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## Review of Research on the History of Library Science Education in the United States and Other Countries (Postprint)

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study systematically reviews representative achievements in research on the history of library science education in the United States and other major developed countries, aiming to understand the key issues addressed in foreign research on the history of library science education and to provide references and insights for research on the history of library science education in China. [Method/Process] By searching foreign databases and online literature sources, core literature on relevant topics was selected for intensive reading. Focusing on research literature from the 1980s commemorating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of library science education in the United States, this study sorts out and analyzes research achievements on the history of American library science education before and after the 1980s, while also briefly reviewing relevant research achievements from other countries worldwide. [Results/Conclusion] It is argued that foreign research on the history of library science education reflects a distinct “present-history perspective,” which, by reviewing the history of library science education, contemplates existing problems in current library science education and its future development. The research places considerable emphasis on the collection and application of historical materials and facts, while also advocating a “grand history of education” perspective that incorporates various forms of library science education into the research scope of the history of library science education.

### Full Text

### Preamble

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## A Research Review on the History of Library Science Education in America and Other Countries in the World

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### Abstract

**[Purpose/Significance]** This article sorts out and reviews representative achievements in the study of library science education history in the United States and other major developed countries, aiming to understand the issues of concern in foreign research on library science education history and to provide references for similar research in China. **[Method/Process]** By searching foreign databases and online literature sources, we selected core literature on relevant topics for close reading. Focusing on the literature commemorating the 100th anniversary of American library science education in the 1980s, we analyzed research achievements before and after that decade, while also briefly reviewing relevant research findings from other countries around the world. **[Result/Conclusion]** The study concludes that foreign research on library science education history demonstrates a clear “present-history perspective,” using historical review to reflect on current problems and future development. Such research emphasizes the collection and application of historical materials and facts, while advocating a “broad education history” perspective that incorporates various forms of library science education into its scope.

**Keywords:** library science education history; United States; review

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### Introduction

In 1887, the renowned American librarian Melvil Dewey established the first formal library science education institution—the Columbia University School of Library Economy. This marked the beginning of library science education in the United States and, indeed, the world. Over the past century, American library science education has made tremendous contributions to the development and prosperity of American libraries, while itself experiencing a journey from rise and development to decline, then revival, followed by another crisis and transformation.

Other countries, particularly developed Western nations, have been deeply influenced by American library science education and have undergone similar developmental processes. Since the 1980s, rapid development of information technology and accelerated social informatization have ushered the world into

the information age. The new information environment has profoundly changed the library landscape, and society's demand for library professionals has changed dramatically, posing severe challenges to traditional library science education. Between 1976 and 1992, more than ten American library schools closed, serving as living proof of the crisis in library science education. In response, former American Library Association President M. Gorman argued that "we need a new model" to address this crisis, and how to create such a model became a major concern for American library education.

The crisis in library science education is not unique to the United States; countries worldwide face similar issues. As the saying goes, "history is a mirror of reality," and "by studying the past, we can understand the rise and fall." Problems in contemporary library science education need to be examined not only from present realities but also from historical perspectives. It is with this purpose that scholars in the United States and many other countries have devoted considerable attention to the study of library science education history.

This study searches foreign databases including Web of Science (WOS), JSTOR, ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), Taylor & Francis, and Emerald, as well as online sources such as Google Scholar, Wikipedia, and ResearchGate, using keywords like "library education," "library science education," "education for library and information science," "library education development," and "education for librarianship." From these sources, we selected 126 highly relevant documents on library science education history. The literature reveals that research on library science education history is primarily concentrated in academic journals. However, the research themes are not well centralized and the content appears somewhat scattered, making it difficult to summarize with just a few topics. Therefore, this study divides American library science education history research into several periods for separate review and commentary, while offering brief evaluations of representative achievements from other countries.

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## 1. Centennial Review of American Library Science Education

In 1987, American library science education celebrated its 100th anniversary. After a century of development, it had trained numerous outstanding professionals for libraries in the United States and worldwide, while the discipline itself had become increasingly sophisticated. However, in a rapidly changing social environment, library science education faced unprecedented challenges. Around the time of this centennial celebration, more than ten American library schools closed, including Columbia University's School of Library Economy and the University of Chicago's Graduate Library School—the first institution authorized to grant doctoral degrees in library science. The quality, characteristics, and values of library science education were once again called into question. In April 1986,

M. Nelson, editor of *Wilson Library Bulletin*, wrote: “It is indeed regrettable that while the library profession itself is experiencing unprecedented vitality, development, and change, the value of library schools is being increasingly challenged.” In 1987, Paris noted at the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) conference commemorating the centennial: “Precisely because library science education is currently facing a serious crisis and the most exciting opportunities, it is extremely important during its centennial celebration to identify its educational position and defend it effectively.”

