Frontier Days to the 21st Century: A History of the Bismarck Public Library

by Kate Waldera, Head of Information Services

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Acknowledgement

"There is not such a cradle of democracy on earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration." – Andrew Carnegie

It has been an honor and a labor of love to write the history of Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library. From its humble pioneer beginnings to the present, there have been two common threads…

- the desire of the citizens to build and maintain a library
- dedicated staff who work tirelessly to keep the library's services sensitive to the needs of the community

This history is, therefore, dedicated to our fine community of library supporters and library staff…past, present, and future.

**Mission**
Collecting, organizing and providing open access to educational, informational, recreational and cultural resources.

**Vision**
Offering information, ideas and personal enrichment to all.

**Values**
- Ensuring fast access to information
- Treating all patrons with respect and equity
- Responding to community needs
- Providing quality basic services without charge
- Protecting freedom of information, privacy and confidentiality
- Providing a safe and secure environment
- Stewarding community resources
- Focusing on cooperative development through partnerships
- Encouraging programming and display of the arts
Chapter 1: Carnegie Legacy

Andrew Carnegie was born in Dunfermline, Scotland on November 25, 1835. He was the oldest son of William and Margaret Morrison Carnegie. A second son, Thomas, joined the family in 1843.

The Carnegie family immigrated to the United States in 1848 and settled in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. Andrew was a personable, hardworking young boy, eager to contribute to his family's finances. His foray into the working world began as a bobbin boy at a cotton factory in Allegheny City where he earned $1.20 per week. Andrew moved from there to another bobbin factory where he ran a small steam engine and fired the boiler in the basement. His weekly salary increased to $2.00. An employment milestone occurred in early 1850 when he was hired as a messenger boy for a Pittsburgh telegraph office. Carnegie later said it, "...felt that my foot was upon the ladder and that I was bound to climb." (Carnegie, p.39)

And climb he did! Andrew put his sharp memory to use by memorizing the business signs on the street and reciting them over and over. He also realized the advantage of getting to know his customers and was able to recognize the gentlemen and deliver their messages directly on the street. He said that "my life as a telegraph messenger was in every respect a happy one..." (Carnegie, p.42)

The young man worked long hours and was not home before 11:00 in the evening most days. Little time was available for self improvement and family finances did not allow for any money to be spent on books. "A blessing from above" soon arrived on the scene and "the treasures of literature were unfolded" for young Andrew. (Carnegie, p.45)

Colonel James Anderson made it known that he would allow young men to utilize his library of at least 400 volumes. A book could be taken out each Saturday afternoon and returned the next Saturday for a new title. Andrew was introduced to the Colonel and allowed to take out such titles as Bancroft's "History of the United States." The impact that Anderson's generosity made on Carnegie was recognized when he later erected a monument in Anderson's honor. It was placed in front of the Carnegie Free Library of Allegheny, the first Carnegie library commissioned in the United States. The monument bears this inscription: (Carnegie, p.46-47)

To Colonel James Anderson, Founder of Free Libraries in Western Pennsylvania. He opened his Library to working boys and upon Saturday afternoon acted as librarian, thus dedicating not only his books but himself to the noble work. This monument is erected in grateful remembrance by Andrew Carnegie, one of the "working boys" to whom were thus opened the precious treasures of knowledge and imagination through which youth may ascent.
The first free library building funded by Carnegie was in his birthplace on July 27, 1881. The city named the building "Carnegie Library." When the building's architect asked for Andrew's coat of arms to be placed above the doors, Carnegie said that he had none. He suggested that the architect use a carving of the rising sun with the motto "Let there be light."

During his lifetime, Carnegie gave a total of 1,419 grants totaling $41 million. This funding enabled the construction of 1,689 public libraries in the United States and Puerto Rico. Commissioned libraries were also built in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Canada. Others were built in Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Mauritius, and Fiji. At first, Carnegie libraries were built almost exclusively in places where he had a personal connection. Beginning in 1899, he substantially increased funding to libraries outside of these areas. (Nasaw, p. 607) Carnegie's philanthropy would soon impact Bismarck, North Dakota in a very big way.

Sources:
- Images #1, #2, and #3 taken from https://commons.wikimedia.org

Chapter 2: The Frontier Reading Room

The library and Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce share a historical connection. The Chamber was founded as the Bismarck Commercial Club in December 1905. Its first location was in a suite of rooms in the Patterson block, followed by the Rhud Building at 119 Third Street and the second floor of the Hinckley Building at 221½ Fourth Street.

4. Bismarck Commercial Club circa 1906
The industrious pioneer women of Bismarck established a small reading room in the school with 200 donated books soon after the city was established in 1873. The books were made available to the public after school hours. It is believed the first movement for a Carnegie Library was begun in 1893 by Marshall Jewell and C. M. Dahl. The idea was well received by the citizens and the Carnegie Foundation appeared willing to consider funding a library. The Panic of 1893, however, hit the country and the protest marches known as Coxey's Army took center stage and the idea of a library was literally shelved.

Other library campaigns were launched by Mayor F. H. Register in 1901 and by Governor Hanna and others. The Civic Improvement League, formed in 1908, named a library committee as did the city Federation of Women's Clubs and the Bismarck Commercial Club. Participants keenly felt that the lack of an established public library in their capitol city was an embarrassment. In fact, Bismarck was the only city in the state with a population of over 3,000 that didn't have a public library. An article entitled "No Library in Bismarck" was published in the Bismarck Daily Tribune on September 10, 1912 and called out the city and its citizens on this matter…

'It is an astonishing fact that there is no public library in the city of Bismarck! Seldom will one find a city of this size so deficient in this respect. Nearly every town in this state, no matter how small, has a library, but Bismarck, the capital city, has none.'

The writer closed with this statement…

'Would it not be well for some combination of people in this city to make a move in this direction? It is safe to say the results would be gratifying.'

