



In Memoriam

Henry Snyder
Professor of History
UC Riverside
1929 – 2016

Henry L. Snyder, Emeritus Professor of History and former director of the Center for Bibliographical Studies, and Research at UC Riverside, <http://cbsr.ucr.edu/>, died in Kensington, California, on February 29, 2016.

A sixth generation Californian, Professor Snyder was born November 3, 1929, in Hayward. In high school, thanks to a free ticket to the San Francisco Opera, he discovered a lifelong passion, and in his youth, unable to afford a theater seat, he served as an usher. A frequent traveler as an adult, Snyder made it a point to see opera wherever he could, at venues both magnificent and mundane. Such was his passion that he organized opera companies where none existed, first in Baton Rouge and again in Riverside. Although he had command of several languages, he once quipped the only one he really needed to make himself universally understood was the Romance dialect “opera Italian.”

He earned his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in history from UC Berkeley. After receiving his B.A. in 1951, he served for a decade as an officer in the California Army National Guard, commanding companies at Walnut Creek and Pittsburg and building the Guard’s only full-strength rifle company in the Western United States. In 1961, he transferred to the Army Reserve, retiring from it in 1978 at the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was a member of the consulting faculty and taught at the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for several years.

Genial and outgoing, he was a natural salesman, as he demonstrated as a newly minted Berkeley B.A. in his first job, in a department store, where he soon became the firm’s youngest buyer. Decades later, he recalled being able to retail items that his colleagues

found impossible to move. He joined the faculty of the University of Kansas in 1963, rising to the rank of professor, then serving as Dean of Research Administration. In 1979, he moved to Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge to take up a position as Dean of the College of Letters and Sciences, and in 1986, happy for the chance to return to his home state, he came to UC Riverside to serve as the Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. Although he stepped down as dean, he remained at Riverside until his retirement in 2009.

Over the course of a career spanning nearly five decades, Snyder published more than 30 scholarly articles in venues as far afield as *The Journal of Modern History*, *The Library*, and *Opera Quarterly*. His scholarly reputation was based on an edition, *The Marlborough-Godolphin Correspondence*, which Clarendon Press published in three volumes in 1975. To complete the mammoth task as quickly as possible, he sold the Duke of Marlborough on the idea he should be allowed to take the original letters from Blenheim Palace to his Oxford residence so that he could work on them whenever time permitted. Snyder also co-edited one book, *The English Short-Title Catalogue: Past, Present, Future* (AMS, 2003), and co-authored three books: *The English Heritage* (Forum, 1988), *The Scottish World* (Abrams, 1981), and *Cataloging of the Hand Press: A Comparative and Analytical Study of Cataloging Rules and Formats Employed in Europe* (Saur, 1994). He was active in the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, serving a term as its president, and he was a member of the board of directors of several scholarly organizations. He was a Visiting Lecturer at Bedford College, University of London, in 1965-1966, and a Fulbright Lecturer at the University of Hamburg, Germany, in 1974. He was awarded senior fellowships from both the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities, although he declined the latter.

Impressive though these accomplishments were, Snyder's greatest achievements were in the digital humanities, a field he pioneered. In the late 1970s, a group of scholars and bibliographers from Britain and the United States were struggling to launch an online Eighteenth-Century Short-title Catalogue of British books, pamphlets and broadsides. They were thwarted by recurrent problems with organizing and financing the scheme, which began to seem over-ambitious. Then, in 1978, someone thought to solicit Snyder's participation. The interview for the position of co-director (with the British Library) conflicted in part with the Metropolitan Opera's latest production of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, and decades later, Snyder still grumbled about having to miss the last act. At the time, he knew little of bibliography and nothing of computers; nevertheless, when he was offered the job, he accepted it. Thus "one of the most remarkable episodes in bibliographical showmanship had begun," observes celebrated bibliographer G. Thomas Tanselle, who worked closely with Snyder for years, in an essay collected in *The English Short-Title Catalogue: Past, Present, Future*. Snyder "sprang into action," drawing on "entrepreneurial skill, scholarly understanding, idealism linked with practicality, and what he himself called 'the conviction and fervor of an evangelist.'"

