

OBITUARY

Leslie T. Morton, 1907–2004



Even with only a sketchy memory of the reference tools studied at library school, every librarian will recall at least three or four, because their authorship gives them a working title: "Bartlett," "Brewer," "Winchell," and—for anyone who took a course in medical librarianship—"Garrison and Morton." This, after all, is known as the definitive bibliography on the history of medicine. Interestingly, the pair—one an American, the other a Briton—never met or worked together, yet their names were inseparable through much of the twentieth century. Fielding H. Garrison died in 1935 at age sixty-five, but Morton lived on into the new millennium and died February 17, 2004, a few years short of his hundredth birthday. (In recent years, he would quip that he awaited the queen's customary telegram of congratulation to centenarians.)

Who was this Morton, the man with the twinkling eyes, small of stature but wide in wit and wisdom, who entertained and charmed (the more so as he grew older) everyone whom came his way? Who was this librarian who organized the first International Congress on Medical Librarianship in London in 1953 and then, nearly fifty years later, welcomed several new generations of medical librarians at the opening of the eighth congress in 2000? Who was this bibliographer who captured the hearts and minds of US medical librarians, so much so that the Medical Library Association (MLA) bestowed on him its highest honor—the Marcia C. Noyes Award—in 1960? He was the first overseas librarian to receive it, and this placed him on MLA's centennial list of "The 105 Most Memorable" in 1998.

Leslie Thomas Morton was born

in London on July 20, 1907. He grew up there and attended Haverstock High School in Hampstead. As did so many of his generation, he entered librarianship right from school, in 1923, and served an apprenticeship in the Medical Sciences Library of University College, London. He did not attend university, because, in those days, certification as a librarian in the United Kingdom was the prerogative of the Library Association (LA). This was granted upon successful completion of its requirements; but an academic degree was not among them. After meeting these requirements, Morton was elected an associate of the LA (ALA) in 1932, thus becoming a "chartered librarian." In 1964, the LA made him a fellow (FLA). In later years, he regretted not having an academic degree, though he scarcely need have worried, given the academic esteem in which he was held.

We leave it to Morton's British colleagues to describe and evaluate his contributions as a library administrator, and we concentrate on his scholarly achievements and on his ties to North America and MLA. Briefly, however, his major library appointments were at:

- The Royal Society of Medicine, 1933–1935
- St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School (University of London), 1935–1943
- British Council Medical Department, 1943–1946
- *British Medical Journal* Information Office, 1947–1959
- National Institute for Medical Research, 1959–1972 (retiring, for the first time, at age 65)
- British Postgraduate Medical Federation (library advisor), 1972–1980 (retiring, for the second time, at age 73)

In this second retirement, he continued to be productive and remained keenly interested in the profession. But, long before either retirement, he had taken on many extracurricular activities, which in-

cluded doing association work, compiling bibliographies, preparing library manuals, and conducting historical research. His paramount association activity—along with the two other luminaries of the British scene, Cyril Barnard and W. J. Bishop—was the founding, in 1947, of a Medical Subsection of the University, College and Research Section of the LA. After various mutations, it is now the Health Libraries Group. Secondly, already mentioned, was his pioneer work in launching our profession's international congresses. Lastly, as a member of the 1965 MEDLARS Committee to Oversee the Establishment of Online Services in Britain, he helped usher in the computer age in that nation's medical libraries.

Early in his career, Morton developed an abiding interest in the history of medicine. Naturally, he was aware of Fielding Garrison's *Texts Illustrating the History of Medicine in the Library of the Surgeon General's Office* (1912, revised 1933). Morton recognized its shortcomings and determined to remedy them, by compiling an augmented and annotated revision. He began the project in 1938 and completed it during the dark days of World War II. In 1943, it appeared as *A Medical Bibliography: An Annotated Check-list of Texts Illustrating the History of Medicine (Garrison and Morton)*. Ever the model of probity, Morton acknowledged Garrison's earlier work in the title, even if most of the effort was his own. The check-list went through four editions (with additional printings), the most recent in 1983.

Much of the work was done while he and his family, and his library, were evacuated to Guildford. There, to while away the hours of the blackout, he worked on his project, packing their crowded apartment with dozens of shoeboxes containing amateurishly typed entry slips. He told the story in the Woodward Lecture he gave at Yale

in May 1960, which Lee Ash printed the following year in his *Serial Publications Containing Medical Classics: An Index to Citations in Garrison and Morton* [1]. The bibliography was subsequently "repatriated" (to the USA), and a fifth edition, edited by Jeremy Norman of San Francisco, was issued in 1991. Honoring "the master," Norman titled it *Morton's Medical Bibliography: An Annotated Checklist of Texts Illustrating the History of Medicine* (Garrison and Morton).

Publication of the bibliography gave rise to a cottage industry. In 1961, Lee Ash published his index, previously mentioned, and Frances Groen, then curator of the History of Medicine Department in the Falk Library at the University of Pittsburgh, indexed the bibliography's third edition as *An Author Arrangement of All Monographs Listed in Garrison and Morton's Medical Bibliography: With Numerous Additional Cross-references*.

Groen had never met Morton until the authors of this obituary had the pleasure of introducing the pair at the London Congress in 2000. He was thrilled to meet her and, learning of her interest in William Osler, undertook to obtain a photograph of the memorial plaque to Osler's son in the village church at Ewelme in Oxfordshire. This later gave Shane Godbolt the opportunity of a wonderful day out with Morton. The photograph was duly obtained and dispatched with his customary efficiency.

