



Libraries Are Having a Moment ... Still

Just when we thought printed books had gone the way of the dodo bird, their repositories—libraries—are booming. Libraries had suffered a notable drop in membership following the crash of 2008, and many believed libraries couldn't survive the digital communications revolution. Now, however, people are finding their way back to the shelves; indeed, there's been an astounding increase in the popularity of public libraries over the past decade. Why? According to a survey by the Pew Research Center, 61% of adults felt their ability to make decisions would improve with access to trustworthy information sources. And more than three-quarters said they felt libraries gave them just that.

Libraries' new popularity encompasses all age groups—not just older people who enjoy holding a book in their hands. According to a recent *CityLab* article, millennials are the most active library users: "Clearly, young adults' constant access to social network news feeds and Amazon hasn't diminished the charm of browsing through the stacks..." *CityLab* also noted, "Millennials are more likely to trust the library than all previous generations, including Generation X, Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation."

Today's libraries offer more than just rows of books. They provide computers, activity centers, classes, and access to a variety of media. Libraries are also central to literacy programs. As well, some have become tourist destinations, thanks to the architectural significance of many library buildings. Reports CNN travel: "Some libraries bring in more than just patrons. They are also popular amongst tourists, drawing visitors by the tens of thousands, if not millions."

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'Urby's' Offer a New Approach to Housing Millennials

What do millennials want when it comes to housing? The answer: pretty much everything. The "Urby"—a mixed-use residential development that brings a little bit of city, a little bit of community, and a little bit of entertainment to a little apartment—may be the answer. Emphasizing "New Urbanist" principles such as walkable neighborhoods and access to public transportation, Urby developments are designed to attract successful urban professionals.

New Jersey-based Ironstate Development Co. calls its Staten Island complex Urban Ready Life (URL), and describes it in a recent *CityLab* article as "an all-encompassing living experience for today's urbanite." Each apartment complex includes ultramodern living units, ground-level retail stores, and amenities that include fitness centers, heated outdoor pools, and keyless entry.

Key to an Urby such as this is providing opportunities for social interaction. The goal is to use common areas to organize activities for millennial apartment dwellers; coffee shops in the lobbies, communal kitchens, and a cultural director offer many chances for interpersonal connections between residents. URL residents, for example, can gather for stand-up comedy in the café, flower arranging in the workshop, or stump-the-chef in the kitchen.

The apartments themselves are inspired by European design and use European techniques for making small spaces feel bigger. While planning, the developer considered what its millennial market would and would not live without. The result: built-in shelving, pocket doors, and kitchen and bathroom "stations." Nonessentials included room to entertain, as the entertaining takes place in communal spaces. Sounds ideal for this work-hard, play-hard generation.

Trivial Pursuits: Why Do We All Love Trivia So Much?

In 1979, two Scrabble lovers, Chris Haney and Scott Abbott, decided to create their own game—Trivial Pursuit. And the rest is game history: Trivial Pursuit sold more than 100 million copies worldwide and earned more than a billion dollars. Because, as Haney and Abbott knew, everyone is fascinated with factoids.

Why people find these tiny bits of useless information so endlessly fascinating is anyone's guess. Some experts believe the attraction comes from a competitive need to demonstrate superior intelligence. Some attribute it to a curious mind. Others believe it's considered a method of brain training. And still others believe it's just great entertainment. In fact, trivia games are also good for us. Great bonding activities, trivia competitions also make people happy and reduce stress hormones. Notes Allquizquestions.com: "It enhances our focus, learning and thinking abilities." Whatever the reason, as *The Point Magazine* points out: "Quizzing, sometimes referred to as 'trivia,' has been a part of popular culture for many decades." In the 1940s and '50s, for example, families gathered

around their radio to hear The Quiz Kids—five super-bright youngsters who answered audience-submitted questions.

With the arrival of TV, "The \$64,000 Question" and other trivia-based contests filled much-needed programming space. The public loved them. And people still do. The wildly popular trivia show "Jeopardy!" was introduced in 1964 and became one of the longest-running TV game shows ever. And as game-show authority Steve Beverly told CNN Entertainment, it's "still the best mental exercise on television." I'll take Trivia for \$200, Alex...



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How has the price of your home changed in today's market? How much are other homes in your neighborhood selling for?

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Just give me a call at 978-478-8656 to arrange an appointment.

Worth Reading

Why Charles Dickens Wrote 'A Christmas Carol'

By Kat Eschner

Smithsonian.com

There are some things many don't know about Charles Dickens' bestselling holiday tale. Seems Dickens and Scrooge had traits in common. Both were hard workers who understood that financial gain requires effort. Dickens created the old miser, in part, to give his family some financial security, and wound up using the wealth amassed as a successful author to help others. Scrooge, ultimately, would have approved. More: <https://tinyurl.com/Dickens-tale>

Consumed by Anxiety? Give It a Day or Two

By Oliver Burkeman

The Guardian

Overwhelmed by today's problem? What made you anxious yesterday? Can't recall? That's the point. Burkeman encourages us to consider past problems we thought would destroy our lives. If we're still alive, chances are, they didn't. And chances are, today's crisis won't either. More: <https://tinyurl.com/overrated-crises>

How to Talk to the Stranger Driving You around Town

By Anthony Ponce

CityLab

If your rideshare driver asks what keeps you up at night, you may be riding with Anthony Ponce. Lyft driver Ponce, who quit being a TV news anchor to drive for Lyft, has learned to be an aggressive listener. He often picks interesting topics for his riders and actively listens to the answers. But even small talk can become big conversations. The result? Good conversations and good customer relationships. It probably doesn't hurt his ratings. Or his weekly podcasts, either. More: <https://tinyurl.com/rideshare-conversations>

Redecorating Your Child's Room? Start Here

Redecorating a child's room is enjoyable. Figuring out creative ways to make your kids' spaces whimsical yet functional is a fun design challenge. And watching their faces light up when it's all done? Priceless.

