

nista dell'informazione, sono espliciti e possono ancora suggerire qualche spunto di riflessione.

Dewey aveva fondato da appena due anni con R. R. Bowker e Frederick Leyboldt a Boston *The Library Journal*, il primo vero organo di dibattito scientifico e di formazione specifica, distinto dall'impostazione genericamente storico culturale di studiosi anche illustri, che sarà di valido supporto di lì a breve all'istituzione della American Library Association. Nell'articolo, con una sensibilità moderna del problema, Dewey delinea alcuni punti fondamentali rispetto alla preparazione professionale del *bibliotecario*: l'identità plurale della figura professionale, il profilo professionale ideale, la specificità della library economy and administration rispetto ad altri settori di lavoro bibliotecario, rapporti tra formazione e istituzione biblioteca. Dewey dunque riconosce il valore delle diverse attitudini personali e il valore della loro diversa spendibilità; la necessità per il bibliotecario ideale di possedere una cultura generale, che poi si articola con *padronanza* specifica nei diversi settori, la necessità per una scuola di biblioteconomia di essere collegata con una biblioteca di dimensioni ragguardevoli. L'orientamento generale del discorso ci sembra ancora condivisibile; in particolare di fronte

alle prospettive di professioni *culturali, immateriali e trasversali* che si aprono, soprattutto per i giovani, ci sembra ancora di poter affermare – con Dewey appunto – che *i propri esperimenti e l'esperienza* non garantiscono la professionalità, *physicians, lawyers, preachers, yes even our cooks have special schools for special training ...*

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Apprenticeship of librarians [1]

Melvin Dewey

We hear a great deal of the importance of having trained librarians; of the folly of employing those unqualified for their special work, and similar talk, such as would fit the employment of physicians without medical education. Some of us forget how few fill these requirements, and the reasons why the many are so deficient. In any case the fact cannot be gainsaid that the number of librarians who approximate to the standard we set is exceedingly small. Some are very learned, but are so lacking in practical bu-

[1] *The Library Journal*, vol. 4(1879), n.5, 147-148

business qualities, in administration, that they could not earn their board in the business world. Others have enterprise and business capacity, but are lacking in culture or mental training, and labor under constant disadvantages. As in all professions, there is an almost infinite variety of unfitness for the position. This article is concerned only with those who are naturally endowed with the qualities that make our ideal librarian, and who have received the necessary general education. We ask and demand that the positions should be given to men and women thus fitted, but this is not all. We need a training school for preparation for the special work. The village school-mistress is provided with normal schools by the hundred, where the best methods of teaching are taught. Physicians, lawyers, preachers, yes even our cooks have special schools for special training. But the librarian, whose profession has been so much exalted, must learn his trade by his own experiments and experience.

There has not been even a system of apprenticeship. Assistants picked up what they could and sometimes were promoted as vacancies occurred, but no regular plan of training to all the varied work has been attempted. The result has been as good as could be expected. Here and there an invincible de-

termination to master the subject has surmounted all obstacles, but the majority have plodded on largely in the ways that they inherited from their predecessors, without much care as to their improvement.

Of late, much has been done in print. Edwards' works, to those who have had access to them, were a mine of needed information, but there was little else. The Bureau of Education made a great step in advance in bringing out the Government Report on libraries in 1876, but like Edwards' much of that was historical. Then came the *LIBRARY JOURNAL*, which has brought forward scores of plans and suggestions of value. All this is something to be grateful for, and opportunity for the aspirant of to-day is infinitely better than it was five years ago. But we need more than has been done in print and more than the much greater helps that are to be put in print, during this and succeeding years. Successful training requires that the student have personal intercourse with men full of the library spirit, and thoroly qualified for their work. His enthusiasm must be roused, till with the guidance furnished, he will press forward to a complete mastery of the subject. Probably no one man would unite in himself all qualities desired in the faculty of our librarians' college. The man who would give the best

lecture and guidance in bibliography might be quite unfit to take the class thru the practical details of library economy and administration. As in all training schools, different men must take in charge different branches. If such persons are not to be had, we must do the best we can with those we have, which plan is, I believe, pursued by all other schools.

Another thing that seems clear is that this librarians' normal school must be attached to some considerable library. It would require an unhoped for patronage to support it independently, and even if this were possible, it is not desirable unless a large library can be at the service of the school. A large variety of books are needed in the work; the pupils must see all the work doing from day to day in all its details; they must have practice in doing each part of it under careful supervision. My design is to submit no definite plan, but to provoke thought and discussion. The form that seems most probable is that certain librarians will take assistants for the special purpose of training them to take charge of other institutions. These assistants will give their services as far as they can be made available in doing the work of the library without other compensation that the instruction given, and the opportunities for practise under trained supervision.

There are many aspirants who would be glad to give their time and best efforts in this way, and librarian with any enthusiasm for this part of our work could plan to get assistance enough to avoid loss to the library. Any other than the enthusiastic librarian would not undertake the training department, and if he did would not succeed in it. While it would be better if all students could be centered in the best library, there are two reasons why I fear it will not be possible. The main one, that only a limited number can be made of service in any one library, and few would be willing to give their time, pay their own expenses and tuition beside. If training departments can be founded in various parts of the

country, it will draw some students who would not go to a distant state.

Perhaps by and by we may have one central library school, where all will want to "finish off", but the first step to be taken is to arrange systematic instruction and apprenticeship in connection with some of our best managed libraries under the charge of our most enterprising librarians.

I am well aware that some have given more attention to this matter than others. Mr. Poole has sent out not a few "graduates" who have done much better work because of the years they spent with him. The Boston Athenaeum has the reputation of being as much as any a kind of training-school. But at the best,

the half has not been done. Let me illustrate. Suppose Mr. Currier or Mr. Winsor took five new assistants, who came for training rather than salary. Let them meet each day for a lecture or talk which shall begin at the foundation, and day by day progress towards a complete view of the whole field. These talk should serve to rouse interest and enthusiasm; to guide very closely the reading and study of the pupils, and to give the facts, methods and inspiration which is not to be found in print. Such a plan would take an hour of valuable time that neither Mr. Winsor nor Mr. Cutter can well spare, but is it possible to get such results in training for librarianship with any less effort?