

Angeline Vernon Milner (1856-1928)

Angeline Vernon Milner, often known as “Ange.,” served as Illinois State Normal University’s (I.S.N.U.)—today Illinois State University—first full time librarian.¹ She was highly dedicated to her work in aiding students and teaching all people about libraries and their resources. During her 38 years of service to I.S.N.U., she worked on various cataloging projects, developed and maintained the university’s central library, and worked with various student organizations, including the student newspaper, *The Vidette*. She steadfastly educated on libraries with talks, lessons, and articles on both the particulars and theories of library operation locally and beyond. She was known for her committed support of students and was in turn greatly admired by students and those who worked with her. Ange’s influence extended far beyond campus through her involvement in the founding of the Illinois State Library Association, her membership in the American Library Association, and authoring over eighty articles and books that helped librarians and teachers create effective school libraries for their students.

Ange was born on April 9, 1856, in Bloomington, Illinois. She was the eldest of six children born to John “J.V” Vernon and Angeline (Baker) Milner.²

Ange was named after her mother, Angeline Baker. Angeline was born on March 19, 1827, in Boston, Massachusetts. Her parents, Theodore and Ann (Wright) Baker had 11 children total, and Angeline was the second oldest. Angeline grew up in and around Boston, where she was said to have received an “excellent” music education, and later worked as a governess and a piano tutor. Her family was part of the Swedenborgian church, which she joined at 18, and remained part of for all her life.³ In 1851, when Angeline was 24 years old, she traveled westward on a week-long journey by rail and boat with her uncle, Nathaniel Wright, to his home in Tremont, Illinois. It was there that she met J.V. Milner, who was working for Wright. Angeline and J.V. married four years later.⁴

John Vernon Milner, often known as “J.V.,” was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to Isaac and Elizabeth (Wilson) Milner on April 26, 1828. He was the fifth of seven children born to the couple. Elizabeth died when the children were young and soon after, in 1836, Isaac moved the family to Illinois with his sister Rachel Milner Brown, settling in Tazewell County where some family had moved to before them.⁵ Unfortunately, just a few years after moving to Illinois, Isaac died “leaving a small property and a large family,” some of whom still needed the care of a parent. John, at the age of 13, went off to work to provide for his family.⁶ He experienced many difficult circumstances in his endeavors to learn a trade and make a living. John was “bound out” as an apprentice to a saddler but was treated very poorly by the tradesman and especially his wife.⁷ His clothing was taken for the couple’s own child, and he was instead forced to wear clothes made of horse blankets. John was not taught about the saddle trade, and instead was forced to cook and do chores for the family. Eventually, after being whipped

¹ Please note that according to Karen A. Schmidt, “‘Deucedly Independent’: A Biographical Overview of the Library Career of Eleanor Weir Welch.” *The Library Quarterly* 55:3 (1985), 304, Ange always wrote her name with a period but will be referred to as “Ange” in place of “Ange.” for the sake of readability here.

² “Angeline V. Milner, Librarian, Is Dead,” *The Pantagraph*, January 14, 1928.

³ “Mrs. J.V. Milner is Dead,” *The Weekly Pantagraph*, October 15, 1909.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Newton Bateman, L.L. D., Paul Selby, A.M., Ezra Price, and John Burnham. *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of McLean County*. (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Co., 1908), 1195-1196.

⁶ “Death of J.V. Milner.” *The Weekly Pantagraph*, April 4, 1902.

⁷ A saddler makes, repairs, or sells leather, generally for saddles or other horse supplies.

severely by the wife one morning, he escaped the situation, running far away from the house and finding his uncle's home. John was able to live with relatives and worked with them on a farm for the next few years. While in town one day, he met Nathaniel Wright, a shopkeeper looking to hire help in his store. Wright hired J.V. as a clerk and J.V. worked for him for eight years in Tremont, eventually meeting Angeline, Wright's niece when she came to visit.⁸

On April 30, 1855, Angeline and J.V. were married in Boston in the Swedenborgian Church.⁹ J.V. had already moved to Bloomington in 1854 to open a hardware store with his brother-in-law, Charles Warren "C.W." Holder, and Charles' brother, Richard Holder.¹⁰

Also arriving in Bloomington around this time was the railroad, and two major rail lines at that. The Illinois Central Railroad, whose charter was secured in 1851, ran through the state from LaSalle, Illinois south to Cairo, Illinois, passing directly through Bloomington.

Construction of the railroad reached Bloomington in May 1853. A railroad running from Alton, Illinois to Springfield, Illinois had also been approved a few years earlier, and by October 1853, the Chicago and Alton line extended to Bloomington. With both major lines stopping in Bloomington, as well as the Chicago and Alton Shops opening on Bloomington's west side in 1853 for locomotive manufacturing and repairs, great population growth was anticipated.¹¹

Indeed, the city's population more than tripled between 1850 and 1855, increasing from 1,500 to 4,500.¹² This boom was what brought J.V. and the Holders to establish their store, C.W. Holder and Co., in Bloomington in 1854.¹³ The storefront was first located on Main Street on the east side of the courthouse square (now the Museum Square).¹⁴ The business stayed there for two and a half years before moving to 106 W. Front Street. About seven years later, in 1864, the store moved to Washington Street, on the south side of the square. By 1866, the store was called Holder, Milner, & Co.¹⁵ As of 1893, J.V. owned the building.¹⁶ In 1898 the store, then called Holder, Milner & Co., became a corporation and soon after, J.V., the last original partner, left, selling his shares in 1900.

J.V. and Angeline settled in their first home in Bloomington together by 1855. The couple first lived in a small house on Center Street for a year where Ange was born in 1856, before moving to a cottage at No. 9 North Street (now Monroe Street).¹⁷ The family lived here for almost nine years before moving to the homestead they created at 700 North Center Street. During the time that they lived on North Street, their children Miriam, Jennie, and Warren were born.¹⁸

The Milner homestead was built on a large lot in the 700 block of North Center Street, bounded by Locust, Center, Madison, and Chestnut Streets (the former location of Holy Trinity High School). J.V. and Charles Holder purchased the lot soon after they arrived in Bloomington,

⁸ Bateman, Selby, Prince, and Burnham, 1196.

⁹ Ibid; "Mrs. J.V. Milner is Dead."

¹⁰ "Death of J.V. Milner."

¹¹ Summers, Candace. "Gridley, Asahel." McLean County Museum of History. 2014. Retrieved from <https://mchistory.org/research/biographies/gridley-asahel>.

¹² Mike Matejka, Greg Koos, Mark Wyman. *Bloomington's C & A Shops, Our Lives Remembered*. (Bloomington: McLean County Historical Society, 1988), 99 and 149.

¹³ Bateman, Selby, Prince, and Burnham, 1196.

¹⁴ J.R. Freese, *Bloomington City Directory for the Years 1855-1856* (Bloomington: J. Wesley Wolfe, 1855), 26, 65. Bateman, Selby, Prince, and Burnham, 1196.

¹⁵ *A Gazetteer of McLean County: A City Directory of Bloomington* (Chicago: Bailey & Hair, 1866), 137.

¹⁶ Ibid; "The Oldest Business Man.," *Weekly Pantagraph*, May 26, 1893.

¹⁷ Bateman, Selby, Prince, and Burnham, 1196; *1859-1860 City Directory* (Chicago: John C.W. Bailey, 1859) 69.

¹⁸ Bateman, Selby, Prince, and Burnham, 1195-1197.

and later, J.V. bought Holder's share. In 1864, the Milner family's home was built on the lot. While in this new house, two more children were born: Laura and Walter.¹⁹

The homestead was frequently noted for its beauty, elegance, and well-cared for lawn.²⁰ It was also often a center for social life. Parties for the family and friends were hosted there, as well as the Bloomington High School alumni reunion in the summer of 1881.²¹ The event, with over one hundred guests, was described as "a scene of beauty, both within the house and out, and an occasion of great pleasure to those present."²²

The Milner homestead was valued for its location as well. In 1887, an addition to a nearby Catholic school headed by the Dominican Sisters was underway. The Sisters wanted to purchase the lot owned by the Milner family for the school expansion, but J.V. was not interested in selling it.²³ By 1911, after both Angeline and J.V. had died, the Sisters of St. Dominic were successful in purchasing the lot from Ange, who was the executrix of her mother's estate.²⁴ The home was turned into a schoolhouse used for grade school through high school instruction, as well as housing for some of the younger students and their teachers. It was known as St. Joseph's Hall, Milner Place. The house was reported to have been preserved to an extent, with much of the work done to it more repairs than remodeling.²⁵ The structure was razed in 1926 to make way for a new building to house Holy Trinity High School for Holy Trinity Catholic Parish in Bloomington.²⁶

Growing up, Ange had a multimodal education. She was first educated at home by her mother, who had been a governess in Boston and taught all her children at home while they were young.²⁷ As school attendance was not mandatory (and would not be until 1918 that all states in the U.S. had enacted compulsory school attendance laws), this was not out of the ordinary.²⁸ Health issues were an ongoing problem for Ange for much of her life, but they rarely deterred her drive nor dampened her talents. It was said that Ange knew the alphabet by the time she was two years old and could read by the age of four.²⁹ When she was eleven, Ange attended a private school and then Major's College, a preparatory school for young women, in Bloomington.³⁰ In the fall of 1870, she attended Bloomington High School, but poor health forced her to stop. She then spent a year in Brookline, Massachusetts visiting family. When she returned to Bloomington, she once again began taking classes at Bloomington High School, but because of her poor health, was once again unable to continue. Instead, she had a private tutor in French and German, and in the summers of 1875 and 1878 she attended the vacation school of the Illinois State Laboratory of Natural History, located at I.S.N.U., led by Professor Stephen A. Forbes.³¹

¹⁹ "Death of J.V. Milner."

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "A Quarter Century," *The Daily Leader*, May 1, 1880.

²² "The Alumni Reunion," *The Pantagraph*, June 11, 1881.

²³ "The Catholic Seminary," *The Weekly Pantagraph*, May 27, 1887.

²⁴ "Buy Milner Block," *The Pantagraph*, May 15, 1911; "Warranty Deeds," *The Pantagraph*, July 3, 1911.

²⁵ "Girls' School In Old Milner House," *The Pantagraph*, July 13, 1911.

²⁶ "St. Joseph's Hall Is Razed," *The Pantagraph*, October 30, 1926; Advertisement "Trinity High School," *The Pantagraph*, August 3, 1927.

²⁷ "Miss Milner's Death Ends Long Life of Service To Community and University," *The Vidette*, January 19, 1928.

²⁸ Samantha Stainburn, "Study Finds That Early Compulsory School Attendance Laws Increased Equality," <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/study-finds-that-early-compulsory-school-attendance-laws-increased-equality/2014/04>, Accessed August 27, 2024.

²⁹ "Angeline V. Milner," *The Index*, 1893.

³⁰ "Miss Milner's Death Ends Long Life of Service To Community and University."

³¹ Ibid.

