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Palm Beach County Library System - Part 1

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Florida Library History Project

Palm Beach County Library System - Part 1

By Ingrid A. Eckler, 1986

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FOREWORD

The Palm Beach County Public Library System came into existence on October 1, 1967, which makes it a very new library. In this short span of time, the library, has enjoyed a quite interesting history. Many people have felt this should be recorded for the benefit of recent arrivals in our area, particularly those who will be involved in the future development of the library system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The person I most wish to thank is my husband William for his constant support throughout the years that I have worked as a member of the Library Study Committee, the Library Advisory Board, and concurrently, as the President of the Friends of the Library. There have been many times that this activity has meant a great investment of time and energy. For some time now I have been trying to compile this history of the Palm Beach County Public Library System and again his patience has been very much appreciated.

I also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Kathleen K. Perinoff, Assistant Director of the Library, in searching out some of the information which was needed. Mary Ernst, a member of the Library Advisory Board, and Mrs. Perinoff have been tremendously helpful in assisting with the editing of this history. I also want to thank Kay Dodd and Dorothy Masters for their patience with me and the wonderful job they have done in completing the typing of the final draft.

It is a pleasure and a privilege as well as a responsibility to serve as a member of the Library Advisory Board. To each of those County Commissioners, George V. Warren, W. H. "Bill" Medlen, Norman Gregory, and Dorothy H. Wilken, who appointed me, I say "thank you." Ingrid A. Eckler December, 1986

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Prior to 1965, there had been at least two requests made to the Board of County

Commissioners by concerned citizens to undertake an improvement of library service in the county, neither of which was successful. In the spring of 1965, the League of Women Voters of the West Palm Beach area appeared before the Board of County Commissioners with the suggestion that the Commission take steps to provide library service for the one-third of the population of the county which was unserved. The outcome of this suggestion was a public hearing in the lecture room of the West Palm Beach Public Library in June, 1965. At this meeting, which was attended by approximately 200 people, a presentation was made and differing opinions expressed. The result was action by the Board of County Commissioners to appoint a fifteen (15) member committee, three (3) to be appointed by each commissioner from his/her district, to study the matter.

By early November, all appointments had been made and a meeting was called for November 23, 1965 in Room 174 of the courthouse in West Palm Beach. Thirteen (13) of the appointees were present. Mr. Lake Lytal, Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, charged the members to determine if the county should provide library service, and if so, how should it be administered and financed. He then called for nominations for office of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary. Results of the secret ballot showed Ingrid A. Eckler, Delray Beach, elected Chairman; Herbert L. Gildan, North Palm Beach, Vice Chairman; and Reine Rush, West Palm Beach, Secretary.

Other members appointed to the study committee were: Mrs. A.J. VanBerkum, Marie T. Shannon, Kenneth Nolan, and Charles Munnings, West Palm Beach; Elsie Leviton, Palm Beach; Bobbi Taffel, Palm Springs; Mrs. Leslie G. Thompson, Lake Worth; Paul Speicher, Delray Beach; William F. Mitchell, Boca Raton; Mildred Larrick, Lake Harbor; Mrs. F.H. Poteete, Pahokee; and Larry Royal, Belle Glade.

In January, 1966, Mr. Mitchell resigned. In April, John T. Opel, Boca Raton, was appointed to fill this vacancy. In February, Mrs. VanBerkham died and in April, Mrs. Marion Nye, Riviera Beach, was appointed.

At the initial meeting on November 23, 1965, it was decided to investigate the services available in the county, to contact the State Library for any assistance they could give, and to set meeting dates on the third Wednesday of each month, starting in January, 1966, with meetings to be held at the various municipal libraries in the county. Meetings were held in the West Palm Beach, North Palm

Beach, Delray Beach, Belle Glade, Lake Worth, Riviera Beach, Boynton Beach, and Boca Raton Public Libraries. Meeting at each of these locations gave committee members a good idea of the facilities available in the county and was part of the self-education program upon which the members had embarked. In many instances, the head librarian, some staff members, and some, if not all, the members of the local library board attended the meetings. This gave them some idea of the magnitude of the task before the committee and gave assurance that problems were being considered from every viewpoint. Serving on the committee were people with various degrees of experience, ideas and expectations relating to libraries, and also representing every shade of political thinking.

A consultant from the Florida State Library, Elizabeth Cole, was assigned to work with the committee. A survey of library service in the county was conducted under her direction. Information was gathered from several Florida counties which had established county library service, a relatively new concept at that time. The head librarians from West Palm Beach, Delray Beach, and Riviera Beach Public Libraries, all professionals, acted as professional advisors to the committee.

Very early in the deliberations, it was determined that there was a great need for improved and expanded library service in the county. It was also decided that there should be no dual taxation. As of January 1, 1967, there were fourteen (14) municipal libraries serving 217,100 people, leaving 107,000 with no library service. In fiscal 1966/67, there was a total of \$329,971 of tax funds budgeted by those municipalities for library service. On February 7, 1967, the committee made a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners detailing its recommendations as follows:

"A county library system should be established with a federation of the existing municipal libraries as the foundation; supplemented by county funds with contractual arrangements between the respective official bodies and the Board of County Commissioners. The county funds would come from an ad valorem tax on the unincorporated area plus those incorporated municipalities not now supporting libraries with tax monies.

"For a library to become a part of the federation, it must spend a minimum of \$1.00 per capita or .25 mills per annum for library operation and be open a minimum of thirty (30) hours per week.

"As a member of the federation, the library will provide free library service and free use of its library facilities to all county residents living in the unincorporated area, the incorporated municipalities not now having libraries and those municipalities whose libraries joined the system. The local library will be completely autonomous insofar as its rules and regulations, selection of books, personnel, etc.

