

Anythink Libraries

Pam Smith, Anythink Library Director, talks with her friend and colleague, Sharon Morris of the Colorado State Library. They share stories about why they love what they do.

Pam: Hi, I'm Pam Smith. We're at one of our beloved Anythink Libraries in Thornton, Colorado. And Sharon is one of my best friends and colleagues. I'd like to start this off this afternoon by asking Sharon what does she love about libraries?

Sharon: Hi, I'm Sharon Morris. I love so many things about libraries. One time, when I was working in the children's library, this girl who was probably about 10 was asking me a question and I was helping her on the computer and she just stopped and looked at me and said "do like your job?" And I was like, "I totally love my job. Do you want to know why?" And she just kinda looked at me like, "I don't know that I really wanna know why." But it just occurred to me, every day I would get to learn something new but I didn't have any control over what I learned. Total strangers were deciding. So, what I love about libraries is that it's all about learning and discovery and, you know, just having the possibility of being better. What do you love about libraries?

Pam: I love the adventure of being in a library and discovering, just like you said. I'm discovering every day. It's like taking a walk in the woods and you discover different things and so, that's the way we set our libraries up, to be this big adventure, walk through the woods, Winnie the Pooh hundred acre woods. You might come into the library and you might be thinking about checking out a GED book but along the way you'll discover there's this amazing cookbook. On figs. And you'll say, "Oh, I have to have that cookbook!" So that's what I love about libraries is that they're filled with surprises and ideas and it's a wonderful space to reinvigorate and to be nurtured and cared for and to sustain yourself.

Sharon: So, do you have an early memory of being in the library when you were a kid?

Pam: My first memory of being in the library -- we lived in Iowa and I just stumbled upon the library. It was just a little Carnegie library not far from our house and think they were doing Story Hour and I thought, "This is magnificent! These people are sitting around reading stories?" And they gave me an application for library card and I remember running all the way home, saying, "Mom, Dad, if you sign this I can get a library card!" And I ran all the way back and got my first library card.

Sharon: That's great. "One of the things I learned from you is the power of story to connect people and I wonder how you use story to connect people to Anythink.

Pam: Well, one of my favorite quotes is from the Crow and the Weasel by Barry Lopez. It says, "Sometimes a person needs the story more than food to stay alive." And that just goes back to what is magical and wonderful about libraries. So the Anythink story really is all about the library is owned by the people who come into this space and so each person who comes in creates their own story of their own library. So a researcher may come in and they frame their library in terms of what they need to do a specific piece of research. And a preschooler might

come in and they frame their story of the library in terms of meeting their first friend at the library, or and discovering books or reading, or something to play with, and so each person develops their own story, really.

Sharon: That's what Anythink is about. Anything you want to think about, anything you want to be, any idea that you want to pursue or discover or find more information about. It goes back to the basic democracy of libraries which is: anything you want to know that you can discover in a library. And that's what Anythink is all about.