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Papal, a Texas native, is a graduate of West Texas State University and Wayne State University's master's in library science program. She joined the Farmington Community Library in 1973 and became its director in 1985.

She has extensive experience in all types of library services and organizations and has kept up with the latest in library technology and services. But the task at the state level will be somewhat different.

"There are 380 public libraries in the state," she said. "Some have limited hours, some may not have a telephone or a Xerox copier. In any case, there is a critical need to supply the communities they serve."

The service those libraries offer not only varies, but must be different in accordance with the public's needs and desires, she said.

"The public library may be the last opportunity for those who have no other way to get information," she said. "We provide some equity to access of information."

Despite the increasing use of computers and other technologies, libraries will still represent a physical place where some people will always choose to come and read a newspaper or browse a new fiction rack, she said. Dividing resources between Internet access,

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new book and tape purchases, and other physical and staff needs will be the measure of success in the business, she said.

Papal said public library advances into high tech do have a history. In the 1930s, libraries began offering reference services by telephone, and still do. By the 1950s, films became part of the libraries repertoire.

More recently, the libraries have begun renting or lending video cassettes, something that had its share of controversy at first.

"Now about half of our video collection is made up of documentaries and other materials that are not available anywhere else," she said.

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Papal will have an advantage because the Farmington Community Library has 11 terminals dedicated to the Internet thanks to grants from TRW and Botsford General Hospital. And with links to Metronet and the University of Michigan among others, the library has been able to access the latest information on academic subjects and business.

Papal said the library will be able to help people improve their skills to a more sophisticated employee in the coming years.

The job seems like a difficult one, both locally and on the far-flung state level.

But if libraries have one advantage in coping with a changing world, libraries should do very well.

"After all, information is one of those things we do have a handle on," she said. "And that's what we're dealing with: How to access information."

New Hills officer hits road



Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer announced the promotion of Alexander Pruss from cadet to police officer on Dec. 14.

Officer Pruss graduated from the Oakland Police Academy Dec. 1. Before attending the academy, Pruss served as a Hills police cadet for nine months.

A graduate of Ann Arbor Pioneer High School in 1990, the officer also graduated from Calvin College in Grand Rapids where he earned a degree in criminal justice. During his senior year of college, Pruss served internships with the Michigan State Police at the Wayland post and the Kent County Juvenile Court.

His hobbies include motorcycles, weight lifting and jogging. Officer Pruss is now assigned to the patrol division and is riding with a senior patrol officer in the department's field training program.

On the job: Alex Pruss, an addition to the Farmington Hills Police Department, patrols the city.

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