

## Dr. Charles Benson, 1946-2017



Charles Benson was Keeper of Early Printed Books in Trinity College, Dublin, from 1988 to 2011. He entered Trinity in 1963, studying humanities, and, after a brief sojourn training as an accountant in England, realised that his vocation was to be a librarian. He returned to Trinity in 1968, becoming one of the first trainee graduates working in the library before moving, in 1969, to Queen's University Belfast. Following his return to TCD in 1972 he ably assisted Mary Paul Pollard in the Department of Early Printed Books.

In 1988 he succeeded Dr. Pollard as Keeper of Early Printed Books and proceeded to develop the department in a number of ways. Charles was always innovatory in his approach to outreach. For example, each year he and his staff produced fascinating annual exhibitions which were displayed in the Long Room and which were accompanied by carefully produced delightful catalogues. He was also very much aware of the need to engage with the academic world both nationally and internationally and he therefore published a host of scholarly articles on the TCD library collections, and, more generally, on the Irish book trade. His magnum opus was, of course, his multi-volume exploration of 'The Dublin Book Trade, 1801-1850' (Ph.D, Trinity College, Dublin, 2000), which continued where his mentor, Mary Paul Pollard's *A Dictionary of the*

*Dublin Book Trade, 1550-1800* (London, 2000), left off. Charles continued to augment this invaluable resource after his retirement. In addition, he and Siobhán Fitzpatrick edited *That Woman! Studies in Irish Bibliography: A Festschrift for Mary "Paul" Pollard* (Dublin, 2005), a fascinating bibliographical homage to Dr. Pollard.

Charles was equally aware of the central importance of networking, not only at national but also international level. He was a founding member of the Rare Books Group of the Library Association of Ireland and he continued to be very active in the group, both as an office holder, member of the committee and general mentor. He likewise represented Trinity College at international level and played an important role in the annual Print Networks conferences.

He continued his outreach by working with scholars such as Drs. Helga Robinson-Hammerstein and Patrick Kelly (Department of History, TCD), Dr. Jean Paul Pittion (Department of French, TCD), and Dr. David Berman (Department of Philosophy, TCD) in setting up a highly innovative one-year taught masters, the M. Phil. in Reformation and Enlightenment Studies, on which he taught a course on analytical bibliography. He likewise used his position as Keeper to substantially expand the College's special collections, particularly in the fields of

French history and drama and, in 2010, the French government acknowledged his important contribution by awarding him the honour of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

As Keeper he was an inspirational line manager who was deeply committed to the wellbeing of his staff. He proved to be a mentor not only to his fellow staff members but also to scores of young students and members of the academic staff who benefited from his immense knowledge of the collection. I speak from experience for I was lucky enough to be taught by Charles on the TCD M.Phil. in Reformation and Enlightenment, and later, when I retrained as a librarian, it was Charles who became my unofficial Library Mentor. And what a mentor he was! Always ready to listen and give trenchant advice because one of the most important things about Charles was his innate truthfulness and boundless loyalty. The numerous declarations of thanks, found in a myriad of publications by scholars from across the world, testify to his helpfulness towards scholars.

Charles was an adept devoted to many bibliographical causes but he was first and foremost a true friend and family man. His devotion to his wife Gillie, his children Ralph and Caroline, and his grandsons Louis and Alexander, was obvious to all. He is greatly missed by all who had the honour of knowing him.

*Elizabethanne Boran, Librarian, Dr. Worth Library.*

## Thomas Kabdebo (Kabdebó Tamás) 1934-2018



Dr Thomas Kabdebo, Librarian of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth<sup>1</sup> from 1983-1999, died in his 85th year on the 23rd May, 2018. A writer, poet, editor, translator, bibliographer and broadcaster he is seen as one of the great figures of Hungarian literary emigration. Born in Budapest in 1934 he escaped to the West after his participation in the 1956 revolution. His experience of the reality of living in post-war Eastern Europe and his subsequent life are captured in his autobiography *No matter where I am, I see the Danube* (2011).

Dr Kabdebo first settled in Britain where he completed his university education obtaining a PhD in history. Opting for a career in librarianship he worked in a number of university libraries including Cardiff, Westminster, Guyana and Manchester before finally making his home in Ireland.

His arrival at Maynooth coincided with the completion of the new John Paul II Library where his first undertaking was to oversee the complex move and the establishment of library services in the new building. In subsequent years he led the reclassification of the entire collection to the Dewey system and began the challenge of computerising first cataloguing and then all library procedures. Indeed his tenure at Maynooth saw the library service transformed by the emerging new technologies in a relatively short period of time.

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<sup>1</sup> NUIM is now Maynooth University

Another achievement was the establishment of a conservation unit in the Russell Library which holds the historical collections of St. Patrick's College Maynooth. The unit's first project was to conserve and list an extensive body of correspondence from the archives of the Irish Colleges in Spain (Salamanca Archive). Notable acquisitions received on permanent deposit during his time included the Hibernian Bible Society collection, which contains over 2,000 bibles in more than 600 languages.

Within the University Dr Kabdebo made significant contributions to academic life. He established a series of *Library Lectures* which attracted scholars and writers to the campus. He was a founding member of the *Maynooth University Record*, a journal which was published between 1996 and 2000. Dr Kabdebo's time in Maynooth also coincided with the bicentenary of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1995, whose staff and students share the same campus and library facilities. Under his stewardship, the Library published numerous publications to celebrate this, most notably *Maynooth Library Treasures*. He initiated the collection of the published works of the staff of both St. Patrick's College and NUIM, a valuable research resource which continues to be added to today. Another initiative was that of Library Scholar to encourage and mentor young students interested in librarianship.

