

# Special Section: The 100th Anniversary of Vocational Guidance

## Introduction to the Special Section

### **Pioneers of the Vocational Guidance Movement: A Centennial Celebration**

Mark L. Savickas, *Guest Editor*

Beginning late in the 19th century, social reformers began to call for vocational guidance to meet the needs of newcomers to rapidly growing cities. These reformers hoped that teachers and social workers would construct and use scientific methods of guidance to replace 19th-century charity work with a 20th-century professional service. As a consequence, personal forms of mentoring and "friendly visiting" (Richmond, 1899, p. 5) gave way to the scientific philanthropy of a bureaucratic society. Lysander Richards (1881) wrote *Vocophy: The New Profession* about the need for a new profession of vocational assistance. George Merrill began vocational guidance in Cogswell High School in San Francisco in 1888. As headmaster of the California School of Mechanical Arts, in 1895, Merrill implemented a plan wherein the teachers observed and counseled students about appropriate occupational choices and trade preparation (Gregoire & Jungers, 2007). From 1904 to 1906, in the New York City schools, Eli Witwer Weaver organized a peer counseling program by selecting students to advise other students on the selection of courses necessary for entry into an occupation. His obituary in the *New York Times* (November 3, 1922) was titled "ELI WITWER WEAVER DEAD. Father of Vocational Guidance System in the Public Schools." In the Cincinnati public schools, a history teacher named Frank Parker Goodwin began an organized guidance program in 1907.

The actual conception of modern vocational guidance began in 1908 because of events that year in Scotland, Germany, and the United States. Maria Ogilvie Gordon of Aberdeen, Scotland, initiated modern vocational guidance services in Scotland and in England where she pioneered educational information and employment bureaus. With the collaboration of social workers in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee, Scotland, Gordon (1908) published *A Handbook of Employments Specially Prepared for the Use of Boys and Girls on Entering the Trades, Industries, and Professions*, which became a model for other countries. In Germany, Dr. Wolff opened in 1908 a department for vocational counseling, with

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*Mark L. Savickas, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mark L. Savickas, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy, 4209 State Route 44, Rootstown, OH 44272 (e-mail: ms@neoucom.edu).*

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the aid of one assistant. On his own initiative, Wolff notified the schools that he was willing to consult with information seekers, doing so at night in his office at the Halle Bureau of Statistics, which he directed. He may have been the first to conduct follow-ups because he had his secretary record the advice given and checked the progress of the youth he had guided. Wolff is credited with initiating Germany's movement for organized vocational guidance, which spread quickly to Munich, Pforzheim, and Dusseldorf (Keller & Viteles, 1937).

One of the best documented stories of the origins of modern vocational guidance also began in 1908 in Boston (Brewer, 1918). A social reformer named Frank Parsons believed that the "City of the Future" required specially trained personnel to help youth make vocational choices. Rather than using the mentoring techniques of a friendly visit, Parsons urged that science be applied to the problem of *vocational guidance*, a term he coined in 1908 to denote both his work with youth and the profession that marks its origin to the publication in 1909 of his influential book titled *Choosing a Vocation*.

In the United States, Parsons's book ignited the vocational guidance movement as a function of social reform, resting on the promise of social efficiency in matching workers to work and of fostering the personal development of workers. The progenitors of this social movement included social workers, lawyers, economists, psychologists, and educators. These pioneers propelled the movement and established the profession of vocational guidance, which later evolved into the field of counseling.

Those interested in biography are wont to claim that to know any field well, practitioners must know its founders. Therefore, on the 100th anniversary of the vocational guidance movement, the profession of career counseling revisits the work of its progenitors and pioneers. In selecting which "vocationalists" to profile in this special section of *The Career Development Quarterly*, I used two criteria. First, they must have begun their contributions before 1910, being active at the birth of the movement. Second, the group should include representatives from the various fields that sustained the vocational guidance movement. Thus, the pioneers profiled in this special section include economists, lawyers, educators, ministers, psychologists, and social workers.

The special section opens with David B. Baker recounting the context and circumstances in which Parsons (1909) wrote *Choosing a Vocation*, the signal event that incited the vocational guidance movement. William C. Briddick, in what he refers to as "Frank Findings," digs deeply into historical records to correct two astonishing errors in prior biographies. Hande Sensoy-Briddick identifies the three "associate counselors" in the Vocation Bureau founded by Parsons. She tells the stories of Lucinda Wyman Prince, Ralph Albertson, and Philip Davis who formed the country's first counseling center staff. Erik J. Porfeli reports how Parsons approached America's most famous psychologist for help in giving a scientific foundation to vocational guidance. More important, Porfeli explains Hugo Münsterberg's resulting scientific theory of vocational guidance. Stephanie T. Burns relates the groundbreaking contributions of psychologist Helen Bradford Thompson Woolley and economist M. Edith Campbell, who joined forces in Cincinnati as social reformers





**Lucinda Wyman Prince**

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**Meyer Bloomfield**



**Frank Parsons**



**Hugo Münsterberg**



**Jesse Buttrick Davis**



**Helen Bradford Thompson  
Woolley**



**M. Edith Campbell**

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and advocates for social justice to advance the vocational guidance movement. Mark Pope highlights the contributions of America's first school counselor, Jesse Buttrick Davis, to the origins of vocational guidance and career education in the public schools. In the final article of this special section, I propose that Meyer Bloomfield, through initiating meetings, publishing textbooks, and teaching counselor education courses, was the principal organizer of the vocational guidance profession. All in all, this special section of *The Career Development Quarterly* pays homage to the progenitors and pioneers of vocational guidance on this the centennial of the profession, one that is now rediscovering its voice in social reform and public policy.

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