

Life in Small Public Libraries of Indiana

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We're always amused when we get advertisements addressed to "Acquisitions Librarian" or "Film Librarian." In a small library everyone does everything, and, as director, I don't mind that at all. I'd hate to give up choosing books or answering reference questions; having a variety of tasks each day keeps boredom away.

Our small library is a Carnegie, built in 1903 with a gift of \$15,000 from the philanthopist. The citizens agreed to be taxed to support the library. It was dedicated in 1905, serving a population of under 5,000 people. The collection began with 2,000 volumes. A basement remodelled as a children's Room in 1958, an addition of three small rooms built in 1965, and a mezzanine across the back of the library added in 1979 comprise the space added to the library since it was built. The library measures 6,411 square feet. Now the city population is about 10,000.

In May of 1983 we approached the County Commissioners about bringing library services to the county. They agreed that library service is vital for an informed, educated community,

and we became a county contractual library serving a total of almost 25,000 people. Our 6,411 square feet was inadequate for serving 10,000; adding 15,000 people presents quite a challenge. According to minimum standards for public libraries we should have an additional 10,000 square feet. Our collection has grown to 46,000 books, fewer than the minimum standards to serve this population. Seating space is completely inadequate.

The Board members believe in the mission of public libraries and have been supportive of extending service. One of our trustees had served on the board of a corporation for many years and had experience in long-range planning. He wanted to bring some of the skills learned on the other board to our library. He considered it important to educate himself about the needs of libraries. He attended a District meeting at which the planning process was discussed and came back enthusiastic about what planning could do for our library. Soon after we began a long range plan.

The first step was to form a committee. We asked a few interested citizens to help us out. With them and some appointees from the Board, we

met and discussed the planning process. Our budget has always been tight, so there was no question about hiring a consultant or someone else to carry out the project for us. We were it. We used the book put out by ALA on planning, *A Planning Process for Public Libraries*, and many of the suggestions they gave were adapted for our library. We used their sample survey, making a few changes. One Board member, a citizen member, and I visited different clubs and organizations throughout the community, told them about the library and our survey, and asked them to fill it out. The survey would tell us what they wanted from the library, not what we thought they wanted. We had designed the survey to be short and to the point. We didn't think many people would be willing to write long comments about the library and we were right. Most of the surveys came back with only the multiple choice items filled in. Where people did comment about library services, they were succinct.

The 6th and 11th grades of the schools were surveyed. We were fortunate in that the high school principal was one of our board members; he saw to it that the work was completed quickly and the results tabulated through answer sheets used in standardized tests. We also took a user survey from anyone who came into the library over a couple of months.

After tabulating the answers the committee analyzed the results and came up with a long range plan which they felt reflected the desires of the citizens of the county for present and future library service. The document stated that the Board would review the plan annually, making any appropriate changes. Another aspect of the plan is a maintenance plan for the present building.

Part of the long range plan addressed the problem of inadequate space in the library. It is evident that we need more space, but the survey answers showed that at that time we lacked the support from the community so necessary for any building project. County residents stated they would prefer to be served by bookmobile. We purchased one in June 1985. This has not alleviated the space problem as most of the people using the bookmobile are new library patrons, and the crowded conditions existed before we added the county. But it would certainly be a lot worse if we did not have the bookmobile. The bookmobile has been an asset in getting the county residents familiar with library service and aware of what is available to them. The bookmobile has storytimes, reading clubs, and craft programs for the children. These have been enormously successful, especially during the summer. We go to the two county elementary schools during the school year; both the teachers and the students make use of the bookmobile while we are there.

One of the goals of the long range plan was to establish a branch library by 1990 in the area of the bookmobile's largest circulation. Evidently the people like library service, because the largest town built a community center and asked the library to open a branch in a 1000 square foot room in the center. The branch opened in August 1989 and is a great success.

The plan recognized that expansion would ultimately be necessary and provided for a feasibility study to determine how we can best serve the public. We hired an architect to do the study and are now planning to buy property for a future new library.

For years the library tried to get by on the least amount of money possible. However, it is the only

institution in the county that provides educational opportunities after high school. We feel it is important to provide materials for our patrons to help them educate themselves. To do that you need money, so in 1982 and again in 1985, when the opportunity was given libraries to increase their tax rate, we appealed and won both appeals. We are now in a better position to purchase materials for our patrons and to provide the maintenance necessary on an old building.

Small libraries have the habit of frugality. We try to make the library's money stretch as far as possible. One method we found for doing this is to make extensive use of our ALSA for interlibrary loan and for reference questions involving material too expensive for us to purchase. We also are part of a large print circuit, begun under the auspices of SIALSA. The circuit currently has eleven members. This helps us in two ways: one, we save money by not having to purchase as many large print books to keep our patrons reading a variety; two, we don't have to take up scarce shelf space with books that are read by just a few people.

It may be a long time before small libraries are able to automate their collections, but we have purchased two personal computers for other purposes and have a computer with CD-ROM received through a grant. We use a word processing program, a printing program, and several learning programs for children. The periodical index for the CD-ROM is widely used.

In a small town you know many of the people personally. We have used our survey and the planning process to ensure that we are providing the people with what they need and want, but we also keep abreast of community thinking through conversations with our patrons and through per-

sonal contact at meetings. The library is a member of the local Chamber of Commerce. The staff enjoys this friendliness. Despite the limitations of our cramped library, public attitude toward the library is good and staff morale is high. We have our plan and review it annually, so we will continue to progress along with Indiana's larger libraries.

Hussey Memorial Library, Zionsville Helen Mills

Hussey Memorial Library, located in a two-story Victorian house on tree-lined Hawthorne Street, contributes to the 'village' charm of Zionsville. 'Village' is Chamber of Commerce talk. The term has been used for the last several years to successfully lure tourists to visit the local shops and restaurants.

Zionsville is a suburban community north of Indianapolis. Most of the residents are well-educated, work in the city and feel that they have the best of both worlds. The library, by most standards, is inadequate. There are 12,000 volumes (building capacity) for the 4000 registered patrons. Last year's circulation was 46,374.

The library is twenty-five years old. It was established according to the terms of the will of Lora Hussey, a high school English teacher who ended her career in the New York City system. Before 1962, the only library was a tiny, dark, one-room township library over one of the stores on Main Street. Years ago, a Carnegie library was voted out by the town fathers in favor of a church organ (which has long since disappeared).

Hussey Library has privately-endowed status and belongs to the town (as prescribed in the will). Two townships pay a modest contractual fee for service. Service is provided by one full-time librarian (Grade VI), a

part-time assistant, a corps of volunteers and three pages. *Money* is the big problem. The endowment has been managed well, but it simply is not enough to handle expansion.

There are a great many people, the library board included, who have an emotional attachment to the library as it was first established. To go public, collect a library tax and give up the 'good fight' seems disloyal to the Hussey family. Even new patrons

from large cities often comment, "I just love this little library".

It is attractive. The working collection is bright and clean. With just a \$7,500 book budget, most of the best sellers are on the shelves soon after they hit the book stores. The books are charged by a Gaylord machine . . . not a computer, but not a rubber stamp, either. The stained glass window, museum-quality needlework and plants help give the building



Hussey Memorial Library, Zionsville

a unique charm.

Charm is fine, but it is *space* that is needed. The children's room is so small that storytimes are held in the carpeted periodical room upstairs. Downstairs seating was cut in half three years ago to make room for more shelving. The office is so tiny that the staff usually move with side-steps. The annual weeding is difficult because good books must be withdrawn to make room for the new ones.

The problems will be solved some way, eventually. The library still has a sound financial base for its present operation. A four year old building fund is growing slowly. The board hopes that the private sector will contribute the necessary funds for an addition . . . and for its operating costs. As yet, no preliminary architectural drawings have been made, although consultations have been started. The greatest need is recognized, and *all* energies are going toward that goal.

The Friends of Hussey Memorial Library organization continues to provide important financial aid. The members handle the annual book sale at the Zionsville Fall Festival, and sponsor the Decorate-the-Christmas-Tree fundraiser. About \$2000 per year is given to the library for books, magazines and equipment. One very special lady who is housebound makes bookmarks out of greeting cards. These are not to sell, but to give away at the front desk.

