

The Library Historian's Field of Dreams: A Profile of the First Nine Seminars

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History haunts me with a sense of lost opportunities.

Louis Shores¹

The Library History Seminars, founded by Louis Shores in 1961, have met about every five years ever since. Through a series of tables and charts, this essay examines various characteristics of the seminar participants, including their gender, institutional affiliation, and the topic and era of their presentations. The data are analyzed to provide a picture of who does library history and how the discipline's research interests have evolved over the past thirty years.

Like the farmer in the movie *Field of Dreams*, Louis Shores always believed that if he could build it, they would come—and they did. In 1961, little more than a decade after Shores, Wayne Shirley, and Carl Milam founded the American Library History Round Table (ALHRT) in 1947, the indefatigable Shores was ready to host the first Library History Seminar at Florida State University.² From that humble beginning (only sixteen library historians attended the 1961 meeting), the seminars have flourished. Over the years the number of attendees has steadily increased, with recent seminars attracting scholars from all corners of the globe to share their affection for library history.

Fortunately, the seminars' proceedings have all been published, and as a group they represent a collection of individual snapshots of the state of the art of library history over the past thirty-five years.³ This essay analyzes the first nine seminars in order to arrive at generalizations about the nature of the craft of American library history. Emphasis is on the characteristics of these historians who laid the groundwork for our contemporary discipline.

Specific information about each seminar and its participants was entered into a spreadsheet and then arranged to reveal information not readily accessible otherwise. Long-time members of the LHRT likely

have an intuitive sense of the patterns that emerge from this approach; nevertheless, these findings should interest all members of the LHRT regardless of their length of association with our subspecialty. The tabular information that follows provides the framework for the narrative.

Table 1 shows attendance by conference with data given for gender, followed by a column indicating the total number of participants, and finally by a column (LIS) that represents the percentage of presenters that are either practicing librarians or members of library science teaching faculty. It is common knowledge that women outnumber men in the library profession as a whole and have for a long time.⁴ Indeed, this belief was affirmed in 1994 when the American Library Association conducted a survey of its members that showed 78 percent as female.⁵ This figure approximates the U.S. government census data for the decades since the Library History Seminars began in 1961: for the years 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990, women comprised 86, 82, 84, and 83 percent, respectively.⁶

When we move, however, from the library profession in general to its subdiscipline of library history, the demographics begin to shift from those that traditionally govern librarianship to those that describe the historical profession in the United States since World War II.⁷ For example, membership data from the LHRT indicates that the percentages are moving in the direction of equality in gender representation, with the 1998 LHRT membership split at 42 percent male and 58 percent female.⁸ Compared with percentages of seminar presenters as revealed in Table 1, it becomes even clearer that men dominated, at least in the early years. While the numbers of attendees fluctuated, gender percent-

TABLE 1
ATTENDANCE CHARACTERISTICS

Conference	%		Total #	LIS%
	Male	Female		
1961	100%	0%	7	17
1965	70	30	13	38
1968	100	0	11	45
1971	84	16	25	44
1976	73	27	15	66
1980	68	32	34	47
1985	75	25	28	36
1990	72	28	29	45
1995	43	57	28	50
Average	76	24	21	43

TABLE 2
ALISE MEMBERSHIP BY GENDER

ALISE	Male	Female
1976	59%	41%
1980	58	42
1985	57	43
1990	53	47
1995	51	49

ages show a relatively steady increase in women as presenters after 1971 until a substantial jump in 1995, when women become a clear majority. Whether the 1995 figure is an aberration or indicative of an emerging trend will become clearer in the future.

