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York's Founding Librarian Made H[er]story: Remembering Gladys Jarrett

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CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

York's Founding Librarian Made H[er]story **REMEMBERING GLADYS JARRETT**

By **JOHN DROBNICKI**, Professor/Head of Acquisitions & Collection Development

Gladys Jarrett was the first Library faculty member hired at York College, and was one of the original three librarians when the college opened, along with Judith Bartlett and Ben DiRusso. Her career at York spanned 1967-1985, during which time she served as Head of Cataloging, Head of Public Services, Acting Chief Librarian, and Chief Librarian.

Gladys Janet Wynne was born in Barnesville, Georgia, on February 6, 1916. She attended Hunter College in New York City, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Spanish in 1936, before going on to Columbia for an

M.A. in Spanish (1937). After earning her Master's, she began teaching Spanish and English at Langston University in Oklahoma. On August 20, 1939, she married Hobart Sidney Jarrett, a Shakespeare scholar who was also teaching at Langston. Hobart Jarrett was a survivor of the notorious 1921 Tulsa race riot, and was also a member of the Wiley College debate team that was portrayed in the 2007 motion picture, *The Great Debaters*.

Although her husband remained at Langston until 1949, Gladys Jarrett began working for the New York Public Library as a Technical Services assistant in 1948. While Hobart began work on a Ph.D. at Syracuse University and worked as Professor and Chair of Humanities at Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina (1949-1961), Gladys worked as a Public Services clerk in the Syracuse University Library (1953-1954), before becoming Head Cataloger at the F. D. Bluford Library at the North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College in Greensboro (1957-1961), without a Library Science degree, although she took classes at the University of North Carolina during the Summer of 1960.



Deadline!

All items for the **April 2015** issue of **Academic Affairs Update** should be submitted in MS Word to AcademicUpdate@york.cuny.edu by **April 3, 2015**.

Librarian

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In 1961, Hobart's career took him to Brooklyn College of The City University of New York (CUNY), where he would be the first African-American to hold the rank of (full) Professor in the English Department. Gladys worked in the Cataloging Department at the Brooklyn Public Library and attended Pratt Institute, earning her Master's degree in Library Science in 1963. She then became an Acquisitions and Reference librarian at Pace University from 1964-1967, when CUNY advertised for faculty for a new college that was just established: York College, which would be temporarily housed in Bayside, New York, sharing space on the campus of Queensborough Community College and renting various other spaces in the neighborhood until a permanent campus could be built somewhere in Queens.

York College moved to Jamaica in 1971, but without a permanent campus was forced to once again rent space in various buildings—the Library was in the main building which previously had been a Montgomery-Ward department store. After the first Chief Librarian left,



Professor Jarrett was made Co-Acting Chief Librarian (1971-1972), and the following year she was elected President of LACUNY (the Library Association of the City University of New York) for 1972-1973. After the second Chief Librarian also left, she became Acting Chief Librarian (1974-1976), and finally Chief Librarian (1976-1985). Professor

Jarrett served as the Chair of the CUNY Council of Chief Librarians during 1979-1980.

During the New York City fiscal crisis of the mid-to late-1970s, York's existence remained in peril, and the nearby site in Jamaica where its permanent campus was slated to be built remained dormant. However, as the economy improved, plans for the new campus—and the new Library—were underway, and Professor Jarrett was instrumental in planning the new facility. (People have often wondered why the Chief Librarian has the second largest office on campus—now you know.) Ironically, Gladys Jarrett retired just before York's permanent campus opened in 1986, and she and Hobart spent their “golden years” traveling much of the world. Hobart Jarrett died in 2005, and Gladys Jarrett passed away on July 25, 2007, at the age of 91. Based on our research, Gladys W. Jarrett was the first African-American woman to be a Chief Librarian in the CUNY system.

A different version of this article was published earlier by Women of Library History and can be found at <http://womenoflibraryhistory.tumblr.com/post/113784963201/gladys-w-jarrett>. ■



Spotlight on Nursing

York Nursing Professor Goes Global

During the January break, Professor Margaret Alexandre had the opportunity to travel to Haiti to provide educational support as a Visiting Professor to the Faculte de Sciences Infirmieres Nursing School at the Universite Publique de L'Aribonite aux Gonaives (UPAG), Haiti. The trip was supported by York College and a grant obtained from the Office of Academic Affairs/Office of the University Dean of Health and Human Services.



Director Colette Cupidon (L. of Prof. Alexandre), and faculty members of the nursing program.