Arts & Humanities

Reminiscences of the Columbia History Department 1923-1975

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One of the silliest things done today in the world of higher education is to publish an annual ranking of the leading universities. The weeklies that conduct such surveys pretend that the public wants to know which are best: it knows this about teams in professional sports, why not about colleges? The answer that is given is about departments, not institutions, so it is no guide to choosing a college. And the ranking is done by asking the members of departments to judge their colleagues elsewhere, so it yields very shaky estimates. They are based on the kind and amount of scholarly publication, so that added to the unconscious bias of personal connections there is that of agreement on doctrine and overvaluation of work done on the topic in fashion. In a word, the ranking procedure is the very negation of scholarly method. It tells the public nothing about college education.

To know the quality of a department, college, or university calls for residence within it in some working capacity, together with academic experience and the judicial mind. And even then, the most that can be ascertained is whether, on the whole, the performance is outstanding, competent, or substandard. When the testimony is detailed and abundant, as it was in the late eighteenth century about the universities of Scotland, one may conclude that as a group they attained excellence, and wisdom adds that some were better than others.

This preamble is to make clear the character of what follows, namely, how the Columbia history department appeared in the second and third quarters of this century, first to a student, next to a young colleague, then to a senior member, and finally to an academic administrator. These four witnesses are myself.

In 1923, when I entered Columbia College, it was in the fifth year of its influential innovation, the required course called Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West. It had replaced History 1, which had also been required. Contemporary Civilization ("C.C.") was an amalgam of the political, economic, and intellectual history of Europe and America from a.d. 1200 to the 1920s. It was taught in small sections by instructors drawn from the departments indicated by the list of the subjects combined. To many observers it seemed strange at the time that instructors should be teaching matters "outside their field"; but if the student mind was capable of grasping the expanded offering, it was reasonable to suppose that the teacher's could stretch to a like extent.

This departure and the argument about it arose from a fact of history itself. In the preceding two decades, leading thinkers in every Western country had redefined the scope of the social sciences and of history in particular. A generation before them, the English historian E.A. Freeman had said: "History is past politics," and it was understood that to be complete a book-length piece of research could cover no more than a few years. The revolt at the turn of the century was against this narrow conception. When Karl Lamprecht came from Germany to the International Congress that met in St. Louis in 1904 to celebrate (a little tardily) the Louisiana Purchase, he declared that history must now make use of findings in the new sociology and psychology. A little later at Columbia, James Harvey Robinson gave the program of a "new history" that must take into account the life and force of ideas. In France, Henri Berr, responding to the worldwide spirit of Populism, called on scholars to replace the history of statesmen and warriors with that of "the people," which meant a sociological concern with the past. Simultaneously, interpreters of Karl Marx wanted to show economic facts as the engine of history. Dilthey in Germany saw on the contrary that cultural forms and styles made up a Zeitgeist that the historian ignored at his peril. Meanwhile in England, Lord Acton, who had just completed his editorship of the largely political Cambridge Modern History in twelve volumes, urged the young to "study a problem, not a period."

This wind of doctrine blowing from all quarters was what swept History 1 out of the Columbia College curriculum in 1919 and put "Contemporary Civilization" in its place. The declared purpose of the course was to equip the student with a sum of knowledge enabling him to understand what had led Europe to the war of 1914-18 and to the present civilization transformed by that worldwide event.

Indeed, by the mid-1920s at Columbia, the atmosphere of the University, and not alone that of the College, was permeated by ideas and feelings born of the war. Three members of the history department, James T. Shotwell, Carlton J.H. Hayes '09GSAS '29HON, and Parker T. Moon had been involved in official work related in one way or another to treaty-making at Versailles; several of the younger members had been in the armed services; and the undergraduate body itself included an influential group of "veterans," who were completing their interrupted education or beginning it after postponement. Their presence lent a touch of maturity to classwork in history: they had been to Europe and had seen the war.

Like other departments of instruction at Columbia, history was divided into a College and a graduate branch. The latter, housed in Kent Hall, was composed of the senior members, who taught only graduate courses. The juniors across the road in Hamilton Hall taught the College boys under the direction of a full professor designated as head. He maintained the liaison with the other half as regards appointments, promotions, and salaries. As for the curriculum, it was decided upon in a way that required him to be an able negotiator. After gauging the abilities of his young team, he proposed—and the graduate branch disposed; except that the interdepartmental Committee on Instruction of the College, led by the dean, had ideas of its own. Not only did it not rubber-stamp everything that came from the departments, it also proposed. The College faculty, which was the entire College teaching staff, had final say.

