

THE QUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL STATUS

EXAMPLES AND INFERENCES

BY

SHIRLEY SPRAGGE

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

That the longest section in the "Bibliography of Bibliographies" prepared for the Archives Training Course is entitled "The Profession" is an indication of the emphasis on, and concern by, archivists for professional status in their work. An examination of the bibliography proved interesting; the writings on "The Profession", British, American, and Canadian, covered the period from the 1930's to the 1970's, showing the concern to be consistent or recurring. Or does it suggest that professional status is not yet achieved, to the distress of the archivists? Secondly, while the articles cover archival education, training programmes, relations with the public in general and historians in particular, there is only one article whose title addresses itself to deciding what is a profession and that is one by a medical doctor published in the British Columbia Library Quarterly.

If we conclude, then that the unavailing concern about the emergence of a profession has been directed introspectively, why not turn to examining what, in current terms, constitutes a profession and how other professions have sought and achieved (or not) that status. To do so, writings of sociologists as analysts of social structure will be used, especially those referring to the efforts of librarians in striving for professional status. This does not imply an equation of librarian and archivist, but there are enough similarities at least to draw comparisons. Robert Woadden accuses archivists of using library profession as both yardstick and crutch.²

¹ Alan A. Klass, "The Spirit of a Profession," British Columbia Library Quarterly, 26 (April 1963), p.2

² Robert Woadden, "The Moral Fibre to Get Down to It," American Archivist (A.A.), 28 (1965), p.494.

This article was originally prepared as a term paper for the 1973 Archives Course.

In using the librarian as "yardstick," the premise is that librarians have not achieved full professional status. Sociologists William Goode³, Wilfred Moore⁴, Bernard Barber⁵ and Harold Wilensky⁶ maintain this painful conclusion, and Amitai Etzioni lumps librarianship with nursing and social work in his collected essays, Semi-Professions and Their Organization⁷. Librarians themselves are touchy on this subject, apt to be as vociferous as uncertain. We shall look at North American examples, concentrating where possible on Canada.

Dr. Alan Klass in his article "The Spirit of a Profession"⁸, finds three essential attributes. The first is "conception and birth within a University," for he believes the idea and ideals of scholarship and research of a university are essential to the existence of a profession. The second basic ingredient of a profession he sees as legal status, defined as a public grant to a profession of monopolies and self-governing privileges, including determination of fee structure and regulation of entrance and conduct. The third aspect is "motivation of service to society which makes voluntary effort the hallmark of the profession." These attributes are paralleled and extended in the writing of Ernest Greenwood⁹, a major contributor to the sociology of professions. He sees the necessary characteristics as a systematic body of theory, authority (over training, etc.), community sanction, ethical codes and a professional culture sustained by a formal professional association. Neither he nor Wilfred Moore¹⁰ see a gulf between professions and occupations; for Greenwood the occupations in society are distributed along a continuum toward professional status and for Moore professionalism is a scale rather than a cluster of attributes. Another

3 William Goode, "The Librarian: From Occupation to Profession?" Library Quarterly, 31 #4 (October 1961).

4 Wilfred Moore, The Professions: Roles and Rules (New York, Russell Sage, 1970), p.176.

5 Bernard Barber, "The Sociology of Professions," Daedalus, 92 #4 (Fall 1963), p.672.

6 H.L. Wilensky, "The Professionalization of Everyone?" American Journal of Sociology, 70 #2 (September 1964).

7 Amitai Etzioni, ed., The Semi Professions and Their Organization (New York, Free Press, 1969).

8 British Columbia Library Quarterly, 26 (April 1963), p.2.

9 Ernest Greenwood, "Attributes of a Profession", in Professionalization, eds. H.M. Volmer and D.L. Mills (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1966), p.10.

10 Moore, p.5.

sociologist, William Goode, in an article written for librarians, succinctly reduces the attributes of a profession to two: "Prolonged specialized training in a body of abstract knowledge," and a "collectivity or service orientation".¹¹ Goode then amplifies his ideas. He holds that the body of abstract knowledge must exist in principles, not details, and the profession must have control of what constitutes this knowledge and access to it through schools, examinations, etc. He feels the service orientation calls for priority for the needs of the client (even to sacrifice self interest of the professional) embodied in control by sanctions or a code of ethics self-imposed by the professional community.