"In return for service to those outside its community, the county will pay to the municipal library a sum equal to 15% of the monies spent the previous year on library operation. The library will also benefit from the additional services such as professional help, central purchasing and processing, central catalogue, and the avoidance of much duplication. Such a system would also make possible the acquisition of materials which cannot now be purchased by an individual library due to cost and/or limited demand.

"To serve those residents who are rather far removed from any existing library, we propose book stations in shopping centers as a start. We are n proposing a county library but rather a county library service."

A bill to be presented to the legislative delegation creating a special taxing district for library service was discussed. Also recommended was a Libra Advisory Board of fifteen (15) members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, serving overlapping, three-year terms. This bill was passed in the Florida Legislature in the 1967 session. See Schedule A for a summary library legislation.

At the direction of the Board of County Commissioners, members of the study committee made contacts as follows to present the library plan. The chairmen of the committee and at least one other committee member attended each these meetings:

April 12	West Palm Beach Library Board
April 27	Lake Park, North Palm Beach, and Riviera Beach Library Boards, jointly
May 10	Delray Beach Library Board
May 18	Village of Palm Springs Library Board

May 24	Boynton Beach Library Board
May 25	West Palm Beach Library Board
June 05	Greenacres City Library Board
June 05	Village of Palm Springs Commission
June 08	Members of study committee met with a group of citizens in Lantana
June 14	West Palm Beach City Commission workshop
June 16	Boynton Beach City Manager
June 19	Boynton Beach City Commission workshop
June 21	Lake Worth Library Board and City Council, jointly
July 05	Boca Raton Library Board and City Council, jointly
July 10	Boynton Beach City Commission workshop followed by a regular commission meeting
July 24	Belle Glade Library Board and City Manager and Pahokee City Commission, jointly
Aug. 28	Belle Glade City Commission
Sept. 26	Pahokee Library Board

On September 19, 1967, a report from the committee was presented to the members of the Board of County Commissioners. As noted on the previous page, the special act creating the special taxing district had passed the legislature. The libraries in North Palm Beach, Lake Park, Riviera Beach, West Palm Beach, Delray Beach, Boca Raton, and Belle Glade all met the minimum standards and agreed to contract with the county.

It was also reported that Boynton Beach and Lake Worth both chose not to join at this time. The other libraries in the county were ineligible because of insufficient monies spent, too few hours open, or not offering free service. In the discussions with the various library boards and city commissions, two matters seemed to be paramount: (1) that libraries should remain autonomous and (2) no dual taxation should be imposed.

The committee recommended that the Board of County Commissioners "take the necessary action to establish a Palm Beach County Library System effective

October 1, 1967 with the federation of the previously-named libraries as its foundation. It is our further recommendation that you fund this system with \$200,000 to be raised by a tax upon all properties in the unincorporated area of the county plus those municipalities not now paying a library tax."

The County Attorney, who had been working with the committee, the County Administrator, and the County Comptroller were present at this meeting. Following submission of the report, a special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners was convened immediately and the report of the committee was accepted. Action was taken to hold a public hearing on September 29, 1967, for the purpose of establishing this library taxing district.

On September 29, 1967, at 10:00 a.m., a public hearing was held in the courthouse in West Palm Beach. A resolution "for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of a free library service in Palm Beach County" was adopted.

THE FIRST YEAR

October 1, 1967, through September 30, 1968

As provided in the resolution which was passed by the Board of County Commissioners on September 29, 1967, the Palm Beach County Library Special Taxing District came into being on October 1, 1967. On October 4, 1967 the chairman of the Board of County Commissioners wrote each of the Library Study Committee members thanking them for a job well done and advising of their appointment for one-year to the first Library Advisory Board. By October 10, 1967, six of the members had declined the appointment. Those who accepted were: Ingrid A. Eckler, Elsie Leviton, Marion Nye, Mami T. Shannon, Paul A. Speicher, Bobbi Taffel, Herbert L. Gildan, and John Opel. New appointees were: Mrs. Jerry Guffey, Mrs. R.S. Douthit, Homer Hand, Mary Orsenigo, and Robert Stevens. This left one vacancy. See Schedule B for a roster of board members and a summary of their duties.

An organizational meeting of the Library Advisory Board was held on November 15, 1967, at the West Palm Beach Library. Twelve of the members were present together with the three municipal librarians: Zella Adams from West Palm Beach; Caroline Wolf from Delray Beach; and Charles E. Huber from Riviera Beach who

were acting as professional advisors to the board. Officers were elected. Regular meetings were set for the third Wednesday of each month. Committees were appointed to draw up a contract to be entered into by the cities participating in the cooperative, to search for a director, to seek suitable space, and to prepare a budget.

In early November, 1967, letters were written to all municipalities in the county advising them that a special taxing district to support a county library system had been established on September 29, 1967. They were advised that if they already contribute tax money to support a library, their properties would be exempt from this library tax. A contract was prepared, approved by the county attorney's office, and the Board of County Commissioners.

The minimum standards for a municipal library to become a part of the cooperative system were that the library should be free, open thirty (30) hours per week, and must spend .25 mills or \$1.00 per capita, whichever was smaller, on library service. In return for a library opening its doors to those county residents eligible to use it without charge, the Library Taxing District would pay 15% of the amount the municipality spent the preceding year on the operation of its library. This amount was not to be paid on any capital improvements. All those who lived in the cities and the unincorporated area which comprised the Library Taxing District, were eligible to use any of the seven (7) cities whose libraries chose to join the cooperative. Those who lived in the cities and the unincorporated area which comprised the Library Taxing District, were eligible to use any of the seven (7) libraries free of charge. By the deadline of May 15, 1968, contracts had been signed by Belle Glade, Boca Raton, Delray Beach, Lake Park, North Palm Beach, Riviera Beach, and West Palm Beach. There were two (2) libraries in the county which were eligible to join but which chose not to. They were Boynton Beach and Lake Worth.

