

Willis #1: "And what is your job title right now? Librarian"

Lead in (Macfarlane): The Salt Lake City Public Library isn't going anywhere. With a rise in the "physical media" online trend, libraries have become the suppliers of physical goods. From books to movies, to snacks and internet access, the Salt Lake City Public Librarians are here to help.

Macfarlane: Cherry Willis is the periodicals and special collections expert at the Salt Lake City Main Library. Willis is here to answer any Utah history question:

Willis #2: "But then seriously, the best thing is being able to get a great reference question and being able to answer it with our resources."

Macfarlane: Willis took me into the special collections room. Shelves were filled with dusty old books. Some were large and lying flat, others were small and filled with ephemera. Ephemera is any old flier, handout, program, menu, tickets, or any other paper item that would've been thrown out, but has kept a small history.

Willis #3: "And the stuff they have in there, this is LDS college catalogues, and the institution of marriage, Salt Lake School of Law, Notes on practical nursing."

Macfarlane: Other collections are just old records. Some from the first Freemasons lodge in Salt Lake City

Willis #4: "And so the masons had a library and our library dates back to 1898. This is their registry for their library. This is when they opened in 1877. But I love that these people were saying "Knowledge is power. Light Love life!"

Macfarlane: Other branches have different goals, with some focused on young children and families. Paul Musser, the branch manager of the Anderson-Foothill library, found his joy in puppet shows.

((Nat. Anderson-Foothill Library))

Musser #1: "I think doing the story times was something that just, once I was in children's I found out, ok, part of the job is you're going to be doing story times."

Macfarlane: Musser's day looks different as a branch manager, as he influences his staff to create the best environment for the community to use. Surrounded by puppets on every surface in his office, his days are full of meetings, forms, and documents. Musser utilizes his fun background to inspire librarians and patrons. He even has a sign on the door to his office that says, "We work together to make lives better. We are: inclusive, open, curious, playful, kind."

Musser #2: "We say it a lot. And even it's become like even a running joke, like at the start of the day when we're unlocking the front door we'll be like, all right, let's change lives!"

Macfarlane: Walking around the Foothill Library with Musser was like walking with a celebrity. He greeted patrons like they were family.

((Nat. of Paul talking to patrons))

Macfarlane: Paul says he's not selling anything and that he is just here to help people find the right books and the right story.

Johnson #1: "My job specifically is dedicated towards programming, books, and engagement with patrons aged like eight-ish to eighteen."

Macfarlane: Transitioning from children to adulthood, teens require a special approach to libraries. Lexi Johnson is the Teen Librarian at the Day-Riverside branch in Glendale. At the western and northernmost corner of the Salt Lake City Public Library system, her days look different than other teen librarians.

Johnson #2: "There's a tricky line where I can't be their friends so much as their librarian..."

Macfarlane: Johnson shared with me the heartaches of working with teens in unstable conditions. With patrons who are in the foster care system, to some who are in the homeless population, Johnson says she never knows when she will see a teen again.

Macfarlane: Johnson is almost a pseudo social worker, helping kids learn the social rules to be library patrons. The library becomes a common ground for teens as they learn to share borrowed books and supplies.

Johnson #3: "Like a huge part of my job is not like, I'm not their moral teacher, but my job is to keep them to the rules to successfully be in the library, and you can't throw hands at the library."

Macfarlane: Johnson helps run the Teen Squad program, a program where kids become part-time volunteers in the library.

Johnson #4: "There's a huge application process, and it gets pooled, and every branch has a limit. I'm personally really proud because my teen squad is always full. I never have vacancies."

Macfarlane: The teen squad program allows kids to train to be workers in society. Mock interviews, daily tasks, and clocking sheets teach these teens how to be responsible employees. Johnson shared that she has taught these kids how to have the hard conversations in a work environment.

Macfarlane: Teenagers love showering Johnson with gifts. Johnson took me to her box of knick-knacks from the teens.

Johnson #5: "I have, like, an even better box at home. They also painted this box for me."

Macfarlane: The box is covered in chipping paint. Crocheted tentacles and sheets of paper are literally spilling out of the box.

((Nat. Johnson going through box))

Johnson #6: "oh my gosh this one's so funny!"

Macfarlane: There are keychains, pins, sticky notes, and papers with poems praising Johnson as the best librarian around.

Macfarlane: The public library isn't going anywhere. Salt Lake City Patrons get so much more than books with a library card, but a community.

Johnson #7: "As a library, we're one of the last free spaces where people can be without having to buy something or have like, really strict behavioral expectations. And so we are mixing with kind of some of the most vulnerable factions of society and we see direct results of like cutting into homeless services and cutting of school lunches' funding."

Johnson put it best. The Salt Lake City Public Library is open to all residents of Salt Lake City or Salt Lake County.

I'm Maggie Macfarlane, reporting.