



John M. Echols

JOHN M. ECHOLS  
MARCH 25, 1913 - JUNE 16, 1982

O. W. Wolters

John Minor Echols died in his sleep on June 16, 1982. This memorial notice is a tribute to one who, from the time he joined the Cornell University faculty in 1952 until he died four years after his retirement in 1978, faithfully served and enriched the life and teaching of the Southeast Asia Program and was as good a friend as those who knew him are ever likely to possess. John, though an archivist by instinct, might, in his modesty, have wondered whether a record of his life and work was worth preserving.<sup>1</sup> His friends think otherwise and have entrusted me with the privilege of writing this notice.

John was born in Portland, Oregon, where his parents were temporarily living. They and their ancestors were of Virginia stock from the Shenandoah Valley, and when John was three they moved to West Virginia. In 1927 he entered the Lane High School in Charlottesville, Virginia, where he met Nancy, his future wife. He became an undergraduate of the University of Virginia in 1930.<sup>2</sup> In 1933-34, as he recalled in a note he wrote early in 1940, "I was forced to discontinue my studies because of financial difficulties," and he took a job as a drug clerk in Ashland, Kentucky. Nevertheless, "during this period I continued to read German plays and novels, and, to a greater extent, works of a linguistic nature. I also devoted a considerable amount of spare time to the study of Norwegian and Russian. During this interim I took a correspondence course in Russian offered by the University of Chicago." In 1935 he was able to resume his studies at the University of Virginia and in 1940 received his doctorate in the field of Germanic Philology. The title of his thesis was "The Numerals 1-10 in Indo-European: A Study of the Cardinals."

From June of 1940 when he was graduated until the summer of 1942, John worked full-time in the cataloguing division of the Alderman Library at the Univer-

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1. John would sometimes urge his aging colleagues to deposit their papers in the Olin Library. He himself wrote several factual but brief accounts of his career. The earliest I have been able to inspect was apparently written early in 1940. This document is a detailed description of the linguistic courses he took at the University of Virginia as an undergraduate and graduate. He mentions studying fourteen languages, including Eskimo, Old-Icelandic, Old-Saxon, and Sanskrit. Tradition on the Cornell campus has it that Hittite was his first enthusiasm, and the document bears out that he studied this language.

2. Because of what we later knew of him as a bibliophile, it may not be without interest to note that on October 27, 1895, William H. Echols, John's distant kinsman and professor of mathematics in the University of Virginia, used dynamite in a valiant attempt to extinguish a fire that threatened the books housed in Jefferson's Rotunda; Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Historical Sketch of the University of Virginia* (Richmond, Virginia: Dietz Press, 1948), p. 34.

sity of Virginia.<sup>3</sup> The months he spent there must have been a formative influence in the career of one who was to make a singular contribution to Cornell University Libraries. In a short note about himself, written in 1974, he referred to his work in the Alderman Library as "a brief stint," but what he owed the experience was generously acknowledged in an address he gave in Chicago in 1954.<sup>4</sup>

John left the Alderman Library to take an orientation course in the Navy. By a curious coincidence, he was assigned to a course at Cornell. He was gazetted in July 1942 as a Lieutenant, Junior Grade, and spent two and a half years at the Navy Department in Washington, DC. During this time, and a decade before he returned to Cornell, he made what may now seem a fateful decision, from which he and Cornell were later to benefit. Discovering that private tuition in the Malay language was available in Washington, he enrolled and was introduced to his first Southeast Asian language.<sup>5</sup>

In 1944 he was appointed Assistant Naval Attaché at the United States Legation in Stockholm, where he remained until 1947. The posting gave him an irresistible opportunity for studying Swedish. Later, when he was a member of the Cornell faculty, he sometimes taught Swedish, and also Dutch and Norwegian, and was often invited by other New York universities to be their external examiner in Swedish. The day before he died he disclosed his hope that he would be able to prepare an urgently needed college text book for teaching Swedish, as soon as he had revised his English-Indonesian dictionary.

