

# 6th grader tries to alter library rules

By MARK A. VALCO

LANSING -- Can one sixth grader change the policy of an entire village library system?

The prodigious persuasion and charm of 12-year-old Scott Smith may do exactly that. Claiming to have the support of his school principal and school board, Smith addressed the Lansing library board Thursday evening, building an impressive case for allowing children to use the upstairs library for studying.

While present policy requires that younger children remain downstairs, Young Smith questioned whether the atmosphere downstairs was conducive, even for children.

Paving his way into the board meeting first with an official complaint registered in the mail, Smith, dressed neatly in shirt and tie, appeared before the board as Library Board President David Tanis read Smith's letter, and then allowed the 12-year old to address the board himself.

Board members agreed they were not only confronting a legitimate issue, but was also dealing with a competent spokesman. Perhaps what stilled

the board more than anything was the petition that Scott Smith brought in which contained the signatures of 117 adults and students that supported his position.

Smith's major complaint about the downstairs library is that it simply was too noisy for the kind of serious studying that research required. Smith proposed that the library change its rules to allow junior high students to use the upstairs.

In the letter read before the board, Smith called the library's rules unfair. Present policy requires that young children be accompanied by an adult, but Smith complained, "often parents are not available to accompany students...I think this rule should be changed," he contended, "because all the newer and more in-depth materials are kept upstairs, and the copy machine is also upstairs."

Librarian Jo Ann Jensen stated that young children were not prohibited from using the materials in the upstairs library, and that often children are allowed upstairs without an adult in order to obtain their materials. However, once the materials

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## Fighting for a cause

Scott Smith, a 12-year-old Memorial Junior High School student, addressed last week's Lansing Library Board meeting to protest the library's policy of not allowing 6th graders to study in the upstairs adult library. Smith presented the board with a petition signed by parents and peers in an attempt to alter the library's present rules. (Pointer Economist photo by Claudia Duffy)

# Library

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have been obtained, the present rule requires them to study downstairs.

Commenting about the upstairs library, Smith remarked, "It is also very quiet and provides a good study place."

Further commenting on the library policy, Jensen remarked,

SIXTH GRADERS ARE NEW TO MEMORIAL (Junior High), we have more children than we can handle upstairs. For every serious student," Jensen maintained, "We have five that come here to goof around." Also, Jensen said, "we have to do this because we don't have a choice. We're adding additional stacks and more and more books. This is not a perfect solution." she said, "but it's all we can do at this time."

Listening to the librarian's rebuttal, Smith was continued his fight - offering the following solution: "Maybe you could assign a special time, say 5 p.m. that would be a special time for junior high stu-

dents to study. It's really too noisy downstairs to study and concentrate."

Jensen replied, "if they are all up here, it'd be too noisy upstairs."

After listening to Smith's plea for a change of policy, board members seemed compelled to come up with a solution. Board member Gwenn Molinar suggested that perhaps two students at a time be allowed to study upstairs. Another board member impressed upon the board that a solution to the problem could be found. The suggestion that perhaps a special study desk be reserved for Smith upstairs was also made.

Tanis praised young Smith for having the courage to address a panel of adults, and he assured him that a solution would be hammered out. Tanis also told Smith that he was following a proper procedure for obtaining change.

After Smith left the meeting, it was apparent that he not only left an impression and a petition, but he also left a compelling force in the minds of the board members to find a solution that both the adults and sixth grader students can live with.