A movement to promote a more formal lending library did begin in late May 1913. A committee representing several women's organizations met at the home of Mrs. O. H. Will. The organizations included the Fortnightly Club, Monday Club, Mothers' Club, Current Events Club, and the Bismarck Civic Improvement League. The committee discussed fundraising and a collaboration with the Bismarck Commercial Club. A book shower was also suggested with a book or magazine subscription being the price of admission to the event.

The Commercial Club heartily endorsed this effort. In fact, a mere fourteen months before, a Mr. Bell introduced a resolution asking for the establishment of a free public library in the city and that the city commissioners be "requested to make every effort to embody accommodations for a free public library and reading room in the municipal auditorium to be erected this year." His resolution passed unanimously and copies of the resolution were sent to the city commissioners. It appears, however, that the auditorium location proposal did not work out.

The Commercial Club and Civic League library committees met again in December 1915 and worked out the plans for the reading room. The resourceful members of the Commercial Club made changes in their headquarters on the second floor of the Hinckley Building and set aside a space. Civic-minded individuals donated materials and labor for the shelves and book cases. Others donated their time and vehicles to transport the materials to the Hinckley Building. The women's groups gave notice to the citizens of Bismarck that book donations were needed and that "works of standard fiction, history, travel, exploration, adventure, scientific, philosophical, theological, and sociological works, good literature of any kind, of any date, of any period, in any binding will be gladly accepted."
The enthusiastic grand opening was held on February 24 and it was estimated that 400-500 people attended the opening. At least 1600 volumes were already on the shelves with more waiting to be processed. Everyone felt that the creation of the reading room was "a monument to the public spiritedness of Bismarck men and women who have recognized the need of a public library; who have toiled for years that their ideals might be realized, and who never expected any other reward for their labors than the satisfaction which comes from the knowledge of a good deed well done." A financial boon came with the gift of $2,200 from W. C. Gilbreath, former Commissioner of Agriculture. The monies were placed in escrow at the First National Bank and provided an immediate fund for additional books and periodicals. Commercial Club president Clyde L. Young addressed the gathering and traced the history of the library movement from the early efforts of Mayor F. H. Register to the work done by the Civic League and the Bismarck Commercial Club. He stressed that the rooms in the Hinckley Building were not meant to be a permanent location and that much rested on the results of the upcoming special election on February 28.

The use of the reading rooms by Bismarck residents exploded. During the month of March 863 books were loaned. Of this number 614 books were children's fiction, 191 books were adult fiction, and 59 books covered historical and other subjects. There were 317 borrower applications on file. Eighty percent of the borrowers were children. A plea was made for donations of children's books since the demand far outweighed the supply.

Sources:
- Image #4: *Glimpses of Bismarck*, 1906?
- "Commercial Club is after Public Library" Bismarck Daily Tribune, March 15, 1912, p.5
- "Movement for city library" Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 25, 1913, p.3
- "Library plans approved..." Bismarck Daily Tribune, December 12, 1915, p.1
- "Enthusiastic celebration marks the opening..." Bismarck Daily Tribune, February 25, 1916, p.1+
- "Library circulation rapidly increasing" Bismarck Daily Tribune, April 5, 1916, p.8
- Image #5 State Historical Society of North Dakota (Item # A6778)

**Chapter 3: The Carnegie Library (1917-1963)**

On behalf of the Commercial Club, Clyde L. Young renewed correspondence with the Carnegie Foundation during the summer of 1915. On February 5, 1916, Bismarck Mayor A. W. Lucas received a letter from James Bertram, secretary of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

*My Dear Sir:

Responding to your communications on behalf of Bismarck, North Dakota, if the city agrees by resolution of the board of city commissioners to maintain a free public library at a cost of $2,500 a year, and provides a suitable site for the building, Carnegie Corporation of New York will be glad to give $25,000.00 to erect a free public library building for Bismarck, North Dakota.

It should be noted that the amount indicated is to cover the cost of the library building complete, ready for occupancy and for the purpose intended.*
During their regular meeting on February 7, the City Commission authorized a special election and scheduled it for February 28. A total of 444 votes were cast and only 70 were opposed to building a city library.

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<td>Sixth</td>
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The Board of Education appointed the members of the first library board in April 1916. Under the law, one member of the library board had to be on the school board and one member had to be female. The appointed members were Colonel Clarence B. Little, Clyde L. Young, Mrs. Agatha Patterson, Otto Holta, and George F. Will.

Several tasks faced the newly-appointed library board. The first was hiring an architect. Frederick W. Keith of Grand Forks was chosen and the first set of plans was sent to the Carnegie Foundation. The Foundation insisted on several changes and revised designs were submitted. The Carnegie Foundation finally approved the blueprints and awarded the $25,000 in December 1916. The next task was selecting a location for the new building. Several parcels were considered but the cost was prohibitive. A miracle of sorts occurred in early May 1917 when the city donated the property on the southwest corner of 6th Street and Thayer Avenue. Bids were let and the contracts for construction were awarded on May 12. John L. Larson acted as general contractor, Grambs & Peet handled heating and plumbing, and electrical work was done by J. L. Tierney. Groundbreaking for the new building began on May 28. Progress was temporarily halted when a human skeleton was unearthed during excavation. The bones were so badly decayed that gender and cause or approximate date of death could not be determined. By early September, the roof was almost complete and construction on the interior was progressing.

Florence H. Davis of Grand Forks was hired as the library’s first director and began work in November 1917. Her charge was to manage the temporary library located in Commercial Club rooms on the second floor of the Hinckley Building until the permanent building was completed. In December 1917, the building was ready and materials were transferred from the reading rooms to their new quarters on January 5, 1918. It had been planned to dedicate the new library in February 1918, but war conditions made it impossible to obtain interior furnishings in a timely manner.

