

Whatever Happened to the Class of 1962?

A study was made of the present whereabouts of the 214 applicants accepted for admission to graduate school of library science of Drexel Institute of Technology, and the 164 admitted to the graduate library school of Pratt Institute in 1961. Statistics are developed on their subsequent experience, including graduation or nongraduation (42 per cent of the former and 51 per cent of the latter have taken degrees), the kinds of positions they now occupy, and the numbers who are inactive. Implications of these statistics to admissions practices are proposed.

LITTLE IS KNOWN about the kinds of students who fail to earn the graduate degrees to which they have aspired and on which they have spent at least a semester of time and energy. The questions of what kinds of graduate students succeed or fail and why they do so remain largely unexplored subjects. Most research on the performance of graduate students has been concerned with the prediction of success in terms of graduate course grades. The final act which far more signifies success or failure in graduate work, the success or failure to receive a degree, has been neglected as a research criterion of success.¹

The idea of following an entering group of students through their graduate school careers to graduation or another end has seldom been carried out for any field. But that is what this study attempts to do and in so doing reveals some of the causes for frustration connected with

the provision of graduates for the librarian's profession.

By waiting five years after the class entered before studying them presumably the authors allowed most of the class members enough time to complete the one-year master's degree curriculum and whatever was going to happen to them academically had happened by that time. Berelson found that the average elapsed time from bachelor's to doctor's degree in professional fields was ten years, but in addition to a three-year curriculum and a dissertation such programs usually included periods of time when the individual was taking no courses.²

The Class of 1962. This study examines student characteristics and history in two separate schools. According to available statistics the graduate school of library science of Drexel Institute of Technology in Philadelphia accepted for admission 214 applicants in 1961. They were selected from approximately two hundred and seventy original applicants (79 per cent accepted) plus many others

¹ Charles R. Wright, "Success or Failure in Earning Graduate Degrees," *Sociology of Education*, XXXVIII (Fall 1964), 73-97.

² Bernard Berelson, *Graduate Education in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 160.

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who failed to send all admissions blanks, college transcripts, and recommendations, or else dropped out before an admission decision could be made. Several comparisons have established the representativeness of this entering group of students. Table 1 shows what happened to the Drexel group in terms of their pursuit of the master's degree.

Two hundred and sixty-eight students applied for admission to the graduate library school of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in 1961. Of this total 164 were admitted (61 per cent and are comparable for representativeness and other characteristics with the 214 admitted to Drexel. For Pratt 11 per cent already held advanced degrees while only 2 per cent of the Drexel group held such degrees. Table 2 shows what happened to the Pratt group in terms of their pursuit of master's degrees.

A first consideration would logically seem to be the number of students who received a library school degree from the admitting institution. To date 42 per cent of the accepted Drexel students and 51 per cent of the Pratt students have received such degrees. For Pratt the greatest number, 18 per cent received the de-

gree in 1963 with declining proportions graduating in succeeding years. In addition, 3 per cent left early in their Pratt careers and subsequently graduated from other library schools, perhaps nearer home or offering scholarships. For Drexel, Table 1 shows the pattern to have been much the same.

Therefore, with the addition of students graduating from other schools, the total number who have completed work for the degree is 87, or 54 per cent of the accepted students for Pratt and 92, or 44 per cent of the accepted students for Drexel. Wright's group of 189 graduate students in a large university showed 60 per cent to have graduated eleven years later.³ In two separate studies Lowen and Berry found graduation among undergraduates to range from 50 per cent to 67 per cent and Berelson quoted 60 per cent as an average graduation figure for both doctoral and law school students.⁴ On the other hand, Rosenhaupt found department ranges from 13 per cent to 38 per cent

³ Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁴ Louis Lowen, and James Berry, "Mortality Study of College Students," *School and Society*, LXXVII (February 14, 1953), 103-105; Berelson, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

TABLE 1
DREXEL CLASS OF 1962 PROGRESS TOWARD GRADUATION

Students	Number	Per Cent	Per Cent, Cumulative
Graduated—1962	39	18	18
1963	26	12	30
1964	11	5	35
1965	10	5	40
1966	3	2	42
Graduated from another library school	3	2	44
Currently enrolled	8	3	47
Currently enrolled in summer only	7	3	50
Admitted as non-degree students	6	3	53
Never registered for courses	22	10	63
Currently inactive	39	18	81
Student formally withdrew	29	14	95
Dropped for poor scholarship	11	5	100
Deceased	1	0	100
Total	214	100	100

