Caroline Thomas. Library Education in the United Kingdom: Past History, Current Trends, Future Possibilities and Implications for Library Education in the United States. A Master's paper for the L.S. in L.S. degree. November 1999. 30 pages.Advisor: Melissa Cain.

This paper traces the short yet rich history of formal library education in both the United Kingdom and the United States from the late nineteenth century to the present, identifies and analyzes current trends in library education in these countries, particularly distance learning and education programs, and concludes in suggesting what the future holds for library education in the United Kingdom and in the U.S. The intention of the paper was to offer a comparative analysis of library education in the U.K. and the U.S. and in so doing show how, over the past century, library educators, librarians and students in these two countries have influenced one another. In the United States, research has shown that, even in more highly ranked programs, students are largely dissatisfied with the quality of the education they are receiving in library schools. With an understanding of the history of library education in the United Kingdom and some of the recent, innovative experiments that schools of library education have taken in that country, perhaps the overall quality of education in library science in the United States could be substantially improved.

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LIBRARY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: PAST HISTORY, CURRENT TRENDS, FUTURE POSSIBILITIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

by
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INTRODUCTION

In the century that has passed since Melvil Dewey established the world's first library school at Columbia University in January 1887, the education of librarians, not only in the United States, but throughout the world, has altered radically in a number of fundamental ways. The changing names of library schools are an excellent reflection of the evolution of the discipline. Dewey's original library school, for example, was known as the School of Library Economy. This gradually changed its name to the School of Library Service (Peiris, 1993). More recently, library schools have become known as schools of library science, and in the past decade, schools of information science. The terms *library science* and even *information science* seem increasingly obsolete and antiquated, as these disciplines are merging to a greater degree than ever before with other disciplines, particularly computer science, communications, education, and the social sciences in the broad sense of the term. As David Muddiman (1999) observes, the discipline of library science is facing increased competition from other disciplines:

> The core claim of the information and library sciences to academic legitimacy – their knowledge and research base in the organization and retrieval of information – has been challenged by the development of new sciences of resource based on computing, management and systems theory…The material reliance of educational programs upon a pre-eminently public sector labor market has ended, and information work itself has become diffuse, deinstitutionalized and deprofessionalized to a degree. As a result, a loose and shifting group of signifiers – Information / Communication / Library – Science /Studies/ Management-now represent academic enterprise in the field, and the precise institutional choice of label is dictated heavily by marketing concerns (p. 2).

The close of the twentieth century, characterized as it is by considerable advances in information technology, is a particularly appropriate time for librarians to reassess their social relevance and for schools of library and information to consider their priorities and ask a number of questions about curriculum as well as the role of library and information studies within the academy.

It has been recognized, at least by most within the field, that library and information science students are preparing to enter a *profession* as valid as those of law or medicine, yet the professional status of librarians continues to be questioned. Ian Cornelius (1996) notes that librarians play a vital role in modern life in that they act as providers of information. For Cornelius, "information is centrally important to modern life and librarians provide information, therefore libraries, librarians, information managers and their discipline and profession are centrally important to modern life" (p. 61). Nevertheless, since the formal inception of library education with the founding of the library school at Columbia, controversy has surrounded the establishment of library studies as a formal academic discipline. First and foremost, to what extent should librarianship be treated as an academic discipline, and should library schools focus on giving their students a broad education in the theory and principles of librarianship or helping them to gain practical experience and technical skills? Is it is possible for library schools to reconcile the practical and the theoretical in an effective manner? How should library schools go about integrating into their curriculum courses in the new and rapidly developing discipline known as information science, without *competing* with it?

This paper will explore these issues, questions and trends in library education from the dual perspectives of the United Kingdom and the United States for several

reasons. First, libraries and librarianship have a particularly rich and complex history in both countries. Since libraries have existed in Britain in some form in Britain since the Middle Ages, librarians must be educated to work with materials ranging from medieval manuscripts to sixteenth century incunabula to the most recently published materials. Peter Harvard-Williams (1987) notes that:

> Libraries in Britain…are not the outcome of an overall governmental policy, but have arisen from specific needs for books, serials and other documents and for information at different times and for different clienteles. Moreover, they have arisen over a long period-manuscripts from the sixth century, college libraries from the fifteenth century, university libraries from the seventeenth century, national libraries from the eighteenth century, special and public libraries mainly from the nineteenth century, each overlaying the already existing provision (p. 91).