It was the dean and his committee that organized Contemporary Civilization and they took on the fight with its opponents wherever found. In general, the objection was not to the new course itself, but to assigning as teachers those at the instructor rank. These young men were doctoral candidates who were supposed to be writing their dissertations. Now they would be expected to learn a good deal that was "outside their field" while carrying a heavy schedule: two sections of C.C. and a third course—fourteen hours a week; it would be (and was) grueling. The students benefited from the small sections and from their mentor's freshly acquired knowledge, but the instructor was delayed in his progress toward the degree.

For him, too, the geographical division of the department was unfortunate. It deprived the young scholar of daily contact with his seasoned elders, and these had no chance to guide or judge the work of the juniors. In more than one instance, a senior member, voting on promotions, confused the identities of two juniors until his retirement and beyond. The annual dinner (black tie) of the entire group, friendly

enough, did not erase misconceptions.

For the College students, the gap between branches was bridged by the opportunity in their third year to take any first-year graduate course and count it toward the B.A.

In 1922 the survey given in Contemporary Civilization was supplemented by a second required year—C.C. (B)—that explained the nature and the ways of economics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. As a result, a student who emerged from the two C.C.'s with a passing mark was capable of following with profit a specific course in any of the seven "sciences of man in society."

In history, the course most likely to be chosen first was Carlton Hayes's offering of the year in Modern European History. He varied the span from time to time, which often made it possible to take a second course with him the following year. Everybody knew that he was an enthralling lecturer. As he strode back and forth behind the wide counter of the large lecture room, he conveyed the drama of some decisive moment in the French Revolution or that of Bismarck's triumph when proclaiming Germany an empire. It was not bombast but history felt as well as recalled. Hayes's style had been abundantly sampled in C.C. through the assigned readings from his two-volume Political and Social History of Europe, the leading textbook throughout the country. In 1934 Hayes reworked it into a Political and Cultural History of corresponding scope.

An alternative was to sign up for Parker T. Moon's course on International Relations, also varied in span, but most attractive when it was entitled Imperialism and World Politics and covered the years 1870-1914. The causes of the Great War (as it was then called) were an inexhaustible topic in the profession and not less so among serious students. Moon also lectured out of abundant knowledge and with flamboyance when suitable. A graduate course was given in two lectures a week, followed by a third hour with an assistant for discussion, quizzes, and a term paper. Parker Moon quite often took the third hour himself and was uncommonly kind to the overawed youngsters who asked questions, mispronounced proper names, and did deep "research" in prewar diplomacy. His early death was an irreparable loss to them and the department.

Close to these two luminaries was the coming man, Edward Mead Earle. He also taught European diplomatic history, with a strong economic component. His recent dissertation on the Berlin to Baghdad Railway had been published as a regular trade

book, a stunning event in the eyes of mere students and proof of his capacity. Earle's bright prospects were soon dimmed by the onset of tuberculosis. After a long recovery in Saranac, he was appointed the first head of the history section in the new Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton.

A Columbia undergraduate's program in his last two years might show a straightforward concentration or "major," but owing to the C.C. spirit, the requirement was broadly interpreted. Advanced courses in economics, sociology, or anthropology were not alien subjects for a history major. And then there was General Honors. This was the two-year sequence created by John Erskine, of the English Department, on a suggestion by George Edward Woodberry. It was designed to give a selected group of students the chance to read whole books instead of snippets. This innovation was the start of the Great Books movement and the cause of the continuing debate about "the canon" of Western classics.

Since as a collection these great works disregard the academic cutting up of thought into subjects, taking General Honors was really to fulfill the demands of the New Historians for an ecumenical outlook on the past. The reading list for Honors took the student from Homer to William James, the encounters along the way being with Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, and J.S. Mill, among others. This "mini-canon" varied according to the preferences of the two instructors of each small group. Every book must be read in one week and well enough to outfit the student with ideas for two hours of conversational discussion.

General Honors was renamed The Colloquium when the mood of the day became hostile to indications of superiority, but the course remained the same in purpose, contents, and method. Out of it came in 1937 the Humanities course, required in the freshman year, and different from Honors only in the layout of the syllabus. It was later supplemented by Oriental Humanities, which introduced one to classics of India, China, and Japan. All this cutting across former subjects of instruction embodied the rediscovery that a culture is an intradependent whole. It cannot be studied all in one piece, but the divisions made for convenience should not leave the student believing that they are intrinsic or permanent.