TABLE 2
PRATT CLASS OF 1962 PROGRESS TOWARD GRADUATION

Students	Number	Per Cent	Per Cent, Cumulative
Graduated—1962	20	12	12
1963	30	18	30
1964	15	10	40
1965	14	9	49
1966	3	2	51
Transferred to another library school	5	3	54
Currently enrolled	0	0	54
Currently enrolled in summer only	0	0	54
Admitted as non-degree students	1	0	54
Never registered for courses	40	24	78
Currently inactive	0	0	78
Student formally withdrew	27	17	95
Dropped for poor scholarship	8	5	100
Deceased	1	0	100
Total	164	100	100

for humanities and 28 per cent to 49 per cent for science in obtaining master's degrees from Columbia.⁵

Before leaving graduation figures, it might be well to point out several other factors related to graduation, some of them disappointing. In recent years it has been the experience of the schools that 2 to 10 per cent of the students *graduating* do not take full-time professional library positions but instead remain in the role of housewife or mother, continue working in another occupation, begin graduate work in another field, or take part-time professional positions. A 1966 check showed 10 per cent of the Drexel 1962 class graduates not to be working as full-time librarians. So even among graduating students not all have entered active, full-time service in the profession.

And in yet another interesting sidelight of the graduation picture, again disappointing to some, the home and job picture of these and other Drexel students was analyzed. Where did these students come from and where did they go in terms of town versus city if—

- (a) "Hometown" was where the student spent the largest number of years in high school.
- (b) A town was one with a population under 100,000.
- (c) Large city suburbs were classified as city.

The conclusions were:

The per cent who came from a town and went after graduation to a town was 30 per cent

The per cent who came from a town and went to a city was 39 per cent

The per cent who came from a city and went to a city was 23 per cent

The per cent who came from a city and went to a town was 8 per cent

This gave the following totals:

Per cent moving *from town* to either city or town was 69 per cent

Per cent moving *from city* to either city or town was 31 per cent

Per cent moving from either town or city *to town* was 38 per cent

Per cent moving from either town or city *to city* was 62 per cent

Briefly, the modal Drexel student came from a town and went after graduation to a city.

A further study was made of first professional job location and its distance

⁵ Hans Rosenhaupt, *Graduate Student Experience at Columbia University, 1940-56* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 36.

from the library school. The majority of recent Drexel graduates moved less than two hundred miles from Philadelphia to their first jobs. A student body comprising for the most part "thirty five year old married women," and the fact that most Drexel students call the Middle Atlantic area "home," plus the many job opportunities in the area help to explain the situation.⁶

For the vast majority of Pratt students the mode was clearly that of city to city, with New York City being both hometown and location of the first professional position.

Finally, the relationships between sex and marital status and graduation are curious and can be seen for Pratt and Drexel in Tables 3 and 4. At the time of admission, 20 per cent of the class was male, but by graduation males had increased their representation to 25 per cent (Drexel). Pratt's male percentage dropped somewhat by graduation, however. Single males made up three-quarters of all males at admission for both Pratt and Drexel even though age at this point was 30 to 35; they declined slightly at graduation for Drexel but increased to five-sixths for Pratt. For females there was no trend by marital status at either Drexel or Pratt. At Drexel for both sexes only 38 per cent of those admitted were married but by graduation 45 per cent were married; this slight shift was caused primarily by the loss of single people, not by the marriage of students while enrolled.

Drexel's shifts were apparently related to the fact that between admission and graduation married and single males and married females increased their percentages while single females dropped sharply. Married females, for instance, made up only one-third at admission,

TABLE 3
SEX OF STUDENTS IN PRATT AND DREXEL CLASSES OF 1962

	Per Cent Male	Per Cent Female
<i>Drexel:</i>		
Admitted	20	80
Inactive or Withdrawn	23	77
Graduated	25	75
<i>Pratt:</i>		
Admitted	31	69
Inactive or Withdrawn	22	78
Graduated	29	71

and single females almost half, but by commencement married exceeded single females.

Now, to return to the analysis of Tables 1 and 2, graduation is the obvious termination, but viewing the percentage, the obvious question is what happened to the other half, the other 46 per cent (Pratt) or 56 per cent (Drexel) of those entering library school groups?

