Undergraduate qualifications for librarianship in Australia: traditions and influences

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Introduction

This article examines the historical context in which Australian undergraduate education for librarianship has developed, and is prompted by recent calls for a Masters qualification as the entry point for professional librarians in Australia. It reviews the traditions of education for librarianship and their influences in Australia to explain the current state.

Education for the 'professional' level of librarianship has suffered in Australia and elsewhere because the profession has not been able to establish a clear vision for its future. Professional associations and the education sector have been largely reactionary in their responses to education needs. The library and information studies (LIS) profession in Australia needs to acknowledge and accept a well-balanced view of its traditions if it is to mature. This acceptance must be based on a common set of understandings about the historical, social, and political foundations upon which Australian education is built. In addition, this view must be placed in a much broader context than has existed to date, one which places LIS education in Australia in the middle of a more mainstream debate about the nature and value of education. An understanding and acknowledgement of these traditions, which explain much about the current state of Australian LIS education, will perhaps provide some ways to improve its quality.

In recent years the promotion of Masters level entry to the LIS profession has emerged as one way to raise its status and standards. Many may view Masters level entry to the profession as a shift away from Australian traditions, noting that it has previously failed to take root in Australia. As LIS professionals we must look beyond our own industry to view patterns and acceptable practice amongst other professions with a common historical, social and political base to fully appreciate our own position. We must understand and acknowledge our traditions, because it is in these traditions that we will find a uniquely Australian answer for the needs of these professions.

Regrettably only a small number of members of the profession are engaged in the debate about Australian LIS education. This low level of engagement is far from new in Australia. Decisions about the various roles of library staff, educational entry points and workplace practice have often been implemented without wide debate, a reflection, perhaps, of what Laurie Brown perceived as the oligarchic nature of the Library Association of Australia (LAA) during the crucial period of course development in the 1960s and 1970s (Brown 1976). Currently discussion between the two key interest groups of sectoral educators – professional (university-based) and paraprofessional (TAFE-based) – has almost ceased, even though the two sectors have converged more than at any other time. This has implications for the development of a common educational philosophy and vision, and for the delivery of education.

The groups who are participating in the debate about the structure of LIS education in Australia fall into two main categories. The first category is an elite group of professionals, often high level managers, educators and influential academic librarians who wield influence nationally and internationally and are exposed to international trends in the field. The second can best be described as the rank and file, those with professional qualifications, usually gained in Australia, who staff the many information agencies in Australia. Surprisingly silent are other groups, such as the two-year qualified paraprofessionals and, alongside them, the many unqualified workers in the industry and paraprofessional educators. The loudest voice is, not surprisingly, that of the elite, who may not represent the experience of the majority and whose vision is likely to have been influenced by their experience of practices outside the Australian context. Recent concerns expressed in Victoria about the state of education for the public library sector in that state and about the continuing decline of education for school libraries (Reynolds and Carroll 2001) may indicate an increasing gulf between the perceptions of the elite and the rank and file.

The debate about the relative merits of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications for entry to professional library work reflects an ongoing, long-standing search for professional status. Issues of poor pay, low status and the encroachment of others into LIS territory are raised in the debate, recalling Sharr's LAA presidential address over thirty years ago:

> For how long have we complained of our relatively inadequate public regard and level of remuneration; for how long have we criticized the poor quality of our professional literature – and done little about it; for how long have some us been secretly ashamed of their own profession; for how long have we cowered in our lairs grumbling at the invasion of our territory by the computer boys (Sharr 1969; 307).

Current discussion about LIS education in Australia reflects the specific vocational and historical imperatives of the profession in Australia. It does not acknowledge the imperatives of the broader educational context. Perhaps we should consider Rochester's view, that 'the main path for advancement of any profession is the development of the unique and identifiable knowledge and skills that it professes' which 'gives social recognition and prestige to the profession [and] it leads to material rewards' (Rochester 1997: 1) and pose the question: what unique and identifiable knowledge and skills are professed in the Australian context? In answering this question we shift the focus of LIS education from vocational needs to the educational goals that provide this unique and identifiable knowledge and skills.

