

# How I learned to love the Brits

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As a child I grew up in awe of an English accent. That was not unusual for an American because so many movie stars spoke with an English accent. All during my high school and college days I instinctively believed that anyone who spoke with an Oxford or BBC accent was an authority. And even professors and intellectuals who adopted the Harvard version of an English accent held me in awe. Several of my professors at Columbia University deserved that sort of adulation since they were indeed experts in their respective fields. However, that all changed when I reached Johns Hopkins University in 1951, when I audited a course in statistics with Professor W.G. Cochran. The student who sat next to me was a Brit who spoke with great authority but after a few weeks I began to realize that most of what he said was nonsense.

For the next few years I had little contact with Englishmen during my stay at Johns Hopkins but my boss at the Welch Medical Library Indexing Project reminded me regularly that he had studied Elizabethan medicine at Oxford.

My next encounter with the English occurred after leaving the Welch Project. I was impressed by the performance of the editor of the *Journal of Documentation*, who stood up to the harassment from my then former boss. He was angry at me for submitting a paper to the *Journal of Documentation* without his permission. So much so that he asked the attorney for the university to write a 'cease and desist' letter but the editor did not buckle to his threats. So I can honestly say that my first published paper appeared in an English publication [1]. These stressful events occurred while I was enrolled at Columbia University School of Library Service.

Of course, even during my two years in Baltimore the British influence on my career was felt strongly. My 'bible', so to speak, at that time was the one-volume, 700+ page *Proceedings of the 1948 Royal Society Scientific Information Conference* [2]. I mentioned the key role played by John Desmond Bernal in that meeting when I spoke about his impact on science policy studies and the field of information science at the recent symposium held at University College in Dublin in September 2007 [3]. Hopefully the Royal Society will soon post the full text of the *Royal Society Proceedings* to their website. A few years ago I was able to convince the National Academy of Sciences Press to post the full text of the two volumes of the 1958 *Proceedings of the International Conference on Scientific Information* sponsored by the National Science Foundation [4].

The English connection picked up again in the spring of 1957 when much to my surprise I received an invitation to attend the Dorking Conference on Classification. My brief recollection of that conference follows, with thanks to Robert V. Williams (the co-coordinator of the *Pioneers of Information Science Scrapbook* [5], which includes my account titled *Memories of the 1957 Dorking Conference*,

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also at [6]). William's 'scrapbook' contains the reflections and comments of many of the 'pioneers' of information science who were invited to a dinner in their honor at the 1998 Conference on the History and Heritage of Science Information Systems, held in Pittsburgh, PA, October 23–25. These web pages contain their brief reflections as well as interesting photographs.

(The relevant text of my remarks at Dorking is available at [7] taken from the *Proceedings of the International Study Conference on Classification for Information Retrieval* held at Beatrice Webb House, Dorking, England, May 13–17, 1957 and published by ASLIB, at the Pergamon Press, in 1957.)

At Dorking my awe of the English was not only restored but reinforced. The group of friends I made there affected the course of my career. Within one year the Institute for Information Scientists was founded. One of the crowning moments of my life occurred when I was invited to become an Honorary Fellow in 1966.

Alan Gilchrist has briefly described to me the origins of the *Journal of Information Science* and its predecessors. To help celebrate this 50th anniversary occasion we have compiled a *HistCite*<sup>TM</sup> bibliographical record of JIS from its official inception in 1979 [8, 9]. *HistCite*<sup>TM</sup> is a system designed to help selectively identify the significant (most cited) papers retrieved in topical searches of the Web of Science (SCI, SSCI and/or AHCI). Once a marked list of papers has been created, the resulting export file is processed to create tables ordered by author, year, or citation frequency as well as historiographs which include a small percentage of the most-cited papers and their citation links. Time and space do not permit me to report in detail on the two previous decades during which time I first met and came under the stimulating influence of Anthony E. Cawkell and his family. Tony and I were associated for more than 30 years until his death a few years ago. Initially he was our man in London and then Director of Research. During that time I visited England about four times each year and enjoyed the pleasures of London and the stimulation of dozens of colleagues in science publishing and the library and information worlds. I then came to realize that the 'English' connection also included the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish.

The formation of the Institute of Information Scientists in 1958 had a great influence on its US counterpart at the time, the American Documentation Institute. The name of the IIS stimulated me and others to push for a name change of ADI to the American Society for Information Science (ASIS). The ADI officially changed its name to ASIS on 1 January 1968 just 10 years after the founding of the IIS. ADI's journal, *American Documentation*, retained its title until the end of 1969 when it became the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*. When I became President of ASIS in 2000 I was able to convince the membership it was time to become the American Society for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T).

However, it may interest and amuse some of my English colleagues to know how I became an information scientist. Upon graduation from library school in New York, I began my career as a documentation consultant. My first client was Smith, Kline & French Laboratories in Philadelphia, now Glaxo SmithKline. However, in order to give the impression that I was not just a lone self-employed person I adopted the business name Eugene Garfield Associates – Information Engineers. Having started as an engineering major when I was 17, and recognizing my affinity for engineering approaches to problems, that seemed a more appropriate appellation for my expertise in scientific documentation and especially IBM punched card machines and calculators.

