

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow:

Reflections on GSLIS

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This year marks the 110th anniversary of GSLIS, the completion of 10 years of the western Massachusetts at Mt. Holyoke program, and my 10th, and final, year as dean. These anniversaries make it an appropriate time to look at the history of GSLIS, where we are today, and what the next decade – and century – might bring.

First I would like to thank Linda Watkins for her tireless work in the archives, in journals, and many secondary sources. Her work has created a foundation for future research and writing about GSLIS. There is a book waiting to be written about our history, maybe even a film, starring Jane Anne Hannigan, Estelle Jussim, and Inga Karetnikova, former teachers of our film course. (More about that course, later.)

Because my time is short, I will share just a few highlights of our school in the areas of faculty, students, alumni, and curriculum. Except for a few exceptions, I will focus on people who are no longer living, following the lead from an article that appeared in *American Libraries* in December 1999, “100 of the Most Important Leaders We Had in the 20th Century.”¹ On that list, of course, are several people who were associated with Simmons: Arthur Curley, William Moffett, and Isadore Gilbert Mudge (*Guide to Reference Books*). [Another luminary on the list, John Cotton Dana, lectured here at least once. But perhaps claiming that “Dana lectured here” is the LIS equivalent of “George Washington slept here.”²] Doubtless, more people from Simmons were on the list, but these are the ones who can be confirmed by our records.

Simmons was founded with the College in 1902. It was the 6th library school after Columbia, Pratt, Drexel, Armour-University of Illinois, and Pittsburgh. In 1906, tuition was \$100—a tidy sum back then. If you wanted to live in the dorms, that was another \$100-450. The mission of the College was distinctive: “The instruction at Simmons differs from that offered at other colleges for women in that parallel courses in technical and academic work are given.”³ John Simmons, who died in 1870, stipulated that money go to the establishment of a women’s college. Specifically, he wanted “to found and endow an institution to be called Simmons Female College, for the purpose of teaching medicine, music, drawing designing, telegraphy, and other branches of art, science, and industry best calculated to enable the scholars to acquire an independent livelihood.”⁴

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The College was incorporated in 1899; in 1901, the Corporation asked Dr. Henry Lefavour, dean of Williams College, to make recommendations on how Simmons should be organized. Dr. Lefavour, who later in the year would become the first president of Simmons, recommended the following:

. . . a technical college of high standard, receiving girls who have already a foundation of general knowledge and graduating them with both a broad intellectual or artistic foundation and a specialized technical training that will open to them some avenue of remunerative labor. . . .⁵

Each student in the new four-year college would take: “domestic science, applied art, secretarial - work, library science, general science, and special courses”⁶ Lefavour had a clear vision of what a library science program should look like. Subjects would include “accession work, classification, cataloguing, shelf-listing, charging systems, reference and cross-reference work, bibliography, etc.” Reading was another critical component of Lefavour’s program. Graduates of the program would study literature, history, economics, and foreign languages.⁷

Who advised Lefavour on this curriculum? Could he have known Melvil Dewey personally? The first two directors of the School of Library Science, Mary Esther Robbins and June Richardson Donnelly, studied with Dewey at the New York State Library School (NYSLS) in Albany, which Dewey started in 1889 after he was forced to move his program out of Columbia University. Could Lefavour have hired Robbins at Dewey’s recommendation? Robbins arrived at Simmons in 1902 – after Lefavour’s plan had been written for the College – which suggests that she was recommended to him. One distinction in Simmons conception of a library school: Dewey named his program at Columbia the School of Library Economy, while Lefavour named us the School of Library Science.

In some respects, then, the culture and pedagogy of the School of Library Science was influenced by its being located in a college with both an intellectual and technical mission. For example, early programs in Pittsburgh and Atlanta emerged from Carnegie Libraries. The program at the University of Illinois, began at the Armour Institute. Armour (today, HT) and the Pratt Institute started out as trade schools. Other early programs started in large state universities, for example, the University of Wisconsin. Joanne Passet describes early library schools this way:

Throughout these early years of library education, however, standards were nonexistent. Library school programs varied in length and were conducted in public libraries, technical institutes, and universities. Admission requirements ranged from a high school diploma or its equivalent to a bachelor’s degree, and graduates received a certificate from their institution but were not examined by a national accrediting agency.⁸

Thus the School of Library Science at Simmons was unique in being situated in a college.

