Public and school libraries help learners of all ages access information and technology to further their interests and education. These essential institutions, in neighborhoods and schools across the United States, provide complementary services in the pursuit of shared goals:
- Equity of access to information and resources
- Appreciation of reading
- Lifelong learning
- Critical use of information and technology
- Knowledgeable and informed citizens

Both public and school libraries pursue these goals by providing:
- A safe, welcoming environment
- Responsive, knowledgeable, well-trained staff
- Convenient access to the Internet
- Information in a variety of media

Although each type of library works in similar ways to achieve these goals, important differences exist. The chart below contrasts some key information about public and school libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Library</th>
<th>School Library</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To meet the informational, learning, and recreational needs of customers, providing an open environment for our community</td>
<td><strong>MISSION</strong> To prepare students to become effective, efficient, and ethical users of information and ideas, capable of lifelong learning, problem solving, knowledge creation and communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>General public, all ages - pre-schoolers to senior citizens</td>
<td><strong>USERS</strong> Specific, known community of youth and those who teach them</td>
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</table>
| • Brodest spectrum of community needs and interests  
• Popular interests  
• Homework/research assignments  
• Summer reading requirements | **FOCUS OF COLLECTION**  
• Support for curricular and instructional needs of school  
• Personal reading interests and abilities of students  
• Professional needs of teachers and administrators |
| • Loan a variety of materials  
• Reference Services  
• Homework/research support  
• Community networking and outreach  
• Independent selection of resources  
• Programming to meet community needs and interests of all ages | **PRIMARY SERVICES**  
• Instruction in research skills and use of information and communication technologies  
• Curriculum planning and support  
• Guided selection of resources  
• Collaborative planning and teaching  
• Programming to promote reading for students/school community |
| Year-round, all day, with evening, and weekend hours | **HOURS** Generally open when school is in session, with some before and after school hours |
| • Meeting Rooms  
• Open public access | **FACILITIES**  
• Flexible instruction space  
• Secure access within school for student safety |

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