Memorial

Charlotte Derksen, Head Librarian and Bibliographer Emerita, Branner Earth Sciences Library and Map Collections, Stanford University March 15, 1944 – March 22, 2026

By Grace Baysinger and Julie Sweetkind-Singer

It is with deep sadness and many fond memories that we remember and celebrate Charlotte Derksen, a leader in the Earth Sciences, Maps, and GIS information communities. She was respected and admired by Stanford students, faculty, and staff who appreciated her vast knowledge and systematic rigor, extensive creativity and insight, seemingly endless energy and tireless efforts, and a friendly and supportive demeanor. She was a thoughtful, kind, and strong leader. Her office, which through her generosity, doubled as the staff room, was often hopping with activity as staff ate, chatted, or met, all while she intently focused on her work.

Charlotte began her career as a Science Librarian at the University of Wisconsin in Oshkosh from 1977-1980. Charlotte was head of the Branner Earth Sciences Library from 1980 until she retired in 2004. She served as Acting Head of the Sciences from 1985-1986. From 1992-1997, Charlotte was the Head of the Science and Engineering Resources Group (SERG) which included seven branch libraries. This was in addition to being Head Librarian and Bibliographer of the Branner Earth Sciences Library and Map Collections. Charlotte was an Assistant Editor for the American Geosciences Institute from 2001-2016, creating and enhancing records for the *GeoRef* database.

Charlotte arrived at Stanford with a background and love of geology, having received her Master's in Geology from the University of Oregon in 1968. Her eyes sparkled when she recounted her adventures as the lone woman on the geologic field trips or when she did her fieldwork by herself, as women were not allowed in the (then) all-male summer field camps. Postcards were sent to us from places near and far typically included a bit about the geology she'd seen along the way.



Such genuine interest in her field led her to be an exceptional leader at Stanford's Branner Library. She understood her subject matter and continually expanded her knowledge of earth sciences in order to best serve the faculty and students.

As Branner's staff and Stanford colleagues knew well, Charlotte seemed to have more energy than all of us combined! She was very committed to making the library an integral part of the university experience for those who needed and used it. Each book, journal and database that was received was reviewed, and relevant faculty and students were told of its arrival. She met with all new faculty, kept in regular contact with existing faculty, and provided in-depth orientation sessions to new students and students who were taking classes that required using library resources. It was always a lot of fun to visit Prof. Dennis Bird's Geochemistry class where Charlotte covered how to search for Earth Sciences resources and Grace Baysinger, Chemistry & Chemical Engineering Librarian, covered searching Chemistry resources.

Her monthly lunch meetings with Grace, the Chemistry and Chemical Engineering Librarian, included discussions about analyzing and managing collections, sharing current activities, plus lively discussions of good mystery books to read. She introduced Grace to Dorothy L. Sayers, one of her favorite British mystery book authors. Charlotte also provided updates on her latest genealogy research. Charlotte was an avid knitter and was rarely without her knitted needles and yarn during any communal meeting.

Official reference hours mean little to Charlotte. Educating users was one of her favorite things to do. She seemed to have an uncanny ability to find those patrons in the library needing help. As Ron Lyon, Professor of Geological and Environmental Sciences, Emeritus, noted, it wasn't unusual to hear her say, "Here, let me find it for you. I know some esoteric routes into the database." Her reference skills were so well known, she was often tapped by librarians in other institutions for help with particularly difficult requests. She designed a series of web pages to facilitate the use of library resources. Each web page was specifically targeted to a user group in order to speed up the process of finding relevant information.

During her tenure, Charlotte built and managed one of the world's best Earth Sciences collections, focusing on all subject areas and the many geographic locations of interest to the Stanford communities. The Branner Library was the only comprehensive, "Level 5" collection in RLG (Research Libraries Group) Conspectus terminology, among the Stanford's Science and Engineering Libraries. While

content has migrated from print to digital for an excellent overview of the Earth Sciences resources that Charlotte played a major role in articulating, see the section on Geosciences in *Information Needs in the Sciences* (p. 35-46) that is free to read online.