Imbued with these ideas, a student going from the College to the graduate department of history found it an easy transition. A newcomer from another institution might at first sight think that the old separations were still in force. He was told that for the master's degree he was expected to take four or five lecture

courses and one seminar "in his field," and on turning to the catalogue he would find courses listed as being in American or European history, Ancient or Medieval, English or some other national category, each limited in span and taught by a specialist. Only two bore the broad title of "Thought and Culture," one given by Lynn Thorndike, "From the Renaissance to the French Encyclopedists"; the other by David Saville Muzzey '23C, on the period 1750 to 1900 in Europe and the United States. There was besides a course in the history of science, and one requirement: historiography. The display looked very much like the standard curriculum at any other university.

But catalogue labels failed as usual to convey the spirit of the contents. To start with the course in the history of science so as to forget it promptly, it was in the hands of an ill-prepared man suffering from several disabilities and it consisted exclusively of names and dates coupled with repetitious praise of the scientific method and derision of older beliefs. It gave the subject a bad name and did not survive the early retirement of its proprietor.

Again, the course in historiography was a misnomer, being what used to be called a "vaudeville course": each week for two hours straight one of the distinguished figures in the department, and occasionally a visitor, would come and do his turn by describing the range of his concern or the work of a great historian of the past. The lectures were well prepared; one learned miscellaneous facts, but not the technique of historiography. That omission was remedied thirty years later when Professor Henry Graff and I designed and gave a course that fitted the label.

At the earlier time, the remainder of the offering was of superior quality and nearly every course embraced more than was forecast in the description. For example, William R. Shepherd's "Expansion of Europe" was a vast panorama of social and cultural exchanges among four continents following the discovery of the New World. Gathering facts never before assembled had entailed wide-ranging research that Shepherd consigned to his written lectures, and these expanded each year like Europe itself. Full of his subject, he delivered them as if from memory, and every listener looked forward to the published volume. Alas, it never found a posthumous editor and publisher. On Shepherd's retirement the work in Latin American history was ably taken up by Professor Frank Tannenbaum '21C, who was equally competent in the history of labor relations.

Muzzey's course in thought and culture had the merit of interweaving the ideas and movements originating from either side of the Atlantic and relating intellectual

differences of temper to social conditions. As for Lynn Thorndike's, it was at first a cause of dismay. Though a lecture course, not a seminar, it was a study in the bibliography of the subject. Yet one learned a good deal of the substance as well, because in pointing out the scope of each of the sources, Thorndike gave thumbnail sketches of men and events; but it took synthetic power to organize the pieces into a history of the period. He was of course famous for his part in the rehabilitation of the Middle Ages, especially its scientific accomplishments. Volume after volume of his History of Magic and Experimental Science came out, full of facts newly dug out of the Vatican library or elsewhere and so detailed that reading him was a form of research in itself. On the other hand, his single volume on the history of civilization is a model of narrative speed and clarity.

The subject Hayes made his own was Nationalism. It had of course no geographical boundaries and took the student beyond politics and into all forms of literature, as well as into music and the fine arts. His seminar on the subject could thus be taken twice, in successive years; the members would bring to it ever fresh reports on the manifestations of the ubiquitous ism.

The other seminar in Modern European history, Charles Downer Hazen's, was exactly the opposite: it repeated, year after year and was none the less indispensable, because it taught method. The topics were not chosen by the student but assigned. One called for delving into the voluminous Clarke Papers for seventeenth-century radicals, another compelled one to master the figures in one of Disraeli's budgets, and so on—each as it were featured a type of difficulty. Hazen had every item at his fingertips, and the omission of a single essential point in the report to the class brought the question, "Did you not find, Mr. X (or Miss Y), that. . . . ?'' Known as "the Chevalier" on account of his Legion of Honor for work in France, Hazen was gentle but implacable; an amended paper must be turned in with the lacuna filled. It was no surprise that his two-volume history of the French Revolution was vivid and memorable—no textbook—by virtue of the skilful use of the small detail; and it was characteristic of his unacademic conception of history that he said he reread Carlyle's *French Revolution* once a year.

Austin Evans's courses in medieval history were less entrancing, but solid also and, the subject being culturally remote, it was necessarily broader than a chronicle of politics. Scholarship on the Middle Ages has by now moved far from his understanding of it, but the substance has changed less than the inferences and interpretations. The Ph.D. candidate who must choose for his oral examination a

major subject and two minors could readily build on the Evans course for one of the minors. The difference between major and minor was that questions on the latter would not touch on the bibliography.

