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# Dr. Paul H. Spence: Librarian, Teacher, and Leader

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**Dr. Paul H. Spence** has dedicated more than 60 years to libraries and librarianship, including more than 40 years of legendary service to the **Mervyn H. Sterne Library** at the **University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)**. Throughout his life, he has invested colossal energy, enthusiasm, and altruism into his work as a librarian, scholar, teacher, mentor, and administrator.

**Paul H. Spence** was born in a small farmhouse near Geraldine, Alabama on Christmas Day, 1923, to **John Clardy Spence**, a farmer, and **Leila Gertrude Carrell**. His mother was a school teacher prior to marriage, and it was under her tutelage that **Spence** learned to read before even entering school. As a result, he developed a great fondness for literature and looked forward to receiving books as his birthday gifts. After high school, **Spence** headed off to **Duke University** in 1942 to pursue a degree in Religion with the hopes of becoming a teaching missionary in China. However, in 1943 he made the decision to forgo his student deferment and signed up for military service in World War II. **Spence** was assigned to the European Theatre as a member of the 1st Squad, 1st Platoon, Company B, 245th Engineer Combat Battalion, and for more than two years he battled heroically against Nazi Germany. After the War, he continued his college studies at **Emory University** and completed the A.B. in History in 1948.

**Dr. Spence** credits several people with supporting and encouraging him to take the journey to the world of librarianship: **Rick Harwell**, his first library job supervisor, **Dr. Jerrold Orne**, former Director of **Air University Library** in Montgomery, Alabama, and **Dr. Robert B. Downs**, the former Dean of the Graduate School of Library Science and the former Director of the **University of Illinois Library** (Spence, Stanishevskaya, and Hogan 2011). **Spence's** first exposure to librarianship as a career path began when he took a part-time library job at **Emory** under the supervision of **Rick Harwell**. **Harwell** encouraged and supported **Spence** as he began and eventually completed the M.A. in Library Studies at **Emory** in 1950.

Shortly after graduation, **Spence** took the position of Assistant Reference Librarian at **Emory**. He loved the job and planned to spend the rest of his life there. He changed his mind about that after a chance meeting with **Dr. Jerrold Orne** during the **Southeastern Library Association Conference** in 1953. At the time, **Dr. Orne** was the Director of the **Air University Library** in Montgomery, Alabama and well-known for his coaching and mentoring of young professionals. He immediately recognized a high-potential leader in **Spence** and made him an offer to join the staff at the **Air University Library** as Chief Librarian of the Periodical Reference Section. **Spence** recalled that **Dr. Orne** made him a financial offer that he just could not turn down, "... So I went to **Air University**, not wanting to go, really, but got down there and liked it very much" (Spence, Stanishevskaya, and Hogan 2011).

Under the guidance of **Dr. Orne, Spence** was introduced to a new concept of bibliographic assistance through a subject-specific liaison program (Orne 1955, 353-359). **Spence** would eventually implement that same concept at **UAB's Sterne Library**. It was also in Montgomery where he met and married his wife, **Ruth McCollough Schmidt**, who became a strong supporter of her husband's professional efforts over the years. Together they would raise three sons: **John Carrell**, born July 21, 1955, **Peter Schmidt**, born November 27, 1956, and **Robert McCollough**, born April 15, 1961.

**Jerrold Orne** continued to have a major influence on **Spence's** academic career through the years to come. In 1957, **Spence** was promoted to Director of the Library at the **Air Force Institute of Technology**. **Dr. Spence** recalled that "**Dr. Orne** kept pushing me" to obtain a doctoral degree (Spence, Stanishevskaya, and Hogan 2011). At that time, **Spence** had two children and really could not afford to quit his job to attend classes. In 1959, also encouraged by **Dr. Orne, Ruth** obtained a better position at the **Air University Library** in Montgomery, making it possible for **Spence** to attend the **University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign** in pursuit of a Ph.D. in Library Science. While in Illinois **Spence** would cross the path of **Dr. Robert B. Downs**.

