

Why are libraries important today?



The most obvious answer to this question is that libraries give access to reading material. This is their traditional role. If you love reading, you will probably want to read many more books than you can buy. Instead, for a small fee, you can read almost any book in your language, and some in foreign languages as well, at your library. Then you can decide which ones you want to get for yourself. Some libraries also offer e-books and have e-readers on which you can read them. Instead of lugging around several kilos of paper, you can comfortably read from the screen.

Along with books, libraries offer academic and research support. If you, or someone in your family, need help for a school project, essay or paper, librarians can find quality sources of information. Even if your library doesn't have the resource you need, they can order it from another branch. Also, many libraries have subscriptions to academic journals, which are otherwise quite expensive. When you need to read the newest articles in your field of interest, libraries can provide you with it.

Libraries are technical providers. If you don't have the budget for a personal computer or printer, you can find these at your local library. There are also Wi-Fi hotspots, to give you Internet connectivity when you don't have your own. Most libraries will print items for a small fee, especially if you need an important document or a CV when searching for a job. You can check out CDs, DVDs, audiobooks, and video games – which is a great way to save some money when you need to. All of this helps to bridge the information gap: public libraries give everyone equal access to information technology.



Libraries have programmes for practically all age groups. There are play and story times for babies and toddlers, free tutoring and homework aid for school children, as well as teen reading, writing or programming groups. In libraries, children learn to share, engage with their communities, make or enjoy arts, and explore the world.



Last but not least, libraries are meeting spaces. When planning an event, finding a place for many people can be a problem, and libraries can easily solve it. They offer free space for different groups, and are usually easy to reach. Here new moms can connect with each other, elderly people can attend events and make new friends, teenagers can meet up after school, and readers of all ages discuss current events or the latest books. In libraries, connections between people and communities happen all the time. And the best thing – it costs practically nothing!

Tasks:

- 1) Go to your local library and find out which services they offer. Are there any other types of community help that they have, which are not mentioned in the text?
- 2) What type of materials can you check out at your library? Rank it from most to least interesting for you.
- 3) Research: Who works in a library? What work do librarians and other staff do? How are books and other items cared for in a library?
- 4) What are the rules to follow in a library?
- 5) Find out interesting facts about libraries in the past and present. How do you expect libraries will change in the future?