

A North Carolinian's Library Experience

With the increase in technology and decrease in public funding, are libraries still important? This question may seem easy to answer, but it requires a search deep within your heart and history reflection to answer honestly. As I think about the true importance of a building filled with books, pamphlets, computers, and great information for all people, I begin to appreciate all that such an amazing place has to offer me and my community. The library is well known for building communities, educating, building art centers, and empowering the youth.

The library serves as a community center for diverse populations, as they reach out to immigrants, lesbians, gays, males, females, minorities, the majority, youth, elderly, etc. Libraries have all types of books for all people with various interests. Not only are libraries the bridge to building diverse communities, but they provide a place where new immigrants and residents can connect with resources, learn various skills, and interact with new people. The library is a place where new people can learn about their new town, community, and government. Libraries provide information and support for different genders and the questioning outsiders who are ignorant about lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and much more. Libraries even provide information and support for the disabled, developing programs with the American Sign Language program and others. The library isn't a place for just one type of people, as it is diverse and increases our knowledge and decreases ignorance.

Continuing to strengthen communities, the library teaches teen students the important skills to get through life. There are several volunteer opportunities, programs, jobs, and clubs that help prepare students for success in school, their daily life, and the workforce. There is also tutorials, homework help programs, and summer reading programs for the toddlers, elementary, middle, and high school students that help improve child development and academic success. I am from a small rural town outside of Charlotte, North Carolina called Monroe, NC. There aren't many outside resources available for a student's academic success, but there is a link between libraries and student achievement. Just as many other families in my community, my mother wasn't able to provide my younger brothers and me with computers, educational tools, or even tutoring in difficult courses. Although our household could not provide us with the resources necessary to succeed, there was a place that did—our public and school library. When I walked into the library, my librarian welcomed me by my first name and she assisted me during my entire visit. My mother was able to drop me off at the library, knowing not only that I would receive the tutoring and help that I needed, but that I was also in a safe place. Similar to me, many students visit the library for all the help that they need to succeed in the classroom and the world, as it is a place that increases your knowledge in various areas such as academics, the work force, research, etc. When I needed to complete research projects, write essays, receive math tutoring, prepare for interviews etc., the library was my one and only source. Without the library, I wouldn't have been as successful as a student or citizen. If the librarians weren't doing their amazing job many children wouldn't ever get the exposure to academic tools, job opportunities, work experience, or even have the opportunity to be involved in clubs. I am very grateful to have a resource that has taught me and my peers some valuable information that our parents couldn't offer us. My situation is similar to many, as our parents didn't grow up with the same tools, and they're working three jobs just to make ends meet, but although they didn't have all of the necessary tools, the library did.

As I have grown older, I've begun to appreciate the library, resources, and librarians more, as they helped contribute to my success, as well as other students' success. Not only does the library help

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students academically, but the library provides opportunities for students to be exposed to extracurricular activities. They provide art classes, story time, computer training, volunteering opportunities, history lessons, movie nights, game nights, poetry sessions, and even clubs such as crochet/knitting club for all, not just those who can afford them. The library doesn't reach out to a particular group, as there are opportunities for all people. Once I went to the library and it was interesting to see the elderly getting trained on how to use computers, as well as the children reading on the other side of the library. The library provides opportunities for free classes and new books that encourage appreciation for various subjects and books by all people.

As we continue to grow, we must not forget the importance of our libraries and the great impact that they have on our community. The library educates about art, literature, music, technology, and so much more, and because of the growth in North Carolina, it is important that libraries continue to strengthen our communities. More than just offering books, the library is a place where we gather to explore, interact, learn, achieve, and dream. The libraries are strengthening all generations and all people, and we must all understand the importance of all of the libraries in our hometowns.