

7 Reasons Libraries Are Essential, Now More Than Ever



Source: [John Towner/Unsplash](#)

By [Sadie L. Trombetta](#)

I grew up down the street from my local library, so I spent a lot of my childhood there, either hidden away in the stacks reading books, using the internet to access Myspace, or meeting up with friends to work on school projects. I've always understood the value of such an institution, but in today's current climate of untruths, intolerance, and ignorance, it's becoming clear that [libraries are essential, now more than ever](#).

2017 has been dubbed by many the [year of resistance](#), and over the past three months, the country has seen that play out in an increasingly interesting number of ways. There's been no shortage of protests, marches, and strikes, but aside from the traditional demonstrations of civil disobedience, people across the country have come up with new and surprising ways to speak out against the dangerous political agenda of the current administration and stand up for their rights and the rights of others. There have been movements to [bury the White House in books](#), a nationwide call to action for [women to get involved in politics](#), and so much more. While millions of individuals have gotten involved in the resistance, entire institutions have dedicated themselves to it, too, including many libraries around the U.S.

Despite what you may hear about the death of print books and the lack of interest in libraries, there are actually [more public libraries in the U.S.](#) than there are Starbucks. More than just storage spaces for books, [libraries are important community hubs](#) that serve as centers of learning, professional development, healthcare, and now, resistance.

In today's political climate, libraries have become centers for the movement that supports women, immigrants, people of color, the LGBTQ community, and those facing religious persecution. They are free public spaces that allow everyone to feel safe and to find opportunity. Now, more than ever, they are vital American institutions, and here are seven reasons why:

1 They offer free educational resources to everyone.



Source: [GIPHY](#)

Public libraries in the United States play an essential role in providing safe, accessible, and 100% free educational resource centers for every member in communities across the country. At a library, it doesn't matter how much money you make, because every resource there is free of charge, including books, internet access, and educational and professional training programs. Individuals and families, no matter their socioeconomic status, can count on their libraries to provide them with the resources they need to succeed and the answers to important questions they can't otherwise find.

According to the ALA, librarians in public and academic libraries across the country answer [nearly 6.6 million questions every week](#). If everyone who asked a question formed a line, it would span all the way from Miami, FL, to Junot, AK. These questions aren't just about card catalogs and book recommendations, either. Librarians help their patrons not only find their next reading selection, but they also answer questions about computer and internet training, job applications and resume writing, and filling out government forms, including tax and health insurance paperwork, all of it for free.

2 Libraries are safe refuges for the homeless and underserved populations.

Libraries in the United States provide a [crucial service for poor and homeless people](#) across the country. Not only do they offer a safe and free refuge for those who need shelter, but they offer support to those in need. Each morning when public libraries open their doors, they become shelters, learning centers, and employment centers for the most underserved population.

In many areas, homeless shelters partner with libraries and provide transportation between the two locations every day. At locations like Washington, D.C.'s [Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library](#), which to the dismay of its patrons will be closing for renovations for three years,

hundreds of homeless men, women, and children visit every day, and most of the time all day, to seek shelter and take advantage of the resources the library has to offer. For the homeless or the very poor, libraries provide them with access to the internet for job searches, books for educational and job training, and essential programs designed to bring them up from poverty.

3 They help boost local economies.



Source: [GIPHY](#)

Because they are free for patrons, not many people consider the role they play in the economy, but libraries play a key role in financially strengthening local community. They provide a work space for telecommuters, supply free internet access for people looking for employment opportunities, and offer job and interview training for those in need.

[According to the ALA](#), 73% of public libraries assist their patrons with job applications and interviewing skills, and 48% provide access and assistance to entrepreneurs looking to start a business of their own. In many cases, like the [Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County](#), local governments work together with libraries to help small business owners by providing them with online and in-person resources, including financial guidance, contract opportunities, market information, business plans, and much more.

