

Rita Brewell
275 Brown's Road
Mansfield Center, Ct.

At one time the Ct. State Library asked public librarians to co-operate in a job description and classification study. One of the ideas I took away from it was the necessity to ask myself 3 questions when doing my job: "Exactly what am I doing?"; "Why am I doing it?"; and "Is this the best way to do it?" And all answers to these questions should be very specific.

And now I have been asking myself these same questions about this new proposal.

What, specifically, will this proposal do?

A.

1. It will cut the public library director's position to 20 hours per week.
2. This new 20 hour position will be filled by a school library media specialist with no significant public library training or experience.
3. The remaining 15 hours of the director's position will be filled by a less experienced, part-time worker who will be taking on some unspecified "administrative duties."

Presumably, since the new director will be spending only 20 hours per week in the public library the duties of this new, less experienced staffer will include some or all of the following: supervision and evaluation of staff performance, as well as staff development; materials selection; preparation for and attendance at Library Advisory Board meetings; preparation and control of a budget at a time when prices are rising and budgets may well shrink; program planning and oversight; attendance at town department head meetings; planning for services to new groups of people e.g. those working in the planned technical park; collection development; maintaining the co-operative regional services the area's public libraries have developed over the years; scheduling of hours for part-timers, especially as regards evening, weekend and summer hours; explaining the library's refusal to censor certain materials to indignant patrons; and maintaining personal relations with the public the better to serve its needs and interests.

It will be very difficult for a young and inexperienced individual to take on these tasks without the benefit of the presence of an experienced supervisor.

B.

1. The school libraries will continue to have their media specialist at 20 hours, except, perhaps, with a different title and pay scale.

At this point, there has been no information as to what additional benefits the school libraries expect from this combined directorship.

2. Will there be any conflicts of interest in serving different groups, e.g., will the public library's children's librarian (who is school certified) be expected to offer more

programs, story hours, or time in the school libraries, at the expense of those pre-school and home-schooled children she now serves?

Why, specifically, are we doing this?

1. According to quotes in the *Chronicle*, the Superintendent of Schools and the Town Manager believe that the combined position will lead to improved and expanded library services in both the school and the public libraries. Just how this will be achieved was not explained, or at least not reported in the newspaper.

2. Again according to quotes in the *Chronicle*, the aim was not to save money, which is fortunate, because there is a real possibility that this change could eventually lead to two library heads under a super director of libraries, an unneeded extra layer of bureaucracy.

There may be a small amount of money saved when half of the public library director's position is filled with a less experienced individual coming in at a lower rank on the pay scale. But what will that relatively small savings buy for Mansfield? I am afraid it will be nothing but a weakened and less effective public library.

Is this the best way we can do this?

Assuming that the real purpose of this exercise is to increase co-operation between the public and the school libraries and thereby to improve library services while perhaps even saving money, is this the best way to achieve that purpose?

Should school and public libraries co-operate? Of course they should - in as many ways and as much as possible.

Should towns be allowed to supply library services as efficiently and economically as they can? To quote a well-known ex-Alaska governor, "You betcha!"

But was this the way to do it? Absolutely not! If improvement is truly the aim, why not call the interested parties on both sides together to present a program of improved co-operation to both the Town Council and the Mansfield Board of Education? Are there reasons why the book ordering and technical processing functions cannot be combined? Can librarians trained to be children's librarians work in school as well as public libraries? If not, why not? What are these impediments? If they come from the State level, maybe it's time the Ct. Dept. of Education and the Ct. State Library got together and helped their respective libraries work out some new protocols.

At a less exalted level, teachers can notify the public library about special projects or their summer reading lists, so the public libraries can borrow or buy multiple copies of needed materials for students.

Also, might it be more appropriate to have school libraries share a library directorship among themselves, rather than to combine the public and school library systems?

For instance, might it profit Willington and Ashford to co-ordinate their library programs, story hours, purchases and processing along with Mansfield? This would eliminate much duplication of effort, with one professional doing the same work for 3 towns.

In short, I am asking you not to rush into what seems to be a vague and un-thought out proposal, a proposal which will, I fear, result in a weakened and less effective public library, with no additional benefits to the school libraries.

Mansfield has worked long and hard over the last 40 and more years to bring its public library up to the high standard of service it can now offer. Why retreat from the standard of excellence that has been a hallmark of life in Mansfield that has been here since I and my family moved here in 1962?

Why not take the time to research whether this type of co-operation has been tried before, noting the size and educational make-up of the communities trying it? If they were successful we need to know what made them successful. If they were failures we need to know why even more.

Town Council Meeting

Public Input 9/12/2011

RE: Bus Garage on Fern Road

The bus garage has been an eyesore and blight on Fern, Scottron and Sheffield Rd neighborhood for years.

Based on lack of payment of taxes and a conversation of the owner indicating his wish to give away the property to the town we re-raised this to the Town Council's attention in April this year. We had greater than half of the audience full of neighbors to ask again for the town to take action on this.

There was follow-up from the town in June and action taken to board up gaping holes in structure. This was progress however the blight is still there.

Due to Hurricane Irene several trees have fallen on the structure. It's clear to me this looks unsafe.

I urge Council to take action that would result in dismantling and removing the building. Acquisition of the land is a secondary concern. If the town is concerned about owning the land, just getting the building dismantled and removed would satisfy the neighborhood greatly.

Respectfully,

Omar Kouatly

98 Fern Rd, Storrs.