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The

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& Cultural Center

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Courtesy of North Central Regional Library

North Central Regional Library

**Wenatchee Valley
M·U·S·E·U·M
& Cultural Center**

"Inspiring dynamic connections to the unique heritage of the Wenatchee Valley"

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From the Director

Keni Sturgeon

I grew up near a library and spent a lot of my childhood there roaming the stacks, reading and checking out books, rummaging through the card catalogue (yes, I remember those), attending programs for kids, working on school projects, and asking the librarian endless questions. I've always understood the value of libraries, and it's become clear that libraries are essential to communities, now more than ever.



Despite what we've heard about the death of print books, there are actually more public libraries in the U.S. than there are Starbucks. More than just storage spaces for books, libraries are important community hubs: public spaces that allow everyone to feel safe and to find opportunity. Each day when our libraries open their doors, they become shelters, learning centers, and employment centers for the most underserved in our community.

Because they are free, not many consider the role that libraries play in financially strengthening local economies. They provide a work space for telecommuters, supply free Internet access for people looking for employment opportunities, help youth with homework, and offer job and interview training for those in need. In helping individual community members financially succeed in their lives, libraries help entire communities succeed at growing their local wealth.

Our area is fortunate to have a resource as remarkable as the North Central Regional Library (NCRL) system. Heck, it doesn't even collect fines for overdue books! This is thanks in no small part to the people in the community who love to read and who support NCRL. Like the Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center, NCRL preserves and shares history and connects community. Its branch libraries house centuries of learning, information, history and culture. They provide access to educational, news, and historical resources that help keep the public informed. NCRL provides spaces where neighbors come together to learn, share, and celebrate where they live, who they are, and what they want to become. Our library system connects our communities in ways that benefit everyone.

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Cover: Thousands of Wenatchee Valley residents thronged the brand-new Wenatchee Library building during its grand opening February 28 and March 1, 1959.

Wenatchee Has Long Been a Library Town

by Chris Rader

The North Central Regional Library, which currently provides service to more than 250,000 people in five Eastern Washington counties, was established in 1960 and is a national role model. We will hear more about the vast regional library system in the following pages, but it is important to note that it had its start in Wenatchee more than a century ago.

According to Richard Steele's 867-page tome *History of North Washington*, published in 1904, Wenatchee's first library started in 1898 when the Wenatchee chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) opened a small headquarters and set aside part of the office for a public reading room. In 1909 the WCTU, led by Susan Reeves, built a new two-story brick building at 114 Orondo Avenue near the intersection with Mission Street. The upper floor housed the WCTU headquarters, reading room and public meeting space. Papered walls, white curtains, a good heating stove, two long tables, bookshelves, and a selection of donated books and magazines made this small library a popular place for readers. Local residents wanting a bigger library contributed toward this new building, with Mrs. Lindley Hull organizing the fund-raising drive. Even the proceeds from popular town baseball games, such as one between the barbers and the bartenders on August 27, 1908 (25 cents admission), were donated to the proposed WCTU library.

By this time the population of Wenatchee had increased nearly tenfold, from 451 in 1900 to 4,050 in 1910, and the community's thirst for reading had outgrown the capacity of the small WCTU library. Seeing this, the Wenatchee city council established a committee to petition steel magnate Andrew Carnegie for funds to build one of his libraries in town. After 30 years of dominating the 19th-century steel industry, Carnegie had quit business and begun giving away his wealth for community betterment.

Committee member Howard Thomas reported that the Carnegie Foundation was prepared to offer \$10,000 for a Wenatchee library. Convinced that would not be sufficient for Wenatchee's needs, the city council instructed Thomas to ask for \$15,000. It was agreed that the library would be built in

the city's only park, bounded by five streets named after Washington locales: Chelan, Douglas, Palouse, Orondo and Okanogan.

Carnegie proposal controversial

A Carnegie library in Wenatchee was not universally embraced, however. Some residents objected using any part of the park for a building. Judge Thomas Burke of the Wenatchee Development Company, which owned the park land, told the council that if any portion of that land were to be developed he wanted it used for parking. And many residents, including members of the Presbyterian Brotherhood Bible Class and Pastor Stevenson, disapproved of Andrew Carnegie's methods in amassing his millions. (Some news sources at the time portrayed the Scottish immigrant as a ruthless businessman who would slash his workers' pay and undercut competitors to destroy other companies. This view has softened over time.)

Wenatchee public opinion eventually coalesced solidly behind a Carnegie library. The Women's Club of Wenatchee came out strongly in favor of the library, pointing out its advantages. It would be centrally located in the residential district; would only occupy 1/32nd of the park; would provide great pleasure to local residents; and, unlike the rest of the park, would be in use for 12 months of the year.

The club persuaded Judge Burke to sign a quit-claim deed on a triangular portion of the park, and then circulated a petition that gained 800 names in favor of a Carnegie library. Architect Howard E. Gray created a plan for a "keystone shape" concrete and brick building to fit the oddly shaped lot. With this blueprint, and a



The northeast corner of Mission Street and Orondo Avenue in 1911 was dominated by the World building, where the daily newspaper was published. At the far right was the small two-story WCTU building, which housed Wenatchee's early library.

Wenatchee Valley Museum #99-3-241



The Carnegie building housed Wenatchee's first real library in what is now known as Memorial Park. Note the trees and garden in front, and compare the building's appearance with the photo on the opposite page.

pledge to continue maintaining the library, the City of Wenatchee made a formal application to the Carnegie Library Commission in September 1910.

