

In Memoriam Elizabeth Mary Moys 1928 to 2002

Betty Moys, one of the great figures of law librarianship of the twentieth century, died suddenly on 1 February 2002 after a period of several months' ill-health. She will be remembered for the classification scheme which bears her name, but she contributed so much more throughout her life to the library and indexing professions.

Elizabeth Mary Moys, known to all her colleagues as Betty, was born on 26 June 1928 at Wickford, Essex. She was brought up in Kent where she spent most of her life when in the UK. She attended Chislehurst County Grammar School then went on to Queen Mary College, London, to read English and took a BA (Hons) degree in 1949. Her first job was in Crayford Branch of Kent County Library Service from 1949–50. After library school in 1950–51 (North-western Polytechnic School of Librarianship, where she was one of the leading spirits in starting a School of Librarianship Students' Association), Betty became reference librarian at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1951.

She was appointed Assistant Librarian at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in 1952 after a short period as a temporary cataloguer. In effect she was deputy librarian to Howard Drake, from whom she claimed to have learnt all she knew about law librarianship. She took part in the early development of the Institute as a national and international centre for postgraduate legal research. Betty had a major share in compiling the early editions of the Institute's union lists of holdings of serials and foreign law, publications probably little known to today's generation of computer-based legal information professionals, but essential aids to so many law librarians from the 1950s to 1980s. As part of the international role of the Institute, she became a member of the International Association of Law Libraries, probably at the prompting of Howard Drake. She also spent two months in 1956 in the USA visiting academic libraries in the north east, working at Yale Law Library, and representing IALS at the American Association of Law Libraries' Golden Jubilee meeting in Philadelphia, having been awarded AALL's overseas travelling scholarship, given by Oceana Publications, to attend the Convention.

Her itinerary sounds like a law librarian's dream – starting in New York she planned to visit New York, Yale, Harvard, Boston, Cape Ann, back to New York and then upstate to Albany and Rochester, on to Philadelphia, then to Greenville PA via Pittsburgh, on to Washington with a trip to Williamsburg and return to London on the Queen

Elizabeth, appearing at IALS on 19th July 'if still alive' (her own words). The visit was a two-way experience. While Betty had the opportunity of seeing major law libraries and of collecting some periodical parts for the Institute, Yale took the opportunity to ask about their British colonial literature and Betty contributed an article on 'The Library of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, London' to the *Law Library Journal* (vol. 49, 1956 p.23–30). Coincidentally her article was printed immediately after a survey of subject classification in law libraries and was followed later in the volume by a report of the Golden Jubilee meeting which recorded a panel discussion on classification schemes for law libraries. I like to think that Betty attended the session.

In August 1959 Betty left the Institute and went to the University of Ghana as Assistant Librarian. She was in turn Orders Librarian, Chief Cataloguer, temporary Acting Librarian and then Deputy Librarian. The Chief Justice of Ghana commissioned her to review the organisation of the Supreme Court Library and make recommendations for its development. Her report in 1960 ran to 57 pages and covered all aspects of running a law library, including cataloguing and classification (only one and a half pages). In its production Betty visited three other law libraries in Accra and produced a union list of the four libraries' holdings plus recommendations for purchases for the Supreme Court Library. The report also recommended a programme of co-operation amongst the four libraries. A 19-page appendix described current classification schemes for law, presented the results of a survey of users on the future arrangement of the stock in the Supreme Court Library and outlined a new scheme in 8 pages. It looks rather familiar!

Betty moved to Lagos in January 1963 where she had been invited to take charge of the library for the new University of Lagos. She planned and implemented the library from scratch, including the new library building, which was almost ready for occupation when she left in 1965 amidst the troubled political events of the mid-1960s.

While in Africa Betty plunged herself into professional activities. She was founder and first chairman of the Law

Library Advisory Committee in Accra, and of the Standing Joint Committee on Library Co-operation in Lagos; a member of the Library Advisory Committee to the Federal Minister of Education in Nigeria; active in the Nigerian Library Association including chairman of the Lagos Division; a lecturer in cataloguing and classification at the Ghana Library School; an occasional lecturer at Ibadan University Institute of Librarianship; and a speaker at the Leverhulme Conference on University Libraries in Tropical Africa in 1964 and at the Annual Conference of the Nigerian Library Association in 1965. Betty also edited with others a *Directory of Lagos Libraries*.