Furthermore, British librarians are being trained to work in libraries ranging from the Bodleian Library, founded nearly four hundred years ago, to very recently established modern libraries. Library education in the United States also has a rich tradition, dating back to the founding of the first library school by Dewey. Secondly, although library education has evolved along fundamentally different lines in the United Kingdom and the United States, at the present time the two are moving in increasingly similar, although certainly not identical, directions.

Higher Education in the United Kingdom: The Backdrop

Changes in library education and training in the United Kingdom have taken place against the backdrop of broader changes in the system of higher education, and it is therefore crucial to understand this broader context in which education for librarians has evolved. In the past hundred years, the evolution of higher education in Great Britain has been characterized by two major trends, both of which have had a strong impact on the education of librarians. First, the establishment of a greater number of universities as well as pieces of legislation such as the Higher Education Act of 1944 have made higher education accessible to a far greater portion of the population. Secondly, in light of the great technological advances which have taken place in the past century, universities have been forced to place an increasingly strong emphasis on professional, vocational and technical education.

In the United States, professional and vocational education have always been held in relatively high regard, and since early in the nation's history, the university has been viewed, at least to some degree, as a training ground for future professionals. Even elite institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were established as theological schools where young men were prepared for the clergy. By contrast, professional education within the British university has a far more checkered history.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the English university was a place in which professional education flourished. The largest, most prestigious schools in the university

were those devoted to the training of clergy, physicians and lawyers (Cobban, 1988). The very structure of the medieval university, with its hierarchy of masters and students, strongly reflected the structure of the professional guilds.

By the late eighteenth century, however, the cultural attitude toward the role of universities had shifted profoundly. Universities were perceived as lofty preserves of the liberal arts where young men went to receive an education that would make them cultured, cultivated and well-rounded gentlemen rather than as places associated with professional training. Vocational studies as such were limited to the ancient, established professions such as law and medicine. As Kate Wood (1997) puts it, "The nineteenth century view of university education was that it was to cultivate the mind" (p. 14). This attitude was perhaps best summarized by John Stuart Mill (1867) in his Inaugural Address at the University of St. Andrews:

> There is a tolerably general agreement about what a university is *not* (emphasis mine). It is not a place of professional education. Universities are not intended to teach the knowledge required to fit men for some special mode of gaining a livelihood. Their object is not to make skillful lawyers and physicians or engineers, but capable and cultivated human beings (p. 22).

Until the late nineteenth century, professionals, including lawyers, physicians, architects, and engineers, acquired the skills and techniques his vocation required primarily through apprenticeship, or "learning by doing." A lawyer might learn his profession by training at one of the Inns of Court, an engineer through an apprenticeship at an engineering firm (Wood, 1997). Librarianship was no exception to this pattern. Generally speaking, well into the nineteenth century, people came to high posts in librarianship by having jobs in the country's major libraries from the time they were

young boys, thus learning the profession from its most notable practitioners (Bramley, 1980). At the Bodleian Library of Oxford University, for example, young boys who were recruited as workers in order to reduce staff costs rose to positions of prominence in the Bodleian and in other libraries throughout the country, as Bramley (1980) observes:

> …Working in Bodley was by no means a dead end occupation for a promising boy. If, as usually happened, there was no assistantship available for him he would be put on the extra staff until he had found a job, or taken his degree. And to some extent Nicholson achieved his object of making Bodley a training ground for librarians. Boys recruited by him and trained under his watchful eye in all branches of their profession, eventually attained to the post of Keeper of Printed Books in the Bodley and to the chief librarianship of the National Central Library, of the London Library, of Chetham's at Manchester, of the Shakespeare Memorial Library at Stratford-upon-Avon and of the university libraries of Sheffield and Melbourne (p. 23).

The late nineteenth century, however, proved to be a time of significant cultural and educational change. The Industrial Revolution had brought with it strong demands on commerce and industry, and education of a more vocational nature was needed to train citizens to meet these demands. Professional organizations such as the RSAC (the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce) founded in 1754, and CGLI (City and Guilds of London Institute), founded in 1878, were established to provide both examinations and qualifications in the technical and vocational subjects that were not typically taught in the universities.

At the same time, the number of universities in Britain was beginning to grow significantly. Prior to 1877, the year in which the Library Association was established, there were only seven fully established universities in the United Kingdom, Oxford and Cambridge among them. Between 1877 and 1945, however, fifteen more universities, the so-called "red brick universities" such as the University of London and the University of

Leeds, were established. Although the emphasis remained on academic subjects and on research, the range of subjects did expand to include more technical subjects such as engineering.

It was in the period following World War II that technical and vocational education began to be developed in earnest and that higher education was made available to a large segment of the population. More progressive attitudes developed as people came to believe that higher education should be available to all deserving individuals, not merely to the sons and daughters of the elite. The Higher Education Act of 1962, for example, provided for mandatory financial support for all students admitted to university first degree courses. In 1970, another barrier to higher education fell with the founding of the Open University, which embraced the concepts of open learning. This university did not require students to have any formal entry qualifications, allowed them the option of engaging in distance learning, as well as the flexibility of part-time study. The Robbins Report of 1963 was significant in that it reflected these new attitudes towards higher education and who should be able to pursue it, stating "that courses of higher education should be available to all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them" (Robbins, p. 6). Other studies and reports of the 1960s were also influential in opening the realm of higher education to a far greater portion of the population. The Newsom Report, for example, suggested raising the mandatory age for leaving school to sixteen (Wood, 1997). In the late 1960s, additional institutions of higher education called Advanced Colleges of Advanced Technology, also know as polytechnics, were established. Even more significantly, the founding of the CNAA (Council for National

Academic Awards) empowered these new institutions to grant degrees in vocational subjects.

The 1980s and 1990s have proven to be a rather difficult time of change and turbulence in the world of higher education in the United Kingdom (Ainley, 1994). Unfortunately, vast increases in the number of students entering higher education coincided with major government funding cut-backs. The White Report of 1987 attempted to determine to what extent the number of students entering higher education would increase by the turn of the millennium. The report estimated that, between 1987 and 2,000, the percentage of the population entering higher education at the age of eighteen would increase from 14.5% to 20% (Wood, 1997). In fact, in retrospect the rate of increase seems to have been much greater; according to another government study, there was actually a 53% increase in the number of students enrolled in higher education courses between 1989 and 1994 (Wood, 1997).

Another major development of the past two decades was the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in 1986. This body was founded with the intention "to achieve a coherent national framework for vocational qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland" (Arundale, 1996). These qualifications, intended to assess an individual's professional competence rather than his academic competence, provided a new route by which workers could obtain profession qualifications and status. This would allow people who had no traditional, formal educational qualifications to seek a professional degree.

Another event highly symbolic of the dramatic changes in British higher education occurred in 1992, when the former polytechnic colleges become full-fledged

universities in their own right, giving them more academic freedom and in effect validating the presence of professional and vocational education within the university (Ainley, 1994). The general expansion of higher education will undoubtedly continue into the next century. The Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals estimates, for example, that the percentage of the population under twenty-one participating in some form of higher education will be close to 40% by the year 2005. Ainley (1994) feels that the expansion of higher education throughout Britain should have a strong and positive impact on British society: "Patterns of education and qualification are changing fundamentally, because more pupils form all backgrounds are staying on at school…So, if one third of the age range, as well as many more adults, can be helped to think creatively, logically and independently by their higher education experiences, this represents a major cultural change for society" (p. 28).

The general expansion and increased accessibility of higher education, particularly vocational education, in Britain has had a profound impact on the development of the training and education for librarians. The improved status of professional education with the university setting has allowed library education to slowly make the transition from training in the form of apprenticeships with other librarians to education in the form of graduate level study of the principles and theories of librarianship.