The library’s architecture was an adaptation of the colonial style. Its exterior was dark red Hebron brick laid in white mortar and trimmed with Bedford stone. The interior walls were light in color with the woodwork finished in ivory and the chairs and tables in mahogany. Special cork carpet covered the floors, and the high ceiling created a sense of space. Alcoves offered private areas for reading and study. The basement contained a community room available for meetings and other public gatherings as well as office and committee rooms, a janitor’s closet, and furnace and boiler rooms. The basement of the building was accessible from inside the building, as well as from an outside entrance on 6th Street.
Mrs. Davis posted these library hours in the Bismarck Daily Tribune effective October 1, 1918:

- 3:00-6:30pm and 7:30-9:00pm all week days
- 3:00-5:30pm on Sundays (until May 1)
- Children’s Room (for all below first year high school) 3:00-6:30pm all days of the week
- Children’s Room will not be open evenings or Sundays

The Bismarck community again rallied for the library on December 7. The City Federation of Women’s Clubs organized a food sale to be held at the Hughes Electric Company’s offices on 3rd Street and Broadway Avenue. The proceeds were earmarked for the purchase of furnishings for the new public library’s community room.

The residents of Bismarck were obviously very proud of their new library. An article published in the October 11 issue of the Bismarck Daily Tribune sang the praises of the citizens and of the new library:

_Bismarck may now pride itself upon one of the most attractive and modern public libraries in North Dakota._

The author urged the citizens to “…make the fullest possible use of its advantages in order that they may profit us to the greatest extent possible.” The article’s closing words are as relevant today as they were almost 100 years ago:

_The public library of today is a live, vital thing, pulsating with energy._

_Establish contact with this power house of thought._

Citizens took these words to heart, as reflected by the circulation figures. In 1919 the library circulated almost 14,000 items.

It was soon discovered that blending adult and children’s services in one area was not an ideal situation. Mrs. Davis made a proposal to the library board on January 19, 1921. The west side of the main floor would be an exclusive reading room, while the east side would be the reference area. All reference materials, including magazines, would be brought up from the basement workroom and shelves in the east side of reference room would be used for these materials. All children’s materials, furniture, and equipment would be moved to the Community Room, which would be renamed the Children’s Room and no longer be used as a meeting space. The assistant for the Children’s Room would be paid $30 per month. All board members approved her proposal and indicated that the changes would be effective on February 15. These changes were delayed at least twice for unknown reasons and in the August 8 minutes the effective date was finally set for September 1.

Mrs. Davis remained as library director until 1925 when she became the librarian at the State Historical Society, a position she held until her retirement in 1949. She was succeeded by Pauline Rich. Other library directors included Helen Kennedy, Alice Ruth King, Ellen B. Lawin, Erana M.
Stadler, Robert E. Thomas, and Andrew Hansen. All served the library well but Stadler, Thomas, and Hansen each left a memorable legacy.

Miss Stadler became the longest serving director up to this point. She was ahead of her time where programming was concerned. Stadler created book talks, programs, and displays on the issues of the day and wrote a regular library column for the daily newspaper. Robert Thomas instituted a service we still have today--circulating art prints. He also laid the groundwork for a bookmobile to serve the city. The bookmobile arrived in late December 1956 before Hansen became director and was dedicated on March 13, 1957. Andrew Hansen soon realized that the needs of the community had outgrown the space of the original Carnegie library. He and the library board began efforts to find a site and secure funding for a new library building. Thus begins another chapter for the library.

Sources:
- "Bismarck Commercial Club opens new home" Bismarck Daily Tribune, October 19, 1915, p.1
- Minutes of the Bismarck City Commission, February 7, 1916
- "Capital city will have fine public institution" Bismarck Daily Tribune, February 8, 1916, p.1+
- "Bismarck library plans completed…” Bismarck Daily Tribune, April 17, 1917, p.8
- "Dedicate site for Bismarck's new structure" Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 1, 1917, p.6
- "Skeleton found on site of new public library" Bismarck Daily Tribune, May 31, 1917, p.3
- "Librarian for new public library named" Bismarck Daily Tribune, August 28, 1917, p.5
- "Capital city pays tribute to Washington" Bismarck Daily Tribune, February 22, 1918, p.1
- "Bismarck city library now fully domiciled…” Bismarck Daily Tribune, July 31, 1918, p.5
- “Library hours of Bismarck Public Library” Bismarck Daily Tribune, October 1, 1918, p.5
- “For benefit of community room…” Bismarck Daily Tribune, December 4, 1918, p.5
- “Our public library” Bismarck Daily Tribune, October 11, 1918, p.4
- Images #6-8 Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library photo collection

Chapter 4: Veterans Memorial Public Library (1963-1989)

It was very important to Andrew Hansen and the library board that the new library remain close to the downtown area. Several locations were considered:
- northwest corner of 6th Street and East Avenue A
- southeast corner of Rosser Avenue and 2nd Street
- southwest corner of Rosser Avenue and 2nd Street

The final choice was the 6th Street and East Avenue A location. The family home of Dr. Eric P. Quain was located on the site. The structure was moved in May 1962 to the 2100 block of Rosser Avenue. The library board and the county commissioners met on August 9 to open bids and awarded contracts to:
- Froeschle Sons, Inc (general contractor)
- M. Welch & Sons (mechanical)
- Dakota Appliance, Inc. (electrical)

The new building was completed in 1963 with $240,000 from a Veterans Memorial Levy in honor of the World War II and Korean War Veterans. The architectural firm was Ritterbush Brothers.
Despite what the publicity picture shows, Andrew Hansen never got to enjoy the new building. He had accepted a directorship at the Sioux City (IA) Public Library and left Bismarck before the move from the Carnegie building to the new Veterans Memorial Public Library occurred in June 1963. And how did they move the books? Betty Mills, a library board member during this time, remembers the parade of staff members and volunteers pushing carts up and down 6th Street. The "official" opening of the Veterans Memorial Public Library was set for October 20.

Hansen was succeeded by Richard E. Miller. Other directors during this period were:
- Richard J. Wolfert
- James L. Dertien
- Thomas T. Jones.

