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FOR READERS ONLY?

Recently, I was reading a juvenile fiction novel set in early 1800's America. The main character was so poor that she could not afford one book. Then the lights went on in my head. *Aha!* Back then, free libraries as we know them today did not exist in America. The poor had little access to books. I am so used to having libraries at my finger tips that I'd never considered this fact.

I drew a parallel to America today. Many poor Americans cannot afford to own a computer or to purchase Internet access. The library offers this valuable tool. From students to the elderly, libraries provide more than a place of refuge for readers. They provide access to the 21st century technologies so vital today. For today's students to achieve, as President Obama has said, they need these tools. The majority of the time I visit Poway library, all the computers are in use.

Libraries also provide free classes for those who need to learn computer basics, as well as for those who speak English as a second language. Currently, the library is celebrating Hispanic heritage month. The library is more than a refuge for readers. It is a place where we come together to celebrate other cultures. It is a place where we can hear a lecture on cancer awareness or how to prevent foreclosures. These are just some of the needs the library meets for the community.

Want to star gaze? Go to the free San Diego Astronomy Association star party at the Poway Library, where you can use telescopes to view the night sky. Are you wondering about your ancestors? Why not check out the genealogy class? If

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you need exercise, some libraries even offer yoga classes. More in the mood for a free movie? The library offers movies for children, teens, and adults.

If music is what you are seeking, why not kick back and take in the soothing sounds of jazz during a free Sunday afternoon concert at the library? Or, if you're a teen, you may want to try the free knitting club. Are you a hungry teen? Rumor has it the teen group makes ice cream—**at the library!** My teen daughter has also attended a forensics class and a songwriting class at the library, where the kids created the words to their own song. The teacher graciously made free CD's for the children so they could listen to the song they had created. The library is just plain fun.

Libraries are not simply for readers. They are for those seeking technology, those celebrating cultures, the health conscious, the financially struggling, exercisers, stargazers, genealogy buffs, movie lovers, musicians, knitting novices, songwriters, hopeful super sleuths, or for anyone wanting to kick back and have a good time -- for free. Now that's a super-duper deal you don't want to miss in this economy.