

When was the Last Time You Visited the Library?

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I recently obtained a library card after not having one since high school, which was about fifty years ago. In this upcoming narrative, I will explain why I haven't had a library card since then and why I decided to get one last week. However, more importantly, I would like to share my experience and what I discovered about my local library branch in Port Orange, FL. It's just one of fourteen branches in the Volusia County Public Library system, with branches as far north as Ormond Beach, as far west as Pierson, and as far south as Oak Hill.

During my visit to the branch, the young man behind the glass at the information desk was very nice and welcoming. He asked how he could be of service, and I told him I wanted to get a library card. He provided me with a form, asked for my ID, and within a few minutes, I had my very own library card. I asked how much I owed him, and he said that there was no cost for a library card and then suggested I check out a few of the available services and programs.

He excitedly recommended that I sign up for Hoopla, a platform that offers a wide range of content including eBooks, audiobooks, music, comics, movies, and TV shows, all for free. His suggestion caught my interest because I'm already an Audible subscriber. So, I decided to visit the www.volusialibrary.org website to join and I was amazed by what I found. I had no idea that the library provides so many programs and services for Volusia County residents. They offer physical services such as computers, internet access, and hot spots that you can borrow if you don't have internet at your location. Additionally, they have copy and fax machines available for a small fee. The branch also provides e-lab programs, which offer one-on-one computer assistance for basic skills, and help with resume writing and cover letter editing.

There are over 80 databases and programs available for free with a Volusia County Public Library card. These programs include LinkedIn Learning, which offers over 16,000 courses ranging from Microsoft Office and Adobe Suite to learning a second language. Many of these courses come with certifications that can improve career prospects and lead to better-paying opportunities.

Ancestry and Heritage Quest are genealogy programs designed to help you trace your family history and discover if you are related to historical figures like George Washington or even royalty like King George III. Before I visited the library's website, I used to think of the library as a place to borrow books or do research for school projects. However, with the advent of the internet, I questioned why I should visit the library when everything is available online. It turns out, I was missing out, as I didn't realize that the library provides access to valuable online resources for free. Many people may not be aware of this, as they may not know that the library offers the best of the internet at no cost. Additionally, the library has knowledgeable staff who are ready to assist visitors.

I understand your concern. Some might wonder, "Why bother with a library when you can find everything on the internet?" While some information is indeed free online, not everything is. For instance, resources like LinkedIn Learning are accessible for free with a library card, but without one, the monthly subscription costs \$39.99. Similarly, Ancestry is available at no cost through the library but charges \$49.99 monthly for those without a library card. The benefits of a Volusia County Public Library card are substantial, providing access to a wealth of information, programs, and services at no cost. With over 221,600 audiobook downloads from the Hoopla website via the library just last month, the

value of the library card is undeniable. As someone who recently joined the library system as an employee, I recognized the importance of having a library card and obtained one after fifty years. Now, I strongly urge everyone to visit the nearest Volusia County Public Library and obtain a library card for themselves and their family members. For locations and addresses, please visit www.volusialibrary.org.

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