

Libraries Are Awesome!

by Timothy Matas

Let me start by saying, I LOVE LIBRARIES. I was fortunate enough to be appointed to the Columbus Public Library Board of Trustees about nine months ago, which is a great honor for me since libraries have been a very important part of my life ever since I was a little boy.

I grew up in McCook, Nebraska, and my favorite summer activity (other than the city pool) involved me hopping on my bike and burning the tires off zig-zagging through town from my family house across from St. Pat's, through Norris Park to the McCook Public Library, skidding to a stop under the three extraterrestrial toadstools, jamming my bike into the rack (sans lock, because that's the kind of place McCook was) and running to open the door.

Inside I was regaled with all manner of wonders. I read about superheroes and the founding fathers. I read about science and science fiction. I read mysteries and mythology. I was part of the "Book-It" generation, where reading was directly tied to free pizza, an irresistible temptation for most kids.

In high school, I combed the shelves for classics, and not just the required reading for my classes. I found "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey", and began binge-reading Stephen King, finishing his entire catalog (at the time) by the time I graduated.

When I went to college, I worked at the music library at UNL where we cared for a large collection of musical scores and recordings, in addition to books about music history and music theory.

Finally, at Law School I worked at the Schmid Law Library for the last two years of my law school career. Being a student librarian gave me such an advantage in being able to use written resources for research.

Now, as a married father of three, the library has given our family so many tools to help teach my children and instill a love of not only reading, but learning and searching for answers about the world around them. The resources available at the library have also continued to grow and change with the world around us.

The library is no longer just a repository for books. Your library card also unlocks a vast universe of information and services, many of which you can access from your desk, kitchen table, or even your phone.

Interested in reading the newest bestseller? You can probably borrow it to read on your tablet without making the trek downtown. Online resources such as Hoopla and Libby (OverDrive) grant library users access to millions of books, graphic novels, record albums, and even movies and television shows using the internet. For free.

Interested in genealogy? DIY car repair? Learning a new language or starting a small business? The library can give you access to resources that normally can become pretty pricey anywhere else. The cost? Free.

I have always loved libraries because of the vast world of information and knowledge they give us access to. If you haven't been to our library in a while, why wait a year for the new building to be done? Come down and learn what our Columbus Public Library has to offer for you and your family.