

OHS CO-FOUNDER HENRY W HOFSTETTER (1914-2002)

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ABSTRACT

Henry W Hofstetter, O.D., Ph.D., had a long and distinguished career as an optometric educator, writer, researcher, administrator, and leader. This biographical sketch examines his life and career, and notes his role in fostering the study and understanding of optometry's history, as exemplified by his work as co-founder of the Optometric Historical Society and long-time editor of its quarterly publication, Hindsight.

KEYWORDS

Indiana University; international optometry; Maria Dablemont; optometric education; Optometric Historical Society; optometry history; The Ohio State University

Henry Hofstetter was born in 1914 in Windsor, Ohio, the eighth of eleven children of immigrant parents, a Swiss father and a German mother. He was raised on the family farm near Huntsburg in northeastern Ohio. Growing up in such a large family may have been a significant factor in the development of his remarkable organizational skills. He later recalled that "neatness, tidiness, and orderliness were paramount in our home. There was one hammer in the house used by thirteen people, but it was always put back in its place and easily found when needed."¹ His parents also set examples of hard work, honesty, and trust.²

Hofstetter's father questioned the merits of higher education, but with Henry's childhood asthma and the crippling of his left hand by polio at age sixteen, it appeared that farming was probably not a good career choice. Hofstetter attended Western Reserve University on scholarship for two years and Kent State University for a summer to obtain a teacher's certificate. From 1933 to 1936, he taught all eight grades in a one-room country school in Middlefield, Ohio. The job also included janitorial duties, ringing the school bell, and building the fire. On weekends and in the summers he also worked as a hardware store clerk. During that time, he lived with his older sister Frieda and her husband, a jeweler who also fitted spectacles and encouraged Hofstetter to pursue a career in optometry.

In 1936, Hofstetter entered optometry school at The Ohio State University (OSU), and in 1939 completed the B.S. degree in optometry, at that time OSU's terminal professional

optometry degree. He stayed at OSU to earn M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in physiological optics in 1940 and 1942. His Ph.D. was the first to be granted by a physiological optics graduate program offered in association with an optometry program.³ Incidentally, his sister Frieda attended optometry school after she was widowed and practiced optometry for many years in Middlefield, Ohio.

For his dissertation research, Hofstetter performed a haploscopic investigation of accommodation and convergence relationships under the guidance of Glenn Fry.⁴ This work was important in advancing clinical understanding of accommodation and convergence relationships. One application of his studies was the development of a graphical system for portraying clinical accommodation and convergence testing results to illustrate their normalcy, consistency, and interdependence and potentially to serve as a diagnostic guide or teaching aid.⁵⁻⁹ (Figure 1) This graphical system has been widely taught and applied, although in 1983 Hofstetter advised that: "there occurs frequently the misconception that graphical analysis is per se a doctrinal concept to be accepted or rejected on the basis of philosophical criteria. It needs therefore to be emphasized that graphical analysis as applied to optometric data is simply analogous to graphic techniques used in every other field in which quantifiable data are viewed. It is a mode of data handling, not a theoretical approach based on one or another eclectic concept."⁸

