Examining how history informs the future of the two sister professions: Librarianship and social work

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EXAMINING HOW HISTORY INFORMS THE FUTURE OF TWO SISTER PROFESSIONS: LIBRARIANSHIP AND SOCIAL WORK

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BACKGROUND

Whole Person Librarianship, Zetervall & Nienow (2019)
Librarianship and social work as “sister professions.”
• Discussions about connections between social work and librarianship in professional literature and conferences
• Social workers and social work students working in public and academic libraries
# Similarities Between SW and LIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Female-dominated professions</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Historical development of the professions</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Debates over professional status</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Professional code of ethics and values focusing on service and social responsibility</strong></td>
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Rossi (1961): “Women depress the status of an occupation because theirs is a depressed status” (83).

Heite (2012): “Historically, social work was long located beyond the boundaries of profession, and was wrongly sees as a (female) semi-profession” (7).

Garrison (1973): “The feminization of public librarianship did much to shape and stunt the development of an important American cultural institution” (153).
KEY DATES IN HISTORY OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

SOCIAL WORK

- 1874: First meeting of prominent social workers at the American Social Science Association
- 1898: First social work class offered at Columbia University
- 1915: Flexner’s speech
- 1917: National Social Workers’ Exchange launched (later became the NASW)

LIBRARIANSHIP

- 1876: First meeting of American Library Association
- 1887: Founding of Columbia School of Library Economy, first library school
- 1923: C.C. Williamson’s Training for Library Service published
- 1939: First Code of Ethics adopted
- 2004: ALA adopts the Core Values of Librarianship
ABRAHAM FLEXNER “WHAT MAKES A PROFESSION”? (1915)

- Assistant Secretary of the General Education Board of New York City
- 6 criteria of professionalism (derived from law, medicine, and clergy)
- Concludes that social work is not a profession
  - social worker mediates rather than performs original agency
  - not a separate profession it is an endeavor to supplement existing professions
  - lacks professional education

• Selected by Carnegie corporation to conduct a major study of library education
• Graduate of Columbia, professor of economics, head of Economics and Social Division of the New York Public Library
• Criticized the quality of many programs
• Designated university of appropriate provider of professional librarian education
• Advocated for graduate degree preparation
ETHICS AND VALUES

NASW Code of Ethics (1960, updated 2021)

- Service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence

ALA Core Values of Librarianship (2004)

- Access, confidentiality/privacy, democracy, diversity, education and lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, preservation, the public good, professionalism, service, social responsibility, and sustainability
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE...

- Continued collaborations that preserve the unique qualities of each profession
- Cross-training: dual MLS/MSW degrees, holistic service approach, trauma informed librarianship, reflective practice, cultural humility
- Reconsidering discourses on professionalism, definitions of professions
- Maack (1997): empowering professions (social work and librarianship)
- “professional shares expertise with the goal of enabling clients to use knowledge in order to take control of their own lives and their own learning” (284).
REFERENCES


· Rossi, P.H. (1961). The librarian’s search for status: discussion. In P.H. Ennis & H.W. Winger (Eds.), Seven questions about the profession of librarianship (pp. 82-83). The University of Chicago Press.
