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Mentor's Introduction

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mentor's introduction

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It appears that Art Education in the United States has come of age and is now old enough to have a history. A history that can provide meaningful insights to honor our past, to explain our present, and to guide our future. With the establishment of the Penn State Conference on the History of Art Education, we as a profession, in a sense, recognized the importance of our own history. Historical research has become a valuable tool to investigate people and movements from our past.

The Art Education program at the University of Missouri was very fortunate to have Ella Victoria Dobbs as its first coordinator. Dobbs was very interested in handicrafts taught by the Sloyd method. She was also a student of John Dewey and much influenced by his teaching. One of her students, Verna M. Wulfekammer, became her colleague and together they built a strong art education program. Providentially, their materials have been saved. June Eyestone researched the Dobbs' material for her thesis and at present Paula McNeill is working with the Wulfekammer papers. In addition to the papers, Paula was fortunate to be able to interview Wulfekammer.

Currently, Paula is a doctoral student at the University of Missouri studying art education with an emphasis in the history of American art education. In addition to her studies, she has been employed as a manuscript specialist for Western Historical Manuscripts at the University for the last eight years. In August of 1989 Paula was responsible for acquiring the Verna M. Wulfekammer Collection for the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection. Through her efforts and to her credit, the Dobbs/Wulfekammer Library was saved from being disassembled.

She is presently involved in biographical research on Verna M. Wulfekammer, 1928-1968. Her research focuses on the mentor/student relationship between Ella Victoria Dobbs and Wulfekammer. As Paula has indicated in her paper, from 1925 to 1928 Wulfekammer was Dobbs' student, and from 1928 until Dobbs' retirement in 1936, they were colleagues in the University's Art Department. Her research on Wulfekammer builds on June Eyestone's recent work on Dobbs in "The Influences of Swedish Sloyd and Its Interpreters on America Art Education" (Unpublished dissertation, University of Missouri, 1989).