In helping individual community members financially succeed in their lives and small businesses, libraries help entire communities succeed at boosting their economy and growing their local wealth.

4 They play an important role in English language learning.

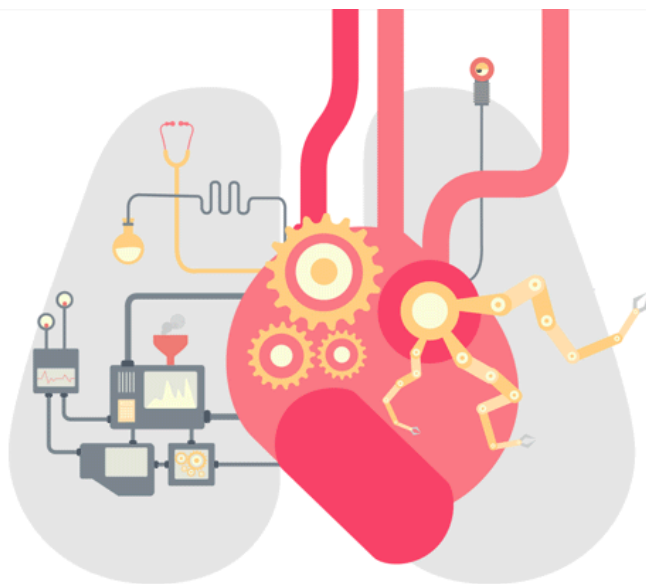
The diversity in America, one of the things that makes this country so great, continues to grow more and more every year, and libraries play a key role in that development. People from all over the world come to the U.S. looking new opportunities for them and their families, and often

times, English is not their first language. Before they can find success, they need to find a place to learn a new language.

[Libraries provide English language learners](#) with the opportunity to immerse themselves in their new language, whether it be through periodicals, books, audiobooks, or resources online. Many libraries also offer multilingual books for adults and children that are designed to help new English learners master the language in a fun and engaging way. Increasingly, libraries are also expanding their collection of non-English books to help create a more inclusive environment for every kind of reader, no matter where they are from.

In addition to the physical resources libraries offer ESL learners, they also provide educational ones, including free language classes, bilingual housing and employment help, [resource and contact information for adult education courses](#) outside of the library.

5 Libraries make communities healthier.



Source: [GIPHY](#)

When you think of a library, you probably don't think of it as a center for health and wellbeing, but in many cases, it is exactly that. Through their community programs, direct librarian assistance, fitness classes, and basic internet access, libraries provide important equal access opportunities to those seeking health information and services.

According to a study by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#), 59% of libraries help patrons find health insurance resources, 18% bring in healthcare providers to offer free limited screening services, and 23% provide free fitness classes. Together with local governments, healthcare providers, and medical professionals, libraries keep communities healthier and increase their vitality in a way that makes a serious impact.

6 They preserve history, and more importantly, truth.

The preservation of truth is important, now more than ever. Libraries, which house centuries of learning, information, history, and truth, are important defenders in the fight against misinformation.

By providing free access to educational, news, and historical resources, libraries help keep the public informed with facts, rather than confused with fiction. They act as a hub of information, and their leaders, the librarians, torch bearers for facts. While they might have a robust fiction section, libraries are still some of the greatest champions of truth.

7 Libraries help connect communities.



Source: [GIPHY](#)

More so than a community center, town hall, or public park ever could, libraries connect their communities in a way that benefits everyone. They pool local resources — from educational offerings to job training to homeless outreach to ESL learning — and put them all under one welcoming roof for everyone to share.

Whether you're a family looking for a fun story time, an immigrant in need of language resources, an unemployed individual searching for job help, or a community member who needs help on their taxes, you can all go to one place: the library. There, communities come together to learn, share, and celebrate where they live, who they are, and what they want to become.

Libraries truly are remarkable places, and in today's world, we need them now more than ever. Find out how you can [support your local library](#) and get to work protecting one of America's most important public institutions. The country needs it.