Later in life, Ange asserted that she wished she had been allowed to continue taking classes at Bloomington High School as her health permitted instead.³²

Ange's work with Forbes set the foundation for her later career with the university. Forbes was an I.S.N.U. zoology instructor from 1875-1878 and the curator of natural history at the State Laboratory of Natural History from 1872 to 1877.³³ At this time, the laboratory was located on the I.S.N.U. campus.³⁴ Ange began this position in August 1880.³⁵ Her job included cataloging scientific books and references, mounting botanical slides in the museum's collection, and some work studying plants nearby at Funk's Grove, Illinois. In this job, she also worked with her cousin, Rachel Fell (a daughter of Jesse Fell, one of the founders of I.S.N.U., who was married to Ange's cousin, Hester Vernon Brown Fell).³⁶

Forbes was instrumental in helping Ange become the first full-time dedicated librarian at I.S.N.U. At the Illinois State Board of Education meeting on June 26, 1889, I.S.N.U. president Edwin Hewett reported that "the general feeling of the faculty that the library might be much more useful if we could employ a permanent librarian." The Board of Education formed a library committee to take the subject into consideration.³⁷ Seven months later, the Board authorized an "appropriation of \$250 to catalog the library" and another \$50 to transform the reception room in the Old Main building into a dedicated library. Forbes and others recommended Ange for the new short-term project of organizing a university library, and she was hired to begin this work on February 1, 1890.³⁸ Ange worked over the spring and summer reorganizing, cataloging, and managing the current collections of materials that existed (4,000 books spread across campus in five collections), compiling it into one central library.³⁹ She excelled in this task, and her work was highly praised by superiors, peers, and students alike. The student newspaper, *The Vidette*, wrote in 1890 that this project she led had not only combined and arranged the "general, reference and society libraries," but also set up tables and chairs logically, and ensured that "in every way possible the wants of the students [were] anticipated."⁴⁰

From this success, she was offered a permanent position as a full-time librarian by the new university president, John W. Cook. She began working in this capacity in September 1890, with an annual salary of \$500 (or \$17,300 in 2023).⁴¹ Ange continued to make the library and reading room as functional as possible and the books as accessible as she could.⁴² She also continued to expand the selection of books offered in the library as well. Her efforts did not go

³² Charles William Perry, "Angeline Vernon Milner," *The Alumni Quarterly of I.S.N.U.*, XIII (May 1924), 2-10.

³³ Lindsay Albright, Myles Jude, "Stephen A. Forbes," Illinois Distributed Museum, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, accessed 24 August 2024, <https://distributedmuseum.illinois.edu/exhibit/stephen-a-forbes/>.

³⁴ "Alumni Quarterly, Volume 14 Number 4, November 1925," *Alumni Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (November 1925), <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/aq/53>.

³⁵ "Angeline V. Milner."

³⁶ "Miss Milner's Death Ends Long Life of Service To Community and University;" "Miss Angie Milner and Miss Rachel," *Bloomington Daily Leader*, May 4, 1884; "The Wrightonians," *Illinois School Journal* 1, no. 7 (November 1881): 24.; Laurie Peterson, "Fell, Hester Vernon," McLean County Museum of History, 2008. Retrieved from <https://mchistory.org/research/biographies/fell-hester-vernon>.

³⁷ David Felmley. *Semi-Centennial History of the Illinois State Normal University, 1857-1907*. (1907: Normal, Illinois State Normal University), 44.

³⁸ Perry, "Angeline Vernon Milner;" Angela Bonnell, "unpublished biographical summary of Angeline Vernon Milner," 2024, 5.

³⁹ "Editorial," *The Vidette*, September 1890; "Angeline V. Milner;" "Rounds Out Thirty-Six Years As Librarian At Illinois State Normal," *The Daily Pantagraph*, January 23, 1926.

⁴⁰ "Editorial."

⁴¹ "Alumni Quarterly, Volume 14 Number 4, November 1925;" Measuringworth.com, accessed September 8, 2024.

⁴² "The College Dailies," *The Vidette*, January 1891.

unnoticed. In a March 1892 edition of *The Vidette*, it was stated that “Miss Milner, the chief librarian, knows her work thoroughly, and it is commonly believed that she is the most obliging person in the state.”⁴³

Ange was passionate about her multifaceted role at the university: she was devoted to her librarian duties of managing information and offering student support and, additionally, was quite involved on campus. “Why am I a librarian? I will say in four words, Because I like it...Of course I think I have the very nicest part of all because mine is the one connected with an educational institution where the people want to learn and are willing to be informed...and where if they don’t do things right there is a chance to teach them to,” Ange said in 1897.⁴⁴

And she did not shy away from establishing order in the library, and circulation and behavioral rules were established, eventually even being voted on and passed at a faculty meeting.⁴⁵ An 1896 “Library Notes” piece explained that library use had “constantly increased. In order that it shall meet the demands it is necessary to define more strictly both its limitations and the duties of its patrons.”⁴⁶ Some of these rules included due dates for specific types of books, periodicals, and other materials (like books in considerable demand and back numbers of magazines were due within one week of check out or stereographs were due overnight or by the hour), guidelines on renewing materials, how delinquent materials would be handled, and outlining student borrowing privileges (i.e. that students would not be able to borrow materials unless their fines were paid and delinquent materials were returned).⁴⁷ Though Ange had systems and rules in place, their purpose was to ensure fair access of library resources to all students. As one student affectionally proclaimed “What if she does scold when we don’t bring our books back on time? We need the scolding if we deprive someone else of his equal right of using that book.”⁴⁸

Students generally understood this need for order and greatly respected her. Ange was quite reasonable and demonstrated a patience and understanding of young people. She wrote a piece in *The Vidette*, reprinted in *The Pantagraph* soon after, questioning the “tendency to be unfair to young people today.” Her article pointed out that many critics “select the most ill-behaved girls that they see [and] compare them with the choicest ones that they remember and say, ‘See how girlhood has degenerated!’” She instead asserted that there have always been “kindly” people, “unruly” people, and those in between, and “fortunately we are never too old nor too young” for good manners.⁴⁹ Ange’s empathy and wisdom surrounding young people and learners was often exhibited. In a Bloomington Women’s Club meeting, she once noted that a young person’s interest in a book is “taken away when made to study it.”⁵⁰ Certainly, she valued the pursuit of knowledge, but she also encouraged a healthy approach to this. While offering studying tips in *The Vidette*, Ange asked the reader to think about how they use their time, saying, “no one can work as well in stale air as in fresh, or immediately after eating, or with a tired brain as with a fresh one.”⁵¹ These sentiments undoubtedly contributed to students’

⁴³ “The Rapidity,” *The Vidette*, March 1892.

