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4-19-1994

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Recommended Citation

Pascarella, Don, "Library Services and Construction Act: Testimonies (1994): Speech 16" (1994). *Library Services and Construction Act: Testimonies (1994)*. Paper 26.

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PUBLIC LIBRARIES - SENATE WITNESSING APRIL 19, 1994

GOOD MORNING. MY NAME IS DON PASCARELLA, AND I'M HERE TODAY WITH THE PERMISSION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF MY EMPLOYER, HARRON COMMUNICATIONS CORP. WHOSE OFFICES ARE IN FRAZER, PA.

AFTER A 5 YR. EXPERIENCE WITH ENTREPRENUERSHIP IN OMAHA, NE, I DECIDED TO RETURN TO THE CABLE INDUSTRY. I ATTEMPTED TO DO THIS IN OMAHA, BUT MY DAD TOOK SERIOUSLY ILL AND I DECIDED THAT I COULD CONTINUE THE SEARCH FROM MONESSEN WHILE HELPING MY PARENTS, SO I RELOCATED TO MONESSEN (WHERE I WAS BORN AND RAISED) IN JUNE OF LAST YEAR. SINCE I WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE MANY ACCOMMODATIONS THAT A PUBLIC LIBRARY OFFERED, MY PLAN WAS TO WORK WITH, AND OUT OF, A LIBRARY. BUT I WAS IN A DILEMMA. MY MEMORY OF THE MONESSEN PUBLIC LIBRARY (AND MY ASSUMPTION) WAS THAT IT WAS AND WOULD BE ILL-EQUIPPED TO HELP ME. SO FOR ABOUT 3 DAYS AFTER MY RELOCATION I PONDERED A PLAN THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO HELP MY PARENTS, AND VISIT THE CLOSEST MAJOR LIBRARY, WITHOUT HAVING TO DRIVE TO PITTSBURGH, 60 MILES ROUND-TRIP. I DECIDED THAT THE MONESSEN PUBLIC LIBRARY COULD AT LEAST HELP ME TO LOCATE SUCH A LIBRARY, SO I WENT TO ASK. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE QUESTION WAS NEVER ASKED!!!

I WALKED IN, ONLY TO FIND A BEAUTIFULLY EQUIPPED, PLEASANTLY STAFFED LIBRARY, COMPLETELY CAPABLE AND WILLING TO ASSIST ME IN MY JOB SEARCH.

THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR THE WORKPLACE CENTER, CAROL SEPESKY, HAD BEEN FULLY TRAINED TO ASSIST INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS TO UTILIZE THE CENTERS' RESOURCES. THIS INCLUDED RESUME WRITING AND

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COMPOSING VIA COMPUTERS AND WORD PERFECT SOFTWARE; THE STAFF PROVIDED INFORMATION ON JOB OPPORTUNITIES BY WAY OF THE PA JOB SERVICE LISTINGS, EMPLOYMENT PERIODICALS (BOTH NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY) THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, AND MANY OTHERS.

THE MONESSEN PUBLIC LIBRARY WAS OPEN 65 HOURS A WEEK, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, INCLUDING 5 EVENINGS, SIX MORNINGS, AND SEVEN AFTERNOONS. THIS WAS EXTREMELY ACCOMMODATING FOR MY SCHEDULE...AND I NEVER FELT THAT I HAD TO GO ANYWHERE ELSE TO ACCOMPLISH MY GOAL.

AS TIME WENT ON I DISCOVERED MANY OTHER WONDERFUL SERVICES THAT THE LIBRARY HAD TO OFFER. SOME WERE APPLICABLE FOR MY USE, WHILE OTHERS WERE GEARED TOWARD HELPING THE UNDEREMPLOYED, THE FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE, DISPLACED WORKERS..... AND EVEN PROVIDES CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION THROUGH..PA CAREERS AND DISCOVER SOFTWARE, "LINKAGE" GROUPS SUCH AS THE PA DEPT. OF WELFARE; THEY PURCHASE DIRECTORIES, ACQUIRE COLLEGE CATALOGS AND VOCATIONAL AND BUSINESS SCHOOL INFORMATION. THE LIBRARY ALSO HAS A VIDEOTAPE COLLECTION OF LOCAL EMPLOYERS WHO DISCUSS JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH THEIR FIRMS, INCLUDING REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS, HOW TO APPLY, AND SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE ASKED DURING THE JOB INTERVIEW. I COULD GO ON AND ON, BUT THE POINT IS, THIS KIND OF PUBLIC SERVICE MUST CONTINUE.

