Educating for Recordkeeping and Information Management

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- *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science,* vol. 34, no. 1, Winter 1993. Special theme issue edited by Richard J. Cox titled 'Educating the American Archivist for the Twenty-First Century'.

- F. Gerald Ham, *Towards Career Professionalisation; An Education Programme for New Zealand Archivists and Records Managers,* ARANZ, Wellington, 1994. 96 pp.

- University of New South Wales, *School of Information Library and Archive Studies; . . . . Student Information.* Processed booklet, 1995. 33 pp.

- University College London Graduate School, *Graduate Studies in Library, Archive and Information Studies.* Printed booklet, ?1994. 17 pp.

- Monash University, *Bachelor of Information Management.* Printed booklet, 1994. 24 pp.

Midway through the 1990s, Australian archives and records education is very much back on the agenda. New courses have appeared in the West and others elsewhere redesigned or relocated; the development of competency standards for the archives and records industry is about to get under way; a TAFE level national curriculum for records management has been finalised; subjects have begun to be offered via Open Learning television and the Internet; and education is now being discussed at national and more specialised conferences.[1]

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I

In Canada, where our glances turn to so often nowadays, an assessment of educational developments by John Smart in the current issue of *Archivaria* was decidedly upbeat. In the US, however, at least in the early 1990s, the outlook—judged by Richard Cox's special theme issue (Winter 1993) of the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* (JELIS)—was much gloomier. Of the five pieces he assembles under the banner 'Educating the American Archivist for the Twenty-First Century', that by Timothy Ericson is the most determinedly honest and critical. His '"Abolish the Recent": The Progress of Archival Education' analysed the progress made particularly by the Society of American Archivists in addressing the training and education needs of its members. Their journey from a workshop training mentality towards one recognising the fundamental importance of a full graduate program as the standard pre-appointment professional qualification has been very gradual and the results still fall short of Canadian, European and Australian achievements.

Luciana Duranti's 'The Archival Body of Knowledge' is the other key contribution for the moment warranting comment. In a piece showing the breadth of reading we have come to expect from her, she summarised the development of archival education in Europe and of the parallel evolution of the components of a distinctive archival body of knowledge, namely archival doctrine and science (i.e. it comprises a theory and a methodology). Significantly, the roots of that body of knowledge draw from diplomatics, law and history, and in the study of the nature of documents in which distinctions between archives administration and records management do not exist. Her description of the various systems of archival education in Europe (there is clearly no single model) and their translation to a 'happy medium' in Canada raise interesting questions about the four graduate based approaches adopted in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Certainly all Australian programs now attempt to cover the records life cycle or the records continuum.

Closer to home, one of the most important recent developments was the commissioning by the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ) of the US government archivist and educator F. Gerald Ham to investigate the education and training needs of New Zealand's archivists and records managers. His report, *Towards Career Professionalisation*, noted the historical background, discussed the surveyed opinion of locals, canvassed the arguments for alternative solutions, and presented as his key recommendations

- for archivists a university based 1-2 year postgraduate diploma/MA which should also be available via distance education, and

- for records managers a polytechnic based one year certificate which should also be available via distance education.

In other recommendations (p. 34–5) Ham argued

- that interim solutions such as short courses and an archival field service should be investigated for sole-charge archivists and small repositories

- that attention be paid to continuing professional development

- for a clearing house for archival information to be established at the National Archives, and

- that ARANZ implement the recommendations, take various post-appointment training responsibilities, and promote the archives/records management profession and promote job creation.

In supporting a university based postgraduate diploma as the desirable pre-appointment qualification, Ham rejected (though not entirely) the idea of an institute based at the National Archives and affiliated with a degree granting university. He rejected too a polytechnic level qualification for archivists and a qualification combining archives administration and records management. His judgements naturally enough are a compromise between his view of what constituted the ideal and what was locally popular, feasible and market tested.

