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## Is Preservation Education Out of the Wilderness Yet?

(“One thorn of experience is worth a whole wilderness of warning.” James Russell Lowell, p. 739)

She was born in Anna, Illinois, in 1865. At Illinois Female College she was an art major, and she later taught oil painting and china painting. Then in 1899 she became interested in bookbinding, leaving Jacksonville, Illinois, for London, studying bookbinding with Sangorski & Sutcliffe. From London she moved to Chicago, where she opened her own studio and began exhibiting her work at the Art Institute. She founded the Bohemian Guild with Frederic Goudy, and taught art and bookbinding classes at the University of Chicago elementary school. Struggling to support herself in Chicago, in 1909 she became head of the bindery at the Cleveland Public Library. In 1922, she went to work for the National Library Bindery, where she closed out her career in the late 1930s. She had bookbinding students into the 1940s, and towards the end of her life, she also volunteered at the Cleveland Art Museum. She died in 1955, largely forgotten.

Who *was* she?

### **Gertrude Stiles.**

And although Stiles has essentially been buried in history, she played an important role in American preservation in two ways. First, for twenty years she was a member of the American Library Association where she was active on the Bookbinding Committee from 1915-1928. In that capacity she revised Margaret Wright Brown's *Mending & Repair of Books*. Stiles also wrote sections of the 1928 classic, *Care and Binding of Books and Magazines*. Nearly a half century later, the Committee on Bookbinding became the Preservation of Library Materials Section (PLMS), which later became the Preservation and Reformatting Section (PARS).

The second reason she was important is that Stiles also taught courses in bookbinding and repair for some twenty years at Case Western Reserve University, beginning in 1910, and later at the University of Wisconsin, and

the Carnegie School of Atlanta (later, Emory). So she may be the first person to teach preservation in a library and information science program. Did she also set the pattern of adjunct faculty teaching preservation?

Whether or not she was the first remains unclear. No one except Barbara Higginbotham has documented the history of the American library preservation movement, and she mentions no one teaching separate preservation courses in institutions. Also, her study covers only the period from 1876 to 1910. We know little about the field between 1910 and World War II.

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What *is* the history of preservation? Or perhaps it is more appropriate to ask, what *are* the *histories* of preservation, conservation, and restoration? Art conservation, historic preservation, and the preservation of moving images all have their own traditions. Art conservation “became a matter of serious concern” (Sheldon Keck, “Further Materials for a History of Conservation,” 285) during the Renaissance, and descriptions about particular treatments appear in such works as Georgio Vasari’s *The Lives of Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. Artists were the first art conservators. To a certain extent, there is a parallel in historic preservation, which was first practiced by architects. In 1934, though, the American Institute of Architects began working with the U.S. Park Service to document historic structures. Historic preservation, like art conservation before it, required multiple areas of expertise.

More recently, the moving image community has become a preservation sector, since the medium of film is just over 100 years old. A complicating issue is that each of these fields has its own definitions, rules, and challenges. Each area is affected by social forces. For example, an important part of historic preservation is the repurposing of structures, but what is preserved and how may be dictated by laws, such as the 1976 Tax Reform Act which removed the incentives for the *demolition* of buildings. The moving image preservation community often has an uneasy alliance with entertainment conglomerates who may own the rights to the films that need to be restored. But the National Film Preservation Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-307) helped to bring attention to the plight of deteriorating film to the public. So there has been greater collaboration since then.

Preservation education evolves from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which marked the beginning of the movement towards a more scientific approach to conservation and preservation. This means that since then, there has been more interaction among scientists, historians, and conservators. Add to that the growth of the publishing industry by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the boom in encyclopedias, dictionaries, and technical manuals which published information about all kinds of crafts. Before then, craft skills had been passed on only from master to apprentice. When documentation appeared, it was in works such as books of secrets. Good science depends on good documentation. Good documentation leads to more widespread education.

