

**TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY**  
**Interview with Lynn Piotrowicz**  
**for the Position of Director, Forbes Library**  
**October 7, 2016**

**Present:** Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Sheirer, and Ms. Wight. **Also Present:** Members of the Search Committee Dylan Gaffney, Martha McCormick, Molly Moss, and Serena Smith.

The meeting began at 3:35 PM in the Coolidge Museum.

Ms. Hess introduced the Trustees, members of the Search Committee, and the candidate, Lynn Piotrowicz. Ms. Piotrowicz has been the Director of the Tucker Free Library in Henniker, NH since May 2005. She was Head of Fiction at the Meadville Public Library in Meadville, PA from May 1997 to May 2005; and Reference Librarian at the Meadville Public Library from August 1993 to May 1997. She received a Masters of Library Science in 1992 from the University of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, PA, and graduated from the University of New Haven.

Mr. Carrier explained that Ms. Piotrowicz would first give a presentation on why public libraries matter in the age of the internet. Then the Trustees will ask ten questions, followed by questions from the search committee. Members of the audience will then be invited to ask questions of the candidate. Paper forms were made available at the meeting to solicit feedback, and feedback can also be sent by email to the Trustees. The Trustees will consider the feedback when making a decision at a special meeting after the last interview on October 24.

**Presentation**

Ms. Piotrowicz thanked the Trustees and members of the audience for their interest. She began by quoting Calvin Coolidge who said that nothing is impossible when people work together. She has found this to be the key to providing library service. She said the internet age has created an opportunity for libraries to grow, change, and become more than a warehouse for books. Public libraries are central to the community and have a responsibility to ask stakeholders how the library can help them achieve their goals and dreams. Library leaders need to be innovative and creative in engaging with the community to empower people. The Library should work with community groups and schools to build support for the library. While many people are nostalgic for the library of the past as a quiet place to sit and read, the greatest threat to libraries is the lack of creativity of library leaders. We cannot tolerate the statement "we have always done it this way," and need to look forward. While the internet seems to offer everything, people fail to recognize the distinction between what the web and the library have to offer. The internet offers information, both good and bad, while the Library offers knowledge. Information is something we possess, use, and cast aside, while knowledge is something we pursue and the library is central to that pursuit. The library provides every individual with the tools necessary to examine issues, and an educated electorate is necessary for democracy to succeed. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century libraries are struggling to remain relevant with the proliferation of computers and technology. Technology is a tool, but it does not define who we are and how we serve. Library leaders must become promoters and convince civic leaders to adequately fund the library to be able to hire the best staff and provide open hours. Smart fiscal management

**Presentation** (continued)

is needed to make decisions that move the library forward, including examining staffing, services, and collections, and looking for redundancy and stagnation. Assumptions must be evaluated and critics anticipated. The library must build relationships with patrons not only with books, but also with programs, and offer a place that is a quiet balance between society and technology. The library should provide spaces for inspiration that excite users to explore, create, and participate. Libraries can offer an opportunity to level the playing field by serving all people.

**Trustees Questions**

1. Describe your present and previous work experience and how it has prepared you for this job.

Ms. Piotrowicz said that the opportunity to make a difference propels her every day to do her best. She has mastered all the behind-the-scenes library functions, but more importantly it is her connections with the community that have prepared her to be a library leader. All events leading up to this time have prepared her for this role.

2. What is your management style? What do you see as the most difficult task in being a manager/director?

Ms. Piotrowicz said that she is a participatory and flat manager who believes in building strong teams. She understands her staff's strengths and what they have to offer. She rolls up her sleeves and works with staff to help guide them and provide the right tools. When staff succeeds she feels that she has done her job. Looking at the bigger picture, she identifies the strengths of the organization and propels it forward so it is always evolving and improving.

3. Tell us about the most difficult personnel problem that you have had to deal with. How did you handle it? How was it resolved?

Ms. Piotrowicz described a situation where she and the Trustees were hearing from the community that they wanted more open hours on the weekends. They formulated a goal to be open 5 hours on both Saturday and Sunday, and Ms. Piotrowicz spent time coming up with a scenario to make that happen. It meant cutting hours for some positions and consolidating staff hours to coincide when the building was open. It was difficult to present the plan to staff and two staff members are no longer with the library. She needed to remind herself and staff that they were there to serve the public, and the staff who remain understand that it was for the good of the community.

