



IN MEMORIAM

Robert Dale Harlan
Professor of the School of Information, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1929-2014

Robert D. Harlan, a scholar of the history of printing and publishing and a Professor Emeritus of the graduate School of Information at UC Berkeley, died on April 8, 2014, at his home in San Francisco. He is best known for his early work on William Strahan, a printer and publisher of the eighteenth century in London, and for his later work on American colonial printing and San Francisco fine printing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Bob was born and raised in Hastings, Nebraska, where he attended local public schools and Hastings College. He was a Korean War veteran, having served in the Army Security Agency from 1952 to 1955. He earned a master's degree in history (1958) and master's (1956) and doctorate (1960) degrees in Library Science at the University of Michigan. In 1960 he began his teaching career as an Assistant Professor at the University of Southern California and in 1963 moved to the School of Librarianship at UC Berkeley where he was promoted to Associate Professor in 1970 and Professor in 1976. He served as Associate Dean of the School from 1985 to 1986. His thirty years on the School's faculty were a time of transition as it changed its name to The School of Library and Information Studies in 1976 and then the School of Information Management and Systems as digital information grew in importance in the curriculum. Following participation in years of self-study and the development of a new vision, Harlan retired in 1993 before the School became the School of Information and ended its coursework in the history of printing and publishing.

After publishing articles on William Strahan, an important and successful London printer and publisher from 1738 to his death in 1785 when he was Printer to the King, Harlan moved to Colonial printing and developed a reassessment of Strahan's chief protégé, David Hall, who after business dealings with Benjamin Franklin came to Philadelphia to succeed Franklin at his printing shop when Franklin retired in 1747. His studies of the life and work of John Henry Nash, his bibliography of the Grabhorn Press, and his sketches on William Doxey and Paul Elder remain standard sources on the subjects. In recent years he was researching the life and works of Anton Roman (1828-1903) to enlarge his essay on that San Francisco publisher in his publication *Anton Roman's Sketch of Bibliography* (1986). His article "Printing for an Instant City: San Francisco at Mid-Century" (in *Getting the Books Out: Papers of the Chicago Conference on the Book in 19th-Century America*, Library of Congress Center for the Book, 1987) reflected developing emphasis in the field of the history of the book on the cultural, physical, and political environment. For that article he used his digital database of the San Francisco Imprint project which contains thousands of citations of books, pamphlets, and broadsides printed in San Francisco from 1850 to 1869.

During retirement Harlan participated in a Bancroft Library program in regional oral history by conducting interviews with Bay Area book people including Jack Stauffacher of the Greenwood Press (1996), Sandra Kirshenbaum, founder and editor of the magazine *Fine Print* that ran from 1973 to 1990 (2001), Andrew Hoyem and Peter Koch. He transcribed the interviews for deposit at Bancroft and elsewhere. He assisted

Flora Elizabeth Reynolds in cataloging the Book Artifacts Collection at the Bancroft Library and was directly responsible for listing the printed ephemera at Bancroft of John Henry Nash and Tomoyé Press/ Taylor, Nash & Taylor.

Courses taught by Harlan ranged from the history of printing and publishing to reference services in libraries to descriptive bibliography. He chaired dissertations on eighteenth- century printing in England and in Mexico, nineteenth- and twentieth- century printing in the Bay Area, the works of Hubert Howe Bancroft and the University of California Press. His students went on to direct rare book departments and historical collections across the United States as well as to teach in the fields of the history of the book and library studies. Bruce Johnson, former director of libraries for the California Historical Society, and Vice President, Library, Indiana Historical Society, said that “Bob Harlan changed lives, including mine. He supported my interest in history and the book as an artifact and introduced me to important figures in preserving the history of printing and publishing in the San Francisco Bay Area. And he did this with his wry good humor, his sharp intellect, and his sensible approach to historical research and writing.”

Harlan was a longtime member of The Bibliographical Society of America, the American Society of 18th-Century Studies, and the American Printing History Association. He served on the Editorial Board and the Board of Directors of The Book Club of California and prepared for them *The Two Hundredth Book: A Bibliography of the Books Published by the Book Club of California 1958-1993* (1993). He was the Chair of the Editorial Board of the University of California Press Series “Catalogues and Bibliographies” in the 1980s.

Bob Harlan had a deep interest in music. While in high school he began piano lessons and for decades had a grand piano at his home in Berkeley until he moved to San Francisco. The depth of his knowledge of his collection of music CDs was recalled by fellow Professor Michael Cooper who asked if he knew of a good CD of Mahler’s ninth symphony and Bob replied with a comparison of his nine recordings of that work. His devotion to a succession of cats, often older ones that wouldn’t often be chosen for adoption, was reflected by his support of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the SPCA. I remember that he kept a bag of peanuts in his desk to feed the campus squirrels.

Bob was predeceased by his parents, Madge and Hugh Harlan, Sr., and by his only sibling, Hugh Harlan, Jr. He is survived by his sister- in- law Dolores Harlan, nephews Lonn and Dan Harlan, niece Lori Henkenius, and their spouses, children, and grandchildren.

Mary Kay Duggan