



OVERDUE | TRUST

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In an era when trust in institutions, media, technology platforms, and even expertise is increasingly fragmented, libraries remain among the most trusted public institutions. We've established that libraries are far more than repositories for books, so what keeps people coming back? Is it computer access, support from skilled staff, or volunteer-led programs? The truth is that these services are possible because libraries and librarians have spent generations earning trust.

In 2021, the American Library Association reaffirmed that libraries exist to provide free and equitable access to information, resources, services, and technology for everyone in the communities they serve, especially those facing barriers to education, employment, housing, and opportunity.

This commitment matters because trust is often built through consistency. Libraries have spent generations serving people regardless of income, background, education, or circumstance. Equitable access is about more than making resources available. It requires understanding that communities face different challenges. By identifying barriers and adapting services to meet local needs, libraries demonstrate that they are invested in the success of the people they serve. Over time, that combination of reliability and responsiveness helps transform a public service into a trusted community institution.

I once asked a KCLS library employee what made their 50-library system so successful. They closely examine the communities they serve and identify local needs, then adapt

programs and services to address those needs. In other words, their purpose is not to offer the same services everywhere, but to connect people with information, resources, and opportunities that are meaningful to them.

Trust is rarely built through grand gestures. More often, it develops through countless small interactions over time. A librarian helps someone find reliable information. A volunteer helps a newcomer practice English. A patron receives assistance navigating technology or applying for a job. Individually, these moments may seem unremarkable. Collectively, they build trust. Libraries earn it by showing up for their communities, adapting to changing needs, and providing access to information, resources, and opportunities without judgment or expectation. I have come to believe that this trust is not a byproduct of their work, but one of their most important achievements.

This has been OVERDUE. Come back next week to keep your account in good standing.

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