After demobilization in 1947 he taught German and Swedish at summer school in the University of Chicago. Before leaving Sweden he had, however, been appointed to the post of Deputy Director of the Foreign Service School of Languages and Linguistics under the auspices of the State Department. There, from 1947 to 1952, he taught no less than twelve languages. Danish, elementary Finnish, Hungarian, and, it should be noted, Indonesian, Malay, and Tagalog were among his offerings. (His interest in Southeast Asia had not diminished during his years in Sweden.) For the United States High Commissioner in Germany, he also established a German language program, and in 1950 was awarded a State Department Certificate of Commendation for this service.

John was now on the threshold of his Cornell career. Milton Cowan, the first Director of the Division of Modern Languages at Cornell,<sup>6</sup> was recruiting staff among linguists who had been working during the war in Washington.<sup>7</sup> In coopera-

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3. I am grateful to Nancy Echols for supplying the dates. The Alderman Library was built in 1936-38 to house the books previously held in the Rotunda.

4. John M. Echols, "The Southeast Asia Program and the Library," *Area Studies and the Library. The Thirtieth Annual Conference of the Graduate Library School, May 20-22, 1965*, ed. Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien and Howard W. Winger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 37. Even as a little boy he liked to catalogue books, when, according to his wife, he kept a list of "The books I own."

5. Nancy Echols does not remember whether he knew of the course from a friend in the State Department or from reading an advertisement in the *Washington Post*.

6. The Division was planned in 1945 and established in the academic year of 1946-47.

7. For an account of the armed forces and language training, see J. Milton Cowan, "Peace and War," *Linguistic Society of America*, 64 (March 1975), pp. 28-34. Milton may have met John as early as 1933 at meetings of the Linguistic Society of America, and he certainly made his acquaintance during summer school sessions from 1938 to 1940 at the University of Michigan, where Milton was on the faculty.

tion with the fledgling Southeast Asia Program founded by Lauriston Sharp in 1950, Milton was then searching for someone to assume responsibility for the development of an Indonesian language program at Cornell, for from its inception the Southeast Asia Program insisted that foreign language training should be required of its students. Partly on the basis of his earlier personal contact with John, and John's growing reputation at the Foreign Service Institute, in the Fall of 1952 Milton invited John to become a visiting associate professor in Cornell's Division of Modern Languages.<sup>8</sup> John immediately accepted the invitation and became the Program's third permanent faculty member. His foreign language experience was an admirable qualification for his new post. Moreover, he had already spent three months in Indonesia, Malaya, and Vietnam, organizing English language programs on behalf of the State Department. Even more important, early in 1952 the Program on Oriental Languages of the American Council of Learned Societies invited him to undertake the preparation of an Indonesian-English dictionary. All these features of his background were to contribute a coherent shape and purpose to his career at Cornell.

Nevertheless, Cornell did not suddenly become his ivory tower. John genuinely deplored the ignorance of most Americans concerning East and Southeast Asia, and he was one of that small group of American scholars who was striving to remedy the situation during the early postwar years. Through his career at Cornell he was able to contribute to the mission of educating America, and he did so, as opportunity offered, outside as well as inside the University.

John's annual reports show that his years at Cornell were packed with extra-curricular duties. From 1952 to 1955 he served as Director-Consultant of the Ford Foundation's English language teaching program in Indonesia. From 1954 to 1957 he was a member of the Fulbright Fellowship Committee, and throughout the 1960s was a member of the Asia Society's Indonesian Council. In 1957 he participated in an Asian Literature Panel at a UNESCO conference in San Francisco. He was always an active and invaluable member of the Far Eastern Association, known since 1956 as the Association for Asian Studies. He served on its numerous committees and eventually became President in 1977-78. In his early Cornell years, he often lectured and contributed articles on Southeast Asian topics outside Cornell. He was an examiner and consultant for the Universities of Singapore and Malaya and was invited to give advice on library development at new Southeast Asian Centres at Hull and Canterbury in England.

