

Perspective of a Library Board Member

By
Russ Freeman

I have worked in public education for 45 years in a variety of positions. During that time the school media center played a key role in the education of each and every student in each school that I worked. Once I retired from my job in education, I was asked if I would have any interest in serving on the Columbus Public Library Board. I decided to attend a meeting to learn more about the possible position and I liked the opportunity that was presented. Therefore, once my appointment was recommended by the Mayor and approved by the City Council I began my duty on the Board. I have now served on the Library Board for almost one year. I will use this article to share my thoughts and viewpoints on some of the areas that I have become more familiar with concerning the Columbus Public Library.

The Library Board members that I have served with for the past 11 months are very special people. They represent many different backgrounds in their professional and personal fields, but they are all bonded together in their willingness to volunteer their time to help make the library a great resource for the people of the City of Columbus and for the citizens of Platte County. Each Board member works together to develop policy, watch over taxpayer money used to support the library and to guide the keeping of the library a viable resource for all of the patrons listed above. I appreciate each of them more each time I attend a Board meeting or work with some of them at volunteer events to promote the programs and the use of the library.

On a personal note my wife is an avid reader. She spends much more time that I do reading traditional books. Her current favorites are the books written by Danielle Steel. She is not into reading the electronic books, so the bounded books are more her style. I do know that there are others that prefer using a Kindle or other device to read a book. Our library serves people with both choices of either electronic or traditional books. Our grandchildren also really enjoy visiting us in Columbus so they can attend some of the summer activities held at the library. Our current library does a great job of providing a variety of programs and services to meet the needs of all people, from young children to mature adults.

In my last position as the Superintendent of the Lakeview Community Schools, I had the opportunity to witness the service provided to county schools and residents through the bookmobile. This is a valuable service provided by the library, as it puts books into the hands of students on a regular basis. Some students do not have the opportunity to have a lot of books at home and the bookmobile visits to their schools is a highlight in their education. This also helps with encouraging reading, which in turn will help our citizens become more successful in school and in the work setting.

As an outsider to the area that has lived in Platte County twice in their life, I have always been impressed by the city and surrounding area of Columbus. I grew up in a very small town and am impressed by the progressive nature that seems to be present in the Columbus area. The Quality of Life Campaign was quite an undertaking and is three-fourths finished. The new East Central Health District, the new Columbus High School and the Wellness Center are outstanding. I also believe that any doubters on those projects will now be able to see how these constructions have benefited the people of the area and will help to draw more people to our community and surrounding area. The city has made many improvements in the past and is working on many important projects for the future. I am a dollar and sense kind of guy and I would hope that the new Library/Cultural Arts Center is still being considered as a top priority. It is my understanding that considerable funds from outside of our county are available if this project is revised and approved in a reasonable amount of time. I would hate to see us not take advantage of the outside funds available for this project. With the opportunity to build this project with a mix of private money and tax money that is already being collected, I would hope it would be kept on the priority list.

Last, I would like to say a big thank you to the current library director, Drew Brookhart. I did not know Mr. Brookhart very well before I started serving on the Library Board, but I can say now that he has been an asset to our library and to our community. He is very knowledgeable about his position, has always been professional in all my encounters with him and has a great work ethic. I wish both him and his family the best in their new endeavors.