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The Everlasting Importance of the Library

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The Everlasting Importance of the Library

The glow of the tiny screens in our hands, the swift swiping of fingers over a thousand million pixels – we are all familiar with the growth of the digital age. The libraries that many, especially millennials, think of today are mini distorted libraries on the Web. These libraries, however, are not the ones that I hold dear. I continue to cling onto the traditional library, the library that both embraces the digital age and serves as a sanctuary from it. As massive loads of information continue to be poured into the digital world, the significance of the traditional library grows. There is something unique in the feeling of a book in the hand, and in the experiences that a library offers, that is unmatched anywhere else.

Libraries are not simply storage houses for books. They are dynamic classrooms and laboratories for discovery. Everyday, libraries provide to people of all ages and backgrounds, an environment that is difficult to obtain from a computer screen. Libraries foster cooperation and interaction, team learning and individual study. To each individual, a library can offer a unique setting. Anyone that enters a library is free to explore the resources that are available rather than be presented with often biased and heavily filtered answers online. They can *arrive* at answers for themselves rather than be told what is right or wrong by Google.

In libraries, we determine our own pathway of exploration and have a freedom to explore, to jump from source to source or topic to topic. Rather than opening up yet

another tab on the Internet browser, we can walk from one end of the library to another, exploring. Although the growth of the digital age has allowed us to quickly look up answers, there is a wealth in physically searching for an answer that makes it stick and have a greater impact. With the growth of technology, it seems as if our short-term memory is in some technological cloud, where we look for answers at the ease of our fingertips. But, when we get up, flip through pages and seek answers, we tend to develop a better understanding and it will stick to our memory.

Finally, libraries can serve as a second-home for many, including me. It is a place in which they can feel comfortable in the time of rapid technological growth. They offer a reminder of the past and are a piece of the past that is valuable for all ages. Having grown up as a regular in libraries, I remember that as I grew up, the library grew with me. From reading picture books to young adult fiction, to now, using academic journals for research, I find myself returning to the library.

Even if the glow of our phones may call to us, we must protect and continue to cherish the bounties of the traditional library. We must remember to slow down and take advantage of the wonderful libraries that are available to us. For, when we take the time to look through a library – to run our hands through the shelves and shelves of histories, information, and stories – we give ourselves a chance of growing and developing not only our knowledge but our desire to innovate and explore. Even when the batteries on our phones and computers run out, the library will still be right there waiting for us.