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# F. W. Lancaster as Scholar, Teacher, and Mentor: Reflections of Students

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## ABSTRACT

This essay captures the reflections of several students who studied with Professor F. W. Lancaster during his tenure at the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) from 1970 to 1992 and beyond. It is organized around the emerging themes as expressed by a diverse group of students in the United States and from around the globe. These students have given us permission to use all or some of their comments in this Festschrift.

## INTRODUCTION

Those who have come to know Professor F. W. Lancaster primarily through his writings may not know of his personal qualities that have endeared him to many of his students. This essay is a tribute to Lancaster by several former students for his personal qualities that reflect his caring, sharing, inspiring, and encouraging nature, and his down-to-earth wisdom and ready wit. F. W. Lancaster joined the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois in 1970 and served as a faculty member until his retirement in 1992. Notwithstanding his retirement, Lancaster continued to direct students' research as an emeritus faculty member. During his tenure, hundreds of students took his courses, which included Information Storage and Retrieval, Vocabulary Control for Information Retrieval, Measurement and Evaluation, and Foundations of Librarianship for students entering the masters program. Based on the student dataset in the MPACT database, Lancaster mentored more students and served on more research committees during his tenure than other faculty at GSLIS in the field of Library and Information Science.<sup>1</sup> Appendix A shows Lancaster's advisees and the dissertation committees on which he served.

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In this essay, we draw on the reflections of several of Lancaster's former students who studied at the GSLIS in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. The students who responded to our call for contributions gave us permission to use their personal stories for this project (see Appendix B). We, the authors, are former students ourselves and we have interspersed our own reflections of Lancaster and of his family throughout this essay. Our goal is to let each student's voice be heard as they reminisce about Lancaster's impact on their lives, their professional careers and in their research interests.

A quick review of Lancaster's advisees reflects a significant number of international students. They arrived in the United States from Brazil, Canada, Mexico, India, Pakistan, China, Malaysia, Philippines, South Africa, The Dominican Republic, and Taiwan.

Reflections offered by his international students demonstrate Lancaster's global reach through his writings and travels. He always seemed especially sensitive to the diverse needs of students who came from different cultural backgrounds and educational systems. The students who responded to the call for contributions to this personal tribute included both masters degree and doctoral students and roughly spanned the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Master's degree respondents include: Julie Sigler ('71), Linda Smith ('72), Becky Lyon ('72), Elana Hanson ('74), Tad Graham ('74), Clifford Haka ('77), Terry Mills ('81, '82), Rashmi Mehrotra ('82), and Sidney Berger ('87). Doctoral student respondents include: Evelyn Curry ('81), Jaime Pontigo ('84), Chandra Prabha ('84), William Aguillar ('84), Sharon Baker ('85), Sharon (Chengren) Hu ('87), Szarina Abdullah ('89), Lorraine Haricombe ('88 '92), and Hong Xu ('96).

Without exception former students agree that Lancaster made a lasting impact on their careers and left them with a deep respect for his personal qualities since his very early days of teaching at GSLIS. Overall, his students recognize him as a dedicated teacher and mentor with a down-to-earth quality, a father figure with warmth and hospitality, and one who never failed to recognize his students for their contributions to his research and to his writings. This essay honors Lancaster for the human values he espouses. It is organized around the themes that emerged in the stories several former students shared with us.

### THE DEDICATED TEACHER AND MENTOR

From his earliest days at GSLIS Lancaster had a distinguished aura and a distinct humane side as described by Hanson ('74). She writes:

The most commanding presence in the Library Science halls in 1973 was F. Wilfrid Lancaster. When I was assigned as his research assistant I nearly fainted. His look, stance, walk, features, and reputation all struck awe and even a bit of fear into the heart of this nervous elementary

education graduate and former resident of the sorority just across the street.

Wilf took me into his office and home, welcoming me as his assistant on campus and family member off campus. He and his wife introduced me to the cuisines of the world; as I helped prepare his manuscripts, he helped prepare me for the coming of the computer to the world of medical libraries I was about to enter as a hospital librarian.

What I didn't realize was that inside this legend was a great human being who took equal delight in taking budding librarians under his wing and getting them ready to take on new challenges in the whirlwind that was becoming information science.

