

Introduction

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ANNIVERSARIES ARE TIMES for taking stock of the past as well as conceiving new visions for the future. In librarianship we are at such a time: the centenary of library education. The first library school in the United States and in the world, opened in 1887—Melvil Dewey's School of Library Economy of Columbia College, predecessor of the New York State Library School at Albany and the later reconstituted Columbia University School of Library Service. The creation of the School of Library Economy signified the emergence of libraries as important social institutions that needed expert, knowledgeable librarians to run them. It also heralded the rise of librarianship as a self-conscious profession characterized by an evolving triad of specialized knowledge, skill in applying that knowledge, and a service ethos. This history has been a checkered one and not without struggle and ambivalence—both within the library education community and outside it in librarianship generally. Today, one hundred years after the founding, graduate library education has been accepted as a prerequisite for professional practice and offered in some of the finest universities in the United States, and library schools have produced a growing body of research. Yet problems remain. There is renewed questioning of the character, quality, and value of library education in a rapidly changing, insecure world.

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In 1986, in connection with the New York City conference of the American Library Association, the Association for Library and Information Science Education, as part of the centenary celebration, sponsored a symposium at Columbia University on library and information science education its status and future. An integral part of this meeting was a historical consideration of the course of education for librarianship—how we got from there to here, so to speak, and with speculation about where we go from here. The intellectual basis for the symposium is a two-part series in *Library Trends*—the first part, issued in advance of the meeting, is devoted to the history of library education; the second, the conference papers, focuses on contemporary issues and trends.

This *Library Trends* number on the history of library education is not intended to be a comprehensive or definitive treatment of the subject. Although there has been a good deal of research on related topics in recent years, much more remains to be done, as there is not yet a sufficiently large body of work to draw upon for thorough syntheses. Indeed, this *Library Trends* issue has been conceived as a vehicle for the presentation of original research and theoretical speculation as well as summaries and evaluations of existing research and thought. The aim was to gather together a group of thoughtful, intellectually sophisticated essays on a variety of themes and topics. Some papers were commissioned de novo; others are based on research in progress or on topics on which prospective authors have already written substantially.

A number of the papers take fresh points of view and have tried in a pioneering manner to integrate research in other fields with the study of our own professional education. The results constitute early attempts and initial steps to bring interpretations of our history into the mainstream of current historical and sociological thought. The conception of library education is deliberately broad, encompassing formal and informal modes and a variety of settings—library schools, libraries, and professional associations, among others. We hope that all the contributions will provoke new thought and further exploration.