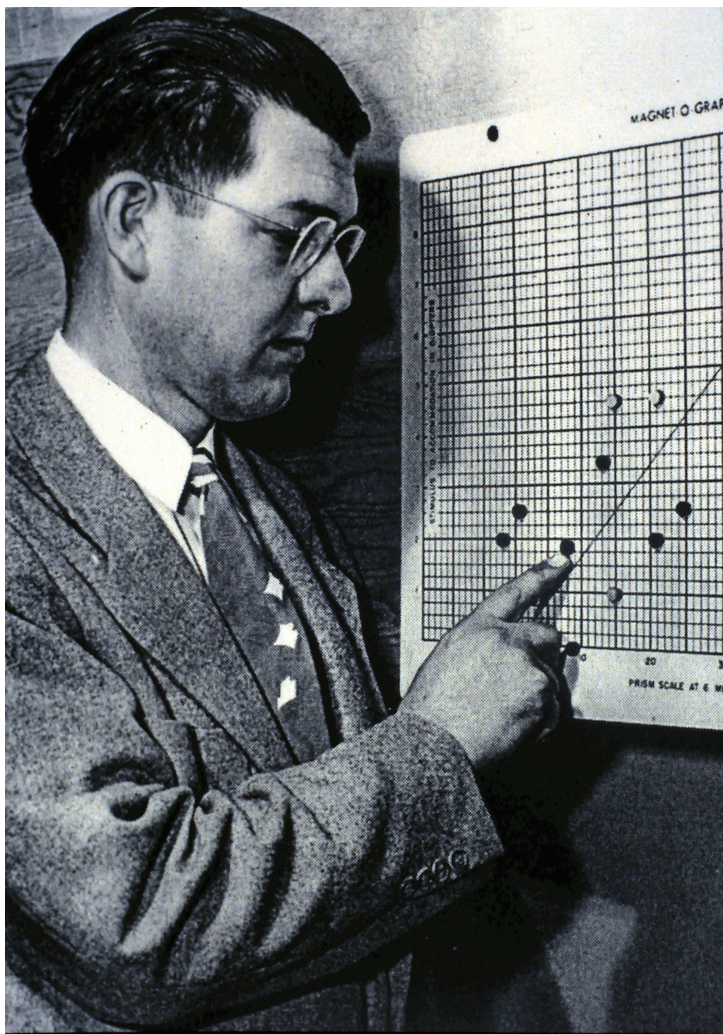


Figure 1: Henry Hofstetter and a "Magnet-O-Graph," a teaching tool with small round magnets used to represent points on the graph of accommodation and convergence test results that Hofstetter helped to popularize. (Photo from Indiana University School of Optometry)

From 1942 to 1948, Hofstetter was on the optometry faculty at Ohio State. When Hofstetter completed his Ph.D. in 1942, the United States was in the midst of World War II. Because of his physical handicaps, he had been classified 4F by the draft board. With the depletion in numbers of both faculty and students during the war, Hofstetter taught most of the courses in the optometry curriculum, which may explain, in part, the broad range of topics on which he published during his career.¹⁰

From January, 1949 to July, 1952, Hofstetter was Dean of the Los Angeles College of Optometry, later known as the Southern California College of Optometry. James Gregg noted that after Hofstetter took over as Dean, the functions of the college's administrators were more formalized and businesslike and that it operated on a more organized basis.¹¹

In 1951, Indiana optometrists were successful after an effort of several years to establish an optometry school at Indiana University.¹² Pre-professional courses began in the fall of 1951 with the beginning of the professional optometry curriculum scheduled for the fall of 1953. Hofstetter became the Director of the new Division of Optometry (later School of Optometry) at Indiana University (IU) in August, 1952. Indiana optometrists and the IU administration wanted a person with strong academic credentials to head the program and Hofstetter was an obvious choice.¹³ In his first year on the job, Hofstetter recruited faculty, ordered equipment, and designed the professional curriculum. His educational experiences and philosophies led him to draw up a curriculum with a broad base in optics, vision science, visual function, clinical science, and related topics, in addition to applied topics. He often noted that optometrists were well educated in multiple scientific areas.

Hofstetter felt that such a broad base in vision science made optometry the profession for people to consult for vision problems at home, during recreation, or in the workplace – the general practitioner of vision as he referred to it, or a primary care practitioner in today's parlance. He viewed optometry as applied vision science. Although he was not among those advocating that optometry gain privileges for pharmaceutical treatment of disease in the early 1970s, he thought that optometrists should practice to the full extent of their education and training. For example, at the 1971 meeting of the International Optometric and Optical League (now known as the World Council of Optometry), he stated: "The optometrist should have unhampered access to any tested, accepted, and safe means of improving his optometric services. Any deviation from this concept can only result in substandard services, in gross demoralization of the profession, and, of course, the denial of benefits of modern science and technology to society."¹⁴

Hofstetter served as Director of the IU Division of Optometry from 1952 to 1970. (Figure 2) During those years, he saw the initiation of the graduate program in physiological optics, the construction of a new Optometry Building, the addition of a branch optometry library, the development of a strong faculty, and expansion of the curriculum to four years of professional study to make possible the granting of the Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree.^{12,15} He was the major advisor for 15 M.S. students and 11 Ph.D. students in physiological optics at IU. He was made Rudy Professor of Optometry in 1974, and continued on the faculty until his formal retirement in 1980. Even after his retirement from IU, he was very active in optometry, authoring papers, doing

consulting work, and rendering advice and service wherever it was sought.

