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A gorgeous visual celebration of America's public libraries including 150 photos, plus essays by Bill Moyers, Ann Patchett, Anne Lamott, Amy Tan, Barbara Kingsolver, and many more. Many of us have vivid recollections of childhood visits to a public library: the unmistakable musty scent, the excitement of checking out a stack of newly discovered books. Today, the more than 17,000 libraries in America also function as de facto community centers offering free access to the internet, job-hunting assistance, or a warm place to take shelter. And yet, across the country, cities large and small are closing public libraries or curtailing their hours of operation. Over the last eighteen years, photographer Robert Dawson has crisscrossed the country documenting hundreds of these endangered institutions. The Public Library presents a wide selection of Dawson's photographs' from the majestic reading room at the New York Public Library to Allensworth, California's one-room Tulare County Free Library built by former slaves. Accompanying Dawson's revealing photographs are essays, letters, and poetry by some of America's most celebrated writers. A foreword by Bill Moyers and an afterword by Ann Patchett bookend this important survey of a treasured American institution.

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