Teaching Bibliographic Sources and Styles to Graduate Students

A recent article called attention to the movement existing in numerous institutions to insist "on the formal study of bibliographic materials as a part of the graduate school program." There are evidences in library literature that bibliography is being taught to advanced students in various disciplines. However, a cursory review of the literature fails to reveal discussion of a program similar to the course that began in 1948 at Florida State University. In this course, the bibliographic sources common to research investigation in all subject areas and the bibliographic styles appropriate for the varied types of library materials are presented to give students confidence in two major aspects of research: the searching and the citing of library sources. Perhaps this is a novel experiment in that all graduate students, regardless of subject specialization, attend the same course.

The incentive for the development of such a course in the curriculum of the Florida State University Graduate School was the widespread belief among faculty members that graduate students needed to become familiar with: (1) the bibliographic sources which are common to all research fields, the use of which is necessary to reflect an exhaustive and systematic search of available literature, and (2) documentation styles, in preparation for thesis writing and other scientific or professional research efforts. Despite constant effort by librarians and others to include adequate instruction on the use of the library in the undergraduate curriculum, the fact remains that many students finish their undergraduate work with only a vague idea of the real potential of library resources. Leaders at FSU deemed it necessary to offer the beginning graduate student an opportunity to overcome this inadequacy. Moreover, foreign students who have not had the experiences of rich library collections and American students who represent the widest possible range of undergraduate experiences, meeting in a common institution with its own requirements of competence, need some formal direction in the examination of research resources and practice in the accepted institutional documentation styles.

Since 1949, L.S. 500, Library Use in Graduate Study and Research, has been a requirement for every student in the graduate school, and one semester hour of credit is granted. Students may satisfy this requirement by completing a departmental course in research methodology. For those who can demonstrate a knowledge of the basic bibliographic sources and styles, competency is recognized through a satisfactory completion of an exemption test. The low percentage of satisfactory completions of this examination, which has been kept gen-

SEPTMBER, 1956
eral in recognition of the wide variety of subject specialists yet specific in requiring that the student know how and when to use the basic tools, is an indication of the inadequacies presented by beginning graduate students in exploring the research potential of the library. The importance that is attached at Florida State University to competence in conducting library research is illustrated by the action of a faculty committee which refused a request that students in music composition be excused from the course. It was reported by the committee that any student granted an advanced degree, even the concert musician who never contemplated library research, should "know his way around a library."

Dr. Louis Shores, dean of the library school, gave first expression to the need for such a course, and in response to the dean of the graduate school, developed the syllabus. Dean Shores taught the course during its formative years, and even after acquiring the necessary faculty in the library school to teach it, has maintained direction through his interest and enthusiasm. This is not to say that the course has remained the same as in 1948. Instead, it has continually evolved in content through the influences of the many people who have taught it. But the basic considerations, bibliographic sources and styles, have remained the same.

Throughout the history of the course, there has been the concern with dividing students according to the major areas represented by subject specialists. It is felt that effectiveness could be increased if students from the social sciences and the natural sciences were separated. Inroads have been made in the scheduling difficulties which have prevented this, and it is expected that desirable divisions will be in effect soon. One of the major reasons for this division is the distinct difference prevailing in the documentation styles of the two areas.

Since its inception in 1948, the course has been completed by over 1500 students from every area of the curriculum included in the alphabetical range of Accounting to Zoology. A list of all the students who have finished the course is being compiled to show a breakdown of the students from the different subject areas.

Approximately 15 class hours of instruction are required to present the materials included in the course. The technique used for teaching has been to consider a basic type of bibliographic source and to coordinate it with a study and practice of bibliographic styles appropriate for that type of material. Thus the student is able to relate source and style. An examination of book sources would give him an opportunity to practice citations of books, whether he is following the Chicago style, Wister, American Geological Institute, or another. An assignment will require the student to locate books on his subject, copy the bibliographic entry as it appears, and "convert" to the accepted style. This conversion process will enable the student to fix in mind the basic elements common to standard bibliographic description and offer some practice in the style he needs to know to document a thesis or dissertation. When collecting references for papers, students are encouraged to convert the bibliographic information immediately so that this phase of the style problem is overcome at the beginning.

At present the content of the course is organized in 13 units. The following outline indicates the scope:

1. Bibliographic styles. A major consideration is the technique of documenting a paper. Before an examination of sources begins, the basic elements of bibliographic entries are studied through presentation of an "eclectic" form. This involves illustrating the entry with the various elements in a position and with
punctuation in a manner closely following the styles observed in two common sources: the Library of Congress catalogs and the Wilson periodical indexes. From this middle ground of style students can fix the basic elements in mind, and adapt the form to their particular needs. Concern with bibliographic style is not limited to this unit. It does serve to introduce the problem and prepare the student for the conversion process he must use with succeeding units on books, periodicals, unpublished materials, government publications, etc. Footnote citations are not introduced until it is evident that competency has been gained in listing bibliographic references. This may occur midway in the course, so that the students will have an opportunity to practice writing footnotes in gathering references from some sources.

