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## Remembering Bob Ellett

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# Remembering Bob Ellett

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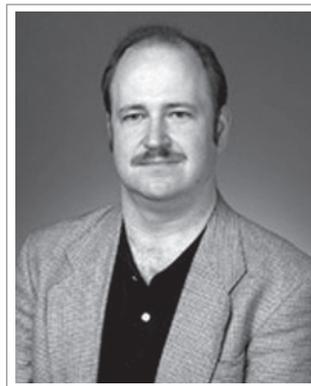
The library world suffered a great loss when Dr. Robert O. Ellett, Jr. (May 24, 1964–Jan. 9, 2013) left us for his heavenly home, suddenly and far too soon. He had served as Chief of Cataloging at the Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia for 24 years, and at the time of his death was just beginning to transition into a new role as Head of Metadata for both the Norfolk campus and its parent institution, the National Defense University in Washington, DC. He had also served since 2004 as a part-time cataloging professor for San Jose State University's online MLIS program.

Bob often admitted to being a “workaholic,” and his family described him as an “overachiever.” A list of his many accomplishments illustrates his hard work and dedication to the profession, as well as the respect that his colleagues had for his leadership and expertise. Over the years he held a number of positions in ALA, including Chair of the Heads of Cataloging Discussion Group, Chair of the Cataloging and Classification Research Discussion Group, member of the ALCTS Cataloging & Classification Section Executive Committee, member of the Committee for the Education, Training, and Recruitment of Catalogers, and member of the Resource Description & Access (RDA) Planning and Programming Task Force. He also served a term as a member of the OCLC Members' Council. He was an active participant in the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC), and served on the PCC Policy Committee, the PCC Standing Committee on Training, and the BIBCO Operations Committee. As the founder and coordinator of the Virginia NACO/SACO funnel, he trained me and other local catalogers to create authority records for LC's authority file, and also encouraged us to propose new subject headings for LC's subject headings list – I had never realized before that “average” librarians outside of the Library of Congress could do that, but thanks to his guidance, I have now had a number of proposals approved!

He had a passion for teaching. His students at San Jose State loved “Dr. Bob,” both for the way in which he was able to make a difficult subject fun, and for his sincere desire to see his students succeed. One student described him as a “Teacher with a capital T,” and another simply called him “amazing.” He was always excited when he could help a student to win an award, be placed in an internship, or just realize that he or she actually wanted to be a cataloger.

Bob was also a popular conference speaker and workshop presenter. He served as a trainer for the PCC, sometimes presenting workshops at the Library of Congress or other federal libraries. He was a frequent presenter at ALA, VLA (Virginia Library Association), and CLA (California Library Association), as well as OLAC (Online Audiovisual Catalogers) and NASIG (North American Serials Interest Group). He even had an opportunity to speak at a conference for government librarians in Spain! In recent years he became especially knowledgeable about RDA, and presented a number of special workshops on RDA, including several ALA pre-conferences. He was concerned about making his presentations available to as many people as possible, and sometimes agreed to participate as a presenter only if there was an online component of the workshop. I especially appreciated a workshop on cataloging digital media that he presented in person in California, but that I was able to attend virtually at home in Virginia. This is the kind of training that catalogers need more of, and losing Bob will leave a huge void in the field of cataloging education.

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Bob attended his first ACL conference in 1993. As in most other areas of his life, once he joined ACL he quickly became involved in a variety of areas. In addition to presenting a cataloging workshop at every conference that he was able to attend, he also served for several years as the Review Editor for *The Christian Librarian*, as well as serving a term on the CILA team.

ACL catalogers always appreciated Bob's workshops on current issues in cataloging such as format integration (in 1995) or PCC core records (in 2000). Although he wasn't able to attend the 2005 conference, a workshop that I presented that year was actually based on his dissertation research on how libraries use PCC records in copy cataloging, and what types of editing they do. In recent years, many of us wished that Bob had been able to get back to ACL to help us learn RDA. Unfortunately, he had to end his active participation in ACL due to a lack of support from his library and his desire to get more involved in ALA and other broader-based organizations.

Anyone who attended the CILA program at Northwestern in 1997 remembers Bob's very memorable presentation on his 1995 trip to

India to help set up a library system for the Gospel for Asia Seminary. In spite of his stories of a variety of difficult conditions that he faced on that trip, he was able to convince Ferne Weimer, Floyd Votaw, and me to join him for a return trip in the Fall of 1997 to provide additional training for the library staff there. We used *The Librarian's Manual* as our text, and he and I team-taught the cataloging sections, adapting the text to teach LC classification and subject headings instead of Dewey and Sears. "Sir Robert" (so nicknamed both because that was name of the London hotel he chose for us to stay in on our way to India and because our Indian students always addressed us as "Sir" or "Madam") did an excellent job of leading our team and ensured that this was a memorable experience for all of us.

Bob's love of the Lord and desire to serve Him were evident in every aspect of his life, from his service with ACL and CILA to his church activities and his ability to turn almost any situation into an opportunity for ministry. Those of us who had the privilege of being members of his Sunday school class appreciated his spiritual insights and his practical illustrations of the ways in which God was working in his life. In spite of a number of difficult circumstances that he had to deal with, he was generally able to keep a positive attitude and approach life with his ever-present sense of humor and a smile. His gentle spirit, generosity, and loving devotion to his mother and the rest of his family and friends were further evidences of his strong Christian character.

Librarians around the world, and especially catalogers, will miss Bob Ellett's professional contributions, and those who knew and loved him will miss having him in our lives, but we can rejoice in knowing that he is spending eternity with the Lord he loves. Our loss is heaven's gain. †

