

Create an **essay**, video, presentation, etc. to tell us your library story and what libraries have meant to you in your life. All submissions should answer the following questions:

- Why are libraries important to you?
- How have libraries impacted you personally? (What's your library story?)
- How are libraries important for the future of North Carolina?

Submit via website, fax, email, or mail by Monday, March 27th, 2023

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Libraries and their Importance

Libraries have always been an essential part of my life. From my earliest memories, I recall visiting the local library with my parents, eagerly searching for books to take home and devour. As I grew older, my love for libraries only deepened, and they became a crucial part of my personal and academic life. In this essay, I will share my library story, discussing how libraries have impacted me personally and why they are important to me.

To me, libraries are essential because they provide access to knowledge, information, and resources that might otherwise be difficult to obtain. They offer a wealth of materials, ranging from books and magazines to digital resources, and they can be a vital source of support for learners, researchers, and anyone seeking to expand their knowledge or understanding of the world. Libraries are also a great equalizer, providing access to resources and services to all members of the community, regardless of their income, background, or social status.

When I was a kid, my parents would take me to the local West Regional public library every week, and I would spend hours wandering the stacks, pulling books off the shelves, and reading them on the spot. As I grew older, my interests evolved, and I began using the library to research topics for school assignments, explore new subjects, and find inspiration for my own creative pursuits. I would come to the library to study, and after studying, I would search for nonfiction books that interested me.

One particular experience stands out in my memory: when I was in middle school, I became fascinated with the "who was" nonfiction series and decided to read as many of these books as I could. Over the next few weeks, I went to the library and read about all the different famous people who made their mark on history. I read everything I could find about these people, checking out stacks of books from the library and devouring them in my spare time. I was amazed by the sheer breadth of knowledge that was available to me, and I felt like I was uncovering a hidden world that I had never known existed.

As I grew older, my relationship with libraries continued to evolve. In high school, I relied on the library to access academic journals and other scholarly resources, which were

essential to my studies. Later, in tenth grade, I found myself returning to the library for Teen Leadership Corps (TLC), which was a volunteering program designed to help little kids perform activities like painting and drawing. The library also served as a way to escape the distractions of the outside world and helped me focus on my work. TLC has played a major role in my life, as I have had lots of fun, made friends, and improved my ability to handle children. I will never forget the memories I've made from this library program. Without it, my life would never be the same.

In addition to my personal experiences, I believe that libraries play a crucial role in shaping the future of North Carolina. As our society becomes increasingly complex and interconnected, the need for access to information and knowledge has never been greater. Libraries can serve as community hubs, offering resources and services that support education, technological access, and personal development. They can also help bridge the digital divide, providing internet access and other technology resources to underserved communities.

Moreover, libraries can play a key role in promoting literacy and a love of learning. By offering books, educational programs, and other resources to children and families, libraries can help ensure that every child has access to the tools they need to succeed in school and in life. They can also serve as a safe and supportive space for people of all ages, where they can explore new ideas, connect with others, and expand their horizons.

In a new generation plagued by phones, computers, and mobile devices, reading a book can take you to a new world, hidden from notifications, pop-ups, and other distractions. Personally, when I started reading, I found that my attention span increased, and my overall mood felt better and more relaxed.

Ultimately, libraries have been a constant presence in my life, and I believe that they are essential to the well-being of our communities and our society as a whole. Through their vast collections of resources, commitment to inclusivity and equity, and dedication to lifelong learning, libraries have the power to transform lives and shape the future of North Carolina. Whether you are a student, a researcher, a writer, or simply someone who loves to read, I encourage you to visit your local library and discover all that it has.