

# Margaret Armstrong Beckman



Margaret Lilas Armstrong BA portrait, 1946. Credit Western University.

b. 22 Jan. 1925, Hartford, Connecticut, USA; d. 28 Feb. 2008, Waterloo, ON

## Education:

BA 1946 Western University (Waterloo College, now Wilfrid Laurier University)

BLS 1949 University of Toronto

MLS 1969 University of Toronto

## Positions:

1946-50 Teacher, Blind River, Ont.

1949-50 Children's Librarian, Galt Public Library

1950-51 Cataloguer, University of Western Ontario

1959-1964 Head, Cataloguing Department, University of Waterloo

1964-1966 Director, Technical Services, University of Waterloo

1966-1971 Systems Librarian, University of Guelph

1970-1971 Deputy Chief Librarian, University of Guelph

1970- Lecturer on Library Design, School of Library and Information Science, University of Western Ontario

1971-1984 Chief Librarian, University of Guelph, McLaughlin Library

1984-1988 Executive Director for Technology, University of Guelph

## Publications (selected):

Beckman, Margaret (1961). "Experiment in the Use of the Revised Code of Cataloguing Rules." *Library Resources & Technical Services* 5 (3): 216-220.

Beckman, Margaret (1964). "Why Not the Bobbsey Twins?" *Library Journal* 89, no. 20 (Nov. 15): 4612-4613, 4627.

- Beckman, Margaret (1965). "Size and Library Research Collections." *Atlantic Provinces Library Association Bulletin* 29 (4): 143-149.
- Beckman, Margaret (1966). "A Documentation Center at the University of Guelph Library." *Ontario Library Review* 50, no. 4 (Dec.): 226-229.
- Beckman, Margaret (1968). Derivation of a Simulation Model of a University Library System. Guelph, Ont. University. Library. Research Report, No.1. Guelph, Ont.: University of Guelph Library, 1968.
- Beckman, Margaret (1969). [Documentation System for the Organization of Government Publications within a University Library](#). Research Report - Library, University of Guelph ; No. 2. [Guelph, Ont.]: Library, University of Guelph. [PDF download]
- Beckman, Margaret and Stephen Langmead (1970). *New library design: guide lines to planning academic library buildings*. Toronto: John Wiley.
- Beckman, Margaret (1973). "Woman: Her Place in the Profession." *IPLO Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (April): 129-134.
- Beckman, Margaret (1974). "Library Networks in the `70's: University Libraries." *Canadian Library Journal* 31 (3): 197-198.
- Beckman, Margaret (1978). "Automated Cataloguing Systems and Networks in Canada." *Canadian Library Journal* 35 (3): 173-180.
- Beckman, Margaret, and Tim Sauer (1980). "On-Line Acquisitions/Circulation Interfaces at the University of Guelph." *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory* 4, no. 1: 19-28.
- Beckman, Margaret (1981). "[Public Access at the University of Guelph Library](#)," pp. 37-48. In *Public Access to Library Automation. Clinic on Library Applications of Data Processing* [17th, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1980], edited by J.L. Divilbiss. Urbana, Illinois: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1981.
- Beckman, Margaret (1981). "Political Setting of Libraries in Post-Secondary Institutions." *Canadian Library Journal* 38, no. 3 (June): 145-147
- Beckman, Margaret, Stephen Langmead and John Black (1984). *The best gift: a record of the Carnegie libraries in Ontario*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.
- Beckman, Margaret (1987). "Online Catalog Development at the University of Guelph," *Library Trends* 35 (4): 527-537.
- Beckman, Margaret and Ellen M. Pearson (1992). "Understanding the needs of users: the timeliness factor." *Essen Symposium*, 307-320.
- Beckman, Margaret and John B. Black (1996). "The local library within the worldwide context: changes, directions, realities." *Essen Symposium*, 78-87.

## **Associations/Committees:**

- 1960-1968 Trustee, Waterloo Public Library Board (Chair, 1966-68)
- 1964-1968 Chair, Midwestern Regional Library Board
- 1964-1968 Chair, Canadian Association of College and University Libraries Committee on Academic Status
- 1964-1965 Chair, Ontario Resources and Technical Services Group, Ontario Library Association
- 1966 Chair, OLA Committee on Legislation and Grants
- 1968-1969 Member, Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada Special Taskforce on Automation
- Member, Ontario Council of Health, Sub-committee on Information Services
- Member: ALA, CLA, ASIS, IPLO, CAIS, LARC

## Honours:

1975 Province of Ontario recognized her as one of 25 outstanding Ontario women  
1986 Association of Colleges and Research Libraries Academic/Research Librarian of the Year (1st Canadian to win the award)  
1987 Award of Merit, Ontario College and University Library Association  
1987 Honorary Doctorate, University of Western Ontario  
1989 Distinguished Academic Library Award, Canadian Association of Colleges and Universities  
1990 Honorary Doctor of Letters, Laurentian University  
1991 University of Western Ontario established the Margaret Beckman Gold Medal in Library and Information Science for the highest Academic student standing  
1990 Honorary Professor, University of Essen, Germany (first Canadian and first woman to receive such an honour)  
1990 Information technology and library management: 13th Essen Symposium: Festschrift in honour of Margaret Beckman. Papers presented at the International Essen Symposium (13th, Universität Essen Bibliothek, October 22-25, 1990)  
2007 Honored by City of Waterloo for leadership contributions

## Accomplishments:

Chair, National Research Council of Canada, Advisory Board on Scientific and Technical Information  
President, Ex Libris Association, 1999  
President, Canadian Library Association, 1972-73  
Canadian representative at several UNESCO Library Buildings Conferences  
Designed CODOC documentation system  
Developed GEAC library system  
Lectured and acted as consultant to library planners in academic, government, school and public libraries throughout Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Saudi Arabia and Sweden.

## Comments:

"In the early 1950's pregnant with her first child, she 'hid' in the basement of a university library cataloguing books, because pregnant employees were supposed to be fired. It was a humble beginning for the woman who would go on to become the chief librarian of the University of Guelph's McLaughlin Library in 1971. As the only woman heading up a university library in Ontario at the time, she was a pioneer." Also she was "internationally known for her work in library planning, innovation in library management and the introduction of technology into libraries. She became internationally respected for her work in library management, automation and building design. She convinced committees and boards that librarians were a valuable and knowledgeable resource when it came to input for building modern library facilities. She saw automation as a valuable path for the future of libraries and led the way. She worked with architects on a new library building and pursued her vision of an automated library system despite critics who believed automation was nothing more than an 'expensive toy'. During her career she spoke and published widely acting as a consultant in the design of libraries throughout Canada and the world. She was the 1st Canadian and 1st woman to receive an honorary professorship from the University of Essen Germany and the 1st Canadian to receive the American Academic Librarian of the Year Award. She served on a number of provincial, national and

international library bodies as member, advisor or on the executive.”

— Famous Canadian Women, <https://www.famouscanadianwomen/job/academics.htm/a>>

## Sources:

[Margaret Armstrong Beckman](#) (accessed April 2023)

“[M. Beckman, Executive Director, Information Technology](#)” [appointment] Guelph University News Bulletin 28 (20), June 17, 1984. [PDF download]

The Kitchener Record, March 1, 2008.

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