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Florida Library History Project

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## **Florida Library History Project**

### **Seminole Community Library at St. Petersburg College, Seminole Campus**

The Seminole Community Library has progressed immensely since its founding nearly forty years ago. As with many public libraries, it began as a civic project of interested and dedicated community leaders and has grown into a strongly supported cultural showcase in the greater Seminole area.

The library was established with about 3,500 books on July 12, 1960, by the Seminole Ridge Business and Professional Women's Club and was first housed in a small cottage provided by the Seminole Branch of Home Federal Savings and Loan of St. Petersburg. The "cottage library" was staffed by club members and located behind the Savings and Loan office near the corner of Seminole Blvd. and Park Blvd. Lots of hard work and devoted volunteer service to the new library earned the club first prize in the St. Petersburg Times' Women's Club of the Year contest.

Rapid growth in the following years made it necessary for the library to have a separate operating organization as well as a larger building. In June 1964, with the collection having grown to some 6,000 volumes, the Women's Club turned over operation of the library to a newly formed Friends of the Library group which later developed into the state-chartered Seminole Ridge Library Association. The following year Home Federal Savings and Loan again came to the rescue and offered additional space in a newly acquired motor court on Lake Drive, just north of the old library cottage. On November 10, 1965, library service began in the new facilities. Under the capable leadership of library volunteers and supporters, including numerous civic groups and local businesses, the library thrived.

By 1969 the collection had increased to about 10,000 volumes and shelf space again grew tight. The widening of Seminole Blvd. (U.S. Alternate 19) also required vacating the building on relatively short notice. These two developments triggered another phase of growth for the Seminole Library.

The greater Seminole community joined in a far-reaching civic and cultural

project that included donation of land for a new library facility; architectural plans for a building with a capacity of 50,000 volumes and construction supervision, provided gratis; a petition drive that persuaded the Pinellas County Commission to part with \$25,000 from a library tax fund that had never been implemented; and \$15,000 in cash donations from civic organizations, businesses, individuals, and families.

In September 1970, a formal ground-breaking ceremony for the new library building was held with local dignitaries and many citizens attending. The new library, located at 11000 Johnson Blvd., opened for service on February 15, 1971, with 2,400 square feet, a collection of 15,000 volumes, and new furniture donated by the Pinellas- Seminole Woman's Club. The design and furnishings were intended to give the new library a warm, informal atmosphere, and its popularity in the years following demonstrated its inviting presence in the community. In 1974, with a collection of about 19,000 volumes, a \$10,000 addition was completed and served as a reading and reference room. In the spring of 1984, extensive remodeling was done to enclose the children's area and provide additional shelving for children's books and audio tapes. The following years saw expansion of the large print collection, the start of audio book and video collections, and the addition of a financial news section.

In 1989, after years of negotiations, the City of Seminole assumed responsibility for the library. The Seminole Library Association was dissolved and all assets turned over to the City. A five member Library Board was appointed and charged with the writing of a \$400,000 State Grant application for a new library building. The grant was approved, consultants, architects, and contractors hired, and construction began on a new facility in November 1991. It was also during this productive and busy period that the library became a member of the newly formed Pinellas Public Library Cooperative and the Tampa Bay Library Consortium. The new Seminole Community Library officially opened to the public on August 3, 1992. The library's 17,000 square feet includes three spacious meeting rooms.

Since beginning this new chapter in its history, the Seminole Community Library has continued to grow in its collection, services, and programs. The book collection, magazine and newspaper subscriptions, and audio-visual materials are at an all-time high. Public access to the Internet, the World Wide Web, and other electronic reference sources are provided. Programs and activities for children and adults are offered throughout the year. In addition to its staff, the library is

supported by a dedicated corps of volunteers, an active Friends of the Library organization, and a Library Advisory Board.

The Seminole Community Library continues to serve the people of the greater Seminole area and will celebrate its 40th anniversary in the year 2000.