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# **Beginning Anew: Archives Education at University of Massachusetts Boston, 2010-2014<sup>1</sup>**

**By Darwin H. Stapleton, Ph.D.**

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This is a commentary on the re-initiation of a graduate-level archives program in the Department of History at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and on the goals of archives education generally. By reviewing the process of creating such a program, its development, its goals, steps and missteps, and its consequences – intended and serendipitous, this article intends to contribute to the continuing discussion of the mission, purposes and results of archival education.

## **1. Background**

The University of Massachusetts Boston (hereafter UMass Boston) was founded in 1964 as the first public university to serve the Boston urban area. At first it had a downtown campus, but in 1974 moved to a new site on Columbia Point, near the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and the Massachusetts State Archives. Like the historic University of Massachusetts Amherst campus in the center of the state, UMass Boston was intended to be a vigorous graduate-level institution, in addition to providing undergraduate education, unlike the other existing branches of the University of Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For editing and comments on a draft of this article I thank Professor Roberta Wollons of the University of Massachusetts Boston, and Donna L. Stapleton of History & Archives Consulting. For assistance with research questions I thank Jessica R. Holden of the University of Massachusetts Boston Archives, and Maureen Dwyer, Executive Assistant, Department of History, University of Massachusetts Boston.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Feldberg, UMass Boston at 50: A Fiftieth-Anniversary History of the University of Massachusetts Boston (Boston: University of Massachusetts Boston, 2015), pp. 1-100; “History of UMass Boston,” at [https://www.umb.edu/the\\_university/history](https://www.umb.edu/the_university/history), accessed 23 October 2017.

In 1979 the Department of History at UMass Boston began to offer archives education courses at the graduate level under the direction of Robert N. Olsberg, the Massachusetts State Archivist.<sup>3</sup> A decade later James O’Toole, soon to be a major figure in the American archives community, took over leadership of the archives education program as a member of the Department of History faculty, and continued his leadership for eleven years.<sup>4</sup> Graduates of that program soon became important figures in the Boston archival community, starting new archives at such institutions as the Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts General Hospital, and UMass Boston itself, and serving as archivists in many other Boston-area repositories.<sup>5</sup>

However, when O’Toole left the Department of History in 2001, the department chose not to seek a successor, and the archives program ceased. A new department chair, Roberta Wollons, came to the department in 2006, and among other new directions, sought a renewal of the archives program. She consulted with representatives of several major Boston-area archival repositories and found that they were “universally enthusiastic about the combination of archival education embedded in a history department.” They wanted a program that would produce graduates who had a thorough understanding of “how historians conduct research.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> University of Massachusetts at Boston, *Graduate Studies Bulletin, 1979-1980* (Boston: University of Massachusetts at Boston, 1979), pp. 35-37, at [https://archive.org/details/universityofmass00univ\\_34](https://archive.org/details/universityofmass00univ_34), accessed 17 October 2017; “Massachusetts Archives,” at [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts\\_Archives](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts_Archives), accessed 16 October 2017.

<sup>4</sup> James O’Toole curriculum vita, at [www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/cas\\_sites/history/pdf/facultycv/otoolecv.pdf](http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/cas_sites/history/pdf/facultycv/otoolecv.pdf), accessed 16 October 2017.

<sup>5</sup> I identified eighteen graduates of the archives program under Olsberg and O’Toole who subsequently held archival positions: Darwin H. Stapleton, journal, 9 September 2009- 12 May 2010, entries for 16 September 2009, 5 October 2009, 19 October 2009, 21 October 2009, 9 December 2009, 26 February 2010, 10 March 2010, 12 May 2010, in author’s possession. Two prominent graduates who held positions outside of the Boston area were: John Treanor, Vice Chancellor for Archives and Records of the Archdiocese of Chicago, and Mark Duffy, Canonical Archivist and Director of the Archives of the Episcopal Church.

<sup>6</sup> Roberta Wollons, email to author, 10 January 2018, in author’s possession.

The next year Dr. Wollons asked me, as an outside consultant, to consider what would be required for reinstating the archives program, and by 2009 she had developed the support of the Department of History and the UMass Boston administration for doing so. In the spring of 2009 Dr. Wollons offered me the opportunity to join the department in order to reinstitute the archives program.

## 2. Professional Career in History and Archives

Because my professional background has bearing on my work at UMass Boston, and will be referred to later in this essay, a brief resume is in order.

I have an undergraduate degree in history from Swarthmore College, and master's and doctoral degrees in history from the University of Delaware. At Delaware I was, for three years, a graduate fellow in the Hagley Program, which was associated with the Hagley Library (then the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library).<sup>7</sup> Beyond their courses at the university, Hagley fellows had additional training and exposure to the operations of the Library -- a combined library and archives, and the du Pont historic site (containing a historic house, museum, gardens, and industrial buildings) on which it was situated. At the beginning of the fellowship all fellows had a two-week orientation to the operations of the Hagley facilities and had field trips to other historic sites. Thereafter, fellows were encouraged to use the library and archives for research, and to engage in Hagley's operations. In essence, the Hagley fellowship offered a saturation encounter with the internal workings of multi-faceted historical agency.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.hagley.org/about-us/what-is-hagley](http://www.hagley.org/about-us/what-is-hagley), accessed 2 October 2017; "Fellows Celebrate UD-Hagley Program's 50<sup>th</sup> Year," at [www1.udel.edu/PR/UDaily/2004/hagley051304.html](http://www1.udel.edu/PR/UDaily/2004/hagley051304.html), accessed 2 October 2017.

