



Nominations for Karen E. Martines

Public Administration Library Department Head
Cleveland Public Library
Cleveland, Ohio

Nominator:
Nora McNamara
Cleveland, Ohio

1. How long have you known the nominee and how did you come to know him or her?

As an employee of the City of Cleveland's Department of Community Development I have been charged with Planning and Development responsibilities. It is a challenging position that requires research, reading of journals, professional magazines, articles, books regarding a whole spectrum of community and national information so that I may better perform my job.

It has been my great fortune and that of so many of us here in Cleveland City Hall to not only have a Cleveland Public Library branch located within the building but to have the very best possible manager of this research and service facility.

I came to know Ms. Karen Martines nearly 27 years ago, and I am among her loyal fans as I am constantly impressed by the breadth of assistance that she has provided to students, politicians of all levels of government, the whole department of law who have looked to her and the library as their personal law library. I have witnessed time again, people who know little about how government functions come to the library and receive assistance; regular pleasure readers are not forgotten as Karen Martines has always been willing to help them reserve books and advise them when they will be in for pick-up.

Karen makes sure we are all aware of new publications and offerings in the library and there is truly information for everyone from our safety forces, to architects, engineers, building inspectors, department directors, finance department staff, members of the Planning, Landmarks and Board of Zoning Appeals Commissions and Committees.

It is a remarkable and integral part of Cleveland City government and an essential research facility to the public. I believe it is as good as it is because of Karen's understanding of the needs of the users of this branch and never fails to maintain our interest in reading and research.

Karen has devoted 30 years to serving the public in ways that ripple through many legal, educational, professional and just plain everyday offices, homes and lives of all of the various people she has assisted.

There is truly something to be said for the human touch; technology is a wonderful thing but the interaction of a knowledgeable, intelligent and committed individual can do so much more to aid in the expansion of our knowledge and the quality of our community, government and even our self esteem.

Karen has never treated anyone with anything other than dignity and respect which is important when someone is uncertain of even the questions to ask to obtain the information they need.

I hope you select Karen because you too will be delighted when you do.

2. Please list a few ways in which the nominee has helped you and others and made your experience of the library a positive one. For instance, did the nominee inspire in you a love for literature; assist you in a research project or finding other information?

I have often had the experience wherein I need to research a topic related to planning and development activities. I recall in particular, a special research project for Cleveland City Council which dealt with ordinances and controls on noise of different types which impacted the quality of life in neighborhoods.

Karen took a tremendous amount of time showing me the location of all of the resources after asking me pertinent questions regarding the different aspects of the issue. It was because she was able to help me discern the material that was available and what I would actually need that I was able to respond to a committee of council with detailed information and recommendations. My testimony was much enhanced because I had so much information at my fingertips thanks to Karen Martines.

3. How has the library, and the nominee, improved the quality of your life?

I love the Public Administration Branch because it contains such a wealth of information and it is the library (I belong to three), wherein I spend the most time and never fail to find information I needed or became intrigued by the new offerings Karen Martines always has on display.

I can ask Karen about any programs the Cleveland Public Library offers and she can advise me or suggest something to me that might be of interest.

It has been my observation that people feel comfortable within the library surroundings; not because they are plush or have the most current technology but because a friendly face who is eager to assist is always there welcoming your presence and encouraging you to expand your knowledge.

I know I have availed myself of many books and programs offered through the library that I would not have known about except for Karen Martines and that over time this has truly enriched my life and increased my knowledge and competence as someone who is responsible for planning and development within a major city in the United States.

4. How does the nominee make the library a better place? Please be specific.

I have previously related that Karen ensures interesting books, periodicals and information about programs are prominently displayed. She solicits input from those who utilize the library as to why they do, what they feel is needed and what they believe might encourage to use the library.

Karen issues notices of potential reading material pro-actively and allows patrons an opportunity to help identify things of interest which we feel would be great additions to the library.

I want to be certain to mention also, the very fine staff that Karen has and how they under Karen's management provide terrific service; ever willing to help you find the information that you need; it is a very welcoming environment.