A well-dressed business man from Indianapolis stopped to kill some time at Hussey Library recently. He made several comments which were complimentary. In the conversation that followed, he assured the librarian that she should not feel apologetic that the library did not have a roomful of computers. "You have something else very special here." I hope he was right. (Hussey Library has since

changed its legal status from a privately endowed library to a publicly-supported library, serving two townships. It is currently in the early stages of planning for a larger facility)

Rushville Public Library

Ann Herold-Short

Our small city library faces the awkward task of serving the Rushville Consolidated School System, which encompasses much of Rush County, while our free service is presently limited to city residents. Please don't misunderstand. Since we are a city of just over 6,000, we would very much like to have a county library. We just have not realized that dream quite yet, even though, from time to time, a great deal of time and effort has been invested in that dream.

So, in order to better serve those people (and organizations) who are loyal borrowers, we have had to come up with some, hopefully, creative solutions. These solutions are meant to cause little offense to taxpayers, while we do our best to serve the needs of our patrons (and potential patrons). We look upon the school system as "a patron" and on county students as potential patrons.

Of course one might wonder, "Why try to serve schools/ They have media centers." This is indeed true. But the schools have been among our greatest allies. We may "go an extra mile" to obtain materials for the schools, but in turn, they have gone many "extra miles" for the library. In addition, we feel that students' need are as valid as all other needs. We consider ourselves part of a valuable network of libraries. Although we greatly appreciate the services of our Library Services Authority (in our case, EIALSA), and the promptness of our interlibrary loan returns, we have often found it desirable, and faster, to borrow locally. This has of course worked

both ways — we have loaned materials to the schools.

In addition, teachers and media specialists have done a great deal to encourage students to attend summer activities at the library, or they have encouraged students to simply make use of the public library during breaks, and during evenings, weekends, etc. Librarians, or media specialists at some schools, feel that they can afford more non-fiction, if they encourage students to use the public library for "light reading."

Without cooperative programming, city children might be denied full access to public library materials and services. The schools encourage the staff of the public library to schedule regular visits to promote our materials and services. In addition, by getting county children interested in our materials, services and programs, we hope to instill good feelings about the library, so that one day Rush County will have a county library.

How can we serve county children's needs, without offending city taxpayers? Seriously, this can be a troublesome issue. Many patrons who don't have children in the school system don't even like to pay taxes for education. They would be upset to learn that the library offers materials for *any* county resident who doesn't pay taxes. However, we have managed to come up with several compromises that help us to serve all Rushville Public library patrons as well as we can:

1) We cooperate as fully as possible with the consolidated school system. Three of the schools are within city limits, and materials are loaned to teachers with valid library cards at other county schools.

2) We cooperate with local private schools and day nurseries who in turn have county children enrolled.

3) We offer student discounts. For instance, cards normally cost \$17.00 per family, but we offer a card for the academic year that costs \$5.00. During the summer, students can buy cards for \$2.00. For our purposes, a student is anyone between the ages of six and eighteen years of age.

Through the years, many cooperative programs have been developed to serve the needs of local students. Among the programs and services we currently offer the schools are:

1) Filmstrips. In addition to the filmstrips we offer to lend our equipment. For private schools with small budgets for equipment, loans are almost a necessity. But teachers find loans of equipment helpful so that films, filmstrips and cassettes can be previewed before showing them to the entire class.

2) Videocassettes and audiocassettes. Again, although the schools offer similar materials, the school's copy or copies might be out when the teacher needs it.

3) Books and other materials are offered to teachers for extended loans. Teachers may wish to borrow several books at the beginning of the academic year, as a classroom collection. We do try to remind teachers that they have borrowed materials each week.

4) Classroom kits are individually designed. Teachers request materials about a subject or subjects. Staff members design a kit which includes filmstrips, videocassettes, art reproductions and labels for displays, books, and activity sheets. We ask for one week advance notice.

5) We purchase materials to be shared by the public library and another school or schools. In one case, the weekly updates for a publication are kept at the library, but the cumulative bound volume is kept at the

school.

6) We share the cost and arrangements of obtaining displays from a museum. Three local schools and the public library have arranged to have the librarians take turns picking up and delivering the displays.

