



OVERDUE | COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Originally published on May 19, 2026

In a previous version of OVERDUE, I talked about how libraries are more than simple book repositories. This time, though, I wanted to better understand what libraries are actually expected to be, so I turned to an unlikely resource: recent librarian job descriptions.

More specifically, I looked at positions requiring candidates to hold an MLIS degree, since not all library jobs are librarian roles, nor does all library employment require an MLIS.

After reviewing several recent librarian job descriptions, I noticed recurring themes in what employers were looking for. Today's librarians are being hired not simply as circulation experts, but as crucial liaisons between library patrons and the community at large. The roles librarians fill include systems thinkers, community connectors, and information stewards.

These jobs consistently emphasize leadership, community responsiveness, and cross-functional coordination. While books and collections do matter, they are often framed as infrastructure for larger human goals. So forget the mental image of the librarian behind the desk shushing you when you talk. Today's librarians are expected to connect patrons with resources and support information journeys.

Observation 1: Libraries appear increasingly responsive to community needs.

One role discussed developing relationships with community organizations and connecting neighbors with relevant resources. Another emphasized designing programs around the specific needs and interests of local populations, particularly teens, young adults, and underserved groups.

Taken together, the postings suggest that modern libraries are not operating as one-size-fits-all institutions. Instead, they appear increasingly shaped by the unique needs of the communities they serve.

What stood out most was the emphasis on adaptability. Librarians are not simply expected to maintain systems and collections. They are expected to listen, respond, adjust, and evolve alongside their communities.

Observation 2: Libraries increasingly function as civic infrastructure.

One role described libraries as spaces centered around literacy, lifelong learning, equity, and community wellbeing. Another emphasized creating welcoming environments where people could access resources, educational opportunities, and support services.

What surprised me was how often the language resembled civic infrastructure more than traditional educational institutions. The postings framed libraries less as passive repositories of information and more as active public systems designed to support communities in practical and human ways.

The more I read, the less libraries begin to feel like buildings filled with books and more like community-centered institutions focused on access, support, learning, and connection.

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

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