



January 26, 2019

# Return to the Real: The Library as Social Connector

**Betha Gutsche and Jennifer Peterson**

WebJunction

Slides and Resources on WebJunction: [oclc.org/oclc/socialconnector](https://oclc.org/oclc/socialconnector)

Let's stay connected! **#libsocialconnect**



## **Betha Gutsche**

WebJunction Programs Manager, OCLC

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## **Jennifer Lee Peterson**

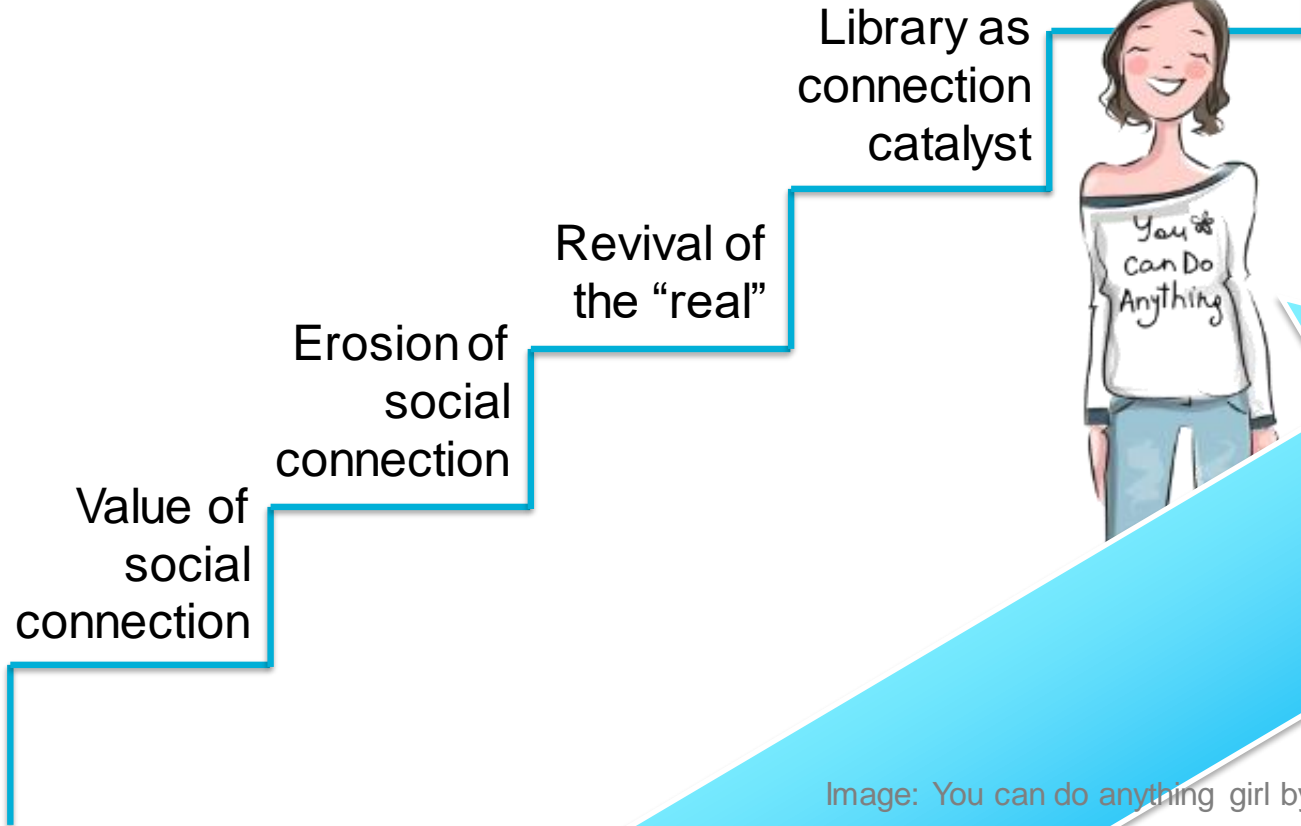
WebJunction Community Manager, OCLC

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# THESIS

By applying an **intentional** focus on rebuilding **social bonds**, public libraries have the position and power to heal fractured communities.

