The Beginnings

The New Rochelle Public Library opened its doors for the first time on November 10, 1893 on the third floor of the Trinity Place School. Starting with a collection of 1,857 volumes, the new library was created after the enactment of the New York State University Law in 1892, which provided for the separation of public and school libraries. The first library board met for organization on July 12, 1893, and with an appropriation of only $200, achieved a Public Library for New Rochelle, which opened four months later. It was such an immediate success that it outgrew its quarters in just three months.

Early in 1894, the Library moved to 40 Centre Avenue, the first building of the New Rochelle Trust Company. (In later years, that building subsequently housed Ferguson’s Feed Store, a shoe store, Campion’s Newspapers, Dillon’s Paper Store and a shoe repair shop. The building was finally demolished to create more parking space for the downtown area.) On July 5, 1894, the official Library charter was issued by the New York State Board of Regents. Growth in the Library’s new quarters was rapid, with circulation quintupling in just seven years. The building became so cramped that only part of the books could be kept on the shelves, the considerable remainder having to be consigned to storage.

Selected Bestsellers

1893 - A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE - Oscar Wilde
1894 - THE JUNGLE BOOK - Rudyard Kipling
1895 - THE PRISONER OF ZENDA - Anthony Hope
1896 - THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE - Stephen Crane
1897 - QUO VADIS - Henryk Sienkiewicz
1898 - THE DAYS WORK - Rudyard Kipling
1899 - DAVID HARUM - Edward Noyes Westcott
1900 - TO HAVE AND TO HOLD - Mary Johnson
In 1901, the Library Trustees leased two floors in the new Masonic Building on Main Street. In addition to the general library, space was now available for a large reading room, a reference room and a special space for a children's library. The trustees were convinced that this would solve the Library's space problems for the foreseeable future. But when library circulation again tripled in 10 years, city officials began to think about a new location for the Library.

In 1910, Alderman Edward Davidson brought to the attention of Mayor Harry E. Colwell a possible source for funding the construction of a new building. As reported by the Mayor:

"Mr. Davidson suggested that we ought to try and get a library from Mr. Carnegie, who was then giving away libraries and pipe organs for churches. He said he knew Mr. Carnegie's secretary and had a very pleasant conversation with him. He said he thought Mr. Carnegie might be interested in giving New Rochelle a public library and that he would send us a blank for some statistics for me to fill out as Mayor and return to him. A few days later I received an application blank for an organ in a church."

The request eventually got untangled and New Rochelle received $60,000 from Andrew Carnegie to build a new library. The building opened May 11, 1914 at Pintard Avenue and Main Street, and remained at that site, with the addition of a multi-level extension in 1928, for 65 years.
Library Branches

With the growth of the northern end of the city by the 1920s, the need became evident for library facilities at that end of town. The Library Board of Trustees bought the old Mahistedt homestead in Huguenot Park and, after remodeling, opened the building as a branch library on March 28, 1926. This branch absorbed the small library stations that had been previously placed in Mayflower, Roosevelt and Lincoln Schools.

As the outgrowth of a request received from the PTA and the residents of West New Rochelle, a library station was established in Columbus School in 1929. Its use soon became much greater than the space and collection could handle, so in 1931, the city remodeled a house in Feeney Park, to be used as the Columbus Branch Library. On opening day, December 28, 1931, about 200 children rushed in for books. The branch was remodeled in 1961 and remained in service until March 1980 when it was moved into the newly constructed August E. Mascaro Boys’ Club. Two years later, staffing limitations necessitated curtailing that service.
Summer branches of the Library began to sprout up in the 1930s. In 1936, the Beach Library opened at Hudson Park with gaily painted pushcarts offering mothers and children an opportunity to browse and read while they relaxed in the sun. In 1937, weekly library service was provided for the children at the city's seven playgrounds, and in 1938, an outdoor reading room was established under a bright umbrella at Huguenot Park.

As the city expanded and citizens moved to considerable distances from the Library, it became evident that a Bookmobile was needed to serve the outlying areas. The vehicle was requested by the Library in 1939, but with the intervention of the war, was not purchased until 1948. This first Bookmobile was a trailer fitted with shelves which was towed by the Library's delivery truck. Because it was unheated, it could not be used in winter. A popular stop was at the railroad station, where commuters dashed for reading material in the morning, or spent a more leisurely visit in the evening.

