Article:
A few days before leaving for Philadelphia I was asked to read over a manuscript written by Don Davis, professor at the University of Texas at Austin, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, and one of his doctoral students at Texas, Jon Aho, in which they were kind enough to mention my name, identifying me as a "library historian." I had never really thought of myself as a library historian and am really not sure of exactly what that means—I presume someone who does histories of libraries as opposed to real history. I am not a real historian. I was an English major. The only official course work I have had in history consists of a course taken as an undergraduate at the University of Florida (UF)—a survey of English history—taught by an elderly gentleman who was a holdover from the days before 1947 when UF was a male school. His entire series of lectures quickly degenerated into a series of dirty jokes about Henry VIII, which he told while carefully watching the reactions of the women in the class. This experience, plus a short course in historical methods taken at the insistence of my major professor at Florida State University (FSU) during my doctoral work there, of which I can remember nothing, accounts for my entire academic background in history.

What seems to have tagged me with this appellation is my doctoral dissertation, which I had always thought of as being about academic libraries and academic librarians—not about history. What made it history is the simple fact that I employed information, material, and, if the word can be used for what I did, data from the past in developing a thesis, or, if you want to be elegant, testing a hypothesis about the nature of the sociology of the workplace in academic institutions.

Since 1979 I have been teaching in an ALA-accredited master's degree program with a variety of assignments, which, taken as a whole, have little intellectual coherence. These have included basic reference, government documents, cataloging, selection, foundations, management, some advanced reference courses (humanities and social sciences), and whatever else needed to be covered. In all of these, the historical dimension has played a major role in my own exposition of the issues involved; exposition that has had to evolve out of my own understanding of the subjects themselves.

In 1989, ALA's Library History Round Table adopted a "policy statement" on the role of history in the library school curriculum that struck me at the time as somewhat silly. It is, after all, what I had been doing for a decade. The insistence that "the entire curriculum should be informed by historical contexts" was one that I had thought would be both obvious and necessary in any course offered in any professional school. How can a student fully understand the rigid hierarchical structure of library organizations without an understanding of the growth of libraries and the necessity for the administrative and organizational structures that developed in the nineteenth century? The status of librarians in academic institutions and public libraries and the image of librarians in American society only makes sense when we look at the nature of the occupation as it developed from its form in the nineteenth century.

In reference, most of us teach the three major encyclopedias—Britannica, Americana, and Collier's—but

without an historical context the student is left wondering why Britannica is "American," why Americana has a strong emphasis on science and technology, and why Collier's is so pusillanimous in dealing with controversial topics. Without the historical perspective on what we are doing and the tools with which we are doing it, we are reduced to viewing the world of libraries and information resources as a synchronous display of current practice and theory, with little opportunity to view the alternatives to that practiced in the past. In reference, we can present to students a series of discrete entities distinguishable by indexing, arrangement, the use of graphics, and all of the other criteria upon which we commonly evaluate reference materials.

In management, we can tell students that women numerically predominate over men in the profession without equivalent financial rewards. In foundations, we can assure them that the ethics of the profession call for equality of access and for developing collections that represent all sides of contemporary issues. What we too frequently cannot do is tell them in any meaningful way why these things are so. All of these things have to be related to "something" in order to make sense to us and to the students, and it is through examination of the historical development of information resources and libraries (and of course librarians) that, to me, these come into focus.

Since the mid-1080s I have been teaching on an on-going basis (once a year) Louisiana State University's (LSU) three-hour course on the history of books and libraries. The course is usually well subscribed (last fall, twenty-three students out of a total student body of approximately 150) and the student evaluations are usually enthusiastic. But, the students seem most impressed with the course as a "break" from the intense instrumentalism of the rest of our curriculum. The course has never satisfied me, perhaps because of this. While I do try to cover Assurbanipal to the Internet in fourteen weeks, I also try to relate history to the professional issues that will confront them upon graduation—an attempt that, at least from my students' perspective, has not been particularly successful in that course. It has always seemed to me that divorcing history from the instrumental realities of the profession is, ultimately, a trivialization of both history and the profession, though I hasten to add that I do not subscribe to any utilitarian view of history. Nonetheless, abstracting the historical events of the field from the functional concerns has always been much less satisfying than treating central professional issues in an historical context.

