

John Davis, Colleague

John Whitney Davis (b. February 11, 1921) began his teaching career at Emerson College (Boston) in 1949, received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Boston University in 1957 and was hired by The University of Western Ontario in that same year. Rapidly ascending the academic ladder, John became Head of the Philosophy Department in 1960—a position he occupied for three years—and was promoted to the rank of Professor in 1963. Throughout his teaching career (until his retirement from U.W.O. in 1986) Professor Davis was an especially active member of the Department, serving on numerous important committees at both the departmental and university levels, helping to organize colloquia, hosting visiting speakers, and contributing in a variety of other significant ways to the vitality and excellence of the Philosophy Department. Professor Davis taught philosophy both at the undergraduate and graduate levels and in the area of the history of ideas. Robert Butts (his successor as Head) once described him as having “extensive knowledge, enormous industry, and great insight.” This no doubt contributed much to his reputation as an exemplary teacher. His teaching range was by no means confined to the history of ideas, however. It was common knowledge in the Philosophy Department that John could teach any course on the philosophical syllabus; and he was often called upon to teach courses no one else had the expertise or desire to undertake. John’s main interest, however, is the British Empiricists and he worked for many years preparing books on both Berkeley and Hume. Although these books have yet to appear, several important articles on both philosophers have issued from this work and have been published in *Dialogue*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *Review of Metaphysics*, as well as in an anthology, *The Methodological Heritage of Newton* (edited jointly with Robert Butts). Yet most historians of philosophy will agree that the crowning achievement of John’s career has been his creation and editorship of *Hume Studies*. In 1974 Davis succeeded in convincing the University to provide ongoing financial assistance for a uniquely and narrowly focused journal. Journals devoted to single historical figures are risky ventures, so this initial success, in itself, was no mean feat. The first volume appeared in April, 1975 and from that *very* modest beginning *Hume Studies* has grown, under John’s guidance, to become a standard, if not *the* standard, of serious Hume Scholarship. John retired as editor with the April 1990 issue of *Hume Studies*. His brilliant tenure as founding editor is celebrated in this volume.

Robert Muehlmann