Wolfert was forced to terminate the library’s bookmobile services effective August 1969 due to severe cutbacks in federal grant support. The bookmobile was sold to a private citizen for $900. Wolfert initiated Saturday hours and the use of the Library of Congress classification system. Bismarck Public Library also became a designated depository for federal publications. Wolfert left the library to assume the State Librarian position in late 1969.

The new director was James L. Dertien. He resumed use of the Dewey Decimal System to organize books and other materials in the library. Dertien was active in various professional organizations including the North Dakota Library Association. During his time as director, and in anticipation of expansion, the library board in the early 1970s began purchasing property on the library’s block as it became available. Dertien also began discussions for a joint city/county library unit.

Jones and other key community leaders as well as county residents worked to reinstate and secure future county bookmobile services. He also recognized that the city was rapidly growing and that demands for more services required more space than the current building offered. In 1979 the library board initiated a lengthy planning process to identify needs for an expanded facility.

The future of the original Carnegie Library was not as promising. The building housed the Municipal Court after the library collection had been moved to the new location on Avenue A. Time ran out for the city’s Carnegie Library on March 18, 1980 when the structure was demolished. The neighboring original fire hall and police station soon met the same fate.
Chapter 5: Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library (1989 to present)

In 1987, Bismarck city sales tax was used as collateral for bonds which were sold to fund a 70,000 square feet facility which included the 1963 building. The bonding for the new Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library was $3.9 million. The building was built in three phases. Phase I (main library) was completed in March 1989. Phase II (meeting rooms) was completed in the spring of 1990. The first two phases were designed by architect Arnold L. Hanson. Phase III constituted the lower level which was designed by architect Warren Tvenge. This phase was completed in December 1997.

Construction began on the library's coffee shop in late 2006. The Library Foundation Inc., Friends of the Bismarck Public Library and a loan from the City of Bismarck provided the funding needed to make the coffee shop a reality. It opened for business in late 2007.

Matt and Sandy McMerty are the current owners. Their dream was to establish a business that could support a successful working environment for their son, who has Down syndrome, and others in the community with unique talents. They chose to name the shop The Gifted Bean Coffee House "where they believe...Every "Bean" is Special."

The Gifted Bean's menu includes coffee and specialty coffee drinks, teas and smoothies along with hot and cold sandwiches, baked goods and sweet treats. Warm conversation, free Wi-Fi and a friendly atmosphere have made this coffee house a popular destination.

An extensive remodel of the Children’s Area was completed in 2009 and funded entirely by over $600,000 in individual donations. No tax dollars were used. The sky mural in the center of the space was done by Ric Sprynczynatyk. Staff member Gwyn Ridenhour created the playful murals in the story room. The panel murals just below the ceiling area were painted by Leon Basler.
Jones retired in May 2011 after almost 36 years as library director. His replacement was Kristi D. Harms followed by Mary Jane Schmaltz. Christine Kujawa assumed leadership in May 2014 and is the current library director.

The addition of a teen center in the northeast corner of the main level was completed and opened for use in early 2017. A collaborative effort between Youth Services staff, members of the teen advisory group, and the architect resulted in a cozy, teen-friendly space that has become a popular destination for our teen library users. "Headquarters" was the name chosen by the teen advisory group for their area. Teenagers gather daily to read, study, do homework, play games with friends, attend teen events and engage their minds with creative activities.

The area is open for walk-in use during posted hours. During regular library hours when walk-in times are not available, the area is available for individual or group study by teens in grades 6-12 by accessing a key from the adult Information Desk.

On April 17 the North Dakota State Library awarded the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library the "2017 North Dakota Star Library Award" for going above and beyond with the service they provide to their community. Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library was compared to other libraries in North Dakota with similar operating expenditures and population. They ranked in the top three libraries of their category. The awards were given based on circulation of collection, hours open to the public, program attendance, computer and Wi-Fi usage, and the percentage of North Dakota Library Coordinating Council Standards for Public Libraries met.

Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library is the #1 ranked public library in North Dakota for hours open to the public, program attendance, public computer usage, and library card holders. The library’s outreach branches, Burleigh County Bookmobile and Bismarck Mobile Library, are ranked #1 in North Dakota for hours available to the public and total number of stops made annually.

Chapter 6: Bookmobile and Mobile Library Outreach Services
Thomas laid the groundwork for the library’s first bookmobile which provided city-wide service. The bookmobile arrived in late December 1956 and was officially dedicated in March 1957 shortly after Andrew Hansen’s arrival. At this particular time, county residents did not pay taxes for library service and special federal grant monies had allowed the library to provide free service to them. These monies steadily declined through the 1960s. In August 1969 Wolfert was forced to terminate service, bookmobile staff were assigned different duties, and the bookmobile was sold.

Jones became director in 1975 and one of his first hurdles was the reinstatement of fully-funded bookmobile services. He and a well-organized committee of community leaders along with determined county residents initiated a petition drive. According to the law at this time, all that was needed to require the county commission to authorize service was 1,583 signatures. Two county commissioners were critical of the drive. One stated that "he knew several instances in which people didn't know what they were signing. Some…thought the petition would just get the issue on the ballot, not to require the commission to contract service." Another said that "he hopes the drive fails because he doesn't feel everyone in the county should have to pay a tax for a library they may not use just because some residents don't want to pay for a library card."

The library had been offering free county bookmobile service, temporarily funded by a federal grant under Title I of the Library Services and Construction Act, since December 2, 1975. Supporters were successful with both the petition drive and a separate campaign to increase the mill levy from 4 mills to 6 mills. These victories secured the future of that vital county service.

The library has continued to be one of the most visited public spaces in the city. Unfortunately, there are individuals living in Bismarck who are not physically able to get to the library on their own. While our bookmobile concentrates the majority of its time in rural areas of the county, there is also a need to provide library service to those individuals within the city of Bismarck.