Klass and the sociologists are looking in the same direction, but whereas Klass emphasizes the effect of association with the university, Greenwood and Goode emphasize a body of abstract knowledge distinctive to the profession. Is there a sufficient body of archival knowledge to qualify? If librarians feel the principles of classification are their sufficient prerogative, do the principles of archival arrangement so qualify? With the lack of general agreement on archival methodology and terminology, the situation is clouded. Both librarian and archivist require higher than average general education, although the archivist has the added requirement for specialization in history, now being broadened to include sociology and political science. What else is considered requisite for an archivist's education? Herman Kahn feels there is too much "how to do it" taught and not enough reference service, research advice, appraisal of record values, philosophy and history.¹² Alan Ridge, in a paper given at the Archives' Section, Canadian Historical Association in 1964,¹³ drew up a curriculum of six core subjects of law, administration, physical care of documents, administrative history, records management and paleography, and five electives of advanced paleography, bibliographical studies, detailed

11 Goode, "The Librarian: From Occupation to Profession?" Library Quarterly, 31 #4 (October 1961), p.308. See also: "Community Within a Community," American Sociological Review, 22 (April 1957); "Encroachment, Charlatanism and the Emerging Profession: Psychology, Sociology and Medicine," American Sociological Review, 25 (1960); "Theoretical Limits of a Profession" in The Semi-Professions..., ed. A. Etzioni (New York, Free Press, 1969).

12. Herman Kahn, "Some Comments on the Archival Vocation," A.A., 34 #1 (January 1971), p. 4,8.

13. Alan Ridge, "What Training Do Archivists Need?" Canadian Archivist, 1 #3 (1965).

methods in correspondence (especially registry), administration of records centre and preservation and use of "modern records". Given that a 1974 list might be different, are these subjects sufficiently rigorous and distinctive to be professional curriculum? One criterion is whether they would be considered graduate school level at a major university.

A more pragmatic approach to measuring attainment of professional status is that of Harold Wilensky in his article, "The Professionalization of Everyone?"¹⁴ He examines a group of professions, comparing the characteristics of the established professions with those of the striving or emerging ones. He tabulates his findings and gives the following description:

It should be noted that in four of the six established professions in Table 1 [accounting, architecture, civil engineering, dentistry, law, medicine], university training schools appeared on the scene before national professional associations. In the less established professions, the reverse pattern is typical. This underscores the importance of cultivating a knowledge base and the strategic innovative role of universities and early teachers in linking knowledge to practice and creating a rationale for exclusive jurisdiction. Where professionalization has gone farthest, the occupational association does not typically set up a training school; the schools usually promote an effective professional association.¹⁵

If we look at librarianship, one of Wilensky's marginal professions, we see that the American Library Association was established in 1876, Dewey's first training school in 1887 and the first university school in 1897. If we look at archivists we find the same pattern: the Society of American Archivists was established in 1936 and the Columbia archival course in 1939; in Canada the Archives' Section of the Canadian Historical Association came into being in 1953, the first training course in 1959.

Before these examples are dismissed as pure coincidence, let us see some of the implications. If the occupational association has charge of education and educational standards, it is important to realize that occupations are not homogeneous groups. Goode says:

¹⁴ American Journal of Sociology, 70#2 (September 1964).

¹⁵ Ibid., p.144.

...practitioners within a field are not likely to be united among themselves.... After all, any plan to raise the standards defines some practitioners as incompetent. Any talk of the new "science" on which the profession rests its claims may be met with derision by the old-timers, who believe that at best they command an art, perhaps merely a skill to be acquired through apprenticeship.¹⁶

It is not presumed to apply this example to Canadian archivists, but it illustrates what sociologists call segmentation within an occupation. Rue Boucher and Anselm Strauss describe this as "amalgamation of segments pursuing different objectives in different manners and more or less delicately held together under a common name"¹⁷ If this is a common pattern, it is perhaps not surprising that educational programmes and professional status are discussed again and again.¹⁸

Whether we agree with Wilensky's theory or not, it focuses attention on the importance of association with universities. Solon Buck gave the first course in Archival Administration at Columbia in 1939, and then moved it to the American University in Washington to use the facilities of the National Archives. Since the 1950's and 1960's single courses have been given at various universities such as Wisconsin and the University of Colorado. Canadian experience parallels American. What is now known as the Public Archives and Archives' Section training course appeared in 1959, was given in 1961, 1964, 1968 and continuously since 1970,¹⁹ first under the aegis of

16 Goode, American Sociological Review, 25(1960),p.903.

17 Rue Boucher and Anselm Strauss, "Professions in Progress," American Journal of Sociology, 66 (1960-61), p.326.

18 Alan Ridge began in 1964 to consider seriously what training archivists needed; his article was published in the 1965 Canadian Archivist. In 1965 the Section moved to establish a subcommittee on archival training and professional status. The 1967 issue of the Canadian Archivist reported that a Committee consisting of Wilfred Smith, B. Weilbrenner and John Archer had been appointed and in the 1969 Archivist their report was given with a recommendation for the establishment of a Standing Committee which would report annually (the suggestion has been implemented). The Committee took no strong stand on accreditation in 1973.