The second minor might be in American history and there the array of courses was especially rich. In colonial history, Evarts Boutell Greene, the first American born in Japan, was supreme. Though not a facile lecturer, his charm in seminar induced an interest equal to his own in—everything; for example, the ethos of Puritan New England compared with Hawthorne's view of it in *The Scarlet Letter*. It involved a study of church records for confessions of fornication before marriage—so frequent that it often appears on the books as FBM—and a brief inquiry into the world-wide practice of bundling. At every point, the department showed by its breadth of interest that it was indeed committed to the "new history."

Other scholars in American History—David Muzzey, Dixon Ryan Fox, John Krout '25GSAS '63HON, Allan Nevins '60HON—each had his enthusiastic band of followers who would recommend to the neophyte this or that course as an absolute obligation before it was too late. For—hard to believe—there would come a time in life when one would cease to sit and listen, notebook in hand.

Particularly attractive was Nevins's fluent style, characteristic also of his biographies—Grover Cleveland, Henry Ford, Hamilton Fish, of which the last received the Pulitzer Prize. He had had a prominent career in journalism and wanted to entice the public to read history. He spurred the founding of the history magazine American Heritage and created a new genre: oral history on tape. He organized the Society of American Historians and established the annual Bancroft Prize for the three leading works in the subject.

The story of the British Isles and empire was in the hands of Robert Montgomery Schuyler and J. Bartlet Brebner, the one a gentle, multicompetent New Yorker, the other a cheerful Canadian, who made the "North Atlantic Triangle" an important historical subject. His Explorers of North America is a classic. The quiet humorist Schuyler dealt with English constitutional matters and the limited sway of Free Trade ideas; he edited the Political Science Quarterly and he wrote an early paper on the supposed relevance to causation in history of Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle.

A gentleman from Virginia, Geroid Tanquaray Robinson '30/gsas '67HON had the daunting task of handling all by himself the whole of Russian history and, after a

time, the growing number of students energized by Sputnik.

Meanwhile, the formidable William Linn Westermann, who deciphered the stacks of Greek papyri found near the Nile delta, was the drill master of the small band of seekers after ancient history. He inspired more admiring wonder for his expertise than affection for his person, because his attitude toward students (and some colleagues) was on the German model. Rigorous scholarship requires frigorous human relations.

Enough has been said so far to show that, unlike today, students in the late 1920s had immense respect for their teachers and noted their foibles as part of the common lot, rather than as a warrant for assuming equality and acting as customers. Asking for a better grade would have been a sign of delirium. There was great courtesy on both sides and no bandying of first names, but it was not unusual for a seminar leader to invite his students to an evening buffet at his house or for an outing in the country. Nor had learning as yet been discovered to be a cover for an oppressive social system. The result was pleasure in the hard work of ascertaining and interpreting fact and joy in the knowledge that one was an apprentice in a worthy guild. The young and their elders were alike "members of the University."

Apprenticeship was none the less exacting. After obtaining the B.A., which should not exceed four years, the M.A. took one year of courses, a day-long written examination, and a substantial essay. The Ph.D. called for two more years of course work, an oral examination in subject matter, and a dissertation examined on the galleys of a book, whether accepted for publication or to be privately printed at the author's expense. The orals were conducted very formally, in the Trustees' Room, by a committee of at least five professors flanked by two more from cognate departments serving as observers.

To the candidate preparing for the ordeal the major seemed a boundless expanse: modern European history stretched from 1500 to the present and from the Azores to Vladivostock. After the Second World War, perhaps as a concession to the returning veterans who were married and had children, the demand was greatly reduced: one could choose a single century, Russia was left out of Europe, and the examinee was often asked at the outset what he knew best. The dissertation was in typescript and its examination was little more than copy-editing.

But both in the earlier period and under this relaxed scheme, Columbia maintained strictness, whereas—again in both periods—some of the leading universities were content to test the candidate through an informal conversation in the sponsor's office with two or three other faculty members. The rationale was that they knew his or her quality from acquaintance during the preparatory years.

Unless already a full professor at another university, a new appointee to the department was assigned to teach in the College. As mentioned before, this meant two sections of Contemporary Civilization and one more, usually as assistant in one of the first-year graduate courses. On occasion the third course might be History 1 in "Extension," the division of evening courses for adults that later became the School of General Studies.

