

International Scene

Education and Training of Archivists at the East African School of Librarianship in the 1990s and Beyond

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Abstract: This paper examines and recommends strategies for the education and training of archivists at the East African School of Librarianship (EASL) in the 1990s and beyond. First, it states the objectives of the National Information System (NATIS) in relation to coordinating the development of library and information services, a major component of which is education and training. The author then defines some terms and gives brief notes on education and training programs offered by selected African library schools, with special reference to archives. Finally, the current status of archival education and training at the East African School of Librarianship is discussed. The paper concludes with proposals for the future education and training of archivists at the EASL in the 1990s and beyond.

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IF ARCHIVES ARE TO CONTRIBUTE effectively to national development, they should be fully exploited. This calls for well-educated and well-trained archivists. This is the *raison d'être* of education and training programs in Africa in general and in archives in particular at the East African School of Librarianship (EASL), the regional school set up by UNESCO for the training and education of information workers in English-speaking countries of Africa. This essay examines the education and training of archivists at the EASL and proposes some strategies that will ensure an adequate number of well-trained archivists for the future needs of archives institutions in East Africa.

The National Information System (NATIS) advocates the creation of a "national body"—an umbrella organization that will ensure the coordinated planning and development of libraries, archives, and documentation services as one national information system. The same philosophy can be extended to the education and training of the staff that will be responsible for those institutions and services. This can best be accomplished by coordinating the education and training of information workers (librarians, documentalists, and archivists) in the region.

If such coordination were already a reality in East Africa, the title of this essay would be faulty because it refers to the education and training of archivists as if they were insular and unrelated to other information workers. However, after some consideration I have retained the title to emphasize the urgency and importance of educating and training archivists, which has been neglected by the EASL curriculum until as recently as 1989, when the Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) program was launched.

The battle over how an archivist should be educated still rages on, and the central issue is whether the archivist should have a background of librarianship, history, or

social science.¹ The French archival educator Bruno Delmas represents one extreme when he declares that the education and training of archivists should have nothing to do with librarianship. He argues that "to introduce a librarian at the end of his course to archival studies in the hope of producing an archivist after only a few classes is like trying to turn a psychiatrist into a neurosurgeon by means of a trick."²

This essay supports the view that librarianship is basic to archival administration; as George Pitt, an Australian archivist, has pointed out, the archivist who is trained as a historian would be "incapable of creating the complicated mechanism necessary for smooth working of an archive."³

The merging of library and archives courses began in 1973 with the diploma of archives administration at the School of Librarianship, University of New South Wales, Australia. The rationale for the merger was not the paucity of archives subjects, but the belief that "some aspects of librarianship are essential to the archivist."⁴

A Definition of Terms

Although the terms *education* and *training* appear repetitive, in curriculum terms, they are not precisely the same. A more general cover term for both is *instruction*, which embraces both education and training.⁵ *Education* refers mainly to formal courses, typically those at the college or university level; such courses provide the-

¹Francis A. Blouin, "The Relevance of the Case Method to Archival Education and Training," *American Archivist* 41 (January 1977): 62.

²Bruno Delmas, "The Training of Archivists: Analysis of the Study Programs of Different Countries and Thoughts on the Possibilities of Harmonization," unpublished conference paper, UNESCO, 1979, Paris.

³Peter Orlovich, "Some Basic Assumptions Underlying the Education and Training of Archivists," *Archives and Manuscripts* 6 (February 1976): 210.

⁴Orlovich, "Some Basic Assumptions," 214.

⁵Meyer H. Fishbein, *A Model Curriculum for the Education and Training of Archivists in Automation: A RAMP Study* (Paris: UNESCO, 1985), 3 (1.3.1.).

ory, history, principles, concepts, and practices. *Training* is the application of theory in the work environment; training is provided through short-term seminars, clinics, workshops, and on-the-job training. Librarian Herbert S. White has written that "in most fields education precedes training and can be acquired in a limited number of ways. Training . . . occurs most frequently on the job through seminars, workshops, and specific courses but rarely through formal degree programs. In other words education prepares you to accept a professional job not to perform it. The latter is the role of training, a distinction that has been understood from the beginning in the fields of medicine and law."⁶

Workshop and *seminar* are further differentiated. *Workshop* designates training for people who lack knowledge about specific applications that are the subject of instruction. *Seminar* refers to a meeting of professionals "who have some knowledge about a specific topic and desire to increase their knowledge by listening to specialists."⁷

Records and Archives

Records are a basic tool of administration. They are the means by which many operational processes and functions are performed, and they represent information that has been created or received by organizations in the course of performing their business. They may take the form of conventional paper documents, microform, or machine-readable media such as computer tapes or disks; they also include photographs, sound recordings, motion pictures, and other media in which information may be recorded or conveyed in the process of performing the organization's function.

