

Check It Out! Podcast Transcript
Episode #31
“Behind the business and communications of Sno-Isle Libraries”
Sno-Isle Libraries, July 12, 2019



Jim Hills:	00:00	In this episode of Check it Out!, we're going to hear from two members of the Sno-Isle Libraries leadership team talk about their past, their experience, what they do here at Sno-Isle Libraries, and where they think Sno-Isle Libraries is going in the future.
Ken Harvey:	00:23	Welcome to season 2 and episode 31 of Check it Out!, the Sno-Isle Libraries podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds.
Speaker 3:	00:31	The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.
Jim Hills:	00:38	My name is Jim Hills and I'm public information manager for Sno-Isle Libraries and your host for this episode. Today, we'll get to know two of the people who play leading roles in building Sno-Isle Libraries' national reputation as an innovative public library system. But rather than have me introduce our guests, I'm going to ask them to do that chore, along with their title here at Sno-Isle Libraries, so let's get going.
Gary Sitzman:	00:59	Hi, Jim. I'm Gary Sitzman. Glad to be here with you today, and this is my first podcast so this is kind of exciting for me. As administrative services director here, I've been with the library for about six years now and have enjoyed this time immensely.
Jim Hills:	01:14	And who's across the table from you here?
Ken Harvey:	01:17	My name's Ken Harvey. I am the communications director at Sno-Isle Libraries and sometimes I get the pleasure of actually helping to host this podcast. I've been at Sno-Isle Libraries for ... I'm into my eighth year, and an exciting organization to work for.
Jim Hills:	01:33	Yeah. So Gary, administrative services is a title that could have a variety of definitions. What's going on in that area? What happens under that title at Sno-Isle Libraries?

(Continued)

Gary Sitzman: 01:44 Well, it all depends on the audience when I talk about what I do at a library. If I'm talking with somebody that may be in the private sector that has business-related experience, I would probably just tell them it's more like the CFO of a corporation. You have those types of responsibilities. If I'm talking with somebody that is more public sector and that, administrative services, I might relate it more as a finance director, because so much of the work that we do is with regards to what you would expect in finance.

Jim Hills: 02:15 So sometimes I think internally administrative services gets referred to as "the business office."

Gary Sitzman: 02:21 Yes.

Jim Hills: 02:22 But there's more to it than that, right?

Gary Sitzman: 02:24 Right. Well, it is business office, but as I think about our responsibilities, we do handle most of the financial reporting that goes on for the library. We have responsibility over the system of internal controls. We want to ensure compliance with all of state laws, regulations that govern us. And we also want to be a value added source of advice and information to the organization.

Jim Hills: 02:56 And so Ken, full disclosure here, you happen to be my supervisor here in the communications department, so this might be a bit of a softball question and-

Ken Harvey: 03:08 Well, you will not be judged on how you do with this interview.

Jim Hills: 03:10 And you can anticipate you will continue to get softball questions throughout this because I like working here. What goes on in the communications department?

Ken Harvey: 03:18 Well, I'm often ... When I tell people about the job that I have at Sno-Isle Libraries, they often register surprise that a library even needs a communications director, or needs anyone working with communications, and so they ask me, "What do you do?" Well, our office handles communications and media relations, it handles advertising, promotions, and marketing of the library's resources and services and the materials that we have in our collection. We also deal with the strategic relationships that the library has, and so trying to engage various stakeholder groups and audience groups and groups of customers and fans of the library. And then also, working to ensure that taxpayers and voters and just general residents, whether they use the library

or not, understand the services that we offer and how we spend their money.

- Jim Hills: 04:37 I happen to have a little bit of background information on that, but let me ask the question for our listeners, because how tough can that be? The library's the library. There it is. You go in the front door and you're in a library. When you talk about services and the customers and the variety of services and things, items that are available, how big is that?
- Ken Harvey: 04:58 Well, people don't know what they don't know. So individuals who haven't used a library in a while or who might be relatively new to an area may not realize that Sno-Isle Libraries exists, that Sno-Isle Libraries is a community of community libraries, that we cover 2260 square miles within our service areas, which is two counties, Snohomish and Island County, and that we've got, I think at last count, 23 community libraries out there, brick and mortar libraries, along with essentially an online library, and a mobile library system. So there's a lot that we offer. We have, I think, over a million items in our collection that are available for borrowing or for downloading, for streaming.
- Ken Harvey: 05:58 We don't assume that everyone knows those things, and part of our job is to help them be aware of them and become aware of when we have new things added to our collection.
- Gary Sitzman: 06:11 Ken, I think that's been a little bit of my experience, too, dealing with public in general. Certain individuals have a perception of the library. They may have that picture of just a little small building that exchanges books, and when I talk about the library as being 23 branches, 500 people, it's like, "Really?" A lot of people just aren't aware of that, and I think sometimes speaking to the audience, it's a matter of knowing what they know about the library and the services that are being offered.
- Ken Harvey: 06:42 Yeah, absolutely. And in fact, one of the things that really makes my job interesting is that it's not just about letting people know what we can do for them. It's also about letting them know about us as an organization, because we're actually one of the larger public sector employers in Snohomish and Island County. We are a medium-sized organization of up to and I think sometimes over 500 employees, up to 700 volunteers within our organization who come from the community and volunteer service. So we have a lot of individuals who are part of Sno-Isle Libraries and our providing service and resources to others.
- Ken Harvey: 07:36 And we're funded from ... The work that Gary and his crew have, a responsibility over ... It's my job to tell the world about

their work, and the stewardship that they bring and the rigor they bring to making sure that we handle the public funds that we receive from taxpayers effectively and efficiently and reasonably.

