



# WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48202

AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

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Mrs Marguerite A. Hart  
Young People's Librarian  
Troy Public Library  
5044 Rochester Road  
Troy, Michigan 48064

Dear Mrs Hart:

Your question, What should a library mean to young people?, I should like to answer, not in a formal way, such as in a fully thought-out and prepared statement, but as if I were asked the same question on a TV program, and I should have to reply spontaneously.

For someone who has known and lived with books all of his remembered life--and that goes back more than fifty years--I can only respond that it is no more necessary to justify books than it is to justify food. It is as necessary to life, at least my life, as food is. Even as a young boy, when I wasn't sleeping, eating, playing with the girls, or doing some sort of job, I was with books--usually books from a library, though we did have them around the house, too. After I grew up, it was just the same, except that books became part of the job as well.

A single person, even a millionaire, can't have all the books he needs or wants or sees, for he hasn't the space and often the money, so where does he go? To the library.

For a young person, it's more than that: it's usually in the library, the school library or the public library, with their great diversity of books--rarely if ever found in a personal collection--that he comes to see just how essential books are to life. And how do we begin to learn about anything: not in a classroom, not from a teacher--as helpful and important as they are--but from a book. Where are most of those books? In the library. One of my great friends, who became rich and well known, was too poor to go to school beyond grammar school. He always said that he was a graduate, an alumnus, of the public library, and that was his university.

It really gives someone a bang to discover suddenly that reading books can be fun. Just don't wait too long to find this out--think of all the hours and days of fun you'll miss. Go read a book in the library. Now.

Cordially,

*William White*

William White  
Director, American Studies Program