

Abstract

Why do we still need libraries? Surely everyone gets their information through search engines and social media. If people are self-educated, what is the purpose of having institutions of public education like libraries or museums? These questions assume that Google and Twitter have completely equalized the playing field of information, and libraries are a redundant luxury. In some ways, this is actually true. But this school of thought comes from a place of privilege and assumes that everyone has digital access. It also does not account for all the other ways that libraries serve the public, which I examine thoroughly in my research.

Libraries also have a unique sense of community. Ever since they began, libraries have been adapting to the specific communities they serve. They have become so incredibly in tune with what their patrons need that no two libraries look the same. When the library is fulfilling the specific needs of their customers, this creates an impactful relationship between the library and its community.

In order to see how libraries connect with and impact their communities, I have interviewed staff members at six different libraries around North America, serving communities in: Anapra, Mexico, Belle Plaine, Iowa, Kansas City, Missouri, Muncie, Indiana, and Queens, New York. I asked them about what resources they have, what their demographic looks like, what funding they receive, and what sort of impact they thought their library made on the community. This is all to examine the effectiveness of the relationship of the library and its patrons as well as the culture that this relationship manifests.

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