My first professional position, beginning in 1974, was as an editor of the Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, which not only required participation in the management of documentary information, but also took me to archives in the United States and Britain.<sup>8</sup> In 1976 I took a teaching position at Case Western Reserve University while simultaneously serving as an editor of the Latrobe Papers for several more years, and I soon began occasional consulting work for the library and archives of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia (the oldest scientific society in the United States), and other repositories. In 1986 I left CWRU to become the Director (later the Executive Director) of the Rockefeller Archive Center, a position I held for twenty-two years. During my tenure there I dealt with a wide range of archival management issues, as well as hiring and overseeing dozens of archivists and interns.

At the time of my arrival the Rockefeller Archive Center held the archives of the Rockefeller family, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller University, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the archives of another dozen Rockefeller-related organizations, some active and some terminated. The Center also had just taken on the archives of two non-related philanthropies, the Commonwealth Fund, and the Russell Sage Foundation, and during my tenure I negotiated the acquisition of the archives of several other philanthropic and nonprofit organizations, such as the Social Science Research Council. The Center also hosted two academic conferences each year on topics related to the archival holdings, awarded 30-40 research travel grants each year, published an annual newsletter, and in 1994 initiated an on-line presence that eventually included a folder-level search capability for much of the Center's collections. The Center annually accommodated about 250 on-

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<sup>8</sup> The Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe were published by Yale University Press in nine volumes, 1977-1994. See: [yalebooks.yale.edu/series/the-papers-of-benjamin-henry-latrobe-series](http://yalebooks.yale.edu/series/the-papers-of-benjamin-henry-latrobe-series), accessed October 2, 2017.

site researchers, some of whom visited for weeks at a time, and it responded to research inquiries from each of the depositing institutions, and from researchers around the world.

Over my years at the Center the volume of records doubled from about 40 million pages of documents to about 80 million pages, the archival staff tripled from eight to twenty-four (some of whom were grant-funded), the number of research inquiries grew exponentially due to the use of email, the demand for copies of photographs and other visual materials grew rapidly, and the Center carried out the Collaborative Electronic Records Program with the Smithsonian Institution Archives.<sup>9</sup>

While at the Center I carried out further consultations, including for the archives of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and Tuskegee University. I continued consulting for nonprofit organizations and for private collections after retiring from the Center in 2008. In 2010 I took the Academy of Certified Archivists' examination and became a Certified Archivist, with that certification renewed in 2015.

### 3. Setting Up the Program

Having committed to the development and direction of the archives program at UMass Boston, I spent the 2009-2010 academic year visiting numerous archivists and archival repositories in Boston and the Boston area, and developing the curriculum for what became known as the Archives Track.<sup>10</sup>

The Archives Track was envisioned as an option within the ten course Master of Arts degree program in the Department of History,

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<sup>9</sup> "The Collaborative Electronic Records Project," at [www.siarchives.si.edu/oldsite/cerp](http://www.siarchives.si.edu/oldsite/cerp), accessed December 13, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Stapleton, journal.

and its courses and the Track had to be approved not only by the department itself, but also by the bureaucracy of the University of Massachusetts. Readers familiar with the slow process of course approval in higher education will appreciate that this was made easier by the discovery that the archives courses offered by Professor O'Toole, although not current, were still extant in the university's course master list, and could be updated and renamed.

My experience, discussions with archivists, reviews of the offerings of other archival programs, and the existing framework of the History Department's master's degree led me to propose that the Archives Track be composed of four courses: "Archival Management and Introduction to Archives," "Archival Practice and Techniques," "Transforming Archives in the Digital Age," and "Archival Internship" (a 120-hour internship under the direction of an experienced archivist). The students then chose four graduate-level history courses in consultation with their advisers. In addition, students were required to complete either a thesis or a capstone project, the latter being an approved project with a writing component. I anticipated encouraging Archives Track students to do theses or capstones that had an archival focus and would contribute to their professional credentials.

Although students could begin the first three Archives Track courses in any order, I encouraged students to take "Archival Administration and Introduction to Archives" as their initial course. In my experience archivists needed administrative and management skills almost from the beginning of their work.<sup>11</sup> Understanding how to effectively plan and allocate their time, and (in most cases) allocate scarce resources (such as facilities, equipment and funds), as well as advocating with

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<sup>11</sup> For recent affirmation of the importance of management in archival work, see: Sarah Buchanan, Jane Gruning, Ayse Gursoy, and Lecia Barker, "Surveying Archivists and Their Work Toward Advocacy and Management, or 'Enterprise Archiving'," *American Archivist* 80 (Fall/Winter 2017), pp. 282-285.

fundlers or administrators for appropriate resources form the project at hand, are critical to being an effective archivist at any level.

