

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
VERNA L. PUNGITORE
(April 30, 1941 - December 20, 2008)

Verna L. Pungitore, professor emerita at Indiana University School of Library and Information Science, died on December 20, 2008 in Bloomington. Through her research, teaching, and service she has had a lasting impact on libraries and librarians, particularly public libraries, across the nation.

Verna was born in Clairton, Pennsylvania. Her parents came from Italy and hers was the first generation to attend college. Verna received her B.A. in English from Blackburn College. At that point she began a connection with public libraries that lasted through her life. She worked in the Youngstown (OH) Public Library while earning her Master of Library Science degree and Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. She held positions of increasing responsibility at Youngstown, the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System in New York, and as director of the Plattsburgh (NY) Public Library.

Verna always wanted to be able to communicate with anybody and saw the public library as a key to helping and informing the general public. Her commitment to public libraries was evident in her research, which focused on how public librarians respond to the need for change and innovation. Preliminary research on how library directors perceived the effects of change in their communities, and on their access to information about managerial information, prepared the groundwork for two larger projects supported by the U.S. Department of Education. The first investigated the development of the planning process at the national level and how state library agencies were enlisted to help with its diffusion. The second project involved field studies of the adoption and implementation of the planning process at the local level. In 1987 she received the American Library Association's Library Research Round Table Paper Competition Award for "Perceptions of Change and Public Library Directors in Indiana." The following year the Association for Library and Information Science Education gave her their Best Paper Award for "Flow of Information among Public Library Directors and Change Agents." Her book *Innovation and the Library: The Adoption of New Ideas in Public Libraries* (Greenwood Press, 1995) culminated this research. Her book *Public Librarianship: An Issues-Oriented Approach* (Greenwood Press, 1989) introduced many students to the careful consideration of this field. Although various models of public library management have been advocated, she argued that reliance on any single model as the best approach to running a library failed to take into account the diversity and individual character of these institutions. Her book suggested a basis for assessing the suitability of different options to specific situations: how to survive and grow in an environment shaped by continuing social, economic, and technological change.

Verna joined the IU School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) in 1984. The public library approach of making things work, even in difficult times, served Verna well during her tenure as SLIS Associate Dean (1993-1995). She worked with the new Dean, Blaise Cronin, re-structuring the school's program commitments to focus on the Bloomington, Indianapolis, and South Bend campuses. She also secured some funding and a modicum of collaboration among the faculty to

design and introduce the Master of Information Science program.

Dr. Pungitore taught courses on collection development and management; libraries, literacy, communications, and reading; user needs and behavior; reading interests of adults; and information retrieval systems. Students consistently spoke highly of her ability to use her professional experience to present and enhance management theories and perspectives. A student in her public libraries course wrote, "Verna is really knowledgeable, not just book smart, but familiar with real life. It was good to learn from her experience. I thought she was really funny... and I really respect the amount of information she had to share with us."

Faculty colleagues and doctoral students relied on her talent for selecting and explaining appropriate research methods. Verna's interest in research methods and statistics was based on her desire to solve real-world problems. Her competence in both quantitative and qualitative methods won her a place on many doctoral research committees, where she was a first-rate teacher – informed, conscientious, and always willing to further the strengths and interests of her students. She directed the SLIS doctoral program for four years, securing fellowship support through HEA Title II-B and GAANN. She taught doctoral-level research courses and served on committees for more than 30 doctoral students, chairing research committees for dissertations on topics ranging from public library planning to information needs of homeless parents or the motivation of academic library support staff. One of her students (now a SLIS faculty member) Marilyn Irwin recalls:

As a member of my doctoral committee, Dr. Pungitore was a caring individual whose insights were very supportive in guiding my work. Through her quiet way, she often asked just the right questions and gave brilliant critical feedback. Her efforts on my behalf helped me frame my course of study and complete my doctoral program.

Colleagues described Verna's service contributions to Indiana as enormous. Much of her service was research in action. She consulted with and advised public libraries in Indiana and conducted workshops on public library planning. She served for 10 years on the Indiana State Library's Continuing Education Committee and in 1997-1998 conducted, with Professor Daniel Callison, an evaluation of the statewide library and information network, INCOLSA.

In recognition of her commitment and devotion to Indiana University, to her field, and to her students, be it resolved that this resolution be part of the minutes of the Bloomington Faculty Council and that copies be sent to members of her family listed on the attached page.

Debora Shaw
Professor, School of Library and Information Science