

**All Are Welcome Here:
An Abecedarian for the Kansas City Public Library's 150th Anniversary**

“In English, the notion of conviviality easily has an association to festivity or happiness. In Spanish, *convivencia* has a contentious dimension. Convivencia emphasizes the constant need and commitment to practice the way we share space and resources with others.”
– from Learning Grounds of Conviviality by Tommi Laitio

All are welcome here. This sacred space where infinite shelves provide harbor for brilliant minds, where
Books come alive & knowledge resides on countless pages. The wisdom of the ages becomes material & w/
Convivial spirits we come seeking community. This temple we call a library has offered us 150 YEARS of
Discovery & has helped us define humanity. This place of ecstasy & agony, comedy & tragedy, urges us to
Engage valiantly w/ those who differ from us radically. This fertile terrain of street slang & elevated diction produces a fabulous
Friction filled w/ the promise of new life. See the world w/ new eyes. We hurtle through the 21st century at the speed of
Generosity to reimagine a democracy that can finally be realized; an idea whose time has come. The rattle &
Hum of the metropolis, this conundrum of a city w/ its complicated history, land of the Osage & the enslaved [...] **I**njustices remain. Did the book's printed page come from a lynching tree? Is America the home of authentic liberty?
Journey w/ me down the corridor of memory when I visited the library religiously. There is no frigate like a book
Knowledge accessed freely allowing me to have lunch w/ Phyllis Wheatley or to travel to unknown galaxies w/out ever
Leaving the room. In the gloom of my loneliest hour, Holden Caulfield comforted me & Ponyboy Curtis
Made me feel strong. In the sweet sanctuary of the library, I found solace. I was never really alone.
No place other than home ever made me feel so safe. So, we give thanks to the humble librarian for
Offering hope to children who may have had none, or a smile to those who have no home, or a
Poem to the broken hearted drenched in a deluge of tears, all have been comforted these past 150 years.
Queens & Kings, liars & thieves, the peasant & the priest, all cross this threshold looking for something to believe.
Reason for our existence, why were we conceived? Is there life beyond this dimension? What can end this grief?
Superheroes get all the credit, the glamour, & the girls, but it's really the librarians who are going to save the world.
These magical, mythical creatures, like the incomparable Carrie Westlake Whitney, make new worlds available to
Us w/out ever charging a fee. On the front lines, they are the ones who define conviviality. They provide a
Vaccine for the plague of ignorance contaminating our minds, offering a pathway to the truth all of us long to find.
Welcoming each one of us w/ all our shortcomings, they stand faithfully by our side. No one could ever
Xerox the service they provide. So, cheers to the Kansas City Public Library on this sesquicentennial celebration
Your commitment to our community has led to constant elevation. Cheers to every branch & all they represent, perched atop the
Zenith of human accomplishment. May the spirit of conviviality continually fuel your ascent.

By Glenn North