

Plans for Internship in Business Archival Work

Observation of the operation of a number of large companies has convinced Professors Clough and Cochran, the two most active members of the New York Committee on Business Records, that in most companies no official is satisfactorily taking care of the problems of record management. Many of these companies have extensive private libraries and a staff of librarians, but the latter have no contact with the manuscript records of the business and no training in evaluating them. Though a company may have an excellent filing staff, control over past records is usually vested in a busy officer of the company who lacks interest in the records as historical material and thinks chiefly in terms of economical storage and early destruction.

A new type of official is obviously needed, one who will be able to help the officers in establishing wise record policies so that those manuscripts will be preserved which contain information essential to the legal department, the business analyst, and the historian, and supervise the classification, storage, and day-to-day handling of the records. This official might be called a Business Archivist, or better, perhaps, a Record Manager.

The Record Manager should be trained in business history and business economics. He should, of course, also understand library methods and record handling and storage problems. To add these elements to his training, the Columbia and New York University graduate schools of business administration are offering special internships in business archival training. The New York University announcement, for example, reads:

B.H. 277-278. BUSINESS ARCHIVAL INTERNSHIP.
Professor Cochran.

September-February, 4 points: hours to be arranged by consultation with Professor Cochran.

Training in the management of business manuscripts and business libraries is provided through lectures and internships. Students registering for this course must be prepared to devote the equivalent of at least three months of full-time daily work to gaining practical experience in designated libraries and business companies. Students completing this course in addition to Business History 275-276 will be recommended as trained business archivists. Registrants must complete the full course to receive credit.

The New-York Historical Society and the United States Trust Company have generously offered to assist the two universities in this program. They will provide the necessary practical training in library work and in the problems and methods of record storage.

Owing to war-time conditions the one student registered for training this past year was in the course offered at New York University. She worked in the New-York Historical Society under the direction of Dr. Barck. From time to time during the year she had conferences with Professor Cochran regarding the problems of the historian in the business company and the problems of business history in general.

Several of the largest corporations already employ archivists or record managers but, as far as we know, none of these present administrators has studied business history. We hope that as the knowledge spreads that specially trained university graduates are available, many more companies will create such positions and fill them with young scholars who may write business history as well as manage the records. Two companies already have shown an active interest in placing such university-trained persons in charge of their records, and both of these have requested Professor Cochran to make a survey of their needs. Professors Clough and Cochran, at Columbia and New York Universities, respectively, would be glad to receive suggestions for the further development of business archival training, and to send to anyone interested literature describing the work of the New York Committee on Business History and Records.

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