NOT ONLY IN MONESSEN, PA. BUT ALSO THE STATE OF PA,,,AND THE NATION. I'M SURE THAT THERE ARE MANY TOWNS AND CITIES IN THE UNITED STATES THAT ARE SUFFERING FROM THE SAME HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE AND.....LET'S NOT FORGET OUR

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KNOWLEDGE HUNGRY AND EDUCATION THIRSTY, WHO CAN'T AFFORD TO DO ANYTHING BUT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR LOCAL PUBLIC LIBRARY.

IN THE LAST YEAR ALONE, MONESSEN'S LIBRARY ASSISTED OVER 1000 PATRONS IN EACH, THE WORKPLACE AND THE COMPUTER ASSISTANCE SERVICES. NOT TO MENTION THAT THEY HAD WELL OVER 1000 PATRONS REQUIRING OTHER ASSISTANCE AND USING THE REFERENCE LOGS.

STERLING PERFORMANCE!!!!

THE WORKPLACE PROJECT WAS FUNDED BY A GRANT FROM THE KELLOGG CORP. OF BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN IN ORDER TO ASSIST INDIVIDUALS TO FIND JOBS. THE MONESSEN PUBLIC LIBRARY WAS CHOSEN AS ONE OF SIX ORIGINAL SITES IN PA BECAUSE OF THE HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE MON VALLEY AREA, AND THE PROJECT WAS ADMINISTERED THROUGH THE STATE LIBRARY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

THE FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT ENDED IN 1990, AND SINCE THEN THE LIBRARY HAS DEPENDED UPON DONATIONS FROM PATRONS, AND KIND CONSIDERATION OF AREA BUSINESSES.....BUT HOW MUCH MONEY COULD THEY POSSIBLY RAISE ON THEIR OWN IN AN ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED AREA????? THEY AND ALL PUBLIC LIBRARIES NEED OUR HELP, YOUR HELP, AND THE HELP OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THESE EXCELLENT AND MUCH NEEDED SERVICES. THE LIBRARIES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A NECESSITY, AND ON THE SAME LEVEL AS PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

MY JOB SEARCH ENDED IN NOVEMBER, '93.

ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL, NEWS OF LIBRARY CLOSINGS IS VERY DISCONCERTING TO ME, AND SHOULD BE UPSETTING TO EVERY

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CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES....FOR WHERE ELSE CAN WE ALL, REGARDLESS OF OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION, GO TO GAIN ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON EDUCATION OR JOBS. ISN'T THE MAIN GOAL, AND SOLE MISSION, OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES TO MAKE INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE?? WHEN WE HEAR OF OUR LIBRARIES' DECLINE, WHAT ARE WE REALLY HEARING?? I THINK THAT WE ARE HEARING LACK OF SUPPORT FROM BOTH STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES. WE ARE NOT HEARING OR WITNESSING LACK OF SUPPORT OR INTEREST BY THE CITIZENS OF THE U.S.! IT IS WRONG TO ASSUME THAT EARNING COLLEGE EDUCATIONS FROM THE RESOURCES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES WENT OUT WITH ANDREW CARNEGI. OR THAT THE "HOW TO" OF SETTING UP A SMALL BUSINESS MUST BE LEARNED ON YOUR OWN. I WOULD BE WILLING TO BET THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST A DOZEN PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM WHO HAVE RECEIVED THEIR EDUCATION, OR ARE RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL SMALL BUSINESS, THROUGH THE AFFORDABLE SERVICES OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE THE POWER AND INFLUENCE TO REVERSE THE CYCLE OF OUR LIBRARIES' DECLINE (BY WAY OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE) LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE PUBLIC. DON'T LOCK UP OUR BOOKS, DON'T LET THE BOOKS BECOME OUTDATED, AND DON'T LET THIS INTERNATIONALLY ENVIED, AMERICAN INVENTION, BECOME A DINOSAUR. IF WE DO, THE ONLY QUESTION TO ASK IS THE QUESTION ASKED BY WILLIAM ECENBARGER IN THE APRIL ISSUE OF THE READERS DIGEST..... "HOW STUPID CAN WE GET ??".