Another way to understand the impact of gender is with a longitudinal view of the percentage of women faculty members in library and information science programs. Data from the *Library and Information Science Education Statistical Report*, for years in common with the Library History Seminars, appear in Table 2.⁹ It is readily apparent that women have steadily increased their presence among LIS faculties to the point of near equality by 1995. The growth of women as a percentage of the total is further evidenced by data that represent the number of women and men earning Ph.D.'s in history during the same time period. These percentages are shown in Table 3 and again indicate a steady increase in the numbers of women who, especially beginning in the 1980s, earned doctorates in history. The inexorable increase of women as professional

TABLE 3
PH.D.'S GRANTED IN HISTORY

Year	Male	Female
1960-61	93%	7%
1964-65	91	9
1968-69	87	13
1970-71	88	12
1975-76	78	22
1980-81	69	31
1985-86	67	33
1990-91	64	36
1993-94	<u>63</u>	<u>37</u>
Ave.	74%	26%

historians and as members of LIS faculty over the past thirty years is mirrored in their involvement in Library History Seminars. Although women have long dominated librarianship, the opposite holds for the historical profession until recently. That women are enjoying a stronger presence among those presenting papers at the seminars should not be surprising given overall trends in the numbers of women earning doctorates in history or joining LIS faculties since 1960.¹⁰

Tables 4 and 5 offer more detailed information concerning the LIS presenters at the seminars. Table 4 identifies individuals who participated in at least two seminars. Robert V. Williams is the most active presenter, but Wayne Wiegand is a close second. Institutional affiliation fascinates investigators, and Table 5 shows this for the seminars' LIS participants. Neither Mississippi State College for Women (now Mississippi University for Women) nor Purdue University has ever had LIS programs. Loughborough University is a British LIS school. The rest now have (or had at one time) LIS programs during the period under review. The preponderance of these institutions in Table 5 should not be surprising, since library school faculty are under greater pressure to engage in scholarly activity than librarians with nonteaching appointments. Although not supporting a library school, the library faculty at Purdue University, led by Mark Tucker, have for many years maintained an avid interest in library history.

TABLE 4
FREQUENT PAPER PRESENTERS BY NAME
AND NUMBER OF TIMES PRESENTING

Two	Three	Four	Six
Choldin	Dain	Wiegand	Williams, R. V.
Colson	Gambée		
Harris, M.	Jackson, E.		
Harris, N.	Kaser		
Holley, E.	Maack		
Johnson, D.	McMullen		
Marcum	Richards, P.		
Martin, R.	Stieg (Darnton)		
Mishoff			
Rosenberg			
Rush			
Slavens			
Sturges			
Tucker			

TABLE 5
INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION FOR LIS OR LIBRARIANSHIP
AND NUMBER OF TIMES AN INSTITUTION IS REPRESENTED

Two	Three	Four	Six	Eight
Catholic U. <i>MSt. for W.</i>	Case Western Res. Kent State	Columbia U. of Alabama	Indiana U. U. of Chicago U. of Kentucky	U. of Illinois- Chicago UNC-Chapel Hill
Rutgers U.	<i>Loughborough U.</i>			
UC-Berkeley	Louisiana State U.			
UCLA	<i>Purdue</i>			
Wayne St.	Florida State U. of Michigan U. of Minnesota U. of South Carolina U. of Texas-Austin U. of Wisconsin-Madison			

A number of studies of library and information science scholars have considered institutional affiliation.¹¹ In library history, an examination of institutional affiliation for *Libraries & Culture* and its predecessor, the *Journal of Library History*, by Jean-Pierre Hérubel revealed that faculty at the University of Texas, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Kentucky were prominently featured as authors.¹² Although it is obvious that participation in the seminars represents a different type of scholarly involvement with the requirement of travel to a specific site, it is nevertheless useful to compare attendance at the seminars with the results of a recent study of those who attended the ACRL triennial conferences between 1978 and 1992. In the ACRL study, the top five institutions were the University of Illinois-Chicago, Purdue University, Indiana University, Ohio State University, and Penn State University.¹³ Table 5 shows that Purdue University, Indiana University, and the University of Illinois-Chicago appear on both lists. Ironically, all three universities are located within a radius of 200 miles. What is it about these three institutions that has led them to support conference attendance more than others? Since only Indiana University hosts a library school, it is difficult to compare the three, but the fact remains that these schools demonstrate high involvement in conference activity. Indeed, the question of geographic representation is the subject of the next group of tables.