His international activities brought him recognition. In 1967 he was elected an Honorary Corresponding Member of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and in 1971 he was appointed Commissioner for North America on behalf of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde in the Netherlands. In 1972 UNESCO invited him to be a Vice-Chairman of its first International Conference

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8. Milton, however, felt bound to inform John that "Cornell salaries are not the highest in the nation, but to every new appointee we give a \$20,000 equity in the view of Cayuga lake." I am grateful to Milton Cowan for showing me correspondence relating to John's appointment to the Division of Modern Languages. John was given tenure as an Associate Professor in 1955. He became a full Professor in 1957. See *In Commemoration of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Cornell University Southeast Asia Program. Catalog*, 1 (Boston: Hall, 1976), pp. xiii-xxi, for a history of the Program by Lauriston Sharp, its first Director (1950-60). The author supplies a general background and describes the Program's policies for graduate studies. In 1954 the Ford Foundation made funds available to George Kahin to establish the Modern Indonesia Project.

on Malay Culture, held in Kuala Lumpur. In the following year he was a Visiting Scholar at the Rockefeller Foundation's study center at Bellagio.<sup>9</sup>

So much for an outline of John's activities that stemmed from his readiness to accept claims on his time by the world outside Cornell.

Yet, in spite of heavy extracurricular demands, his loyalty to Cornell was absolute. Though he was not very interested in academic administration, he cheerfully undertook his chores. He was Associate Director of the Modern Indonesia Project from its origin in 1954 until he retired in 1978, Associate Director of the Southeast Asia Program from 1961 to 1978, and Chairman of the Department of Asian Studies from 1956 to 1961. In the 1950s the enrollment of graduate students was, proportionately, much faster than the recruitment of staff members, and John found himself serving as a "minor" member on a great number of graduate committees. Another of his duties in those early days was to take his turn in lecturing on Southeast Asia as part of a general Asian survey course.

The central feature of his campus responsibilities was, of course, his language teaching. During the 1950s he had sole responsibility for teaching Malay, Indonesian, Javanese, and Malayo-Polynesian. When students requested that courses should be given in Old-Javanese, John unprotestingly agreed to do so and worked overtime to make this possible.<sup>10</sup> A student in his Indonesian classes remembers that John came to every session even when Southeast Asian instructors were giving the lesson. His generosity of spirit and natural courtesy in the classroom relieved tension and made the process of learning an exciting experience. In this student's words, "he created the illusion that we were all associated in the pursuit of common goals instead of being mere pupils."

A particular feature of John's teaching deserves to be mentioned, because those who were not at Cornell in the 1950s are unlikely to understand its significance in developing the Program's interdisciplinary objectives. In the Fall of 1954 he gave the first of a series of courses in Southeast Asian literatures in translation, and even in 1980 he was willing to come out of retirement when there was a request for such a course to be given again. This innovation was probably prompted by his experience in language training. He took the humane view that language and literature should not be separated, and he required his language students to begin to read specimens of contemporary Indonesian literature as soon as possible. The result was that the students' curiosity about Indonesian culture was stimulated by an opportunity of learning something of its imprint on the imagination of its writers. Listening to texts in class, they were introduced to Indonesian literary discourse. John was also able to enliven his teaching by inviting to the campus some of the many writers whom he met in Indonesia during the 1950s. These years were the springtime of Indonesian studies at Cornell, when Indonesian-language students who wanted to learn more about matters that caught their attention in John's classes were able to turn to George Kahin and Claire Holt to satisfy their curiosity.

Here, then, is the probable genesis of John's courses on Southeast Asian literatures in translation, which he introduced at a time when the number of available works in translation was still small. In his later years he maintained his conviction

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9. He was a member of several learned societies: the Linguistic Society of America; the American Anthropological Association; the American Oriental Society; the Societas Linguistica Europea. At the University of Virginia he was elected a member of the Phi Beta Kappa in 1961.

10. According to his wife, he taught himself Arabic in order to teach it to a student who was interested in learning Arabic. He gave his classes at home.

that there was a place on the campus for this kind of course. In an address in 1980 to the Upstate New York branch of the Association for Asian Studies, he said:

I am reminded of a senior in the Industrial and Labor Relations School who sent me a Christmas card after graduation to tell me how much he appreciated (he did not say "enjoyed") the course, because it provided him with conversation at cocktail parties. I wonder what tidbits he passed on to unsuspecting listeners. More seriously, I like to think that he, like many others in the course, obtained not only some indication of the breadth and depth of Southeast Asian literature and some acquaintance with specific writers and their works, but also gained access to, and insight into, several other cultures quite different from ours and in this way experienced new ways of viewing life and experience as reflected in these writings. Perhaps I am asking too much. I do recall, however, that several undergraduates in the course became deeply interested in a country of the region and went on to study the relevant language, take an area course or two, and ultimately received advanced degrees here or at other institutions.<sup>11</sup>

John's literature courses were an important element in his efforts to promote interdisciplinary studies, the cornerstone of the Southeast Asia Program's charter. No aspect of Southeast Asia escaped his attention, and a broadminded conception of the field was, of course, reflected in his efforts to expand the library's resources.

