IN MEMORIAM
WILLIAM BURTON TODD

William B. Todd, professor emeritus of English and former Mildred Caldwell and Baine Perkins Kerr Centennial Chair in English History and Culture, died August 27, 2011, at the age of ninety-two. Bill arrived at the University of Texas in 1958 and retired in 1985, though he remained an active and publishing scholar until he suffered a debilitating stroke in December 1999 at age eighty. He will be remembered for his bibliographical knowledge, wit, and wise advice, freely dispensed, as well as the gracious hospitality that he and Ann Bowden, his wife and scholarly partner, extended to junior colleagues over many years.

Born April 11, 1919, in Chester, Pennsylvania, Bill attended Freedom Academy in Maine, graduating as class valedictorian in 1936, and continued his studies at Lehigh University, where he earned his B.A. with high honors in 1940 and an M.A. in 1947. His graduate work was interrupted from 1941 to 1945 by service in the United States Army, 12th Infantry, 4th Division, where he rose to the rank of major. In the service of his country, Bill was assigned as control officer at Utah Beach on D-Day and as executive officer during the Normandy Campaign, was wounded severely, and was awarded both the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

He subsequently received his Ph.D. with honors from the University of Chicago in 1949 and taught at Salem College, North Carolina, from 1949 to 1954. This was followed by a nearly four-year stint as assistant to William A. Jackson, the legendary first librarian of the Houghton Library at Harvard.

Bill was recruited by the University of Texas at the behest of Harry Huntt Ransom, then serving as provost, who wrote in December 1957 that he would “do everything but lay the Tower on its side and run the Colorado River dry” to bring him here. Although Bill’s primary appointment was in the English department, he worked closely with what has become the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) throughout his career, serving first as Associate Curator of Special Collections and then as Director of Bibliographical Studies. A chief responsibility at the HRC was the development of the book collections of the eighteenth and earlier centuries, and in 1978, he joined with Ann Bowden to form a team to select (from the three exemplars then on the market) and acquire the Pforzheimer copy of the Gutenberg Bible, one of the HRC’s greatest treasures. After his official retirement, Bill continued to serve as an informal advisor to the HRC, and his personal collections of prize books and Sir Walter Scott are now part of the HRC’s holdings.

A great bibliographer in a generation of great bibliographers, Bill produced a host of scholarly publications and contributions—a survey in 1991 reckoned a total of two hundred and eighty-three books, articles, and reviews, published as far afield as New Zealand and Japan (see *Library Chronicle* 21, 1990-91, 187-213). Bill’s Chicago doctoral dissertation so impressed Fredson Bowers, an external examiner, that he added a late footnote based on Bill’s work about the importance of press figures in eighteenth-century printing to his foundational *Principles of Bibliographical Description*, while it was in production, and as early as 1954, Bowers named Bill “the foremost 18th-century bibliographer of the present day.” That century was Bill’s original field—his *Bibliography of Edmund Burke* (1964) and the scholarly editions of Burke’s work, which he prepared or oversaw, remain standard half a century after publication—but he brought his bibliographical skills to bear on works ranging in date from the fifteenth-century Gutenberg Bible to the typescripts of the Nixon’s Watergate tapes. The nefarious doings of the early twentieth-century bibliographer, forger, and thief Thomas J. Wise were a particular forensic
specialty, resulting in many publications, including *Suppressed Commentaries on the Wisean Forgeries* (1969, rev. 1974). With Ann Bowden, he served as editor of the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* from 1967 to 1981 and prepared two mammoth bibliographical studies, *Tauchnitz International Editions in English, 1841-1955: A Bibliographical History* (1988) and *Sir Walter Scott: A Bibliographical History, 1796-1832* (1998). In undertaking these herculean tasks, Bill and Ann were pioneers in the application of computer technology to bibliography–their first rudimentary CPT machines were purchased in the late 1970s.

Bill’s academic honors were plentiful. He was awarded fellowships from the Fulbright Program (1952-53), the American Council of Learned Societies (1961-62), and the Guggenheim Foundation (1965-66). In 1969-70, he was the J.P.R. Lyell Reader in Bibliography at Oxford University and a visiting fellow at All Souls College, and he delivered the Cecil Oldman Memorial Lecture in Bibliography and Textual Criticism at Leeds University in 1975, the same year that he was awarded the first International Marc Fitch Award for distinguished research in analytical bibliography. His Hanes Lecture at the University of North Carolina followed in 1982. He served as vice president of the Bibliographical Society of America from 1981 to 1984, and president of the Private Libraries Association, London, from 1983 to 1986. Here in Austin, Bill was a founding member of the British Studies faculty seminar. He was a mainstay to the community of bibliographical scholars, which is not likely to see his kind again, and by any measure a bibliographer of the first rank.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Michael Winship (chair), Lance Bertelsen, and Joseph Moldenhauer.

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