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WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

A TRIBUTE TO SHIRLEY N. WOOD

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The contributions of people like Shirley Wood, one of the founders of the Association of Christian Librarians, often go unnoticed due to the selflessness of their service. It is good to be reminded once in a while that what we take for granted in our 21st century library work was at one time the result of some former librarian's creativity. In the Christian library community, an individual's contributions are frequently done quietly, which is the way it should be if one wished to serve in the Scriptural way of not calling attention to oneself or one's service.

Shirley Wood expended large amounts of energy and creativity in her work at Columbia International University from 1944-1974 and in the larger Christian librarian world of those same years. Archival records show many instances of creative ideas that have since taken root as a "natural" part of the Christian library scene all over the world. In honor of that service, Shirley was recently honored at CIU by having the main Ministry Resource Room named in her honor.

Where, when and how did those ACL "duplicate exchange lists" ever get their start? Did they just appear one day in the mail or did someone actually come up with the idea? One thing is for sure... they have certainly helped Christian libraries save money through the years by sharing resources in this way.

For that matter, where did this Association of Christian Librarians come from? It has been a great source of encouragement and challenge for

Christian librarians all over the world to be able to relate to others of similar faith and profession.

Also, think of the help the *Christian Periodical Index* has been to students and faculty alike in their intellectual pursuits at many Christian institutions around the world. Where would they have been without the CPI as a resource in those endeavors? There is no question of the value of that tool through the years since its creation.

To truly appreciate such enhancements to our professional life, we need to look back more than fifty years to the early 1940s. A new library school graduate came to South Carolina from New York to work in the library at Columbia Bible College (now known as Columbia International University). Shirley Wood had graduated from library school and wanted to study the Bible and somehow use her library skills in God's service for the rest of her life. She had heard of the twenty-year-old Bible college in Columbia, South Carolina, and decided that this would be the place to pursue her goal. She fell in love with the school immediately, so when Dr. Robert C. McQuilkin, the President of the college, invited her to become the head librarian she was ecstatic. In a letter to him in July 1947, Shirley expressed her gratitude for this opportunity by telling Dr. McQuilkin: "May I express my gratitude to the board for the expression of confidence in making me the official 'librarian' ... It is my earnest and sincere purpose to 'fill full' the position, as the Lord gives grace, and to do my best to help the C.B.C.

Library be an increasingly useful tool in accomplishing our purpose. 'To know Him and to make Him known.' I am continually grateful for the opportunity of having this share in the most worthwhile enterprise in the world..."¹

Shirley loved the Lord and she loved library work. She thought that "being paid for the privilege of serving the Lord by doing what I like best still seems to me about parallel with Moses' mother receiving wages for caring for her own baby."²

The college had no professionally trained librarian previous to Shirley's appointment, giving her that special distinction of being the first to serve full-time in that position. She attacked the job with an enthusiasm that never ended, even when she retired from Columbia in 1974.

Shirley's tenure as librarian was marked by numerous notable activities, not to mention the personality she put into the life of the library for library staff, college faculty members and students alike. She established the motto of the library, "Not to be ministered unto but to minister," by putting it into practice from the very beginning of her work there. Her goal was to make anything that anyone wanted to use available for check-out. That meant that if someone needed a bouquet of artificial flowers, she would make a card for it and that person could check it out!

Besides the motto she worked by, Shirley also emphasized that each library staff member should strive to be "fu-tse." Shirley learned this Chinese word which means "responsibility" from a former library staff member. She learned a Sunday school song from that staff member entitled, "Fu-tse", which she taught each year to new staff members. This, Shirley would explain to them each year, means doing your assigned duties responsibly and voluntarily taking on extra tasks that just need to be done. As staff members graduated, they received diplomas from the library as well as from the college

(not at the same ceremony, of course), conferring degrees of "Fu-tse", "Cum Fu-tse", and "Magna cum Fu-tse". This was all not just frivolous activity. Shirley was using these means to help develop future Christian workers and leaders. It was her mission to help students develop a good work ethic and be able to use library skills in their missionary work overseas where often they would be alone in trying to carry out the task of setting up a library.

Because of her desire to help train missionaries and pastors, Shirley developed a Library Science course for the Bible college in which she taught the basics of library organization and operation that could be used in a setting other than the "modern" American setting. She taught that class for several years in the 1950s.

Along with her regular library duties of administration, acquisitions, cataloging and reference work, Shirley also prepared a file of as many mission organizations as she could find information on (this was in the days before the missions handbooks and directories

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were widely available). She included information about the mission, its address, size, purpose, finances, whatever she could learn. This file was kept up-to-date and was heavily used in the years before other sources were so easily available.