The most important cooperative effort we have established is a desire on the part of our staff and the school librarians to keep an open mind when suggestions for cooperative programs are offered by students, teachers, parents or media specialists.

Establishing the Rush County Archives

It is difficult to serve a community well with the limited resources available to a small public library. The problem is compounded by the sophistication of today's library user. Far from being ignorant of advances in the library world, today's user wants and expects more and more services.

Rushville Public Library has come to rely upon the generosity of local citizens. For many years, the library has fostered a cooperative spirit with citizens and organizations. Gifts and donations have made it possible for our library to obtain additional books, equipment, and furnishings. But cooperation doesn't stop with tangible objects. For several years the library has had cooperative programs with local schools and organizations. The longest running cooperative effort has probably been with the Rush County Historical Society.

The two organizations share almost one history. The Historical Society was organized on June 15, 1922. The officers included Miles S. Cox, President, Al L. Gary, whose wife was later to become the library board president, Treasurer, and Mary A. Sleeth, Secretary. Mary Sleeth was the first librarian of the present library, and served at Rushville Public Library for

many years.

The current city library was established in 1911, occupying three rooms of the northeast corner of the main floor of the courthouse. The collection grew and by the late twenties it had become apparent that larger facilities were needed. Citizens made donations to the building fund, and with the help of a bond issue, the new structure was completed in 1931. When the library moved from the Library Room of the Court House, the president of the Historical Society appointed a committee to move relics from the second floor to the Library Room. In 1940, the society moved to its present location, but not before establishing a tradition of cooperation with the public library.

During the years, patrons of each organization have been referred to the other in quests for more information. The society has loaned museum displays to the public library. Oral history tapes and transcripts, and many other materials, have been given to the library.

The latest joint venture will establish the Rush County Archives in the Genealogy collection of the Rushville Public Library. This cooperative arrangement will make it possible for the public library to make historical records available to a wider audience than would be possible at the society. At the same time it will make the materials more accessible since the museum is not open as many hours. In addition all uncataloged materials will be organized while at the library. This arrangement will also provide more space for the society.

A committee of members from both organizations was organized to suggest types of materials to include, how materials will be organized, and other guidelines. A proposal was submitted to the Rushville Public Library with the suggestion that space be desig-

nated for the archives in the current building renovation plans.

It has been recommended that the Rush County Archives include some of the following types of materials from Rush County:

1. Local publications of organizations.
2. Records and reports from organizations.
3. Official publications, photographs, pamphlets and brochures.
4. Blueprints and studies of local historical sites.
5. News releases.
6. Minutes of local organizations which are no longer in existence, but which were of historical significance.
7. Family papers and documents.
8. Local oral and written histories.
9. Memorabilia of historical and literary value.
10. Old photographs of local interest.

As material is added to the collection, donors will be strongly urged to donate the materials to either of the two organizations to simplify record-keeping and possible future disposal.

Several concerns were expressed by members of both organizations. Some of the members of the Rushville Public Library's Board of Trustees were concerned about loss or damage because the items will be "on loan" from the society. However, several society members felt that the benefit of more use for the items far outweighed concerns for loss or damage. One precaution will be to provide duplicate copies to the library in the case of rare items.

Another concern was voiced about staff time limitations and hidden costs. Obviously, there will be a need for staff to spend time supervising the project. But processing will be done

by museum and library volunteers, closely supervised by library staff. Costs for the project will be shared, as much as possible, by the library and the historical society.

Other board members from the library were concerned about the remote possibility that the library could become the repository of the society's "junk". Surprisingly, several society members suggested the same possibility. So, final judgement will rest with the librarian.

Filing cabinets and boxes on open shelves will probably house the majority of the collection. At least in the early stages, the current history collections of the library and historical society will remain separate from each other, yet in the same room. Cross references will need to be developed to make finding materials somewhat easier.

Growth is anticipated if this experiment goes well. Possible locations have been proposed. During the planning process we have tried to anticipate as many problems as possible, yet we realize there are sure to be problems we haven't considered. Still both organizations are looking forward with excitement to this new opportunity to work together. The program seems to be a close-to-ideal solution to growth problems for both organizations.

For more information see:

"Community Archives," *Focus on Indiana Libraries*, December 1982, pp. 3 & 4.

Thompson, Enid T. *Local History Collections*, Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1978.

Menzensha, Mary Jane, *Archives and Special Collections*, Columbia University, New York, 1975.

Mitchell Public Library
Vickie L. Holt

Mitchell Community Public Library is only one of the many small public libraries scattered across the State of Indiana. It is nestled in the back hills of southern Indiana and serves approximately 11,000 people in an area of Lawrence County south of White River.

The Way It Was . . .

Thirty years ago our library could have been described as suffering from a severe case of library D's: a dingy, dark, depressing, desolate, dank, and dusty old Carnegie building which had outlived its heyday and was sadly decaying from non-use. Few people darkened its doors and many of the few who had the courage to do so, never did again after the first visit.

The collection was so old and dusty that upon viewing it one was not sure whether the scriptural verse "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" was coming into play before one's very eyes. It seemed that most of the books on the shelves had been purchased within the first few years after the library had opened in 1917. From the Depression years on there had rarely been enough money to update the collection or even provide current best sellers. In fact, the collection was so bad that even the mice turned away in disgust - it was not even nest building material.

Many of the former librarians fit the stereotyped image that so many people have of librarians - the little old lady who sits ever so quietly behind the desk carefully monitoring the never opening door. If, by some slim chance of fate, someone did walk through the door she wanted to be certain to do her job of greeting the person with the usual "Sh - - - !" I truly believe that most of the former librarians who worked at the Mitchell library had a total vocabulary consist-

ing of the consonant digraph "sh".

I shall never forget my first experience visiting the library when I was in upper elementary school thirty years ago. I was so frightened by the eerie place that I immediately went home and asked my mother if I could join the Book-of-the-Month Club from Doubleday Books. Thank God my mother agreed. Otherwise, I think I would have given up reading had I been forced to use the library.

The basement of the building would have put any haunted house to shame. The coal bin and the furnace were located there and the old furnace, which struggled to work, belched out stinky clouds of sulphuric gases and soot that kept the basement rat free. I think even the spiders and roaches had serious health concerns and lived there only out of necessity.

The other end of the building was in no better shape. The roof leaked so much that the librarian sat beneath an umbrella on rainy days and anyone who appreciated a cold shower could take one free of charge providing the librarian wasn't on the scene. However, I don't recall anyone trying it.

The library board was an entity all its own. In fact, the meetings were so private they would not allow the librarian to attend, so she never knew if she was still hired, fired, or whatever unless a note was left for her by one of the board members. I am sure there must have been great difficulty in communication and I really haven't figured out just how communication on management of library affairs took place unless it was through ESP. I am sure there were no cheap cassette tape recorders involved because this was before their time. However, even if the \$29.00 variety had been around at the time, I don't think the budget could have supported the purchase of one and paid the librarian, too. Also, the librarian was unable to order

books without first submitting the book list to the board for approval. Any books which they deemed inappropriate for the library were crossed out and the list was then returned to the librarian.

Library services that we all hear about today were unheard of in Mitchell thirty years ago. Services were what the local churches and gas stations offered the community. In short, the Mitchell Public Library was not a people's institution but a no-man's land where few people wanted to tread.

Getting to Where We Are Today . . .

I am not sure whether it was sheer luck or a miracle but two things happened in 1973 that would mean total reformation for the Mitchell Community Public Library; one was the hiring of a totally different and rather unusual librarian and the other was the arrival of the wife of the bank's new president. Both women hit the library like a whirlwind of fresh air with their enthusiasm and vitality. Dorothy Marshall, who was hired as librarian, had traveled worldwide and had been a music teacher; Sonia Ewald was a former teacher with a degree in early childhood education. When these two put their heads together, the slow dull life in the little town of Mitchell was destined to change, and the library would become the center of activity in the community.

