
This paper studies the history of archival education and traces its evolution from seminars and workshops to full-fledged, university-based graduate programs. It examines the continuing roles of library and information science and history in the development of graduate archival education, and the relationships and differences among the three disciplines. The curricula of the sixteen United States-based archival education programs listed in the Society of American Archivists Directory of Archival Education are analyzed and the results compared to those of earlier, similar studies. The results indicate that there has been real progress in defining the core body of archival knowledge, and in the development of strong archival programs.

Headings:

Archivists -- Education

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Society of American Archivists
THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS, GRADUATE ARCHIVAL EDUCATION, AND PROGRESS: A STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF ARCHIVAL EDUCATION AND CURRENT CURRICULA

by

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Introduction

Archival education has been, traditionally, archival training. Archivists usually studied history at the graduate level, supplemented that education with some coursework in archival administration, and then entered an apprenticeship. Coursework often took the form of summer institutes or professional workshops, though a few institutions of higher education offered graduate courses dealing specifically with archives. True professional education for archivists, programs with developed content, structure, and organization, were many years in the making.

Archival education, like any professional education, “involves a practical application of a body of professional knowledge.” Archivists, who for many years have been involved in the process of professionalization, are still attempting to define that body of professional knowledge. Terry Cook has pointed out that defining archival education is really about defining what kind of archivists the profession needs. What the profession needs, in some ways, has changed over the years as archivists have pushed towards professionalization, have tried to separate archival education from library science and from history, and as information technology has changed the ways they do their work and the materials with which they work. But there is increasing definition in archival education. Identifiable archival programs, some offering very extensive coursework, have been established; the Society of American Archivists (SAA) has issued four sets of guidelines since 1977 dealing with graduate archival education; and education has moved beyond apprenticeships and a “workshop mentality,” as James O’Toole has called it.
The expansion of graduate archival education has been hindered by the fact that it has been grafted on to other disciplines, usually library science and history. This view of archival education as a sub-discipline or a stepchild concentration has made it difficult for archival educators to establish new courses and create coherent programs. The production of archivists is not the main objective of history departments or library schools, and so resources often go to other areas that program administrators feel are more productive and lucrative. Another element that has held archival education back is that SAA, formed in 1936 as the professional organization of archivists, has taken a generally hands-off approach. Though it has studied education, issued guidelines, and encouraged discussion, it has often accepted the status quo and has not found a way to promote or enforce its own guidelines.

This paper will give an account of the history of archival education. It will discuss SAA’s role, the attempts to professionalize archival work, and archival education’s relationships with history and library science. It includes a study of the current state of archival education and program curricula that illustrates the kinds of changes that have taken place, specifically over the last ten years. Archival education in the United States has altered dramatically since 1936, and many of the changes have come very recently. It has gone from an apprenticeship system, to a loose cluster of a few graduate courses to, now, a more organized and focused system of educating archivists, not just teaching them how to arrange materials.

*History of Archival Education*

In tracing the roots of the body of archival knowledge, Luciana Duranti finds the beginnings of an archival doctrine in 1681, in the last volume of Dom Jean Mabillon’s
tome on diplomatics. This early articulation of an archival doctrine did not delve into issues such as the physical and intellectual control of archival material, but was part of the method of ascertaining the veracity of records and of the events they describe. As such, the archival doctrine was an integral part of education in the fields of law and history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the 1840s, the archival doctrine developed into something recognizable to modern archivists, with theories of organization and description, as well as preservation and disposal. Diplomastics, history and law, as fields that encompassed the archival doctrine, were the central core around which European archival education revolved until the 1870s.¹

In 1870, the new Italian state set about defining the knowledge all archivists should have. Cesare Guasti, a jurist and professor in the archival school of Milan, wrote a report encouraging archivists to receive education in the archival doctrine, not as part of an education in diplomatics or any other discipline, though they would continue as necessary components. This radical step, perhaps the first attempt to define the study of archives as separate from other disciplines, was not well received in other European countries; they continued educating archivists in the traditional fields of law, history, and diplomatics.²

Archival education proceeded according to the European model in the United States through the early twentieth century; most archivists came to work with a background in history or law. SAA was formed in 1936, and immediately began examining archival education. In 1939, SAA’s Committee on the Training of Archivists published a report written by Samuel F. Bemis that dealt specifically with the training of public and institutional archivists, ignoring those in the manuscript tradition.³ The Bemis Report recommended two types of training for two types of archivists. The first type
would be made up of the directors of large state and national archives; as doctoral candidates in American history, they would write dissertations using archival sources, and take a few classes on the history of archives, archival practice, and a practicum. The second type of archivist, as defined by the Bemis Report, would be made up of archivists in smaller repositories. For them, two years of graduate work in history or political science, along with a little instruction in library science, would suffice. The Bemis Report stated that historians who had acquired supporting instruction in archival practices staffed European archives, and encouraged the same for American repositories. As Terry Eastwood notes, the report “proposed that archivists of both types be educated in history and trained in their professional craft in part by university study and in part by apprenticeship.” Archival training became, primarily, a post-appointment endeavor.

Archival education in the US began a significant incorporation of library science because of the unusual set of circumstances found here. Though public archives continued to be administered in the European fashion, collections of historical manuscripts before 1950 concentrated on individual, rare, and special items. Richard Berner states that the “documentation which was collected usually stood isolated from other record items with which they were originally associated.” As a result, library practices and theory influenced how curators maintained intellectual control over the collections. The items in these collections could easily be controlled at the item level, much like traditional library materials. Another reason that library practices infiltrated manuscript collections is that many collections were housed in a library or library system and librarians became manuscript administrators in state libraries, historical societies, and university libraries.
The treatment of historical manuscripts as individual items continued until about 1950. In the middle of the century, manuscript collecting began to change, concentrating on recently created papers. The volume expanded, and they came to the repositories with some order in the form of series. Cataloging items individually was no longer practicable, and made less sense when the items were located in a complete context. The historic manuscripts tradition began taking more theory and practice from the public archives field than from library science. The convergence of theories dealing with manuscripts and public archives continued through the fifties and sixties; Theodore H. Schellenberg encouraged treating modern manuscripts as though they were archival collections in The Management of Archives, published in 1965. Berner says that elaborations on Schellenberg’s contribution in the sixties and seventies resulted in “the ascendancy of the archival mode and the decline of the historical manuscripts tradition with its roots in librarianship.”

