

In Memoriam: Nancy S. Hewison



Nancy Hewison, Professor Emerita of Library Science and former Associate Dean for Administration, University Libraries, passed away on December 3, 2025.

Nancy Sybil Hewison was born in Auburn, Maine on February 7, 1950, to Donald A. Hewison and Sybil Parker Hewison. Nancy was a caring, independent spirit blessed with a brilliant mind. A graduate of Edward Little High School, Auburn, Maine in 1968, Nancy attended the University of New Hampshire as a National Merit Scholar, where she graduated in 1972 with highest academic honors. She then earned an M.S. degree in library science in 1975 from Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts.

Nancy began her career as a medical librarian and served as Head of Reference and Public Services at Tufts University Medical and Dental Library, Boston. She was later Head of Reference and Online Services at the Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) Library, Portland. Throughout those two roles, Nancy administered and participated in reference services to schools of medicine, dentistry, and nursing as well as university hospitals. It was an exciting time as online systems and searching tools were only just beginning to emerge in the mid-1970's. This was a period of rapid change, and Nancy enthusiastically embraced the challenge to better serve medical scientists, clinical practitioners, librarians, and students. She was respected for her quick intelligence and professionalism and loved by her colleagues as well as the people she served.

Nancy joined the Purdue University Libraries in 1985 as an assistant professor and assistant librarian in the Life Sciences Library. She loved to help people find the information they needed to understand issues, make informed choices, and to assist them in solving problems. The more complex the reference question, the greater she relished the challenge. Nancy was promoted to professor in 1995 in recognition of her scholarly research and teaching.

In the early 1990's Nancy led the Purdue University Libraries first strategic planning effort, engaging Libraries faculty and staff as well as the broader academic community. She was a skillful integrator of diverse points of view, and her success in this effort led to opportunities to provide leadership across many subsequent initiatives including staff development, diversity and equity, safety, mentoring in the faculty promotions process, and renovation of Libraries facilities to meet the changing needs of students and staff. As associate dean of Libraries from 2004 to her retirement in 2017, Nancy worked thoughtfully and tirelessly, often behind-the-scenes, always taking a positive and analytical approach in guiding the adoption of new policies and programs. She mentored many junior colleagues and students with words of encouragement but also with a constructive nudge when needed. Her kindness, honesty, and wonderful smile will be remembered by all who knew her. Nancy lived life with vitality, enthusiasm, and eternal optimism.

Nancy is survived by her husband of fifty-three years, Robert J. Joly, Professor Emeritus, College of Agriculture, and many family members and friends. A Celebration of Life service of remembrance will be held in the spring of 2026 at Hippensteel Funeral Service and Crematory, 822 N 9th Street, Lafayette, IN. Burial will take place later at Saint Mary Cemetery in Claremont, New Hampshire.