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Alachua County Library District

Florida Library History Project

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Florida Library History Project

Alachua County Library District

History of the Library

(revised October 1990)

Note: Some of the following information is formatted using HTML tables . It may not display properly on some browsers (such as Lynx). If this happens, try this plain version of the document.

1903 The Twentieth Century Club, forerunner of the Gainesville Women's Club, was organized as a literary club, established a library and issued a public call June 2, 1903 for donations of books and money.

1905 On January 22, 1905 Nora Norton announced the establishment of the Gainesville Circulating Library, a private subscription library located in the office of the Gainesville Sewing Machine Company. Charges were \$5.00 for a year's access to the collection or \$1.50 to join for a year and 2 cents a day fee for each book borrowed.

On March 28, 1905 the Twentieth Century Club announced the opening of its library with nearly 200 donated books in the Miller Law Exchange. It was also a subscription library, charging \$2.00 per year for membership.

1906 On January 8, 1906 the Gainesville Public Library opened its doors on West Liberty Street; its hours were 2:00-5:00 pm Monday through Saturday. Still a subscription Library, costing \$2.00 a year to join, the Twentieth Century Club had donated its collection to the newly formed Library Association. The collection also included the library of the East Florida Seminary and totalled nearly 800 volumes. In March Mr. C. W. Chase purchased Miss Nora Norton's circulating

library 200 volumes and donated them to the Public Library.

1907 By January 25, 1907 the library collection totalled 1,158 volumes. To fund the library, the Library Association held musical entertainments and established a Women's Exchange for the sale of ladies' "fancy work".

1907-1912 The Gainesville Public Library was moved several times, ending up in the Thrasher Building, 201 East Main Street. The Library's collection numbered 1600 volumes, and the hours were 3:30-5:30pm Monday through Saturday.

1914 The Public Library was moved from 201 East Main Street to a small building, formerly a barber shop and pool room, owned by Attorney B. A. Thrasher between his law offices and Holy Trinity Church. The annual subscription fee was still \$2.00. Library hours were 2:30-5:00pm Monday through Saturday.

1915 The Library Association approached the City Council and Carnegie Corporation to build a free public library. To acquire the money for a Carnegie building, the City of Gainesville had to provide a suitable site and obligate \$1,000 per year in operating funds for the library.

February 6, 1915 - Ordinance No. 315 was adopted by the City of Gainesville Council deeding the property at 419 East University Avenue to the City for the Library building.

July 15, 1915 - Ordinance No. 318 was adopted by the City Council calling for a referendum and special election under state law to provide funding of \$1,000 a year for the operation of the Public Library. This ordinance provided for a tax of up to one-third of one mill on property and established a Library Board to consist of five businessmen elected by the City Council to supervise the expenditure of these funds and oversee the operation of the Library.

October 5, 1915 - the Library election was carried by a good majority. The vote was: for the library, 200; against the library, 85; spoiled votes, 7. There were approximately 6,522 residents of Gainesville in 1915, but, of course, only men could vote.

October 13, 1915 - Ordinance No. 323 established the Gainesville Public Library and the City Council elected five member Library Board consisting of Dr. A. A. Murphree, Captain C. R. Layton, Hon. W. M. Pepper, Hon. George P. Morris, and Dr. H. W. Cox.

1916 A Library Benefit Carnival was held on February 18, 1916 to provide funding for the operation of the Library.

April 10, 1916 - Resolution No. 152 was adopted by the City Council accepting the contract with the Carnegie Corporation to receive \$10,000 to build the Library and pledging \$1,000 per year annual maintenance support.

1916-1917 There were several changes in the choice of the architect, and there were resultant delays in the completion of the Library Building. In 1917 Mrs. Jessie S. White was appointed Librarian.

1918 February 25, 1918 - The Gainesville Public Library, 419 East University Avenue, was opened to the public. It was at last a free library, requiring only that the public register their name and address to receive a card. Contributions of books, especially children's books, and monetary donations were still encouraged, with large donors being thanked in the newspaper.

The new building brought an increase in use. In June 1918, 1,149 books were checked out, and there were 664 registered borrowers. In March 1918, story hours for children were introduced. They were offered on Saturday afternoon, 4:00pm, and were conducted by a volunteer, Mrs. E. C. Beck, who taught a course at the University on storytelling.

In its first ten months the Library circulated 10,788 books to 991 registered borrowers. At the end of 1918 there were 1,588 volumes in the collection.