His loyalty to the Program was as absolute as his loyalty to the University. He participated in every function and regularly attended the guest-speaker lunches organized by the graduate committee each Thursday in 102 West Avenue. His wife and he made a habit of offering their hospitality to students and especially those from Southeast Asia. Many former students will recall their home away from home with the Echols. Warm and almost Edwardian-style hospitality was offered to all without distinction of academic status or age. One of his deep regrets in retirement was that his contacts with students were necessarily less.

I have tried to give a general impression of John's career in the life of the campus. I shall now say something of his contribution to scholarship. He perceived what he was doing as having intrinsic worth as significant scholarship in its own right, yet I believe that his scholarly activities were also motivated by a determination within the limits of his capacity--which he always evaluated with needless humility--to promote the scholarship of others. I use the term "promote" deliberately, because he always hoped that what he was doing would help others to make their own contribution to learning.

We have seen that in the early 1940s he was, in effect, serving an apprenticeship that prepared him to make a special impact on the Southeast Asia Program from the day he arrived in 1952. He had acquired an inside knowledge of library work when he was a cataloguer in the Alderman Library, and he had begun to study Malay. On the eve of his coming to Cornell he had also accepted an invitation to

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11. One consequence of his interest in literature was the publication in 1956 of *Indonesian Writing in Translation* by the Modern Indonesia Project. In his "Preface" John states: "This compilation of translations of modern Indonesian literature originated as a series of class exercises performed by some of my students at Cornell University as a part of the advanced Indonesian language class during the years 1952-1955. . . . It is my hope that this anthology will assist in dispelling some of the ignorance which now inevitably prevails concerning modern Indonesian literature." He sometimes gave talks outside Cornell on Southeast Asian literatures: at Saigon in 1959; at Bangkok in 1960; at Ohio in 1969; at the Asia Society in 1971; at Hamilton (Ontario) in 1977.

prepare an Indonesian-English dictionary. And so it was that his background enabled him to identify and take in his stride two activities which he hoped would help to provide a substantial foundation for graduate studies at Cornell: lexicography and the building up of a first-rate library. He was working on these two objectives until he died, and what he managed to achieve will be his permanent memorial.

The first edition of the Indonesian-English dictionary, which he co-authored with Hassan Shadily, was published in 1961. A second enlarged edition came out in 1963. In the meantime, the Ford Foundation had given him funding assistance to prepare an English-Indonesian dictionary. Publication of this dictionary had to be postponed at the last moment because he wanted to bring it into conformity with the system of Indonesian orthography introduced on August 17, 1972, and it finally came out in 1975. In 1973 he had already begun to revise extensively his Indonesian-English dictionary. As Hassan Shadily recalls, "Since the publication of the IED in 1962 John and I kept our correspondence going, reading the criticisms, making notes of errors, weaknesses, new words, etc. in our own interleaved copies."<sup>12</sup> From 1976 to 1982 the two maintained a prolific correspondence on the revisions, exchanging letters on an average of once a week. The "L" entries were finished at the time of John's death.

Dictionaries are usually taken for granted by their users. There can hardly be a more time-consuming and self-effacing form of intellectual work, for which scholarly recognition depends on the judgment of often cantankerous fellow-lexicographers. John was well aware of the hazards of his calling. In his Presidential Address to the Association for Asian Studies in 1976, he quoted Samuel Johnson: "Every other author may aspire to praise; the lexicographer can only hope to escape reproach, and even this negative recompense has been yet granted to very few."<sup>13</sup> In the same address he noted two major problems that faced him: the fluidity of the Indonesian lexicon, with its shifting nuances of meaning, and the ephemerality of the many neologisms. He also paid a tribute to Poerwadarminta, the pioneering author of an Indonesian monolingual dictionary which John admired.

