

Isadore Gilbert Mudge (March 14, 1875 - May 16, 1957)

The history and development of library and information studies has been enriched by the work of outstanding men and women, one of them is Isadore Gilbert Mudge. Isadore G. Mudge was a leader on reference works and a great reference librarian; her work innovated and delineated new library functions for the new times in American higher education (Dain). Mudge was the eldest of three daughters and two sons, born in Brooklyn, New York, to Alfred and Mary Gilbert (Ten Brook) Mudge, both parents from Arbor, Michigan. Education was an important part on the life of her family; her maternal grandfather, Andrew Ten Brook, was a Baptist minister, professor and later university librarian at the University of Michigan. Her paternal step-grandfather, Charles K. Adams, was president in Cornell University and her father was a successful lawyer graduated from the University of Michigan (Dain, Richardson). It is not a surprise that her three siblings, the ones that survived childhood, all went to college and worked a profession as well (Dain).

According to Richardson, while attending Adelphi Academy in Brooklyn, Isadore Mudge, under the influence of George Lincoln Burr, an archivist, medieval historian, and librarian, become interested in following a library education. After finishing her Bachelor of Philosophy degree in 1897, she enrolled in the New York State Library School in Albany, New York where she earned her Bachelor of Library Science degree in 1900 with honors.

In 1900, Mudge attained her first job as a reference librarian and as an assistant professor to teach reference work and book selection in the University of Illinois at Urbana, under the supervision of Katherine L Sharp, who was head of the library and the Library School (Dain). One of the goals of Mudge during the three years that she worked in Illinois was to build a

reference collection that allows students to become independent learners (Richardson). Dain states that in 1903 Mudge resigned from the University of Illinois in order to take the position of head librarian at Bryn Mawr College, and following her, as cataloguer Minnie Earle Sears, with whom she maintained a close professional and personal relationship. Between 1907 and 1911, after taking a year's leave of absence and not returning to Bryn Mawr, Mudge traveled to Europe, worked with Sears on its Thackeray Dictionary (1910) and took various part-time jobs, one of them was teaching at the library schools of Simmons College in 1910 and 1911 (Boman, Dain).

In 1910 Mudge accepted the editorship of the Guide to Reference Books, issued by the American Library Association (ALA) (Dain). The next year, in 1911, Isadore Mudge took the position of reference librarian at Columbia University, a position that she had been looking for (Dain). Nicholas Murray Butler was the President of Columbia, a university that was increasing its prominence; however its library had stayed behind, both in its collection and services (Dain). During the time that Mudge worked in Columbia, from 1911 to 1941, with the support of Butler, she began to build a library of first class, assembling a great reference collection and improving its reference services to reach advanced students and faculty members (Dain). Mudge asserted the clear idea of basic needs of a reference department: “a dictionary, an encyclopedia, an atlas, a biographical dictionary” along with a “book of quotations, handbook of statics, a state or government manual” (Richardson).

The knowledge and expertise of Mudge was not limited to users of the library; she was one of the first teachers at the New York Public Library School when opened its doors in 1926, and became an associate professor in 1927 teaching “Bibliography and Bibliographic

Methods”(Dain, Richardson). Isadore G. Mudge is widely known for her work editing the third through sixth editions (1917, 1923, 1929, 1936) of the Guide to Reference Books issued by the ALA (Boman). She also revised reference work and wrote for the Library Journal, additionally she wrote several book reviews, articles, and edited some bibliographies and reference material (Dain, Wikipedia)

Isadore G. Mudge was unquestionably an admired and respect professional. In her work, Phyllis Dain gives details about her personality: “Isadore Mudge was a brilliant, determined woman, generous with her knowledge and her energy, Her manner at times might have been brusque, her tolerance for incompetence limited, and as she grew older, her devotion to principle sometimes rigid, but she was essentially a modest, kind, approachable person devoted to the cause of fine scholarship.” Mudge was a very social woman, she enjoyed travel, concerts and theater, and gardening. Around 1930 Mudge and Minnie Sears, bought a Westchester County Country House close to the Columbia Campus, where they enjoyed been visited by their friends (Dain). Mudge remained unmarried and had no children and she maintained a very close relationship with her only living brother and his family (Dain, Wikipedia).

Mudge and Sears worked together on several projects, one of them was a George Eliot Dictionary published by Routledge and Sons in 1924. After Sears’s death in 1933, Mudge continued living in her Westchester home (Dain). At age 66, Mudge retired from the Columbia Library, and in the next year, in 1942 she retired from teaching as well. When illness and infirmity weakened her, she left her Westchester house to a nursing home care. She died in 1957 in Baltimore, at the age of eighty-two (Dain). The ALA established in 1958 the Isadore Gilbert

Mudge Award consisting of a monetary prize of \$5,000 and a citation to an individual who has made a distinguished contribution to reference librarianship.

For me, as a woman, it is exciting and inspiring to know the trajectory of a woman that have changed and defined, through her work, the librarian career. In my opinion, as result of my research, Isadore Gilbert Mudge was an intelligent and a determined librarian, rich in personal and professional achievements that made her own name in this profession. Another side of Isadora Mudge that I find fascinating is that I found in the Old House Web site that the person who presumably bought Mudge's old house, mention that "When the farm that it belonged to here in Croton Heights was sold the lots were bought by women librarians from Columbia University in NYC. It was dubbed "No man's land" and they, being librarians and literary types, gave their homes names from books". Mudge's house "was called Hayslope which was from the book Adam Bede by George Elliot". Another interesting anecdote is that according to Online Archival from Harvard University Library, Mudge's house was draw, in 1934, by pencil for another outstanding woman of her time: Elisabeth Coit(1892-1987) an award winning architect and author. All this make me think that Mudge could be a feminist and that her social life was share with cultivated women. Unquestionably Isadora G. Mudge has been and will remain a great example of one of the outstanding men and women in the history and development of library and information studies.

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