

**Angeline Vernon Milner (1856-1928)**, often referred to as “Ange,” made a significant impact on Illinois State University (ISU), then known as Illinois State Normal University (ISNU), as its first full-time librarian. Over 38 years, she helped organize and **transform** the library, providing **guidance** to students and helping establish a system that would benefit generations to come. Known for her kindness, **dedication**, and commitment to education, she became a **beloved** figure on campus.

Born on April 9, 1856, in Bloomington, Illinois, Ange was the oldest of six children in the Milner family. Her parents were John Vernon Milner (J.V.) and Angeline Baker Milner. Her mother, Angeline, originally from Boston, was musically talented and worked as a piano teacher and **governess** before moving to Illinois. Her father, J.V., faced **significant** challenges in his youth, losing both of his parents at an early age. Despite this, he worked hard, eventually co-owning a successful hardware store in Bloomington.

The Milner family became well-known in the community. Their home, located on an entire block at 700 North Center Street, was a popular gathering spot, and Ange grew up in an environment full of support and love, which would later shape her warm and **nurturing** personality.

Ange was naturally bright and had a love for learning from a young age. Her early education came from homeschooling, led by her mother, followed by private schooling. However, Ange struggled with health problems that caused her to take breaks from her studies. Despite this, her passion for knowledge never **wavered**. She learned French and German from tutors, and though she couldn't always attend school regularly, she educated herself through reading and personal study.

In 1880, Ange secured her first job at the Illinois State Laboratory of Natural History on the ISNU campus. This position involved **cataloging** scientific books and working with plant **specimens**, which helped her develop skills in organizing information—an ability that would become **crucial** when she later became the university's librarian.

In 1890, Illinois State Normal University's library was in **disarray**. Books were scattered across five different locations on campus, and the system for managing them was almost **nonexistent**. Ange was hired to solve this problem. She was so **effective** at organizing the collection and making the library more efficient that she was offered a full-time position as the school's librarian that same year.

Ange's contributions to the library were **transformative**. She developed a system to organize the books, created an **accessible** environment for students, and set up rules to keep the library running smoothly. While some might find rules **frustrating**, the students at ISNU respected her because they knew she was there to help. Ange didn't just run the library; she helped students succeed by teaching them how to use the library properly, and her guidance became **invaluable** to many.

The students admired her so much that they frequently wrote poems and stories about her in the school newspaper (*The Vidette*) and yearbook (*The Index*), highlighting her kindness and dedication.

Ange's role on campus went beyond her job as a librarian. She was a **mentor** and a leader who took part in many **aspects** of student life. Whether giving speeches at pep rallies, attending sporting events, or hosting social gatherings in the library and her home, she was a constant presence on campus. During Homecoming events, she organized special displays of student work in the library, making it a central **hub** for campus activity.

Ange's influence extended beyond ISNU. She wrote more than 80 articles and guides on how to create and run effective libraries, particularly for schools. Her work helped other educators and librarians around the country improve their library systems. She even taught courses on how to use the library, and eventually, her classes became a required part of the **curriculum** for all students at ISNU.

During **World War I**, many students, teachers, and alumni from ISNU went off to serve in the war. Wanting to recognize their **contributions**, Ange was appointed to the university's **War Service Committee**, where she played a critical role in creating the "War Roster." This document tracked the service of 821 individuals connected to ISNU who were involved in the war effort as soldiers, nurses, and volunteers.

Ange took this project very seriously, writing hundreds of letters to soldiers and collecting their stories. She even displayed their letters in the library for other students to read. One soldier, Lewis Millman, **corresponded** with her regularly and told her that if he didn't survive the war, he wanted her to keep his books at ISNU. Fortunately, he made it back safely and graduated in 1922.

In addition to her work with the War Roster, Ange also organized efforts to collect and send books and magazines to soldiers overseas. She knew that these materials would not only provide entertainment but also help the soldiers learn and prepare for life after the war. Her dedication to supporting the ISNU community during such a challenging time left a lasting impact.

Throughout her career, Ange remained committed to **professional development**. She attended her first American Library Association conference in 1893 and was a founding member of the Illinois State Library Association (ISLA). In 1907, she organized the ISLA conference at ISNU, which was a major success. In addition to her work with these organizations, she was also active in local groups such as the History and Art Club and the **Equal Suffrage Association**, which worked to gain voting rights for women.

Despite facing partial deafness later in life, Ange continued working tirelessly to expand the library and improve the services it offered to students. She oversaw two major expansions of the library, one in 1898 (with the library moving and expanding to Cook Hall) and another in 1914 (with the library moving and expanding to North Hall), ensuring that it could **accommodate** the growing student population.

After 38 years of service, Ange was forced to **retire** in 1927 due to illness. She passed away on January 13, 1928. Her death was felt deeply by the ISNU community, and her funeral was attended by a large number of students, faculty, and **alumni**. In honor of her **contributions**, the university canceled classes so everyone could attend. One editorial published at the time

described her as one of the most important figures in ISNU's history, praising her dedication and the lasting impact she had on the institution.

Ten years after her death, ISNU named its new library building "Milner Library" in her honor. In 1976, a larger, more modern library was built and kept the Milner name, ensuring that Ange's **legacy** would continue to inspire future generations of students. In 2006, on what would have been her 150th birthday, a **headstone** was finally placed on her grave to **commemorate** her life and work.

Angeline Vernon Milner's legacy goes far beyond her role as the first full-time librarian at Illinois State. She was a **trailblazer in library science**, a mentor to countless students, and a dedicated member of her community. Her passion for learning and her commitment to helping others shaped the university and its library system for the better. Today, Milner Library stands as a testament to her vision, reminding us of the **profound** impact one person can have on a community.