History of the Library Association (LA), circa 1970s

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How do you do interpretative historical sociology of a profession? This is an exercise in British history which may make a contribution to the sociological understanding of professionalization.

How do you come up with a topic?

- Read other works in library history. Only one thorough history on the LA exists but it ends in the 1970s
- Ask what problems did the LA face and what has been unasked or unanswered by historians
- Ask what general sociological questions can be addressed in this study. Read in the sociology of professionalization



Combine ideas to form an initial set of interpretative questions incorporating sociological concepts

Where do you get information?

- Read other works in library history
- Archives of the LA in London
- Any works about the American Library Association which indicate similarities or differences for comparative purposes
- Works on what is going on in general UK culture and politics in the 1970s that might provide a framework for the interpretation

Librarianship: "the theory and practice associated a selection, acquisition, organisation and exploitatiof information and materials regardless of the form which they appear." - (Northern Branch).

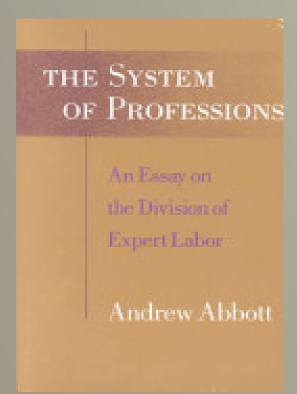
"A profession with a broad interest in all media of communication". - (West Midland Branch).

"Media service" and "director of media services" - (individual member).

Library: "a collection of books and materials with a particular objective related to the people and organisations served, selected, organised and exploited by librarian". Librarianship: "the art of selecting, organising and exploiting a library" -(inclibrary: "communication centre for knowledge".

Librarianship: "both the art and science of getting that knowledge to the right person when they need it (individual member). All those bodies and individual members which stress the need for redefinition emphasis the fact that it should give predominance to the information aspects of the profession.

Yorkshire Branch considered redefinition impossible even if it were necessary, as almost all areas have relevance. London and Home Counties Branch felt the the definitions could take care of themselves if the questions relating to professional education and qualifications were less important and less useful thar analysis of basic library skills. And two individual members considered redefinition totally unnecessary.



All professions must solve certain problems; differentiating themselves from non-professions, moving curriculum into university systems, carving out a set of practices for themselves alone, forming professional bodies. Initial differentiation from amateurs and clerks, developing a curriculum, and setting up criteria for entrance were the problems of the LA from the late 1800s to the 1970s. Reinvention, redefinition, and differentiation from emerging technology-driven fields were the challenges in the 1970s. This was a pivotal moment. It was not seized immediately. Why not? Was it done later?

Write, then revisit archives, revisit interpretation and rewrite