The municipalities which supported libraries which were not eligible to join were: Briny Breezes, Greenacres City, Lantana, Pahokee, Palm Beach, Palm Springs, Ocean Ridge, and Royal Palm Beach. The municipalities which made up the taxing district, along with the unincorporated area were: Atlantis, Cloud Lake, Glen Ridge, Golfview, Gulfstream, Haverhill, Highland Beach, Hypoluxo, Juno Beach, Jupiter, Jupiter Inlet Colony, Lake Clarke Shores, Manalapan, Mangonia Park, Palm Beach Gardens, Palm Beach Shores, South Bay, South Palm Beach, the Village of Golf, and Tequesta.

Ads had been placed in several library journals nationwide seeking applications for the position of director. Eighteen (18) applications were received and reviewed. Those deemed not qualified for the position were eliminated. Two Florida applicants were interviewed on Saturday, July 20, 1968, at the West Palm Beach Public Library. Miss Zella Adams and Mr. H. William Axford, Florida Atlantic University Library Director, were professional consultants to the Board for these interviews. Miss Florence Biller of Tallahassee, Florida, was offered the position and accepted effective December 1, 1968.

The special committee which had been appointed to look for suitable space explored every possible lead. It was decided that no commitment would be made until the director arrived, but that as much information as possible would be gathered.

The budget committee worked with the county finance office in order to present a budget by June 1, 1968. This was a real learning experience since none of the committee had ever worked on a county budget or was familiar with state budget laws. The budget was prepared, submitted on time, and passed by the Board of County Commissioners. This first budget was for a total of \$207,581, or a tax of .221 mills. See Schedule C for budget, tax, and millage growth.

In June, the Florida State Library advised that Palm Beach County would be eligible for \$15,000 to \$20,000 of State Aid. The request had to be submitted by September 30, 1968. In August, forms were received for application for a Development Grant for \$55,000 from the Florida State Library which had to be signed by the Board of County Commissioners and returned to Tallahassee by October 1, 1968. These applications were submitted. As a result, State Aid and the Development Grant were awarded in the spring of 1969.

Publicity was prepared to announce the fact that those living in the Library Taxing District could use the seven (7) libraries which had contracted with the District as of October 1, 1968. Residency maps were prepared for the libraries to use when registering new patrons.

Early in this first year it was evident that bylaws were needed. These were prepared and adopted after much research and discussion. See Schedule D.

At the September meeting, members decided that numbers would be drawn within districts in order to establish the rotation of the board. At the request of the Board of County Commissioners, this was done at the October meeting. Plans were made for letters to be sent to the seven (7) member libraries, to the libraries not in the system, to mayors, city managers, library board chairmen, and others, about the start of library service. A press release was prepared to be sent to all county newspapers on September 23, 1968. Plans were made for a reception to welcome the first director of the Palm Beach County Public Library System on December 5, 1968, in the lecture room of the West Palm Beach Public Library.

It was a very busy year, full of accomplishment. The recommendation for library service, which was made to the Board of County Commissioners by the Library Study Committee in February, 1967, was about to become a reality.

OPERATING AND EXPANDING

Service Established

Even though the plan for library service to those who lived in the Library Taxing District was somewhat complex, it began rather smoothly on October 1, 1968. The Library Advisory Board met in October, at which time final plans were made for the reception for the Library Director to introduce her to the community. Officers were elected and numbers drawn to determine rotation of members on the board. At the November meeting, the municipal librarians who had acted as consultants to the Library Advisory Board were thanked for their assistance and good counsel.

On December 18, 1968, the Library Advisory Board met in the Board Room of the West Palm Beach Public Library with the Library Director, Florence E. Biller, in attendance for the first time. Ten resolutions, the first five having to do with the application for a development grant, were passed. These ten resolutions were:

1. The outline for the Library Development Grant to be submitted by the Board of County
2. Commissioners.
3. A plan for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 1968.
4. A book selection policy.
5. The adoption of a budget amendment to include the State Aid and

Development Grant Funds.

6. A provision to participate in the Florida State Library film program.
7. Participation in the Processing Center operated by the Florida State Library.
8. The adoption of the travel policies of the Board of County Commissioners.
9. To delegate adequate authority for fiscal procedures.
10. To authorize the Library Director to select, approve, and recommend to the Board of County Commissioners the rental of headquarters for the County Library System.
11. To recommend a schedule of reclassification and new positions.

This procedure of adopting resolutions set the pattern for communicating with the Board of County Commissioners in a manner which would avoid misunderstandings. An announcement was made that space for the headquarters had been rented on a month-to-month basis in the Harvey Building, West Palm Beach, using borrowed desks and one typewriter. The library had a telephone! Now the director could begin assembling a staff and all the materials needed to establish a library.

In January 1969, the Library Advisory Board passed resolutions which recommended the rental of additional space in the Harvey Building for temporary use if necessary; recommended to the Board of County Commissioners that they secure Bldg. S-962 at the Palm Beach International Airport and have it renovated to serve as headquarters for the library; recommended the purchase of a bookmobile; and asked that the Board of County Commissioners enter into any necessary agreement with the Florida State Library for the purpose of obtaining individual or group loans of library materials.

