

**Remarks Delivered at the NH Trustees Association's
Library Director of the Year
Award Ceremony
October 16, 2023**

First thank you to the Trustees of the Madbury Public Library for nominating me and to the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association for selecting me for this award. The main task of any Library Board is to hire a director and then to support him or her. This is often the snag for many gifted, hard-working directors in New Hampshire and beyond. Trustees have many different backgrounds and reasons for serving. Some want their libraries to succeed and some, frankly, don't. Some actively dislike their library director, some are merely indifferent. I mention this only because library directors at those libraries, talented as they may be, don't get nominated for awards.

I'm very aware that I'm receiving this award because Noreen, Marie, Hope, Betsy, and Georgann are engaged with the library's mission, foster conditions for good decision making, and are generous with their praise. I'm lucky to work alongside them.

I am not a full-time director, a fact that is met with a combination of shock and pity by the director's groups I attend. Thanks to Kayla Morin-Riordan, who has been here eight years (yes, *thank you!*) I can almost complete all the tasks expected of me. Thank you to Peggy Wolcott, a library founder and hard-working assistant. To Jacky LeHouillier, who has brought our story time program to life and is always a pleasure to work with. To Amy Covell and Daphne Chevalier, both very part time but such eager and speedy learners. To Liz Burbank whom I never see on those fifth Saturdays but am happy she's still part of the library family.

Finally I want to say something about libraries, small libraries in particular. I came to this profession fairly recently considering my age. I was once a magazine editor, worked at a university press

and also put in many years as a freelance writer. But around the time my youngest left for college, I realized it was time to get serious about full-time work again. I'd been a very part time library assistant at the William Fogg library in Eliot and, as I observed the daily activities of their director, I decided that's what I wanted to do. It looked like fun ordering books, talking to other readers, and getting to know the community. She had a master's degree in library science from Simmons College so I decided to get one too. In 2006, at the Simmons new student orientation in 2006, we were told that it was an exciting time to be a librarian. "The field is changing so quickly," one dean said giddily, "and you will all be leaders in 21st century library technology." I was horrified; I just wanted to run a small New England library, buy books, read them, maybe with a kitty on my lap. I didn't want to be a techno revolutionary. But 17 years later I can say technology can be, if not mastered, at least accommodated. The fact is small libraries like this one still run on customer service: Talking to people, coming out from behind the desk to show them where to find what they're looking for. Remembering their names, *saying* their names, caring. That's all it takes. That's the good news! The bad news? I worry about how sustainable the solo small town library is. But that's a discussion for another time. Thank you for coming!

Susan Sinnott