A prodigious writer, Hofstetter authored over 500 publications. Among them were four books. His first book, and perhaps his most notable, was *Optometry: Professional, Economic, and Legal Aspects*, published in 1948 and reprinted in 1964. According to Gordon Heath, Hofstetter's successor as head of the optometry school at Indiana University, the book made his name "a household word in the profession."¹³ The 412 pages of this book offer comprehensive coverage of topics relating to the subtitle of the book, including historical background of optometry, legal status, licensure and board examinations, reciprocity, history of optometric degrees, designations prior to the term optometrist, use of the doctor title, governmental relations, ethics, types of practice, earnings and fees, optometrist-patient relations, office accounting, international optometry, optometric education, distribution of optometrists, scope of practice, manufacturers and distributors, relation to other professions, prevalence of visual anomalies, and public health issues. The book served an important role in summarizing all those aspects of the profession in one place. Typical of Hofstetter, statements made in the text are supported by numerical data in the form of tables and graphs throughout the book. In a review of the book, Carel Koch stated that Hofstetter's "writings have been eagerly followed by thousands of optometrists because of his clear and thorough covering of the subject he has investigated. His new book follows the same meticulous pattern...Optometrists everywhere will benefit by reading this book."¹⁶

Hofstetter served as editor for the second edition of *Manual of Ocular Tests*, published in 1948 by the American Optometric Association. The first edition appeared in 1942. The subtitle of the 84 page second edition is *A Compilation and Compendium of Ocular Tests in Use by Various Service Branches of The United States of America*. The book provided brief summaries of equipment, procedures, precautions, and interpretations of various tests.

In 1956, Hofstetter published his third book, a 189 page text entitled *Industrial Vision*. Filling a need at the time, the book offered information on industrial eye hazards and protection, vision testing for industrial settings, the relation of vision to industrial efficiency, and compensation for loss of vision in industry. In a review of the book in the *Journal of the American Optometric Association*, E. LeRoy Ryer stated that it "presents a comprehensive analysis, interpretation, and integration of data." Ryer further noted that optometry "has missed out...in this field of industrial vision. If optometrists will only read this book, the results of former oversight and neglect might be

counteracted advantageously to every one concerned."¹⁷

The first edition of the widely used *Dictionary of Visual Science* appeared in 1960 with Max Schapero, David Cline, and Henry Hofstetter as editors. A second edition with the same line-up of editors was published in 1968. Editors for the third edition (1980) and fourth edition (1989) were David Cline, Hofstetter, and John R. Griffin. The fifth edition (2000) was edited by Hofstetter, John Griffin, Morris Berman, and Ronald Everson. For the fifth edition the title was modified to *Dictionary of Visual Science and Related Clinical Terms*, which better reflected its content from the beginning as essentially a dictionary of optometry and vision science. For each edition, the editors were assisted by contributors who checked or composed definitions in their respective fields of expertise. The first edition featured definitions of over 13,000 terms, while the fifth edition expanded to include about 25,000 terms and a 39 page appendix with tables summarizing various information. Optometric librarian Grace Weiner's review of the first edition called it "an immensely significant contribution to the field of optometry and to the whole field of visual science" and characterized the definitions as "comprehensive and meaningful."¹⁸ Weiner also stated that she had "long felt the need of just such a dictionary."

In addition to those books, Hofstetter authored numerous research papers, editorials, book reviews, and informational



Figure 2: Henry Hofstetter standing in front of the Indiana University Optometry Building, which was built in 1967 while he was Director of the IU Division of Optometry. (Photo from the Indiana University School of Optometry)

items. These publications span a remarkable breadth of topics, including for example, accommodation, binocular vision, color vision, international optometry, occupational vision, optometric tests and measurements, optometric

education, optometry history, orthoptics, presbyopia, refractive errors, strabismus, visual acuity, and professional policy. When asked how he had chosen topics to write about or research, he responded simply that he worked on areas that were needed at the time.¹⁹

Several authors have detailed Hofstetter's work in international optometry.²⁰⁻²³ Because of his international optometry activities, his extensive travels, his three sabbaticals to study optometry in Africa, Australia, and Europe, and his work in numerous professional and scientific organizations, Hofstetter was known by optometrists worldwide. Manfred Müller, president of the World Council of Optometry stated that: "Dr. Hofstetter has influenced every region of the world. He has promoted optometry in every forum: education, health care, industry and politics. WCO salutes a leader who has changed the path of our profession and, in doing so, has forged a new, global frontier for optometry."²⁴ Hofstetter carried out regular correspondence with optometrists and optometric leaders from all over the globe, providing guidance and encouragement. The extent of his correspondence can be shown by the fact that his correspondence file at the Indiana University Archives encompasses over 600 folders.

