

Chapter 20: Libraries and Library School

I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.

Jorge Luis Borges, "Poem About Gifts,"
from *Dreamtigers* (1960)

A. Libraries

I hung out in libraries from early days – I think especially of my childhood library, the 96th Street branch of the New York Public Library. Then there was the Donnell Library, also a branch of NYPL, which I frequented as a teenager when I used the Museum of Modern Art, just across 53rd Street, as a club.¹ I spent many pleasant days in the reading rooms of the main library on 42nd Street (right), sending for books and browsing the delicious reference works which lined the walls of these two huge rooms. And there was the New York Society Library on 79th Street, a private subscription library where I was a member.



Of course starting in 1963 the magnificent Columbia libraries were my home turf. I still visit them on almost every trip to New York (I have an alumni pass). In California I did a lot of heraldic research at the university library at Berkeley, where I also got a stack pass, and sometimes at Stanford also. There is no substitute for stack access, and when I lived in Washington I did the same thing at the Library of Congress (this was before stack access was discontinued for the public there). Even in Taiwan in 1975-6 I managed a stack pass at Tung Hai University. In Cape Cod I used the Wellfleet Pubic Library and occasionally the Provincetown one, but they were pretty poor by the standards I was used to.

When I arrived at Penn the law library was being refurbished, but when it opened it was very grand, and with a great collection. I prowled around late at night, having wangled the same after-hours access the members of the law review had. In California I used the

¹ I later learned, in library school, that NYPL is pronounced *nipple* in the trade.

wonderful old City Hall law library, since relocated, a space out of Dickens with books stacked up to the high Beaux-Arts ceilings. Later I stopped going to the law library and did 99% of my research by computer, on the incomparable Westlaw database. But when I needed something special, I went to the library at Hastings College of the Law on Hyde and McAllister, which my bar card got me into, or the University of San Francisco at Fulton and McAllister, not as big but more convenient.

For many years I have been a member of the Mechanics Institute, an old-style subscription library at 57 Post Street (right), and still use it. But my favorite library now is the one at San Francisco State University, which has open stacks and where I have borrowing privileges as a Friend of the J. Paul Leonard Library.²



The J. Paul Leonard Library is certainly a good friend to me, and has pretty much whatever I need. Some of my happiest days are when I go there with a shopping bag, and after browsing for a while take out a dozen books at a time – usually I read about half of them but scrupulously return them all. Both these libraries have on-line catalogues and on-line renewals, luxuries undreamt-of when I was coming up, in the day of tattered hand-written catalogue cards. I also sometimes use the Jewish Community Library, at Steiner and Ellis, which has a good selection of Jewish history and Jewish authors, and a pleasant reading room.

- The “new” (1996) San Francisco Public Library Main Branch is an abomination, a monument to the vanity of architects. I almost never go there – it is one of the most confusing and frustrating buildings I’ve ever seen. Most of its space is devoted to a useless atrium, to the point where even before it opened the staff was secretly throwing out boxes of books under cover of night because there was no room *even for the existing collection* in the shiny new \$100 million building. Don’t get me started. The old Main Library a block away, where the new Asian Art Museum is now, was crowded and antiquated, but at least it functioned like a

² Had open stacks, I should say. As I write this the Leonard Library is closed for three years, for renovation, and when it reopens only part of the stacks will be open. This means, as usual in such cases, that the obvious books will still be available by browsing, but the unusual items, which you really need to browse among in order to choose intelligently, will now have to be requisitioned, sight unseen, from a computer entry, waited for, and selected (or not) without benefit of comparison.

real library. The branches at SFPL will happily get anything I want free on inter-library loan, though, a service Mechanics charges for.

Some people don't like libraries because they have to return the books. It's OK with me that I have to return them – it allows the libraries to hold huge resources, and it allows me to sample whatever I like without spending anything beyond my annual subscription, which I'm glad to pay as it is in a good cause. When I borrow a book and see from the charging record that it was last taken out in 1948, I think how wonderful it is that the book has been sitting on the shelf for more than 60 years, just waiting for me.