The first week that Dorothy reported for work not one person darkened the doors of the library and out of sheer frustration she started the first homebound service the library ever had. She checked out several books and magazines to a few of her homebound friends. Shortly after Dorothy was hired, Sonia Ewald popped in to ask a favor. Sonia had four small children and Mitchell did not have a preschool or kindergarden

at the time; she wondered if the library could possibly provide a special preschool program for children in the community. Dorothy looked at Sonia and with her usual enthusiasm announced, "We can do anything, the sky's the limit." From that day forward, "the sky's the limit" was the standing philosophy of the Mitchell Community Public Library.

At that time the library had a total staff of two: Dorothy and the janitor. Sonia volunteered to organize and train more volunteers to help with the preschool program. A group of mothers and fathers were rounded up to be trained as teachers and to renovate a portion of the library basement into a bright new room for the incoming preschoolers in the fall. The library's budget could not support any part of the necessary expenses to get the program rolling. Sonia and the parents begged, borrowed, and pleaded for help and donations. By fall the program was ready to roll and it was aptly named the Library Activities Program. The objectives of the program were two fold: 1.) To provide a much needed community service - a headstart for preschoolers getting ready to enter first grade the next year; and 2.) to produce future library users by exposing children at a very early age to the library. The Library Activities Program was a smashing hit from the start. It continues to be a hit even today with ninety children enrolled each year plus a large waiting list.

As with most small libraries with micro-budgets, Dorothy realized that the first things that was needed was to find ways to raise the budget income. When she first accepted the directorship, the annual budget was \$17,500. She also realized the need to hire more staff in order to free her time to develop library services and to find avenues for more money. CETA was the answer for more staff. Stu-

dent pages were also trained and put to work after school and in the summer. Dorothy attended several grant-writing workshops and this opened the door to more money to fund special library programs for the community. She quickly recognized the need to talk Bono and Spice Valley townships into being annexed into the library's taxing district. This greatly increased the tax base for the library's budget.

Dorothy was always looking for something new to try at the library. Her biggest asset was her philosophy "the sky's the limit" and whatever one wanted to do at the library, her response was always, "We can do anything."

I shall never forget the first time I asked her if an Adult Basic Education class could be held at the library. Every place I had checked for a class location had turned me down. However, when I approached Dorothy her response was "Great! When do you want to start?" The library accepted us with open arms and provided the publicity the class needed. We had thirty-five people show up on opening night. Ten years later, Mitchell still has one of the most successful and active rural ABE classes in the State. Many new readers have been brought into the library because of Dorothy's willingness to try a new idea. She saw the library not only as a storehouse for books, but as an active community center.

Today, the Mitchell Community Public Library remains one of the most active places in the community largely because of the unusual personality of Dorothy Marshall. It was her willingness to support others in the community which encouraged them to use their talents to their fullest extent at the library. Dorothy had the building cleaned up and the yard landscaped; the basement was remodeled, and the old belching furnace was

eventually replaced with a modern gas furnace. The place came from a no man's land to a vital community center brimming with life under her direction.

Dorothy retired in 1985 and I accepted the directorship in June of that year. Having known Dorothy was certainly an asset; I had firsthand experience of the importance of making the library a community center. Dorothy's twelve years as director had been spent largely in revitalizing the old place and getting the budget up to a sufficient amount to maintain support staff and library programs. As a new director fresh out of library school I took the "driver's seat" with the background knowledge of Dorothy's accomplishments and ideas as well as all the newest theories about librarianship and libraries.

In my first few weeks, I began to assess the ways we could continue being a vital community center providing the much needed services as well as becoming a viable library providing a good reading collection, consistent library procedures, and staff development. My work was cut out, I had several major tasks ahead that needed to be undertaken as quickly as possible to get the library sailing in the direction that I wanted it to go.

The library had never had a written policy for library procedures, personnel, collection development, library board, or written job descriptions. I requested policies from other libraries as well as books on policy development and I read until I thought I would have permanent eye damage. Meanwhile, in weekly staff meetings, the staff and I hashed over former verbal policies and tried to find their strengths and weaknesses. We were shocked to find so many variations of verbal policy from staff member to staff member. At the same time, the

board formed a committee of three members to work with me to formulate personnel policies and to make recommendations to the other board members concerning much needed staff benefits such as vacation time, sick days, personal leave days, and holiday pay. Staff made lists of duties they performed. They separated these into two categories, those duties enjoyed most and those enjoyed least. From those lists I wrote job descriptions. Finally, after eleven months of hashing for the board, myself, and the staff, the Mitchell Community Public Library had its first policy handbook accepted and passed by the board. The long-needed staff benefits boosted staff moral sky-high.