1920 By February 1920, the book collection numbered 2,360 volumes and was declared "entirely inadequate" for the citizens of Gainesville. In the year ending June 1, 1920, 18,343 books had been checked out.

1921 In May 1921, Mrs. Jessie White, Librarian, spoke to the Chamber of Commerce about the needs of the Library, and the Chamber directors appointed a

committee to visit the City Council in the interest of a larger appropriation for the Gainesville Public Library.

1923 By the end of 1923 the Gainesville Public Library, six years old, had grown to a collection of 4,101 books, 4,083 registered borrowers and a circulation of about 20,000 loans per year.

1924 In 1924 there were 5,189 volumes, 4,600 registered borrowers and an annual circulation of 24,069.

1925 Miss Mary B. Swinney was named Librarian at Mrs. White's retirement.

1927 Commission-Manager form of government was adopted by Gainesville.

In 1927 the Library budget was \$8,750; the collection numbered 8,041; and circulation was about 50,000.

1928 Mrs. C. A. "Annie" Pound was first appointed to the Library Board. She was to serve a record of more than 40 years.

1929 The Gainesville Public Library building, now 11 years old, was rearranged and renovated to handle the steadily increasing use. Miss Mable Blackburn was hired as an assistant to Miss Swinney. The Library also extended service to Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 7:30 to 9:00pm and Sunday 2:00 to 5:00pm.

1930 In the first 6 months of 1930 the Library circulated 38,868 volumes and had a collection of 12,575 volumes. High Schools did not yet have libraries, and students were encouraged to use the Gainesville Public Library for their studies. The Library served these students, whether or not residents of Gainesville, but for the first time suggested that the County should contribute to the library funding.

1936 The city financed further improvements to the library building. Annual circulation in 1936 was 72,951 books.

1940 Circulation in 1940 was 72,820 books, and Gainesville's population was 16,000 people.

1941 The University of Florida's General Extension Division provided books to schools all around the state through a project financed by the Florida Women's Auxiliary of the American Legion.

1943 According to Librarian Mary B. Swinney's annual report in August, the war in Europe reduced reading in Gainesville: "Adults read less, preoccupied as they are with Red Cross or other war work and with the difficulties of business and housekeeping under war conditions. Lack of transportation makes it difficult for many readers to get to the library." The City's budget for the library was \$4,800. There were 10,588 volumes in the collection and circulation was 68,917, quite a drop from 1940's use.

1945 Miss Mabel Blackwell, who had been assistant since 1929, was named Librarian after Miss Swinney fell into a hole in the library floor and broke her hip.

In 1945 total circulation was still dropping, down to 49,462 books that year.

1949 Best sellers popular with Gainesville citizenry in 1949 included *The Big Fisherman* by Lloyd Douglas, *Crusade in Europe* by Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Naked and the Dead* by Norman Mailer, and *Dinner at Antoine's* by Frances Parkinson Keyes. A new genre of fiction, western novels, were very popular with men, but Librarian Mabel Blackwell reported that too few westerns were being published to meet the demand.

The city Commission replaced the Library Board, which had governed the library since 1915, with a five member Library Advisory Board to advise the City Manager and Commission. The Library became a department of the City of Gainesville.

1950 Stanley L. West, Director of the University of Florida Libraries and President of the Florida Library Association, presided and hosted the annual meeting of the Florida Library Association in Gainesville. The meeting included the dedication of a new library addition at the University, the presentation by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings of several of her original manuscripts to the University, and a talk by author Frank G. Slaughter.

Use of the Gainesville Public Library continued to decline. In 1949-50 circulation

was 57,761 books, and the collection numbered 13,276 volumes. The Library's budget in 1950 was \$6,669.

1951 In 1950-51 Public Library circulation was 57,633, and there were 13,956 volumes in the collection.

1952 In April 1952, a group from the Twentieth Century Club, led by Mrs. Ida K. Cresap and Mrs. F. W. Kokomoor, initiated a campaign to upgrade the standards of the Gainesville Public Library, which had been unchanged for 34 years and was inadequate for the city. Mayor-Commissioner Roy Purvis asked the Club and Library Board to prepare a joint study of possible actions and recommendations to the City Commission.

In June, the Library Board and Twentieth Century Club proposed to the City Commission that a \$100,000, 4,000 sq. ft. addition be built, that operating costs be increased to \$18,000 a year (about four times the existing budget,) and that four full time and two half-time employees be provided so that 12-hour service be offered daily. The Commission committed itself to looking for the needed funding.