Only lexicographers are qualified to offer professional comments on John's dictionaries, but every user can be confident that he did everything he could to read extensively in every kind of Indonesian writing, including scientific literature. This was supplemented by his unbroken correspondence with Hassan Shadily, who, after completing his graduate studies at Cornell in the 1950s, remained a very close friend as well as colleague of John.<sup>14</sup> In addition, John traveled frequently to Indonesia

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12. Letter from Hassan Shadily, dated August 20, 1982.

13. John M. Echols, "Presidential Address. Dictionaries and Dictionary Making: Malay and Indonesia," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 38, 1 (1978), p. 23. Conscious of this fact he and Hassan Shadily had agreed in advance to welcome every review of their dictionary "good or bad," and had determined that, in response, they would avoid endless polemics, but, rather, would make use of the criticisms to improve their revision of the dictionary. (Letter from Hassan Shadily to John Echols, dated March 18, 1977.)

14. That friendship was undoubtedly nourished by the fact that John insisted that his Indonesian colleague be accorded equal status. In the words of a scholar who followed John's work closely: "The way in which John took Hassan into his etymological partnership was deeply touching. One would never know--from listening to John--how senior he was, not merely in years but also in scholarly status. Over and over again I have cited John's generosity in this regard when I have been confronted by examples of other Western scholars too selfish to give Asian fellow-workers the partnership credit they deserved."

in the 1950s and 1960s and never failed to consult every Indonesian visitor to Ithaca. He worked late at night and on weekends at his dictionaries. His "3 by 5" slips went with him on holidays, and he would have them on his lap when he was sitting at the porch of a relative's home. When traveling by car, he would ask his wife to jot down words suddenly occurring to him so that he could check whether they were on his slips. Compulsively meticulous in everything he undertook, he updated his work even when it was in galley proofs.

Two more points can be made about his dictionaries.<sup>15</sup> The American Council of Learned Societies was responsible for inviting him to prepare an Indonesian-English dictionary, his first venture in this field. Many would have been content with this single venture, but he went on to prepare an English-Indonesian dictionary because, with characteristic generosity, he wanted Indonesians to have better access to the English-speaking world. His English-Indonesian dictionary is the only one of its kind. Secondly, a difference can be detected between the two dictionaries. The earlier one is based on heard speech, and it was prepared when John was frequently visiting Indonesia. The second one tends to be based on written speech; his visits to Indonesia were becoming rarer. Nevertheless, virtually all students of Indonesia have both dictionaries by their side.

I have already remarked that dictionaries are normally taken for granted by their users, and judgments on them can be made only by a few experts. This is not the case in respect of John's other major contribution to Southeast Asian studies --his role in developing the massive Southeast Asian resources of Olin Library. Those who borrow books from this collection are themselves the best judges of its superlative quality. Year by year readers visit it, and their admiration is unanimous.

Many Cornellians will remember that John always seemed to be leaning over the Olin card catalogue with slips in his hand. We knew that book collecting was one of his passions, but not all may know what he was actually doing. From the day he came here he quietly and energetically assumed sole responsibility for a simple but gigantic task. He wanted every published work on Southeast Asia, no matter how old and on whatever subject, to be found in the Olin stacks. Oey Giok Po, the Curator of the Southeast Asian holdings, began his library career as John's right-hand man, and a valuable and warm personal relationship developed over the years between John and Giok Po and also with the entire staff of the Southeast Asian division of the library.

Giok Po has neatly summed up John's work as performing perhaps the most indispensable and labor-intensive function in the selection process, for John took it upon himself as a voluntary service to read every available book catalogue in order to indicate priority items with the words "eager to get" scribbled in the margins.<sup>16</sup> The number of catalogues reaching him multiplied over the years when book dealers came to realize that Cornell was a profitable customer and, very important for dealers, a customer who could be expected to respond promptly. John's work was "labor-intensive" because he had to scrutinize every item in a catalogue before he could identify perhaps only a few that were needed to fill gaps in the library. As Giok Po puts it, John might read hundreds of items before earmarking about twenty for purchase. To expedite the process he had a duplicate set of holdings in his

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15. I am grateful to Benedict Anderson for discussing the dictionaries with me.

16. I am grateful to Oey Giok Po, Curator of the John M. Echols Collection, for a long account of John's role in the Olin Library and for making personal files available to me. John's concerns were not limited to the Olin Library. He was equally interested in the Southeast Asian holdings of the other libraries on the campus.

office in the form of slips of paper. Library slips, as well as dictionary slips, would accompany him on holiday to enable him to write immediately to Giok Po when he spotted gaps in the library holdings which could be filled. In the library acquisition business speedy action is the essence of success.

John supplemented his scrutiny of book lists by relentless personal investigation. He had a wide range of personal contacts throughout the world and maintained an extensive and time-consuming correspondence. These letters often took the form of newsletters to friends. What he wrote to Giok Po when he was abroad reflects his enterprise in unearthing materials and also an urgency which some may not have associated with one who, in his physical movements, gave the impression of a certain languor.<sup>17</sup> Writing from Jakarta on March 23, 1973, for example, he informed Giok Po:

Two of the three days in Copenhagen I spent in bookhunting. The "haul" was not large, but I think our holdings of Danish language material on SEA will be increased slightly. I visited and explored exactly 15 antikvariats and I've kept the names (and addresses) of what I consider the most important, from our point of view. At three of them I arranged to have shipped to your attention small shipments of items, with invoices. . . .<sup>18</sup>

His holidays invariably took him to bookshops in out-of-the-way places. Always self-effacing in personal matters, he had no hesitation in overcoming his shyness when he met strangers from Southeast Asia and had the chance of enquiring whether they owned books that could be preserved in the Olin Library. He was always aggressive in pursuing targets of opportunity on behalf of the library. One of his proudest captures was a book on Indonesia in the Uzbek language, which he acquired during a visit to the Soviet Union.

No one is better able to assess John's importance in the history of the Olin Library than his friend, Giok Po.

The greatest significance of John's work with us was that, from the very beginning, he set the tone for the development of the Southeast Asia library in the broadest possible scope. He wanted us to cover everything that pertained to Southeast Asia. He respected the interests of every specialist. He was fortunate in winning the fullest support from the Assistant Director for Technical Services, Felix Reichmann, who was a scholar in his own right. They respected each other.<sup>19</sup>

The occasion of a friend's death is when one recalls other friends and the part they played in his life. Giok Po rightly mentions Felix Reichmann, who was one of the Program's best supporters in the library.<sup>20</sup>

Giok Po's tribute also stresses John's multidisciplinary concern. This was evident as early as 1952, when, in his first letter to Hassan Shadily, John asked for information on "work being done by Indonesians in the field of sociology and anthro-

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17. John would often say that he was "born tired."

18. This letter is in Giok Po's files.

19. As a footnote to Giok Po's tribute, I have discovered that on the day John died, Teresa Palmer, his secretary, typed a draft letter written a few days before when John was ill at home. He was anxious to procure from England a mimeographed paper on "The Management of Tidal Wetlands in Marginal Areas."

20. Felix and John shared a common interest in German music. Felix was a survivor of a German concentration camp, and this touched John deeply.

pology, especially cultural anthropology."<sup>21</sup> John later put forward one explanation for his broad interests in a paper he prepared for the International Symposium on studies of the Malay World in Kuala Lumpur in 1979 (a meeting which, unfortunately, he could not attend). He recalled there that his lectures of the 1950s on Southeast Asia in the Asian survey course "required me to become more familiar with much writing on the political science and economics of the Malay world."<sup>22</sup> Another explanation for his broadminded approach to library acquisition is that his Indonesian-language students were continually enlarging his range of Indonesian interests when he required them to translate contemporary Indonesian literature. But probably no single reason explains his catholicity of outlook. He was endowed with this quality, and this is why his influence on the Southeast Asia Program in the early and crucial years of its history was invaluable. If I may be permitted to paraphrase what has been said of Leonardo da Vinci, John was interested in nothing for its own sake but always for the sake of other things, for the sake of the whole, and for the sake of the inner unity of everything.