Twenty-four per cent (Pratt) and 10 per cent (Drexel) can be accounted for readily. Though admitted, a total of 62 students for the two schools never registered for course work. They took the trouble to complete forms, pay for the transcripts mailed, and pay non-returnable admissions fees, but never took classes, thereby wasting their time and money and that of the admissions officers. It is hard to say why they did not follow through. Probably the following

TABLE 4
MARITAL STATUS OF PRATT AND DREXEL STUDENTS IN CLASSES OF 1962

	Per Cent Married	Per Cent Single
<i>Drexel:</i>		
Admitted	38	62
Inactive or Withdrawn	41	59
Graduated	45	55
<i>Pratt:</i>		
Admitted	54	46
Inactive or Withdrawn	52	48
Graduated	51	49

⁶ Kenna Forsyth, and John Harvey, "Drexel Library School Students: Where Do They Come From and Where Do They Go?," *CRL*, XXIV (March 1965), 138-44.

list of reasons covers most of these cases.

- Ill health
- Pregnancy
- Financial reasons
- Transfer to another subject field
- Husband transferred to another position
- Moved to another city
- Loss of interest
- Illness at home
- Course scheduling problems
- Took a position in another field

It is possible to say for those who actually enrolled in degree programs however—obviously a smaller group than the number admitted—67 per cent for Pratt and 49 per cent for Drexel went on to receive their degrees.

Certain other groups of 1962 students can be accounted for almost as readily. Fourteen percent of the Drexel class and 17 per cent of the Pratt class withdrew formally for a variety of reasons, primarily those listed above plus the disheartening experience of going on probation.

Obviously, it was hazardous to admit certain kinds of students, those with limited finances, for instance, since finance was often given as a reason for dropping out. Increased financial aid in both schools would have saved some of these cases. Regrettably, married women were hazardous to admit, since they were subject to pregnancy, illness within the family, reduced financial resources, and husbands being transferred. Age may have affected class attendance, also; Rosenhaupt found the age group most often successful in earning master's degree to be quite young, in the lower twenties.⁷ Even having a previous degree was no guarantee of success since a fourth of that group withdrew, became inactive, or was dropped.

Still left for accounting is one-third of the initial Drexel group and 5 per cent of

the Pratt group. Practically all of this Pratt group were in the category, Dropped for Scholastic Reasons; therefore, they left involuntarily because their grades were low. But this category also included 5 per cent of the Drexel class, the same percentage as that of Pratt and also suggesting the classic bell-shaped curve calling for a flunking group of 5 per cent. Probably most of these flunking students were sufficiently intelligent to do the course work successfully but failed for other reasons. And finally, it should be observed that this student group was the only one whose eventual return to the school was impossible.

Two groups of students are still enrolled at Drexel. Three per cent attend only in the summer and 3 per cent are currently enrolled during the winter, pursuing the degree on a part-time basis, apparently with interruptions. This brings to a total of 6 per cent those whose files are currently active. It also points up the fact that probably less than half of the accepted Drexel group will ever graduate.

Upon careful examination of the groups remaining it becomes apparent that six of the Drexel students and the remaining Pratt student were not admitted as degree students but auditors, technicians, or post MS in LS students. They were nondegree students participating in post graduate programs or non-college graduate library technicians ad-

TABLE 5
WHAT HAPPENED TO DREXEL STUDENTS
WHO WERE ON PROBATION?
(Random Sample 1959-1964)

	Students	Per Cent
Dropped by the school	11	12
Currently inactive	34	39
Still on probation and enrolled	13	15
Got off probation	26	30
Graduated	4	4
Total	88	100

⁷ Rosenhaupt, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

mitted to a limited number of introductory courses.

The Drexel group now remaining, thirty-nine students or eighteen per cent of those initially admitted, is known as the Inactives, apparently without definite plans to continue work toward the degree and professional status yet not formally withdrawn. The relationship in each institution between those who withdrew formally and the Inactives who merely stopped coming is undoubtedly close but is poorly understood.⁸ Probably the same list of reasons applies to both groups, with the Withdrawals including more cases of moving to another city and changing subject fields and the Inactives including more indecisive and temporary reasons such as illness, financial, and scholastic probation problems.

The Drexel Inactive and the Pratt Withdrawal groups form two of the largest and most intriguing in the study. In each case they constitute about a sixth of the total and a third of those not graduating. They deserve further analysis and discussion because of their ambivalent nature and because they are a sizable group of promising students lost to the profession.

The Inactives (Withdrawals) vs. the Graduates and the Probationers. What comparisons can be made between the Inactive and Withdrawal groups and those who have received the degree? A common assumption about students who become derailed along the way suggests that they are academically less successful than graduating fellow students. Investigation shows the Drexel grade average for the graduate group to have been 85.9 per cent and for the Inactives to have been 84.1 per cent. The undergraduate grade average presents almost the same pattern; the graduates have an

average a little above B- while the Inactives fall only slightly below that figure. In both cases the differences were slight and not statistically significant. Substantiating this view for Pratt is the finding that only 7 per cent of their Withdrawals were on scholastic probation.

