

A Biography of **Marion A. Bills**

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Marion Almina Bills was born in Allegan, Michigan, on July 5th, 1889. She earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan in 1908 and received her PhD in experimental psychology from Bryn Mawr College in 1917.

Bills started out in academia as a professor at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1917, followed by a year as an associate professor of psychology at the University of Kansas. In 1919, Bills was hired by the Carnegie Institute of Technology (CIT) in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, as a research assistant and later as an associate director of the Bureau of Personnel Research.

Much of the early research in industrial psychology originated from CIT, and Bills was right in the midst of it. Originally she worked as part of a program for training industrial psychologists, and then as a consultant for businesses and government agencies in applicant selection, position assignment, and compensation practices. She conducted research in many areas; her work on employee retention was published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* in 1923 and became a seminal guideline for employee placement. Publication by non-academics was not favorably viewed at this time, but Bills insisted on the importance of publishing research results in maintaining what she considered an important relationship between academics and non-academics. As a result of her commitment to the academic community, she was featured in the 1921 edition of James McKeen Cattell's *American Men of Science* biographical directory.

In 1925, Bills began what was to become a thirty-year career at Aetna Life Insurance Company. While her official title was assistant secretary initially, in reality she continued conducting research, mostly in the areas of job classification systems, employee evaluation protocols, wage incentive programs, and the role of gender in job permanency. By the time Bills retired from Aetna in 1955, she was a high-level officer with voting rights.

Bills was very active in professional societies. She served as secretary of the Industrial and Business Section of the American Association of Applied Psychology (AAAP) in 1938, 1939, and 1940. In 1945, she worked with the AAAP and APA to create the Division on Industrial and Business Psychology, the 14th

division of the APA, which is now the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. In 1951, Bills was elected the seventh president of SIOP, the first woman ever to hold this position. Marion Bills died of Parkinson's disease in 1970 at the age of 81.

References

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