For informed debate about the future of LIS education a common set of understandings and a fully rounded consciousness of context and history are required. The debate about education and entry to the profession, and more recently about the nature of the profession, has waxed and waned for decades. Recent statements by Myburgh ('I am of the view that a post-bachelor Master's degree should become the basic pre-professional training. The Graduate Diploma is not enough', Myburgh 2003: 224) and Harvey ('I am convinced that we have done ourselves another major disservice by not actively and energetically promoting ourselves as a graduate (professional masters) profession', Harvey 2001: 17) are depressing echoes of the

concerns noted nearly two decades earlier by Boyd Rayward, Professor of Librarianship at the University of NSW at the time of the Dawkins' reforms, which merged Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) and traditional universities into one higher education system (Rayward 1988). It seems that with each shift in emphasis in educational priorities, there is a need to revisit the debate that has haunted Australian librarianship since the inception of an organized profession One explanation may be that in times of crisis in education for the profession (and we are in one now) issues like these must resurface. Another may be that in universities undergraduate professional qualifications have never been fully accepted. Or again, it may be that at times of professional challenge, the profession's elite feels the need to redraw the boundaries in order to reassert the professional association's traditional gate-keeping role. This latter is never mentioned in Australian LIS circles, although it is commonly acknowledged in other professions such as education, medicine and engineering. Peter Rushbrook, an educator and researcher in vocational education and training, suggests that one purpose of professional associations is:

> professional protection/gate keeping and this is associated with professional bodies and the power they maintain over curriculum. Professional bodies practice selective exclusion so as to maintain the status of the profession (P. Rushbrook in discussion with M. Carroll 16/07/02)

Knowing our history

In Australia, as elsewhere, economic pressures and societal change have contributed to the contraction of clearly identifiable LIS schools into the more generic disciplines of Knowledge or Information Management, and Business and Information Technology, a reflection of what has been called in the United Kingdom a 'gentle disappearance' (Muddiman 1996: 21) of the stand-alone LIS school. LIS educators have been accused of educating too narrowly for what Muddiman calls 'new vocationalism' rather than broad educational outcomes (1996: 22) and to have sacrificed quality for survival and generic concepts for broadly-based employment skills (Harvey 2001; Muddiman 1996). This generalization of the nature and content of LIS education at university level has led to accusations that there has been a decline in the quality of those who enter the profession and in the educational depth and breadth they bring. These accusations are neither new nor unique to Australia. This has led to a revisiting of the issue of entry level to the LIS profession, which has dogged the profession since its inception in Australia (Radford 1963; Ramsey 1963). The answer promoted to solve the perceived problems of poor quality graduates has been a call once again for Masters level entry as the sole entry point to the profession with the focus on what are seen as inadequacies of the one-year postgraduate diploma. These calls have failed to address the place of undergraduate qualifications or the issue of the strong uptake of undergraduate qualifications by qualified paraprofessionals. We cannot adopt this approach without measuring the broader impact of such a move, considering the unique Australian condition and questioning the validity and basis of these perceptions of failure. Before we can embark on any meaningful discussion we need to understand how education for the LIS industry in Australia took the form it did, and to understand the underlying pressures, conceptual and educational framework and the cultural context of education from the 1930s onwards.

One way to focus the debate over professional entry points is to investigate the broader educational, cultural and political influences which have always driven the LIS agenda but are never fully acknowledged. Many of the educational imperatives that have governed LIS education in Australia have been the product of forces outside the sector, including economic depression, government initiatives, educational agendas, and the dual influences of Britain and America on the Australian cultural and educational landscape, including librarianship. According to Rochester 'The system of professional education for librarians in Australia which eventually evolved was based on Anglo-American traditions' (1997: 1). There is evidence within Australia that this dual perspective has created unresolved tension. This tension, which is evident in Australia's approach to education, has had a lasting impact on the shape and form of LIS education and its precepts.

The dual influences of Britain and America on the Australian cultural and educational landscape result in a cultural tension that is intrinsic to that landscape. Education for all sectors of the LIS industry has largely followed a path defined by the historic forces that have shaped Australian education as a whole. These social, political and historic factors are rarely, if ever, raised in discussion about the direction LIS education in Australia should take. Rather, the LIS educational agenda has been driven by the desire of the profession to improve its status in the eyes of the general community (Fielding 1972; Sharr 1969). It is now, perhaps, time to shift the focus to defining what the essential requirements of the industry are, and to educate to this end. To do this it is essential that an informed debate emerges and recognition is given to the influences that have shaped the industry, and education for it.

British, American, or hybrid?

The changes proposed by Myburgh and Harvey to a Masters degree as entry-level qualification to the profession can only arise from a perspective derived from the United States with its long tradition of professional Masters-level programs for all but school libraries. This within the Australian context was called the 'American Pattern' (Bryan 1971). This tradition differs from the Australian tradition and cannot be adopted without due consideration of Australian conditions and of the factors which have shaped them, which include Australia's strong links with Britain and an Australian education system based on what has been described as a 'British semi-apprentice system' (Stokes in Radford 1963: 12). These links have influenced not only the education system but also many other aspects of Australian culture, including the role of professional associations as examination rather than accreditation bodies, the value placed on the value of 'graduate' entry, and the perceived merit and status of postgraduate degrees from Britain and America. It is quite clear that LIS educators in Australia initially did not place the same value on qualifications from the United States as from Britain (Radford 1963: 12; Broadbent 1988: 50). In the first issue of *The Australian Library Journal* in 1951 an unnamed author (presumably its editor John Metcalfe) suggested that 'the appointment of British librarians to senior positions in Australia should do something to dispel the idea that we are Americanised in Australia' (Librarians Overseas 1951: 21). More recently Rochester noted that 'in Australia in the 1930s the British tradition was paramount, so in librarianship, as in many other professional areas, models from the United Kingdom were followed' (Rochester 1997: 7).

British educational traditions are deep rooted in Australia. They arrived with white settlers in the eighteenth century and were maintained and strengthened throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. This British tradition was, and still is, evident in the delineation we draw between 'technical' and 'professional' education, the continued presence, particularly in Victoria, of an elite public schools system, our traditions of apprenticeships and trades and their alignment to the trade union movement, and in the perceived role of university education in Australia as providing education for the learned professions (law, medicine and theology) – although here the Australian approach, according to educational historian Barcan, has always been a compromise between the utilitarian and the learned (Barcan 1980: 119). British traditions were so central to the approach taken in Australia to LIS education that Bramley, a British commentator, noted in 1975 that 'the system of library education which has developed in the United Kingdom is more clearly mirrored in Australia than any other country in the world' (Bramley 1975: 75).

The strong British tradition in Australian education has, however, been tempered by other influences. From the 1930s a new influence, that of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, was felt among prominent educators, academics, library managers and leaders of cultural institutions. The Corporation provided funding for study tours (almost inevitably including the United States), for resources for Australian libraries, and to establish the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) and the Free Library Movement (Horrocks 1971). White, an educational historian, believed these grants 'threw a cultural lifeline' to Australia and 'were fed into strategic points where national ideas and values were shaped' (White 1997: 1). The influence of the Carnegie Corporation, grafted on to the British tradition, may have led to a Janus-like vision for education in Australia looking behind to Britain and to the U.S.-led future, particularly within those institutions targeted by the Corporation and those benefiting from its funding. Evidence of this duality of outlook and influence can be found in every aspect of education for the LIS sector: in its initial accreditation/examination debates; in the origins of two of the most influential reports into libraries in Australia, the Carnegie Corporation-funded Munn-Pitt Report (which Biskup believes 'marked the beginning of American influence on Australian librarianship' (Biskup 1994: 11)) contrasting with the post-war survey of British librarian Lionel McColvin (1946); and in today's concerns over the appropriate entry-level qualification for the profession and the reconstruction of the professional identity. If we lose sight of this dual cultural influence, there is the risk of oversimplifying the solutions to the complex issues of professional status and education.

