

Gertrude H. Lamb, 1918–2015, AHIP, FMLA

Ellen Gay Detlefsen, DLS

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.103.3.003>



Gertrude Houser Lamb AHIP, FMLA, died on March 15, 2015, in Storrs, Connecticut, at the age of ninety-seven. Trudy, as she was known to colleagues and friends, was born in rural Montana in 1918. She earned her bachelor's degree in economics from Radcliffe College in 1940 and a master's degree in public

administration from Boston University in 1945. Initially, she taught courses in government and international relations at the University of Connecticut (UConn) and later switched to begin working in the acquisitions area at the university's library.

Librarianship was a second career for her. She had met her future husband, Dr. Jack Lamb, at UConn when they were both on the faculty, he in the Department of Speech and Drama and she in the Department of Government and International Relations. When they were married, they ran afoul of a state nepotism rule, and one of them had to resign a faculty position. Her decision to resign her faculty position at UConn led to her to Cleveland, Ohio, where she earned a master's of science in library science in 1968. She also went on to pursue doctoral studies in information science at Case Western University, and she was awarded her doctoral degree in 1971. Her dissertation was titled *The Coincidence of Quality and Quantity in the Literature of Mathematics*. She and her husband commuted between Ohio—and later Missouri—and Connecticut, while he continued to teach in the drama and speech faculty at UConn, and she built her new career in librarianship.

After completing her doctoral degree, Trudy began her work in medical libraries by taking a position as medical librarian and associate professor of medicine at the University of Missouri–Kansas City, from 1971 to 1973. While in Missouri, she served as project director for a National Library of Medicine (NLM) grant on “Bio-medical Librarians in the Patient Care Setting,” which established a program for clinical medical librarianship (CML) in the university's hospital and medical school.

She returned full-time to Connecticut in 1973, with an appointment as university assistant librarian and director of the clinical librarian program at the Hartford Hospital, where she directed another NLM grant on “Clinical Librarians in Patient Care Teaching Settings.” She became director of the Health Sciences Libraries at the Hartford Hospital in 1980 and served there until her retirement in 1992. Trudy was the author of five articles on clinical librarianship and a piece, “The Rediscovery

of Librarianship,” in Hoadley and Clark's *Quantitative Methods in Librarianship: Standards, Research, Management*, published in 1972. She also wrote the chapter on administration and management for the first edition of *Hospital Library Management*, published by the Medical Library Association (MLA) in 1983.

Among her numerous committee activities for MLA, she was chair of the North Atlantic Health Sciences Libraries (NAHSL), the New England/North Atlantic Chapter of MLA, in 1977–1978, and she was elected 1980/81 president of MLA. In 1988, Trudy was honored with the association's highest award, the Marcia C. Noyes Award, which “recognizes a career that has resulted in lasting, outstanding contributions to health sciences.” Prior to her retirement in 1992, she was also elected as a Fellow of MLA. In 1998, on the occasion of MLA's centennial celebrations, she was named as one of “MLA's Most Notables,” a group of 105 medical librarians “known for their outstanding contributions” to the association. The Special Libraries Association also named her to their list of “100 Librarians Who Have Shaped the Profession.”

She is most widely known in medical librarianship as an early CML advocate—most colleagues believe that she invented the concept! Her pioneering work linking librarianship to clinical medicine began when she was asked to work with medical students and their attending physicians on rounds at the hospital. She remembered that “I just started out saying, well now, if I'm going to support that kind of educational activity, I'd better find out what it's like. I went out as a member of the patient care team...and I discovered that all of those team members had information needs and they were never met.”

Writing in the medical journal *The Hospital Medical Staff* in 1977, she defined the clinical librarian as:

A medical librarian [who] is assigned to an inpatient service and attends rounds and conferences with the patient-care team. The clinical librarian searches current medical literature for answers to questions relating to patient care and management and provides the clinicians on her assigned hospital service with relevant articles. The review of the actual journal article for its appropriateness sets the clinical librarian apart from a library service that provides a bibliography or a list of citations in response to a question.

In her MLA oral history interview, conducted with Estelle Brodman in 1985, Lamb also described the tasks of the clinical librarian as serving as:

An information system in which information is brought to the point where it's most needed for decision-making, and [it] is done most effectively by a medical librarian, rather than some other team member, because that medical librarian has two

unique skills that I think are unique to librarianship, one of which is the librarian knows how to ask a question, and then knows how to access the literature quickly.

As the news of her death reached the medical library community, colleagues were quick to comment on Trudy's significance, writing of her "vision, determination and contributions over her long and distinguished career, which continue to inspire so many of us, especially those who recall the early era of clinical librarianship," with one specifically stating that "I will always remember the valuable things I learned from her during my time working at the Hartford Hospital medical library as a clinical librarian." A Connecticut friend and mentee wrote, "Trudy was an inspiration to all health librarians!" Bearing this out, comments from the next generation of librarians emerged, even prompting some who never knew her in person to marvel on her impact on the profession, noting via social media that Trudy was "a very important medical librarian," "a leader in the profession," and "a giant in our field," and that "her trailblazing work in CML led the way for so many."

Trudy had many interests beyond those arising from her professional expertise. A biographer wrote in 1980 that she had a "love of the woods and its creatures, [and] she also raises prize roses and nurses sick house plants back to health. Her interests range from classical to rock music, from Agatha Christie detective novels to bird watching, from computers to Connecticut history."

She was the widow of Jack Lamb, who died in 1987. She is survived by a sister, a niece, and two nephews. A memorial service celebrating the life of Gertrude Houser Lamb was held in Connecticut on April 18, 2015. Memorial contributions in her honor may be sent to the Storrs Congregational Church, to support their carillon.

You can read more about Trudy, her remarkable career, and her place in the canon of medical library pioneers in these articles by and about her:

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Ellen Gay Detlefsen, DLS, ellen@sis.pitt.edu, Associate Professor, School of Information Sciences, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA