

CONRAD BULT

Calvin's Man of the Millennium

Mrs. Bult and library co-workers comment on Bult's retirement and service to Calvin's campus

By Eric Flores
PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

If you don't know who Conrad Bult is, then you're probably not getting your money's worth from Calvin.

Bult has been the reference librarian since the fall of 1965. He is known for helping students and speaking louder than most librarians. Bult will be retiring in May after 34 years of dedicated service to the students of Calvin. His wife, Delores Bult, said his motto is: "That is what Calvin is for — to help students reach their potential."

As reference librarian, Bult has helped students reach their potential by pointing them in the right direction for term papers, essays and research projects. Mrs. Bult said he worries about students that he doesn't think he helped enough.

"You could ask him anything and he could point you in the direction you need to go," said Anita Veltman, a student employee at the library. "He probably knows everything about this library."

Some of Bult's duties around the library are answering reference questions, giving classroom presentations on the reference section and on researching in the library, and ordering new journals. Those who work with him say he is unforgettable and perhaps irreplaceable.

Kathleen Struck, who has been working with Bult for the past 11 years, said she will be sad to see him go because she has worked with him as long as she has been working for the library.

"He's unforgettable," said Marilyn Grevengoed, head of circulation at the library. "He can never be replaced ... He's 'Mister Hekman Library.'"



photo by Flores

Conrad Bult's love of books has guided students to reference materials for their term papers and (as Airband would have us all believe) he has guided Calvin College on a wild and dangerous ride to unknown reaches of the Hekman Library.

Library student employee Chris Botting added that Bult is “probably the loudest person I’ve heard in the library.”

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“He has his own quirks,” said Grevengoed, “but they’re just priceless. It’s nothing derogatory; he’s unforgettable.”

Since he has been at the library, Bult’s fame has grown to heroic proportions. Airband ’99 showed Bult as a “Raiders of the Lost Ark” super-reference-librarian, exploring the far reaches of the library and warding off dangerous fiends to protect a priceless book. The portrayal is not altogether far-fetched — Bult has been the discoverer of rare manuscripts

in one of the library’s infamous “back rooms,” and he probably knows the library better than anyone else.

“If he can’t find it, it’s not there,” said Grevengoed. Veltman agreed: “If he can’t find it, it’s a lost cause.”

While interviewing Bult, a fellow staff member asked him if he knew where a book was by only the call number. Right away Bult knew the book wasn’t in the rear book room, but on a cart in another back room. “He is like a walking library himself,” said Struck.

Mrs. Bult, who works in the Financial Aid office and will also retire at the end of this year, said that Conrad deals with books at home too. He is an avid collector of Victorian children’s books.

Bult graduated from Calvin in 1957 as a history major. He then spent two years in the army. When he got out of the army in 1959, he continued his education at the University of Michigan. After getting his masters’ in library science, he taught English and was the librarian at Chicago Christian High School. Finally, in the fall of 1965, he returned to Calvin’s old Franklin Campus as the periodical librarian.

At the end of the year, Mr. and Mrs. Bult will have worked at Calvin for a total of 60 years. In their free time they love to go to basketball games and are boosters for both men’s and women’s basketball at Calvin, and of course, they both share a great interest for books. Mrs. Bult said that they plan to do some traveling when they retire, and Bult plans to volunteer at the Heritage Hall Library. They traveled to the Netherlands last year with retired Calvin staff and plan to take another trip there soon.

“What [Bult] likes best about Calvin, is the student body,” said Mrs. Bult. “He admires the students so much.”