



NOTE: This is the fourth in a series of articles that were released monthly throughout 2017 as part of the celebration of the NH State Library's 300th anniversary. The State Library was founded in Jan. 25, 1717 and is the first state library in America.

NH's Libraries: Fun And Vibrant, With Something for Everyone

April 10, 2017: If you still think that libraries are old-fashioned places where people speak in whispers and the lights are kept low, then you really need to stop by your community's library and see how things have changed.

New Hampshire's public libraries are dynamic, energetic places with activities for people from all walks of life. Check out your library's calendar of events and you're bound to find something that will interest you or someone that you care about: a Bone Builders fitness program for seniors, a children's art workshop series, technology tutorials, movie nights, mah jong sessions, knitting clubs...the list goes on and on.

A 2012 study by the Institute of Museum and Library Services ranked New Hampshire first among the nation's libraries for the number of programs offered per capita. Library activities start with the very youngest patrons, when toddlers and their caregivers stop by for regular story times and learn finger plays and nursery rhymes they can enjoy together at home. Early readers may have the opportunity to practice their reading skills with "reading dogs" who are specially trained to be patient listeners. Teens can find poetry slams, murder mystery nights and the chance to make crafts in a safe atmosphere. "MakerPlay" sessions, where young patrons can use toys and games that help them learn coding, construction and other skills, are also popular.

There are plenty of ways for adults to branch out and expand their library experiences, too. Book groups, of course, remain a popular way to enjoy reading as part of a community experience. Many libraries partner with other organizations for programs, inviting speakers to discuss a wide range of topics of interest in their communities, such as caring for an aging parent, discovering New Hampshire's natural treasures and making homes more energy efficient. Some libraries highlight their cookbook collections by holding cupcake wars and soup swaps, and others will organize seed exchanges in the spring. In any given week, programs happen across the state covering just about any topic you can imagine, in fun and engaging ways.

In some New Hampshire communities, the public library has the best—and sometimes the only—free access to computers and the internet, making it possible for patrons to apply for jobs, complete online government forms, find up-to-date online health resources, and more. Nearly ninety percent of New Hampshire public libraries offer computer skills training as well, playing a crucial role in bridging the digital divide and changing people's lives.

Even if you can't attend a specific program, when you visit your public library to check out books, magazines or other materials, you can often take a little break and renew yourself by working on a jigsaw puzzle, playing checkers on an oversized board or even doing some coloring—no matter what how old you are. There truly are activities for everyone.

So stop by your public library the next time you're in the neighborhood to see what's happening. No matter what your age or interests, they'll be something to keep you coming back.

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