January 1989

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The Georgia Archives Institute
and the Training of Archivists, 1967-1989

Linda M. Matthews

When Carroll Hart, director of the Georgia Department of Archives and History, began to formulate the idea of an archives training program at her institution in 1965, she was confronting a recurring and fundamental problem. There were few training programs for archivists in the United States, and only one course, a semester course in an undergraduate college, in the entire South.¹ The oldest short-term training program at the National Archives in Washington, which in 1965 had just reduced its schedule from four weeks to two, could not provide a feasible training program for institutions whose personnel at all levels required basic introductory instruction.² State archives in the Southeast were among the nation’s oldest and most venerable institutions housing public and private records, but


their rank and file staff lacked adequate preparation for archival work.³

The implications of this situation were clearly understood by Carroll Hart. The complexities of twentieth-century records and the documentation for the study of modern society demanded well trained personnel for their proper administration. Hart knew that few state or private institutions at that time held the resources for adequate staff development programs. She believed that state archives were better positioned than any other agencies to provide training and instruction in archives administration to individuals in libraries, historical societies, and smaller private and public archives who were charged with the development and maintenance of an archives program. There existed a need and an opportunity.

The Georgia Archives in the mid-sixties was in a particularly prominent and propitious position to begin a major initiative in staff training. Indeed, the initiative seemed imperative. A new state archives building, recently dedicated on Capitol Avenue in Atlanta just two blocks from the state capitol, had won acclaim as one of the finest state archives structures in the nation. As Carroll Hart noted on opening the first institute in 1967, the archives's staff had begun "the struggle to make our Department in organization and function equal to our splendid building." ⁴

Thus the archives institute envisioned by Carroll Hart filled two main purposes. The first and primary purpose was to


⁴ Records of the Georgia Archives Institute, Georgia Department of Archives and History. Information in this paper is drawn from these files unless otherwise indicated.
provide opportunities for training and continuing education for the staff of the Georgia Department of Archives and History, which had increased by seventeen employees in the year after the new building opened in the summer of 1965. The second goal, growing from the first, was to provide a training venue for beginning staff members at other institutions in the area, whose opportunities for such training were almost nonexistent.

The institute plan began to take a definite form in 1966 when Dr. Martha Jane Zachert, a member of the faculty at the school of librarianship at Florida State University, directed a query to Carroll Hart concerning training for archives administration. At that time, the state of Florida had no state archives. Where did one gain such training, Dr. Zachert asked, and could such training be incorporated into a library school curriculum? The result of Dr. Zachert's query and Carroll Hart's interest in education and training was an intensive directed course of study at the Georgia Department of Archives and History in the summer of 1966, with Dr. Zachert as student and members of the staff as instructors and seminar participants. Their work and research led to the development of a plan and a curriculum for a program of training in modern archives administration, put into practice in the summer of 1967 when a class of seven students was accepted for a four-week archives institute. Graduate credit was offered through the Emory University library school, and Venable Lawson, director of the

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5 "News Notes," *American Archivist* 29 (April 1966): 317. The Georgia institute was based on the format of the original four-week program offered at the National Archives, which Carroll Hart had attended.

6 The *Georgia Archives Institute 10th Year Commemoratory* (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Archives and History, 1976).
Division of Library and Information Management, became co-director of the institute. Thus began an association that lasted for twenty-two years, until the graduate program in librarianship at Emory was discontinued in August 1988.

For the first thirteen years, from 1967 to 1979, the institute followed the four-week format. Carroll Hart served as its driving force and, although various other members of her administrative staff coordinated and planned daily schedules and programs over those years, the institute clearly bore the stamp of her personality and vision. Hart's strong belief in the "mission" role of the archivist, her contagious enthusiasm for the preservation of local history at the source through records of all types and formats—artifacts and oral history as well as paper documents—and her faith in the "one world" of archives was translated in the institute program into a moveable feast of archives and history across the state of Georgia. As much as a quarter of each year's program, and perhaps more in some years, was devoted to travel and tours of archives and historic sites throughout the state. Every hot Georgia summer, the band of ten to twenty institute students, with Georgia archives staff as guides and tour leaders, left the sweltering streets of Atlanta for treks into the hinterlands. There were weekend trips to Savannah to visit the Georgia Historical Society, view historic preservation efforts firsthand, and sample local coastal culture; visits to local county courthouses to see court records in their natural habitat; or excursions to north Georgia's mountains to stop in on the Foxfire project engaged in preserving mountain culture. During the week, visits to other Atlanta archives, as well as tours of microfilm laboratories, computing centers, photographic processing facilities, and record centers were interspersed with lectures and laboratory assignments.