⁴⁴ Ange Milner, “Illinois State Library Association—Why am I a Librarian,” *Public Libraries* 2:6 (June 1897), 293-294.

⁴⁵ “Are Your Library Books Overdue?,” *The Vidette*, May 15, 1912.

⁴⁶ “Library Notes,” *The Vidette*, February 1896; “Library Notes,” *The Vidette*, November 1894.

⁴⁷ “Library Rules,” *The Vidette*, May 15, 1912.

⁴⁸ “Our Librarian,” *The Vidette*, April 17, 1912.

⁴⁹ “Miss Milner Asks Fair Play For Young People,” *The Pantagraph*, April 17, 1923.

⁵⁰ “District Women to Meet Jan. 22,” *The Pantagraph*, December 12, 1923.

⁵¹ Ange V. Milner, “Educational Items: Library Notes,” *The Vidette*, October 30, 1906.

reverence and appreciation for her, which they likewise made clear. Students and faculty brought her bouquets of flowers one morning to celebrate her 25 years at the school.⁵² In *The Vidette* and in the university's yearbook, *The Index*, students wrote poems about her, recounted humorous stories, dedicated a volume of the yearbook to her, joked about her lovingly, and even printed a sketch of her.⁵³

Ange went out of her way to be of service to faculty and students alike. For example, she would scan periodicals as they came in and alert any faculty member or student to articles that might be of interest to them. She was always helpful to students and would spend hours hunting down a reference needed, no matter how insignificant, for a thesis. And if she could not locate a source, she would "often write another library and secure the information."⁵⁴ However, she had no patience with those who waited until the last minute to seek out her help and would lecture them on getting an earlier start on their research.⁵⁵

Ange's interests extended beyond the walls of the library. Students fondly recalled her "pep talks" at rallies and she was known for attending athletic events, once remaining at a game even after rain chased many spectators away.⁵⁶

When I.S.N.U. held its first Homecoming in November 1921, Ange took advantage of the inaugural event by welcoming alumni into the library with a reception showcasing students' coursework.⁵⁷ She continued and expanded the tradition in subsequent Homecomings.⁵⁸ As a testament to her school spirit and students' affection for her, she was designated the "guest of honor" at a reception during the 1927 Homecoming, the last Homecoming Milner would witness. Former and current students, and faculty alike gave testaments about Ange and her dedication to the library and her students. Gertrude H. Andrews, the assistant librarian, stated that "Many students who return to campus make it a point of business to see Miss Milner."⁵⁹

Over her 38-year career she regularly used the library as a social center to host exhibitions, receptions, and other events—even when it meant lifting her rules of quiet "allowing people to talk and visit at will."⁶⁰ Similarly, Ange often held receptions at her home, the Milner family homestead, for students and faculty as well.⁶¹ Two years after her mother's death, Ange had moved closer to campus, first living at 408 W. Mulberry Street in Normal.⁶² By 1913, she was living at 220 North University Street, what would now be the northwest corner of the Bone

⁵² "Remembered Miss Milner," *The Vidette*, April 14, 1915.

⁵³ "Our Librarian," Illinois State Normal University, *The Index* (Normal, Illinois: 1915), 80, Dr. JoAnn Rayfield Archives; "Efficiency," *The Vidette*, December 12, 1917; "Mr. Barker You Can Do Anything Under the Sun But—" *The Vidette*, October 11, 1911; "Our Librarian," *The Vidette*, April 17, 1912; "Dedication to Ange V. Milner," Illinois State Normal University, *The Index* (Normal, Illinois: 1926), Dr. JoAnn Rayfield Archives; "Angelic Accents from Angie," Illinois State Normal University, *The Index* (Normal, Illinois: 1900), 126, Dr. JoAnn Rayfield Archives.

⁵⁴ "Miss Milner to be Guest of Honor," *The Vidette*, October 6, 1927.

⁵⁵ Perry, "Angeline Vernon Milner."

⁵⁶ "Big Pep Meeting," *The Pantagraph*, February 19, 1924; "Basket-Ball," *The Vidette*, May 1899; Perry, "Angeline Vernon Milner."

⁵⁷ "Grads Return to Celebrate," *The Pantagraph*, November 3, 1921.

⁵⁸ "Fourth Annual Homecoming Is A Huge Success," *The Vidette*, October 29, 1924.

⁵⁹ "Miss Milner to be Guest of Honor."

⁶⁰ "Meet Homecomers at Station," *The Pantagraph*, November 2, 1921.

⁶¹ "A Merry Party of Students," *The Vidette*, September 1891.

⁶² Charles Samson. *Bloomington-Normal City Directory, 1911*. (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1911), 434.