Snyder quickly mastered both bibliography and computing, keeping up with the latest advances in each area until he retired, drawing on knowledge of them and his formidable administrative and salesmanship skills to move the ESTC project forward.

Few could resist his appeals for help with it. Towards the end, even his love of opera was put to good use; he would break the ice with people by launching into his favorite arias. To organize North American efforts, he created ESTC/NA, and he established a base for cataloguing, the Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research, at UC Riverside, which co-owns the catalogue with the British Library. Grant application after grant application poured from Snyder's computers over the years, and he successfully raised more than \$11 million for the project. Over \$6 million came from the National Endowment for the Humanities alone, a record few humanists could match. Snyder secured the balance from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the H. W. Wilson Foundation, the Ahmanson Foundation, the Gladys Keieble Delmas Foundation, the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trust, and the U.S. Department of Education. This formidable war-chest funded canvassing for relevant items in some two thousand libraries around the world. Snyder always led from the front, and in the days before digital photography, photocopy machines were an essential tool for recording title pages. Unfortunately, they were also awkward to move around, and there are legends of Snyder helping manhandle the machines up the narrow staircases of Oxford college libraries, one of the richest sources of material for the database.

Once the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue was completed, the indefatigable Snyder expanded his focus to include the earlier period but kept the initials, ESTC, rechristening the database the English Short Title Catalogue. By Snyder's retirement in 2009, the ESTC contained bibliographical information on nearly a half-million items, representing practically everything printed in English or in Britain and its possessions before 1801. Many institutions, scholars, and librarians were involved in completing this magisterial project, but it was widely acknowledged as the fruit of Snyder's labor.

Snyder's experience with the ESTC made him an invaluable colleague on other large database projects. He played a significant role in helping launch and develop the continental analog of the ESTC, The Heritage of the Printed Book Database, managed by the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL). In 1990, when the California Newspaper Project, now the California Digital Newspaper Collection, struggled to find a home, Snyder stepped in, hosting it at the Center for Bibliographic Studies and Research. It too was having trouble securing financial support until Snyder overcame the state legislature's reservations by bringing into a committee hearing a crumbling stack of the only known copies of some newspapers, his case made for him when a volume inadvertently fell over and disintegrated in the middle of the proceedings. Convinced of the project's value, the legislature approved the necessary funding, enabling Snyder to preserve some 9000 newspapers, as well as to begin digitizing them. Still not content to rest on his laurels, in 2000 Snyder organized another bibliographic initiative, The Catálogo Colectivo de Impresos Latinoamericanos hasta 1851 [CCILA], an union catalogue of Spanish and Portuguese language publications printed in North and South America, the Caribbean, and the Philippines between 1539 and 1850.

Snyder was a member of the Grolier Club, and he also belonged to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), chairing its Rare Books and Manuscripts Section for four years and working on its Newspaper Section. After his

retirement, he was a member of, then Librarian for, the Board of Directors of the Book Club of California, and he was on the Board of Directors of the California Genealogical Society, serving as chair of its Library Committee and as Librarian.

Scholars and others interested in history have long appreciated Snyder's tireless efforts in the digital humanities. National recognition came in 2007, when President George W. Bush awarded him one of ten National Humanities Medals presented that year for his "visionary leadership in bridging the worlds of scholarship and technology" by opening "new frontiers in cataloging and preserving ideas and documents for future generations." Snyder was only the sixth UC faculty member and the first UC Riverside faculty member to be so honored. International recognition came in 2009, when Queen Elizabeth II made Snyder an honorary officer of the Order of the British Empire in 2009, a rare honor normally reserved for American glitterati in business and politics.

Professor Snyder is survived by his three sons and seven grandchildren.

This memorial was prepared by Carole-Anne Tyler, Associate Professor of English, adapted from a version prepared by Tom Cogswell, Professor of History, which drew on a first draft by Tyler that was based on information from UCR colleagues in History and other departments; the National Humanities Medal page on the National Endowment for the Humanities web site, <https://www.neh.gov/about/awards/national-humanities-medals/henry-leonard-snyder>; and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.