The commission rejected the triangular shape of the building, however, and asked the city to submit a new plan. In a heated city council meeting on late December, councilman Ed Russell moved that Carnegie's offer be rejected.

He said that the proposed library was not in keeping with the other public buildings of the city, and that, furthermore, he did not like to see the city erect a monument to Andrew Carnegie in its public park. It was explained to Mr. Russell, however, that the council was acting in accordance with the express wishes of the people of the city in accepting the Carnegie money; that during Mr. Russell's absence from the city the citizens had sent in a petition signed by thousands of people.¹

Architect Gray drew a new plan for a rectangular brick building with four classic columns at its entrance. The main floor would contain two reading rooms, stack room, reference room and librarian's office. In the basement would be a lecture room, newspaper reading room, a place for unpacking books, and a boiler room (for steam heat). The Carnegie people accepted the plan, and officially pledged \$10,000 for construction of what would become one of 1,679 Carnegie libraries in the United States.

Contractors Milton Bird and Joshua Hobson, who also owned the brickyard along the Columbia River near Fifth Street, submitted the winning construction bid. A board of trustees for the public library was formed: Fred Reeves, president; Dr. Morse, secretary; Mrs. B.J. Williams, treasurer; and Mrs. Gillette and

Howard Thomas. Many Wenatchee citizens began donating books, mostly nonfiction works such as *The History of Civilization* and *Werner's Universal Encyclopedia* in 12 volumes, and Shakespeare plays.

In December 1911 Fred Reeves (younger son of WCTU powerhouse Susan Reeves) was elected mayor and withdrew from the library board. Thomas became president and attorney Fred Kemp was appointed to take Reeves' place on the board; Kemp served on the board for the next 25 years. A month or so before completion of the library, the board hired Miss Louise Maxey as its first librarian. She indexed and arranged some 1,500 books in preparation for the grand opening.

Library opens in 1912

Wenatchee's Carnegie library opened to the public on Monday, Jan. 1, 1912. A brief dedication program included remarks by Thomas and Reeves and musical selections from the town band. Milot Mills donated floral decorations. Such a large crowd turned up to tour the new facility that no effort was made to lend out books that day. All agreed with Miss Maxey that the building was "substantial and beautiful."

Windows are plentiful and light comes in abundance from all sides. Being situated at the peak of the park, no future buildings can be erected to cut off the light of the library or shut out its magnificent view. A lovely vista confronts the eye, no matter at what window one may stand.... Every convenience has been provided for the librarian and the public in the new building. The latest improvement was a cork linoleum, which makes walking noise less.... Entering the front door, the large hallway gives a good impression and disappointment does not follow when entering the main room. In the center is a big desk for the circulation department. The alcove on the left, the east side, is for adults and on the west side for children.

Books were shelved behind the large desk, on adjustable shelves that allowed for books of varying sizes. In the basement were restrooms, the boiler room, book storage and three meeting rooms available for rent. A small, hand-operated elevator made the "lifting of heavy books up and down an easy thing even for a lady to handle."²

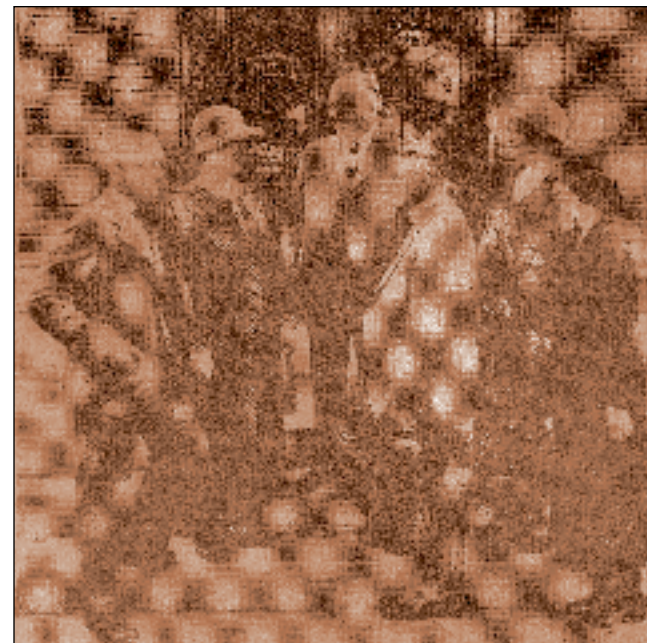
Within just three weeks, the library board reported that more books were needed to meet public demand. "Not the fiction kind, but the substantial solid works,"



Fred Kemp

Wenatchee Valley Museum #90-56-16

Courtesy of The Wenatchee World



Library board members Fred Kemp, Mrs. O.B. Shay, Conrad Rose, Dr. H.F. Morse, Mrs. B.J. Williams and librarian Miss Alta Chambers stand at the entrance of the Carnegie library building on Jan. 7, 1912. Kemp, Morse and Williams had served on the board since the library opened in January 1912.

Howard Thomas urged in the Jan. 20, 1912 issue of *The Wenatchee Daily World*. The board set a goal of \$500, asking community members to chip in. Miss Maxey reported that 480 library cards had been issued to date. The Brethren Church applied to the board for permission to rent a basement room every Sunday for church activities. Board members stated that "quite a little revenue can be obtained by renting these rooms." They set up a price schedule of \$1.50 for the afternoon and \$2 for the evening, or \$1 and \$1.50 for long-term reservations.

