

Although Kingston Council has always been a proponent of education, space restraints at the school I attended (Bonner Hill Girls' School) meant that we had a very poor library. Consequently, homework assignments on such subjects as the African Veldt lands, or writing essays for Literature classes on Shakespeare, meant that the Reference Library at Kingston Library was well-used by me and my classmates. That's where I found the entire Encyclopedia Britannica, the complete OED, etc. We always found the library staff to be helpful, even if they did have to keep "shushing" us while we worked in the Reference Room (a dark wood-paneled area with uncomfortable chairs).

Let's fast forward to 2012 – I was in England for my mother's funeral and memorial service and while in Kingston decided to visit some of the old haunts. The Library is centrally located – in a building that was built in the mid-1800's. I wasn't sure what I would find inside, but was pleased to see that Kingston Library was no different to our Library – welcoming places (with lots of books) and nowadays with technology playing a great part for the patrons of the town. I introduced myself as a volunteer with the Atascadero Friends and asked for quick tour – which was great. The library staff were extremely welcoming. The Reference Room is no longer a dark room but light and airy with computer terminals to help with research. The Children's Room is a fun place to visit especially during Toddler RhymeTyme. The programs offered in Kingston mirror programs offered here in Atascadero. Children's programs, reading groups for young and old, CD and DVD to check out (along with BOOKS!) Two ideas that I thought innovative were Games Day (looking for a chess partner? How about a game of Scrabble for four? No video games allowed!) and the Writer's Group providing an opportunity for local writers to share their poetry, stories, etc. Above all – tea/coffee and biscuits on offer for a small charge of £1.50.

I urge you to look inside the local library when you next travel to places far and wide...and bring back ideas and tips of programs being run in those libraries to us. We might just be able to work something into the fabric of our community!