**Dr. Downs**, as the Dean of the Graduate School of Library Science and the Director of the **University of Illinois** library, "consistently evidenced a personal concern for graduate students and their struggle to obtain the doctorate" (Young 1983, 79). **Spence** recalled that "**Downs** personally paid his tuition to enable him to stay in school" (Young 1983, 79). While completing his Ph.D., **Spence** continued to grow professionally by working at the **University of Notre Dame, University of Nebraska, University of Illinois, and University of Georgia**. In 1969, he successfully defended his dissertation, entitled "Comparative Study of University Library Organizational Structure."

In 1970, **Dr. Spence** was appointed as the first Director of the **College of General Studies Library** at the newly-designated **University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)**. Developing a library from the ground up was certainly a challenge. However, **Dr. Spence** had a clear vision of the role of an academic library: "to acquire, organize, make available, and interpret all library materials needed to serve the teaching and research needs of the students and faculty of **University College**" (Spence and Crow 1976, 3). His vision allowed him to work quickly in several directions: Collection Development, Cataloging and Inventory Control, and Reference Services.

Building a strong research collection was the first priority. In 1970, the Library contained

only 10,000 volumes, and it was obvious that the collection could neither meet the teaching and research needs of a rapidly growing university nor satisfy accreditation requirements. "I have felt that the major and most lasting contribution I can make to **UAB** is the development of a good library collection. A good collection is necessary before good services can be provided, and the quality of the service is dependent to a very large degree on the quality of the collection," recalled **Spence** (1979, 7). **Spence** used several different methods and strategies to quickly construct a basic collection: he acquired several bookstores at a very low cost that were offered for sale around the country; purchased individual collections of well known historians and scientists; actively participated in many book exchange programs that allowed obtaining duplicate materials from other libraries; and accepted private donations.

Considered innovative at the time, **Spence** initiated an approach to organizing library resources by using the Library of Congress Classification scheme. During the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a lot of discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the Dewey Decimal Classification System (DDC) versus the Library of Congress Classification System (LC). **Dr. Spence's** decision to go with LC was based on a fact that LC was better suited for larger collections and gave better coverage of some subject areas. The use of LC scheme also helped to speed up the workflow due to the ability to incorporate the time-saving cataloging and classification work already established by the Library of Congress and reproduced on LC cards (Downey 1964, 2293). **Spence** formulated the initial collection development policy for **Sterne Library**, where he summarized the goals, priorities, and principles of the Library and prepared a plan of action for matching library resources to academic programs. From that point on, he made phenomenal progress in collection development, and, as a result, from 1970 to 1985 the number of books and other materials at **Sterne Library** increased significantly from 10,000 to more than 750,000 volumes. His hard work did not just build a collection but formed the foundation of what is the **Mervyn H. Sterne Library** today.

In 1970, **Spence** implemented what was at that time a very unique, subject-specific Liaison Program as a communication channel between the Library and the other academic departments. According to **Dr. Jerry Stephens, Sterne Library's** current Librarian and Director, **Spence** "believed in the concept of the reference librarian as a subject specialist. He believed that the first-hand information that the front-line reference librarian gained from working with students and faculty was valuable input into collection development decisions"

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(Dr. Jerry Stephens, email message to authors, May 25, 2011). **Spence** employed a group of subject-specialist reference-bibliographers who had “special competence in a particular subject and who worked closely with the faculty in teaching departments in that subject area to build the library collections and to promote their use in teaching and research” (Spence and Crow 1976, 3). The program supported a strong partnership between schools and librarians and gave librarians an opportunity to satisfy the information needs of users and increase the quality of the reference services through subject-specific bibliographic assistance, collection development, and classroom teaching. **Spence** built a very successful program that continues to enrich the community today and maximizes the value of the Library in academia.

