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Jacob Brogan
Cheldelin Middle School

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A Young-Adult View of Library Services

*by Jacob Brogan,
Seventh-Grader,
Cheldelin Middle School*

My name is Jacob Brogan and I am a seventh grader at Cheldelin Middle school in Corvallis, Oregon. I am a member of the local Commission on Children and Families. I am also an avid reader and I spend a fair amount of time in libraries (This is partially because my Mother is the Director of the Library here in Corvallis). I also spend quite a bit of time on the computer. One reason I want to write this article is that I am one of three kids on the focus group for the Junior Friends of the Library.

One thing that was great for me when I was younger, was the computer at the library. The computer that I first used was an Apple 2GS which when it first came out was a pretty powerful computer. It is now rather pathetic compared to some of the computers on the market today. At any rate, it was on this computer that I first began to my fascination with computers in particular, and technology, in

general. More recently, I have been pleased to see that libraries have begun to upgrade their computers or even buy new ones. This is great because it means that now younger kids will be able to learn and do a lot more on the computer even if they don't have one at home, or if they do have one, but for some reason, are not allowed to use it. As more libraries get connected to the Internet, kids will get to find information from libraries everywhere.

On another topic. The library was also where I first learned to read. Actually, I didn't learn to read at the library per say, but it was of the library that I first began to read. The first book I read, which was, if I remember correctly, a very small picture book on some form of large cat came from the library. Then, not long afterwards, came the Summer Reading Program at the library. I am sure that most people reading this are familiar, with summer reading programs, but I will summarize how they (in my experience) work. This one was more or less as follows: Read ten books and have your parents sign off on the sheet each time you read one and bring the completed sheet to the library. By the time the program ended and you have read your ten books, you would receive a certificate stating your accomplishment signed by the mayor and the governor. So, I read my books and had my mom sign off on the sheet every time I finished a book. Then at the end of the time period, I turned in the sheet and received my certificate and was as, I suppose I should be, quite proud of

myself.

For me, I don't think that there could have been a much better introduction to reading. Not only did it let me find out what great things books are, but I also received a small reward for what I had done. Besides those two reasons, it was also great because it let me know that there was a place where I could go to get books to take home. Even now five plus years later, despite the fact that I probably wouldn't be caught dead reading a picture book, I still go to the library whenever I need something to read. That is, after all, what they are for.

I primarily use the library as a place to get books for fun reading. However, when I need materials for schoolwork that I can't obtain at home, the library is the first place where I head. I know that some kids do most of their homework at the library. It is, after all, a great place to work. There is a multitude of reference materials available at a moment's notice. There are often computers that have writing programs on them that are available for use by children and adults alike, and some libraries even have homework centers where kids can go to do there homework.

Once with a few friends, I went to the library rather early in the morning so that we could play Dungeons and Dragons. We chose one of the tables sat down and for an hour or two we played the game. One of the major things that this experience showed me is that we were able to use the library as a place to hang out. Yes, you can go to the library to check out books, read, do homework, and take advantage of the computers. However, one of the major, although generally underused things for kids to do at the library, is to go to do some something with your friends. This is not to say that kids should go to the library talk loudly and disturb the other patrons, but if they have a game (such as Dungeons and Dragons) or a similar mostly quiet activity to do then what better place to go then the library? After all, libraries are usually easy to get to and most people know where they are, plus they usually have large open tables where games can be played and activities can be worked on.

If the thought of having children playing games on the tables in your library disturbs you, or even if it doesn't, then one idea is to create a game/activity room where kids can go to play their games and such. This room would probably be slightly separated from the rest of the library and would have at least one table and a few chairs in it.

There is a lot more I could write about the library but I will save it for another article. I hope that what I have said has been informative and can help you with your library. □