The Library Association: Its Influence on Education for Librarians in the UK

The United Kingdom's Library Association was founded in 1877, one year after the American Library Association was founded in the United States. The Association continues to be a strong and vital organization today, with approximately 25,000 members both in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

Despite the very similar founding dates for Britain's Library Association and the American Library Association, education for librarians developed very differently in the two countries. In the United States, library schools have essentially developed independently of any one governing organization and have been free to set their own curriculum, decide what degrees to award and how to examine their students. Although the American Library Association does play an important role in accrediting library schools and determining the overall quality of library schools, it does not limit the freedom of individual library schools to determine their own requirements and curriculum. By contrast, library education in Britain has, historically, been dominated and even monopolized by the Library Association. Only very recently, in the past decade or so, has this truly begun to change now that all library schools in Britain are departments of universities, although the Library Association does continue to play a very significant role in the world of United Kingdom libraries.

From the early days of its history, there was much controversy and discord over what the function of the Library Association should be. There were those who thought

that the Association should have the role of a trade union, while others felt that it should act as an examining and accrediting body. Within a short time, the Library Association opted to move in the second direction and gave its first examinations in 1885. Those who passed these examinations would obtain a Library Association degree in librarianship.

In order to obtain a Library Association degree, candidates had to pass a number of examinations and demonstrate a knowledge in a wide range of subjects. Indeed, the syllabus that was set by the Library Association in 1881 would probably give most present library students, graduate students with a good deal of formal education, much difficulty. Essentially, a candidate had to pass three sets of examinations: First, a preliminary examination in general subject areas such as English grammar, arithmetic, history, geography and English literature. Secondly, there was an intermediate set of examinations in which a candidate had to demonstrate knowledge of English and another European literature, classification, cataloging, bibliography, library management and administration as well as adequate cataloguing knowledge of at least two foreign languages (Bramley, 1969). In a final examination a candidate had to show advanced knowledge of all these subjects, demonstrate knowledge of three languages. To obtain the degree, they would also need to have at least two years of library experience.

Despite the formidable syllabus, however, the actual examination questions put emphasis on rote memorization and had little application to the field of librarianship. They included such questions as "Give the titles of ten selected English novels published within the last ten years" and "Give a list of Dickens' works in order of importance," "What provisions would you make against fire," and leading newspapers as to be read easily by several readers?" (Bramley, 1969).

Initially, the Library Association was unable to attract many librarians to its examinations. Those who did decide to take them had a very high rate of failure. In part, this can be attributed to the very poor reception of the Library Association examinations to the fact that, first of all, librarians of this period had a very poor general level of education and were expected to work long, grueling hours that made preparing for the Library Association's examinations difficult if not impossible. Bramley's (1980) description of a typical British library employee of the late nineteenth century would undoubtedly shock most present day librarians:

> A serious concern was the low standard of general education of the average…assistant in British libraries in the nineteenth century. The monetary rewards which a career in librarianship offered were not calculated to attract the more able and better educated members of society. Normally, those working in the more humble posts in public libraries would have completed their education at the age of fourteen or even earlier. This would have been sufficient only to provide the most basic of educational skills; the ability to read and write simple English with some knowledge of arithmetic (p. 27).

Furthermore, there were no library schools or formal courses to help the students prepare for the examinations. Library education is considered to have formally begun in Britain with a very primitive form of correspondence course. James Ogle, one of the students who sat for the first examinations given by the Library Association in 1885, began to write a column called "The Library Assistants' Corner," which appeared in the periodical *The Library* (later *The Library Association Record*) from 1895 to 1899. This was intended to answer questions and give advice to library assistants who wished to take the Library Association's exams but lacked formal the formal educational resources and instruction the library schools would later provide. Ogle (1899) writes on subjects such as charging systems, the then newly created Dewey decimal system of classification, and

cataloging, as well as gives sample examination questions, for example: "Draw up a list

of six titles of books and provide each title with a brief annotation suitable for printing in

a popular catalogue" or "Mention a popular book on 1) seismology 2) thermodynamics 3)

ichthyology 4) demography" (p. 10). Ogle's own answers to these questions would

appear in the following issue of the journal. At the end of each month, a small monetary

prize would be given to the person who had given written in with the best answers.

