

James Yaffe

THE COLORADO COLLEGE
COLORADO SPRINGS

Mrs. Marguerite A. Hart
Troy Public Library
5044 Rochester Road
Troy, Michigan 48084

April 24, 1971

Dear Mrs. Hart,

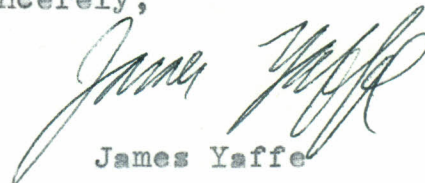
Please excuse my delay in answering your letter. I've been in the midst of acquiring a son, and life has been hectic. Anyway, I've now had time to consider your request, and I think I would stand by the following statement:

Since the beginning of civilization, men have felt the need to reach out beyond themselves, to make the attempt to know other worlds besides their own and other people besides their own kind of people. But along with this need, men have found themselves trapped by their own limitations. Life is short, and even the strongest of us is weak; we cannot live in more than one world, we cannot break through the barrier of our own individuality. We are doomed to be ourselves, when we yearn to be everybody.

Man invented books to help him out of this dilemma. Through books we can realize, in part, our wild ambitions. Through books we can catapult our imaginations into those worlds that our bodies can never reach. When we read history we demolish the prison of time and become one with the men of the past. When we read ~~books~~ books about science or politics or current affairs, we become one with those millions of our own contemporaries whom we will never see. Above all, when we read poems or plays or stories, we are drawn into the inner lives, the feelings and thoughts, of other souls we could never have imagined for ourselves.

A library, then, is the most important institution a civilization can create, the most important building a town can build. It helps us become more than ourselves, and this is the only way of being truly human.

Sincerely,



James Yaffe