

Indiana's First Library Educator

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Melvil Dewey, who established America's first library school at Columbia University in January, 1887, is well known as the nation's first library educator. Before library schools came into being, people who wished to become librarians could acquire knowledge of the profession in several ways, including learning by doing, imitating other librarians, and serving as apprentices.¹ The rapid growth of public libraries during the last quarter of the nineteenth century rendered these methods impractical because they could not keep up with the growing demand for librarians. As a result, other forms of training emerged, including library institutes lasting several days to a week, training classes at public libraries, summer library schools, and year-long library schools. By 1910, eleven one-year library schools had been established in the United States; only one, the Indiana Library School, did not survive to the present day.²

Indiana Librarians expressed an interest in library education as early as 1896, when the Indiana Library Association, in lieu of its annual meeting, held a three-day library institute.³

Although librarians praised the institute and recommended that it become an annual event, it did not, and the only other library training effort in the state was a course taught by visiting lecturers at the Winona Assembly and Summer School.⁴

At the turn of the century, a Fort Wayne woman, Merica Evans Hoagland, emerged as Indiana's first library educator. She was born in 1858. Her father, Pliny Hoagland (1810-1884), a Fort Wayne businessman, was widowed when Merica was three. She attended the Fort Wayne public schools and the Vassar College preparatory class of 1875-76. While still young she became involved with club work, organizing the Qui Vive Club in Fort Wayne in 1878, and by the 1890s she was a prominent Fort Wayne club woman. Her club and community activities often focused on library related matters. In 1893, for example, she served on the Woman's Club League committee for the selection of books for the public library and the following year she worked to establish the Fort Wayne YWCA and held the position of secretary of the Fort Wayne Public Library Commit-

tee. By 1895, she was contributing club and library items to a weekly column in the *Fort Wayne Morning Journal*, and in 1896 she began a weekly publication, *Public Occurrent*, dedicated to club and library work.⁵ That same year she attended her first American Library Association meeting, and in 1897 Hoagland became state president of the Indiana Union of Literary Clubs.

Miss Hoagland's interest in library work grew, and at the age of 40 she attended the New York State Library Summer School at Albany. (Melvil Dewey had moved his school from Columbia University to Albany in 1889.) Following completion of the course, she gained practical experience by organizing libraries in Ironwood, Michigan (1899); Sioux Falls, South Dakota (1899); and Joliet, Illinois (1900/1901). Her speeches before state and regional library meetings on the subjects of library legislation and the role of club women in library development gained Hoagland recognition which led to an appointment, in 1901, as the state organizer for the Indiana Public Library Commission.⁶

In her role as organizer, Miss Hoagland increasingly saw need for library training in Indiana, a state that had only one library school-trained librarian by 1899.⁷ Initially she visited the librarians of Indiana's public libraries, giving informal training in the organization of collections, selection of building sites, choice of building plans, appointment of librarians, and administration. The need for more systematic instruction led Miss Hoagland to conduct a library institute in the fall of 1901; it was attended by thirteen students.⁷ This was followed by a month-long course in the spring of 1902, and in 1903 the Public Library Commission hired Miss Anna Redfield Phelps as an instructor for its newly established summer school for librarians. The summer school was

"designed to give *an outline*, something of the work given in the regular library school with a view to the needs of smaller libraries."⁸

Merica Hoagland did not rest content with a short course in library work. In 1900, before her appointment as state organizer, she had proposed that the Indiana Library Association appoint a committee "to draw suitable resolutions in favor of securing an endowment for a library school to be located in Winona, Indiana."⁹ The ILA was reluctant to act on her 1900 recommendation, and it remained so in 1904, when Hoagland presented plans for a one-year library school to be conducted as a department of the Winona Technical Institute in Indianapolis, a school originally intended to provide technical education to boys. The ILA's dubious endorsement noted that ". . . salaries paid librarians are not sufficient to permit them to attend library schools. This school enables high school graduates to take a course for fifty dollars a year."¹⁰ It is evident that the ILA regarded the proposed library school as inferior to other schools.

The Public Library Commissioners also had reservations about the library school. At a November 7, 1905 meeting, William W. Parsons, one of the commissioners and the president of the Indiana State Normal School in Terre Haute, suggested that the school should have been established at his institution. Miss Hoagland countered that Indianapolis was the best location in the state because of its centrality and that the State Normal School was established to train teachers, not librarians. Parsons remained unconvinced, and the commission decided that while it "might continue to act in [an] advisory capacity, it would not maintain any entangling alliance with the W.T.I."¹¹ Nevertheless, Miss Hoagland's position as secretary and state organizer for the Public Library

Commission undoubtedly lent credibility to the project.

Lack of official enthusiasm did not dampen Hoagland's interest in library education, and Indiana's first one-year library school opened on November 15, 1905, with eighteen women students and two instructors. The *Indianapolis News* reported that this school, operating as a department of the Winona Technical Institute, was created "to train young men and women that they may properly conduct public libraries in Indiana and other States of the middle west."¹² The Winona Library School's statement of purpose, printed in its 1906 annual, declared that it "stands first, for the training of young men and women in character, in knowledge and selection of books and in technical processes of caring for them; and second, as offering to high school and college graduates, opportunity to fit themselves for wage earning positions which cannot but afford satisfaction and educational uplift."¹³ Although the school's primary purpose was to train librarians to work in small libraries throughout Indiana and neighboring states, the *Indianapolis Star* noted that some women students "were entering the school that they may get the general benefits which come from close knowledge of books."¹⁴

Tragedy struck the Winona Library School on April 11, 1906, when fire destroyed the library school rooms and the institute's library.¹⁵ Only twelve days later, however, the school resumed activity on the third floor of the Graphics Arts Building. Although the school survived this physical disaster easily, it had more difficulty withstanding the Winona Technical Institute's financial distress. Early in 1908, the institute's director, Dr. Solomon C. Dickey, proposed closing the library school. By making personal sacrifices, including relinquishing her salary, Miss Hoagland succeed-

ed in graduating the Winona Library School's last class that spring.

Although she was without financial support and no longer had official ties to the Public Library Commission (she had resigned her post as organizer in 1906), Hoagland did not let the school die.¹⁶ In February 1908, she secured the support of women library enthusiasts who, "chilled by exposure to the drizzling rain, with bedraggled skirts and ruffled dispositions," forced their way into the Indianapolis Propylaeum to hold a meeting to discuss steps that could be taken to obtain financial backing for a permanent library school in Indianapolis.¹⁷ In addition to petitioning philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie for support, Miss Hoagland, in 1908, began a personal canvas for funds, incorporated the school under the name of Indiana Library School, and established an executive board consisting of prominent Hoosiers including author Meredith Nicholson, historian Jacob P. Dunn, and Butler College president Thomas C. Howe. Hoagland's goal was to secure private support for the school until legislation was passed giving it state funding.

Senate Bill 275, introduced in 1909, included a provision for a state library school, but it, as well as a similar library bill introduced in 1911, met strong opposition. Public Library Commission secretary Carl Milam (who in 1920 became the Secretary of the American Library Association), addressing the General Assembly in 1911, cited the small number of library positions available each year, low salaries, and the presence of "at least nine other library schools of recognized standing" as the main reasons why the "necessity for a school quite disappears."¹⁸ In February, 1912, Miss Hoagland began to agitate for a bill to be introduced in the 1913 General Assembly, but by this time the Indiana Library Association's Leg-



*The Public Library Commission's Summer School for Librarians at Winona Lake in 1907.
Reprinted courtesy of the Indiana State Archives.*



*The first library training class on a picnic at Riley's Old Swimming Hole at Greenfield in 1901.
Merica Hoagland is second from left. Reprinted courtesy of the Indiana State Archives.*

islative Committee had taken an official stand against a library school in Indiana, their principal opposition being "the present inadequate system of payment for public librarians in the state." The Committee "declared that the average salary of librarians is so low that they could not afford to pay tuition and expenses for even a one-year course in a library school."¹⁹ Ironically, ILA's 1912 opposition to the library school was based on the same reasons used to issue their tentative endorsement in 1904. This opposition sealed the fate of the Indiana Library School, which by 1912 was conducting classes in Hoagland's Indianapolis home. The Indiana Library School died a quiet death in 1913, when Hoagland finally withdrew her energy, time, and financial backing. But as late as 1926 she remained optimistic, writing that she expected it "to be continued sometime."²⁰

