

# In Memoriam: Phyllis Allen Richmond

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On October 6, 1997, Phyllis Allen Richmond, internationally known librarian, information scientist, and educator, died from complications of Alzheimer's disease. She was 76 years old. At the culmination of her career, she was a professor emeritus of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, where she served from 1970 to 1984 as a distinguished expert in classification theory and practice.

Born in Boston and raised in Rochester, New York, Phyllis Richmond has an educational profile with more than fifteen years of distinguished scholarship. In 1942 she received an A.B. in history from Western Reserve University, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Following a semester as a graduate scholar at Bryn Mawr College, she served as curator of history at the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences from 1943 to 1945 and again in 1946/47. Continuing her education, in 1946 she received an A.M. degree in history from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1947/48 she was an American Council of Learned Societies fellow at Cornell University, and in 1948/49 was a Bennett fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, where she received a Ph.D. in the history of science. Following this, she was a research assistant to the director of the Institute of the History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University. Then in 1952 she entered the School of Library Science at Western Reserve University, receiving an M.S.L.S. degree in 1956, and was elected to Beta Phi Mu. Dr. Richmond's academic

excellence, together with her intense interest in history, science, medicine, and information science, was to have a profound influence on her career as reflected in her professional activities, her research, and her writings.

Phyllis Richmond started her career as a librarian at the University of Rochester, where she began as a serials cataloger (1955 to 1960), then served as supervisor of the River Campus Science Libraries (1961 to 1966) and as information systems specialist (1966 to 1968). Innovation was a factor early in her career, when she had a strong interest in the application of computer technology. While at Rochester she was responsible for six computer-produced title-a-line book catalogs (1960 to 1968) for the science and engineering libraries and for two computer-produced serials lists (1966 to 1968), all of which were leading edge projects for that time. Following a brief period in 1966, when she was a visiting professor at the School of Library Science, Western Reserve University, Dr. Richmond moved from a career in librarianship to library and information science education, first at Syracuse University in 1969 and then at Case Western Reserve University from 1970 until her retirement in 1984.

Dr. Richmond's career as an educator was marked by the fact that she was an outstanding teacher of cataloging and classification and guided numerous Ph.D. candidates through their programs. In particular, she brought to her teaching a

rare mixture of theory and practice, and she was arguably the most outstanding classification theorist in North America for her time. She had the ability to present complex topics with clarity and wit and to instill in her students an enthusiasm for their work heretofore unknown to them. In her role as an educator, she endeavored to cultivate in her students an understanding of classification and classificatory structure as the basis for the organization of all knowledge and indeed all aspects of life in general. She was a firm believer in the fact that "some kind of classification is inherent in everything we do" (Richmond 1977, 108). An early supporter of interdisciplinary study, she encouraged students to think, to analyze and compare, and to seek logical solutions to problems. For teaching purposes, she frequently drew analogies between library classification and the rest of the world, inviting comparisons between scientific subjects and cataloging and classification. For example, she once posed the following problem for one of her Ph.D. students: "There are many kinds of medicine based on different theoretical foundations: regular, homeopathic, allopathic, osteopathic, naturopathic, chiropractic, etc. All practicing medicine uses the same materia medica (i.e., if licensed by a state they can write prescriptions for drugs). What are the equivalents in classification and cataloging?"

As a library and information science educator, Phyllis Richmond also took an active part in professional associations, most particularly in ALA and the American Society of Information Science (ASIS). In ALA, she was an inveterate participant in ALCTS, bringing to them her interest in practice and her knowledge and expertise in research and library and information science education. She served as chair of the CCS Classification Committee, member of the CCS Policy and Research Committee, member of the CCS Executive Committee, secretary of the Serials Section, and chair of the Esther J. Piercy Award Committee. For many years, among her many commitments was her work as assistant editor of *LRTS*, where she refereed many papers and encouraged many aspiring research-

ers. She was also very generous with her time and effort in contributions to ALCTS programs, workshops, and classification institutes. An active member of ASIS, Dr. Richmond was one of the American pioneers in documentation and information science, serving as the first chair of its Classification Research Special Interest Group (ASIS SIG/CR). Indeed her expertise and reputation took her beyond these two bodies to serve as member of two subcommittees of the Committee Z39 of the American National Standards Institute, as consultant on various information science projects at the American Institute of Physics, and on the Bibliographic Control of Microforms Project of the Association of Research Libraries.

