Unit 4

Academic Libraries:

History and Context

When looking at the history of the academic library, one can follow the winding evolutionary path institutes of higher learning have navigated over the past 350 years. Like most things, it occurred within a larger social and political context which affected its growth and focus. It is important to know about and understand the impact greater society has had upon the development of the academic library. The initial basis of the academic library began in the colonial era. It was heavily impacted in the 1800's by changes to federal policies and US colleges' best practices, as well as the 1900's by women's suffrage and desegregation. Examining these larger trends is important to understand the prevailing social and political perspectives of libraries as they exist today.

Colonial era

The birth of academic libraries in the US is generally accepted to have taken place in Cambridge, MA, in 1638 when John Harvard donated his collection of 400 books to Harvard University (Harvard College Libraries, 2012). During the colonial period, there were minimal book publications occurring in the US. The majority of books were imported from Europe, most often from England. Between 1639 and 1776, publishers in the US produced approximately 60 books a year (Weiner, 2005). In 1804, a catalog listing available books published in the US had 1,338 publications in print (Hanson, 1989). The books being published were predominately

focused on theology or philosophy (Jones, 2004; Weiner, 2005). Libraries did not have a widely accepted method of categorization (Weiner, 2005).

The first colonial academic libraries included Harvard (1638), William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), College of New Jersey (now Princeton, 1746), University of Pennsylvania (1749), King's College (now Columbia University, 1754), College of Rhode Island (now Brown University, 1764), and Dartmouth (1769) (Jones, 2004).

In the colonial era, most colleges focused on Protestant theology and had a rigid curriculum where all students studied the same thing. The dominant method of learning was the English style of recitation, memorization, and regurgitation (Weiner, 2005). The focus was more on indoctrinating the student than on the student learning basic information and creating a unique synthesis based on that information. The focus of colleges at the time were to educate potential members of the clergy as well as preparing men to be upstanding merchants and citizens that would spread the dominant national values (Tucker, 2001). Higher education was also available to a very limited demographic. College education was available to government officials, professionals, and the male leisure class (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities [APLU], 2012).

Because of the more English style of education at the time, libraries had a very limited scope. They were run by faculty members or college presidents (Jones, 2004). The libraries generally had very limited hours, perhaps 1-2 hours a week, and were located in a small room in the college's chapel or main building. The first person to be an official librarian at Harvard was Solomon Stoddard in 1667 (Jones, 2004). The first freestanding library was constructed by Harvard in 1841 (Hanson, 1989).

Nineteenth Century

Some of the most drastic changes to the academic library happened in the 1800's. Women's, coeducational, and multiracial colleges were all introduced in the nineteenth century. The first women's college was Mount Holyoke founded in South Hadley, MA in 1836 (Coughlin & Gertzog, 1997). The first college to offer equal admission to African-Americans and women was Oberlin founded in Oberlin, OH in 1833 (ibid). Fisk University (Nashville, TN), Howard University (Washington, DC), and Morehouse College (Atlanta, GA) were founded in the 1860's and focused on educating newly emancipated slaves (ibid).

In the 1850's, there was a substantial push from both the general and agricultural communities to provide places of education that focused on agriculture, engineering, home economics, and other technical education (APLU, 2012; Tucker, 2001). In response to this need, Representative Justin Smith Morrill (R-VT) initially proposed a land-grant bill to Congress in 1857. It was passed in 1859 by Congress but vetoed by President Buchanan. Morrill reintroduced the bill in 1861 with changes to the bill including that institutions founded under this act would teach military tactics. Because of the need for military officers following the Civil War, the act was viewed more favorably and was enacted in 1862 after being signed by President Lincoln (APLU, 2012; Tucker, 2001).

The Morrill Act provided public lands to each state to create their own land-grant university. The state was expected to provide the buildings and maintenance of the institution. In 1887, the Hatch Act was passed; this act provided federal funding to land-grant universities to construct agricultural research stations in conjunction with the universities (APLU, 2012). The second Morrill Act was passed in 1890 which added a requirement to all land-grant universities

applying for federal funding. All universities had to show race was not part of the admissions criteria; if it was, the university had to designate a separate land-grant university for African-American students (ibid). Based on the second Morrill Act, 17 states created separate institutions for AA students (APLU, 2012; Hagy, 2009).

