

The W. J. Bishop Memorial Lectures, 1968–1983

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A note in the Medical Section's *Bulletin* for February 1967 entitled 'MLA – Bishop Scholarship' stated that William Wiedman, formerly on the staff of the National Library of Medicine, had given \$1000 to the Medical Library Association (U.S.A.) for a scholarship in honour of W. J. Bishop. This had been awarded to Miss Beatrice Kovaks, daughter of Mrs Helen Kovaks, who had addressed the Section in 1964, and was well-known to older medical librarians. It was the MLA which was the first to honour a distinguished British medical librarian. This note also endorsed the suggestion of Leslie Morton, made at the LA Medical Section Annual General Meeting in 1967, that Bishop should be commemorated by a lecture or similar memorial and this was put into effect by the Committee. The Lecture was to be delivered annually, alternately by a librarian and a distinguished non-librarian, no fee being given to the lecturer, although expenses are usually offered.

The first W. J. Bishop Memorial Lecture was delivered by William LeFanu at St George's Hospital Medical School at the Annual General Meeting on 19 January 1968, which marked the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Section. William LeFanu's lecture was published under the title 'William John Bishop. A great medical librarian'.¹

The 1969 Lecture was delivered at the Annual General Meeting held at St Mary's Hospital Medical School on 24 January, and was given by Miss Jessie Dobson, then Curator of the Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons. Her subject was 'Doctors in literature', and it was also published in *Library Association Record*.²

The third Lecture was given by Philip Wade when he was Librarian of the Royal Society of Medicine, at St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, and was attended by the President of the Library Association, D. T. Richnell, a long-standing member of the Medical Section. The Lecture was published under the title 'Librarians: the nature of the men and their machines'.³

The late Dr K. Bryn Thomas of Reading, a keen historian of medicine, and Hon. Librarian of the Reading Pathological Society, was the next lecturer and took as his subject 'Anatomical atlases'. His lecture was delivered on 15 January 1971 at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, and was profusely illustrated by slides and an exhibition of the books described. The substance of the lecture was later published as 'The great anatomical atlases' in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*.⁴

The Lecture for 1972 was contributed by D. T. Richnell, then Director and Goldsmith's Librarian of the University of London, and at one time a medical librarian. It was delivered in the University of London at Senate House on 21 January and dealt

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with library co-operation and the national library service, describing the relationship of the various libraries of the University of London.

Professor Iain Macintyre of the Royal Postgraduate Medical School at Hammersmith gave the 1973 Lecture at Hammersmith on 19 January, taking as his subject calcitonin, which originates in the thyroid and reduces blood calcium to normal levels, and prevents the break-down of bone. This account of research by Professor Macintyre was obviously very technical for his audience, but he succeeded in making it fascinating enough to hold their interest throughout.

The next Lecture was delivered at the Royal College of Physicians of London by the Librarian, Leonard M. Payne, on 11 January 1974. He took as his theme 'Some aspects of biography and portraiture', a subject on which he has written authoritatively on several occasions.

In 1975 Dr Charles E. Newman, Harveian Librarian of the Royal College of Physicians, gave the Lecture at King's College Hospital Medical School on 28 February his subject being 'The fascination of book collecting'. This erudite talk revealed the lecturer's keen interest in the history of type design and in historical bibliography. Older members of the audience in particular were reminded of their days as librarianship students when typography, paper and bindings were an essential part of their bibliographical studies.

The 1976 Lecture was delivered on 20 February by John L. Thornton at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, of which W. J. Bishop had been Consultant Librarian at the time of his death in 1961, in which post he was succeeded by John Thornton. Entitled 'Medical librarianship before and since the war', it included a survey of Bishop's contribution to the profession and an appreciation of his achievements at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. An abridged version was published in the *Library Association Record*⁵ under a somewhat irrelevant title 'Too few libraries are organized for readers', which unfortunately excluded most of the references to the person the lecture was intended to honour.

Dr Hugh L'Etang, Editor of *The Practitioner* gave the next lecture on 18 February 1977 at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine at Hampstead, under the title 'The pathology of leadership'. This was concerned with the illnesses suffered by eminent politicians of the past and how these possibly affected their decisions and careers, a subject upon which Dr L'Etang has written on several occasions.

Leslie Morton chose as his subject 'The saints of medicine' for the 1978 Memorial Lecture delivered on 27 February at the Institute of Child Health. It was profusely illustrated by slides, and the extent of the vast subject was made apparent to the fascinated audience. Unfortunately it has not been published.

Dr Stephen Lock, Editor of the *British Medical Journal*, was the Bishop Memorial Lecturer on 9 March 1979 at BMA House, taking as his subject the early British medical journals, with special reference to their editors and contributors. He suggested that medical librarians might provide literary assistance to authors writing papers.

The Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine was again the venue for the Lecture on 27 February 1980, when Patrick Bishop, W. J. Bishop's younger brother, spoke on

'What strange beast is this?' This provided an entertaining definition of medical librarians and their work.

'The development of medical journals in Britain' was the theme of Sir Christopher C. Booth's Lecture delivered at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine on 25 February 1981. Sir Christopher is Director of the MRC Clinical Research Centre at Northwick Park, Harrow, and a short abstract of his lecture was published in the *LA Medical, Health and Welfare Libraries Group Newsletter*.⁶

The former Librarian of the British Medical Association, Frederick Sutherland, gave the 1982 Lecture on 3 March at the Royal College of General Practitioners, taking as his title 'The politics of medical librarianship'.⁷

On 1 November 1983 Robert Maxwell, M.C., Chairman of Pergamon Press and British Printing Corporation gave the Bishop Memorial Lecture at Guy's Hospital Medical School. Mr Maxwell took as his theme the challenge which information technology presented to traditional forms of medical librarianship and to the role of the librarian. He contrasted what he saw as the innate conservatism of the library profession with the rapidly changing information expectations of the scientific community. He went on to urge the library profession to respond to this challenge and to assert its claim to a new and influential role in the collection, interpretation and dissemination of information.

Additional information on W. J. Bishop

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