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The Influence of F. W. Lancaster on Information Science and on Libraries: Notes on the scope of this Festschrift

THE GUEST EDITORS

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ABSTRACT

Over a period of four decades F. W. Lancaster has continuously emerged as a visionary leader in the field of library and information science. His research, writings, and teachings have earned him the highest honors in the profession. Lancaster excelled at many fronts: as scholar, educator, mentor, and writer. This essay summarizes the personalized contributions of Lancaster's friends, family, students, colleagues, and scholars in the field to celebrate and pay homage to him for his life's work.

INTRODUCTION

F. W. Lancaster's accomplishments span four decades and they are numerous. Long after Lancaster's active career and formal retirement in 1992, his work and his writings remain foundations in the field of library and information science in the United States and around the world. The idea of a personalized Festschrift to honor Lancaster's work and his impact was widely embraced by many in the profession. It was quickly followed by commitments from authors and contributors to participate in this project that we fondly labeled as a "labor of love." The contributors we selected for this work include Lancaster's friends, students, colleagues, and other specialists who are known for their expertise and their own contributions to the professional literature. While all authors had some flexibility to develop their own approach for their particular topic, we encouraged them to make this a personal Festschrift, connecting each article to Lancaster in some way.

Unlike most Festschriften, this, the second Festschrift to honor Lancaster, is a personalized tribute to his magnificence and his contributions in a

number of areas that advanced the field of information science.¹ The idea to publish this Festschrift as a special issue of *Library Trends* seems most apt to honor one who has served as its editor for more than two decades.

We are former students of Lancaster's and felt deeply honored when we were approached to serve as guest editors for the Festschrift. Keith Russell was a master's student in the early 1970s at the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS), and had two classes with Lancaster—information retrieval and vocabulary control. Lorraine Haricombe completed her MLIS ('88) and PhD ('92) at GSLIS, where she took several of Lancaster's classes including one of the four (then) required doctoral seminars. Lancaster also served as her dissertation advisor. Like so many of Lancaster's students, we credit him with having significant impact on our lives at the personal level and at the professional level.

Neither one of us has ever edited a Festschrift. In fact, Keith had never heard of a Festschrift until he took Kathryn Luther Henderson's cataloging course at GSLIS, and in one class assignment had to create a 3x5 catalog card entry for a Festschrift. Consequently, as we proceeded with developing this Festschrift, we explored earlier Festschriften in library and information science, and in other fields.

We found, for example, that several faculty members at GSLIS have had Festschriften to complement their careers. These include Pauline Atherton Cochrane (Wheeler, 2000), Herbert Goldhor (Powell, 1989), Kathryn Luther Henderson (Smith & Carter, 1996), and Donald W. Krummel (Hunter, 1994). We also noted that at least one GSLIS graduate, Ruth C. Carter, had been celebrated in a Festschrift (Holley, 2007). And we reviewed the aforementioned earlier Festschrift that honored Lancaster, the proceedings of a conference in Germany.

As we were working on this Festschrift, Keith observed firsthand the impact of Lancaster's work on the current scientific community. He attended a research seminar by Anne Maglia, a faculty member from the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Missouri-Rolla. Her presentation described her work creating three-dimensional online anatomical representations of amphibians and their development. In the last part of her talk, she described efforts she and her colleagues are making to facilitate research on amphibian anatomy. In particular, they are creating a database that covers three hundred years of literature on amphibian anatomy, on hundreds of organisms, published in many languages and a wide range of monographs and journals. Sources often used different terms for the same anatomical feature, and researchers often lost valuable time figuring out proper terms to use. She commented that she and her colleagues are using the best information retrieval software available to find and manipulate the information from all those sources about all those organisms, and that they are using established vocabulary

control software and protocols to help straighten out what each anatomical feature should be called, and what synonyms and related terms had been used. Wow! Lancaster was one of the pioneers in the 1960s and 1970s that defined, described, and developed some of the principles and techniques for computerized information retrieval systems and for vocabulary control. Keith introduced himself and spoke with Anne at the conclusion of the seminar and mentioned that a Festschrift was being done for one of the key researchers and educators whose earlier work no doubt had helped her with her research today. Her work is reflected in Maglia, Leopold, Pugener, & Gauch, 2007.

