



Celebrating 100 Years of Public Library Service

Jay County Public Library
1902 – 2002

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The Jay County Public Library celebrates a centennial this year because library service was first supported by the community's tax money in conjunction with the construction of a library building in 1902 with a \$15,000 gift from Andrew Carnegie. Efforts to establish public libraries started in 1852, when the state of Indiana established public libraries (books, not buildings) in townships, but interruption of funds and the challenges of the Civil War prevented continued service. A revival of the service came in 1897 through local teachers and the Portland Alumni Association, who then took advantage of the growing library gifts of industrialist Carnegie. Library service in our community has been public supported ever since.



1902 Carnegie building on East Walnut Street

The original Carnegie building went through redecoration and repair, a project to lower ceilings, a large addition, and was finally superceded by a new building in a nearby location, but the public support it inspired continues.

While the library is primarily funded by county property tax, money is also received from the county option income tax, financial institution tax, excise tax, fines, fees and copy machine receipts.

LIBRARY TRUSTEES – A HISTORY OF SERVICE

From the revival of the library in 1897 to the present, the public library has depended upon the guidance of a Board of Trustees.



1996 building on North Ship Street

Development of Indiana state library law has changed the formation of the Board through the years, but the gift of time and talent asked of trustees is still just that, a gift, as Board members serve without pay. In the course of reconstructing lists of past Boards, it was seen that over 110 individuals had dedicated time to serving the public in this way since 1900. The community is thankful for their many, many combined years of service!

Today the library is governed by a seven-member board, with those members appointed by the Jay County Council, Jay County Commission and the Jay School Corporation. Members are appointed for four-year terms and meet at least monthly. Present members are: Bruce Hedges (president), Lynn Hampson (vice president), Linda Frantz (secretary), Pat Bennett (assistant secretary), Jane Prescott (treasurer), Chuck Mil-

THANK A LIBRARIAN

Serving as head librarian or library director

1898	Mellie Stanley served precursor to public library
1902-1905	Lena Randall
1905-1914	Mary Elma Boltin (perhaps beyond 1914)
1919-1944	Louise Timmonds
1944-1946	Ruth Alice Harvey
1946-1948	Miss Arbogast (summer of 1948, Donna Erlit)
1948-1950	Miss Sylvia Taylor
1950-1953	Ruth Alice Havey
1953	Everett Riegel (died November 1953)
1953-1954	Jean Simmons
1954	Mrs. Charles Wilkinson (interim)
1954-1955	Margaret Carroll
1955-1956	Andrew Sloan
1956-1957	Mrs. Charles Wilkinson (interim)
1957-1958	Mrs. Patricia Stanley
1958-1981	Margaret Antles
1981-present	Rosalie Clamme



Miss Timmonds in second floor office of the Carnegie Building

Many, many others have served the public throughout our 100 years, assisting the head librarian, working with the bookmobile, preparing materials, providing custodial service, always with the goal of providing entertainment, education, information and inspiration.



“This is my life.”

So said Miss Ollie Fleming at her retirement in December 1966. She had begun work at the library in 1925 under head librarian Miss Louise Timmonds (head librarian 1919-1944).

Ollie Fleming graduated in 1903 from Portland High School and lived all her adult life in Portland. Her nephew, Ted Fleming of Portland, recalls that his aunt did not drive, but walked to the library from the Fleming home on 3rd Street. Miss Fleming is remembered by Ted and others as one who would tolerate no nonsense, but also helped readers choose books and knew their tastes, often having a stack of recommended titles for regular customers. One library regular was young Alan Garinger, a writer and educator and enthusiastic promoter of reading. He tells this story about Miss Fleming:

Miss Fleming

I spent a lot of time in the Portland library. It was a refuge or a jumping-off point for other adventures. When my mother took me to the library to get me my first card, Miss Fleming gave it to me and a long sermon about getting books back on time. I was probably eight at the time, but I remember it quite well.

Because I was there so often, we became friends. She often said to me, “As much as you like books, you’ll probably write one someday.” This was the first time I recall consciously thinking about writing. But if Miss Fleming thought I could do it, that was good enough for me. In August of the year I was going to be ten, Miss Fleming said, “Ten, huh? Don’t you think you should read ten books this month?” I told her I would, but I didn’t. Why I decided to feel guilty about this failure, I don’t know. But I never forgot that broken promise.

Nearly 50 years later, I wrote my first book for young people, Water Monsters. It was the tenth book I had written. I took a copy to the Portland library and offered to give it to them if they would let me write in it. I wrote, “Miss Fleming, This is my tenth book. Sorry it took so long.”

Miss Fleming was “not one to put herself forward,” as her nephew says, but if you wish to see part of the legacy a librarian can leave, look up the library’s copy of *Water Monsters* (J001.9 G 232). There are probably similar stories about other staff members throughout JCPL’s history. When you’re



1962 National Library Week proclamation is signed by Portland mayor Ray Burk as acting librarian Margaret Antles looks on.

BOOKMOBILE ON THE ROAD OVER 50 YEARS



Children with Mr. Finch & first bookmobile

In the early years, opportunities to visit the library were limited for those who lived outside of town without easy transportation. Teachers in the county schools often checked out books for use by their students, but a more systematic way to distribute the books was sought.

In 1947 the library board began serious discussion of a bookmobile program. By November 1948 the first bookmobile visited all county schools and four city schools. The bookmobile delivered boxes of books to school classrooms and welcomed visitors aboard to choose their own books. Book stations were established at Como, Bellefountain, Blaine, Collett, Fiat, Noble, Trinity and Westchester. By the next spring Mt. Pleasant, New Corydon and Bryant had been added.

