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Ellis Mount Remembered

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Ellis Mount Remembered

Richard P. Hulser, Chief Librarian, Natural History Museum Los Angeles County

Ellis Mount had a long career in the library profession and equally extensive activities in SLA. He was editor of a number of books for Libraries Unlimited among his many contributions in SLA he was editor of Sci-Tech News for many years. Ellis was a kind and gentle man who always had a curiosity of what others thought and had to say yet he himself was a wealth of knowledge and experience.

Two articles I had the privilege to write about Ellis Mount for Sci-Tech News appeared first in 1985 and later in 1990 and are reprinted in this issue. They show many thoughts and concerns Ellis had at the time that are just as relevant and useful today.

Ellis and his wife Kass moved to Hawaii in 2007 where they spent their remaining years until her passing in 2011 and his on January 19, 2012. ❖

Ellis Mount: A Portrait

Richard P. Hulser, Chief Librarian, Natural History Museum Los Angeles County

(originally published in *Sci-Tech News* vol. 39, no. 1 January 1985)

Ellis Mount is currently an Assistant Professor at the School of Library Service at Columbia University. He was recently honored with the 1984 Achievement Award by the Sci-Tech Division for his distinguished service and commitment to scientific and technical librarianship. This is news for today. But, how did it begin?

We go back to September 25, 1921 and find that Ellis Mount was born on this date about 40 miles southeast of Indianapolis, in Connersville, Indiana. Later, at the age of 18, he began his undergraduate education at Indiana University. He then transferred to Principia College, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Physics in 1948. From there he went on to complete a Master of Science in Physics at Northwestern University (1949), and then a Master of Science in Library Science at the University of Illinois in 1950.

His early career began with a position at the John Crerar Library in Chicago, for one year. He then held the position of Technical Librarian at the General Electric Company for two years before returning to John Crerar for another two years of service from 1953 to 1955. His next job was Chief Librarian at ITT Laboratories, where he remained until 1964. At that time he joined the staff at Columbia University as Science and Engineering Librarian, later served as Science Bibliographer there and then as Senior Lecturer. In 1975 he began work on a Doctor of Library

Science degree at Columbia, which he completed in 1979. Ellis then became a faculty member in the School of Library Service at Columbia, where he is today.

Ellis Mount has not been idle to say the least. He has been a prolific writer, contributing a great deal to the library literature with treatments of scientific and technical topics. Aside from many articles published in the journal literature, he has written and edited several monographs. Some of his works include: *Planning the Special Library* (1972); *University Science & Engineering Libraries: Their Operation, Collections, and Facilities* (1975); *Ahead of Its Time: The Engineering Societies Library, 1913-80* (1982), and *Special Libraries and Information Centers: An Introductory Text* (1983);. In addition, he has been editor of *Science and Technology Libraries*, a Haworth Press quarterly publication, since its first issue appeared in the Fall of 1980. He has also written a history of the Sci-Tech Division of the Special Libraries Association, which appeared in volume 26 of the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services* (1979 pp. 372-375).

Ellis has not only been a member of SLA, but also the American Society for Information Science and the American National Standards Institute Z39 Subcommittees (1972-76). He has been very active in SLA, as demonstrated by his contributions to discussions during meetings as well as the positions to which he has been

elected. These positions include being President of the New Jersey Chapter (1963-64), Chairman-Elect (1973-74) and Chairman (1974-75) of the Sci-Tech Division, and Treasurer of the Division (1976-79). He was an Archivist for the Division for 1975 to 1976, then continued the position from 1977 to the present.

Beta Phi Mu recognized Ellis Mount for his work in 1972 by awarding him the Council for Library Resources Fellowship. The Special Libraries Association also honored him with an award at the annual meeting in New York City in June, 1984. Ellis continues to make contributions to the library community and we wish him continued success in his future endeavors. ❖

Back to the Future: A Conversation with Ellis Mount

Richard P. Hulser, Chief Librarian, Natural History Museum Los Angeles County

(originally published in *Sci-Tech News* vol. 44, no. 4 October 1990)

A prolific author, distinguished professor, and active Association and SciTech Division member, Ellis Mount has been the recipient of many accolades. Election to the Special Libraries Association Hall of Fame in June 1990 has been a recent addition to his list of achievements.