The extension of a Royal Charter to the Library Association in 1898 did much to

enhance the professional status of librarians and to encourage the education of those

working in libraries. It indicated that librarianship had, in the view of the state, obtained

the status of a profession rather than an occupation. Speaking at the 1898 Annual

Meeting of the Association, Henry Tedder remarked:

> This year has been memorable for us in the acquisition of a Charter of
> Incorporation. This has made a great alteration in the position of our
> profession, which has thus been officially recognized by the state. Our
> future work in the direction of ameliorating the status of raising the
> qualifications of librarians cannot but be greatly aided by this royal mark
> of favor, while our influence in spreading library facilities will be more
> powerful (cited in Bramley, 1980, p. 32).

The mission of the Library Association as stated in its Royal Charter is: "To

promote the establishment of new libraries; to endeavour to secure better legislation for

public libraries; to unite all persons engaged or interested in library work for the purposes

of promoting the best administration of libraries and to encourage bibliographical

research…" (Annals, p. 75).

In the same eventful last decade of the nineteenth century, librarians in the United

Kingdom were inspired and influenced by developments in the United States. The

founding of the School of Library Economics at Columbia University by Melvil Dewey

had set a precedent for library education throughout the world, and librarians in the United Kingdom did not wish to be left behind. In two important articles, "A summer school of library science" and "A plan for providing technical instruction for library students and assistants," James Ogle and Minnie Stewart Rhodes James argued that a formal system of education for librarians was needed in the United Kingdom. Muriel Petherbridge, another librarian, visited Melvil Dewey's school of librarianship in 1892 and argued that a library school should be established in London at University College (Bramley, 1969). These arguments did have some influence, and summer schools began to be established to help library students prepare for their examinations. Although not up to the quality of full-time, graduate education, the summer schools did provide a certain amount of instruction in areas such as library history, the printing and illustration of books, as well as cataloging, bibliography and classification. Also, the summer schools allowed library students to make practical field trips. For example, the 1893 summer school featured several visits to the book-binding department of the British Museum Library, where staff members and workers gave the librarians demonstrations (Bramley, 1980). The summer schools, held between 1893 and 1897, proved to be extremely popular, attracting approximately forty-five students from all parts of the United Kingdom. This may not seem like a terribly large number today, but given that the first Library Association examinations only attracted three students, this did indeed seem a substantial improvement.

In 1902, the first library science course in an institution of university status was introduced at the London School of Economics. This was an initially successful but not particularly long-lived venture, lasting only until 1914 with the outbreak of the First

World War. The difficulty proved to be that, although the school attracted a large number of students who were interested in gaining the prestige of enrolling in courses at an institution such as the London School of Economics, there was a struggle between the school, which felt that it should be able to control what was taught and set its own set its own syllabus, and the Library Association, which felt that in its capacity as examining body it ought to have the privilege of determining what was taught. Sydney Webb (1902), a prominent librarian, expressed his view that he didn't feel "professional or any other kind of education should be managed entirely by a professional association" (p. 195). By contrast, the Secretary of the Library Association's Education Committee, proposed that "a system of library schools for the British Isles should be established as early as possible under the control of the Library Association" (Cited in Bramley, 1980, p. 30). One of the most important outcomes of the establishment of university level library science courses was that, for the most part, public librarians pursued the Library Association's credentials while those who followed courses at University College and received that diploma tended to become involved in academic and special librarianship. This contributed to a rift between public librarians and academic and special librarians which persisted until very recently in the United Kingdom.