The formation of my own private library is discussed in Chapters 5 and 29.B. My pleasure in running my institutional libraries, in the law firms where I worked, is discussed in Chapter 24.

I would rather be in a good library than almost anywhere else.

B. Library School

At the end of Chapter 16 I describe how I decided to go to library school. There were two main reasons for my choice. First, since I had to work for a living, I wanted as easy a job as possible. Being a librarian seemed like it would be pretty easy. My visits to lightly frequented specialized libraries such as the Education Library at the School Board where I worked as a typist encouraged my view that being a librarian would be relatively stress-free compared to the high stress of being a criminal trial lawyer, an occupation I had bailed out of after two months, before being tested even once (see Chapter 15.A). I remembered also the library scene in *Citizen Kane*. How demanding could it be? I wanted a sinecure, and this seemed the best approach. Also I wanted a sinecure with enough status that I would not be subject to petty harassment as happened at the School Board, where a pleasant work environment was suddenly made unpleasant by an arbitrary management decision. See Chapter 16. In practice I did find library work to be the (relatively) protected sinecure I was looking for.

The second reason for deciding on library school, as discussed in Chapter 4, was that I had been a book person from childhood. Even today, almost 28 years after my last day as a professional librarian (in 1982), there is no place I find more congenial than a library. I love being surrounded by books and I love particularly the feeling that the answer to any question can be found on site if you know where to look. So what could have been more natural than to become a librarian? I found later as a reference librarian that helping people find the information they want is extremely satisfying. This same impulse (to be

able to find the answer to any question) lies behind my collecting atlases and other reference books.³

Typically (see Chapter 10), I decided to be a librarian without giving a thought to the fact (if I even knew it to be a fact) that librarians are the very worst paid of all the learned professions. If I had considered that point I doubt if it would have made any difference. In 1973, at 29, I had still not focused on money as an important objective, beyond having enough to get by. And I needed very little, having done OK on unemployment compensation and on my wages as a typist. What would I have done if I had focused on money (or had a family to support)? I can't be sure. If I'd wanted to earn serious money I was already a lawyer, and could in theory have done well for myself, but I wasn't interested and was temperamentally unsuited for it anyway. No other occupational choice that provided adequate money would have met my main requirement: that it be a sinecure. Becoming an art historian or museum curator (as I now half wish I had done, and which was still within reach in those days – I could have studied for *that* degree rather than a library degree) would have been a lot of fun, but would have paid *next* to the bottom of the learned professions.⁴

Anyway I settled on library school. I took the Graduate Record Examination and did spectacularly well. I applied to the University of California at Berkeley, and they accepted me, but not for the academic year about to begin (1973-74) as their class was full, but for the year after that. I didn't want to wait, so I applied to Columbia's School of Library Service, hoping that as I had done my undergraduate work there they would squeeze me in, and they did.

I wrote to my mother asking if I could stay at 112 East 70th Street while at school, which would have been very comfortable with free rent and air conditioning and free food served by Mary. She surprised me twice by her reply, in which she said (1) no to living at 112, but (2) that my father, who had just died that March, would have wanted to help me get another degree, so she would help pay the cost. It was good that she nixed my living at 112. My attitude toward my mother was not fond, and living in her house would

³ Also, as related toward the end of Chapter 3A.5, even as a child I enjoyed what I now think of as "proto-librarian" work – organizing my parent's back runs of antiques magazines and museum bulletins and collections of old sheet music, repairing damaged copies and noting missing issues.