Smith ('72) wrote, "As an undergraduate in physics and mathematics at a small college, I had completed the few computer science courses offered at the time. But it was not until I enrolled in Professor Lancaster's courses that I began to understand the potential of computer applications for the field in which I had chosen to pursue a career: library science." Smith writes that she was a student of Professor Lancaster in two courses: Information Storage and Retrieval and Vocabulary Control. He literally wrote the textbook for each course (*Information Retrieval Systems: Characteristics, Testing and Evaluation*, 1st ed., 1968; *Vocabulary Control for Information Retrieval*, 1st ed., 1972).

I remember sitting in the auditorium in Room 66 in the basement of the Library at some point that year, watching a demonstration of an early online retrieval system from the National Library of Medicine (NLM), AIM-TWX (*Abridged Index Medicus-Teletype Writer Exchange Network*). We had been learning about NLM's pioneering efforts to carry out batch processed searches of bibliographic records of the medical literature (MEDLARS—Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System), but this was something new: online searching in real time.

By the time I returned to Illinois in 1977 to join the faculty, Professor Lancaster had published yet another book (*Information Retrieval Online*, 1973) and developed a course on online information systems. He generously offered to let me teach the course, which until that point had involved reading about developments in information retrieval online, with no hands-on component. We were able to partner with the Library in spring 1978 to introduce a laboratory component for the course using the BRS (Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc.) system. I continued to be the primary instructor of that course until 1996, each year updating it to reflect the changes in online resources and the systems used to access them. In 1996 GSLIS launched its LEEP program, the online option for earning the M.S. degree in which I now teach regularly. It has been rewarding to pioneer instruction using online technology, just as Professor Lancaster pioneered teaching about online technology for information retrieval twenty-five years earlier.

Professor Herbert Goldhor, former Director of the (then) Graduate School of Library Science (GSLs), hired Lancaster in 1970 to launch the school's program in Biomedical Librarianship. Lancaster served as direc-

tor of the program for four years until 1973. Lyon ('72), an early recipient of a fellowship to study biomedical librarianship funded by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), remembers that Lancaster was the project director and advisor to ten students who received the NLM fellowships.

I remember him as an excellent professor, advisor, and mentor. Wilf is directly responsible for guiding me in the direction of the National Library of Medicine, where I have happily spent 27 years of my 35 year career. I would probably not have considered applying for the NLM Associate Program if Wilf hadn't told me to do so. He was a truly great mentor—seeing an opportunity that I would not have considered and firmly moving me in that direction. Having Wilf as a professor, mentor, and later friend, has been very important to me. I will always be grateful to him for the many ways in which he taught, guided, and inspired me.

Sigler ('71), a member of that first scholarship group at GSLIS writes:

I recall the excitement of his arrival at U of I, Mr. MEDLARS himself! . . . In many ways his presence at U of I contributed to a year that I've always considered one of the most worthwhile of my life, because of what I learned and the confidence I gained in myself and the friends who I still have.

Graham ('74) registered for Lancaster's Information Storage and Retrieval class and marveled at Lancaster's foresight as he remembers their first field trip to the Ohio State University (OSU) Main Library, where a bold experiment called the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC) was underway. Born of the simple notion of sharing resources and saving money, Lancaster pointed out it was the online aspect that would ultimately prove to be the most important innovation. Online would change the way we work. In 1981, the OCLC would be renamed the Online Computer Library Center. Graham asks: "How did he [Lancaster] know that?"

Lancaster predicted that librarians would no longer function simply as caretakers of printed materials. They would be at the center of exploring ideas, of discovering connections between those materials and assisting in the birth of new ideas. Graham continues: "We haven't quite fully achieved this vision of the new world order, but the evidence thus far would suggest we are getting close. In any case, because Professor Lancaster was out in front, well-grounded in both the theoretical and the practical approaches, and because he understands the technology, his two courses enabled me to establish an excellent foundation on which to build a highly successful 30-year career in information systems. For that, I will always be grateful."

Mills ('81,'82) expresses similar sentiments and writes "having you as my CAS degree faculty advisor while at Illinois between 1980 and 1982 [was] very important to me . . . in fact [it was] the highlight of my academic career."

Curry ('81) first read Lancaster's work while working toward her master's degree in library and information science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She was impressed by the clarity she found in Lancaster's writings. Curry joined the doctoral program at GSLIS in 1977 where Lancaster supervised her dissertation research. She wrote:

Having been drawn to the profession as a Black teenager when I dared to enter a "whites only" public library in the segregated south, social questions piqued my interest in the profession: Why couldn't Blacks use the library? What was so sacred about libraries that Blacks were kept out? How could Blacks benefit from using library materials? Beyond that initial "calling," I did not know the direction I would take in the profession upon entering graduate school. But reading Lancaster, however, was a defining moment for me.