Student Center parking lot, with her sister, Mariam Bowen (who was a widow).⁶³ Living close to campus she hosted parties with cake, ice cream, games, music, and dancing, reminiscent of the parties held at the Milner homestead.⁶⁴

She was very involved with the Sapphonian Society, a women's debate club that promoted intellectual and independent thought.⁶⁵ Ange would regularly give talks as part of regular club activities. In December 1891, she gave an interesting talk on "Physical Economy," that extolled the virtues of taking care of ones self in order to improve academic studies.⁶⁶ The following year, Ange gave a short talk on "Methods of Study," which shared tips students could use to improve studying habits.⁶⁷ During the May 17, 1895 meeting of the Sapphos, Ange, as a member of the Women's Work committee, assisted in leading a discussion about the "Influences affecting Woman's Wages."⁶⁸ Ange was also an honorary member of the Philadelphian and Wroughtonian literary societies on campus.⁶⁹ And she collaborated with students on *The Vidette* and worked alongside them creating the yearbook, *The Index*.⁷⁰

Ange contributed many articles to *The Vidette*, most of which dealt with instructing students how to use the library, the benefits of libraries, changes and additions to the library, or activities happening in the library. One of her earliest articles published in *The Vidette* was "What the Library Can Do For The Students." In it, she encouraged students to use the library and the benefits reading books would have on their studies.⁷¹ For several years, Ange also had a column called "Library Notes," which she used to alert readers of library matters. Ange commonly used that space to invite students into the library, urging them to make use of the resources there.⁷² She would write about the library's catalog, expanded offerings, and how the facility grew more popular on campus. The "Library Notes" column would also share library rules, changes, hours of operation, and would advertise various lectures, lessons, and events hosted there.⁷³

Outside of her contributions to *The Vidette*, Ange was a prolific author in the field of librarianship, writing more than eighty articles and books. Some of her works became recommended readings for other librarians.⁷⁴ Many of her articles were published in national library and education journals such as *The School News and Practical Educator* and *Public Libraries*. Her topics were wide-ranging, including how to use a library, suggestions for books and materials a library should contain, and the importance of libraries. Her most common theme, however, was helping librarians and teachers create effective school libraries for their students. Articles she authored included "Books for School Libraries: Holiday Entertainments (*The School News and Practical Educator* 23, 1909), "School Libraries-Notes and Suggestions: Organizing a

⁶³ Charles Samson, *Bloomington-Normal City Directory, 1913*. (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1913), 144 and 439.

⁶⁴ Bonnell, 8.

⁶⁵ Maddie Loiselle, "Milner Library celebrates the women of Illinois State Normal University," March 6, 2024, accessed September 3, 2024, <https://news.illinoisstate.edu/2024/03/milner-library-celebrates-the-women-of-illinois-state-normal-university/>.

⁶⁶ "Sapphonian Notes," *The Vidette*, December 1891.

⁶⁷ "Sapphonian Notes," *The Vidette*, November 1892.

⁶⁸ "Sapphonian Notes," *The Vidette*, May 1895.

⁶⁹ Perry, "Angeline Vernon Milner."

⁷⁰ "The Vidette Staff," *The Vidette*, May 1900.

⁷¹ Ange Milner, "What The Library Can Do For The Students," *The Vidette*, February 1891.

⁷² "Library Notes," *The Vidette*, November 1893.

⁷³ "The Teachers' Institute," *The Vidette*, April 1895; "Library Notes," *The Vidette*, November 1894.

⁷⁴ Bonnell, 6

Library (*The School News and Practical Educator* 23, 1910), “School Libraries: Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, and Other Reference Books (*The School News and Practical Educator* 20, 1907), and “School Library- Notes and Suggestions: Rural Progress (*The School News and Practical Educator* 24, 1911).⁷⁵

Ange just didn’t write about librarianship, she also taught courses on the subject. Though instruction was not listed among her original library responsibilities, by the 1891-92 school year at I.S.N.U., she was offering instruction in the use of the library collection; “...the librarian gives instruction on the use of the library, in a set of informal talks.”⁷⁶ Course catalogs note the evolution and expansion of her instruction from informal talks and practical lessons to teaching a three-week course on “Libraries and How to Use Them” at the summer institute for visiting teachers.⁷⁷ In 1904 Katharine Sharp, a prominent librarian and director of the University of Illinois library school, cited Ange’s instruction program at I.S.N.U. as having the “strongest continuous influence [that] has been exerted in the state of Illinois.” In 1906, Ange’s instruction program was praised as a model by National Education Association.⁷⁸ The evolution of her library instruction continued in 1912 when she began teaching a ten-lesson library course.⁷⁹ Eventually, it would be required of all I.S.N.U. students. Ange adapted instruction based on students’ “abilities, studies, and requirements.” Active learning or “active work,” as she described it, constituted in laboratory practice was an essential component of each library lesson.⁸⁰

But Ange did not just write instructional manuals or library education curriculum, she also wrote poetry. On November 22, 1891, Ange delivered a lengthy poem called “A Library Talk” to members of the Philadelphian Society. In it, she promised “to try to be worthy” to the position that had been conferred upon her by the university, and to do her best to help the students seek the books and answers they need.⁸¹ On the occasion of her 64th birthday, students threw her a birthday party. Humbled by their gesture, she wrote a poem expressing her gratitude to them:

“The library brought us together,
And in helping to gain the ends
Of service men, teachers, and students
The library gave me friends.”⁸²

During the First World War (known as The Great War), Ange wrote several poems, including “Winning the War” and “Afterward.” In her poem, “I.S.N.U. in February 1918,” she wrote about how those who remained on campus missed the students who had gone off to serve in the war.

⁷⁵ “Milner, Ange. V,” Illinois State Normal University Faculty Research: A Bibliography 1857-1957, <https://facultypublications.library.illinoisstate.edu/vivo/individual?uri=file%3A%2F%2Fusr%2Fshare%2Ftomcat%2Ffaculty6436730>, date accessed September 5, 2024.

⁷⁶ *Thirty-fourth Annual Catalogue of the Illinois State Normal University, Normal, Illinois for the Academic Year Ending June 23, 1892.* (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Co., 1892) 70.

