

JCPL Timeline

- 1852 Indiana establishes public library in every township with trustee responsible. D. W. McNeal (physician, school teacher, surveyor and trustee) maintains the Wayne Township library in the Miller building on Main Street. Service suffers lack of funds and fervor, is affected by the Civil War, and is discontinued.
- 1897 Local library revived by Portland Alumni Association and city school teachers with “book shower” and a room in the Bimel Building (southeast corner of Main and Meridian Streets in Portland).
- 1898 Librarian Mellie Stanley hired. Funds raised to buy furniture and pay rent.
- 1901 Businessman Frank White writes to Andrew Carnegie on behalf of the local library board asking donation for construction of a library. (Carnegie’s philanthropy built public libraries throughout the U.S. between 1886 and 1917.) Gift of \$15,000 granted “if the city of Portland will furnish a site and pledge itself to appropriate \$1,500 a year for support of library.” Tipton and McArthur lots on East Walnut Street purchased for \$3400. Architects Patton & Miller of Chicago, designers of many Carnegie buildings, retained.
- 1902 New building dedicated on September 10 with Senator Charles Fairbanks as speaker.
- 1902 1903 report of 1902 year end statistics count 489 borrowers with total circulation of 9150.
- 1919 Library service extended to all of Wayne Township.
- 1923 Redecorating and repair done during the 20th anniversary.
- 1925-35 Roof leaks, basement flooding and needed repairs appear in Board discussions.
- 1932 Board votes to buy Stereoptican views of “Africa”, “Transportation” and “China” for \$75.83.
- 1943 Needed roof repair patched temporarily in hopes “it may last until the war is over.”
- 1946 The Board extends library service to the county by contract. A new roof is installed.
- 1948 \$20,000 issued in bonds for repairs and services. Ceilings lowered except in the rotunda.
Board furnishes funds for a librarian at a Pennville library room. (The Pennville library withdraws from the Portland-Jay County Library in 1950-51.)
- 1848 Bookmobile purchased to serve city schools and book stations at Como, Bellfountain, Blaine, Collett, Fiat, Noble, Trinity and Westchester. Stations added at Mt. Pleasant, New Corydon and Bryant the following year.
- 1949 One room of the basement used for public school kindergarten at \$50 per month rent.
- 1950s Filmstrips added to the collection.
- 1956 New bookmobile purchased for \$6000+ and displayed at the county fair.
- 1960 Bookmobile rotates 100 volumes at a Redkey grocery store to function as branch service..
- 1967 Library consultant tells Board that like all Carnegie buildings, the rooms are now too small, but walls in the structure cannot be moved.

- 1968 The Drop Forge donates a copying machine and Board installs a 22 volt line to use it.
- 1968-70 Long range planning begins, architects Bradley & Bradley present plans of possible additions.
- 1973 Open house held for the newly enlarged building.
- 1976 Library reorganizes from Portland-Jay County Contractual Library to Jay County Public Library. Covers all of the county except the city of Dunkirk, Pennville and Penn Township.
- 1985 Architect recommends new building twice the size to accommodate growing usage.
- 1989 Automated circulation system installed; more than 100,000 items barcoded.
- 1992 Library consultant recommends new structure. Long range plan retreat held with members of public, Board and staff.
- 1993 Card catalogs moved out in favor of online public access catalog computer stations. Board hires architect for feasibility study. The basement floods.
- 1994 Board votes to build new structure on North Ship Street; remonstrance petition halts financing of for one year. Independent review committee recommends using gift funds to supplement a maximum \$1.85 million bond.
- 1995 October ground breaking for new building.
- 1996 October dedication of new building. Local donations \$600,000+; State and Federal grants pushes total non-tax funds over \$ 1 million. Project cost \$3.4 million.
- 1997 Public access to the Internet added.
- 1999 New bookmobile purchased for \$106,000.
- 2001 Over 105,000 items in collection. Circulation exceeds 300,000. Twenty-one full and part-time employees.