Education for Map Librarianship

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The History of Map Librarianship Education

IN THE EARLY 1900s, most map libraries were administered by persons with varied academic and professional backgrounds, few of whom had any professional training in library science. As interest in geography grew in the United States and its colleges during and between World War I and World War II, an increasing number of professionally trained geographers with, by definition, undergraduate or graduate degrees in geography, but woefully lacking in library science skills, found employment as map librarians.[1] The only kind of education for map librarians until the 1950s and the 1960s was the kind that is still considered by some to be the best—on-the-job training. Persons became caretakers of maps generally by accident while on their way to somewhere else, and frequently under protest. Maps are traditionally the stepchildren of any library; they and their fellow cartographic materials, with the exception of atlases, are in nonbook format, and are therefore awkward at best and suspect at worst, as far as the rest of the library world is concerned. So the person in any library "stuck with the maps" (and so it was expressed) was either the lowest on the totem pole or had made the fatal mistake of not being at the meeting at which the issue of map caretaking was decided. Fairly often, those persons who originally found themselves in a dark, dusty room (probably below ground level), staring with dismay and perhaps even horror and dislike at a stack of dark, dusty maps, later discovered they had become fond of these bulky, beautiful, supremely

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useful objects, in spite of the latters' supposed crotchets and actual caretaking problems. The few who had volunteered to take on the maps, either because no one else would or because they liked maps in the first place, were quickly or already won over to the side of truth, beauty, and the right.

But it was not until after 1950 that some interest was shown in the revolutionary idea of training persons for map librarianship before, not after, they became map librarians. "In 1950 Professor Joseph A. Russell, Chairman of the Geography Department, University of Illinois, recognized the need for a map course to improve the skills of geography students."[2] The resulting course, intended for geographers and librarians, was taught from 1950 to 1958 by Bill M. Woods, and in succeeding years by Robert White and David Cobb. William Easton of Illinois State University, Normal, also taught the course, which for many years remained "the only accredited course in map librarianship available anywhere in the world."[3]

Mercifully for the researcher, the written history of map librarianship education begins relatively recently, just after 1950, with Woods's seminal article in *Special Libraries*, in which he noted that library schools were finally offering courses in special librarianship.[4] Woods also made recommendations for the curriculum for map librarianship, which still hold up well thirty years later—introduction to maps and map libraries; cartobibliography (catalogs, periodicals, atlases, geography generally); care and preservation; classification and cataloging; old and rare maps; use of maps; and cartography.

Silence settled once again, until Woods's next article in 1956, in which he extended his recommendations to include an undergraduate major of thirty to thirty-two semester hours in geography with special attention to cartography and research, a minor in geology or history, and a foreign language. He closed with recommendations to the aspirant to consider graduate work in geography, and to obtain an internship in a map library.[5]

It was not until the late 1960s that articles on map librarianship education became frequent, when a veritable gaggle turned up in *Library Literature*, dominated by Walter Ristow's survey articles of 1967 and 1976.[6] From the reports made by Woods and Ristow over the 25-year period from 1952 to 1976, it is apparent that art followed life: the frequency of articles on map librarianship education did indeed reflect the frequency of such education.

In 1967 specialized training in map librarianship in the United States was still offered at only one school, the University of Illinois,

although some slight attention was given to maps in cataloging and technical processing courses at other schools, and several library schools made provision for directed specialized studies, including map interest. Little seemed to be happening on the international scene until the International Federation of Library Associations' Section of Geography and Map Libraries formed in 1973 a working group on training for map librarianship to investigate the current situation in re training, to make recommendations, to prepare practical guidelines for map librarians, and to promote and organize seminars.[7]

In 1976 Ristow recommended that, because of the heavy concentration of map libraries in the northeastern United States and on the Pacific Coast, library schools in those areas consider introducing map librarianship into their course catalog.[8] Map librarianship need not have felt discriminated against because of this lack of mention in university catalogs; while in 1975 over 80 percent of accredited library school programs offered one or more special librarianship courses, half of the programs of specialization were offered by a little over one-quarter of the schools, and specialization by type of special library was offered at only 66 percent of the schools.[9] Subspecialization was most often seen where "a defined body of literature and a distinct professional orientation among users" existed, and was perhaps most developed in those areas "where the end use of academic training can be predicted with some certainty."[10] At this time (1975) four library schools were offering a course in map librarianship.[11] By 1976, the number had grown to five—University of Illinois, University of Toronto, Columbia University, Western Michigan University, and Catholic University of America—and directed studies and specialized reading courses were available at a number of schools.[12] The West Coast had at that time no course offered through the library schools, but the University of Oregon and Southern Oregon College both offered map librarianship courses, taught by resident map librarians.[13]

