



BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM TIMELINE & FUN FACTS

1836 – 400 civic-minded community members form the Young Men’s Association (YMA) to acquire books of permanent or lasting value for its members. 5,500 items circulated the first year from its first leased space at 219 Main Street.

1841 – Second library location opens on South Division Street to provide needed Reading Room and collection space.

1857 - YMA admits its first female member. And, former resident Seth Grosvenor dies and bequeaths \$40,000 to Buffalo for the creation of a free public reference library.

1861-62 – YMA establishes standing committees to address the rapidly growing city’s needs regarding historical, scientific and fine arts educational collections. These committees later spawned today’s Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo Museum of Science and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

1871 - The Grosvenor Library, created from Grosvenor’s 1857 bequest, opens as a non-circulating public reference library. The Grosvenor Library established a number of noteworthy collections, including rare books, music, patent information, medical reference, and military and legal documents.

1887 - Officially named the Buffalo Library as its magnificent new building on Lafayette Square opens.

1896 – Buffalo Library is one of the first American libraries to establish a Children’s Room.

1897 – Under agreement with the City of Buffalo, the Buffalo Library becomes the Buffalo Public Library, publicly supported and completely free. 2,700 YMA members changes to 32,000 registered borrowers in one year.

1900 -1915 – First 7 branch libraries are established.

1947 – Erie County Public Library established to coordinate county-wide branch libraries and bookmobile outreach.

1953 – The region’s three library organizations merged by New York State special legislation and created one federated county-wide system: the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library System. Ownership of all library buildings and book collections transferred to Erie County.

1964 – Present downtown Central Library building completed; houses merged collections and centralized system functions.

1960s - 1975 - 25 library buildings constructed in Buffalo and surrounding towns.

2005 – Erie County fiscal crisis forces closing of 15 libraries, reducing System from 52 to 37 sites.

2006- The newest site, the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Library, opens on Buffalo’s East Side.

2010 – More than 8 million items borrowed with nearly 4 million patron visits.

BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM-WIDE STATISTICS

37 libraries

8,097,152 total items borrowed in 2010 (including books, e-books, DVDs, etc.)

1,567,941 Children's books borrowed in 2010

2,495,928 Adult books borrowed in 2010

860,530 computer use hours in 2010

468,090 reference questions asked in 2010

2,908,755 database searches in 2010

148,407 program attendees in 2010

3,925,499 door count in 2010

2011 - Celebrating 175 years of library service in Buffalo & Erie County...with books, periodicals, public computers, reference materials, programs, multi-media & downloadable e-books & music.

DID YOU KNOW:

- Covering two full city blocks, if turned on its side, the downtown Central Library is over 50 feet taller than Buffalo City Hall.
- The downtown library houses over 57 miles of shelving and more than 2 million books. Though it appears to have three floors, there are actually five; two non-public floors house the bulk of the Library's collections.
- The Library System's Rare Books and Special Collections include:
 - The complete, handwritten manuscript of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, given to the Library by Twain himself
 - The First, Second, Third and Fourth Shakespeare Folios (1623-1685)
 - John James Audubon's 4-volume *Birds of America*, one of only 119 known copies in the world
 - More than 5,000 historic and literary manuscripts and letters, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln
 - The *Milestones of Science* collection, 197 rare first and early editions of the greatest discoveries in the history of science
 - A large collection of significant Bibles
 - Rare anti-slavery tracts and documents
 - World War I posters
 - Edward S. Curtis' photographs of Native Americans
 - A noteworthy collection of works by American and English writers
 - Pre-eminent collection of regional genealogical and local history resources
 - An outstanding music collection including recordings and scores from the NBC Orchestra, and the early archives of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

For More Information:

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