In February 1957, a new Bookmobile which could carry 3,000 books was purchased to replace the old van. It began its career inauspiciously, however, with a small fire breaking out shortly after its dedication. The Bookmobile soon became an institution in New Rochelle as it rolled through the city providing library service to the most inaccessible areas. The heaviest users were children, who loved to crowd inside the vehicle searching for their favorite books. This vehicle was replaced by a new air-conditioned model in 1970, but mounting repair costs and staff cutbacks necessitated retiring the Bookmobile from service in 1980.
Children's Services

Although children's libraries before the year 1900 were considered very rare, the New Rochelle Public Library was decidedly progressive in providing a selection of books for children when it started in 1893. In 1901, when the Library moved to the Masonic Temple Building, it had its first Children's Room and its first children's librarian, Miss Jessie Brainard.

The Children's Room in the Main & Pintard building offered a large selection of books and pictures for children, along with reading lists for all ages. Seasonal exhibits highlighted book collections, and the children's librarians provided story hours, school class visits and book talks. Children had access to the room through their own entrance, making it unnecessary for them to pass through the main part of the building.

The first story hour for children was offered in 1910, limited to a group of 25, the largest number the first Children's Room could accommodate. Story hours continued to be popular over the years, with seven programs a week offered currently in the Children's Room.
The Library Today

The current Library, constructed in the center of the downtown business area as part of a major neighborhood revitalization project, opened to the public on September 17, 1979. Designed by architects Pomeroy, Lebduska Associates of New York and Fred W. Lyon Associated Architects of New Rochelle, the building provides service on three sprawling floors utilizing a total of 67,000 square feet. The main section of the building (60% of the total structure) was refurbished from a former parking garage, with the resulting low ceiling heights offset with the creation of a wide, central skylit area.

This innovative design resulted in an Award of Excellence for Library Architecture from the American Institute of Architects and the American Library Association in 1980. In selecting the New Rochelle Public Library for this award, the jury said: "The library brilliantly satisfies a complex set of requirements by tying in existing structures with new construction. This superb piece of urban design acts as a community facility that provides exhibits, theater, meeting areas and a 250,000-volume library. This facility, in turn, stimulates the New Rochelle downtown district."

In the 1880s, this site was the home of Morgan's Livery Stables.
Looking Toward the Future

In some ways, the New Rochelle Public Library is not so different from its beginnings 100 years ago. People still like to sit and read, students still do schoolwork— but the materials themselves and how they can be found are vastly different. Now, patrons use computers instead of card catalogs, and borrow videocassettes, books on tape, and CD's as well as traditional books.

THE LIBRARY TODAY

- 38,000 registered borrowers
- Annual circulation between 380,000 and 410,000 items
- 80,000 reference questions a year
- 60,000 periodicals requested/used
- Film Series
- Music, Wine and Cheese Concert Series
- Art exhibits - incl. children's art, new artists, N.R. Art Association
- English as a Second Language programs
- Pre-School Story Hour: 6 each week
- Homework Clinics: 20-30 children every day
- Summer Reading Programs: 500+ children every summer
- Children's School Vacation programs: up to 400 children per program
- Literacy Volunteers: Drop-In Center
- Westchester County Career Counseling

LIBRARY DIRECTORS
1893-1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Mary E. Huntington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Elizabeth Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Katherine Tappert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Jessie F. Resinard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Mary E. Huntington</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Aubry Lee (Hill) Graham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Frances C. Little (acting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Josephine H. Edwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Ruth M. Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Eugene L. Mittaglueck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Frederick S. Girlandano (acting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Patricia Anderson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With funding from the City Council, the New Rochelle Public Library was one of the first communities in the county to automate its library. The system went online with the Westchester Library System in 1989, and now has a computerized catalog of library holdings throughout the county for public use. Just as the first Library faced the challenge of a new century, so does the Library today. On this eve of the 21st century, the present Library trustees are taking steps to keep advancing with technology in order to meet the demands of the next 100 years.

Selected Bestsellers

1970 - "NEBUCHADNEZER" - William Styron
1980 - "THE COVENANT" - James Michener
1981 - "NOBLE HOUSE" - James Clavell
1982 - "E.L. - THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL STORYBOOK" - William Kotzwinkle
1985 - "THE OUTTOWN OF THE JEEP STORYBOOK" - Jean Vinge
1984 - "THE TALISMAN" - Stephen King
1985 - "THE CHERISHED" - Bernard W. Yeh
1986 - "E.T." - Stephen King
1987 - "THE COMMISSIONER" - Stephen King
1989 - "THE SECRET OF THE KREMLIN" - Tom Clancy
1989 - "THE JOY LUCK CLUB" - Amy Tan
1990 - "OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!" - Dr. Seuss
1991 - "THE Firm" - John Grisham
1992 - "WAITING TO EXHALE" - Terry McMillan
1993 - "BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY" - Robert Weller

CITY COUNCIL
1994

Timothy C. Idoni, Mayor
Council Members:
Katharine W. Conroy
Alexander R. Podice
Joseph P. Fosina
Ruth Kitchen
Rhoda Quash
M. Christina Selin

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