At the Rockefeller Archive Center most of the archivists at any time had significant management responsibilities, such as carrying out a processing, microfilming, or digitizing project within a certain time period; purchasing necessary supplies; maintaining a relationship with a depositing organization (e.g., planning and documenting transfers of archival material), directly supervising interns; and efficiently assisting long-term researchers. Based on that experience I made archival administration central to the initial course, focusing on such issues as time management, effective team organization, budgeting, fund-raising, and navigating a bureaucracy. The need for such education is demonstrated by a recent survey of practicing archivists that found that many of them “expressed a lack of readiness to serve in the broad role of manager.” One respondent stated that “management needs to be a significant component of the [graduate-level] archival curriculum,” and another argued succinctly that “in the archival classroom ‘emphasis on management and people skills is a must’.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Larry J. Hackman, a leader in the archives profession, has stated that while “‘management and administration’ are archival functions that are part of core archival knowledge... they do not appear to be treated as fundamental by graduate programs.”<sup>13</sup>

In order to obtain approval of the Archives Track and the updating of the courses I had to draft syllabi for each of the courses, including an outline of topics and required readings. I also had to provide written justification for what was essentially a new graduate program, and I had to appear personally before the UMass Boston’s curriculum

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<sup>12</sup> Sarah A. Buchanan, “Insights from Archivists to Educate for Advocacy,” in Karen F. Gracy, ed., Emerging Trends in Archival Science (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2018), pp. 101, 103.

<sup>13</sup> Larry J. Hackman, “Parting Thoughts: Advocacy and the Archives Profession,” in Larry J. Hackman, ed., Many Happy Returns: Advocacy and the Development of Archives (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011), p. 372.



committee of the College of Liberal Arts. After a final review by the trustees of the University of Massachusetts, in the spring of 2010 all the hurdles were cleared.

Throughout this process I had the complete support of UMass Boston's Provost, Winston Langley; the Department of History, particularly of the chair, Dr. Wollons; the Graduate Program Director, Professor Paul Bookbinder; and Professor Tim Hacsí, in particular, whose tenacity, persistence, and knowledge of the university bureaucracy were essential to moving the process forward. Among many other details, the department approved of my suggestion that "Archival Practice and Techniques" be taught by the Massachusetts State Archivist, Dr. John Warner. The other three courses were my responsibility.

In 2011, at the request of Dr. Wollons, I developed a Certificate in Archives within the History Department, primarily to provide advanced training for prospective students who already held an advanced degree or who were established in the archives profession but wanted, or needed, a means of certifying their knowledge of the field. The certificate required students to take all four of the required courses, including the internship, plus one of the Public History courses offered by the History Department. The University of Massachusetts trustees approved that proposal, and in the 2011-2012 academic year the first students began pursuing the certificate.

#### 4. Needs of Archival Education and the UMass Boston Environment

A fundamental question in modern archival education is whether archives education benefits more from an association with library science or with history.<sup>14</sup> A recent work on the state of the archives

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<sup>14</sup> During my early years at Case Western Reserve University I had discussions on this topic with Ruth W. Helmuth, then the university's archivist. She had founded a double-degree program in archives administration (M.S.L.S. in

profession begins with the statement that “the archival field has matured significantly in the last twenty years from its roots in historical approaches,” raising the question of the relevance of a history-based approach to archival education.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, during my twenty-two year tenure at the Rockefeller Archive Center I observed a distinct shift in the education of applicants for positions at the Center, from history-based education and on-the-job education toward library science education.<sup>16</sup> This mirrored the blossoming of archival education modules within library science programs that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Whatever the differences between library and archival goals, the growing use of digital methods of management and control of information created a rapidly-increasing overlap in practice between the two disciplines.

In the archival world the need for digital skills was fostered by the growing acceptance of web-based access tools, the escalating need for email communication, and – ultimately – the management of digital information that archives had to acquire and integrate into their collections. History and other humanities departments seldom adapted their curriculum to confront the gushing resources of the digital age, and their traditional role in training archivists was outstripped by the aggressive adoption of archives curricula at major library science schools – and indeed, the traditional M.L.S. degree was generally superseded by M.L.I.S. (Master of Library and Information Science), and other designations that did not even hint at an association with

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Library Science and an M.A. in History) at CWRU, and was a leader of the Society of American Archivists. “Ruth W. Helmuth, University Archivist, 1964-1985,” *Recollections: the art or power of calling to mind*, entry for 7 October 2011, at [www.blog.case.edu](http://www.blog.case.edu), accessed 23 October 2017. See also: entry for “Helmuth, Ruth W.,” *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, at [www.case.edu/ech](http://www.case.edu/ech), accessed 23 October 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Gracy, ed., *Emerging Trends*, p. ix.

<sup>16</sup> I hired an average of two archivists each year, not counting the archivists whom I hired from the ranks of interns.

libraries. Some library education programs actually were subsumed within computer science or information science departments.<sup>17</sup>

As I surveyed the state of archival education in 2009-2010, spoke to chief archivists at major institutions, and reflected on my experience, I came to the conclusion that a solid graduate-level background in history remained, and for the foreseeable future would be, a significant contribution to the archival community, for two major reasons: first, many archival repositories are essentially historical agencies, or are located within historical agencies, so that – as Dr. Wollons found in her initial discussions with representatives of Boston-area repositories -- the historical competency of employees is valued; and secondly, growing researcher demands (in large part a product of on-line access to finding aids, and of email communication) require historical knowledge for efficient and effective responses.<sup>18</sup> I found that it was not unusual in archival repositories with multiple staff positions to find archivists whose major work assignment was to answer researcher inquiries, to oversee on-site researchers, and to provide institutional support.<sup>19</sup>

The Department of History at UMass Boston was very strong, having a long-established graduate program taught by faculty who were not only committed to teaching, but were also astonishingly productive research scholars. UMass Boston is also a public university – and the only public university in Boston – with low tuition fees compared to the private universities in the area, and a strong tradition

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<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting here that for archivists who work within libraries, or in university settings, a library science degree is often a *sine qua non* for the practical reasons that archivists in such positions must be able to communicate with their peers, and will find that institutional advancement requires a library or information science degree.