It is risky as an outsider with no direct experience of the New Zealand scene to assert whether Ham 'got it right'. In any case some tests for this lie in the future; as he himself wrote, his 'blueprint' was not an end in itself but the first step. His judgements, largely based on a four week mid-1993 tour of New Zealand, generated widespread discussion and comment in the New Zealand archival literature.[2] In a sense, the published commentaries represent volume two of the report. For this reviewer, two areas in particular from the report and the local reaction stand out. The first was Ham's decision, though not specifically singled out in his brief, to pay special attention to the needs of what he called 'sole-charge archivists and small repositories'. His attempt to address the education and training needs of this often neglected majority should be applauded and his ideas for them studied closer to home where small archival operations are even more numerous and isolated. The second concerns Ham's view that archives and records management education

warrant separate solutions, one a university higher degree the other a polytechnic certificate. His justification is question-begging (p. 20) and inconsistent in its response to local views (pp. 18, 19) and use of Australian parallels (pp. 18, 23).

At one point Ham referred to Australia's two 'integrated' archives and records masters programs, those offered by Monash and Melbourne.[3] The School of Information Library and Archive Studies at University of New South Wales (UNSW) could now be added to the list and its 1995 booklet *Student Information* offers a first glimpse of the results of its recently redesigned curricula. The name changes, from Graduate Diploma in Information Management—Archives Administration to Graduate Diploma in Information Management—Archives/Records and from Master of Archives Administration to Master of Information Management—Archives/Records, signal marked changes in content. But the basic philosophy espoused by librarianship academics such as Professors Wilma Radford and Mel Weinstock in the 1970s is still evident, namely that archives and librarianship in theory are but two subspecies of a larger discipline called information management.[4] Thus the 1995 archives and records diploma students must study five core subjects: Information Technology—Access Systems and Resources; Communication and Information in Society; Management for Information Professionals; Information Systems—Analysis Design and Management; and Information in Context.

From its earliest years, this compulsory core attracted two criticisms from archivists, (i) that a genuine graduate program in archives had enough ground to cover without being required to include general information management subjects as well, and (ii) that the common core subjects were not taught with sufficient attention to the archival applications and examples.[5] This is not the place to discuss the relevance of information management in an archives and records curriculum, though one may observe in passing that in over twenty years the UNSW has never managed to build beyond just the two specialisations. If there ever were hopes that programs in for example, museum studies or health information management would be offered, they have not been realised, and with these disciplines available elsewhere in Sydney, unlikely to in the foreseeable future.[6] The idea persists, however, in more modest form. The introduction to the current student booklet states that the flexibility of the new curriculum caters for students' special interests, be they 'electronic records, information retrieval, management of information services or in regional issues and challenges with particular emphasis on the Pacific and Southeast Asia'.

The archives/records curriculum now consists of a subject on Recordkeeping Principles and Structures, three subjects covering four key functions (control, accessibility, disposal and storage), an issues/problems subject, a field work subject, and eight electives from which two must be selected covering areas such as the management of special media, oral history and conservation. Judging from the subject descriptions, the new diploma represents a broadening of earlier curricula to more systematically combine archives administration and records management approaches[7] and to include coverage of such matters as recordkeeping systems and electronic records. A determination to extract maximum value from fieldwork experience is also evident. The result reflects the established interests and specialisations of the three archives lecturers but also Ann Pederson's research begun in the early 1990s for the Australian Archives' technical training scheme and for her major 1992 ICA congress presentation.[8] How the new subjects 'sit together' in practice remains to be seen.

The curriculum revision also resulted in the replacement of the Research Masters with a two year coursework masters, possibly to make it more attractive to archivists in mid-career only able to undertake part-time study.[9] In line with practice elsewhere, this program articulates with the Graduate diploma. Something of the past remains in some of the seven second year subjects offered such as Management of Electronic Records and Data Archives, Recordkeeping and Legal/Ethical Accountability, Archival Development in Asia and the Pacific and Archive History. A professional attachment must also be taken as a summer session. Understandably, the choice of subjects is greater than that offered in the former research degree, and freedom to choose from graduate subjects from elsewhere within and outside the School is also allowed. Opinions will differ as to whether the net result is an improvement, but the increased subject preparation workload aside, the added electives and the practicum can only be welcomed.