Approximately 76 land-grant colleges and universities were established initially. In 1994, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), representing 29 tribal colleges and universities, were granted land-grant status by Congress, bringing the total of land-grant institutions to 105 (APLU, 2012). It was surprising to realize that Connecticut does have one land-grant university. The University of Connecticut located in Storrs, CT can trace its roots back to the Storrs Agricultural School, founded in 1881 (APLU, 2012; Austin, 1998).

Much of the focus behind the Morrill Acts was to educate the middle class and provide opportunities for advancement. These institutions were also intended to advance society and provide places with a focus on applied research (Hagy, 2009). While the land-grant act was not intended to create colleges that focused on technical education to the exclusion of all else, many institutions did not develop broad core classes on topics such as the arts or humanities. Along with other factors, this is one of the reasons that many land-grant colleges were among the most underfunded and underdeveloped of all academic libraries (Tucker, 2001).

However, of the 105 land-grant colleges, some have risen to the top as exceptional institutions. As of 1997, the top 4 land-grant college academic libraries were as follows: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of California, Cornell, and the University of Wisconsin (Tucker, 2001). The University of Illinois has emerged as having the largest library at a public university. Their undergraduate library built in 1969 is rather famous for being an

underground library, primarily built in such a fashion to avoid blocking sunlight from reaching the Morrow Plots, although maintaining the open aesthetic of the campus was also a focus (Leetaru, 2011). The Morrow Plots were the first experimental soil plots used by a US college. They have been in constant use since they were established in 1876 as only the second experimental plot in the world (ibid).

At this point in college history, many colleges began to reformat their curriculums in response to the changing social and political climate. One of the most notable changes was in the electives system. In 1869, Charles Eliot was elected as president of Harvard (Coughlin & Gertzog, 1997). Eliot encouraged a broader base of core classes as well as allowing more personalization of individual's program of study.   Under Eliot's direction, seniors began selecting all of their courses, with freshman having some choice in their courses by 1884 (Charles Eliot (1834-1926) – Harvard).

In 1876, Johns Hopkins University was founded (Coughlin & Gertzog, 1997). This institution relied on a more German-style of education. Professors were encouraged to not only be teachers but to be scholars who were up-to-date on their field of expertise. The focus was not on recitation and memorization but on interactions and independent thought (Hagy 2009). Students and professors were expected to produce content that was a synthesis of the currently available knowledge; they were expected to add to that body of knowledge.

Because of the focus on applied research and independent thought, there was an increasing demand for primary sources. Libraries began to have longer hours and provide more bibliographic and reference services (Weiner, 2005). Many colleges began to erect separate academic library buildings to house the additional resources and services. Another part of the

answer to the demand for primary sources was an increase in serial publications. In 1825, there were less than 100 serials; by 1885, there were 9,000 (ibid). Librarianship as a profession also began to take shape in the nineteenth century. The American Library Association was founded in 1876; the Dewey Decimal classification system was invented in 1876; and Colombia University established the School of Library Economy in 1887 to train librarians (Jones, 2004; Weiner, 2005). It is also interesting to note the rapid transition of librarians being predominately male to female. In 1870, 80% of librarians were male; in 1900, 80% were female (Passet, 1996). It is interesting that as women began gaining access to higher education, there was a heavy increase in female librarians. Part of this could be that at the time, being a librarian was not a prestigious job and generally did not offer opportunities for advancement (Jones 2004). Because of these factors, librarianship was often considered appropriate work for a college-educated woman.

Some other noticeable events that occurred during the nineteenth century were the ratification of the 13th, 14th, and 15th constitutional amendments. The 13th amendment ratified in 1865 abolished slavery. The 14th amendment ratified in 1868 included due process and equal protection clauses. The 15th amendment ratified in 1870 granted voting rights regardless of race. These changes to the constitution, most specifically the 15th amendment, set the stage for the major activation of women's suffrage in the early twentieth century. Also, in 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*. This book heavily influenced the movement of higher education towards scientific inquiry which in turn further bolstered the cause of the academic library (Weiner, 2005).

