January 2018

Foreword: Tribute to Professor Joseph Webb McKnight

Jennifer M. Collins
Southern Methodist University

Recommended Citation
Jennifer M. Collins, Foreword: Tribute to Professor Joseph Webb McKnight, 71 SMU L. Rev. 3 (2018)
https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol71/iss1/2

This Foreword is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at SMU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in SMU Law Review by an authorized administrator of SMU Scholar. For more information, please visit http://digitalrepository.smu.edu.
Oxford, 1947: Professor McKnight punting on the river.
Photo credit: Sir Guenter Treitel
TRIBUTE TO
PROFESSOR JOSEPH WEBB McKnight

Jennifer M. Collins*

ON behalf of SMU Dedman School of Law, I am delighted to wel-
come you to this symposium issue of the SMU Law Review hon-
oring the extraordinary life and career of Professor Joseph
McKnight. Professor McKnight joined the SMU faculty in 1955. For al-
most 60 years, he served as a warm and dedicated teacher to generations
of law students and as a generous mentor and role model for countless
faculty colleagues. His scholarly impact in the fields of family law, com-
munity property, and legal history was enormous. He published more
than 100 articles and books, including an important annual review of
Texas law and numerous works on Texas history. But Professor Mc-
Knight's impact on the development of Texas law extended far beyond
articles in law reviews; he is credited for being the principal drafter of the
Texas Family Code and the Matrimonial Property Act of 1967, which rec-
ognized the property rights of married women, and the Texas Antiquities
Code, designed to protect archaeological finds on the Texas coast, among
other statutes.

Professor McKnight’s love of legal history extended to his love of
books. He established an invaluable collection of more than 6,000 rare
legal history books, one of the largest of its kind in the nation, with the
oldest book in the collection printed in 1481. He studied bookbinding and
book conservation at the Dallas Craft Guild for more than 20 years,
learning how to properly restore the antiquarian volumes he cherished. In
December 2011, he generously donated his book collection to Dedman
School of Law’s Underwood Law Library, where it will be a resource for
scholars for years to come.

We are very grateful to the judges, academicians, and friends for their
contributions to this special Symposium Issue. The breadth of contribu-
tions is a reflection of the far-ranging impact of this remarkable scholar,
teacher, book collector, and true Renaissance man. We are honored that
Professor McKnight’s legacy will forever be part of the special fabric of
SMU Dedman School of Law.

* Judge James Noel Dean and Professor of Law at SMU Dedman School of Law.