

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

MICHAEL W. HILL

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

W. Boyd Rayward

at

Oxford and Cambridge Club
London, England

on

26 June 2000

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION
Oral History Program
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Chemical Heritage Foundation
Oral History Program
315 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106



MICHAEL W. HILL

1928 Born in Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, United Kingdom on 27 July

Education

1938-1941 King Henry VIII School, Coventry
1941-1947 Nottingham High School
1949-1953 M.A. and M.Sc., University of Oxford, Lincoln College

Professional Experience

1953-1956 Laporte Chemical Company
Research Chemist

1956-1958 Morgan Crucible Group
Laboratory Head, Chemistry, Physics and Physical Analysis
1958-1962 Assistant Process Control Manager, Carbon and Sintered Metals
1962-1963 Manager, Telephone Granules Production
1963-1964 Group Technical Editor

1964-1965 British Museum
Assistant Keeper, National Reference Library of Science and Invention
1968-1973 Keeper, National Reference Library of Science and Invention

1965-1968 Patent Office Library
Deputy Librarian

1973-1986 British Library
Director, Science Reference Library
1986-1988 Associate Director, Science, Technology and Industry

Other Professional Activities

1969-1973 Member, Organizing Committee for the British Library
1973-1980 UK Delegate, EEC, DGXIII, WP on Patent Information
1976-1980 UK Delegate, EEC, DGXIII, WP on Information for Industry

1980-1984	Vice President, Federation for Information and Documentation [FID]
1984-1990	President, FID
1990-present	Honorary Fellow, FID
1980	Joint Founder of Western European Round Table for Information and Documentation [WERTID]
1976-1981	Vice President, International Association of Technological Universities Libraries [IATUL]
1969-1974	Member, Advisory Council on Scientific and Technical Information [ACSTI]
1974-1978	Chairman, Online Information Services Committee, British Library
1974-1979	Honorary Secretary, Council of Association for Information Management [ASLIB]
1979-1981	Chairman, Council of ASLIB
1974-1976	Board Member, U.K. Chemical Information Service
1970-1986	ad hoc U.K. Delegate to World Intellectual Property Organization
1971-1974	Member, Executive Committee, National Central Library
1974-1993	Various official consultancies to foreign official and international bodies
1977-1979	Chairman, Circle of State Librarians
1983-1987	Member, Advisory Committee, Scottish Science Reference Library

ABSTRACT

Michael W. Hill begins his interview by discussing how he was first drawn to the information and documentation side of chemistry. While at Lincoln College, Hill planned to become a chemist. He received his B.A. and M.Sc. there, under the tutelage of Rex Richards, by researching applications of nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy. After graduating, Hill started his career at Laporte Chemical Company in Luton, then moved to London to become head of Morgan Crucible Group's chemistry laboratory. Eventually Hill left the secretive world of industry to work as assistant keeper in the National Reference Library of Science and Invention, a new national science library being setup by the British Museum. Hill soon advanced to the post of deputy librarian at the Patent Office Library. Next he became the head of the National Reference Library of Science and Invention, first as part of the British Museum, then from 1973 as part of the British Library's Reference Division, renamed the Science Reference Library. Hill also joined Aslib and became a fellow of the Institute of Information Scientists, chairman of its council, and, in the 1980s, president of the International Federation for Information and Documentation [FID]. He was also elected vice president of the International Association of Technological University Libraries. Hill concludes his interview by hypothesizing about the future impact of information science.

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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- 2 Entrance into the World of Information Science
Applies and receives position as Assistant Keeper in the National Reference Library of Science and Invention, the British Museum's national science library.
- 4 Career Growth and Advancement at the British Museum
Transfers to post of deputy at the Patent Office Library. Becomes a civil servant. Manages the daily operations of the library. Advances to head of National Reference Library of Science and Invention. Member of National Organizing committee for the British Library.
- 7 Personal Involvement in Information Committees and Conferences
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- 15 Further Professional Recollections
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- 25 Future of Information Science
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NOTES

1. The recitation of “The Address to the Haggis,” a poem by Robert Burns is a central feature of “Burns Suppers.” When the line, “an’ cut ye up wi’ ready slight,” is reached the speaker cuts open the haggis with a sharp knife.
2. Nathalie Dusoulier, interview by W. Boyd Rayward in Nice, France, 19 June 2000 (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Foundation, Oral History Transcript #0201).
3. Michael W. Hill, *The Impact of Information on Society: an Examination of its Nature, Value and Usage*, (London: Bowker Saur, 1999).

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