<sup>18</sup> At the Rockefeller Archive Center the advent of email communications in the late 1990s and early 2000s quadrupled the number of researcher inquiries in five years.

<sup>19</sup> One archivist in charge of a major institutional archive described her responsibilities as primarily “public affairs” for her institution, including leading daily “history tours”: Stapleton, journal, 11 May 2010.

of educating students who are the first of their families to seek higher education, as well as being receptive to immigrants and international students. Within that environment the Department of History's graduate program was welcoming to students of a variety of backgrounds and educational experiences, including prior or active military service.

In addition, students admitted to the graduate program typically were well down their life and career paths and had come to embrace the archival field after traversing several employment experiences. (UMass Boston had a long tradition of serving a diverse body of students who were integrating education with work skills.<sup>20</sup>) They often had discovered an interest in and affinity for archives and history by significant exposures to those fields through volunteer experiences or work opportunities that placed them in historical agencies. In sum, with few exceptions, students came to the Department of History and the Archives Track as a positive, self-directed choice, and typically engaged well with committed faculty and fellow students.

## 5. A Word on History and Archives

Since the 1980s it has been fashionable to discuss, even to decry, a perceived division between the archives and history professions. Francis Blouin argues that when the divide began to be visible toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was because "history was moving toward new conceptual frameworks that diminished the privileged position of the archives, and ... archives [were] moving toward new frameworks that would marginalize the authority of academic history."<sup>21</sup> Blouin locates this divide, on the one hand, in the necessity for governmental

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<sup>20</sup> Feldberg, UMass Boston at 50, pp. 50-51, 60, 109-115, 159, 200,

<sup>21</sup> Francis X. Blouin Jr., "The Evolution of Archival Practice and the History-Archival Divide," in Terry Cook, ed., Controlling the Past: Documenting Society and Institutions (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011), pp. 317-18.

and institutional archivists to control the flood of modern records by establishing selective, even draconian, acquisition strategies; while, on the other hand, historians have changed research interests toward the study of social classes and institutions that tend to leave fewer records in traditional archival repositories.<sup>22</sup> In Blouin's view, these diverging approaches to documentation has left professional historians and archivists hardly talking the same language, although he has also suggested that it may be possible to have a worthwhile exchange:

If the archival community infuses the importance of historical understanding and inquiry into the archival process, and historians can also wrap their minds around what the implications of digitization are, there could be some real communication across this divide.<sup>23</sup>

In a thoughtful article, "The Archivist's Perspective: the History of an Idea," James M. O'Toole engaged the finer point of how archivists view their own profession, and the degree to which archivists "have a particular way of looking at things, distinct from that of other people who come into contact with records."<sup>24</sup> O'Toole referred to the 1980s project of the Society of American Archivists "to draft a statement defining an archivist," and noted that this discussion was in part prompted by considerations of the proper training for archivists.<sup>25</sup> In his

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<sup>22</sup> In 2010 I attended the annual meeting of the Association of Australian Archivists in Perth, Australia.. Much of the meeting focused on how government archivists could assist Australian aborigines' attempts to document wages fraudulently withheld from them while in forced work environments in the 1900s. While the needed documentation was indeed meagre, the archivists were diligently piecing together sufficient information. This situation shows that "documentary information, once created, tends to survive" (an axiom that I have presented to archival students and historians as an axiom for more than twenty years), and should give some confidence to both historians and archivists that records created for one purpose – to fulfill the needs of a government bureaucracy – may serve a contravening function.

<sup>23</sup> Robert B. Townsend, "Processing the Past: A Conversation with Francis Blouin and William Rosenberg," at [www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2011/processing-the-past](http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2011/processing-the-past), accessed November 13, 2017.

<sup>24</sup> James M. O'Toole, "The Archivist's Perspective: The History of an Idea," in Cook, ed., *Controlling the Past*, p. 330.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

view, “A good deal of energy was wasted in debating the proper organizational setting for these programs – whether history departments or library schools.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, O’Toole noted, graduate programs for archivists at the time were often limited to one course, followed by “one or more internships and practica,” raising the question of what is required and sufficient training for an archivist, no matter what the host institution or department.<sup>27</sup> O’Toole concluded that, while the definition of what constituted archival practice (a discussion in which O’Toole was a participant) moved forward, the question of proper training remained unresolved. He mused that “the archival education glass is both half full and half empty.”<sup>28</sup> Richard J. Cox has similarly reported that in the 1980s and 1990s “archivists wrestled with whether [archivists] were or should be distinct from librarians and historians... (with little resolution and with modest contributions to the concept of an archival knowledge).”<sup>29</sup>

I suggest that it is fruitless to parse the relationship between history and archives: in my view, and in my experience, they are deeply overlapping disciplines. In the case of archival work, there are multiple ways in which archival practices require historical understanding. For example, the initial task of appraising a potential body of documents that is considered for acquisition requires understanding the historical context of the documents – their potential significance as contributions to knowledge. The appraiser will have to consider, for example, whether the documents fill a hole in existing historical knowledge, or will increase knowledge of what is regarded as an important episode or current of history. And, assuming the collection is acquired, an archivist

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>29</sup> Richard J. Cox, Archives and Archivists in the Information Age (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2005), p. 239.

