

Obituary

JEROME MELVIN EDELSTEIN

Jerome Melvin Edelstein, distinguished bibliographer and long-time staff member of the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities in Santa Monica, died on June 12, 1996, in Providence at the age of seventy-one.

Mel Edelstein developed his passion for the making and collecting of books early in his career. Born in Baltimore in 1924, he undertook a classical course of study in high school at the Baltimore City College. He enrolled at Johns Hopkins, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and eventually graduated cum laude in 1947 with an A.B. in history. His college years were interrupted by service in the U.S. Army from April 1943 until January 1946. He was stationed in Florence, where he met his wife-to-be Eleanor Rockwell, and where, when the war ended, he remained to study Italian history and literature in the University of Florence. Following his graduation from Johns Hopkins he returned to Florence on a Fulbright fellowship for graduate work in Italian history and literature. He then returned to complete a Master's Degree in Library Science from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1953.

Over a long and productive career Mel Edelstein gained broad experience with book and archival collections. He taught many subjects, including European history, analytic and historical bibliography, literature of the fine arts and humanities, and rare-book librarianship, on the faculties of Johns Hopkins, UCLA, the Catholic University of America, and, most recently, Brown University. He specialized in the work of the American poet Wallace Stevens, serving for many years as a consulting editor of the *Wallace Stevens Journal* and publishing *Wallace Stevens: A*

Descriptive Bibliography in 1974. He also wrote *A Bibliographical Checklist of the Writings of Thornton Wilder* (1959), *A Selected Catalog of Books from the Library of Don Cameron Allen* (1968), and many articles on book collecting, early editions of well-known texts, collecting modern fine printing, and American poets and authors in addition to Stevens. At the time of his death he was working on a book on Vespasiano da Bisticci, a fifteenth-century bibliophile and man of letters.

One of his first jobs while still a graduate student was to organize a group of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts from the Scheide Collection at Princeton University. From Princeton he moved to the Library of Congress, where he worked from 1953 to 1962, first as an assistant service librarian and then as assistant chief of the Rare Book Division. He came to California in 1962 as medieval and renaissance bibliographer at the University Library of UCLA, where he acted as chief selection officer in those areas. After serving two years as librarian for special collections at New York University, where he had responsibility for development of the Fales Collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century English and American literature, he returned to UCLA in 1966. Until 1972 he was the humanities bibliographer at the University Library, with responsibility for the library's acquisitions from the Renaissance to modern times. He later held an appointment as chief librarian of the National Gallery of Art, where he directed both the library and photo archive housed in the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts and served as principal selection officer for the library.

Mel Edelstein came in 1986 to the Getty Research Institute (then called Getty Center) for the History of Art and the Humanities as senior bibliographer and resource coordinator. He later became assistant director, collection development, a position from which he retired in July 1994. His contributions to the character and growth of the Getty's Resource Collections cannot be overstated. His love of books, his broad knowledge, his extensive contacts in the world of collectors and dealers, and his passion for

building unique bodies of rare materials served the Research Institute extraordinarily well over eight years. His notable acquisitions for the Research Institute are too numerous to list, but among them are a large collection of Italian Renaissance and Baroque festival books; the archives of several small fine presses, that also helped launch a fine collection of artists' books; other large collections such as the André and Oleg Grabar Library of Islamic and Byzantine art and architecture; the DDR collection (1950-91), archival materials documenting the history of twentieth-century East German art institutions and policy; the archive of Count Panza di Biumo; the Fischer Collection of Max Ernst, including 496 books and graphics by Ernst; and the papers of the Italian futurist F. T. Marinetti. He participated in the planning of several exhibitions, including 'Time Objects: 10 Years of Collecting,' which traced the development of the Research Institute's collections since 1984, and he organized 'Reading and the Arts of the Book,' a week-long conference exploring the effect of the book arts on artistic and literary production, the psychology of reading, education, communication, and the act of reading itself.

Mel Edelstein was a member of many professional organizations, including the American Antiquarian Society (since 1978), the Bibliographical Society of America, the Association Internationale de Bibliophile, the James Joyce Society, the Wallace Stevens Society, and the American Printing History Association. He belonged as well to the Grolier Club and Century Association of New York and the Cosmos Club of Washington, D.C.

In 1994 Mel and Eleanor Edelstein returned to their home in Bristol, Rhode Island. He assumed an appointment as a senior scholar at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University and continued until just before his death to serve as consultant to the Getty Research Institute—as ever, an enthusiastic contributor to its intellectual life and a good friend to his California colleagues.

John Walsh

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