2. Library card catalogs and classification systems. It has been demonstrated that graduate students are frequently stymied in the use of the basic index to the collection, the library card catalog. Since this is the most important source for locating materials, a unit is devoted to the use, potential, arrangement and scope of the catalog, with consideration given to the kinds of information found on the cards and classification schemes, particularly the Dewey system used at Florida State University.

3. Commercially published book sources. Graduate students frequently need books beyond those listed in the local card catalog. In order for them to determine what has been published in their subject, a unit is presented including the U.S. Catalog, Cumulative Book Index, Publishers' Weekly and the Publishers Trade List Annual as a means of identifying books published in English since 1900. The uses of each are emphasized so the student can relate their values to problems of research in his own subject.

4. National bibliography. Although the catalogs of other national libraries are mentioned as sources for identifying books, primary emphasis is placed on the Library of Congress catalogs of printed cards. Important uses which graduate students may make of this series include approaching materials through subject, as provided by the subject supplement; verifying bibliographic description; locating rare materials; and identifying all the works by authors— to mention only a few. Because the catalog represents the collection of one of the world's largest libraries, and its cataloging is reputed to be the most accurate and most fully descriptive, it is indispensable for bibliographic work.

5. Periodical indexes and lists. Two or three of the general indexes are generally well known. However, it is appalling that graduate students have so little knowledge of the potential of such indexes as the Education Index, PAIS Bulletin, International Index, Industrial Arts Index, Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus, Agricultural Index, Engineering Index, and Poole's Index. Most of the students are vague to the point of ignorance about the types of material indexed in each. For instance, many humanities students overlook the Art Index as a source for articles on architecture or archaeology; or the biochemist does not know the Agricultural Index; or the psychology student has never used Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus. Many students in the natural sciences have depended entirely on the abstract services for article references. Seldom is there evidence that the student is aware of the lists of periodicals such as Ulrich's, Union List of Serials, or the World List of Scientific Periodicals, to say nothing of the value of identifying and locating hundreds of journals dealing with his subject.

6. Abstracts, book reviews and news digests. Students in the natural sciences...
generally make good use of the abstract journals, except for the tendency to de-
pend on only one. The chemist fre-
quently overlooks Biological Abstracts or Science Abstracts, or the physicist
overlooks Nuclear Science Abstracts or the Mathematical Reviews. Students in
the social sciences have not made such
good use of their abstracts, perhaps part-
ly because they are not as prominent nor
as comprehensive. But the appearance of
abstract journals in economics, history
and sociology provides many students
with a way to keep abreast of the litera-
ture. There is a common misconception
among graduate students that book re-
views are limited to fiction. A study of
the Book Review Digest and other re-
viewing tools such as the U.S. Quarterly
Book Review and the New York Times
Book Review introduces sources where
the student may get the reaction to a
scholarly work as opposed to the de-
tached summary of the abstract. Facts on
File and Keesing's Contemporary Ar-
chives are examined to make the stu-
dents aware of sources for locating di-
gests of important news items when
needed for reference purposes.

7. Professional and learned societies
and their publications. Some time is de-
voted to this subject because of the vast
amount of research activity and the re-
sulting publications of many societies
and organizations. Sources are examined
which will list the organizations, outline
descriptive information and purposes,
and disclose research and publications
supported by learned and professional
groups.

8. Locating information on people,
places and statistics. Frequently, research
workers need biographical information
on people whose lives are interwoven
with the development of a subject. Pre-
senting biographical sources which in-
clude brief identification tools, who's
whos, encyclopedic works, and directo-
ries which list the membership of learned
and professional organizations will en-
able students to gather the type of bio-
graphical information dictated by the
needs of his particular research. Some
knowledge of the more comprehensive
atlases and an acquaintance with sources
of statistical information, like the Statis-
tical Abstract, will be helpful in gather-
ing data.

9. Encyclopedias, dictionaries and
yearbooks. A common oversight of the
graduate student is the use of encyclo-
edias for authoritative background ma-
terial and selective bibliographies which
may provide a springboard for other ref-
erences. The yearbooks and annual sur-
veys published in many subjects provide
authoritative summaries of the year's
progress and developments. Dictionaries
in the various subjects are being pub-
lished in increasing numbers and are a
first source for establishing definitions of
terms and phrases, a necessity in many
theses.

10. Theses, dissertations and other un-
published materials. This is one of the
most significant categories of sources for
the person who contemplates writing the
thesis. He must be sure that he has de-
termined the originality of the problem,
and he must be certain that he has ex-
husted available literature dealing with
his problem as contained in other theses
and ephemera, in addition to the more
conventional sources such as books and
journals. Students are very pleased with
the results they get through examination
of the Association of Research Libraries
list and Dissertation Abstracts. In addi-
tion, the various subject lists of theses
completed and research in progress series
which are characteristic of learned jour-
nals are valuable aids. The pamphlet
material listed in the Vertical File Index
is not overlooked in the searching prob-
lem, for much of this is of a nature and
format that would not be acquired un-
less a specific need for its use were ex-
pressed, which often occurs when the
specialist is investigating a little known aspect of a subject.

