

# Clermont County Public Library: A Brief History

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The residents of Clermont County voted “yes” in 1948 to create a public library system. A seven-member Board of Trustees was appointed and organized in 1949. The Board decided establishing an independent library would best fit the needs of the growing county. Their plan was clear, but the road ahead was bumpy. The Clermont County Budget Commission did not immediately approve the library’s budget. The money was eventually collected through the intangible personal property tax, which is a tax on stocks and bonds. The effort from the library’s Board of Trustees proved successful and in 1955 the budget commission was instructed by the state to make funds readily available. The library continues to be governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the county commissioners and the court of common pleas judges.

## **DIRECTORS**

Throughout the duration of the library’s history, nine people have served as the library system’s director.

- Doris Wood was head librarian from 1955 to 1977. She also briefly served as the interim director in 1982.
- Christina Shama, was first to be called “director.” She worked for the system from 1978 to 1979.
- Mary Mackzum served from 1979 to 1982.
- Leo Meirose, served from 1982 to 1989. He was instrumental in the passage of the levy that paved the way for the library’s expansion. Under his leadership, the plan to place a branch within a 15-minute drive of all Clermont County residents was developed.
- David Macksam served from 1990 to 1995.
- Sonia Long served 1996 to 1999. She was director when the 10th branch opened.
- Leslie Massey and Nancy Ehas became co-directors in 2000.
- In 2004, Leslie Massey was named sole director.
- David Mezack, former library operations coordinator, was appointed executive director in 2008 after serving as interim director since October 2007.
- Chris Wick became the director Jan. 1, 2014. She was appointed interim director in February 2013. She had served as the branch manager at Union Township, Amelia and New Richmond.

## **AMELIA BRANCH: 1988**

In 1986, two acres of land at 58 Maple Ave. were purchased for \$42,000. Hartman-Walters, Inc. designed the new building and its doors opened to the public March 27, 1988. Andrea Millican was the first branch manager. Between 1996 and 2010, the Amelia Branch received new carpeting, paint, landscaping, a flagpole, exterior lighting, plumbing fixtures, high-efficiency HVAC systems, security cameras, burglar and fire protection systems, technology infrastructure upgrades and a new roof. The beginning of 2011 ushered with it a remodeling project combining the reference and circulation desks into one new central location within the branch. The desk includes three self-checkout stations and one library card registration terminal. Additional shelving was added to allow expansion of the collection. New carpeting was installed throughout the building and certain walls repainted.

## **BATAVIA BRANCH: 1961**

The Batavia Branch opened in 1961. Harry Kahle constructed the building, located at the corner of 180 S. Third St. and 326 Broadway St., in 1959. The original building consisted of a garage for the two bookmobiles, space for the revolving collection and for processing materials, workspace for the small staff, and a two-story wing of four apartments that generated money for the library.

# Clermont County Public Library: A Brief History

The wing would later be remodeled and is currently home to the library's administrative offices. The branch was ready for public service in January 1961. Between 1996 and 2010 the Batavia Branch received new carpeting, paint, high-efficiency HVAC systems, a flagpole, security cameras, burglar and fire protection systems, upgrades to the technology infrastructure and a new roof. In 1990, the branch was renamed for Doris E. Wood in honor of the library's first head librarian and her invaluable contributions. Ms. Wood was also instrumental in creating the Clermont County Genealogical Society, whose extensive collection is housed and maintained at the library named in her honor.

## **BETHEL BRANCH: 1967**

Bethel had its first library in 1929. It was housed at the Grant Memorial Building under the management of the Bethel Women's Club. In the late 1950s, the Clermont County Public Library's bookmobile also serviced the area. In 1966, Bethel Village Council members offered to provide space for CCPL to operate a branch library in Bethel. Due to budget constraints, the library Board of Trustees applied to the state library for a grant. Once the grant was awarded, the private library was transitioned into the Bethel Branch of CCPL. It officially opened Aug. 22, 1967, in a room of the Grant Memorial Building. In 1985, the Bethel Branch moved to a former 4,600-square-foot hardware store at 111 Plane St. After 20 years at the Plane Street location, the Bethel Branch relocated to a new 10,000-square-foot modern facility at 611 W. Plane St.

