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St. Petersburg College Libraries

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Florida Library History Project

St. Petersburg College Libraries

St. Petersburg College was founded in 1927 as the first private junior college in Florida. Since then, it has grown in stature and today is recognized as one of America's best colleges.

From 1927 to 1942, SPJC was a non-profit institution operating in downtown St. Petersburg. Today its campuses span Pinellas County with locations in St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Tarpon Springs, a health education center in Pinellas Park, and a criminal justice/law enforcement training center in St. Petersburg. A new Seminole Campus is projected to open in 1998.

The original SPJC campus was located in downtown St. Petersburg. The campus library was contained in one room of the single building facility. A special agreement was established with the City Library Board to provide additional library services at the nearby Carnegie Library at Mirror Lake.

In the 1941-42 school year, the college moved to its present location at 66th Street and 5th Avenue North in St. Petersburg. Increased enrollment prompted the State Legislature to appropriate funds in 1955 for new construction at SPJC. The additions included the construction of a small new library.

The Clearwater Campus opened in 1964-65. In addition, during this time SPJC assumed supervision of Gibbs Junior College and the library with its valuable African American collection (one of a dozen all-black colleges established by the State of Florida in the late 1950's before desegregation). Gibbs Junior College closed in 1967, and became a part of the 5th Avenue campus in 1993, to honor the contributions that Gibbs Junior College in its single decade of life made to St. Petersburg College and to Pinellas County education in general. The SPJC campus became known as St. Petersburg/Gibbs during the 1993-94 school year. In the fall of 1975, the Tarpon Springs Center was opened.

In 1979, the three libraries were renamed in honor of retired college President Michael M. Bennett. Because of soaring enrollments in A.S. Degree programs in

the eighties the Caruth Health Center opened in Pinellas Park. Seeing a need for a library to support health courses St. Petersburg Times established the Media Center through a capital campaign from 1981-1985. Allstate Insurance Company's donation of the Allstate Center in south St. Petersburg to SPJC enabled the college to open its fifth library in 1991. The library supports Criminal Justice, Fire Science, and Corporate Training Programs.

SPJC continues to pioneer new technologies in library and information science throughout its many campuses.

(Factual information taken from the SPJC Factbook 1996-97). Most recently it has become a four year college.