Though the influence of library science entered archival education by way of historical manuscripts, it did not wane as manuscripts administration began to mirror that of public archives. In 1938 the library school at Columbia University offered the first graduate archival course in the United States. Regardless of the fact that the archival community felt that archivist should be educated as historians, history departments offered little in the way of archival coursework; training was left to post-appointment apprenticeships. Library schools attempted to fill that void, with mixed success. There was a very real fear that library schools would train students to think of records like library material, de-emphasizing the organic nature and inter-relatedness of the documents. As H.G. Jones noted as late as 1968, however, library schools offered most of the short courses in archival work available in the US.
Jones and Theodore Schellenberg both made contributions to the April 1968 issue of *American Archivist*, dedicated to archival education. Here, they made their cases for the proper venue for archival education. Schellenberg argued for library schools, Jones for history departments. The argument over the best place to situate archival education was not a new one, and Jones and Schellenberg did not settle it. The debate exited the spotlight only in the eighties, but is not completely dead. Conversations about what discipline is most sympathetic and related to archival education continue even today.

Jones felt that archivists should have thorough knowledge of the records in their care and an understanding of the circumstances that led to their creation. This could best be afforded by traditional historical training. In addition, archivists who have done research of their own using primary sources are best prepared to assist other researchers using the documents in their care. Schellenberg, on the other hand, argued that history departments do not offer the appropriate kind of education. He agreed that a firm foundation in history is necessary, but felt that more specific training should also be required. Schellenberg wrote of the need for inter-departmental education with library schools as the center, offering training in records management, classification systems, reference, and government documents. History departments, argued Schellenberg, are less concerned with methodology than are library schools, and so library courses are the most appropriate place to learn archival methodology.

One of the difficulties faced by archival education, and the archival profession, is that it was long considered a sub-discipline, either of history or of library science. Fredric Miller says that in the mid-sixties, when Jones and Schellenberg were arguing about where to situate archival education, the archival profession was considered a “marginal” one. It did not possess any of the usual professional attributes such as a
way of assuring that archivists have the knowledge required for practice and a structured setting for the dissemination of that knowledge. There was no consensus on what should make up archival education, and there were no standards or agreed upon direction for education programs.

In the sixties, it was difficult to find strong leadership in the archival community: SAA did not yet have a permanent office or full-time staff; neither the American Library Association nor the professional history organizations were particularly interested in archival education, as it is not a large or lucrative field; and, as a whole, much of the practicing archival community still clung to the idea that archivists should be trained in apprenticeships, after being educated in history.\textsuperscript{16} Eastwood argues that as archival education was kept distinct from library education, but largely ignored by history departments, it was “removed from the academic and epistemic realm and assigned to one which ever since has been preoccupied with rather arid notions of training.”\textsuperscript{17} SAA’s Committee for the 1970’s reinforced the archival education’s preoccupation with training when it said, in its 1972 report, that archival training should be firmly rooted in practical experience, and that the field does not merit a distinct graduate degree program.\textsuperscript{18} The Committee also reported that SAA was doing little to give direction or structure to graduate education, and was not providing leadership to the profession.\textsuperscript{19}

The seventies saw changes in archival education, however. The economy of that decade led to an explosion in the field of archives. The academic job market fell through in the early seventies; universities produced record numbers of graduates in history, but there were no teaching jobs for them. At the same time, the National Historic Publications and Records Commission and the National Endowment for the Humanities increased funding to archival repositories, and recent graduates found positions there. As
a result, both archival employers and archival employees began seeking out graduate courses, archival education entered a wild growth spurt, and it became obvious that it needed standardization and direction.\textsuperscript{20}

SAA hired a full-time staff and strengthened its Committee on Education and Professional Development in order to guide and direct the sudden expansion of archival education. In 1973, that committee began working on a set of guidelines for archival education, which were finally approved in 1977 and published in 1978.\textsuperscript{21} The 1977 Guidelines have been accused of simply mandating the status quo of archival education in the seventies. They called for a three-part program. The first part was an introductory course concentrating on the basic elements of archival work: the nature of archives, acquisitions, processing, use, and administration. The second was an independent study; the third was a practicum. The practicum was central to the 1977 Guidelines; they called for 140 hours of work in a semester, and SAA quickly developed an additional set of guidelines specifically for the practicum. All three parts of the program were to be taught or directed by practitioners, a necessity at the time, as there were few full-time archival faculty members in the United States.\textsuperscript{22} Other sharp criticisms leveled at the Guidelines were that they existed in isolation from any larger discipline of historiography or information science and that they placed too much emphasis on vocational activities.\textsuperscript{23}

Though they came forty years after the Bemis Report, both the 1977 Guidelines and the report of the Committee for the 1970’s call for much the same course of study as the earlier report. All three say that archival education should be comprised of only a few basic courses, and that archivists will learn most of their craft on the job. Unlike the Bemis Report, however, the 1977 Guidelines do not offer history or political science as
the appropriate graduate degrees; indeed, the Guidelines avoid specifying any particular degree.

