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My First Love

My name is Monica Smodic, and, with the retirement of Denni Grassel at Delmont Public Library in December, I am the new Library Director. I would like to tell you a little about myself and how I came to this position.

My first love and favorite memories are of books. Snuggled in my Mom's bed, she read to me from the few books we owned and, on the best occasions, library books that I personally picked out. I grew up in a very rural area that did not even have its own library. The closest library was half an hour away, and since it was so far away, we did not go very often. When we did go, it was like entering a holy place - with its tall ceilings and marble floors and rows and rows of books - filled with countless stories, all of which were mine for the taking. I would search the shelves for my next adventure, experiencing the wondrous incense of old paper that only a library has, Whether it was with Maurice Sendak's "Where the Wild Things Are," or a fairy tale forest, or, as I got older, on Prince Edward Island and in Derbyshire England, I knew I would do things within the page I would never do in my real world.

My love of books led to my second love, history. Reading fairy tales led me to reading historical fiction about kings and queens, which in turn led me to read history books, biographies and autobiographies. Soon, I was devouring every historical book I could get my hands on in my library. Alison Weir, Antonia Fraser, and David McCullough became my teachers, so much so that majoring in history in undergraduate school at Bethany College seemed the logical next step.

Upon graduation, I became the Director of The Bradford House Museum on Main Street, Washington, PA. While I worked at the Museum, I was struck by the history and permanence of the building. How many people had lived, worked and visited the building; how many people would do so in the future. Even in the museum, I was drawn to books. I spent a significant time preserving the small collection of antiquarian books in the museum's collection.

After I left the Director position at the museum, I opened a used bookstore filled with antiquarian, collectible and readable used books. I loved being among the books, thinking of all the people who had held and read them before and how many people would love and read them in the future.

After shuttering the bookstore, I chose another path, a path to which I had been drawn my whole life but never really thought about. I entered the University of Pittsburgh

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seeking a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science. In the program, I learned of the history of librarianship and all the possibilities of the future of the field.

Since graduation, I have worked at the Murrysville Community Library in several areas including technology, processing, collection development and social media. I also supported the Murrysville Community Library by serving on the Murrysville Community Library Foundation Board, maintaining and developing its social media.

In becoming the Director of the Delmont Public Library, I hope to continue to use my love of books and history. I know that I am just one caretaker in a long line of wonderful caretakers at the library. Each has made an indelible mark on the library and, in turn, the community. The library is an important part of the community, but more than that, the community is an important part of the library. Every person who works, volunteers, checks out a book, attends a program, likes or shares a social media post, or donates time or money is a part of the library. So essentially, the library is yours. Thus, I hope to do a good job taking care of your library, and I hope to continue to have the community's support to make the library the place you want it to be.

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