Thanks to generosity of Kupper-Chevrolet, the library started local outreach service in December 2016 with a new Mobile Library to ensure that library service is available throughout all of Bismarck and Burleigh County. This sponsorship makes it possible for the library to continue outreach services to:

- assisted living centers, which will ensure personal enrichment opportunities to the older adults in our community
- preschools, which will ensure that the youth in our community have reading opportunities, and the importance of literacy will be promoted at an early age
- rural Burleigh County, as this new service within the city resulted in opportunities for increased bookmobile service in the rural areas of the county

Under Wraps Graphics designed and applied the vehicle graphics at no charge. The Friends of the Bismarck Public Library agreed to fund the fuel and auto insurance costs. The library is grateful for the community support it has received in starting this much needed service. It is a testament to the overwhelming support of our local businesses and citizens for the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library and the services it provides for our community.

**Source:**
- Media Advisory dated November 21, 2016
Chapter 7: For the Love of Libraries: The Library Foundation and Friends of the Library

Our library owes its success to many things: stellar leadership and staff, amazing customer service in step with the needs of the community and societal trends, and supportive and enthusiastic users. This institution has thrived and grown far beyond its humble beginnings, and two independent partners have played a large role in that growth.

The Library Foundation, Inc. was established in 1975 by Murray and William P. Pearce as a nonprofit organization to provide support and recognition to the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library.

In 1976, the Library Foundation gave the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library $1,500 to establish the McNaughton Book Plan to increase the available copies of high demand titles, which arrived "pre-processed, with catalog cards, etc.," to speed preparation for public use. In 1977, the Foundation sponsored a Book Fair, a day-long joint effort with Saks News, Inc. In 1978, a new upright Baldwin piano was purchased for the meeting room. Film programs and children's events were often underwritten during the next few years.

From 1987 to 1990, the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library was expanded from 16,000 to over 70,000 square feet, and the lower level public meeting rooms were finished. During this period, the Library Foundation assisted in raising more than $200,000 to furnish and complete the facility.

Through the vision and leadership of Dr. Richard Timmins in the mid 1990s, the Foundation Board began meeting monthly to more actively grow and develop support for the library. In 2001, the Library Foundation undertook the first major initiative to build an endowment, hiring consultant assistance from American City Bureau in Chicago.


While basic library services are supported by tax revenue, the enhanced services that make the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library a regional leader are realized through gifts to The Library Foundation. Those enhanced services include, but are not limited to, over 50 computers for public use, collections of rare books and large-print books, an expanding collection of CDs and DVDs, and books and equipment for the Youth Services section.

Gifts to the Library Foundation come from private individuals, businesses and corporations through annual gifts, grants and planned gifts. The Endowment Fund reached $850,000 in 2006 and $1.2 million in 2014.

The Library Foundation board and staff are grateful for the continued generosity of the hundreds of contributors who value the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library and who share the vision of ensuring that its resource will remain available for people of all walks of life.

The Foundation spearheaded fundraising for the coffee shop in 2007, the upgraded Children's Library and Story Room ($650,000) in 2009, and the upgraded teen Headquarters ($430,000) in 2017.
The Friends of the Bismarck Public Library was initially organized in 1961. According to an early organizational constitution, their purpose was "to widen community interest and participation in the library, and to increase its scope and services." In the early years they sponsored many story hours using volunteer story tellers. Special programs for children were organized. These events included annual book fairs and antique toy shows. The organization also donated reference sets such as the *World Book Encyclopedia*. They purchased a microfilm reader and book charger. Their book club called "The Book Thing" was very popular and met the last Monday of the month. The organization became inactive in the mid-1970s and its funds were absorbed into the accounts of the newly formed Library Foundation, Inc.

Since 1992, when the Friends organization was 'resurrected,' the library has continued to rely on their volunteer help and financial assistance. The organization today remains "committed to increasing public awareness and use of the library through cultural, educational, and social activities." They continue to raise funds to "supplement and enhance library programs and services." Examples of their support include the Great Books Discussion Group, the Little Free Library program, the ice cream social, author visits, musical programs, Rough Rider Industry furniture, AV equipment, defibrillator, and the self-checkout machine.

The primary fundraiser continues to be the book sale. In 1991 the library contracted with the American Association of University Women to jointly hold the annual used book sale. The library provided the space and collection point for the books. Within two years the Friends became organized and stepped forward to become equal partners with AAUW.

The last sale the two organizations held jointly was in March 2004. Since then the Friends have had the sole responsibility. In 2005 the book sale became a semi-annual event due to popular demand.
and generous ongoing donations of books by the community. The book sales are held in March and October, and the revenue figures for each sale speak to the event’s popularity with area booklovers. The library extends a heartfelt “thank you” to our dedicated Friends organization for the many years of generous support.

Current board members of the Friends of the Bismarck Public Library:

Officers:
- Jennifer Bandy (President)
- Dale Wetzel (Vice President)
- Michael Weisbeck (Treasurer)
- Donald Allen (Membership Director)

Directors:
- Darlene Faber
- Barb Handy-Marchello
- Michaelanne Jones
- Carolyn Twingley

Sources:
- "Library supporters seek new officers", Morning Pioneer, July 14, 1974, p.15
- The Friends of the Veterans Memorial Library letter dated April 20, 1968
- Constitution of the Friends of the Veterans Memorial Public Library, undated

Chapter 8: Leadership and Key Players: Past and Present

1. Library Directors 1917-present with dates of service and brief biographies:

Florence Davis (November 1917-July 1925):

Florence Harriet Brennan was born October 26, 1868 in Merrickville, Ontario, the daughter of Edward and Joanna Branick Brennan. She came to Pembina County, Dakota Territory in 1880 along with her parents and five brothers and sisters.

She attended school at Pembina and Bathgate, Pembina County and secured a teacher’s certificate in 1888 to teach near Cavalier. Later that same year, she took the elementary school course at the University of North Dakota and then continued her rural school teaching near Hamilton and Tyner until 1893 when she married Allen Baldwin at Bathgate. They had one child, Elaine born in May 1894. Allen Baldwin died July 1, 1895, presumably of tuberculosis.