- Jim Hills: 08:04 So talking about these kinds of things, the messaging that we're bringing out to the public about the library ... But this is all about you, so what did you personally find surprising when you first came to the library? Maybe something you didn't know?
- Gary Sitzman: 08:19 Well, I think I was one of those individuals that had a much narrower view of what the library did. Yes, I was aware of the availability resources ... the collection, the books, the DVDs, the ability to get information from the library was there. I think what was a eye-opener for me was the role the library really plays relative to the community and a healthy community at that. And it's ingrained right in their purpose to engage with the community and yeah, that I think is the much more expansive view that I developed once I came here.
- Jim Hills: 09:04 What about you? You've been here for a while and it's your job to tell people about it. Is there something that surprised you at the beginning or maybe still surprises you?
- Ken Harvey: 09:11 You know, there's hardly a week that goes by that I'm not surprised about something else I didn't know about Sno-Isle Libraries, and sometimes public libraries in general. I mean, there are so many things that we offer that ... I think early on, just discovering the number of digital products that we offered was just very surprising, and especially for individuals who might be interested in starting their own business or may be already working in the business world or in management, lots of resources that are available for them.
- Ken Harvey: 09:54 Now, this wasn't the first library I worked for. I actually worked for Tacoma Public Library early in my career, and so I remembered from that earlier experience with libraries how involved the libraries are in early literacy and working with children, making sure that they're prepared for kindergarten and first grade and for success in school. And so I took that as a given, but even still, coming back to work for a public library eight years ago, the depth of the work that we do with childcare providers and making sure that they're really trained to do a great job in their work. I mean, I think that really surprised me and I found really gratifying to discover just how integral the library is to the life of a successful community.

Jim Hills: 10:55 Gary, Ken just mentioned that he worked at Tacoma before. I'm assuming that this isn't your first job. Where else have you worked before you came here?

Gary Sitzman: 11:05 No, it has not been my first job. Well, yeah, I've got a history of 32 years with the pulp and paper industry, working in private sector.

Jim Hills: 11:15 Pulp and paper.

Gary Sitzman: 11:15 Yeah. And then after that, did consulting for three years, and that's what really led me here to the library when a position opened up, and I've been doing that now for six years.

Jim Hills: 11:27 So in administrative services, business-related services in the pulp and paper industry? Is that what you were doing?

Gary Sitzman: 11:37 Yeah. I really just started as a cost accountant way back in 1977 and worked up through the ranks. Pretty much a typical trajectory for a finance person within a corporate ladder. And yeah, served here at the old Scott Paper Company plant, which was then bought out by Kimberly-Clark, and was at-

Jim Hills: 12:03 Down on the Everett Waterfront.

Gary Sitzman: 12:04 Yeah, on the Waterfront, and was there until 2009 when they went about shutting it down.

Ken Harvey: 12:10 How large an operation were they, Gary? When they had it?

Gary Sitzman: 12:12 When I got there back in 1989, we had about 1250 employees.

Ken Harvey: 12:17 Wow.

Jim Hills: 12:17 Sounds big.

Gary Sitzman: 12:18 Yeah, so it was pretty large. Three union operation pulp and family care products were produced there.

Ken Harvey: 12:27 Working around the clock?

Gary Sitzman: 12:28 Yeah, it was a 24/7 operation.

Ken Harvey: 12:31 Wow.

Jim Hills: 12:31 They were a big deal.

Gary Sitzman: 12:32 Yeah, it was. And little by little it got a little smaller over the years. It was a bittersweet decision when the company decided to close the mill and it was kind of a tough one for folks to deal with.

Jim Hills: 12:50 What other kind of industries were you consulting for?

Gary Sitzman: 12:54 I did mostly in timber industries. I had a few smaller just consultation type gigs that I did. But to be frank, I spent a lot of my time working, again, for Kimberly-Clark because it's one thing when you close the mill, but then there's really what happens after you close the mill. And there was the whole demolition of the facility, the reclamation of any stuff that could be recycled, there's contracts that needed to be unwound, there's real estate that the company owns in the area that they want to dissolve. So a lot of cleanup work that occurred during that time that because of my position and, I'll say, institutional knowledge that I had of that mill at the time was beneficial, and so Kimberley-Clark just contracted me to continue on doing work there. So that took a bunch of my time.

