

Using Your Local Public Library as a Resource

BY LILY ALONSO

While some schools have their own libraries, many school libraries are at risk or have already been eliminated. However, that does not mean schools and teachers are alone. Public libraries are excellent supplementary resources that offer multiple benefits and opportunities for all levels of students and teachers. Not only can they get you access to that unattainable bestseller, but they also serve as third spaces—along with home and school—with so much to offer.



COLLECTION ACCESS

School libraries are on the front lines of book challenges and book bans, and at risk of being eliminated from campuses. Most public libraries are (*for now*) able to maintain a diverse collection due to collection development guidelines, the [ALA Code of Ethics](#), and other safeguards. While not completely safe from these threats, public libraries can maintain a collection that may not be readily available to students through their school libraries because of these challenges.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

With a library card, patrons have access to ebooks and audiobooks *plus* databases for access to academic articles, foreign language courses, and digital guidebooks. A partnership between my library and our local district gives digital access to students with their school ID, and in many cases, we have unlimited checkouts for select titles—*perfect for class reads*.

PROGRAMMING

As school curriculum changes, library programming offers students a chance to continue engaging with subjects like home economics, art, and other subjects affected by cuts. A close relationship with your local librarians help initiate programs the community needs. These programs further exercise critical thinking, communication, and practical life skills.

COMPUTER CLASSES

In many rural communities, a public library is the only space with free computers and internet access readily available. Computer classes have proven valuable in helping local students with academic projects. Librarians can guide students through tasks like creating a basic Word document, designing charts for presentations, navigating databases, and properly citing sources. Classes like these have been held at the library and, also, taken out to the schools.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

When available, library outreach is a vital tool in fostering a strong relationship between a community and its local library. Librarians visit schools to present library resources and issue library cards. Additionally, library staff can offer classes and activities on campus. This interaction invites students to become active library users.

AUTHOR VISITS

Authors have a second home in libraries. Visits can be a groundbreaking experience for students, especially if they are avid readers and aspiring writers or illustrators. These opportunities encourage students to engage more critically with texts and can create a connection with the author they admire. This fosters lifelong literacy and library use.