

NEWTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

MISSION STATEMENT

To be a cornerstone in the lifelong learning process for each member of the Newton community and a key component in Newton's education system. NPL delivers equal access and opportunities for all.

VISION STATEMENT

Newton Public Library is a community pillar of education, advancing the economy and quality of life. The 21st Century Newton Public Library is the family room of the community, alive with people from all walks of life engaging in self-directed learning, research, enlightening experiences, and enjoyment through books, e-resources and other materials. The Library serves as a place that provides assistance and instruction to its community members. The impact of a strong library in the community strengthens the lifestyle and education of individuals, families, businesses, and government.

HISTORY OF THE NEWTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Miss Clara Rand of Chicago, a teacher in the city schools, promoted the idea of a library for Newton in the late 1870's. The "Ben Franklin Library", a semi-private affair, was established and later the Newton Public Library Association was organized with a membership of \$1.00 per year. In 1886, at a special election, the citizens voted to establish and support the Newton Free Library.

The site at 2nd and Main was the gift of E.C. Llewellyn and was built by a gift of \$15,000.00 from Andrew Carnegie. The City guaranteed at that time the necessary \$1,500.00 yearly maintenance. On March 14, 1904, the Newton Free Library held an open house in their new building. It was built to serve a population of 8,000 and today is the oldest public building in town. In 1904, it became a member of the American Library Association. With periodic remodeling, the Carnegie Library served the needs of the community for many years.

On April 19, 1966, the City Commission voted to set aside one mill each year to accumulate funds to build a new library. The levy was for 10 years, or until \$275,000.00 was accumulated. An additional grant of \$53,341.00 in LSCA Title II funds became available. On January 27, 1972, bids were awarded for construction of a new building at the corner of 7th and Oak.

The legal name of the library was changed on January 17, 1973, from the Newton Free Library to the Newton Public Library.

Transfer from the old Carnegie Library at the corner of 2nd and Main was made to the Newton Public Library in February 1973, and a Ribbon Cutting - Open House was held on April 1, 1973.

In 1980, using \$185,000 provided by Florence Bessmer, a wing for children called The Florence Bessmer Addition for Children was added. The Florence Bessmer Foundation began providing annual enhancement funds in 1983, primarily for Children's Services.

A locally developed automated circulation system was initiated in 1981 and the automated catalog was added in 1984 for use within the Library.

In 1986, for the Centennial Anniversary, Alden Allbaugh wrote a comprehensive history of the Library entitled *The Newton Public Library 100 Year History 1886 - 1986*. The Second Century Endowment Foundation was incorporated to provide funds for enhancement of Adult Services.

As the Children's Department collections and services continued to expand, the Junior collection was relocated to the lower level in 1988 while the Children's collection expanded in the Bessmer Addition.

In 1995, the Adult Department public service and office areas were remodeled as the first steps in implementation of the new Dynix library system and to provide additional staff work area. The Dynix system became available for public use in June 1997. The Dynix system was replaced in 2004 by the new Horizon platform and the public access Horizon Information Portal, which included upgrading from Wyse 150 terminals to PCs at the public service and patron use stations. The text based public catalog was replaced with additional graphics and enhanced information about items in the NPL collections.

Because of space constraints, the lower level was remodeled to serve as the joint Youth Services Area in 1998. The ribbon cutting was held on June 11, 1998. The Bessmer Addition was divided to provide a larger meeting room and storage area.

In 1999, the Library continued to expand beyond its walls when the NPL catalog and other databases became accessible through the NPL website. The NPL wireless network and video conferencing system were installed on Sept. 27, 2006, the 120th anniversary of Newton Public Library. The Helen E. Claassen Mobile Laptop Lab was implemented in May 2008 to provide hands-on class sessions for the public and expand teen programming opportunities. In 2009, the NPL integrated library system was migrated from the SirsiDynix Horizon ILS to Polaris Library System.

In 2006, the Newton Public Library Board, staff and the community began a planning process. Consultants conducted NPL services and facility needs assessments in 2006 and 2008. That led to architects being hired September 2009 to

review and update the assessments with the public and to develop a concept design for the NPL facility. The concept design for a new facility was presented to the City Commission and in public forums in February 2010.

Newton Public Library celebrated its 125th anniversary on September 27, 2011, kicking off a year of special activities and programs. Discussions continued about plans for the future and for the library facility.

Early on April 3, 2015, 60% of the roof over the original 1972 library building, vents and computer room air conditioning unit were blown off during a storm. NPL Board, staff and City crews worked many hours to minimize the water damage to the Adult Services nonfiction and Young Adult collections. NPL was closed to the public April 3-7, with full services restored April 13 - minus some books sent for restoration. Work on facility restoration and reconstruction projects continued throughout most of 2015 and some into 2016. Replacement of the original roof was completed April 23, 2015, but water leaks through the roof, windows and foundation continue to be an issue. Various other facility issues appear as the building ages. Most recently in 2017 a section of the aged sewer line cracked open between the two floors. Restoration of the staff break room was completed in January 2018.

The Library Board continued to inform the City Commission about library service and facility needs and in 2017 presented the Re-Envisioning Newton Public Library study findings. The City Manager, with approval of the City Commission in 2018, formed a community task force to help develop a vision for the future of community library services in Newton. July 2019, the City Commission approved requesting proposals for a multi-faceted library project.

NPL staff collaborates with other libraries, community organizations and local experts to provide a variety of resources, programs and services for the public. The public attends numerous classes, workshops, programs and one-on-one technology help sessions. Popular ongoing programs include: StoryTimes for the public and childcare agencies; summer reading programs; monthly book discussions, genealogy/local history, Fourth Tuesday Photography, and tech talk classes; and, weekly Teen GameZone & Crafts.

Special collections include: Newton area and Kansas resources; genealogy collection with emphasis on northeast USA; WPA period dolls; Ray Wing Rock & Sphere collection; Newton newspapers; local cemetery records; and, local oral history with digital access at https://digitalsckls.info/sckls_dli. Newton Public Library card holders have access at <https://www.newtonplks.org/> to a variety of online resources 24/7, which continues to expand.

Newton Public Library is the place *where possibilities begin...*