11. Government publications. This type of material is recognized by graduate students to be difficult to uncover, perhaps because of the common practice of organizing and servicing government documents collections separately from other materials. We do not attempt to gain the ease in locating documents that we gain with other materials. Inviting the documents librarian to present a lecture to each class at the scene of the collection, explaining the indexes, and exhibiting representative publications while discussing the overall organization of federal agencies has proved very effective in encouraging the use of the vast amount of publication by official governmental agencies. An alternative method is to discuss in class the types of publications issued by the administrative, legislative, and judicial branches; the arrangement of the Congressional set by serial number, and the departmental publications by the Superintendent of Documents classification schemes; and the historical development and current status of document bibliography. This is complemented by some discussion of state government activity in publishing as identified through use of the Checklist of State Publications. With some knowledge of the organization of agencies doing research in his subject and facility in use of the document indexes, the student can discover pertinent references, even though he will need help to locate them.

12. Audio-visual materials and microphotography. The new audio-visual media of films, slides, recordings, and others too numerous to classify here are presented through an examination of the Wilson guides and the Library of Congress supplements. Especially are these significant to the persons who are concerned with instructional aspects of their subject. A bibliographic style, based on that represented in these sources and the Dugdale manual, is practiced for this class of material. The microphotographic techniques have been one of the most arresting considerations. We think the research worker needs to be aware of and concerned about the problems of acquiring and storing rare or little used materials. The implications of these techniques as a solution to the manifold problems inherent in the research collection must receive significant emphasis in such a course. More and more, the graduate student will be required to utilize his resources in the form of microreproductions. The various readers are demonstrated, the types of materials reproduced by microphotography are discussed, and the student is prepared to relate the significance and implications of this technique to the literature of his own subject.

13. Library resources and special collections. No meaningful survey of the potential of the research library can be completed without pointing to the libraries with special resources and collections in the various subjects. It is a well recognized and regrettable fact that no university library can hope to acquire all materials necessary for a great research center in all subjects. It is worth while to deal with the movement to survey library collections, which brings to the surface their weaknesses and strengths, and to note some of the implications for scholarship of cooperative acquisition programs. Books which are designed to indicate special resources and collections are examined and students are encouraged to discover those which offer rich collections in their subject.

From the foregoing summary of the content of the course it is evident that

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in the short time allotted, all sources
cannot be treated with as much concen-
tration as may be desired. Students are
urged to ferret out those sources which
have special implications for their own
subjects. At the same time, those sources
that cut across all the subjects repre-
sented in the curriculum are stressed in
the hope that they will become common
knowledge among research students.

Student reaction to the course has
been favorable. Some students have in-
dicated it to be one of their most valu-
able graduate experiences. Although
they are quick to admit a lack of under-
standing about the basic sources, some
have questioned the value of the course
when it has been delayed until near the
end of their program. It is felt that this
objection would be eliminated if stu-
dents would include the course early in
their program, as recommended. Others,
whose program does not include writing
a thesis, feel that it has less value for
them. Generally, students have been
quick to acknowledge the need for un-
derstanding that will permit them to go
about searching library resources with
ease and confidence.

In addition to teaching some sections
of the course, this writer also has the re-
sponsibility of editing the theses and
dissertations, before acceptance by the
graduate school, for style and bibli-
ographic form. This dual role has perhaps
resulted in a close relationship between
the emphasis of the course and the needs
of graduate students regarding research
sources and documentation styles. More-
over, it has permitted this writer to ob-
serve the effectiveness of indoctrination
in sources and style in improved thesis
products. Frequent testimony by stu-
dents indicates the value of the course
in locating research materials during
their studies in addition to the help it
gives them in preparing the manuscript.
The influence on the quality of thesis
manuscripts is discernible through im-
provement in investigating research
sources and more careful documenta-
tion, and perhaps provides the most
valid measurement of the effectiveness of
the course.

Growing out of the success and gen-
eral acceptance of the course has been
the sharp realization that the use of li-
brary resources by undergraduates is in-
adequate. Graduate students have fre-
cently indicated that the course would
have been helpful to them as under-
graduates; that such competence need
not be considered the province of ad-
vanced students to the exclusion of un-
dergraduates.

Awareness of this problem among the
faculty in a professional school dealing
largely with undergraduates has recently
been indicated in a request for the li-
brary school to develop and teach a simi-
lar course as a requirement in that de-
partment's curriculum. This is an en-
couraging development. Perhaps the in-
fluence of L.S. 500 at Florida State Uni-
versity will not be limited to graduate
students, but will extend into other un-
dergraduate departments if this experi-
ment at the undergraduate level proves
successful. When this awareness becomes
sufficiently widespread among other cur-
riculum planners, perhaps the under-
graduate can become proficient in the
use of library resources. But until that
awareness is reflected in the curriculum
to include an examination of the basic
bibliographic sources, graduate schools
must remain concerned about the com-
petence of their students to pursue an
independent and exhaustive investiga-
tion of the research sources of the li-
brary, the common laboratory of all
scholarship.