Outside Maynooth, Dr Kabdebo contributed nationally and internationally through his involvement in CONUL (Consortium of National and University Libraries) and SCONUL (Society of College National and University Libraries).

Running in parallel with his career as a librarian was his distinguished literary life. Language, writing and publishing were his passion and his output covered a wide subject area from his compilation of a *Dictionary of Dictionaries* (1992) to a book of his poetry *Ultima Ora* (2018). The most recent edition of his bibliography, *Kabdebó Tasás munkássága, 1949-2015* by Mária Kórász and Katalin Szücs was published by Argumentum in 2016, testifying

to an abundance of publications. Over his long career he received many honours and awards including the Hungarian Order of Merit (1995) and culminating in 2017 with the Hungarian Laurel Wreath Award for literature.

Hungarian-Irish historical and literary connections were forged and recorded by him and the opening of the Hungarian Embassy in Ireland in 1991 was an opportunity to arrange events under its auspices. Through his translations and publications notable Irish poets were introduced to Hungarian readers and listeners, and vice versa. Historical and cultural links were explored in the collaborative publications *Ireland and Hungary: A study in parallels, with an Arthur Griffith bibliography and Hungary and the two Roger Casements*.

He was a man of many parts and among his interests were fishing and tennis, and Italian language and culture, along with an alchemist's approach to the brewing of his coffee. From 1989 onwards, Dr Kabdebo was able to return to his beloved Hungary where he spent his summer holidays meeting his extended family and enjoying fishing on his native lakes.

He leaves behind his wife Anna, and his children Lily, Andrea and Isti.

*Elizabeth Murphy and Regina Whelan Richardson, Maynooth University Library*

## Colette Ní Mhoitleigh, 1936-2018



Colette Ní Mhoitleigh died peacefully on 26 June 2018. She retired from Trinity College Library in 1998, where she had worked in the Cataloguing Department, later Bibliographic Data Management, from 1969. She retired as Sub-Librarian in charge of the Department.

Colette's early childhood was spent in Roscrea, where her father taught mathematics and Latin in Mount St. Joseph's. She maintained a life-long attachment to the place and to the Cistercian community in particular. Her secondary schooling was at St. Mary's Presentation College, Mountmellick, where she sat her Leaving Certificate at the age of sixteen. The family moved to Dublin following the death of her father and she worked for more than ten years as an administrator in the Guinness Brewery. During that time she studied part-time in UCD, taking a BA in Irish and Archaeology.

In the mid-1960s she took the brave step of resigning from Guinness to study full-time for the UCD Diploma in Librarianship. That led to her appointment as subject cataloguer for Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Religion, Celtic Languages and Literature at Trinity – a broad sweep of subjects appropriate to her breadth of knowledge and interests.

Her work with bibliographic data management was during a period of major changes in automation, librarianship and access to information on the

internet. She was very much central to Trinity Library in managing those changes and establishing procedures and protocols for sharing bibliographic records with Trinity's sister Legal Deposit libraries and international consortia. She had a flow of ideas on the best way forwards, but never tried to push her views without consultation; her way was to raise the debate and include as wide a range of other contributions as was possible. She always saw the need to provide the best service possible for Library readers. She served on many working parties and committees with national and international colleagues where her enormous expertise in cataloguing was hugely respected and she is credited with several innovations on record creation that were adopted widely.

Colette taught generations of computer colleagues and library system suppliers the subtleties of authority control, filing rules and other key concepts vital to making an online catalogue accessible to readers. Many of her detailed rules for managing and indexing headings were adapted and incorporated into several early commercial library management systems during their implementation at Trinity.

Colette's kindness to colleagues on a personal level was genuine, always empathising with others' problems and offering support and practical help

sensitively. As ever, this was often done behind the scenes in her quiet, calm way. She was blessed with a sharp intellect, a very wide sweep of informed understanding, but most of all, a generosity of spirit that enabled all who worked with her to share in her knowledge.

Taobh amuigh den leabharlann ba í an Ghaeilge ba mhó spéis ag Colette, spéis sa teanga féin agus sa litríocht. Ba thríd Cumann Merriman a cuireadh sin in iúl do chách. Chaith sí blianta fada mar bhall den chumann. D'oibrigh sí go díograsach bliain i ndiaidh bliana ar a shon agus b'fhurasta a tionchar ar théamaí éagsula Merriman a fheiceáil. Ba chairde leí i gconaí lucht na Gaeilge agus fiú iad siúd a bhí ag sracadh leis an teanga bhí Colette foighneach agus spreagúil leo.

Bhí sí gníomhach freisin i ngrúpa staidéir an Bhíobla trí Ghaeilge. Ní nach íonadh gur i nGaeilge a bhí seirbhís sochraide Colette, seirbhís a bhí dílís dá teanga dá creideamh.

Colette maintained her interest in current affairs right up to the end – reading the *Irish Times* from cover to cover and writing to contributors with a gentle correction or update and had several of her pithy letters to the editor published over the years.

Colette Ni Mhoitleigh was a wonderful colleague and friend to a generation of librarians in Trinity and elsewhere – generous, patient and while meticulous in her work, had a keen sense of humour and knew how to enjoy a party.

I líontaibh Dé go gcastar sinn.

*Trevor Peare with much help from Colette's relatives and colleagues.*