⁶Herbert S. White, "Defining Basic Competencies, Educators and Practitioners Must First Agree on Which Skills Are Best Learned in Library School," *American Libraries* (September 1983): 520.

⁷Fishbein, *A Model Curriculum*, 3 (1.3.2.).

In this context, archives derive from records. Archives are noncurrent records that have been formally appraised and have been judged to have continuing or permanent value as evidence for research purposes. In France and other French-speaking countries, the term *archives* is used for all records. Current records are designated as *administrative archives*.

It should be clear, given the relationship between records and archives, that the education and training of archivists also embraces records management.

Programs Offered by Selected African Library Schools

There has been growing awareness in Africa of the need for achieving effective records management systems and archival organization. Former U.S. archivist James B. Rhoads summarized the vital contribution of archives to national development when he noted that archives

serve first of all as the nation's memory and enable a society to plan intelligently for the future based on an awareness of past experience. Archives preserve a record of the obligations and commitments of the government and evidence of rights and entitlements of citizens. Collectively, the archives contain a vast amount of information about people, organizations, social and economic development, national phenomena and events, invaluable primary source material for writing about all facets of the nation's history. As a source of national history the archives can become a powerful influence in fostering a people's understanding of itself and in creating a sense of national identity.⁸

⁸Jonas B. Rhoads, *The Role of Archives and Records Management in National Information Systems: A RAMP Study* (Paris: UNESCO), 1.

Critics have noted the “harmful tendencies of individual institutions and academic departments to appoint persons to responsible positions without regard to academic preparation, training, or experience.”⁹ Such criticisms, coupled with the importance placed on archives in national development as mentioned earlier, have resulted in the opening of archival education and training institutions throughout Africa. Omdurman Islamic University in Sudan, for example, now offers a bachelor’s in arts in library science and archives. The Kenya Polytechnic in Nairobi offers a certificate in archives studies. Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya, covers archival administration as part of its course at the Faculty of Information Science. Archives and records management form part of the postgraduate courses for diploma offered at Ibadan University. The University of Zambia offers a Bachelor’s of Arts in Library Science (BALS), a major component of which is archives and records management.

The best thing that has happened to the African archives world, however, is the establishment of the Regional Training Center in Ghana. The center was established, among other reasons, “to offset the disadvantages and shortcoming of overseas training.”¹⁰ Full-time courses, given at the graduate diploma level, are designed to prepare future archivists to:

1. occupy initial professional positions in any type of archives institution in Africa.
2. effectively acquire, manage, and conserve documents, records, and archives and exploit information contained in them.
3. guide users toward making the best use of archival documents.

⁹Phillip Mason, “Archives in Developing Countries: The Regional Training Center,” *American Archivist* 35 (April 1972): 164.

¹⁰Mwiveriwa, “The Development of Archives in Africa: Problems and Prospects,” in *Aspects of African Librarianship—A Collection of Writings*, 231.

4. assist record-creating agencies, including government and public bodies, in establishing and managing efficient record systems.¹¹

The center also offers a certificate course to the paraprofessionals who run government records or archives centers in the private sector.

Developments at the East African School of Librarianship

The establishment of the East African School of Librarianship as a UNESCO Regional Training Center for English-speaking Africa had its origin in a 1953 Ibadan seminar with the theme “Development of Library Services in Africa.” At this seminar, which discussed the education and training of information workers, a resolution was passed recommending “indigenous education for librarianship in Africa.”¹² The Hockey Report on the Development of Library Services in East Africa, which was submitted to the East African governments of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in 1961, recommended that “if the proposal for the establishment of central library services are approved at the same time consideration should be given to the establishment of a School of Librarianship for East Africa.”¹³ This view was confirmed by the 1962 Enugu Seminar, which had as its theme, “Development of Public Libraries in Africa.” The participants agreed that the training of librarians was as vital as the planning of the libraries themselves.¹⁴

¹¹University of Ghana, *Graduate Diploma in Archive Studies* (n.d.).

¹²UNESCO, *Development of Public Libraries in Africa*, Public Library Manual 6, Ibadan Seminar (Paris: UNESCO, 1955), 100.

¹³S. W. Hockey, “Development of Library Services in East Africa,” a report submitted to the governments of East Africa (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1960).

¹⁴UNESCO, “Regional Seminar on the Development of Public Libraries in Africa,” *UNESCO Bulletin for Librarians* 21 (November–December 1967): 110–11.

