

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?

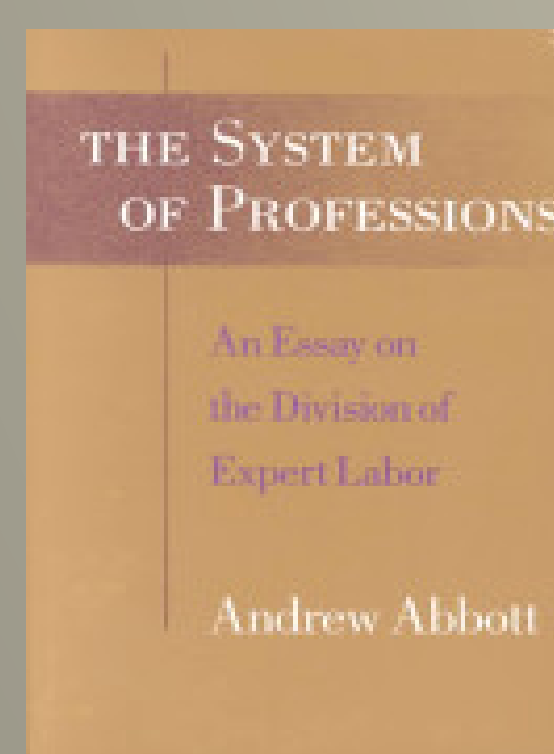
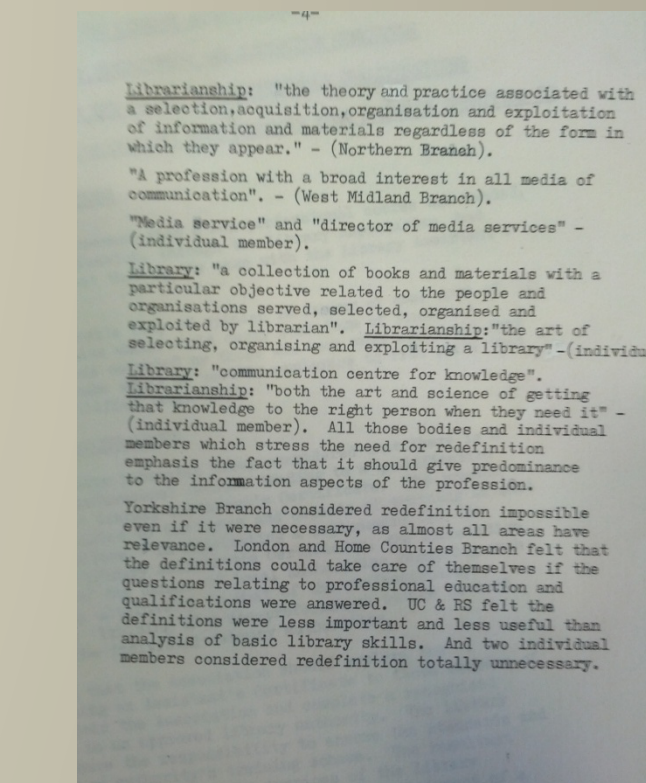
- Read other works in library history. Only one thorough history on the LA exists but it ends in the 1970s
- Ask what problems did the LA face and what has been unasked or unanswered by historians
- Ask what general sociological questions can be addressed in this study. Read in the sociology of professionalization



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



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