One of the promises made by the Library Study Committee had been that library service would be made available in the Jupiter/Tequesta area as soon as possible. Interest was expressed very early by residents in that area and steps toward providing this service were begun at this meeting.

At the March meeting, representatives from four (4) management consultant firms were interviewed. Arthur D. Little Company was recommended for the project of submitting a five-year plan for library development in the Library Taxing District. The recommendations made in the final report were followed very closely for that period of time.

By the time of the April board meeting, the headquarters had been moved to Bldg. S-862 at the Palm Beach International Airport. The County Administrator and the members of the Board of County Commissioners were invited for a tour of the headquarters and a buffet supper. Four of the commissioners attended. At the meeting following supper, a non-resident fee of \$10 was established. It was announced that the Arthur D. Little Company had already started to work within the system. The Library Advisory Board was advised of proposed general legislation which would endanger the status of the Palm Beach County Library Taxing District and lead to double taxation. It was decided to advise the County Legislative Delegation of the conflict and ask that the proposed legislation be modified or defeated. It was decided to recommend extension of the contracts with the cities for another year with the understanding that payments would be made once a year, if funds were available, instead of quarterly. An announcement was made that a contract had been awarded for the first bookmobile. And the bylaws were amended.

In May, recommendations made by the Arthur D. Little Company were incorporated into the proposed budget for the coming fiscal year. The library had been advised that the building being used for a headquarters would be available until March, 1972.

The Tri-Community Library Association, a group of citizens in the north county area, advised the Library Advisory Board that they were planning to rent space for a community library to be operated by the Palm Beach County Public Library System.

On September 25, 1969, a branch was opened in Tequesta. On September 30, 1969, the first bookmobile was dedicated. See Schedule E for information about continued expansion. This first fiscal year of operation was very busy. Everyone was learning how to incorporate library service into the workings of county government. Among other things, there were many budget transfers, jobs were reclassified, state and national library legislation was followed very closely, a bookmobile was purchased, and the first branch was opened and the bylaws revised. The library system was taking shape.

SERVICE EXPANDS

The proposed library budget for 1969-70, had to be reduced because the aggregate

county mill age in one section of the county went over the 10 mills limit. In time, the hospital districts were exempt from the 10 mills limit. The library asked to be exempt but was unsuccessful. In 1970, the first changes came about in the makeup of the Library Taxing District. Ocean Ridge came into the district; Gulfstream and Highland Beach withdrew. In 1971, Manalapan withdrew and Briny Breezes came in. Royal Palm Beach came into the district in 1975; and Greenacres City in 1983; and Belle Glade in 1986.

In 1970, the Library Advisory Board proposed legislation to establish a Building Reserve Fund but it was denied by the Legislature.

In that year, first steps were taken toward acquiring five (5) acres of land in Section 6, which is where the headquarters building is now located on Summit Boulevard. Since that land was part of the airport property used to secure the bonds for the expansion of the airport, there were some hurdles to surmount. At first, the land was to be leased but in order to use it as part of the matching funds needed to secure a federal grant for the building, it was determined necessary to purchase it. After taking out easements, approximately three (3) acres were purchased. The original building and the expansion in 1977 were both built with funds from federal programs.

The lease on the branch in Tequesta had been in the name of the Tri-Community Library Association, Inc., and paid by them. It was decided that the Library Taxing District should assume the lease so that there would be no question as to responsibility for the branch. At this time, the decision was made to use geographical names for branches, insofar as possible, so that there would be no question about the fact that they are a part of the Palm Beach County Public Library System. For clarification, the name Palm Beach County Public Library System was adopted.

As a result of a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding on the part of the public when their tax bills were received, the Library Advisory Board requested the tax collector to modify the tax form so that the library tax would show separately as the municipal and school taxes do.

As the library grew, there was a need to establish criteria for the use of the buildings, use of the multi-purpose rooms, for mobile unit stops, and for the use of

the film collection. With more and more branches, it became evident that a card catalogue was not satisfactory.

A contract with Science Press was entered into for a book catalogue which was updated periodically during the year. This was the first library in Florida to use a book catalog. Each branch and each cooperating library had copies. Computer Output Microfilm Catalogue (COM CAT) replaced the book catalogue in 1976. It is maintained by Science Press.

AUTOMATION

Interest in the use of automation for the handling of circulation began as early as 1973. On February 12, 1979, the first steps were taken toward acquiring a computerized circulation system. In April, 1979, a representative, Richard Boss of Information Systems Consultants, Boston, visited the library since they had been awarded the contract as consultants in this matter. In April, 1980, bids were opened and the award was given to Dataphase. The system was called ALIS which stands for Automated Library Information System. The total library collection was held in the database. ALIS gave the status of any book or any other item, reported its location within the System, and if it was available. When patrons checked out materials, it reflected if they had exceeded the limit in any particular category or if they had overdue books. ALIS generated the overdue notices. ALIS supplied statistical reports, including residency of patrons. ALIS was implemented throughout the library system for circulation in February, 1983.

CONTINUING CONCERNS

Insurance on valuable papers and records was a matter of concern which was resolved after considerable research and discussion. The matter of the library participating in Revenue Sharing Funds was brought to the attention of the Board of County Commissioners on a number of occasions without success. The payment of a fee to the Property Appraiser and Tax Collector was questioned on several occasions. Fines for overdue books and fees for other services, as well as the disposition of library materials, have been recurring topics of discussion. Censorship, possibly obscene material, and special interest material required careful attention and provision for handling. Confidentiality of library circulation records was first addressed in 1973. In 1981, a state statute providing for the confidentiality of these records became law. Long-range planning has been a part

of the work of the library staff and board constantly. Such a plan is required when applying for state or federal funds and as a guide for development. On several occasions, the delay in authorizing the filling of positions which have been budgeted has been questioned. Legislation affecting libraries at both the state and national levels has been followed closely and acted upon as deemed necessary.

NON-RESIDENT FEE

This is a fee charged to those who are not eligible by virtue of being a taxpayer in the Library Taxing District or a constituent of one of the cooperating libraries. This fee was set at \$ 10 per year in April, 1969, and raised to \$15 in January, 1974. There has been discussion about special student rates but none were established. There was a six-month rate of \$7.50.

GIFTS

Over the years, a number of gifts have been received by the library. Several came from users of the Service to the Blind and Physically Handicapped to enhance that service and for large-print books. Special art books have been purchased with designated gifts. The largest gift to date was from the Audubon Society of the Everglades, Inc., in the amount of \$10,000 to establish an ornithological collection.

Branch Planning

It was evident from the beginning that it would be necessary to establish branches throughout the Library Taxing District in order to properly serve the residents. After much study, guidelines for establishing branches were adopted at the April, 1974, board meeting and presented to the Board of County Commissioners on June 4, 1974. This plan has been revised and updated periodically. A Branch Development Committee was appointed on January 14, 1980. Considerable time was devoted to the need for permanent branches, their location, size, etc., as well as the manner in which the funds could be generated to carry out the capital improvement plan. Legislation was prepared to allow for a specific millage for a specific period of time. This bill did not get out of committee in the 1983 session of the Legislature. See Schedule A.

CONTRACTS WITH THE CITIES

As indicated previously, when the cooperative system began operating on October 1, 1968, there were seven (7) municipal libraries which had entered into a contract with the county to provide library service free to the residents of the Library Taxing District. The minimum criteria for a municipal library to contract were that it should be open free for at least thirty (30) hours per week and spend \$1 per capita, or .25 mills, for library service, whichever was smaller. In return, the Library Taxing District agreed to reimburse the municipality 15% of its library operating expenditure for the previous year. The seven (7) contracting libraries were Belle Glade, Boca Raton, Delray Beach, Lake Park, North Palm Beach, Riviera Beach, and West Palm Beach.

On January 19, 1971, the Board of County Commissioners accepted the Library Advisory Board's proposal that the criteria be increased to require that a library be open forty (40) hours per week and expend \$1.50 per capita, or .75 mills, of ad valorem taxes on library service. This was based on standards for participation in federal aid. On March 18, 1974, it was recommended and approved that the expenditure be increased to \$2 per capita.

The Pahokee Library joined the cooperative in fiscal year 1970/71, and Boynton Beach in fiscal year 1971/72. The cooperative system continued to operate with nine (9) municipal libraries participating through fiscal year 1976/77.

During the hearing on the 1975/76 Library Taxing District budget, the payments to the municipalities were questioned by members of the Board of County Commissioners. As a result, an extensive study was made by a special committee of the Library Advisory Board which became a committee of the whole.

Representatives of the participating libraries, librarians, and library board members were invited to attend a training session on February 19, 1976, for a library user survey, as part of the re-evaluation of the cooperative system. Each municipal library director had been visited personally by the County Library Director and the concept of the study had been well-received. The survey was conducted the week of February 11, 1976, under the direction of the Orlando Public Library which had experience with such surveys. The User Survey Report was received in April.

In April, 1976, recommendations were made by the Library Advisory Board to the

Board of County Commissioners. These recommendations were made in an effort to correct the difficulties experienced in administering the system as it had been set up; to respond to occasions in the past when the library budget had been cut while the monies paid to the cities had not; and to make use of the data gathered in the User Survey. The recommendations were as follows:

1. Member libraries would submit an application for participation.
2. Payment would be based on the previous year's expenditures as shown by an audit at the time of budget preparation.
3. Audits would be limited to salaries of library personnel (exclusive of maintenance personnel) and library materials.
4. Contracts would not become final until after the County Library's budget was approved.
5. Payment would be prorated if the County Library's budget were cut.
6. A maximum would be established for payment to the municipalities.

In August, 1976, the maximum, referred to above, was established at 18%. It was determined that the total payment of 18% of library personnel and materials of all contracting municipal libraries amounted to approximately the same as 15% of the total operating expenditures of these libraries.

The cities reacted unfavorably toward the change in the agreement. Instead of an "application" they wanted a "Letter of Intent" to which the Library Advisory Board agreed. The matter of the percentage and the basis of payment were in contention. The Library Advisory Board stood by its recommendations.

The Board of County Commissioners directed the Library Advisory Board and the members of the cooperative to work toward a joint recommendation for contractual agreement. In March of 1977, a workshop was held with the directors of the several cooperating libraries.

On June 27, 1977, a meeting was held at the Central Library, attended by the library directors, many library board members, and several city managers from the municipalities participating in the cooperative system. It was decided that the several library directors and not more than two (2) library board members from each library should meet to evaluate the situation and try to come to a common understanding.

Criticism of the Library Director, the proposed contracts, and the service provided by the Palm Beach County Public Library System began to appear in the media. The Library Advisory Board and Director decided to confine their expression of opinions to the joint meetings. At the September meeting of the Library Advisory Board, the Director was assured of the support of all of its members.

