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8 March 2006
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The Mayor
Christchurch City Council
Christchurch

Dear Mayor

I wrote this article with reference to the proposed
closure of community libraries.
Can the decision be reversed? This is a core service to
the young and elderly. They deserve those libraries to
be kept open, Mayor.
With every good wish.

Yours faithfully,
Gregory Smith.

P.S. I met you some years ago up on the top floor of the
old railway station building

The possible closure of three community libraries in Christchurch raises some deep questions. Is the City Council called on to govern the 'whole' life of a community, or is it merely just a bankroller of the institutions it governs?

Historically speaking, small towns New Zealand grew up around two solid buildings - church and library. It was out of these buildings that a community was nurtured.

Christchurch is a city of distinct suburbs. Each suburb has multiple churches, halls, malls, schools and perhaps one library. Take away that library from a community and its people have no direct access to the feeding of their minds.

To many a student a library is an after school refuge - a homework house - to study and recreate. To many a senior citizen a library is a reading pub to fill up books for the following week.

In particular our senior citizens deserve a library in every community. They have fought wars for

the very freedom to have libraries. Their rates and taxes have gone a long way to procuring the material we enjoy in a library.

Unlike libraries of old, the modern multifaceted library has become interactive. Not a house of silence anymore, but a meeting and companionship centre; a fulcrum for what it is to live and be in a community.

Redwood library becomes a case in point: a library that serves a burgeoning Redwood-Belfast population base, right through to Kaiapoi. The Styx bridge has been transformed into a four lane over-bridge to cater for the increased volume of traffic that flows through these two suburbs.

Close the Redwood library down: where do these people go without a library? They will simply be forced into watching more mindless television or paying for books they can ill afford; ordinary people live on tight budgets.

The community libraries of Christchurch are the jewel in its crown. They serve all sectors of society.

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Their principles are enshrined in the manner of the librarian service, their access to knowledge and the mental stimulation so necessary to a healthy life.