The head of the College history staff in those years was Harry J. Carman '19GSAS '54HON. Reared on a farm in upstate New York, he had made himself a specialist in the relation of successive American social and political conditions to the varying types of the contemporary agriculture. His introductory course in American history was a universal favorite, partly on its own merits, partly owing to the character of the teacher. Harry Carman possessed all the attributes of the paternal saint. He understood every mental and moral difficulty, sympathized with every trouble, and did something about it. The novice bewildered in his first year of teaching C.C. went to him for advice and a recharge of energy; the doctoral candidate consulted him about the tactics of examinations; his entire staff of instructors and assistant professors relied on him for support when the executive committee of the department annually debated re-appointment and promotion. Carman became dean of the College, had influence in the city as conciliator in labor and race relations, and was a member of its Board of Higher Education—all this without neglecting his regular and self-imposed duties within the University.

"Harry's boys," as we came to be known to the executive committee across the street, consisted of aspirants whose promise was largely fulfilled. Charles Woolsey Cole '31GSAS '54HON, an economic historian who wrote the classic work on the theory and practice of French mercantilism before and under Colbert, became president of Amherst College and ambassador to Chile. Walter Langsam '30GSAS, specialist in Colonialism, became president of the University of Cincinnati. Dwight Miner '26C '40GSAS wrote the definitive book on the politics preceding the seizure of Panama for the Canal and was Carman's successor as the most popular interpreter of American history to the college generations. Shepard Bancroft Clough '30GSAS,

whose dissertation research in Flemish nationalism landed him in jail on the very spot of his inquiries, went on to write about economics and the fate of civilizations. Samuel McKee, who steadfastly declined to write a dissertation and was never promoted, was none the less an original and learned scholar, as well as a well-liked instructor in the history of the American West. All of us, in addition to fitful toiling at our dissertation topics, did our best, year after year, for the prosperity of Contemporary Civilization.

It was year after year, because promotions were postponed *sine die*. The Great Depression had struck, and it was our lot to remain at the instructor rank for a decade. Nobody thought of complaining; on the contrary we were all grateful to President Butler, who had decreed that nobody should be dismissed—or advanced in grade or salary.

By the time of my elevation to the professorial branch, in 1937, its quarters had been moved from Kent Hall to Fayerweather; and while I continued to teach in the College and also to participate in the design of the new Humanities courses, a group of new faces had appeared among the full professors—and kept appearing. They pursued the tradition of straddling barriers and combining fields. Henry Steele Commager '69HON was a specialist in American constitutional history, but he ranged freely over American social and intellectual history; so, a few years later, did Richard Hofstadter '42GSAS, who before his all-too-early death did pioneer work on the Reform Movement and on American thought and twice received the Pulitzer Prize. Salo Baron '64HON worked at his monumental social and religious history of the Jews. Richard Morris '30GSAS '76HON, a protégé of Professor Greene's in colonial history, was also interested in American law and made a study of notable cases under the title of *Fair Trial*. He went on to edit an *Encyclopedia of American History*, which by its completeness and accuracy has been standard ever since.

The unmistakable southerner, Dumas Malone, after serving as editor-in-chief of the twenty-volume *Dictionary of American Biography*, came to Columbia and devoted his talents to writing the most detailed life of Jefferson, in four volumes. Carrying lightly his eminence from Ohio State, Walter Dorn was master of the cosmopolitan period of the Enlightened Despots and lectured about it with an abundance of telling incidents.

Early modern history was the province of Garret Mattingly, whose great gift of exposition made his biography of Katharine of Aragon, his path-breaking study of

Renaissance diplomacy, and his account of the Great Armada entrancing books that reached the general educated public. For *The Great Armada*, the Pulitzer committee made an exception to its strictly American purview and bestowed on Mattingly a special prize never duplicated.

Equally original and publically recognized, the work of Fritz Stern in German history also received an uncommon recognition. He first attracted notice by a masterly work on the friend and financier of Bismarck's schemes, Bleichroeder, and went on to take part in Germany's current self-questioning about its national history and character. His strongly buttressed yet temperate views brought him an invitation to address the Reichstag, which he did to general satisfaction. It was the same historico-political sense that later made him a capable Provost of the University and for several months a resident adviser in Bonn to a new American ambassador. His subsequent studies were in the history of Einstein's career.