Other evidence seems to present a closer relationship between grades and graduation. Of the group initially admitted to Drexel, twenty-one, or 10 per cent were on academic probation for one or more quarters. From another set of statistics, nine of the thirty-nine Inactive students, or 23 per cent, were on academic probation. Obviously, the nine are included in the twenty-one above. This leads to the conclusion that almost half (9 of 21) or 43 per cent of the probationary students became Inactive whereas only 16 per cent of those never on probation (31 of 193) became Inactive and only 7 per cent (12 of 174) of those who did not become Inactive were on probation. The conclusion is suggested that the Inactives were more likely to have had scholastic difficulties than other students, 23 per cent to 7 per cent, and conversely that the probationary student was more likely to become Inactive than his non-probationary counterpart (43 per cent to 16 per cent).

In this vein, Ecklund found that the ratio of dropouts who were potential graduates to dropouts whose graduation appeared unlikely was approximately one to five, based on a study of undergraduate students at Vanderbilt and Illinois.⁹

Tables 5 and 6 summarize the fate of Drexel probation students. A third got off probation and some graduated. One in seven was still on probation and also still active. However, half had either become Inactive or been dropped from the

⁸ At Pratt a concerted effort is made to clear up Inactives and turn them into Withdrawals with a formal exit statement or a statement giving a readmit date.

⁹ Bruce Ecklund, "A Source of Error in College Attrition Studies," *Sociology of Education*, XXXVIII (Fall 1964), 60-72.

TABLE 6
NUMBER OF QUARTERS DREXEL STUDENTS
WERE ON PROBATION, 1959-64

Number of Quarters	Students	Per Cent	Per Cent, Cumulative
1	18	20	20
2	25	28	48
3	16	18	66
4	12	14	80
5	6	6.5	87
6	3	3	90
7	6	6.5	96
No record	4	4	100
Total	88	100	100

NOTE: Table 6 does not include students admitted on probation unless they made low grades in courses.

school. The average probation student remained on probation for two or three quarters before dropping out, being dropped, or getting off probation. After the third probationary quarter, under the rules being followed in 1961-62, most of the probationary students no longer listed on probation had dropped out, and some had fallen victim to the school's withdrawal rules.

Another popular belief about the Inactive and the Withdrawal student is that he takes one or two courses and quits. The data from the Drexel group suggest this to be fallacious, but the data from Pratt suggest it to be true. The average number of quarter hours completed by the Drexel Inactive was eighteen hours—somewhat greater certainly than a course or two, in fact equalling five or six courses. The range of hours completed was from three to fifty-four (with sixty hours for graduation) before becoming Inactive. But for Pratt students withdrawal came typically after only one course. Obviously, Drexel students typically left slowly, a few at a time, after several courses, while Pratt students left abruptly after only one course. Another and perhaps related finding was that the number of course work hours taken was not related to scholastic average, nor was scholastic average de-

pendent upon the number of course work hours taken.

Perhaps a portion of the Drexel group became Inactive after completing school library certification requirements. However, the minimum requirements for certification in the Drexel area were twenty-seven quarter hours in New Jersey and thirty-six hours in Pennsylvania, so only a small minority could have carried out this procedure.

One other interesting and curious comparison can be made. The thirty-nine 1961 Drexel students presently Inactive attained this status at approximately a two-to-one ratio with the students who were earning their degrees. In 1962 when 18 per cent of the total number of graduates of the 1961 group received their degrees, 38 per cent of the total now Inactive joined the Inactive group, while in 1963 12 per cent received degrees and 17 per cent became Inactive, and in 1964 5 per cent graduated as opposed to 12 per cent becoming Inactive. For Pratt half withdrew in 1961 and half in 1962.

Grades and Graduation. A special study was made of the grades of the Drexel class of 1962 on the undergraduate level and at Drexel, and these grades are shown in Tables 7 and 8. An 80 per cent average was required for graduation.

The four groups of Drexel extremes studied included: (1) the Low Undergraduate group of forty-four students (20 per cent) whose undergraduate grade average was lowest in the class,

TABLE 7
DREXEL GRADE AVERAGES FOR CLASS OF 1962

Grades	Students	Per Cent
95-100	0	0
90-95	20	12
85-89	65	38
80-84	60	35
75-79	13	7.5
70-74	13	9.5
Total	77	100

(2) the Low Graduate group of twenty-seven students (13 per cent) whose Drexel average was lowest at the time of the study, (3) the High Undergraduate group of thirty-five students (16 per cent) whose undergraduate average was highest and (4) the High Graduate group of thirty-three students (15 per cent) whose Drexel average was highest in the study.