(or team of archivists) processing that body of documents must be alert to the appearance of documents that are especially evocative of the significance of the collection. Ultimately, an archivist's knowledge of history may make a crucial connection – pointing the researcher to elements of a collection that are central to the researcher's inquiry.

There is also the reality that an archivist embedded in an institutional setting (such as a university, museum, or corporate archives), frequently becomes the “resident historian,” frequently called upon to support institutional memory in multiple ways.<sup>30</sup> Maureen Melton, a graduate of the UMass Boston program, who was the founding archivist at the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), eventually became the Museum Historian, a role that included authoring a book on the museum's history, and creating a permanent exhibit on the museum's history.<sup>31</sup> My own experience at the Rockefeller Archive Center included being asked to create exhibits at Rockefeller family events and at Rockefeller University; being called to provide information for speeches by officers of the Rockefeller Foundation; and organizing a historical conference to initiate the observance of the Rockefeller University's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In sum, I believe that despite the view that there is a history-archives divide, archivists are of necessity historians and, consequently, coordinated education in history and archives is valuable and important contribution to the archives profession.

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<sup>30</sup> A group of archivists surveyed in 2014 reported that “institutional memory” was their second-most “interactive [i.e., management] task”: Buchanan, et al., “Surveying Archivists and Their Work,” pp. 276-277.

<sup>31</sup> [www.mfa.org/about/department.contacts](http://www.mfa.org/about/department.contacts), accessed December 13, 2017, and “Students in Archives Awarded for Work,” at [www.archivespublichistory.org/?tag=maureen-melton](http://www.archivespublichistory.org/?tag=maureen-melton), accessed December 13, 2017; Maureen Melton, *Invitation to Art: A History of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009). Note that Ms. Melton also served on UMass Boston's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary communications working group: Feldberg, *UMass Boston at 50*, p. 220.

## 6. Initiating the Archives Track

The Archives Track was advertised in the spring of 2010, and the first courses were offered in the 2010-2011 academic year. Combined enrollment for the three basic courses (not including the internship) was about 25, sufficient to make it clear that the Track had attracted attention and was making a significant contribution to the Department of History's graduate program. In fact, with the Public History Track that had been initiated the previous year, the department's graduate enrollment was soon twice what it had been over the previous decade. By the end of the first two years that I was director of the Archives Track there were 15-20 students who had declared their intention to complete the requirements of the Track.<sup>32</sup> The first student to complete the Archives Track and receive an M.A. graduated at the end of the 2011-2012 academic year.

In addition to the coursework, the most important other aspect of the Track was establishing sound internship possibilities. My discussions with archivists in the Boston area in the 2009-2010 academic year had established that there were excellent opportunities for internships in a variety of settings. The plan for a 120-hour internship was particularly appealing in that many institutions had experience with the 60-hour internships then offered by the Simmons College library science program, and which many regarded as too brief both to provide sufficient training of the students and to make a significant contribution to the host institution.<sup>33</sup> I also made it clear that internships should

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<sup>32</sup> The Department of History was not rigid in requiring a student to complete the Track if he/she had originally declared that intention, and did not restrict students from pursuing the Track, or in any way restrict their enrollment in Archives Track courses, if admitted to the general graduate program. Students could, and did, change their plans. Thus, while students were progressing through their graduate programs it was not possible to make a firm calculation of the number of Archives Track students.

<sup>33</sup> Stapleton, journal, 5 October 2009, 6 October 2009, 19 October 2009, 2 February 2010, 24 February 2010, 25 February 2010, 13 April 2010, 27 April 2010. To be clear, some of the archivists who expressed that opinion were graduates of Simmons, and many had had several Simmons interns, but they did express a preference for a longer



focus on fully processing a collection, or completion of a similar digital project, so that a student seeking subsequent employment could refer to having completed what is generally regarded as a multi-faceted professional task. Most of the archivists I talked to believed that a 120-hour internship was sufficient to do that.

The first internship was at the archives of the Massachusetts General Hospital, and subsequent internships were at the National Archives Boston, the John F. Kennedy Library, the Baker Library of the Harvard Business School, the Boston Public Library, the Isabelle Stewart Gardner Museum, Smith College, the Museum of Fine Arts, and other major institutions in the region. Supervision at those institutions by experienced archivists, my visits to those institutions during the internships, and in-progress and final written reports by the students, ensured that the internship experiences were overwhelmingly positive for the students and productive for the institutions.<sup>34</sup> In more than one instance the internship led to a continuing relationship between the student and the institution.

