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# Honorary Degree Award Citation for Dennis Ribbens

Lawrence University

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## Honorary Degree Awarded to Retiring Faculty

### Dennis Ribbens, University Librarian

"Dennis Ribbens, you have directed the library through a time of unprecedented change. In your 27 years at Lawrence, we have gone from the Samuel Appleton Library to the Seeley G. Mudd, from the card catalog to LUCIA, and from Selectric typewriters to Pentium computers, and your leadership has helped us make those transitions gracefully.

The building too, has made those transitions gracefully, a testament to your planning and foresight. The Mudd continues to be a place where we hang out, search for and read books, and (occasionally) get some studying done. The staff you hired, trained, and nurtured has made a graceful transition as well and has helped position the library to serve the Lawrence community well into the 21st century. Your students in Freshman Studies have benefited from your nurturing too. Your concern for clear thinking and writing is only surpassed by your concern for the wellbeing of your students. And students have responded well to your concern and your counsel. Years later, they continue to stop by for discussion, advice, or to snag an invitation to dinner at the farm. So renowned are those dinners, in fact, that one of your classes recently invited itself over for a Freshman Studies reunion meal four years after the course ended.

You have declared yourself 'hopelessly in love with Wisconsin, books, and libraries,' and you have written and spoken extensively about Wisconsin authors. With the cooperation of the Banta Corporation and the Wisconsin Library Association, you initiated the Banta Award, which is given annually to the best book by a Wisconsin author. One of your favorites is Aldo Leopold, who reflects your interest in both Wisconsin writing and nature writing. In his classic, *Sand County Almanac*, Leopold wrote that 'a land ethic changes the role of *Homo Sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.'

You have shown respect for the Lawrence community--in your service, in your teaching, and as a parent of six alumni--and in return have earned ours. By the authority vested in me, I now confer upon you the degree of Master of Arts, *ad eundem*, and admit you to its rights, its privileges, and its obligations."

*Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1998*