19 Information on the incidence of the course varies. Barbara Wilson of the Public Archives took it in 1959 (personal interview); Douglas Boylan in the Atlantic Provinces Library Association Bulletin, 28 #3 (August 1964) claims that it was given in 1961 and John Archer in the Canadian Archivist, 2 #3 (1972) says it was given 1964, 1968, 1970+.

Carleton, but consistently, and now wholly, using the Public Archives' facilities. Other universities in Canada --the University of New Brunswick, McGill, Western and Toronto--have given single courses in and allied to their library school courses, Laval has given a single course toward a history license and the University of Alberta in 1973 initiated a training course. Ambitious plans in 1972 for the University of Ottawa to launch an archival course in their library school and to aim for a Master's degree in archival studies came to naught. Archivists then have merely a toehold in graduate school and rely on major archival institutions. Without entering the debate on how much practical work is necessary in professional education, it may be pointed out that the necessity to locate near and utilize adequate archival facilities is more restrictive for the location of archival training than library training, for adequate book collections are more easily located.

Judging from the history of library schools, it may be an ill omen for archivists that it is there they seek entré to the university. Since C.C. Williamson's Carnegie survey of library schools in 1923 the complaint has re-²⁰urred that library schools are unsatisfactory because faculty lack academic qualifications, prestige and rank. Robert Warner in his 1972 article, "Archival Training in the United States and Canada,"²¹ has surveyed the qualifications of what is admittedly a very small number²² of teachers in archival programmes. In examining fifteen programmes he found seven were part of library school curriculum, three in the history department, four cross-listed and one in continuing education. All fifteen respondent faculty members but one had history or social science degrees; all held the minimum of an M.A., mostly from major universities; six were Ph.D.'s and six were progressing toward that degree. They were experienced teachers, averaging twelve years' experience, and active in professional organizations. This is a respectable but not overly impressive record in the day of the Ph.D. union card. More encouraging was his report, again based on little data, that "virtually" all the students were at the M.A. level, with a few Ph.D.'s. Warner assessed the situation thus:

The inescapable conclusion is that the scope of the archival profession is rela-

²⁰ See also J.P. Danton, Education for Librarianship (New York, Columbia, 1946) and Robert Leigh, The Public Library Inquiry (New York, Columbia, 1950).

²¹ A.A., 35 (July-August 1972).

²² Warner gives no indication of how, or how many, he sampled.

tively limited. To date there is simply not so much that is unique about archival training to require more than a one man faculty. Demand for this training at present apparently does not even warrant development of specialists in various areas.²³

On the English scene, Raymond Irwin, Director of the School of Librarianship and Archives at the University of London, when writing on "The Education of an Archivist"²⁴ in 1962, included the small demand and small number of qualified students as rationale for incorporating the archival course in the London library school.

Is it out of the frying pan into the fire for archival educational programmes? If archivists have been more rigorous than librarians in choosing their educators they are still constrained by demands of location and size to a tenuous hold on the university campus. With these constraints can archivists achieve the "prolonged specialized training in a body of abstract knowledge" that Goode claims to be necessary for the professional?

Goode's second criterion of a profession is related to its community or service orientation. The group or collectivity regulates its own profession, its standards and entrance requirements. The ultimate control is government licensing to standards set by the profession. Social workers are approaching this and librarians have at least discussed it. The Quebec archivists have been discussing such a move. Minimum standards of education, accreditation of courses and a code of ethics seem more attainable forms of regulation. In its present structure could the Archives Section or its Committee on Training function as a regulatory body? The Constitution states its aims:

1. to encourage and foster professional standards, procedures and practices among Canadian archivists;
2. to disseminate and distribute information relating to the archives profession;
3. to provide common meeting ground for all types and classes of archivists in Canada;
4. to provide leadership and guidance wherever needed in fields of archives' administration, education and practice;
5. to promote preservation of historical documents and to encourage their scholarly use and

²³ Warner, p. 354.