Jim Hills: 13:54 Yeah, that sounds really interesting. Ken, besides Tacoma, where else have you been in your professional life?

Ken Harvey: 14:01 I've been fortunate to work in the private sector, the public sector, and the nonprofit sector, so I am very aware of and have experience working with organizations with essentially no budget, trying to figure out how to get things done, working with organizations that are really driven by profit motive and trying to expand their footprint in the marketplace, and then also in the public sector with organizations trying to deliver services and resources that are tax funded. Each one of those areas have some things in common and some things that are significantly different in terms of approach and motive and realities that they have to deal with. I would say that probably one of the more interesting areas that I had an opportunity to work in was early on in television and radio and-

Jim Hills: 15:12 You do have a nice voice on the microphone.

Ken Harvey: 15:15 Gosh, thank you. I have to, I guess, credit my mom and dad for that.

Jim Hills: 15:22 It's in the genes.

Ken Harvey: 15:24 And also a voice coach I had when I interned for KREM AM/FM television in Spokane, Washington. I was working in one part of

the building down in shipping and delivery and going to school at the same time, and did an internship with a radio production guy there named ... Oh, Bob, I can't remember your last name. All of a sudden my mind went blank. But Bob took me under his wing and helped me lose a Mississippi twang that I had and drawl that I thought that I had lost. Because I was a military kid and had lived a lot of different places, and as a kid you pick up wherever you live and then you slowly start to lose it but layer on other things from the next place you live. And so he helped me develop my voice as a better instrument.

- Jim Hills: 16:30 So KREM was like your version of being discovered at the Hollywood soda counter there, right? You're working in delivery and you get discovered.
- Ken Harvey: 16:39 Working in the back rooms of the soda fountain.
- Jim Hills: 16:41 Yeah, there you go, huh?
- Ken Harvey: 16:42 Yeah.
- Gary Sitzman: 16:43 I can identify with Ken on the various accents because I also came from a military family and I lived in 13 states before I got out of high school, and so ...
- Ken Harvey: 16:53 Yeah, that sounds familiar.
- Gary Sitzman: 16:53 ... I remember distinctly a move that I made from Saratoga Springs, New York down to Hampton, Virginia.
- Ken Harvey: 17:00 Wow.
- Gary Sitzman: 17:00 I was in fourth grade and the first day in class ... and you know you're always feeling like the awkward kid coming into class ... and the teacher asked me a question and then I said, "Yes," and ... it was "yes" or "no," thank God ... answered, "Yes," and she says, "Yes what?"
- Ken Harvey: 17:16 Yes what?
- Gary Sitzman: 17:16 And I'm like, "Yes, yes?" I didn't know. And she says, "Here we address us as 'yes ma'am.'" And I, "Oh, yes ma'am." And so you learn ...
- Ken Harvey: 17:27 Absolutely.

Gary Sitzman: 17:28 ... what those etiquettes are in these various place. And then I was there for two and a half years and my dad was transferred up to Wisconsin and I got into class there, seventh grade now, and a question came up and I answered, "Yes ma'am." Boy, you should have seen those heads snap in that classroom like, "Where is he from?"

Ken Harvey: 17:50 "You're not from here, are you?"

Jim Hills: 17:54 So how do you think those experiences have shaped who you are now and for the job that you're doing now? How's that all come together for what's in front of you?

Gary Sitzman: 18:05 Oh wow. Good question. I think children in general are pretty darn adaptable when they're young and I tend to believe for myself that translates into being able to accept and respond to change very quickly. I feel like I'm a very adaptable individual. So throw me a new situation and I will adapt to it relatively quickly. So I-

Jim Hills: 18:38 Do you think that's a skill that works for you wherever you've worked?

Gary Sitzman: 18:43 Well, I think if I translate that into my various positions I've been in, there's an element of leadership that I think draws upon that. Some people are hesitant to change. I think leaders really have a sense of vision of where they want to go, they have some enthusiasm around trying to get there, a bit of passion. But yeah, there's this not being afraid to step out and to take a chance or accept the risk of making a decision that I think builds on just this adaptability.

Jim Hills: 19:20 Sure. I worked for a place one time where part of the HR grading was ... there was an item on there that said, "comfort with ambiguity" and I think it's kind of the same thing. So do you need direction, or are you adaptable to new situations, can you work in an area where while there's a goal, there might be a couple of paths to get there?

Gary Sitzman: 19:50 Right.

Ken Harvey: 19:51 I think that there is really a lot to be said for growing up as part of a family, first of all that has some military service around it, because it teaches you right off the bat that there's something greater than you, there's something bigger than your own problems, that you're serving something much bigger. And when we have dads and moms who are in military service,

that's woven into the family's fabric. Same thing can be said for if someone's in ministry or doing something that's really kind of service related within the community. I mean, that gets woven through, and I think that in some ways it helps breed and raise individuals who are not just about themselves. They want to make a difference, they want to help, and they're looking to not just create problems, but help solve problems.

