

In July 2017, my wife-then-girlfriend and I had just moved to Clinton from New York City and we spent the first week exploring our new home. Everyday, after she would get off work, we would pick a direction and walk. On the very last day of the week, we decided to walk towards Hamilton College, because we were told about all the beautiful houses on College Street. When we got to Elm Street, I saw a brick building with a really tall steeple and said, "Wow, Brenna, look at that really cute church." That's when Brenna said, "That's the library and I think we should get our library cards."

So, we walked right up the front door and pulled on the double doors and... locked. Brenna was disappointed we found the Library at the exact time they were closed. I, who only ever had a library card because of a field trip my second grade class took to the library, didn't really care about visiting a library at all. However, I knew that for Brenna getting a library card would be a big step towards making her feel at home. Noticing the open signs on the windows, I took my phone out of my pocket, looked up the Library's hours and told Brenna to follow me. That's when we found the main entrance, down the driveway on the side of the building.

When we walked through the door I felt something shift within me. This twenty-something, who never cared about visiting a library, suddenly felt the overwhelming desire to stay. I wanted to cancel the rest of our walk and just stay. The coziness, the friendliness of the people at the desk, and overall warmth radiating from the space was enough to make me want to keep coming back.

That September, they hired me as their new Patron Services Associate. I loved the job. Everyday, that job gave me the opportunity to talk to community members, bond with my coworkers, read new books, and grow as a person. The job reinvigorated me. When I got hired full-time somewhere else, I had to say goodbye to probably the only job I ever cared about. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I quit my job, took some time off, and then reached out to the KTL Director, Anne Debraggio, about me coming back. Much to my dismay, she said that they weren't hiring at the moment, but would keep me in mind. Two days later, she contacted me to ask when I could start. Serendipitous? I like to think so.

Since then so much has changed at the library. We have installed new carpets, rooms have gotten a fresh coat of paint and bookshelves have been rearranged. We have a new room that stores our collection of sports equipment including bicycles, tents, tennis rackets, croquet, lawn bowling, disc golf, and cornhole and pickleball sets, to name a few. We recently added a bounce house and a kiddie pool into the mix. We saw old staff members go and new ones arrive ready to serve their community.

For the past four years, I have gone through changes, too. I graduated with my Masters in Library and Information Sciences, took on the role of KTL's Adult Services Librarian, and made a big move to Utica. To say that the Kirkland Town Library was a factor in me becoming a librarian would be an understatement. The Kirkland Town Library is the *reason* I became a librarian. So, to say goodbye again is right up there with the hardest thing I'll ever have to do.

The Kirkland Town Library

7/30/2025

Dennis May

Soon, I will begin a new journey at the Utica Public Library and say goodbye to the library that took a chance on a twenty-something who never knew that libraries were so special. If you, like I didn't, don't really understand why people visit their public library or why libraries are so important, I encourage you to simply visit the Kirkland Town Library, talk to the amazing staff, explore their collection that extends well beyond books, ask about their diverse programming and services, take in everything, and learn how it continues to shape its community and beyond. Your life may just change for the better.

*(Dennis' last day at the Kirkland Town Library is Thursday, August 7th. Please stop in and wish him well as he begins the next chapter in his library life).*