

Book 'Em Danno

Forbes recently ran an opinion piece by an economist who said we no longer needed public libraries because people have Amazon and Netflix. Considering my wife is a public library director, you can guess I thought he was...how can I put this...***out of his pea-pickin' mind!*** So many people disagreed with the notion that the piece was eventually taken down, but not before the writer's popularity went down faster than the *Titanic*.

As utterly disturbing as this economist's views were, some of the comments in opposition to them were equally disturbing because the commenters decided to inject politics into the discussion. And guess who they blamed for this economist's views. Donald Trump. After all, Trump is the source of all evil in the universe (after beating out the Loknar in the Intergalactic Electoral College vote), so why wouldn't he be to blame for people thinking public libraries are worthless?

Well, I'm gonna go out on a limb here and say it's because...Trump has nothing to do with that point of view. It's a stretch, I know, but it's one I'm willing to make.

The problem with discussions like whether public libraries still have worth in a society where our phones we carry around can look up anything under the sun is that it far too often becomes muddled in tangential ideological muck that takes our focus off the issue. I'm not a Trump fan, but even on my worst days, I wouldn't dream of blaming him for said days. Ditto when Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and so on were President. (Although I suspect Jimmy Carter may have had a hand in me losing my lunch money on a class field trip to the zoo back in 1978, but I don't have any concrete proof...yet.) In short, if you're using this or any other issue that has nothing to do with politics as a soap box to make a political statement, just don't! Not everything is political,

and not everyone has to be on ideological point all the time.

As far as the economist's viewpoint on public libraries, he's off the mark by...let's just say a lot. Amazon and Netflix are great, but they both require a little something the kids like to call the Internet. And as technologically saturated as we are, there are people across the country who do not have reliable Internet service. And, no, this is not a plea for there to be universal Internet access. But there is one place in just about every community that has Internet access: the public library.

Aside from using the Internet, public libraries provide other services ranging from photocopying to access to books and movies to educational programs for young and old alike, and that's only scratching the proverbial surface! Public libraries provide much more than the tax dollars necessary to keep their doors open and their lights on. They provide a means to expand our minds, open our hearts, and maybe just escape our normal lives for just a bit. Put another way that is sci-fi related (since I'm a sci-fi geek from way back), your public library is a TARDIS that can take you anywhere and anywhen you want to go.

I know "anywhen" isn't a word, but work with me people, okay?

Call me old fashioned (or just old, for that matter), but I always get a thrill when I walk into a library and just browse the aisles for old favorites and potential new favorites. And it's for that reason I will always be an ardent champion for public libraries.

That, and the fact my wife knows where I live.