

Ursula Evelyn Mabel Judd (1917-1976)

— a Tribute

On the 4th January 1976 Ursula E. M. Judd, Chief Librarian and Secretary of the Natal Society Library, passed away. She had been appointed to the post in September 1950 and held it for 24 years with outstanding success. From 1974 until her death she was employed by Messrs. Shuter and Shooter, publishers and booksellers.

During her 24 years' service she saw the Natal Society Library grow from a subscription library serving only a minority of the White population of Pietermaritzburg to a dynamic free lending library serving all race groups.

Soon after her arrival Miss Judd set about the considerable task of re-organising the book stock, setting about this with the energy which was to mark her service throughout. The task involved the complete re-cataloguing, reclassifying, and overhauling, of some 60 000 lending library books in order to maintain a live collection. She approved of the construction of the actual premises (built 1930) which were 'neither unsuitable nor unpleasing' and noted the soundness of the basic book stock but felt that a modernisation of the entire library was necessary, despite the shortage of funds.¹

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One of her most important contributions to the Natal Society, was the creation of the Reference and Copyright Department. The Copyright Act of 1916 gave the Natal Society 'legal deposit' privileges but before Miss Judd's arrival little attempt was made to collect or preserve this material, as much of it was discarded through lack of space.

In 1953 the Members' Room was converted into the new Reference department and a librarian and staff were appointed. This development was an important landmark in the history of the Natal Society. It was now not only possible to offer proper reference library facilities, but to organize and preserve the copyright material and many valuable works in stock, and also to pursue relentlessly all copyright publications prior to 1951, in an endeavour to replace discarded material. An efficient classified catalogue, now one of the best in the country, was begun at this stage.

Through Miss Judd's awareness of the Pietermaritzburg public's needs, and the co-operation of a sympathetic library Council, other developments were soon under way. In March 1958 the Market Square Branch opened its doors to Non-white users, with a book stock of 6 000 volumes. This was the first free library service.

In 1954, on the occasion of the official opening of the new entrance in Longmarket Street, Miss Judd's hard work was commended by an appreciative Library Council. The then President, the late J. W. Hudson, wrote in a letter dated 27.11.54:

I would like you to know how much I congratulate you personally on the culmination of your fine efforts for the library. It was a fortunate day for the Council when it engaged you as Librarian. I hope you will feel that the work has been worth while and that you will want to stay with the Society for many more years. 'By their deeds shall we know them.' These improvements at the Library might well be known as the 'Judd developments'.

A FREE LIBRARY

These words were indeed prophetic. Miss Judd's untiring efforts, together with the support of a sympathetic Library Council, came to fruition on the occasion of the opening of the new library building on 17th June 1975. In 1967 the library had become free to all residents or workers in the city. This new library building now opened its doors to all races, offering a free service comparable to any in South Africa.

In June 1974, however, Miss Judd resigned. Sadly she was never to see over the new completed library building on Churchill Square but it may well stand as a memorial, incorporating as it does so many features specifically planned by her. In recognition of her service to the Natal Society the third floor of the new building was named the Judd Floor.

Miss Judd's early career was interesting. She obtained the University of London School of Librarianship Diploma in 1941, and in 1942, became a Fellow of the Library Association of England. Her first posts were in public libraries, as library assistant. After qualifying, she worked for the Westminster Public Libraries in London. Her ability was such that she was put in charge of the Buckingham Palace Road Library immediately after the premises had suffered serious air raid damage. The Chief Librarian of this complex of libraries was the well-known librarian and author of standard works on librarianship, Lionel R. McColvin. In a letter dated 30.8.45, he had this to say:

... she possesses great adaptability, initiative and a fine sense of responsibility.

FINLAND, JAMAICA, NIGERIA

In 1948 she joined the British Council on the condition that she serve anywhere in the world as directed by their head office. Her first post was Helsinki, Finland; three months later she was appointed to the post of Assistant Director of the newly formed Jamaica Library Service, a scheme to provide library facilities for the whole island and a post which involved new and interesting pioneer work. Her duties included numerous talks and broadcasts of a literary nature. In 1949 she accepted a post as head of the British Council Books Department and Chief Librarian of the Lagos Public Library in Algeria. The following year, equipped with considerable organisational ability and experience, she took up the post at the Natal Society Library to which she was to devote the rest of her professional career.

1. JUDD, U. The Reorganization of the Natal Society Library, 1950-1954. In: *South African Libraries*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 63.

Her competence and integrity won her a respected place in the library world. She was an active member of the South African Library Association. From 1952-1955 she was chairman of SALA, Natal Branch, and served on the council of the Library Association for a number of years. She was nominated vice-president of SALA three times. In 1974 she accepted an invitation to serve on the Censorship board, and with the true librarian's insistence on objectivity of judgement, she filled the post admirably. From 1971 she served on the editorial board of *Natalia*, and as hon. secretary until she resigned her post as Chief Librarian. She worked tirelessly to help ensure the success of each edition.

Miss Judd's interests were varied and she was active in many circles. She was a member of the now defunct Liberal Party and a Foundation member of the Black Sash and in 1975 was made an honorary member. She served on St Saviour's Cathedral Parish from 1971-1974. In 1975 she served on the book review panel of the *Natal Witness*. Her hobbies included golf and philately and her interest in history was reflected in her considerable private collection of books and documents. She was considering writing a work on notable Natalians.

HER LOYAL STAFF

Miss Judd's qualities evoked an unusual degree of loyalty in her staff, particularly those who had been with her for many years. She will be remembered with affection by many of her colleagues. At the time of her death, one former staff member now working in Johannesburg wrote:

... for myself, she taught me an attitude to work that will never change, an integrity and responsibility that I am glad she was there to teach.

In her conclusion to an introductory talk at a symposium held by the Natal branch of the South African Library Association in 1954, she made some remarks which have a strangely prophetic ring:

Some of us have more to give than others both in our jobs and as members of the branch. One can only work to the best of one's capacity, and this may not be very large. One may seldom be singled out and congratulated; but if one's purpose is sufficiently sustained, one does not need a lot of praise. For my part, I would be happy to have said of me, like the woman in St Mark's gospel, 'She hath done what she could.'

JENNIFER WHITELOW
JUNE FARRER