

Richard A. Spohn – A remembrance

Richard A. Spohn died on April 18, 2008. He was a longstanding member of the Geoscience Information Society. At the University of Cincinnati, he was Head of the Geology Library, Head of Public Services at the Geology-Physics Library, and Acting Head of the Geology-Physics Library. Rich retired in September 2001 and lived near his family in the Orlando area.

I first met Rich twenty years ago at a GSA Annual Meeting. We both had done graduate work in geography at the University of Cincinnati. I think that his interest in geography is reflected in all the road trips that he made. He was an avid collector of counties. He would devise trips that would take him and usually a friend to counties that he had never visited. His goal was to at least drive through every county in the United States. His county map showed that he had covered much of the United States. You may remember that he often added road trips to the GSA conferences that he attended. I was lucky to go on one throughout Utah after a Salt Lake City meeting. We visited some of the national parks and even ran into a GSA field trip at Panguitch.

Another manifestation of Rich's interest in geography was his service as member and Chair of the Cartographic User's Advisory Council. He was proud to have affected some decisions regarding USGS and the maps program. After retirement, he served as President of the Western Association of Map Libraries. I think his interest in WAML only strengthened his longstanding love of the West.

Rich built a strong collection at the University of Cincinnati. He was truly a collector, both at work and home. He was particularly interested in field trip guidebooks. He developed one of the best collections, and I think that he even had an endowed fund to purchase them. He was a member of the GIS guidebook committees and Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Union List of Geological Field Trip Guidebooks, 6th edition. Perhaps Rich Spohn's work with guidebooks was his greatest contribution to geoscience librarianship. He was also very proud of his keynote paper on geoscience societies at the GIS 25th Anniversary Meeting in 1990.

Rich was a very strong contributor to public services at the University of Cincinnati. I saw some of his excellent supervision of student assistants. Some students became longtime friends. He liked teaching and was particularly proud of the internet courses he presented throughout the libraries. He was often the on-call reference librarian at the main library, though he had branch responsibilities. Rich was very conscientious about his branch libraries. At the cusp of his retirement, he was putting in a tremendous amount of extra time to resolve projects and leave the Geology-Physics Library in good shape.

Finally, Rich was an excellent host and event organizer. A good example is the GSA 1992 Annual Meeting in Cincinnati. Rich was a member of the conference organizing committee. He developed the GIS field trip with Professor Paul Potter, and he was the coauthor of the guidebook. Two highlights of the trip were the ferry across the Ohio River and the visit to a fossil bed.

Rich organized wonderful dinners for GIS attendees at Leonhardt's (an Austrian-Hungarian restaurant) and the Golden Lamb (a 200-year old inn). The meeting was also memorable for the lunch at the Rookwood Pottery, which resulted in the Rookwood Accord, a document-sharing agreement between

several California geoscience libraries. Rich's hospitality truly contributed to an excellent GIS annual meeting.

A personal example of Rich Spohn's hospitality occurred at the end of a Special Libraries Association conference in Philadelphia. Rich was dropping me off at the airport and then going to spend the next day in Montgomery County, his original home. I couldn't catch a plane because thunderstorms closed the airport. Rich offered to spend the next day showing me around all the areas of his youth. It was an interesting experience to see the homes, schools, and landmarks in a beautiful rural area that helped shape him.

Last November [2008], Rich sent me regrets that he was not able to make the GSA and WAML meetings in Denver. He really wanted to see the many friends that he had made at GSIS and WAML meetings. I think that I can say that his many friends in these organizations will also miss him.

Michael M. Noga

MIT Science Library