4. How do you keep up with what is hot in the library world? How do you decide when a trend is worth pursuing?

Ms. Piotrowicz described a situation where her library was one of the first in New Hampshire to adopt downloadable books. She felt it was an opportunity to get in on the ground floor and build the program. She put staff in charge to build the collection and spent a lot of time tweaking it. Before she arrived, the Trustees had hired a consultant who said the library needed an addition, but Ms. Piotrowicz realized that many of the books were not circulating and what the library really needed was weeding. She helped to build a collection that is new, relevant, and most importantly, being used. She took down all the signs

**Trustees Questions** (continued)

in the library that said "no" or imposed limits and created a library that is alive. They put stickers on books that are in series to make them easier to find and identify and were leaders in adopting "Dewey-lite" where books in the non-fiction and children's section were organized by easily recognized umbrella terms. She also spent time with a team of her staff building and improving the library's website.

5. What kind of partnership and/or collaborations do you see as advantageous for a public library to establish within a community?

Ms. Piotrowicz said that she has spent a lot of time reaching out to civic organizations in the community with the belief that the more people hear our story the more they will support the library. She met with leaders of Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, and JC clubs and worked with the Senior Center and local preschools. She is a strong believer in lifelong learning and was an assistant director of an adult education program. She does "TED Talks" on the third Thursday of the month and leads discussions where she gets to know the individuals in the community she serves. This type of problem solving and working together is the most satisfying and rewarding part of her week.

6. What techniques would you use to evaluate service quality and customer satisfaction with services provided?

Ms. Piotrowicz said she is a strong proponent of listening and reaching out to community groups. She also understands the need for numbers to create goals and build strong programs. Every week she generates reports showing how busy the library is, but circulation statistics do not tell the full story as many patrons never check out books, so throughout the year she also does impromptu studies of counting patrons in the building. These numbers help put the library in a better position to promote its programs.

7. What are some of the unique service populations that the library can serve and how can that service be provided?

Ms. Piotrowicz described the Henniker community in New Hampshire where she serves as Library Director. It is a rural community of about 4,900 with a small homeless population including children. This homeless population needs the library and should be made to feel welcome. The library is the only organization in town that opens its doors to everyone and that is a large part of its mission.

8. What kind of public relations program would you envision for this library?

Ms. Piotrowicz was impressed by the attendance at this public meeting for an interview for a new library director and said it was a good indication of the community's level of interest. She said the library needs to tell its story and communicate regularly with the community, trustees, friends, and staff. Each of these groups will branch out into the communities they navigate through to spread the story further.

9. If you were appointed Director, what kind of relationship would you strive to establish with the Library Board? What would you expect from the Board?

**Trustees Questions** (continued)

Ms. Piotrowicz said that she always gives 100% plus to the library, and she would expect for the Trustees to give the same. Sometimes they may not agree philosophically or procedurally, but can negotiate a way forward to a conclusion. It is important not to take it personally if an answer to a request is "no" and to move forward.

a. If you make a recommendation to the Trustees and they reject it, what would you do next?

Ms. Piotrowicz said that she would keep plugging away accomplishing different things, and would not spend time spinning wheels on one issue, which is not productive. She said she would understand why they said "no" and move forward.

10. If you were offered this position, what would be your top three priorities and how would you determine them?

Ms. Piotrowicz said her top three priorities would be 1) She would begin learning about the local community, who they are and why they feel the library is so important that they are here today at this meeting. 2) She would like to improve the website and make it more engaging with graphics and images. 3) She would like to make the library and staff hours more consistent and less confusing.

**Search Committee Questions**

Molly Moss asked Ms. Piotrowicz to describe her experience with staff training and development. Ms. Piotrowicz said that she had shared her personal experience with library staff this morning. She said that in 2009 when the economy went south, her library lost the opportunity to offer professional development to staff, and that when times are tough, staff development is usually the first line item to go. This fall she applied and was accepted into a leadership program that was funded by the trustees. The program emphasized for her the importance of getting outside the library and interacting with the community. As she builds the budget for next year, she wants staff to have the same opportunity as her and is adding it back into the budget. She said her door is always open to staff and she enjoys rolling up her sleeves and working with them. There is nothing more satisfying than when she hears from the community how well her staff has served them.

