

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

**ON THE DEATH OF ASSISTANT PROFESSOR EMERITA MARGUERITE CHRISTENSEN**

Marguerite (Marge) Christensen, assistant professor emerita of the General Library System and former head of Memorial Library Reference, died on May 6, 2008 at Oakwood Village in Madison. She was 90 years old.

Marge, as she was widely known, enjoyed a childhood unusual by today's standards. Born on August 24, 1917 at Trout Lake in Vilas County, she grew up in the heart of Wisconsin's Northwoods. Her father was a forestry manager, and the family lived in what was known as the "State House," a beautiful, 23-room log dwelling near the lake, where visitors included governors of Wisconsin and Illinois, state agency heads, game wardens, fishing guides and logging crews. In his 2005 book, *Northwoods Life: Growing up at the State House*, her brother John describes a spacious dining room that hosted scientists such as Edward Birge, Chancey Juday and Aldo Leopold. Winters were spent on snowshoes, summers skinny-dipping in area lakes. Teams of draft horses hauled logs for heating and chunks of lake ice in winter to be stored in sawdust for refrigerating food. Wolves, deer and bear roamed the wooded expanse.

Like many country children, she left for the city. After attending high school in Minocqua, Marge earned bachelor's and library science degrees at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. In 1939 she started her career at the Bloomer Public Library in Bloomer, Wisconsin, subsequently working at the State Teachers' College in Superior and Carroll College in Waukesha before returning to Madison in 1945 as a member of the UW Library reference department. At that time the library was still in the old State Historical Society building, and she was one of just three people in the reference room. After the library's collections were moved to the new Memorial Library in 1953, she served as head of inter-library loans and assistant reference librarian until, in 1967, she was appointed head of the reference department, a position she held until her retirement in December 1982.

During Marge's tenure, the department's collections, physical space and personnel underwent a huge increase, and by the mid-1970s electronic research services arrived on the scene. She facilitated this development by hiring the first librarians trained to assist students and faculty with searches of computerized databases and led the department through a time of considerable relearning, as the tools of research were transitioning from a print-based environment to one increasingly dominated by computers, always maintaining a calm, down-to-earth devotion to her work and an impish sense of humor. Her knowledge of reference sources and current issues was held in high regard by faculty, students and staff alike.

Though a Madisonian for much of her life, Marge never forgot her Northwoods roots. She loved telling stories about her childhood and waxed nostalgic at the call of the loon. For years she maintained a cottage in Woodruff, which she eventually sold for an expansion of the Howard Young Medical Center. She was a faithful member of the Civics Club and after her retirement remained an avid bird watcher and promoter of environmental causes, as witnessed by her support of groups such as the Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, and Northwoods Land Trust. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother John A. Christensen in 2003. She was survived by cousins and her sister-in-law Dorothea Christensen of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, who died in 2011.

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