In this interview Ellis talks about his experiences and expresses his views about our profession and the future outlook for information professionals.

RH: How did you first become interested in librarianship?

EM: While working on a Masters in Physics at Northwestern University I began to realize I didn't really like doing lab work, even though I had been accepted for the doctoral program. One day by chance I had lunch with a Northwestern librarian who described his work as head of the school's engineering library. It sounded fascinating; I had always enjoyed working with the literature of science, if not its lab work. I also talked with librarians at the Crerar Library in downtown Chicago and thought it looked like a good place to work with science materials.

So I finished the degree and enrolled in the library school at the University of Illinois that summer; I've never regretted my decision. (The librarian was George Bonn, who later became head of the sci-tech Division of the New York Public Library.)

I often wonder how many college students are like I was, having no idea of the possibilities of a career in special libraries. I hope that someday the Association will launch a campaign of sending members to each college and university, talking with appropriate faculty members and guidance counselors, collectively reaching all schools. I'm

sure many of us would volunteer to visit a local college. Ideally it should be a year-in, year-out program, not a one-shot effort. There are bound to be many prospective SLA members out there.

RH: What do you think are the main challenges for information professionals today?

EM: I think the most significant problem is that of keeping abreast of new techniques and products—there is such a flood of new equipment, new software, and innovative techniques. We are fortunate in having many avenues within SLA to help us—the conferences, short courses, A/V products, publications, and, of course, its members, who readily share their knowledge with fellow members.

RH: Do you think there were challenges 25 years ago that are as strong or stronger today?

EM: I feel it is more difficult to keep abreast of developments today than it was 25 years ago. Choices of equipment, software, and new management techniques are far more vexing now than then. I can remember when all you needed for a so called high tech library was a photocopier and a microfilm reader printer. We all realize we can give so much better service now with 1990s technology, but we pay a price, having to take the time to select it, to learn how to use it, and to teach our staffs/users what it can do for them.

RH: What have been the most intriguing experiences for you?

EM: Aside from being very satisfied with my daily routines of teaching and working on various projects, two experiences stand out. One was traveling to some 20 sci-tech university libraries

ranging from Florida to Vancouver, gathering material for a book entitled *University Science and Engineering Libraries*, which came out in two editions, one set of travel schedules for each. I was fortunate to get travel funding from the Council on Library Resources. I met many interesting people and saw a variety of libraries. The other was serving on the SLA Board for a term as Treasurer, rubbing shoulders with outstanding SLA members. I should also mention the satisfaction of doing some consulting; each project is like a little puzzle that needs to be solved.

RH: What are some of the new publications we can look forward to seeing from you?

EM: There are two books that should be published before the end of the year. One is the 2nd edition of *Special Libraries and Information Centers*, written as a textbook; SLA is the publisher. The other, published by Qryx Press, is *Understanding Science and Technology Information Sources*, intended to help students learn the features of patents, technical reports and other sci-tech sources; Beatrice Kovacs is the co-author. Otherwise I'll be content to continue as editor of *Sci-Tech News* as long as I'm needed.

RH: What upcoming events are of particular interest to you and why?

EM: I always enjoy conferences, whether those of SLA, ASIS or others related to new technologies. Whether international, national, or local, I almost

always find the time and expense well worth it. Talking to attendees is often as educational as the formal program.

RH: Since retiring last year from the Columbia School of Library Service, what have you been doing? What are your plans for the future?

EM: I've continued to teach one course per semester and serve as the sponsor of the SLA Student Chapter. I've had more time to work in the information brokerage firm I formed with Janice McCue, doing consulting, indexing, and tutoring in online search techniques.

RH: Is there anything you would like to add or comment on for our readers that we haven't covered?

EM: I think one point we often forget is the variety of positions people trained as special librarians can move to--for example, indexing, translating, systems analysis, database managing, to name a few. The list of opportunities is constantly growing for those who are abreast of the times.

RH: As you can see, Ellis is constantly adding to the many contributions he has made to librarianship over his long and distinguished career. It was a pleasure to speak with him, and we all wish him continuing success in his endeavors. More information about him can be found in *SciTech News*, vol. 39, no. 1, Jan. 1985, as well as in *Special Libraries*, June 1990. ❖