I knew that information retrieval would be my specialization as I probed the question of "access." Whispering a prayer to myself, "what an honor it would be to sit in one of his lectures" I tucked the idea away in my mind, never fully believing that I would have the opportunity to meet—let alone study—with him in person one day.

Curry says that she solidly learned the principles of information storage and retrieval from Lancaster. She writes "I learned four valuable lessons under his tutelage—that information retrieval was practical, accessible, relevant and fun. I also learned an important way to think about the field, a philosophy behind the theory—namely, that the human factor was as important as system factors in effective information processing."

Reflecting on her career, Curry credits Lancaster's scholarship for shaping her professional agenda and service initiatives.

Lancaster's work in developing countries—in India, Brazil, Mexico, Namibia, and other parts of the globe—has been a beacon of light to those of us interested in comparative librarianship. My own research interests have included virtual reference and information retrieval. I have also taught Library and Information Science and conducted research in Kenya and Zimbabwe as a two-time Fulbright Scholar. I have seen the field—as he has for many years—through different eyes. Much of what I have learned from Mr. Lancaster has been "caught" not "taught." From walking the dirt roads of small-town Texas—questioning the value of libraries in the lives of Blacks "across the tracks"—I have grown in my belief that access to information services by marginalized groups is critical to the empowerment of communities. I am grateful for the impact he has had on my life.

Mills ('81, '82), as part of his 1982 Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) project, *The University of Illinois Collection Use Study* (ED 227 821), developed a relative use statistic called the "percentage of expected use," which has been referenced in several publications over the years. Like Lancaster, his research in the area of "expected use" had broad impact in collection management in libraries in the United States and as far afield as Australia. Surprised and proud of the global impact of his work Mills writes:

Imagine that, after all these years, from some ideas that I'm sure I never would have had if I wasn't lucky enough to have had Professor Lancaster as my faculty advisor.

Lancaster attracted students from near and far to study at the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Aguilar ('84) met Professor Lancaster at a library conference in Kentucky a year or so before attending the University of Illinois. He writes:

It was his presentation on measurement and evaluation of library service that persuaded me to attend the U of I. More specifically, I enrolled at the University of Illinois because Professor Lancaster was there. I went there to study with him and to learn from him. I took every course he offered and spent many hours talking with him about my doctoral program.

Pontigo ('84) remembers how Lancaster took a personal interest in encouraging him to pursue a PhD degree at GSLIS.

I was back in Mexico and learned that Prof. Lancaster was coming to Mexico to teach a course on information retrieval in 1976. I was invited to a dinner in his honor and it was then that I met Mr. and Mrs. Lancaster. We had a brief conversation, he asked me when I was going to start the program but due to lack of support it was not until 1979 when I went to Champaign-Urbana.

Hu ('87) remembers that she was introduced to essential principles and concepts of information systems in her undergraduate curriculum at Wuhan University, China in 1978.

I started to learn the essential theories of information systems with various concepts such as "Information Retrieval," "Online Searching," "Thesaurus," "Indexing" and "Abstracting," many of which were imported from western countries. While much of the material covered in the coursework was taken from Western authors, one author frequently cited in the textbooks was F. W. Lancaster. Deeply impressed by Lancaster's work, I decided to do graduate studies in automatic information retrieval systems and dreamed that one day I might read Lancaster's original books and listen to his speeches . . . I purposely applied to UIUC because Lancaster was a professor there. I took most of his courses and read as many of his publications as I could. And, he was my advisor on my PhD research thesis.

Not only was Lancaster a great teacher, he was an excellent mentor to shepherd newly minted librarians into their new careers. Berger's ('87) reflections capture it best. He writes:

It isn't common, I am sure, for the influence of one professor to have a lasting effect on one's life. Wilf Lancaster, however, taught me things that have changed the course of my life—naturally, for the better.

In 1986, just as he was entering the profession as a rare book librarian, Berger took one of Lancaster's courses, *Indexing and Abstracting*, where

he proceeded to develop a thesaurus for rare book cataloging on the subject of paper. Later, as a member of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) Standards Committee, Berger presented his thesaurus, which was approved a few years later and published by ACRL as one of the RBMS Thesauri for Rare Book Cataloging. He attributes his success to Lancaster's teaching and writes:

Needless to say, I couldn't have done it without the training I got from Wilf, whose teaching was impeccable: absolutely clear and thorough. Painless. Brilliant.

