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MAYOR

SALT LAKE CITY CORPORATION

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Utah Humanities Council
Attn: Mayors' Awards in the Humanities
202 West 300 North
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to nominate Nancy Tessman for the Salt Lake City Mayor's Award in the Humanities. Nancy has served the Salt Lake City community as an employee of our city library system for 28 years, and has filled the role of Director since 1995. Nancy embodies the qualities of a Humanities Champion.

Through her focused and tenacious efforts over many years, Nancy has built the Salt Lake City Library into far more than a repository of books. She has elevated our libraries to community gathering places, made them citadels of free expression and civic dialogue, and has thereby raised the quality, frequency, and civility of public discourse to levels previously unimaginable. In recent years, Nancy has presided over a massive expansion of the City's library system, the centerpiece of which is the new Main Library downtown. At every step of the process, Nancy has infused the expansion project with an emphasis on lifelong learning, the value of democratic principles and open discussion, respect for diversity of culture and viewpoint, and the importance of the civic realm. In each of these ways, Nancy has shown herself to be an extraordinary and visionary community leader.

In 1998, the voters of Salt Lake City approved a bond to fund the construction of a new Main Library, as well as the expansion of many of the existing library branches. Throughout the multi-year process of planning and constructing these facilities, Nancy placed democratic principles and open discussion at the forefront of the project. In planning for all of the new facilities, Nancy ensured that the public had ample

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opportunity to voice its views and concerns, and to direct the nature and scope of the improvements. She also ensured that the design of the new facilities would contribute to lifelong learning and the civic realm. For example, at Nancy's insistence and under the guidance of world-renowned architect Moshe Safdie, the new Main Library includes children's and teen areas to attract youth of all ages to the joys of learning and interaction, and public meeting and lecture areas to provide a wide array of programs for people of all ages. She also ensured that the additions to the branch libraries included plenty of functional space for community needs, such as discussion meetings and art exhibits. These spaces are used extensively today by community councils, civic organizations, and study groups, all of whom seek to further their involvement in and understanding of their respective communities.

Nancy has worked hard to ensure that our libraries not only provide the physical spaces needed for lifelong learning and community interaction, but also the programs that promote these opportunities. At the main library, she and her staff have created the Dewey Lecture Series, where authors and experts from a wide array of disciplines (covering each of the main categories in the Dewey Decimal System) deliver lectures about their work. These lectures are free and open to the public. Nancy also worked hard to bring a community public radio station to the campus of the Main Library, and has successfully interwoven the station's operations with many of the library's educational programs. She also enticed the Salt Lake City Film Center to take up residence at the main library, where the Film Center hosts numerous educational and documentary films that would not be readily accessible otherwise.

Her successful efforts to attract people of all ages with such innovative programs and opportunities have fully engaged community members, not only in ongoing learning activities, but also in more frequent interaction with their neighbors and community members. A wide array of public forum meetings has allowed residents to discuss their varying viewpoints openly, thereby instilling a better understanding and respect for differences of culture, politics, religion, and background.

While her accomplishments are substantial, Nancy Tessman's ego is not. In spite of having made enormous contributions to our community for more than 20 years, Nancy always insists that these accomplishments,

like so many others, were the work of many. She is correct, of course, but they have all come at her direction, and under her careful leadership. More than any other individual in the Salt Lake City Community, Library Director Nancy Tessman has enhanced the richness, openness, intellect, and understanding of our community more than she knows or is willing to admit. She is a distinguished leader of great personal intellect and integrity, whose penchant for innovation is unmatched.

For all of these reasons, and many more, Nancy Tessman is indeed a Humanities Champion in our community, and I am honored to forward my enthusiastic recommendation that she be so acknowledged. Such an award is but a very small way for our community to thank her for her tenacity, her unwavering dedication, and her passionate service, the influence of which will be felt in Salt Lake City for generations to come.

Best regards,



Ross C. Anderson
Mayor