

Nodlaig Hardiman, 1935 - 2016 - an appreciation

Nodlaig Hardiman, who died on 17th February 2016, had a long and distinguished career in public libraries, making a significant contribution to the profession.

Joining the then Dublin Corporation as a library assistant in 1954, she gained a Fellowship of the Library Association of Ireland and was appointed librarian in 1964. In 1970 she was promoted to Senior Librarian, setting up the Commerce and Technology Library in Capel Street, a service which still exists in the form of the Business Information Centre at the Central Library, ILAC Centre.

In 1979, Nodlaig oversaw the introduction of Dublin City's first computerised library system, and in 1980 she was promoted to Divisional Librarian, the post from which she retired on 21st December 2000. During her time as Divisional Librarian she continued to introduce modern information technology into the work of the libraries, while not neglecting her responsibilities for the Gilbert Library and Special Collections.

Nodlaig Hardiman's professional interest in bibliography and local studies bore fruit in her long-standing involvement with the internationally renowned Gilbert Library, the core collection around which Dublin City's Dublin and Irish Collections are built. Her wide knowledge and experience proved invaluable in the development of the City's specially built headquarters and reference services at the Dublin City Library and Archive, Pearse Street.

Her admiration of Sir John T Gilbert – she used to call him the man in her life - led to her editing, along with colleagues, a volume on him during his centenary year and she also initiated the annual John T Gilbert Lecture series, which is now in its nineteenth year.

She was editor of *A Directory of Dublin for 1738*, which Dublin City Public Libraries published to critical acclaim.

Throughout her 46 years long career, Nodlaig maintained a strong professional focus. She was for a long time an active member of, and prime mover in, the Library Association of Ireland. She was for many years Honorary Secretary of the



Association working tirelessly to raise standards in the profession. All of us who work as librarians now owe her a great debt of gratitude both for the central role she played in making professional education an essential requirement for Librarian posts and for her role in the establishment of the staff education support scheme.

As a member of the North-South Liaison Committee, Nodlaig was instrumental in organising many of the Association's annual conferences, keeping the links between North and South alive and well, at a time when, as she often said, quoting Myles na gCopaleen, 'it was neither popular nor profitable'.

In 1986/7 she was elected as President of the Association, a role which she filled with her customary dedication and professionalism. On her retirement she was made a 'life member' in recognition of her service to the Association and the profession.

As all who knew and worked with Nodlaig can attest, she didn't suffer fools gladly: she set such high standards for her own work and for the work of her colleagues.

She was remarkably well-read and very knowledgeable and generous in sharing her knowledge and expertise.

Nodlaig had a mischievous sense of humour, and was a very funny storyteller, enlivening many a tea break with tales from her career – nearly all true and mostly scandalous.

In her long career, through her dedication, erudition and professionalism, Nodlaig made a significant contribution to Dublin City Public Libraries, to the Library Association of Ireland, to the wider library community, and to the working lives of her many colleagues.

To coin a phrase she was fond of, Nodlaig Hardiman was a woman of 'capernosity and function' - Ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís.

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