

Viewpoints

Libraries evolve to meet changing needs of a new century

I recently attended a graduation ceremony for a friend who was receiving her master's degree in library science. As is typical for commencement ceremonies, there was a long list of speakers. Given that all the graduates were receiving degrees in library science, the speakers focused their remarks on the role of libraries in the 21st Century.

As I listened to the speeches, it was apparent that the librarians were aware, and perhaps a little worried, about the impact that rapidly changing information technology would have upon their profession. The speakers' commitment to keeping libraries relevant was also clear.

If you take a moment to look, you will see how our local libraries are evolving to meet the needs of 21st century patrons. Here are a few examples.

The Weber County Library provides digital access to over 30,000 eBooks and eAudiobooks which can be downloaded to a home computer, Kindle, iPad, or mobile phone without setting foot in the library. The cost of accessing these books is simply the price of a library card. Cards are free to residents of Weber, Davis, Morgan, and Summit Counties who present two valid forms of identification at any Weber County library.

For me, the real digital treasures are found in the databases and collections that provide access to material unavailable through public web sites. Despite the growth of the internet, many newspapers and magazines do not provide online publications in a free and unabridged format. If you want to read the Wall Street Journal online, it will cost you \$100 for an annual subscription. However, anyone with a Weber State University library card can read the Wall Street Journal online for free. You can also search decades of the newspaper's archives. WSU library's web site also provides digital access to thousands of other newspapers, magazines

and journals ranging from The Antioch Review to Victorian Studies.

If you think the Weber State library is only open to WSU students, you are wrong. Anyone in the community may use the library, and for a charge of \$15, anyone there can attain a WSU library card that allows you to access the entire digital collection online.

History buffs will enjoy perusing WSU's collection of digital photographs. Here they can find photographs of Ogden's 1919 Armistice Parade, a photo of nurses using bed pans as sleds to slide down a snow covered hill by the old Dee Memorial Hospital, and photos of well known Ogden residents taken when they were much younger.

Yet, if you limit your use of the library to your home computer, you will be missing a great deal. Some of the most enjoyable aspects of a

library are only found by setting foot inside the library. Northern Utah libraries provide plenty of reasons to actually go the library.

The main Weber County Library offers English as a Second Language classes for patrons whose native language is not English. Pleasant Valley Branch library hosts a film series that features great movies which, for the most part, never found their way to the

local multiplex. Most importantly, every library has quiet spaces for reading and contemplation.

Given present economic conditions, you may be watching your budget. If you are concerned about the economy but are not inclined to occupy Wall Street, you may want to consider occupying your local library. Libraries are an economical source of information and recreation. As Malcolm Forbes once observed, "The richest person in the world, in fact, all the riches in the world couldn't provide you with anything like the endless, incredible loot available at your local library."

Top of Utah Voices



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Commentary

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