

Gratitude in Times of Trial
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2020 has been a year of commotion around the world that borders on the side of ridiculous. Hurricanes, fires, famine, drought, locust swarms, wars, politics, and everyone's favorite, COVID-19, have impacted billions of people around the globe this year. People's anxiety and mental stability have been put through the ringer as so many unexpected or upsetting situations have occurred. It's easy to see how people's patience could be a bit beyond frayed at the edges. That being said, November is also a time of gratitude for the good in our lives. It's easy to focus on the negative, especially when it is loudly repeated from every direction. Here's a little reminder from the library about all the good things you have that we as librarians seek to promote and defend.

You have the opportunity to read this. I have the opportunity to write it, and the newspaper has the opportunity to print it. Or not. In today's talk of fake news and social media manipulation, we can be grateful that we have the choice of what to read and watch. There are a number of countries in the world where that is not the case. I could be arrested in some of them just for writing this. At the library, we defend your freedom to choose. What you read, how you read, when you read, how much you read, or why you read aren't conditions for you here. All are welcome, and we seek to preserve each patron's right to privacy, no matter what you check out.

You have the opportunity to disagree. You could dislike what I write, and you could even write a letter to the editor expressing your opinion. Your neighbor could disagree with both of us. That's okay. There are places in this world where disagreement is silenced with prisons, torture, and death. The library protects your right to think for yourself. We don't censor materials because of difference of opinion, belief, or perspective. We guarantee each patron has the ability to see for themselves, to learn all sides of a debate, to question narratives, and to compare and contrast viewpoints. If you have an interest in a topic, author, issue, or book, we'll do our best to give you the opportunity to read it. No judgment, coercion, or threats allowed.

You have access to ideas. Not only do you get to read what you want and decide to agree or disagree, but you also have the opportunity to seek the unknown, to look for answers, to build on the work of others, to invent something new, to be inspired, and much more. If every book in our library were of the same genre, it would be a poor service to our community. Some would find it wonderful, but it would exclude many others from the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the freedom to read.

We hope you'll take time this month, or even just today, to consider the good things you have in your life. If life has got you down, and you can't think of anything else. Remember, you still have the library, and if you have the library, you have the world.