical work requirements, are sufficiently high to elevate the professional status of archivists to a level that will not be inferior to any other profession.
- 2) to provide adequate training for all persons engaged in work of an archival nature to ensure the proper care of archival materials wherever they may be.
- 3) to ensure as far as possible throughout Canada standard archival terminology, techniques and practices.

In view of the recent trends in archival training three subsidiary purposes may be added to these general aims:

- 1) to provide librarians with archival training suitable for their profession.
- 2) to provide graduate students in history and related subjects with a better understanding of the role of the archivist and the use of original source materials.
- 3) to provide adequate instruction in records management.

In order to view Canadian training problems and practices in perspective it is useful to consider the nature of archival training in several other countries. Of European countries where the profession of archivist is firmly established, Great Britain can be taken as an example.

Great Britain

In National repositories, particularly the Public Record Office,

ARCHIVAL TRAINING

archivists are recruited by competitions held by the Civil Service Commission . The basic qualification is a first or second class degree in history, classics, English or law. Training is done within the office and there is a probationary period of two years.

Post graduate courses in archives administration are provided by three universities - London, Liverpool and Wales. The Diploma Course in the School of Librarianship and Archives, University College, London, can be taken as an example. The entrance requirement is a first or second class honours degree in Arts from an approved university. It is a one-year post-graduate course and a diploma is awarded after passing the examinations (11 papers) and at least one year of practical experience. The professional staff of county and municipal records offices is recruited chiefly from graduates of the university courses.

Although there are many persons who have collections of manuscripts and records in their care but are not professional archivists, there is no continuous provision for instruction. Summer courses have been given but not regularly.

United States

Archival training in the United States is of particular interest since it reflects conditions that are very similar to those in Canada. A concise review of training in the United States is given in response to a questionnaire of the International Council on Archives prepared by Dr. Schellenberg as Chairman of the Committee on Training of the Society of American Archivists. He reported that there were no specialized schools for the training of archivists and no required courses for post-graduate professional training. He indicated that university archival institutes were of three kinds: 1) three-week summer institutes given annually by the American University, Washington, D.C. and the University of Denver; 2) summer institutes given irregularly by library schools of various universities (these have been given by Dr. Schellenberg himself); 3) courses given during the academic year by Wayne State University, Detroit, the University of North Carolina and the University of Wisconsin. He added that specialized courses, particularly in records management, were given in various places.

To complete the American picture it should be pointed out that professional archivists for the National Archives and most state archives are recruited by civil service competition, that the basic requirement is a university degree in history or related subjects and that normal training takes place within the repository. The summer institutes provide introductory courses covering the whole field of archives administration and are attended by

professional archivists from smaller repositories, librarians, museum curators and other persons whose employment requires a knowledge of archival techniques. A certificate is given upon completion of the course. University courses are usually given in connection with history departments and credit is given towards a degree. In some cases university courses can be audited or taken without credit but a certificate of completion is given.

Canada

The situation in Canada in regard to archival training is similar to the United States except that the number of persons involved is considerably less.

The chief employer of professional archivists is the Public Archives of Canada which has on its staff approximately fifty archivists and employs each year an average of ten or twelve new archivists. Recruitment is by competition through the Public Service Commission. Minimum educational requirements are an honors degree in history or related subjects with a good knowledge of Canadian history. Training is within the archives and is predominantly practical experience. There is a one-year probationary period.

Several archivists each year are employed by the various provincial archives. The qualifications vary somewhat but the minimum educational requirement is a B.A. with emphasis on a knowledge of Canadian history. There is at present a growing demand for university archivists and universities collectively may eventually replace provincial archives as the second largest employer of archivists. With the increasing involvement of provincial archives with records schedules and selection and the requirements of the university archivist there is a growing need for instruction in records management.

A considerable number of persons in Canada have duties which involve the acquisition and custody of archival materials and require a knowledge of archives administration including arrangement, description, reference, repair and photoduplication. They include librarians, church and business archivists, employees of museums and historical societies. Qualifications vary with the type of employment and the one thing which members of this group have in common is a requirement for some type of archival training.

Finally, mention should be made of the large number of persons who are responsible for the care of current records, both at the different levels of government and in the private sector. Archivists are concerned with the entire life span of records but it is not within the scope of this report to suggest the amount

of training in records management that archivists should receive or the amount of interest which records managers may have in archival training.

The report of Dr. Schellenberg on archival training in the United States would apply equally to Canada. There are no specialized schools for the training of archivists, such as the famous Ecole des chartes, and there are no required courses for post-graduate professional training such as the diploma course at University College, London.