A BIT ABOUT LANCASTER

From Lancaster's early career days at the National Library of Medicine where he revolutionized assessment of information retrieval systems, to his retirement in 1992 and beyond, he excited many professionals and enlightened students who were interested in pursuing a career in library and information science. His work is often cited and discussed in works on the history of information science (e.g., Lilley and Trice, 1989; Bourne and Hahn, 2003). And even as we were submitting the manuscript for this Festschrift, another article (Osif, 2008) was published that referred to Lancaster and adapted wording in the title that parallels the title of an earlier Lancaster publication (1978). A more complete picture of Lancaster's many accomplishments may be gleaned from Hayes' tribute and his *Curriculum Vitae* elsewhere in the Festschrift.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FESTSCHRIFT

The Festschriften that we reviewed had a significant impact on the development of this one. We have incorporated the features we liked most into this volume. The organization of the Festschrift reflects our goal to: (a) pay tribute to Lancaster, the pioneer, teacher, husband, and father; (b) show the breadth of his impact in theme-related essays by colleagues and friends; and (c) provide a bibliometric analysis of the impact of his writings and his work. Finally, we have included his personal reflections (on his career and its highlights, his mentors, students, family, and hobbies) and his current *Curriculum Vitae*.

Lancaster has achieved much and touched many throughout his career, most notably as teacher, writer, and scholar. Bob Hayes provides a compelling and comprehensive tribute to Lancaster's gargantuan stature in information science through presentations, writings, teachings, consultancies, and awards that span the last four decades of the twentieth century and beyond.

Beyond his active and rich career Lancaster was a family man. From his early beginnings in the United Kingdom and in the United States Lancaster navigated his time between professional demands and his grow-

ing family. Cesaria Lancaster, his wife, and their children Miriam, Owen, Jude, Aaron, Lakshmi and Raji, graciously agreed to offer a glimpse of life with Lancaster the husband, father, and grandfather.

Many former students contributed their personal tributes and shared their stories of how Lancaster impacted their careers, and ultimately, their lives. Haricombe and Prabha, themselves former students, developed their essay based on the emerging themes in students' comments. Lancaster's global impact is clearly reflected in this essay as international students share their first encounters with Lancaster through his writings or lectures in their respective countries.

The next ten articles are learned essays on themes reflected in Lancaster's work in information science.

Citing Lancaster's belief in continuous self-appraisal to respond to users' needs, Tefko Saracevic adopts a historical perspective to describe the effects of relevance judgments on information retrieval test results.

Peter Jacso discusses the *h*-index as a measure to assess the publishing productivity and impact of a researcher. He uses Lancaster's publications as a case study to highlight the shortcomings of the content and software in the most commonly used databases to calculate a researcher's *h*-index.

Carol Tenopir focuses on Lancaster's legacy in the area of the underlying structure for online information retrieval systems and his valid prediction of how modern online retrieval systems might operate. Forty years later advances in software, hardware, and telecommunications have exceeded Lancaster's wildest dreams.

Lancaster's significant work in the area of subject analysis and thesaurus construction was directly responsible for many projects. Candy Schwartz recalls the exciting years of subject analysis and thesaurus construction in the 1970s and its resurgence in the 1990s and the in-between years with reference to Lancaster's significant role in this area.

Lancaster is famous for his prediction of a "paperless society." Arthur Young provides a careful analysis of that prediction, and various reactions and developments over time.

Lancaster is well known for system evaluation work he did with the National Library of Medicine (NLM). Barbara Rapp reviews that work, its impact on both NLM and information retrieval systems, and his influence on colleagues who worked with him at NLM.

Martha Kyrillidou and Colleen Cook reflect on Lancaster's impact on measurement and evaluation in libraries, and describe both earlier and later work in that arena. They include descriptions of measures currently used by, or being developed for, research and other libraries, and highlight related programs at the Association of Research Libraries (ARL).

Keith Russell comments on GSLIS director Herbert Goldhor's and Lancaster's fact-based approaches to decision making, and the effect of having both as professors during library school. Their work can be viewed

as a precursor to the current emphasis on evidence-based practice in libraries, and he suggests that the discipline of organizational development can be useful in evidence-based practice in healthy libraries.

Lancaster was highly regarded as a library and information science educator, and his books and other publications have enriched the education of library and information science students throughout the world. Beverly Lynch pays tribute to Lancaster's educational achievements by reviewing the history of library education.

One of the areas Lancaster specialized in was bibliometrics. It is only fitting in this Festschrift that Jian Qin analyzes citation data from more than thirty years of his productivity, and the various disciplines in which that impact can be measured.

Leigh Estabrook was dean of GSLIS for a significant part of Lancaster's career at the University of Illinois. She provides a personal remembrance of working with him, and then conducts an interview with him about his life, influences, and achievements.