In turning from Australia's oldest archives program to the UK's oldest, it is interesting that the School of Library Archive and Information Studies at University College London also has recently revamped its archives and records courses.[10] On examining its current booklet *Graduate Studies in Librarianship, Archives and Information Studies; Information for Prospective Students*, one is struck firstly by the similarities with the new UNSW course. As in Sydney, UCL offers a graduate diploma and masters intended to cover the entire life cycle of archives administration and records management issues. In addition there is compulsory fieldwork and a set of six compulsory subjects and one elective. Here the similarities end. Some differences arise from terminology and the duration of the masters qualification, and, as with contrasts in the

subjects themselves, are understandable and unremarkable. For the graduate diploma, the basic six areas covered are Introduction to Automation, Records Management I, Administrative History and Historical Sources, Palaeography and Diplomatic (covering post fifteenth century records), Arrangement and Description and Records Office Management. The one elective is a choice of additional records management study (covering more current issues such as electronic records) or an additional palaeography and diplomatic subject focused on the reading and interpretation of mediaeval documents.

The strongest differences between UNSW and UCL exist firstly in the complete absence from the London School of a core of subjects common to both archives and records management and library and information studies programs. There are two ostensible overlaps involving modules in each of the UCL programs' records management and automation subjects, but their descriptions suggest each has been tailored to separate needs. The second strong contrast concerns the additional qualifications the School offers, including in particular an MA and undergraduate Certificate in Overseas Records Management and Archive Administration. While the UNSW School's overseas orientation has centred on short courses in library related skills marketed to Asia and the Pacific, the UCL School has been very successful in attracting students from Africa and Commonwealth countries to and funding for its archives and records courses, especially through the efforts of Dr Anne Thurston.

The final title under notice is Monash University's booklet *Bachelor of Information Management*, the first Australian undergraduate degree so named. The question of how fundamentally different a concept it is compared with undergraduate degrees in library and information studies offered around Australia might be raised in passing.[11] Because of its links to archives and records management education, and because other universities are rumoured to be planning these 'BAs of the twenty-first century', the booklet certainly warrants closer attention.

Significantly, the Monash degree has been developed following the relocation last year of the Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records to the Faculty of Computing and Information Technology. It comprises a compulsory major in information management and allows up to fifty-two of the 144 credit points to be gained outside the Faculty. What actually seems new is the mix of disciplines relevant to the wired society and reminds one of the imaginative inter-disciplinary combination developed in 1993 when the UNSW designed (though did not proceed with) a Bachelor of Information Studies (Conservation) degree. Given the sponsoring Faculty, not surprisingly

the Monash degree has a strong emphasis on the basics of business applications (spreadsheets, e-mail, databases and document management), systems design and analysis, accessing information through public networking and business sources, and securing information in electronic systems. But recordkeeping values are also clearly recognisable in subjects to be taught by the archives staff such as Legal Systems and Recorded Information, Documenting Society I and II, Group and Corporate Recordkeeping and Ethics and Risks in Information Management. These subjects make manifest the degree outcomes listed in the booklet (pp. 5–6) such as

> 7. an interdisciplinary perspective on the typology, properties, behaviour and management of information as data, document and record, and understanding of the relevance of the principles of data management, document management and records management to managing stored information

>   . . . .

> 9. understanding of the recordkeeping dimension of information management and associated models and processes which capture complete, accurate, reliable and useable records of social and business activity as evidence of that activity.

It is clear from the booklet that the Faculty regards its new BIM to be an ideal base (though it is not a pre-requisite) from which its graduates could tackle the postgraduate diploma or MA in librarianship or in archives/records. In a sense, they have approached the 'IM core' completely differently from UNSW. Rather than include it at the graduate level, Monash covers it more thoroughly (and dispenses with it) at the undergraduate level.

