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On the Importance of Libraries

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Rose Duong

On the Importance of Libraries

Can you remember the first time you stepped into a library? For many of us, it was probably the first time we had ever seen so many books in one place. You were probably taken to your local public library by a parent or close relative, or ushered into the school library alongside your classmates to learn about this strange place for the first time.

Do you remember how you felt, looking at the rows upon rows of books around you? Were you overwhelmed, like I was, at the sheer enormity of having all that knowledge about komodo dragons at your fingertips? Maybe not, but that's the amazing thing about libraries--they cater to every niche interest and subject the human mind could desire, all without asking for a fee.

The presence of a library in our lives is something that people today often take for granted. We've grown so used to this universal service, we don't stop to think about what life would be like without it, and we simply live on the assumption that it's always going to be there for us.

Libraries are more than just places to read and research. They foster literacy to the masses and a sense of generalized trust to the public, making every library a safe space for anyone who needs it. They also provide resources for lower income households and people seeking employment. As shown in a study by the University of Philadelphia, over 10% of the

5.8 million in-person library visits in 2015, over 500,000 patrons, involved specialized access to health and assistance programs. According to the American Library Association, 98% of libraries boast free public Wi-Fi access, and over 60% of libraries host social connection events for teens and adults, such as book discussion clubs or gaming programs. Libraries also function as social hubs where people can gather to talk and spend time together, strengthening the bonds in a community. The Collin College Library is a perfect example of what I'm talking about. It's distinct in its appearance from the main building, open and inviting towards the weary student population with its wide glass windows and promise of comfortable chairs and charging stations. I walk into the library everyday and find that there's always something going on in every corner of the building, a constant bustle of activity that makes the place feel alive. Any college student would be able to tell you how useful the library is in their everyday lives, whether they're in need of some last minute research, a private study room to rethink their life choices, or simply a place to relax and unwind--the library has it all. It's easy to think of the library as a place for academic learning and forget that there's so much more it offers. I can't tell you how many times the easy printer access has come in handy, or how I wish more students knew about the 3D printing services found in the Maker's Space, which I've used to make all sorts of fun things to display in my room. Still, there's no denying that the resources provided by the library are indispensable. Just ask any student during Finals Week, when study room usage and caffeine consumption is at its all time high, and the presence of a de-stress area becomes a life saver. I believe that the library is one of the most essential parts of the campus, and that we all can find a comforting sort of solidarity in knowing that it will have exactly what we need to push towards our goals as college students.

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