

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

DOUGLAS J. FOSKETT

Transcript of an Interview  
Conducted by

W. Boyd Rayward

at

Portsmouth, England

on

3 July 2000

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION  
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## DOUGLAS J. FOSKETT

1918 Born in London, England on 27 June  
2004 Died on 7 May

### Education

1939 B.A., Queen Mary College, London  
1954 M.A., Birbeck College, University of London

### Professional Experience

1940-1948 Ilford Municipal Libraries  
Librarian

1940-1946 Royal Army Medical Corps/Intelligence Corps

1948-1957 Metal Box Company Ltd.  
Librarian

1957-1978 University of London  
Librarian, Institute of Education

### Honors

1965-1990 Honorary Library Advisor, Royal National Institute for Deaf People  
1975 Honorary Fellow of the Library Association  
1976 President of the Library Association  
1978 Order of the British Empire Award  
1981 Honorary Fellow, Polytechnic of North London

## ABSTRACT

Douglas J. Foskett begins the interview by describing how he entered the field of information science and began working at Ilford Public Library. After serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps for six years, he returned to Ilford and met his wife Joy. Eventually, Foskett left the Public Library to take over Barbara Hill's position of running the information section at the Metal Box Company Ltd. When the Metal Box research department relocated to Swindon, Foskett decided, as an alternative to moving, to join the University of London's Institute of Education. During his twenty-one year career at the University of London, Foskett became director of the University Library and Goldsmiths' Librarian. In his interview, Foskett next discusses the formation of the Classification Research Group [CRG] to address the need for new ways to classify scientific literature. Foskett has been a member since CRG's formation, and Foskett developed faceted classification schemes for education and safety and health that are still in use. Foskett also met with NATO representatives and secured five thousand pounds of funding for the CRG to develop a new general classification scheme. Foskett then recalls S. R. Ranganathan's influence in the field of information science. Ranganathan was the first person to demonstrate that facet analysis could be applied to terms in a system of classification. Foskett next describes the theory of integrative levels and why the Dorking Conference was so significant. Foskett concludes his interview by addressing the expansion of the Library Association to include special librarians and the eventual formation of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureau [ASLIB].

Douglas J. Foskett was a very important figure in the developing field of information science. He passed away on 7 May 2004.

## INTERVIEWER

W. Boyd Rayward is a research professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He turned to librarianship after graduating in English literature from the University of Sydney. He received his Ph.D. from the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1973. He has held positions in the University of Chicago (where he became Dean of the Graduate Library School). He served as Professor and Head of the School of Information Library and Archive Studies and Dean of the University's Faculty of Professional Studies at the University of New South Wales in Sydney where he is now professor emeritus. He has published two books related to Paul Otlet, Belgian documentalist and internationalist, and a great many articles on history of national and international schemes for the organization and dissemination of information.

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