The Loma Prieta Earthquake in October 1989 caused major damage to parts of the Stanford campus. The stacks in the West (now called Bing) Wing of the Green Library which contained materials covering most social sciences, humanities, and area studies, were closed for a decade. In preparation this closure, the "central" map collection at Green which contained about 100,000 maps was moved and integrated into the Branner Library's Map collection, doubling the number of the maps available. This was a particularly challenging time because the Map Mezzanine at the Branner Library had also suffered major damage from the earthquake. Through dedicated, Herculean efforts and many hours, Charlotte and the Branner staff integrated the Central Map Collection and continued efforts to improve bibliographic access to all of the maps. Charlotte worked diligently with library facilities to get map cases re-secured, and locks added so that drawers didn't fly open in future earthquakes.

Charlotte was visionary – very early on, she understood the importance of and championed a proposal to provide Geographic Information Services. She laid the groundwork, hired key staff, which were subsequently spearheaded and implemented by Julie Sweetkind-Singer.

To detect gaps in the collection, she spent several years analyzing the citations in theses. When the collection was being barcoded for online circulation, Charlotte spent considerable effort to have symposia that were published as special issues in journals cataloged so that users would be able to find them more easily. When reviewing the bookshelves to make more space for the growing collections, it was not unusual to see Charlotte in the stacks with a faculty member, their heads together as they discussed the merits of keeping a book on the shelves versus moving it to library storage. She made the library into a dynamic resource for all of the campus by consulting with patrons on a regular basis.

Her strong appreciation for field trip guidebooks led to the publication of a *Union List of Geologic Field Trip Guidebooks*, 5th Edition, that was co-authored by Jim O'Donnell. Published in 1989, the 5th edition included 787 entries (in contrast to the 4th edition's 567 entries) to organizations who sponsored geologic field trips. It also included new indexing (38 pages) which featured specific place names, and a new

strategic index which included references to formation names. This new edition quickly became a core resource that was purchased by all earth science libraries. She also contributed to the 6th edition!

Outside of Stanford, Charlotte was widely known and highly respected by her library and geoscience colleagues. She served on multiple advisory boards and created lively and thought-provoking articles and conference presentations on important and timely subjects. She won two “best papers of the year” awards by the Geographic Information Society. Constantly networking and acquiring information from the four corners of the earth, she worked unstintingly in the service of Stanford colleagues, Earth Sciences faculty and students.

Charlotte in the News

[Stanford] Provost Presents Distinguished Service Awards. *SUL News Notes*, Vol. 1 (37), September 18, 1992, Article #1.

“Provost Gerald Lieberman presented the third annual Distinguished Service Awards, designated by the Committee on the Libraries of the University, on Thursday, September 17 between 2 and 4 pm. Four individuals, whose extraordinary efforts have contributed greatly to the libraries and to the University, were recognized. He noted that the accomplishments and service of library staff are critical to the success of the instructional and research missions of the University and noted, as well, that in honoring the recipients, we call attention to the dedication and contributions of all library staff. Award recipients were presented with an engraved Stanford Centennial commemorative stone and a copy of the book *The Stanford Album: A Photographic History, 1885-1945.*

Below is remarks Provost Liberman made about Charlotte:

CHARLOTTE DERKSEN: Due largely to Charlotte’s enthusiastic efforts, Branner is now considered one of the leading Earth Science libraries in the country. She has devoted an unusual degree of personal dedication to building up her collection, often going to great lengths to locate an arcane publication of interest for a patron.

Charlotte is respected for her ability to teach and research Earth Science materials, having trained leagues of students and post docs in the fine art of literature searches. She is known for setting an enviable standard for librarians, especially in her commitment to “serving the customer.” Charlotte is proud of the Stanford

Library system and follows developments avidly. She considers the libraries equal partners in the educational and research processes and works hard to see that they function as such.”



Commemorative sandstone rock Charlotte Derksen received at the 1992 Distinguished Service Award celebration

College & Research Libraries News: People in the News – Retirements

“Charlotte Derksen, head of the Branner library, has retired from Stanford University after 23 years of service. Derksen has been very active and played a

leadership role in professional organizations for earth sciences librarians, including the Geoscience Information Society, American Geological Institute, GeoRef, Geological Society of America, Cartographic Users Advisory Council, ALA-Map and Geography Round Table, and the Research Libraries Group. She has published over 20 articles on collection development and public service issues and has won the best paper from the Geoscience Information Society for the past two years. By request from the Geological Society of America, she developed a Web page called "Selected Web Sites for Geoscientists." Derksen compiled information for the monograph "Union List of Geologic Field Trip Guidebooks," 5th ed. (1989)—a core title that is purchased by virtually all earth sciences libraries."

