In Memoriam: Edward C. Carter II, 1928-2002

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On October 2, 2002, Edward C. Carter II died of a heart attack at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia at the age of 74. His death is a real loss to the editorial community, of which he was a lively and enthusiastic member.

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania in 1954, Ted went on to receive his Ph.D. at Bryn Mawr in 1962. He then taught at Phillips Academy, the University of Delaware, St. Stephen’s School in Rome (where the library is named in his honor), the Johns Hopkins University, and Catholic University. Dr. Carter’s life came full circle when he returned to Philadelphia in 1980. There he became the Librarian of the American Philosophical Society and began teaching at Penn. He brought with him to the APS the ten-volume edition of The Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, then in progress under his leadership. In the twenty-two years he served as Librarian, Ted oversaw an explosive growth in the scope of the Society’s collections. He delighted in acquiring manuscripts and books, reaching out in new directions to strengthen the holdings in nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of science. "We’re not just about Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson any more," he liked to tease me. Ted was also keen to see those collections used. He encouraged the editors of the Franklin Papers to consult the APS manuscripts whenever needed and he and the staff under his directorship made us feel at home. He also built up a strong program of research grants so that other scholars could have better access to the treasures of the APS.

Nearest and dearest to Ted’s heart, one could argue, were editors. He was a friend of the editors of The Papers of William Penn, holding Richard and Mary Dunn up as models for the rest of us. As Editor-in-Chief of the Latrobe Papers, Ted sang the praises of Latrobe’s varied talents, a rich multitude of talents that he himself shared, and nurtured the work of Lee Formwalt, Tom Jeffrey, John Van Horne, and Jeffrey Cohen. As a member of the Administrative Board of The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Ted was a jovial participant in its meetings. There was almost nothing he looked forward to with greater pleasure than working with Ellen Cohn and the Franklin editors to celebrate the tercentenary in 2006 of Franklin’s birth. Ted and the APS supported and admired Gary Moulton’s edition of the Journals of Lewis and Clark, and Ted served on the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission. The Papers of Thomas Jefferson also claimed his attention, in part because Jefferson was an early president of the American Philosophical Society, an organization dear to Ted’s heart, and in part because Jefferson’s curiosity about science and natural philosophy mirrored Ted’s.

Ted Carter followed a number of very different paths in his career, but he never ceased to think of himself as an editor and he delighted in the successes of the editors he mentored. He was gregarious, smart, wise, and humane. He was a presence in any gathering, and our community will be the poorer for his absence.

—Barbara Oberg