Professor James Douglas Pearson 1911–1997

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With great regret I must report the death of JD (Jim) Pearson on Friday, 1 August 1997, at the age of 85. Professor Pearson was one of the most eminent, and pioneering, librarians and bibliographers in the field of Middle Eastern, Islamic, and Oriental studies.

Born in December 1911, Professor Pearson was educated in humble circumstances in Cambridge. First employed in Cambridge University Library at the age of sixteen as a book-fetcher, he developed a taste for, and skill in, 'exotic' languages, and was awarded a scholarship at St John's College, graduating in Hebrew in 1936. He was then employed in the Oriental Section of the library until 1941, when he was enlisted for war service until 1945. He worked again in Cambridge University Library as an assistant under-librarian from 1945 until 1950.

In 1950 he was appointed librarian of the School of Oriental and African Studies library in London, and from then until 1972 oversaw the drastic expansion and development of the library in what were probably the most important years of its history.

As well as librarianship, Professor Pearson also devoted himself to bibliography, being responsible for a number of fundamental reference tools and surveys, most notably *Index Islamicus*, which began publication in 1958, *Oriental manuscripts in Europe and North America* (1971), the *World bibliographies of African and Asian bibliographies* (1975), the *Supplement to Creswell's Bibliography of the architecture, arts and crafts of Islam for 1972-80* (1984) and the series of comprehensive surveys of British archives relating to Asia, Africa and the Middle East (1965-94). He was still working on a further volume (on the Middle East) in this series at the time of his death.

Apart from his own work as librarian and bibliographer, he was active in encouraging and inspiring colleagues elsewhere in Britain and overseas. In 1967 he established the Middle East Libraries Committee (MELCOM) — now MELCOM (UK) — which brought together most British librarians in this field, and gave birth to a long series of major and minor bibliographies and research tools, in several of which Pearson himself actively participated. He was closely involved also in the beginnings of a European dimension to this activity in 1979, resulting eventually in the formation of MELCOM International. An enthusiastic and assiduous traveller, he visited many colleagues, Orientalists and scholars throughout the world.

He will be greatly missed and mourned, not only by his British colleagues, but also by a wide international circle of friends, companions and collaborators, and by all those who have benefitted from his bibliographical legacy. ■