

Libraries Should Be No More

(American Public, that is!)

The historical purpose of libraries has really changed over the last millennium or two or three. Libraries have evolved from being upper class education learning and sharing centers, where only the educated, formal and informal, and wealthy were allowed in, all to the way to the present day system of being easy and low cost information and entertainment access centers for anyone who would want to benefit from the new library services. These formal education centers of the past certainly have changed. Today, particularly in the U.S.A. most libraries are not even closely related to being needed education centers. Hence, it is important to understand that the reason very few American taxpayers actually use these facilities is because they are far behind the times and really have little to offer. Most Americans have access to far more general educational information, along with tremendous entertainment enterprises directly from their homes or offices. And due to the fact that very few Americans actually need these relatively expensive facilities the American libraries are financed mostly by those who would never use them. This may seem to be strange but it is true. Fewer than ten percent of the taxpayers actually use these old types of education or learning focused facilities. It is very apparent that what should be of greatest importance when it comes to knowing this is that these types of government operations, the libraries of today, are no longer the formerly necessary educational research centers they actually once were but simply are more entertainment type facilities which only benefit a few. And when it comes to what they currently offer, versus what they should be offering, more libraries have internet connection services and movie rentals that really have nothing to do with the concept of what libraries are supposed to be. It is apparent that when it comes to learning centers almost all of the current American libraries do not result in a positive return on either the required initial investments and/or their ongoing operating costs.

Now, if the original necessary service parts of the libraries of today could only be offered in a way in which the directly related overall costs could be reduced, in addition to the customers being given better and more diversified information and learning services, the educational standards of the nation could be improved. In this way an even greater percentage of American taxpayers would all be better off. However, is there any way in which the many governments within the nation can prove the need to reverse the expenditures related to the existing high cost and low value adding libraries presently being paid for by a struggling American taxpayer? And, if so, then answering and implementing the "What can take their place?" question must precede their elimination.

Well, before this question is answered another question related to a basic American statute requiring something like equal rights, some of which should have led to a national standards based better education, must be answered? Should the people particularly in the small towns of the U.S.A., like, Grand Haven, MI, a town of less than 12000, not have the same public library qualities and quantities of products as those Washington, DC folks, who have with the Library of Congress, do? Did the small town folks not pay their

fair share for the startup cost of this Washington, DC library monolith and do they not continue to pay their share for its ongoing operating costs? The fact is that there is not a true fair sharing of benefits. These very expensive libraries might be able to offer to at least the few of those who can even get to these facilities, remember as many as 99% of the American taxpayers cannot simply get on an inexpensive public transportation bus or subway system to get there. And even if they could when they did get there they would certainly find that there would not be enough room for all of them. A national cost for the few indicates very strongly that it should not exist. In general, the physical American library entities of the past cannot be fair overall, let alone efficient. So, why can't the governments of this nation not work together to create a fair and equitable information and education service that could be of benefit to almost all Americans? Now, many will state that this is not possible, but it has been possible for more than a decade. Today, the creation of an equally accessible and truly national American national library is certainly possible. But when switching to this type of library many may think or feel that this would be unfortunate as they will no longer be able to live in the past. But, the U.S.A. is supposed to have a national government whose sole purpose is to meet the needs and wants of the majority of taxpayers and the need for a publicly accessible reading materials database is no exception. Now, for those who are interested in how a better educational and national material access system can be created and maintained at a lower cost, this is how can it can be done.

To start it is important to learn how the creation of a truly national public information center, which would prove to be far more valuable than a series of public buildings used by only a few and one that would be accessible by all, is possible? Well, the technologies required for greater equal data access requiring far lower operating costs than the current library system have been around for some time. Using this far lower cost technology all American governments would have the ability to fund the creation of this system which would give those who like to learn even far more in terms of better learning tools and valuable information. The American governments do have the ability to give equal data access even to the financially unfortunate ones, who historically have been limited to going to their out of touch schools where most are only being exposed to the very basics. But every American must learn quickly that they all live in a digital world that can do everything that is needed to give every American equal access to far more than the basic libraries and at a far lower cost than any of the current library system approaches. People, like Bill Gates, have been getting closer to the solution by having funded libraries with both the computer tools needed for unlimited information access along with that basic internet link, which really is the only roadway to all of this. But his group is still missing one important step and that is the lowering of the taxpayer's costs for such things. Why not simply eliminate the need for the high overhead public library systems, and by saving this money at the same time spend these donator and tax funds on the creation of a far greater media outlet.