## **FELCITY BRANCH: 1994**

The community celebrated the groundbreaking for the 7,300-square-foot Felicity Branch in 1991, but construction did not begin until two years later in February 1993. The delay was caused by printing ink sludge that had to be removed from the property. The environmental cleanup process took 10 months. CCPL and Felicity residents finally celebrated its grand opening Jan. 30, 1994. Between 1996 and 2010, the Felicity Branch received new carpeting, paint, new high-efficiency HVAC systems, a flagpole, security cameras, burglar and fire protection monitoring systems and upgrades to the technology infrastructure. The Felicity Branch is at 209 Prather Road, directly across from the Felicity-Franklin Local School District complex, which houses all grades.

## **GOSHEN BRANCH: 1989**

The 14,000-square-foot Goshen Branch officially opened to the public Oct. 29, 1989. Joann Kiser was the first manger. The Goshen Branch is one of the state of Ohio government information depositories in Clermont County. This information is available during all operating hours of the branch. Between 1996 and 2010, the Goshen Branch received new carpeting, high-efficiency HVAC systems, security cameras, burglar and fire protection systems, a flagpole, new exterior material returns, upgrades to the technology infrastructure and parking lot lighting. In 2011, the reference and circulation desks were combined into one new central location within the branch. The desk also includes three self check out stations. There is also a separate library card registration kiosk located within the branch.

## **MILFORD-MIAMI TOWNSHIP BRANCH: 1959**

The Milford Branch Library was the first walk-in location. The Village Improvement Society originally established the library, at 19 Water St., as a private library in the early 1900s. In fall 1959, talks between the Trustees of both libraries were successful and the Milford Library became the first branch of Clermont County Public Library. More space was needed and the library finally found a great 8,000-square-foot location when the former Ohio Valley Egg Co-Op property at 934 Lila Ave. became available. Thanks to a \$200,000 grant from the Library Services and Construction Act, the facility was converted to the Milford Branch in 1983. In 1996, space constraints and structural problems forced the library to search for a new location. The old

# Clermont County Public Library: A Brief History

Rock Bottom Grocery Surplus building at 1099 Ohio 131 provided 14,000 square feet of much-needed space. The library reopened Jan. 16, 1997, with a new name better identifying its expanded service area: the Milford-Miami Township Branch Library. Between 1996 and 2010, the branch received new carpeting, high-efficiency HVAC systems, security cameras, burglar and fire protection systems, a flagpole, new exterior material returns, upgrades to the technology infrastructure, new LED parking-lot lighting, replacement of the sewer lateral and concrete under the front canopy area.

## **NEW RICHMOND BRANCH: 1980**

The first New Richmond Branch opened in 1980, but it only offered services 16 hours a week. This branch was housed inside a permanently-parked bookmobile near the old school building. From 1980 to 1983, the library was housed in the basement of the New Richmond High School. A permanent location was found in 1983 at 107 Market St., when CCPL purchased a closed tavern and an acre lot for \$30,000. The New Richmond Branch opened for business Jan. 30, 1984. Eleven years later in 1995, the library moved again, this time into the lower level of the refurbished New Richmond School at 212 Market St. In March 1997, a major flood caused the branch to scramble to save materials and equipment. Thanks to a massive effort by the staff, damage was minimal. The branch reopened in May. Future flooding was still a risk for the New Richmond Branch, but those fears were eliminated when plans were announced to build a brand new facility. The community celebrated the grand opening of the 10,000-square-foot Harold F. Flannery New Richmond Branch, 103 River Valley Blvd., March 14, 2004.

