

“Librarian’s Shelf” by Jill Owens

Your library – More than just a book warehouse

What is a library? We all have our own idea of what a library is and why libraries are needed. It is interesting how many divergent opinions exist. Of course allowing for the fact that there are so many types of libraries can explain part of this. An academic library might function quite differently than a public library. There are also generational and regional components to this debate.

There is the school of thought that libraries are hushed, nearly empty book warehouses. One of my professors called this the “Library as mausoleum” thinking. Libraries that hope to rival places of eternal rest in stillness are generally not public libraries.

Most modern public libraries subscribe to the “Library as place” way of thinking. This is especially true in communities that don’t have community centers or other public gathering places. As places that offer more than just information and inventory, many libraries have a vibrant community building aspect. While we have wonderful collections for people just interested in the lending library core component of CPL, we also have many other attractions. Patrons of all ages and backgrounds gather at the library for interaction with one another in the contexts of meetings, classes, and programs. In addition to the things you might guess, such as book clubs and tutors, we host quilters, census information folks, self-help groups, clubs, and more. If people need a place to congregate to exchange ideas, CPL is the place to call.

The Columbus Public Library is a place to explore the Arts. Thanks to the wonderful exhibits, classes, and activities sponsored by the Columbus Arts Council, area patrons can enjoy many types of shows and art education. They collaborate with the library to offer StoryART to children, and other programs for all patrons. The new teen space opened just this month. This room was made for youth to have a place to congregate both after school and when they come to the library for programs or anytime they need a cool place to enjoy. Platte Valley Literacy Association is also housed in our library. People assemble to learn English, work on a GED or literacy skills, learn about citizenship, and much more. As you will have read in last week’s column, the library is also a place to take beginning computer classes.

Don’t worry, traditionalists are also welcome and will feel at home. You can browse for something to read, have a seat in the reading area, or maybe you want to find a corner to have some quiet time. The regular users of the library have learned when the rush times are and when the quieter times can be found. We’ve tried to accommodate the people who need quiet study time (upstairs, east wing) and the people who want to group and mix.

As you can see, your vital and dynamic Columbus Public Library brings people together for many reasons. So the next time your soccer team or garden club needs a meeting place, call 564-7116, option 2, and book a room.

Stop in and find out what Columbus Public Library can be for you.

The Columbus Library Foundation recently received memorials for Fred Kluck and Betty Graver given by Burns and Lucille Ellison. Roberta Saalfeld memorialized Frances Jacobsen. The Jenkinson and Archer Families gave a memorial in honor of H. Lynne Jaeggi. Bud and Rita Fleisher donated in memory of Teresa Heimes. Louise Kaufmann was memorialized by Vern and Ruby Beckmann, Fern Rohde, Dorothy Byers, and Dorothy Cole.