

BOOKS BETTER THAN DIAMONDS?



High Plains Library District

Community

FEBRUARY 2026



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READ CON

Meet Kristin Koval

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What do **YOU** have to **SAY** about our newsletter?

What do you have to say about our newsletter? Think about this as our Letters to the Editor option. If you have something to say about our newsletter, head to mylibrary.us/letters to get your feedback in the right hands.

Letters to the Editor

Readers, we've got a good one today in reference to our most recent Cagemas:



So, since you seem like someone who would appreciate this sort of correction, you say "Anyway, if you're

looking for the best Ghost Rider comic, IMO, it's Ghost Rider #35 from 1973". However, Ghost Rider #35 came out in 1979. The series launched in 1973, but it was bi-monthly up until #39, so took a while to get up to #35. Marvel tend to just use the launch date to differentiate between different series regardless of how long they lasted. e.g. Ghost Rider (1973) vs Ghost Rider (1990)

-Matthew



First of all, Matthew, you're 100% correct that I appreciate this sort of correction. Deeply. I feel it in my bones, which

are laced not with Adamantium, but comic book ink absorbed through my fingertips over the decades. Fun fact: This has NOT made my bones unbreakable, but rather has most likely made them even more breakable than normal. Hey, some mutations are beneficial and make you a wildcard berserker, others allow you to be a brittle-boned weakling.

For all the confused readers out there, Matthew is right: Oftentimes you'll see a citation online along the lines

of "Ghost Rider #35 (1973)," and what that means is we're talking about the 35th issue of a Ghost Rider series that BEGAN in 1973. This is how they make a distinction between Ghost Rider 35 from the 1973 series versus Ghost Rider 35 from the 1990 series or Ghost Rider 35 from the 2006 series. Individual issues of comics DO have titles, but that's not really how most people keep track of them, so when we're talking Ghost Rider 35, we've got to be more specific.

ANYWAY, Matthew, thank you, and I have something I think YOU'LL appreciate:

In the 60s, comics started a tradition of offering prizes to fans who wrote in with continuity errors, stuff like, "Uh, excuse me, how can Wolverine be in SPACE in his solo book during the same month he's fighting with the X-Men on Genosha in Uncanny X-Men!?"

Stan Lee did some giveaways and some mail-in contests before he decided to stop taking these corrections on the wallet and hit on the idea of the No-Prize.

At first, the No-Prize was literally nothing. No Prize.

After Marvel got a number of letters written by people asking where their prizes were, Stan Lee started to send out empty envelopes stamped with "This envelope contains a genuine

Marvel Comics No-Prize, which you have just won!"

Corrections became fun, a game, and readers got a prize, but nothing that broke the bank.

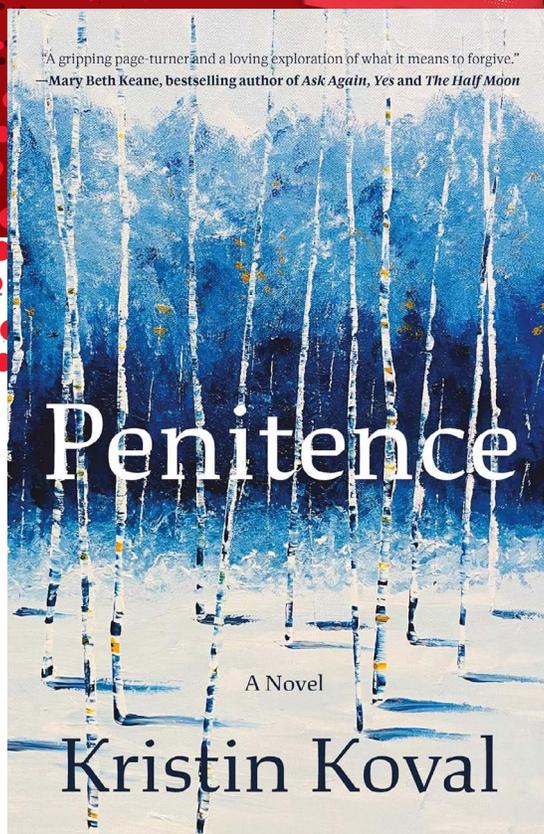
And because Stan Lee was the best, HPLD is happy to completely rip off his idea with the HPLD No-Prize! That's right, when you point out an error in our newsletter, we'll send you out one of these babies.