By 1919, the time was right for the foundation of a formal library school. The United Kingdom's first library school was founded at the University of London. The two year program at University College lead to a Diploma of University College. The introduction of new qualifications was not greeted with a great amount of enthusiasm within the library profession. Those librarians who had already earned the LA qualifications feared that the development of new qualifications associated with a

university would lessen the value of their own Library Association credentials. As it happened, what the introduction did was to deepen the already growing rift between public librarians and academic librarians. Kate Wood (1997) notes: "Posts in public libraries tended to continue to go to those who had taken the LA examinations by part-time classes (which were established in a number of large cities) or correspondence study, receiving practical training in post, while the University College diplomates went into academic and research libraries" (p. 26). This continued to be a point of contention well into the 1960s. The other major debate initiated by the foundation of the Library Association was the question of whether librarianship was an occupation best occupied by university graduates, or those who did not necessarily have many formal academic credentials but had received a significant amount of practical training. Employers made frequent complaints that the university graduates did not have the practical, technical skills involved in librarianship. On the other hand, complaints were also made that those who had focused more on the practical aspects of librarianship did not have enough education and broad knowledge. The problem, of course, continues to persist to this day: which is preferable, training of education? How can practical experience and theoretical education be balanced?

During the period subsequent to World War II, library education began to expand substantially along with the entire higher education system throughout the United Kingdom. The most significant work of this era was done by Lionel McColvin, who published a highly influential report entitled "The Public Library System of Great Britain: A Report on Its Present Condition with Proposals for Post-war Reorganization." (Wood, 1997) Part of this work was devoted to the education of library professionals. It also

suggested that more library schools should be established in different parts of the country

in eight different colleges: Manchester College of Technology, City of Birmingham

Technical College, Newcastele-upon-Tyne Municipal College of Commerce,

Loughborough College, North Gloucestershire Technical College, Cheltenham, Brighton

Technical College, Leeds College of Commerce and Cardiff Technical College.

Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, library schools gradually gained greater

and greater autonomy. These decades saw major changes in the roles played by the

library schools and by the Library Association. Events such as the establishment of the

CNAA, which allowed the technical colleges in which many library schools were located

the authority to award degrees, gave library schools freedom to break from the Library

Association. Although the Library Association continued to maintain control over

examinations until 1964, at this point it stopped giving examinations and adopted a new

role as an accrediting body which would oversee the quality of library schools rather than

certifying and examining candidates (Munford, 1976). Nevertheless, the Library

Association does continue to maintain a registry of professional librarians, and vestiges

of it dominance remain to this day. Those who have both earned academic qualifications

in librarianship and demonstrated professional competence through the development of a

work portfolio are granted the status of "chartered librarian," a term coined by librarian

Raymond Irwin in the 1940s to describe those librarians who had earned Library

Association Qualifications (Wood, 1997). Earning the title of charted librarian is still a

very helpful step in advancing one's library career, even if it is not absolutely necessary.

Without question, library education in the United Kingdom, although it was

hindered for many years by the power struggle between the Library Association and the

library schools, has truly grown and evolved in a positive direction. Ironically enough, it is now in the United States, which inspired the Untied Kingdom to move towards a more decentralized system of library education, that some are beginning to propose a national system of library schools, to be under the direction of one governing body, perhaps the ALA. Due to the size of the United States and relatively large number of library schools, however, it seems highly unlikely that this will come to pass.

Current Trends in UK Library Education

This portion of the paper will examine a number of the current trends in education for librarians in the United Kingdom. I think it important to identify several major trends from the outset: 1) an increasing number of students with a high level of education (university graduates) who also have qualifications in other subject matters and are capable of conducting high level research 2) an increasing emphasis on information science and its social role rather than the specific emphasis on libraries that formerly characterized library education 3) the development of new qualifications that don't come from either the library schools or the Library Association and 4) increased flexibility and access to library education through the development of open learning and distance education programs.

At present, there are a total of seventeen library schools in the United Kingdom, all of which are located in university departments. This is a significant departure from the past, when many library schools were located in institutions that were considered inferior to universities. Now that the polytechnic schools have become universities in their own right, the quality and quantity of students they attract has improved. Although this is a welcome development in many respects, it has put significant pressures on the schools given recent economic difficulties. It has simply been very difficult for library schools to accommodate the growing number of students who wish to pursue degrees with more and more limited resources and faculty. According to Wilson (1993):

> The schools and departments of LIS have been under three sets of pressures: from the established information professions, from the changing employment market for their graduates, and from within their own institutions as a consequence of political decisions (p. 224).