She later married Larimore lawyer, Albert A. Davis, formerly of Bismarck, on October 12, 1908, in the Governor’s Mansion. They had one child, Brennan, born July 8, 1912. After the death of her second husband she and her son moved to St. Thomas and lived with her sister, Amelia. In 1913, Florence, her son, and her mother moved to Grand Forks and lived with Florence’s daughter until Florence graduated from UND in 1916. She then attended the University of Wisconsin library school and in 1917 became the first librarian of the Bismarck Public Library. In 1925 she became the librarian at the North Dakota State Historical Society and remained there until 1949 when she retired. She then made her home with her daughter, Elaine, in Norfolk, VA. Florence died on March 8, 1958 in Richmond, VA.

Sources:
- Florence H. Davis Papers (Elwyn B. Robinson Dept. of Special Collections; ID: OGLMC 1197—UND Chester Fritz Library)
- Bismarck Tribune, August 28, 1917, p.5
Pauline Rich (September 1925-August 1927):

Miss Rich was a graduate of Wellesley College and for six years was on the editorial staff of H. W. Wilson Publishing Company of New York. For three years she was secretary to the Superintendent of Schools at Billings, MT. Pauline graduated from the University of Wisconsin Library School in June 1926 and soon after accepted the librarian position at the Bismarck Public Library. She resigned in August 1927 after accepting a similar position with the Eastern Montana Normal School in Billings, MT.

The University of Montana-Billings has a scholarship in honor of Miss Rich. The Pauline H. Rich Memorial Endowed Scholarship award is $1,150 and the applicant has to be a Montana resident pursuing an English major. Preference is given to student with an interest in Literary Arts or Library Science. Pauline Rich passed away on May 8, 1981.

Sources:
- Bismarck Tribune, April 22, 1926, p.1
- Montana Memory Project (File name: The Rimrock_1928 10)
- Find a Grave (www.findagrave.com)
- Family Search https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JLYG-R4Q

Helen Kennedy (September 1927-November 1928):

Miss Kennedy was born June 15, 1903 in Belt, MT which is near Great Falls. She was a graduate of the University of Montana with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Library Science. She had had two years of experience in the university library and also had been the first assistant in the public library at Billings, MT. After she left her position in Bismarck, she returned to Montana.

Helen married Robert Medley Waters in Great Falls, MT on January 14, 1929. The couple resided in Billings, MT their entire married life. Their daughter, Jean, was born on April 27, 1936. Helen Kennedy Waters passed away December 27, 2000.

Sources:
- Bismarck Tribune, August 19, 1927, p.5
- Bismarck Tribune, November 14, 1928, p.5
- Montana Obituary and Death Notice Archive, p.133 (www.genlookup.com/mt/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/133)
- The Sentinel 1925(University of Montana), p.45 (http://scholarworks.umt.edu/sentinel/51/)

Alice Ruth King (November 1928-August 1936):

Miss King was born in Montana on April 20, 1889. She was a graduate in library science from the University of Syracuse and had served in the New York Public Library and at the Northern Normal and Industrial School at Aberdeen, SD. She had also been the director of the juvenile department of the Butte Free Public Library and the librarian at the Butte High School and Cloquet Public Library (MN). King became engaged to Oliver Brooks Hoskins in late July 1936 and resigned from her Bismarck Public Library position. They were married in Washington on August 22, 1936. Ruth died in California on January 29, 1972 and is buried next to her husband in St. Mary’s Cemetery in Bismarck.

Sources:
- Bismarck Tribune, November 14, 1918, p.5
- Northern State University Archives
- California Death Index, 1940-1997 (via FamilySearch website)
- Montana Butte Standard, September 1, 1936, p.7
Ellen B. Lawin (August 1936-May 1938):
Miss Lawin was born in Minnesota on February 13, 1896. (Some sources list year as 1897). She came to Bismarck from Sumner, WA where she had been director of the public library since August 1933. Lawin received her degree from Mankato (MN) Teachers College and later studied at the Universities of Wisconsin and Iowa. In June 1932 she graduated from the University of Minnesota with the degree of Bachelor of Science in library science. Her first library position was in St. Paul where she was employed for 1½ years. Ellen then served as assistant librarian for two years at the International Falls Public Library and then became librarian, a position she held from 1927-1930. She resigned her position in Bismarck due to poor health and returned to Tacoma, WA. Ellen died on October 22, 1938.

Sources:
- Bismarck Tribune, July 23, 1936, p.17
- Bismarck Tribune, August 1, 1938, p.5
- Sumner (WA) Museum Archives
- Ancestry Library Edition
  (https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/85741422/person/280041076366/story)
- Washington State Death Certificate Index 1907-1960

Erana M. Stadler (August 1938-May 1951):
Miss Stadler was born in Oconomowoc, WI on October 13, 1908. Erana received her library training at the University of Wisconsin, where she also received a Bachelor of Philosophy degree. She had been assistant librarian in conjunction with holding the position of children’s librarian at West Allis, WI for two years. During her time in Bismarck, she served as president of the local branch of the American Association of University Women, the Bismarck Library Circle, and the North Dakota Library Association. After leaving Bismarck, she worked in the Great Falls (MT) Public Library, Owatonna (MN) Public Library, and Fergus Falls (MN) Public Library. Stadler also served on the American Library Association Executive Board from 1959-63 and was president of the Minnesota Library Association. She received the Librarian of the Year Award from the Minnesota Library Association in 1956. Stadler married Willard J. Donahue on September 12, 1963. Erana Stadler Donahue died on June 21, 1971.