John's services to the library were an act of love and probably gave him as much pleasure as almost anything else in his life.<sup>23</sup> Very properly, in 1977 the Olin Library and the Program showed their gratitude by renaming the Southeast Asian holdings "The John M. Echols Collection," and Dale Corson, President of the University at the time, let it be known that "this is one ceremony I want to be in on." The event gave a clear identity to the Southeast Asia library, which had earlier grown up under the wing of the Wason Collection on China and the Chinese but had long merited a more independent status. The significance of the new status was underscored not long afterwards when Oey Giok Po became the first Curator of "The John M. Echols Collection." John was probably more delighted by his friend's richly deserved promotion than by anything else.

I suggested earlier that John always saw his scholarly contribution as being that of promoting the scholarship of others. One more instance of this trait should be mentioned. In his bibliography, published in this issue of *Indonesia*, his book reviews are not listed, and the reason is that they are too numerous. He was a conscientious reviewer, especially for the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, and books for review, together with his dictionary and library slips, would go on holiday with him. He had a specific view of his role as a reviewer. He wanted to congratulate the author for "making available," for example, a difficult Javanese text for the benefit of scholars in general, or he would "recommend" a book as a "model of its kind." He would describe another book as a "useful tool." He always accomplished the first duty of a reviewer, which is to provide an account of the book's contents. He did so carefully and would usually recommend the book, though he occasionally noted a few omissions or typographical errors. He never pretended to know more about a subject than the author, whose terms of reference were always respected. He sought no more than an opportunity to make a new and important book better known in the scholarly world, and was especially pleased to do so when the book was written in a foreign language, as was often the case.<sup>24</sup> John was a

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21. Letter from John Echols to Hassan Shadily, May 30, 1952.

22. In his Kuala Lumpur paper he was able to comment on the liveliness or otherwise of every discipline from the point of view, he modestly stressed, of someone who was only familiar with the bibliographical items that had come to his notice.

23. John's interest in the library made him a valuable Charter Member of the Library of Congress's Committee on American Library Resources.

24. His command of languages enabled him to translate A. S. Teselkin's *Drevne-javanskii Jazyk (Kawi)*, published in Moscow in 1963. The translation was brought

devoted librarian and was naturally anxious that books should be read. He always encouraged others to publish. Grateful for criticism himself, he never understood why scholars should be sometimes blamed for taking risks in publishing.<sup>25</sup>

I have concentrated in these paragraphs on such aspects of John's career as I have been able to piece together from a few records he left behind and from conversations with friends. Much more could be written to situate both him and the Southeast Asia Program in the history of an American university at a particular period in national and international history, and thus illustrate the intellectual adventure his career exemplified. But even that task would be less difficult than what I shall try to do by way of concluding my notice. I want to attempt to separate him from his Program environment.

When I began to write my notes, the coherence of his career dawned on me as never before, but I also came to wonder whether I knew him as an individual as well as I thought I did during his lifetime. I discovered that not everyone knew the same things about him. One of his friends, for example, believed that he was entirely apolitical in his outlook, but another was able to persuade me that this was by no means the case. In his quiet way he was well-informed and capable of great concern about contemporary political and social issues, and one friend told me that, in the last few years of his life, he was saddened by signs that opportunities for upward mobility were temporarily disappearing from American society. And so, when I write about John as an individual, the best I can do is to mention a few obvious characteristics which I believe those who knew him will recognize.

I observed in the first paragraph of this notice that we were all aware that he was one of the gentlest and most considerate friends we were ever likely to have, and our sense of loss is growing daily even though his benign influence will endure. As one instance of his essential kindness, I recall that his was the moving spirit behind the publication of a volume in honor of D. G. E. Hall, for which he wrote the foreword. He felt that his old friend deserved to be honored in this way. Some of us will remember kindnesses when we were troubled. Every visitor in a disturbed state of mind would leave him with the sensation that troubles were dissipated after being in so pacific a presence. He had the greatest contempt for the lobbying and intrigue that are the consolation of misplaced academics. He showed no trace of vanity. He never minded being interrupted in his work by those who came to seek his counsel, and he always rejoiced when he could pass on bibliographical information on the back of his discarded slips or at a chance meeting on the campus.<sup>26</sup> It

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out by the Modern Indonesia Project in 1972. John's Preface contains a characteristic passage: "It is hoped that this translation will serve as an introduction to the language for the non-specialist and will also make this work available ["available" was one of his favorite words] to a wider audience." He also provided a thirty-three page glossary of all the Old-Javanese words cited in the text and an up-to-date bibliography.

