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Florida Library History Project

Wakulla County Public Library

In October, 1972, a branch of Leon County Public Library, was established in Crawfordville as a result of the efforts of the Crawfordville Woman's Club' and Library Committee Chair, Ann Estes. Service was provided from a vacant grocery store adjacent to the County Courthouse.

The Wakulla County Public Library (WCPL) was formed in 1976 when the Board of County Commissioners passed Local Ordinance 76-4, providing for free library service to all residents of Wakulla County and ending its relationship with Leon County. A new home was needed for the library and a bicentennial grant was obtained to restore the Old County Courthouse, Florida's oldest wooden courthouse. The library moved into the Old County Courthouse in 1976 and remained there until December, 1995.

Initially the library offered services from 2 of the 4 rooms on the first floor of this building and the local Chamber of Commerce and commodities program used the remainder of the building. As the library began to grow the other activities were moved to new locations and the library occupied all of the first and second floors of the building. The second floor was used for office and meeting room purposes.

Throughout the years the library has provided a popular collection of children's and adult fiction and nonfiction materials. It has also offered a wide variety of programs for children and adults.

Bookmobile service was provided in the county from 1979 to 1983 but due to the age of the vehicle and frequent breakdowns this service was abandoned. In 1989, after receiving an LSCA grant, bookmobile service was begun again and through the auspices of Wilderness Coast Public Libraries was expanded to Jefferson and Franklin Counties in 1994. In 1996., Wilderness Coast Public Libraries purchased a new Bookmobile and now provides this service to the three county area.

In 1986 an LVA Tutor Training Workshop was held at the library. From this small beginning an active Adult Literacy Program came into being and continues today.

Originally located on the second floor of the Old County Courthouse, this operation was funded exclusively from Title VI LSCA grants. The program is now located at the library, as well the Wakulla Adult Education Center, where it maintains a large collection of materials and a computer reading/writing lab for the students. Funding is provided by the library, Wilderness Coast Public Libraries, the Wakulla County School Board, and Literacy volunteers of Wakulla County. There are currently 30 students and tutors working with this program.

In November, 1994, a committee was formed to find a new site for WCPL. In its existing location the library had long ago surpassed its space needs and had severe problems with security, climate control, and potential fire hazards. Another major problem was the building's lack of accessibility and compliance with ADA standards- Library programs were being held off site to accommodate people with disabilities and a 35 percent reduction in collection size was needed to open stack aisle widths to ADA standards.

The seven member library committee, chaired by then Friends of WCPL President Peggy Martin, immediately focused their attention on acquisition of a vacant 10,000 sq. ft. facility in Medart. Because of the hard work of this committee and a large show of support from county residents, the Board of County Commissioners, signed a contract to purchase this building on June 25, 1995.

During the summer of 1995, the Friends of the Library began renovations to the building costing nearly \$20,000 so that the library could receive a certificate Of Occupancy. The renovations included adding fire exits, making the bathroom handicap accessible, building a meeting room, and painting and carpeting the interior.

In December of 1995, the library moved to the new facility. In July, 1996, the library received a \$300,000 Library Renovation Grant from Secretary of State Sandra Mortham's office and the Florida Legislature. From February, 1997 until August, 1997, the library underwent a major transformation from a bare bones grocery store to that of a modern functional library building. In addition, the Friends of the Library and the Iris Garden Club have undertaken an extensive landscaping project for the three acres of land on which the library is located. With the help of a \$2,500 Department of Agriculture Urban and Community Forest Grant, nearly 300 trees were planted during 1997.

In November, 1997, another milestone was achieved when the SIRSI Library Automation System was brought on-line. Acquired through a grant obtained by Wilderness Coast Public Libraries, the system provides OPACs, automated circulation functions, and a union list of holdings for the Jefferson, Franklin, Wakulla County Public Libraries, as well as the Wilderness Coast Bookmobile. Also in November the library began public Internet access with a computer purchased with a FLORINET grant.

Throughout its history, WCPL owes its success to the many dedicated employees, Friends, volunteers, and others who have donated time, money and materials to make the library what it is today. Past Library Directors of WCPL include Sue Crum (1975-1975), Bobbie Stephens/Liz Butterfield (1975-1978); Verna Brock (1978-1980), Sue Crum (1980-1984); and Doug Jones (1985-present). The 1998 Library Advisory Board includes Michelle Snow (Chairperson), James Donnini, Roberta Phillips, Jeanne Pope, Vicki Smith, Mary Butera, and John Probert. The Officers of the Friends of the Library in 1998 are Cathy Cameron, President, Debbie Reich, Vice President', Roberta Phillips, Secretary, and Mary Butera, Treasurer.