⁷⁷ Bonnell, 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ *The Illinois State Normal University, Normal, Ill. The Normal School Quarterly, Series 10, Number 44, July 1912.* (Normal: Illinois State Normal University, 1912), 13.

⁸⁰ Bonnell, 6-7.

⁸¹ Ange Milner, “A Library Talk,” *The Vidette*, December 1891.

⁸² Bonnell, 8.

The last few lines stated, “Every man and woman known, Serving in war work and once our own; Normal’s spirit is fine and true; Duty to country and thoughts of you.”⁸³

Some of Ange’s most notable work for the university was done during the First World War. Shortly after the United States joined the war in 1917, Ange was appointed to serve on the University’s War Service Committee, along with other faculty, by university president David Felmley. Ange was responsible for creating the “War Roster” file, which documented the service of 821 men and women connected to I.S.N.U. Students, faculty, and alumni involved in the war as soldiers, nurses, and volunteer service workers with organizations like the Y.M.C.A and American Red Cross. Ange meticulously kept these records to create a permanent file for her library.⁸⁴ She collected all of this information via surveys and letters she mailed to those engaged with the war effort, as well as information shared by their civilian friends and family.⁸⁵ *The Vidette* consistently ran a section petitioning students to share the contacts of their friends and family serving. They asked, “Won’t you help us in this work of getting together an accurate register? Surely you desire your friends in the services to have every possible comfort; then why not give us their correct addresses as soon as possible so that the Vidette may be sent to them?”⁸⁶ After years of work and help from volunteers, Ange eventually compiled information of over 821 I.S.N.U. affiliates who served during the First World War.⁸⁷

Ange’s dedicated support for students at war, like her support for those on campus, was profound. She did not just create and maintain these records to accomplish an assignment but had heartfelt intentions of honoring students’ service and assisting them as she could. A 1918 *Vidette* article expressed to “our men and women in the service” the efforts and conviction of Ange, telling them:

“You may remember library lessons, the hunt for rhetorical assignments or fines or overdue books but that is not what the spirit of our indomitable librarian beholds as she writes your name on an envelope in her War Roster. Instead she sees courageous young manhood and womanhood who have taken from the school room something beyond the printed page, have caught a vision of something beyond the material and are willing to hand on their ideal to the youth of the days that are to be.”⁸⁸

During and after the war, Ange wrote hundreds of letters to students who served. She event dedicated one whole shelf in the library under the clock to letters from soldiers. The letters were placed there for students to read and were changed each week.⁸⁹ One student that she regularly corresponded with was Lewis Millman, a former student of Ange’s who was employed as a book binder at the library for several months.⁹⁰ Millman was born in London, England and was studying at I.S.N.U. when the war broke out.⁹¹ In one of his letters, Millman wrote that “often the bombardment of our lines is made and the scene caused by skyrockets, bursting shells,

⁸³ Perry, 7. Ange Milner, “I.S.N.U. February, 1918,” *The Vidette*, February 20, 1918.

⁸⁴ Perry, 6.

⁸⁵ “More Names on War Roster,” *The Pantagraph*, August 26, 1919; “I.S.N.U. War Roster,” *The Vidette*, September 6, 1919.

⁸⁶ “Register Your Friends!,” *The Vidette*, September 19, 1917.

⁸⁷ “World War I Illinois State Normal University Military and Community Service Records” [Finding Aid: Biographical or Historical Information Note]. Dr. JoAnn Rayfield Archives, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. <https://findingaids.library.illinoisstate.edu/repositories/3/resources/196>, accessed February 22, 2024.

⁸⁸ “To Our Men and Women in the Service,” *The Vidette*, April 17, 1918.

⁸⁹ “Those who are interested in the personal reports of soldiers,” *The Vidette*, January 19, 1918.

⁹⁰ “Millman Under Fire,” *The Pantagraph*, May 21, 1918.

⁹¹ “Has Earned His Citizenship,” *The Pantagraph*, September 23, 1919.

and firing of guns is more than impressive. Sometimes the boys go over the top and sometimes they raid our trenches. In every case, our boys have displayed the spirit of '76 and '61," (referring to the Revolutionary and Civil wars). "They have shown that the spirit of their fathers is still there." He also had a request in his letter for "Miss Milner," and that was if he did not survive the war, he wished that she would keep his books for the university's library and send his trunk to his mother in England.⁹² Fortunately, Millman survived the war, came back to I.S.N.U., and graduated in the class of 1922.⁹³

Ange was adamant about keeping others abreast of the war's progression, the statuses of students away at war, and how those at home could help. The library reading room had a section marked "Our Country's Call" where timely, war-related materials were kept. These included publications like the *Red Cross Magazine*, *The Columbia War Papers*, and other publications on city gardens and food preparedness. Students also had access to a daily newspaper published by the U.S. Government called the *Official Bulletin* in this section.⁹⁴

There were many national and local campaigns to garner support for the war effort from the home front. In one instance, the U.S. government and American Red Cross asked the American Library Association to help collect books and magazines for those deployed. Librarians all over the country obliged, including Ange, who led the collection campaign for Normal and I.S.N.U.⁹⁵ Local newspapers petitioned students and community members alike, urging them to bring reading materials to the library, where Ange had set up a table to receive the contributions.⁹⁶ Ange also worked with the Normal postmaster to establish donation receptacles at the post offices around town.⁹⁷ The book drive asked for recreational pieces, including adventure chronicles, detective stories, and romance novels, as well as reference books on topics like medicine, mechanics and machinery, and other nonfiction writings on business, foreign language, and other educational subjects.⁹⁸ The community donated many books and magazines, and *The Vidette* worked to send copies of their paper to those serving, but there was still a great amount to collect and send. Similar campaigns worked to raise money to purchase books and magazines for soldiers, and Ange helped to boost this as well.⁹⁹

Even after the fighting ended, Ange continued to solicit donated reading materials to send to those soldiers and aid workers who were not yet back home. She explained the reasoning and weight of this continued collection in a 1919 *Pantagraph* article, sharing direct quotes from letters she had received from soldiers. One wrote,

"You ask, what is the soldier's hardest job? While there was fighting to be done, that was the soldier's only job. Now the boys in France are waiting, waiting, month after month in the camps, for their turn on the transport. You who have not been there cannot know what it is means to the homesick boys to wait for months in camps like Dijon or Brest. You

⁹² "Millman Under Fire."