Home design website Houzz conducted a survey of users who have "recently completed, are working on or are planning a home project with kids in mind." The results provide an interesting look at what's currently trending in the world of children's rooms. If you're about to embark on creating a special room for a child, keep the following in mind:

- Close to 70% of respondents said their kids' rooms have themes. The most popular looks, in order: nature, animals, sports, and princesses. But note: kids

grow up quickly and tastes change just as quickly. Today's trendy decor may look dated tomorrow.

- Functionality and maintenance are top priorities. Seventy-one percent of respondents said they wanted a space that was easy to clean and maintain, and 64% said they needed a functional setup. Be sure to incorporate washable and durable materials, and include labeled storage boxes and bins.
- Blue reigns supreme. Fifty-nine percent said blue is the dominant color for kids' rooms, followed by white, gray, green, and pink.
- The cost of redecorating a kid's room varies. Of respondents who had completed their project, one-third spent \$1,000 or less. Establish a budget before starting; it's easy to get carried away with cute decor and

playful features. And unlike adults, kids don't notice the difference between the more expensive option and a more affordable one.

- Nearly 70% of participants cited clutter as a challenge. Make toy management a priority in your kids' rooms. Oversized bins in fun colors and/or closet storage systems are key to keeping toys and "stuff" out of sight and out of mind. Finally, involve your kids in the decisions. After all, it is their room.



Where Have All the Pay Phones Gone?

Kiosks are being installed throughout New York City where people can charge their phones and access free WiFi. Or even make phone calls. According to a CBS News report, the kiosks provide a public service to people accustomed to the constant connections mobile technology provides.

Ironically, the kiosks may exist because that same mobile technology has rendered the old coin-operated phone booth obsolete. The "phone-in-a-box," which first appeared in the 1900s, is now almost extinct. Almost. According to the Payphone Project online database, they still exist, and four of the old-style pay phones can actually be found in New York City—the same city that's installing kiosks.

As *The Atlantic* pointed out recently, the old pay phones were killed off by more than mobile tech. Police, who were legally prevented from tapping them without a warrant in the 1960s, had identified the pay phone as a tool for criminals. Government crime fighters responded, and the booths began to disappear. However, one concern remains: How will Superman change clothes? In one of the mobile kiosks? Or will he find one of the old-style pay phones on the streets of Metropolis?

Save Money in December with This Advice

Get a head start on one New Year's resolution: buy strategically this month. According to *Reader's Digest*, in December you should:

Stock up on athletic equipment and clothes. Sporting goods stores may start jacking up their prices soon to capitalize on people's January fitness resolutions. Beat the rush in December. They can even be great holiday gifts for your loved ones, who won't have to buy them at full

price in January, when those fitness resolutions kick in.

Buy ahead if your new year includes wedding plans. Consider buying your gown off-season, when it can be had for significantly less.

But hold off on buying computers or linens. These items are often marked down in January when last year's products go on sale to make room for the newest versions.

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

Should I buy a home first or sell mine first?

The answer: it depends on where you are. Your approach may change depending on whether it's a buyer's or a seller's market in your area, and in the area where you want to buy.

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) suggests that prices, which are expected to increase by 5% by the end of 2017, will rise by 3.5% in 2018, making it a seller's market in many parts of the U.S.)

Typically, in a seller's market, you would be inclined to buy first, as there are more buyers than available properties, and it might be harder to find a home you like. But it's a great time to sell your own property.

In a buyer's market, you may want to sell first, as there are more available properties than there are buyers. You will want to list first, as your home may be on the market for some time, and you don't want to carry both. The bottom line? Do what's best for your family.

The Coco, Early Report

Coco, Early & Associates

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Sudoku instructions: Complete the 9 × 9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3 × 3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

Tomato and Mozzarella Pockets

Yields 18 pockets for a colorful Holiday appetizer

- 1 box puff pastry
- 1 8-ounce jar oil-packed sundried tomatoes, drained and roughly chopped
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella
- 18 large leaves basil
- 1 egg lightly beaten
- Finely ground sea salt and pepper to taste
- Store-bought balsamic glaze to drizzle

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line 2 baking trays with parchment paper. Place one sheet of puff pastry on each tray. Cut each sheet into 9 equal squares (3x3 inches). Place a rounded teaspoon of tomato in the center of each square, spreading it out to opposite corners. Sprinkle a tablespoon of cheese along the same area and place a basil leaf on top. Fold opposite corners together. Press firmly to hold in place.

Brush with egg wash and season with salt and pepper. Bake for 15–20 minutes or until golden brown. Allow to cool slightly then drizzle with balsamic glaze. Serve warm.

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JEANNE JUDSON, REALTOR®
 Coco, Early & Associates
 15 Garden Road
 Plaistow, NH 03865
 Cell: 978-478-8656
 Office: 603-382-2100
 Email: jjudson@cocoeearly.com
www.jeannejudson.com

