

I N M E M O R I A M

Robert S. Taylor

1918-2008



Robert S. Taylor, dean emeritus of the Syracuse University School of Information Studies (iSchool), passed away Thursday, January 1, 2009, at the Francis House in Syracuse after a lengthy illness. He was 90.

Robert Taylor served as president of ASIS&T in 1968 and was the recipient of the 1992 Award of Merit and the 1972 ASIS&T Best Information Science Book Award for *The Making of a Library*.

He served as dean of the Syracuse University School of Information Studies from 1972 to 1981. One of his most memorable accomplishments at the school was changing its name from library science to the more comprehensive *information studies*. “The change in name is not a cosmetic cover, but a recognition that the activities and courses we presently have can no longer be called *library science*,” he said at the time. “Simply put, ‘information studies’ better represents what we are doing and the direction we are going.”

Reflecting on the decision to change the school’s name, Taylor said in July 2007 that he accepted the deanship at Syracuse with the hopes of creating a new kind of school focused specifically on information. “I came here to Syracuse because this was the one library science school in the country that had a potential – a real potential – for change,” he said. “I wanted the word information in there so eventually we arrived at information studies – ambiguous enough to cover almost anything, as it has.”

Taylor also credited the late Raymond F. von Dran (dean from 1996-2007) with carrying out the vision he had for the field back in 1974. “Ray has truly given body to my dreams and I thank him,” he said during a memorial celebration for von Dran in July 2007.

Taylor founded the nation’s first master’s degree in information resource management (which is now called information management) in 1980.

In an October 30, 2008, interview, he said he was thrilled to see the development of the iSchool movement and the emergence of more “information schools” or “iSchools.” “iSchool – I couldn’t

have thought of a better word,” he said. During this conversation, he also shared his recipe for the school’s continued success: “Imagination and work,” he said.

Two of his seminal works, “Question-Negotiation and Information-Seeking in Libraries” (1967) and *Value Added Processes in Information Systems* (1986), continue to be quoted and relevant to shaping scholarly discussions today. His works have been donated to the Syracuse University Library Special Collections, and his life is being chronicled in a biography by local writer, Russ Tarby.

In November 2008, the Syracuse University School of Information Studies Board of Advisors formally acknowledged his contributions with a resolution in his honor.

An Ithaca, N.Y., native, Taylor earned a bachelor’s degree in history from Cornell University and worked for a short stint as a sports reporter before being drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942. He became a member of the Army’s Counter Intelligence Corps until returning to the United States in 1947.

He enrolled in Columbia University’s library science program on the GI Bill, earning an M.S. in Library Science in 1950. He was named a Fulbright Lecturer in 1956. He went on to work as a librarian, professor and director of information science at Lehigh University and then a professor and director of the Library Center at Hampshire College.

Taylor was predeceased by his first wife, Leni Reichenberger Taylor, to whom he was married for nearly 50 years. He is survived by his second wife of 10 years, Fay Inman Taylor; his stepsons, Anton Reichenberger of Long Island, David Golden and wife Karen of Savannah, Ga., Dan Golden of Hacienda Heights, Calif.; and grandsons William and Max Golden; as well as nieces and nephews most of whom live in the Dallas, Texas area.

Friends and colleagues are invited to leave a remembrance to Taylor at the Syracuse University website. Please visit http://ischool.syr.edu/taylor_temp/taylor_home.html and click on the “Leave a Remembrance” link. Donations are also welcomed for the Fay and Robert Taylor Scholarship fund which can be accessed through the above link. The fund provides partial scholarship and financial assistance to deserving graduate students in the in the Library and Information Science program in the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University. Academic merit and relevant experience are the criterion used to determine selection. ■