

The Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. Commentary on Shera, J. (1969). Twelve apostles and a few heretics.

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John V. Richardson Jr.

*Professor Emeritus of Information Studies University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA),
Email: jrichard@ucla.edu*

There is a certain symmetry in being asked to write a commentary on Jesse Shera's summer 1969 JEL article about higher education because he wrote the foreword to my own history of education for librarianship at the University of Chicago entitled *The Spirit of Inquiry* (Chicago: ALA, 1981). It came about in the following way.

As a doctoral student at Indiana in the late 1970s, I had interviewed many former Chicago GLS students including Dr. Shera who was also a former Chicago faculty member, along with his mentor and adviser, Dr. Pierce Butler. Of course, I was hoping my dissertation might make its way into book form and looking ahead to that time, I had talked with my major adviser, Dr. David Kaser, about who I might ask to write the foreword. He concurred that it would be a coup if Dr. Shera agreed because Shera was an *éminence grise* of librarianship, having graduated Yale, worked in the OSS, and served as dean of Case Western's library school. So while I was happily looking forward to finishing my dissertation in early August of 1978, I received an invitation to speak at the Chicago ALA in early June as part of a panel "Report of Recent Historical Research on Specific Developments in American Library History." I hope that nobody has a copy of tape #23 from that conference because you will hear a confident Dr. Shera and a rather timid voice from me; but afterward he did, nevertheless, agree to write that foreword.

Note that I can't call him "Jesse" even though he was one of our first LA house guests in 1980, when we had literally just taken possession of our Village Green townhouse and things were still in boxes. Maybe Dr. Shera truly couldn't see (but he certainly seemed able to step aside or over them), so you can understand why I think that he was just being polite about those boxes. Similarly, I do remember well another early AALS (before it was changed to ALISE) conference in the Palmer House in downtown Chicago. In those days, one only had to stand in the lobby of that place and anybody you wanted to see would come wandering in off the streets. One evening a bunch of us were standing around, when one of his many admirers came forward to tell him that she had read everything that he had ever written (which you can see from the appendix of Wright's book which you hold in your hand is nearly 600 items); well, he was polite until they were out of earshot, and he turned to me and said *sotte voce*: "Either she is a liar or a damned fool!" I know that I greatly miss his witticisms and other public comments at AALS meetings, for which he was justly famous.

As you read this 1969 article from Shera's more than 800-item oeuvre, you will see that he had a seemingly prescient ability to know the fads and fancies of our field. Yet, some, if not many of the twelve titles (ok, it grew to twenty-three finally) he listed in 1969 as being useful to under-

stand higher education, aren't ones you'd readily reach for today. No doubt, I also risk committing the same heresies, but I asked my UCLA Department of Information Studies colleagues much like he did—Jean-François Blanchette, Anne Gilliland, Leah Lievrouw, and Beverly Lynch who responded to my request.

In short, I think the following four successor titles are ones I would recommend to guide any incoming doctoral student trying to understand how the field of higher education has changed since Shera's day:

Cohen, Arthur M. and Carrie B. Kisker, *The Shaping of American Higher Education; Emergence and Growth of the Contemporary System*, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, A Wiley Imprint, 2010.—Maintaining the longer view by framing the collegiate form within the American colonies, the authors help the reader deal with the recent movements toward greater accountability, corporatization and even privatization.

Geiger, Roger L. *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900–1940*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986; reprint ed., Transaction Publishers, 2004.—As I look at my career arc over nearly forty years, I think the single biggest difference is the role of extra-mural funding in some academic decisions and Geiger lays out how the entrepreneurial professoriate emerged. Furthermore, Geiger confirms much of Robert A. Nisbet's *Degradation of the Academic Dogma* (New York: Basic Books, 1971) which argues that the mission of

the university should be knowledge for its own sake.

Lombardi, John V. *How Universities Work*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.—Not intended as a cookbook, “but a pragmatic approach to understanding the structure and dynamics” of our national research universities.

Roth, Michael S. *Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.—Written by the president of Wesleyan University, this work is a pragmatic manifest on what kind of future the liberal arts colleges should be preparing its graduates for (i.e., learning how to learn in order to become life-long learners).

And, finally, two of my colleagues couldn't resist my self-imposed limit to printed works, so one rightly suggested two film documentaries: 1) Andrew Rossi's 2014 *Ivory Tower* about doubtful value of a higher education given the increasing tuition costs and the mounting student loan debt and 2) Frederick Wiseman's 2013 documentary entitled *At Berkeley*, which is, after all, one of the greatest universities in the world while another colleague recommended staying current by looking at the American Educational Research Association's website for “educational research.”

Taken together, though, these four texts will be provocative guidance in rethinking the context—that of higher education and its mission, obligations, and likely future—within which we operate as a discipline.