Against this backdrop, a surge of research on library science education history emerged in the American library community around 1987. Through centennial research, scholars hoped to evaluate past development while envisioning new futures for library science education.

Discussions about the centennial of library science education actually began in 1985, when the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* published W. C. Robinson’s article “Time Present and Time Past,” which reviewed the problems and challenges faced by library science education in the early 20th century. By examining journals from the 1910s and 1920s, the author analyzed the main contents of professional library science courses at that time, such as library management, public services, technical services, scientific literature, and the Americanization of library science education. In addition to discussing evolving curricula, the author addressed several issues in library education, including on-the-job training, professionalization, practical training, certification, leadership in library education, and entry-level education for libraries.

In this centennial discussion, American librarian E. G. Holley, as a library science educator, provided systematic and incisive commentary on American library science education over the past century. He analyzed the reasons for the successive closures of library schools, offered suggestions for improving education quality, and envisioned the future development of library science education for the next hundred years. In 1986, Holley contributed an article titled “One Hundred Years of Progress: The Growth and Development of Library Education” to the ALA Yearbook of Library & Information Services, reviewing the century-long development of American library education, reflecting on existing problems, and dividing the hundred-year pursuit of formal library science education into nine stages, elaborating on the developmental characteristics and representative progress of each stage. The century-long journey of library education had continuously sought to identify the fundamentals and characteristics of library science education. In the same year, *American Libraries* published his article “Does Library Education Have a Future?” in which he endorsed M. K. Buckland’s three directions for the development and change of library science and library education: (1) library values (attitudes, the role of libraries, selection and censorship, cultural environment); (2) library technology (technologies available for library services); and (3) library science (how to provide theoretical support for library operations). Holley argued that library science education should uphold humanism and focus on people.

In October 1986, *Library Quarterly* published a special issue titled “Library Education: Yesterday and Today.” W. B. Rayward, former dean of the University of Chicago’s Graduate Library School, revisited the school’s founding philosophy from 55 years earlier—interdisciplinary research—and argued that current library science education needed reconstruction. In discussions about library education’s past and present, while reflecting on the nature of library education, the relationship between library science education and economics, libraries and society, and technology emerged as crucial factors determining the patterns of library science education.

Professional library association journals also published articles commemorating the centennial. The Special Libraries Association’s *Special Libraries* featured “Library Education in America: The SLA Salutes the First One Hundred Years of Library Education,” reviewing developments in accreditation, curriculum improvement, and program funding, while suggesting that “specialists” might become more important than “generalists” in future library and information science education.

As the accrediting body for library science education, ALA has been intimately connected with its development. ALA members, as participants in and consumers of library science education, have always followed its progress. In 1986, P. Sullivan wrote a historical review of ALA’s surveys and evaluations conducted jointly with library education institutions.

This wave of research around 1987 demonstrated the high regard for “one hundred years of library science education” among American librarians. Using historical methods, these studies systematically and comprehensively reviewed the development of library science education, linking it to the library profession and exploring its developmental laws within the broader social system. The centennial review reaffirmed the nature, foundation, and value of library science education amidst changing economic, technological, and social environments.

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## 2. Pre-Centennial Research on American Library Science Education History

Before the “centennial review research” boom, American librarianship had already produced several studies on library science education history. As early as 1939, American scholars published *Research and Projects in Library Education*. In 1954, J. Wiesner published *A Brief History of Education for Librarianship*, outlining the transformation of American library science education from apprenticeship training to academic education. In 1961, C. M. White published *The Origins of the American Library School*, analyzing three fundamental reasons for establishing the first library school: the need for trained staff due to increasing numbers and sizes of libraries, the professionalization of library work, and technological advancement requirements.

By the 1930s, with the “Carnegie impulse” and post-WWII higher education reconstruction, library education transformed into part of modern university science education. In 1967, S. R. Reed published “The Federal Government and Library Education” in the *ALA Bulletin*, describing federal programs supporting library education, particularly provisions in the National Defense Education Act of 1958, the Higher Education Act of 1965, the Medical Library Assistance Act of 1965, and the Library Services and Construction Act.