Now, more on that tax money issue. The American taxpayers cannot immediately reduce the overall costs of the educational relics known as public libraries, entities which cannot move into the real high tech and diverse information world even if they wanted to. Without question the startup step in the creation of this new access to this nationalized

system of information would require preparing to shut down most of these library operations with the short- term commitment to selling the buildings and possibly the real estate as well. However, at the same time, the Federal Government's budgeting system which will not have access to most of the funds realized by any of the sales and will need some additional taxes. But the taxpayers will in general win as the costs per capita of this national library system will be very small and when the local library operations are sold the taxpayers will be much better off. These new federal government lower costs must be well focused in order to accomplish two things: First, the U.S. Government must create a medium speed web access for most, if not all of the nation's people. Now, most American cities currently have these tools and would not need to spend anything to achieve this. However, many remote areas in the nation which do not have these types of services could even use their local phone companies to set up low speed networks that would create a limited access to the new national educational services that would replace the libraries. Second, following the creation of this relatively low cost access to this system the local governments would also need to provide the basic access hardware required to enjoy and benefit from the then available services. And it is very obvious that the low cost hardware required for this type of connection can be found all over the nation and most often for free. Overall, the necessary hardware is really less of a problem than most would imagine. For those who have money and have been able to spend whatever is needed for their own computers and have made the necessary internet links there would be no changes. However, the lower income families would need to find very low cost computer systems in order to link themselves to their new internet based data access tools. And low cost computers, which could even be free systems, are available when a company with the necessary skilled individuals can perform some of the necessary rebuilding of the "to be disposed" available slower (obsolescent to the high techies) older computers that could still be used by someone else not in the business world. These computers could not be seen as the play tools of the day, as they will not be able to even play the slow games of today, however they would be very low cost access tools that could add real learning values to even those who cannot afford basic cable TV. Every Fortune 1000 company disposes of hundreds and sometimes thousand of computers a year. If they would like to improve their public acceptance while at the same time actually improving on what they are attempting to do to improve the lives of their future employees then maybe the U.S. Government could create a "Thank You for Contributing" site where those companies which gave significant numbers of working computers to this new government library replacement system they would have their names added to the list for each year that they give. Everyone in the U.S.A. would benefit.

Still think this alternate library idea may not work? Well, if you want to enjoy having a cup of coffee while sitting in a comfortable environment and also listen to music while at your computer or simply read, then go to the newer customer reading enticement creators, like Barnes and Noble. Like many of the current American libraries they give their customers a learning choice. Those who want to interact with others or be exposed via a computer to almost everything that they could want and more is one option while those who just want to sit and read one of the many texts which are for sale is the other.

And most important is the fact that the Barnes and Noble companies provide these services without stealing even a single penny from the overburdened taxpayers of today.

Understanding all of this makes it quite apparent that, when it comes to actually improving that which is used to learn, the current American library concepts will have to change. When the above new access to information system comes into play, the need for the old libraries will simply go away. Then what do we do with all of that for which we have already paid. Well, almost all of the low cost libraries of today can be sold and these funds could then be used to at least start to reduce the unfair bonds issued by most of the past governments in the U.S.A. However, a number of the upper class building libraries could be turned into resort houses whereby those who want to take a closer look at a lot of real American history could do so for a small fee. And if this partial conversion is done correctly, these well known and new tourism focused institutions could even become revenue centers for future governments, but they should only be partners wherein those who know how to run this type of business are in total control thereof.

Alright, maybe there will continue to be a demand for some kind of library, which would be similar to those of today, whereby the access to physical texts and their related entertainment facilities can be made available. However, if this be the case these new libraries must be offered via the future businesses which can create a library service, substantially different from the Barnes and Noble group, that can be paid for by their customers and not the poor taxpayers, many of whom today think that the public libraries should be no more. And to take this public access to information to the highest possible level at least on this planet, and that would exist when everyone worldwide could have access to such a service, using today's technologies have the relatively new library in El Iskandaryia or Alexandria, Egypt become the world's central real and internet database library. Taking this approach would not only create a valuable treasure, when it comes to a world benefiting creation, it would also return Alexandria it to its previous stature as being the place with the greatest library in the world. With this creation only then could almost the entire world have access to both a really large physical library and a database so large that no one today could even begin to estimate the positive return on that which should become an international investment. If this were to happen, when this world library were to become fully operational it must also become the next greatest wonder of this world.

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