

For Immediate Release
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Caroll Preston Baber Research Grant recipient named

Debra Wilcox Johnson, assistant professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the 1993 recipient of the American Library Association (ALA) Caroll Preston Baber Research Grant.

The \$7,500 grant, the largest of ALA's awards, supports innovative research that could lead to an improvement in library services to any specific group of people. It was donated by Eric R. Baber of Newton, Kan., in honor of his father who was library director at Kansas Teachers College (now Emporia State University) for 27 years. Baber died in January 1991, leaving ALA an endowment to support the award in perpetuity.

The grant will enable Johnson to develop and test performance measures for family literacy programs in public libraries. Family literacy, as defined in Johnson's proposal, is "a program that is targeted to working with undereducated parents and other adult caregivers" as well as with children.

"Recent acknowledgement of the fact that illiteracy is intergenerational and cyclical has led to the development of family literacy programs in many different settings," said Sue Searning, chair of the 1993 Baber Grant jury. "Public libraries are a natural setting and Johnson has been involved in numerous family literacy projects."

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The work to be supported by the Baber grant builds on Johnson's 1992 national survey of public library family literacy programs which found that evaluation was the weakest component. Johnson will identify and evaluate existing measurement techniques, develop new measures, if needed, and explore ways to use technology in the measurement effort. One result will be a manual of measurement techniques for public libraries.

"The research proposed by Johnson has the potential to improve public library services to the parents and children who need help the most to participate fully in our society," Searing explained. "In this project, Johnson takes an important next step in her work with family literacy programs. The results of this project will aid public libraries nationwide in evaluating family literacy programs and strengthening them."

Johnson is widely sought speaker and workshop leader in the field of family and adult literacy. She has served as a consultant to libraries and other institutions in evaluation, literacy, community analysis and user services.

She has conducted extensive research in evaluation and literacy and managed a comprehensive examination of library family literacy programs in 1992. Johnson is currently one of three researchers in a U.S. Department of Education project to help state library agencies and local libraries evaluate federally-funded programs.

Johnson has a doctorate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

She will receive \$3,750 during the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans, June 23-July 1. The remaining \$3,750 will be awarded after a successful six-month report is submitted.

Application materials for the 1994 Baber Grant will be available from the ALA Office for Research and Statistics after September 1, 1993.