

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

Publications devoted to the writing of library history in the United States date from the 1950s but did not begin to appear with regularity until the latter stages of the 1970s. Articles on the "value of library history" have been produced by Jesse H. Shera (1952, 1.12), Haynes McMullen (1952, 1.11), Raymond Irwin (1958, 1.17), Louis Shores (1961, 1.26), and John C. Colson (1969, 1.44) and collectively constitute a genre in their own right.

More traditional contributions reviewing and evaluating the literature stem from classic essays by Felix Reichmann ("Historical Research and Library Science," 1964, 1.29) and Sidney L. Jackson ("Materials for Teaching Library History in the U.S.A.," 1972, 1.76). These were followed by two fine articles on public library historiography by Sidney Ditzion and Francis Miksa, respectively (1973, 1.82; 1982, 1.139); overviews of the literature encompassing academic, public, and private libraries as well as key individuals and landmark publications by Shera (1973, 1.87) and Colson (1976, 1.100); general analyses of recent scholarship by David Kaser (1978, 1.121) and Lee Shiflett (1984, 1.145); and a statistical and analytical study of the historical monograph from 1975 to 1985 by Laurel A. Grotzinger (1986, 1.155). Thematic and methodological issues came under the scrutiny of Michael H. Harris (1975, 1.97; 1976, 1.105; 1986, 1.157), Elaine Fain (1979, 1.128), Wayne A. Wiegand (1983, 1.143), and Robert V. Williams (1984, 1.147). Interpretive concerns, in particular, dominated the writings of Harris, an avowed revisionist, and were featured with rejoinders in two issues of the *Journal of Library History* (vol. 10, no. 2 [1975]; vol. 13, no. 1 [1978]). Harris's interpretations are discussed below and, later, in Chapter 5, "Public Libraries." Fain compared library history with the history of education (engaging some of the issues raised by Harris); Wiegand proposed the use of psychohistorical methods that have been applied to both popular and scholarly biography for the past three decades; and Williams analyzed theoretical constructs that may be applied to historical perspectives on library growth and development.

The literature of library history depends heavily on papers presented at formal programs, conferences that often reap the benefits of cross-fertilization involving not only librarians and the library history community but also scholars from the fields of intellectual and cultural history and the history of books and printing. The resulting interdisciplinary dialogue has become increasingly influential at the Library History Seminars, seven of which were conducted between 1961 and 1985.

Other meetings contributed substantially to a discussion of historiographical issues. For example, the Conference on Historical and Bibliographical Methods in Library Research, held in 1970 at the University of Illinois, featured papers by Haynes McMullen on primary source materials in library research (1971, 1.62) and Edward G. Holley on

textual criticism in library history (1971, **1.60**). The American Library Association's (ALA) American Library History Round Table meeting of 1977 included papers by Holley on historiography and questions of evidence (1977, **1.113**); Harris, who examined the interpretive approaches of library historians (1978, **1.119**); and Phyllis Dain, who responded to Harris, deriving observations from her research into the history of the New York Public Library (1978, **1.116**). The 1978 meeting of the Association of American Library Schools' Research Interest Group featured McMullen on matters of writing style and interpretation (1978, **1.123**) with responses by Betty Milum (1978, **1.124**), Joe W. Kraus (1978, **1.122**), and Donald C. Dickinson (1978, **1.118**). Library History Seminar VI opened with Neil Harris's observations on the historiography of cultural institutions and the theme of modernization (1981, **1.134**) and David W. Davies's comparison of mass culture with the culture of those devoted to intellectual pursuits (1981, **1.133**). Robert V. Williams examined variables for analysis used by public library historians (1981, **1.135**). At the 1980 meeting of the Association of College and Research Libraries Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Paul Raabe urged librarians to research the related areas of library history and the history of the book (1984, **1.144**). The 1984 ALA Library History Round Table meeting featured presentations by Francis Miksa (1985, **1.149**), W. Boyd Rayward (1985, **1.150**), and H. Curtis Wright (1985, **1.151**) on historical relationships between librarianship and information science, while Library History Seminar VII resulted in essays by John P. Feather (1986, **1.154**) and David D. Hall (1986, **1.156**), who, to some extent echoing Paul Raabe, underscored book history as essential to an understanding of social and cultural history.

Only occasionally are publications in library historiography issued as monographs. They include the work of James G. Ollé, whose *Library History: An Examination Guidebook* (2d ed., 1971, **1.63**) was intended primarily for students but whose *Library History* (1979, **1.129**) stands as a state-of-the-art critique. Ollé aims for a British audience but includes a number of examples from the United States.