Table 6 distributes the nine seminar participants by state and by professional affiliation, either as teaching faculty or a library practitioner. It does not distinguish between library school faculty and non-library school faculty. The right-hand column indicates the percentage of participants from a state that are associated with librarianship. Table 7 further refines the data from the right-hand column of Table 6. Finally, Table 8 uses the

United States Census regional categories (arranged by number, not percentage) of Seminar participants who were LIS faculty to provide more detailed information about the regional characteristics of seminar participants. We can see that over the years the eastern portion of the Midwest and the southeastern part of the United States supplied most of the participants. Since these are aggregate figures, it is important to mention that the early seminars were held in Florida, giving that region a preponderance of attendees that it did not enjoy in subsequent seminars. Examination of individual seminars more clearly reveals this shift. Tables 6, 7, and 8 provide a somewhat different picture of the seminars, but the

TABLE 6
PARTICIPANTS BY STATE AND OCCUPATION

State	Total	LIS	Non-LIS	% LIS
Alabama	4	4	0	100
Arizona	2	1	1	50
California	10	7	3	70
Florida	13	6	7	46
Georgia	4	3	1	75
Illinois	23	18	5	72
Indiana	10	9	1	90
Kentucky	6	6	0	100
Louisiana	3	3	0	100
Maryland	3	0	3	0
Massachusetts	7	3	4	42
Michigan	6	6	0	100
Minnesota	3	2	1	66
Mississippi	2	2	0	100
New Jersey	2	2	0	100
New York	18	10	8	55
North Carolina	10	9	1	90
Ohio	8	8	0	100
Pennsylvania	2	2	0	100
South Carolina	4	4	0	100
Tennessee	2	1	1	50
Texas	12	4	8	33
Virginia	2	2	0	100
Washington, D.C.	8	6	2	75
Washington	1	1	0	100
Wisconsin	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>100</u>
Total	168	122 (73%)	46 (27%)	

TABLE 7
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF LIS PARTICIPANTS AS
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Maryland	Arizona	California	Alabama
	Florida	Georgia	Indiana
	Massachusetts	Illinois	Kentucky
	Tennessee	Minnesota	Louisiana
	Texas	New York	Michigan
		Washington, D.C.	Mississippi
			New Jersey
			North Carolina
			Ohio
			Pennsylvania
			South Carolina
			Virginia
			Washington
			Wisconsin

dominance of the Midwest reflected in Table 5 is confirmed by these data as well. Moreover, when all nine seminars are examined, the West is poorly represented, with only California making much of a showing.

Table 9 takes the subject matter of the presentations and categorizes them roughly into a matrix defined by chronology and topic.¹⁴ The table reflects the primary historical periods of the presentations. By way of

TABLE 8
DETAILED CENSUS
REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

West/Pacific	11
West/Mountain	2
Midwest/West North Central	3
Midwest/East North Central	50
Northeast/Middle Atlantic	22
Northeast/New England	7
South/West South Central	15
South/East South Central	14
South/Atlantic	44
Total	168

TABLE 9
PRESENTATIONS BY SUBJECT AND ERA

SUB	Gen	Pre-16	16	17	18/1	18/2	19	19/1	19/2	20	20/1	20/2	Ttl
Aca	3												3
Ass									3	1	2	4	10
Bio	1		1		1			2	4	1	8		18
Bk	5			1	1	1	2	1	3	1		1	16
Gen	12	1							2		1		16
His	13			1				3					17
LC								1	1		1		3
LIS									1		3		4
Pr	1		1		2			1	2	2			9
Pu	7						1	1	8	2	1		20
Sp	1				1		1	3	1	2	1		10
Wo	1										2		3
Ttl	44	1	2	2	5	1	4	12	25	9	19	5	