By the end of 1912 the library board reported "remarkable growth" in the city library use, with approximately 2,000 card holders. Increase continued in 1913. Librarian Alta Chambers noted that the library now held 3,652 volumes and circulation reached 23,114 that year. Growth was especially seen in the reference department and the children's department. Story hours were led by five women: Mrs. James Cowan Wilson, Mrs. C.S. LaForge, Miss Murray, Miss Bess Smith and Miss Adele Hoppock.³

In 1919 Conrad Rose, wealthy and generous proprietor of the Wenatchee Produce Company, donated \$250 for book purchase. This was a huge amount, as city

tax funds topped out at \$2,800 for the library's yearly budget. Rose became president of the library board in 1921. That year the yearly fee for library cards for people living outside the city was raised to \$1 for adults and 50 cents for children. A record circulation was reported: 9,233 books loaned in February 1921. "It is believed that no city in the United States the size of Wenatchee reaches this circulation," *The World* reported.

Library use continued to increase every year. To reduce crowding in the Carnegie building, the library board and Wenatchee city council arranged in 1930 to house a junior branch in the Elks Temple, at 35 South Chelan Avenue, for children's books. Even so, the Wenatchee Library was outgrowing its space. Board president Dr. H.F. Morse asked the city to budget \$16,000 to double the size of the library, which he said "was built for a city of about 5,000 people and we now have three times that many."⁴

For the next several years the city council declined to spend vast amounts on the library, or to apply for federal or state matching funds. "Too much red tape," said mayor John Mooney in October 1933. But Wenatchee educators cried out for more books. High school principal Wellington Pegg declared, "The library is starving!" He pointed out that the shelves contained "not one new important book except a few fiction stories.... The children of this community have developed an appetite for good reading material and it cannot be supplied."

Clearly, Wenatchee Valley readers were facing a crisis. Could new space be found for a larger library? Read on!

ENDNOTES

1. *Wenatchee Daily World*, Dec. 28, 1910.
2. *World*, Jan. 1, 1912.
3. *World*, Jan. 7, 1914.
4. *World*, Oct. 7, 1929.



In 1939 the Wenatchee Library left the Carnegie building, making way for the town's first museum. Note the painted trim and totem pole.

Wenatchee Anchors First Regional System in U.S.

by Chris Rader

"Towns should have churches, a city hall, a fire station and a library. That's what a town is. And the library is the only institution that serves everyone as long as they can read."

These words by longtime Wenatchee librarian Josephine "Jo" Pardee crystallized the views of many Wenatchee-area residents. From a modest beginning as a reading room in the small headquarters of the Women's Christian Temperance Union to a handsome two-story brick building in the city park plus a children's branch in the Elks Temple, Wenatchee's library became a vital part of community life. By the early 1930s its growth was exceeding the two buildings' capacity, and something needed to be done.

Although there are nearly 3,000 volumes in the junior branch of the Carnegie public library here, there are rarely 450 left on the shelves when the office closes in the evening, according to Dr. H.F. Morse, president of the library board. Recently Miss Miriam Oatey, junior librarian, placed a \$97 order of books on the shelves, every one being taken out by the next afternoon, he said.... "People seldom complain of too much business, but the business of Wenatchee's public library has long since reached a point where it cannot be properly taken care of with the present facilities."¹

The library board continued to engage the public in discussion over library space. Nathan Neubauer, owner of the Wenatchee Department Store at 101 North Wenatchee Avenue (where the plaza of the Numerica Performing Arts Center is today), was retiring from business in 1938 and offered his vacant building as a temporary location. (The J.C. Penney store was next door, at 109 North Wenatchee Avenue.) The offer was accepted, and in 1939 library operations moved into Neubauer's building. The North Central Washington Museum promptly took over the Carnegie building.

County library established in 1945

The city's lease with Neubauer was in place for about seven years. Meanwhile the board, city council and public continued to seek a larger and more permanent facility for the library. In February 1945 Chelan County commissioners established a county library board "to set up a library for the county which would serve everyone who does not live in an incorporated town," according to chairman Otto Jahns of Wenatchee.² County residents could now borrow books from the Wenatchee library without charge.

The state library board would advise the new library organization, which did not have its own building or



Wenatchee Valley Museum #012-51-2086

Nathan Neubauer offered the use of his Wenatchee Department Store as a temporary library location.

books but shared office space with the overcrowded Wenatchee city library. Miss Annasue Hughes was appointed the first county librarian. In that first year the new county library board included representatives from Manson, Cashmere and Monitor.

Small libraries were built throughout Chelan County. In 1946 Manson got the first branch of the county library, with 1,200 volumes on its shelves. Lake Wenatchee had 300 books for lending at the John Smith store at Crescent Beach. Peshastin opened its branch in Dena's Beauty Shop. Entiat, Ardenvoir, Holden, Stehekin and Twenty-five Mile Creek all opened branch libraries that year. Stehekin's operated in the Harry Buckner home, four miles from the boat landing; this home also served



Courtesy of North Central Regional Library

A clerk in the Monitor Store helps a girl check out a library book in the early 1950s. Chelan County set up library branches in a variety of locations.



Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center #86-24-43

The Wenatchee Library was housed in the old Chamber building on Mission Street for 12 years.

as the winter post office. Residents coming on skis or snowshoes to pick up their mail could now borrow books too.

In 1946 the City of Wenatchee purchased the old Chamber of Commerce building at 18-20 South Mission Street for \$30,000 to serve as another temporary home for the Wenatchee/Chelan County library. City councilman Jack Goodfellow made a verbal agreement with contractor A.F. Willett and Sons to replace the roof and remodel the interior, and in August 1947 the library moved from the old department store to the new location. It took two weeks for staff to box up and reshelve roughly 33,000 books. Fines for overdue books were waived in the interim.

A minor brouhaha ensued over the lack of a formal contract with Willett, with Mayor Art Pohlman and some council members moving to withhold payment for two months' work. Lawyers fought for more than a year over the legality of the agreement and Willett's lack of bonding, even appealing to the state attorney general, but finally the matter was resolved and Willett was paid.

The new location, with its soft sage green walls, natural-finish woodwork and brown marbled linoleum, had some advantages over the former department store. It was closer to the residential district. It had public lavatories, a drinking fountain, air conditioning and better lighting. However, the temporary library on Mission Street was still too small to handle the growing demand for

library services. People were often waiting outside the building before it opened at 9 a.m. High school and junior college students crowded the reading tables and hunted through reference books in the evenings. Books did not stay on the shelves for long.

Jo Pardee starts library career

Jo Pardee was appointed Chelan County librarian on Sept. 1, 1947. That year more than 80,000 books were circulated through the participating libraries. In January 1948 alone 10,160 books were borrowed, and activity showed no sign of slowing down. Thanks to the new county library, "The most remote and isolated communities can receive the best in books and classical records for their schools and townspeople," stated an editorial in *The Wenatchee Daily World*. "Many of these communities are small and couldn't support the services now being provided by the centralized system. However, their interest is high and from the books sent to these remote towns, we would say their taste is discriminating."³

Pardee had grown up in Ohio, earned a degree in library science from Kent State University, and then spent three years in the U.S. Navy during World War II as a coding officer. After the war she worked briefly as a librarian in San Francisco before allergies to damp weather caused her to apply for the Chelan County job. Flying up for a job interview, she disembarked at Pangborn Memorial Airport and was disappointed to



Courtesy of North Central Regional Library

Bo Brooks, left, and Jo Pardee prepare to listen to one of the phonograph records available to borrowers at the Wenatchee Library around 1954.



Jo Pardee pulls a cart loaded with heavy books from the elevator at the library in the old Chamber building.

see no big trees around. "But as we drove down Grant Road, I saw the (Columbia) river flowing through and the mountains rearing up behind the city," she later told a newspaper editor. "Apples hung from the trees and I don't know that I'd ever seen anyplace as dramatic."⁴

Pardee brought intelligence, enthusiasm, energy and vision to the new county library. She often visited the outlying branches and was received warmly, as in arriving at Lake Chelan's Stehekin landing and being presented with home-baked bread by grateful patrons. She made speeches, told stories in elementary school classrooms and had a weekly story hour on KPQ radio. She also brought her former Navy commanding officer and friend, Boyden "Bo" Brooks, to Wenatchee to work at the library. The two also shared a duplex, a stone building and former fruit warehouse on Squilchuck Road.

Through the 1950s, the need for more space at the Wenatchee-Chelan County Library grew more evident. There was insufficient parking on Mission Street and no space in the library for new books or magazines. All books going to branch libraries (210,000 in 1954) had to be boxed on the second floor and then taken down the elevator or a precarious fire escape to the main floor, then carted across the floor to a panel truck in the alley. And despite the re-roofing of the former Chamber building, melting snow sometimes leaked into the library.

Pardee and the library board spearheaded two bond issues in the fall of 1956, one for Wenatchee

and one for Chelan County. Board members were Otto Jahns, James O'Connor, Kathryn Fewkes, Kenneth Graves and Peggy Ault. Both bond campaigns were successful and raised nearly \$600,000 for a new library building in Wenatchee.

Inching toward regional library system

Meanwhile, vague talk of a four-county regional library had begun in the summer of 1949. There were already self-contained libraries in 17 towns in Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas and Grant counties, not including the 18 branch stations in smaller Chelan County communities. In November 1954 Wenatchee city commissioners dissolved the existing library board and appointed a regional library board. Members were Warren Avery, Mrs. George Cowan, L.P. Batjer, Otto Jahns and Art Pohlman. Nothing concrete came about for a few years, but people in the four counties started getting used to the idea of a consolidation.

Full rural library service started to take form in Washington state's first regional system in 1957. State librarian Maryan Reynolds convened a meeting at the Chelan County PUD auditorium on July 14 to talk about the proposed "demonstration library" for the four above counties plus Ferry County. County commissioners, library board members, librarians, legislators and representatives of incorporated towns in the five counties heard of some \$400,000 in federal and state funds for the new concept.



Breaking ground for the new library on Sept. 3, 1957 were, from left, board members Kenneth Graves, Otto Jahns, Kathryn Fewkes and Peggy Ault.