Although the *Bibliography* is Morton's best-known work, it represents only a small part of his literary output. His first publication, in 1934, was *How to Use a Medical Library* (with six subsequent editions, the most recent in 1990). In 1946, he compiled *World Medical Periodicals*, with a second edition in 1957. His *Use of Medical Literature* appeared in 1974, with later editions through 1991. He coedited *Medical Research Centres: A World Directory of Organizations and Programmes* (1983) with Jean Hall and compiled, jointly with Robert J. Moore, *A Bibliography of Medical and Biomedical Biography* (1989; 3rd ed, 2004 [in

press]). His final work *A Chronology of Medicine and Related Sciences* (also with Moore) came out in 1997, though, as recently as 2003, he contributed an article to a booklet celebrating thirty years of library achievements in Britain's National Health Service (NHS) [2].

Morton visited the United States several times, gave lectures, attended MLA meetings, and made firm friendships with many US librarians, notably NLM's Frank Bradway Rogers. From 1960 to 1971, he contributed "Notes from London" to the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* (the column later became "International Notes"), and it was one of the many ways he fostered cooperation and communication between British and US medical librarians. William (Bill) Kaye Beatty penned a comprehensive and, at times, amusing article on Morton's Anglo-American relationships in 1987 [3]. Among other things, he told of Morton's meetings with Mildred Langner and how "their accents at first made communication rather difficult!" But they became great friends, and he liked to tell of showing her his rose garden (T. Mark Hodges, who visited Langner shortly before her death, said she retained fond memories of the occasion.)

MLA members took stock of Morton, very favorably indeed. Estelle Brodman, in a book review, paid special tribute to Morton for "his intelligence, dedication, and the ability to see the purpose of a particular job" [4], while Erich Meyerhoff, in his 1977 Janet Doe Lecture, hailed Morton's bibliography as "a key to the history of medicine and a boon to historians, librarians, and auctioneers" [5].

Distinguished awards came to Morton on both sides of the Atlantic, including the highest medical library honors of the United Kingdom and the United States. For the Noyes award, the citation contained this tribute "Librarians and historians everywhere are grateful to you for your outstanding contributions to medical librarianship" [6] and, for honorary membership, thirty-four years later, the bibliog-

raphy "alone sets Morton on the level of the great medical and scientific bibliographers of the past ... and it is rightly regarded as a major work in the field of medical history in its own right" [7].

Between times (1971), he received the United Kingdom's Cyril Barnard Memorial Prize, which is akin to the Noyes award. Only two persons—one American (Rogers), the other British (Morton)—have received both awards. An accolade that gave him much pleasure came in 1987, when the Health Libraries Group devoted the September issue of its journal to his life and work [8]. Then, in 1998, when the LA celebrated its charter centenary, he was one of only two medical librarians (among a field of one hundred) who were presented a Royal Charter Centenary Medal by the Princess Royal. He was always very proud of this.

Our personal memories of him, some shared, abound. Godbolt recalls what a privilege it has been to know Morton, whom she first met over thirty years ago. He was then the great bibliographer, the "Morton" of "Garrison and Morton," but he was so much more than that and has been a mentor, a colleague, and a loyal friend to her and to many. For more than twenty years, Godbolt lived only a few minutes by car from Morton's home in Hatch End and was able to visit often. The house was always warm and welcoming; a place where small children were entertained and made at home, where there was stimulating professional conversation and much laughter. And, if there was work to be done, that too was achieved. His wife, Bertha, was very much a part of the medical library world, supporting her husband's work and befriending young and old alike.

Hodges recalls meeting him for the first time at the San Antonio meeting in 1994. Morton wanted to savor Texas to the full, so a group of us, including Godbolt, took him to the Liberty Bar Grill in a nondescript part of town. There, over beer and barbecue, we exchanged jokes, heard outsize stories, and

generally came to appreciate this renaissance man who was at home anywhere. Godbolt also remembers how much Morton enjoyed attending that meeting, accompanied by another great friend of MLA, the late David Stewart, whose dedicated career as librarian of the Royal Society of Medicine spanned more than thirty years. Suzanne Grefshheim, on behalf of the History of Medicine Section, graciously hosted a lunch in Morton's honor. He told Godbolt, with that mischievous twinkle in his eye, that he was going to offer the guests a prepared speech: the short one—thank you—or the long one—thank you very much. He put his hand in his pocket when the moment came and delivered the speech beautifully, before going on to entertain all there with some fascinating reminiscences.

Hodges also remembers interviewing Morton for the MLA Oral History Project, which took place at his home in the summer of 1999. He could not have been more gracious, having ordered delicious sandwiches and a bottle of fine white wine for lunch. Technical difficulties with the tape led to part of the interview having to be repeated, and Godbolt filled the bill.

His great knowledge and practical help were unstintingly placed at the disposal of anyone needing it. He was an avid reader of both the *Bulletin* and *MLA News*. Morton was always a joy to be with. His

gift for friendship and his wit never dulled. He remained outward looking, admired MLA, valued his US colleagues and friends enormously, and was interested in all their doings.

Leslie Morton and Bertha Shrosbree were married in 1933, and they celebrated their diamond wedding in 1993. She died on June 7, 1997, and, though this saddened him greatly, he kept going as energetically as ever. Surviving him are his son, John, his daughter, Margaret (Ellison), three grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

In his recent obituary for Mildred Langner, Henry Lemkau Jr. characterizes her as "the quintessential Southern Belle" and goes on, "She combined those qualities of intelligence, charm, grace and faith with absolute integrity and dedication to the pursuit of excellence in all she undertook" [9]. We characterize Leslie Morton as the perfect English Gentleman, who combined those same qualities in all that he undertook. Nonagenarians both, they died within six months of each other. Without them, medical libraryland is no longer the same.

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