In 1968 and 1974, ALA published *North American Library Education: Directory and Statistics*, providing data on graduate programs, undergraduate programs, library technical assistant programs, and library education development in Canada and Mexico around 1970.

In 1975, C. D. Churchwell published *The Shaping of American Library Education*, analyzing and explaining movements, events, and their impacts on library education development between 1919-1939, with particular attention to the ideas and contributions of Charles C. Williamson, Emma Baldwin, and Ernest J. Reece. Based on literature surveys, the book introduced and commented on library education activities such as curriculum teaching, professional training, accreditation and standardization by library associations, and the Carnegie Corporation’s ten-year plan for library education.

British scholars have also examined library science education history in the UK and US. G. Bramley’s 1969 *A History of Library Education* systematically reviewed library education in both countries, though without covering Europe or other nations.

Throughout the century-long history of American library education, many issues have been repeatedly discussed without reaching consensus. Some issues are crucial to library science education, including the necessity of professional library schools, the influence of libraries on library science education, the relationship between theory and practice in education, practical training, and core curriculum design. In 1983, D. J. Grogan addressed these issues in “Education for Librarianship: Some Persistent Issues.”

In the 1980s, as information technology developed rapidly and humanity entered the information age, library science education approached a turning point after nearly a hundred years. Information science, which studies the collection, organization, interpretation, storage, retrieval, dissemination, and transformation of information, inevitably permeated library science education. Should information science courses be incorporated into traditional library science curricula, or should information science theories and methods be integrated into every course theme? H. B. Hee’s “Trends in the Education and Training of Library and Information Professionals,” based on surveys of 25 universities, argued that the trend of integrating library science education with information science education had become evident. H. Borko expressed similar views in “Trends in Library and Information Science Education.”

### 3. Post-1990s Research on American Library Science Education History

Following the 1980s research boom, studies on the history, present, and future of library science education continued into the 1990s and beyond.

In 1990, D. D. Barron published “The Use of Distance Education in United States Library and Information Science: History and Current Perspectives,” reviewing the development of distance education in library and information science from the Dewey era to the present.

In 1992, M. F. Stieg published *Change and Challenge in Library and Information Science Education*, using data from eight ALA-accredited LIS schools. Each chapter provides an overview of library science professional history, discussing the purpose of professional education, professional background, university context, faculty, curriculum, students, management, and accreditation. The book covers the content of LIS professional education, plans by local administrative agencies for developing library science education, and policies supporting library science education research.

In 1994, R. S. Martin published “The Development of Professional Education for Librarians and Archivists in the United States: A Comparative Essay,” comparing the developmental histories of library science and archival science education in the United States and concluding that library science education, particularly graduate education, had been more successful.

Entering the 21st century, research on American library science education history reached another peak. In 2001, E. Logan and I. Hsieh-Yee published “Library and Information Science Education in the Nineties,” reviewing major developments in 1990s LIS education, including historical background, political environment, copyright, access and privacy, social climate, technological context, economic background, management, profession, procedures, curriculum and faculty changes, and future directions.

The most influential work in early 21st-century research was M. Gorman’s “What Ails Library Education?” (2004). The article assessed the state of American library education as of March 2004, concluding that it was struggling in many regions and identifying key problems: (1) Only 50 ALA-accredited library schools existed—too few and unevenly distributed (California, with millions of population, had nearly as many as Texas with only 400,000); (2) Some prestigious research universities had abandoned LIS education, and many “core knowledge” areas (like cataloging, reference, collection development) were no longer central or even required in LIS curricula, leaving libraries as employers uncertain about what master’s graduates had learned; (3) Many LIS schools lacked research on actual library needs, preferring to become part of “pure” research universities, while modern communication technology tempted educators to focus excessively on technology and criticize libraries not committed to technological solutions; (4) The LIS education community lacked consensus on

the nature of librarianship and failed to identify with ALA's statements on core values and required competencies. Many LIS educators (especially information scientists) had lost faith in libraries' traditional missions, policies, programs, and values, encouraging students to seek employment outside libraries. Gorman argued these issues must be resolved to recruit enough new librarians for decades ahead. Though conservative and seemingly out of step with mainstream discourse, his views contained rational and sober reflections. The crisis facing library science education would either lead to its decline or force it to reinvent itself—clearly a question the field must answer.

In 2004, K. Markey's "Current Educational Trends in the Information and Library Science Curriculum" analyzed information on North American information and library school websites, identifying trends in curriculum content and format. Her views differed from Gorman's, advocating for abandoning some controversial traditional courses.

