In Memoriam: Timothy Edward Connor 1942-2015

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IN MEMORIAM

Timothy Edward Connor
1942-2015

Timothy Edward Connor, the Public Services Librarian of the Harvard-Yenching Library between 1984 and 1998, passed away peacefully at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on October 14, 2015. The son of Helen (Williams) Connor and Edward Cosgrove Connor, he was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, on March 16, 1942, and grew up in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, and Newport, Rhode Island.

As a child, Tim developed an interest in Tibet and China. Upon graduating from Phillips Exeter Academy in 1960, he entered Harvard College, where he studied Chinese under Rulan Pian, read widely on topics related to China in particular as well as Japan and occasionally Korea in a tutorial with John Lyman Bishop, and as part of his undergraduate as well as graduate studies, took courses with such distinguished teachers as John King Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, Albert Craig, Max Loehr, Edwin A. Cranston, Francis W. Cleaves, and James R. Hightower. He graduated from Harvard magna cum laude in Far Eastern Languages in 1964, writing an Honors Thesis entitled “Two Sino-Tibetan Marriage Alliances in the T’ang Dynasty”, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. From 1964 to 1966, he continued his study of Chinese at the Stanford University Center in Taipei (now known as the Inter-University Center for Chinese Language and Area Studies), and following his return to the United States, pursued a master's degree for two years in the M.A. program in Regional Studies/East Asia at Harvard University. In 1968, he began his Ph.D. studies in pre-modern Chinese history at Harvard under a joint departmental program in History and East Asian Languages (HEAL) within the Department of Far Eastern Languages (now East Asian Languages and Civilizations). Professors Lien-sheng Yang and Ying-shih Yu directed his doctoral studies. He was particularly interested in the role of the Turks in the founding of the T’ang Dynasty, and completed all of the requirements for the doctorate except his dissertation. To fulfill the requirements of the HEAL doctoral program in a western field of history, Tim also studied the history of the Roman Empire with Mason Hammond.

Tim was appointed teaching fellow for the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations in 1968. For four years (1968-1972) he developed and taught a course entitled “Materials and Methods of Sinology” that was required of all graduate students in Chinese studies and offered rigorous training in the techniques and bibliography of research. It aimed to acquaint them with the kinds of information that could (or could not) be found in Chinese primary sources and in secondary sources in all languages, and to teach them how to find and interpret that
information. An important by-product of the course was the compilation of annotated research guides for entire fields of Sinology that came to be used at other universities as well. During that same period, he served as a tutor for undergraduates in the department, and directed them in reading comparative topics in Chinese and Japanese history, literature and society. Tim also served as the assistant editor of the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, a scholarly journal published by the Harvard-Yenching Institute, between 1972 and 1974. When John Lyman Bishop, the journal's editor, died in March 1974, Tim was invited to serve until 1976 as its editor.

In 1984, Tim became the Public Services Librarian at the Harvard-Yenching Library, where he worked until mid-1998. He administered the reference and circulation services for its collection of nearly one million volumes and coordinated these services with the university library system and other libraries throughout the United States and Canada. He also was responsible for selecting and maintaining the reference collections in Chinese, Japanese, and Western languages, both in print and online, and met regularly with classes and individual students to help with sources for research papers.

In July 1988, Tim was one of twenty East Asian librarians chosen to attend the Summer Institute on East Asian Librarianship at the University of Washington that was sponsored by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The Institute, under the direction of the late Karl Lo, provided two weeks of intensive training on the application of computer technology to solve problems in traditional bibliographic control and in the control of management data. Later, when the Harvard-Yenching Library acquired the full-text database of the *Twenty-Four Histories* in Chinese from the Academia Sinica in Taipei, Tim was the first one to receive training in its use at Harvard-Yenching, and he became proficient in providing service for the database. He was among the first librarians in East Asian Studies in the West to deal with electronic sources on East Asia.

Tim was completely dedicated to his work as a research librarian. In that connection he once wrote, “I believe that a research library must meet scholars on their own level. That means not just having a person familiar with the major language they use, but also having substantial subject knowledge—a solid grounding in the history, literature, government, economics, geography, philosophy and religion, society, and arts of the area covered. Scholarly background and training are very important—to put students and scholars in touch with the resources they need, you must be experienced in research methods and in using research libraries. In a strictly librarianly way, the head of the collection has to know the various classification systems, the book trade, preservation methods, and of course the latest technological developments. An organized mind, management experience, and public relations skills are also necessary,
because the librarian must represent the library in many different contexts. But probably the most important thing of all is a genuine and active interest in what students and scholars are doing and a dedication to helping them do it.”

Eugene Wu, the Librarian of the Harvard-Yenching Library during most of the years that Tim worked there, recently commented that “the appointment was a perfect fit for Tim as well as for the Library. Tim’s gift in languages, particularly Chinese and Japanese, his deep knowledge of East Asian civilizations, his familiarity with the Library’s collections through years of use, and his experience in teaching students how to use primary sources in research made him the ideal choice for that post. He was patient in helping users locate material and often went beyond the call of duty to suggest sources they had overlooked. In this way he helped countless Harvard and non-Harvard students and faculty as well as scholars from all over the world in their search for research materials at the Library. In doing so he also helped make the Harvard-Yenching Library collections more accessible to all. . . . Tim was meticulous in his attention to detail and precise in his use of language, qualities which contributed in no small measure to the quality of his scholarship and the success of his library career. He demanded much of himself and those working under him followed suit. He was a gentleman, a leader and a hard-working and considerate colleague.”

In addition to serving as the editor of volumes 34 (1974) and 35 (1975) of the Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, Tim was senior editor for history for the highly acclaimed, nine-volume Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan (Tokyo, 1973), to which he contributed numerous unsigned articles and directed the work of five associate history editors as well as several researchers. Tim was very active in the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) of the Association for Asian Studies, serving on committees and task forces dealing with interlibrary loan, reference services, Pinyin conversion, bibliographic instruction, and public services in general. He published a number of reports in the Journal of East Asian Libraries, and from 1996 to 1999 he was Chair of the CEAL Committee on Public Services and a member of the Executive Board.

From 2004 until his passing, he worked as a librarian at the Cambridge Public Library. During that time he contributed various articles to the Cambridge Public Library's newsletter and also continued to edit works on Chinese history—something that he had already been doing for many years.

Tim led a full and productive life committed to social justice and respect for others. Whether serving on national professional library committees, doing research and intellectual pursuits, helping library patrons,
participating in community service as a member of the Cambridge rent control board in the 1980s and 1990s, or presenting a radio jazz program with Craig Ball, leader of the White Heat Swing Orchestra, he did all with enthusiasm, wit, and sophistication.

He loved music, especially Classical and Romantic music, jazz and opera; European and American architecture; English belles-lettres and biography; New England history; book collecting and bibliography; travel, tennis, and sailing. Tim enriched the lives of those around him by generously sharing his considerable knowledge on a wide range of subjects.

Tim became a librarian because, as he wrote to one friend many years ago: "I'm a librarian because I'm a bookworm. I like books as physical objects, as things to hold in the hand and feel and smell. I like to read books, to learn more about the human condition and, if I'm lucky, to savor good writing and new ideas."

Timothy Edward Connor is survived by his wife of 42 years, Ruiko Connor, his sister, Ellen Connor Clark, a niece and nephew, extended family, and many colleagues and friends.

Compiled from information contributed by Ruiko Connor, Eugene Wu, and Frank Joseph Shulman