Despite the implications of the 1977 Guidelines and the report of the Committee for the 1970’s that archival education could not constitute a separate graduate degree, there was a sense that the archival community needed to increase its professionalism. From the beginning, the archives field has been regarded by all as a stepchild of either history or library science; by all, that is, except archivists. The 1977 Guidelines, whatever their failings may have been, were an effort to standardize archival education and to define the things an archivist should know before beginning an appointment. In the late seventies and early eighties, there was an aborted attempt to certify graduate archival education programs. Program certification is one way professional organizations can control entry into the profession. Library science schools and history departments established new multi-course archival education programs, and university-based graduate education was becoming, in the early eighties, not only a viable way to prepare archivists for the field, but the preferred way.²⁴

The Rise of Archival Education in Library and Information Science Programs

Despite the slow progress made in the eighties towards professionalization, archival education was not able to create an identity separate from other, more established disciplines. During the eighties, library schools gained archival students in greater numbers than they had in the decades before. In 1971, a survey of archivists showed only twelve percent of the respondents had graduate library science degrees, while fifty-one percent had degrees in history or social science. A similar survey, conducted in 1989 by SAA, revealed that thirty-six percent of the respondents had a
graduate library science degree, though some were in combination with a subject master’s. This is a marked increase over fewer than twenty years.\footnote{25}

A number of factors contributed to the increase of archivists seeking education in library schools as opposed to other disciplines. The most important is technology. Throughout the eighties and nineties, computers became an increasingly important part of the day-to-day lives of archivists. Computers changed the way institutions, governments, and people conducted business; over a relatively short period of time, record keeping shifted from paper-based to digital processes, and most documents are now created in digital format. In order for archivists to adequately care for this new kind of documentation, they had to become familiar and comfortable with it.

As with society at large, archival work became increasingly automated. Archivists started using computers in their work to create finding aids, track accessions, and organize materials. At the same time, research in library and information science introduced new ways of describing materials and making them accessible. Though perhaps reluctantly, archivists adopted some of these tools to provide networked access to their materials. Standardization and information exchange formats entered the archival repositories swiftly in the eighties, and computer proficiency became a requirement for archival work.\footnote{26}

History departments and departments of social science did not, however, traditionally offer any kind of computer or automation courses. History departments did not have the infrastructure set up to offer such coursework; they did not have the appropriate faculty or lab facilities. Further, history departments did not consider computer instruction to be within their purview.\footnote{27} F. Gerald Ham has said that “specific
and detailed course work in automation, for example, often is seen as being incompatible with “real” history courses in history-based programs.”

The incorporation of technology into archival work, particularly standardized formats for information exchange, has widened the gap between the history and the archival professions, and resulted in a corresponding intertwining of the library science and the archival professions. Some researchers and educators emphasized the similarities between library and archival work: both deal with the preservation of recorded information, with making that information accessible, and with assisting researchers. The two disciplines simply use different methods to achieve the same goals; those methods are determined by “volume and nature of the material and the clientele who used the material.”

Robert Warner makes the case that the similarities between library and archival work are such that disciplinary convergence is taking place. The two face similar problems: there are enormous economic pressures on libraries and archives; both are dealing with quiet disintegration of acidic paper; and archivists have, in recent years, seen their clientele expand to include the general public. Warner advocates sharing data and research among librarians and archivists, and, perhaps, even a coming together of archival and library education. Even as archivists are trying to develop an identity separate from other disciplines, there is a burgeoning understanding of archival work as part of library and information sciences.

Another factor contributing to the increase of archivists holding graduate library science degrees is what Ham calls “changes in the archival marketplace.” He asserts that a growing number of archival repositories have come under the control of library systems, particularly in universities. The change from independent repositories to ones
under the administration of library systems has made a library science degree desirable, and, in some cases, necessary. Long-term career advancement means moving up in a library administrative hierarchy.

Archival education is not the exclusive domain of library and information science, however. History departments began offering public history programs in the seventies as a way to train historians for careers outside of teaching. The academic job market was still feeling the repercussions of its collapse, and public history gained popularity in the years following. Public historians seek to identify, preserve, and manage cultural heritage in settings such as historical preservation societies, museums, and archives and manuscript repositories.33

Archivists did not immediately embrace public history programs as appropriate settings for archival education. They felt that archival education as a part of a larger educational program in public history was almost the same as including it as part of a history program or a library science program. The archival community was wary of any new programs that tried to graft archival education onto another discipline.

One of the purposes of public history education, as public historians see it, is to bridge the gap between the various fields that it encompasses. Public history wants to bring many disciplines under one umbrella, emphasize their relationships to each other and to history. Though public historians view the interdisciplinary approach as a virtue, archivists worried that the new programs were spreading themselves too thin, attempting to divide instruction among too many fields. In the seventies and early eighties, archival education was expanding and defining its own identity in the university; some in the archival community felt that mixing archival education with education in other history-related fields was a step back.34
Possibly more detrimental to the relationship between public historians and archivists however, was public history’s sudden and vociferous claim to archival administration, as well as to other history-related occupations. In the eighties there was the feeling among archivists that public history was trying to co-opt archival administration, and that it claimed ultimate expertise in an area where archivists had been working for many decades. This has been called arrogance on the part of public history, and put archivists, who were trying to create a separate and professional identity, on the defensive.\textsuperscript{35}

Many of the “instant” public history programs common in the early eighties have ended operations. Those that remain are established, staffed by knowledgeable and experienced faculty, and are producing public historians qualified to work in applied history settings. Archivists are less wary of public historians, and public history programs have gained acceptance as venues for archival education.

In part as a result of the continuing criticism of the 1977 Guidelines, SAA revised and published in 1988 the more extensive “Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education Programs.”\textsuperscript{36} That the new guidelines were an attempt to emphasize the growing professional nature of archival work is made very clear by the statement that “the work of an archivist represents that of a profession, not a craft or applied vocation” (p. 380). As a minimum, the 1988 Guidelines endorsed the three-course sequence described in 1977, but also included specific subjects that programs should offer, listed required resources such as a library collection, archives center, and computer and preservation laboratory facilities, and called for at least one full-time, tenure track faculty. The requirement of full-time faculty was an effort to pull archival education out of the “workshops” and into academia. James O’Toole points out that hiring faculty
members not responsible for managing repositories while teaching “represented a more serious commitment to archival education . . . than had previously been common.”