II

Arising from the titles under review, when examined again as a group, several features clearly stand out. One might observe firstly how different in each of the countries represented has been the nature of the involvement of the relevant archival societies. In the United States, the SAA has devoted a great deal of effort to what we might call 'home grown self-help' and while there is still no full graduate program in archival studies, it has at least developed draft guidelines which say what such a curriculum should cover. In New Zealand, ARANZ called in Dr Ham and while its members (and those of the New Zealand Society of Archivists) contributed their views, it was the outside expert who suggested what the curriculum and infrastructure of the formal professional qualification should be. In the case of the London and Sydney

course redesigns, while members of the relevant professional societies contributed views and subsequently carried out recognition/accreditation (or will, in our case), neither drew upon locally developed curriculum guidelines. Embedded in the accreditation criteria being used there is undoubtedly a notion of 'the good' against which particular programs are measured, but they seem to be used after rather than before programs are redeveloped.

Curriculum content links to questions which bedevil all archival education: who are we trying to educate, for what, and broadly with what shelf life? Archivists? (assuming there is concensus as to what an archivist's role is)? Archivists and records managers combined? Or generalist information managers whose core skill is tied to information technology? Attempting answers is quickly complicated because a series of related questions immediately suggest themselves.

For example, is a composite multi-qualified information professional needed? As the Ham report noted, many sole charge archivists must double as librarians and museum curators and records managers, a situation also pertaining to Australia and the Pacific. Some employers seem to think so, if the evidence of some recent recruitment advertisements is typical, and the

Advertisement from Financial Review, *7 April 1995, showing requirement for membership (or eligibility for) of the RMAA, ALIA and ASA.*

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same implication is there when the Monash BIM booklet notes that 'Libraries, banks, travel agents, university administrations, payroll management operations, archives and museums all employ individuals whose prime task is to access, supply and manage information'.[12] At least one of JELIS theme issue authors, Toni Carbo Bearman, would endorse the composite 'information professional' because 'archivists, records managers, librarians, software engineers, systems integrators and other information specialists' are all 'documentalists', i.e they manage documents, a key concept of Paul Otlet. As she explained

> Otlet used 'document' in its true sense of evidence. A manuscript, a series of records, an artifact, a giraffe, a book—they are all documents. Otlet's work reminds us that, although we may be in different specialisations, we are all from the same family tree.[13]

This amazing insight succinctly encapsulates an all-embracing meaning of that elusive concept, information; the kind of meaning championed by those whose predisposition to see numerous mid-range similarities between all 'documents' leads to a parallel conclusion about information professions. The reemergence of the Otlet view in parallel with an all-pervasive information technology and the rise of ideas about 'convergence' and 'harmonisation' have triggered debates and repercussions within professional societies and university programs which are still being resolved.[14]

In a sense, this brings us to a final question which asks how are electronic records and recordkeeping systems dealt with in our sample of writings on archival education. It is there in Ham's report as a 'core element' of the course content (p. 11), but possibly reflecting his separation of records management and archives courses, it is viewed as a special class of record along with still and moving images and cartographic records and drawings. Regardless of whether it can satisfactorily be addressed in a single subject, as is attempted for example in the Edith Cowan University graduate diploma, to teach electronic records from a 'format' perspective seems self-defeating. The London course outline shows its optional records management subject includes coverage of electronic records. What it does offer to the pool of ideas is its compulsory 'Introduction to Automation', though one wonders whether its need is a generational or cultural characteristic. In the redesigned Sydney program, electronic records are treated as an element of larger subjects such as 'Recordkeeping Principles and Structures', and treated specifically through a seminar subject in the masters program. Via Frederick Stielow's 'The Impact of Information Technology on Archival Theory: A Discourse on an Automation Pedagogy', prepared for the JELIS theme issue, the professional society model is presented and critiqued. Commendable though the efforts of the SAA have

been, the solution he argues must centre on the masters degree in archival studies. Stielow also comes down strongly in favour of the view put by Michael Cook and others supporting not a separate subject but electronic records issues infiltrating 'the fabric of every course'.[15] He would support too the need to cover how and why organisations develop, use and manage information systems, as clearly does the Monash BIM.