**Dr. Spence’s** impact on UAB’s campus stretched beyond his role as director of the campus library. He established himself as a leader able to motivate and inspire, evidenced in his ability to align members of the UAB community to a new direction. His vision of librarians as equal partners of the teaching faculty led their inclusion in the academic group. Under **Dr. Spence’s** leadership, **Sterne Library** was “designated in the [UAB faculty] Handbook as an academic unit of **University College** so that librarians were accorded the same opportunities ... as teaching faculty (Spence 1979, 20-21). As a result, librarians received faculty status, which has allowed them to engage in scholarship and faculty governance, as well as enhance **Sterne Library’s** visibility.

**Spence’s** outstanding leadership and revolutionary vision of the Library helped to build the first computerized circulation and acquisition systems in Alabama. Under his direction, **Sterne Library** was one of the first libraries in the U.S. to transfer all its bibliographic records into machine-readable formats (Mervyn H. Sterne Library 1985, 1). Recognizing the importance of cooperative approaches among libraries, he was one of the first adopters of the **OCLC’s** shared cataloging system in the state. “**Dr. Spence** had a vision to maximize the use of technology to improve services and to make the library operation more efficient and effective,” recalled **Dr. Stephens**. Through the efforts of **Dr. Spence** and his staff, the “Library has made significant progress toward becoming a highly-respected academic library” (Mervyn H. Sterne Library 1985, 1). **Sterne Library** continues to contribute to the prestige of **UAB** by providing the critical resources and services needed to support the university’s educational and research activities.

In 1985, **Spence** stepped down from active administrative duties and became the Collection Development Librarian. In recognition of his distinguished contributions, the Board of Trustees of the **University of Alabama** System honored **Dr. Spence** with an Emeritus position on August 22, 1989. Today, he is still active and has continued to devote himself exclusively to collection building at **UAB Sterne Library**.

Throughout his career, **Spence** was involved in library education. He taught reference classes at the **UAB** School of Education in the media program for prospective school librarians, as well as evening classes at the School of Library and Information Studies at the **University of Al-**

**abama** in Tuscaloosa. His teaching experience was rewarding to his students. They remember him as a great educator who used his own unique methods and techniques in the classroom. **Susan L. Spafford**, Coordinator of the Non-fiction Department at the **Hoover Public Library**, said: “I was fortunate to have **Dr. Spence** as a professor... He was a wonderful teacher and I feel I learned more in his class than any other” (Susan L. Spafford, email message to authors, June 25, 2011). By sharing his experience and knowledge through teaching, **Dr. Spence** has surely inspired a new generation of librarians to make innovative contributions to the profession.

Over the years, **Spence** actively participated in professional organizations, associations, and societies. Many years ago, he pointed out that a “membership in a professional association provides an opportunity to share individual and institutional achievements and problems in librarianship with others who have similar interests” (1981, 5). His professional memberships included: the **American Library Association**, the **Association of College and Research Libraries**, the **Southeastern Library Association**, the **Association of Southeastern Research Libraries**, the **Georgia Library Association**, the **Illinois Library Association**, the **Nebraska Library Association**, the **Alabama Historical Society**, and the **Alabama Library Association**. He served on numerous boards and committees. He served as Vice-President/President-Elect (1980) and President (1982) of the **Southeastern Library Association (SELA)**. For outstanding contributions to SELA, **Spence** was appointed as an Honorary Member in 1990. He also served as treasurer of the **Association of Southeastern**

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**Research Libraries (ASERL)**, as well as a member of the ASERL board in 1984-1986. Recognizing the importance of professional cooperation, **Spence** actively participated in the establishment of several organizations for sharing resources and other services among universities. In 1973, **Spence** collaborated with a group of Library Directors on a project that created and founded the **Southeastern Library Network, Inc. (SOLINET)**, and for two years he served on the initial Board of Directors (1973/1974 and 1974/1975) (Gribbin 1988, 103). Also, in 1984 he was a member of the group of librarians that founded the **Network of Alabama Academic Libraries (NAAL)** as well as served as the first chairman of the NAAL Collection Development Committee. **Dr. Spence's** work with the board "was invaluable," recalled **Sue O. Medina**, former Director of NAAL. He "demonstrated great patience shaping the committee's work and in overseeing the development of the first draft of the [collection development] manual" (Medina 1987, 10).