In the quest for professional status there has been a denial of the strong vocational traditions that existed prior to and in conjunction with the university tradition in Australia. These vocational traditions reflect a long history of apprentice-type training for various industries based on British models. This vocational tradition is the stock upon which LIS education in Australia has been grafted. Broadbent believed that:

> Australia's beginning professional course can be seen as quite 'hybrid' in their evolution, without the sort of schism between education for librarianship and education for information science evident in some countries. At the same time, the development of course structure and names has drawn on aspect s of both British and American traditions

(Broadbent 1988: 49).

In this light the educational structures in Australia for LIS is best viewed as a series of expedient grafts to an already existing educational rootstock firmly grounded in the British educational tradition. This tension between the often U.S.-influenced and focused industry elite and the more home-grown, perhaps British-influenced, traditions of the average worker in the industry and the wider community has existed as long as formal education for librarianship has been on the agenda in Australia. At key turning points in our educational and professional history, such as the debate over graduate entry to the profession in the 1960s, there have been 'clashes of culture' in the decision making process (Encel, Bullard and Cass 1972).

Concepts of education

As already noted, the Australian tradition in education was strongly influenced by the apprentice-master traditions of Britain, and its university tradition is also deeply rooted in British concepts of 'liberal, non-vocational education, at a relatively advanced level, in the humanities, the arts and the sciences' (Barcan 1980: 241-242). There is also a tradition of separate education for more vocationally-oriented areas such as teaching and engineering (Rushbrook 1997: 4). In contrast, Bramley describes the American educational tradition thus:

> No attempt was made to separate from each other those vocations which require extensive theoretical instruction, and those which could be best taught by the apprenticeship method of training. In the egalitarian society, not only were all men equal, but the work which they did was also regarded as being of equal importance. As a result, both the professional and vocational schools gradually became attached to the universities (Bramley 1969: 76).

Australia did not, until the Dawkins' reforms of the late 1980s, subscribe to this American educational tradition. In this country training for many professional sectors has its origins in industry-based training, apprenticeships and colleges of advanced education.

One way to view Australian LIS education over time is to see its ebb and flow as being largely influenced by the prevailing educational culture of the time and the imperatives driving the general educational agenda. The LAA provides an example. In 1961 its General Council adopted the policy statement *Graduate qualifications for librarianship*. This statement emphasised 'that new entrants to full professional status should be required to be graduates' (Radford 1969: 409), that is, graduates with three years study in something other than librarianship. In 1968 the LAA redrafted their statement on graduate qualifications to allow CAE and undergraduate qualifications to satisfy the Association's requirements for Associateship (that is, full professional membership) while also putting in place minimum standards for course recognition. This acceptance of undergraduate qualifications was hurried. It was driven by an outside agenda articulated in the Martin Report (1965) and the Wark report (1966).

The Martin report (Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia 1965) and the Wark report (Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Advanced Education

1966) examined the state and directions of tertiary education in Australia, and were intended to address changing educational and industry needs. For the library industry they had the effect of forcing the acceptance of the qualifications described above. Wilma Radford, Professor of Librarianship at the University of New South Wales at the time, believed that the LAA 'reached this decision rapidly and without due regard to the categories of library workers and their appropriate initial preparation' (Radford 1969: 408), stating that 'we have been vitally affected by government policies on tertiary and vocational education – Commonwealth government policies, and funding as well' (Radford 1969: 410).

The argument about suitable qualifications for professional entry to the profession reached its zenith in the period during and after the adoption of this policy. Letters to the *Australian Library Journal*'s editors condemn the change. For example, a letter to the editor by Agnes Gregory in 1969 states that:

> It was abundantly clear at the recent Annual General meeting of the Association in Adelaide that the membership is by no means unanimous in its acceptance of the decision to water down the graduate qualification for full professional membership of the Association (Gregory 1969: 416).