As if the educational challenge of electronic records is not enough, our mission must include infiltrating too the centrality of the record into the thinking of systems designers and a myriad of other information technologists, as well as that of our librarian and information management colleagues. The opportunities it would seem are growing: at Monash since 1994 the archives and records programs are offered from the Faculty of Computing and Information Technology and the results of co-location are evident in the new BIM. One suspects too that at Edith Cowan the Graduate Diploma of Science (Archives Studies) finds it conducive to operate from the School of Mathematics, Information Technology and Engineering. Such a combination is also not unknown overseas.[16] Have we found the right qualification and the right School at last?

Endnotes

1. The new West Australian courses, both offered for the first time in 1994, were Edith Cowan University's Graduate Diploma of Science (Archives Studies) and Curtin University of Technology's Graduate Diploma in Archives. (The latter was not offered this year.) The redesigned and relocated courses are mentioned elsewhere in this article. On competency standards development, see Sue McKemmish's report in the *ASA Bulletin*, no. 120, April 1995, pp. 34–6. The TAFE records management curriculum is yet to receive notice in the literature. The subjects include Edith Cowan University's 'Electronic Recordkeeping' available at URL: http://139.230.164.31/dlisc/Courseware/1ST4235.htm. The videos referred to are listed in Frank Upward's review elsewhere in this issue. The conferences include the forthcoming July 1995 ASA conference and preceding Educators' Forum.

2. See the April and October 1994 issues of *Archifacts*, and *The New Zealand Archivist*, vol. V, no. 2 Winter/June 1994, pp. 9–13.

3. See p. 23. From 1995 the University of Melbourne archives and records diploma (but not the masters) is being offered at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. It has slight modifications involving a common core of information management subjects shared with other Graduate Diploma of Information Management specialisations.

4. For an example of that philosophy, see Melvin Weinstock, 'Innovations in Information and Library Sciences for Local Government', *First Annual Conference on Records Management in Local Government*, Infoman Press, Springwood, 1978, pp. 101–136.

5. The legacy of these criticisms is clearly evident in the development of the Edith Cowan University program. As Karen Anderson notes elsewhere in this issue, 'The consultation process had made it clear that the archives community did not want

any library studies content included'. In relation to the second criticism, the booklet provides encouraging signs: two qualified archivists, Ann Pederson and Paul Wilson are responsible for two of the five core subjects and *Keeping Archives* is included as preparatory reading for a third.

6.   The progress of health information education in Sydney was capped late last year with the call by the University of Sydney for applications for a Chair of Health Information Management. Its School of HIM offers undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications to doctorate level.

7.   The School has been sensitive to the charge that it did not cover records management. See for example Baiba Irving and Peter Orlovich, Letters to the Editor, *Incite*, 4 July 1980. But previously it tended to be a 'records management for archivists' subject.

8.   For an insight into the fundamental values of the original UNSW archives program, see Peter Orlovich, 'Some basic assumptions underlying the education and training of archivists', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 6, no. 6, February 1976, pp. 204–225 and 'Unique archives course a success', *University New—From the University of New South Wales*, vol. 13, no. 4, December 1974. For Ann Pederson's ICA paper, see 'Development of Research Programs', *Archivum*, vol. xxxix, 1994, pp. 312–59.

9.   On the other hand there are those who regard a thesis in an archives masters as essential, e.g. see the Association of Canadian Archivists' *Guidelines for the development of a two-year curriculum for a Master of Archival Studies*, ACA, 1990, p. 15.

10.   For a straightforward discussion of the new course, see Elizabeth Shepherd, 'Archives and Records Management at University College London', *Society of Archivists Newsletter*, no. 67, December 1993, pp. 16-17. See also her contribution to 'The education and training of archivists: some responses', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol. 14, no. 2 Autumn 1993, pp. 111–115.

11.   To investigate the comparison accurately one would need to check nearly a dozen university based programs in library and information management (and variants thereon) forming part of a bachelor's degree in arts or business or social science or education or applied science! See *Courses in Library and Information Science 1994/95*, Australian Library and Information Association, ?1994.