About twenty years ago Canadians began to attend the summer institute on archives management given by the American University, Washington, D.C. In 1959, a similar course was given by Carleton University, Ottawa, in cooperation with the Public Archives of Canada and the Archives Section of the Canadian Historical Association. It was felt that there should be an enrollment of at least ten persons to justify giving the course. This course was repeated in 1964 and on that occasion it was felt that the class should not include more than thirty persons. The maximum number enrolled. Since then considerable interest has been shown in this course and suggestions have been received that it be given on a more regular basis.

At present two university courses in archives administration are given in Canada, at McGill and Laval. Actually two courses are given at McGill. One is a post-graduate course. Given by the Graduate School of Library Science, it counts for a full credit in the two-year programme for the M.L.S. degree and admittance is confined to librarians. Lecturers are Alan Ridge, University Archivist, John Archer, Director of University Libraries, and Douglas Wurtele, who was director of the last Carleton summer course. The second McGill course is an extension course in records management and archives administration given by Alan Ridge, assisted by John Archer and John Andreassen.

The course at Laval is included in the post-graduate courses leading to a license degree which is equivalent to an M.A. in history. The course has been given by M. Lecour, a graduate of L'Ecole des chartes and chief archivist of the Departement de la Rhône. He was assisted by Bernard Weilbrenner, Provincial Archivist of Quebec, and the facilities of the Quebec Archives were used for practical work. In addition to providing training for potential archivists, the course provides experience in the use of original materials for persons engaged in historical research and in this respect resembles the archives courses given at American universities. It is possible that a similar course in French may be given at the University of Ottawa.

Another type of training should be mentioned. It is described

by the Public Record Office as "instructional visits" from overseas archivists, particularly from emergent nations, which includes on-the-job training at the Public Record Office often supplemented by visits to county records offices. In addition the Public Records Office receives repairers from other record offices for instruction in the Conservation Section. Similar demands are made on the Public Archives of Canada and probably on other archival repositories. Recent "instructional visits" sponsored by External Aid, have been from Trinidad, Guyana, British Honduras, Iran, Burma, and American trusteeship territories in the Pacific. Evidence of the need in Canada for short courses or practical training is the number of requests each year for permission to participate in the annual course provided by the Public Archives for its own professional staff and to obtain information concerning conservation methods.

Finally, courses in records management are given at two levels - the regular university extension course at McGill and the annual course provided for federal records officers by the Records Management Branch of the Public Archives.

To summarize the state of archival training in Canada it can be said that most archivists receive professional training at the repository which employs them, that courses in archives administration are given as part of post-graduate programmes at two universities - one in a two-year course for a M.L.S. degree, the other in a one-year course for a license in history, that there is inadequate provision for training in records management and that there is a demand for periodic short courses in archives administration for persons whose employment requires a knowledge of archival techniques and some practical experience in handling archival materials.

The following recommendations are not entirely original since they are based to some extent on similar recommendations to the Society of American Archivists and on suggestions from several members of this group. They are submitted for the consideration of the Archives Section:

1. Whereas all archival training in Canada is the proper concern of this Section, this committee recommends that a standing committee of the Section be appointed to sponsor training courses, to prepare or assist in the preparation of syllabi, to cooperate with institutions which may provide courses, to suggest minimum standards and to submit an annual report to the Section.
2. Whereas it is desirable that all persons who are engaged in employment which involves the management of archival material should receive adequate instruction, this

Committee recommends that arrangements be made with Carleton University to provide a summer course in archives administration in 1968 and thereafter on alternate years if the expected enrollment seems to warrant it.

3. Whereas university courses in archives and records management, such as those provided by McGill University and Laval University, serve a useful purpose by integrating professional archival training with higher academic education, this Committee recommends that this Section explore the possibility of similar courses being provided by a limited number of universities in other regions but that minimum standards be suggested with respect to the qualifications of instructors, syllabi, access to archival material and conservation facilities, uniformity of terminology and techniques.
4. Whereas there is a requirement for practical experience which can best be obtained by inservice training or "instructional visits", this Committee recommends that encouragement be given to cooperation between archival repositories which have adequate facilities in order to establish a regular program for that purpose.
5. Whereas the need for adequate instruction in records management is increasing, encouragement should be given to the provision of courses such as that at McGill in other regions and a regular short course corresponding to that in archives administration in Ottawa.

This paper was given by Dr. Smith as Chairman of the Archives Section Committee on Training at the Canadian Historical Association Conference, 1967.

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