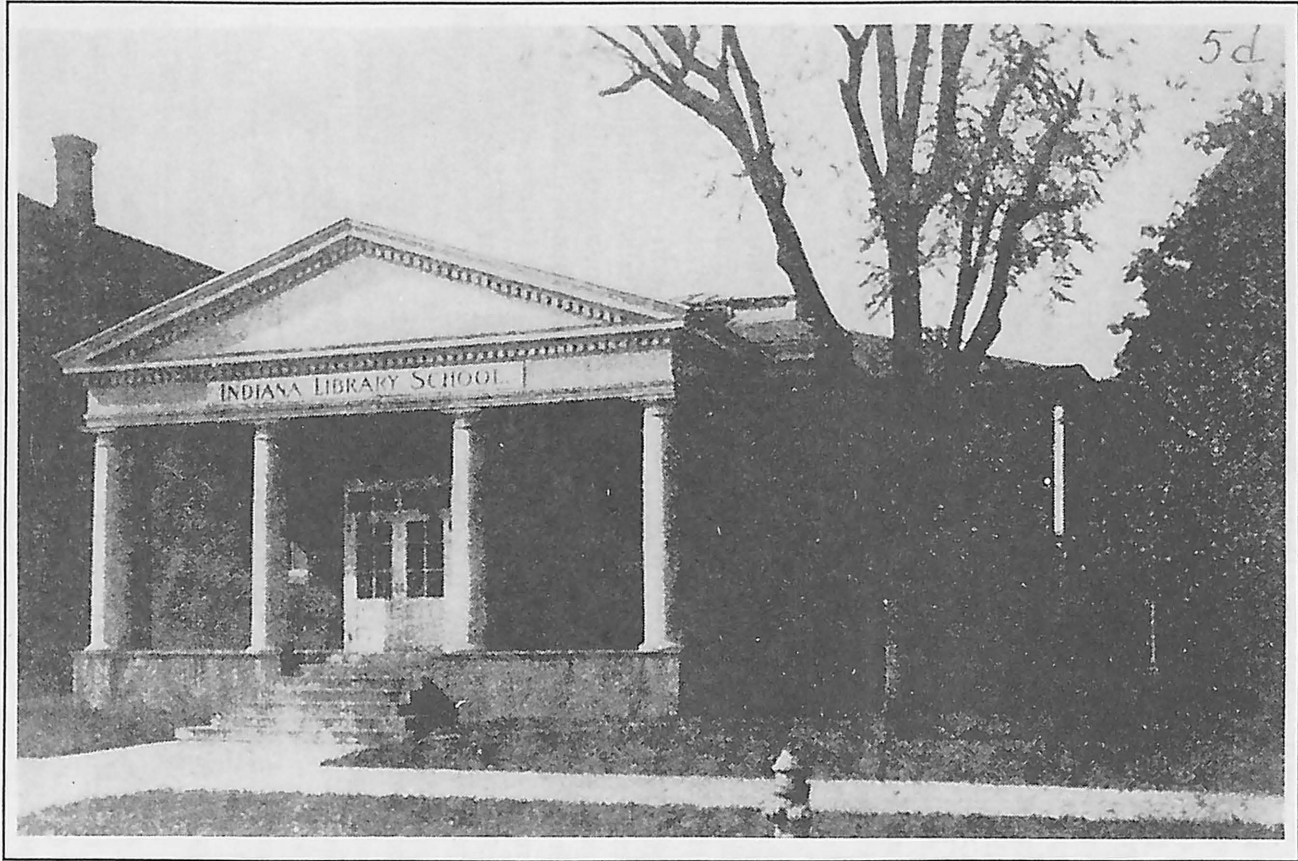
In the eight years of its existence, Miss Hoagland's school offered, as did other schools of this era, a curriculum focusing primarily on technical aspects of librarianship. Instruction was in the form of lectures, discussion, study, and practice work in libraries. The school's bulletins list courses in book selection, accession work, library handwriting, administration, classification and cataloging, reference work, typewriting, and bookbinding. Students also received instruction in English and American literature, foreign languages, general history, and the Bible.

Miss Hoagland directed the school throughout its existence, working with one or two full-time and numerous part-time instructors each year. Although she had not graduated from a one-year library school, Merica Hoagland was careful to select instructors from schools such as the New York State Library School, the School of Library Training at Pratt Institute,

and the University of Illinois Library School. Guest lecturers included such people as Clement Andrews, president of the American Library Association in 1906-07; Mary Wright Plummer, Director of the School of Library Training at Pratt; librarians from neighboring states; officers of the Bobbs-Merrill Publishing Company; newspaper editors; professors from Indiana's colleges and universities; and Indiana's state library officials.