In the United States, the 19<sup>th</sup> century ushered in formal education for professions. The first law and medical schools opened in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1876 the American Library Association was founded, and in 1887, Melvil Dewey founded the first library school at Columbia University.

Educational programs for conservation (and later, preservation and conservation) were not established until the twentieth century. Some examples:

The first art conservation training program started at the Fogg Museum, Harvard, in 1928.

The first historic preservation course: 1964, Columbia University.  
The first degree program: Columbia, 1978.

The first course in library and archival preservation after Gertrude Stiles: Paul Banks at the University of Illinois in 1971, followed by George Cunha at the University of Rhode Island in 1974.

While some students with an interest in book conservation studied at NYU and Cooperstown in the mid-1970s, the first LIS preservation and conservation program started at Columbia in 1980.

All of these historical developments led not only to an increase in knowledge and materials, but also to an awareness that preserving these artifacts and texts was desirable—possibly even necessary.

As one of the early people in the preservation education field, Gertrude Stiles seems to personify many of the challenges which we face today. Paul Conway will be presenting you with a number of other challenges later on

this morning. Here are some of the ones that I as an LIS educator have been thinking about.

- 1) As we shall soon see from the research papers that follow, many LIS programs dismayingly do not offer *any* preservation courses. Who, then, is advocating for preservation in those programs?
- 2) The teaching of preservation in library schools that *do* offer courses has been uneven, episodic, and largely left to preservation practitioners who usually have little or no influence in shaping preservation education in the rest of the curriculum.

Though these preservationists may be experts in their fields, they usually do not have Ph.D.s, and their courses, valuable in themselves, may not mesh comfortably with the rest of the curriculum in which their classes are taught. So not only will they have little or no influence in *shaping* the curriculum, what they teach will not be *integrated* with the other curricular offerings. Courses in library history, library buildings, scholarly publishing, bibliography, online searching, information technology, database construction, and so forth may not consider at all the preservation aspects of their subjects.

- 3) With the exception of maybe 6 LIS programs, (generally those with strong archives programs), preservation is not integrated into the rest of the LIS curriculum. In *those* schools:

- How are students learning about preservation issues inherent in the creation of digital libraries? When they graduate from LIS programs, do they have the technical knowledge required to work with systems developers?
- How will students grasp the concept that as libraries increasingly “lease” rather than buy information, there are profound implications for the preservation of information that is proprietary? (How many *librarians* understand this?)

- When students study metadata, are they only learning it as a subset of the organization of information? Are cataloging professors teaching students about preservation metadata? Do students understand the relationship between digital content and digital metadata?
- Where in the curriculum are they learning about rights management issues?
- In information technology courses are students learning about the disappearance of information in file formats and of loss of entire infrastructures? Have they been taught to consider how to preserve the key characteristics of digital records?

Perhaps not every LIS program needs to produce preservation managers. But we *could* make the case that every graduate should, at a minimum, have a basic awareness of key preservation concepts and issues. It should be made clear that preservation is a core area of our profession.

But LIS curricular issues are not the only ones that keep me up at night. I worry that in the digital world there is no metaphor as powerful as the brittle book with which to engage the public about deterioration. I cringe when I read in *PARADE Magazine* that people can throw away their home movies and photographs once they have been digitized. And I am worried, in the wake of 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq, that preservationists across disciplines (art, historic preservation, museology, etc.) don't talk to each other as often as they should.

We should be collaborating more closely across disciplines and across professional organizations. Art and object conservators, moving image archivists, historic preservationists, and preservation managers of library and archival materials all share common concerns.

While we cannot solve all of these problems today, I hope that we will be able to identify key challenges and come up with strategies for addressing them. I hope that by bringing together such a diverse group of people as you are, we can identify new areas of collaboration, and possibly new forums in which to meet and publish.

Finally, I hope that we will leave the symposium with new perspectives,

and a new resolve to keep preservation at the forefront of our  
consciousness and efforts.

Michèle V. Cloonan, April 11, 2004