Harrison Bryan reflected in 1971 that:

> …it would have been reasonable to assume that what it [the LAA] really had in mind was favour of university schools on the (basically) American pattern of education for librarianship (Bryan 1971: 15).

However, external pressures as well as internal politics meant this did not occur. Rochester reflects the tensions of different influences within the industry in her description of Australia's uptake of external models for LIS education:

> These library schools within the major libraries of Australia followed an American precedent from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rather than a British tradition. However, they followed a British model once the Australian Institute of Librarians set up its examination system, in preparing students for the examinations of the professional association, rather than following their own syllabus and setting their own examinations. The AIL was acting as a qualifying association on the British Library Association model, unlike the ALA which acted as an accrediting association (Rochester 1997: 21).

The LAA's 1961 statement on graduate qualification can be considered as a push for an American pattern of education, moving away from the role of the LAA as an examining body to that of an accrediting body. However, this statement was also a request for a first degree in another discipline of at least three years duration plus library qualifications the equivalent of a year, not a request for a Masters degree as the minimum qualification, as was the case in the United States. The hue and cry that followed the 1968 redraft of the statement to allow recognition of undergraduate qualification was a protest against the reduction of entry level to the profession from four years to three. Radford commented that:

We have now moved to a minimum of three years of tertiary education in 'professional studies' ... In losing a quarter of the minimum time of tertiary preparation once thought necessary, we have lost at least a third of the time to be devoted to subjects which would not so much reinforce our professional competence, as be an integral part of it (Radford 1969: 409).

Industrial complexity

The complexity of the issues surrounding professional entry levels within the Australian context is increased by the existence of three other industry groups, teacher-librarians, library technicians and library technician educators. The role of library technicians, in particular, in testing the boundaries placed around access to the profession requires a clear understanding of the historical and educational development of these groups if we are to fully come to terms with the full complexity of the issues. One man, Wesley Young, played a pivotal and largely unheralded role in the development of the identity, perceived function and education for both library technicians and teacher-librarians. In 1970 Young founded and developed the first educational programs for library technicians, together with others in the Victorian Branch of the LAA, and he influenced the development of undergraduate teacher-librarianship courses in Victoria. His vision and work ultimately shaped and influenced these branches of the industry.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when technical and undergraduate LIS education was established in Australia, the concept of education for 'good citizenship' prevailed in educational thinking. There was also a shift in focus within the technical sector. Rushbrook believes this evolved from 'Britain's rash of mid-1950s and early 1960s government reports' and 'favoured the inclusion of citizenship and social science education for apprentices, technicians and professional technologists' (1997: 4). In this context it is important to realize the distinction between the Radford–LAA concept of a 'graduate' profession, and the model outlined in the same year by American educator Lester Asheim in his vision of education for 'citizenship'. Asheim, whose model deeply influenced Wesley Young, described American LIS education this way:

Education for librarianship follows this pattern. The first recognized professional degree is the master's; admission to most library schools requires the four-year bachelor's degree, following the twelve years of elementary-secondary education' (Asheim 1971: 43).

It is also important to remember the influence of educators such as John Dewey on American models of education. While Australia was clearly hoping to emulate many aspects of American education, British influence was still strong, particularly in higher education. The concept of general rather than vocationally oriented undergraduate education prevalent in the U.S. was outlined by Asheim as 'the emphasis is on general education rather than specialized education…. Concentrated professional education is not pursued until postgraduate work at the master's level and beyond' (1971: 43). This is not a pattern generally adhered to in the Australian context. Elements of this generalist education, as well as newly emerging British models, began to influence the shape and form of education in Australia.