On September 20, 1977, a meeting was called of the librarians and representatives of the library boards of all participating libraries as agreed in June. A statement was read stating the position of the Library Advisory Board with regard to the criticism which had been leveled at them and the Director in the media. It outlined the relationship of the Director to the Library Advisory Board, the Library Advisory Board to the Board of County Commissioners; explained again the reason for the change in the contract, particularly setting the payment at 18%; expressed a desire to be considered a "sister" library and not looked upon as an adversary because of size. It was pointed out that municipal libraries had no more right to have a say in the Library Taxing District budget process or decisions than the Library Advisory Board had to enter into such discussions about their budgets. The statement also made clear that the Library Advisory Board saw no reason to distribute copies of its minutes to other libraries since the Library Taxing District was autonomous just as municipal libraries were. These points were made in response to particular criticisms which had been leveled at the County Library Advisory Board members and the Director.

On October 3, 1977, a "mini-system" was established, consisting of Belle Glade, Boca Raton, Boynton Beach, Pahokee, and Riviera Beach. Another meeting with the municipal library representatives was held on October 18, 1977, followed by a final meeting on November 15, at which time Lorraine Schaeffer of the Florida State Library was in attendance to explain the distribution of state and federal funds. At that time, a statement from the Library Advisory Board was distributed. It summarized the conclusions reached at the meetings as the Library Advisory Board understood them.

On October 11, 1977, the Board of County Commissioners instructed the County Administrator and his staff to analyze the library situation in light of the criticism which had been leveled at the county library in the media. On November 18, 1977, late Friday afternoon, the report became available and was presented to the Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday, November 22, 1977. The Library Advisory Board asked for time to respond to the report since there had not been time to

study it. The Library Advisory Board also pointed out that though the County Administrator had been directed to consult with the library director and the Library Advisory Board, less than an hour had been spent with the director by a county staff member. None of the members of the Library Advisory Board were contacted at any time. Due to the holidays in November and December, the Board of County Commissioners agreed to hear the response of the Library Advisory Board on December 27, 1977.

On December 14, the following recommendations from the Library Advisory Board were transmitted to the Board of County Commissioners:

1. The long-term solution to the delivery of public library service in Palm Beach County, to be on an equitable basis, will require financial and administrative unification of all public libraries under the Board of County Commissioners.
2. The complete and separate autonomy of all public libraries, including the autonomy of the county Library Taxing District, should be fully recognized as the only means to peaceful coexistence among public libraries in a county with thirty-seven (37) municipalities.
3. That the Board of County Commissioners authorize the county Library Taxing District to submit an application to the Florida State Library for a Public Library Development Grant under the Federal Library Services and Construction Act for the purpose of retaining an outside consultant to study and advise on various options for governmental structure, equitable financing, administrative patterns, and equalization of service. This would assure countywide library development which would be compatible with the Florida State Statutes and administrative codes governing the allocation of State Aid for public libraries.
4. Beginning with Fiscal Year 1979, the county Library Taxing District established a working relationship with any municipal library, with mutual concerns, based on the sharing of resources through reciprocal borrowing with no payment of funds by the Library Taxing District.
5. A coordinating council of representatives of all interested public libraries be established as soon as possible for the consideration of common concerns and planning for countywide library development. Members of the Library Advisory Board and the library director were in attendance at the meeting of the Board of County Commissioners on December 27, 1977, for the purpose of presenting the response of the Library Advisory Board to

the report submitted by the County Administrator. The report of the Library Advisory Board was never heard. Instead, the director was summarily dismissed. The assistant director, Kathleen K. Perinoff, was immediately appointed acting director by the County Administrator.

The professional library at the county library headquarters is dedicated to Florence Biller, the first director of the county library. The plaque was paid for by contributions from members of the staff, the Library Advisory Board, and one (1) county commissioner.

On April 11, 1978, a seven (7) member Task Force was appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. It included a citizen from a cooperating municipality who had at one time been a member of the Library Advisory Board, a citizen from a municipality which had never joined the system; the Chairman of the Area Planning Board; a representative from county administration; a city manager from a municipality cooperating with the system; a city manager from a city in the taxing district; and a disinterested party with certain expertise in data processing.

The Planning Grant of \$3,000 had been received. The first action of the Task Force was to select a consultant. They appointed Cecil Beach, Director of Libraries for Broward County. In July, Mr. Beach informed the Task Force that he would be unable to fulfill the assignment. Dr. Richard Waters, Dallas, Texas, was then approached and accepted. His report was received in March, 1979. A workshop was held by the Board of County Commissioners which was attended by librarians, library board members, and others interested in the matter. Dr. Waters' report advocated immediate consolidation of all library services in the county. The report was rejected by the Board of County Commissioners.

In April, most cooperating municipalities agreed to certain services being supplied by the county library system in addition to the 18% payment. In May, the library was informed by the state library that the amount paid to the cities in calculating its expenditures when applying for state aid would have to be deducted since there was no central control over these funds. As a result, the Library Advisory Board passed a resolution recommending that no monies be paid to the cities. In September, the Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution approving a reciprocal use program with no monies to be paid to the cities. As a result, no contracts were signed with any municipalities for the ensuing fiscal year. However, on October 9, 1979, the Board of County Commissioners reversed itself

and passed a resolution which provided for some payment to cooperating municipalities in the FY 1979/80 county library budget.

THE SEARCH FOR A DIRECTOR

In April, 1979, after receipt of the Waters' report, the search for a permanent library director began. The qualifications as adopted the previous year were affirmed. They were:

1. A Masters Degree in Library Science from a Library School accredited by the American Library Association.
2. Five (5) years of progressively responsible public library administrative experience.
3. Considerable knowledge in all areas of library service: experience in planning, budget preparation, purchasing, personnel management, automation, and proven ability to utilize modern managerial practices.
4. The ability to represent the library to government officials and community groups.