In 1963, the East African School of Librarianship was founded. Its goals corresponded with the general aims of other library schools in Africa, namely to:

- provide a standard of education and qualification that would make librarianship a profession worthy of ranking alongside other traditional professions.
- pay special attention to library needs of the future.
- adapt existing teaching practices, where necessary, to local circumstances.
- be responsible for the publication of original material specifically concerned with African problems.

Commenting on professional education, Peter Drucker has stated, "The professional is assumed to know better what is good for the client himself. In other words, the professional demands autonomy of judgement of his own performance."¹⁵ To produce those characteristics, education and training for information workers should promote the following characteristics:

- The ability to organize data and information in a form that people can use.
- An awareness of and capability in the range of information technologies, from print to sound and image computing.
- An awareness of and capability in the range of information resources and successful strategies for searching for information in any specific area.
- A sensitivity to users' needs for information, leading to a careful consideration of human concerns in the design of systems and services.
- A strong tradition of service, which demands that attention be paid to client satisfaction.

Addressing the supply of manpower for NATIS, Objective 8 specifies that "national institutions and programs should be established as integral parts of the national educational structure at universities or equivalent institutions of higher education as the principal means of supplying adequate numbers of professional staff to meet the demand for qualified personnel at all levels to operate the national information system."¹⁶ Such staff would not only promote the status of the profession but would attract the sympathy of the relevant powers to provide the necessary resources. They would also be able to implement and evaluate programs in library and information services.

The EASL has been in the field of education and training for approximately thirty years. It offers courses at the preprofessional level (undergraduate and postgraduate diplomas in librarianship). A major omission in its programs is the area of records and archives management. This omission may be inadvertent, since Uganda, as an active member of the Eastern, Southern, Central African Regional Branch of the International Council of Archives (ESCAR-BICA), has developed a national archives system and once hosted a UNESCO archives consultancy by John Akita in the field of archives.¹⁷ As the old saying goes, "It is better late than never." A major component of the Bachelor's in Library and Information Science program, which was inaugurated in 1989, is the course "Records Management and Archives Studies." Training at this level alone, however, cannot cope with the demand in both the public and private sectors. Steps to improve the situation are discussed below.

¹⁵Peter Drucker, "Managing the Public Service Institutions," *College and Research Libraries* 137 (1976): 4-14.

¹⁶UNESCO, *Intergovernmental Conference on Planning of National Documentation, Libraries and Archives Infrastructures* (Paris: UNESCO 1975), 2.

¹⁷John M. Akita, *Development of the National Archives and the National Documentation Centre* (Paris: UNESCO, 1979).

The Future

The role of archives in national development cannot be overemphasized. The need for well-educated, well-trained, and experienced archivists is as urgent as it is important, since the archival system that ensures efficient organization, storage, and retrieval of archives relies in the end on a corps of qualified archivists. Consequently, to produce this corps of trained professionals, there is a corresponding need for education and training at all levels—paraprofessional, professional, and post-professional. Given the arguments presented earlier in this article for requiring archivists to have a background in librarianship, they should be educated and trained in the following core and ancillary principles.

The *core* has been defined as the part of the curriculum that must be taken by all information workers, regardless of the specialization they declare or the level at which they have taught. The core contains the features of the educational program that have common application to all information workers, wherever they may be working.¹⁸ As John Dean has stated, “The argument in favor of the acceptance of a core idea is really an argument for the production of a generalist or ‘Johannes factotum’ at the basic professional level and for training in depth in specialist fields at the post-professional level.”¹⁹

In developing countries, the advantage of structuring professional courses on core and ancillary principles is that this format will give future professionals the opportu-

nity to pursue advanced interests while acquiring a general appreciation and comprehension of the essentials of librarianship. Indeed, such a structure presents a coherent pattern of subjects for study, demonstrates their interrelationship, emphasizes the local information environment, uses available resources fully, and affords lively academic opportunities to both faculty members and students.

The courses in such programs would be offered at the undergraduate or postgraduate levels. Undergraduate courses provide a good liberal background for further study, and they develop the required subject expertise. At the undergraduate level, during a period of three or four years, students concentrate on their professional subjects while also taking specified academic courses. This type of program, however, may not provide the in-depth expertise acquired at the postgraduate level.

There is also a great need for paraprofessional courses leading to a certificate in archival studies; such courses would provide the necessary training to allow supporting and technical staff to work hand in hand with professional archivists. Above all, an effort should be made to offer occasional programs involving seminars, clinics, workshops, and conferences. Affiliations, exchange visits, and sharing of experience with well-established archives institutions like those in the United Kingdom, India, and the United States would also be useful. The overriding factor at all levels of education and training is that the views of the employing institutions and experts should be sought to ensure acceptability of the proposed program of education and training in all institutions.

