

# One in a *Ver*Million

## Meet Jane Larson

**By David Lias**

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If anyone ever needs prove that change is the only constant thing in life, all they have to do is visit the Vermillion City Library.

Jane Larson has been at the helm there as librarian since November 1984, and has overseen constant improvements to the facility for nearly three decades.

"I think in the summer of 1985, we borrowed a computer from the school district," she said. "That's how we got our first computer until we could get some money to buy our own. Things like technology, arrangements, the way we put books on the shelves and process them – we were the first non-OCCL library to go online with our card catalog, so that was a big step to get everything computerized."

OCCL is a national cataloging system, and usually academic and larger libraries adopt that

online system. "We were the first public library in the state of South Dakota to go online, and convert our records that were on 3 by 5 cards to an online card catalog," Jane said. "They told us it would take three to five years to convert the records and we did in two years. In 1991, I believe, we had completed that."

"We purchased computers for the public and the staff, we hired temporary workers, we sent the records away to be digitized and we put bar codes on all of the books," she said. "We also became a member of the South Dakota Library Network which is the online consortium that does all of the libraries in the state of South Dakota."

Jane served on a consortium that helped plan and launch the South Dakota Library Network while employed at the I.D. Weeks Library on the University of South Dakota campus.

"I was I.D. Weeks Library for seven years, and during that time I took

summers off and moved to Denver, CO, and got my master's degree," she said. "I started there (I.D. Weeks) in '77, and Edith Siegrist was my supervisor."

Shortly before her death last July, Edith, who served for 24 years as a librarian science professor at USD, informed the city that she planned to donate \$800,000 for an improvement project to the city library. At the time, the Vermillion City Council had set aside \$1.4 million toward the project. Engineering estimates came in at about twice that, and city leaders were struggling to find other revenue to keep the project from stalling.

"She started as my library media professor at USD... and then she became my boss, and then she became my friend and my mentor," Jane said. "For 40 years, she was a definite influence, and she remembered the community's needs."

Thanks in part to Edith's generous gift, a new round of changes is coming Jane's way. Construction workers have begun excavating areas next to the library as the expansion gets underway.

Architects have designed the new 11,000 square foot addition to the library to complement the existing Carnegie Library building located next door to the north. It is estimated that the work will take approximately a year to complete.

Jane welcomes the change as it allows the city to offer better services to the public – a factor she loves about her job.



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"I really like working with people and finding what they need," she said. "I like doing the research – it is kind of like a treasure hunt – and I like working with public, no matter what age, and being a help to them. It can be everything from looking up a sports score or helping with genealogy or trying to locate a good fiction book. "There's quite a bit of

variety," Jane said. "We still give a lot of information out, a lot of material out, but it's formats different from what we ever dreamed of. The library is the only public place in the that has public access to computers, and we have a lot that use them."

The library staff will soon be gearing up for its summer reading program. "Last year in our two

month summer reading program, we had 5,000 participants," Jane said. "This year, with our construction, we'll be a little limited with our space, but next year – it will be all there."

"We are so excited," she said. "Every day it's just so much fun to look out and see the work that's going on."

### NOTICE

**VERMILLION TOWNSHIP**  
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