

Prof. William A. Jackson Dies; Harvard's Houghton Librarian

Special to The New York Times

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Oct. 18.—Prof. William A. Jackson, librarian of Harvard University's Houghton Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts and an internationally acclaimed bibliographer, died today at the Massachusetts General Hospital of a heart ailment. He was 59 years old.

Professor Jackson helped plan the Arthur Amory Houghton Library and became its first librarian when it opened in 1942 as a repository of literary and historical treasures. It was said of him that, as professor of bibliography, he introduced generations of Harvard students to the pleasures of book-collecting.

Under his guidance, the Houghton Library became a center for research in history and literature, visited by scholars from all over the world. During his 26 years as librarian, its collections more than trebled. Harvard, in awarding him an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in 1962, called him "Our Grand Acquisitor."

The Houghton Library's collection of books and manuscripts is said to be unsurpassed in many areas, including the works of the New England authors of the 19th century and of John Keats, in its graphic - arts collection and, among libraries in the West, its Russian literature holdings. Professor Jackson was also given credit for having built outstanding collections of early printed works of European literature, of early maps and of works in the history of science.

Tennyson Acquisition

In February, 1956, it was announced here that what was described as a rich harvest of unpublished poems, first drafts and revisions of poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson had been acquired by the Houghton Library. The items were said to include about 650 drafts of 350 poems and were described as the greatest collection of the poet's writings.

At the time, Professor Jackson hailed the collection as being of "immeasurable value for historians and critics."

At his death, Professor Jackson had nearly completed a new edition of Pollard and Redgrave's "Short-title Catalogue of English Books, 1475-1640," for which he had been compiling information for nearly 40 years. The work is a systematic list of English books from the introduction of printing until the Cromwellian revolution, with a census of the known existing copies. For this period, Professor Jackson was recognized as a leading authority by collectors, librarians, scholars

and book dealers on both sides of the Atlantic ocean.

His catalogue of the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library in New York, on which he worked for eight years, was regarded as a model and a monument of bibliographic scholarship. He was the author of many articles and studies and editor of "The Stationers' Court-Book 1603-1640."

In the spring, Oxford University awarded Professor Jackson an honorary degree in literature and at the time said of him, "Today anyone with a taste for ancient, beautiful or rare books and manuscripts will nowhere find a richer feast than in the library munificently founded at Harvard by Arthur Houghton and successfully administered by this guest of ours."

Professor Jackson, a native of Rockingham, Vt., grew up on the West Coast. He was graduated from Williams College in 1927 and received an honorary Master of Arts degree from it in 1938. He received another honorary master's degree, from Harvard, in 1943.

Benny Goodman Collection

In 1939, when he was associate professor of bibliography at Harvard with the Widener Library, he went to New York to accept a collection of 100 phonograph records and material on swing music from Benny Goodman.

In accepting the gift, which was to be known as the Harvard-Goodman Collection of Music, Professor Jackson pointed out its relevance to our times by observing that the music used in Shakespeare's theater had been lost, and that no one knew precisely how it sounded.

Professor Jackson was honorary secretary of the Bibliographical Society of London, had been president of the Bibliographical Society of America, a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Society of Antiquaries of London and was a member of Roxburghe Club of Britain and the Grolier Club of New York.

At his death, he was secretary of the Walpole Society and president of Boston's Club of Odd Volumes. His other clubs included the Athenaeum of London, the Century of New York and the Tavern of Boston.

Professor Jackson leaves his wife, the former Miss Dorothy Judd of Honolulu, and a son, the Rev. Jared Judd Jackson, a member of the faculty at Williams.

A memorial service will be held Wednesday at 2 P. M. in Christ Church here.