By 1978 the number of accredited North American library schools offering at least one course in map librarianship still stood at five (the same five), there were still possibilities for practica and independent studies, the University of Oregon still offered a course (generally taught in the summer), and one course had been taught at the University of British Columbia.[14] In 1980 matters were much the same, having remained at a plateau for more than ten years, with five schools offering at least one course in map librarianship, although the University of Illinois is considering expanding its course to an integrated program, and the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee now has a map librarianship curriculum.

The State of Library Science Education

Before any person goes into map librarianship, he had best take a good hard look at library science generally. Library science education has moved from pre-Dui times, with apprenticeship and in-service library training classes, to the Columbia School of Library Training in 1887, to accreditation of schools in 1923, to the conferring of master's degrees in 1947-48, to the 1970s. The latter has rung with calls for change, a trend toward tailoring each student's program, the integration of two or more course areas, and a vague feeling that a big shakeup is needed, that if we do not take hold and make the necessary changes, someone else will.[15] All of these attitudes may be classed as the few good things that came out of the 1970s employment crash.

Library schools are changing their names to schools of library and information science, and with good reason: something called an information manager is on the scene. What do information managers do? Well, they do what librarians have done for years, except information managers are paid considerably more than librarians, they never do clerical work, and they *never* call themselves librarians, probably because the persons they supervise are called librarians. Other agencies of modern-day life have tumbled to the ancient fact that knowledge is power, and have eagerly translated it to mean that the management of knowledge is thus extremely important work. Robert Taylor, dean of Syracuse University's School of Information Studies, certainly makes this clear:

> It is my contention that the profession of librarianship—or, if you will, the information profession—is the most exciting, challenging, and necessary profession in the latter quarter of this century. This depends, however, on two things—first, the profession must cut its umbilical cord to the library. Only when that cord is cut will we become a true profession. In its best sense, librarianship is too important a profession to be tied to the fate of a single institution.
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> And secondly, the schools must themselves graduate professionals who feel comfortable working throughout the information environment.[16]

We live in a world where information grows exponentially, doubling every ten years, and where information services employees form slightly over half of the work force of the United States. And ironical as it may seem in such a world, this bonanza is in the main blithely passing us by—us, the people who knew information before it was a star. Businesses have seen the light, and they feel no qualms whatsoever about not only generally ignoring the library world, but, worse, using that world

to get what and where they want, while we mumble, "Service to the public," and retreat yet one more ditch.

Another reason the library schools are in a process of change is the student. Soon after the bottom dropped out of the library employment market in 1970, students began to realize that library science was one of the few professions or occupations where the practitioner had to work an extra year and obtain a master's degree in order to be paid considerably less than did most mediocre business administration students after obtaining a mere bachelor's degree—*if* the prospective librarian could find work in the first place (a problem that the business student most likely did not face). Of 4971 1978 U.S. graduates in library science, 3064 were employed as librarians (but only 2756 in permanent positions) by the spring of 1979; the average salary was $12,281; the median salary was $11,804; and only 996 men had been sufficiently sanguine to believe that they could support a family by becoming a librarian.[17] In 1976 the estimate was that "only"(!) 16 percent of library school graduates were unplaced six months after graduation, and the evidence was that persistence, mobility, flexibility, and capability were traits that the graduate desirous of gainful toil in the fields of library service needed.[18] The result of these disastrous tidings? "A recent study disclosed that, of a sample of 198,641 students enrolling for the first time at 374 colleges and universities, 0.0 percent declared geography as their major field. Of 78 fields identified, library (or archival science) and statistics were the only other disciplines having 0.0 percent intended majors."[19] Not necessarily strange but certainly unhappy bedfellows.