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For the first quarter of the 20th century, the issues of Public Libraries provided regular reports from all the library schools. From these reports, it is clear that the Simmons' first two directors, Mary E. Robbins, and, later, June Donnelly, spent considerable time not only on curriculum development, but on building a faculty, creating internship opportunities, and bringing in guest speakers and visiting part-time faculty.

Simmons tried to serve part-time students from the beginning. The Public Libraries entry for 1904-05 stated that:

“The only special students received in the Library school are women already holding library positions, whose time is too fully occupied to allow them to follow the program as - it has been arranged.”⁹

Thought was also given to internships. “Since it is impossible to secure in one college year a sufficient amount of practice, this program must be supplemented by three months of approved experience in-some library before a certificate can be granted.”¹⁰

By 1907 the length of the internships was increased, and degrees were granted to “. . . college graduates who have taken the one-year course, upon completion of six months' approved work in a library and the presentation of a thesis on a technical subject.”¹¹ This was deemed necessary because the school didn't think that students were prepared for the profession after only one year of instruction. Interestingly, length of LIS program has been debated ever since.

The early program had three tracks: women who had already graduated from college could earn a certificate. I refer to this as the Dewey model, because when he founded the program at Columbia, he sought students who had already earned their BA degrees. Second, there was an undergraduate program for Simmons women. The third track was the “summer library class.” Even back in 1906, students who lived outside New England attended the College. In that particular year they came from Wisconsin, Missouri, and New York, and Canada.

Home Sweet Home

GSLIS has resided in only three different buildings: the Main College building, Lefavour Hall with the Beatley Library in 1961, and since August 2002, the Palace Road Building. The home room in the MCB was Room 318, which you will have seen in some of the old photos. While MCB had its “home room,” the new location in Lefavour became known for its air conditioning, and its Mug Rack. The architects of the Palace Road Building would not allow Jim Matarazzo to move the mug rack to “The Palace.”

Students and alumni

By 1908, Simmons had 100 students,¹² and as early as 1906, GSLIS had international students of whom the first were Canadian.

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As far as Linda Watkins can ascertain, the second country to be represented was Japan. The first Japanese student was XXX; she started the program in 1914. Another early student was Henrietta Karlovna Abele-Derman, who came to Simmons in 1917, and who today in Russia has the stature of Melvil Dewey. Derman's return to Russia, was described by Donnelly in a 1921 issue of *Public Libraries*.¹³ In 1919, Simmons reported that there were students from Norway and Japan in the program.¹⁴

Simmons alumni reported to Donnelly about their international experiences. In 1922, Miss Marion Ward visited the Boone school and Mary Elizabeth Wood in Wuhan, China. Daphne Damon worked in the American Library Association Library at Paris.¹⁵

Today, the 9000+ Simmons alumni hail from over 80 countries¹⁶ and all fifty states.

Faculty

Alice Jordan (1870-1960) taught children's literature and services courses at Simmons ca. 1910 until 1922. She worked at the Boston Public Library, mentored Bertha Mahoney, founder of the Horn Book, and was a member of the first Newbery Medal Award committee.¹⁷

Isadore D. Mudge, who was a librarian at Columbia University and author of the eponymous reference work, taught as an adjunct at Simmons from 1911.¹⁸

"Prof. Fujii visited the Library School October 11 [1917]. Upon his return to Japan he expects to establish courses in library training."¹⁹

Many distinguished full- and part-time faculty have taught at Simmons. Jane Hannigan, Estelle Jussim, Nancy Peace, Ruth Leonard, Josephine Fang, A.J. Anderson played a role in developing the curriculum in some notable areas of strength for GSLIS.

Curriculum

GSLIS has made a mark in several areas:

Corporate and special libraries. The first course was offered in 1921 and internships were offered at Arthur D. Little and Stone & Webster.²⁰ However, the importance of special libraries was recognized much earlier at Simmons. Guest speakers and field trips were scheduled regularly. For example in 1915, students toured the special library of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston which included a discussion about ". . . the meaning of special library work, the characteristics which differentiate it from other types, the qualifications needed for it, and the opportunity in this field?" The fact that the first local chapter of the Special Libraries Association was established in Boston in 1910²¹ probably created additional opportunities for the school. Ruth Leonard taught the course beginning in the 1930s.

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Contemporary management. Courses and lectures on library administration were offered from the beginning. However, the case study method for library management was pioneered by Kenneth Shaffer, and further developed by Thomas Galvin and A.J. Anderson.