As important as the internship was for the professionalization of the students, other non-curricular elements associated with the Archives Track also were important. During my tenure as Director I had funding for an annual archives lecture at UMass Boston. In the spring of each academic year I brought a presenter who not only addressed the Archives Track students, but also any interested member of the university community and – UMass Boston being a public university – anyone from the general public, as well. I recruited Archives Track students to assist with the planning and hosting of the lecture, giving

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internship period and with few exceptions said that they would welcome future UMass Boston students. Note that in 2012 the Simmons College archival internships were changed to 130-hours: "Revisiting Archive Internships," New England Archivists Newsletter 40 (January 2013): 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> The occasional, but inevitable, difficulties that occurred with the internships were ironed out quickly because of the regular reporting and communication between me, the students, and the internships supervisors.

them experience with a function that was likely to be part of future employment with any historical agency.

Another important professional opportunity for Archives Track students was the semi-annual meeting of the New England Archivists, which were welcoming to graduate students. The one-day workshops at the NEA meetings provided particularly valuable insights into current problems and procedures in the archives world. Students were encouraged to attend the meetings, and not only did many students do so, but they also contributed professionally to the NEA. One won the annual Graduate Student Essay prize, including publication of the essay in the NEA newsletter<sup>35</sup>; another contributed a book review to the newsletter; two were presenters at meeting sessions; and some served as session rapporteurs.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps the most absorbing non-curricular activity for Archives Track students was the formation of the History Graduate Student Association (HGSA) in 2011. Completely initiated and run by the students themselves, although supported by the faculty of the Department of History, the HGSA established a program of mutual-support activities and also created an annual conference of student presentations, complete with faculty and student chairs and commenters.<sup>37</sup> Students and faculty from other humanities departments were also invited to participate, with proposals vetted by

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<sup>35</sup> The winning essay was a revision of a required paper for the "Introduction to Archives and Archival Administration" class: Adrienne Marie Naylor, "Life Spans: Queer Archives," New England Archivists Newsletter 39 (October 2012): 20-22.

<sup>36</sup> "With a Little Help from My Friends: Building Community Archives with Volunteers," New England Archivists Newsletter 39 (July 2012): 22; Adrienne Naylor, session rapporteur, New England Archivists Newsletter 40 (January 2013): 21; "Writing Outside the Lines: Partnerships in the Academic Environment," New England Archivists Newsletter 40 (July 2013): 22; Myles Crowley, session rapporteur, New England Archivists Newsletter 40 (July 2013): 25; Arabeth Balasko, review of Christine Zamon, The Lone Arranger, New England Archivists Newsletter 40 (January 2014): 12; Myles Crowley, session rapporteur, New England Archivists Newsletter 42 (January 2015): 16-27.

<sup>37</sup> "Graduate History Conference: History Graduate Student Association," at <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/ghc/>, accessed 11 November 2017

the HGSA, so that panels with interrelated topics were on the program. Several Archives Track students presented versions of the final papers that were required in the “Archival Administration and Introduction to Archives” class; others presented work drawing on their internship experiences. This was a valuable grass-roots professionalization experience.

## 7. Unexpected Results

Several serendipitous developments helped to shape the outcomes of the Archives Track. Most important was the correlation of the Department of History’s Public History Track with the Archives Track. The Public History Track was initiated in 2009 and directed by Professor James Greene, a labor historian and long-time practitioner of public history.<sup>38</sup> The track required students to take two designated courses and an internship and, as with the Archives Track, the courses were open to all History graduate students. I strongly encouraged Archives Track students to take at least one Public History course for two reasons: my personal experience indicated that archivists are frequently in roles or circumstances that require public history-related knowledge; and consequently, I believed that Archives Track graduates would have better opportunities for employment if they had a broader range of history-based skills.<sup>39</sup> In fact, we

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<sup>38</sup> Marilyn Morgan, “Beloved UMass Boston Professor and Scholar Passes Away,” 30 June 2016, at <http://www.archivespublichistory.org/?p=917>, accessed 5 June 2017.

<sup>39</sup> The previously-cited survey of archivists demonstrated that their frequently-performed tasks included writing, public speaking, and exhibit design: Buchanan, et al., “Surveying Archivists and Their Work,” p. 277.

advertised the two programs jointly in a brochure for prospective graduate students.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps an illustrative anecdote is in order. My tenure at the Rockefeller Archive Center coincided with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Rockefeller University, the Center's host institution. While participating in the plans for observing the anniversary, I proposed that the Center create an exhibit on the business and philanthropic career of the University's founder, John D. Rockefeller. With the assistance of Center staff, I designed and executed an exhibit that included some artifacts from the Center's collections, as well as text panels headed "The Art of Getting" and "The Art of Giving" – words used by Rockefeller himself in a 1909 memoir. The exhibit was planned to coincide with the eighteen months of the centennial celebration (fall 1999 through spring 2001), but during that period the University's Development Office found that it had become a valuable means of introducing prospective donors to the Rockefeller heritage, and with occasional upgrades the exhibit remained in place for another eight years.

Interestingly, my interviews with Boston-area archivists, and the experiences of several archives interns, showed that exhibit preparation was a normal archival task. It is also worth noting here that in recent years there has been considerable discussion of the interrelationships between libraries, archives, and museums to the point of developing an identifying acronym, LAM.<sup>41</sup> While I have noted earlier in this article that library and

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<sup>40</sup> Graduate Studies in Archives and Public History at the University of Massachusetts Boston (Boston: University of Massachusetts Boston, c. 2012). Joint advertising of the two tracks continues: "Archives & Public History at UMass Boston: About the Programs," at <http://www.archivespublichistory.org>, accessed 28 October 2017.

