

As online learning becomes more common and more and more resources are converted to digital form, some people have suggested that public libraries should be shut down and, in their place, everyone should be given an iPad with an e-reader subscription. Similarly, a Pew survey conducted in 2015 found that nearly two-thirds of American adults feel that closing their local library would have a major impact on their community. People who use tablets and mobile devices excessively also have a higher incidence of more serious health issues such as fibromyalgia, shoulder and back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and muscle strain. One neighborhood found that, after a local library instituted community events such as play times for toddlers and parents, job fairs for teenagers, and meeting spaces for senior citizens, over a third of residents reported feeling more connected to their community. Additionally, staring too long at a screen has been shown to cause numerous health problems, including blurred vision, dizziness, dry eyes, headaches, and eye strain, at much higher instances than reading print does. Some of these benefits include acting as a quiet study space, giving people a way to converse with their neighbors, holding classes on a variety of topics, providing jobs, answering patron questions, and keeping the community connected. A study done on tablet vs. book reading found that people read 20–30% slower on tablets, retain 20% less information, and understand 10% less of what they read compared to people who read the same information in print. Proponents of this idea state that it will save local cities and towns money because libraries are expensive to maintain. They could also access more materials because libraries won't have to buy physical copies of books; they can simply rent out as many digital copies as they need. Second, it is incredibly narrow-minded to assume that the only service libraries offer is book lending. Libraries have a multitude of benefits, and many are only available if the library has a physical location. People see libraries as a way to connect with others and get their questions answered, benefits tablets can't offer nearly as well or as easily. However, it would be a serious mistake to replace libraries with tablets. First, digital books and resources are associated with less learning and more problems than print resources. They also believe it will encourage more people to read because they won't have to travel to a library to get a book; they can simply click on what they want to read and read it from wherever they are. I know that whenever I read from my e-reader for too long, my eyes begin to feel tired and my neck hurts. We should not add to these problems by giving people, especially young people, more reasons to look at screens.