

Verna Pungitore

Verna Pungitore came to Bloomington in 1984, a newly-earned Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh in hand. Along with the academic credential, Verna had some 20 years of experience in public and academic libraries and had been on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh for three years. She received her B.A. in English from Blackburn College, then worked in the Youngstown, Ohio, public library while earning her Master of Library Science degree from Pittsburgh. She held positions of increasing responsibility at Youngstown, the Clinton–Essex– Franklin library system in New York, and as director of the Plattsburgh, New York, Public Library. While a doctoral student she worked as a research librarian at Carnegie Mellon University before accepting the position in Wisconsin. In 1990 Verna was promoted to associate professor at IU; she served as associate dean of the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) from 1993 to 1995.

Verna's research has focused on how public librarians respond to the need for change and innovation. Preliminary studies of library directors' perceptions of the effects of change in their communities, and of their access to information about managerial information, prepared the groundwork for two larger research projects supported by the U.S. Department of Education. These looked specifically at a particular innovation in public librarianship—a process for planning and evaluating services. The first project 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) culminates this research.

Associate Professor Emerita Judy Serebnick noted that faculty colleagues and doctoral students relied on Verna's talent for selecting and explaining appropriate research methods. Verna's expertise with the intricacies of the Planning Process for Public Libraries allowed her to teach the process in classes and to incorporate it into effective grant proposals. 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.

Verna's teaching interests and enthusiasm center on public libraries, research, and library management. Her book *Public Librarianship: An Issues-Oriented Approach* (Greenwood Press, 1989) is held by 250 libraries and has been translated into Japanese. The book has introduced many students to the careful consideration of this field. Although various models of public library management have been advocated, she argues that reliance on any single model as the best approach to running a library fails to take into account the diversity and individual character of these institutions. Her book suggests 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 was active in the statewide delivery of SLIS courses during the 1980s, teaching at other IU campuses and via the IHETS video system. She has also 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 speak highly of Professor Pungitore's ability to use her professional experience to present and enhance management theories and perspectives. As 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 has to share with us." Another student (several years earlier) wrote, "Professor Pungitore obviously cares a great deal about her students. She is generous in imparting her knowledge and experience to us."

Verna's passion for research and her ability to inspire similar commitment among doctoral students have provided her many opportunities to teach on the graduate level as well. She directed the SLIS doctoral program for four years, securing fellowship support through HEA Title II-B and GAANN. And she has 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. Julie Hersberger, one of the beneficiaries of this guidance, recalls:

Verna was instrumental in gently steering me through the coursework, qualifying exams, and then finally through the dissertation process. The dissertation process did not proceed all that smoothly in part due to the topic selection (information needs of the homeless) and the methodology (ethnographic), and I am certain that Dr. Pungitore fought many battles for me that I am unaware of. With her unending support and input, which came at a time of personal difficulty for her, she helped me finish a solid piece of research.

Colleagues have described Verna's service contributions to Indiana as "enormous." Much of her service is research in action. She has consulted with and advised public libraries throughout the state and conducted workshops on public library planning. She served for 10 years on the Indiana State Library's Continuing Education Committee and in 1997-98 conducted, with Professor Daniel Callison, an evaluation of INCOLSA, the statewide library and information network.

Friends have appreciated Verna's writing talents and encourage her to contribute to our reading lists, either academic or recreational. As she leaves IU we wish Verna Pungitore many happy years and hope she will spend some of them in Bloomington with her friends and admirers.

Marcy Murphy
Debora Shaw