

## What I Learned while Serving on the Library Board by Pat Anderson

I am a “joiner” by nature and a lover of libraries, so it was logical for me to apply to the Library Board by filling out an application form and then attending several meetings to see how I would fit in. The application form is available on the Library website and anyone can attend board meetings. Since I would be representing county rural residents, I needed the approval of both the City Council and the Platte County Board of Supervisors before I could begin serving. My time on the Columbus Public Library Board ends soon at the end of the 8-year term limit.

I learned so much! First of all, the library offers so much to so many, and so few of us really understand and appreciate all that is available. Of course, there are books—both hard cover and eBooks—and often there is a waiting list to check out either. The computer area is always busy, plus the free WIFI is accessible around the clock outside the building. That was really helpful during the COVID shutdown last spring. Did you know that you can book an appointment to get help with your computer problems? The list goes on and on---makerspace, genealogy, children’s activities, young adult/teen, book clubs, programs, etc.

I learned that it takes lots of people willing to work together to define and refine what it takes to build a library. The Library Director, Karen Connell, has spent endless hours working with her staff to identify what the library needs to continue to improve patron services, as well as downsizing to a temporary smaller facility. It is similar to moving to a temporary home-- use, store, or sell. The staff even managed to make their new location in the former police station friendly and welcoming.

I learned that good people of all ages are willing to commit their time and talents to serving as members of the Library Board, the Library Foundation Board, and the Friends of the Library. The library profits from a diversity of experience and age.

I learned that the Steering Committee meets regularly with the architects to ensure that the needs of each library component will be met in the final building plans. Imagine balancing library services, art gallery, makerspace, children’s library, genealogy, and now a Children’s Museum and City Hall offices!

I learned that our elected officials and city employees are as committed to this project as those of us who have worked on the project for years. City Administrator Tara Vasicek partnered with Karen Connell to present the Library project to civic groups and just about anyone else who would listen. Mayor Bulkley and City Council members got on board to add the city offices to the third floor of the proposed building, therefore sharing costs while benefiting both entities.

I learned that the Quality of Life Committee worked diligently to promote the library as the fourth and final component of their campaign to improve life in Columbus. This committee pursued additional funding through grants, such as the Sherwood Foundation’s matching grant.

The most important thing I learned is that good things happen when people work together for the improvement of the community. Way to go, Columbus!