Sources:
- Bismarck Tribune, August 1, 1938, p.5
- Bismarck Tribune, May 3, 1951, p.13
- Social Security Death Index (via Ancestry Library Edition)
- Wisconsin Badger, 1932, p.111 (http://images.library.wisc.edu/UW/EFacs/UWYearBks/1932v02/M/0112.jpg)

Robert E. Thomas (July 1951-October 20, 1956):
Thomas was born November 8, 1920 in Racine, WI. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1950 and received his Master of Arts degree in library science in 1951. Robert worked at the Racine (WI) Public Library for five years and was also employed at the Madison library. Thomas served during World War II in the south and central Pacific areas and Japan. Robert left Bismarck for a similar position in Hutchinson, KS from 1956-60. He also was the director of the Salt Lake City Public Library (1960-69) and Ramapo-Catskill Public Library System in Middletown, NY (1969-72). Thomas died in Middletown after a brief illness on January 17, 1972.
Andrew Hansen (January 1957-October 1963):
Hansen was born in Storm Lake, IA on March 25, 1929. He attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha and obtained his master's degree in library science from the University of Minnesota. Hansen served in the U.S. Air Force from 1951-1955 in Wiesbaden, Germany. His efforts were instrumental in bringing a new library building to Bismarck. Unfortunately, Hansen never got to enjoy the fruits of his labor. Andrew had accepted a directorship at the Sioux City (IA) Public Library and left Bismarck before the move from the Carnegie building to the new Veterans Memorial Public Library occurred. Hansen was a faculty member at the University of Iowa. He also served 23 years as the executive director of Reference and Adult Services Division of the American Library Association. Hansen worked part-time in his retirement at the Wilmette Public Library. Hansen died January 15, 2015.

Richard E. Miller (June 1964-November 22, 1966):
Miller was born October 1, 1931 in New Haven, CT. He received his B.S. degree in Library Science from Southern Connecticut State College and was awarded his master's degree in library science from the University of Southern California. Miller was on active duty during the Korean War serving with the United States Air Force from 1952-1956. His early experience was as librarian of the Aerospace Corporation in San Bernardino and as branch librarian and audiovisual director of the San Bernardino Public Library. After he left Bismarck, he was the director at the Port Angeles (WA) Public Library from 1966-70, the Arcadia (CA) Public Library from 1970-78, and the Oshkosh (WI) Public Library from 1970 through the early 1980s. Miller spent his last years in the Arlington, TX area and passed away April 5, 2012. He is buried in the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery.

Richard J. Wolfert (May 1967-October 1969):
Wolfert was born in Chicago, IL on October 18, 1929. He earned a master's degree in library science from the University of Chicago and served in various libraries in Chicago and Racine and Madison, WI. He left the directorship at Bismarck Public Library in 1969 to become the North Dakota State Librarian, a position he held until 1981. His later years were spent in Boulder, CO and Fargo, ND. Wolfert died November 25, 2013 at Sanford Health in Fargo.
Dertien was born in Kearney, NE on December 14, 1942. He received his master's degree in library science from the University of Pittsburgh. Prior to assuming the directorship in Bismarck, he served as head librarian at the Carnegie Library in Mitchell, SD and at the Sioux Falls College Library. He resigned his position at Bismarck to accept a directorship at the public library in Bellevue, NE. The remaining years of his career was as director of the Siouxland Public Library System in Sioux Falls, SD. He is now actively enjoying a well-deserved retirement.

Sources:
- Overtones (newsletter from the Nebraska Library Commission), January 1986
- Country School Legacy, January 1981

Thomas T. Jones (November 1975-May 2011):
Jones assumed directorship of the library in November 1975. He came to us from Cuyahoga County Public Library, a suburb of Cleveland, OH, where he was a branch manager. Jones was instrumental in tripling the size of the library from 16,000 square feet to over 70,000 square feet. Other career highlights: state aid for public libraries (1983), Mountain Plains Library Association’s Distinguished Service Award (1983), computerized circulation system (1984), North Dakota Library Association’s Librarian of the Year (1999), and completely renovated children’s area (2009).

Source:
- Library Connections, v.7 (2), April-May-June 2011, p.1+

Kristi D. Harms (June 2011-April 2013):
Harms received her master’s degree in library science from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Prior to the directorship at Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library, Harms served as director of Switzerland County Public Library and director of Jefferson County Public Library, both in Indiana. She resigned from her position at Bismarck Public Library to accept a regional directorship at Northwest Regional Library System in Thief River Falls, MN.

Source:
- Library Connections, v.7(3), July-August-September 2011, p.1
Mary Jane Schmaltz (May 2013-April 2014):
Schmaltz started employment in 1971 as the Children’s Librarian and was later promoted to Assistant Library Director. In 2013, she was promoted to Library Director. In 1992, Schmaltz was responsible for “resurrecting” the Friends of the Library and served as its Library Staff Representative until she was named Library Director. She earned a master’s degree in library science from George Peabody - Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN.

Christine Kujawa (May 2014-present):
Kujawa received her master’s degree in library science from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and her master’s degree in management from the University of Mary. She started employment in 2003 as the Head of Circulation and was promoted to Assistant Library Director in 2013. A year later, she was promoted to Library Director.

Source:
- Library Connections, v.9(1), January-February-March 2013, p.1

2. First library board and Carnegie Library architect:

Colonel Clarence B. Little:
Born: November 18, 1857 in Pembroke, NH
Died: September 25, 1941 in St. Paul, MN

Little served in the North Dakota Senate from 1889-1908 and as president pro tempore in 1897. Together with E. A. Hughes he helped build the Provident Life building in downtown Bismarck and served as president of the First National Bank.

He graduated from Dartmouth College and Harvard Law School and began practicing law in 1883. While en route to Seattle, Little stopped in Bismarck and fell in love with the frontier town and decided to remain. In 1884 he was elected judge of the Burleigh County probate court. Little became friends with Richard B. Mellon, a local banker, who introduced him to the banking industry.

Little married his first wife, Caroline, in Boston on November 24, 1885. She died in 1933. He married Irene Shepard in 1938. He had two children with Caroline (George P. and Viroque Mabel).

