

Librarian drafted other access rules

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LANSING — The Lansing Public Library director said Monday she helped draft policies at two other Chicago-area libraries restricting young children's access to the libraries.

But Director Jan Bojda said she had no immediate plans to impose a similar policy in Lansing.

Bojda's comments came after

The Daily Southtown Economist published a story Monday in which she said occasional problems with "latchkey children" prompted her to consider a policy setting a minimum age for unsupervised children who want to come to the library.

She said she got a number of telephone calls from people complaining about the idea and told The Associated Press she was misquoted in the Southtown Econo-

mist article, although the AP did not say on what she claimed to have been misquoted.

Bojda said she had helped draft policies at two other libraries that prohibit children younger than 8 from entering the library without an adult or "responsible adolescent."

Bojda said she supported the policies as an administrator at

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both the Park Forest Public Library and the Indian Prairie Public Library in Willowbrook, where she worked before coming to Lansing. This was confirmed Monday by staff at both libraries.

Bojda said the policy was needed in Park Forest because numerous youths were disrupting other library patrons. At Indian Prairie, she said, the librarian "wanted to be covered for liability."

On Friday, Bojda told the Southtown Economist she was considering a similar policy for Lansing because some children who come to the library alone after school were occasionally "rambunctious" and "our staff has to intervene. They have to play the role of parents."

She also said she feared the librarian would be held liable if a latchkey child were hurt while at the library.

"I think we should have a policy on latchkey kids, and have a minimum age, before it becomes a bigger problem," she said Friday.

She said she planned to discuss the idea at a staff meeting this week.

On Monday, she said she was not recommending such a policy now, "although we may discuss it at a future date.

"If we did implement a policy on it (latchkey children), it might

include an age restriction," she said Monday. "But it's not my recommendation at this point in time. I'm a firm believer in free access."

Her earlier comments about latchkey children were directed toward "latchkey kids in general," she said.

"I feel sorry for these kids. The fact that they're rambunctious is not their fault," Bojda said. She also said it was not only latchkey children who were occasionally rambunctious.

If the issue of latchkey children comes up at a staff meeting Thursday, she said, it would only be to discuss a recent problem the staff had with a young child who was believed to be involved in a purse theft at the library.

Dave Tanis, president of the Lansing Library Board, said Friday he had not heard about a proposal for a minimum-age policy but felt it would not be needed. He said Monday he had not changed his position.

Library Trustee Terry McKenna also said Monday he did not think a minimum-age policy was needed.

The library board voted down an age restriction proposed by former Librarian Joanne C. Jensen in the spring of 1988 because "we felt it limited the kids' ability to learn and grow," McKenna said.

He added, however, that "if she (Bojda) thinks we need it, we should talk about it. She's there every day, I'm not."

For Reference

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