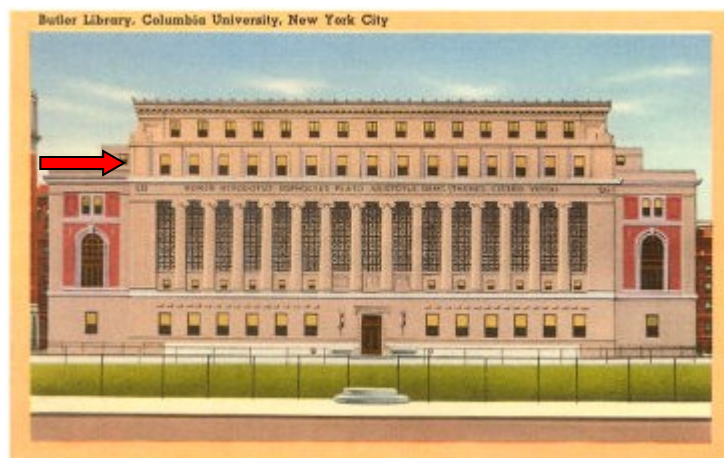
⁴ Also art history professors and museum curators have to go where the jobs are, which can be in the sticks. I know a man who succeeded in becoming a professor of art history, just as I imagine I could have done, but he has to live in Gainesville, Florida. I think I'd rather be a part-time lawyer in San Francisco than an art history professor in Gainesville. Better a crust in tranquility than a banquet in tribulation, as Aesop or somebody said.

have been strained and unpleasant for both of us, as well as exploitative, although cheap and comfortable in some ways.

The degree, not expensive by modern standards (I remember \$4500 – was that per semester or in total?) was financed by a three-way split. My mother paid a third, Columbia paid a third in scholarship aid which included a work-study job, and I paid a third through a student loan (I had no loans from college or law school).⁵ I needed 36 points to graduate, but they gave me 6 points of advanced standing for my law degree, so that eliminated the need for summer school. I could do the degree in two semesters (Fall 1973 and Spring 1974) of 15 points each – a full but not excessive load. And that is what happened.

Sometime in the summer of 1973 I got into my car and drove east. See Document 30-4 for an account of the trip. When I arrived in New York I drove to Mary Lindsay's house in Mount Vernon, a near suburb of New York, to park my car on her property. A car is not needed in New York and it can be a dreadful encumbrance due to the city's deliberately maddening parking restrictions. I did come to the 70th Street house for a few days on arrival, but through the school's referral service soon found a studio on the roof of 535 West 110th Street (also called Cathedral Parkway), a few doors east of the convenient corner of 110th Street and Broadway. It was a nice building, fallen a bit on hard times in those days as many West Side apartment houses had, but there was still a doorman and a marble lobby with elevators on two sides. My "penthouse," as they called it, was up a floor from where the elevator stopped. It was a secluded little rectangular box, with access to the roof and a view, from the roof, across the Hudson River. It was small but had good light, and a vestigial kitchen good enough for me. I stayed there until I left for Washington after graduation.

The Columbia University School of Library Service was one of the oldest and most prestigious library schools in the country, a rival of Chicago for this particular narrow preëminence. When I got there in 1973 it occupied the rim of the fifth floor of Butler Library on the main campus (see the red arrow at right), surrounding the



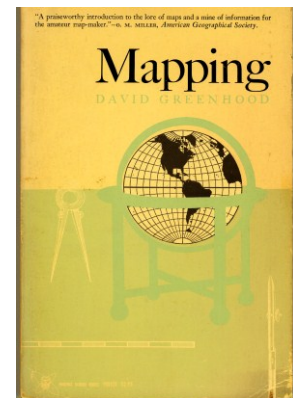
⁵ My work-study job was to go on Saturday to answer the phone in a university office that was only open Monday through Friday. Talk about a sinecure! I used the time to do my homework.

main stacks. As well as classrooms and administration, we had our own library where technical materials and professional journals and reserve items were held, and a reading room and reference collection just for us. We had a separate entrance to the main stacks, also just for us – the only way into or out of the stacks other than through the main portal on the second floor. Very convenient.