- Jim Hills: 20:53 It sounds like you're talking about perhaps others, but are you talking about yourself there too?
- Ken Harvey: 20:58 Yeah, absolutely. I look at my family, and Gary may echo this too with his own. I look at the lives that my family members have lived, and they're really all about service. They've looked for opportunities to help make a difference in their communities or larger ... in the state, within the country, on the globe somewhere ... and I think it's really remarkable, but ... And in some ways it's remarkable, but it was just the way our family has been. And at this point in my life looking back at our family, I just really appreciate that about our early life experience.
- Gary Sitzman: 21:48 Yeah, I agree with you, Ken. And there's pluses and minuses. We always thank our veterans and that when we see them, people that serve. I kind of reach out a little further to just their families, too. I mean, the families ... I look at my mother. Five kids, my dad [inaudible 00:22:05] Navy, under the water for three, six months at a time.
- Jim Hills: 22:09 Wow.
- Ken Harvey: 22:09 Six kids in ours.
- Gary Sitzman: 22:12 Yeah, so kudos to Mom ...
- Ken Harvey: 22:14 Absolutely.
- Gary Sitzman: 22:15 ... and those family members that really hold down the fort while their spouse is off doing service and that. I would also say that, being kind of a Navy brat kid growing up, there's something that I developed much more here later in life, and that was having bounced around so much as a young child, I never experienced establishing deep friendships with individuals because you do relocate quickly. I think the longest we ever lived in any one place was three years. The shortest was probably six months. And so you learn to make friends

quick, but you don't develop what I'll say is a deep friendship. And now with my kids and-

Ken Harvey: 23:03 Because you also learn to say goodbye ...

Gary Sitzman: 23:05 Oh, you do.

Ken Harvey: 23:05 ... pretty easily.

Gary Sitzman: 23:06 Yeah. And I think as I've grown and have been more stable with my family, I have developed deeper friendships with people. Even with my wife, who grew up in a small community, I know members of her ... kids that she grew up with really well. I mean, I attend their class reunions and stuff like that. I know them better than anybody I would ever know from my own classes or schooling and that.

Ken Harvey: 23:36 That's true. That is so true. Me too. And I was going to say ... I was waiting for an opportunity to say, you learn to make friends easily, you learn to say goodbye without a lot of emotional fanfare. The one thing I would say, though ... and then you learn to make new friends very easily, and so that has really helped professionally in my life. But Gary, your point about deep friendships, that is so true. And my wife too, born and raised in Spokane, a family that did not move around a lot, and she has some childhood friends that she still is very thick with, and they have become my friends and my deep set of friends.

Jim Hills: 24:30 So the job you guys are doing, the people that you are come to this place. What do you like best about working at Sno-Isle Libraries?

Gary Sitzman: 24:39 For me, I think ... It's great people to work with, but for me personally, the ability to drive change. That is something that I like to do. I would go a little crazy if I wasn't trying to change something or make it different, make it better. It's just my makeup. I'm a tinkerer. I'm a garage tinkerer, I love doing that stuff. Even at school, I was kind of a split business with engineering, didn't know which way I wanted to go there. So I like mechanical things, I'm a visual person. But yeah, for me, it's driving change and I need to be able to look at where am I headed and always every day just drive a little bit more improvement towards that goal.

Jim Hills: 25:26 And the organization is open to that?

Gary Sitzman: 25:29 Very much so, yeah. There's some folks that will go kicking and screaming, and I don't spend much time with them. But you really have to focus on the folks, the 10, 20 percent, that are really kind of in the same camp as you and are willing to make that change and really to drive it. That other 60, 70 percent, they'll just go along for the ride. And then of course you've got the few folks on the tail end that will go kicking and screaming.

Gary Sitzman: 26:01 But I focus ... When I try to drive change, I look for people that are on board and we work together as a team to try and make things happen, and that's just been my experience.

Jim Hills: 26:13 How about you, Ken? What do you find that you really like here?

Ken Harvey: 26:17 Probably the best thing I like is that there is never a boring day working for Sno-Isle Libraries.

Gary Sitzman: 26:24 That's true.

Ken Harvey: 26:24 We serve so many different individuals and communities. We serve customers and non-customers. We have all kinds of things, initiatives and changes that are continually happening in this organization, and so there's always something new to deal with. I find that this is a remarkable organization because it was a good organization before I got here. I and Gary have been given opportunities to help continue to improve it, keep us on a continual learning and improvement track, and empowered with the ability to do it and the tools to do it. And so that has been, to me, just really rewarding.

Jim Hills: 27:20 It sounds like both of you really like being here, you like what you're doing, which can be a double-edged sword. It can start to consume. So what do you do to keep yourself centered?

Gary Sitzman: 27:32 Pray a lot.

Ken Harvey: 27:35 Amen.

Gary Sitzman: 27:38 Keeping myself centered ... You know, I really haven't had ... I assume you're talking kind of work and life balance, right?

