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What Is a Modern Library? Part II

Last week, in Part I about “modern” books and libraries, I jumped the history-first story along from clay tablets to print media, and touched on digitalization. Now comes the presumption of projecting into the future, per the title of this article.

To start, both printed and digitalized books will likely coexist for some time into the future. Libraries will surely serve both types of readers, and, therefore, what this article has to say is not about the form of the book at all, but about the form of service to the public, the new opportunities to take on, irrespective of how an opportunity rises out of the page. So, here are some opportunities to which this writer is partial.

- (1) Actively participate in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Math & English Language Arts and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that underlie a modern scholastic education: opportunity to redefine the Public Library as participating in standards-based, PreK-12 learning across all 12 months of the year (thereby countering summer slide).
- (2) Join the digitalization world not only by lending e-books, but by offering on-site and virtual device training, as a Special Resource Center, to those in society seeking to catch up and catch on: opportunity to participate in workforce development for those who are underserved in this capacity, and have no easy way forward.
- (3) In the same spirit as that of the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, and its Illinois Neurodiversity Initiative, offer programs (another Special Resource Center) geared towards helping learners with special needs, such as those on the autism spectrum, to succeed academically, socially and professionally (<https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/1007268520>): opportunity to engage in and lead social change as regards to how differently people learn, even within the so-called normal spectrum.
- (4) Offer career guidance through in-person and virtual programming for tweens and teens especially, and within those groups for young women in particular who are interested in exploring STEM careers: opportunity to draw very hard-to-reach and intimidated populations into the Library and opportunity thereby to fill a major need.

It is not that I have just now dreamed up these initiatives out of thin air for future growth and purpose. In fact, there are grantors - government, public service and Foundation - who are promoting them all, and two libraries in the Westmoreland Library Network, in the communities of Greensburg-Hempfield and Delmont, are collaboratively deeply committed and engaged. I have written some already about their purposeful programs and activities (February 20 column most recently @ <https://www.murrysvillelibrary.org>).

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Among the grantors and/or collaborators are the American Library Association itself, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit Math & Science Collaborative, the United Way of Southwestern PA, the PA Department of Labor & Industry, the Community Foundation of Murrysville, Export and Delmont, the Eden Hall Foundation, and the National Science Foundation, to name just a few that you will easily recognize. So, I plan to continue to share more information about this very important subject in the future.

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