Multicompetent in a similar way, a much earlier appointee, James T. Shotwell, appears here out of chronological order as an a emblem of the past and a portent of the future. He could boast of having been the first instructor assigned to carry out at Columbia the precepts of Robinson's "new history." He showed his versatility by producing works on the history of the Eucharist and then on ideas related to the Industrial Revolution; afterwards an *Introduction to the History of History* and some 250 articles for the famous Eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, of which he was moreover the assistant editor. He founded at Columbia the series called "Records of Civilization." These were little-known but significant works in the rise of Western culture, Christian and Islamic, that had never been translated or edited in English.

The editorship passed to Austin Evans after Shotwell's radical shift of scholarly concern, occasioned by the war in 1917. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace had sought Shotwell for its executive post, but he chose to remain at Columbia, only to be drafted—so to speak—as a member of the historical commission that went to Versailles with President Wilson. From then on, Shotwell led a life of international endeavor that reduced his teaching to one intermittent course, of which the chief interest lay in the anecdotes about contemporary events and figures. Shotwell's very full career culminated in his editorship of *The Economic and Social History of the World War* in dozens of volumes that took eight years to publish.

Professor Shotwell was not the first academic in the country to be drawn away from the classroom and into the world of affairs, but his was a most conspicuous case in the early history of the flight from teaching. The invitation from Carnegie had caused deep concern to all the department heads of the Faculty of Political Science; they wrote a memorandum to President Butler, asking plaintively whether scholarship in the future would be divorced from its ancestral link with teaching the next generation, and whether the University would or could resist the pulling power of wealth lodged in foundations. The questioners—and Butler too—were all for resistance. Everybody knows that it proved vain.

During the first decade and a half after my admission to the circle of seniors, the head of the history department (commonly called chairman and officially "executive officer") was, with a short interval, Carlton Hayes. It was an elective post with a three-year term, and everybody in the department had a vote, the latest assistant included. Hayes was an admirable executive, calm, not intrusive, seeing to it that meetings were short and fruitful, a good judge of talent in appointments and promotions, and above all a fine tactician in the annual battle with the University budget committee.

By the time of my becoming dean, in 1955, the chairmanship had passed to John H. Wuorinen, a native of Finland, competent in the several Baltic languages, whose first two books dealt respectively with nationalism and with prohibition in that country. A third described the settlement of Finns in Delaware. Wourinen made an excellent chairman, even calmer than Hayes, and gifted with humor of much the same subrisive kind.

One of his departmental concerns was also one of mine: the time it took for the Ph.D. dissertation to be written after the orals had been passed. I enlisted the help of the University admissions officer, Dr. Hans Rosenhaupt, himself an able scholar-refugee, to make a study of the lists of candidates in the five departments of the Faculty of Political Science—History, Public Law and Government, Sociology, Anthropology, and Mathematical Statistics. It turned out that some unfinished degrees went back sixteen years and a large number between eight and twelve. These former students now held teaching positions and were so burdened with work and family life that they had no time to do research and write. Throughout the academic world, the ABD (All But Dissertation) was an unofficial but popular degree.

One cause was the vagueness that attached to the word dissertation. Many students and sponsors took it to mean the ultimate book on the subject—a life's work for one who could not devote his whole time to it. Another cause was the diffident attitude of sponsors, coupled with their accepting all who asked for their sponsorship. No reminders or inquiries were sent out to the delinquents, and some sponsors accumulated a crowd of unpromising applicants. The hospitable Allan Nevins was credited with at least a hundred. When he retired he vainly offered them in small platoons to his colleagues in American history.

The situation called for a pair of rules: one strongly suggesting a limit of 250 pages for the dissertation, and a second restricting to seven years the completion of the degree. An additional year would be granted to women for pregnancy. These proposals ran into some opposition at the Faculty meeting: what if a student presented a masterpiece of 1,000 pages? It was decided to let that embarrassment be taken care of when it arose. With subjects better circumscribed, seven years proved workable, and the dissertation regained part of its original purpose, which was not to write a definitive work, but to show competence in research and writing. Students tend to be excellent researchers, full of good ideas, and they also tend to turn sponsors into unpaid copy-editors.

Since the time of that reform, the coercive "Publish or Perish" has made the journal article the unit of scholarship and thus has helped to keep the length of the dissertation down—without improving the contents. The impression is abroad that the supply of desirable subjects has been exhausted, so that repetition is unavoidable. It may be so. What the reader finds in many an article is one or two fresh points, led up to and concluded by wrappings of well-known information.