Now, I can't guarantee these will skyrocket in price quite like the Marvel No-Prize has, but how about we leave it at this: Nobody at Marvel ever dreamed that a No-Prize signed by Stan Lee would be up for auction on something called the internet for nearly \$4,000 dollars.

So thank you to Matthew, and send us your address to receive this wondrous, potentially* valuable prize!



Kristin Koval Interview



Readcon is coming back for 2026!

That's right, HPLD's favorite event for readers and writers is headed your way Friday, April 24th, and we'll have another panel of authors ready to do some reading, field some questions, and, of course, sign books for fans, whether those fans be of the longtime variety or newly-minted on the night of the 24th!

To kick things off, pique your interest, we've got a first of three interviews with the guests who will be honoring us with their presence on the 24th.

Meet Kristin Koval. From her bio:

*Kristin Koval is a former lawyer who always wanted to be a writer but initially wandered down other paths. Her debut novel, **Penitence**, is a Barnes & Noble Discover Pick, a Book of the Month Pick, an Indie Next Pick, an Apple Books Best Debut of 2025, an Apple Audiobooks Must Listen, a People Magazine Book of the Week, and a Goodreads Most*

Anticipated Pick and Hottest Debut selection. She lives in Boulder, Colorado and Park City, Utah with her husband, two sons and two great danes.

And now, on with the questions!

HPLD: At the time of this interview, it's almost exactly a year since **your novel, *Penitence***, came out. Happy bookiversary! Tell me a little bit about what the last year has been like.

KK: The last year was an unexpected but fun whirlwind! I traveled to bookstores for events with other authors, from Colorado and Utah to the East Coast to California and Seattle; met with book clubs both virtually and in person; attended literary festivals in Colorado, Wyoming, and Tennessee; and was interviewed for numerous podcasts and radio spots, including [a live taping with Ryan Warner for Turn the Page with Colorado Matters](#). Through it all, I met many terrific readers, made new friends, reconnected with old friends and saw family I hadn't seen in a long time. I feel very fortunate that I got to do everything I did this year.

HPLD: I think I counted 21 events that you've done in the last year around *Penitence*! What is it about doing events that you enjoy the most, and are there any downsides to being on the road?

KK: The biggest upside was meeting so many amazing people in the book world (readers, booksellers, librarians, other writers...) and getting to talk to readers about the themes I'd tried to focus on in *Penitence*. After many months of writing on my own, it was energizing to spend time with other people. The biggest downside was being away from my own pillow and bed. (I also missed my husband but was lucky because he came with me for a few events, including two that were back-to-back and required an 8 hour drive from Jackson Hole to Aspen!)

HPLD: You made the switch from lawyer to writer. What might you tell someone who is thinking about making a switch from their first career into a second career as a writer? Do you have any specific advice or maybe lessons learned from your own experience?

KK: I tried to write for years by sitting down at a laptop and opening up a blank document—and I always failed. What finally helped me make the switch was the realization that I was missing two things. First, I'd never taken a writing class before, not a single one! Second, I was missing a writing community. Once I enrolled in writing classes and became a part of a writing community through the friends I met, I started to succeed at the writing part of this career, and when it came time to focus on finding a literary agent and a publisher, classes and community continued to be incredibly important. In the

age of online learning and zoom, gaining access to those classes has gotten easier, so I'd suggest anyone interested in writing start there.