In October, the City Commission decided that building additional space for the library would require a bond issue.

1953 By 1953 the Gainesville Public Library collection of 16,000 volumes was well below the 54,000 volumes minimum recommended by the American Library Association for Gainesville, a city of 27,000 people (1950 census). The 1918 Carnegie building was so crowded that books had squeezed out all but two reading tables, made browsing impossible and even crowded the window sills. The Twentieth Century Club continued lobbying for a new library to house at least 50,000 volumes.

Librarian Mabel Blackburn, who had worked at the Library for 24 years, died, and Miss Emily Johnson was Interim Librarian. On September 8th Mrs. Virginia Orbeton Grazier was named Librarian. She was the first librarian with a degree in library science and had worked at the Meriden Public Library in Hartford, Connecticut.

In 1953 the Carver Branch Library for colored people was opened at 536

Northwest 1st Street.

1954 In February the City Commission earmarked \$50,000 from revenue certificates for the expansion or replacement of the Library. Architect Myrl Hanes was selected for the project. The Architect, Library Advisory Board, and University Librarian Stanley West urged that the structurally deficient Carnegie building not be remodeled or added to. Due to lack of money to purchase land it was decided to build the new library on the site of the old Carnegie Library on East University Avenue. By November the library was moved to temporary quarters, a home at 411 N. E. 7th Street, while the new building was under construction. Library hours were Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 1:00 to 5:00pm. In December the City Commission approved a low bid of \$68,771 for the new library.

Before moving out of the Carnegie building a children's room was finally opened in the basement of the building. The space was needed when the Junior Welfare League donated a collection of 600 books, increasing the children's collection by fifty percent. Story hour was again offered from January through March, provided by volunteer Mrs. Barbara Webb Larkin, a librarian at the University of Florida. A summer reading program was initiated in the summer of 1954, and 250 children participated.

1955 In 1954 the Gainesville Friends of the Library was organized and had 710 members by November. They began a book sale to raise money for books for the new library.

After two announced opening days for the new library, each postponed, the temporary library was finally closed for the last two weeks of December for the move.

1956 The new 6,000 sq. ft. library at 419 E. University Avenue was finally opened to house approximately 20,000 volumes on January 6, 1956 with 600 people attending the opening. The new library's hours were: Monday, 10am to 5pm and 7 to 9pm; Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 10am to 6pm; and Saturday, 10am to 5pm.

The Library Advisory Board requested a 1956-57 budget of \$25,850 for the Gainesville Public Library and Carver Memorial Library (Negro branch).

Library use rose dramatically in the new building; circulation rose from 56,872 books in 1955 to 86,434 books in 1956. The University's College of Education provided volunteers to conduct story hours for children.

1957 By 1957 35% of library users lived outside the Gainesville City limits. On October 1, 1957 the City imposed a \$2 per year user fee for non-residents using City libraries. This sparked considerable interest in county-wide library service. On November 13th the Library Advisory Board hosted a workshop on rural library service that included a showing of a bookmobile and a talk by a State Library representative on the availability of federal monies to initiate rural library services via the Library Services Act. City and County Commissioners, presidents of county-wide organizations, and citizens were invited.

Volunteer Mrs. Thelma Ford offered Friday afternoon story hours at Gainesville Public Library, attracting an average of 38 children. In October, she added a Friday afternoon story hour at the Carver Negro Library.

1958 The Gainesville Daily Sun added a new column "In the Book" that covered library news of interest and reviewed new books at the Library. On March 19, 1958 the Gainesville Public Library celebrated the first National Library Week with an open house, a puppet show for children, the Friends' book sale, and a bookmobile borrowed from Brooksville. Just two years after the new building was opened, it was already overcrowded, and there was a call in the Sun to establish a branch library or acquire land next to the existing library for the needed expansion.

County-wide service to all Alachua County residents began on October 1, 1958 by interlocal agreement between the City and County Commissioners. Two County residents were added to the Gainesville Library Advisory Board per Section 2-31 of the General Code of Ordinances. \$15,402 was the County contribution for library services, and \$10,517 was provided by the State Library in a Federal Library Services and Construction Act establishment grant.

The residents of High Springs, Micanopy, and Hawthorne began planning library buildings. The North Florida Telephone Company offered the High Springs Parent-Teacher Association the loan of its vacant building for the first branch library outside of Gainesville.

1959 High Springs, Hawthorne, and Micanopy Branch libraries were opened in 1959. The first bookmobile operated for rural residents was dedicated on April 14, 1959.

