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NCLA Student Library Ambassadors Program  
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Today's Libraries are bustling community centers that often separate the quiet areas from the rest of the library because today's libraries allow voices above a whisper and have more than traditional books and magazines available for reading or borrowing. Some of the innovative programs the library of today offers include interactive games for preschoolers, computer classes for Senior Citizens, DVD's, teen scavenger hunts, computer labs, Wi-Fi and so much more. If you haven't visited a library in a while you may want to prepare yourself because libraries have continued to grow and expand just like our communities. Libraries have also continued to embrace technology. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg library even has an app for your iPhone. The app allows you to view and register for programs, order movies, eBooks and the ability to chat with a librarian.

More specifically, libraries are important to both my classmates and me because it is a place where we could always go to get information for our classes, to study and of course borrow books. Some of the programs offered for high school students include ACT/PSAT/SAT test prep. These are very popular programs, and valuable to anyone trying to prepare for the college exams. As I mentioned before, our society is full of technology, and yes, the library has embraced it, but the library will not be overrun by it, librarians are still needed for assistance and to lead and create the programs offered to the public. While the library continues to use technology to make it run smoother, people are still needed to shelve books. And while the library offers eBooks, for me reading on an electronic device just

isn't the same as reading book. I personally, prefer to hold a book and turn its pages, not swipe across a tablet. Some eBooks include the sound of pages turning because there are others like me who like to hear the pages turn.

Libraries have personally impacted me in so many ways, including the opportunity to have a Summer Internship. While serving as a volunteer at the library during my internship I learned so much about what the library has to offer for kids, teens and adults. While being an intern I helped out with many children's programs like painting, storytelling, African drum lessons, and the Summer Reading Program. Before this internship I became a member of the library's Teen Advisory Group also known as TAG. In our TAG meetings the group and I assisted in the decisions made about new teen programs, decorated bulletin boards to promote the latest young adult books, and much more. I am still a TAG member and hope to receive another internship again this summer. In the summer of 2013 I promoted libraries as my platform while competing in Miss Gastonia's Outstanding Teen Pageant. The title of my platform was. "Today's Library More Than Books." I spoke about all the technology and the programs available at the library and I think I was able to open the eyes of the judges that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century a teen could find libraries to be a place to hang out. I was happy to promote the library as an important part of our community. Libraries have given me the chance to meet new people, learn new things and gain service and leadership skills. During my internship I was required to talk with people while answering their questions, register summer reading program participants in the computer system, and help children and adults alike. I have logged almost seventy (70) volunteer hours at the library over the last 2 years. The library has offered me so many opportunities to learn and grow and I didn't even need to borrow a book, but I most certainly did.

Libraries are important to the future of North Carolina because the programs they offer are usually free or at a very minimal cost. Most people don't think of the library as a place to learn

computer skills or as a place to look for a new job or apply to college, but they should. The library is now a community center that offers interesting programs at low cost and a place for members of the communities to meet and share ideas. The Matthews Branch of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library offers an abundance of programs for adults and children. The programs offered range from story time for children, book clubs for teens, and test prep classes for high school students, computer classes for adults and even an iPhone class for senior citizens. Several of the libraries in the City of Charlotte even hold movie nights for all ages. Libraries need to continue to market themselves as a place of learning with and without books, and they are trying new ways to gain patrons including 5k races, evenings with authors, and dinner galas. I hope to run in the next 5k race offered in Charlotte that benefits our local libraries and I will recruit others to join me.

To conclude I believe that the future of North Carolinas libraries is in no way being diminished, but they are losing funding every day. They are continuing to be a vibrant part of our communities and we should continue to keep them as a vital hub. I would like to continue to promote the benefits of libraries to others and I believe the Student Ambassador Program can offer me the opportunity to do just that.