HPLD: When you talk about classes, I think, for a lot of people, that initial period of being a novice can be really difficult, really intimidating. Sometimes, as adults, we're afraid of looking foolish or uninformed about something, and that fear of being an amateur makes it hard to learn new things or try new things. What kept you motivated through that initial period when there's so much to learn?

KK: It was definitely hard to be a beginner again, but the thing that kept me motivated was that I truly loved (and still love) to write — and it was exciting for my brain to be learning something new, to figure out how to fall down and get back up again when a first try didn't work, to be creative, to explore, and to do something different every day. Although being a beginner at anything can be hard, it's a great way to grow, especially if you're able to focus on your own personal goals rather than the goals of those around you.

HPLD: [I read in your newsletter](#) that *Penitence* is not your first novel, although it's your first published novel. Tell me a little bit about the novels that came before.

KK: The first novel I wrote was a collection of satirical linked short stories. Short story collections are notoriously difficult to publish, so I wasn't able to find a literary agent who was interested in that book, but looking back, I think that might also have been my "learn how to write" novel, so for now it will just sit on a file on my laptop...

APRIL 2026

READCON

**April 24th
5:30-8:30pm**

**LINC Library Innovation Center
501 8th Ave, Greeley**

**Get tickets at
www.mylibrary.us/readcon**

Leigha Huggins **Lisa Zimmerman** **Kristin Koval**

highplains Library District HPLD Friends & Foundation

HPLD: Tell me how you think, or maybe you've heard from readers, that *Penitence* has been useful in exploring topics like transgression and forgiveness for readers. What role do you see fiction playing in addressing our real-life emotions and circumstances?

KK: Fiction is in a unique position to address our real-life emotions because it transports us into other people's worlds and gives us the chance to walk in their shoes. In the case of *Penitence*, where all the characters were flawed and struggling with choices they'd made in their lives, I hoped once readers had the chance to see each character's world through that character's perspective, it would enable readers to feel empathy they might not otherwise feel. In real life, once we feel empathy, we're more likely to extend mercy, and once we extend mercy, we're more likely to forgive. If fiction can help us find new ways to experience our real life emotions, maybe it can help us work through those emotions.

HPLD: As much as books are for readers, sometimes they're also for the people who write them. Do you feel like you also had an emotional experience in writing the book?

KK: I spent too much of my life carrying anger around instead of letting it go, and after having a positive experience forgiving another person in my life, I realized I wanted to explore the idea of forgiveness and the different ways forgiving or not forgiving can affect our lives. Writing *Penitence* forced me to inhabit each character's world in order to understand them, and ended up transforming me into a more empathetic and forgiving person, and I feel lucky that I had that experience. Readers (not just of *Penitence*, but of all novels) are invited to inhabit each character's world, but they also bring their own history and life experience into the reading and each of them will always experience books uniquely.

READCON

HPLD: It looks like you took up being a novelist and distance running around the same time. Does that feel like coincidence, or is there something to those things sharing a similar window of time?

KK: I think it was largely a coincidence, though I've found that my best ideas come to me while I'm on long runs — I frequently need to stop and pull out my phone and jot down a few notes to myself!

READ All Year Long

Challenge yourself to read 20 books in 12 months with the Adults Read On program and earn prizes along the way! Adults (16+) can participate by picking up a paper log at any branch, by downloading the Beanstack Tracker App and following the instructions, or by visiting highplains.beanstack.org/reader365. Redeem prizes at your local HPLD location, after you've read 5, 10, and 20 books! For more details, check out www.MyLibrary.us/aro.

ADULTS READ ON

Complete 20 books in 12 months. Redeem prizes at your local HPLD location, after you've read 5, 10, and 20 books!

Book #	Title
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ADULTS READ ON

Complete 20 books in 12 months. Redeem prizes at your local HPLD location, after you've read 5, 10, and 20 books!