On September 15, 1959 Bradford County joined Alachua County in regional library service, named the Santa Fe Regional Library. Bradford County had a branch library in Starke and bookmobile service.

Library use was growing dramatically in the late 50's. Circulation in 1956-57 was 91,218 books; in 1957-58, 103,075; and in 1958-59 it rose to 130,215, including the four new branches and the bookmobile. In 1959-60 the budget for Alachua County library services was \$55,000: \$10,500 of federal funds, \$15,483 Alachua County, \$30,000 Gainesville. The population of Alachua County was approximately 90,000; there were 10,000 registered borrowers and 27,000 volumes.

1960 In January a 540 sq. ft. building for the Micanopy Branch Library was dedicated. It housed a collection of 3,000 books. A 756 sq. ft. workroom was added to the Gainesville Public Library, which was already overcrowded. The Hawthorne Branch was re-located to the Women's Club Building. In November the Friends of the Library book sale netted \$874.40.

1961 After seven and a half years as librarian Virginia Grazier resigned. Miss Beth Daane was appointed head librarian.

1962 Gainesville Public Library's hours were as follows: Mon., Tues., Thurs., and Fri., 10am to 8pm, and Sat., 10am to 5pm. Circulation figures for the month of January were: 12,368 Gainesville, 482 Carver, 139 Hawthorne, 253 High Springs, 119 Micanopy, 1,664 Starke and 2,478 Bookmobile.

On October 1, 1962 Union County joined the Santa Fe Regional Library system on a two year trial basis with a \$20,000 Federal LSCA establishment grant and \$13,950 of County money.

The Library Advisory Board proposed a \$126,000 addition to the Gainesville Public Library in 1962 and another \$185,600 addition in 1965 to keep pace with the growing population. The City Commission took no action on the proposal.

1963 In 1963 The Santa Fe Regional Library Budget came from the following sources:

\$38,000 or 29% Gainesville

\$43,000 or 34% Alachua, Bradford & Union Counties

\$30,000 or 23 1/2% State of Florida

\$16,500 or 12 1/2% Federal Government

\$127,500

The library system was well below American Library Association standards - \$1.25 per capita funding, instead of \$4.00 per capita, .4 books per capita instead of 2 books per capita. There were 42,732 books in the collection.

1964 On Tuesday, February 11, 1964 residents of Gainesville approved a \$6,000,000 bond referendum that included \$250,000 for an addition of 10,000 sq. ft. to the 6,200 sq. ft. Gainesville Public Library.

An editorial in the Gainesville Sun on May 10th called for a careful study of expanding the existing building or constructing a new building. The editorial also called for increased operating funds for the library system, specifically challenging Alachua County, which was funding at less than half a mill, to match Union and Bradford County's one mill.

In October the City Commission applied for \$175,000 federal LSCA construction money for the library building project.

1965 With the encouragement of the Library Advisory Board and a library building consultant, the City Commission decided to construct a new main library facility.

1965-68 There was continual revision of City Hall and Library construction projects to conform with bond funds available and spiraling costs of construction. Many delays and impediments slowed the construction schedule. The Library building program was reduced from 40,000 sq. ft. to 17,500 sq. ft. without the possibility of future expansion.

1966 The Gainesville Public Library started using a regiscope circulation system for its 390,000 yearly book checkouts.

In June, children's story hours were moved from the Gainesville Public Library next door to the American Legion Building because of the crowded condition of the library.

The Junior Women's Club of Gainesville donated \$2,500 furnishing the children's wing of the new library.

1967 A new \$22,478 bookmobile was purchased and began serving the Alachua-Bradford-Union circuit May 22nd.

In July Bradford County withdrew from the Santa Fe Regional Library system, deciding to fund its own library in Starke and to do without bookmobile services.

1968 The Library received a three year federal grant to index back issues of the Gainesville Sun and to microfilm the crumbling papers that dated back to August 1, 1891.

Use of the Santa Fe Regional Library system grew 4% in circulation during FY 67-68:

67-68 66-67

Gainesville 148,668 144,701

Carver 2,350 2,103

Hawthorne 3,676 2,845

High Springs 1,685 1,249

Micanopy 1,004 994

Bookmobile (including Bradford Co.) 27,984 27,084

Totals: 185,367 178,976

Library service to the Alachua County Detention Center began in 1968 through twice a month Bookmobile stops.