Sources:
- State Historical Society of North Dakota (Item # 00029-141)
- Bismarck Diocese website

George F. Will:
Born: November 8, 1884 in Bismarck, D.T.
Died: October 3, 1955 in Bismarck, ND

Will was known as an archaeologist, anthropologist, ethnologist, naturalist, nurseryman, seed man and historian. He graduated from Bismarck High School in 1902 and then attended Harvard. He returned to Bismarck to work in his father’s seed business. George served on the Bismarck School Board for 30 years and was on the Bismarck Zoning Board and the State Park Commission. He was a member of the Rotary, Sons of the American Revolution, American Association of Advanced Sciences, American Anthropological Association, Society
for American Archaeology, and the American Newcomer Society. Will also served as president of the State Historical Society of North Dakota from 1947 until his death in 1955. He received an honorary doctorate from the N.D. Agricultural College in 1940.

Will married Katherine Sterrett on July 4, 1908 and had one daughter, Margaret. On June 15, 1924, he married Elvira Kangas and together they had three children: George Francis Jr., Elvira Susanna, and Oscar Henry Will Jr.

Sources:
- Bismarck Tribune, October 5, 1955
- North Dakota Studies website (http://ndstudies.gov/gr8/content/unit-iii-waves-development-1861-1920/lesson-3-building-communities/topic-7-telling-our-story/section-9-george-francis-will-archeologist);
- Will Family manuscript collection #10190 (http://history.nd.gov/archives/manuscripts/inventory/10190.html)
- State Historical Society of North Dakota (Item # A2335-2)

Mrs. Agatha Patterson:

Born: December 7, 1866 in Wabasha, MN
Died: November 7, 1923 in Bismarck, ND

She married Edward G. Patterson in St. Paul on December 14, 1887. Their only child, Sadie May, died in infancy on August 20, 1889.

Mrs. Patterson was active in social and civic circles and in the management of the Patterson hotel properties. She served as postmistress in Bismarck from 1896-1915. Agatha was quietly active in charitable work. She nursed, fed and clothed the poor of the city in her home during the Panic of 1893.

Sources:
- State Historical Society of North Dakota (Item # 2015-P-008-0002)
- Bismarck Tribune, November 7, 1923

Otto Holta:

Born: March 3, 1866 in Oslo, Norway
Died: February 4, 1949 in Bismarck, ND

Holta arrived in the U.S. in October 1885 and attended the University of Minnesota. He was a resident of Bismarck for 51 years at time of death. Otto was employed as a salesman with the Janney, Semple, Hill & Co. for 62 years. He also served on the Bismarck School Board and was an honorary life member of the Elks Lodge and a charter member of the U.C.T.

Sources:
- Bismarck Tribune, February 5, 1949

Clyde L. Young:

Born: June 25, 1877 in Mogadore, OH
Died: June 11, 1967 in Bismarck, ND

Young attended the University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, and the University of North Dakota. He served as superintendent of schools at St. John and Rolla, ND and Evart, MI. Young was admitted to the N.D. Bar in 1906 and practiced law in Lansford, ND and Bismarck.

"Father of the Bismarck Public Library" was a most appropriate title for Young. He served continuously on the
library board from 1916 until 1962 when he retired. Other positions included assistant attorney general, city attorney, general counsel of Provident Life Insurance Company from 1916-1962, Bismarck Zoning Commission president in 1923, and member of the N.D. Judicial Council from 1927-1930. He also was a member of the Rotary Club and president of the Bismarck Association of Commerce and of the Bismarck-Mandan Executives Club.

Clyde married Rosa Christie on August 6, 1902. She died on April 11, 1962. Their only child, John C. Young, was born October 10, 1903 and died October 29, 1923.

Sources:
- Bismarck Tribune, June 12, 1967
- Find a Grave (www.findagrave.com)
- State Historical Society of North Dakota (Item # 00029-115)

Frederick W. Keith:
Born: November 13, 1878 in Mt. Vernon, Iowa
Died: April 30, 1946 in San Diego, CA (some sources claim 1954 in Chicago)

He attended Cornell College in Mt. Vernon and was also an art professor for a time at Simpson College in Indianola, IA. He married Eula Goodhue on January 15, 1902 in Indianola and had three children, Frederick G., Dorothy, and Charles.

Other buildings in the state that Keith designed independently or in partnership with William F. Kurke included: Henry H. Steele house (103 West Avenue B, Bismarck), Armory and School of Law (UND, Grand Forks), Liberty Memorial Building (604 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck), Stickney and May Halls (Dickinson State University, Dickinson), Morrill Hall (NDSU, Fargo), and Leach Public Library (417 2nd Avenue North, Wahpeton).

Sources:
Various genealogy collections via Ancestry Library Edition
Manuscripts by Subject-Art/Architecture (http://www.history.nd.gov/archives/manuscripts/arts.html)

3. Full time library staff as of April 2017:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christine Kujawa</td>
<td>Library Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Jacobs</td>
<td>Assistant Library Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Strong</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vern Mastel</td>
<td>Technology Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Waldera</td>
<td>Head of Information Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Hovland</td>
<td>Head of Circulation Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Needham</td>
<td>Circulation Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lora Rose</td>
<td>Head of Technical Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Matthews</td>
<td>Head of Interlibrary Loan; Adult Programming Coord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy Hamre</td>
<td>Interlibrary Loan Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traci Juhala</td>
<td>Head of Youth Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jana Maher</td>
<td>Children's Programming Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Rysavy</td>
<td>Teen Programming Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeliAnn McDonald</td>
<td>Head of Bookmobile Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vickie Schmidt</td>
<td>Bookmobile Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Bryntesen</td>
<td>Head of Maintenance Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Library board members as of April 2017:

Left to right:
- Michael Fladeland
- Pat Grantier (Vice President)
- Michael Schaff
- Joyce Hinman (President)
- Bob Bartosh