

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

June 2003

“I have often thought that nothing would do more extensive good at small expense than the establishment of a small circulating library in every county, to consist of a few well-chosen books, to be lent to the people of the county, under such regulations as would secure their safe return in due time. These would be such as would give them a general view of other history, and particular view of that of their own country, a tolerable knowledge of Geography, the elements of Natural Philosophy, of Agriculture and Mechanics.”

Thomas Jefferson, May 19, 1809, Letter to John Wyche Monticello

As I puzzle through the rarified discussion on siting a new library, I must confess confusion. Rarely has such a decision evoked such controversy, though there really are guidelines and “best practices” that have evolved over the last fifty years. The conventional wisdom leans toward pragmatism confirming the old marketing adage: location, location, location. Interestingly, many thoughtful planners favor a large site with room for growth, centered in high traffic, business area with an abundance of retail and offices, plenty of existing or “planned” parking, and access to public transportation. The concept of “identity” as a place of destination clearly characterized as a library is a primary grounding principle for the siting of main public libraries.

In the interim between Board meetings much has happened, affecting all staff. We have mourned the death of Cathy Coldren’s mother and the untimely passing of Gladys Fullford’s husband. Such events change us in ways unanticipated. We reluctantly prepare to say goodbye to Bruce Radkte, knowing that his patrons in the Outreach Program will miss him hugely. His personal attention to this very special population will be hard to emulate. Susan Henderson’s departure at the end of June leaves us with a very big position to fill. Because technology impacts every aspect of library operations and services, this is indeed a mission critical position. Both the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) and the Human Resources Department (HR) have stepped up to the plate to expedite and facilitate the replacement process – a process that is complicated by the new fiscal realities. We have appointed Judy Swatosh to a temporary reference position created to fill the vacuum left by Bruce’s retirement. She will assume those duties around the 1st of July.

Meanwhile many staff members are graduating – high school, college, and grad school. We wish them great success as they ponder next steps. Page Recognition Day was filled with goodies that tantalized our palates; all of course were definitively healthy.

Altogether, positive outcomes were realized through the public discussions. Carl Oekerman was well received and there has been a great deal of positive feedback. The debriefing went well and, oddly, I’m actually looking forward to the next round of public meetings. Deb Brewer is setting up the “new library reference center”, Dave Christensen is gathering pictures of recently built libraries, and the new arial map confirms Scott’s assessment of the amount of space occupied by the library, i.e. roughly half of the site.

As you know, Susan Trimmingham has agreed to co-chair the ballot measure proposition along with Tim Farris. The other great news is that Jyane Freudenberger has agreed to head up the publicity post and recruit others to help. She mentioned that the Board had appointed a citizen’s steering committee in addition to the ballot measure campaign team during the renovation and expansion of this building. I will plumb Linda Lambert’s memory since she served on that committee. You may possibly want to consider establishing such a group.

I am pleased to announce that the Whatcom Hospice Foundation, through a generous donation from Horizon Bank, has awarded the library \$1,500 to purchase materials on death, dying and grief. The hospice program is one of the finest in the country and extends services to families for a year following end of life events. It is an honor to partner with them; they will actively promote the library as a resource for grieving families. The check will be presented Monday, June 16th at 10:15 a.m. in the library.

Fairhaven moves apace. Sue Tercek submitted an application to the City for a “Small and Simple Grant” to restore the fireplace in the Fireplace Room. This dovetails nicely with other restoration projects planned for Fairhaven.

See you at 4:00 p.m., Tuesday. The budget is first on the agenda!