
Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison On the Death of Professor Emeritus David C. Lindberg

The son of a Christian fundamentalist preacher, David C. Lindberg grew up in Chicago and attended the nearby evangelical Wheaton College, where he majored in physics and met Greta Johnson, his future wife. After earning an M.S. in physics at Northwestern University (1959), he attended a National Science Foundation workshop, where the UW historian of medieval science Marshall Clagett inspired him to become a historian of science. After visiting the University of Wisconsin, Lindberg chose instead enroll in the graduate program at Indiana University, where studied with Edward Grant, a former student of Clagett's. He earned his Ph.D. degree in 1965 and took up his first history of science position in the History department at the University of Michigan. After two years in Ann Arbor (1965–1967), Lindberg left for the University of Wisconsin, at which, despite several attempts to lure him away, he remained for the duration of his career.

A prolific author with more than a dozen books and scores of articles to his credit, Lindberg published on a wide range of topics, beginning with the early history of optics. His revised doctoral dissertation became his first book: *John Pecham and the Science of Optics: Perspectiva communis* (1970). His *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (1976), an impressive example of cross-cultural history of over a long span of time, argued that Kepler's solution to the problem of vision made no sense without an understanding of both the problem that Ibn al-Haytham had set up in eleventh-century Islamic civilization and complementary developments in the intervening medieval Latin tradition. In 1983 Lindberg capped his detailed studies of medieval science with an English translation and critical edition of Roger Bacon's *De multiplicatione specierum* and *De speculis comburentibus*.

Lindberg shone in particular when writing synthetic overviews outside his expertise in medieval science. He sought to educate the broadest possible audience about the history of science generally. His most well-known achievement in this arena was *The Beginnings of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, 600 b.c. to a.d. 1450* (1992; rev. ed., 2008) a book which sold tens of thousands copies worldwide and translated into German, Dutch, Greek, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, and Korean. Lindberg's grandest vision for the field found expression in the eight-volume *Cambridge History of Science* (2003–), of which he served as general editor with Ronald L. Numbers. Shortly before Alzheimer's disease overtook him completely, he proudly held the second volume in the series, *Medieval Science* (2013), which he had coedited with Michael H. Shank.

Throughout his academic life Lindberg took special pride in his teaching. At the University of Wisconsin Lindberg was a star of the large lecture hall, where he taught more than twelve thousand undergraduates and won several distinguished teaching awards. He was a master of perfectly timed and accessible lectures. Later in his career, he ritually infused into them a half-time joke drawn from a list as canonical and regular as a high-church calendar. Although he did not like the unpredictability of the graduate seminar format, he mentored some nineteen doctoral students.

In 1982 the University of Wisconsin awarded him an Evjue-Bascom professorship. A decade later (1993) he received an even more distinguished Hilldale professorship. Among his many administrative duties, Lindberg served as chair of the History of Science department on several

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occasions and also served two terms as Director of the Institute for Research in the Humanities (1987–1993, 2002–2003), a scholarly center that had been founded by fellow historian of medieval science Marshall Clagett in 1959.

Beyond his teaching and administrative work for the UW, Lindberg contributed considerable time and energy to the History of Science Society, serving on its Council in 1970–1972 and again in 1981–1983 and 1992–1997. He was also elected President in 1994 for a two-year term. At various times he chaired the Local Arrangements Committee for the Annual Meeting, the Committee on Publications, the Committee on Meetings and Programs, and the Nominating Committee. In 1981 he co-chaired, with Ronald L. Numbers, the Annual Meeting Program Committee that, without funding or approval, launched the Society Lecture. In 1992 the Society elected him president for a two-year term (1994–1995). In recognition of his many contributions to the field, the History of Science Society in 1999 bestowed on him the Sarton Medal for lifetime scholarly achievement, his most treasured award.

Over the years he received many other honors as well. Among the most appreciated were an appointment in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton (1970–1971), a Guggenheim Fellowship spent at the University of Oxford (1977–1978), his election to fellowship in the Medieval Academy of America (1984), corresponding (1986) and full (1991) membership in the Académie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences, and a fellowship in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1991).

In the mid-1990s the physically vigorous Lindberg fell victim to the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. As his memory failed, he continued to attend departmental colloquia and brown-bag seminars. On 6 January 2015, surrounded by his immediate family, he died peacefully at Covenant Oaks Memory Care in Madison. He is survived by his wife, Greta; his daughter, Christin Lindberg; his son, Erik Lindberg; and four grandchildren. Countless former colleagues, students, and friends have for some years been missing the Lindberg we knew—and now mourn his passing.

Memorial Committee
Michael H Shank
Ronald L. Numbers
Thomas H. Broman