Aca=Academic; Ass=Associations; Bio=Biography; Bk=Books and Reading; Gen=General; His=Historiography; LC=Library of Congress; LIS=Library and Information Science Education; Pr=Private Libraries; Pu=Public Libraries; Sp=Special Libraries; Wo=Women in Librarianship; Ttl=Total

further explanation, 19/1 means the period from 1800 to 1850, and 19/2 covers the period from 1851 to 1899. It was not necessary to divide the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries since discussants treated them broadly. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which generated more detailed interest, required an entire column for papers whose subject-matter treated those entire centuries. The subject areas to the left are derived from the arrangements used in the biennial *Libraries & Culture* literature reviews. Table 9 reveals that many of the papers were either on very broad topics that defied categorization or were devoted to large spans of time and thus fell into the General category; and the recent period garnered the most attention, which is not surprising since U.S. topics dominated the seminar papers, and our history is relatively short in duration. Nor should this be surprising since the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries comprise the bulk of the reported research. Most of our subdiscipline's historiography has been focused on this formative era from around 1870 through World War II. Although the table does not show it, the five papers devoted to the last half of the twentieth century were all given at the 1995 seminar. As time progresses, the period after 1950 will increasingly become eligible for vigorous scholarly investigation. Table 9 also shows that presentations

devoted to public libraries and biographical topics have been plentiful over the years, with historiography and books and reading close behind. Indeed, Table 9 indicates that research into books and reading spans almost the entire chronology. Moreover, interest in this topic has grown steadily in the past ten years, with several presentations devoted to books and reading at both the 1985 and the 1990 seminars.¹⁵ On the other hand, academic libraries, the Library of Congress, and women as librarians have been the least explored topics. It should be mentioned here, however, that the two papers on women in librarianship appeared at the 1995 seminar. Increased interest in that topic will likely occur in future seminars.

Analyzing the seminars by subject and historically significant time periods is difficult, and certainly more perspectives are possible. For example, the arrangement of Table 9 could be applied to each seminar, charting in more detail the shifting landscape of topics that intrigued library historians at each stop along the way. I will leave this task for future investigators. The Library History Seminars, launched in 1961 by the energetic Shores and his colleagues, are still alive and well as the century ends. The dozens and dozens of scholars who have shared their research at the nine seminars over the past four decades testify to the intellectual vigor that Shores, Shirley, and Milam believed possible for the fledgling American Library History Round Table. Building on a tradition of hearing learned presentations started in the middle of the seventeenth century by members of the Royal Society of London, the seminars have built a solid foundation of enduring scholarship. The diverse nature of the topics pursued over the years and the range of institutions represented reflect the expanding appeal of library history as a worthwhile intellectual endeavor for library scholars throughout not only the United States but other nations as well. This profile has sought to show who we were and where we came from between 1961 and 1995; future seminars should chart where our discipline will go in the next century.

Notes

1. Louis Shores, *Quiet World: A Librarian's Crusade for Destiny* (Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1975), 231. A good source for Shores's views on the value of library history can be found in his "The Importance of Library History," in John David Marshall, ed., *An American Library History Reader: Contributions to Library Literature* (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1961), 3–7.

2. Shores, *Quiet World*, 231–34; Lee Shiflett, *Louis Shores: Defining Educational Librarianship* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 213. Shores also reflected on Wayne Shirley's influence in "Wayne Shirley: In Memoriam," *Journal of Library History* 9 (October 1974): 291–92.

