



William R. Roalfe

WILLIAM R. ROALFE A Tribute

The manuscript from which this tribute was adapted will be published in *Law Library Journal*.

After a long illness, William R. (Bob) Roalfe passed away on July 22, 1979, in his retirement home in San Diego. He had moved there from Chicago in 1970.

When, in 1946, Bob was appointed law librarian and professor of law at Northwestern University, he was acclaimed "one of the foremost law librarians in the country." His impact on law librarianship has been strong and lasting, and there are few phases in the development and in the advances of the profession with which he was not intimately connected during his professional life.

His leadership was immediately recognized when, describing himself as "a comparatively new member" of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) in 1931, he wrote his significant and history-making letter to the president of the association which inaugurated an unprecedented "decade of progress" in the history of law librarianship. This letter was the basis for the famous "Roalfe Expansion Plan" which was adopted by the AALL and was instrumental in the reorganization and growth of the association. Among other achievements under this plan was the creation of "institutional members," a new type of membership in

the association. In addition, *Law Library Journal* was enlarged and improved and numerous basic problems of the profession were examined and clarified. Roalfe effectively asserted his leadership as president of the AALL (1935-36). He reaffirmed his leadership by a series of articles, "The Developing Role of the Library in Legal Education" (31 and 32 *Law Library Journal*, 1938-39).

Even before 1931, Roalfe had been active in promoting regional cooperation, the importance of which he continuously emphasized. Later, he was a leader in discussions on vital problems of law librarianship. His excellent book *The Libraries of the Legal Profession* (1953), which was prepared for the Survey of the Legal Profession, stands as a landmark in the field. In addition, Roalfe was the general editor of the fifth and sixth editions of *How to Find the Law* (1957 and 1965) and the author of numerous outstanding articles. Only two years ago, his book *John Henry Wigmore, Scholar and Reformer* (1977) was published. The book is the first biography of Wigmore, dean of the Law School from 1901 to 1929 and an outstanding leader in the field of Anglo-American law.

Born in 1896, William R. Roalfe received his LL.B. from the University of Southern California where he was law librarian from 1927 to 1930. He was at Duke University from 1931 to 1946, and in 1946 he came to Northwestern University. He retired in 1964. During World War II, he served with a government agency in Washington, D.C. In 1934 Bob married Mary Holland. She died in 1957. They had one son, William Robert Jr., now a medical doctor. In 1960 Bob married Helen Snook, then president of the AALL. Helen died in 1974. In 1975 Bob married Emma Brubaker, who survives.

Both at the University of Southern California and at Duke

University, Roalfe substantially improved the collections and expanded law library service. At Northwestern, he directed a reorganization in the administration of library services and achieved a substantial expansion of the collections. In 1959, Temple University conferred upon him the honorary degree of LL.D., and in the same year the AALL awarded him a citation which lauds him as an "administrator par excellence" and cites his "outstanding leadership and dedicated service." Roalfe was one of the founders and the first president (1959-1961) of the International Association of Law Libraries (IALL). In 1965 he became honorary member of the IALL, the only person so honored.

Roalfe's profile would be incomplete, however, if only his achievements in the field of law librarianship were listed. He was an active member of the Association of American Law Schools, the American Bar Association and the Council of the American Library Association where he represented the AALL.

For many years, he was interested in the field of international relations and was at one time a member on the board of governors of the American Association for the United Nations (UN). He filled numerous speaking and writing engagements dealing with the UN and its activities. His pioneering work for the IALL, of course, was an additional expression of these interests.

However, Roalfe's professional life never overshadowed his human interests, his kindness, his love of nature, his gentle sense of humor and his warm feelings which he expressed in a volume of poems, *Poetic Utterances* (published in 1976). Bob will be sorely missed by his family, his friends and by the profession.

KURT SCHWERN
Professor of Law Emeritus
and Law Librarian Emeritus