

REUBEN MUSIKER (Jan 1931- Dec 2015)

Reuben Musiker, doyen of South African bibliographers, died in December 2015, a few weeks short of his 86th birthday, in Johannesburg where he had spent most of his life. He trained as a librarian at the University of Cape Town in 1954 and began his professional life at the Johannesburg Public Library in 1955, later becoming Deputy University Librarian at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1961-1972, and then University Librarian of the University of Witwatersrand, 1973 to 1991, where he was simultaneously Professor of Librarianship and Bibliography. He began writing on bibliography while in the public library, initially as he said inspired by the example of Douglas Varley, then Librarian of the South African Library (and later of course Chairman of SCOLMA, 1971-1973 when University Librarian of Liverpool). His *Guide to South African reference works*, a counterpart to the works of Walford in the U.K. and Winchell in the U.S. appeared in 1955, and was followed by regular supplements and new editions until the 6th edition in 1997. This was joined in 1970 by his *South African bibliography: a survey of bibliographies and bibliographical work* (3rd ed. 1996). He accompanied these major and regularly updated titles by a continuous stream of articles in library and African studies journals with titles such as 'Bibliographical progress in South Africa'. Some of these appeared in South African journals but Musiker made a real effort to have them published overseas to give better exposure to South African activities: in the U.S. he wrote in the now defunct titles, *African studies bulletin* and *Africana library journal* in the 1960s and 1970s before making *ARD* in the U.K. his preferred vehicle. His work gradually made him the "go-to" author for major publishers of reference titles, especially for Scarecrow Press for whom he produced *Southern African bibliography* (1996) in their "Area bibliography" series and the *Historical dictionary of Greater Johannesburg* (1999). For these last two volumes his wife Naomi appeared on the title page as joint author and she was always acknowledged for her help with his earlier publications.

Musiker's SCOLMA connections began early. While on a visit to the U.K. he gave one of the earliest of the SCOLMA seminars in the mid 1960s, in the old "inner sanctum" of the Royal Commonwealth Society Library in Northumberland Avenue, chaired by Donald Simpson, Librarian and also Chairman of SCOLMA. He contributed an item on South African bibliography to *Library materials on Africa*, SCOLMA's first journal, in 1966, its third year of publication, and later he was effectively the South African correspondent for *African research & documentation* contributing 'South African bibliographical notes and news' on an annual basis. In issue 74, 1997, he contributed a reflective backward looking article entitled 'Achievements of a South African bibliographer: reflections on a half-century of bibliographical activity' which is a good starting place to get some idea of his range of interests and activities. He continued to make contributions to *ARD*, his last being 'Some highlights of

Jewish Africana', *ARD*, 104, 2007, 49-59 (marking just over 40 years of contributing to SCOLMA's journals).

As well as his chair at Wits Reuben was active in other professional activities. He was the founder and first chairman of the Association of Southern African Bibliographers and Indexers and involved in organising many of their conferences. He was also much involved in the irregular conferences of South African Bibliophiles entitled *Bibliophilia Africana* (1st 1966 – 8th 2005) to which at least two chairmen of SCOLMA have been invited to speak. Additionally he managed to remain deeply involved in the Jewish community in South Africa, being Chair of the S.A. Association of Jewish Studies in 1986, Library Consultant to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies from 1999 and a member of the editorial board of *Jewish affairs*; and to pursue his lifelong interest in light and popular orchestral music, culminating in the publication, again with Naomi of *Conductors and composers of popular orchestral music: a biographical and discographical sourcebook* (Greenwood Press, 1998) covering over 500 figures. With all his activities Reuben remained ever ready to respond rapidly to enquiries or suggestions, or indeed to make his own enquiries, always in his unmistakable spidery handwriting: many of us will miss seeing it on incoming envelopes.

John McIlwaine