## **OWENSVILLE BRANCH: 1997**

Before Owensville had its own branch library, it had a “depot.” From 1994 to 1995, the Owensville Depot offered residents access to books and other materials without driving to a branch in another town. The Owensville Depot, located inside the Stonelick Township Municipal Building, was only open Tuesdays from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. The last of the originally planned libraries, the Owensville facility is 14,500 square feet and is at 2548 U.S. 50. The building houses the 8,500-square-foot branch and other support departments. The land was purchased from the Owensville Methodist Church in 1989 for CCPL’s 10th and final branch. Between 2005 and 2010, the branch received new high-efficiency HVAC systems, security cameras, burglar and fire protection systems, a flagpole and upgrades to the technology infrastructure. The Owensville Branch celebrated its grand opening Aug. 25, 1997.

## **UNION TOWNSHIP BRANCH: 1963**

The Board of Trustees watched the population of Union Township rapidly grow in the late 1950s. Although both bookmobiles serviced that area, a physical branch was needed to offer adequate resources. In 1961, the prospect of adding a branch in Union Township was investigated. Gene Romohr, a businessman interested in community development, volunteered to build a building and lease it to CCPL. In 1963, the library at 4462 Mt. Carmel-Tobasco Road opened its doors to the community. A fire in winter 1979 closed the branch for seven weeks for smoke and water damage repair. The branch reopened in 1980. A large addition completed in 1988 tripled its size to 11,900 square feet. In 2010, the property at 4450 Ryan’s Way was purchased and announced as the new 20,000-square-foot Union Township Branch location. The facility had its grand opening Jan. 29, 2012. The new facility contains state of the art amenities, a large meeting room, a children’s activity room and also houses the library’s first Blu-ray DVD collection.

## **WILLIAMSBURG BRANCH: 1988**

The Williamsburg Branch was dedicated Sept. 18, 1988. Marion Crosswell, library board trustee, cut the ceremonial ribbon at the celebration. The branch, 594 Main St., is within walking distance

# Clermont County Public Library: A Brief History

of the elementary school. Chris Yurgaites was the first branch manager. In 2007, the branch was renamed the Marion G. Croswell Branch to honor Ms. Croswell's many years of service as a library board member. Between 1996 and 2010, the branch received new carpeting, paint, landscaping, a flagpole, exterior lighting, high-efficiency HVAC systems, security cameras, burglar and fire protection systems, upgrades to the technology infrastructure and a new roof.

## **SUPPORT AREAS**

Collection Development is responsible for managing the library's collection. The department oversees the orders for new books, magazines, movies and other materials based on community needs and interests.

The Fiscal Office consults with the Board of Trustees and Director to plan, organize and carry out the day-to-day financial activities of CCPL. The Fiscal Office maintains all financial records and certifies available funds.

Facilities handles all maintenance in the 10 branch libraries including purchasing general supplies, library vehicles, supervise janitorial, landscaping, HVAC and other contractors. Also works with architects and engineers to renovate, repair and construct new facilities. The department runs a full-time shuttle operation that operates five days a week to ensure materials are moved efficiently.

The Human Resources Department oversees personnel policies, employee relations, benefits and general-orientation activities for the library. The department also maintains and updates the CCPL Staff Handbook and job descriptions.

Information Services was created in October 2013 by merging Circulation and Automation Services. Circulation services is the management of all technology related to the catalog and circulation sub-systems. Automation services is the maintenance of the library system's workstation, server and network infrastructure.

Marketing & Programming works to promote the library and support its programs. This department produces posters and flyers, handles public and media relations, maintains the library's website, provides programming resources to all 10 branches and produces system-wide programs.

The Technical Services Department is responsible for the processing, maintenance and cataloging of all library materials. The department also provides inter-library loan services for the patrons.

## **OUTREACH HISTORY:**

The Dreamweavers Storytelling Troupe was formed in 1992. Members perform at schools, community events, senior centers and nursing homes. They have presented workshops at professional conferences and performed at large events at the Cincinnati Art Museum and Clermont County's Culturefest. In 2010, 671 children and adults attended performances.

The Hands Up! Puppet Troupe was created in 1999 by Leslie Massey, former CCPL director. In 2005, the six-member troupe was invited to present its first original puppet show, a tribute to Shel Silverstein titled "Where the Sidewalk is Always Falling Up" at a conference in Columbus, Ohio.

In 2013, 3,792 children and adults attended outreach performances by these two troupes.