We used to complain that there was no subject matter for the library degree. That this is not quite so is shown by the courses I took. As with similar course reviews in Chapters 11 and 14, I include this mainly for future scholars. Contemporary readers: skip it if you like.

Fall Term 1973

- **Library & Information Services** (double course – 6 points). Required of everyone and very dull.
- **History of Books and Printing.** A survey course from Phoenician potsherds to photo-offset (in those pre-computer days the latest thing after letterpress). Very interesting – I learned about the transition from scroll to codex, and incunabula and historiated initials and Aldine editions and fore-edge painting and much else – great fun for a book person like me.
- **Map Resources and Librarianship** with Professor Drezhnerowski (sp?), librarian at the American Geographical Society at Audubon Terrace (a weekly class was held there). This should have been fascinating, but wasn't – he was a great scholar, no doubt, but not such a good teacher, and he had a heavy Russian accent. However, I did learn a lot from the course and, from David Greenwood's *Mapping* (1964), about maps and their composition and limitations and projections and distortions, interesting as I had been a map maven almost as long as I had been a book maven.
- **Descriptive Bibliography.** A very dry course using Gaskell's *New Introduction to Bibliography* (1972) – collation and the technicalities of books up through the 18th century, a requirement for students in the rare book program. I joined that program dreaming of my sinecure – what could be more insulated than special collections? Some of it was pretty interesting – see type illustration below. But I had little interest in the antiquarian aspect of books and still am not turned on by mere antiquity – almost all of those expensive old books are pretty boring in terms of content, and it is the content of books I am interested in.



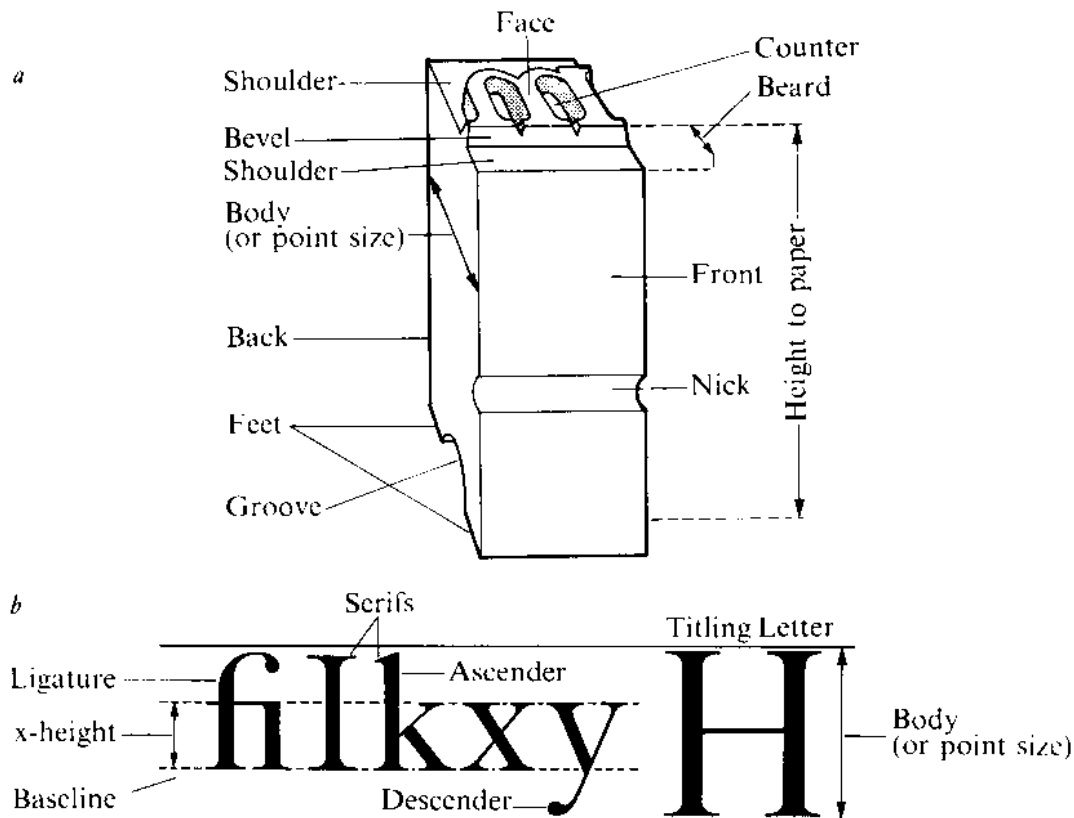
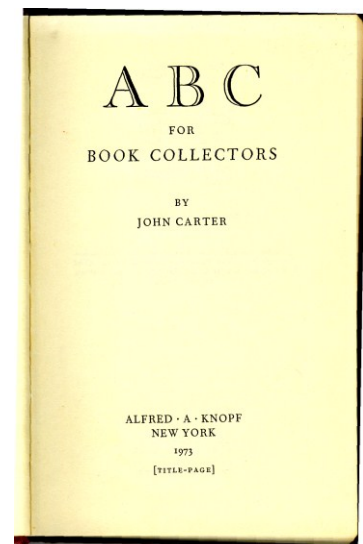