<sup>41</sup> "An investigation into the incentives and strategies for deep and transformative collaboration among libraries, archives and museums (or LAMs)," at [www.oclc.org](http://www.oclc.org), accessed October 15, 2017. See also Deanna Marcum,

archives education have experienced an intersection, this discussion has been focused on the overlapping aspects of actual practice of those who work in museums, libraries, and archives, institutions which often have been viewed as homes of entirely separate professions.

A second unexpected result was the increasingly close relationship between the UMass Boston Archives and the Archives Track. While I made a point of including student visits to the UMass Archives in course syllabi, and of inviting the University Archivist, Joanne Riley, to make class presentations, the interconnections went well beyond that.<sup>42</sup> Students frequently volunteered to work in the archives; students were hired to help with the Archives' preparations for UMass Boston's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary<sup>43</sup>; and several students participated in the Mass Memories Road Show, "a statewide digital history project that documents people, places and events in Massachusetts history through family photographs and stories."<sup>44</sup> Overall, the UMass Boston Archives provided valuable hands-on experiences distinct from the required internships.

The third unexpected result was that enrollments in the Archives Track courses included not only other History graduate students, but graduate students from other humanities and social science departments, including English, Anthropology, and American Studies, and non-matriculated students seeking some

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"Archives, Libraries, Museums: Coming Back Together?," *Information & Culture: A Journal of History* 49: 1 (2014): 74-89.

<sup>42</sup> During the first year of the Archives Track Elizabeth Mock, a graduate of the earlier archives program at UMass Boston, and the founder of UMass Boston's archives, was the archives' Director. She was in the process of retirement as the Archives Track was just getting established. On her retirement in 2011 she was succeeded as Director by Joanne Riley.

<sup>43</sup> "History, MA Students Prepare for UMass Boston's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> "Mass Memories Road Show," [www.openarchives.umb.edu](http://www.openarchives.umb.edu), accessed October 15, 2017.

archival training. These students brought wide-ranging interests, questions, and perspectives to the classes that enhanced dialogue. It is important to note that UMass Boston permitted non-matriculated students holding an undergraduate degree to take up to two graduate courses without seeking admission to a graduate program. In the case of the Archives Track, several individuals already employed in archives or historical agencies enrolled in archives courses with a view toward expanding their skills and knowledge. In the seminar-style environment of the archives classes those individuals frequently contributed valuable comments based on their work experiences, as well as raising questions about the relationship between theory and practice.

## 8. Perspectives

Archival education today covers a broad spectrum of programs hosted in various schools and departments. The Society of American Archivists' website listed forty-four degree programs in the United States and Canada in August 2017, including several programs offering multiple degrees and certificates. Six of those programs were located in history departments; seven programs offered dual degrees offered by library or information science units and history departments.<sup>45</sup> Assuming that programs exist in part to respond to market (or student) demand, the connection between history and archives remains substantial.

In considering the viability of history-based graduate programs in archives it is also worthwhile to anticipate the likely direction of library school and information science-based archival programs. The future of library science and information science is uncertain, because the future of libraries is uncertain. Shrinking institutional

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<sup>45</sup> "Directory of Archival Education," at [www2.archivists.org/dae](http://www2.archivists.org/dae), accessed August 10, 2017.

commitments to the long-standing library functions of book storage and retrieval, versus the growing provision of direct access to library materials in digital formats suggests that future pathways of library development may drastically alter the traditional practices of librarianship. We may be witnessing the beginning of a radical redirection of library education. Paul Courant, an advocate of library modernization, has stated that

If we were starting from scratch today, with the technology we have and a blank slate of IP [intellectual property] law and practice, we would immediately invent archives and archivists. The rest of library functions ... would be organized around services rather than collections.<sup>46</sup>

In that future scenario, the center of gravity for graduate archival education might well shift back to history departments.

In any case, the overall employment picture for newly-minted archivists was mixed. Boston-region archivists whom I interviewed bemoaned the outpouring of archival graduates versus the limited number of full-time positions offered.<sup>47</sup> One graduate of the Archives Track noted that “many of the jobs that have been available to me after graduating [were] temporary, low pay, grant funded, or have no benefits.”<sup>48</sup>

Yet the experience of initial graduates, and certificate recipients, of the Archives Track at UMass Boston indicates that prospective employers value the training and experience they acquired. Of the 10 graduates and certificate recipients who took classes in 2010-2014, four

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<sup>46</sup> Paul Courant, quoted in Lisa Spiro and Geneva Henry, “Can a New Research Library be All-Digital?,” in [The Idea of Order: Transforming Research Collections for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholarship](#) (Washington: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2010), 9.