5. How has the librarian made a difference in the community?

As the manager of the Public Administration Library wherein information about government, the environment, public policy, planning, governance in detail and law and so much more are all available; Karen is euphemistically known as the "Empress of All Knowledge".

Karen and "her library" are essential to the education of students from Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Case Western University, high school students from Cleveland and its' environs and the general population.

Functioning as another arm of the educational system, Karen provides training in research which is a necessary lifelong skill from learning the basics of learning how to deal with a utility company to how a bill or legislation is created and vetted through our government system and becomes law and how you can make contact with your representative to express your rights as a citizen in that process.

Karen also has developed a network over the years so that she can not only tell people what offices to contact but has the ability to identify contacts who are more than happy to assist because the request was made either directly or indirectly through Karen. Her assistance to so many in the law department and at the College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University in particular, has resulted in a virtual "alumni" of persons who now keep in touch among themselves as a result of the network created by Karen's assistance to so many.

Nominator:
Terry Bindernagel
Cleveland, Ohio

1. How long have you known the nominee and how did you come to know him or her?

Ms. Martines and I met while I was conducting one of my first assignments with the Cleveland Fire Department that required research into past city practice. Since then Karen and I have multiple opportunities to talk and share personal and professional experiences for 26 years.

2. Please list a few ways in which the nominee has helped you and others and made your experience of the library a positive one. For instance, did the nominee inspire in you a love for literature; assist you in a research project or finding other information?

Ask Karen an obscure question. In many cases you are seeking an answer to several hundred years of city history. Compile that with state and federal statutes and imagine the possibilities. I once told Karen how I was trying to determine locations of old gas wells in the city which had been originally dug in the pursuit of early oil drilling explorations. The idea is the oil was not found, but the ensuing holes were perfect conduits for escaping underground gases which became evident as Cleveland progressed and prospered. Without further discussion, Karen called me over two years later and stated she had discovered a gas well map from the early 1900's. I am sure I am not alone in attesting to her ability (and obvious memory) to take obscure information and small fragments of city history, law, or personal knowledge and apply such to the multiple endeavors we encounter daily in maintaining a major city.

3. How has the library, and the nominee, improved the quality of your life?

Both professionally and personally. Karen is a consummate professional. She did not become a librarian by accident or fortune. Her path was direct and planned. She attained a Masters degree from Case Western Reserve University specific to her profession. She has since been specifically placed for a career of over 30 years at the library located within Cleveland City Hall for the benefit of public safety, city council requests and law department requests. Do not underestimate her ability to work within imposed timelines, staff issues and walk-in requests from the general public.

Personally Karen has guided me to other city employees to compare notes on college searches for our children. She maintains a very distinct knowledge of the people who work around her and near her. She has amassed a wealth of knowledge on guiding me to city personnel who have personal experiences similar to my own interests.

4. How does the nominee make the library a better place? Please be specific.

The longevity of her tenure is her greatest asset. Her commitment of multiple decades to her chosen profession speaks volumes to her credibility. Karen makes the library better by knowing you are making a request of a person who has been intimately involved in the city, its history and its leaders.

On another note, Karen's personality lends the library toward a place where the hectic nature of a city hall environment never seems to intrude. This has not gone unnoticed. We who visit City Hall often refer to this as "sanctuary". The Cleveland Public Library Public Administration Library seems by all rights to be a place that you enter and your heart rate declines. There are no AED's. If Karen and her staff were to put out roses, I believe I would leave knowing their scent.

5. How has the librarian made a difference in the community?

Karen extends herself effortlessly from librarian to personal acquaintance to community leader. She offers her time and knowledge to better causes she believes in. Her religious beliefs and attachments to the church are displayed in delightful anecdotes from religious leaders who I am sure have also gained through mutual discussion with Ms. Martines. She has a passion for her heritage and the heritage of others. Ms. Martines is sharp, witty and astonishingly committed. If she is to receive this award, she would never understand why she was chosen. That is why she is the perfect candidate.