Dr. Richmond was also highly regarded internationally in the field of classification theory. She was a corresponding member of the British Classification Research Group (CRG), which strongly influenced her involvement in the formation of a Classification Study Research Group (CSRG) in the United States. She also presented papers at major international conferences, among which were the FID/CR International Study Conferences on Classification Research. In this context, she participated at the second study conference in Elsinore, Denmark, in 1961 and prepared a paper for the third conference, which was presented in Bombay, India, in 1975. Although the CSRG did not have a long life, its aims and objectives are somewhat embodied in the activities of the ASIS SIG/CR and may be regarded as an important part of Phyllis Richmond's legacy to classification research.

With respect to her writings, her multifaceted expertise and creative mind made it possible for Dr. Richmond to gain deep insights into the theoretical aspects of knowledge and to arrive at new and intriguing methods of viewing her subject. She was prolific and truly interdisciplinary. By the time she retired, she had produced more than 75 articles and a book. She always had fresh approaches to her subject, and a number of her writings and presentations are unique in this regard.

For example, her article on "Cats: An Example of Concealed Classification in Subject Headings" (Richmond 1959) reflected not only her pleasure in her beloved cats, Fluffy and Brownie, but also it brought together her knowledge of zoology and the problems of structure in the *Library of Congress Subject Headings*. Similarly her keynote address, titled "Mr. Dewey's Classification, Mr. Cutter's Catalog and Dr. Hitchcock's Chickens" presented at the 1976 ALA/RTSD meeting as a part of the centennial of ALA, *Dewey Decimal Classification*, and *Cutter's Rules for a Dictionary Catalog*, provided much food for thought for her audience. The paper drew on the study of dinosaurs to illustrate the importance of research as "an activity that constantly reinterprets the past as well as the present" (Richmond 1977, 108) in the development of the principles that should underlie the work that catalogers and classifiers do in practice. It is an article that, more than twenty years later, still has much to say to library and information science. Always looking to the future in her research and teaching, Dr. Richmond was a staunch supporter of modern methods of classification. In particular, she had become the North American expert on faceted classification and the work of S. R. Ranganathan and the CRC. As a basis for the study of classification she produced a "Reading List in Classification Theory" (Richmond 1972). This bibliography was structured in such a way as to provide a well-organized and useful approach to a thorough study of this topic. Ultimately her continuing interest in modern classification systems led her to an investigation of the PRECIS system, a product of the work of the CRC, and resulted in her very lucid and useful Introduction to PRECIS for North American Usage.

For her energy, her scholarship, and

her intellect, Phyllis Richmond received numerous awards of distinction that were justly deserved. In addition to her scholastic awards, she was honored professionally. In 1968, the American Documentation Institute (predecessor of ASIS) awarded her its Technical Service Award, and in 1972 she was the first woman to receive the ASIS Award of Merit for her contribution to the understanding of the theory and practice of subject analysis, in general, and classification in particular. Then, in 1977, she was honored with ALA/RTSD/CCS's highest award—the Margaret Mann citation as an outstanding individual in the fields of cataloging and classification, as a writer, scholar, practitioner, teacher and contributor of common sense and wisdom.

Indeed, during her lifetime, Dr. Phyllis Allen Richmond made an outstanding contribution to the development of theory and practice of classification—a contribution on which her successors have been able to build and expand. She was exceptional for her time and has left a lasting legacy that should not be forgotten. In all of this, Phyllis was a quiet unassuming person who enjoyed life through her many friends, colleagues and students, her beloved cats, and her ham radio. She is greatly missed both personally and professionally. Hers was an act that will not be easy to follow.

#### REFERENCES

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