<sup>47</sup> Stapleton, journal, 15 September 2009, 16 September 2009, 25 February 2010

<sup>48</sup> Graduate #1 [name redacted], email to author, 11 August 2017, in author’s possession.

subsequently found archival employment. In addition, one had previous employment in an archives and continued in that position, and another continued in a previously-held library position; one held part-time archival positions while in other employment, and began pursuit of a library degree; one had an administrative role in higher education; and another was pursuing a doctorate in history.<sup>49</sup> In addition, one student who took all the archival courses but completed the M.A. in the Public History Track held an archival position.<sup>50</sup>

Of particular interest is the experience of Archives Track students in encounters with the digital environment. Although all students in the Archives Track took the required course “Transforming Archives in the Digital Age,” there was no required course in the application of digital techniques. One former student expressed the wish that the Archives Track had offered “a computer lab ... all hands-on,” and another stated that she found that graduates of another archives program had exposure to electronic-records management methodologies that she lacked.<sup>51</sup>

However, one of the Archives Track graduates held a position with the title “Digital Archivist,” and another worked as an archivist in a high-tech corporate environment. The latter graduate noted that she “took advantage of the FDA [Federal Drug Administration] requirement that GxP industries maintain an archive to become a GLP [good laboratory practice], GMP [good manufacturing practice], and GCP

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<sup>49</sup> Personal information for eight of the ten students is redacted, but see: “Jacob Carter [curriculum vita],” at <http://www.albany.edu/history/79332.php>, accessed 28 October 2017; and “Salem State students selected for slavery education research,” 8 March 2017, at <http://salem.wickedlocal.com/news/20170308/salem-state-students-selected-for-slavery-education-research>, accessed 5 June 2017.

<sup>50</sup> To obtain this information I solicited statements from graduates of the UMass Boston M.A. program, agreeing not to reveal names or specific employment data. Email messages to the author: graduate #1, 11 August 2017; graduate #2, 26 July 2017; graduate #3, 23 June 2017; graduate #4, 24 April 2017; graduate #5, 19 June 2017; graduate #6, 18 October 2017, all in author’s possession.

<sup>51</sup> Graduate #5, 19 June 2017, and graduate #6, 18 October 2017.



[good clinical practice] archivist.”<sup>52</sup> One explanation for the qualification of graduates for such work, in spite of the lack of required digital training, is that (as was mentioned earlier) many of the students coming into the Archives Track brought to their studies substantial life and work experience, often including considerable personal and work experience with digital technologies. Learning archival methodologies gave enhanced significance those skills. Indeed, in the classroom I often found that discussions on digital subjects were illuminated and expanded by the students’ personal and job-related knowledge of the digital environment.<sup>53</sup>

One may consider, given the rapidly-changing digital environment, whether classroom knowledge of current digital applications quickly becomes outmoded; perhaps it is better to educate students in adaptability to the digital environment than in specific techniques.<sup>54</sup> An extreme view of the problem of digital training might be similar to a recent critique of the digital humanities, in which considered that field’s focus on “digitization, classification, description metadata, organization, and navigation,” and concluded that “the list ... leaves out that contradictory and negating quality of what is normally called ‘thinking’.”<sup>55</sup> Richard Cox made a similar comment when speaking at a meeting of the New England Archivists in 2009 – arguing that archival

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<sup>52</sup> Graduate #4, 24 April 2017, and graduate #5, 19 June 2017. “GxP” is the acronym for good practice quality guidelines and regulations. My frequently-reiterated comment to Archives Track students was that Boston-area “start-ups” in the biotech industries would need information managers to maintain their legal and proprietary information, and that graduates of the Archives Track should “pound on the doors” of those companies, offering their skills to organize such information while the company founders were engaged with development and innovation.

<sup>53</sup> My professional experience with the digital environment included the development and oversight of the *Collaborative Electronic Records Project*, a joint effort of the Rockefeller Archive Center and the Smithsonian Institution Archives: “The Collaborative Electronic Records Project.”

<sup>54</sup> A 2010 graduate of a major Midwestern library school commented to me that as she reflected on her education she thought that “the school may have been unprepared for the speed by which the digital transition has occurred,” such that in her subsequent position she was continually “grappling with ever-developing technology and its consequences”: email to the author, 9 August 2017, in author’s possession.

<sup>55</sup> Timothy Brennan, “The Digital Humanities Bust,” [The Chronicle Review](#), 20 October 2017, p. B14.

education had become too focused on practice and not enough on ideas.<sup>56</sup> One former UMass Boston student noted that while she had not gotten specific digital training in the archives courses, “as I progress in my career, more and more I appreciate having classes with an archival administrator.”<sup>57</sup>

## 9. Conclusion

This review of the re-initiation of the Archives Track in the Department of History at the University of Massachusetts Boston indicates that there is a role for archival education nested in a history framework. Some factors inherent in the situation of the Archives Track at UMass Boston – a strong faculty, the relatively low tuition and fees of a public university, its situation in an urban area with excellent internship opportunities and subsequent job opportunities, and its coordination with the Public History Track – have made it particularly attractive to prospective students. But the personal characteristics of the students who have enrolled, including their substantial job and life experiences, also contributed to the program’s outcomes over its first four years. While it may not be possible to duplicate all of these facets, archival educators should consider the development of the Archives Track at UMass Boston as they shape archival curricula in the future.

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<sup>56</sup> Richard Cox, “From Hilary to Helen and Beyond: Arguing About Appraisal,” 7 November 2009, New England Archivists fall 2009 meeting, notes in Stapleton, journal, 7 November 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Graduate #6, 18 October 2017.