Serena Smith asked about her experience with Friends groups and volunteers. Ms. Piotrowicz said that state laws in New Hampshire prohibit using volunteers for work performed by paid employees. The library's critical functions are written into job descriptions, which precludes them from using volunteers for those functions. Ms. Piotrowicz said that their Friends group has reached a point where it needs to be revitalized. There are by-laws in place, but outreach to new members is needed.

**Public Questions**

Dee Michel asked Ms. Piotrowicz what projects or decisions she was most proud of and for which did she have regrets. Ms. Piotrowicz said that she was proud of the project she initiated to replace the stained-glass transoms in the library. The Friends paid for the first window, and then Ms. Piotrowicz applied for and received grant funds to replace the remaining windows. She researched the building architecture and completed a lengthy historical inventory in order for the building to be eligible for grant funds. Now she is on the grants committee that awards the grants. In terms of regrets, Ms.

**Public Questions** (continued)

Piotrowicz said that she regretted not building in more staff time for oversight of the Saturday and Sunday hours as she is on-call both days and now only has one day off per week which is not enough time to recharge herself.

Nancy Dubin asked Ms. Piotrowicz to comment on the digital divide in this country created by those who have access to technology and those who do not, and the library's role in bridging the divide. Ms. Piotrowicz said that the library should provide the technology and services to those who do not have the resources of their own. There are more and more people coming in to the library bringing their own devices and the library should build the infrastructure to provide access for all. She said that she advocated strongly to have the Wi-Fi in her library on at all times so that the community can access the internet from outside the building even when the library is closed. Ms. Piotrowicz said the library also has a role not only in teaching people how to use technology, but also in the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the internet and separate facts from fiction.

Mark Parsons asked about patron privacy and whether Ms. Piotrowicz would stand behind a decision made by a staff member, and if she did not agree how she would handle it. Ms. Piotrowicz said that her staff is encouraged to contact her at any time, and they text her whenever there is a problem. If there is an incident, they write it up and she shares it with the trustees. She tells staff that she is there for them and will support their decisions. She encourages them not to be afraid to make mistakes, as library work is not a life and death matter. Understanding our humanity is important and she believes in being gentle, but firm and consistent. Ms. Piotrowicz said that in a sense knowing your patrons and suggesting books for them is an invasion of privacy, but a welcome and not an intrusive one. The library should respect patron's privacy and does not leave phone messages that include the titles of book requested. Patrons can also opt out of having the library system collect their circulation history.

Nancy Dubin asked about providing staff with a living wage and benefits and treating staff fairly. Ms. Piotrowicz said she is the only fully benefited staff at her library. She wanted to hire a children's librarian with benefits but the trustees said no. She knows women who cannot afford medical treatment and has spent sleepless nights worried about them. She has directed people to the programs provided by the local hospital. She also said there is something wrong with the whole big picture of healthcare in this country and the library can help educate people that will bring about national reform that allows equal access to all services. She talked about a book she read recently, *The Nordic Theory of Everything*, about services including health care, paid parental leave, childcare, free college tuition, and retirement. It is part of a bigger discussion and a message the library can propagate in the community.

**Trustees Wrap-Up**

Mr. Carrier asked if there were anything else Ms. Piotrowicz would like to tell them. She said she had just read a book, *Simply Brilliant*, about doing simple things in an extraordinary way. Things might seem simple, but if we give it a twist and make an effort to reach out, there are opportunities to be extraordinary.

Mr. Carrier asked if Ms. Piotrowicz had any questions for them and she said not at this time.

**Trustees Wrap-Up** (continued)

Ms. Hess thanked Ms. Piotrowicz for coming and speaking with the Trustees and the public. The next interviews are October 13 at 4:00 PM in the Community Room, October 20 at 4:00 PM in the Coolidge Room, and October 24 at 4:00 PM in the Coolidge Room. Mr. Carrier thanked the audience on behalf of the Trustees for sharing their questions, and Ms. Hess reminded the audience to use the feedback form or email their feedback to the Trustees.

The meeting ended at 4:45 PM.