Mehrotra ('82) recalls that she was fortunate to have had Lancaster as her advisor and to have worked as his research assistant. She recalls:

I was new in this country and had very little knowledge about the field I had chosen to study. I was in awe of his knowledge and insight, yet had a very affectionate regard for him, for who he was as a person, and I still do. He nurtured me with patience and gave me an opportunity to be where I am today. The scenarios that I edited for him in his manuscripts are reality today in the field of librarianship. I salute him for his tremendous contributions to the field of Library and Information Science.

Xu ('96) recalls when she was an undergraduate at the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) at Wuhan University, China, a world famous library and information science scholar, F. W. Lancaster, along with his well-known prediction of "paperless society" was introduced to her class.

I never thought that his name would be connected to my future scholarly career. Three months after my graduation from the MLS program at the same University, I was told that Professor Lancaster would visit the School and give lectures in October 1987. With full curiosity and admiration, I attended the lectures. I was particularly impressed by Lancaster's forecasts of a paperless society. Even though some have criticized this prediction, electronically based information systems were playing a major role in advancing the field. Recognizing this, I chose my dissertation research topic and planned my career.

Prabha ('84) marvels that Lancaster's course assignments were not time-intensive but called for an understanding of the concepts he wanted the students to grasp.

By the time I completed the assignment it was clear that Lancaster wanted us students to understand the concepts he was trying to convey in the classroom. Lancaster used to present data in support of the ideas he was presenting when he taught. In the master's level courses, Lancaster did not usually tell us how he arrived at those percentages, for example, the success and failure rates of reference service or citation accuracy. Not knowing the source of the percentages he was using to make a point, I was curious to know whether Lancaster was just making up percentages! Only later as I progressed through the program did I realize that all of the supporting data he used in teaching came



from studies published or otherwise. Sometimes, the supporting data were taken from the studies that Lancaster himself had conducted as a library consultant.

Abdullah ('89) writes about Lancaster's sensitivity to students' needs.

During the 1980's you would be out of place among students and professionals in library science in Malaysia and Singapore if you had no idea who Lancaster was. And people gave you a big nod of approval upon knowing that you have chosen to study under his supervision. . . . As one of his doctoral students from January 1986 to December 1988, I have progressed and obtained my degree within the planned timeframe due in large part to his professionalism and unwavering attention given to my dissertation. Without fail, he would return my drafts with his comments on Mondays or Tuesdays after my submission on Fridays. He had a very distinctive handwriting and I still keep some of those drafts with fond memory. The "Bibliometrics" I learnt under Lancaster has prepared me to venture into developing a national Bibliometrics database for Malaysia.

Haricombe ('88, '92) recalls that her years as a GSLIS student from 1986 to 1992 coincided with some of the most difficult years in South Africa before the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990. She writes:

Some of the significant events at that time included the economic sanctions against South Africa and the lesser known academic boycott. These events would provide me with rich opportunities to frame research questions that would later inform my dissertation topic: the academic boycott of South Africa and its impact on scholarship and libraries. I was delighted to know that Prof. Lancaster was willing to serve as my advisor. He was instrumental in guiding me through the research process. I remain grateful for his support and for the opportunity to have studied with him as well as co-authoring *Out in the Cold*, my first book with him. In 1992, when I graduated, I turned to him to "hood" me. Not one for the pomp and circumstance of commencement exercises he told me he disliked participating in them. Despite his dislike for formal ceremonies he agreed to hood me. While I felt honored by his presence, I still feel guilty that he had to sit through it all! Lancaster served as my mentor in the choices I made during my career. As I progressed in my career over the years I have often called on him for advice.

Perhaps more than other faculty, Lancaster exhibited a sympathetic understanding and more patience with international students, many of whom had never been outside of their own countries or to whom English posed a significant challenge. Xu ('96) remembers that

because of my frustration in adjusting to the program and my language barrier in the first couple of months, I worried if I could finish my course work, successfully write my dissertation, and eventually graduate from the program. He [Lancaster] said, "You certainly will." His word was the great encouragement to me in my next five years' of study. . . . Had it not been for the inspiring words and sound training

of Lancaster, I could not have assumed the great responsibilities in my present position.

It would be impossible in this essay to publish all the reflections of all the students Lancaster influenced during his career as teacher and mentor. Notwithstanding this limitation, the quality of his impact on his students as reflected in their contributions more than compensate for the lack of quantity. While Lancaster influenced his students through teaching and mentoring, students quickly discovered his wit and his genuine kindness.