In 1951, the fairly new Accrediting Association of Bible Institutes and Colleges was revising its standards of membership to include a library section. Because Columbia Bible College was a member of the AABIC,

Shirley had been involved in that exercise, as had librarians from other member schools. One of the concerns of all the members was how to help build up the libraries of the member schools to meet the new standards more fully, given the limited financial resources available to most of them. As she pondered this challenge, Shirley came up with a new idea that had not been tried in Bible colleges before. She wrote a letter to the librarians of all the member schools in November 1951 in which she made a unique proposal:

"...it occurred to me that we might benefit from a cooperative project such as is employed by some of the secular college libraries, namely an exchange 'pool.' Under this plan, the libraries participating engage at least twice a year to send out to each of the other libraries a list of the books and periodicals they have on hand but do not wish to keep for themselves... For the cost of a few dollars in postage then, we might all be helped... The Columbia Bible College Library is willing to under-

take to act as a central chairman. If you are interested in joining in such a plan, will you please drop us a card to that effect, and we will furnish you with the list of schools wishing to be included."³

Thus the ACL duplicate exchange

came into being and is still being used and appreciated by Christian librarians today.

It was not long after this, 1956 to be exact, that Shirley was thinking about how much she would like more fellowship on a professional level with other librarians whose purposes and goals were similar to hers. She had several friends she had met through the years who were serving as librarians in similar institutions. Shirley wrote a letter to each of them, proposing that

they meet together and look into the idea of forming an association under which Christian librarians could have social and professional fellowship. Out of that meeting of five librarians, the Christian Librarians' Fellowship was born.

In those early days of Shirley's service in the Bible college library, there was no index for many of the

The Association of Christian Librarians is fortunate to have the heritage of Shirley Wood and her contemporaries who fearlessly and creatively served the Christian library world.

Christian periodicals that she was receiving, so Shirley would spend time indexing the most important or outstanding articles in magazines received that week.

How many times have we stopped and thanked God for the *Christian Periodical Index*, the "child" of the Association of Christian Librarians? Without the ACL there would be no CPI, and we might all be doing what Shirley was doing in the 1940s.

Shirley always tried to keep up with library staff who went on to serve as missionaries around the world. She wrote letters and sent birthday and Christmas cards to dozens of former staff members. Many of them returned to the campus bearing gifts for Shirley in appreciation for her help and encouragement. Most of those gifts were in the form of curios from their adopted countries. After a while, Shirley had a collection far too large for her tiny house. How she could enjoy them and make them particularly useful at the same time was no big challenge to Shirley. She created a lending library of curios that current students and college faculty and staff members could use in their teaching or speaking engagements. That collection is still intact, only larger, as missionaries continue to donate items.

The Ministry Resource Department at Columbia International University today sports a fascinating display of

items from all over the world, including a hippo's foot and a tiger's claw necklace, among other interesting items.

All of which brings us to yet another of Shirley's outstanding accomplishments as librarian at Columbia, the Ministry Resource Department.

Because of the demand for visual aids to help students in their required Christian Service

assignments, Shirley created a visual aid lending library, now known on campus as the MRD. There was no money for purchasing such items yet the students needed help for their teaching, so Shirley gathered up her own visuals from home, brought them to the library and prepared them for lending.

Flannelgraph lessons, puppets, models and all the other unusual items she had for lending presented their own challenge as Shirley tried to classify them in the cataloging process. Never one to shirk from a challenge, Shirley created her own classification scheme based on the Dewey decimal system she was using in the library at the time. This adaptation proved successful and is still being used to classify items for use in the Ministry Resource Department at Columbia International University. Numerous other libraries also use the same classification adaptation for their collections.

Miss Shirley Wood is now retired and living in a retirement home in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. She has always served the Lord faithfully, diligently and fervently, not expecting any recognition for her creative work through the years. That makes her recent recognition a special one indeed.

Recently the Board of Trustees of Columbia International University made a decision to honor Shirley by naming the Shirley N. Wood Ministry Resource Room after her, complete

with an engraved plaque and portrait to be hung at the door to the department.

*THE SHIRLEY N. WOOD
MINISTRY RESOURCE ROOM
Dedicated to the glory of God and
in honor of Shirley N. Wood, Co-
lumbia International University
librarian from 1944-1975, who
began the Ministry Resource De-
partment with the contribution of
her own teaching resources and
missions curios and whose vision
and sacrifice continue to motivate
those who follow her.*

Columbia International University is not alone in their indebtedness to this dedicated and gifted woman. The Association of Christian Librarians is fortunate to have the heritage of Shirley Wood and her contemporaries who fearlessly and creatively served the Christian library world. We know your greatest reward is in heaven, but we at Columbia International University Library are especially grateful for the heritage of selfless, creative, godly service which you have left us.

¹ Letter to Dr. Robert C. McQuilkin, July 29, 1947. Columbia International University Archives.

² Letter to Dr. Robert C. McQuilkin, June 1946. Columbia International University Archives.

³ Letter to Accrediting Association of Bible Institutes and Colleges member libraries, November 1, 1951. Columbia International University Archives.