Advertisements were placed in several national library journals with a deadline of June 15, 1979. By that date, fifty-two (52) applications had been received from librarians in seventeen (17) states. These were carefully screened and studied by a committee of the Library Advisory Board. Mr. Cecil Beach, Broward County Library Director and former Florida State Librarian, assisted in evaluating the applicants after the first eliminations were made. The County Administrator and his assistant who was the liaison to the library, also reviewed these eighteen (18) applications and agreed on the elimination of seven (7) more. After receiving the official county applications from these eleven (11) and further study, three (3) applicants were invited for personal interviews on August 18, 1979. At that time, the county personnel director and the Assistant County Administrator who was the liaison to the library, attended to assist in those matters which fell into areas of their particular expertise. Mr. Beach acted as a professional consultant to the Library Advisory Board. Immediately following the interviews, a special meeting of the Library Advisory Board was held and the unanimous decision was to recommend Jerry W. Brownlee to the Board of County Commissioners for the position of library director at an annual salary of \$27,000. The Board of County Commissioners accepted this recommendation and Mr. Brownlee assumed this position on October 15, 1979.

A NEW START

One of the first actions of the new library director was to implement the resolution which provided for payment to municipalities. By the middle of January, 1980, the cities of Boynton Beach, Riviera Beach, Belle Glade, Pahokee, and Lake Park had agreed to participate. West Palm Beach was added the following year. The agreement provided for the taxing district library to purchase \$35,000 worth of leased book services for the benefit of the municipalities participating and \$40,000 worth of permanent library materials to be placed in the participating municipal libraries each year. A committee composed of the library directors of the participating libraries was charged with responsibility for the equitable distribution of the leased books and the library materials. The selection of materials for purchase or lease was to be done by staffs of the participating libraries. The cities agreed to register and serve all Library Taxing District residents and residents of all other participating libraries on the same basis and terms as residents of their own cities. The county agreed to register and service residents of the participating cities on the same basis and conditions as residents of the Library Taxing District.

The cities also agreed to maintain an accurate record of Library Taxing District residents who were registered with each city for use of its library. The county agreed to maintain an accurate record of city residents who were registered with the county library system for use of its services. The county library agreed to provide courier service to the cities at an appropriate level.

THE LIBRARY SYSTEM - 1984

As libraries go, the Palm Beach County Public Library System is still very new. Only 15 years have passed since public service first began in 1969 with a bookmobile schedule and the North County Branch.

The library system serves the unincorporated area of Palm Beach County and 22 cities. The population of this service area has grown at an even faster rate than that of the county as a whole. There are now 429,698 people living in the Library Taxing District or 57% of the population of the county.

Our efforts to meet the increasing demands placed on the library system by its growing public have spurred opening and enlarging of branches and creation of innovative services.

Today, the Palm Beach County Public Library System is made up of the Central Library Headquarters and nine branches: North County Branch, Jupiter Branch, Palm Beach Gardens Branch, Okeechobee Boulevard Branch, West County Branch, Greenacres Branch, West Atlantic Avenue Branch, Southwest County Branch, and Belle Glade Branch.

The collection of the library system is extensive, including over 343,180 books. The library system subscribes to over 92 newspapers and 1,114 magazines.

Each of the nine library locations offers reference service to the public over the counter and over the phone. Readers' advisory services to help each patron select reading material is available at each of the library sites. Browsing collections of the latest fiction and large-print books are also offered at each site.

Each library location also includes a collection of children's materials and offers story hours and special programming for children.

Seven of our library sites have meeting rooms at which programs for adults are presented including films, lectures, workshops, and displays.

The Palm Beach County Public Library System also offers services to those who cannot use conventional library outlets or materials.

1. The bookmobile, whose importance has already been mentioned, now maintains a schedule of twelve (12) weekly stops.
2. Service to the Blind and Physically Handicapped. This program mails books recorded on disc and cassette tape to patrons unable to use conventional print materials. This service is offered to all eligible county residents; 1,495 are currently enrolled.
3. Books-By-Mail mails paperback and large-print materials to readers who are unable to visit a library due to distance from a branch, handicap, or lack of transportation. The Central Library offers materials unique in Palm Beach County. Over 800 16mm films and 200 videocassettes are available

on loan.

The Central Library's reference department is the largest, providing back-up service to all library outlets. Toll-free telephone service is available to the Central Library from all parts of the County.

The Palm Beach County Public Library System's Literacy Project came into being in the 1985-86 fiscal year when a federal grant was received. This was part of the Literacy PLUS effort. This made it possible for the library to recruit tutors and students. Then the tutors were trained, students were assessed, and tutors were matched with students. It also made it possible for the library to develop a collection of materials for new adult readers. The library has staff trained to instruct tutors. There is a growing number of staff and volunteers working with students in this program.

The Historical Society of Palm Beach County was incorporated in 1937. It is involved in the discovery, collection, and preservation of materials pertaining to the history of Palm Beach County. It also promotes historical research and stimulates public interest in the history of Palm Beach County. It was formerly located in the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach and, as per an agreement dated September 9, 1986, moved to the board room of the Palm Beach County Public Library System Headquarters at 3650 Summit Boulevard, West Palm Beach. The library system is now circulating materials at a rate of two million items per year. As the county population increases, the Palm Beach County Public Library System will continue to grow and bring fine library service to all residents of our service area.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

The idea of forming a Friends of the Library group was discussed on a number of occasions almost from the start. There were always so many challenges connected with the rapid growth of the library system that the formation of a Friends group was postponed until 1980. In the meantime, information was gathered from various sources, including the American Library Association, so the Library Advisory Board members would be informed about such an organization and its purpose. In May, 1979, Gloria Glaser, who is an expert on Friends organizations and who was a speaker at the Florida Library Association's convention in Orlando, came to West Palm Beach to talk with several of the Library Advisory Board

members. The decision was made to make the formation of the Friends group a top priority as soon as the new library director arrived.

