

## NEW POET LAUREATE

# LC Names Mona Van Duyn New Poet Laureate

Mona Van Duyn of St. Louis, Mo., will take office in the fall as the Library's sixth poet laureate consultant in poetry. She will open the Library's annual literary series in October.



Photo by Miriam Berkley

Mona Van Duyn

The author of nine books of poetry, Van Duyn has won all the major American literary prizes: the Pulitzer Prize (1991), the National Book Award, the Bollingen Prize (with Richard Wilbur), the \$20,000 National Endowment for the Arts grant, and the \$25,000 Ruth Lilly Award.

Dr. Billington announced the appointment on Monday, June 15. "I look forward to welcoming Ms. Van Duyn to the Library and I am particularly pleased to have a distinguished poet of such wide range joining us to promote public awareness of poetry and literature," Dr. Billington said.

The first woman in the post since "poet laureate" was added in 1985 to the title, Van Duyn succeeds six women, all major poets, who served in the earlier, equally prestigious poetry consultant role: Leonie Adams, Louise Bogan, Elizabeth Bishop, Josephine Jacobsen, Maxine Kumin, and Gwendolyn Brooks. Van Duyn succeeds Robert Penn Warren, Richard Wilbur, Howard Nemerov, Mark Strand, and most recently, Joseph Brodsky.

Critic Joseph Parisi, editor of *Poetry*

magazine, has said, "From the publication of her first book, her mastery of the art was immediately apparent—her subtle intelligence and formidable technical skill, her gift of humor and satire, her formal elegance, and especially her understanding of the vagaries and vulnerabilities of the human heart."

The new poet laureate will advise the Library on literary matters, including its literature collections and its audio and video tape archive, and participate in its annual series of free public readings by other distinguished authors.

Born in Iowa, Van Duyn earned her B.S. and M.A. degrees at the University of Northern Iowa and the University of Iowa, respectively, and has received a number of honorary doctorates.

She is married to Jarvis Thurston, professor emeritus of Modern American and English Literature at Washington University, and the couple are longtime residents of St. Louis. She has appeared a number of times in LC's poetry series, most recently in April 1990.