Why has this occurred? This paper is allotted too short a length, and the author is not sufficiently knowledgeable, to do other than suggest a few possible answers. The first, and it is fairly obvious, is that the library schools continued to turn out more students than were needed, perhaps mostly because such a complicated and expensive procedure as a graduate program is hard to slow down, but certainly not because the signs of disinterest by the market were unclear. On the contrary: the supply-and-demand situation was extremely clear. For example, the best-paying positions in the library world, namely those in universities, now frequently require a double master's degree (one in library science and one in another subject area), and the field is so glutted that the employers pay for these two degrees as if they were one. When prestigious university libraries in the New York City conurbation (an expensive place to live) have the gall to advertise for a full-time music cataloger, requiring virtually two master's degrees (one in library science and one in music history), reading knowledge of three lan-

guages, and a little experience would be nice, and the salary offered is under $10,000, nonnegotiable, the time is long past to call a halt. Ditch-diggers— of whom no education is required—let alone those in the trades, not to mention the other professions, would refuse to work for such a ridiculously low sum. Yet that position was in all likelihood filled, because a faculty wife with a library degree decided to go back to work, or because someone fresh out of library school needed a job immediately just to keep eating. It is indeed a shameful exhibition, and a sign that either library schools need to change radically (among other things, monitoring the job market carefully and at least attempting to reach a reasonable match between number of persons trained and number of positions available) or that said schools should be required, perhaps under something similar to the Truth in Advertising Act, to tell persons about to enter through the schools' fair portals that when they graduate they will be fully qualified to earn less than they could have by obtaining almost any work the moment they left their undergraduate schools. We all realize that we did not go into library science to get rich, but this is ridiculous.

Make no mistake about it: I love my work as a map librarian in a university, and I have a deep loyalty to the discipline and its concepts. It is for these reasons that it so angers me to see us groveling in the street for crumbs. I adhere to the old-fashioned idea that pay for work should be based on how much formal preparation the work requires, that is, how much the individual must invest (or gamble) before he receives a payback. In library science the relationship is inverse, not direct—which leads to the next point.

Perhaps pay for librarians is so notoriously low and out of scale with the education required because we simply aren't worth any more. Perhaps this whole matter of having a library science degree as a graduate degree is just a fond illusion on our parts, and the degree should be an undergraduate one, or perhaps even a two-year, community college certificate. Perhaps what is needed is an honest reappraisal by libraries of professional positions; any position involving more than one-quarter time clerical work such as typing and filing should be considered for reclassification. Perhaps this woeful pay situation exists because, for whatever reason (probably because of the amount of clerical work presently involved in many positions), librarianship is traditionally a woman's profession with the result—or is it the cause?—that salaries are relatively low, making "Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me" an excellent title not just for Richard Farina's novel, but for a course on women in library science. Interestingly enough, in library

positions that pay well—administrative positions with little or no clerical work, and, relatively speaking, many university positions—we find men in the majority.

A final suggestion on this matter. Perhaps it is because library science is in the main taught as a technique, not as a philosophy, and, for a final kiss of death, taught not by practitioners of that technique, but preferably by persons who have either never worked in a library or have not done so for fifteen years. The highly predictable results are that in the eyes of the rest of the world, an MLS is just barely above a Ph.D. in physical education, and that *soi-disant* information management has completely outdistanced librarianship. Why else would the U.S. National Cartographic Information Center until very recently not even consider hiring a librarian to dispense information, but instead hire persons trained in cartography? William F. Poole may have been right when he said, "The information cannot be imparted by lectures; and who that is competent has the time to do the lecturing?"[20] Nonetheless, if library science is to be taught as a technique, practitioners should teach it. How many of us working in libraries with a resident library school have had a library science instructor refer students to reference works that were outdated ten years before?

The sad truth is that what was perhaps initially seen as a practical way to teach library science, that is, as a technique, ends up being not practical at all, for persons who do not know why they are doing something (for example, cataloging) cannot deal with the inevitable changes. If indeed library science is a science, it should be taught as such, with class hours for philosophy and theory—including such elementary points as why libraries (call them what you will) are of value to society—and laboratory hours for application and internship. Quite possibly, since library science has for its ambitious, even awesome, goal the organization and dissemination of all recorded knowledge as requested and required, library schools might even learn from other disciplines—by setting up cooperative agreements with the business school to teach a management course, with the computer science department to teach a computer applications course, and so forth. After all, if we are not particularly enthusiastic about other departments teaching research methods and bibliography in their subject, we should not expect to be able to teach their subjects either.[21]

Looking through the recent literature of library science education does allow the searcher to garner some encouraging signs. Courses in on-line bibliographic instruction are being taught, but only recently (though, in a classic understatement, it is recognized that "such systems

have clearly become a permanent part of the library profession"[22]). There is an increased emphasis on networking, computer technology, and managerial training in library school curricula,[23] and on the need to develop skills for use of print and nonprint, nontraditional media.