Archives and Records Management. The LIS 438 course was first offered by Nancy E. Peace in 1978. Records management was introduced around 1982. There were separate archives and records management programs until 1996. Megan Sniffen-Marinoff developed the Archives Management Concentration. In 1993, the Dual Degree Program with History was introduced.

Preservation. Josephine Fang developed the LIS 439 preservation course in collaboration with the Northeast Document Conservation Center in 1981. Several conservation institutes were also held at Simmons. As with archives, the course offerings have continued to grow.

Visual communication and art documentation and librarianship. Jane Hannigan taught the first film course in fall 1968.²² Photographic Archives and Visual Information (LIS 471) was first offered between 1982 and 1984.

Directors and Deans: Stability and an Outward Focus²³

As I mentioned earlier, the first two directors at Simmons, Mary Robbins (18??-1939) and June Donnelly (1872-1962) were students of Melvil Dewey at the New York Library School. Robbins graduated in 1892, in the same class as Katherine L. Sharp, who directed the programs at Armour and Illinois. Little is known about Robbins' prior education, where she was born, her religious affiliation, or her father's occupation. She was single. Donnelly was born in College Hill, Ohio, earned a BS from the University of Cincinnati in 1895, Phi Beta Kappa, worked as a librarian, graduated from the New York School in 1903, and was an Episcopalian.²⁴ She was single. I mention these personal details for a reason: Joanne Passet's study found that the early female library school directors formed a powerful professional network. "Born during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, . . . the typical female library director was born into a professional family, attended the Episcopalian church, and had attended college or prep school at an eastern women's college."²⁵

More research should be done on these first two directors. Collectively, they ran the school for 35 years, from 1902-1937. They worked tirelessly to shape the program, mentor and then place their students, attract full-time and adjunct faculty, bring visiting speakers to campus, set up internship sites, and organize field trips. They were also professionally active. While these administrative tasks may seem ordinary today, Robbins and Donnelly were establishing all of these things for the first time. Today we take our incredible Simmons network for granted; back then, it had to be created.

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Also according to Passet, “men began to replace women as library directors during the second and third decades of the [20th] century.”²⁶ Herman H. Henkle came to Simmons in 1937, and was followed by three male successors. Although Henkle was at Simmons for only 5 years, he had along and distinguished library career, with a strong interest in corporate and special libraries.²⁷ It is likely that he contributed to GSLIS’s curricular strength in corporate and special libraries. From Simmons, he went to the Library of Congress to head up the Processing Department, and where it is likely that he worked with my cousin, Seymour Lubetzky, as both of them started there at the same time, Seymour initially “on a six-month consultant contract to look into LC’s practices in bibliographic description”²⁸ Intriguingly, Henkle published a report on descriptive cataloging in 1946, suggesting that they probably knew each other well.²⁹ As did Bob Stueart, Jim Matarazzo, and me, Henkle served as president of ALISE--the Association for Library and Information Science Education (then the American Association of Library Schools). Henkle retired from the John Crerar Library in Chicago and taught at Minnesota, Florida State, and North Carolina. He was president of the Special Libraries Association (1945-46), and was elected to its Hall of Fame in 1971. In 1957-58, he served as president of the American Documentation Institute, later, ASIS&T. He was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.³⁰ Henkle’s influence on Simmons is worthy of further study.

Nina Brotherton then served as acting director for four years until Kenneth Shaffer became director in 1948. Was she only the acting director because by then the tide had turned to hiring male directors?

Among Shaffer’s many accomplishments, he pioneered the use of the case method for library education, ushered in the Master’s degree and, much later, the DA degree. Under Shaffer, the School moved from Lefavour Hall to Beatley Library. In fact, the library was designed by Shaffer, and it was air conditioned. In 1968 he hired Kenneth Kister to teach a new course for the school: “Intellectual Freedom and Censorship.” He started Alumni Day in 1970, and LIS pioneer Jesse Shera was the speaker. The faculty swelled to 13, in 1972. Kenneth Shaffer stepped down in December 1974.