Jim Hills: 27:47 Work/life balance, yeah. And sometimes it might just stay at work, but it can be outside of work. What do you do to avoid becoming consumed by the job, burned out on the job? What do you do? How do you find that?

- Gary Sitzman: 28:01 Let me put a little context on my answer here just for a moment. I went through a period in my life when I had certain responsibilities with the merger of two corporations, and during that time, we did 45 days straight, 10, 12 hours a day, trying to make certain things happen. And during that timeframe, I could feel myself getting older. That's not a good thing. That's not a good balance. And what was interesting to me is that there were these young folks that were coming out from New York City, flying all the way out here to Everett. They'd be working 18, 20 hours and catching their sleep on the plane.
- Ken Harvey: 28:43 Wow.
- Gary Sitzman: 28:44 And I'm watching them get old in front of my eyes, just in this month type period. And I'm looking at it and going, "Wow. These folks don't have a life." And it's certainly not a balance that I would appreciate. But I also learned during that timeframe that the work was never done, and at the end of the day, you always felt like, "Gosh, I didn't get done what I needed to get done," and it would weigh on you and you'd carry it in your head and you'd be thinking about it going to bed and the moment your eyes pop open in the morning, that's the first thing that flashes in your mind again is, "Okay, what do I got to get done today?" And you start the routine and you're in the little hamster wheel.
- Gary Sitzman: 29:26 What I learned from that experience ... and it's always good to reflect on these types of experiences ... is it's not so much what you didn't get done. It's that you have to take time at the end of the day, breathe, and pat yourself on the back for what you did get done. And I still do that to this day. I don't focus on what didn't get done today. I look at, what is it that I got done today? Did I use my time wisely and did I drive some improvement again today?
- Jim Hills: 29:57 That's really interesting.
- Gary Sitzman: 29:58 And then I just recognize I've done what I can, I did my best efforts. What happens tomorrow? We'll pick it up then and we'll just keep on moving forward. So that's kind of how I center myself.
- Jim Hills: 30:10 Yeah, that's great. Ken, how about yourself?
- Ken Harvey: 30:14 I think that in my life, it's been really helpful for me to learn to rest, sometimes learn to walk away, and contemplate and appreciate and let things that may have been said to me or

passed on to me, give them an opportunity to resonate. I'm almost doing word poetry here, aren't I? Because I could think of words like "percolate" and all that as well. But when I was in my 30s ... yeah, mid to late 30s ... I ended up really hitting the wall. I was a workaholic, I was really busy trying to establish myself and be visibly recognized as a person of worth.

Ken Harvey: 31:16 And at the time, among other things I was doing, I was working for the city of Reno, Nevada as their public information officer and cable franchise administrator, which was added to my title. And I was overwhelmed and exhausted. It was just so much that was called upon to do, but I was trying to juggle that and a number of other balls and I hit the wall. And through that experience, I had to learn to deal with this feeling of, or being in the state of, overwhelm. And I just want to do just a little shout out here to Sarri Gilman, who is a remarkable person, a psychotherapist, and someone who did a TEDxSnoIsleLibraries talk for us, who wrote a book in the last few years called Naming and Taming Overwhelm that talks about this state of just having so much on your plate that you just can't find a way through it. It becomes like a labyrinth for you.

Ken Harvey: 32:25 And it was something that ... She gave me a copy of a book and I've been rereading it and just reminding myself that there's a time that we need to set aside to rest ourselves, there's a time that we need to set aside to be refreshed, and to learn to relax and let go. And so I try and practice that so that I can really bring my best self to work and to be who I need to be for others.

Jim Hills: 33:01 I appreciate hearing how you're handling the pressures at work and how within the work framework, how you can keep yourself fresh. So away from work, what do you do for fun?

Gary Sitzman: 33:17 Well, for me, I'm a bit of an outdoorsy guy so I do mountain biking, I do camping. I also have musical interests. I was a classical violinist when I was growing up and have switched to guitar and now a ukulele and I recently got a classical guitar, so I'm doing classical music on guitar now. So yeah, between that and family, I have-

Jim Hills: 33:47 It keeps you busy?

Gary Sitzman: 33:48 It keeps me busy, yeah.

Jim Hills: 33:50 I know that at one point there was a meeting that we were in and you said you had to leave a little early because you were

going to head over to Lord Hill or something to go mountain biking.

Gary Sitzman: 33:56 Oh yeah.

Jim Hills: 33:57 So tell us about the biking piece.

Gary Sitzman: 33:59 Well, yeah. I swear, if I had a place like Duthie, which is a biking park down in Issaquah area ... if I had that kind of a park when I was a kid, I probably wouldn't be sitting in front of this microphone today because I was just-

Ken Harvey: 34:21 What would you be doing?

Gary Sitzman: 34:22 I would be a terror on wheels. I wouldn't be alive. I wouldn't have survived.

Ken Harvey: 34:28 Oh, okay.