Over the course of the four-week institute, the core curriculum and program divided into two main themes—presentation of basic archival principles and instruction
on the organization, functions, and activities of the Georgia Department of Archives and History, the latter a reflection of the institute’s primary goal, at its inception, as a training ground for staff of the state archives. For the first five years, some 40 percent of the schedule involved sessions that can generally be categorized as "archival methodology" and of that 40 percent nearly 30 percent was devoted to arrangement and description (including the practicum component) with the remaining 10 percent covering all other topics, such as appraisal, records management, outreach, and technical aspects of records administration. The remaining 60 percent of the schedule divided fairly evenly into sessions that focused on the history and operations of the state archives programs, and special tours and presentations on other archives and historical organizations in the region. For example, in the first institute in 1967, two days were spent in the Civil War records section of the State Archives, one day in state records, and one day with county and local records. The practicum sessions, devoted to arrangement and description of a series of government records, occupied three afternoons a week for four weeks.

The practicum, which accounted altogether for over a week of the total schedule, made the Georgia institute distinct from the short-term institute offered by the National Archives, which had dropped the internship from its schedule in 1965, and attracted students who sought a more individualized "hands-on" approach. Another special feature of the Georgia program, begun in 1967 and continued for almost fifteen years, reflected Carroll Hart’s interest in outreach and exploration of new uses of archives. This special topic, a day-long seminar that was eventually styled the "Twentieth Century Documentation Seminar," invited registrants from outside the institute program to become involved in exploring a particular topic in archives. The first seminar in 1967 brought the archivist of the Eli Lilly corporation to Atlanta to offer a program on business archives,
attracting participants from major banks, corporations, and businesses in the Atlanta area.

The institute curriculum remained fairly close to the original concept during its first thirteen years. Adjustments in emphasis or approach and the introduction of timely topics brought some changes each year. The practicum remained intact, and the tours continued, although they varied each year. The long trip to Savannah was eventually dropped, with other shorter trips substituted. The amount of time devoted to the organization and history of the Georgia Archives was gradually lessened and sessions on college and university archives and manuscript collections were added as a result of student requests and evaluations.

After the 1979 institute, the staff of the program conducted a thorough assessment of the goals, the successes, and the benefits of the institute and of its impact on the State Archives. The institute had trained an impressive number of individuals who had assumed responsible positions in archives throughout the nation and in other countries. On the tenth anniversary in 1976, a survey conducted of graduates showed that of the 104 (80 percent of those completing the institute up to that time) respondents, 15 held positions in state or other public archives, 21 in manuscripts repositories or college archives, 5 in records management divisions, and 7 in church archives. Of these, 5 headed special collections or manuscript departments in university libraries, 3 headed church archives or special subject archives, and 1 served as director of the newly established state

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7 Other respondents worked as librarians (20), teachers or educational administrators (9), and researchers or consultants (4). Eleven were enrolled in graduate library education programs.
archives of New York. However, for four weeks out of the summer the archives building and much of its staff resources had been turned over to the institute, while only a small number of the participants came from the staff of the Georgia Archives or from other public archives in the Southeast.

By 1980, the environment for archival training had changed. The archives institute in Georgia was experiencing more competition from the increasing number of similar training courses and workshops being offered by university library schools and history departments and by archival organizations. In the three years prior to 1980, according to a report of the State Archives committee reviewing the institute, the program had seen a 25 percent decrease in applicants. More and more, individuals were unable to be away from jobs and responsibilities for four weeks in the summer. Moreover, the drain on archives staff and operations had to be weighed against the archives's responsibility as keeper of the state's records and its outreach mission to assure the proper care of archival materials outside its purview. The review committee recommended a reduction in the length of the institute, and in 1980 the schedule was reduced from four weeks to three.

From 1980 to 1982 the institute ran as a three-week course, continuing the basic curriculum elements but reducing the practicum time and eliminating most of the site visits outside Atlanta. In 1983, the new director of the Department of Archives and History, Edward Weldon, again reviewed with his staff the impact, goals, and benefits of the institute against the increasingly complex responsibilities of the archives in providing leadership for the state records program. While supporting the basic purpose for the institute in offering beginning instruction for new archives personnel and an introduction to the

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8 The Georgia Archives Institute 10th Year Commemoratory.
profession, the director and his staff reluctantly reached the decision that the department of archives could no longer provide complete resources for staffing, space, and program planning for the institute. Severe budget cuts throughout state government, a change in political leadership after the 1982 election, and recommendations from the NHPRC needs assessment for government records were major contributing factors. A new partnership was formed between the State Archives and Emory University in 1983 in which the university assumed the primary planning and coordinating role. At the same time, the schedule was reduced to two weeks. In 1984 the Jimmy Carter Library, newly opened in Atlanta, became a third partner in sponsoring the Georgia Archives Institute.