**Spence** has made legendary contributions to academic librarianship through innovative application and practical realization of the best library services and collections for users. **Dr. Jerry Stephens**, summarizing **Spence's** achievements, said: "**Dr. Spence** has contributed so much to **UAB** and to the library profession. He has always been thoughtful, inspiring, and understanding. He has always presented ideas and challenges in a positive way and has been supportive in assisting colleagues develop their careers. He has been a great mentor to so many, not just at **UAB**, but across the country. He has

been a great sounding board for ideas and he always listened to ideas regardless how unorthodox they might have sounded. He has influenced so many in such positive ways and personally has been a great friend for many years" (Dr. Jerry Stephens, email message to authors, May 25, 2011). **Spence's** educational background, experience, deep understanding of professionalism, affiliation with many library associations, and hard work helped him successfully translate his concept of librarianship into leadership roles within the profession. Approaching his 90th birthday, **Dr. Spence** is most proud of the library collection that he helped to build at **UAB**, and he continues to contribute and to serve in promoting librarianship as Collection Development Librarian at **UAB's Sterne Library**.

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## ATG Special Report — TOC - The Tools of Change for Publishing Conference, November 7, 2012 in Charleston, SC

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by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*) <gilson@cofc.edu>

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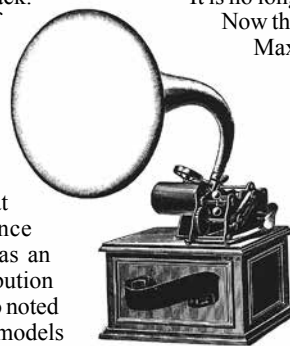
**Mini TOC (Tools of Change) Charleston** more than lived up to its billing as a day of "conversation focusing on the thriving publishing, tech, and bookish-arts community." Sponsored by **O'Reilly Media's** and **BiblioLabs** in cooperation with **The Charleston Conference, Mini TOC Charleston** had something for everyone, providing a thought-provoking program along with an open forum for stimulating discussion.

Leading off the morning presentations was **Rachel Fershleiser**, who works on **Tumblr's** outreach team and specializes in publishing, nonprofit, and cultural organizations. **Rachel** offered a witty and irreverent tour of social networking services, with a particular focus on **Tumblr** and how it can be used to develop a following and promote books, bookstores and publishing. She pointed out that **Tumblr** allows an opportunity for personal interaction that is very effective in getting out your message and encouraged members of the audience to give it a try.

**John R. Ingram**, the chairman and acting CEO of **Ingram Content Group**, continued the discussion but took a different tack. He focused directly on the world of publishing and claimed that in the digital world abundance and access are reshaping publishing. He pointed out that we are moving to a time of self-publishing not agents, limitless visibility as opposed to limited shelf space, production that is patron-driven, increasing reliance on print-on-demand, global rights as an opportunity not a barrier, and distribution that is no longer controllable. He also noted that these developments foster new models like digital first workflows, outsourced distribution, increased role for social networks, new revenue streams, and patron-driven acquisitions. One of **John's** core messages was that readers are driving the revolution — publishers are no longer in control. Noting that there is a real need to live up to customer

expectations, he insisted that publishers have to be agile and adapt to changes in the market.

It is no longer a question of "either/or."  
Now the expectation is "either/and."  
Maximizing reach is essential.



**Brian O'Leary**, founder and principal of **Magellan Media**, continued the emphasis on the customer with his discussion of "Lean Consumption," a model that "minimizes customers' time and effort by delivering exactly what they want, when and where they want it."

**Brian** also highlighted the shift away from a concern with "containers" like books, journal articles, etc., noting that "a viable product can be a book, a chapter, a component, an extract, a snippet — anything that can be monetized." Citing **Hugh McGuire**, he

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