FIG. 1 (a). A piece of type and the names of its parts. The chief purpose of the nick, which could take various forms and could even (in France) be placed on the back of the letter, was to indicate the orientation of the face; it also helped to identify the fount to which a piece of type belonged (based on B.S. 2961: 1958).

1 (b). The names of the parts of impressions from type (based on B.S. 2961: 1958).

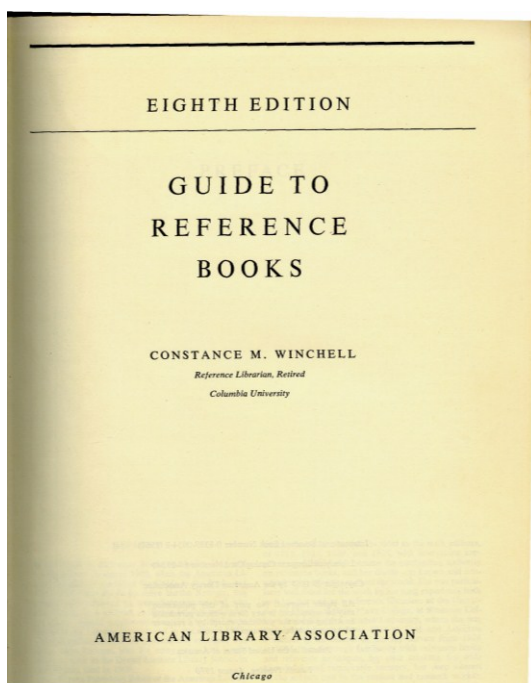
Spring Term 1974

- **British Empire & Commonwealth.** A history survey course at Barnard College. I found I was allowed some courses outside my field and could cross-register there. This was a subject I had studied on my own for many years, from my childhood British Empire stamp collection to my days in college reading British colonial history rather than German lessons, and up to today. Very satisfying.
- **Fundamentals of Subject Bibliography.** I remember nothing about this course, in which I got an A-, except the professor was Terry Belanger, who was a charismatic figure (for a library school professor), and we all went one



night to see his girlfriend or someone perform a one-woman show far off Broadway about the 19th century British actress and author Fanny Kemble. Still we were attracted to him, and divided our SLS [School of Library Service] class into Belanger people and non-Belanger people. I cannot now remember why.