Source: *College & Research Libraries News*, February 2004, p. 103.

https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/download/18217/20408

Geoscience Information Society (GIS): Distinguished Service Award, Charlotte Derksen, 2005 (inaugural winner).
https://geoinfo.org/about/awards/distinguished-service/



"The award, given for the first time this year, recognizes significant contributions to the geoscience information profession. In presenting the award on October 18, selection committee chair Claren Kidd (University of Oklahoma) cited Derksen's professional leadership, research, and service to users of geoscience information. "Charlotte's distinguished career has also included being a mentor of future

geoscience librarians," Kidd added. "She's been an innovator and a staunch advocate for geoscience libraries."

Derksen was head librarian of the Branner Earth Sciences Library and Map Collections at Stanford from 1980 until her retirement in 2004. At Branner, she instituted instruction, database searching, and extensive collection development programs, and added map catalogers and GIS experts to the staff. Her expertise in digital geoscience data was widely known and shared through many presentations and papers on the subject. She also conducted cost and use studies to assess the value of geoscience literature. Derksen was active in the Geoscience Information Society, the Cartographic Users Advisory Council, and the American Geological Institute. She served on advisory committees for GeoRef and *GeoScienceWorld,* and on the Geological Society of America's Publications Committee. The publication of the fifth edition of the *Union List of Geologic Field Trip Guidebooks of North America* in 1989 owed much to her involvement. Since her retirement from Stanford, she has been working on indexing projects for GeoRef."

GIS' Best Paper Award (The Best Paper Award has been presented annually since 1986, given to the best paper published in the field of geoscience information during the previous year.):

- **1993** – Charlotte R. M. Derksen and Michael Noga. "The World of Geoscience Serials: Comparative Use Patterns." *GSIS Proceedings*, v.22, 1991, p.15-62.
- **2003** – Charlotte R.M. Derksen. "USGS Publications: Current Access via the Web and via Catalogs." *GSIS Proceedings*, v.32, 2002, p. 107-116.

Selected Pictures



Charlotte Derksen in her first office at Stanford’s Branner Earth Sciences Library.

Source: Stanford Historical Photograph Collection. Library Staff.
https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/rv190dz2362