We at LSU have recently gone through one of our periodic agonies of curriculum revision in which we added three new core courses to the program. Last fall, I was assigned to teach one of these, "Information Needs Analyses," and in the process of pulling it together, discovered the work of Kuhlthau, which led me to other works on sense making and to the realization that what I had been doing all along through my own natural inclinations and limitations was indeed a legitimate approach to exposition.[1] What the writers in this arena focus on are conflict, motivation, and instability—rather than logic and rationality—as antecedents to change. Further, the process itself is essentially historical in dimension: "Sense making takes place when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations."[2] Supplying students with copies of the American Library Association's (ALA) Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights is all well and good, but without the rationale that comes from the historical dimension of the creation of these documents, it doesn't adequately prepare them to deal with the challenges that libraries face from censors. To simply say that this is what the ALA says is good and right and pure holds little water against those who seek to protect their children, themselves, and their communities from what they perceive as being the forces of evil and heresy. The attacks on libraries, either on access policies in the case of the Internet, or on specific titles in the collection, are attacks on the particular. There are specific things to which people object. The policies derive from the general. The only way to fully understand the general is through the history of the production of the policy documents in question. Without understanding this history, the librarian is forced to argue in the realm of the specific, which is frequently the weakest line of defense.

We also can argue that the historical dimension is vital to the entire process of library education. When Melville Dewey designed the first library school at Columbia in the 1880s, he did so with the realization that the purposes and objectives he could achieve were at best limited. He could teach people the mechanics of library operations. He could not teach them to be "missionaries of the book" and it was precisely this type of person

that was needed to pro-mote the library faith in the land. What he could do, and what the schools did do following Dewey's example at Albany and the demands of librarians in the field, was to limit admissions to the programs to the kind of persons acceptable to the profession and thus create the stereotype of the librarian that we have been attempting to change for the past few decades. Since the 1960s, there has arisen a general acknowledgment that we cannot impose supra-intellectual qualifications on our students. Letters of reference from ministers attesting to applicants' moral character carry little weight against their poor undergraduate records and low Graduate Record Examination scores. The gatekeeping function, once considered by library educators and librarians to be the main purpose of the schools, is one that the schools no longer fulfill. We can attest to the technical qualifications of our graduates and we can, in many cases legitimately, address personal qualifications in recommendations. But, we cannot assure in general that our students will live up to the implied moral codes of a community or even the dress codes of a library.

What we can do is to do our best to ensure that the foundations of librarian-ship are adequately addressed in the programs that we offer and that we make as much sense out of the forms, ethical environment, and professional values of information work as we can in our classes. We still too often accept student performance at what Dewey called the mental level and are content to train technically competent workers in the field without educating professionals who can make sense of the deeper issues of library and information work. The question, "Where has our history gone?" is, perhaps, not the real one to be addressed. History is with us in all that we do as librarians and educators of librarians. The real question is how do we use history to make sense out of a profession that seems to be increasingly fragmented and fractured into numerous small bits and pieces that, without perspective, can each be taken as the whole.

One of the justifications for research productivity among American university faculty members is the idea that research informs teaching. In many disciplines, this is undoubtedly true. But, many of these disciplines tend to be more focused than I have found library and information science to be. If your regular teaching load includes an advanced course in eighteenth-century English literature and you are a Samuel Johnson scholar, you have a good fit in which your research will inform your teaching. If your regular teaching load includes a broad array of subjects and your research is narrowly focused, trying to fit the work into the classes becomes difficult. I have managed to discuss Collier's Encyclopedia in my basic reference class, primarily as an example of the difficulties in editing a general encyclopedia, and have managed to work material on William Terry Couch into my foundations course in discussions about censorship. I have been more successful in utilizing parts of my doctoral dissertation in various courses, particularly the history of books and libraries. But, this has only taken the form of bits and pieces interspersed here and there among many other topics vital to the day-to-day functioning of information professionals. The problem, of course, is that any of the courses I teach, and I imagine this is true for many of my colleagues, covers a great deal more territory than my research does and what I know best has to be submerged in the general needs of the professional program. The needs of the master's in library and information science curriculum, I find, do not really allow us a forum for our research, though I must confess that every student I have had in classes for the past decade has heard of Louis Shores. I also must confess, however, that I am not at all sure that they particularly needed to know about Shores.