Admittedly, education is always a difficult, expensive procedure, constituting as it does "a kind of alchemy, the creative function of transmuting knowledge into wisdom."[24] It is also a very important process, and until such time as library schools not only reach an awareness of the current situation and probable future but make changes as needed, it is definitely a time of *caveat emptor* for the person interested in working in libraries. Library school students must be informed consumers, and must know that in today's competitive market many universities use an applicant's possession of a degree from an accredited school as a primary winnowing factor. While it is difficult to assess the training you are receiving before you have been out in the field, that is exactly what the library student must do, most logically by checking with practicing librarians. For example, we in map librarianship are a friendly crew, and are more than happy to talk to newcomers about new ideas and trends in the field. In addition, and perhaps primarily, library schools should take it upon themselves to predict market trends.

Specific Requirements for Map Librarianship Education

Supposing optimistically that after reading the preceding diatribe someone may still want to become any sort of librarian, let alone a map librarian, let us now move to specific requirements and recommendations for the education of the map librarian. For those who plan that far ahead, in undergraduate work the student should major in geography or geology, taking as many courses in cartography and map and aerial photograph interpretation as are offered; regional geography courses may be of assistance. This would also be an excellent time for the student to take courses in management and computer programming, and as many courses in reading knowledge of foreign languages as possible. In times past, library schools told prospective students to take whatever they wanted in their undergraduate work; let us hope those times are long gone, for management courses and computer programming courses should be demanded by all library schools of their students.

Once in library school, there are two checklists for the student to keep in mind, one relating to general library science courses, the other to map librarianship coursework. For the first, the student should take

management courses, either extensions of courses taken in undergraduate school or courses relating specifically to library management. In either case, budgeting must be included in the studies. Map libraries are especially prone to being mini-businesses, with the map librarian who runs a collection being responsible for managing the collection, its personnel and its budget effectively. Fair warning is hereby given: any map librarian who did not take management courses in graduate school or earlier will suffer for it financially (as, of course, will the collection he oversees) either by virtue of a lower salary or by having to take one of those expensive management workshops (which the librarian will probably have to pay for himself). If the library school does not offer management courses, and perhaps even if it does, the student should take basic courses offered by the business administration department of the university. Other courses that the student would do well to take as an undergraduate, and, again, may do well to take outside the library science department if such courses are taken in graduate school, are computer basics and computer programming. Computer use is going to become more and more dominant in libraries—consider that today $250,000 will buy the same computer power as the entire world possessed in 1960[25]—and the librarian not fully cognizant of what computers can do will pay heavily for such ignorance. The student is well advised to consider computer programming to be no more nor less than the new lingua franca, easily as universal as English.

Another course that the student needs unfortunately seems not yet to exist, that is, a course in reading foreign languages for cataloging and general reference purposes. Maps in Sanskrit are, fortunately for most map catalogers, not very common. But maps in Japanese are as common as maps in German; both nations' citizens seem to be map lovers and cartographers at heart, and while the Japanese generally and very kindly translate basic terms into English, the Germans are more inclined to leave the non-German-reading person to the mercies of the dictionary. Even though library users are in the main conversant with only one language, their native tongue (as any university reference librarian or even a shelver could bear witness), maps with information in a foreign language may still be relatively readily used by most patrons. Therefore, the map librarian will purchase them, and the map cataloger (who is usually the same person) will need to catalog them. Most foreign-language courses are much more detailed than the sort of course needed, not to mention having the wrong focus for the library student. It is a bit overdone to take an entire semester of Italian just to learn how to translate needed elements on a map, when it is rare that the cataloger

will need to translate more than 100 words, and the acquisitions librarian will probably not need to understand many more. Map catalogers should be able to catalog German, French, Russian, Japanese, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese foreign-language maps at the least, and, of course, English maps—which means that any prospective map librarian had best take both beginning and advanced cataloging, since if any maps are to be cataloged, the map librarian frequently must do them, and generally map cataloging is discussed only in advanced cataloging classes.

The second major focus of study comprises courses relating to map libraries and map librarianship. However, such courses are structured, they should include study about maps—their history, how to interpret them, how they are made, and how to care for and provide service for them—selection, acquisition, classification, cataloging, storage, reference, promotion (both of the maps and for the librarian!), preservation, restoration, and cartobibliography.