### WIT, WISDOM, AND KINDNESS

Despite being a scholar with a global reputation, Lancaster often surprised his students by being both direct and witty, qualities that helped him develop rapport with students. Baker ('85) comments that "Wilf's dedication to teaching, dry sense of humor, and quiet passion for life enlivened both his classes and the luncheon sessions he spent with students." Prabha ('84) believes that without Lancaster's ready wit and his zest for life she would not have survived the roller-coaster experience of the doctoral program.

As Curry ('81) was completing her dissertation research, Prabha joined the doctoral program at GSLIS. Both had earned their master's degree in library and information science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and had a tendency to walk together on campus. Curry reminisces:

I fondly remember Lancaster's nicknames for Chandra Prabha (an Indian doctoral student) and me—Mutt and Jeff—when he saw us walking together in the department and on the campus. Chandra is just 4 feet 8 inches tall and I am nearly 6 feet tall! We loved his down-to-earth manner of relating with students.

Prabha ('84) shares more tales to illustrate Lancaster's wit.

In the first semester, I came up with a research idea that required gathering views of the members of the U.S. Congress via mail questionnaire. Although Lancaster was not my program advisor at that time, I sought Lancaster's opinion on the probable rate of return of responses from the survey of U.S. congressional members. In less than the time it would take to blink an eye, Lancaster responded with amusement: "With a last name like yours (Vaidyanath), which Congress member is going to respond to your survey?" His forthright answer was not only amusing but also revealed unspoken biases that a naïve student may not recognize. In that instant, I realized that I could trust him to tell me if I was going wrong.

Cliff Haka ('77) recalls this scenario from the last day of his Information Storage and Retrieval class with Lancaster:

Wilf Lancaster took the opportunity to discuss the fact that cutting-edge scholars didn't rely on the typical information cycle that we had been studying. Instead, "stars" in various disciplines communicated directly

with each other via rough drafts of articles and other such devices. This informal network of communication, we were told, was typically coordinated by the “superstar” of the discipline. At this point a hand went up and a student asked “who was the superstar in information retrieval?” Poor Wilf was not prepared for this eventuality and stood speechless as a bright red hue worked its way up his neck and soon thereafter engulfed his entire head, turning it into the equivalent of a ripe tomato. Eventually he sort of put his head down and mumbled, “Well, I guess I am . . . class dismissed.”

Curry ('81) recalls that “When walking home one day from school carrying an armful of packages to my off-campus apartment, Mr. Lancaster drove past in his station wagon, stopped and asked if I needed a lift (ride). Thankful for the offer, I accepted help a few blocks to the corner on which I lived. Shocked that a professor of his stature would condescend to offer a lowly doctoral student a ride, I decided that he was quite ‘human’ after all!”

Prabha ('84) remembers a similar incident. While she was waiting to cross a street on the Engineering Campus, a car suddenly stopped close and she heard a familiar voice, “Would you like a ride?”

Once when Pontigo ('84) asked Lancaster, “What is the clue to become a highly cited author?” Lancaster answered, “You pick up an interesting title for your publication.” Pontigo writes that at that time Lancaster had published a new book and gave him a copy of the book and signed it: “For Jaime, from the author of good titles.” Even in his wit, Lancaster was enormously human. Hanson ('74) puts it succinctly: “Lancaster’s heart was as big as his brain.”

## HOSPITALITY AND HAPPY HOUR

Many students enjoyed the Lancaster family’s warm hospitality occasionally, especially at Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, and Christmas. Lyon ('72) writes:

Wilf would also invite his advisees to dinner at his home on occasion. These were educational experiences for a young woman who had grown up in the Midwest with a decidedly meat-and-potatoes upbringing. I was introduced to fabulous and sometimes exotic foods and delicious wines. I can still remember some of those meals. . . . We always had a wonderful time. Wilf continued to be interested in the progress of my career for many years after I moved to the Washington, DC area. Occasionally when he was in town for one meeting or another, we would meet for dinner. Thanks to his visits, I sampled a number of outstanding restaurants I would probably not have found otherwise.

Happy hour with Lancaster was clearly a favorite among his students. Lyon recollects:

Friday was my favorite day of the week, not because the weekend was approaching, but because that was the day that Wilf and a small number

of other professors invited students to join them for beer and conversation in a local watering hole. We discussed wide-ranging subjects and generally had a great time in a congenial atmosphere.

Many years later Haricombe ('88, '92) too recalls that Prof. Lancaster would invite his students to "happy hour" at a nearby location for those who wished to continue class discussions.