Dean Robert Stueart will end my survey of the deans and directors, because he is now retired. Under Bob’s tenure, courses in art librarianship, legal bibliography, archives, and preservation were offered for the first time. In 1980, the School became the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. The Continuing Education program was launched. Stueart increased the school’s international visibility by hosting international scholars, giving the first alumna/i award, and working extensively in Southeast Asia. Perhaps his greatest legacy will be the Vietnam program, in which 55 librarians were trained, with external funding from a variety of foundations. The program ran from 1993-2008 under Pat Oyler’s direction.³¹

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Recent Years

The recent history of GSLIS is well chronicled in the last issue of the *GSLIS InfoLink* as well as the upcoming issue. Where will we go from here? In many ways, the strong foundation of GLIS provides a blueprint for future directions. GSLIS was early to recognize the importance of special libraries, it was pioneering in its use of the case method, it was among the first programs to incorporate visual media into the curriculum, and while not the first school to offer archives or preservation, it has developed innovative courses within those specializations. Our doctoral program in leadership builds on the strong management roots here. The cultural informatics specialization has grown from archives, preservation, and the arts courses. And we continue to build new relationships in Boston. Technology is now seamlessly-woven into everything that we do. Our early commitment to part—time students is being reinforced by our online programs. Even CE is now predominantly online.

[Blue Ribbon panel]

- 1 “100 of the Most Important Leaders We Had in the 20th Century,” *American Libraries* 30 (December 1999), pp. 38-47.
- 2 “News from the Field. Simmons College,” *Public Libraries* 11 (1906), p. 468.
- 3 *Public Libraries* 11 (1906), p. 127.
- 4 “Historical Background of the Program in Library Education,” *Self-Study Report. School of Library Science*. (Boston, MA: Simmons College, April 1975), pp. 1-2.
- 5 “Historical Background,” p. 2.
- 6 “Historical Background,” p. 2.
- 7 “Historical Background,” p. 2.
- 8 Joanne Passet, “Entering the Professions: Women Library Educators and the Placement of Female Students, 1887-1912,” *History of Education Quarterly* 31 (Summer 1991), p. 211.
- 9 News, p.468.
- 10 *Public Libraries* 10 (1905), p. 233.
- 11 *Public Libraries* 12 (1907), p. 25.
- 12 *Public Libraries* 13 (1908), p. 54.
- 13 *Public Libraries* 26 (1921), p. 343.
- 14 *Public Libraries* 24 (1919), p.390.
- 15 *Public Libraries* 27 (1922), p. 58.
- 16 *Simmons: A Century of International Engagement*. (Boston, MA: Simmons College, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, May 2006).
- 17 Gale Eaton, “The Education of Alice M. Jordan and the Origins of the Boston Public Library,” *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 46 (2011), p. 26.
- 18 *Public Libraries* 14 (1912), p. 44. She might have taught before 1911, but she is listed as teaching in the 1911-12 academic year.
- 19 *Special Libraries* 22 (1917), p. 395.
- 20 *Special Libraries* 26 (1921), p. 283.
- 21 *Special Libraries* 20 (1915), p. 137.
- 22 Jane A, Hannigan, “Toward Visual Literacy: A Course in Film Communication,” *Journal of Education for Librarianship* 13 (Winter 1973), pp. 176—181.
- 23 This is the list of directors and deans and their years of service in that role: Mary Esther Robbins (11 years, 1902-13), June Richardson Donnelly (24 years,1913-37), Herman Henry Henkle (5 years, 1937-42), Nina Caroline Brotherton (1942-46, 6 years as acting, 1942-46), Kenneth R. Shaffer (28 years, 1946-1974), Robert D. Stuart—the first dean (19 years, 1974-94), Jim Matarazzo (7 years, 1994-2002). The award for administrative longevity goes to Kenneth Shaffer, who served as director for 28 years.
- 24 *Who’s Who in Library Science*, 1933, p. 144.
- 25 Passet, p. 209.
- 26 Passet, p. 226.
- 27 William S. Budington, “Herman Henry Henkle, 1900-1987,” *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 76.4 (October 1988), p. 388.
- 28 Budington, p. 388. See also *Seymour Lubetzky, 1898-2003*, an obituary that appeared in a Library of Congress publication. See <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/lccn/lccn1105.html> . It appears that the two of them were at LC and at Berkeley at the same time. And they both retired in 1969 but continued teaching and lecturing. They were almost the same age: Seymour was born in 1898, Henkle in 1900.)
- 29 Herman H. Henkle, *Studies of Descriptive Cataloging: A Report to the Librarian of Congress*. (Washington DC: Library of Congress, Processing Department, 1946).
- 30 Budington, p. 388-9.
- 31 Linda H. Watkins, *Timeline of GSLIS History in Draft Form*, 2012.