FIG. 17–3   Ryan's final essay on libraries or the internet   **1**

Libraries or the Internet?

Why do we need to go to libraries?" Why libraries when we have the Internet?" Libraries are very important resources and should remain available to the public. The truth is, as children suggest the extinction of libraries, they don't realize how essential libraries are. There is a lot of evidence to support the necessity of libraries. As technology progresses, libraries are in fact, needed more. Libraries should remain open because they provide free computers and Internet access, because they provide a sense of community, and because libraries positively affect the grades of students.

Clearly, today's world runs on computers and technology. But where can people go who cannot afford Internet access or computers? The library. Libraries can provide free computers and Internet access to the public. A good computer costs at least $650, tablets can cost over $300, and Wi-Fi connection can cost up to $400 a year. If you go to the library, you can borrow computers and tablets, and Wi-Fi connection at the library is free. This free access is important because twenty-five percent of all people in the U.S. do not have a home computer. Many of these people cannot afford one but may need one to complete homework, fill out resumes, or check up on the news. Without libraries, these people may not have any other computer options. Yet with libraries, these people have free computers and the Internet at their disposal.

Frankly, libraries are not just places to study. The less researched side of the issue in support of "no libraries" may imply that libraries are not places to socialize. However, libraries

FIG. 17–3 *(Continued)* **2**

are, in fact, the exact opposite. Libraries provide a sense of community because, not only are they a place for students to study, but they are also a meeting place for groups of friends. Furthermore, many children have parents who work long hours. Over 55% of all U.S. children have two working parents. Libraries can be a safe public place for children to engage in-group activities. Libraries also support clubs and meetings. At the New York Public library, there are book clubs, Lego clubs, exhibitions, and even yoga classes. Libraries all over the U.S. have activities like these, all bent on helping adults and children socialize, connect and come together as a community.

Without a doubt, the debate about libraries has also reached colleges and universities. There is evidence to suggest that students at schools with libraries tend to have enhanced learning outcomes and perform better on standardized tests than those without libraries. However, in an effort to save money, many schools have decided to dedicate fewer resources to library programs. According to the American Library Association, students at schools with libraries achieved over 15% higher reading levels than students at schools without libraries. The less researched side may imply that all worthwhile documents are now online. While it may be true that many documents are in fact online, the Internet is not always a reliable source. In the process of converting papers into an online or electronic format, any number of potential errors can be made to the document. In a library, a warehouse of error-free information is in original hard – copy form so that the first-hand documents are available for research. Having more reliable information will help students gain a better understanding of their research.

FIG. 17–3   *(Continued)*   **3**

In summation, the Internet is a part of everyday American life. However, replacing libraries with the Internet would deny the public of many important opportunities. After all, libraries allow people to operate computers and access Wi – Fi for free, they help communities come together in person and socialize, and they improve the learning outcome of students. Although some people may disagree and say that libraries are no longer needed because of the availability of the Internet, not everyone can access the Internet. Further, there is no substitution for reading a good book in hand in the presence of others who appreciate the same experience. We need to appreciate all that our local libraries have to offer and take steps to ensure that libraries are properly funded and supported so that they will always around for future generations to enjoy.