Hofstetter was a member of and/or presided over dozens of organizations and committees, including community groups, university committees, scientific societies, and optometric organizations. In these service activities, he often stimulated new organizational vigor or broke new ground. When he was elected president of the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry, it was a loosely organized group, but he appointed committees which were expected to produce useful reports.¹⁰ When he assumed presidency of the American Optometric Association, he was the first full-time educator to hold that office.²⁵ He did consulting work for many groups, including the National Academy of Science, the United States Public Health Service, the Highway Research Board, the United States Air Force, Time-Life Books, and the National Science Foundation.

After teaching an introduction to optometry course, Hofstetter developed an interest in optometry history.¹⁵ He came to realize that most optometrists did not appreciate that optometry was "a discipline with as noble and pervasive a heritage as any" due to their lack of knowledge of its history.²⁶ He wrote that a study of optometry history shows "optometry's centuries-long existence and emergence from a prestigious and sophisticated handicraft to its present academic stature, a truly proud history which includes many prominent and accomplished personalities."²⁶ In such beliefs, he found a kindred spirit in Maria Dablemont, the American

Optometric Association librarian and archivist for almost 25 years. He noted that when someone talked about optometry having "humble beginnings," Dablemont "would get furious... She would say, 'There is nothing humble about your history. You have a glorious history.'"²⁷

Maria Dablemont and Hofstetter were co-founders of the Optometric Historical Society.^{28,29} Their work in 1968 and 1969 established the society, and in January, 1970, they saw the launch of the *Newsletter of the Optometric Historical Society*, later named *Hindsight*. Hofstetter was the first president of the OHS, serving in that role from 1970 to 1974. He was the first editor of the newsletter and served as editor, co-editor, and later contributing editor to the publication for thirty years, writing most of its content over that period of time.

Hofstetter was a staunch supporter of strong optometric libraries, archives, and museums.³⁰ He was a member of the American Optometric Association's library and history committees, and he held librarians and archivists in high esteem. He had a great appreciation for the importance of archival collections. He recognized that many popular myths about optometry's history "have incurred significant damage to the profession and have interfered with its progress. Myths without evidence need to be challenged but the challenge is void without archival documentation."³¹ He noted that optometrists can potentially contribute to documentation that could dispel such popular myths: "Such documentation may well lie hidden in your own attic or basement, in committee correspondence in your files, in your optometric scrapbook of pictures and news clippings, or even in your memory."³¹ He further noted that owners of such important materials should "take immediate steps to insure the transfer of their collections to appropriate repositories at the time of the owner's death or retirement. It is not sufficient merely to write the request in one's will. The collections should be clearly labeled and marked well in advance for their desired posthumous disposition."³²

Friends and colleagues have noted that Hofstetter had a witty side.^{20,33} His collection of several scrapbooks of cartoons depicting eyes or spectacles is held by the Indiana University Optometry Library. It can also be observed that his wife Jane was an excellent helpmate, as she accompanied him on optometric travels, helped fill out index cards, and entertained students, student wives, and various optometric and academic visitors in their home.^{15,34}

Hofstetter's lifelong work and dedication was acknowledged by numerous awards and recognitions, such as five honorary doctorate degrees, the American Optometric Association Apollo Award (1973), Armed Forces

Optometric Society Orion Award (1974), American Academy of Optometry Prentice Medal (1976), Indiana Optometric Association Distinguished Service Award (1983), American Public Health Association Vision Care Section Distinguished Service Award (1986), International Optometric and Optical League International Optometrist of the Year (1990), American Optometric Association Distinguished Service Award (1991), Indiana Optometric Association Lifetime Achievement Award (1996), Indiana Public Health Foundation Achievement Award (1996), World Council of Optometry Distinguished Service Award (1999), and induction into the national Optometry Hall of Fame (1999).

I was fortunate to have had Henry Hofstetter as advisor, not only formally for my Ph.D., but also informally for many years thereafter. Like many others, I appreciated the characteristics that made him so remarkable: the gracious unassuming manner, the faultless organizational skills, the pause after being asked a question followed by a to-the-point impeccably formulated answer, the kind compliments on papers along with valuable recommendations written in green ink, the professional generosity, the use of a carefully planned graph to show trends in data, the emphasis on knowing the history of our profession, and the meticulous attention to detail. As I look back at what he wrote years, even decades, past, I am struck by the fact that so many of his writings not only filled a need at the time, but also hold relevance for optometry today. His insistence that optometrists should learn about, and gain a correct understanding of, their history is surely one of his most important legacies.

Acknowledgments

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