The publication in 1974 of the Kangan report, *TAFE in Australia* (Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education 1974), which led to a greater focus on holistic, individual development of graduates in vocational programs, was in many ways to change the face of technical education in Australia. The value of a general education as part of a technical LIS qualification was acknowledged in the requirements for generalist subjects such as literature and history in the TAFE LIS curriculum from 1969 until a national curriculum for library technicians was introduced in 1995. With the introduction of the national curriculum subjects such as children's literature, Australian history and Australian literature were formally removed from the curriculum. This view was perhaps also influenced by the general mood of the Australian educational community of the time, although Young anticipated it, influenced as he was by Asheim. Young's perspective came from a philosophical view of the role of education in making individuals employable as well as good 'citizens'. It was:

> An educational philosophy which recognizes that the ultimate economic stability of the nation will not be realized from a narrow attachment to training for a trade whose usefulness has a limited term but is more likely to derive from young people educated to possess moral, social and aesthetic values, historical perspectives and the capacity to relate effectively to others (Young 1979: 445).

This philosophy drove much of the TAFE agenda in the 1970s and 1980s. It represented what Batrouney (1985 in Rushbrook 1997) saw as one of the powerful traditions of TAFE, its purpose being 'the amelioration of disadvantage, eclectic curricula, nation building, citizenship, utilitarian outcomes' (Rushbrook 1997). It began to decline with the advent of economic rationalism and high unemployment in the 1980s. Rushbrook views the phase following the release of the Kangan report in 1974 as one which championed such things as citizenship and social science education for apprentices and professional technologists. He identified these as borrowing heavily from British government reports (Rushbrook 1997: 4), although within library circles the American influence is also evident.

Sectoral convergence

The proper place and form of education for LIS has always been contentious and university based education for the sector has not always been supported by community consensus. This has been exacerbated by the presence of a large technical sector and compounded by the previously mentioned generalization of university based courses in recent years. The historically hybrid nature of Australian LIS education and pressure to survive in an increasingly austere academic environment has added impetus to these factors. A current concern in Australian education is sectoral convergence - that is the blurring of the roles of TAFE colleges and universities in delivering education - not just in the LIS field but in many vocationally oriented professions. This is an issue discussed widely in the broader educational community, though rarely, if ever, in LIS circles, but it may be a catalyst in the call for Masters level entry to the profession. LIS education has always struggled with sectoral convergence and has relied on pedagogical differences, rather than

epistemological difference to distinguish the sectors educationally.

Education for LIS paraprofessionals in Australia exemplifies the complex and hybrid influences driving the industry. The technicians' course emerged during a pivotal period in the development of LIS education. Library technician education in Australia was introduced in 1970 and was based to some extent on an American model of paraprofessional education as outlined in a 1967 report to the ALA (Radford 1977: 146-147). As noted above, the LIS industry was at the time divided about minimum entry requirements for the profession and, despite many setbacks, had a vision of university schools of librarianship. In developing Australia's first technician-level LIS course, Wesley Young and the Victorian Branch of the LAA followed 'Lester Asheim's recommendations on emphasizing the vocational aspects in technician courses' (Rochester 1997: 52) but also incorporating American concepts of general education.

There is no doubt that much of the educational activity at this time reflects the growing influence of American culture on the Australian educational landscape. Yet much of the traditional trade model persisted. The first library technicians' course was still clearly situated in a long tradition of vocational education in Australia. Library technician training owed much to the changes occurring in trade education at the time, including the development of technical tasks, job segmentation and a need for specialists because of increased technology which 'tended to fall outside the province or sphere of concern of the tradesman or the professional engineer' (Barker and Holbrook 1997: 219).

The impetus for technician education came out of an increasing need for training in growing areas of employment that fell outside traditional trade and university parameters. This new training allowed for 'vocational starting points for individuals who frequently did not have a trade background' (Barker and Holbrook 1997: 219). Those who were enrolled in the first course for library technicians in Australia in 1970 were required to be employed in a library, as was required of traditional apprentices in trades. The establishment of the course at Box Hill Girls Technical College is evidence of its location in the technical (or trade) school system. This paradigm saw paraprofessional education as being finite and complementary to higher education at universities and at the emerging CAEs. Young was a strong advocate of general education, calling in 1979 for at least fifty per cent of the course to be general rather than vocational. He believed that broad-based general education should be maintained as long as possible and envisaged training as a means of providing a flexible and attractive alternative education option within the vocational framework for library technicians (Young 1979: 444-447).