On returning to the UK, Betty became Superintendent of the Reading Room and Departmental Libraries at Glasgow University Library from 1965 to 1967. In 1968 she was appointed Librarian of Goldsmiths' College, University of London, which enabled her to return to her beloved Kent. Betty remained at Goldsmiths' College for 21 years until her retirement in 1989. It is ironic that her appointment to a library with no law collection coincided with the publication in 1968 of the first edition of the *Moys* classification scheme. No doubt her colleagues have many stories to tell of Betty's time at Goldsmiths' College. My memory is of visiting her there once and trying to work out from the map and her directions which of the two stations at New Cross to alight from the train. On another occasion during the editing of one of the editions of the *Manual* she recounted the process of appointing an architect for the extension to the Library. The successful person seemed to meet her exacting standards of attention to detail.

A career such as this would be achievement enough for many people. However, this is only the beginning of the story because Betty was as active outside work as within it. Mention has already been made of some professional participation. She was also active in IALL, BIALL and the Society of Indexers and edited several books as well as devising *Moys*.

For much of her career Betty was a member of IALL and, characteristically, an active contributor including as a member of its Board of Directors from 1965–68. She wrote book reviews for the Association's *Bulletin* and edited the *European Law Libraries Guide*, which the Council of Europe had commissioned from IALL as a way of improving co-operation amongst European law libraries. It was published in 1971. In 1969 Betty represented IALL on a panel of the British Standards Institution which was preparing an English full edition of UDC class 3.

Betty recorded that the *Moys* classification scheme was developed and tested during her time at the University of Lagos Library¹. However, it is clear that she saw the need for it while working in Accra, which had a home-made LC-lookalike scheme for law, and her interest in classification may have developed during her years at IALS. Whatever the catalyst, Betty chose law classification for her Library Association FLA thesis and worked on it in Africa, with Howard Drake supervising from London. Betty attained her fellowship in 1965 and soon found a publisher. A *classification scheme for law books* (known around the law library world as *Moys*) was published in four editions between 1968 and 2001 and adopted by about 200 law libraries from all sectors – law firm, court and academic - around the world, principally in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK. The enthusiasm with which the scheme was immediately taken up is witness to both the need for it and its excellence. Tributes describe it as 'just making perfect sense' and distinguished by 'rationality and elegance' 'clarity and clear logic'. The thesaurus, which was added in the 2nd edition although under consideration by Betty and BIALL in the early 1970s, has been described as a 'tour de force'. Betty supported librarians who were about to adopt the scheme by visiting them in order to help them get started. The scheme's users were drawn into subsequent revisions and the scheme will undoubtedly continue through the *Moys* User Group set up in 1995. It should not be overlooked that



Betty Moys

the production of a classification scheme is a remarkable intellectual effort which requires a deep understanding of the subject and its literature as well as of classification theory. Betty's achievement is all the more remarkable as she was not working daily with law materials.

But Betty's activities in law librarianship encompassed so much more. She was one of that founding group who had such a formative influence on BIALl and, in her case, on its publications. Betty participated in both the Harrogate Workshops, at the second of which BIALl was founded. At the first workshop she gave a long session on cataloguing and classification and provided a pre-publication preview of the *Moys* scheme. At the second workshop she gave a shorter talk on cataloguing legislative materials.

The genesis of a journal for BIALl is described in the Association's history². To quote from Wallace Breem's memorandum on publications in 1969 'The success of any new journal is almost always largely due to the efforts of its first editor, for whom it becomes a work of devotion'³. Little could he have realised how accurate a description this would be of Betty's editorship of BIALl's journal, *The Law Librarian*, which she had agreed at short notice to take on. With characteristic thoroughness and with the help of Allan Appleby of Sweet & Maxwell and of Butterworths, Betty saw the journal from concept to publication as a properly printed 16-page per issue journal in a few months. Betty edited the journal for seven years, setting and maintaining a high standard of content and presentation.