Book #	Title
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Adults Read On

HPLD Friends & Foundation

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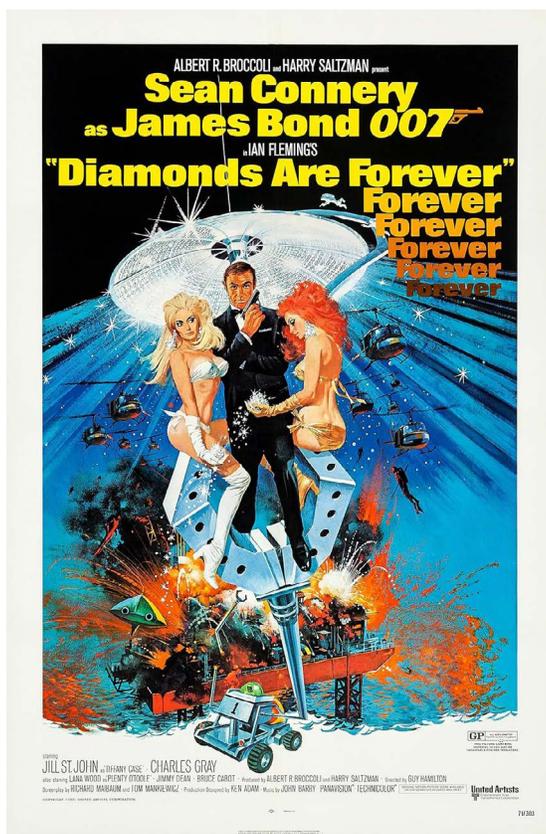
Diamonds Aren't Forever, **Maybe Books Are**

I am not someone who knows a lot about fashion or jewelry. My idea of a good accessory is a pen with a satisfying click. I do not currently own a pair of dress shoes that actually fit my feet, so hopefully nobody close to me either has something great or something terrible happen that'd necessitate a trip to buy some nice footwear. Just keep it right in the middle, friends.

Because I'm not a fashionable guy in the least, when it came to the time in my life where I was meant to buy a diamond, there were some surprises in store for me... Namely, I didn't expect what I'm going to gently, as politely as possible, call a complete scam.

For one thing, Diamonds are Forever, right? If I've learned anything from the titles of James Bond movies, it's that Diamonds Are Forever. If I've learned a second thing, it's that Tomorrow Never Dies. If I've learned a third thing, it's that Solace can be expressed in units of one or more Quantums.

Diamonds are supposed to be hard as heck, unbreakable, unassailable signs of love.



However, in order to maintain the warranty on your diamond jewelry, you have to bring the jewelry in to be inspected every 6 months. FOREVER.

One of two things is going on here.

Perhaps this is just a way to convince you to come into the diamond store a couple times a year, and of course, while they do whatever it is they're doing, which looks to be maybe using one of those little brushes that they uncover dinosaur bones with

because these archaeologists have never heard of a leaf blower, you're "free to look around the store!"

Oh, goody.

I mean, it makes sense, from a seller's perspective: If I'm selling something that lasts forever, I sell one thing to each person, then, boom, I'm out of business. If my products are TOO good, I'll never sell another one again, nobody will need one!

This is supposedly the fate of the Tupperware company, they made products so long-lived that nobody ever needed to buy any more, and they put themselves out of business.

And I reckon this is possible, based on what we all experience when we go home for holidays and open that one drawer and see a Tupperware that held leftover cake from our first birthday parties.

But I question this whole “Making quality products puts you out of business” thing.

“Our product was SO GOOD that we put ourselves out of business!” Okay, sure. And I couldn’t get a date to the prom because I was so awesome that everyone was intimidated, and anyone who went with me knew they’d have to live out the rest of their life knowing that their peak experience was slow-dancing with me to “Don’t Wanna Miss a Thing” by Aerosmith. Everything after that would just be a slow fade into the grey doldrums of adulthood. THAT makes sense.

Anyway, the other possibility is that diamonds aren’t as invincible as we were told. Rather than being endless and immortal, forever, like the Spider-Man villain Sandman, they’re just nigh-invulnerable, like The Tick.