12.   The advertisement illustrated provides a typical example of the presumed need (a salary saving need?) for a multi-skilled information manager, though interestingly Coopers & Lybrand Consultants previously advertised for an almost identical position, quoting the same reference number (MCS8915) and requiring the same three memberships, for a Records Manager not Information Manager. See *Financial Review*, 28 October 1994. The position of Manager, Archives and Library Technical Services, Victoria University of Technology which required, inter alia, librarianship qualifications *and* experience or training in archives or records management might also be cited. See *The Australian*, 18 January 1995. A further advertisement, for a Lecturer in Information Management at the University of Canberra, is equally suggestive given its statement that 'The Faculty especially welcomes applications from professionals working as Information Managers, Office Managers, Records Managers, Archivists or Librarians'. See *The Canberra Times*, 1 April 1995.

      In citing examples of newspaper advertisements, one cannot stress enough their limited value as sources of employers' thinking, because so few vacancies are filled through press advertisements and because my use is anything but systematic. And of course they do not always express clearly what employers really need.

13. Toni Carbo Bearman, 'The Education of Archivists: Future Challenges for Schools of Library and Information Science', *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, vol. 34, no. 1, Winter 1993, p. 67.

14. There is now an extensive literature on these matters. Australian examples supportive of the combination view are Mairéad Browne's, Lynn Allen's and Joyce Kirk's papers from *9th National Convention Records Management Association of Australia 8–11 September 1992; Proceedings, RMAA*, ?Sydney, ?1992 and W. Boyd Rayward's 'Electronic Information and the Functional Integration of Libraries, Museums and Archives' in *Electronic Information Resources and Historians: European Perspectives*, eds Seamus Ross and Edward Higgs, Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, St Katharinen, 1993, pp. 227–43. For local writing critical of the combination view, see for example Sue McKemmish's paper presented to the 9th RMAA convention, op. cit., pp. 104–14; the works cited in her endnote 3; her 'Reinventing Information Management Education - The Recordkeeping Dimension', presented to the PICS Conference "Records Management in the Public Sector and Corporate Environment', June 1994; and Peter Orlovich's 'An Outside View', *Archifacts*, April 1994, pp. 13–20. Not all librarians are prepared to virtually equate librarianship with information management; see for example Meg Paul, 'What's in a name?', *New Librarian*, March 1994, pp. 11–12 and some of John Levett's writing. For a summary of the literature on education and harmonisation, see Ann Pederson, op. cit., p. 357 (note 8). As for debates triggered within professional societies, locally we have seen the Records Management Association of Australia debating whether to become the Records and Information Management Association of Australia. See J. Eddis Linton, 'Change Our Association Name? Why?', *Informaa Quarterly*, August 1994, pp. 24-5 and 'President's Message', *Informaa Quarterly*, February 1995, p. 3. Coincidentally, the UK Society of Archivists has also agonised over a change of name though none of the nine alternatives included 'information'! The most popular alternative (though it did not attract the required two-thirds of those voting) was 'the Society of Archivists, Conservators and Records Managers'. See *Society of Archivists Newsletter*, March 1994, p. 5 and June 1994, p. 2.

15. Whether teaching is centred on an intensive workshop such as the 1993 Monash Winter School, or concentrated within a single subject such as Edith Cowan's, or integrated throughout an entire graduate diploma or masters such as UNSW is now attempting, it would be still be inadequate. Such is the conclusion of Richard Cox after having been intimately involved with the so-called Pittsburgh project and on completing a major study on the limited successes of US archivists to develop effective electronic records strategies between 1960 and 1990. His reluctant conclusion is that an additional specialised year is needed following a masters degree. See his 'Re-Discovering the Archival Mission: The Recordkeeping Functional Requirements Project at the University of Pittsburgh, A Progress Report', *Archives and Museum Informatics*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1994, p. 295.

16. For example, in 1989 the South African State Archives Service's National Diploma of Archival Science moved to Technikon SA, which now offers additional qualifications including a Masters Diploma in Technology: Archival Studies. See Lydia Botha, 'Argiefopleiding: 'n Hersiene Curriculum', *S. A. Archives Journal*, vol. 36, 1994, p. 77.