Increasingly, library schools in the United Kingdom, as in the United States, emphasize information science and the technical skills that go along with being an information provider in the age of the Internet rather than on library science as such. This is certainly not limited to the United Kingdom and is also a major issue on this side of the Atlantic. Drawing on my own experience at the School of Information and Library Science, I feel that there is sometimes a rather bitter rivalry between the two fields. In Britain, perhaps, this is the debate that will take the place of the struggle between the library schools and the Library Association, which no longer seems to be as strong an issue at this point. Some innovative departments in the UK are finding ways to merge information science, library science, and other disciplines. One strong example of this is the program in the Polytechnic of North London. In this program, the Department of Library and Information Studies is part of the Faculty of Social Studies; thus, the program puts a unique emphasis on the social context of library and information work. The candidate progresses through several levels. At first, the library and information science candidate takes the same courses as students enrolled in other social science fields, for example "Individual in Society I," "Social History and Social Policy," "Introduction to Law," and "Information in Society." At the final level, students specialize in courses for their particular track. Information scientists and librarians would be required to take courses such as "Fundamentals of Automated Information Processing," "Cultures, Information and Communication," "Political and Economic

Analyses of Information and Communication Systems," and "Computers and Information

Access." Finally, when these requirements have been met, library and information

science specialists choose their remaining credits from courses such as "Libraries,

Librarianship and History," "Managing Information Services" and "Popular Literature"

among others (Whitbeck, 1990). In this manner, library student move in a gradual manner

from a broad emphasis on the social science and the study of society in general, to the

study of information and its role in society, and finally to the more specific study of

libraries.

Furthermore, newer, less conventional qualifications are emerging for librarians

in the United Kingdom. The days of entering the profession only through the Library

Association have definitely come to an end. For example, the S/NVQs (Scottish and

National Vocational Qualifications) have emerged as an alternative professional

qualification over the past fifteen years. Introduced in 1986, these relatively new

vocational qualifications are geared toward evaluating a person's job performance and

practical. Technical skills rather than their mastery of the theories and principles of

information and library work. The NVQs cover a wide range of vocational and

professional competence, from level 1 (low-level technical qualifications) to level 5 (deep

professional understanding and approximately equivalent to an advanced university

degree.) At present, librarians and information specialists can only obtain an NVQ up to

level 4, although that should soon change (Arundale, 1996). Essentially, a candidate

presents evidence, which can take virtually any form from memos to videotapes of the

candidate at work to interviews with the candidate's superiors, to an assessor who

determines whether the candidate has successfully acquired certain skills, or "elements"

that are part of a written standard. For example, to obtain an NVQ in library and information science at Level 3, a candidate would have to demonstrate that they have developed the following skills to an acceptable degree:

- Provide information/material to user

- Organize information/material

- Solve problems on behalf of customers

- Maintain services and operations to meet quality standards

Although they are being more widely accepted by librarians and information specialists, the NVQs nevertheless remain quite controversial, and many consider them to be, at best, a good supplement to an advanced academic qualification rather than a substitute for one. Some academics such as Wilson (1995) see the NVQs as benefiting the organization rather than the worker:

> Let there be no mistake-the benefits [of the S/NVQs] are for the *organization*: the worker is a cog in the machine, ground to fit the other cogs to interact more effectively (at least from the point of view of the organization). In essence, therefore, the scheme is anti-humanistic, mechanistic, Taylorism made manifest…The real answer to the problems that librarians and information managers face is not narrowly-focused, competency based, part-time training but effective, full-time professional education (p. 381).

It cannot be denied, though, that NVQs are gaining in acceptance and appeal. At a time when many employers complain that workers and professional emerging from library schools lack competence in basic technical skills, the NVQs provide evidence that an individual is capable of performing on the job as well as in the classroom. Furthermore, they are easily accessible as one does not have to have any academic qualifications to obtain them and they are obtained as one works, so one does not need to leave one's job or interrupt one's professional development.

Distance education, an educational concept which has recently regained popularity in the United Kingdom, has been defined by Holmberg (1977) in the following manner:

> …the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization (p. 52).