⁹³ "261 To Graduate At State Normal," *The Pantagraph*, June 7, 1922.

⁹⁴ "Library Notes," *The Vidette*, June 25, 1917.

⁹⁵ "Books for Soldiers and Sailors," *The Vidette*, March 20, 1918.

⁹⁶ "Books Wanted for Army and Navy," *The Vidette*, September 12, 1917; "Wants Books for Soldiers," *The Pantagraph*, September 17, 1917.

⁹⁷ "Books Coming In," *The Pantagraph*, March 19, 1918.

⁹⁸ "Books for Soldiers and Sailors."

⁹⁹ "To Raise Library War Fund," *The Vidette*, n.d.; "Miss Milner Tells of War Work," *The Pantagraph*, November 9, 1918.

can best help the boys by sending magazines and books. What you send will not be read by just one soldier, but he will pass it on for others to read.”¹⁰⁰

Many newspaper articles advocating for the collection campaigns like this explain the homesickness that many away at war were feeling. While it is not mentioned, the trauma associated with warfare also must have weighed on all those involved, and the chance for at least momentary escape through the books and magazines sent to them would have been important. No matter their reasons, many of the recipients appreciated the materials shared with them. In 1920, after a group of soldiers came home, they brought Ange a bouquet on her birthday to thank her for “her many kindnesses to them while they were in the service of our country.” The article that reported this said that “Miss Milner was indefatigable in her efforts to bring cheer and comfort to the boys while they were away...”¹⁰¹

Ange’s support was clear on many fronts. She displayed a variety of the World War I posters distributed by federal agencies and organizations, as well as a library service flag she created with a star for every student library assistant that was away at war. She was also diligent in sharing her findings on the university’s involvement in the First World War with others.¹⁰² In fact, the Illinois State Historical Library pronounced the I.S.N.U. war roster as one of the most complete in the state after the war had ended.¹⁰³ After the war, she preserved the wartime correspondence, documents, and war posters for future generations. Illinois State University still has the collection that she created, making it one of the few libraries in the country with original World War I posters.¹⁰⁴

Throughout her career, professional development was a continued focus for Ange. She took advantage of national and local professional associations to learn and keep up to date on developments in librarianship. She, along with one of her local mentors, Hannah Galliner of the Bloomington Library Association, attended her first American Library Association (ALA) conference in 1893 in Chicago, Illinois. ALA President’s Melvil Dewey marketed this ALA conference as the World’s Library Congress. According to research from Eleanor Weir Welch, Ange’s successor as I.S.N.U. librarian, Ange took advantage of one of the few lengthy professional resources available at the time, *Public Libraries in the United States of America: Their History, Condition, and Management*, a government document published in 1876 by the Bureau of Education. It served as Milner’s “professional bible, her inspiration and her textbook of method.” This tome is over 1,000 pages with entries written by prominent librarians of the period such as Melvil Dewey, William Poole, Charles Cutter, Justin Winsor, and Ainsworth Spofford. It offered the best aid in library training at the time.¹⁰⁵

Ange was one of the charter members for the Illinois State Library Association (ISLA), which was founded in 1896.¹⁰⁶ According to an article in *The Vidette*, on January 22, 1896, Ange attended this first meeting, which was held in order to “appoint a library commission” for the state of Illinois. The ISLA was founded to “superintend and aid the work of all the free libraires

¹⁰⁰ “Soldiers Need Reading Matter More Than Anything,” *The Pantagraph*, May 10, 1919.

¹⁰¹ “Ex-Servicemen Honor Librarian,” *The Pantagraph*, April 10, 1920.

¹⁰² “Letter to Miss Milner,” *The Vidette*, December 3, 1919.

¹⁰³ Perry, “Angeline Vernon Milner,” 6.

¹⁰⁴ Angela L. Bonnell, “‘Answering the Call’: Ange. V. Milner and Posters from the ‘Great War’” (2018) *Faculty and Staff Publications – Milner Library*, 154, <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/fpml/154>. These items are currently held at the University Archives and in the Government Documents collection

¹⁰⁵ Bonnell, 6.

¹⁰⁶ “Library Notes,” *The Vidette*, February 1896.

in Illinois and establish free libraries throughout the state.”¹⁰⁷ Throughout her involvement in the ISLA, she served as president, vice president, secretary, and councilor.¹⁰⁸ In February 1907, Ange served as the acting president of the association (she had been elected vice-president in the fall of 1906), and organized the ISLA conference held in Bloomington at Withers Library and at I.S.N.U.¹⁰⁹ Many members of the I.S.N.U. faculty presented papers and led sessions at the conference, including Dr. June Rose Colby who presented a paper on “The Girl and the Library” that outlined what the “evil influence” that poor fiction had on boys as well as girls, and explained how encouraging students to read “nobler fiction would have an overall positive influence on society.”¹¹⁰ The conference was reported to have been a success, to which Ange credited to “the assistance and backing of the entire Normal University from President to Janitors.”¹¹¹

