

Why does Point Roberts need a new library? Well, the primary reason is that it needs more room, more space. Not more space for books but for people: for tables to sit at, chairs to sit on, computers to be used. And there is no way to provide more space for the library in the Community Center. That is a basic fact.

There are people with whom I have spoken over the summer who say, "Why do we need more space? This library works just fine for me. I can come in and pick up my books and it's not a problem. I don't even have to wait to check out my books now that I can do the check-out myself." And, in truth, the library works just fine for me in that respect, too. I order my books online and pick them up when an email tells me they've arrived and I check them out myself and thank the Whatcom County Library for making this all possible, and I leave without thinking much at all about whether the library needs more space.

But that is not really how this library or any library works nowadays for most people. When I was a kid, the library I went to in a small western town wasn't much bigger than the P.R. library, even though it served more like 20,000 rather than 5,000 people. And it was jammed with books on shelves, and reference books, and racks of card catalogues. People weren't sitting around in the library: they were coming and going and if they were staying awhile they were standing in front of the reference books or the card catalog taking notes where they stood.

Go to any newly-built library you come near and you will see a world of difference: banks of computers with comfortable chairs; upholstered chairs with good lighting where you can read a book or your laptop via the library's wi-fi; small, set-off spaces where parents can read books to their kids without anyone saying, "Sh!!!, actual enclosed spaces where teens can study together, doing research on their laptops. It's not my childhood library, and it shouldn't be. After all, we're not in my childhood. We're in my great-grandchildren's childhood. I want better for them, just as you want better for your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Yes, the library works fine for me and for lots of people in the generation that grew up after the depression. We're less likely to be taken with the need for computers and the internet, after all; we may also be more likely, just as a matter of age, to be willing to adapt to what is given. But in 1946, some Point Roberts residents said, "We need a library here for our kids and for us." Maybe they didn't say, "And for the people who will be coming here for the next 60 years." But, in fact, that was what they did. That's what they created. And I, for one, thank them deeply and have joined the FOPRL fundraising group because I want to learn from their generous act.

Now, though, it's our turn: not just to give ourselves a little more room, a little more open space, a little more comfort, a little more technology. It's also our turn to think about the people who will come to Point Roberts and the library over the next 60 years. It's also about *our* gift to the future.

I urge you to join the library in this project for now and for the future. Join us by contributing your talents and skills where those will help and by contributing actual dollars where those will help. I do not want to be someone who asks you to give the least amount you can; I want to urge you to give the most you can. To come to the library when it is built and to know that you are a part of it and it is a part of you. And to know that it and your intentions will keep on being of service to this community long after you have moved on.

What I have learned from this past year is that It takes a community to build a library. Be a part of that community.