Already a quarter century ago, the procedures for appointment and promotion felt the strain of this drift in scholarship. The committees were impatient with the "supporting material" that was submitted and they were tempted to weigh the bulk of it rather than to look inside. They also fretted at the requirement to attend dissertation examinations as observers. As dean of faculties it was my duty to persuade the reluctant that until the rules were changed they should be followed.

These complaints, this attitude, suggested not so much indifference or laziness as too many obligations. Many departments, and history notably, included members who belonged also to one or another of the institutes and centers for regional studies that had been set up at the behest of foundations. This double citizenship

doubled the responsibilities—reports, students, meetings, paperwork, essays and dissertations to read—and quite naturally spurred the urge to whittle them down. It was not the flight from teaching, but it was akin to it by stemming from the same cause—the worldly demands on academics at the expense of teaching and of freely chosen scholarship.

At Columbia more than elsewhere, circumstances helped to augment this centrifugal force. Being in the city and exposed to contacts with every person and agency pursuing worldly interests, the academic expert found it difficult to resist offers that seemed compatible with his work at the University, especially if they wore the guise of public service. The Second World War made yielding virtually a duty. Well before that, it was "the community" that gave license to neglect students and teaching, which in the end set off the 1968 student uprisings. A faculty in a small town or on a hillside was protected from temptations by its being itself the community and isolated from the traffic of world organizations and potentates.

What is more, at Columbia an old tradition favored "outreach." The School of Political Science, founded by John W. Burgess in 1880, was intended by him to perform a public service. Aged seventeen and fighting on the Union side in the Civil War, he reflected one night that minds better trained than the politicians on either side of the struggle would have known how to avert it. A school should be established to provide that training. This idea possessed his mind and made him a scholar and an educational promoter. His study of German and French higher education supplied elements for his plan of a school specializing in history and the social sciences. The time was ripe. Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, each with a special bent, established graduate schools simultaneously, this top layer of instruction turning colleges into universities.

Of course, Burgess expected that it would be the graduates, not the teachers of his school, who would lead the world into better paths. But if learning is to guide the reckless world, the mature scholar is surely better qualified than the fresh graduate. The logic is inescapable and as we saw, some members of the Columbia history department gave in to it at least from the First World War onward. But it is equally evident that with the single exception of Professor Shotwell, none of them became an academic prodigal son, roaming the world while keeping a fitful connection with his students and his chair. When Carlton Hayes was sent by President Roosevelt as ambassador to Spain at a critical moment of the Second World War, he and Mrs. Hayes occupied the dangerous post as a duty. The war over, Hayes resumed his

teaching for another half-dozen years. Fritz Stern showed the same native resistance to the lures of the big world, particularly that of tramping about in the corridors of power.

More than these examples could be cited, and I think that this integrity is somehow linked (as I shall suggest in a moment) to another of the departmental traditions, that of brilliant scholarly lecturing. I have mentioned Hayes and Moon; I should add John Krout, whose course in American history was virtuoso public speaking. So was Dwight Miner's in the College. Henry Graff '49GSAS on American diplomacy was another renowned performer, and Fritz Stern, Charles Cole, Walter Langam, Dixon Fox, Harry Carman, were all accomplished lecturers, giving without notes an organized presentation of a topic in fifty minutes and covering—not truncating by lack of just proportions—the subject of the course.

Before closing, one lecture, unscheduled and unrepeated, must be mentioned for the record. During General Eisenhower's presidency of the University he was brought, on the spur of the moment, to the department's annual dinner. Robert Schuyler had assured him that no speech was expected, only conviviality with the group. In the middle of general conversation the question came up of Winston Churchill's war proposal to attack "the soft underbelly of Europe." The phrase sparked something like anger in Eisenhower, who proceeded to give with not a single hesitation a superb lecture on the military campaigns in the Balkans from the Peloponnesian War down to the present. It was a stunning performance, and from a man reputed to be without learning or readiness of speech. No one who heard him ever forgot it.

Why, among academics, speaking well should go with fidelity to teaching and a sense of responsibility to students may perhaps be referred to a simple habit expected of the profession: preparation. At any rate, the Columbia history department has been steadfast when elsewhere, and in other fields, the call for public service has been damaging to the institution and still more to the students. A partial list of recent or current members of the Columbia group is enough to support the generality.

