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I am going to argue for supporting the Santa Monica Library, its branches and staff, not only for the many excellent programs it provides, but to maintain and continue to develop its core: the book collections, in both electronic and paper forms.

I am a retired professor of education and one of my research areas is literacy and the impact of libraries. Also, I am a member of the Santa Monica Public Library.

Here is some what we know about libraries and literacy:

The more children as well as adults read for pleasure (and that includes mostly fiction), the better they read, write, and spell, and the larger their vocabularies.

The more people read (again for pleasure, largely fiction), the more they know about history, literature, and science and the more they know about other cultures.

Children of poverty have fewer books at home; their families have less money for buying books. This results in less reading and therefore lower literacy levels. It also results in less subject matter knowledge, and, inevitably, lower school performance.

Very often the only source of books these children have is the library. In our studies, we found that the positive effect of a good library can balance the negative effect of poverty on reading achievement.

Ten percent of the population in Santa Monica lives in poverty, and that figure will soon be rising dramatically. For a modest investment, we can make sure all children have a chance to experience the benefits and pleasure of reading.

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