I think it was Belanger's course that required mastery of the definitions in John Carter's wonderful *ABC for Book Collectors* (5th edition revised, 1973) (above). This is a fabulous resource and very entertainingly written. The "Carter quizzes" in this class were the ones I always aced because I did the reading stoned on marijuana – see Chapter 17.E



- **Information – Reference Services.**

This was training to answer reference questions, using the print resources available in the Columbia Reference Room, which was of course a lot more than just a room. We were given short assignments to research in the Reference Room (I remember one on Who Was King Arthur?) and resources on all sorts of topics were explained to us through Constance M. Winchell's *Guide to Reference Books*. Granger's *Index to Poetry*, for example, and the *Social Science Abstracts*, and the *National Union Catalogue* and *Ayer's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals*, and hundreds more. This was all very interesting and useful for a

reference maven, as I still am, although this print-first method of reference work has been almost entirely superseded by the Internet. It would be pointless today to start running down a poem through Granger's *Index to Poetry* rather than Google, although Granger could still be useful in a pinch.

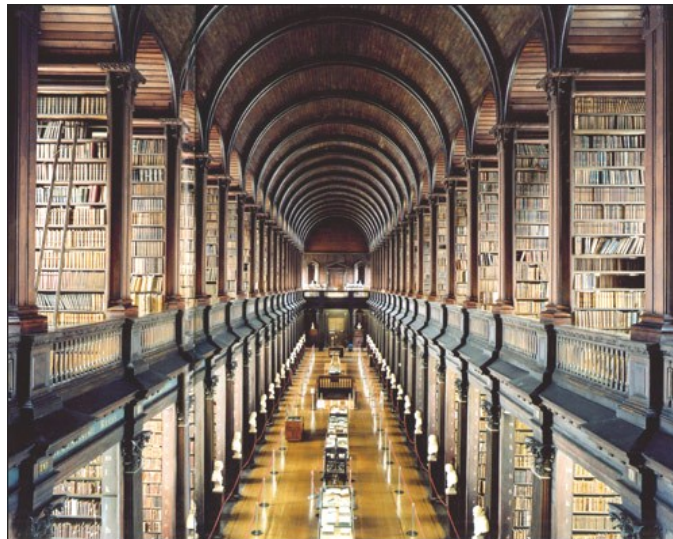
- **Law Librarianship.** Prof. Morris Cohen, Biddle Law Librarian at Penn Law School, came up once or twice a week and taught a course out of his *Legal Research in a Nutshell*. I already knew most of what he was teaching and didn't learn much that was of any use when I became a law librarian on my own. I should have skipped this one.
- **Seminar in Rare Books.** With the Head of University Special Collections, whose name I now forget, up in his eyrie on the sixth floor. Move softly. Interesting in its

way, but as noted the truth is I wasn't all that interested in rare books. I didn't end up meeting the requirements for the Rare Books Certification.

I forget now for which course this was required (probably History of Books and Printing), but I did actually bind a book from scratch in the university's bindery downstairs in Butler Library. I took my old copy of Joyce's *Ulysses*, which was falling apart, and rebound it myself in Irish linen. I didn't really master the process but learned to understand it, which was the point, and the book did get rebound (with a lot of help from the binders).

All went smoothly and I graduated at the end of the Spring Term 1974. I was created a Master of Science (not Master of *Library* Science or even of *Library Service*). My diploma is attached as Document 20-1, and my transcript as Document 20-2. Document 20-3 proves, in case anyone asks, that I did finally pay off my student loan.

Soon after graduation I moved to Washington to look for a job as a librarian (see Chapter 21). To my amazement, a few years later Columbia dissolved the School of Library Service. They said they needed the room in Butler Library, but I think there had to be more to it than that. Anyway it vanished, the third school (after Emerson and Walden) to be shot out from under my alumnicity.