Library consultant Louis Nourse was hired by the Friends of the Library to study the Santa Fe Regional Library, and he proposed that local funding of \$1.75 per capita be increased to the minimum Florida standard of \$5.00 per capita. The report also proposed transferring the library system from the City to Alachua County if the County could provide adequate funding and doubling the size of the new Gainesville building under construction as soon as possible.

The new \$439,293 Gainesville Public Library at 222 East University Avenue opened December 9, 1968. It was 17,500 sq. ft. with a book capacity of 88,000 volumes. Hours of service were: Mon., Tues., Thurs., and Fri. 10am to 8pm and Wed. and Sat. 10am to 5pm. It was already crowded when opened, and the public complained about insufficient parking in close proximity of the building. A new record collection was initiated with the opening of the building.

1969 Library Director Beth Daane resigned September 16, 1969 to accept a teaching position at the University of Florida.

The new Hawthorne Branch Library building was completed and opened to the public. The 3,000 sq. ft. building cost \$40,000 and was designed to hold 15,000 books.

Effective October 1, 1969, Union County withdrew from the Santa Fe Regional

Library system. The County had paid \$6,800, or \$1 per citizen, for bookmobile service. In a tight financial year the Union County Commission decided it could not afford library service. In 1986, seventeen years later, there is still no library service in Union County.

Mrs. Jane Patton was hired as Library Director and began work December 15th. Lilly Carter, who had been Acting Director in the interim period, quietly closed Carver Branch Library, the Negro branch just a mile or so from the main library in Gainesville. There was no press release or announcement. Carver was closed temporarily for repairs and just not opened again when there was no public outcry about blacks using the main library.

In 1969 library service to nursing homes was begun.

1970 In May 1970 Mrs. Jane Patton resigned as Library Director to return to her former position in Panama City, Florida. Miss Lilly Carter again served as Acting Director until August, when she resigned. Adult Services Librarian Florence Dunlap was the appointed Acting Director. On October 1, 1970, Mr. Thomas E. O'Malley was appointed Library Director.

In July the old bookmobile replaced in 1968 was renovated at a cost of \$500 and reintroduced to serve low income communities. The cost of gasoline was low, and the old bookmobile was a bit unreliable. So the old, smaller vehicle was used in Gainesville and the new larger vehicle served communities outside of Gainesville.

On December 1, 1970 Mr. O'Malley outlined the library's primary objectives to be: (1) increase service hours from 54 hours per week to 68, including Sunday hours; (2) expand the book collection of 82,000 books; and (3) immediate planning for expanded main library facility, a High Springs Branch, and new branches in the City of Gainesville.

1971 The library received a \$25,000 grant from the State Library to attract non-users to library services and to reinforce and expand bookmobile services to City residents.

In 1971 Main Library hours of service were increased from 54 hours per week to 68, including four hours on Sunday afternoons. The FY 1971-72 budget for the

library system was \$285,370.

1972 In the fall of 1972 bookmobile service to low income neighborhoods of east Gainesville was discontinued because of lack of operating funds. One bookmobile continued to serve areas outside of Gainesville. The Library Advisory Board proposed taking over the old library building to expand main library holdings and services and also recommended the inclusion of a neighborhood branch in the planning underway for a northeast Gainesville neighborhood center; neither proposal was approved.

1973 Bookmobile service to east Gainesville was resumed in February.

Library Director O'Malley recommended to the City Commission the construction of a 40,000 sq. ft. facility to replace the main library of 17,500 sq. ft. built in 1968. There were in 1973 87,000 volumes in the collection and an annual circulation of 440,000 books. Gainesville was now funding library services at \$180,600 and Alachua County at \$121,000.

The Friends of the Library 20th annual book sale offered 25,000 books October 17 to 20 and netted \$7,000.

1974 Library service to homebound citizens was initiated in cooperation with the Alachua County Older Americans Council.

In August bookmobile stops were cancelled for the remainder of the summer due to the demise of the old bookmobile shortly before the arrival of its \$39,500 replacement, funded by a federal grant.

The 70th birthday of the Gainesville Public Library was celebrated October 30, 1974. One of the special honorees was Mrs. Annie C. Pound, who served on the Library Advisory Board from 1928 to 1969. Former Library Directors Beth Daane and Virginia Grazier attended.

A second new bookmobile was purchased for \$36,000 from a state grant in 1974, and January 6, 1975 saw the reinstatement of two bookmobiles serving Gainesville and Alachua County.

