

AUGUST 2014

LIBRARIES

JUSTINE BRIAN

DATE DUE	
JUL 12 2004	MAY 12 2005
JUL 20 2004	MAY 21 2005
JUL 28 2004	
AUG 11 2004	JUN 11 2005
SEP 14 2004	JUL 02 2005
OCT - 2 2004	JUL 05 2005
OCT 21 2004	MAR 11 2005
JAN 4 2005	APR 13 2005
JAN 8 2005	
FEB 3 2005	APR 21 2005
FEB 20 2005	MAY 04 2005
FEB 24 2005	JUL 18 2006
MAR 07 2005	AUG 15 2006
APR 20 2005	SEP 25 2006
	SEP 28 2006

MOTION:

“THERE IS NO LONGER A NEED FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES”

DEBATING MATTERS
TOPIC
GUIDES

www.debatingmatters.com

welcometrust
Strategic Award

PRIMARY FUNDER

HODDER
EDUCATION
LEARN MORE

HEADLINE PRIZE SPONSOR

LLOYDS
SCHOLARS

TOPIC GUIDE SPONSORS

THINK BIG. THEN THINK BIGGER.

Lloyds Scholars is a unique social mobility programme run by Lloyds Banking Group. Partnering with leading universities across the UK, we offer students from lower income households a complete package of financial support, paid internships, a business mentor and the opportunity to develop their employability skills.

For more information visit:

 www.lloyds-scholars.com  @LloydsScholars



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

CONTENTS

Introduction

Key terms

The libraries debate in context

Essential reading

Organisations

Backgrounders

In the news

Audio/Visual

KEY TERMS

Librarian

Public Library

INTRODUCTION

1 of 6

NOTES

1
1
2
4
4
5
6
6

“We have an obligation to support libraries. To use libraries, to encourage others to use libraries, to protest the closure of libraries. If you do not value libraries then you do not value information or culture or wisdom. You are silencing the voices of the past and you are damaging the future”, argued author Neil Gaiman in response to the proposed closing of hundreds of libraries across the UK [Ref: [Guardian](#)].

When central government reduced its funding to local authorities in an attempt, it argued, to reduce the national debt, councils across the UK had to reduce their budgets in turn, with library services, among many others, being cut. Some predicted hundreds of libraries would be forced to close [Ref: [Guardian](#)], and local and national campaigns were established to save local services [Ref: [Independent](#)]. But in reaction to the threat of closures others began to question the role of the public library in modern Britain when, in 2010, just 12.8% of the adult population visited once a month and 39.4% once a year [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. But beyond the current debate about funding, what exactly is the purpose of a public library today? In 1850 parliament passed the Public Libraries Act, laying the foundations for local boroughs to establish libraries at public expense, by local taxation, to provide free universal access to literature and information [Ref: [politics.co.uk](#)].

Today there are over 4000, employing around 20,000 people, and local authorities have a statutory duty to provide public libraries, overseen nationally by central government. But do they fulfill the same role they did in the Victorian era? Have our reading habits changed to the extent that we no longer require a national network of public libraries, instead accessing books and information online and via E-books? Or in the process of using and promoting new technologies, do we miss something vital about the purpose of libraries within society? Can the seemingly limitless information we are able to access on the internet be a replacement for these “cultural and intellectual” centres [Ref: [Wall Street Journal](#)]?



A timeless institution?

The passing of the Public Libraries Act reflected a social trend in the Victorian period for the promotion of education, led in part by campaigns by the Free Library Movement, which sought the 'improvement of the public' and educational bodies such as Mechanics' Institutes, which provided adult education for the working classes. The growth of public libraries took off in the later Victorian period as philanthropists, such as Scottish-American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, established the new institutions [Ref: [Wikipedia](#)], and by 1900 there were 295 public libraries across Britain. In reaction to the recent campaigns to save local libraries, some commentators accused activists of a sentimental attachment to them, based not on contemporary society's requirements but of an ideal of what they were. John McTernan, former political advisor to the Labour Party, argued: "Few institutions are timeless. Most reflect the period when they were created, and have to change as society changes if they are to survive. The crisis in our libraries is not because of the "cuts" – it's because they are needed less" [Ref: [Telegraph](#)]. Others concurred that: "Nobody, setting up such public provision now, would dream of building and stocking conventional libraries the length and breadth of the land...it's not just a question of cash: it's a question of change" [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. With the launch of Amazon's Kindle Unlimited E-book subscription service, offering readers access to 600,000 books [Ref: [Telegraph](#)], and "knowledge and storytelling... experiencing a revolution..." with the rise of the E-book [Ref: [Publishers Weekly](#)], can it be the case that we still need local libraries? Author of the 'Horrible Histories' series, Terry Deary, breaking ranks with many fellow