Gary Sitzman: 34:28 I had no fear. I took up mountain biking a little bit later in life, got a double suspension bike because my bones don't handle the bounces as well as they used to. But I really enjoy just getting on bike trails and things like that and just getting out there and riding my little butt off. I had a very fast cadence in general and I'm pretty aggressive with things still in my older years here, still enjoy it a ton.

Jim Hills: 34:58 Did you do bikes before you picked up mountain biking as an adult?

Gary Sitzman: 35:02 I did biking, yeah, just in general. I never did long distance biking. I was pretty much a runner most of my life. I enjoyed running more than I enjoyed walking, so anywhere I went it was always on a run.

Jim Hills: 35:15 Oh, there you go.

Gary Sitzman: 35:16 It was just ... Then kind of the knees started giving out a little bit and you find out cycling's a little better for them and I enjoyed that just as much.

Jim Hills: 35:23 So are you out on your bike most of the time, every week?

Gary Sitzman: 35:26 No, I wouldn't say every week. I try to get out periodically, but I would say it's more event oriented where I need a chance to get out and get some fresh air where I'll go out and do some biking.

And I really do enjoy being out on forest trails, things of that nature, as opposed to in-town riding or road bike type riding.

Jim Hills: 35:49 How about you, Ken? What do you do for fun?

Ken Harvey: 35:50 Yeah, so Gary and I, we do share a little bit more here, along with military service, military brat-dom. When I was young, I started learning to play the piano and took viola lessons and played the viola for a couple of years. And recently, to actually help with relaxation and to kind of scratch an itch that was happening inside me, I decided I wanted to relearn the viola so I went on amazon.com and bought one, an affordable little one, and have been kind of reteaching myself, which for me means not being constrained by just knowing every note and sight-reading. It's picking it up and trying to play it kind of almost like a fiddle, playing music that I like and that I can hear in my head and seeing if I can hear it on the strings as well.

Ken Harvey: 36:55 One thing I have to do in terms of just a shout out to family ... Family, they are-

Gary Sitzman: 37:01 I think we know where this is going with learning the viola.

Ken Harvey: 37:03 They are incredibly patient when we're learning music, learning to hone our musical skills, because some of the sounds that we can make-

Gary Sitzman: 37:12 Especially on stringed instruments.

Ken Harvey: 37:13 Yeah, especially on stringed instruments can be really excruciating, but I think maybe even with brass and wind instruments as well. When you're learning to play the tuba or clarinet or saxophone, and some of the squeaks and screeches and things. And I know that my family's been incredibly patient and for me it's been really fascinating just the last few months where suddenly my brain and muscle memory is coming into play and it's not screeching the way it used to and the songs are sounding more recognizable than they had been.

Jim Hills: 37:53 I don't know. We'd better go ask your neighbors about that.

Ken Harvey: 37:56 Well, one of my neighbors found me out in the yard one day playing the viola and he's like, "So Ken, have you been banished to the outdoors?" I said, "Well, kind of." But guitar, I've picked up the guitar, trying to learn that as well. And so those are things that we do both in the enjoyment and for relaxation

because it's incredibly satisfying when it sounds the way you intend it to sound.

Gary Sitzman: 38:30 That's true, that's true.

Ken Harvey: 38:32 But then also knowing that great music is a universal language. Music just really kind of cuts across a lot of things that can divide us and creates the opportunities for people to enjoy one another and enjoy something in common.

Jim Hills: 38:50 So viola's something that you're working on now. Any hobbies or skills that are still on your to-do list, your wishlist?

Ken Harvey: 38:56 I've been kind of discovering how to make things because there's within me this kind of designer person and I'm a maker, and so I've been learning to make things using Mod Podge and other materials. It might be said that I'm crafty.

Jim Hills: 39:17 Yeah, we're going to see you at craft shows?

Ken Harvey: 39:21 Yeah, who knows? I've got a growing collection that my wife would like me to do something with.

Gary Sitzman: 39:26 I think there's an element of creativity between you and me, Ken, that's in there. You may recall I did some glasswork ...

Ken Harvey: 39:32 That's right.

Gary Sitzman: 39:32 ... a stained glass piece of artwork for my parents as a gift. And that was something new and different for me and was just along those lines.

Ken Harvey: 39:40 Yeah, nice work.

Gary Sitzman: 39:41 I wanted to try something different.

Jim Hills: 39:43 Anything else on your list there that you think, "I'd like to give that a try."

Gary Sitzman: 39:47 Oh, I'm not a guy that ... If you said, "What's your hobby?" I don't have hobbies. I mean, life is my hobby. I am just a person that just dabbles with everything. That's why I call myself a tinkerer because there's nothing that I won't do. I mean, I'll go play golf, I play tennis.

Ken Harvey: 40:03 We're curious by nature.

Gary Sitzman: 40:05 Yeah. But I would not want to play tennis every night, nor get really proficient at it. Golf, no. Maybe once a month, maybe.

Jim Hills: 40:13 They say you can never get proficient at that.