As an international student, I was first startled to see a professor and his students mingle in a bar! Over time I adjusted to the informal relationship between faculty at American universities and their students. We usually occupied a large table in one corner of the bar. Later, I appreciated the opportunity he created to engage his students in some of the best discussions around a pitcher of beer or lemonade. I too began to look forward to "Fridays with Lancaster."

Lancaster's hospitality extended well beyond his family home and happy hour in Urbana-Champaign. Hanson ('74) who grew up in Champaign, recalls the great experience of being a student at GSLIS in the medical librarianship program. At that time, she had to take the medical library course in Chicago at the University of Illinois Medical Center. She remembers that "Wilf took us all up there and taught it as a summer course. We had such a blast—going out to great restaurants on the weekends. He showed us all the sights of Chicago."

Lancaster and his wife, Cesaria, were especially sensitive to the needs of international students. Pontigo ('84) remembers arriving on the University of Illinois campus in the middle of one of the worst winters. He writes, "Actually, we were not only welcomed and guided but protected by his [Lancaster's] wife, Cesaria."

Haricombe ('88, '92) recalls that the Lancasters' home was a home to many international students in the USA. "The students felt connected there, not just socially, but also globally. Lancaster's keen interest in students' backgrounds and in their countries coupled with his personal experiences during travels to some countries made a difference."

Mehrotra ('82) still recalls her first Thanksgiving and says "not a single Thanksgiving goes by when my family does not remember our first Thanksgiving at Professor Lancaster's house with his family." The Lancaster's warmth and hospitality made an impression on Prabha ('84), who expressed an interest in attending midnight mass with the Lancaster family one year. "They drove to my apartment on campus, picked me up to go to the church and then after mass dropped me off." She recalls that Lancaster and his wife opened their home to students year after year and that several of the invitees were from abroad, including countries like Iran, the Philippines, India, Brazil, and Mexico. The conversations took on an international flair. "The students who came to these gatherings were not only from the library and information science department but also from other disciplines of study on the campus. Long before globalization and

internationalization became common business themes, those present actually experienced it first hand.”

Despite Lancaster’s high professional profile, he and his wife cared about the simple things in life, and mostly about the people they met. The stories the Lancasters shared about their worldly travels and experiences were always intriguing. They seemed to enjoy the opportunity to learn more about other cultures and had lively conversations with their student guests. At these gatherings, Mrs. Lancaster herself prepared multi-course dinners and served the guests at the table.

Lancaster was often invited as a speaker or a consultant, nationally and internationally, which led to many travels abroad. Haricombe (’88, ’92) recalls a memorable moment when Lancaster shared his impressions of his first South African trip with her, including his delightful experience with the people and the vineyards of Stellenbosch, a university town on the famous wine route in South Africa. “Naively he asked, ‘Have you ever been to Stellenbosch?’ I still remember the surprised look on his face when I told him that was my hometown. The next time they visited South Africa, he and Mrs. Lancaster took time to meet my parents. Years later my parents still talked about the famous professor who came to their house!”

Prabha (’84) echoes similar sentiments: “Lancaster not only opened his home to his students but also readily visited homes of students or their relatives, when invited. “When work took Lancaster to New Delhi and Hyderabad, Lancaster made time to visit my families in these cities. The rain pour in Hyderabad was severe. Even so, Lancaster kept his dinner appointment. My niece and nephews were at an impressionable age. A fair-skinned man from the West was interacting with them, creating an unforgettable first hand experience for these children. Lancaster’s unassuming nature made it possible for students to invite and entertain him in their and their relatives’ homes.”

Curry (’81) recalls some twenty years later, in June 2000, when Mr. and Mrs. Lancaster visited one of their sons and his family in McKinney, Texas, a half hour from her home.

I stopped over to visit. Preparing to leave, I wished him “Happy Father’s Day,” stating that my own dad had died the previous December after the death of my mom sixteen months earlier. Without blinking, he said, “I’ll be your father!” The remark caught me by surprise, but I looked up, smiled and recognized the “father’s heart” of a master teacher who had instinctively nudged and encouraged scores of students along the way his entire career.

Haricombe (’88, ’92) writes,

Many years have passed since I left GSLIS. Today, as then, Prof. and Mrs. Lancaster remain accessible to their students and always seem glad to hear from them. As a former international student, my daughters and I can attest to the significance of having a home away from home. In

the absence of a father figure, my oldest daughter (Heidi Weilbach) remembers Lancaster as a fatherly figure who was genuinely interested in her life and her studies. She writes, "My life and studies have taken me far afield from those early days in Urbana, but I am happy to count Prof. Lancaster as a mentor and his family as, briefly, mine too. Thanks to the Lancasters, my family and I were never far from home."

