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Tuesday, June 3, 2008

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Woman suspected of library thefts will pay \$1,062

By Anna L. Griffin TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF
agriffin@telegram.com

LEOMINSTER— A Holden woman accused of stealing encyclopedias and many other books from her local library admitted to sufficient facts in court yesterday and was ordered to pay \$1,062 in restitution.

Debra A. Dixon, 46, of 1397 Wachusett St., Jefferson, was alleged to have taken an entire set of Childcraft encyclopedias and more than 50 other books from the Gale Free Library, Holden's public library. She was charged in Leominster District Court with larceny of library materials over \$250.

The charge will be continued without a finding for one year, during which Mrs. Dixon will be on probation.

According to court documents, police were called to the Gale Public Library in early May by Jane Dutton, library director. Ms. Dutton said staff members had become aware that more than 100 nonfiction books were missing, and that because some involved education they believed a teacher or educator was stealing them.

Mrs. Dixon drew the suspicions of the library staff because of her actions and that of her children in the library, court documents said. For example, library staff were asked to help the children find a book, and did so. When staff checked later in the day, the book could not be found on the shelves. A review of library records indicated it had not been checked out.

Holden Police Officer Christopher J. Cary obtained a search warrant for Mrs. Dixon's home and on May 7, police used the warrant. Police said they found the 2000 edition of the Childcraft Encyclopedia; science books, such as four books in the "Science Visual Resources" series, and mathematics books, including the "Oxford Concise Dictionary of Mathematics," by Christopher Clapham.

Other titles discovered were "The Ultimate Book of Homeschooling Ideas," by Linda Dobson; "Paradise Lost," by John Milton, and "Who's Who in the Bible, an Illustrated Guide."

Police indicated that some of these books had the Gale Free Library stamp on them, or the stamp had been crossed out or blacked out.

When police showed these books to Mrs. Dixon, she told them she had bought them at yard sales or during Holden Days.

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Mrs. Dixon was placed under arrest by police, taken to police headquarters and advised of her rights, but agreed to be interviewed. After a short amount of time, police said, she admitted to taking the books, but also said she always returned the books after reading them.

She told police some of the books she would take were too long for her to read in the allowed check-out time, six weeks. Police then asked her about the books that she had not returned and, they said, Mrs. Dixon did not have an answer.

In her statement to police, Mrs. Dixon wrote: "I started taking out books from the library a couple of years ago. I would use them and return them when I was done. I have many in my possession that were not checked out.

"I have returned books many times that I had not checked out. I know this is not right and I am sorry for taking them without checked. I teach my boys not to take or use things without the owner's permission yet I did it. I am willing to do whatever is necessary to correct the wrong I have done. I am really sorry."



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