At the time of the establishment of this course, many industries had defined boundaries and created professional constructs. These were based on Taylorism or the theories of scientific management which created an incremental education ladder that can be defined 'as secondary-university-professional or junior technical school-technical college trade/middle level/applied professional' (Rushbrook 1997: 4). In this context 'each task over time was split into several segments, each performed by people with different sets of skills and knowledge' (Barker and Holbrook 1997: 218). These concepts were widespread in industry in Australia and Britain and were the foundation principles underpinning new educational structures after World War 2.

In Australia at this time there was increasing scrutiny of the higher education sector. The establishment of non-research institutions, the CAEs and TAFE colleges, reflect the Taylorist labour model. LIS education largely emerged at these non-research CAEs, with library technician education based in the TAFE colleges. The LIS profession, still focused on an American model, struggled to accommodate these educational paradigms in its quest to gain a foothold on the tertiary education ladder. There is no doubt that many in the profession still aspired to university-based schools, as the literature of the time indicates, but eventually the profession succumbed to community and government pressure to establish professional schools in the CAEs. There appears little doubt that such decisions were made without any professional consensus about future directions.

The reasons for the LAA's changed position about entry to the profession during the 1960s and 1970s, and the rank and file's acceptance of the change are complex. They are linked to the education reports mentioned previously, as well as to broader issues such as migration and the wider educational community's perception of the place of training for the LIS industry. The advent of library technician training had no influence on the decisions that were made. As has been pointed out above, library technician training was the result of broader educational patterns emerging in the Australian community at the time, aimed at addressing particular labour force issues and needs, such as the emergence of women in the workforce and a shortage of labour.

In establishing library technician training Young adapted a concept of education for citizenship and merged it with the existing Australian/British industrial model to create a unique and continuing tradition of paraprofessional education for librarianship in Australia. The significance of the emergence of library technician education may lie in the vision for a bipartite future in professional education for the LIS industry. In retrospect it is surprising that a professional group would establish a paraprofessional education model when its foothold in higher education for its professional members was so tenuous. Perhaps in doing so the profession hoped to establish with more authority the professional nature of their work.

Where to from here?

Recent calls for a Masters level LIS professional education model in Australia raise again the question of the role of undergraduate education. Does the profession in Australia believe that LIS education is best delivered outside the now long-standing undergraduate tradition? If this is the case, why? Is this really about the background and education of those entering the profession from paraprofessional ranks and the issues associated with a blurring of educational rather than professional boundaries? And how does this sit with the historical, cultural and social factors which have led to us to this point? Change may occur, but it is essential that change is based on clear analysis and understanding of historical context and educational consequences, and that it takes into account the views of the wider profession. Perhaps twentieth-century industrial influences on educational pathways will give way to more fluid and creative approaches in the twenty-first century. Appreciating the historical context suggests that any new approach must consider several issues: a need to separate the educational and professional branches of the LIS industry more clearly; an acknowledgment of the

changing nature of university education and the pathways between the university and the TAFE sectors; a recognition of the hybrid and expedient nature of education for the industry; and a recognition of the strong vocational traditions underpinning university level education for the industry. Until the real educational questions are debated the profession and professional education cannot grow and thrive, and will not develop a uniquely Australian form from its hybrid past. Our hybrid tradition has not developed into something strong and unique, but has become dissipated and generalised. Many of the recent calls for change have focused once again on the desire to emulate 'the American model'. The Australian industry seems to want to validate Wilma Radford's 1963 comment that:

> It sometimes seems to me that in our comparatively late library development in Australia we do not profit from what has happened elsewhere. It is almost as though we say, there are a few British and American mistakes we haven't made yet; let's make them, it would be a pity to miss any (Radford 1963: 12).

The global nature of the current environment may make it impossible for the Australian LIS industry to do anything but bow to outside forces. It is nonetheless important to understand the historical context, because 'the injection of historical insight can improve the possibilities for success' (Barker and Holbrook 1997: 214).

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