

Top-notch library credit to director

BY JUNE W. KENNEDY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Ellen Downey Rainville has the honor of being director of the J. V. Fletcher Library as it celebrates its Centennial year. Looking back, she recalls that her very first library assignment was "to get rid of the red tape." This, of course, was in 1972 when, as a Library Aide during her college years, she literally removed the red tape traditionally used for binding and storing legal documents and periodicals. And the pay was \$2.18 an hour!

Rainville, a Westford resident since 1967, received her B. A. summa cum laude in 1976 from the University of Massachusetts Boston and is a Phi Beta Kappa Society member. Following graduation, she served full-time as Westford's Library Assistant I Cataloger and purchaser of Adult Collections, a natural for this well-read English major.

During this period, she served as the curator and conservator of the library's Historical Collection, where she created and classified Genealogy and Local History volumes. Her expertise in grant writing became evident when five Historic Conservation awards were granted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. In keeping with the 25th anniversary of the town of Westford on Sept. 23, 1979, Rainville chose that October as Historical Preservation month, filling the calendar with memorable exhibits, lectures and and entertainment. Featured among the many conservation efforts from local notables were textiles woven by Alice Adams Prescott — 1780-1860 — (additional weavings belong to Essex Institute in Salem) and manuscripts by geneticist Nettie Stevens 1861-1912, a 1994 inductee into The National

Women's Hall of Fame, along with a warrant for "Westford's" first town meeting 1729/30.

In 1980, Rainville became assistant director, responsible for oversight of the staff, publicity, grant writing, adult collections and adult programming. Throughout these years she functioned variously as head of reference, head of circulation and assistant in the children's department, in addition to being public relations person to the schools, boards and community organizations.

In 1984, Ellen Downey Rainville became director of the J. V. Fletcher Library. She knew the library inside out. However, because of the new position, as written, required a masters in library science, Rainville entered Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science, graduating in 1988 and becoming a member of Beta Phi Mu, the International Library Science Honor Society. It pleases her that several J. V. Fletcher Library employees have gone on to earn their M. L. S. degree.

In town affairs in the early 90s, Rainville was involved in the Westford Legislative Action Committee and was appointed to the Special Financial Planning Committee. She is well-known in professional circles and served as chairman of Public Relations Committee, Mass Library Association 1991-1993 and is presently

serving her third year as president of the Massachusetts Library Association. Rainville also served as secretary, Friends of the J. V. Fletcher Library Inc. 1990-1992. For the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium, she served as vice president from 1988-1990; president from 1990-1992 and is presently personnel chair. She has active membership in state, regional and national library associations.



J.V. Fletcher Library Director Ellen Rainville

As J. V. Fletcher Library director, Rainville's managerial skills, strong interest in personnel, public relations, facility and building design, Municipal Board support and Program Development are evident. She has overseen the plan, monumental execution and administration

of collection automation, Westford's library is on-line!

Rainville's grant writing skills made possible the \$200,000 Mass Public Library Construction Program provisional award which aided the passage at a 1986 town meeting of a \$2.28 million dollar bond issue, making the library expansion possible.

In 1987, the formal groundbreaking ceremony was held. Wearing a hardhat, Rainville turned the first spadeful of soil for the library addition. That same month the library was awarded the John Cotton Dana National Public Relations award for their slide/tape production of "J. V. Fletcher Library... still making history." After two years of

disruption, including a 3 1/2 month closure, the formal dedication of the new library and rededication of former areas was held in April of 1989, with great ceremony.

Today, Rainville oversees a staff of 26 and an equal number of volunteers. The total library department budget is over two percent of the municipal budget and serves over 90 percent of the community. New services include the John Wagner Public Computer Room, Father Time Story Times, Technology Tours, CDs, Books on Tape and the Internet. The Bookmobile, M.O.S.T. Friends of the Library Book Sales and newsletters continue. Recently, the Preservation Grants have been submitted for the benefit of the Historical Collection. Over 900 meeting room reservations a year are made by town organizations. With over 90,000 volumes, the J. V. Fletcher is the fourth highest circulating library in the Merrimack Valley Consortium, with the lowest town population.

Ellen Downey Rainville has dealt with a lot of red tape through the years. Her reply to her present position at the top of the ladder and to the J. V. Fletcher Library today was typically modest: "Westford is a wonderful town to work for and Westford is a wonderful town to live in. I feel fortunate to have hired staff who share the same philosophy and service commitment—like-minded colleagues. I was left a wonderful legacy, having followed two very progressive directors. It made my job more pleasant and created community expectations that have a responsive library."

Surely the spirit of the Hon. J. Varnum Fletcher smiles down upon the community of Westford in this Centennial year of the J. V. Fletcher Library.

—June Kennedy is a Westford resident

Westford proper spelling in 1729