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## West Florida Regional Library

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# Florida Library History Project

## West Florida Regional Library

1885	The Pensacola Library Association organized as a subscription library. One hundred eighty-four members paid twenty-five cents per month to use the library.
1904, 1910, 1911, 1919	Attempts made to secure Carnegie funds for a public library. However, the City failed to provide a site and a promise of future support for such a library, so that funds were not obtained. The City later allotted \$25 per month, and then \$50 per month. The library moved to various locations downtown and at some point a bond election failed.
1933	The subscription library closed and its books stored in the San Carlos Hotel.
February 1937	Pensacola City Council passed ordinance to establish a free public library and created a five-member board.
January 1938	Lucia Tryon hired as Librarian to organize and open library.
February 15, 1938	Pensacola Free Public Library opened in Old Christ Church with 3,352 books, including those from the old subscription library and a hundred dollars' worth of new ones.
1938	The Shakespeare Club opened a library on Oak Street in Milton

March 1, 1938	Pensacola Free Public Library counted 2,375 cardholders.
August 17, 1952	Alice S. Williams Branch Library opened to serve the Black community.
1957	New Pensacola Public Library opened at Spring and Gregory Street.
1963	Santa Rosa entered into inter-local agreement with City of Pensacola, with service to 1800 patrons at the Milton Branch Library. Beginning of the West Florida Regional Library System.
1963	First Bookmobile began operation, shared by Pensacola and Santa Rosa County.
December 1964	Pensacola City Council voted to extend service to the rest of Escambia County through inter-local agreement with the County. City approved addition to the Pensacola Public Library.
April 1965	Larger Bookmobile began service to Escambia County.
April 1967	Addition to Pensacola Public Library completed.
1971	Santa Rosa opened branch in Gulf Breeze.
1972	Outreach Van begins serving low-income areas.
1973	Friends of the Pensacola Public Library established.

- 1974 The "Summers Report" presented a study of the West Florida Regional Library recommending the immediate establishment of a branch in northeast Pensacola and, by 1985, the expansion or replacement of the main library.
- 1974 Jay Branch opened in rented quarters. Milton Branch moved to new building on Alabama Street (present location), with 12,164 cardholders.
- 1975 Belvedere Branch opens at North Ninth Avenue at Creighton Road. (In 1983 moved to Bayou Boulevard as Northeast Branch.) New building for Gulf Breeze Branch completed.
- 1976 Alice S. Williams Branch closes and merges with main library. Jay Branch moves into new Jay Civic Center building.
- 1979 New Bookmobile for Santa Rosa County, housed in Milton
- 1981 Bookmobile service discontinued in Santa Rosa County
- 1989-90 Study by HBW Associates, Inc., Library Planners and Consultants, found WFRL well behind libraries in comparable communities in facilities, collections, staffing and funding, and able to provide only "the extreme basics"! of library service. Recommended immediate automation, building a new main library by 1995, adding branches and increasing library per capita funding from \$5.00 to \$20 per capita by 2000.

1990	Lucia M. Tryon Branch Library opened at N. Ninth Ave. and College Boulevard giving a permanent home to the former Northeast Branch.
1990-91	Escambia County Budget cuts forced main library and new Tryon Branch to close Sundays and Mondays and drastically reduce book purchases.
1993	Automated circulation and computerized catalog inaugurated.
1993	Navarre Branch Library, begun as an all volunteer operation by the Friends of the Navarre Library, joins the West Florida Regional Library System.
1994	Funds secured to build addition to Gulf Breeze Branch. Funds include state grant, a one-time local MSTU and private contributions gathered by the Friends of the Gulf Breeze Library.
1996	Dedication of addition to Gulf Breeze Branch
1996	In a non-binding referendum, Navarre voters agreed to a two-year .30 million tax levy to match anticipated grant funds for a permanent library building.
1997	Internet access provided at all library locations.
	Escambia County budgeted funds for a storefront branch library in southwest Escambia County, to open in the spring of 1998.