Gary Sitzman: 40:14 Yeah, but I'm not focused on any one of these things, nor do I enjoy it to the extent that I would exclude other things from my life.

Ken Harvey: 40:22 We've got that in common.

Gary Sitzman: 40:23 I like to do a lot of stuff. And I was fascinated with your comments about the screeching. I started playing violin when I was in second grade. Came home from school one day and told my mom I wanted to play violin and she was really hesitant, as you can imagine. "That's what I need is a second grader playing a violin." But if you ask her, she'll say, "You never went through that screechy cat sound as a student." And I learned under the Suzuki Method ...

Ken Harvey: 40:52 Oh, wow.

Gary Sitzman: 40:53 ... which is a listen and play method, so I did not learn to read music until I was in fifth grade and there was a plus and a minus to that. On the plus side, I learned to be able to hear things and translate that very quickly and that's something I still use to this day. The negative side was when I got into orchestras, sight-reading music was a real deficiency for me and I had to work on that. But I still enjoy just the gift of music, what comes from the head and the heart, and just being able to jam with YouTube videos and things like that. It's just a blast. It's an absolute blast.

Jim Hills: 41:35 That sounds really fun. So we've been talking about some of the work stuff here and some of your personal piece. Let's get back to professional advice. Both of you are successful professionals.

Ken Harvey: 41:46 Okay, if we have to.

Jim Hills: 41:48 Let's talk about some advice you might have for others who are just starting to carve out their careers. You're both pros, you're successful at it, you have been successful at a couple of different workplaces. What's it like to be a member of a leadership team like you are here at Sno-Isle Libraries?

Ken Harvey: 42:08 I think-

Gary Sitzman: 42:09 Ken, you want to do this?

Ken Harvey: 42:10 Yeah, I'll jump in. First of all, it's an incredible ...

Gary Sitzman: 42:15 Privilege.

Ken Harvey: 42:15 ... privilege to be part of this leadership team. My sense is that the individuals who are part of this team are incredibly committed, they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience with them and are individuals who are worth following. This organization has such a wonderful mission to start with and vision, and the policymakers we have on the board provide kind of additional guidance to us that is just remarkable. But then the individuals on this team I have found inspire me and they give me additional focus and perspective that really helps me always be confident that we are heading in the right direction as an organization.

Jim Hills: 43:23 [crosstalk 00:43:23] Gary?

Gary Sitzman: 43:23 I echo Ken's comments there. I'm not even sure how much I would add to it. I think I picked out of your question too, you were talking about what advice? Was that advice to-

Jim Hills: 43:31 Yeah, so as much as your experience there on the leadership team here, advice on someone who ... how to navigate being on a leadership team.

Gary Sitzman: 43:42 Okay. Well, I think one of the things I would advise somebody on, new coming into work or otherwise, is in all your dealings, deal with everybody respectfully and carry out your own actions with integrity. Never ever ever sacrifice your integrity for anything. It's one thing that I think is probably most important about being a leader. If you have that integrity, then the other thing I think is really key and important is developing trust. I don't think effective leaders can do so without having trust with the individuals, and I think that's one of the things that makes our leadership team here very strong, is that we trust that individuals, when they take actions or make decisions, are doing so with the best intent. And we may not always agree with what that action is or whatever, but we know it's being done with the best intent and we have that confidence. I think that's important in our culture.

Ken Harvey: 44:58 Yeah, absolutely. And sometimes what you discover ... Well, I shouldn't say sometimes. I have absolutely discovered that the things that I had been successful in, the ways that I had acted that had led to success that had gotten me to certain levels of recognition in an organization title or authority, they're not

always enough to get you to the next level. And so if a person has an objective, they want to move up in their career to another position, another level of authority, a title, what you have to commit yourself to, to being willing to continue to learn and potentially change to adapt to new situations, because that next level may require a different set of skills and knowledge than you've had up to now.

Ken Harvey: 46:15 And along with that is just that kind of willingness to continue to reflect on and accept that, "Okay, the things that have gotten me up to now aren't going to be enough. I have to be willing to adapt myself, which means my willingness to change myself." Which can be a little scary for us, and sometimes what really helps is being willing to admit that to someone and saying, "Hey, would you be willing to help me? Would you be willing to mentor me or help me bounce situations off of that I'm not really sure what the right thing is for me to say or do in this situation or to help me see a different perspective or to help me be aware that I might have a blind spot? So you can tell me where my blind spot is so I can work on it."

Gary Sitzman: 47:20 Right. That's really key, too. You're touching a little bit on something I would bring out with, is the relationships that you establish with your fellow workers, your peers. Just the ability to be able to accept criticism or have somebody feel comfortable enough with you that they can give you good, honest feedback is so important as you develop as a leader, so those relationships. One of the things I practice and have done so for years, especially in this age of social media and that ... people let call the person that's just down the hall from them to have a conversation or whatever. Me, I will ... in fact, very seldom will I ever call anybody in this building, okay? We've got 100-some-odd employees here. Very seldom will I ever give somebody a call directly. I will go down to their office. I like to do face-on-face discussion with them. I think that has a much more positive element of building relationships with people rather than a quick text message, just sending them an email, or just a phone call. And so that's one of the things I do in practice is I usually show up at your doorstep if I want to talk to you.