1975 A plan for downtown redevelopment presented to the City Commission included the plaza now on the 100 block of East University Avenue with a new main library just west of City Hall. The library was quickly dropped from the plan.

In February budget cuts required dropping two four weekly story times at the main library.

From November 10th through the 15th the library sponsored a Fall Festival of Children's Books at the Gainesville Women's Club. Many authors and illustrators of children's books autographed books, and there were puppet shows. Goering's Book Center provided the books for the sale.

1976 In February, 1976 a branch library opened in the new Alachua County Adult Detention Center. It was staffed by trustees and stocked by the main library.

After years of fund raising by community organizations in High Springs, ground was broken for a new High Springs branch in May. With federal funds, there was \$44,000 to build a 3,000 sq. ft. building.

1977 The new High Springs branch opened January 3rd, with a collection of 6,500 books. High Springs' children moved the book collection from the old library to the new with a block-long human chain.

The Micanopy Branch moved into its existing location, the first floor of the renovated historic school building.

The Main library closed for the week of January 3 - 9 to conduct the first complete inventory of the library collection. When the library reopened, a new \$12,000 security system purchased by the Friends of the Library had been installed to prevent books being taken out of the building without being checked out.

On January 14, 1977 Library Director Thomas O'Malley died. Assistant Director Elaine Frances was named Acting Director.

A public survey in 1977 revealed that 58% of library users were residents of Gainesville, 37% residents of Alachua County outside Gainesville, and 5% from out of the County. The survey was the result of the search for more equitable City-

County funding of library services. After years of annual budget arguments over library funding, the City funded library services fully in FY 76-77, while the County funded transit fully to avoid the new issue of double taxation. From 77-78 to 79-80 the County funded the library through its general revenue, and from FY 80-81 to 85-86 the County funded library services through a new taxing mechanism, the Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU), a property tax on the residents of the unincorporated areas of the County. This meant that the smaller cities in the County were not contributing to the operating funds of the branches, bookmobiles and main library except that the cities of Hawthorne, High Springs, and Micanopy provided for the maintenance of the branch libraries. The library budget in FY 76-77 was \$662,327, \$50,000 of which was for books, to serve a population of 104,764. Annual circulation was 527,005.

Acting Director Elaine Frances resigned in July, and Loretta Flowers was named Acting Director for a few weeks until Thomas E. Meyers, new library Director, arrived.

1978 In 1978 overdue fines were eliminated after a study showed that \$21,000 in staff time was required to handle \$13,000 income from fines annually.

1979 In 1979 two new children's programs were added at Main - a toddler story time for children 18 months to three years for parent and child and an evening family story time to which children could come in their pajamas.

In FY 1978-79 the library's budget was \$614,521 and annual circulation was 619,000. The 1979-80 budget was \$725,409.

In 1979 a library building consultant and architect were hired to study the main library building space needs. Their report recommended the construction of a new main library of 71,250 sq. ft., costing an estimated \$5,072,000.

1980 The Friends of the Library annual book sale in November netted \$15,000.

1981 In February, 1981 Thomas Meyers resigned as Library Director and Assistant Director Loretta Flowers was named Acting Director.

On April 20th a new service began - Bookmobile III, a specially designed step van

funded by a federal grant. This third bookmobile or mini bookmobile was smaller than Bookmobiles I and II and designed to serve economically the homebound and small rural communities in the County which had been dropped from service in 1978 when rising gas prices made them inefficient for the two larger vehicles. Bookmobile circulation had tripled in the last years and now reached 120,000 books a year.

1980-81 circulation was 725,000 books system-wide.

1982 In February Loretta L. Flowers resigned, and Ann Warrington was named Acting Director.

A federal Library Services and Construction Act grant of \$20,000 funded a project to improve the Library's collection in the area of environmental information. The project culminated in an environmental information fair held at Morningside Nature Park in September.

Citizens in the City of Alachua opened a volunteer library on February 20th in a loaned trailer on land next to the Alachua City Hall. A library board and friends of the library group spearheaded the effort to start the library and to make it a branch of the Santa Fe Regional Library.

Mary (Polly) J. Coe was hired as Library Director on May 10th.

The Alachua Library was not funded by the County as a branch of the library system in the FY 82-83 budget. County staff proposed criteria for branch libraries, and there was a public hearing on the criteria August 18th. The criteria were not adopted. Eventually, the County funded a book budget for Alachua but not operating costs or staff.

In the Fall of 1982 the City Commission established a committee to study and recommend on expanding or replacing the very crowded main library building.