In addition to professional organizations, Ange was also a member of several different community groups. Throughout her life, she took part in the History and Art Club, Woman’s Club of Bloomington, the American Literature Club (which she founded), the Palladian Club, the University Center, and the Equal Suffrage Association.¹¹²

Ange dedicated 38 years of her life to I.S.N.U. By this time, she had written countless “Library Notes,” hundreds of letters with students and over eighty articles and monographs. And she did all of this despite being partially deaf for much of her adult life. It was said that Ange was not sensitive about her hearing loss and used an acousticon (a type of hearing aid) during the later years of her life.¹¹³

Because of Ange’s hard work and dedication, the library expanded several times during her tenure. In 1892, Ange successfully advocated for larger library quarters. Then President Cook gave up his own two-room office so that the library could add a reading room and additional space for Ange’s instruction.¹¹⁴ In 1898, the library moved to the newly constructed gymnasium building (Cook Hall), which was built to serve the dual purpose of a gymnasium and a library. The library was housed in a single “splendid and spacious” room on the second floor above the gym.¹¹⁵ In the spring of 1914, the library was moved for the third and final time during Ange’s career, this time to the “old training school building” (renamed North Hall), which the university spent \$12,000 to remodel and turn into a library.¹¹⁶

Ange was a prominent figure on campus through the fall of 1927, but illness forced her to cease active work, and she became confined to bed. Angeline Vernon Milner died on January 13,

¹⁰⁷ “Library Notes,” *The Vidette*, January 1896.

¹⁰⁸ “Library Notes,” *The Vidette*, January 1897; “Locals,” *The Vidette*, December 11, 1906.

¹⁰⁹ “Locals.”

¹¹⁰ “Illinois Library Association: Twelfth Annual Meeting A Grand Success,” *The Vidette*, February 26, 1907.

¹¹¹ “Illinois Library Association,” *The Vidette*, February 26, 1907.

¹¹² “Woman’s Club Will Have An All-Day Meet,” *The Pantagraph*, December 10, 1923; “News of Normal,” *Bloomington Sunday Leader*, March 22, 1896; “Mrs. E.M. Prince Entertained,” *Bloomington Daily Leader*, May 22, 1886; Bonnell, 5.

¹¹³ Perry, 9.

¹¹⁴ Angela Bonnell, “Serving Students: The Legacy of Milner’s Library 01- Old Main,” exhibit at Milner Library, Illinois State University, October 13, 2017, <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/servingstudents/14/>, accessed September 8, 2024.

¹¹⁵ Felmley, 45; Angela Bonnell, “Serving Students: The Legacy of Milner’s Library 04- Cook Hall,” exhibit at Milner Library, Illinois State University, October 13, 2017, <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/servingstudents/2/>, accessed September 8, 2024.

¹¹⁶ “New Library for Normal University,” *The Pantagraph*, March 12, 1914; Angela Bonnell, “Serving Students: The Legacy of Milner’s Library 07- North Hall,” exhibit at Milner Library, Illinois State University, October 13, 2017, <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/servingstudents/10/>, accessed September 8, 2024.

1928, in her home on University Street in Normal. Her funeral was held on the afternoon of January 16. The university canceled classes so that any student, faculty, or staff member could attend the funeral of their beloved librarian.¹¹⁷ Additionally, a party by the Women's League of I.S.N.U. was also postponed that evening out of respect for Ange's passing.¹¹⁸ After a brief service at Ange's home, the "funeral party went to the University auditorium for the main service at 2:30 o'clock." So many came to pay their respects that the auditorium was filled to capacity and was standing room only.¹¹⁹ An editorial in *The Pantagraph*, conveyed the affection, esteem and respect felt toward Milner. It read in part, "Normal University will not seem like the same place without the smiling presence and genial personality of Miss Ange. V. Milner, for 38 years librarian of the institution. Her record will long remain as one of the potent influences in the making of a great institution."¹²⁰ Following the service, Ange was buried in the Milner family plot at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.

Ten years after Ange's death, construction began on a new library at I.S.N.U to be named "Milner Library" in her honor. It was the first building at the university to serve the sole purpose of a library. At the new Milner Library dedication on June 10, 1940, those who knew Ange were in attendance. One of the attendees shared, "...the influence of her life is as enduring as the stone in which her name is now engraved."¹²¹ In July 1976, after years of planning and lengthy delays, a second building to be known as "Milner Library" opened. The space was intentionally designed to adapt and transform to the changing students' needs and advances in technology—right in line with Ange's views on libraries.¹²² The building continues to serve as the university's library today.

For almost 80 years after her death, Ange's grave remained unmarked in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery. It is believed no marker was ever placed because most of Milner's family members were deceased by the time of her death and she was unmarried. In 2005, a team of librarians at I.S.U. began researching Milner's life for her's and the university's 150th birthday. When they located her grave in Evergreen, the team felt "the best way to honor her legacy" was to place a marker. On the occasion of her 150th birthday in 2006, a peach-colored headstone (paid for by private donations through the University Foundation at ISU) was placed on Ange's grave, so that no would ever forget the university's first librarian.¹²³

By: Angela Bonnell, Morgan Bueza, and Candace Summers, 2024

¹¹⁷ "University to Close Hour of Funeral of Angeline V. Milner," *The Pantagraph*, January 15, 1928.

¹¹⁸ "Normal Items in Brief," *The Pantagraph*, January 15, 1928.

¹¹⁹ "Angeline Milner's Services Conduction," *The Pantagraph*, January 16, 1928.

¹²⁰ "Miss Milner's Death," *The Pantagraph*, January 15, 1928.

¹²¹ Bonnell, 9; "Walker, Vance Detweiler at Dedication," *The Vidette*, June 11, 1940.

¹²² Bonnell, 9.

¹²³ "State honor's Milner with headstone, proclamation," *The Vidette*, April 12, 2006.