authors, argued that: "...access to literature does not have to come from a building, (or) librarians...it comes electronically. We can give the poor a Kindle which is a hell of a lot cheaper than a library building and they can have access to millions of books; not the couple of thousand in their local libraries" [Ref: [Telegraph](#)]. However, those who oppose library closures argue that they provide something unique within communities that cannot be replaced by the proliferation of new technology: "...people know that their communities need a cultural and intellectual centre. What other institution can fill that role in the same way?" [Ref: [Wall Street Journal](#)]. The Director of Collections at the New York Public Library argues they exist: "...to connect good readers with good books" and can change and develop to reflect readers' needs today [Ref: [Spectator](#)].

The changing face of libraries

Libraries are "...accessible, multi-generational, classless, community spaces providing free access to books, information and an increasing range of services" according to librarian Catherine McNally [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. In recent years many libraries have been transformed in an effort to revitalise and integrate them as an essential part of the community, sometimes combined with other local cultural institutions, such as The Beaney in Canterbury [Ref: [Canterbury City Council](#)], a combined art gallery, events space and library. The London Borough of Tower Hamlet's rebranded it's libraries as Ideas Stores [Ref: [Ideas Stores](#)] which offer health and employment advice in addition to more traditional library services. Many proponents in

favour of retaining existing library provision, both in the UK and elsewhere, argue there is a strong economic case for retaining library provision, as they can: “...assist job hunters, education for small business entrepreneurs, orientation for newly arrived immigrants...” [Ref: [Globe and Mail](#)]. This lead author Janette Winterson to dub many modern libraries as: “...a community center with books” [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. For some, this multi-use development of libraries is too utilitarian a defence. Critics of the trend to move away from the core purpose of a library argue that: “...we’re coming up with all these other ways to try to keep these buildings open. Co-working spaces! Media labs. Art galleries? But it’s impossible to see a world where we keep libraries open simply to pretend they still serve a purpose for which they no longer serve” [Ref: [TechCrunch](#)]. Perhaps, some argue: “...the abandonment of the library’s main purpose: books for readers” is why library attendance has suffered [Ref: [Telegraph](#)].

“Humanity’s past thoughts are my inheritance”

Scottish novelist A L Kennedy argues that libraries are more than information centres, or one-stop shops for local services. Instead, they are repositories of the “lives of others” which help generate an understanding of the world around us: “My first ever means of personal identification was my proof of library membership. I was a citizen of the world because I was a reader....Humanity’s past thoughts are my inheritance - I need them in order to learn how to prosper in the long term” [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. Others argue that is an age where we have a seemingly endless supply of

information at our fingertips, an “information glut”, libraries help us to find what’s important, making a value judgement on the information housed in them as: “...information has value, and the right information has enormous value” [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. And the librarians: “...have specialist knowledge and are trained to find reliable information and evaluate it - a skill as relevant in the digital age as it has always been” [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. In response to the idea that online services such as Google effectively replace the need for libraries and librarians, an American librarian argued that: “Everything you see on the library shelf has gone through a tremendous filtering process. Publishers don’t just publish anything. Libraries don’t carry just any old book” [Ref: [New York Times](#)]. So are public libraries as we know them past their sell by date? Have new technologies usurped their place, or do they remain repositories of the: “...world’s cumulative knowledge and heritage” [Ref: [WIPO](#)] in a way that Google never can? What value do we place on curation and judgement about the world of knowledge before us, and how best can we be assured of accessing not just information, but good information?

ESSENTIAL READING

Committee publishes report on library closures

Parliament 6 November 2012

Public Libraries: what are public libraries?

Politics.co.uk

FOR

The end of the library

M.G Siegler *TechCrunch* 13 October 2013

Liberal whingers are wrong: we should close our libraries

John McTernan *Telegraph* 20 October 2011

We writers are fighting for the wrong libraries

Anthony Horowitz *The Times* 3 March 2011

Make way for the new in the book world

Peter Preston *Guardian* 6 February 2011

AGAINST

A point of view: what happens when a library falls silent?

A.L Kennedy *BBC News* 13 June 2014

Do people need libraries in a digital age?

