

Barbara E. Davis

1925-1994

LIBRARIAN, READERS' SERVICES, EMERITUS

B.S., Carnegie Institute of Technology; B.Mus., University of Wisconsin;
M.L.S., Carnegie Institute of Technology, 1951
California State University, Fullerton From September 1, 1960 To August 31,
1987

Birth: May 14, 1925; Death: November 11, 1994

Barbara Ellen Davis was a library administrator and member of the Library Faculty at California State University, Fullerton, for twenty-seven years. Her colorful personality, her comprehensive professional knowledge, her leadership ability, her zest for work, and her unwavering devotion to serving users of the library are remembered with great fondness and gratitude by her many colleagues and by the hundreds of students who came to know her as a teacher, supervisor, mentor, and friend.

Barbara was born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, on May 14, 1925. After graduation from high school, she attended the Robert Morris School of Business, graduating in June of 1943. There, in keeping with the spirit of the wily Liverpoolian financier for whom the school was named, she acquired the art of conducting business calmly and effectively under the most trying of circumstances.

In her view, Barbara continued her education during the next four years in the United States Steel Corporation's Duquesne, Pennsylvania, plant. There she learned a great deal about the practical side of human nature and interpersonal relations. She also learned a great deal about the practical side of the English language.

She went on to the Carnegie Institute of Technology, where she received a B.S. in English in 1950 and a Master's Degree in Library Science in 1951. From 1951 to 1955 she served in the Madison, Wisconsin Public Library while she continued her studies at the University of Wisconsin. After receiving a Bachelor of Music degree, she served in the Music Library of the University's School of Music for two years. From there she went to the Library of the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, whence, in 1960, she came to the library of what was then Orange County State College as Head (later Chair) of the Readers' Services Department.

Barbara arrived at the OCSC Library late in the summer of 1960, shortly after it had been moved from Sunny Hills High School to the largest of the temporary buildings in the north-west part of the campus, a building constructed from plans for the temporary cafeteria at Northridge. Because of the timing of the fiscal year, much of the urgently-needed equipment had not yet arrived. Classes were scheduled to begin in a few days in the other temporary buildings. Tension was great and tempers were short. Barbara, in keeping with her Robert Morris training, remained calm, and soon demonstrated another of her outstanding talents. She could -- and did --

bring order out of chaos in a remarkably short time. When classes convened, the Library was ready to serve faculty and students. Barbara was a natural pioneer. She relished dealing with chaos.

Over the next several years Barbara recruited outstanding faculty and staff for Readers' Services. She instilled in them a dedication to service which remains an intangible but potent monument to her endeavors. Because she had great confidence in her colleagues, she was able to encourage initiative by delegating large amounts authority and responsibility. She was always available, of course, to help in solving problems and to give support and advice when needed. She was very interested in the recruiting and training of the many student assistants whose work was essential to the functioning of the Library. She got to know them all and worked with them when she could find time. Several of them became lifelong friends. With her colleagues she was normally cheerful and optimistic no matter what problems had to be faced. Few of them knew that she carried the lifelong burden of chronic depression.

Almost immediately after Barbara's arrival, planning began for housing the Library temporarily in the basement of what is now McCarthy Hall. She became totally involved in this work, and much of the credit for the successful design of the public service areas in this inhospitable and unsuitable environment is hers. When it came time to move, she devised a way of doing it in the shortest possible time with the smallest possible crew. This was an excellent dress rehearsal for the larger moves to come.

Almost immediately after the move to McCarthy Hall, planning began for the permanent library building. Barbara made major contributions to the preliminary building program and to the development of schematic plans. She also worked closely with the architects who designed the building. She helped greatly in achieving a workable plan in spite of the unbelievably restrictive regulations of the state's Department of Finance.

Months before the end of the four years it took for the design and completion of the new building, the library ran out of space. Materials and equipment were stored wherever room could be found for them. During this uncomfortable period, Barbara and her department managed to maintain an extraordinarily high quality of service.

The move to the new building was Barbara's masterpiece. She created a scheme which allowed crews to work in half a dozen places simultaneously, boxing books and labeling them with the shelving address of their destination. The scanty allowance of new shelving units was put in place to receive the first books moved. Old shelving units, when emptied, were dismantled, moved to a new building, and erected in pre-determined places in time to receive their share of the flow of books. Hundreds of thousands of volumes were moved quickly and without a hitch. One might say that Barbara orchestrated a symphony of movement.

She had future occasions to use her highly effective moving technique when the Library occupied the two floors of the building which had been used temporarily by instructional departments and schools.

Barbara loved books of all kinds. She spent many happy hours in bookstores. Over her lifetime she collected some twenty-four hundred volumes for her own use and for sharing with her friends. Among them were books about books, music, cooking, religion, gardening, cats, psychology, and many other subjects, as well as classical works, science fiction, and detective and Regency novels. She was fond of children, empathized with them, and collected children's books and toys. She also made large contributions to children's charities.

Her love of books and her extensive bibliographical knowledge enabled her to collaborate with various faculty members and departments to build a number of very strong subject collections for the CSUF Library. She was instrumental in creating an outstanding collection of children's books which still serve the elementary education program. She acted as library coordinator for the Music Department and made a major contribution to building a collection of music books, scores, records, and tapes which Theodore Front, the famous music dealer and bibliographer, described as excellent. She also helped to build collections of science fiction and detective novels as a part of the Archive of Popular Culture.

In collaboration with members of her department and the other Library departments, Barbara developed and taught classes to instruct students in the complex knowledge and skills necessary to use library collections efficiently. As part of this program, she wrote a *Library Guide to Music*, which, in a revised and updated edition, is still in use. When the graduate Library Science program was introduced, she taught professional courses in various areas of librarianship. In so doing, she shared with a new generation of librarians the fruits of her extensive experience and inspired them with her dedication to library service.

Barbara was an active member of the congregation of the Episcopal Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Placentia. She served as choir member, choir master, and organist, as well as a member of the vestry. She was President of the local and regional Episcopal Church Women's organization. In her final months she led the project which resulted in the completion of a patio and rose garden for the Church. The garden has been named as a memorial to her. Her Yamaha piano was her final gift to the Church.

Barbara loved gardens and gardening. She created a tiny jewel of a garden behind the apartment on Melody Lane where she lived for over thirty years. As her illnesses increased, she found consolation in sitting and enjoying its beauty. She was a member of the Friends of the Fullerton Arboretum and, as a volunteer worker, spent many happy hours there. She willed her plants to the Arboretum.

When Barbara came to California, she experienced a decided culture shock in one important area of living. She had never before driven, nor thought of driving, an automobile. For many months she tried to live with Orange County's public transportation. Finally she resigned herself to the fact that meaningful life in Southern California is not possible without driving. She took lessons in a Dodge Dart, passed her driving tests, and acquired an

identical Dart of her own. In it, and its successor, a Volvo, she gave her friends many a thrilling drive. She never got into a serious difficulty, but a problem with depth perception led to many close encounters.

Among the many friends who miss Barbara and remember her with affection are those who helped to make this tribute possible: Loretta Crutchfield, Diana Davis, Rita Fuszek, Helen Hayner, Linda Herman, Juanita Kaiser, Ruth Nycum, Sharon Perry, and Jim Watkins.

Submitted by
Ernest W. Toy
University Librarian and Associate Professor of History, Emeritus
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