Early in 1980, patrons of the library were asked to express their interest in the Friends by signing forms which asked if they would join and requested their names and addresses. On April 24, 1980, a meeting of eight interested patrons was held to explore the possibility of organizing. Temporary officers were selected: Ingrid A. Eckler, Delray Beach, Chairman; and Marguerite Handel, Boca Raton, Secretary.

Article 11 of the Friends of the Palm Beach Public Library Bylaws states:

"The purpose of this organization shall be to maintain an association of persons interested in books and libraries; to focus public attention on library services, facilities, and needs; and to stimulate gifts of books, magazines, desirable collections, endowments, and bequests." The Friends work jointly with the Library Advisory Board and the library administration in support of the library and to educate the public as to its needs and activities.

In due course, bylaws were adopted and Articles of Incorporation as a nonprofit organization under the laws of the State of Florida were drawn and filed with the Secretary of State. The first officers were: Ingrid A. Eckler, President; Julian Kaye, Vice President; Marguerite Handel, Secretary; and Ruth Findling, Treasurer. Application was made requesting that the organization be recognized as a tax-deductible corporation by the Internal Revenue Service.

As of May, 1984, the organization had approximately 800 members. The Friends co-sponsored with the Library Advisory Board a luncheon for the Palm Beach County Legislative Delegation. The Friends also co-sponsored the following workshops: Alternative Funding for Libraries in October, 1980; a Puppet Workshop in January, 1981; a Seminar of the Florida Library Association Friends and Trustees Caucus in November, 1981; and a meeting for Library Friends and Trustees from the libraries in south Florida in November, 1982.

The Friends sponsored six book reviews in two branches of the library. In March, 1983, they sponsored the first Meet the Authors Luncheon with Red Barber and Sloan Wilson participating. The second luncheon was held in March, 1984, with

Richard Grayson and Robert Tolf participating, together with William Robertson, Book Editor of THE MIAMI HERALD, which co-sponsored the event.

Many gifts for the library have been made through the Friends, including display cases for the West Atlantic Avenue and Greenacres Branches; a bike rack for the West County Branch; large-print books for the Jupiter and West Atlantic Avenue Branches, to name just a few.

The Friends purchased three photocopiers for the use of the public and arranged for photocopiers to be placed in all branches for public use. The Friends also purchased an IBM computer to maintain its membership and to provide mailing labels for the monthly newsletter. This computer will be used by several departments in the library for many purposes, including maintenance of the film catalogue and necessary records for the Service to the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and Books-By-Mail. The Friends also purchased video equipment, a Kroy-Type Machine to be used in the graphics department to produce posters, and a display case for the Central Library.

The Friends have also hosted a luncheon for the members of the Board of County Commissioners and at the dedications of the Okeechobee Boulevard, Southwest County, West County, Greenacres, and Jupiter Branches. The group also assisted in publicizing the library by underwriting costs for balloons for National Library Week, by underwriting the membership of the community relations librarian in the Palm Beach Ad Club, and by underwriting the costs of posters to publicize various events at the library. As of October 1, 1983, a Tribute Fund was established which makes it possible for patrons to honor, console, or cheer someone with a gift to the library. In April, 1984, this fund was expanded by establishing the Jerry Soul? Tribute Fund to promote and accept gifts to enhance the Service to the Blind and Physically Handicapped. In October, 1983, the first combined library calendar and Friends' newsletter was published.

The Friends are a growing organization which is proving a real asset to the library in many ways.

See Also:

- [Schedules A-E](#)

p>La Biblioteca Pública:

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¿Sabía usted que la Biblioteca Pública del Condado de Palm Beach ofrece una gran variedad de materiales y servicios totalmente en español? Desde libros, películas y audiolibros para niños y adultos hasta horas de cuento en español en algunas de nuestras sucursales. También ofrecemos clases para aprender a usar computadoras y navegar la Internet.

Cuando visite nuestra página web en www.pbclibrary.org haga "click" sobre "Páginas en Español" para obtener amplia información sobre la biblioteca - desde qué documentos necesita para obtener un carnet de biblioteca hasta cuántos materiales puede pedir prestados y por cuánto tiempo. Además, a través de nuestros recursos electrónicos podemos conectarle con otras agencias y fuentes de información como son por ejemplo la Junta Escolar del Condado de Palm Beach, la Administración de la Vejez, el Departamento de Estado de los Estados Unidos y hasta La Casa Blanca.

Si de salud se trata, visite la sección "Información sobre Salud." Aquí puede ponerse en contacto con el Centro para el Control y Prevención de Enfermedades, la Biblioteca Nacional de Medicina y el Medicare, entre otros.

Otra area de interés puede serlo "Electronic Resources." Visite "Learning Express" si quiere practicar para el exámen de la ciudadanía norteamericana (esta sección es en inglés.)

Los estudiantes entre 4 y 12 grado tienen acceso a Live Homework Help a través de nuestra página web. Este servicio les pone en contacto con tutores que le ayudarán en matemáticas, ciencia, estudios sociales o inglés. Los estudiantes pueden comunicarse con un tutor totalmente en español de domingo a jueves entre las 3 y 9 p.m. Si prefieren comunicarse en inglés, pueden hacerlo de domingo a jueves entre 3 y 9 p.m. o los sábados de 2 a 7 p.m..

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