The 1988 Guidelines received many of the same criticisms as those leveled at the 1977 Guidelines. They did not require much in the way of coursework that was not already present, in some brief form, or easily attained by programs. They, essentially, mandated the status quo once again and did not really push for any expansion or intensification of archival education, beyond the hiring of full-time faculty. Richard Cox, a member of SAA’s Committee on Education and Professional Development (CEPD, the committee that drafted the 1988 Guidelines), has said that the 1988 Guidelines evolved as they did because the committee did not think that SAA was ready or willing to endorse a separate degree for archival studies, though the CEPD felt that more comprehensive programs were necessary. The committee drafted the Guidelines to include curriculum content that could not be met in a three-course sequence, in the hopes that programs would expand on their own initiative. The plan backfired, and programs claimed to meet the Guidelines within existing courses.

No matter how improved the 1988 Guidelines were in comparison with the 1977 set, archival education still consisted of a three-course sequence appended to another type of education, typically library science or history. But even with the expanded 1988 Guidelines, there was still little consensus on what constituted the core body of knowledge for all archivists. Timothy Ericson lists the lack of a defined core of skills as one of the gaps in archival education. Students from different programs conclude their graduate studies with very different sets of skills and knowledge. Though most programs have similar introductory courses, beyond that level there are wild variations. History programs tend to offer courses on documentary editing, historiography, genealogical
research, and local history; library science programs offer courses such as automation, rare books and special collections, and cataloging. Ericson said, in 1988, that though “some diversity is both inevitable and healthy, the extremes of graduate programs strain the limits of such virtue.” Many of these courses do not deal directly with anything archival; they benefit the archivist, but only as contextual knowledge.\(^4^0\)

James O’Toole has famously said that graduate archival education is so unsystematic and non-standard because of the “workshop mentality” in the archival community. Many practicing archivists received their archival education in workshops, usually as part of continuing education after initial appointment. Often, archivists who take advantage of three-course sequences find it necessary to augment their educations with professional workshops. This has been the case for so long that workshops have become the de facto way of teaching advanced archival theories and practices. O’Toole points out some problems with this approach. Workshops, because they are brief and summary, teach student to view their discipline in an overview fashion. Because workshops tend to deal with one aspect of archival work, the interconnectedness of tasks is not made obvious. And workshops are practical; they teach vocational skills. They are not the proper forums for educating, only training. O’Toole says “our concern has been with what an archivist can be trained to do, rather than with what an archivist should know.”\(^4^1\)

Soon after the publication of the 1988 Guidelines, archival educators and archivists began calling more stridently for education fundamentally separated from other disciplines. Though it had been questioned in the past, there was a stronger conviction “that archivists have their own specialized knowledge, even if it still requires formal
The traditional three-course sequence was no longer considered adequate to transmit the archival knowledge to the next generation. Educators and archivists were concerned, like O’Toole, that archival education was unsystematic and piecemeal. There was no structure, beyond the three-course sequence. Students were receiving education in disciplines other than archives, and expected to extend that knowledge to archives. If, for instance, students were learning about automation or reference, it was usually in the context of a library school course, directed at traditional materials, not archival records.

In 1981, the University of British Columbia established the first master of archival studies (MAS) degree in North America. In 1988, just after the SAA published its new guidelines for graduate archival education, the Association of Canadian Archivists published their “Guidelines for the Development of a Two-Year Curriculum for a Master of Archival Studies Programme.” Archivists in the United States began discussing the advantages of such programs, and investigating the possibility of establishing them here. Educators, such as Richard Cox, cautiously supported the idea. Certainly, most felt that graduate archival education had to be expanded. Cox argued that expanding archival education, possibly into MAS degrees, would make the profession more visible and attract more high-quality students. It would also heighten the likelihood that programs could maintain more than one faculty position, obtain greater resources, and the higher stature could help them “tie into other professional schools, such as library and information science schools, as a qualified specialization in the information sciences.”

Duranti says that the “Canadian example generated the willingness on the part of the SAA CEPD in 1990 not only to revisit the issue of graduate archival education, but to
make the guidelines for a master’s degree its only agenda item for the following three years.”\textsuperscript{47} The result came in 1994, SAA’s “Guidelines for the Development of a Curriculum for a Master of Archival Studies Degree (MAS Guidelines).”\textsuperscript{48}

The MAS Guidelines expanded the required knowledge areas to such an extent that they could never be taught in a three-course sequence. The curriculum components consisted of five areas: contextual knowledge, archival knowledge, complementary knowledge, practicum, and scholarly research. The first, contextual knowledge, is coursework dealing with the environment in which records are created; courses on organizational theory, legal systems, and financial systems are suggested. The second component, archival knowledge, is the core of the curriculum. It is the body of professional knowledge: history of archives, records management, archival methodology, and archival scholarship. The complementary knowledge component emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of archival education, and is made up of library and information science, management, history, and research methods. The practicum component was essentially unchanged from earlier guidelines. The scholarly research component, however, was new. It stressed the importance of exploration of archival scholarship, and encouraged original contributions by the students. The MAS Guidelines also called for a stronger infrastructure to support the autonomous degree, and for adequate library resources.

In 1999, the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee was given permission to develop a MAS program, but it has yet to be established. No other MAS program has been established in the United States. Randall Jimerson has attributed this lack of progress to the fact that there are only a small number of potential degree candidates, and they are geographically dispersed. There is not the demand necessary to establish
programs in this period of slow growth and careful expansion in higher education.\textsuperscript{49}

Others have blamed SAA for not doing more to market the MAS Guidelines. One author says that SAA “followed the approach of setting standards and then stepping back and waiting for a response from university archival education programs.”\textsuperscript{50} SAA mailed out the guidelines, but did not track or follow changes being implemented in archival programs. They did not monitor the effect of the new guidelines on archival education or encourage programs to adhere to them.

