EDITOR’S SUMMARY
A groundbreaker and important link between library science and computer-based information science, Claire Kelly Schultz passed away in May 2015. Though Schultz’s original aim to become a doctor was derailed, her first job as a biology lab assistant and librarian launched her on a career path that ultimately provided important service to medicine, pharmacology and information science. With training in library studies, chemistry and medicine, Schultz became the librarian at the future Merck, Sharp and Dohme Research Labs and became aware of the technical challenges of literature retrieval in the field. She consulted with others at the forefront of indexing and retrieval systems to develop a successful card sorting method using Boolean logic. This success led to consulting positions and publications on information retrieval, vocabulary control, thesaurus construction and indexing. Schultz strongly advocated applying documentation practices to the developing field and to the history of the American Documentation Institute (ADI), forerunner of the Association for Information Science and Technology, and she created the first thesaurus of information science. Active in several professional societies, Schultz became the ADI’s first woman president and earned its 1980 Award of Merit.

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Claire Kelly Schultz, first woman president of the American Documentation Institute (ADI; predecessor of ASIS&T) and recipient of the 1980 Award of Merit, died May 28 in her hometown of Line Lexington, Pennsylvania. The cause of death was Alzheimer’s disease, which she had had for a number of years. Claire was an active member of ADI, the Special Libraries Association (SLA), the Medical Library Association (MLA) and the American Chemical Society (ACS). She was the first ADI member to take a serious interest in the history of ADI, publishing an historical sketch of it in 1969 followed by a series of biographical articles on early ADI pioneers [1]. Her edited volume on Hans Peter Luhn, the developer of keyword-in-context (KWIC) indexing and many other innovations in the field, was a significant contribution to the history of information science [2].

Claire was born in Etters in central Pennsylvania, and her parents were part-time farmers and merchants with limited formal education. She completed her B.S. degree in 1944, majoring in chemistry and pre-med, at Juniata College. From an early age Claire wanted to be a medical doctor and through...
meetings. She completed her M.S. in 1952 and submitted as her thesis a paper on the system [3] and later published a paper in Casey and Perry’s 1958 book on punched cards [4].

Publicity about her system led John Mauchly, developer of the ENIAC computer, to visit for a demonstration. He was surprised at the use of Boolean logic in her system and offered her a job with his company, Sperry-Rand Univac, in Philadelphia, to do more work on her searching system and on vocabulary control. She declined this offer, fearing that if she left Merck, Sharpe and Dohme her work on the retrieval system would be lost. However, three years later, in 1958, she became a systems analyst for Sperry-Rand. Her work there mostly involved working with and consulting on various information retrieval problems relating to federal government contracts (or possible contracts), most notably, the Armed Services Technical Information Agency (ASTIA), the National Library of Medicine’s (NLM) MEDLARS project and others. The early 1950s was a time of great interest in building vocabulary control systems, and many of these contracts were related to this issue, a particular interest and specialty of Claire’s. She was also involved in the decision-making process for the best computer to use for a contract, which meant she had to know the technical details about each machine and how well it could handle the work to be done.

The late 1950s and early 1960s were a very busy time for Claire. Not only was her fifth child born during this time, but also she was attending classes at Drexel and, later, teaching there. She was also doing a lot of consulting with federal agencies with weekly meetings in Washington, DC, as part of her job with Sperry-Rand. She also somehow found the time to publish over 20 articles from 1952 to 1963, most of them relating to information retrieval, vocabulary control, thesaurus construction and indexing [5]. And, for a brief six-month period in 1957, before she began with Sperry-Rand, she helped Eugene Garfield do some of the early publicity and related work for his new company, Eugene Garfield and Associates, later the Institute for Scientific Information. She had extensive contacts with the
resulted in the production of a “back of the book” index that was computer generated, possibly the first of its kind in the United States. Claire worked at IAMC until 1970 when it was disbanded, Dr. Orr moved to Europe to do consulting and she became a freelance consultant in many of the same areas she had worked before.

The freelance consulting work ended in 1972 when she was enticed to become the director of libraries and professor of information science at the Medical College of Pennsylvania (MCP), the same school that had kicked her out of the M.D. program. She worked there until 1982 when she retired. However, during the 10 years she was at MCP she oversaw the building and equipping of a new library, taught the medical students how to use computers and managed a number of small contracts in the areas of vocabulary control and indexing.

Claire was the ideal bridge from library science to information science. She was well prepared in the basics of library science, had a strong science background and chose to do in-depth exploration of the new trends in scientific documentation, indexing and thesaurus construction. She was also a leader in developing and implementing computer-based approaches to library problems, particularly in helping to design large information systems for the federal government. As a bridge in the larger field, she was able to deal effectively with what was becoming a split between special librarians and the new “documentalists” of ADI and, later, ASIST.

After her retirement in 1982 Claire became deeply involved in the life of being a grandmother. She and her husband, Wally, built their own catamaran and began to sail it to many places on the East Coast. After several years of doing that in the summers they gave the boat to a children’s center.

Claire was severely ill with Alzheimer’s for a number of years before her death, living in an assisted living facility, but was always well cared for by her extensive family.
Resources Mentioned in the Article


[5] A complete bio-bibliography of her publications may be found in her oral history interview at the Chemical Heritage Foundation:

