

Brief History of the Livermore Public Library

The Livermore Public Library was established in 1878 by a small group of citizens who raised enough money to begin a Library. Membership in the Library was \$3.00 per year with a lifetime membership costing \$25.00. This subscription library closed in 1885. A new Library Association was formed in 1896 and has provided free library service ever since. The Library was largely dependent upon donations, memberships, and revenues from “entertainments” for its support. In 1899, the Library circulated an average of 500 books a month.

In 1901 the State of California passed legislation establishing free public libraries in towns and cities. Citizens petitioned the Town of Livermore to establish and maintain a public, tax supported library. The town of Livermore did so by Ordinance 42 and received the existing building and collection from the private group to begin the Library. Thus, in 1901, Livermore became the first town in California to take advantage of the law establishing public libraries in towns and cities.

In 1909, the Livermore Free Library applied to Andrew Carnegie for a grant to enlarge the Library. The grant was approved in October of that year and a site between Third and Fourth Streets and J and K Streets was chosen for the new building. The new Library formally opened in May, 1911, and remained in operation at that site until 1966.

The library needs of the City outgrew the Carnegie Building, and in 1964 a bond issue was passed to build a new 18,000 square foot building. This new building opened to the public in 1966 on the grounds of the planned Civic Center complex.

In 1978 the passage of Proposition 13, which limited revenues, severely affected the library’s operation. Open hours, personnel, and many services were reduced or eliminated. Soon after, the Library became a full department of the City and now receives its funding from the City’s General Fund. Since that time, the Library has gradually been able to return to previous levels of service and add new ones.

In 1986, the Library opened its first branch library located in the Springtown area. This 2,400 square foot branch offers primarily recreational reading and quick information to the residents of the area.

In 1992, the Rincon Branch Library in May Nissen Park opened to the community. This 4,200 square foot facility was funded by Measure R funds and is the system’s second branch.

The Library implemented a fully automated circulation and bibliographic control system in 1989. This system provides the Library with a computerized catalog and tracks all borrowing activity and patron information for all branches. Patrons can also connect with the Library’s catalog from their home computer. Access to the Information Superhighway through the Internet was provided in 1995.

The Library has shown considerable growth within the past five years, experiencing 10% to 15% increases each year in all areas of service. Of special interest are the very popular children’s programs and the increase in the use of modern technology to meet citizen’s information needs.