In summary, the education and training of archivists at the EASL in the 1990s and beyond envisage training at three levels:

1. Paraprofessional. Training at this level consists of a one-year program leading to a certificate in archival administration of the type offered at the Regional

¹⁸Lester Asheim, *The Core of Education for Librarianship: A Report of a Workshop Held Under the Auspices of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago, August 10–15, 1953* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1954), 1–2.

¹⁹John Dean, *Planning Library Educating Programs: Study of Problems Involved in the Management of Library Schools in the Developing Countries* (London: Deutsch, 1972), 68.

Training Center in Ghana. This program would concentrate on producing support and technical staff. The paraprofessional program should educate the student on the topics of introduction to records management, introduction to archival administration, preparation and treatment of archivists, general training of archivists, and historical aspects of Africa.

2. Basic professional: undergraduate or postgraduate. Training at this level consists of a basic professional course offered at either the graduate or postgraduate level. One example of graduate courses already in existence is the BLIS at the EASL; this is a three-year program with a concentration in records management and archives studies covered in sixty hours during the first year in a course titled "Foundation of Library and Information Work." Another example of such training, but at the undergraduate level, is the bachelor's of science in information science at Moi University; Moi's course is called "Archives and Records Management."

Although training at the undergraduate level has the disadvantage of a lack of depth in coverage, it does provide a good basis for specialization at the master's level in later training. The postgraduate diploma would then be patterned after the present postgraduate diploma at the EASL and would comprise core subjects and electives, which would include archival administration.

3. Professional. Education and training of this type would be offered at the master's level, like the one already offered at the Department of Information and Library Studies (DILS), University of Wales; the format would be either a full-time specialized program or a composite program. The full-time specialized program would offer a course of study specializing in archival administration under either alternative regulations (such as a program incorporating elected courses in addition to writing a dissertation) leading to an ex-

amination and dissertation or to research leading to a master's in philosophy in archival studies. The composite program would involve three modules, one of them being archival administration, and successful completion should be determined both by examination and course work.²⁰

4. Continuing education/further training. Additional training and education should take the form of occasional refresher courses, specialized archives courses (such as restoration and conservation), aspects of archives, workshops, clinics, seminars, and conferences. Such occasional offerings would focus on particular developments in the archives world.

Conclusion

The overall objective of archives programs at any level would be to prepare future archivists to occupy initial professional positions in any type of archives institutions in East Africa; to acquire, manage, and conserve documents, records, and archives effectively and to exploit information contained in them; to guide users in making the best possible use of archival documents; and to assist record-creating agencies, including government and public bodies, to establish and manage efficient records systems.

The late Professor S.A.I. Kotei complained that one big obstacle to be overcome in educating and training African information workers was the "lack of necessary infrastructure."²¹ Therefore, in addition to designing a localized syllabus, we need to ensure a body of archival staff members who will be adequate both in

²⁰University of Aberystwyth, *Higher Degrees Studies and Research*, Department of Information and Library Studies prospectus (n.d.), 9.

²¹S.A.I. Kotei, "Training of Information Specialists for African Needs," in *Development of Information: An African Approach. Proceedings of the Third Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern African Librarians*, edited by R. A. Thairu (Nairobi: Kenya Library Association, 1979), 78.

number and in quality of training. By carefully designing the programs leading to degrees in the archival field, we can guarantee that archival staff members will be well trained and will present a reasonable background, professional qualifications in librarianship and archives, postprofessional qualifications in advanced courses, post-professional qualifications in research, practical experience, teaching ability, competency in research, and linguistic expertise. The staff should also have ready access, for demonstration purposes, to the full range of equipment for data processing, copying, printing, binding, and conservation. Above all, well-staffed archives must be developed to function as a training ground for future archivists.

The EASL is fortunate in having a staff member with an M.A. in archives; a functional library school building; and the

Uganda National Archives, manned by a professional archivist. EASL's present greatest need is for furniture and equipment.

Much as local education and training should be emphasized, external linkages via exchange of staff for short periods or sending abroad potential archival leaders for further training should not be ruled out. Such facilities are available at the Archives Institute of India or the Schools of Library, Archives and Information Studies in the Universities of New South Wales, Australia, Liverpool, London, and Loughborough.

The East African School of Librarianship, through its program of educating and training archivists, supports the development of national archives and their full exploitation. We think this is a noble undertaking, and we believe our efforts will be successful.

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