# Trajectory (agenda)



Possibilities

# How do you make social connections when you enter a room where you don't know anyone?



\*Photo: Chess pieces by [Markus Spiske temporausch.com](https://www.pexels.com/photo/chess-pieces-by-markus-spiske-temporausch-com/) on [Pexels](https://www.pexels.com/)

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# VALUE OF SOCIAL CONNECTION

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“Social connections are as important to our survival and flourishing as the need for food, safety, and shelter.”\*



\*Photo: 5 Tribe by [amanda tipton](#) on [Flickr](#) CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

\*Source: [Social Connection Makes a Better Brain](#); E. E. Smith; The Atlantic; Oct 29, 2013

“Social connectedness generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical well-being.”\*

- Lowered anxiety and depression
- Stronger immune system
- Faster recovery from illness
- Increased chance of longevity
- Higher self-esteem, greater empathy

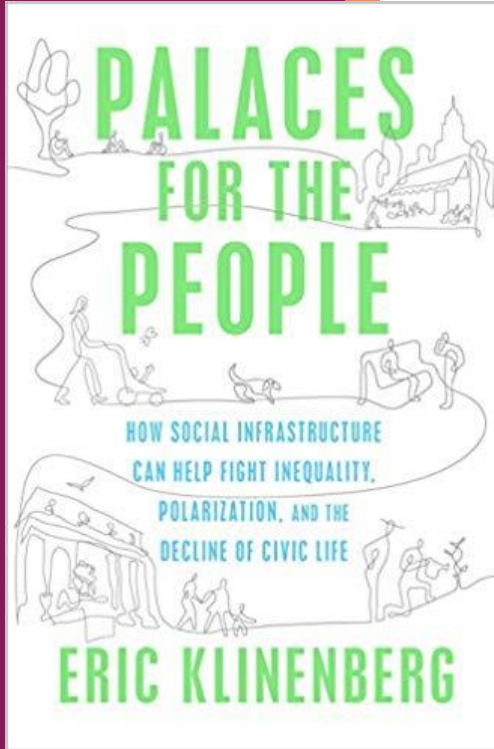
\*Source: [Connectedness & Health: The Science of Social Connection](#); Dr. Emma Seppala; Stanford Medicine; May 8, 2014



**Social connection = more  
trusting and cooperative**



# The Social Infrastructure Factor



**“When people engage in sustained, recurrent interaction, particularly while doing things they enjoy, relationships inevitably grow.”**

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# EROSION OF SOCIAL CONNECTION

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# Bowling alone

“If people bowl alone, they do not participate in social interaction and civic discussions that might occur in a league environment.”

—Wikipedia





[illegible][illegible]

HOW FACEBOOK MAKES US UNHAPPY

New  
Yorker

6 Ways Social Media Affects Our  
Mental Health

Forbes

Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?

Atlantic

Feeling Lonely? Too Much Time On  
Social Media May Be Why

NPR

A photograph of a man sitting on a wide set of grey stone stairs. He is wearing a light-colored short-sleeved button-down shirt and dark trousers. He is sitting on the bottom steps, looking down at a smartphone in his hands, with his right hand pressed against his forehead in a gesture of stress or frustration. The stairs are very wide and lead up a hill. In the background, there is a modern building with large windows and a metal railing on the right side of the stairs. The overall mood is one of isolation and stress.

We've lost that “we feeling”

Photo: Stressed by [aaayyyymm eeelectriik](#) on [Flickr](#) [CC BY 2.0](#)

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# REVIVAL OF THE “REAL”

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# MOLESKINE®

Legendary notebooks



“Analog gives  
us the joy of  
creating and  
possessing  
real, tangible  
things”

—David Sax

Photo: Moleskin display by B. Gutsche; used with permission

# Logged off: meet the teens who refuse to use social media

The Guardian  
Aug 29, 2018



Photo: Cornwall Public Library Smart Space, used with permission



“This desire for human interaction — and a sense of community and place — is one of the magnets that draw people to neighborhood ~~bookstores...~~”



*libraries*

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# LIBRARY AS CONNECTION CATALYST

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# Why libraries?