I mean, I’ve purchased MANY things that make no claim to immortality, and they don’t need to be checked up on every 6 months. Heck, I’m DEFINITELY not immortal, and I only go to the doctor half as often as a diamond ring.

Either way, I have to reach the conclusion that Diamonds Ain’t Forever. Sorry, Jimmy Bond, but it turns out at least ONE of your titles is inaccurate. I might also throw *Moonraker* in there. I didn’t see one gardening implement in that movie, let alone a Moon Rake.

~

Anyway, if diamonds aren’t really forever, this opens up new gift-buying options for your sweetheart, and I want to encourage you to get your sweetheart a book for Valentine’s.

Is a book forever? Well, no. BUT, a well-taken-care-of hardback will probably outlast YOU. I mean, it’ll outlast ME, for sure. I don’t want to presume what you’re up to, you might be one of those juice cleanse people who’s going to swim The English Channel at age 90 or whatever, so maybe your library will wither away before you do. But me? I take better care of my books than I do my internal organs, I’m betting on me to win this slo-mo race to the grave.

Some benefits of buying books over diamonds?

Price: I would never, EVER tell you to spend 3 month’s salary on a book. It would probably be fairly challenging to even make that happen unless you get into the world of books signed by major historical figures, or maybe a book that fell out of Taylor Swift’s bag or something.

You’ll Actually Use Them: Sometimes, expensive jewelry is, well, too expensive to actually wear. The fear of losing it or something outweighs its enjoyment, so you never wear it, instead leaving it in a jewelry box awaiting the “right occasion.” In fact, [you could buy a book with a great essay about this very topic.](#)

Books Aren’t Ostentatious: Sometimes, when I see someone with something really fancy, I wonder what they’re trying to prove, you know? Like, when a person has an ENORMOUS diamond, and you’re like, “Okay, I’m sure someone loves you SO MUCH.” But a book? Nobody sees a book and is like, “Oh, okay, Richie Rich, must be nice to be able to have a book of your own.”

Books Are More Personal: A diamond might be a way to say, “I love you,” but I don’t know if it’s a way to say things like, “I understand you,” and “I pay attention to the things you like.” A book is definitely a way to show someone you really care.

Diamonds Are the Easy Way Out: Look, if you drop a few grand on a diamond, who’s going to accuse you of not trying? But a book? If you buy a book without any thought, just walked in and said, “Gimme the finest book you’ve got in the store!” you’d probably end up disappointing your loved one. Make the effort!

Now that we’ve covered the advantages of books, let’s talk about some special sorts of books that might make good gifts.

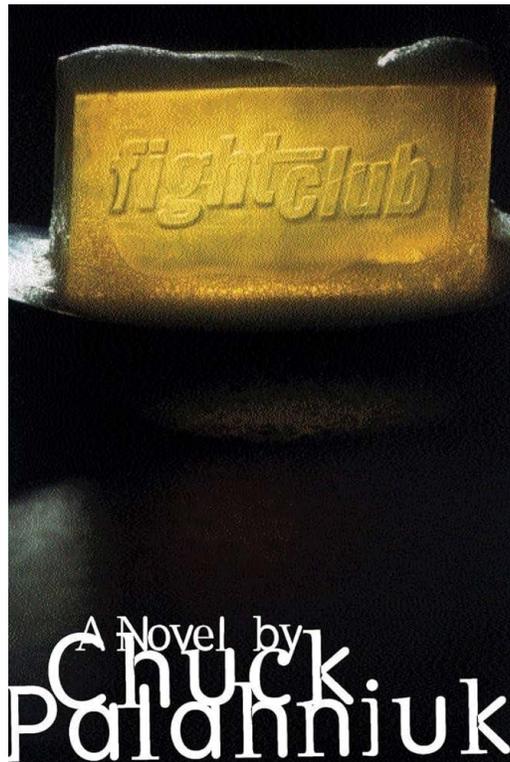
First Editions: First Editions are versions of books that were the first ones to roll off the line at the printer.