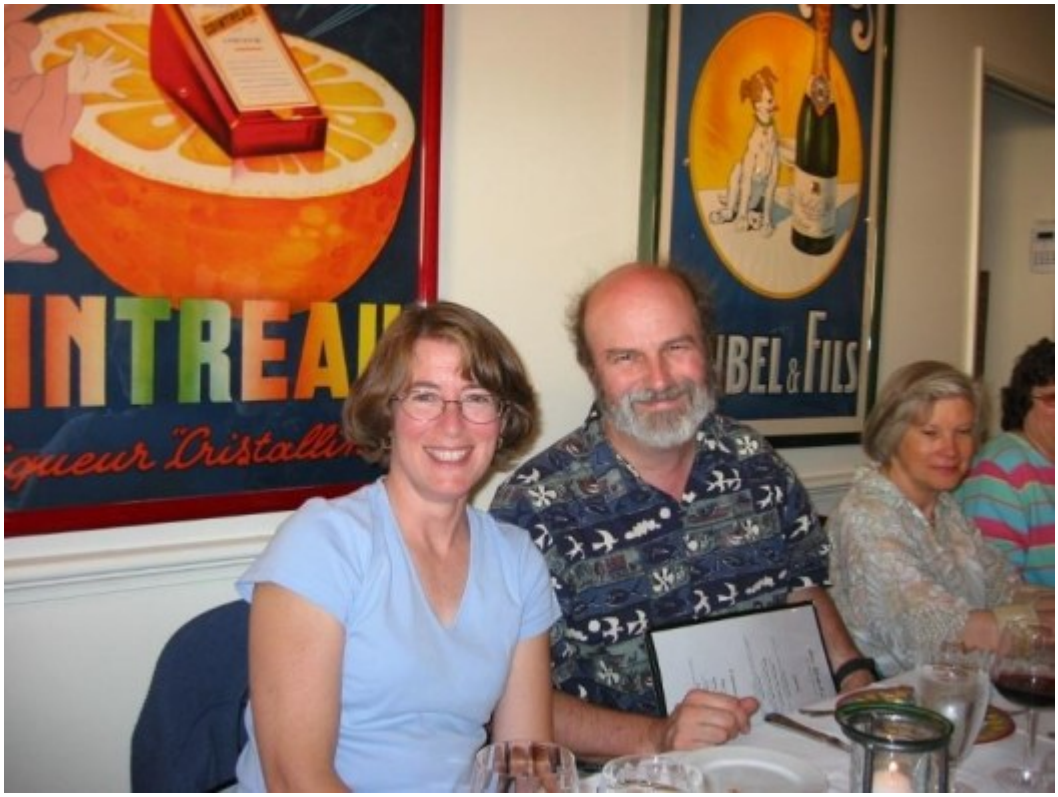


Charlotte Derksen on the Map Mezzanine after Loma Prieta Earthquake in 1989.

Source: History of the Branner Library
https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4ac288eab9a644cb8d60408577364ff4



Stanford's Science & Engineering Resource Group (SERG) Librarians 1999 Retreat at Steve Gass' House in Palo Alto, CA. Photo supplied by Joe Wible.





Left: Julie Sweetkind-Singer, Joe Wible, and Charlotte Derksen at Joe Rombi's Restaurant in Pacific Grove, CA. Right: Charlotte Derksen at SERG Librarians 2002 Retreat at Hopkins Marine Station (HMS) in Pacific Grove, CA. Photos supplied by Joe Wible.