Ken Harvey: 48:33 He absolutely does.

Jim Hills: 48:34 He does.

Ken Harvey: 48:35 And that's one of the things I really love about Gary, appreciate about him, and I try and model his example.

- Jim Hills: 48:43 Well, I think it's really interesting that you talked about adaptability, Ken, here in your answer there. And Gary, you started this conversation talking about adaptability. I want to apply that word to perhaps our final question for this conversation, and that is, how do you view the future of libraries in this period of time when there's so much change going on? There's technological change, there's societal change. How do you view the library's role, and perhaps applying that word, "adaptability" if it's appropriate?
- Gary Sitzman: 49:22 It's not only the amount of change, it's the pace at which change is occurring. I just see change occurring much quicker now than it has in the past, and I think society is a lot more diverse in opinion and demographics and you name it. It's just a lot of diversity now. So how do we as a library deal with that? Well, when I came here in 2012, it was pretty clear that the role of the library was changing right there. The advent of electronic media was coming around the corner. We had already gotten Kindles and Nooks and all this stuff, and yeah, that question of, "Well, do we need brick and mortar? What is the library doing? Why can't we just go to a central repository, I can get all my books downloaded, et cetera?"
- Gary Sitzman: 50:21 But again, that's a very myopic view of what a library brings to a community, and when you think of what the community needs are amongst all of this change, I think the library plays a critical role in helping to have dialogue and communication and information sharing that helps bridge a lot of the problems and issues that a community is dealing with. So I see the role of the library evolving as we go through change and I think adaptability ... you're asking how that fits in. Well, it'd be nice if everything in the world just stayed the same, then we wouldn't have to change, but things are changing and they're changing more rapidly and we as leaders have to be able to change and respond accordingly. So I think there's a lot of space, a lot of opportunities for good leadership and I think the role of the library is very secure going forward as we look at what's happening in our communities.
- Ken Harvey: 51:32 There are individuals out there who I think have a traditional view of what a library is based upon what a library used to be for them. They see or remember the library being a place for books, a place for music, and they may be remembering it when it was LP records, vinyl records.
- Jim Hills: 51:58 I have read that we used to check out art for your walls.

- Ken Harvey: 52:00 We used to check out framed art prints for people to hang on their walls for a few weeks and then take it down, so they could look cultured for a week and then switch it out. Or they see the library as a place that's for newspapers and movies. Back when I started with Tacoma Public Library, they were just making the transition from 16 millimeter films to VHS tapes, and it was considered pretty controversial. They were just starting to offer computer literacy courses and had public computers in the library, which dates me.
- Ken Harvey: 52:52 Well, like Gary was saying, the definition of what a library is continues to transform and in our communities, there is still a need for a brick and mortar library in that community for children and teens and adults and seniors and families and the retired to visit and to have physical access to certain materials. And for others, as a place where they can gather and talk about issues that are important to that community. So it's like a community gathering place for discussion groups, sometimes for homeowner associations that don't have any other place where they can meet, and sometimes as a maker space where kids can come together and work on projects together, collaborate on school projects after school.
- Ken Harvey: 54:00 But there's also this side of libraries that's happening more and more across the United States where the libraries are operating outside their four walls, and we've had evidence of that over the last decade with our own Issues that Matter forums, with TEDxSnoIsleLibraries, with futurist events where a futurist has been brought in, or some industry leader to talk with leaders in our region in business and industry in the public and nonprofit sectors. There are things happening that I think are continuing to expand the definition of what a library is, and that's one of the reasons why, increasingly, our own board of trustees will have conversations with our leadership group about the needs that continue to emerge in our communities in our region and how the library can bring its best self, its resources, and leverage those things to meet the informational and cultural and idea-based needs that exist out there.
- Jim Hills: 55:23 For our community, yeah. Well, thank you very much for your time. It's been really intriguing to get to know more about both of you. And thanks so much for-
- Ken Harvey: 55:33 Well I learned some things about Gary that I didn't know, so thank you Gary.
- Gary Sitzman: 55:37 I've enjoyed it. Thank you.

- Speaker 5: 55:39 Want to get the latest business news and solid financial advice from the experts for free? You can with your Sno-Isle Libraries account. Library customers can download the latest news and advice from publications like Entrepreneur, Kiplinger's, Fast Company, and Inc. You'll find feature stories around the business of technology, leadership, innovation, the stock market, retirement planning, and achieving financial success. All of that with a library card, just waiting for you online at Sno-Isle Libraries.
- Ken Harvey: 56:11 If you enjoyed this podcast, please subscribe so you can receive every episode automatically. And until next time, remember your library has a lot to offer you. So what are you waiting for? Check it out.