<u>Twentieth century</u>

The early 1900's also brought many changes. The 19th constitutional amendment was ratified in 1920 which gave women the right to vote. World War One was fought from 1914 to 1918. The Great Depression began in 1929 and continued for many years. World War Two consumed 1939 to 1945. World War Two and the resulting social and political changes had a substantial impact on institutes of higher learning.

The first community college, Joliet Junior College, was founded in 1901 in Joliet, IL (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2012). This was in response to institutes of higher learning realizing that most entering students were not properly prepared for the college curriculum's shift to more independent method of study and that students often needed a stepping stone. Community colleges were present for many years but their attendance skyrocketed after WWII and the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, also known as the GI Bill of Rights, in 1944 (AACC, 2012). Prior to WWII, the number of community college students numbered 325,000; after WWII, that number increased to 3.4 million (Coughlin & Gertzog, 1997). The number of community college facilities increased from 400 to 973 (ibid).

With the enactment of the GI Bill, colleges and universities had to handle unprecedented numbers of incoming students, primarily veterans of WWII. The number of students enrolled in post-secondary institutions rose from 2.5 million in 1955 to 8.8 million in 1974 (Coughlin & Gertzog, 1997). The likelihood of an 18-year-old being enrolled in college increased from 17.8% in 1955 to 33.5% in 1974 (ibid). Women and African-Americans also

began attending college in unparalleled numbers. Women went from being 1/3 of all students enrolled to 1/2 and African-Americans enrollment numbers increased 8-fold (ibid).

The Vietnam conflict occurred 1955-1975. The hippie movement occurred primarily in the 1960's. Both of these forces influenced the further breakdown of barriers to equal enrollment in the 1960's and 1970's. More institutes of higher learning began to evaluate individuals on their credentials rather than their race, religion, or gender (ibid).

The 19th century saw many changes to the academic library. The first library staff involvement with a union occurred at the Library of Congress in 1940 (Weiner, 2005). In 1947, Harvard opened the first ever library designed specifically for undergraduate students (ibid). This trend saw a peak in the 1970's when over 40 different universities had separate libraries for their undergraduates. However, due to the crippling cost of replicating services, by 1987 only 25 universities continued to have separate libraries (ibid).

In 1967, the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC) was formed by all of the state's colleges and universities. Their goal was to produce a computerized system that would allow academic libraries to share materials with each other to help cut down on duplication and cost (ibid). In 1972, the OCLC began to offer an online database service to all subscribed institutions. It began as a shared cataloguing resource based on Ohio's college libraries. The database is now known as WorldCat and now contains holdings for almost every library in the country, as well as some international libraries (ibid).

There were determined to be 2,190 4-year colleges and universities in 1995; 1/4 of these institutions are publicly controlled. Those public institutions comprise more than 1/2 of all students enrolled at a 4 year institution (Coughlin & Gertzog, 1997).

Summary

In the colonial era, academic libraries were minimal and difficult to access. College students of the time were predominantly affluent Caucasian young men seeking out a theological education. In the nineteenth century, substantial expansion was made in the number of institutes of higher learning. The focus of those institutions changed from a more theological education to that of applied sciences. The philosophy of university education changed to a more German style of interactive learning rather than the English style of memorization. This change pushed academic libraries to the forefront as more primary sources of information were required by students and faculty alike. This pressured libraries to increase their services and become more interactive themselves. In the twentieth century, major world climate changes influenced institutes of higher learning to become more accepting of all kinds of people. Restrictions on admissions began to fall away and women and minorities began to be more fairly represented in universities. The dawn of the digital age began and academic libraries rose up to meet it. Academic libraries will continue to evolve to meet the needs of their denizens. The profession should endeavor to deliver services to individuals even though the delivery may appear substantially difference than in the past.

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