1983 The Library Advisory Board appointed a citizens committee to implement the American Library Association Planning Process for Public Libraries. This process included studies of other library resources in the area, surveys of library users and surveys of people not using the public library. The result was a five year

plan for development that was submitted to the City Commission and approved November 7, 1983.

The City Commission held several hearings on the space for the main library and a new site, finally settling on the original site of the Carnegie library building, across University Avenue from the 1968 building. The Commission also advertised for proposals, interviewed and selected architects for the new main library.

In the summer of 1983 the City and County Commissions established a seven member citizens committee to study the funding of library services countywide and recommend alternatives. In December the Joint City/County Library Services Ad Hoc Committee recommended to the two Commissions the establishment of an independent taxing district to finance and govern library services county-wide.

In the fall a one-year pilot project was begun with the Alachua County Schools. Two high school libraries were opened after school hours for public use, and the public library provided books, registration, etc. The extended hours were very heavily used by students, but the general public used the schools very little.

1984 During 1984 there was considerable public discussion of the library taxing district. The City Commission, County Commission, and Library Advisory Board drafted and discussed several versions of enabling legislation.

The Santa Fe Regional Library was awarded two out of five national awards by the American Library Association for innovative outreach services - the cooperative branch library in the Alachua County Detention center and library service to the homebound.

During 1984 the Library staff prepared specifications for an automated library system to provide much needed circulation control and to replace the card catalog with an on-line catalog. In August the City Commission awarded the contract to CL Systems, Inc. for a LIBS 100 system. The hardware was installed in November, and a two year conversion project to put all book data into machine readable form was begun in December.

In the fall the Santa Fe Regional Library initiated the first reciprocal borrowing

agreement in the state with the Putnam County Library System to allow residents of Alachua and Putnam counties free access to both library systems.

In December a new library materials selections policy was submitted to the City Commission for approval. There was considerable public debate, particularly in the area of censorship of potentially controversial books. For the first time in the library's history the materials selection policy was approved by the governing body.

1985 In early 1985 the City and County Commissions were still discussing a possible library taxing district but had not reached a consensus. State Representative Sidney Martin, with the support of the other local delegation members, submitted enabling legislation for the Alachua County Library District to the Florida Legislature in the spring. It was passed by the Legislature.

The Library Advisory Board and Friends of the Library initiated a Library Referendum Committee during the summer to put together a campaign to inform voters about a library referendum that would create the Alachua County Library District as a special taxing district. Phyllis Bleiweis chaired the Referendum Committee of forty-one citizens. On October 15, 1985 the citizens of Alachua County approved the library taxing district in a special referendum by a vote of 4712 to 2799, 63% in favor, 37% opposed. There was a low voter turnout, with only 10% of registered voters in the County, but the nearly two to one margin was a strong vote for a tax increase to finance library service.

The year that ended on September 30, 1985 represented the busiest the library system had ever experienced. Circulation for the year was 858,877 from a collection of 197,819 volumes. There were 56,895 registered borrowers of a total county-wide population of 174,651, representing 33%. 211,874 reference questions were asked during the year, and 29,789 people attended programs at the various libraries. The FY 84-85 budget of \$1,556,020 funded the main library in Gainesville, branch libraries in the towns of Hawthorne, High Springs, Micanopy, and Alachua, and three bookmobiles.

1986 In March of 1986 Alachua County commissioners signed legal documents necessary to turn the Santa Fe Regional Library over to the special library district on April 1. According to the agreements, the city would lease the current library to the new library district, and also sell a section of city property downtown as a site

for a new library. The agreements also called for city and county leaders to sell the library system's books and most other property to the new library district for \$2.

City and county leaders also nominated people to serve on the library district's board of trustees. The library's governing board will select three of the county's nominees and three of the city's nominees to serve on the board of trustees along with an additional trustee selected from nominees named by the Alachua County League of Cities.

On April 1, 1986, amid balloons, food, and flute players, the downtown Gainesville library became the Alachua County Library District. The library had been owned and run by the city of Gainesville, with some monetary assistance from the Alachua County government. In order to switch over the city's, county's, and library's various contractual obligations and leases, the library district's governing board -- composed of city commissioners Gary Gordon and Jean Chalmers and county commissioners Tom Coward, Leveda Brown and Jane Walker--spent 15 minutes approving documents. After that, the governing board named a library Board of Trustees, whose members are Thomas Rider, Martha J. Weismantel, Gustave Harrer, Cornelius Bonner, Arthur Marshall, Nicole Whitney and Victor Ramey.

