

The Importance of Libraries

By Kathryn Ballobin

There are 116,867 libraries in the United States. Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1833 funded the first tax-supported public library. The Nebraska Territory established the first library in Omaha in 1856-57. Columbus Public Library was established in 1878.

Advocates for public, private, and school libraries have been leading influencers and fundraisers and have come from every walk of life. Many of us have spent a great deal of time in a library. Initiate a discussion with anyone about their visit to a library and a dialog will kindle regarding the attention, expertise, and enthusiasm of the staff, and amazement about ever-evolving services. Learning to access these resources, whether in person, on-site, or online, is an essential skill that provides expected, and sometimes unexpected, life-long benefits derived from early through advanced age. Libraries serve and support everyone, and provide equitable access to information that we can understand and appreciate as a fundamental expectation and valued privilege.

Libraries have always been recognized as a visible and vital center of the communities they serve. Inspiring quotes abound worldwide regarding libraries:

“Books and doors are the same thing. You open them, and you go through into another world.” Jeanette Winterson; English Author.

“It is not true that we have only one life to live; if we can read, we can live as many more lives and as many kinds of lives as we wish.” S.I. Hayakawa; Canadian-born American academic and politician.

“A trained Librarian is a Powerful Search Engine with a Heart.” Sarah McIntyre; American Author and Illustrator.

“In the non-stop tsunami of global information, librarians provide us with floaties and teach us to swim.” Linton Weeks; Washington Post Writer.

“I have found the most valuable thing in my wallet is my library card.” Laura Bush; American teacher, librarian, memoirist, author and former First Lady of the United States.

“When in doubt go to the library.” J. K. Rowling; British Author.

There are many books that have been written where a central character is a library, a librarian, or staff in a bookstore. Recently, several books have coincidentally become a part of my reading journey where a character’s life, based on author experiences, was enriched, engaged, and/or encouraged and changed for the better.

- *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haas
- *The Secret, Book, & Scone Society* by Ellery Adams
- *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich

- *The Personal Librarian* by Marie Benedict and Victoria C. Murray.

We can all be advocates for libraries as easily as by getting to know the staff, and learning and utilizing the incredible services. If and when it's possible, participation can be at another level by becoming involved in the Columbus Public Library. Contact them about information regarding the Friends of The Library, Library Board, Library Foundation Board, Adopt-a-Shelf, event volunteers, and organizational partnerships. More information is available at: <http://www.columbusne.us/174/Get-Involved>

Libraries and their staff have been treasured resources since their existence began. Become an advocate whenever and wherever you can and visit your library frequently!