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Obituary

LILLIA M. D. TRASK, 1873-1952

Miss Lillia M. D. Trask, Librarian of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, New York, from 1911 to 1938, died at Vineyard Haven, Mass., on February 8, 1952, following a cerebral vascular accident. Miss Trask would have celebrated her 79th birthday on February 12.

In the light of today's highly specialized training, Miss Trask's preparation for a career outstanding in two fields of library work was short. She attended Bryn Mawr College in 1892/93 and in 1906 took a short apprentice's training course at the Orange Free Library, Orange, New Jersey. She started her library career, at the age of 33, in the Children's Room of that library, but word of the exceptional job that she was doing reached the head of the Children's Department of the New York Public Library who invited Miss Trask to join the staff. In New York her work was almost exclusively with children on the Lower East Side, at the Chatham Square and the Seward Park Branch Libraries. In 1911 she was approached by Dr. Simon Flexner, the Director of The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, to become its librarian. With apparently grave misgivings as to her ability to succeed in a field so far removed from her experience she did accept and on August 28, 1911, entered upon her second career, that of a medical librarian.

The Rockefeller Institute, the first of its kind in this country, had been in existence only five years and had a library of approximately 5000 volumes. It offered an opportunity for which Miss Trask's talents were eminently suited. With rare insight she realized that existing library practices would not suffice for this type of library. She believed that the library was a tool, like the laboratory, provided to further the cause of research and the librarian, not a custodian, but the instrument by which this tool could be put to work for those for whom it was provided. With her abounding energy, which never flagged until her fatal illness, she set to work to devise library methods to fit the new requirements, with the result that many of her innovations are today accepted procedure for this type of library.

Miss Trask began her affiliation with the Medical Library Association in 1916 when The Rockefeller Institute was admitted to membership. She was a member at the time of her death and until her retirement in 1938 had participated actively and enthusiastically in Association affairs. Among many services which she rendered two were outstanding. She was the Chairman of the Committee to Consider the Compilation of a List of Health Works Recommended

for Lay Reading and was a member of the Special Committee on a Medical Library Handbook. She collaborated with Miss Eleanor Fair to write the chapter on Pamphlets and Pictures, Maps and Microfilms in *A Handbook of Medical Library Practice*.

The influence of Miss Trask's strong personality and her high ideals of loyalty and service extended much farther than she ever knew, not only through those who received their training under her, but also through the many who sought her advice.