²⁴ In Essays in Memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson, ed. A.E.J. Hollaender (Sussex, Moore and Tillyer, 1962), p. 183.

to encourage publication of historical studies and documents as circumstances may permit.²⁵

No term as stringent as "regulate" or "legislate" appears in the mandate but "to encourage and foster" might be extended.

It took the American Library Association forty years from the formation of the Committee on Library Education in 1883 to the authorization in 1923 of the Temporary Library Training Board to formulate tentative standards and devise a plan for accrediting library training facilities. The Board (now the Committee on Accreditation) in 1925 set up minimum standards for four levels of library education, all calling for university affiliation. Minimum standards require continual reviewing; in 1922 qualitative standards of judgment of professional spirit, the achievements of graduates and efficiency in teaching were added to the quantitative measures of staff, facilities, quarters, etc. But it must be borne in mind that accreditation of library schools has never been compulsory or nationally enforced. Robert Downs estimated in 1968 that only about one in ten of the approximately five hundred schools in the United States and Canada were accredited.²⁶ Admittedly the total included undergraduate programmes, programmes for school librarians and newly established schools seeking accreditation. It would appear, however, that the American Library Association's advance on professional control has been neither speedy nor sweeping. A code of ethics within the profession binds only the professional himself and is enforced primarily by the professional community. The American Library Association has one, albeit general in terms, but no trace was found of a Canadian archivists' code.

There is a converse to the idea of the autonomy of the profession---the public must permit the profession's own standards to be high enough to protect the public from any damage that could be done by incompetent or unethical work by a professional, that is, fraud, quackery, embezzlement, etc. The public must trust the collectivity of the occupation to act (although there may be additional civil penalties). Librarians are, according to Goode,²⁷ not given this trust in their collectivity and hence granted autonomy because the public does not consider them to be in a position to be harmful by misuse of or with-

²⁵ Canadian Archivist, 1 #6 (1968).

²⁶ Robert Downs, "Education for Librarianship in the United States and Canada" in Library Education: An International Survey, ed. L.E. Bone (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1968).

²⁷ Goode, Library Quarterly, 31 #4 (October 1961), p. 318.

holding their services. Librarians are thought of only as custodians. In 1950 the Society of American Archivists was refused admission to the Learned Societies because it was a custodial occupation.²⁸ Yet when one considers the trust placed in the archivists' role in record management, in appreciation of evidential values, and in the safekeeping of confidential records, it does not seem their custodial role has the essential blandness of a librarian's. Is this an argument to stress latent power? Perhaps the public is not sufficiently aware of the discretion required of archivists.

Hugh Taylor, in an exuberant article in the 1972 Canadian Archivist, declared that the great age of establishment of archives is over and that "a whole new profession has emerged, still rather defensive toward librarians but on the whole subtle, pragmatic, with the confident assurance of having arrived."²⁹ Feeling secure as "a member of a distinct profession so hardly won,"³⁰ he called for the archivist to move from concerns of preservation and arrangement to gain mastery of content through information retrieval. Archival training must be broadened to include information retrieval, especially for senior archivists and, as a corollary, the courses will then be opened to more than history graduates. Librarianship too has heard the siren call of information retrieval and library schools are incorporating the term "information science" into their titles. But whether librarians and archivists can contain these specialists within their disciplines is debatable. It has been argued that an independently trained information scientist should be used in the archives rather than the archivist with a smattering of technology.³¹ There are already in the United States doctoral programmes combining behavioral science, computer and information science studies; for example, the programme of the Institute of Communication Research at Stanford University. In a United States' Library Manpower Study, Rodney White and David Macklin tested occupational values by orientation to librarianship, dividing library school students into groups according to humanistic, quantitative and mixed orientation. Quantitatively oriented students responded highly to the factors of working in a constantly changing field and the tackling of challenging problems as requirements for

28 Kahn, p.4.

29 Hugh Taylor, "Information Retrieval and the Training of the Archivist," Canadian Archivist, 2 #3 (1972), p.34.

30 Ibid.

31 M.E. Carroll's presentation on Automation, Archives Training Course, 28 September 1973.

an ideal job; those with other orientations did not.³² This and other differences discussed by White and Macklin suggest a wide range between the interests of the two groups. Will this produce more tensions of segmentation?

It is much easier to be critical than constructive. Besides illustrating pitfalls, does the comparison with librarians contain a model that archives might copy? It might be suggested that the University of Chicago Library School which opened in 1928 because, according to some,³³ of national dissatisfaction with the level of library course content, is a model worth contemplating. The faculty was interdisciplinary, all held doctoral degrees in subject fields and were trained in research; the School was integrated in the Graduate School of the University of Chicago and demanded scholarly and research-oriented work. The School granted the first Ph.D. in library science in 1930, published a stimulating series of studies and initiated workshops for in-service training. The daring of the University of Chicago in establishing progressive interdisciplinary schools and innovative programmes has borne fruit and produced leaders in the social sciences from the 1920's and in city planning from the 1950's, as it did in librarianship. According to Louis Round Wilson, the Chicago school's famous dean for ten years, its effect was "to jar the profession out of its prolonged devotion to practical techniques."³⁴ It seems a worthwhile model.

In the long run comparisons are strained, if not odious. This paper does not wish to fit archival training to a Procrustean bed of librarianship. However, it seemed useful to examine archival progress toward professionalism by sociological criteria and illustrate with some library problems. If one accepts Goode's criteria for a profession--specialized training in a body of abstract knowledge and a collectivity directed toward community orientation--it is not easy to assume there is an established archival profession. It is suggested here that the best way to

32 Rodney White, "Professionalization and Role Conflict: The Case of Librarianship", mimeo paper, September, 1970, pp.6-7. Quoted by permission of author from interim report on U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Office of Education. Bureau of Research. Education, Careers and Professionalization in Librarianship and Information Science. October, 1970.

33 Harriet Howe, "Two Decades in Education for Librarianship," Library Quarterly, 12 (1942), p.565.

34 Louis R. Wilson, "Historical Development of Education for Librarianship in the United States" in Education for Librarianship, ed. B. Berelson (Chicago, American Library Association, 1949), p.51.

achieve specialized training in abstract knowledge is allied and interacting with a university. Herbert Finch of Cornell University writes, "I believe that archivists must see relationships between and discriminate among sources and that they must be skilled in the intellectual arts of hypothesis and definition to function professionally. Archivists need to recognize the intellectual dimension of their calling and seek to re-establish it."³⁵

This is not to call for the abolition of in-service training and special courses, but to urge the necessity of a university base for the development of the profession. A profession is not encompassed by what the professionals do but must be continually developing. As Ralph Tyler of the University of Chicago said, "as the profession becomes more mature it recognises that the principles used in the profession must be viewed in an increasingly larger context. Thus the science needed by the profession must be continually extended to more basic content than restricted only to the obvious applied science."³⁶

Two special constraints in archival education must be considered: the relatively small number of job openings for archivists and the advisability of teaching close to extensive archival facilities.

Is it possible to balance the requirements for professional development and the training constraints? Let us give Wilfred Smith in the Canadian Archivist of 1969 the last and not very reassuring word as chairman of the Committee on Training.

The Kecskemeti [Secretary of the International Council on Archives] report and surveys and discussions in the United States lead one to the inevitable conclusion that training in archival administration and records management in Canada is inadequate. Training in the form of a summer institute at Carleton and internship programmes at the Public Archives are good as far as they go. But do they provide a satisfactory basis for the development of a distinct profession? Should Canadian universities play a more active role in archival training? Obviously there must be a direct relationship between supply and demand and it is possible

³⁵ Herbert Finch, "Administrative Relationships in a Large Manuscript Repository," A.A., 34 #1 (January 1971), p.221.

³⁶ Ralph Tyler, "Educational Problems in Other Professions" in Education for Librarianship, ed. B. Berelson (Chicago, American Library Association, 1949), p.24.

that the limited number of positions for professional archivists in this country does not warrant the establishment of university courses or training schools.³⁷

³⁷ Wilfred Smith, "Archival Training in Canada," Canadian Archivist, 1 #7 (1969).

ANNOUNCEMENT

Available Soon: -

UNION LIST OF MANUSCRIPTS IN CANADIAN REPOSITORIES (Revised Edition, 1975), 2 vols.

- A national catalogue of manuscripts and records in Canada and a Guide to significant primary sources providing information on the nature, content and location of research materials.
- Contains over 27,000 entries from 171 Canadian repositories.
- Entries are listed under names of individuals, families, corporate bodies or government agencies who created, received and accumulated the records.
- Entries include details on type of papers, terminal dates, linear extent, location of originals, available finding aids, existing restrictions, breakdown by categories and subjects and references to persons, events and historical periods.
- An index provides references to names of persons, corporate bodies, places and subjects which appear in the entries.

The ULM is a joint project of the Public Archives of Canada and the Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Available from the Government Book Stores.

Price \$50.00 in Canada.
\$60.00 abroad.