Another acute problem facing us was the lack of space on the main floor. Books were so crammed on the shelves that it was virtually impossible to remove some of them. We needed to expand and move the children's department downstairs, but the only available room was the activity room which also doubled as our meeting room when activities weren't in session. Luckily, the board had purchased a house next door to the library several years ago. We decided that with some remodeling we could turn the house into a library annex with a large meeting room and office space for the children's program. Several interior walls were removed to provide a large central area. Meanwhile, our janitor accepted the task of building shelving for books in the former activities room. By January of 1986 we were able to move all the children's books downstairs into a newly created children's department. The Library Activities program moved to the newly remodeled annex.

We also realized that the collection was in dire need of weeding; the shelves were filled with dead wood that hadn't moved for years. In fact,

we were shocked to learn that many of the science books in the children's collection still had us several years away from landing on the moon. After discussing ways to accomplish weeding, the staff and I decided on the red dot system. We set the date to start the red dot (which, by the way, ended up being a yellow rectangle for us) for January 2, 1986. We agreed to yellow dot everything that checked out over the next fourteen months. Normally this system would require a longer wait than fourteen months; however, since the collection had not been weeded for so many years we decided to start the process somewhat earlier in the children's collection. We weeded nearly half of the children's nonfiction collection. We still have more weeding to do in fiction and in the adult collection as well. However, we were amazed at the transformation of the collection. The shelves of books look alive and inviting. We have room to face many of the new books with their covers forward. The children and their parents are excited about the beautiful new books we have and circulation has increased. We still have weeding to do and we may not be finished before the end of this year, but the collection is looking better than it has for thirty years.

With all the policy writing, weeding and moving we have managed to keep up with special programs, nursing home visits, story hours, and an active adult basic education program. The Mitchell Community Public Library is a living library. Many folks have said that the library is the "best thing that ever happened to Mitchell." However, making it the "best thing" has not been easy and has required a lot of hard work on everyone's part, but the payoff has been fantastic. We are appreciated by the community and the people in the community let us know frequently how much they appreciate us.

Where Should Small Libraries Be Going?

I sometimes feel because the adjective "small" precedes library there is a feeling that the library can offer no more than a pittance in service to its community. I also have the feeling that all too often the librarians and boards of small libraries feel they do not have to justify their libraries' existences in the communities. Likewise, those same communities hardly acknowledge that the libraries are present and they do not demand good service. The result is pathetic. A community institution slowly dies and decays; it becomes a liability rather than an asset. Eventually, I feel that many small libraries will face closing because the little money which is being funnelled to them could be better used elsewhere in the community.

Many small libraries across the State have hardly enough money to open their doors and pay the librarians a micro-salary. Mitchell Community Public Library was once one of those. Our budget isn't as much as we would like, but it has increased seven-fold over the last few years. It has increased because we have been able to prove our worth. We have managed to justify our existence in the community and the surrounding townships. When asked to form a library district, Spice Valley and Bono townships were more than happy to do so. These townships could be assured of good library service and this made them willing to join forces.

Besides the money barrier, small libraries face several other barriers which stand in the way of their success. Perhaps two of the worst obstacles facing small libraries are their boards and/or their directors.

An apathetic board suffering from a lack of concern is the death of any small library. The library can be only

as good as its board. The board must be willing to stand behind the director and staff and help present the library to the community. They must be willing to allow the director her space and trust her decisions and judgments. The board should have the ability to determine when to interfere and when not to interfere in the operations of the library. Boards should be educated about their responsibilities. Many board members are quite ignorant about their duties.

Perhaps one of the most difficult jobs facing a director is educating the library's board. If the director doesn't know what the board's duties and responsibilities are, then she needs to read the public library laws and other informative materials on board duties. I have worked hard at educating and keeping my board as informed as possible. The payoffs have been fantastic. Board members have actually stated they enjoyed the meetings. They were not aware of their responsibilities as board members and that in the event of a lawsuit they would be the ones holding the bag not me. I have worked at getting them actively involved in library affairs. At board meetings they not only hear about the good things going on, but they hear problems, discuss library legislation and how it will affect us, discuss future plans, meet staff, and update policy.