Xu ('96) sums it up nicely:

There is an old Chinese saying: *my teacher, my father*. Wilf, you have been a magnificent advisor, an outstanding teacher, a great source of inspiration, a patient listener, and a good father to me.

### RECOGNIZING STUDENTS' CONTRIBUTIONS

From the very beginning of his appointment at GSLIS, Lancaster involved his students in his research and always acknowledged their contributions to his research and to his writings. Terry Mills ('81,'82), an advisee who pursued the Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS), was flattered when Lancaster included his CAS project, the University of Illinois Film Center Collection Use Study, in three of his books (*If You Want to Evaluate Your Library*; *The Measurement and Evaluation of Library Services*, 2nd edition, and *Technology and Management in Library and Information Services*).

In the early years students reviewed the drafts of chapters for books he was writing and provided feedback. A review of his publications shows that he often provided publishing opportunities for his students by coauthoring with them. While most acknowledgments are for graduate students' assistance in gathering materials and checking references and quotations, others were also recognized for being critics and for writing chapters (see Table 1).

Table 1. Students and others acknowledged by Lancaster in his books for their assistance, usually as graduate assistants

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Baker, S., & Lancaster, F. W. (1991). <i>The Measurement and Evaluation of Library Services</i> . (2nd ed.). Arlington, VA: Information Resources Press. Assistants: Elana Hanson, Gini Gale, Mary Jane Joncich
Fayen, E. G., & Lancaster, F. W. (1973). <i>Information Retrieval: On-line</i> . Los Angeles: Melville Pub. Co. Assistants: Ruth Lerner, Lynda Molodow, Carol Boast, Ruthie Bishop
Lancaster, F. W. (1979). <i>Information Retrieval Systems: Characteristics, Testing and Evaluation</i> . (2nd ed.). Information Sciences series. New York: Wiley. Assistants: Dianne McCutcheon, Billie Mann
Lancaster, F. W. (1982). <i>Libraries and Librarians in an Age of Electronics</i> . Arlington, VA: Information Resources Press. Assistants: Kathy Neff; Rashmi Mehrotra
Lancaster, F. W. (1985). <i>Vocabulary Control for Information Retrieval</i> . (2nd ed.). Washington: Information Resources Press. Assistants: Mary Ann Barragry, Linda Bonen, Anne Ernst, Miriam Kauffman, Arther Ketchersid, Mary Krick, Dudley Marcum, Anna Bell McCuiston, Martha Nichols, Margaret Smith,

Table 1. *continued.*

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- Barbara Hoegle. Most of these students were in his first Vocabulary Control class in 1971. They provided feedback to the manuscript before its publication in 1972.
- Lancaster, F. W. (1993). *If You Want to Evaluate Your Library*. (2nd ed.). Champaign, Ill: University of Illinois, Graduate School of Library and Information Science.  
Assistants: Hong Xu; Susan Bushur
- Lancaster, F. W. (2003). *Indexing and Abstracting in Theory and Practice*. (3rd ed.). Champaign, Ill: University of Illinois, Graduate School of Library and Information Science.  
Assistants: Jill Bytner; Lorraine Haricombe; Beverly Rauchfuss
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## NOTE

Our goal with this essay is to capture, in their own voices, the essence of former students' tributes and homage to Lancaster. While many more students have studied under Lancaster (see Appendix A) than those who have responded to our call for contributions, there is no doubt about the significance of Lancaster's impact on them, their lives, their careers and the depth of their appreciation for his teachings, writings and guidance. It has been both an honor and a humbling experience to compile their reflections and their comments for this Festschrift.

1. The MPACT database is housed at the School of Information and Library Science Interaction Design Laboratory at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.  
For more information about the MPACT project see [http://www.ils.unc.edu/mpact/mpact.php?op=show\\_tree&id=2595](http://www.ils.unc.edu/mpact/mpact.php?op=show_tree&id=2595).

