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I Believe in Libraries

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I believe in libraries. Yep, you got it. Libraries.

Why libraries? Well, I believe in libraries because I believe in love.

I basically grew up in libraries. I started going as a little girl, fascinated for some reason with the books that had no pictures on the cover. When my family and I moved to a new town, the library was one of the first places we went. My mom got a job there, and the library soon became my home away from home. I've worked at that library myself for the past three years, and when I'm away at school, I probably spend more hours at my university's library than I do in my dorm room. While my preoccupation with libraries may seem borderline obsessive, it's really not so much the building or the books that I find appealing. When I walk into a library, I know I'm walking into a beautiful example of love in action.

I was given a front-row seat to witness this example, as this past summer was the first time that my job required me to deal with patrons more than books. One of my favorite parts was getting to know the people who came in. Every time I go to the grocery store in my town, I can walk down the aisle and know practically every person just from his or her frequent stops into the library. People at the library know each other, too. It's not just a place for solitude; it's a place for interaction. Whether it's the strangers who chat while they drop their kids off at story time, or the group of older men who meets to tinker with Ham radios, the library is a perfect place to build relationships. Libraries foster community.

The community created by libraries is rarely exclusive and sometimes not even expected, but I dare you to find a community as accepting as the library. I've seen more polar opposites walk through the doors of libraries than I have ever seen in my life: rich, poor; three week-olds, 95-year-olds; ex-convicts, ministers; people carrying oxygen tanks, marathon runners; stereotypical nerds, stereotypical airheads&you get the idea. Not only are the doors of the library open to anyone and everyone, but those doors also open to a place where you can explore and develop your interests. If I've learned anything from working at a library, it's that you can read what you want and be who you are, and the community that is the library will welcome and accept that.

Even though there are many things that intrigue me about libraries — the paradox of being

in a place of such intense reality while being surrounded by fiction, the energy and passion enclosed by those walls, the amount of information waiting to be absorbed — what impresses me most is that libraries are places of community and acceptance. Libraries are places of love. So run, don't walk to your local library; you'll fall in love with it.