Tailpiece: Old Library,
Trinity College, Dublin

Document 20-1: Library School Diploma

THE TRUSTEES OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

TO ALL PERSONS TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS MAY COME GREETING
BE IT KNOWN THAT

DAVID F. PHILLIPS

HAVING COMPLETED THE STUDIES AND SATISFIED THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE

HAS ACCORDINGLY BEEN ADMITTED TO THAT DEGREE WITH ALL THE
RIGHTS PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES THEREUNTO APPERTAINING IN
WITNESS WHEREOF WE HAVE CAUSED OUR CORPORATE SEAL TO BE HERE
AFFIXED IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK ON THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF
MAY IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED
AND SEVENTY-FOUR



Richard L. Darling
DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF LIBRARY
SERVICE

John F. McLean
PRESIDENT



Too big for the scanner



Document 20-2: Library School Transcript

Columbia University in the City of New York		SCHOOL OF LIBRARY SERVICE		REQUIREMENTS SATISFIED	
Name: PHILLIPS DAVID FRANK Address at Entrance: 112 EAST 70 STREET NEW YORK N Y Date of Birth: 09 15 44 MO. DAY YR. Place of Birth: WILMINGTON, DELAWARE Basis of Admission: B.A. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY (COLUMBIA COLLEGE) 1968 Date of Admission: SEPTEMBER 1973		Total points credit: 36 including 6 points advanced standing			
STATUS: 1. from SEPT. 1973 to X M.S. 3. from 197 to Special 2. from 197 to D.L.S. 4. from 197 to Adv. Study Program					
DESCRIPTIVE TITLES	COURSES	POINTS	GRADES	GRADE CHGD. TO	
LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE HISTORY OF BOOKS AND PRINTING MAP RESOURCES & LIBRARIANSHIP DESCRIPTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY I	AUTUMN TERM 1973				
	LIBRY SERV K6002X	6.0	A-		
	LIBRY SERV K6071X	3.0	A-		
	LIBRY SERV K8207X	3.0	A		
BRITISH EMPIRE & COMMONWEALTH SUBJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY FUNDNTLS INFORMATION-REFERENCE SERVICES LAW LIBRARIANSHIP SEMINAR IN RARE BOOKS	LIBRY SERV K8361X	3.0	P		
	SPRING TERM 1974				
	HISTORY w4328Y	3.0	A-		
	LIBRY SERV K6020Y	3.0	A-		
	LIBRY SERV K6021Y	3.0	B		
	LIBRY SERV K8214Y	3.0	B+		
	LIBRY SERV K9071Y	3.0	B		
Degree requirements satisfied: M.S. <i>Richard A. Darling</i> DEAN D.L.S. DEAN Date of Award: May 15 1974 Memoranda: GRANTED SIX POINTS ADVANCED STANDING TOWARD M.S. FOR J.D. UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA LAW SCHOOL, MAY 1971.					
THE ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE STUDENT IS INDICATED BY THE RECORD ABOVE. UNLESS THERE IS A STATEMENT TO THE CONTRARY, HIS STATUS WITH RESPECT TO ALL OTHER OBLIGATIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY IS SATISFACTORY.					
FOR PURPOSES OF CERTIFICATION, REPRODUCED COPY OF ORIGINAL RECORD SHALL NOT BE VALID WITHOUT IMPRESSION SEAL AND ACTUAL SIGNATURE.					
FORM L.S. 7 JUNE 17-1-300					
Under the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, this transcript cannot be released to a third party without the consent of the student.					
FEB 18 1976					
ROBERT W. ZULEG ASSOCIATE REGISTRAR RECORDS DIVISION OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT - UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES TO BE GIVEN TO STUDENT					

Document 20-3: Discharge of Student Loan



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

REGION IV
101 MARIETTA TOWER BUILDING SUITE 310
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30323

May 19, 1997

CREDIT MANAGEMENT & DEBT COLLECTION

Dand F. Phillips

Box 88

Turo, Ma 02666

RE:

F 132,34.6725

CLAIM

0031637079

Congratulations for paying in full your student loan(s).

Attached is your promissory note(s) marked "PAID IN FULL", signed by the duly authorized official of this office.

It is suggested that you keep this for your records.

Sincerely,

Gloria Collins
Asst. Supervisory Management
U.S. Department of Education

Enclosure(s)