

October 10, 2007

Milwaukee Common Council
200 E. Wells St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202

RE: Proposed elimination of a bindery position

Dear Milwaukee Common Council,

The 2008 budget proposes to eliminate a much needed book binder position from the bindery department and move that skilled worker into a department where he will be over qualified for the work. In turn, an unskilled worker will be moved into the bindery. It seems that not only will this not save the library money it is a poor use of resources.

The bindery is integral to the functioning of the entire library system. There are currently three full time book binder positions in the department. Together, they are responsible for the repair and upkeep of thousands of books in the entire City of Milwaukee Library system. Additionally, the department prepares all new titles for circulation with an incredible turn around between the time new books are received until the time it is on the shelf.

Book binding is skilled trade. To remove a position from the department and replace it with a worker who will not have the experience, skill and training is an extremely poor utilization of city resources. An inexperienced worker will require extra supervision and training, taking away production time from the other book binders. Additionally, there will be tasks such as "clear plasticking", that an unskilled worker will be unable to do. Work can not be distributed evenly according to priority when an individual can not perform a number of tasks needed for the job because they do not have the skills needed.

The bindery department is an asset to the library system and its patrons. The city makes an effective use of its time and resources with an in-house department that is able to do the work for all the branches. Without it, the city would be forced to outsource to a private company, who would charge for each small item. Books would be in waiting for repairs for months before being shipped out and sent back, and patrons, would be not have access to the resources that their tax dollars pay for. In a city trying to promote growth and recruit more jobs, it would seem contradictory to outsource its own positions, while telling businesses to come to the area.

The most fiscally responsible decision that the Common Council can take is to keep the book binder position in the department. A budget needs to consider not only dollars, but the human capital attributable to each employee. In this case, there would be a re-shuffle of positions that would not create any monetary savings for the city. The city would actually loose time and money by underutilizing a much needed book binder and creating a position for an unskilled worker in a department that requires a high degree of skill and experience. I urge you to keep the position in the bindery, which will benefit everyone.

Sincerely,

Celestino Velasquez Jr.
Lead Book Binder