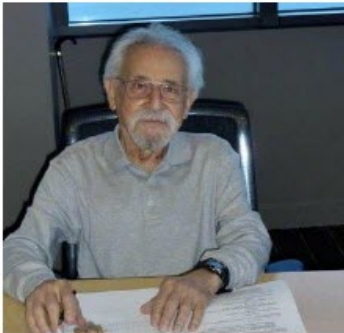


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NLM Mourns the Loss of Gerald Oppenheimer, Long-Time Regional Medical Library Director



Gerald J. Oppenheimer

Gerald J. Oppenheimer, former director of the Health Sciences Library at the University of Washington (1963-1967) and of the Pacific Northwest Regional Medical Library (1968-1987), died on August 23, 2016. He was 94.

Oppenheimer was instrumental in promoting regional interest and support for the proposal that led the University of Washington Health Sciences Library to become the second library in the country designated by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) as a Regional Medical Library (RML), in 1968. He played a key role in establishing goals and policies, such as uniform national charges for key services, for the emerging network, now known as the National Network of Libraries of Medicine. When computer-based information services first became a reality, Oppenheimer and his pioneering staff worked with widely dispersed libraries in five states to improve information access for health professionals across the vast Northwest Region.

Beyond his work at the University of Washington and in the national network coordinated by NLM, Oppenheimer was a leader in the profession of health sciences librarianship, encouraging librarians and library associations to influence public policy matters affecting science, the public's health, and their institutions and services. He served in leadership positions in the Medical Library Association and was the prime mover in creating the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL), which provided a new voice for librarians within academic health sciences institutions. He promoted joint MLA-AAHSL action to influence legislative matters relevant to biomedical science and health information, including many important to NLM and NIH.

"In the late 1960s and 1970s, the selection of Regional Medical Libraries and their work for NLM to coordinate national service standards in hundreds of independent libraries was a predictable source of friction and contention. Those present during that exciting, productive, and very stressful period remember Gerry as a source of calm, reason, and creative ideas for moving forward," said Betsy Humphreys, deputy director of the NLM. "His career exemplified his belief that the library profession could and should influence public policy that affects

science, health, and access to information. He was articulate, persuasive, dedicated to his profession, and admired by librarians and health professionals throughout the country. A humanist at heart, he was a joy to be around whether at the policy table, walking through an unfamiliar city, or in a social gathering.”

Born in Frankfurt am Main, Oppenheimer escaped Nazi Germany when he was 18 years old, going through the Soviet Union, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan before reaching the United States.

He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Washington in 1946 and 1947 respectively and earned a master's degree in library science from Columbia University in 1953.

Oppenheimer worked as a librarian at the Seattle Public Library and a manager of information services at Boeing Scientific Research Laboratories. He later became head of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center at the University of Washington libraries and then director of the Health Sciences Library.

In 2006, an endowed fund, the Gerald J. Oppenheimer Fund for the Professional Development of Health Sciences Librarians, was created in his honor to support the professional development of health sciences librarians in the Puget Sound area.

Since its founding in 1836, the National Library of Medicine <https://www.nlm.nih.gov> has played a pivotal role in translating biomedical research into practice and is a leader in information innovation. NLM is the world's largest medical library, and millions of scientists, health professionals and the public around the world use NLM services every day.

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