



They marched to save our libraries



Poet Joshua Seigal and actor Rebecca Front. Photo Mike Coles

By Daphne Chamberlain and John Lawrence
It was their last chance to show their feelings about how much they value the library service in East Finchley and across the borough. And so hundreds turned out for a noisy and good-natured demonstration march that they hoped would send a very strong message to Barnet Council ahead of its decision on the service's future.

The Children's March on Saturday 12 September started from East Finchley Library because 66% of borrowers here are youngsters, an increase of 18% over the last five years. Young children dressed up as their favourite book characters held placards aloft and teenage students walked alongside them.

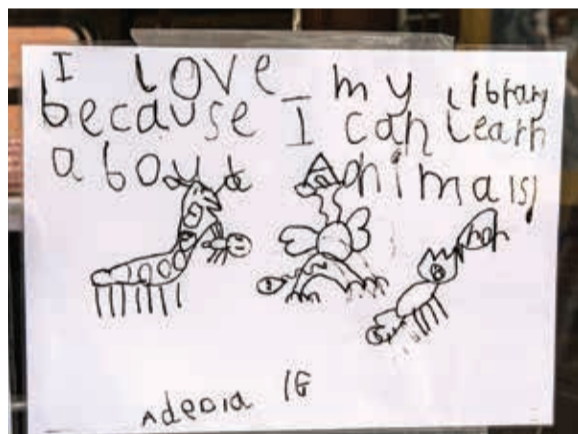
Actor and author Rebecca Front kicked off the march from East Finchley Library with a stirring speech, and the crowd also heard from 10-year-old library advocate Ralph Vincent from Whetstone, and performance poet Joshua Seigal.

With music playing and stewards shepherding them along the route, around 250 marchers set off along the High Road and then up East End Road to Church End library where they were met by a red open-top bus festooned with balloons and even more supporters. The London Metropolitan Brass Band played to the throng, which then marched up Ballards Lane for its final stop at North Finchley Library.

East Finchley Library Users Group said afterwards: "Thank you very much to everyone who came. You're all brilliant and it was great to be with you."

Why we need a local library

Here are some of the memorable quotes from the Children's March for Libraries that set off from East Finchley.



Actor and author Rebecca Front: "Imagine you're on Dragons' Den and you go to the dragons with an investment idea for a series of buildings across the country where people can go and read books and borrow them for free, where they can read newspapers and use the internet for free, and borrow CDs and DVDs.

"The dragons would say this was a terrible investment idea because they wouldn't make money. But libraries are not a money-making scheme. They are a community-making scheme. They are a good society scheme. Let's support the libraries."

Mother Emilia, with 15-month-old Aron: "We use the library for the singing and reading sessions. Being a new mum isn't always easy and I've made many friends through coming to the library. It's a hub to meet people and I dread to think what life would be like without it."

Alex, 13: "Libraries are useful and I like the range of books. I use East Finchley Library in my spare time because I like looking at the guide books."



Two of the children's posters. Photo Mike Coles



Harry Potter joins the kids at the library. Photo Mike Coles



Parents and kids ready to march. Photo Mike Coles

Emily, 11: "I come into East Finchley Library every couple of weeks. I use it for taking out books and reading while I'm there. If we didn't have it, I'd feel very sad."

Seen on banners: "Libraries are cheap. Illiteracy is expensive." "Hands off our libraries!" "Save libraries. Save communities."



A young library user proudly shows off his reading monster t-shirt

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vintage & handmade

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