In 2005, R. D. McKinney compared ALA's statement on library professional core competencies with curricula from several university library science programs, finding both alignment and differences, and proposed competency-based curriculum recommendations.

In 2007, G. S. Bobinski published *Libraries and Librarianship: Sixty Years of Challenge and Change, 1945-2005*, with Chapter 8 addressing library science education. The author reviewed challenges and changes witnessed during his 60-year library career.

In 2008, B. P. Lynch's "Library Education: Its Past, Its Present, Its Future" in *Library Trends* reviewed the background of library science education's rise in late 19th-century America, arguing that the public library movement's development, libraries' continuous improvement of information organization and management techniques, and user service needs drove library education forward. The article discussed key aspects of professional education system development, continuous curriculum evaluation, various educational program designs, faculty development standards, and accreditation of library science education institutions. It also evaluated influential figures and their educational philosophies, affirming Wilfred Lancaster's important contributions—both in theoretical research in information science and in inspiring many American and international students to pursue library and information careers.

In 2009, the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* published "Library and Information Science Education: The Landscape from 1930-2007," analyzing data from 38 ALA-accredited institutions and 3,014 LIS education papers to comprehensively introduce the history of LIS doctoral education in the U.S. and Canada from 1930 to 2007, focusing on recent developments in doctoral curricula, research, faculty, and evaluations of ALISE's role.

Since the 1980s, the deepening crisis in library science education prompted several prominent American LIS institutions to launch the iSchool movement in 2003, aiming to integrate all "information"-related disciplines and establishing

the iSchools consortium, whose influence expanded rapidly. Research on the iSchool movement became a hot topic in early 21st-century library science education. Although not all iSchool research falls under library science education history, relevant papers discussed iSchool issues based on reviews of LIS education history and its crises. For example, University of Pittsburgh Information Science Dean R. Larsen's "Libraries Need iSchools" articulated iSchools' different talent cultivation philosophy: practicality and professionalism; emphasis on research and teaching abilities; interdisciplinarity; communication and leadership skills; and commitment to creating, exploring, and innovating. According to Chinese scholars, this was the most frequently cited paper on iSchools in the U.S. (as of 2014). D. P. Wallace from the University of Alabama argued that LIS education had long lacked unified standard names, with diverse departmental and degree titles and frequent debates about theory-practice relationships, and that "iSchools" could help resolve these issues.

After 2014, American research on library science education history gradually deepened into specific areas. K. Matusiak et al. traced the history of ALA's accreditation system for American LIS master's programs. Y. Kwan reviewed and analyzed the development of American school library education programs and master's curricula, examining 1,150 master's courses from 84 schools. In 2016, F. Shu and colleagues investigated the interdisciplinarity of LIS education by analyzing doctoral dissertations from 1960-2013, finding that LIS is an interdisciplinary field closely related to information science, which has surpassed library science as the main research topic, and that doctoral advisors' academic backgrounds significantly influence their students' interdisciplinary dissertation topics.

In summary, research on American library science education reveals that its historical evolution is closely related to American social development. On one hand, American library science education research has continuously explored the "unchanging" fundamentals of mission and value. On the other hand, rapid technological updates and diversified social demands require library science education to continuously innovate to meet new professional requirements. This fully demonstrates the interactive relationship between American library science education and society: while library science research and education influence society through talent output and contribute to social development, changing social environments also prompt adjustments and reforms in library science education. Facing the future, library science education must accept new challenges from society, economy, and culture.

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#### 4. Library Science Education History Research in Other Countries

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has long focused on librarians' professional and lifelong education to adapt to

technological innovation, paying attention to equality and differences in library science education across regions and countries, and publishing conference proceedings to promote innovative development in professional education.

Beyond the United States, many countries have produced research on library science education history. European librarians proposed establishing formal library education early on. Schrettinger advocated for special schools to educate librarians in his *Handbook of Library Science*, showing that systematic library education suggestions existed in early 19th-century Europe.

In 1993, British scholar M. Freeman reviewed the history of LIS education and training in 16 UK higher education institutions, providing detailed introductions to their teaching, research activities, and organizational changes. In 1996, D. Muddiman published “Information and Library Education: A Manifesto for the Millennium” in *New Library World*, reviewing British LIS education history and warning that obsession with “emerging” markets and “new” professionalism threatened to return education to “the apprenticeship era,” potentially ending library and information science. In 2000, D. Stoker discussed core concepts that 21st-century library science education should uphold and necessary curriculum changes based on historical review. In 2005, G. Evans examined changes in UK LIS graduate research funding since 1990, analyzing historical backgrounds and studying British LIS education from an institutional perspective.