An Indiana Library School bulletin published in 1910 listed fifty-two graduates of the school in the first five years of its existence. It is possible that some students were not accounted for and others began but did not complete the program. The Winona Library School's 1906 annual conveys some of the students' enthusiasm for their venture: "We were a class of friends from the first, all firmly caught. The library spirit was everywhere, and in comparison with it Southern hospitality is nothing!"²¹ Roxana Johnson, one of the Indiana Library School instructors, corresponded with the faculty at the University of Illinois Library School and observed in 1909, "I have enjoyed my work immensely and feel rather satisfied with the work students have done for me. We have no brilliant ones—but they are all doing their best."²²

Many graduates of Miss Hoagland's school held positions in Indiana libraries, including Ethel Cleveland, founder of the business branch of the Indianapolis Public Library; Florence Jones, who headed the reference department at the Indianapolis Public Library; Margaret Wade, who became librarian of the Anderson Carnegie Public Library; and Susan Weimer, who was the children's librarian at the Muncie Public Library. A few gained recognition outside of Indiana. Mabel Hunt, children's author, was the Newbery Award runner-up in 1951 with



*The Indiana Library School at 642 North Meridian Street, Indianapolis.
Reprinted courtesy of the Indiana Division, Indiana State Library.*

Johnny Appleseed, and Rene Reese went on to direct training classes at the Denver Public Library.

Although Miss Hoagland's school died in 1913, her dream of an Indiana library school survived. In 1922, the Indiana Library Association's Committee on Education for Librarianship recommended that an "Indiana Library School" be established in Indianapolis under the direction of the Public Library Commission or the State Board of Library Commissioners.²³ This recommendation, like Hoagland's school, failed to generate enough support and Indiana was without a library school until 1949. The efforts of Indiana's first library educator, however, had not been in vain. Hundreds of Indiana librarians benefited from her educational legacy, which included personal visits to librarians, library institutes, the summer library school, the year-long library school, and the "library spirit." Hoagland did not live to see her dream of a library school come to fruition. She died in 1933 after spending the last years of her life employed by the Diamond Chain and Manufacturing Company, Indianapolis, as Director of Girl Employees, Director of Welfare, and Director of Mutual Service.

NOTES

¹ Mary Wright Plummer, "Training for Librarianship," *Library Journal* 26 (June 1901), 317.

² The eleven schools were: Drexel, Pratt, and Winona, located at technical institutes; University of Illinois, Simmons College, Syracuse University, and Western Reserve University, in academic settings; the New York State Library School and the Wisconsin Library School, supported by state monies; and the Carnegie Library

School of Atlanta and the Carnegie Library School at Pittsburgh, operated at public libraries.

³ *Public Libraries* 2 (February 1897), 56.

⁴ *Winona Assembly Daily Review* 2 (May 1900), 50.

⁵ The only known issue of *Public Occurrent*, dated June 17, 1896, Indiana Division of the State Library.

⁶ Minutes of the Public Library Commission, March 26, 1901, Archives Division, Indiana Commission on Public Records, Indianapolis.

⁷ *Report of the Public Library Commission of Indiana from November 1, 1901, to October 31, 1904*, (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, 1905), 18.

⁸ Minutes of the Public Library Commission, November 7, 1901, February 1, 1902, June 9, 1902, and May 9, 1903.

⁹ Indiana Library Association minutes, Oct. 26-27, 1900, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

¹⁰ Indiana Library Association minutes, December 27-28, 1904.

¹¹ Minutes of the Public Library Commission, November 7, 1905.

¹² "Librarians Trained for Small Libraries," *Indianapolis News*, November 15, 1905, p. 18.

¹³ *Winona Library School Annual*, (Indianapolis: Winona Technical Institute, 1906), 11.

¹⁴ "Will Instruct in Newspaper Duties," *Indianapolis Star*, October 29, 1905, p. 3.

¹⁵ "Winona Institute Fire Loss Heavy," *Indianapolis Star*, April 12, 1906, p. 20.

¹⁶ "Miss Hoagland Resigns," *Indianapolis News*, March 6, 1906,

17 "Women Force Door," *Indianapolis Star*, February 26, 1908, p.14.

18 "Library Bills Opposed," *Indianapolis Star*, February 11, 1911, p. 7.

19 "Opposes State Aid for Indiana Library School," *Indianapolis Star*, June 8, 1912, p. 15.

20 Mercia Hoagland Papers, Manuscripts Department, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

21 *Winona Library School Annual*, p. 25.

22 Roxana G. Johnson to Frances Simpson, 22 February 1909, Library School Alumni File, University of Illinois Archives, Urbana.

23 "I.L.A. Meeting, October 28, 1921," *Library Occurrent* 6 (January 1922), 193.