Under the new partnership, in 1983, planning for the institute curriculum and schedule, as well as full responsibility for coordination, fell upon Emory University, with the head of Special Collections and the director of the Division of Library and Information Management dividing the responsibilities. The State Archives continued to provide the space for lectures and discussion sessions and some staff support. Instead of a variety of lecturers invited from the State Archives and other repositories, national and local, the institute brought in primary guest lecturers who would be responsible for coverage of all core curriculum topics. Ann Pederson, lecturer in archives administration in the school of librarianship of the University of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia), and David B. Gracy, II, professor in archival enterprise in the library school of the University of Texas, became the "faculty" of the archives institute. With the shift to a two-week program, tours to archives within Atlanta were eliminated, and the twentieth century documentation seminar was dropped. The practicum segment of the program was reduced to three days, with participants assigned to local archives for a directed study in a particular area of interest that they had previously designated.
Lectures and discussions on archival fundamentals occupied approximately seven days of the program. The institute continued its focus on introducing new staff members of archival repositories to the concepts, literature, and development of the profession. The focus shifted away from the centrality of public records to a more general approach to archival principles and issues applied in a broad range of archival environments.

From 1984 to 1988 the institute continued under the sponsorship of Emory University, the Georgia Department of Archives and History, and the Jimmy Carter Library. In 1989, Clark Atlanta University replaced Emory as the academic sponsor and offered graduate credit through its library school. A year earlier, Martin Elzy of the Carter Library assumed the position of institute coordinator.9

Changes in goals and curriculum over the course of the institute’s twenty-three years mirror changes in the profession nationally and echo the ongoing debate over training and education for the profession. Increasing demands upon resources of the State Archives, the growing number of archives courses and graduate programs, and the developing plethora of short-term workshops and offerings available through a variety of venues all contributed to the gradual reduction in the institute’s length. Changes in the curriculum reflect changes in society and research trends, as well as the search for a distinct professional identity. The early institute curriculum bore the clear markings of the historical roots of the profession, with sessions such as "Chronology, the Key to Biography," historical editing, the historian’s use of archives, and the uses of oral history. More time in the first two or three years was devoted to the history of the archival profession, and to the "archival

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9 Ann Pederson, Jeraldine Cloud, and Lorraine Lee of the Georgia Department of Archives and History served consecutively as institute coordinators prior to 1983.
movement" in Europe and America, giving way eventually to additional sessions devoted to records management, computer applications (making its first appearance in 1968), microfilming and other technical operations. The interrelationship of archives and records management blossomed as a theme in the 1970s. In 1973 a developing schism within the profession was reflected in a session devoted to "Professional Relationships: Records manager, computer specialist, scholar, manuscripts curator, special librarian, and genealogist."

A training program can be measured both by its curriculum and by its staff, but perhaps most clearly by its students. Who has attended the Georgia Archives Institute? What are the characteristics of the student population? Although the 1976 survey of graduates has not been repeated, the demographics of the participants at the time they enrolled provide insight into the major audience for the program. Of the some 300 participants between 1967 and 1987, 130 either worked in libraries (in areas other than manuscripts or archives) or were library school students. Library staff participants worked primarily in smaller academic and public libraries which had no full-time professional archivist but had designated a staff member to assume the duty of caring for historical materials or college records. One hundred and twenty-eight participants were employed in an archives or manuscript repository at the time of their enrollment. These were most often new employees or paraprofessional staff enrolled for continuing education, staff development, and basic training. Of the remaining number, four listed employment in records management, twenty as either history students or teachers (in history, library science, or English) interested in expanding career opportunities, and twenty as concerned with historic preservation, family history,
genealogy or a variety of other "personal" interests. Probably no more than a fourth were affiliated with state archives or public records agencies. Over half of those attending worked in small colleges or historical societies, church archives, or manuscript departments. Geographically, Georgia residents (including students in library school in Georgia) have made up approximately 60 percent of the enrollment, but the remaining 40 percent divides between students from southern states and those from all other places (including some foreign countries). Institute participants have come from thirty-three states and the District of Columbia, and from New Guinea, Italy, Indonesia, Canada, Thailand, and the Virgin Islands.

Carroll Hart's plan in 1965, as she searched for a way to build an organization to match the "splendid new building," focused on the essential foundation of training and professional development as the key to the future of her program. That vision has been a part of the evolution for the archives profession since the early 1900s and assumed a major importance with the founding of the National Archives in 1934 and the Society of American Archivists in 1936. Georgia's State Archives had been blessed with energetic and progressive leadership, but trained personnel to manage the state's records had to come from within. Undoubtedly, at least for the first decade, the institute provided opportunities for archives staff to participate in discussions and seminars that expanded their perspectives on professional issues and developments. But the explosion of workshops, conferences, and other training opportunities sponsored by the Society of American Archivists, the Society of Georgia Archivists (organized in 1969 just two years after the institute began), the South Atlantic Archives and Records Conference, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, and many others, has over the past decade decreased the urgency of ambitious internal training programs. Staff members now have access to numerous
conferences, workshops, and continuing education offerings that were available only to a few in the mid 1960s. The institute's role as a vehicle for socialization into the profession, as basic training for beginning staff, and as a framework and network of support for small institutions and organizations whose archives staff will continue to be part-time or voluntary remains a major contribution. Its future will depend, as in the past, on the available resources for support of its programs and a continuing assessment of its place in the changing professional environment.

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