In 1956 the board purchased a new bookmobile for \$6,123. When it arrived in August it was displayed at the county fair. Refinements were made to the vehicle with added side mirrors, a heater, and heavy duty batteries.

The growing program required additional clerical help and books. In 1964 the library's circulation was 158,060 with 66,013 items from the main library and 92,047 on bookmobile. In 1969 the board hired "a boy [who] would be paid to load the books into the bookmobile and work evenings 6 to 8 with one staff member on duty," perhaps the origin of loading the bookmobile as a task for our high school pages.



Bryant — Bryant students are shown taking advantage of the Bookmobile facilities on one of the regular calls made to the school. From left are: Donna Rittenhouse, Marian Shepherd, Tom Garlinger, Chancy Sipe and Tom Wagner.

The bookmobile on a 1960 visit to Bryant



Sarah Rarick on a last run for the library's third bookmobile

In December of 1969 Sarah Rarick was hired to work on the bookmobile.

The current staff member with longest tenure, Sarah has driven a total of three bookmobiles. Her first (the one purchased in 1956) was notorious for unplanned stops. The bookmobile librarians set out traffic cones to alert approaching drivers and then one of them would walk for help! A bookmobile purchased in 1975 was more reliable, but still a challenge to start, drive, back up and park.

By then the bookmobile's schedule included Redkey, Bryant, Noble and Madison Township Schools; Garfield, Lincoln, Shanks and Haynes elementary schools and Immaculate Conception Catholic School in Portland.. Boxes of books were also dropped off at "stations" in Redkey, Salamonia, Bryant, New Corydon, Bellefountain, Jay Garment Company, Jay County Hospital, nursing homes in Portland and Dunkirk, and later the Boys Club Community Center and Orchard Park Apartments. Now the bookmobile visits the five elementary schools in our service area. The stations remaining today are paired with the homebound delivery program rather than bookmobile.



Bookmobile purchased in 1999

In the "old days," Sarah says the librarians stamped the date due on a white slip inside the cover of each book, wrote the borrower's name on the book card and filed the hundreds of cards according to school—a time-consuming task. When the library's circulation system became automated in the 1980s, the bookmobile made the switch too, using a laptop computer to record the transactions. A new "bus body" bookmobile arrived in 1999, fitting snugly in the garage at the new building. Drivers appreciate the pull-through garage doors that eliminate backing the big bus at home base. The laptop computer has also undergone improvements, and the addition of a cell phone that goes along on visits makes the necessity of walking for help much less likely. A special

THEN ... AND NOW

It's no surprise that things have changed for library patrons and staff in the past 100 years. What hasn't changed may be more remarkable.

Cards, cards, and more cards

The card catalog was a wonderful way to search for materials and many students were taught its ways. Producing and maintaining an accurate file of cards was a major task for library staff that typed, corrected, filed and removed cards to keep it up to date. After the 1973 addition to the Carnegie building, the catalog was located on the ground floor. Many staff and library users have memories of searching the card catalog located on the first floor, climbing to the third floor to find the item, not finding it, going back downstairs to double check, and making another trip to third and so on.

The tasks and trips were considerably shortened when the card catalog was replaced with computer stations placed throughout the building. New capabilities for entering, correcting, cross-referencing, adding and deleting listings were greatly appreciated by the staff. Searching for magazine articles on those computers eliminated the bound volumes of the periodical index.



Children's Room in the original Carnegie building.

Each book had a card in its pocket as well. When a book was checked out, the borrower's name or number was written on the next open line and the date due stamped next to it. Remember the specially made stamps that fit near the point of the librarians' pencils? Each card had to be filed in order in specially made wells in the circulation desk. Checking in or renewing a book meant retrieving the card by its due date. Books and library cards with barcodes have eliminated several steps and the clever pencil stamps have been replaced with barcode readers in either "wand" or trigger-like configurations.



In the electronic gallery

Now a part of everyday operation

Computers have made selection of books easier, not only for library users, but for staff choosing what to add to the collection. Rather than blindly looking for materials among the brief listings published in the heavy multiple volumes of "Books in Print," or scanning limited reviews in magazines, librarians can now "surf the net" for descriptions, reviews, and specific information on availability of books, periodicals, videos, audio cassettes, and CDs. Where the library before offered only a typewriter, it has now added computers for library users for creating documents and searching the Internet. Children can use the computers in their gallery for playing educational games and creating stories. The addition of a web site at www.jaycpl.lib.in.us allows access the library's catalog without leaving home.

But it's not only computers

Many changes have come to the library as they might for any business, agency or homeowner. There is no more bailing of a flooded basement, buying of tons of coal for heating, or loading the bookmobile outdoors. Several specialized tools and machines have been eliminated (a washing tool for long playing records, a machine that cut out vinyl letters for labels, the white ink that was used to mark book spines). Photocopies have replaced stencils, dittos and carbons. Interest in genealogy has grown and so has the space dedicated to it. Usage of the library has climbed over the years and the staff increased to serve the many more visitors. Attitudes have changed about balancing the need for quiet and social spaces, with perhaps a little less "shushing" from a still watchful staff. Community meeting space has encouraged more citizens to come in and see what benefits the library has to offer. But for all the changes, you'll still see people enjoying books at the library and meet library staff ready to assist them.

Current library director – Rosalie Clamme

The library employs 10 full time and 2 part time staff and 6 student employees serving a population of 17,900. With a collection of more than 100,000 items available for use, circulation for 2001 was in excess of 300,000.