25. He expressed this point of view in the Preface to his Indonesian-English dictionary when he wrote: "we are aware of the risks we run by providing many illustrative English sentences and phrases with their corresponding Indonesian equivalents."

26. A student of the early 1960s tells me that he once met John on a sidewalk between Morrill Hall and the Olin Library. John stopped him and said that there was an editorial in the *Bangkok Times* of 1888 that the student simply had to read. The editorial was entitled "Siamese Historians: A Want," and John gave the exact reference. When the student started to walk away, John called him back to give him the library call number from his incredibly precise memory.

was entirely in keeping with his modesty that a note to his wife written two years before he died requested that no eulogy should be given if a Memorial Service were held for him; instead, he asked merely for some of his favorite music to be played.<sup>27</sup>

But all these traits were his visible ones. What lay behind his passive surface must remain unknown. He unquestionably possessed inner strength. In official matters he always stood firm on principle and would make no exceptions, as I discovered when I was rash enough to take an introductory course in Old-Javanese with him. In his address on "Whither Malay World Studies?" he admitted to being an optimist, "albeit a cautious one." He enjoyed laughing at himself, and could do so with some gusto. Puns would leap to his lips. One sometimes suspected that his vision of the world was one of courtly order, where respect should be paid to those who achieved. When he retired, he continued to attend the weekly meetings of the Program faculty but never expressed an opinion unless asked to do so. His explanation was that he felt that, because he no longer carried responsibilities, he did not have the right to assert his views. His self-restraint at these meetings was startling until one became used to his silence. But never was his self-restraint more remarkable than when he was under the gravest personal stress; his friends could not help but marvel that he never seemed to lose his composure.<sup>28</sup> No one ever heard him raise his voice in complaint or saw his features lose their habitual calm.

In 1971-72 John supervised a tutorial for a student who happened to be endowed with an unusually penetrating insight into human character. The student has recently written to me, and those who knew John will recognize a faithful description of their friend in the following sentences.

Different kinds of memories of him float through my mind, but there are things constant in all of them: his genuine interest in people around him; his bottomless capacity for empathy; most of all, his simply taking it for granted that he was meant to give of himself, to put his erudition and his curiosity at the service of others. . . . I have been writing to him off and on . . . , mostly with reference to his self-effacing requests for items that would help fill in the Collection, and I have been struck by how the notes he sent were so consistently like him, friendly, amusing, interested, boyishly self-deprecatory. I miss him already, the best example I have ever known of a "perfect, gentle knight."

Writing a memorial notice as much for as about an admired friend is not a simple undertaking, and especially when the friend would not wish to be masked by eulogy. I have introduced a few features of his life and career that Cornellians would be expected to supply, and I hope that I have not departed from the standards of truthfulness that John always set himself. His friends in Indonesia and elsewhere will probably remember other features which I have failed to mention. But all of us, and, above all, John himself, would want to emphasize what he owed his wife.

John's debt to Nancy was immense. She stood by him all times and in many more ways than by typing his dictionaries or letters on library business when they

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27. Part of his capacious heart was often in Vienna. He was an enthusiastic patron of the Ithaca Opera Association and of the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra. Towards the end of his life he wrote a short note on Johann Strauss the Younger for the *Ithaca Opera Bulletin*, 5, 1 (1981), pp. 10-15.

28. Perhaps a glimpse of his thinking comes from the fondness he expressed for a familiar song in Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, with the refrain, "Glücklich ist, wer vergisst was nicht zu verenden ist" (Happy is he who forgets what cannot be changed).

were at the four corners of the world. Her thoughtfulness matched his own. She was always concerned that the Program's overseas students find suitable accommodation in Ithaca. His friends were always hers, and hers his. These friends were numerous, as we realized in the summer of 1966, when the Echols's children secretly invited us to celebrate their parents' twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. The lawn of 711 Hanshaw Road was packed, and the delighted astonishment on the faces of Nancy and John, the last to arrive, is unforgettable. Whatever reservations John would have about a tribute in his honor, he would have wished me to mention Nancy alongside him. I gladly do so as a gesture of homage to both of them.<sup>29</sup>

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29. I am indebted to a number of John's friends for assisting me in writing this memorial notice.