## APPENDIX A

### STUDENTS WHO STUDIED UNDER F. W. LANCASTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

#### *ADVISEES (Lancaster was their major professor)*

Terry L. Weech (1972)  
 Brewster Porcella (1973)  
 Robert A. Berk (1974)  
 Lawrence E. Leonard (1975)  
 John B. Albright (1979)  
 Jeannette Marguerite Kremer (1980)  
 Evelyn Laverne Curry (1981)  
 Tillie Krieger (1981)  
 Eddie Ray Stinson (1981)  
 Julie Marlaine Neway (1982)  
 William Aguilar (1984)  
 Richard Irving Blue (1984)  
 John Bruce Howell (1984)  
 John Newman Olsgaard (1984)  
 Jaime Pontigo (1984)  
 Chandra Prabha (1984)  
 Abdus Sattar (1985)  
 Sharon (Chengren) Hu (1987)

Amy Warner (1987)  
 Szarina Bt. Abdullah (1989)  
 Catalina Y. Diluvio (1989)  
 Phyllis Self (1990)  
 Silas Marques de Oliveira (1991)  
 Lorraine Jeanne Haricombe (1992)  
 Maria Soledad Floren-Romero (1994)  
 Shiao-Feng Su (1994)  
 Jian Qin (1996)  
 Hong Xu (1996)

*Committeeships at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (Lancaster served on their dissertation committee)*

Marilyn Domas White (1971)  
 Mary Ellen Soper (1972)  
 William C. Robinson (1973)  
 William Nasri (University of Pittsburgh) (1975)  
 Anne M. Billeter (1979)  
 Jorge Encarnación (1979)  
 Virgil P. Diodato (1981)  
 Susan Monica Bonzi (1983)  
 Jeanette Marie Drone (1984)  
 Carol Tenopir (1984)  
 Danny Paul Wallace (1985)  
 Robert Burger (1988)  
 Marilyn A. Lester (1989)  
 David Neale King (1994)  
 Ming-Yueh Tsay (1996)  
 Tomas A. Lipinski (1998)

## APPENDIX B

### ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS

Abdullah, Szarina. '89. Faculty, Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia  
 Aguilar, William. '84. Vice President for University Advancement, Cal State San Bernardino, CA.  
 Baker, Sharon. '85. Library Consultant  
 Berger, Sidney. '87. The Ann C. Pingree Director of the Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum and Professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College and also the University of Illinois.  
 Curry, Evelyn. '81. Faculty, School of Library and Information Studies, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX



- Graham, Tad. '74. Retired. Regional Director for Information Systems  
Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC)
- Haka, Cliff. '77. Director of Libraries, Michigan State University
- Hanson, Elana. '74. Retired. Director of Libraries, first for Penrose  
Hospitals and then Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs, CO
- Haricombe, Lorraine. '88, '92. Dean of Libraries, University of Kansas, KS
- Hu, Sharon "(Chengren)". '87. Director of Technical Services, Chicago  
State  
University, IL
- Lyon, Becky. '72. Deputy Associate Director, Library Operations,  
National Library of Medicine Bethesda, MD
- Mehrotra, Rashmi. '82. Children's Services Supervisor, Naperville Public  
Library, Nichols Library, IL
- Mills, Terry. '81, '82. Adult Services Librarian, Barrington Area Library, IL
- Pontigo, Jaime. '84. Technological Information Manager. Instituto de  
Investigaciones Electricas, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. Mexican  
delegate and Vice-chair to Energy Technology Data Exchange (ETDE)
- Prabha, Chandra. '84. Retired. Senior Research Scientist, OCLC  
Research and Programs, OCLC Online Computer Library Center,  
Dublin, OH 43017
- Sigler, Julie. '71. Retired. General Motors Research Laboratories.
- Smith, Linda. '72. Faculty, Graduate School of Library and Information  
Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL
- Xu, Hong. '96. Head, East Asian Library at the University of Pittsburgh.  
University of Pittsburgh, PA

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Lorraine J. Haricombe was a student at GSLIS, University of Illinois, from 1986–1992. She graduated with a master's degree in 1988 and earned her PhD in 1992 under the tutelage of Professor F. W. Lancaster. She served in library administration positions from 1992–2001 at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb. In 2001 she became dean of University Libraries at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio and served there until she was named dean of Libraries at the University of Kansas in 2006. She coauthored her first book *Out in the Cold: Academic Boycotts and the Isolation of South Africa* with Lancaster.

Chandra Prabha was a doctoral student at GSLIS, University of Illinois, from 1980–1984. She decided to pursue her dissertation research under F. W. Lancaster even before she was admitted in the doctoral program. She had ample opportunity to interact with Lancaster and his family while she was a student at GSLIS. The research process she learned at the University of Illinois intrigued her so much that she pursued a career as a researcher at OCLC Research from 1985 to 2007. Chandra earned her masters degree in Library Science from University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1972.