Among the most useful publications, both for their evaluative comments and suggestions for further research, are bibliographic essays reviewing recent books and articles. Michael H. Harris wrote the first of these in 1968 in the *Journal of Library History*, recounting the historical output for the previous year. He continued the series, typically on a biennial basis, working with Donald G. Davis, Jr. as co-author. The Harris-Davis articles ceased in the mid-1970s, after which they were produced by Wayne A. Wiegand, who continues to publish them in *Libraries & Culture*. Bibliographic essays treating specialized topics include those by Nathaniel Stewart on college library history (1943, **1.8**), Harry Bach on scholarly libraries (1959, **1.19**), Donald E. Oehlerts on the history of American library architecture (1976, **1.109**), and David S. Zubatsky on the history of American colleges and their libraries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (1979, **1.131**).

Due to their nature as reference works, guides to the published writings and manuscript sources on library history are much less abundant than are essays on

historiography. Still, their value to the profession is widely recognized, they have appeared with some consistency in the past decade, and they have emerged as essential sources for ongoing research. Perhaps the most significant work in recent years is the *Dictionary of American Library Biography (DALB)*, edited by Bohdan S. Wynar, assisted by George Bobinski and Jesse Shera (1978, 1.125). This collection of biographical sketches of 302 deceased librarians, library educators, association officers, publishers, and benefactors provides critical essays, bibliographies of writings by and about the subjects, and the location of major primary source material for each individual. The *DALB* offers a wealth of historical information and serves as an admirable model for other professions and disciplines. Wayne A. Wiegand edited the *DALB* supplement, scheduled for publication by Libraries Unlimited in 1989. Additional sources of retrospective biographical articles and of historical perspectives on a wide range of topics are the two editions of the *ALA World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services* (1980; 2d ed., 1986, 1.159).

Library historians and the library community in general appreciate the practical and scholarly value of solid bibliographical sources. *American Library History: A Bibliography*, identifying more than 3,000 articles, books, theses, and dissertations, compiled by Michael H. Harris and Donald G. Davis, Jr., quickly became a first source to consult before embarking on a research project (1978, 1.120). *Libraries & Culture* publishes Wiegand's biennial bibliographical essays as well as numerous articles on sources and methodology. Its predecessor, the *Journal of Library History*, sponsored a series of bibliographies on state library history, fourteen of which have appeared to date, while a more recent book-length publication, Aubrey E. Skinner's *Texas Library History: A Bibliography* (1983, 1.142), serves as a model for future publications in this genre. *Libraries in American Periodicals before 1876: A Bibliography with Abstracts and an Index*, compiled by Larry J. Barr, Haynes McMullen, and Steven G. Leach, resulted from tedious spadework among thousands of periodicals scattered throughout research libraries and deserves the accolade of "classic" (1983, 1.141). This book identifies more than 1,400 abstracted or annotated entries; it is as useful to students, researchers, and historians as H. G. T. Cannons's *Bibliography of Library Economy, 1876 to 1920* (1927, 1.4) was to previous generations and, much later, Cannons' *Bibliography of Library Economy, 1876-1920: An Author Index with Citations*, compiled by Anne Harwell Jordan and Melbourne Jordan (1976, 1.106).

Michael H. Harris' *Guide to Research in American Library History* (1968; 2d ed., 1974, 1.93) consists of an annotated bibliography of theses and dissertations and introductory essays on the state of the art in library historiography and on philosophical and methodological issues in historical research. Arthur P. Young's *American Library History: A Bibliography of Dissertations and Theses* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1988) capably supersedes the Harris guide. Young differs from Harris in excluding the introductory essays, but his work demonstrates a major effort in identifying nearly 1,200 theses, dissertations, and unpublished research papers and reports.

The library historian has long suffered from an absence of sources that identify and describe manuscript collections, a circumstance partially remedied by the appearance of *The National Catalog of Sources for the History of Librarianship*, a list of archive collections described on three sheets of microfiche with an introductory essay by Marion Casey on the use of primary materials in historical research (1982, 1.137). Publication of the *National Catalog* grew naturally from the experiences of Maynard Brichford and the staff of the University of Illinois Archives which, in 1973, acquired and began making accessible the extensive archival records of the American Library Association. Brichford and Anne Gilliland describe the ALA record groups and how scholars may obtain access to them in *Guide to the American Library Association Archives* (2d ed., Chicago: American Library Association, 1987), a micropublication revised from the first edition issued in 1979 (1.127). Finally, Doris Cruger Dale has compiled a list of more than 200 oral history interviews in *A Directory of Oral History Tapes of Librarians in the United States and Canada* (1986, 1.153), while Richard J. Cox and Anne S. K. Turkos presented compelling arguments favoring the establishment of public library archives (1986, 1.152).

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