I subsequently received a letter from the Pennsylvania Board of Professional Engineers stating that I was not allowed to call myself an information engineer unless I had a degree from an accredited engineering school or the equivalent thereof. Rather than fight City Hall, as we say in the USA, I decided to become an information scientist. Then in 1960 I changed the name of my company to the Institute for Scientific Information. That move proved to be quite important, I believe, in the exponential growth of ISI's activities over the next few decades. I must say that the British influence and connection was a factor. Non-profit, academic or government enterprises were more highly regarded in the library world than private ventures. It was many decades later that for-profit enterprises achieved equal regard in the USA and the UK. The Information Industry Association was founded by me and four other individual entrepreneurs because in those days the National Federation of Abstracting and Indexing Services limited membership to non-profit and governmental information organizations.

In the Spring of 1957, I temporarily shared an office in Washington, DC, at Thomas Circle with my new partner Harry Brager, a public relations man. He wisely recommended changing the title of 'Management's DocuMation Preview' to *Current Contents*<sup>®</sup>. A few weeks later, I received an unexpected invitation to discuss CC<sup>®</sup> and citation indexing (based on my papers in *Science* [10] and the *Journal of the Patent Office Society* [11]) at the International Conference on Classification for Information Retrieval mentioned earlier. The conference was only a few weeks off and I was nearly broke. Using TWA's instalment plan, I bought a round-trip ticket to London at a cost of \$489 – a small fortune for me in those days. The plane from New York stopped in Newfoundland en route to Scotland and the greenest land I had ever seen. After a visit to relatives in Manchester, I went straight to Dorking in Surrey and my first personal encounter with British information scientists. I would meet J.D. Bernal one year later at the International Conference on Scientific Information in Washington, DC.

It is quite possible that Jesse Shera, editor of *American Documentation* had suggested I be invited to Dorking. In 1953 he had invited me to become Associate Editor. Other participants included Robert Fairthorne, D.J. Foskett, Jason Farradane, Eric J. Coates, Cyril Cleverdon, Brian C. Vickery, D.J. Campbell, N.T. Ball, Jack Wells, Barbara Kyle, John Mills, and last, but not least, S.R. Ranganathan. I spoke at length with Mills and Ranganathan about my personal encounter with Henry Evelyn Bliss in 1954 [12]. The Bliss classification was better known in the UK than in the USA thanks to Jack Mills.

Forty years later, FID publication #7146 commemorated the 40th anniversary of Dorking. Unfortunately, I was unaware of this 1997 meeting, so I missed the opportunity to catch up with old friends, many of whom I had not seen for decades. In that reminiscence of the Dorking conference, Robert Fairthorne mentioned my 'surprise' at the British members 'disagreeing without being disagreeable', unlike the rancor frequently encountered at the early meetings of the American Documentation Institute. On the other hand, Cyril Cleverdon recalled the evening when 'Gene Garfield defended his proposals for a citation index against a group of very skeptical and outspoken critics', including Cyril himself! Jean Aitchison recalled me as 'a young man vigorously marketing his ideas of journal contents lists, at an extra evening session'. Indeed, 1957 was the year that the Life Sciences edition of *Current Contents* was introduced to the pharmaceutical industry.

The 1957 Dorking *Proceedings* volume, page 98, contains a concise account of citation indexes covered in the evening session on 14 May.

On the second day, I realized that if I attended Wednesday's session, I would not see London. So I took an early morning train to Victoria Station. During the next 15 hours, I visited everything from the Tower of London to Parliament and the British Museum. I arrived at Victoria Station about midnight and was shocked to learn that it was closed. The only transportation to Dorking was a taxi. When I chaired the morning session the next day, the audience gasped when I said that I had taxied from London. I didn't mention that it used most of my remaining cash.

This remarkable meeting eventually led to my joining the UK Institute of Information Scientists which, as mentioned above, awarded me an Honorary Fellowship in 1966. Through IIS, I made the friendship of researchers like John Martyn, Alan Gilchrist, Charles Oppenheim, Blaise Cronin and others too numerous to mention.

As a postscript to the remarks on the early days of *JIS* and the IIS, I would like to add that my role as science communicator, intertwined with my activities in information science, were in another world which led me to friendships with British journalists like John Maddox, Bernard Dixon, Maurice Goldsmith, Anthony Michaelis, Steven Lock – editor of the *British Medical Journal*, Richard Horton, editor of *Lancet*, Maeve O'Connor – medical editor, and John Ziman, former editor of *Philosophical Magazine*. Other colleagues not to be forgotten include D.J. Urquhart, Maurice B. Line and the many friends at the British Lending Library. Last but not the least are my British 'émigré' friends – Derek J. deSolla Price, Norman Horrocks, Arnold Thackray, Michael Lynch. Peter Willett, Monty Hyams and Wendy Warr were also among my many friends in the chemical information world. I'm sure many others have been inadvertently omitted. In my numerous dealings with publishers, those who stood out in the British pantheon are Per Saugman, Robert Campbell, Gunther Hayden and Gillian Page. And last but not least, my present partner at *The Scientist*, Vitek Tracz.

Every family and profession also has its rogues and adversaries. Unique in the history of scientific publishing is Robert Maxwell whose exploits have been described in great detail by others. But it is not often known that the founder of Pergamon was known to me from the 1950s when I was a consultant to *Biological Abstracts* and he attempted to take them over by one means or another including setting up a competitive service. For over three decades Maxwell tried to recruit me as his director of research after first threatening me with copyright violation when we included some of his journals in *Current Contents*. Much to his dismay he found that in spite of his histrionics he was no match for my intellectual property attorney Arthur H. Seidel and his partner Edward Gonda.

Maxwell's relentless pursuit of ISI kept up until the time of his untimely death shortly after he had acquired a small percentage of shares in the company just before it was sold to JPT and then Thomson. The full story needs to be told in another venue at another time.

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