Take a book like *Fight Club* because I guess that’s what you’re getting your sweetie. A bold choice, though it can be argued the book is about the difficulties in expressing intimate and close feelings for others.

Ahem.

Picture *Fight Club* in your mind. I’m betting you picture a pink bar of soap.

What if I told you THIS image above was the original, First Edition of *Fight Club*?



I don't know why I asked that as a question, because this IS the first edition of *Fight Club*. That's right, a yellow bar of semi-translucent soap.

ARCs are not necessarily valuable, per se, and so you can find them pretty easily on online auction sites that rhyme with Bbay, usually at a very reasonable price.

Anyway, a First Edition is special in the mind of book collectors, sort of the way a game-used, signed baseball might be special to a baseball fan. It's got a history, it's the place where something began.

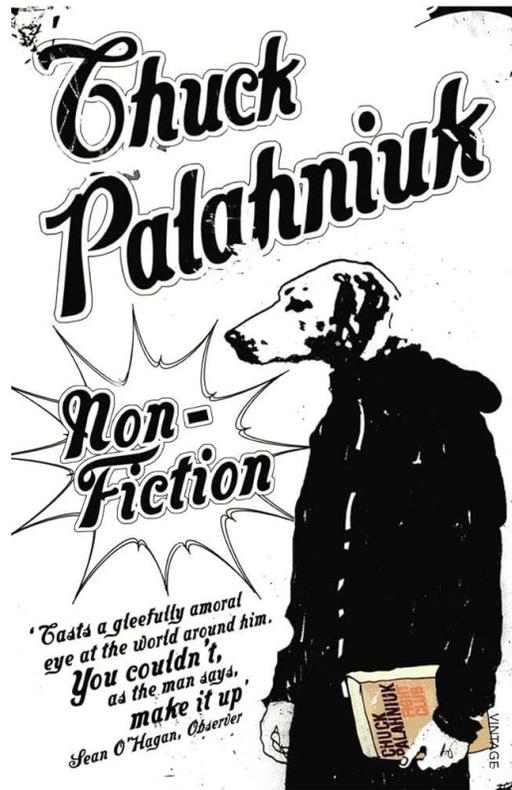
UK Editions: Okay, maybe dropping a couple hundred bucks on a first edition isn't for everyone. Or for anyone. But UK editions of books often have different covers from their American counterparts, and they're often pretty inexpensive!

The aforementioned Chuck Palahniuk put out a book called *Stranger Than Fiction* in 2004, and in the UK, it had a completely different cover and was called *Non-Fiction* instead. The UK title lacks some pizzazz, however it IS safe from being confused with the Will Ferrell movie, also titled *Stranger Than Fiction*, that came out in 2006. People who picked up Palahniuk's book, thinking it was the basis for the Will Ferrell movie, were probably horrified by the true story of Palahniuk's father hiding under a bed while his own father stalked him with a gun. This is a heck of a book, people, you really should give it a read.

You can get a UK edition of *Non-Fiction* for SEVEN BUCKS! Well, now you can't, I just bought that one. But you can get your own UK edition of your dearest's favorite book.

ARCs: "ARC" is short for Advance Reader Copy. These are books publishers send out to libraries for consideration for the collection, media outlets for a review, stuff like that. This, by the way, is part of why we can stay up-to-date with the newest titles and so on, we get a head start. :-)

An ARC often looks pretty similar to the published copy, but sometimes it may contain typos or other items that were corrected before the book was published. In addition, it will usually have something printed on the back about an author's book tour, when the book is coming out, fun ephemera like that.

