

1-1-1990

St. Johns County Public Library System

Florida Library History Project

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Florida Library History Project, "St. Johns County Public Library System" (1990). *Digital Collection - Florida Studies Center Publications*. Paper 79.

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Main Library

The St. Augustine Free Library Association was founded in 1874, starting the oldest library in Florida. It was first housed in the U. S. Customs House (now Government House). In 1895 the Wilson family purchased the birthplace of Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith on Aviles Street to use as a library. The house was given to the St. Augustine Library Association under trusteeship as long as the building was used for a library for the public. In January, 1976, a movement toward a county library system was led by the American Association of University Women, joined by the Junior Service League and others. In 1977, an ordinance was passed setting up a county system and appointing a five-member advisory board. A contract was signed in February, 1978 between the County Commission and The St. Augustine Library Association for use of the Aviles Street building as a main county library. On November 6, 1984, voters passed a county-wide referendum for 1 mill funding for one year to provide over one million dollars for the County Library System to include a new Main Library in St. Augustine. The dedication for the new and current Main Library building was held on February 14, 1987. The St. Augustine Historical Society took over the Aviles Street Building in 1989.

Bartram Trail Branch Library

The first branch for the northwest portion of St. Johns County was housed in a leased 1,000 square foot building adjacent to the Wesley Manor Retirement Community, and opened its doors to the public on March 17, 1985. The library was relocated to a 2,700 square foot store front space in the Julington Square Shopping center, which opened its doors to the public on August 19, 1990. This facility was later expanded to include the adjacent storefront space, totaling 3,300 square feet. As a result of the continued efforts of the northwest community and the support of the Board of County Commissioners, the current stand alone 10,000 square facility was opened on March 1, 1997.

Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library

The first branch for the northwest portion of St. Johns County was housed in a leased 1,000 square foot building adjacent to the Wesley Manor Retirement Community, and opened its doors to the public on March 17, 1985. The library was relocated to a 2,700 square foot store front space in the Julington Square Shopping center, which opened its doors to the public on August 19, 1990. This facility was later expanded to include the adjacent storefront space, totaling 3,300 square feet. As a result of the continued efforts of the northwest community and the support of the Board of County Commissioners, the current stand alone 10,000 square facility was opened on March 1, 1997.