

The library “isn’t just for books.”

Stephen Krashen

Every morning, I type in “libraries” under google news, and very often I find an article or letter to the editor that tells me proudly that the library in their town “isn’t just for books.” They will loan you skateboards, electronic games and board games, cheerfully announcing that now you can have some real fun, and for free. I certainly don’t object to libraries offering toys and games, but I object to the message that reading books is a necessary evil and not “real fun.” Many of us think that reading is a profound source of pleasure and agree with Jorge Luis Borges: “I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.”

There is more: Study after study shows that those who read for pleasure read better, spell better, write better and have larger vocabularies. Readers also know more about a wide variety of topics, including history, science, and literature. Libraries are the major source of reading material for those living in poverty, and increases in book prices make the library an important source of reading material for most of us.

“Libraries aren’t just for books” is like saying fire departments do more than just put out fires and save lives.

Sources:

“read more read better”: Krashen, S. 2004. *The Power of Reading (Libraries Unlimited)*

“readers know more”: Stanovich, K. and Cunningham, A. 1993. *Where does knowledge come from? Specific Associations between print exposure and information acquisition. Journal of Educational Psychology 85, 2: 211-229.*