“Why build a library when we have an internet?  
Put another way, ‘Why go to a party when I  
have food and music at home?’

Internet surfing is largely a solo endeavor.

**A library is a shared experience.”\***

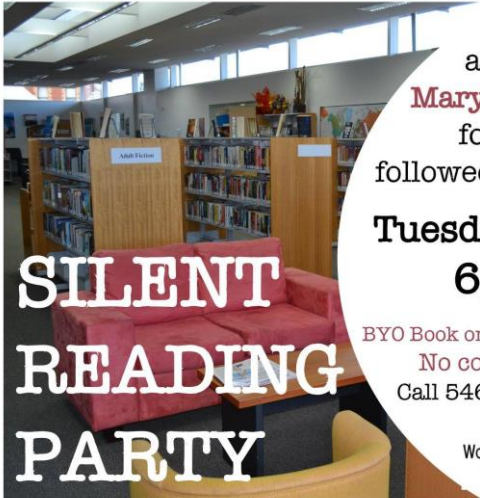
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\*Quote: [A Library for All Ages](#); Louie Castoria; Half Moon Bay Review, Aug 22, 2018

# Libraries foster social cohesion

- People forge bonds in healthy infrastructure
- Open and inclusive
- Safe space
- Nurture civility
- Cultures of learning, improving self and society




# Active, connected learning at the library



Please join us  
after hours at the  
**Maryborough Library**  
for **Silent Reading**  
followed by a **Book Chat**

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> August**  
**6pm-7.30pm**

BYO Book or grab one from our shelf  
No cost • Supper provided  
Call 54611950 for more info.

Words in Winter   

DIY becomes DIT (doing it together)

# Nerf Wars Build Social Connection!



Photo: courtesy [Carnegie-Stout Public Library on Facebook](#)  
See also video <https://youtu.be/FjOVue0jitA>



Photo: Courtesy Prince George Public Library  
See also video <https://youtu.be/QvrBeg8bWKg>



***What active learning or participatory programs are you offering in your libraries?***

# Build social capital

What can the library do to amplify social connections?



Photo: Gold coins by [aleksandra85foto](#) on [Pixabay](#)

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# CHALLENGE

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For a public program that brings people together at the library to do or make things, design ways to enhance social connections, *especially* between/among individuals who are unlikely to connect in their everyday lives

**\*YOU\***  
are idea  
generators

# Possibilities



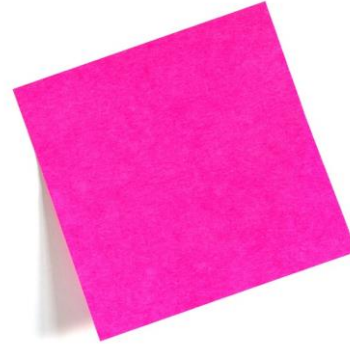
Photo: Team spirit by [dimitrisvetsikas1969](#) on [Pixabay](#)

