

Libraries and Their Relevance in a Digital World

In the wake of a digitally powered era, libraries can seem like the odd ones out. After all, they have a reputation for being ancient structures full of old, dusty books. However, as society has progressed over time, libraries have progressed with it. While they have always been hubs of potent information, libraries today differ the most from their negative stereotype. Despite their sometimes negative reputations, libraries are still relevant and important in the 21st century. They are absolutely crucial to my peers and I, and they have definitely left a lasting mark in my life; additionally, libraries can help the state of North Carolina to progress further down the road of modern, educated living.

Libraries are powerful aids to both myself and my peers. On any given weekday in my county, students can be found studying, completing assignments, or just enjoying a good book at the main library after school. I know quite a few students in my grade who have no access to wifi at home, so the free wireless internet offered at either of the county's branches is absolutely crucial to their success. There is, of course, a surplus of research materials available as well, which aids those of my classmates who are working on research projects. At the main library, there are even clubs for teens that are focused on poetry, books, and anime. These clubs provide my peers and I with entertaining, enriching ways to have fun after school. The Summer Reading program is also a big hit for kids of all ages in the county.

I consider libraries to play a humongous role in my life. When I was 12, I started volunteering at the Alexander County Library, and I continue to do so three years later; while demanding school assignments have definitely limited the time I am able to spend

volunteering during the school year, I spend many of my days in the summer volunteering for Summer Reading Program activities. In the past year alone, I volunteered over 100 hours. Volunteering at the library has shown me that I want to work in the library field someday, for any library can quickly become my happy place. I have also met lifelong friends, gained fun experiences, found new favorite books, and explored poetry writing through the aforementioned after-school clubs. Without libraries, I wouldn't be who I am today.

Because libraries provide so many tools for education, child-development, and self-improvement, it is obvious that they can help North Carolina as a whole progress steadily through the Information Age; in rural and metropolitan cities alike, the free access to books and internet that libraries boast is greatly important to the academic and professional well-being of North Carolina's population. For example, students of all ages can take advantage of the available books and internet to complete assignments, study, and enhance their school performance, and if they don't have access to a computer or internet where they live, adults can gain access to online job listings and stay in touch with family and friends via the internet. At libraries, babies and toddlers can attend enriching activities with their parents/guardians, and Summer programs can keep kids busy and "exercising" their brains despite a vacation from school. Additionally, more and more opportunities are arising for artists of all types to showcase their work via library art exhibits. When these effects of libraries are combined, communities can be found teeming with education, success, and synergy. Libraries can certainly assist North Carolina in moving forward as a literate, successful state.

Overall, libraries can hold a boring, negative reputation. However, they are becoming more and more relevant in the 21st century. My classmates and I benefit greatly from library

resources, and I wouldn't be who I am today without libraries- I even hope to work at one one day. They also have the power to help North Carolina as a whole move through this fast-paced Information Age with educated, successful citizens. Libraries are powerful tools than can and should be harnessed by all!