Robert Paxton, Eric Foner '63C '69GSAS, Alan Brinkley, Kenneth Jackson, William Harris, Eugene Rice, Elias Bickerman, John Mundy 40C '41 '50GSAS, Morton Smith, Ainslie Embree '47 '60GSAS, John Garraty '48GSAS, Eric McKitrick '49 '60GSAS, Walter Metzger '46GSAS, Graham Irwin, and Caroline Bynum stand high in the profession and have been faithful teachers. Not a few are also well known to the

public that reads about the perspective of history on current events. Kenneth Jackson's acclaimed *Encyclopedia of New York City* is but one more sign that the principles of the "new history" are still at work.

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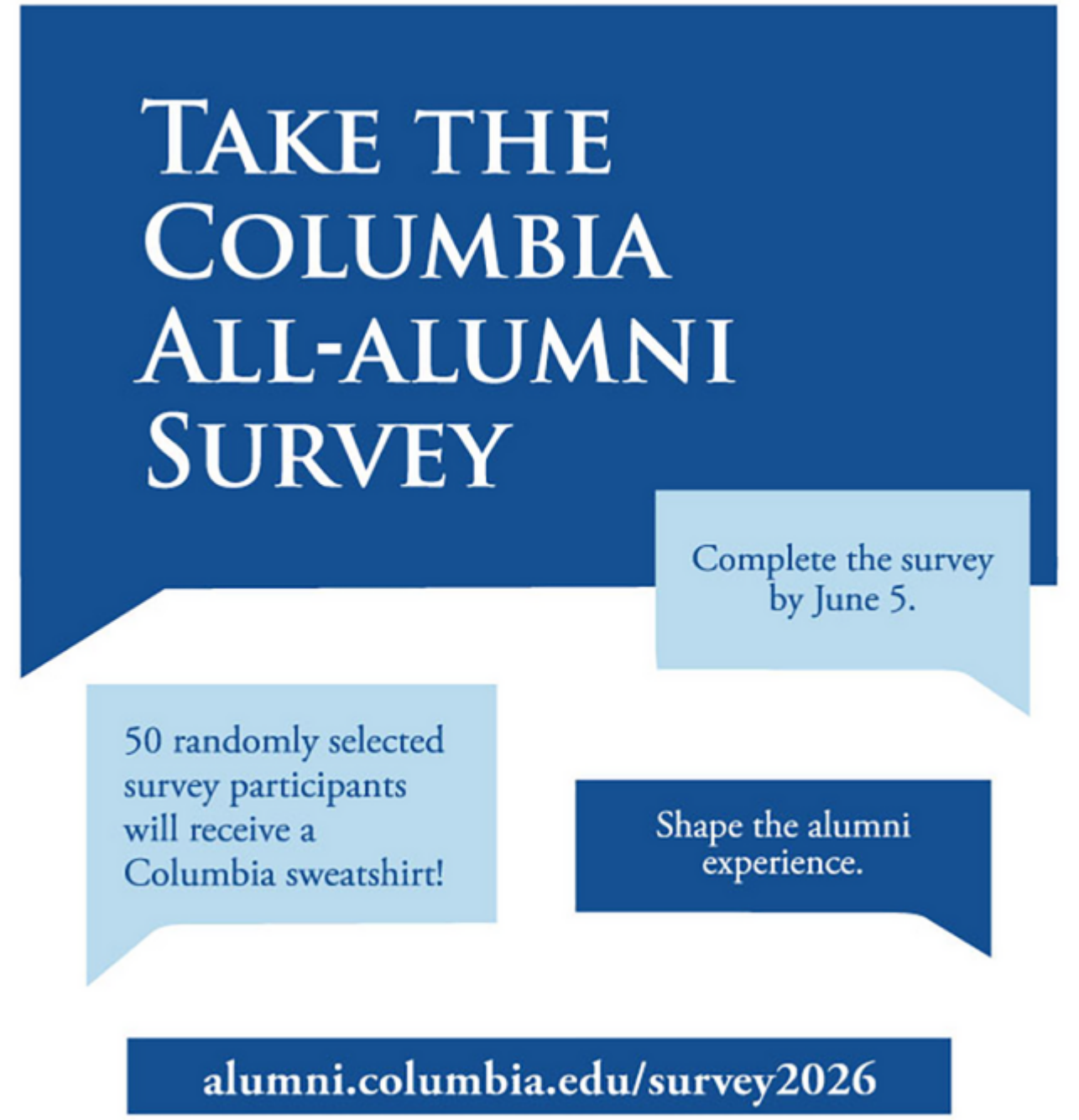
Guide to school abbreviations



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