

A library can build strong minds and a stronger community

Dear Editor,

I attended a recent focus group on the Library Building Project hosted by architects Sam Lasky and Kevin Bergeron from William Rawn Associates and the Library Building Committee. I was excited to see the possibility for the Lynnfield Public Library to be moved forward into the 21st Century with a suitable facility that provides flexible community/cultural meeting spaces, good physical access, support for our children's education, and a positive addition to our town's heritage.

You may ask, "Hasn't the library been replaced by the internet?" The answer is a resounding "No, not even close." When was the last time your smart phone read a story with feeling to a dozen five and six year-olds to inspire their imaginations and encourage learning and reading? Can a blog about recipes stand in for a lively conversation among an aspiring group of home kitchen gourmets?

Our library serves Lynnfield residents of all ages, all economic strata, and all interests. Nancy Ryan, Library Director, and her talented staff do a fine job leading us to that book we only know part of the title, that online newspaper article from 1989 on the fall of the Berlin Wall, or an article a middle school student needs to complete her paper on the Canadian education system.

The library can play a stronger role in building community with a meeting room for library and other programs. The library can encourage education with a new creative/maker space with a place for computerized 3D design and printing. The library also provides some of the basic components for our democracy with no-charge services and access to a rich array of paper and online resources (without the pay wall) for those with limited means.

Library buildings are designed for a generation – about 20 years. Over the next 20 years we're likely to see a decline in use of p-books (paper books) and an increase in e-book reading. The p-books on the shelves now will be needed for much longer than that. Publishers will not digitize anything that won't turn a profit in new sales and copyright law prevents libraries from digitizing these titles. We need the flexibility to accommodate these changes.

We deserve a 21st Century Lynnfield Public Library. Our investment will build community, strengthen education, enhance our quality of life, and put a multiplier on the other important town improvements we have made in education, sports, and the town's character and heritage.

Sincerely,
Greg Pronevitz

The author is a 17-year Lynnfield resident and executive director of the Massachusetts Library System, a state-funded not-for-profit charged with providing services to all libraries in the Commonwealth, including public, academic, school, hospital and museum libraries.

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