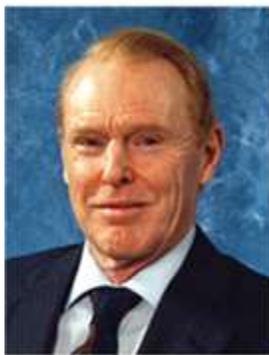


# Uncompromising Commitment—Robert J. Luxmoore Graduate Student Travel Award

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Dr. Robert Luxmoore, who passed away in 2014, believed that being an exceptional scientist extended far beyond academia. Good science and good scientists make the world a better place. He lived his convictions with uncompromising commitment to serving his state and local community, the science community as a whole, and SSSA, CSSA, and ASA members.



Robert Luxmoore

“[He] taught me, as a young scientist, you have to do more than just great research and publish papers. He believed being a good scientist meant you had a responsibility to the sciences, to your science community, and the larger community as a whole,” notes Dr. Glenn Wilson, USDA-ARS National Sedimentation Laboratory scientist, who upon completion of his Ph.D., was hired by Luxmoore to work at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL).

A curious nature and wholistic multidisciplined approach led Luxmoore to explore topics in crop science, plant physiology, soil physics, hydrology, and environmental responses during his career. Being identified as a soil physicist by those focused on soil physics and hydrology and claimed as a forest soils guy by those involved in forest and wildland soils contributed to Luxmoore's wide acclaim and extensive influence, Wilson explains.

Born and raised in Australia, Luxmoore came to the U.S. to complete a soil physics doctoral program at the University of California–Riverside. After his post-doctoral work at the Universities of Illinois and Wisconsin, Luxmoore found a home at ORNL for 28 years until retirement.

“Bob was informal, often in shorts and sandals at work, but very professional in everything he did. We were taking samples 24 hours a day; Bob would always volunteer for the night shift. Here was this prestigious scientist volunteering for the toughest shift; mud, rain, and cold. He led by example,” Wilson recalls. “Bob's research in the 1980s with mesopores describing preferential flow was revolutionary. The fact that he has 22 papers cited over 100 times speaks to the depth of his work.”

Luxmoore's environmental research at ORNL focused on plant, forest, and ecosystem responses to elevated CO<sub>2</sub> levels, acid rain, and climate warming. Dr. Richard Norby, also at ORNL, explained while most scientists were looking at CO<sub>2</sub> responses at the leaf, Luxmoore focused on processes below the ground.

“Bob generated ideas and initiated new research opportunities for myself and others supporting decades of work. His core idea from 1981 of the positive feedback associated with elevated CO<sub>2</sub> levels continues to generate active research. Bob was an innovative thinker, believing research needed to be done on a scale that mattered,” Norby notes.

Luxmoore worked with the International Union of Forest Research Organizations and believed in their mission of developing science-based solutions to forest-related challenges benefiting forests and people worldwide. He served as editor of several journals, including the *Soil Science Society of America Journal*. He was a Fellow of AAAS and SSSA and served as president of SSSA.

## Legacy of Encouragement to Young Scientists

“Bob's involvement with the Society was important to him,” Wilson says. “His encouragement enabled me to have an impact in the Society.” Luxmoore's legacy of encouragement to young scientists continues this day through the Robert Luxmoore Graduate Student Travel Award for Forest, Range, Wildland Soil, and Soil Physics and Hydrology graduate students.

The travel award enabled Melissa Pingree, then a forest sciences graduate student at the University of Washington, to attend the 2016 SSSA Annual Meeting. Pingree believes the face-to-face communication is crucial to developing students into good scientists and members of the science community. “Meetings enable students to experience new and novel research, speak with established professionals, and interact with academic brethren. The travel award bridges the gap between classes/research in our small labs and the Society,” Pingree says.

Sara Vero received the Luxmoore travel award in 2015 while a Ph.D. candidate in soil physics at the National University of Ireland. “Presenting my research, I received constructive input and advice that helped shape the write-up of my thesis and gave me confidence before my defense. During the meeting,

the comprehensive skills and creative thinking of Dr. Luxmoore was lauded as key to his success. I hope to emulate his example of broaching new ideas and taking on ambitious challenges in the field. Dr. Luxmoore left his research and publications, his example of Society and community involvement, and tangible support for those following after him. He showed us the job doesn't end in the lab.”

Luxmoore lived his conviction, working for social, economic, and environmental justice in Tennessee with the Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM) and protecting the natural lands and waters with Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP). He served as an expert witness, providing testimony on the environmental damage caused by surface mining.

“R.J. (Bob)Luxmoore was known for his extremely diverse array of topics researched from oxygen diffusion to roots, biogeochemical cycling, forest hydrology, preferential flow, to CO<sub>2</sub> enrichment effects on plants,” Wilson says. “His mentorship had a profound effect on me and my career. Bob saw his involvement in the Societies as a way to make science better for others.”

If you would like to ensure Dr. Luxmoore's legacy of service continues, please consider making a donation online at [a-s-f.org/donate](http://a-s-f.org/donate) or writing a check payable to ASF, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801 with Luxmoore Grad Student Travel Award” on the memo line. Contact Eric Welsh, 608-273-8081, for more information.