

Donor Event speech  
October 27, 2004

The question I want you all to think about this evening is “Why is a community with a library different from a community without a library? What difference does a library make in the life of the Lansing community, a mostly rural community comprised of an interesting mix of professors and farmers, and professor farmers; a community that spans the economic and educational spectrum leading to diverse interests, needs, and debate. Lansing is a proud and old community dedicated to the ideals of volunteerism and local pride. Is it worth the investment of time and money in Lansing to build a strong library? How can it better us as individuals as well as a community?”

As a society we move forward by relying on inquisitive minds and an informed literate population. Free public access to information is a cornerstone of democracy. Those are lofty ideals, not easily measured. But they begin with small concrete steps that can be seen and understood, if not actually measured, and that is what we see happening in the Lansing community with a library.

The conversations and exchanges that happen around books, ideas and imagination are different in quality than most any other interactions we have in our daily lives. These interactions are not defined by specific boundaries. I listen to the conversations that happen at LCLC, conversations that build relationships between people previously unassociated. And books... they have another magic quality, they allow us all to enter a world where we can dream, escape, grow, think and connect without judgment.

Concrete steps: LCLC provides Internet access to school children that cannot afford or do not have access to it at home. LCLC provides computer access to our adult population for information sharing and gathering, communication and personal education.

Concrete steps: LCLC provides proximity and convenience to library services allowing the community, from toddlers to retirees, to become regular life long library users.

Libraries attract homeowners  
Libraries support schools  
Good schools and a solid homeownership attract business  
Libraries build communities  
Libraries help to create thinkers, dreamers and doers.  
Libraries are worth the investment and deserving of our support.

For a reasonable further investment, the Lansing Community Library Center will deliver what is hard to put a value on”

What is the value of information?

What is the value of books?

What is the value of imagination?

So, I ask you again to ponder, “What is the difference between a community with a library and a community without a library”? What is the difference that makes the difference?

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End of speech points to consider:

1. Though the connection between Lansing and Ithaca has become increasingly stronger over the last few decades, we still have a sizable number of elders for whom going downtown is not in their comfort zone. We also have families with little kids, and residents with physical disabilities, and for some of them, going downtown, parking and schlepping is just too overwhelming. We could not, and should never try to, replace TCPI, but by our proximity and convenience we become available for everyday access and that is when you start seeing the magic of libraries come to fruition.

2. Lansing is lacking in a town center and this library is becoming a building block for a new and vibrant center in Lansing, a place to gather, share information and meet friends.