Legislators supporting the project included Sen. Nat Washington, Grant County; Rep. Horace Bozarth, Douglas County; and Rep. John Goldmark, Okanogan County. Goldmark introduced a bill that passed the state House in March 1957, allocating 35 percent of public utility tax district income to be distributed to county schools, roads and libraries. (Goldmark, a fervent library supporter, later faced a challenge by right-wing John Birch Society members who suspected him of being a communist. Voters in Okanogan in 1961 rejected having their town library become part of the regional library system, fearing central control as a "communist doctrine." Goldmark eventually won a libel case brought against Ashley Holden, publisher of *The Tonasket Tribune*, and the Okanogan library joined the rural system.)

The Columbia River Demonstration Project was approved and implemented, to great success. The state furnished trained library specialists, bookmobiles to bring materials to the far rural corners of the five counties, and large collections of books, phonograph records, films and magazines. All of this would become the property of the district if citizens voted to continue funding the regional system.

Wenatchee builds new library

Thanks to the earlier bond election, Wenatchee was ready to build a new library on Douglas Street in the residential area adjacent to Memorial Park. Clair Vandivort was awarded the construction bid for the 25,000-square-foot building project; Wells and Wade did the mechanical work and Donald Swartz of Moses Lake was the electrical contractor.

An estimated 4,000 people attended the two-day opening of the new library on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 28 and March 1, 1959. They toured the book-filled main floor, upper mezzanine with children's books, lower mezzanine with the music department (which featured hi-fi equipment and earphones to allow listeners to preview records before borrowing), and the basement's offices and small auditorium. In the back of the new building was a covered area where the bookmobile and panel truck could be loaded for deliveries to branch libraries.

An editorial in *The World* gushed over the beautiful new library.

(Visitors) found the \$540,000 building to be the marvel of architectural excellence they expected. They nodded in approval at the shelves standing row on row, containing most of the 93,000 books and 85,000 magazines circulated by the library. The chairs were comfortable (upholstered, yet) and the tables neat and serviceable. But what opened



Construction of the new library on Douglas Street was good business for Mack's Shell Station next door.

the eyes of the curious were the services that have become a part of the modern library, but which in the old building most people never knew existed.

There were phonograph records (78s and LPs) to check out, paintings that can be borrowed, and movies with sound The films, complete with projector and sound equipment, are loaned to service clubs, fraternal groups, and even just to regular library card holders for showing at home. There are travelogues, commercial films, stories of bird and art, animal stories, scenics of the Cascade Mountains – almost any type of film you'd wish.

If you stop to think of it, you can find almost any bit of knowledge you're seeking in the library. House plans? The library has them by the bookful. Science, explanations of the cosmos? The wisdom of the ages is at your fingertips, all bound up in convenient volumes at the library.⁵



The Wenatchee Library, now North Central Regional Library, has always catered to children with story times and summer reading programs.



With the help of the Washington State Library Association, a bookmobile based in Wenatchee in 1958 began delivering books to rural readers of what was originally called the Columbia River Regional Library.

The state and federally supported Columbia River Demonstration Project came to an end in 1960 – but voters (readers!) in the five counties approved a tax levy of up to two mills to continue the regional library. It became known as the North Central Regional Library, the nation's first permanent regional system in the geographically second largest "library district" in the U.S. Moses Lake and Omak became sub-regional branches and 32 libraries in the five-county area contracted to become part of the regional organization. Of the 200,000 volumes available, half had been obtained during the demonstration period. Book circulation in 1960 was nearly 1 million; they were distributed to outlying branches via bookmobiles.⁶

During the transition to the regional system, Pardee put her friend Bo Brooks in charge of merging the collections of the participating libraries as they came on board. Brooks later became director of the mail-order program, holding that job until retiring in 1981.

Throughout the 1960s (and beyond) the NCRL thrived. In 1962 three bookmobiles traveled almost 60,000 miles and 910,718 books, magazines, films and records were circulated at 29 community libraries. New buildings were constructed at Peshastin, Cashmere, Manson, Leavenworth, Omak, Republic and other branches during the '60s.

Jo Pardee left NCRL in September 1967 to marry Web Hallauer, a state senator whom she met in Olympia when lobbying for library issues. She moved to his home in Oroville. Library board chairman John Thomsen of Mansfield said Pardee's resignation was accepted with regret. "No one has been more responsible for the

success of the regional library than Miss Pardee, with her untiring energy and professional abilities."⁷

Lynch replaces Pardee

Her replacement as regional library director was Mike Lynch, who had served as assistant director since 1965. Lynch had a master's degree in library science from Denver University and started his new job in March 1968 at age 30, one of a very few men working with dozens of older women.

Lynch inherited an extremely busy organization with a large five-county staff, 100,000 patrons and an operations budget of more than \$500,000. He had to continually work with the state library and a few hundred junior taxing districts to assure tax funding for regional library services. Lynch's widow, Carol, described their early years together. "When we first started dating he warned me, 'I can see

you just one day on a weekend' because he was so busy traveling and going to meetings." Carol worked for the Washington State University Extension Service and also did a lot of traveling, but they managed to find enough time together to marry in 1970.

Lynch led a strong effort to reach non-patrons in Head Start classrooms, the Canyon Home for Boys and local nursing homes. Under his leadership summer reading clubs, story hours and senior citizen activities doubled in size. Library branches began making federal tax forms available. Lynch found the means to install telephones in the eight small branch libraries that had previously lacked phones and had to resort to the slower U.S. Mail for communication.