Certainly, distance education is not exactly innovative and, in fact, it has rather a long history in UK library education. In the nineteenth century, when there were no formal schools of librarianship, candidates had to prepare for the Library Association's examinations through correspondence courses. These were gradually phased out as the library schools were established, and it began to be widely believed that correspondence courses were vastly inferior compared with conventional, full-time study.

The first experiment with distance learning by an established United Kingdom Library School began in November 1985, when the College of Libarianship Wales at Aberystwyth initiated a three-year course which would lead to a Master's Degree in the management of library and information services. This began with a class of fifteen students but has now expanded to approximately thirty-five students per year. The course needed to be established, mainly, because there are no library schools in southwest England and because the college is located in a remote, rural area far from the major cities of Wales. This made it an ideal location for an experiment with distance learning. The course takes three years, two of which are spent in course-work, while the remaining year is spent writing a thesis under the supervision of an advisor. The academic year begins in September, when students spend three intensive days meeting with advisors and

fellow students. They are introduced to the content of the courses they will be taking and prevented from feeling a sense of academic isolation. Each student remains in telephone contact with a selected supervisor throughout the year while completing their coursework. The structure of each course is similar and is student is provided with:

- A study guide giving learning objectives, study directions, a set of self assessment questions and any written assignment connected with the unit

- An audiotape cassette which carries basic lecture material, varying from 35 minutes to about 50 minutes

- Supplementary material containing definitions, diagrams, quotations, detail not appropriate for the tape, etc.

- Recommended reading

The success of the program has, to this point, proved remarkable. According to Edwards (1991), the reaction of both students and faculty has been extremely favorable, the drop-out rate is extremely low and there have been very few administrative difficulties.

Future Possibilities and Conclusions

The evolution and development of library education in the United Kingdom is, as this paper has suggested, a rather complex subject about which it is difficult to generalize. Although library education in the UK has grown differently than in the U.S., at the turn of the millennium I believe library schools in these two countries, due to the technological changes that are occurring and making the world a far smaller place, will have a far greater impact on each other than ever before.

While it is not possible to say for certain what directions library education will take in the United Kingdom, I believe, given the current trends, there are things that can be said with certainty. Without question, the boundaries between library science, information science and other disciplines, particularly those such as computer science, business management and the like will begin to fade and even in some cases disappear, as the integrated course at the Polytechnic of London I explored above suggests. Also, it seems certain that the development of IT will have an increasing impact on library education. With an increased number of non-traditional age or employed students entering higher education, I think it is extremely likely that distance learning initiatives such as the one in Wales will expand, grow and perhaps begin to replace the more traditional modes of education. Certainly, as the population entering graduate education changes, library schools will be forced to reconsider their methods of course delivery.

This leads to the significant question of how the changes that are currently affecting education in information and library science in the United Kingdom might affect library education in the United States in the near future. Traditionally, I think, we in the United States have viewed ourselves as the leaders in the field of education in library science, perhaps not without some justification. The world's first library school was, after all, founded in the United States. At this point however, it cannot be denied that library education in the United States is currently plagued by a number of ills, financial, political and curricular. In the past decade, several important library education programs throughout the United States have closed, at Case Western Reserve, Brigham Young, and most notably and symbolically, the pioneering library school of Columbia University (East, 199). My own experience as a student at the School of Information and Library Science, the top-ranked library program in the nation, suggests that a large number of students feel a certain amount of dissatisfaction with some courses in the core curriculum. I would recommend that, in order for United States library programs to remain relevant, they should consider experimenting with the following concepts that are currently being implemented in library programs in the United Kingdom.

- Experiment with distance learning initiatives. To some extent, this is already being adopted, for example an experimental distance learning program in library science at Syracuse University (Small, 1999). Increasingly, library and information science students are not of traditional student age and must balance their studies with family and financial obligations and need greater flexibility.

- Integrate library and information studies with other academic departments; create a link between library science and other fields of study.

- Create a balance between academic theory and practice by initiating requirements or qualifications that indicate a student's competence in practice as well as in the classroom.

This is an exciting and perhaps unique time for library education not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the world. I will be extremely interested to observe the future of library education as it develops over the next several decades.

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