On July 28, 1986 laser technology beams its way into the stacks at the Alachua County Library District. The library starts issuing new library cards with "zebra labels" similar to the Universal Product Codes on food items. Library users are asked to re-register in order to use the new bar-code system, which goes on line Oct. 1. The new cards are part of a \$311,000 modernization of the library circulation desk, where a laser will read the labels on cards and books to keep track of where books are in the system.

On December 15 the library introduced the Al-E-Cat on-line computer catalog of all the library's offerings. Al-E-Cat is an acronym for Alachua County Library District Electronic Catalog. The system includes 46 terminals, 21 for public use, in each of the county's libraries including downtown Gainesville, Hawthorne, High Springs, and Micanopy. It will promote greater access to the more than 74,000 books, cassettes, records, and even include SUNDEX, a listing of local articles published in the Gainesville Sun. Future plans include a terminal at the Alachua branch.

1987 Library Director Mary "Polly" Coe resigned effective January 16, 1987.

In March the library governing board unanimously voted to buy Popeye's Game Room in the city of Alachua for \$75,000 from Huntley Jiffey Stores, Inc. The property was valued at \$100,000, and Huntley officials donated \$25,000 of the value to the library district to house the new Alachua branch library. In October 1986, the mobile home that served as the city's library for five years was closed after inspectors found electrical and structural hazards.

On March 12, 1987 there was plenty of debate before the High Springs City Commission about whether to rent, lease, or donate the High Springs Library to the Alachua County Library District. The gift proposal was endorsed by the High Springs Friends of the Library and following the back-and-forth the motion passed 5-0 to donate the building to the district. The gift had a stipulation that ownership would revert to the city if the district stops using the building as a library. Two more debates followed in April & May and the building was officially donated on June 16, 1987.

After two stints as acting director of the Alachua County Library District, Ann Williams is named the new director in May 1987, three months after a nationwide search generated 55 candidates.

In July, 1987 a bond issue referendum date was set for September 15, 1987. The bond issue would finance a 10-year building program for a new main library, large branches for northwest and southwest Gainesville, and small branches for Archer and Newberry. The total cost will be about \$16.5 million and the bond issue would be financed by taxes the district was already collecting and would not require a tax increase.

Alachua County voters approved by a small margin a \$19 million bond issue on September 15, 1987 to finance a new main library and four branches. Turnout for the single-issue special election was 11.7 percent, 4,794 voting for the bond issue to 3,802 against, a margin of 56 percent to 44 percent.

On November 14, 1987 a ribbon cutting ceremony (including music from band members of Santa Fe High School) was held to open the new branch library in the city of Alachua. Residents had been without a library for a year because fire

inspectors closed the old building, a trailer, because it did not have adequate fire safety.

1988 In January, 1988 improvements were made to the computer catalog by adding memory to the system. These improvements were first steps toward a new easier-to-use computer system for public use.

January also marked the signing of documents as the final step in getting \$15 million bonds to build a new main library and four branches in the county.

The June 1, 1988 deadline for ground breaking at the new main library site had to be postponed due to asbestos found in office buildings on the site. The cancer-causing asbestos had to be removed before the buildings could be demolished, as well as the rerouting of a water main that cuts through the property and the removal of an underground fuel-oil tank.

1989 So far, construction of the new main library is right on schedule. When finished, the 78,000 square-foot, two-story library will house youth services on the first floor, adult services on the second floor and a 300 seat meeting room on a separate level. The new structure will be four times as large as the current library and is expected to be completed by December of 1990.

On April 25, 1989 the city of Archer and the Alachua County Library District celebrated the purchase of the site for the Archer Branch Library at the corner of University and Heagy Avenue (next to Casey's Cafe) in Archer. The ceremony included a children's program and refreshments, and the bookmobile was available for people to get library cards and check out books.

Cox Cable's 3rd Annual Lap for the Library was held on June 10, 1989. The Lap was a one-block walk, jog, or run around the present library block to raise funds to support the creation of a video section in the new library.

In September, the Governing Board of the Library District unanimously approved its tentative budget for 1989-90 in a public hearing that lasted only 22 minutes. The proposed \$3.7 million budget is up from \$3.1 million last year, but taxes will remain the same. A total of 1.5 mills, or \$1.50 for each \$1,000 in assessed property value, will be used to pay for construction of the main library and its

branches.