

Memorial: Ellen Coolman Rappaport (1944–2003)

¶1 Ellen Coolman Rappaport, most recently head of technical services at Albany Law School, died at her home in Albany, New York, on May 12, 2003, succumbing to the cancer she had courageously fought for more than eleven years.

¶2 Ellen was the consummate technical services librarian, having worked in all areas of her field from the time she started in the Syracuse University Libraries in 1967 through her final days at Albany Law School Library. She completed her M.L.S. at Syracuse University in 1970 and stayed to become the head of the serials department. In 1974 she became the head of technical services at the SUNY Cortland Memorial Library, leaving in 1979 to become the library liaison officer at SUNY/OCLC (now Nylink), where she worked in implementation and support of online and local systems provided by OCLC. From 1988 to 1992 she was project manager for Ameritech Information Systems, where she managed the implementation of serials control and acquisitions systems and provided training for many librarians throughout the region. In 1993 Ellen came to Albany Law School as the technical services librarian, where she learned about (in her words) “the fascinating complexities of legal materials.”

¶3 Ellen had worked on implementation of OCLC from its earliest stages and had spent many years working with serials systems. Her real passions were for serials and standards. She was a member of AALL, the American Library Association’s ALCTS Committee to Study Serials Standards, the CONSER Task Force on Publication Patterns and Holdings, the New York Library Association (NYLA) Technical Support Committee, and NYLA’s Section on Management of Information Resources and Technology. She was a natural teacher, whether acting as a mentor or speaking at a national meeting. The large outpouring at her passing from librarians who had worked with Ellen, attended one of her conference presentations, or benefitted from her contributions to several online discussion lists was a testament to her work in the library profession.

¶4 For years she provided support to many who suffered from cancer both in the local support group she and her husband started and throughout the United States. She researched the most recent treatments and aggressively fought for the most effective treatments, searching for the best strategies to maximize her quality of life. She generously shared the results of her research and her determination with others who suffered from cancer and needed encouragement and support. When one of the author’s mothers was diagnosed with breast cancer a year ago, Ellen was there to lend materials from her personal library, offer continuous support, and be a friend.

¶5 But Ellen’s life had much more meaning. And it was this life that she loved and enjoyed for all her years. There was her husband to whom she was married for many years, whose home she shared with her beloved cat. Ellen and Lou loved to

travel and might be found in such places as Australia or inside the Arctic Circle or, in later years, in Spain or Japan. Music and folk dancing were longtime passions. Her music took her from playing the violin to singing with the Schola Cantorum in Syracuse and with the Helderberg Madrigal Singers in Albany. She was spontaneous and warm and had a whimsical wit that never deserted her.

¶6 Her enthusiasm for life and new experiences remained always a part of her life. She was a wonderful friend and colleague. Librarianship for Ellen was not institutionalized. She brought the love of libraries and the organization and dissemination of information to everyone she met, to her rabbi, to her medical team, and to unsuspecting acquaintances and friends. Librarianship is better for her having been a part of the profession, and we are all better for having shared this and many other experiences with her.—*Nancy Lenahan*¹ and *Colleen E. Smith*²

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