

Henry Heaney

Henry Heaney was the University Librarian and Keeper of the Hunterian Books and Manuscripts at the University of Glasgow for twenty years until his retirement in September 1998. He was born in Newry, Northern Ireland, and after secondary school went to Queen's University Belfast. In 1957 he graduated with a BA in Modern History, and in 1970 took an MA with a thesis on prison reform, a subject which remained dear to his heart.

After graduating he became an assistant librarian at Queens, and in 1963 obtained his first post as Librarian at Magee University College in Londonderry, which subsequently became part of the New University of Ulster. In 1972 he took up the post of University Librarian at Queen's, Belfast, and in 1975 moved to Dublin to become Librarian of University College Dublin, before coming to Glasgow in 1978.

His twenty years at Glasgow saw a revolution in the way in which the University and its Library operated, the most significant being the rise of electronic information sources and delivery. They were also characterised by significant additions to the fabric of the University Library building, the design and operation of which owed much to Henry's characteristic blend of innovation and conservatism - while always open to new initiatives and opportunities, he was well aware of the need to retain the best of past practice and activity, thereby creating an evolutionary process of change.

The many positive developments of the eighties were unfortunately matched by a prolonged period of financial uncertainty, as the various crises in Higher Education began to bite. Henry's response to these and to other developments was collaborative activity. He made sure that Glasgow was a founder member of the Consortium of University Research Libraries which he helped to transform from a small informal group to an effective and successful organisation. As CURL developed he became the chair of the management committee, and when it became a limited company the first Chairman of the Board. From a very early stage, he saw collaboration as the only way in which cash-strapped libraries would be able to work together on projects which would ensure their development, or even survival. Collaboration has resulted in a number of important products such as COPAC (a database listing many of the holdings of the CURL libraries) and SALSER (a Scotland-wide database for academic journals). Also noteworthy was his pioneering work on Conspectus, an American system for recording the strengths of libraries' collections.

Henry's interest in Conspectus mirrored another significant aspect of his work in Glasgow: his knowledge of and love for the wealth of the collections, particularly (he Special Collections. He valued his title of Keeper of the Hunterian Books and Manuscripts, and insisted on using it as part of his normal description. He was always keen to ensure that these collections were preserved, developed and exploited, regarding them as a priceless treasure which needed to be passed on to future generations in as fine a state as possible.

On the national scene, he will be best remembered as a member of the British Library Board and as a member of the Follett Committee. He ably represented academic libraries on the British Library Board at a time when the design and construction of the St. Pancras building was being virulently criticised on all sides, and defended the project - a defence amply justified as anyone who has visited the new building will agree. As a member of the Joint funding Councils', Libraries Review Group (the Follett Committee), he was part of one of the most significant developments in 20th century librarianship. The Follett recommendations changed the way in which libraries are viewed and the way in which they will develop; Henry's position on the committee was influential; as a hugely experienced and well-respected University Librarian he was able to bring an understanding both of the traditional strengths of conventional librarianship and of the exciting possibilities of IT, digitisation and networking. Follett led directly to the Anderson committee on research needs, another group on which he served with distinction. His work in all these areas was recognised by the award of an OBE in 1996.

Among other distinctions, he was a Trustee of the National Library of Scotland between 1980 and 1991 and President of the Scottish Library Association in 1990. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1996.

Henry will be remembered by those who knew him for his deep commitment to his profession, his pawkly sense of humour and his abiding interest in people; many current University Librarians have benefited from his help, encouragement and friendship as they pursued their careers. Within the University of Glasgow, he was a well-known figure and a stalwart of the College Club, whose management committee he chaired for a number of years.

His sudden death less than a year after his retirement has cut short a promising second career as historian; only this year he published an edition of the manuscript journals of Robert Graham of Redgorton under the title *A Scottish Whig in Ireland 1835-1838* - a project he had long wished to complete.

Henry is survived by his wife Mary.

Andrew Wale

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Henry Heaney – an appreciation

Andrew Wale has written of Henry's professional contribution but little of the man himself apart from his sense of humour. I should like to add a personal note.

His Keepership of the Hunterian Books and Manuscripts first brought us together as colleagues but we rapidly became friends and allies. As Keeper he had to report to me annually as well as to the Libraries Committee on the use that had been made of the Hunterian Books and MSS. This seemed to me to be a waste of effort so I soon dispensed him from the obligation.

I found that we had similar views on academic problems and that his readiness to share his knowledge was most helpful as was his advice on numerous occasions.

Henry was a very social being and knew people in all walks of life. It came in useful when we were asked jointly to supervise the publication of a book about the treasures of the University of Glasgow to mark Glasgow's year as the European City of Culture. Henry persuaded the University administration that it was desirable, in the interests of making the book a better read, to get a writer with no immediate connection to the University to weave together the texts that our staff had written. An author known to Henry was chosen but there were incredible delays while Administration made up its mind whether it could afford his fee. By the time it did, the intended writer was too busy to be able to take on the task but fortunately Henry knew, through a dining club to which they both belonged, a Glasgow graduate, journalist Robert McLaughlan, and was able to persuade him to do the job. It happened that I retired in 1990 during Glasgow's reign as City of Culture, leaving Henry to see the job through. The punning title *Gifted*, was Henry's idea.

Not only did Henry have a ready smile - indeed I cannot remember him without a smile on his face - but he possessed a great fund of comic stories. On one occasion, when I was asked to make a short but amusing speech, I was concerned that the two stories I thought of telling might be familiar to my audience so I tried them out on Henry. He had not heard either of them so I felt safe in recounting them to an audience which, it turned out, had not heard them either.

His early retirement and withdrawal to Wolverhampton came as a shock. I had not realised till then that he had become my best friend.

Frank Willett

Henry Heaney BA, MA(Belfast), FLA, OBE. Born 2nd January 1935, elected 2 March 1992, died 14th September 1999.