Letter Email

Challenge an opinion while acknowledging its strongest point

Full exam-style C2 Proficiency Part 2 formal letter task. Original independent practice, not an official exam paper.

A newspaper opinion article argues that online services have made public library buildings unnecessary and that their funding should be transferred entirely to digital provision. Write a letter to the editor responding to this argument. Acknowledge the benefits of online access, evaluate the assumption that it can replace a physical library, and suggest a constructive approach to future provision. Address an educated general readership without attacking the contributor personally. Write 280-320 words.

Write 280-320 words.

Write your response on separate paper before studying the model below.

One possible response

Dear Editor,

Your recent contributor is right to recognise the convenience of obtaining information without travelling to a library. Online catalogues, digital loans and remote enquiries can extend a public service beyond opening hours and reach people whose circumstances make visiting difficult. These are substantial benefits. They do not, however, justify transferring all resources away from library buildings.

The proposed replacement assumes that everyone possesses reliable equipment, affordable connectivity and a suitable place to study. It also assumes the confidence to navigate information independently. A service may be technically available while remaining practically inaccessible to someone without these resources. Closing a building before addressing those inequalities would turn an expansion of choice for some residents into a withdrawal of support for others.

A physical library also offers something less easily reduced to the delivery of information. It provides a shared setting in which a hesitant question can develop into a conversation with a knowledgeable member of staff. Someone uncertain about what to search for may need that exchange before a database becomes useful. Quiet workspace and opportunities for informal learning are further functions that an online catalogue cannot itself perform.

This is not an argument for preserving every existing arrangement unchanged. Local needs should determine opening hours, staffing and the balance between physical and digital services. Councils could consult users and non-users, trial flexible provision and assess whether changes improve meaningful access, rather than measuring success solely through online transactions. Such an approach would allow digital investment to extend the library's reach while retaining support that still depends on a place and a person.

The relevant question is therefore how the two forms of provision can strengthen one another. Treating them as interchangeable risks saving a building's running costs while overlooking the public value that disappears with it.

Yours faithfully,

Alex Morgan

This is an original model, not an official marked script. Other approaches can also meet the task.

Understand the task and model

Task and relationship

This is a formal letter to an unnamed newspaper editor, intended to persuade a wider readership. Address all three requirements: acknowledge digital benefits, evaluate replacement and propose a constructive approach. "Dear Editor" and "Yours faithfully" suit the relationship. The model is one possible position, not the only acceptable policy view.

Plan

Begin with a fair concession, expose the assumptions behind full replacement, develop a distinct value of the physical service, then propose needs-based provision and conclude. This sequence lets the disagreement grow from reasons rather than from an immediate dismissal of the article.

Content and argument

"A service may be technically available while remaining practically inaccessible" distinguishes nominal provision from actual use. The following account of a hesitant question becoming a conversation develops a separate function of libraries, so the argument does not merely repeat the lack-of-equipment point. No fabricated local statistics are needed.

Communicative achievement and register

"Your recent contributor is right" acknowledges the strongest opposing point. "This is not an argument for preserving every existing arrangement unchanged" prevents the letter from being read as an automatic defence of the status quo. The tone challenges a policy, not the contributor's character.

Organisation and language

"It also assumes" extends one line of reasoning; "also offers" introduces a distinct reason to keep physical provision; "therefore" signals the final conclusion. Precise contrasts such as technically/practically and available/accessible make the reasoning clear. The paragraphs are developed enough to explain consequences, not simply name issues.

Pitfalls and alternative positions

Do not ignore the article's funding proposal or merely list attractive library activities. Avoid claiming every library must stay unchanged, which the argument has not established. A letter supporting more closures could also meet the task if it fairly addressed unequal access, physical functions and a workable replacement for the support people need.

Check your own response

- Have I acknowledged genuine benefits of digital access?
- Have I examined the assumptions behind complete replacement?
- Have I developed a distinct function of the physical library?
- Does my proposal follow from the problems I identified?
- Is the disagreement reasoned and appropriately formal?
- Is the complete letter within 280-320 words?