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Library Corner: Are libraries becoming obsolete?

By Jennifer McQuade Owasso Library Manager Sep 15, 2018



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I recently read an article written by an economist suggesting public libraries be replaced with physical Amazon stores to save taxpayers money.

I realize there are many people who feel libraries are no longer important. If there is one thing I wish people understood about libraries, it is that we are so much more than books.

Libraries aren't becoming obsolete; we are evolving to meet the needs of our communities. I often say I would like to invite anyone who thinks people no longer use libraries to come by the Owasso Library in the middle of June, when we average over 1,000 people coming through our doors every day. Library services help everyone, and we need the support of our communities and governments to succeed.

So, if we aren't all sitting behind desks guarding our rows of dusty books and shushing people, what do we do all day? (It's not sit around and read, I promise).

We create early literacy programming for babies, toddlers and children, instilling a love of reading and libraries that will last a lifetime.

We are a place of connection and communication for young mothers who feel isolated at home with their new baby.

We are a friendly face and a bit of conversation for our older customers who may be experiencing loneliness. We also provide library services to our home-bound customers.

We provide computer access to those who do not have it or cannot afford it.

We teach basic computer skills and resume' help. We will help you figure out how to download free e-books and audio books to that kindle you got for your birthday.

We provide programs for adults on health, education, finances, and technology.

We can help a worried, stressed out mom find and apply for services so her children can have food and medical care.

We help our customers copy, scan, fax and email so they can buy a house, communicate with their

families, fulfill business needs, or support their organizations or churches.

We provide a free space for community groups to meet.

We have a learning area with educational toys and comfortable furniture for families to spend time together. No greasy food or purchase required.

We have system-wide programs like summer reading for ages birth-adult – with our largest participation numbers ever this year.

We give every second grader in Tulsa County a free book and library card in October.



We have a free Small Business Center database, a step-by-step online planning tool to help small business owners plan, start, and optimize a small business or nonprofit.

One in six adults in Tulsa County cannot read. We teach adults to read through our Adult Literacy service.

We are all this and so much more. Access to technology. A friendly face. A conversation. A teacher. A helping hand. A safe space.

The best part about working at the library are the times when I believe we made a difference in someone's life.

The time I helped a welder fill out a job application because he had lost his job and had no experience using a computer.

The time I helped a new grandma print a picture of her grandbaby from Facebook to show her friends.

The time a mom at one of our early literacy workshops was connected with services she needed for her child. Any time I connect someone with a book that helps or changes them.

No, libraries will never become obsolete. I would argue we are needed more than ever in this time of overwhelming information and technology. We are a shelter in the storm.

And of course, we are still happy to help you find and check out a great book to read!




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