Canadian library science education is closely linked to American education. During the American centennial, Canadian scholars H. McMullen and L. Shiflett published “The First Hundred Years: A Mini-History of Library Education” (1986), reviewing Canadian library science education, particularly developments after 1965, with considerable attention to graduate education. In 2000, C. Ann interviewed directors of seven Canadian LIS schools, identifying issues needing resolution, including cooperation with other academic institutions, richer curricula, entrepreneurship courses, and closer industry ties.

European countries have also produced occasional research articles. As early as 1974, B. T. Kulawiec published “Library Education in Poland,” reviewing Polish library education history. In 1989, M. Sroka’s “Bibliologist or Information Specialist? Library Education in Poland after 1989” described post-Cold War changes in Polish library education reforms, organizations, and curricula, noting many schools’ attempts to combine traditional library science with modern information science. In 2000, C. Miralpéix and E. Abadal’s “Education on Library and Information Science in Spain: Development and Current Trends” quantitatively and qualitatively introduced Spanish LIS education development. In 2017, A. Muñoz-Cañavate examined Spanish university LIS graduate education before and after the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), concluding that while the Bologna Process led to consolidation of officially recognized master’s and doctoral programs, LIS education content saw little renewal. In 2015, T. Elen “celebrated” 25 years of important achievements in Romanian library science education since the Cold War, arguing it had synchronized with Europe. In 2011, M. Gerolimos traced Greek library science education history, assessed

its current state through program and literature analysis, and offered future recommendations.

Australian scholars published a series of articles commemorating 50 years of library science education in Australia (2007-2012). G. C. Hallam's *Libraries in the Twenty-first Century* (2007) devoted a chapter to reviewing Australian LIS education's shift from apprenticeship to formal education. C. S. Wilson analyzed Australian LIS education history from the perspective of faculty changes in "Fifty Years of LIS Education in Australia: Academization of LIS Educators in Higher Education Institutions" (2010) and systematically overviewed the dramatic changes in Australian LIS education from 1959-2008 in "From Practice to Academia: 50 Years of LIS Education in Australia" (2012), including rapid school expansion followed by closures and mergers, and the transformation from vocational to academic education.

In Asia, Japanese scholar M. Tamiko reviewed Japanese LIS education development from the early 20th-century founding of library schools through 1951 establishment of Keio University's Library and Information Science Department and subsequent development of library and information science universities, analyzing existing problems. In 2015, R. V. Williams studied the career and writings of Japanese educator Satoru Takeuchi, showing how a LIS educator successfully combined the North American model with Japanese traditions.

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## 5. Perspectives on Foreign Library Science Education History Research

Based on the representative research findings from the United States and other countries reviewed above, several "historical perspectives" in foreign library science education history research deserve consideration.

### (1) The "Present-History Perspective" in Library Science Education History Research

Educational history research involves two different "historical perspectives." One agrees with Italian scholar Croce that "all true history is contemporary history," advocating using current educational problems as starting points to study real educational issues through historical dimensions and historiographical methods—the so-called "present-history perspective." The other perspective seeks knowledge about education's past for its own sake, opposing the comparison of historical facts with present realities. Foreign, especially American, library science education history research predominantly reflects the "present-history perspective." Most research either reflects on current problems and future development through historical review, or uses historical reflection to examine lessons from the past starting from real problems.

### (2) Does Library Science Education History Belong Primarily to "History" or "Education"?

Educational historiography is undoubtedly a combination of historical science and educational science, but scholars disagree on whether it belongs primarily to “history” or “education.” Those advocating for “history” first argue for full use of historical materials and facts to historically reproduce education’s appearance in different periods. Those advocating for “education” first mainly proceed from education’s own logic, seeking evidence from historical materials. Foreign research reflects both perspectives, but more often treats library science education history primarily as “history,” emphasizing collection and application of historical data and facts.

### (3) The “Broad Education History” Perspective

This perspective advocates that library science education history should study not only formal school-based education but also other forms of library science education. Consequently, foreign research extensively covers adult education, on-the-job training, courses offered by libraries, and accreditation of library education institutions by library associations.

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### Author Contributions

Xiao Ximing: Conceived the paper framework and wrote the main sections.

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Qi Bindi: Collected materials and wrote some sections.

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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