The practicalities of the matter are that there are, and will probably continue to be, few classic classroom possibilities for the prospective map librarian to learn about maps, given the relatively few library schools with map librarianship courses. Thus, the student will be involved mainly in standard courses, nonbook media courses and independent studies. This is probably just as well, since although there does seem to be a shift to more full-time positions, the vast majority of map librarian positions are part time, and the student would be well advised to learn how to handle government documents and general reference duties, as the map collection is most often linked with one of these departments. One possibility for the future is that the map library professional organizations might put together learning packages, composed of videotapes, slides, text, syllabus and reading list, that would either be purchased or rented by the library school, and that might also be used for continuing education.

The student is advised to try for an internship in a map collection, if for no other reason than to find out if he likes the work or not. All the student need do is to look in the most recent directory of map collections of North America (which at the time of writing is the third edition of *Map Collections in the United States and Canada*[26]) to locate the nearest collection.

Fortunately, there is an awareness among many library school faculty that "non-book media are assuming an increasingly important role in library collections, and the teaching of the organization of these materials has become more and more significant for the curriculum of

library education,"[27] so the prospective, persistent map librarian should be able to receive some training previous to his immersion in the map cases.

Post-degree, the most valuable learning experience the map librarian may have is the work itself, closely followed by convention attendance and workshops. Workshops on map collecting, map libraries and map librarianship are proliferating all over the United States, proof that there is indeed professional life after library school. And there is always (we hope) the Library of Congress's Geography and Map Division Summer Map Project, which has come to be an unofficial training ground for the neophyte map librarian. As for conventions, those sponsored by the Special Library Association's Geography and Map Division, by the Map and Geography Round Table of the American Library Association, by the Western Association of Map Libraries, by the Association of Canadian Map Libraries, and, for the working rich, by the International Cartographic Association's International Conference on Cartography and by the International Federation of Library Associations' Section for Geography and Map Libraries, are all and always informative and enjoyable. Recently, state map interest societies, such as the Michigan Map Society, the California Map Society and the British Columbia Map Society, are springing up all over North America.

Continuing education in maps for the non-map librarian is also extremely important. Maps are of value to almost all libraries, so to the hardened map librarian it logically follows that all librarians should know something about maps. Learning packages and workshops, sponsored either by library schools or by the relevant professional associations, seem to be the most promising. It is very true that "as the half-life of professional knowledge steadily declines, continuing education enables one to keep a step ahead of professional obsolescence."[28]

Conclusion

Education for map librarians encompasses the following:

1. specialization in map librarianship for librarians;
2. elementary introduction for non-map librarians; and
3. continuing training for map librarians in order to keep up with new developments and to fill in gaps in knowledge.[29]

A few points, some expressed earlier, deserve emphasis. The major point is that all librarians must pay attention to how the world around us

changes. It is all too easy, in the calm and serenity of a library, to ignore what goes on outside the window. It is also professionally fatal, for what happens outside will soon slouch through the doors of even the most chryselephantined of ivory towers. The rest of the world is now talking about each individual having to train for four or five jobs in a lifetime, so we librarians who want to stay in the field should plan on having that many drastic changes in the library world in our lifetime. We must stay awake and alive to change.

We are all going to have to be better managers, and we will have to know more about and do more in public relations work and in understanding our public. If the White House Conference on Library and Information Services did nothing more, it showed the horrifying gap between what librarians think needs to be done and what our best patrons think we should be doing. A large part of our management will be of automated machinery, as the computer becomes more and more the benevolent monster that runs the library.

Another major, in fact crucial, point is that the job outlook for map librarianship is not notable for its fulsomeness, and that it is immoral to educate persons for positions that do not exist. The number of map librarian positions opening up in any given year is relatively small, perhaps five or ten. It is therefore sensible to have as a goal in map librarianship to keep non-map librarians informed, beginning in library schools with the inclusion of map library information in both classic and nonbook media courses, and extending through workshops and papers at general conventions. Whatever we war-horses of the field do should work toward recognition of the importance of maps and the appreciation of cartographic materials not only by patrons but also by our fellow librarians, who, through no fault of their own, have not been fortunate enough to work with that compact, beautiful, functional medium, the map.

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Education for Map Librarianship

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