Perhaps another reason the MAS Guidelines did not bring about sweeping changes in archival education is that they were quickly seen as outdated. Many educators and administrators found them helpful in “articulating the knowledge and skill archivists need, and in producing an identifiable degree separate from either history of LIS,” but not very useful in setting up a viable, free-standing program.\textsuperscript{51} The MAS Guidelines did not state how many hours or credits should be required by a program to constitute an MAS; they only state that it should be comparable to the other master’s degree programs offered by the institution or department. Many educators, especially in LIS, felt that the guidelines insufficiently incorporated information technology. If the incorporation of information technology was “insufficient” in 1994, by the end of the decade it was terribly outdated.\textsuperscript{52}

The late nineties saw changes in the archival world, and the world in general, that twenty years earlier would have been the stuff of science fiction. Not only were archivists using MARC formats on a regular basis by 2000, but they were also regularly putting finding aids online using HTML, and some were encoding finding aids in Encoded Archival Description (EAD). Most repositories had some sort of online presence; archivists did reference work via email; and they were scanning and using
optical character recognition packages to mount electronic exhibits online. All of this new technology was in addition to the new tools that entered archival work in the seventies and eighties: personal computers, electronic records, and the first information exchange standards. The vague mentions of “automation” and “electronic records” in the MAS Guidelines did not begin to cover what archivists needed to know in the new millennium.

In 2002, SAA revised the guidelines and published “Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies.” The first difference in the 2002 Guidelines is that they are for a graduate program in archival studies, not a Master’s of Archival Studies. SAA stepped back from the MAS in saying that there “are a number of appropriate venues for archival studies programs, which may or may not offer a separate degree in archival studies.” This step might have come about because of the failure of the 1994 MAS Guidelines to prompt the establishment of separate programs.

The 2002 Guidelines are more specific in credit hour requirements. They suggest at least 18 semester hours in core archival knowledge, and the remaining hours in interdisciplinary knowledge. There is slightly more emphasis placed on information technology in the 2002 Guidelines than was evident in the MAS Guidelines. Though electronic records and access systems are defined as part of the core archival knowledge, other areas of information technology necessary to understand, manage, and preserve electronic records are placed in interdisciplinary knowledge. The new guidelines continue to place information technology in a peripheral position, not integrated with the rest of archival education.

The curriculum of the 2002 Guidelines is divided into two areas: core archival knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge. Core archival knowledge includes
knowledge of archival functions (such as arrangement, preservation, and reference); knowledge of the profession (history of archives, ethics, and records and cultural memory); and contextual knowledge (social and cultural systems, legal and financial systems, records management, and electronic records). Interdisciplinary knowledge is composed of coursework such as information technology, conservation, research methods, management, and history. The curriculum is not substantially different from the one suggested in the MAS Guidelines. The 2002 Guidelines do encourage some curricular expansion, but they essentially represent a reorganization of components. Instead of three main areas broken down into a few components, the new guidelines consist of two main areas broken down into many components and subcomponents. Though they do not add much that is new, the 2002 Guidelines are more specific in naming what should make up archival education.

Has the Progress Been Real?

Since its formation, the SAA has been involved in and concerned about archival education, as any professional organization should. The Bemis Report, published in 1936, was its first formal and public statement of the Society’s notion of what kind of education its members should have. Over the next six decades or so, SAA formulated and issued four sets of guidelines for archival education, each more specific than the last, and each suggesting deeper and more focused curricula than the last.

SAA has taken, however, an oddly hands-off approach to archival education. It has issued guidelines, but done little to enforce them. They are, in effect, suggestions. Even more problematic, programs have treated the guidelines like goals, not minimum standards. SAA does not accredit graduate programs, and its Directory of Archival
The literature is full of sample curricula, “how we did it good” articles, arguments about history versus library science as appropriate disciplines, and articles insisting on the necessity of separate archival education. But where have all the conversation and guidelines gotten us? Has archival education progressed?

Certainly, archival education has progressed since the issuance of the Bemis Report. There are now numerous multi-course programs for archival education. Some institutions offer formal concentrations in archives or records management as part of degrees in library science or history; many others offer no formal concentrations, but do offer archival coursework. The Bemis Report endorsed the apprenticeship model of archival education; that evolved quickly into the three-course sequence of an introductory class, an independent study, and a practicum. This was the extent of graduate archival education for many decades; the three-course sequence was not questioned until the 1988 Guidelines. The publication of the MAS Guidelines in 1994 was SAA’s first serious reformulation of archival education.

In 1993, just before the publication of the MAS Guidelines, Timothy Ericson published a study of archival education programs.56 He said that it had “become fashionable for archivists to proclaim how improved the state of their graduate education
programs” was in comparison with earlier years. He found, however, that the improvement of graduate archival education was more apparent than real.

Ericson compared SAA’s 1990-91 Directory of Archival Education with that of 1978, the first Directory published after the 1977 Guidelines. He found thirty programs listed in 1978, and thirty-six in 1991. More striking than the modest increase in the number of programs was the increase in the number of courses. There were 100 in 1978, averaging fewer than three courses per program. In 1991, Ericson found 228 listed in the Directory, doubling the average size of programs. This is the increase that the archival profession found so encouraging in the eighties.

Ericson divided the courses into five categories. The first three were those recommended by the 1977 Guidelines. The fourth was plausible electives, courses that covered things archivists should know outside of the three-course sequence, like photographic collections administration. The fifth category he called related coursework, “nice to have and doubtless useful to some extent but too watered down” (p. 27). This category included things like oral history and museum administration. Ericson found that the most of the increase in coursework fell into category five. There were ten such courses in 1978 and sixty in 1991. Almost one quarter of archival education was concentrated in “related” coursework.

In a similar study done a few years earlier, Ericson found much the same thing. In 1986, he found sixty-one of the 250 courses listed in the Directory fell into the “related” category. Most of the rest of the courses were the introductory courses, independent studies, and practica that met the 1977 Guidelines. Of the fifty-nine remaining courses, more than one half dealt with either preservation or records management. Only twenty-seven courses in North America treated other specific aspects
of archival theory and practice, such as appraisal, arrangement, or description. Ericson found only six graduate archival education courses on automation.