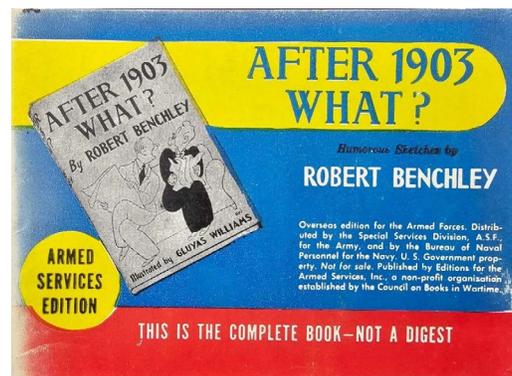


Armed Services Editions: These unusual editions are the result of WWII efforts to give soldiers something to do when there was not much to do other than wait around. The first attempt to give soldiers books, a huge donation campaign, ended up being a problem because the donated books were often big, bulky hardcovers and the like. So the military started in on an initiative to print up tons and tons of books that were suited to soldiers, and that were printed and bound in such a way that they'd fit in a cargo pocket. The result: Armed Services Editions! Many of these are available on reseller and auction sites today, and most are not terribly expensive. Keep an eye on the quality, depending on what you're looking for, but you should be able to find something pretty interesting with a little searching.

Rebound Edition: Book rebinding is a whole thing. Some people rebind books as a hobby, some people do it because it's fun.

[One maniac did it because why not see how large 14 Wheel of Time books all bound together would be?](#) Impractical? Yes. Fun? Also, very much Yes.

You can find someone to do this for you on sites like etsy, OR you can check out [Denver Book Binding](#), a local outfit that does this kind of thing all the time!



Special note: If your beloved is a fan of comics, [Houchen Bindery](#) specializes in taking loose "floppies" and binding them together into beautiful hardcovers. Just, you know, make really double sure you're not binding something that should remain intact. Really triple sure.

The downside of rebinding is that it's a bit time intensive, if you need a gift tomorrow, don't go this route. BUT, if you plan ahead, it can be a really touching, sentimental gift.

LOCATIONS

LIBRARIES Visit www.MyLibrary.us/locations-and-hours for library hours

Administration & Support Services

2650 West 29th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Carbon Valley Regional Library

7 Park Avenue
Firestone, CO 80504
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Centennial Park Library

2227 23rd Avenue
Greeley, CO 80634
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Eaton Public Library

132 Maple Avenue
Eaton, CO 80615
(970) 454-2189

Erie Community Library

400 Powers Street
Erie, CO 80516
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Farr Regional Library

1939 61st Avenue
Greeley, CO 80634
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Fort Lupton Public & School Library

370 S. Rollie Avenue
Fort Lupton, CO 80621
(303) 339-4089

Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library

400 S. Parish Avenue
Johnstown, CO 80534
(970) 587-2459

Grover Library

402 Chatoga Avenue
Grover, CO 80729
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Milliken Location of the Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library

1109 Broad Street
Milliken, CO 80543
(970) 660-5039

Hudson Public Library

100 S. Beech Street
Hudson, CO 80642
(303) 536-4550

Kersey Library

332 3rd Street
Kersey, CO 80644
1-888-861-READ(7323)

LINC Library Innovation Center

501 8th Avenue
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Nantes Library

703 Birch Street
Gilcrest, CO 80623
(970) 737-1035

Northern Plains Public Library

216 2nd Street
Ault, CO 80610
(970) 834-1259

Outreach

2650 W. 29th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
1-888-861-READ(7323)

Platteville Public Library

504 Marion Avenue
Platteville, CO 80651
(970) 785-2231

Riverside Library & Cultural Center

3700 Golden Street
Evans, CO 80620
1-888-861-READ(7323)

AFFILIATED LOCATIONS

Hazel E. Johnson Research Center at the City of Greeley Museum

714 8th Street, Greeley, CO 80631
(970) 350-9220

Poudre Learning Center

8313 West F Street, Greeley, CO 80631
(970) 352-1267

PUBLIC COMPUTER CENTERS

Briggsdale Community Library

210 Main Street, Briggsdale, CO 80611

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