Lynch also oversaw establishment of the new mail order library in 1968. This began as an experiment only in Douglas County, thanks to a \$56,000 grant from the State Library Commission, with the intention of expanding to all five counties in the regional system the following year. State librarian Maryan Reynolds noted the national interest in NCRL's mail-order program. "This is something that has never been tried anywhere in the United States, to my knowledge," she said. "Libraries everywhere are trying to find a better way to get books to people. If this experiment is successful, a whole new



Mike Lynch



NCRL's mail order library is thought to be the first established in the U.S. It is still going strong, after 60 years.

'Mail Order Library' service may be started."⁸

Part of the grant money went to *The Wenatchee World* to inexpensively print catalogues briefly describing nearly 1,000 books – best sellers, westerns, mysteries, how-to books – that the average reader might like to borrow. These catalogues were mailed to rural households (outside of city limits of towns that had libraries). Once a reader mailed in a card signifying the books he or she wanted to borrow, the books were mailed in paper envelopes (later, cloth bags) with return postage included.

The mail order library was a great success. At the request of the state library, NCRL's mail order program later contracted to serve rural areas of Walla Walla, Pend Oreille and Stevens counties as they developed library services – and for two years NCRL demonstrated mail order services to the entire state of Alaska. The mail order library eventually replaced bookmobiles in North Central Washington.

Another of Lynch's legacies was construction of a new service center in Olds Station for the regional library and mail order services. Completed in May 1977, the building was financed by the Port of Chelan County, Economic Development Administration and the regional library itself. The spacious new quarters allowed for smoother operation of the mail order program as well as circulation of books and materials to the 24 (at the time) branch libraries. With the exit of the regional headquarters, the Wenatchee Library could now focus on its own patrons.

During Lynch's tenure, the NCRL budget more than doubled (\$1.26 million in 1979) and circulation continued to grow (1,112,000 books

and other materials loaned in 1981). In his last several years as NCRL director, Lynch was heavily involved with the state legislature regarding library funding. He worked successfully to obligate a percentage of state property tax revenue specifically to libraries in order to guarantee their continued, long-term support. Lynch retired in October 1990 and worked in the antiques store he and his wife had opened near their Leavenworth home. He died in 2009.

Dean Marney, who had been Lynch's second-in-command (officially titled extension librarian, or head of all branches), became the new director of the North Central Regional Library in December 1990. Read on for part three of our library saga!

ENDNOTES

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3. *World*, Feb. 21, 1949.
4. *World*, Feb. 7, 1983.
5. *World*, March 8, 1959.
6. *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, July 9, 1961.
7. *World*, Oct. 13, 1967.
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- William L. Dwyer, *The Goldmark Case: An American Libel Trial*, 1984.
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Children flood the new Peshastin Library in 1966. Longtime librarian Lucille Routson, right, was credited with getting practically everyone in town to read. She also persuaded the "Avon Lady" to pick up overdue books from patrons during her weekly deliveries.

City and Regional Library Continue to Thrive

by Chris Rader

North Central Regional Library, headquartered in Wenatchee, was well established by the time Dean Marney succeeded Mike Lynch as director in 1990. Management was and is vested in a regional board consisting of two trustees from Chelan and Grant counties and one trustee each from Douglas, Okanogan and Ferry counties. NCRL is supported almost exclusively by property taxes and proportional fees from incorporated cities and towns that choose to contract with the regional library. This number has fluctuated from 24 to 30 (its current number) since formation of the district in 1960.

Keeping the regional library system funded was a full-time job, as Marney learned when he became the new director. "We had branches in five counties, mostly in small towns that were hustling to balance their budgets anyway," he said. "Library services often were low on the totem pole." He said towns sometimes threatened to pull out of the regional library system, taking their tax money with them. There were occasional budget shortfalls; the NCRL budget ran from January through December but tax dollars couldn't be collected until April, so the library sometimes was forced to temporarily borrow money to cover expenses.

"Some tax districts, county commissioners, didn't want us to have any surplus," Marney said. He, like predecessors Lynch and Jo Pardee, spent a lot of time visiting those small towns and making persuasive arguments about the need for good libraries. He credits longtime NCRL financial officer Doreen Purcell for holding things together during the lean years, running a tight ship and using the tax money wisely. He, Purcell and the library board kept expenses to a minimum and eventually dug out of the financial hole. Once NCRL could build up a surplus, wise investments and a healthy stock market put it on a solid footing.

Marney grew up in Waterville and earned a master's degree in library science from the University of Oregon. He first started work at the Wenatchee Public Library as a clerk. He was promoted to Wenatchee librarian in 1979, and then became children's librarian for the regional library. He was promoted to mail order coordinator in 1981 before becoming assistant director.

Marney and Lynch were two of just a few men working in NCRL management in the 1980s; some others were Lance Wyman, Bruce Burwick, Dan Walters, Bruce Zeigman and Jack Johnson. Dee Hill was office manager. Marney said her husband, superintendent of schools Jack Hill, often gave him sound advice on keeping the

library afloat financially.

Transitioning to computers

In the early 1990s the regional library was feeling the pressure to convert its records to digital format and implement Internet service. Marney said this was easier said than done. "We had libraries in five counties and many of them had very rudimentary infrastructure," he said. "We had to deal with lots of different Internet service providers. And what a job it was to input hundreds of thousands of books into an automated system! Connection would still fail in places like Republic and Mattawa, but when everything was finally up and running and everybody was trained, it was incredible!"



