

*In memoriam*

We are sad to announce the death at the age of fifty-five of our distinguished colleague M. John Jolliffe, Bodley's Librarian in the University of Oxford since 1982. A friend of M. Jolliffe's and former colleague of his at the British Museum Library, Ian Willison, writes :

"John Jolliffe was one of the pioneers in the application of computers to early books (this formed the title of his classic report on the subject, published in 1974). In the larger perspective therefore he was one of the pioneers in the application of high technology to humanistic research and research librarianship in general, a major aspect of the world of learning in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Yet the importance of his Computers and Early Books: Report of the LOC Project lay not only in its introduction of the 'fingerprint', developed partly in collaboration with the I.R. H.T., and now well known to readers of the Nouvelles des Empreintes as an established technique for the automatic matching of the copies of early printed books to be recorded in a machine-readable union catalogue. Computers and Early Books was also exemplary in its demonstration of how operational research, guided by library history, could produce a realistic, detailed strategy for administering the unprecedented, massive, and politically complicated project of "compiling a machine-readable union catalogue of pre-1801 books in Oxford, Cambridge and the British Museum" (to quote from its subtitle). Though the LOC Project still remains to be completed, much of the global wisdom contained in his Report was based on John Jolliffe's earlier experience in administrating (with Dr A.M. Cain, now of the National Library of Scotland) the first-ever Systems Division within the Department of Printed Books of the British Museum, which he left in 1970 to join the Bodleian Library. It was from his and Dr Cain's work on automation and related matters in the British Museum that the proposal in 1976 to launch the machine-readable Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue (the ESTC) ultimately derived, and it was the ESTC which in turn in 1983 stimulated the launching of the Nineteenth-Century STC, under John's chairmanship. In short: that the entire British national printed archive is now well on the way to being recorded in machine-readable form, and at the moment is the leading element in the international grand design of retrospective Universal Bibliographical Control, is in no small measure due to the work of John Jolliffe.

As a source of intellectual and emotional calm in this rapidly changing world of research library administration, French Renaissance literature was of great importance to John (as was also French music - I remember well, from a summer evening a dozen years ago, his luminous exposition of the more quiet, hieratic passages in Béatrice et Bénédict). However, being a true professional, John Jolliffe converted this deep attachment into a line of precise bibliographical scholarship: a line that extended from his recension of the text of Du Bellay's Regrets published in 1966 and his printers' index to the revised British Library French Sixteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue (now in the press), to his regrettably unfinished detailed study of Lausanne and Morges imprints of the second half of the sixteenth century, and the essay-review, commissioned by The Library, of the first two volumes of l'Histoire de l'Édition Française which he had just begun at the onset of his fatal illness.

The sustained meticulousness of his scholarship, exemplified by the virtually error-free copy of his printers' index which he submitted to us, or even (for those familiar with it) his concise, disciplined handwriting, provide, perhaps, a key to his personality. Intolerant of loose thinking and loose rhetoric in himself and others, often feeling himself to be a new man in an old establishment, he was a sharp - and witty - critic; but once a position or an objective had been agreed he was steadfast and loyal, particularly towards his own équipe. If I may end on a personal note: I was proposing, with some trepidation, to submit my own collected papers to his scrutiny before his most untimely death: alas, they will, I fear, now be the poorer for being deprived of it".