3. The proceedings of the Library History Seminars have been published in the following: John D. Marshall, ed., *In Pursuit of Library History*, Library History

Seminar 1, Proceedings, 1961 (Tallahassee: Florida State University Library School, 1961); John D. Marshall, ed., *Approaches to Library History*, Library History Seminar 2, Proceedings, 1965 (Tallahassee: Journal of Library History, 1966); Martha Jane K. Zachert, ed., *Library History Seminar No. 3, Proceedings, 1968* (Tallahassee: Journal of Library History, 1968); Harold Goldstein and John Goudeau, eds., *Library History Seminar No. 4, Proceedings, 1971* (Tallahassee: Florida State University School of Library Science, 1972); Harold Goldstein, ed., *Milestones to the Present: Papers from Library History Seminar V* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Gaylord Professional Publications, 1978); Donald G. Davis, Jr., ed., *Libraries & Culture: Proceedings of Library History Seminar VI, 19–22 March 1980, Austin, Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Donald G. Davis, Jr., ed., *Libraries, Books & Culture: Proceedings of the Library History Seminar VII, 6–8 March 1985, Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (Austin: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Texas at Austin, 1986); Donald G. Davis, Jr., ed., *Reading & Libraries: Proceedings of the Library History Seminar VIII, 9–11 May 1990, Bloomington, Indiana* (Austin: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Texas at Austin, 1991); and Donald G. Davis, Jr., ed., *Libraries & Philanthropy: Proceedings of Library History Seminar IX, 30 March–1 April, 1995, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa* (Austin: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Texas at Austin, 1996).

Reviews of several of the seminars are available: Elmer D. Johnson, review of *Library History Seminar No. 3, Proceedings, 1968*, in *Journal of Library History* 6 (October 1971): 376–79; Betsy Vantine, “Special Report: Library History Seminar Eyes Libraries & Culture [*Library History Seminar No. 6, 1980*],” *Library Journal* 105 (June 1980): 1254–58 (it should be noted that Vantine errs in saying this is the fourth seminar); Millicent Huff, “Libraries and Culture: A Brief Report of Library History Seminar VI,” *Journal of Library History* 15 (Summer 1980): 309–19; Mary Pound, “Libraries, Books & Culture: A Brief Report of Library History Seminar VII,” *Journal of Library History* 20 (Fall 1985): 434–38; Ralph Lee Scott, “Libraries, Books, and Culture,” *North Carolina Libraries* 43 (Summer 1985): 108–9; James V. Carmichael, Jr., “Reading & Libraries: A Brief Report of Library History Seminar VIII,” *Libraries & Culture* 26 (Summer 1991): 540–46; P. Toby Graham, “Libraries & Philanthropy: The Proceedings of Library History Seminar IX, Spring 1995, the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa,” *Libraries & Culture* 32 (Fall 1997): 470–73; and John Feather, “Libraries & Philanthropy: The Proceedings of Library History Seminar IX,” *Library Quarterly* 68 (April 1998): 231–32.

4. For general data, see Anita R. Schiller, “Women in Librarianship,” in Kathleen Weibel and Kathleen M. Heim, eds., *The Role of Women in Librarianship 1876–1976: The Entry, Advancement, and Struggle for Equalization in One Profession* (Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press, 1979), 222–56. Another good historical source is the collection of essays edited by Heim, *The Status of Women in Librarianship: Historical, Sociological, and Economic Issues* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 1983).

5. Mary Jo Lynch and Gerald Hodges, “1993 ALA Member Opinion Survey Reveals One New Major Player,” *American Libraries* 25 (June 1994): 598.

6. Census data for the period from 1870 to 1970 are summarized by Schiller, “Women in Librarianship,” 238, Table VII. Data for 1980 came from *1980 Census of Population. Detailed Occupation of the Experienced Civilian Labor Force by Sex for the United States Regions: 1980 and 1970. Supplemental Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1984), 26. The 1990 figure comes from “Census 90: Detailed Occupation by Race, Hispanic Origin and Sex,” *Constats: An Electronic Subscription Service* <http://tier2.gov/cgi-win/eoo/eeodata.exe>.

