This is the sixth in a series of papers depicting the mostly undocumented life of E.M. Jellinek. Jellinek was known to make a great impact on his co-workers in many ways. Perhaps his closest colleague and friend during his years in alcohol studies was Mark Keller, editor of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol. This paper draws heavily upon the newly discovered content from Keller’s correspondence with Jellinek’s former wife, Thelma Pierce Anderson. These letters provided leads in researching topics presented in the previous five papers, as well as corroborating evidence. The information in these papers was first presented at the 36th Annual Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists (SALIS) Conference on May 1st, 2014, by seven presenters in a panel entitled “Mystery and speculations: Piecing together E.M. Jellinek’s redemption.”

While much of E.M. Jellinek’s history is unknown, his time in the alcohol research field has been well documented. For many of these years Jellinek worked closely with Mark Keller, his friend and colleague. The Center of Alcohol Studies Library is fortunate to have numerous letters between Keller and Jellinek’s former wife Thelma Anderson, in addition to articles, speeches and interviews from Keller describing his relationship with Jellinek. These materials create a clearer...
picture of Jellinek, in both his professional and personal life.

Mark Keller was born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1907 and immigrated to the United States in 1913. He was a self-educated man, and despite never attending college, he had a broad knowledge of several topics. He began researching in the alcohol field in the 1930s in a group led by Norman Jolliffe. One of the first original staff members at what would become the Center of Alcohol Studies, Keller worked for the Center at both Yale University and Rutgers University. During his time at Rutgers he helped create the Center’s library and its extensive alcohol research collection. Working his way up from editorial assistant, Keller was named editor of the Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, the highest position within the journal.

Norman Jolliffe was appointed medical director of the project, and began work at NYU Medical School with Keller as his editorial and research assistant. Recruited by Jolliffe to work on the project, Jellinek was shortly appointed executive director. In a 1972 speech Keller remarks that “Jolliffe went up to Worcester where Jellinek was lured away from schizophrenia to alcoholism” (Keller, 1972). In a later interview Keller would say, “he [Jellinek] didn’t know anything about it, about alcoholism” (Blume, 1980).

Although Jellinek had been named executive director of the literature review, it’s evident that he was not wholly trusted, especially when it came to money. Keller writes in a letter to Thelma Anderson, Jellinek’s ex-wife,

Jolliffe’s decision to ship me up to the Academy to work with Bunky had multiple reasons, one being to raise my income. But there was another...He expressed the feeling that this Jellinek fellow was evidently a holy wonder—but didn’t impress him as a very solid character. What would he do, especially budgetwise, left all to himself? So I was to try to keep Jellinek on an even keel (Keller to Anderson, 1963).

Keller was sent to the Academy to keep an eye on Jellinek, however, according to Keller, Jellinek recognized Jolliffe’s suspicions and played along quite well. Again, Keller writes to Anderson,

I think Bunky understood my position and he cleared lots of things with me, such as buying this and that, about which I didn’t care a hoot. In retrospect, maybe Bunky understood this aspect of my position better than I did (Keller to Anderson, 1963).

Once the alcohol literature review was finished, Jellinek was invited to join the Laboratory of Applied Physiology at Yale, which would be responsible for creating the Center of Alcohol Studies. Jellinek brought with him the results of the literature review.
and continued his work. In 1941 Mark Keller joined him at Yale, where they collaborated on numerous projects. Jellinek and Keller made important contributions to alcohol research literature, in particular the Classified Abstract Archive of Alcohol Literature, manuals and publications focused on organizing and disseminating information and large bibliographies. After Jellinek’s departure from the Center, he and Keller continued to have a close working relationship. In addition to editing Jellinek’s book, *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism*, Keller was instrumental in having the work published. Even after Jellinek’s death, Keller was invited to carry on his work, and was asked to complete the alcohol encyclopedia Jellinek had been working on.

Beyond their professional relationship, Jellinek and Keller developed a close friendship. In a 1972 speech Keller says, “*It didn’t take long for Jellinek and me to become friends*” (Keller, 1972). In letters, speeches, and memorials, Keller’s affection for Jellinek is obvious. As evident in their years-long correspondence, Keller was also close with Jellinek’s ex-wife, Thelma Anderson.

As the field of alcohol studies grew, Jellinek encouraged Keller to grow as well and seek new opportunities. At one point Jellinek suggested Keller switch careers and join him in becoming a research consultant. Keller worried he could not join an endeavor of which he knows nothing about, but Jellinek, ever the innovator, believed the ability to think is what matters, as knowledge can be taught. Keller recalls,

> My first reaction was, ‘But I don’t know anything about it!’ To which he replied, ‘What you think is more important, and anything you need to know I’ll teach you.’ But I am terribly unenterprising (my belief in free enterprise is strictly for the rights of others)... (Keller to Anderson, 1963).

