# Obituary.
# Emeritus Professor Ia McIlwaine: An Appreciation

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Professor Ia McIlwaine was born Ia Cecilia Thorold on 20 April 1935, the only daughter of Michael Thorold, a clergyman in the Church of England, and Dorothy Henfrey; she had two younger brothers. Her unusual Christian name, which often caused confusion for correspondents, is Cornish in origin, the nominative form of what we may be more familiar with in the place name St. Ives.

She was a pupil at Bath High School, and, after leaving school, went up to Bedford College, London to read Classics, a discipline in which she maintained a lifelong interest. In 1957-58 she studied for the Graduate Diploma in Librarianship at University College London, the beginning of a long and distinguished association with that institution. After a five year period as Assistant Librarian with Westminster City Libraries, during which time she was awarded Fellowship of the Library Association, she was appointed to the post of Lecturer in the School of Library & Archive Studies at UCL. A major part of her role there was to teach classification and indexing, the subject field which would become her primary research area.

She progressed steadily through the academic ranks, being promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1985 and Reader in Classification and Indexing 1995, at which time she also took on the Directorship of the School, now the School of Library, Archive & Information Studies. In 1997 she was honoured with a Chair of Library & Information Studies. She continued the strong tradition of classification and indexing work in the School, which had begun with Charles Berwick Sayers, whose pupil Ranganathan was in the 1920s. At a time of waning interest in classification in most UK library schools, she kept it solidly and centrally on the curriculum at UCL, and sustained it as a distinctive feature of the UCL department with a programme of international events and a lively group of research students; some of her doctoral students now occupy leading roles in the world of library and information science in general, and classification in particular. As a student myself in the early 1970s I found the classification element of the course the most appealing and intellectually engaging, and it led me into the most rewarding career which I would not have enjoyed without her original enthusiasm and expertise.

Although her academic work was primarily focused on classification, where most of her publications are to be found, she had a broader interest in subject work and bibliography generally, and in bibliographic control. She co-authored the book *Introduction to Subject Study,* and edited a number of conference and collected papers including *Standards for the International Exchange of Bibliographic Information, Subject Retrieval in a Networked Environment*, and *Knowledge Organization and the Global Information Society.* Her reputation as an editor led to the role of series editor for Saur's (later de Gruyter) substantial *Introduction to Information Sources*, which documented the bibliography of a wide number of disciplines and formats. On the classification front, she was an active member of the International Society for Knowledge Organization, being President from 2001-2005, as well as a longstanding member of the Scientific Advisory Committee, and the Editorial Board of its journal *Knowledge Organization.* She was also, in its latter years, Secretary of the UK Classification Research Group. In addition, she was a

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member of the British Standards Institution Committee on Indexing, an observer on the Committee of the Bliss Classification Association, and served on the British Committee for the Dewey Decimal Classification.

In what was probably her major contribution to the field, she took over in 1993 as Editor-in-Chief of the *Universal Decimal Classification*, leading a major programme of revision of this large international system. A major part of the revision work under her Editorship was the introduction of a more rigorous analytical and faceted approach to the classification as a whole, which resulted in a number of radically revised classes, as well as a systematic pruning and rationalisation of the scheme overall. To this end, she engaged the help of a number of colleagues and contributors, with whose assistance several substantial revisions of main classes were achieved. She undertook much of this painstaking and time-consuming work herself, producing new schedules for photography and large parts of the auxiliary table for "place," as well as a major overhaul of the medicine class, carried out in association with Nancy Williamson.

She gave much thought to the problems of maintenance and revision of large classification systems, particularly against the background of transition to an online environment. Within that context, another innovative feature of her time as editor of the UDC was her fostering of a more cooperative and collaborative view of classification revision. She worked closely with the editors of both the *Dewey Decimal Classification*, and the *Bliss Bibliographic Classification*, both to share the effort of maintaining these large systems, and also to promote consistency in the way they represented subject content.

Alongside her work in classification and knowledge organization she retained her interest in the classics. Her PhD work, published as *Herculaneum: A Guide to Printed Sources,* was also carried out at UCL while she was a member of staff, and was awarded the prestigious Dunn & Wilson prize. This interest was picked up again in retirement, when she produced a supplement to her thesis for a new publication from Bibliopolis for Centro Internazionale per lo studio dei papiri ercolanesi. For this scholarly work she was elected to a Fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries, an honour which particularly pleased her.

In addition to her academic work, Ia was a powerful advocate for the profession at both national and international level. In 1998 she was recipient of the United Kingdom Library Association Centenary Medal, one of a hundred members of the Association so honoured, for her "services to the profession," largely an acknowledgement of a long career spent in education for librarianship. She had an equally longstanding commitment to the International Federation of Library Associations, and served on its Governing Board from 1993-2003, chairing the IFLA Professional Committee from 2001-2003. She was also a member and office holder in the Section for Classification and Indexing and the Division of Knowledge Management, and in 2005 was awarded the IFLA Medal, "for distinguished services to IFLA."

Much of this activity continued into her early years of retirement, but her time was increasingly spent at the family cottage in Norfolk, and later at a larger house where she could indulge her love of gardening. After a period of ill health she died on 24 August 2019 from complications following pneumonia. In 1966 she had married her fellow lecturer, John McIlwaine, who was her colleague and her companion for 53 years. He survives her, together with their daughter Anne who followed her parents into the world of libraries.

Ia was tireless in her work for the School of Librarianship, for University College, and for the wider world of librarianship, never shirking a difficult situation, and always going the extra mile. It was often her personal involvement and attention to detail that ensured the success of any number of activities, both at home and abroad, including the hosting of several international conferences on classification and information retrieval. A sometimes daunting manner hid a well of personal kindness, and a considerable sense of responsibility. She was a formidable administrator, but also a great enabler of younger colleagues and associates who widely acknowledge the role she played in encouraging and advancing their roles in the profession. It was a not uncommon occurrence for some overseas visitor to stroll into the School Office at UCL, uninvited and unannounced (and usually on a Friday afternoon), confident that she would welcome them, which she invariably did. A vast network of connexions across the libraries of the world bears testimony to the friendship and respect she was accorded by her fellow practitioners, as well as her academic contacts in all countries. Her part in the international scene can hardly be exaggerated, and she will be much missed by her friends and colleagues across the globe.

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