

It's Been Good to Know You

It is hard to imagine it's been fifteen years since I stood outside the Nichols Library on a freezing second of January, waiting for the former librarian to meet me at the door and welcome me in as the new director. If I had been asked my long-term plans that day, I probably would have said that I might be there for 5-7 years, but to my surprise, five and seven crept into 10 and then 15. This by no means implies regret. It has been, by and large, a wonderful time. But all good things must come to an end, and so on January 1st, I will be stepping down and passing the baton, er, date due stamp, to a new director,

Words cannot express what a pleasure it has been to greet you at the library and help you find the right book or movie to make your day. It amazes me that our storytime toddlers are now school kids; that juveniles and teens when I first came are now working parents with kids; to see adults become grandparents and retirees. Along the way, I have said fond goodbye to many familiar patrons and welcomed new ones. To see staff come and go. Last year, I withdrew a series that was not used for a long time. It brought to mind a patron, now departed, who hung on every addition to that series. Books pass in and out of fashion. Perhaps, too, librarians.

I'd like to think I left the Nichols Library in a better place than when I arrived that cold day. I'm proud to have squeezed out every inch of available shelving so we could grow the collection without removing too many old favorites. We finally updated our dismal turn-of-the-last-century lighting so the Nichols is a bright and welcoming space. We created special sections for teen readers and beginning readers. We grew a collection of 30 audio CDs and maybe 60 DVDs to 1006 books on CD and nearly 2000 DVDs. We made the leap to digital in 2012, joining NH downloadable books, which has become wildly popular. We have since added streaming audio and video. In 2010, I compiled a history of the library's first 100 years. It is a testament to how much the town library has meant to the people of Center Harbor.

People have sometimes asked why I became a librarian. It was not my original intention in life. That said, there is something uniquely satisfying about the work. In [*One Long River of Song*](#) (which I highly recommend, by the way), Brian Doyle says:

“an leabharlann (the ancient Irish word for library) is where your community stores its treasures. It's the house that imagination built. It's where all the stories that matter are gathered together and shared. People come to it seeking for something that's deep and ancient. Who you are as a town is in the library.”

I hope that as I have come to know you that the Nichols Library has grown in a way that reflects your treasures and inspires your imagination. Where the library goes from here will not only be up to the new director or the Board of Trustees, but you, the patrons, by expressing your desires on how the Nichols Library should evolve. As for me, I'll leave you with a refrain from Woody Guthrie:

*So long, it's been good to know yuh
So long, it's been good to know yuh*

*This dusty old dust is a gettin' my home
And I've got to be driftin' along.*