# Think like a party host



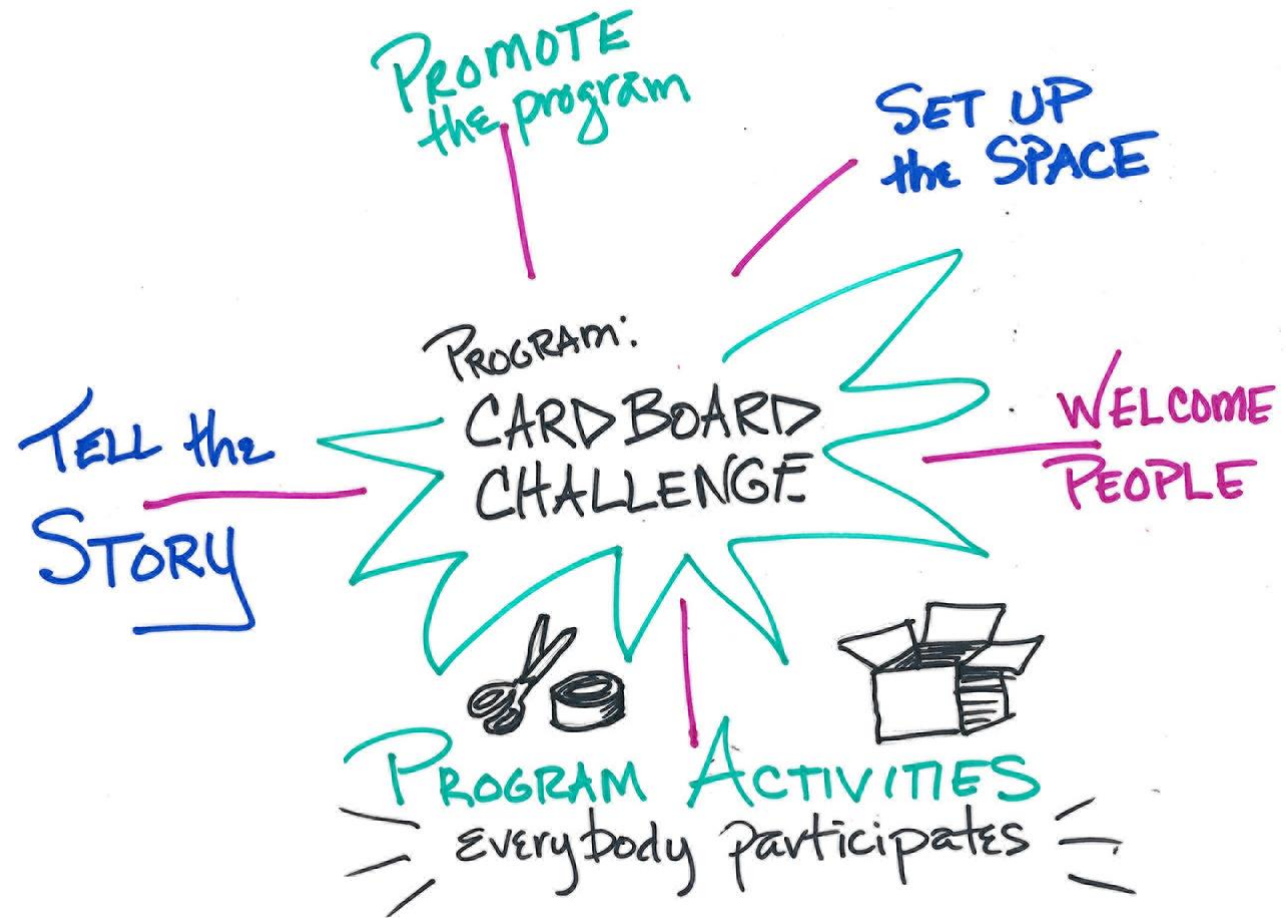
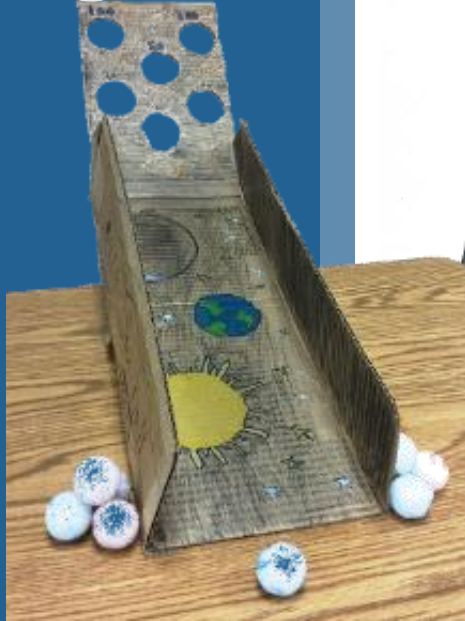
Best strategies to:

- Get a variety of people to the party
- Get people who don't know each other to mingle
- Get people to learn more about each other





# Socialize that program!



**“[Libraries are] amazing institutions that would be kind of inconceivable if we didn’t already have them.”**

**—Eric Klinenberg**

**How will you tell this story to your stakeholders?**



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## Return to the Real: The Library as Social Connector

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# thank you

#ALAMW19

Stay connected

