

# The Laura Kuchenbach Memorial Library Technology Award

The Laura Kuchenbach Memorial Library Technology Award commemorates the life of a library professional whose dynamic enthusiasm for her work and dedication to life-long learning inspired successive generations of her family to follow her into the field of library science. This kindred-spirit flowed into its third generation: her granddaughter, a library professional, donor of this award and a MacEwan University graduate.

It was 1931, and the burden of the Depression was unequally distributed between social classes in the United States. Employment was scarce, prohibiting both husband and wife from having jobs at the same time. With Laura's husband's income barely making rent, she was determined to contribute. Already licensed in the State of Wisconsin to be an "Assistant in the Racine Public Library," she landed a position driving the County's very first bookmobile. There was only a small problem –



Laura didn't know how to drive. With characteristic resolve — and a bit of feminine charm — she coaxed an older brother into teaching her in their father's car, and in the course of her lessons, managed to flatten a few mail boxes. When after nine months her supervisor suspected she was married, Laura quit her job before she could be terminated. This learning curve didn't impede her passion for books and for continuing her education. On the contrary, it made it stronger.

After raising her family, Laura was finally able to pursue the education she wanted, graduating from a two-year teachers college in 1957, at the age of 46. She continued her education through night school and summer courses, receiving her Bachelor of Education degree from University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (1962) and Master in Library Science from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (1971). During this time she also served as a secretary-treasurer of the Burlington School Board for several years.



Laura found it both amazing and fulfilling to learn that public schools enjoyed hiring teachers that brought to the job maturity and vibrant ideas gleaned and developed through life experience. She earned her future employments based on these qualities. She loved teaching and reading to children and inspired her rural students to persevere with their goals. Indifferent to cultural background, Laura firmly believed everyone should have equal access to education, and that financial need should never be a barrier.

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