James O’Toole, examining the 1998 Directory in a similar study, found that there had been some improvement in the number of courses devoted to specific core areas, though not much. He counted three courses on appraisal, two on arrangement and description, one on reference, and eleven on automation and electronic records. Unfortunately, O’Toole also found that 88, or more than thirty percent, of the 279 courses he examined fell into the “related” category.59

Ericson’s and O’Toole’s somewhat discouraging findings are the result of decades under the three-course sequence. Most of the programs Ericson studied were simply the sequence with a few related classes tacked on. There was no compelling evidence of attempts to build cohesive and focused archival education programs. O’Toole found a somewhat improved situation; there were more courses devoted to a wider range of issues central to archival activities, in addition to introductory courses and practica. He felt, however, that the lack of emphasis on electronic records and automation, as well as core archival knowledge such as appraisal and outreach, did not bode well for the profession.

If the 1988 Guidelines represented the first serious questioning of the three-course sequence, and the MAS Guidelines of 1994 were the first reformulation of graduate archival education, then the landscape may have changed significantly since Ericson published his study in 1993. Change does not come quickly, and this is especially true in higher education. It is possible that programs did not have the time or money to expand their course offerings before O’Toole did his study in 1997. What follows is an attempt to update Ericson’s and O’Toole’s studies of archival curricula.
Methodology

This study faced many of the same problems encountered by past studies of archival education.\textsuperscript{60} The major problem is that there is little existing data on archival education. No association, including SAA, collects data on archival education with any regularity, beyond statistics on continuing education workshops. Many LIS schools and history departments offer substantial coursework in archives, enough to qualify as an archival program by any standards, but do not have a formal concentration or track in archives. The student graduates with an MLS or an MA, and there is no official recognition of a concentration in archives. On the other hand, some programs do have designated tracks, specializations, certifications, concentrations, or clusters. The fact that some programs are not designated, and those that are designated use widely differing terminologies, make it difficult to identify archival programs and courses.

SAA’s \textit{Directory of Archival Education} lists graduate level archival programs, and this is one of the few places to find centralized information.\textsuperscript{61} The listings include basic information, such as contact information, location, and numbers of faculty, as well as lists and descriptions of the archival courses that make up the educational programs. Unfortunately, listings are contributed voluntarily by the institutions on a fee basis, and updated as the institutions deem necessary. As a result, not all of the archival programs in North America are listed; only those institutions that pay the subscription fee. This creates a problem for gathering data because it is quite possible that only the strongest programs are represented in the Directory. Programs with only a few classes to offer, or those without a defined archival course of study, may not submit information and pay for inclusion in the Directory. Any data gathered from the Directory may not be
representative of archival education as a whole, therefore; it may only represent the strongest curricula and most well established programs.

The course lists provided in the Directory were a starting point for this study. Not all institutions provided the names and descriptions of their courses, however, and there are no stated criteria to guide those that do provide course listings. One institution might list library cataloging as part of the archival curriculum because all students must take it, while another institution only lists courses dedicated wholly to archival content. Five programs listings included courses that were not archival in nature; one program listed more than ten such courses, twice the number of archival courses it offered. In addition, the listings are often outdated and include courses that no longer exist, or that have changed significantly. Of the sixteen programs evaluated in this study, only two had directory listings that matched their website course listings. Six programs listings include courses that no longer exist, and five programs do not list archival courses that appear on their websites. The voluntary nature of the Directory, and the fact that the listings are not guided by outside criteria, mean that it is, at best, only a place to begin collecting data. One cannot rely on it to provide a complete or accurate portrait of archival education.

In order to circumvent all of these problems, this study used the Directory only to gather names and Internet addresses of programs. Lists of courses were then gathered from the institutional websites. Gathering data this way ensured that course lists were current, and provided some consistency across institutions in that the same criteria governed which courses were considered “archival.”

Once all of the courses were gathered, they were divided into four categories, corresponding to the categories employed by Ericson in his earlier studies. The first category is core archival knowledge; it is comprised of introductory and upper level
courses on archival administration, electronic records, and courses devoted to specific archival functions, such as appraisal, archival description, and administrative or organizational history.

The second category contains the plausible electives. Ericson described these courses as justifiable even in a limited course framework. They fall outside of the original three-course sequence, but deal with knowledge archivists would find useful, even necessary, in professional work. Preservation, records management, historiography or research methods, and courses on non-textual materials fall into this category.

Into the third category, related electives, fall courses on subjects such as oral history, documentary editing, and the history of books. These are related to archival work, in that they often require using archival materials, but they have little bearing on the work of an archivist. The related electives category also contains courses that are too broad or general to concentrate on archival issues. Archives might be part of, but are not the main focus of, these courses. The fourth category comprises only the practica or field experiences.

**Results**

The first, and most obvious, change since Ericson’s study of the 1991 *Directory of Archival Education* is in the number of programs listed by SAA. In 1991, Ericson found thirty-six multi-course programs; O’Toole found 37 in the 1998 Directory. It currently lists only seventeen programs. This is not a result of a sharp downturn in the number of archival programs; there are many more programs in the United States and Canada, in both LIS schools and history departments. They are simply not listed in the Directory. One explanation may be, again, the voluntary and fee-based character of the
Directory. It may also be illustrative of lack of a separate identity of archival programs. They are administratively part of larger programs; many do not have any kind of archival designation, and so are not thought of as discrete clusters of courses. The programs listed in the Directory may be programs with the strongest sense of identity, and with a conscious dedication to archival education.

Of the seventeen programs in the Directory, sixteen are in the United States; this study is concerned with only these. There are ten administratively based in LIS schools (sixty-three percent), and six in history departments (thirty-seven percent). Ericson found that LIS schools administered about one-third of the programs in 1991. The near doubling of the percentage of archival education programs in LIS schools, once again, is more apparent than real. History departments often offer archival courses as part of a public history program, and public history has its own professional organization, the National Council on Public History (NCPH). There are currently sixty-one public history programs listed on the NCPH website, and many, if not most, offer archival coursework. It appears that SAA has lost the allegiance of history-based archival programs. Though SAA continues to be the professional organization for archivists, programs, for better or worse, are looking to other organizations for leadership.

The sixteen programs, taken together, offer 122 courses; that is, an average of 7.5 courses per program, up from an average of just more than six per program in 1991. The smallest program lists three courses; the largest, fourteen (see Table 1). Six programs have joint programs in place, usually offering degrees in LIS and history. For the first time, the MAS Guidelines of 1994 recommended extensive scholarly research in the form of a thesis, and that recommendation was repeated in the 2002 Guidelines. Four of the
programs require theses; another four had a thesis option, or required one only from students participating in a joint program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Programs</th>
<th>LIS-Based Programs</th>
<th>History-Based Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Programs (in US)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Archival Courses</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Number of Courses per Program</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smallest Number of Courses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest Number of Courses</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, 36% of archival courses can be considered core archival knowledge, and 30% are plausible electives. The most troubling of Ericson’s findings in the 1991 Directory was that 26%, more than one-quarter, of graduate archival courses were related courses. O’Toole found more than 31% in 1998. This study found only 21%, certainly an improvement (see Table 2).

Practica still play an important role in archival education. Every program at least offers students that chance to work in the field under supervision, putting classroom learning into practice. Some programs integrate practice into the courses, requiring students to work forty hours processing collections. Others offer semester-long practica, involving 140 hours of work. Many programs use both approaches. Field experiences and internships are no longer the focus of programs, however, and the emphasis that used to be placed on them has shifted elsewhere. The shift of emphasis away from practica
indicates that archival knowledge is no longer seen as something that should be transmitted and taught through apprenticeships. The fact that advanced coursework is taking the place of practica shows a deepening appreciation for the intellectual content of the archival discipline, and a realization that graduate education, as opposed to training, is an important part of professional development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage (of All Courses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Archival Knowledge</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plausible Electives</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Electives</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practica</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>122</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dividing the courses first into history and LIS courses, and then into categories illustrates some of the differences between the two venues. There are eighty-one courses offered by ten LIS programs, or an average of 8.1 courses per program. This is above the average for all programs. The smallest program offers five courses, and the largest fourteen. Core archival knowledge and plausible electives make up 38% and 35% of LIS archival programs, respectively. Related electives make up only 12% of those programs (see Table 3).

History-based archival education programs offer a total of forty-one courses in six programs, with an average of 6.8 courses per program. In general, history-based archival programs are smaller; the smallest is only three courses, the largest is twelve. Core
archival knowledge and plausible electives make up 32% and 20% of the courses offered in history departments, but related electives make up 34% (see Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Library and Information Science Courses by Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Archival Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plausible Electives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Electives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. History Courses by Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Archival Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plausible Electives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Electives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No one wants to reopen the history versus library science debate, as both disciplines have their place in archival education, but the high number of related electives in history programs is troubling. The majority of the related coursework is in documentary or historical editing and oral history. There is no doubt that archivists
should be aware of documentary editing and oral history; most archivists will come into contact with these two subjects over the course of their careers. They will assist researchers in locating appropriate materials for editing, care for the output of oral history projects, and, in many cases, edit documents and take oral histories themselves. To dedicate so much coursework to those subjects at the expense of more central archival issues, however, could be problematic.

Perhaps one of the reasons history-based programs rely more heavily on related coursework is that they are usually well-established programs and have been producing archivists utilizing an educational formula that has been sufficient for years. Information technology has impacted history departments, but it has not fundamentally changed the discipline of history. Library science, on the other hand, has changed dramatically over the last twenty years because of the technological revolution. LIS schools have been in a state of flux for the past two decades. Curriculum revision is a way of life for LIS program administrators; as a result, the addition and tailoring of courses in LIS-based archival education has been easier to achieve. History departments have not had to restructure whole programs to accommodate information technology, and curriculum changes in a stable department are sometimes quite difficult.

Another explanation for the prevalence of related coursework in history-based programs is that history approaches the archival discipline from a different direction than does library science. History departments think of archivists as historians; they care for the materials, but they also use them for research and, for example, edit the documents in their care for publication. Documentary editing, for history departments, should be part of the professional preparation of an archivist. Library science, on the other hand,
approaches the archival discipline as though it was another of the information sciences.
Archival work is about organizing materials and making them available to users.

There have been some improvements in the numbers of courses dedicated to specific archival functions. Where O’Toole found three courses on appraisal, there are now six. There are now six courses on arrangement and/or description; O’Toole found two. Reference courses have increased from one to four. These are major increases when one considers the much smaller data set of this study as compared to O’Toole’s (sixteen programs and thirty-seven programs). One area of decrease is electronic records. Ericson found five, O’Toole eleven. There are now four courses on electronic records offered by programs listed in SAA’s Directory. The decrease is only in raw numbers, however. The percentage of programs offering at least one course in electronic records has held steady at about 25%. Records management and preservation have remained popular course offerings, with nine and fifteen courses currently listed. There has also been an addition of one course dedicated to archival outreach and advocacy, a subject on which O’Toole found no classes (see Table 5).

It is difficult to compare the findings of this study with the findings of O’Toole and Ericson because fewer programs are listed in the current SAA Directory than was the case in earlier years. When Ericson and O’Toole did their studies, inclusion in the Directory was not on a fee basis, and more programs, perhaps programs of generally lesser quality, submitted information. These results, however, do give the impression of an expanding and deepening educational landscape. There are more courses dedicated to specific archival functions. Fewer programs continue to rely on the old three-course sequence; in fact, this study found only one such program. Introductory classes are now just that; they are no longer the sole course, wherein professors must pack all of the
knowledge of appraisal, records management, arrangement and description, reference, and legal issues. Students can now rely, to some degree, on introductory courses to introduce these issues, and on upper level courses to really investigate them.