Betty's title of Hon. Editor also encompassed responsibility for BIALl's publication programme. The idea of a manual of law librarianship was conceived at one of the Harrogate Workshops and was a priority for the new Association. Both outline and detail of the specification were drawn up during one lengthy BIALl Publications Subcommittee meeting which continued over a gammon and chips supper at the Russell Hotel in Southampton Row after the committee venue closed – a favourite adjourning place for many early BIALl committee meetings. The aim of the book was to provide a reference work on legal literature and library procedure. The latter was thought necessary because so many law librarians were one man bands. Betty found contributors, produced a prospectus, negotiated with publishers, specified house style for the manuscripts, guided and edited contributors, compiled the index and the list of publications cited. 'The Manual' as it was always known even before the title was formally agreed, was launched at the 1976 Oxford Conference. This is one of the few early BIALl events which was recorded. The photograph of Betty and contributors taken at the celebration of the *Manual's* launch can be seen in BIALl's *History*. Her work on the *Manual* earned Betty the first award from the Howard Drake Memorial Fund presented at a small ceremony at IALS in 1977. This was entirely

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appropriate bearing in mind Howard Drake's influence on Betty's early career. By the early 1980s, some of the *Manual* had become out of date and BIALl asked Betty to assess the appropriateness of minor revisions or a new edition. Betty's recommendation after a chapter by chapter analysis of obsolescence and changes was for a new edition. It was inevitable that she was asked to edit it and the second edition duly appeared in 1987.

Throughout this period Betty was also active on BIALl's Executive Committee and other committees, especially Cataloguing and Classification which made several submissions under her guidance on revisions to AACR and 18th and 19th Dewey.

Betty's good sense and hard work in BIALl's early days helped to make the Association what it is today. Her involvement in BIALl reduced after the publication of the second edition of the *Manual* and her retirement, although she continued to attend BIALl's annual conference and, indeed, was still in demand as an editor. In 1998 she was joint recipient of BIALl's Wallace Breem Award for editing *Information Sources in Law*. As a leader in the field, BIALl invited her to be its Vice President (1987–90), and then its President from 1990 to 1993.

Betty's energies were not diminished by retirement, only re-directed to another career. She joined the Society of Indexers in 1985, qualified as a registered indexer and set up freelance. Betty was an active member of the Society, serving as its Treasurer from 1992 to 1999, as a member of its Publications Committee from 1992, and as Vice-President at the time of her death. She was joint author of *Indexing Legal Materials* published by the Society. Her index to the *British Tax Encyclopedia* won her the Wheatley Medal in 1991 and the index to *Archbold's Criminal Practice* gained her a nomination for the Wheatley medal. She was also a member of the LA/Society of Indexers' Wheatley panel.

Betty's outstanding career was fittingly recognised by the award of the MBE for services to classification and indexing in the Birthday Honours List in 2000. Those of us in on the secret were delighted; Betty said that "The envelope with 'Prime Minister' on the front was a great surprise when it arrived a few weeks ago! It is very gratifying, and also humbling, as I know that so many people have done so much more than I have." I know few, if any, people who could have done so much!

Betty's great strengths were in planning and executing projects which required both vision and attention to detail. She saw both the wood and the trees. She never lost sight of the overall context of a publication or the classification scheme and was also able to implement it through meticulous planning and attention to detail. She created her reputation for 'arm-twisting' to obtain contributors or collaborators but having twisted one's arm, she gave her time unstintingly to support her 'victims' and she was always on top of the smallest detail whenever a contributor

consulted her. She could also be a firm taskmaster – and we were the better librarians for having to meet her standards.

To anyone who did not know Betty, this account is enough to inspire awe and trepidation, but she was not like that. Meeting her professionally or socially, no-one would have been over-awed because Betty was good company, interested in everyone and everything and full of humour. She did not expect to be the centre of attention and would be surprised, and probably uncomfortable, with the tributes which have been paid to her. Despite what looks like a workaholic career, Betty had time for leisure. She developed an interest in gardening and landscaped the sloping site of 'Hengist' her marvellously-named home in Badgers Mount. She loved music and sang with a choir. She was fond of rambling. She played bridge, including running bridge classes

and going on bridge holidays. She enjoyed photography and Australian colleagues recount how she had a marvellous time taking pictures during her trip there in 1991.

Betty was warmly regarded and admired by friends and colleagues around the world. With Betty's passing one of the giants of the law library and indexing professions has left us but the name of *Moys* will remain as her memorial.

Barbara Tearle

President, British and Irish Association of Law Librarians

This obituary has been written with the help of Betty's family, friends and colleagues, to whom acknowledgement is gratefully made.

Footnotes

1. Preface to *A classification scheme for law books*, by Elizabeth M. Moys, London, Butterworths, 1968. p vii.

2. *A History of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians 1969–1999*, by Mary Blake, BIALL, [1999]

3. *Ibid* p.52