How can we introduce an historical sensibility into the curriculum? It would seem to me that several issues or areas of issue are involved. The first problem I see is that sense making is, according to most authors dealing with the approach, a personal process. We make sense of the world through a variety of ways and almost any of the social sciences have the capacity to structure the field. We can make sense of library and information science economically, sociologically, psychologically, and even anthropologically. The various approaches that Butler identified in his An Introduction to Library Science are still valid and useful means of making sense out of our environment.[3]

Further, the notion that courses should be "historically informed" presumes that we all have some historical sense to impart to our students. This assumption is nonsense to any of us who look around at our colleagues on our faculties. The Ph.D. degree is first and fore-most a research degree, not a teaching credential. The doctoral programs in library and information science (LIS) and in the conjoining fields from which we draw faculty

members are not programs that can or should attempt to improve the quality of teaching in the library schools, no matter how useful this might be in general. When the Graduate Library School was established at the University of Chicago in the 1920s, we, as a profession, accepted the model of social science research over the earlier propositions that we follow a "humanistic" model and, in doing so, accepted the forms of quantitative research that this model represented. The hegemony of the social science model of research and the commitment of the Ph.D. programs to research effectively rule out the possibility of us "growing our own" historically oriented cadre of library school teachers committed to informing the curriculum through history.

The idea of interdisciplinary work has been suggested as a potential source of historically minded influence on the LIS curriculum. While this may look promising, it undoubtedly promises more than it can deliver. For the past twenty years, I have tried to convince members of the history department at LSU and the graduate students in that department to address topics in library history. There are many such topics in the South and in Louisiana that could profitably be investigated. The resources are there. There has been no interest. People in history departments are concerned with history as a profession, not with "professional history." The political factions in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, in the 1890s are of much more importance to them than the history of libraries, or reading, or books in the state. The LSU English department offers a course covering analytical bibliography that several of my students have taken over the years. It offers a good introduction to the history of the printed book, but it is, ultimately, a research methods course in literary studies and fully half of the course is spent searching for obscure quotations and lines of poetry. This may be good experience for reference librarians, but it doesn't fill the need for an historically informed curriculum in library and information science.

A few years back, Mary Biggs pro-posed the abolishment of our Ph.D. pro-grams.[4] They are, she maintained, methodologically weak and we should be encouraging scholars and researchers in other disciplinary areas to develop the research front in LIS. It was an intriguing idea. Getting real scholars to study the problems rather than librarians might well elevate the quality of the research effort, and, since we have essentially imported our research methodologies from other fields, it does make sense that researchers in LIS be trained not in the application of the methods on a secondary level but in the fields themselves. We have some examples of this, principally from academic librarians working in or near universities without LIS doctoral programs who manage to convince faculties of other departments that libraries would be fruitful arenas of study in whatever discipline they have an interest. While many of these efforts have proven adequate for the demands of the degree, they have thus far not contributed significantly to the body of research with which we deal and have not contributed to the general demand for historically informed teaching. Academic departments generate their own topics of research that, too infrequently, do not include libraries and information services and sources as high priorities. Libraries, it would seem, are viewed as resources for research, not subjects of research.

The recent establishment of interdisciplinary doctoral programs at several universities with ALA-accredited master's degree programs may change the picture. New administrative configurations developing at Albany, Hawaii, Buffalo, and Emporia offer the possibility that there may well be movement toward doctoral work in LIS that would be enriched by close cooperation with other disciplines. At this point, though, it is too early to forecast any major changes in the focus of the LIS doctorate based on these developments. It is probable however, that the more logical alliances with education and computer science would probably be maintained rather than expansion into nontraditional alliances with departments of history or English.

The final concern I have about the entire issue is what history or whose history should we be teaching? Feminist theory, Marxism, and quantitative analysis all have shaped historical studies. These are approaches having legitimate claims for our attention and all pose problems and approaches that can be radically opposed. Historical fact is nothing more than the framework on which historians base the interpretation of the record or extract significance from the events they describe. History itself is a rhetorical vehicle for any number of visions of reality and the absence of any consensus on the purposes and forms of historical analysis make history its own idiosyncratic from of sense-making. The idea of imbuing the curriculum with history begs the question of what history and whose history will we use. Without such a consensus, I would submit that attempting to make LIS an historically informed discipline makes no sense if by this we mean that teachers in our LIS schools can

use history to promote a vision of information services that would form a universal basis for professionalism. It only makes sense if each of us can use whatever context we ourselves use to make sense of the confusion with which we deal to make sense to our students. History makes sense to me, but it undoubtedly will not for everyone.

References
1. Carol Kuhlthau, Seeking Meaning (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Pr., 1992).
2. Karl Weick, Sensemaking in Organizations (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Russell Sage Publications, 1995), 14.
3. Pierce Butler, An Introduction to Library Science (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1933).
4. Mary Biggs, "A Perspective on Library Science Doctoral Programs," Journal of Education for Library and Information Science 32 (Fall/Winter 1991): 188-93.