

Robert Doherty, Alfred University professor emeritus, passes away

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Robert Doherty

CAMBRIDGE, MA – Robert J. Doherty, Alfred University professor of design emeritus, who is credited with starting the graphic design program in the University's School of Art and Design, passed away Jan. 6, 2019, in Cambridge, MA. He was 94.

Doherty was appointed professor of design at Alfred University in August 1984, retiring in December 1991 as professor emeritus. During his tenure at Alfred, he accepted an offer from Mario Prisco, then dean of the School of Art and Design, to set up a graphic design program. He would serve as chair of the School's Design Division.

He was born in Everett, MA, and grew up in Medford, outside Boston. He served two years in the U.S. Army during World War II and after the war earned a B.F.A. degree from Rhode Island School of Design in 1951 and an M.F.A. degree from Yale University in 1954.

An accomplished photographer, Doherty was appointed professor of photography at Louisville in 1959 and later developed the university's graphic design and art therapy programs. He became curator of the photography collection of the Hite Art Institute, University of Louisville, in 1962 and served as acting director of the Institute for from 1964-67. From 1967-72, he served as director of the Institute and as chair of the University of Louisville's Fine Arts Department.

From 1972-81, Doherty served as director of the George Eastman Museum (then called the George Eastman House) in Rochester. He was director of the Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City, UT, from 1981 until 1984, when he joined the faculty of Alfred University.

In 1992, following his retirement from Alfred, Doherty became Printer in Residence at Wells College, Aurora, NY, where he founded the Wells College Book Arts Center in 1993 and reactivated the Wells College Press. In 2010, the University of Louisville awarded him a Doctor of Fine Arts honoris causa in recognition of a lifetime of contributions to photography, design, typography and letter press, historic preservation, and teaching.

Doherty was living in Cambridge, MA, at the time of his passing. He was preceded in death by his wife, Esther (Fiske) Doherty, in 2017. The couple, married in 1955, had three children.

[Full obituary](#) from The Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY.