time for nondental, nonlibrary activities. He served a term on the Board of Education of Bremen Community High School, and aided and abetted Little League baseball. He was a former member of the vestry of the Episcopal Church in New Lenox, Illinois, and of the vestry of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Allegan, Michigan.

Delighting in happenings, Don lent his light and airy touch to allow them to come about on alternate Thursdays. Librarians of Chicago’s Near North Side and any from afar who wished to come—and many did—found a noon hour interlude of good talk, food, and laughs with him at the ADA buffet.

This uncommon man of great humility had a real gusto for the intellectual life, but seemingly had no dogmatism or irreversible preconceptions. His tolerance and breadth of ideas and facts were well known to his staff, colleagues, and friends. He was a wholesome character whose personality sparkled with cool urbanity, a ready chuckle, and a light-hearted preference for the sunny side, through the grueling labors and anxieties that beset anyone in an administrative position.

Donald Washburn died on September 10, 1992, at his home. His survivors are his wife, Ruth; daughters Mary Suphan of New Windsor, New York, and Melissa Washburn of Wayland, Michigan; sons Donald Jonathan Washburn of Mt. Druitt, New South Wales, Australia, and Andrew Washburn of East Grand Rapids, Michigan; a sister, Isabel Sheppard, of Worthington, Ohio; a brother, George Washburn, of Jackson, Michigan; and grandchildren Alan, Beth, Judith, Annie, Jane, and Susan. An exchange-student son, Dr. Ben Al- dan of Saipan, also survives.

A memorial service was held Saturday, September 18, officiated by the Reverend Terry Haughn at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Allegan. Interment was in the family plot, Hudsons Corners Cemetery, Allegan. One hundred sixty-two people attended the memorial service, coming from as far away as New Hampshire and California, including many classmates and bureau heads of the ADA.

We shall miss his wisdom and his gentle strength.

Minnie Orfanos
Chicago, Illinois

Helen Kovacs, 1912–1994: everything was extraordinary

Helen Kovacs, born Ilona von Magyary-Koss in Pecs, Hungary, in 1912, lived a life filled with adventure, hard work, and achievement in her profession. When Helen was barely more than an infant, her mother died, leaving Helen’s care to her father, an officer in the Hungarian army. She was raised with her older brothers. Helen received her early education in the schools of Budapest. Her education was completed in schools in Austria, England, and Belgium. From the beginning, she was found to be proficient in languages and was to read and speak six of them. Her marriage to Lorand Kovacs was to be a long and happy one. Conditions in Hungary after World War II, however, were such that the young couple found it necessary to flee. Lorand, a Malev Hungarian Airlines pilot, commandeered a Malev plane and they escaped in 1948 to Salzburg, Austria. It was in Salzburg that their daughter Beatrice was born.

Both Helen and Lorand now found themselves in the position of displaced persons. Fortunately, Helen’s talent in languages enabled her to find work on a U.S. Army base in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Later, through an American nurse friend, who was also Bea’s godmother, the family was sponsored for entry into the United States. As is the case with many Hungarians, the Kovacs were reluctant to leave their country, but there was no alternative. Again using her skill as a linguist, Helen was employed in the Dental library at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. From Birmingham, the family moved to New York City, where she was employed at the Dental School at New York University. In the mid-1950s, Helen moved to the Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn to work for Eric Meyerhoff. When Eric left to become director of the Medical Library Center of New York, Helen succeeded him as librarian at Downstate.

During Helen’s administration at Downstate, the library became a preeminent medical library among such facilities in the United States. She implemented the merger of Downstate’s library with that of the Brooklyn Academy of Medicine’s library, making Downstate’s Medical Research Library of Brooklyn the eighth-largest medical library in the country. With the creation of the Regional Medical Library...
Network in the United States. Downstate was to give strong support to the New York Academy of Medicine, the center for region 1. Downstate was to make its extensive collection available not only to the libraries in the region but also to many libraries in the entire regional medical library system.

Helen was extremely proud of her library. To demonstrate its many and varied services, she made a documentary film on the library, which was to exhibit throughout the United States and abroad. Her automated information retrieval system run by Vernon Bruette was a prototype for the system that was eventually developed at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse, New York, as the SUNY Biomedical Communications Network. In 1971, Helen was cochair, along with Gil Glausman, of the MLA annual meeting held in New York City at the Waldorf Astoria. In her autobiography, A Medical Librarian—What’s That?, written while she was at Downstate, Helen chronicled her life and work. Her thesis that anything can be accomplished by hard work and persistence was the main theme of her life.

But Helen’s life was not all work. Many will remember her for that unique sense of humor. When referred to as that “mad Hungarian,” she would break up with laughter. Although she lived in the United States for many years, she never lost her native accent.

I met Helen late in 1964 when I was at the Westchester Academy of Medicine in Purchase, New York. Our friendship was to span thirty years! Her staff at Downstate—Shirley Tanner, Janet Gross, Vernon Bruette, the late Ellen Gartenfelt, and the late John Anderson—were more of a family than just a mere staff.

The trip to Brooklyn was a long one, but it was well worth it just to be in the company of Helen and that wonderful group of young people on her staff. To me, the 1960s and the early 1970s were truly golden years of medical librarianship.

Helen and I attended together a number of meetings of the New York Regional Group and many of the MLA annual meetings. Denver, New Orleans, New York, and the Second International Medical Congress in Amsterdam in 1969 were particularly memorable ones. We both enjoyed the informative and social highlights of the meetings, the city sights, and the good food to be found in the various restaurants. Helen was modest about her own cooking, even though she often prepared some delicious Hungarian dishes. We were both book collectors, so there were many jaunts to second-hand bookstores in many cities.

Helen retired from Downstate in 1974, but she was to be far from inactive during her retirement years. While still living at her home in New Milford, New Jersey, she remained active in local library activities. She also continued her usual gardening interests and never lost her love of book collecting. During the first ten years of her retirement, she often returned to her native Hungary to visit friends and relatives. Lorand Kovacs passed away in 1980. When Bea moved to Albuquerque, Helen moved with her. They finally settled in a lovely house in Greensboro, North Carolina. My last visit with Helen was in April 1993. Seeing her again was almost as though time had stood still. Although she was eighty-one, she looked twenty years younger. I was astonished, therefore, when Bea called me on January 20. Helen had a stroke late in 1993, and there were complications. She passed away peacefully in her home. Helen Kovacs may be gone, but those of us who were fortunate in knowing her will never forget her.

Don Roy
Whitefield, New Hampshire

**Farewell from Helen Kovacs**

Dear Friends,

When you read this, I will no longer be around, and I have asked my daughter, Bea, to forward this note to you.

I feel that I have an obligation to fulfill and express my sincere thanks to all those who made my years as a member of MLA memorable and gratifying ones. The Association never discriminated against me as an immigrant, and accepted me for what I was—an eager, interested and hard working medical librarian, with limited attributes. I am grateful to all of you.

Goodbye—and never forget that this is still the best country in the world.

God bless you all.

Helen Kovacs