Just as the board can be the death of a small library so can the director. She is the backbone of the organization and her attitudes and management capabilities will affect the overall image of the library in the community. The director is the liaison between the board and the staff and the board and the community. She is also responsible for the daily management of the library and is curator of the physical building. She should be aware of her limitations in decision-making and should not over step her

boundary and get into the board's responsibility. The director's responsibilities and those of the board are often difficult to separate. However, trust and respect should be mutual between herself and the board. She should be a vital and enthusiastic person, honest, and not afraid to voice her opinions and stand up for her rights as well as for the rights of her staff, board, and community.

I have attended many meetings where directors complain bitterly about their disinterested boards. It is this disinterest by their boards that prevents their libraries from getting anything accomplished. However, I have noticed that some of these librarians do little else but gripe about their situations. That is the easy way out. Gripe gets little done other than exercising the jaw and perhaps, lessening the wrinkles on the face. I sometimes get the vague, uneasy feeling that a few of these directors really don't want to do any more themselves but just hate to admit it; so they pass the buck on the board.

Besides board and director problems, small libraries suffer greatly from a lack of support staff that is needed to provide increased services. This takes us back once again to money problems resulting from budgets far too small to support a single family of four people, and yet this same budget is expected to provide services to several thousand in a community. Money problems are not easy to overcome, but there are ways to help increase the budget if the director, staff, and board are willing to try.

Where does one go for more money? Check out neighboring townships which may not be paying a library tax and invite them to join forces. However, don't expect them to be overjoyed at the invitation if the library is doing very little in its community. It may be

necessary to upgrade services or have a plan for services one hopes to implement if the townships would provide support. If the library doesn't have a Friends of the Library group, start one! Friends not only earn money for the library but quite often have excellent ideas for improving services and have good contacts in the community. Educate the community concerning the importance of donations, contributions, and memorial gifts to the library. The public often does not see the library as being a "needy" institution and very deserving of gifts. Many folks haven't thought about the fact that gifts or contributions given to a public institution will benefit many people. Also, check out the local clubs in town; many have money to give or are willing to contribute other gifts such as books and equipment. Grants are another excellent source of funds for small libraries. Invest time in a grant writing workshop and then search out grant sources. Money is around, but one must put a little "elbow grease" into finding it. I don't think anyone ever received extra money by complaining about how destitute he was.

Small libraries must become more aware that the needs of patrons differ today from those of thirty years ago. Where only books and magazines once sufficed, today's patrons are looking for the new line of library materials such as videos and audiocassettes. Not only do the regular books patrons enjoy the addition of the new library materials, but such collections also attract many people who would never use the library otherwise. Although there are many arguments that these mediums are not what libraries are about, these materials do provide a popular service for the community and create some very positive attitudes toward the library. If the time should come when the library needs support, one can be assured community sup-

port for the library has grown because of a good mix of materials.

Small libraries must also understand the need for networking. Every small library should be a member of an ALSA. These wonderful organizations have made it possible for small libraries to provide materials that they could never afford to purchase. Also, the ALSAs have made available information, training sessions for staff, directors, and boards free or at a very minimal cost, and a host of other benefits that enable small libraries to better serve their communities.

Small libraries are challenging places to work. There are many obstacles which must be overcome in order to provide good library service. However, no matter how small, a library can be an asset to its community if the board, director, and staff are willing to put forth the effort. The community must be made to see the

library as an essential and very much needed institution.

So, where should small libraries be going? They should be going PUBLIC! They need to start looking for ways to make the libraries assets rather than liabilities to the communities. It is time for librarians to stop feeling sorry for themselves because they have no money, uninterested boards, no staff, old buildings, and a host of other problems standing in the way of providing good library service. We owe our communities something more than lip service about our hard times. We need to show them that we are willing to fight for better times. If we are willing to put forth an effort, then we may get more backing from those around us. It will not be easy, but better service, more money, interested boards, and more staff are not an impossible dream.