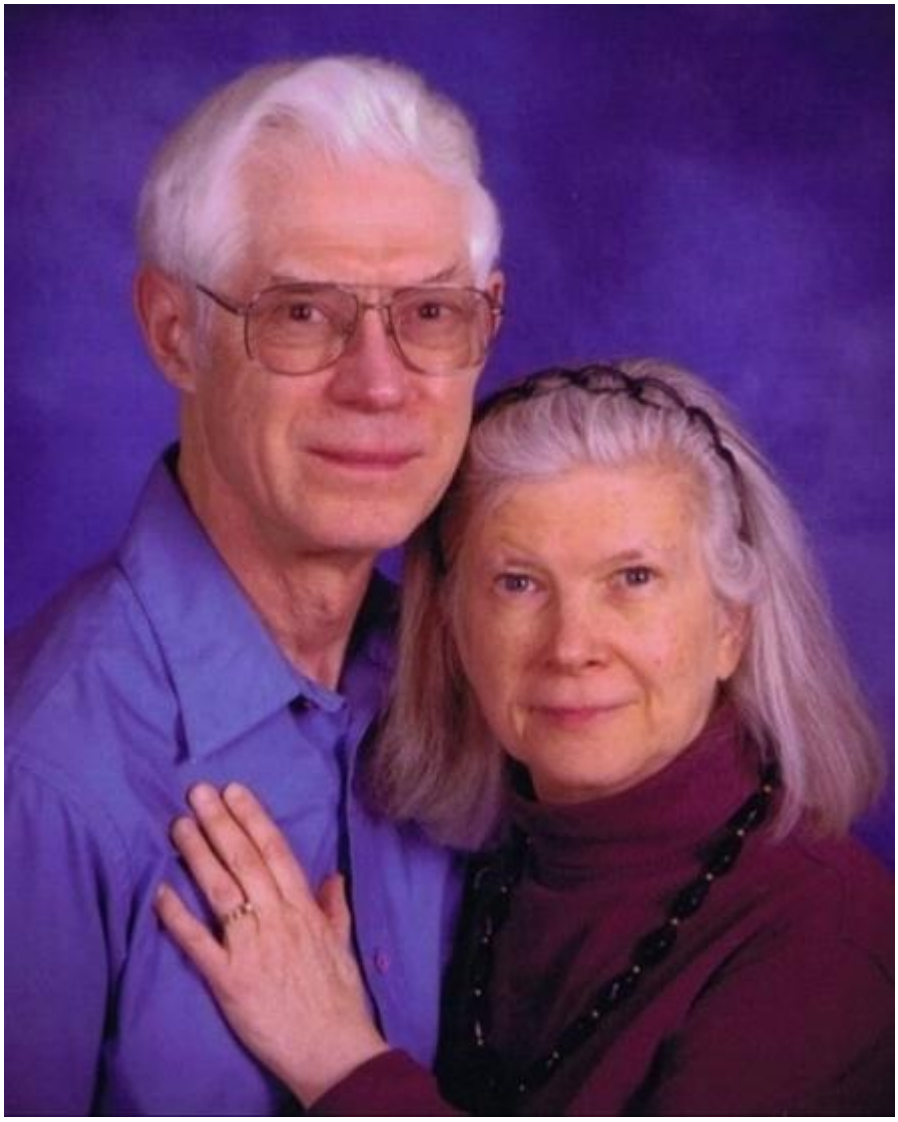


2015 SERG Librarians Retreat at HMS (Charlotte Derksen was already retired but there in spirit). Pictured in the front and center is Jane Ingalls, Map Librarian at the Branner Library, who worked with Charlotte for many years. Photo supplied by Joe Wible.



Charlotte Derksen at 2006 WAML meeting with Jim O'Donnell (Cal Tech), Chris Thiry (CO School of Mines), and Mary Douglass (Seattle Public Library). Photo supplied by Julie Sweetkind-Singer.

Obituary and Biographical Works



Roy and Charlotte Derksen

Charlotte Ruth Meynink Derksen Obituary (March 15, 1944 — March 22, 2026) https://www.funerals.coop/obituaries/charlotte-derksen (See also: Roy Arthur Derksen Obituary October 15, 1944 — September 25, 2024, https://www.funerals.coop/obituaries/roy-derksen)

Charlotte Ruth Meynink Derksen. *World Biographical Encyclopedia*, Prabook, Version 2.0.48.1.1248 2021. https://prabook.com/web/charlotte_ruth_meynink.derksen/533290

Charlotte Ruth Meynink Derksen, *Marquis Biographies Online*, accessed 06-18-2026.

(Charlotte is also these book editions: *Who's Who in America*, 70th ed., 2016; *Who's Who in the West* 43rd ed., 2016; and *Who's Who of American Women*, 28th ed., 2010-2011.)

Selected Citations

Gould, Constance C. *Information Needs in the Sciences*. Research Libraries Group, 1981, pp. 35-46. https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/14171824 (Free to read online)

History of the Branner Library
https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4ac288eab9a644cb8d60408577364ff4 (Tip: recommend viewing using an iPad or Mac instead of a PC).

Selected Works Authored/Co-Authored by Charlotte Derksen

Derksen, C. R. M. (1968). *Geology of the eastern end of Elkhorn Ridge, Baker County, Oregon*. Master's Thesis, University of Oregon Department of Geology. https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/5473369

Noga, M. M. and Derksen, C. R. M. Map Collection Development, Processing, and Public Services in an Academic Earth Sciences Library: Stanford University. In *Role of Maps in Sci-Tech Libraries*, Ed. Mount, E., Routledge, 1985. https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/4469732 (also published as an article in Science & Technology Libraries https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J122v05n03_01)

Derksen, C., American Geological Institute, & Geoscience Information Society Guidebooks Committee. (1989). *Union list of geologic field trip guidebooks of North America* (5th ed.). Published by the American Geological Institute in cooperation with the Geoscience Information Society. https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/1713023

Richard, S. and Derksen, C., American Geological Institute, & Geoscience Information Society Guidebooks Committee. (1996). *Union list of geologic field trip guidebooks of North America* (6th ed.). Published by the American Geological Institute in cooperation with the Geoscience Information Society.



https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/3105744

Geoscience Information Society Meeting, Eds., Derksen, C. R. M., & Manson, C. (1999). *Accreting the continent's collections: proceedings of the 33rd meeting of the Geoscience Information Society, October 25 to 28, 1998, Toronto, Ontario*. Geoscience Information Society. https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/4334986

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