The first finding was that 40 per cent of the High Undergraduate group students were also in the High Graduate group. The corresponding generalization also held true that 40 per cent of the Low Undergraduate group were in the Low Graduate group, and this suggested that undergraduate grade average was a good predictor of graduate grade average. Nevertheless, there were a few cases where the student jumped from low to high group or fell from high to low group.

At the time of the study 25 per cent of those in the Low Undergraduate group had already graduated, while 43 per cent of those in the High Undergraduate group had graduated, the chances for graduation for the first group being somewhat poorer than those for the second group, one in four to three in seven.

Of the students in the High Graduate group, half had already graduated and half were Inactive or had withdrawn, a

consistent but discouraging percentage. This means that half of the scholastically most promising group of graduate students had dropped out of the program within five years of their admittance. Of the students in the Low Graduate group, all were inactive, had withdrawn or been dropped by the school, a complete loss, but not so surprising or disappointing.

For those in the Low Undergraduate group, the Drexel grade average was 81.4 per cent and for those in the High Undergraduate group, the Drexel average was 87.0 per cent, suggesting that undergraduate average was a good predictor of library school grade average in this instance. Other studies have some times confirmed this finding and other times refuted it.¹⁰

Table 8 shows the undergraduate averages for Pratt students. Obviously, their grades were somewhat higher than those of Drexel students, which tends to support the previous finding that Pratt was somewhat more selective in admissions than Drexel.

Pratt undergraduate averages were analyzed for their Withdrawals, Dismissed, and Graduate groups. Both the Graduated and the Withdrawals averaged B, though the former was a some-

¹⁰ Janet Weber, "Success in Graduate School," *Journal of Higher Education*, XIII (January 1942), 19-24; Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 79; Paul Munger, "Can We Really Predict Who Will Graduate from College?" *College and University*, XXXII (Winter 1957), 218-21.

TABLE 8
UNDERGRADUATE GRADE AVERAGES FOR PRATT AND DREXEL CLASSES OF 1962

GRADES	DREXEL		PRATT	
	Students	Per Cent	Students	Per Cent
A and A-	6	4	9	8
B+	28	17	23	20
B	46	28	32	27
B-	19	11	15	13
C+	26	15	22	19
C	24	14	14	12
C-	19	11	2	1
Total	168	100	117	100

what stronger B than the latter. The Dismissed averaged C+, confirming the above findings for Drexel.

For both the Pratt and Drexel graduating groups, three-fifths finished within two years of their admission, so they must have been taking at least a half course load each quarter. Since only fourteen Drexel students are still enrolled, this suggests that only a few members of the class have attended Drexel at the rate of only one course at a time and still have a chance to graduate. No Pratt student is still struggling toward the degree. Because the number of Drexel students actually taking only one course at a time during the period was relatively large, however, perhaps one-fourth to one-half of the student body each quarter, the Inactive group apparently included a significant percentage of one-course-at-a-time students. Or, apparently the chances of graduating instead of becoming inactive were much higher if you were a full-time or at least a half-time student than if you took a smaller course load each quarter. In sup-

porting this conclusion Rosenhaupt found part-time graduate students at Columbia to have completed fewer course hours and to have had poorer chances of earning degrees than full-time students, 75 per cent of those earning degrees doing so within two years of entrance, and 90 per cent after three years.¹¹

Admissions Problems. A conclusion to be drawn from this study is that admissions procedures for selecting students who would eventually graduate needed improvement in both schools in 1961. With only 44 per cent graduated from Drexel and 54 per cent from Pratt, the dropout rate was high. While a certain percentage of these dropouts were because of low grades, apparently many were not. The schools needed not only to improve techniques of selecting persons qualified to carry out graduate course work successfully but also to choose students who would stay with the program until graduation. ■■

¹¹ Rosenhaupt, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

. . . International Library

(Continued from page 207)

involved. It is after all not enough merely to offer good library services. They must be presented to the user in such a way that he can understand their value to him and, furthermore, be able to use them himself. Teaching the reader to use the collection and to take full advantage of the services offered is one of the most important tasks currently facing the special library for, as emphasis is

placed increasingly upon the new information systems, the reader must not be forgotten. Regardless of nationality, the needs of individuals are best satisfied when they can help themselves, for they alone know what they really want. The successful library is still the one in which the reader can do this as much as possible. ■■