The encouragement and admiration between the two went both ways. Jellinek was a mentor to Keller, but Keller was also responsible for helping to create and produce some of Jellinek’s most accomplished works. The two enjoyed a fruitful 25-year working relationship, and Keller would remain a loyal friend and colleague to Jellinek throughout their relationship. After Jellinek’s death, Keller’s loyalty only grew. He wrote several memorials, articles, and remembrances of his friend. In each of these, he stressed the importance of Jellinek’s role in changing and developing the alcohol research field (e.g., Keller, 1964, Keller, 1970, Keller, 1972, Keller, 1984).

Keller so admired Bunky that in 1965 he, along with several others, created the Jellinek Memorial Fund. In addition to a cash prize, the winner receives a bust of Jellinek, nicknamed a “Bunky”. Keller won the award in 1977 and his inscribed bust is now housed at the Center of Alcohol Studies, Rutgers University.

Although many could say that Jellinek may not have had the credentials necessary for his position, Keller knew there were no limits to his abilities. Keller describes Jellinek as having “boundless imagination and vision,”
while cultivating an interdisciplinary approach to the field. He attributes the rational, scientific approach to alcohol problems to Jellinek and states that Jellinek “fought...to replace the absence of knowledge which had prevailed in the realm of alcohol problems” (Blume, 1980).

In one memorial article Keller best describes his feelings on the controversial subject,

E. M. Jellinek was essentially a universal scholar. He never really earned a doctorate, although along the way he acquired a couple of honorary degrees, and he allowed himself to be referred to as Dr. Jellinek because it was too inconvenient to correct everybody all the time. Of course he was a doctor of doctors in the truest sense (Keller, 1970).

Keller, among others, attempted to write a biography on Jellinek after his death, stressing that the biography was a “grand and needed project” that “lots of people were waiting for” (Keller to Anderson, 1988). Keller would correspond with Thelma for years, trying to piece Jellinek’s life together. During that time he realized how much of Jellinek’s history was a mystery to him, despite their close personal and professional relationship. Keller also believed that others would not be successful in writing a biography, failing to “understand Bunky” (Keller to Anderson, 1984).

When Keller wrote to Thelma Anderson asking for her help with the biography, she asked which Bunky the public would be interested in: “Bunky the man, the scientist, the humanitarian, the ruthless, the genius or the screwball?” (Keller to Anderson, 1984).

Among friends, Bunky was known for his nonsense verse. One of Keller’s letters even references a nonsense verse competition to decide what would be written in a going away card; Keller won that one. These nonsense verses give us a sense of Bunky the smart, lighthearted joker. An example of Bunky’s nonsense verse:

I felt that time was hanging by its toes,
I felt the goosedflesh creeping up my nose,
I felt the shudder of an unknown thought,
I saw the world behaving like a kite,
I felt as loving as a Hitlerite;
I wondered what the cause might be—
I found: My cigarette was smoking me.
(Jellinek, n.d)

One of the most interesting finds among the Keller-Anderson correspondence was a story told by Thelma describing Jellinek’s talent for becoming an expert on any topic.

Parenthetically—on some occasion, I believe it was while he was with United Fruit, he was asked to supervise the construction of a bridge. Now, you and I know that Bunky had the mechanical sense of a billygoat but—he had a weekend to get the bridge project worked out. He gathered together a pile of books and went to bed. On Monday morning, the plans for the bridge were ready! (Anderson to Keller, 1963)

Jellinek took a similar approach when beginning his career in alcohol research.

I do remember Bunky coming home and saying, ‘How would you like to be married to an alcohol expert?’ I said something along the line of, ‘But you don’t know one damned thing about it’. …I said I thought he could probably learn enough to bull his way along until he needed to know more. Again, Bunky took to the books, and I swear that within ten days he had developed a number of really good and original ideas on a subject about which he (nor anyone else it turned out) had had not one reasonable notion in 50 years (Anderson to Keller, 1963).

Mark Keller is an important factor in telling the Jellinek story, because a lot of what we know about Jellinek comes from Keller, who gathered information from Thelma.
Anderson. Keller’s fading and selective memory colors the past and what we’ve come to know of Jellinek (Roizen, 2011). Some of the Jellinek mythology comes from hearsay or word of mouth stories, which for librarians can be a good starting point. The next step involves locating primary sources whenever possible, searching for secondary sources to provide context, and putting the pieces together. As librarians, we’re responsible for finding materials and providing access.

References

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