The latest version of Lancaster's *Curriculum Vitae* is included at the end of the Festschrift.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to thanking our authors for their contributions, the many former students and colleagues who provided remembrances for this Festschrift, and editors in the production cycle, we would like to acknowledge others who made this issue of *Library Trends* possible.

Several people have supported our efforts to shape the Festschrift and to make it a reality.

Kathy Painter, administrative assistant at the GSLIS Office provided Lancaster's current *Curriculum Vitae*. She worked closely with Lancaster in the course of typing manuscripts for eight of the books he published and she maintains his current CV. She wrote: "During the typing of a book, Professor Lancaster would invariably ask, 'How does it sound?,' and I would always reply 'I don't read 'em, I just type 'em.' Although that was essentially true, I also felt that in doing this typing work for him I was contributing in a small way in bringing his words of wisdom to the professional LIS literature, and was proud to do so. Without exception, Professor Lancaster would express his appreciation of my work in the acknowledgments of his books."

Leigh Estabrook, Dean Emeritus of GSLIS, agreed to conduct an interview with Lancaster and provided the transcript to be included in the Festschrift. In doing so, she offers *Library Trends* readers a rare glimpse into the personal life of someone they would otherwise mostly read about.

Several faculty, staff, and administrators at GSLIS provided wise counsel as we developed the prospectus for this Festschrift, recruited authors, verified names and dates of former students, and developed the issue.

These include Dean and Professor John Unsworth, Professor Emeritus Boyd Rayward, Associate Dean Linda Smith, and staff in the GSLIS Alumni Office. In addition, we thank Sandy Wolf for verifying bibliographic citations.

Developing relevant themes and completing a *Library Trends* issue requires careful planning, patience, and an “eagle eye.” Marlo Welshons, Assistant Dean for Publications and Communications at GSLIS, provided excellent guidance and shared her own memories of Lancaster as *Library Trends* editor. She wrote: “As a guest-edited, themed journal, we need to plan the editorial calendar for *Library Trends* many months in advance. Under Wilf’s tenure, our slate of upcoming issues was always full. His stature in the field meant that he knew which were the important topics to cover and could persuade the experts in any particular area to lead the development of each issue. Wilf was not above the mundane details of production, either. He would pore over each set of page proofs when they arrived from the typesetter, finding mistakes missed by the rest of us. I greatly appreciated his unerring attention to detail.”

A special thank you goes to Gary Marchionini who granted permission to use data from the MPACT project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Some of the authors of articles in this Festschrift worked with bibliometric aspects of Lancaster’s publications. We are grateful to Eugene Garfield and Soren Paris for their work to update the HistCite citation record for Lancaster. This ensured that our authors had access to the latest information on Lancaster-related publications in the Web of Science.

We are also indebted to library faculty and staff at KU who helped us identify, retrieve, borrow, and in other ways obtain access to a wealth of Lancaster publications and sample Festschriften.

Finally, our thanks to Lanis Atwood, Executive Assistant at the University of Kansas Libraries, who provided administrative support in coordinating communications with Lancaster’s former students, and Maggie Brooke, Administrative Associate at the University of Kansas Libraries, for checking references and other formatting features.

NOTE

1. Helal, A. H., & Weiss, J. W. (Eds.). (1995). Information superhighway: The role of librarians, information scientists, and intermediaries. 17th International Essen Symposium, 24 October–27 October 1994. Festschrift in honor of Frederick Wilfrid Lancaster. *Publications of Essen University Library #18, 1995*. Essen: Universitätsbibliothek Essen. (Proceedings of a conference dedicated to Lancaster.)

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Lorraine J. Haricombe was a student at the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science from 1986-92. She graduated with a master's degree in 1988 and earned her PhD in 1992 under the tutelage of Professor Lancaster. She served in library administration positions from 1992-2001 at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL. In 2001 she became dean of university libraries at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio and served there until she was named dean of libraries at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS in 2006. She coauthored her first book *Out in the Cold: Academic Boycotts and the Isolation of South Africa* with Lancaster.

Keith Russell is life sciences librarian at the University of Kansas (KU). In his faculty service and research activities he works closely with the KU Department of Human Resources and Equal Opportunity on campus-wide training, facilitation, and organizational effectiveness programs. Special interests include: best practices in healthy organizations; group facilitation and empowerment; and the design and use of experiential learning activities (including group drumming) for training and teambuilding. Prior appointments include dean of libraries at KU and deputy director of the National Agricultural Library. His MS (Library Science) degree is from the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science, where he was a student of Professor Lancaster.