Christopher Jon Farley *Wall Street Journal* 12 February 2014

Why our future depends on libraries, reading, daydreaming

Neil Gaiman *Guardian* 15 October 2013

Future Shelves

Christopher Platt *Spectator* 30 March 2013

IN DEPTH

What will become of the library

Michael Agresta *Slate* 22 April 2014

ORGANISATIONS

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Library Campaign

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

Public Libraries News

4 of 6

NOTES

How to save libraries from e-predators

Claire Fox *TES* 23 June 2014

Why libraries matter

Chris Heller *Atlantic* 17 May 2014

Terry Deary: give poor people free e-readers

Hannah Furness *Telegraph* 15 November 2013

Folding shelves

Economist 23 May 2013

We must protect and reinvent our local libraries

Janette Winterson *Guardian* 23 November 2012

The business case for beautiful libraries

Lisa Rochon *The Globe and Mail* 12 February 2012

Will libraries become extinct

Erica Friedman *Forbes* 2 February 2012

As libraries close is that the end of the story?

Christopher Howse *Telegraph* 15 November 2011

Can libraries survive in a digital world?

BBC Click 12 March 2011

The e-book and its ilk are no replacement for our libraries

Catherine McNally *Guardian* 17 February 2011

Are libraries finished: five arguments for and against

BBC News 4 February 2011

Hands off our libraries

John Henley *Guardian* 3 February 2011

Is the physical library a redundant resource?

Mary Beard et al *British Library* 26 October 2010

When a search engine isn't enough, call a librarian

Jeffrey Selingo *New York Times* 5 February 2004

The Beaney house of art and knowledge

Canterbury City Council

Mechanics Institute

Wikipedia

Idea Store

Tower Hamlets Borough Council

Library facts

The reading agency

Libraries in crisis

Huffington Post

Carnegie Library

Wikipedia

Are librarians still important?

Kate Rix *Scholastic*

Guaranteeing access to knowledge: the role of libraries

Ben White *WIPO Magazine* August 2012

[Amazon unveils Kindle Unlimited subscription service](#)

Telegraph 18 July 2014

[Outcry at library shakeup proposals](#)

Grimsby Telegraph 11 July 2014

[OAP on a mission to save Luton's libraries](#)

Luton Today 9 July 2014

[Judicial review into Lincolnshire's library plans](#)

BBC News 8 July 2014

[Library closure plans scrutinised as Council cuts bite](#)

BBC News 18 January 2014

[Death of the library: shock fall in users](#)

Express 26 September 2013

[Paperless libraries switch to digital](#)

BBC News 22 May 2013

[200 libraries close as cuts bite](#)

Telegraph 10 December 2012

[Library closure may be unlawful, MP's warn](#)

BBC News 6 November 2012

[New report charts the rise of the e-book](#)

Publishers Weekly 6 April 2012

[Writers stage a 'shhh' in against plans to close 450 libraries](#)

Guardian 6 February 2011

[Campaign against closure of 375 libraries grows](#)

Independent 18 January 2011

[Visitors to libraries continues to drop](#)

BBC News 24 August 2010

AUDIO/VISUAL

[Why libraries matter](#)

Chris Heller *Atlantic* 17 May 2014

[Libraries in crisis](#)

Huffington Post

ABOUT DEBATING MATTERS

Debating Matters because ideas matter. This is the premise of the Institute of Ideas Debating Matters Competition for sixth form students which emphasises substance, not just style, and the importance of taking ideas seriously. Debating Matters presents schools with an innovative and engaging approach to debating, where the real-world debates and a challenging format, including panel judges who engage with the students, appeal to students from a wide range of backgrounds, including schools with a long tradition of debating and those with none.

DEBATING MATTERS
**TOPIC
GUIDES**

www.debatingmatters.com

FIND OUT MORE:

Debating Matters engages a wide range of individuals, from the students who take part in the debates, the diverse group of professionals who judge for us, the teachers who train and support their debaters, and the young people who go on to become Debating Matters Alumni after school and help us to continue to expand and develop the competition. If you enjoyed using this Topic Guide, and are interested in finding out more about Debating Matters and how you can be involved, please complete this form and return it to us at the address below.

Debating Matters Competition
Academy of Ideas Ltd
Signet House
49-51 Farringdon Road
London
EC1M 3JP

- Yes, I'd like to know more. Please send me further information about the Debating Matters Competition:
- I am a teacher and would like further details about events in my area and how to enter a team
- I am a sixth form student and would like further details about events in my area
- I am interested in becoming a Debating Matters judge
- I am interested in sponsoring/supporting Debating Matters
- Other (please specify)

First name

Surname

School/company/
organisation

Professional role
(if applicable)

Address

Postcode

Email address

School/work phone

Mobile phone

**“A COMPLEX
WORLD REQUIRES
THE CAPACITY
TO MARSHALL
CHALLENGING IDEAS
AND ARGUMENTS”**

**LORD BOATENG, FORMER BRITISH HIGH
COMMISSIONER TO SOUTH AFRICA**

