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## Introduction

Pam North  
*Sherwood Public Library*

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# Introduction

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When I first proposed an issue dedicated to library-related travels and wanderlust, I thought I would get tales of serendipitous library discoveries or of dragging long-suffering traveling companions into yet another musty old library. Amy Hutchinson, Director of the Lake County Library District echoed my thoughts when she sent me an email saying, “Anyone who has travelled with me at all in the last five years knows that I have two cultural institutions that are priority visits: the art museum, and the public library. And I can skip the art museum if I have to. My friends and family have sat and looked at magazines in libraries everywhere from Charlotte, North Carolina to Lander, Wyoming to Eugene, Oregon so that I could have the chance to walk through the library building and see what I could see. Libraries are as different as the communities that build them, and every library has at least one small treasure of an idea that I can learn from. I thank library staff everywhere for always putting your great ideas on display. I also thank my travelling companions for their patience.”

That’s it! The stories would be about stumbling upon a charming old library in New England while driving through autumn leaves on winding roads ... of taking a breather in the British Library only to discover Jane Austen’s writing desk and a 1215 copy of the *Magna Carta* ... of finding a tiny pastel public library while touring the Caribbean island of Bequia ...

However when the submissions started trickling in—then roaring in—I learned I was wrong, very wrong! I had to change the lens on the big old camera I was carrying around my neck to one that took in a much broader view.

These weren’t stories of serendipitous discovery, of pedestrian travelers. These were stories of passion, determination, philanthropy and dreams. These were individuals driven to discover and experience other parts of the world—sometimes quite remote—and for some, to fulfill their desire to work in libraries along the way. Not afraid to be conspicuous or considered an “outsider,” these library adventurers shared encouragement, frustrations, similarities, challenges, and sometimes even squid with their new acquaintances. Many did not know what to expect as they embarked on their journeys and they marveled, got goosebumps, and their hearts skipped a beat as they came to understand the proud history and common spirit alive in libraries worldwide. The positive impact made by the travelers and their hosts cemented the belief that libraries are important—whether they be on a remote island or in downtown Manhattan. The libraries visited were not just about books, but about culture and connection.

So this issue, which I had intended to be a lighter travel issue is much, MUCH more than that. It is testament to the adventurous spirit and devotion of library workers worldwide. Now when I wander I will still be drawn to libraries as some are pulled in by the lure of museums or cathedrals. But my personal intrigue with libraries is but a tiny fragment of the possibilities and wonders to be discovered in libraries around the world. I wish you happy travels as you wander through these stories of joy and wonderment.

*Guest editor*  
Pam North  
[pamn@wccls.org](mailto:pamn@wccls.org)  
Library Manager  
Sherwood Public Library

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