

Why libraries?

by Heather Estrada

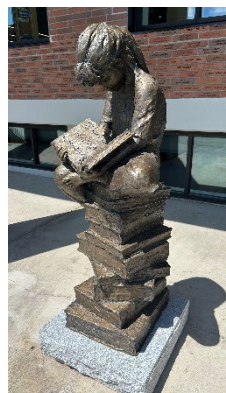
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Mark Rose, the Hermiston Public Library Director, began his career in libraries in 1991 in Flagstaff, Arizona just as the internet was hitting the public, including libraires. His motivation for starting a library career? In all the time he spent working in his University Library while finishing his degree he “didn’t hate it”! He was searching for a career after being discharged from the Army that would support his already expanding family. And while he enjoyed his time in the University Library, he was drawn to public libraries as “the people’s university”. A place where kids, families, people of ages and walks could find space to be. A space to interact and feel safe.

Mark and the internet grew up together over the past 35 years in libraries. In 1991 the staff and patrons were amazed they were able to access the entire collection of Shakespeare or the entire phone book on a CD Rom database (kids you might need to ask your parents what that was)! Today, the entire collection of Shakespeare’s works is walking around in most of our pockets - on our cellphones.

Mark witnessed the card catalog transition from cabinets filled with thousands of little cards (title cards, subject cards, and author cards) to online databases that connect libraries around the world with the click of a few keys. Here in Eastern Oregon, you can search not just your local library but 77 others as well for any books you may want to read.

He has seen monumental change in libraries, and our lives, over the past 35 years; and yet libraries continue to be the heart and soul of communities. The advent of new technologies that saved countless hours creating and filling those thousands of cards didn’t diminish the need for librarians and their staff. Instead, it has created spaces for more time to connect with the public. To create programs, activities, and events for communities to gather around. And libraries still provide that safe place for kids, families, and people of all ages to gather, connect and feel safe. The same vision that drew Mark to libraries in the beginning is still thriving in the libraries around our area, and the world, today.



New statute in front of Hermiston Public Library. [Photo by Heather Estrada]

Mark will retire in 3 months from the Hermiston library after a career that spans 6 libraries, 6 states, and multiple different titles on his name badge. He will walk away knowing that libraries are still doing the good work of creating access to books and materials, creating safe spaces to be and to learn, and will leave behind a newly opened, beautifully renovated Hermiston library. He began his first career in the US Army with a desire to serve his county. He is finishing his formal career in libraries still serving his country in the ways that really matter. By serving his local community, providing much needed access, literacy skills, and a community space. Well done, Mark, well done. To learn more about all the Hermiston library has to offer visit <https://www.hermiston.gov/library>. Links to all the libraries in Umatilla County can be found at www.ucslid.org.



Mark Rose rides the lift at Echo City Hall with supplies and equipment for the Spring 2026 UCSLD all staff in-service. [Photo by Heather Estrada]