Table 5. Dedicated Coursework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Courses</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Electronic Records</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practica</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>History of Books and Printing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Non-Textual Materials</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records Management</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentary Editing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rare Books</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Administrative History, Records Creation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement and Description</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Legal Issues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Outreach or Advocacy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions
An examination of SAA’s current *Directory of Archival Education* indicates that graduate education has improved in the five years since O’Toole conducted his study. A look back to Ericson’s studies more than ten years ago shows even greater improvement in the area. Graduate archival education is now deeper and more extensive; the programs have more courses on average, and more courses that have to do with central archival issues. At least, those programs that have chosen to list themselves in the Directory are stronger and more extensive than the programs appearing a decade ago.
Working with a much smaller data set than either Ericson or O’Toole, this study found more courses on arrangement and description, appraisal, reference, and outreach and advocacy. Practica still play an important role in archival education, but they are no longer the centerpieces of most programs. While there is still great diversity in graduate archival programs, there is also a growing consistency. Archival educators and program administrators seem to be getting a handle on the core body of archival knowledge. The archival profession is making slow but steady progress towards defining what it is that an archivist needs to know before he or she enters the profession; and graduate programs are beginning to offer an education that can produce well-prepared and qualified candidates.

There is, however, much work to be done. Though there have been improvements in the number of courses devoted to specific archival issues, and though there has been a reduction in related coursework, archival education still needs more focus. Most programs do not have coursework dedicated to individual archival functions; by and large, they are still being taught lumped together into one course. Courses on administrative history and organizational theory are difficult to find, and so archivists can enter the field without a real understanding of how records are created and maintained by institutions before they come under archival care. Appraisal is becoming more and more important as the sheer volume of records increases, but it is only being taught as a separate subject in six programs listed in the Directory. Considering the kinds of records the new generation of archivists will have to care for, there are too few courses on electronic records. The archival profession will feel the bite if that area is neglected for much longer.

The failure of the MAS Guidelines to produce any freestanding master’s programs indicates that perhaps the American system of higher education is not ready for
full-fledged graduate archival programs. Financial resources play a large part in this. The number of graduates that geographically dispersed programs could produce does not outweigh the expense of establishing such programs. In addition, not everyone is convinced that archival studies should be taught outside of larger schools and departments. History and library science have been educating and training archivists for years, and many inside and outside of archives see no compelling reason to change that. It is a catch-22: archival studies will not be able to create its own identity until it separates itself from library science and history, but it cannot separate itself until it creates its own identity.

It is possible that directors of archival programs do not feel that a separate identity is necessary. They may find that a close alliance with library science or history is actually beneficial. Small programs often find greater financial stability, more influence in campus-wide matters, and a larger pool of students from which to draw when they incorporate themselves into larger programs. In addition to political and financial matters, there are intellectual concerns. The study of the nature, function, and administration of archives is an interdisciplinary endeavor. History and library science have the greatest roles, but law, public administration, and other social sciences also inform archival education.

Dual programs, composed of degrees in history and library science, might be the most comprehensive course of action. Students in the dual programs can take courses on information technology and library science without sacrificing courses on historiography and public history. Dual programs also relieve the pressure of trying to fit archival classes into a course of study already packed with required and necessary courses of the host department. The study of history and the study of library science are two very
different disciplines, and they approach and think about archives in very different ways. Both approaches are valid, and each has advantages and disadvantages. Archivists should be sympathetic to both, not blinded by one to the worth of the other. A program of study that includes both approaches, and exposes students to the various ways of thinking about information and archives can only better prepare them for archival work. The study of history and library science together can give students the best of both worlds.

It is not likely that archival programs will be able to set up shop outside of history and library science departments in the near future. And perhaps that is not a bad thing. In order to improve, however, archival programs must protect what makes them essentially different from history and library science. They should be receptive of the methods and ideas of both, certainly, but remain aware that dealing with archival materials and archival users is not just like working with books and library patrons, and that being an archivist is not just like being an academic historian. If they do not, they run the risk of becoming watered down, trying to do too much in too few courses, or of turning their attentions to studies more related to their host departments than to archives. Graduate archival education is improving, and is beginning to form a distinct and consistent course of study. The programs listed in SAA’s Directory show this. But there is still far to go on the path to identifying a core body of knowledge, to setting up a structure to transmit that knowledge, and to organizing it in a systematic and consistent way. If these tasks are left uncompleted, archival education may well slide back into archival training.
Notes

1 Terry Cook, “‘The Imperative of Challenging Absolutes,’ in Graduate Archival Education Programs: Issues for Educators and the Profession,” The American Archivist 63 (Fall/Winter 2000): 389.
2 Ibid, 380.
5 Ibid., 12.
8 Terry Eastwood, “Nurturing Archival Education in the University,” The American Archivist 51 (Summer 1988): 231 (emphasis orginal).
10 Ibid., 4-5.
11 Ibid., 6.
13 Ibid., 141-154.
20 Miller, “The SAA as Sisyphus,” 226-227; 229.
23 Miller, “The SAA as Sisyphus,” 231.
24 Ibid., 232-235.
37 O’Toole, “Curriculum Development,” 461.
40 Timothy L. Ericson, “Professional Associations and Archival Education: A Different Role, or a Different Theater?” *The American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988): 303-304.
41 O’Toole, “Curriculum Development,” 462-463 (emphasis original).
46 Cox, “The Roles of Graduate and Continuing Education,” 452.
49 Jimerson, “Graduate Archival Education,” 158.
55 Miller, “The SAA as Sisyphus,” 225.
57 Ibid., 26.
58 Ericson, “Professional Associations,” 298-311.
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______, “Professional Associations and Archival Education: A Different Role, or a Different Theater?” *The American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1998): 298-311.


