

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee

For the record my name is Susan Good Geise G_E_I_S_E

I think I have the best job in the world. I am the librarian in Augusta, population 284, just 78 miles up the road, home of the best one day rodeo ever. Consider coming to the Augusta Rodeo, we sure know how to have a good time. Be sure to bring the family.

When I was testifying upstairs last week, I heard the assertion that libraries are the dinosaurs of the information age. And that claim is just flat wrong. Yes, libraries check out books. But in our library in Augusta, that is but a small piece of what we do. Last Thursday I went through a long litany of what I do in an average week: Storytime lets kids be introduced to reading and crafts, for sure. But they learn to share, listen, socialize, sing and make something to be proud of. And for their young moms, they use this time to set up play dates, and swap babysitting chores and to share parenting insights. And our storytime has as its godmother an elderly woman who views storytime as the highlight of her week. Her husband appreciates that his beloved, fragile wife has a goal to look forward to.

Our library notarizes documents for affairs large and small, for the 5th generation wealthy rancher to a recently unemployed ranch hand. We write resumes, and help people file unemployment when the jobs dry up after hunting season, as they often do in places like Augusta. SINCE I WROTE THIS TESTIMONY ON SUNDAY, ONE OF THE MEN I WAS WORKING WITH GOT A CALL WHILE WE WORKING ON HIS RESUME WITH A JOB OFFER. IT WAS A CONTACT HE HAD MADE IN OUR LIBRARY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE HIS RELIEF. We help make travel arrangements for 84 year old women going to see their 91 year old sisters in Florida. We help 5 year old boys who are begging for their own hound learn what it takes to care for such a dog. We assist college sophomores find internships that actually will help them find a job, and one that will not cost their parents an arm and a leg.

As a former teacher, I realize the value of the visual aid, and so last week when we were testifying to the Appropriations subcommittee, I brought a packet of actual envelopes that we use when we need to send or receive books. I emphasized to the committee that I needed them back. When I got back to the library I began to put the envelopes away. This one caught my eye and I feel compelled to tell you the story behind this particular one. Notice that it is postmarked Great Falls. Here's the REST OF THE STORY. A young architect in Missoula was cruising internet news during his lunch hour one day in November. There was a short blurb about some particularly horrific conditions in North Korean prison camps and that a book had been written by a man who had escaped. This so interested the young Missoulian, that he called me and asked me to find the book for him; apparently it was rather obscure. I was able to find the book for him in the Great Falls Library. They sent it to my library and I forwarded it to him. He was so moved by the book that he contacted the author to see if there were ANY way he could help shine a light on this unspeakable situation. The author was stunned and grateful that someone in far away Montana was so interested. After the initial conversations, communication intensified. The young architect's partners were drawn in after having read the book. This highly regarded firm is investigating assisting the Koreans with designing their own center, perhaps much like the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC so that the whole world can learn about the horrible human rights violations that are occurring every day in that sad place.

One young man with just a shred of interest, enough to ask a librarian to get more information, and luckily, a library system that could get him the material he needed. Who knows where this transaction will lead? I don't know for sure. How a tiny library in a remote Montana town can play a

small role on such a stage is a mystery to me. But I can assure you of this: this story is true, and I can tell you half a dozen more equally improbable ones. As we say in our business, "I'm a librarian: ask me."