Dean Marney

Howard Purcell, the son of the library's financial officer, had a computer science degree and took charge of the transition. It was a slow process with many steps: switching to computers for mail order management, ordering books and magazines by computer, digitally organizing the collection and card catalog, and eventually managing patron accounts.

By December 1991 NCRL was using the global Online Computer Library Center, or OCLC, for interlibrary loans. In the next two years, NCRL received two state/federal grants totaling \$180,000 to switch to the Laser-Pac computer-based card catalog for all branches. By January 1999 the NCRL collection was automated with bar codes on all materials.

Barbara Partridge (later Walters) was working with Howard Purcell during this transition to digital library management. When he suddenly died in 2001, she took over the technical aspects of NCRL.

Public Internet access is contentious

In early 2000, public access to computers with Internet connections began in NCRL's three largest branches: Wenatchee, Moses Lake and Omak. One by one, thanks to a generous grant from the Gates Foundation, the regional library's information technology team expanded this service to all of the other branches. Filters were installed on each computer to prevent users from logging into sites featuring pornography, child pornography or illegal online gambling. The NCRL board's rationale was that, even if children were not using the public computers, they could be exposed to onscreen images. No branch except Wenatchee could afford to build walls physically separating the children's section from the rest of the library.

NCRL's Internet Public Use Policy stated, in part: The mission of the North Central Regional Library is to promote reading and lifelong learning. Internet access is offered as one of many information resources supporting that mission. The Internet is currently an unregulated medium. While the Internet offers access to materials that are enriching to users of all ages, it also enables access to some materials that may be offensive, disturbing, or illegal.... The library district cannot guarantee privacy for individuals using library public access computers to search the Internet, and computer screens may be visible to people of all ages, backgrounds, and sensibilities. (Therefore) all Internet access on NCRL library computers is filtered.

Someone at the Washington chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union became disturbed that NCRL's filter blocked sites such as the Craigslist personals section; courting-disaster.com, a sexual advice and comic website; and womenandguns.com, a publication produced by the Second Amendment Foundation. (NCRL contended the latter site was never blocked.) The ACLU cast about for plaintiffs within the NCRL's 14,500-square-mile district and 250,000 patrons to bring a lawsuit against the library. Three complainants from Okanogan and Ferry counties were found: Sarah Bradburn, Pearl Cherrington and Charles Heinlen.

In 2006 the ACLU filed a lawsuit titled Bradburn v. North Central Regional Library in order to force NCRL to remove its filters. The case dragged on for six years in Eastern Washington Federal Court (Tri-Cities) before it was resolved that NCRL's filter was legal.¹

The case also was heard in the Supreme Court of Washington in May 2010. The majority concurred with the federal district court's final decision. "We conclude that a library can, subject to the limitations set forth in this opinion, filter Internet access for all patrons, including adults, without violating article I, section 5 of the Washington State Constitution," the opinion, written



Courtesy of North Central Regional Library

Architect Brad Brisbine leads a tour of NCRL's almost-finished new headquarters in the old Coca-Cola bottling plant.

by Chief Justice Barbara A. Madsen, said. According to the opinion, the decision was made based on the fact that libraries are allowed to limit and control their collections.²

NCRL gets new headquarters

The service center for the five-county regional library had been operating since 1977 in a building in Olds Station leased from the Port of Chelan County. When the Port decided it needed the building for another purpose, Marney and the NCRL board started looking around Wenatchee for a new location for the library headquarters and mail-order department. They inspected a few former fruit warehouses before learning that the former Coca-Cola bottling plant at 16 South Columbia Street was up for sale. Built in 1939, its exterior had a lovely curved wall, many windows and Art Deco architecture.

"We wanted a historic tie to the town," Marney said, "and this building was so cool!" The interior, however, was in bad shape. While negotiating to purchase the building, Marney took some of his staff down to look inside. "It had been empty for years," he said. "Three of the women burst into tears! There were three inches of dried sugar syrup on the floor, cobwebs everywhere, and signs on the wall saying 'rat patrol.' I should have taken those signs down first."

Once the sale went through, NCRL hired architects Brad Brisbine and Justin Borst from MJ Neal Associates to design the new interior. Department of Corrections prisoners were brought over from Olympia to (safely) remove asbestos, lead paint, a rickety stairwell and much of the metal infrastructure. What had been the men's room on the south side of



The former Wenatchee Bottling Company plant was built in 1939.



Jake Lodato, right, was part of a large crowd attending the opening of North Central Regional Library's new service center on Sept. 22, 2005. Lodato served 14 years on the library board.

the building became the main entrance with handsome wood-and-glass doors. A new roof, elevators, central grand staircase, and partitioned offices turned the former industrial plant into a beautiful showpiece. Wood paneling, trim and upstairs flooring help preserve the building's architectural integrity; it is now on the Wenatchee Register of Historic Places.

Friends groups help libraries succeed

Space in this magazine does not allow for tracing the history of the 30 branch libraries within the NCRL system. Most of the branches are supported by "Friends of the Library" nonprofit organizations that raise funds and volunteer for various projects. They are comprised of members who are passionate about books and promote access to reading for all. Sometimes FOL groups fund substantial improvements such as painting a library, or purchasing a book drop or piece of furniture. Large recent projects have included the construction of the

Curlew library and the capital campaign to fund the Wenatchee Public Library remodel. Friends of the Winthrop Public Library are currently galvanizing that community to build a new, larger facility.

