



Recognizing a Debt to Pay

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Editorial Comment

It would have been difficult to enjoy my hobby as much as I have without the Western Philatelic Library. To have such an asset nearby is a privilege for us all. For me it is an intensely personal symbol.

Forty years ago, I was invited to join the FWPL Board. It was early in my involvement with what we call “organized philately.” I served as Chair of the SUNPEX Committee 1975-1976, and I was active in the Sunnyvale Stamp Society. Roger Skinner recruited me to join the Board at the close of SUNPEX in 1976. The main question we were dealing with at the time was where to relocate the library collection. The Sunnyvale Public Library had housed the collection, but they needed the room for their expanding general collection.

I moved out of the area in 1977 and lost touch with the Sunnyvale club and the library. My hobby was put on “hold” for 20 years as I dealt with the challenges of a corporate career, starting my own business and several house moves in the Bay Area.

Fast forward to 1998, and I dusted off my hobby as a means of relaxation from the stress I faced every day as a business owner. At WESTPEX that year (my first since 1976), I found Roger Skinner at the FWPL booth, and we chatted about the Library, some of the things that had transpired in the last 20 years and how I might get involved once again. Shortly after that chance encounter, I hit a very bad patch. I was unable to work in my business any longer due to stress, and the WPL was an important part of my recovery.



Access to Knowledge

Roger gave me a place to work and a set of tasks that required my hands but not a lot of thinking. Once a week, I came to the Library to process book covers and repair damaged volumes. When I was sufficiently recovered, he asked me to document and assist in improving library operations, the sort of work that I had done as a consultant.

I was asked to rejoin the Board in 2000, and I worked with other Board members to give the WPL an updated “look” in preparation for a fundraising/marketing push — any day the City of Sunnyvale could ask us to vacate the free rent space where we were, so we needed to find a place and the funds to support it.

For various reasons, all that fell apart, and I left the Board but still volunteered somewhat regularly up to the time the WPL moved in 2014. During that decade or so, there were other attempts to modernize and reorganize the Board and Library operations, with little lasting success.

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We (**all** of us) are at a critical junction right this minute. The WPL is being supported, as it has for 40 years, by a small number of people and a precarious financial position. If things do not change, there is a high probability that the WPL will cease to exist. How to fix this?

More people need to get involved:

- People who have business skills to populate the Board.
- People who have a love for books and/or philately to work in the library.
- People who have Library Science skills or experience to advise and revise operations to take advantage of technology and improve internal efficiency.
- People who live in or close to Redwood City to volunteer so that the library is open for more hours.
- People who have the funds to support the WPL.

Kudos to **Roy Teixeira** for the thousands of hours he has spent already and his commitment to take a leadership role in the next iteration. Kudos also to **Ed Jarvis** for getting involved with the new Board. I will re-engage as well, **if others will join us**. Contact me at dmcnamee@aol.com to add your name to the list.

Otherwise, I fear the future will see this wonderful asset disappear, forever. That would be a shame on all of us.