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Kim Johnson: Relevance is the new renovation for libraries

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There are great things happening at Tulsa City-County Library, and our new buildings are only part of the story.

Through the MY Library, OUR Future campaign, four communities are gaining new and expanded libraries designed for how people use public spaces today and for the needs we anticipate.

On Saturday, Oct. 3, Rudisill Regional Library will open a new 33,000-square-foot facility. This follows the opening of Bronson Brookside Library in October 2025. Construction continues with the Eddy Gibbs Library in Owasso and the William K. and Natalie O. Warren Library in South Broken Arrow.

These projects are more than new buildings. They are investments in literacy, technology, education, workforce development and innovation.

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Each year, TCCL welcomes more than 1.8 million visits from people across Tulsa County. This summer, 71,429 people participated in one of our most beloved traditions: the Summer Reading Program. Together they read 442,786 books and attended more than 1,100 programs and events offered across the county.

Those numbers are worth celebrating, but what happens after the Summer Reading Program ends tells a bigger story: People keep coming back.

What happens when they walk through our doors is a powerful example of why libraries are relevant.

Entrepreneurs rely on us to research ideas and launch businesses. Adults work toward earning a high school diploma, and others explore their family histories in our genealogy centers.

TCCL is a place where curiosity can become a new skill, an idea can become a business and access to technology can open possibilities someone may not otherwise have.

That is the modern public library. That is TCCL.

Books remain at the heart of what we do, but our branches are also technology hubs, classrooms, meeting places, creative spaces, cultural institutions and connection points to resources that can change lives.

When nearly every aspect of our lives seems to come with a price tag, public libraries remain one of the few places built around a remarkably simple idea: Everyone should have a place to learn, live curiously and find community.

When people experience those opportunities here, the benefits extend beyond the walls of the library and strengthen Tulsa County.

That is why the question “Are libraries still relevant?” feels disconnected from what is happening inside our buildings.

As our community grows, TCCL continues to evolve, responding to new needs while remaining rooted in a principle that is as important today as ever: Access to information and opportunity should be available to everyone.

Relevance isn’t something we are trying to hold on to. It is something we see every day.

In our maker spaces, customers record podcasts, demos and albums. They design and create projects and turn ideas into something tangible, such as using our technology to create a prosthetic limb, teachers recording audiobooks for students to supplement distance learning, and helping countless other entrepreneurs design and create inventory for their small businesses.

This is TCCL’s investment at work, making a difference in the quality of life. There are more great things ahead.



Kim Johnson

Kimberly Johnson is CEO of Tulsa City-County Library.