Like the two directors before him, Marney presided over steady expansion of North Central Regional Library during his 23-year tenure. Adult book clubs (272 in 2009, more book clubs per capita than anywhere in the state), author visits to schools, a Spanish/English bilingual outreach coordinator, pre-reading programs for families of young children, and social media marketing have kept NCRL at the forefront of progressive American library systems.

Marney retired in 2013 and Dan Howard, assistant director, was promoted to director. Howard's management style was controversial and the library board asked him to resign in 2017. After a nationwide search his assistant, Barbara Walters, was promoted to executive director.

A Wenatchee Valley native, Walters (nee Partridge) started as a library assistant with NCRL in 1989 and during her 30 years with the district worked her way up to administrative and management posts. She now leads a staff of 276 employees (including approximately 150 substitutes) and oversees a budget of \$13.7 million. With districtwide taxes for library services now set at five mills (five cents per \$1,000 property valuation), NCRL is on a healthy trajectory to accomplish new goals. What are some of them? Read on!

ENDNOTES AND SOURCE

1. caselaw.findlaw.com/wa-supreme-court/1523482.html
 2. http://courses.washington.edu/uwtruss2/op_library.html
- Dean Marney interview with Chris Rader Jan. 29, 2019.



Courtesy of Omak-Okanagan County Chronicle

Friends of the Winthrop Public Library hold a sign during a 2017 parade saying "No place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library." The group is leading a capital campaign to build a larger library.

Libraries Are Not a Thing of the Past

By Michelle McNiel, NCRL communications manager

Building on its illustrious history, North Central Regional Library is looking toward the future with renewed energy and focus. The district is getting ready to implement a new strategic plan that will position its libraries as vibrant community centers, offering expanded programs and services and strengthening ties with community organizations to better serve the public.

The vision still includes books. But it also has technology, high-speed internet, thought-provoking speakers, language-learning and art. The libraries of today not only connect people to books and information, but also to other people, new ideas, and the tools they need to accomplish goals.

In the coming years, NCRL will work to develop spaces that are welcoming, easy to navigate and meet the changing needs of communities. Wenatchee Public Library will undergo a major renovation of its main floor this spring, getting updated technology, a centralized information desk, spaces for community gathering, and more.

Several other communities in the NCRL district are currently exploring building new libraries, including East Wenatchee, Entiat, Winthrop, Tonasket, and Royal City. The town of Winthrop bought property for a new library in late 2018. To reach communities without libraries, NCRL purchased two new bookmobiles in 2018 that are bringing library services to schools and rural areas. (Bookmobile service from decades ago ended with the advent of the mail order library.) The community bookmobiles visit retirement communities, farmers markets and adult living facilities, and maintain weekly hours in the isolated community of Plain.

In addition, many librarians regularly bring library services out of their facilities into the community to provide outreach at schools, senior centers, chambers of commerce, festivals, businesses and more. By meeting people where they are, the library has been able to partner with

other organizations and discover unmet needs in communities.

All 30 libraries operated by NCRL offer public computers and free internet access. In addition, the George and Chelan libraries also check out wireless internet hotspots. Many of the libraries have technology programs that teach 3D printing, coding and robotics. The district is also exploring virtual reality programs. The libraries also offer backpacks equipped with everything you need to explore nature, and have partnered with school districts to provide snowshoes for winter outdoor education.

New tools, resourcing and staffing have equipped NCRL to directly respond to needs in the community with materials, programs and community engagement opportunities. For example, we now offer a selection of Japanese language books in Moses Lake and ESL and citizenship classes in some rural communities. NCRL libraries have programs for knitting, crocheting and other fiber arts, as well as painting, pottery and fabric-dyeing glasses. Two libraries have ukulele programs.

NCRL partners with Humanities Washington to bring vital speakers addressing a variety of topics like civility, climate change, race, morality and politics. We also host an annual one-read program every spring that encourages everyone to read one book, and then brings the author to give a talk. More people than ever are participating as they are able to access books, e-books and audiobooks through the libraries and watch the author live or via live-streaming at many libraries.

The enduring value and mission of public libraries has always been the equal and free access of information and knowledge. New technologies make that more attainable than ever before. NCRL libraries are and will continue to be spaces for learning, consuming, creating and experiencing.



Executive director Barbara Walters

The Wenatchee Public Library will be remodeled this spring. This rendering by Forte Architects shows a section of the main floor with two catalog computers.



Courtesy of North Central Regional Library



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Coming Up at the Wenatchee Valley Museum



- First Friday Reception: High School Art Show**, Friday, March 1
- Environmental Film: "Wasted!"** Tuesday, March 5
- High School Art Show Awards Reception**, Saturday, March 9
- Environmental Film: "The Trouble with Wolves,"** Tues, March 19
- Night at the Museum**, Saturday, March 23
- Spring Break Camp: Robots to Rockets**, Monday-Thursday, April 1-4
- First Friday Reception: Art Show Closing**, Friday, April 5
- Apple Blossom Tea**, Sunday, April 14
- Environmental Film: "A Plastic Ocean,"** Tuesday, April 16
- Earth Day Science Fair**, Saturday, April 20
- Members-only Opening Reception**: Thursday, May 2
- First Friday Reception: Blossom Days Remembered**, Friday, May 3
- Annual Meeting**, Monday, May 22

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