7. The best overall view of the historical profession, especially for the period after World War II, is by Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Also useful is John Higham's magisterial survey, *History: Professional Scholarship in America*, updated paperback ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). For women as historians from a broad perspective, see Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) and Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). In her book, Scott has an excellent chapter devoted to women historians from 1884 to 1994. Two older works that are still valuable are Jessie Bernard, *Academic Women* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1964), and Lucille Addison Pollard, *Women on College and University Faculties: A Historical Survey and a Study of Their Present Academic Status* (New York: Arno Press, 1977). For more on the background to the development of modern women historians, see Jacqueline Goggin, "Challenging Sexual Discrimination in the Historical Profession: Women Historians and the American Historical Association, 1890-1940," *American Historical Review* 97 (June 1992): 769-802.

8. Personal e-mail correspondence to the author from Catherine Sias, American Library Association, 13 July 1998.

9. Timothy W. Sineath, ed., *Library and Information Science Education Statistical Report 1995* (Raleigh, N.C.: Association for Library and Information Science Education, 1995), 5.

10. In Table 3, the source for the years 1960-61 is Wayne E. Tolliver, *Earned Degrees Conferred, 1960-1961: Bachelor's and Higher Degrees* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1963), 223. Data for the rest of the years in Table 3 were found in the appropriate volumes of *Digest of Education Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare), with the publication date in parentheses: for 1964-65, p. 81 (1966); for 1970-71, p. 102 (1972); for 1975-76, p. 113 (1977-78). For 1980 on, the sponsoring agency for this statistical series changed to the Department of Education: for 1980-81, p. 117 (1983-84); for 1985-86, p. 201 (1988); for 1990-91, p. 254 (1993); for 1993-94, p. 284 (1997).

11. Some recent studies that examine institutional affiliation include Paula D. Watson, "Production of Scholarly Articles by Academic Librarians and Library School Faculty," *College & Research Libraries* 46 (July 1985): 334-42; John M. Budd and Charles A. Seavey, "Characteristics of Journal Authorship by Academic Librarians," *College & Research Libraries* 51 (September 1990): 463-70; John M. Budd and Charles A. Seavey, "Productivity of U.S. Library and Information Science Faculty: The Hayes Study Revisited," *Library Quarterly* 66 (January 1996): 1-20; A. Neil Yerkey, "Publishing in Library and Information Science: Audience, Subjects, Affiliation, Source, and Format," *Library & Information Science Research* 15 (Spring 1993): 165-83; James L. Terry, "Authorship in College & Research Libraries Revisited: Gender, Institutional Affiliation, Collaboration," *College & Research Libraries* 57 (July 1996): 377-83; and a comparison with all faculty can be found in John M. Budd, "Faculty Publishing Productivity: An Institutional Analysis and Comparison with Library and Other Measures," *College & Research Libraries* 56 (November 1995): 547-54.

12. Jean-Pierre V. M. Hérubel, "Authorship, Gender, and Institutional Affiliation in Library History: The Case of *Libraries & Culture*," *Behavioral & Social Sciences Librarian* 11, no. 1 (1991): 53.

13. Anne L. Buchanan, Edward A. Goedecken, and Jean-Pierre V. M. Hérubel, "Scholarly Communication among Academic Librarians: An Analysis of Six ACRL Proceedings," *Behavioral & Social Sciences Librarian* 14, no. 2 (1996): 9.

14. This table was created using a simplistic form of content analysis to assign categories for the presentations. The basic text for this methodology is Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1980). Also quite useful is Robert Philip Weber, *Basic Content Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Newberry Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1990). A fine current literature review can be found in Daniel Riffe and Alan Freitag, "A Content Analysis of Content Analyses: Twenty-five Years of Journalism Quarterly," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (Winter 1997): 873–82.

15. Wayne Wiegand provides an informative overview of the burgeoning literature devoted to the study of print culture in "Introduction: Theoretical Foundations for Analyzing Print Culture as Agency and Practice in a Diverse Modern America," in James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand, eds., *Print Culture in a Diverse America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 1–13.