

Dear Mrs May,

It may have come to your attention that, in the twenty-first century, libraries are considered to be less and less relevant as time progresses. This is due to the rapid technological growth that our society is constantly undergoing. Why borrow physical books or look for factual texts in a library when you can easily find the desired information online?

While these views are valid, however, they are not necessarily representative of the population. One of the core functions of libraries is to make resources available for everyone. I believe that learning is and should be considered an essentiality, not a privilege available only to a select few. A recent survey taken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed that around ten percent of households in the UK do not have access to the Internet, though the majority of our public libraries provide free computer usage for anyone holding a library card, making the Internet's resources available to a broad spectrum of people. For both adults and children, libraries are as much a social place as they are an educational one. A whole host of activities ranging from book groups to craft clubs are easily accessible and can help a variety of individuals to meet new people and discover books different to ones they might normally read.

A library is an arsenal of ideas that have, over the centuries, been put down onto paper. This untamed creative power is available to anyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age or religion. If you have a desire to learn something, through fiction or fact, you can. Libraries grant you that liberty.

With this concept in mind, we can look at school libraries. These collections of resources are arguably even easier for students to access than their public libraries, as they are based on school premises. The information available to students is timely and relevant, and can be catered to their own individual needs. One might think that technology would distract and diminish school library usage, but this is not the case. At Ribston Hall, we use a library database system called Oliver, which allows librarians to circulate and track books, as well as view pupil-based statistics. From school or at home, students can search for and reserve books themselves, and are given recommendations for more books based on their personal preferences. We also have a subscription to JSTOR, which is an online collection of mostly factual sources to aid research for projects like the EPQ. While this is a recommended resource for Sixth Formers, pupils in younger years are in no way prohibited from using it.

Reading is proven to have many benefits; it stimulates the brain, increases your knowledge and improves concentration – but most importantly, it teaches individuals empathy. To quote Atticus Finch: “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” Our school library contains a multitude of books that focus on the lives of diverse characters, allowing students to get a glimpse of what living in different areas, cultures and times would be like. This is reflected in our borrowing data; some of the most popular books in our school library include ‘The Fault in Our Stars’ (telling the story of young people who are forced to battle cancer), ‘Wonder’ (which shows a boy with Treacher Collins syndrome overcoming prejudice from his peers), and the ‘Noughts and Crosses’ series (a collection of award-winning stories showing the effects of racism in a dystopian world).

Our library is an invaluable resource to students of all year groups and backgrounds, as it provides free access to hundreds of books, magazines and online resources. I hope this letter has shown you how much the library at Ribston Hall High School impacts our students, and how much it means to me.

Yours sincerely,

Hannah Marsden