

Our Future

The Library's past is parent to its future. We will continue to rely on an appropriation from the City, as well as reimbursement from the County. Both the Endowment Fund and ongoing donations will play a critical role in making the Library, and the community we serve, something special. The involvement of patrons, Board members and community organizations in developing and supporting our programs remains crucial.

There is much that will change. We must find our way in a new and changing information ecology. The program, collection and building must be reshaped to meet new community needs. Our staff must develop fresh skills and a new focus. We must create and renew partnerships with community educational, business and cultural organizations. These are challenges that we embrace.

In building our future, we are mindful of the words of Mrs. Milton Schneider in her eulogy for Mary McMillan Burt.

May the library reflect her generosity and vision,
her warmth and concern for human needs,
her flexibility and capacity for growth.
May it serve to encourage and liberate others -
to add beauty and depth to the lives of others.



125 Years of Public Library Service McMillan Memorial Library



The public library of the City of Grand Rapids was founded in 1890 as the T.B. Scott Public Library. In the 125 years since then, both the City and the Library have changed their names. While much else has also changed, the Library has endured through world wars, economic dislocations and seismic changes in how people read and learn. It expanded from two rented rooms to a floor in City Hall, then to a large house and finally into a purpose built building. The Library has survived and prospered due to City appropriations and County reimbursements, generous private support from foundations and individuals and the efforts of hundreds of Board members and engaged citizens. We owe them a great debt, which we strive to repay by our present efforts.

McMillan Memorial Library
Strengthening our community through lifelong learning

- 1886 - T.B. Scott bequeaths \$5,000 for establishing and maintaining a free public library for the residents of Grand Rapids.
- 1889 - The City found space above the First National Bank, then located on Second Street. Local groups raised funds for furniture. The original Library Board was headed by J.D. Witter and they hired Grace Balderston as librarian.
- 1890 - The T.B. Scott Free Public Library opened on March 22.



**First Library
1890-1892**

- 1892 - The Library moved to the recently completed city hall at the corner of Baker and First streets, using four rooms on the second floor.



1896 - The J.D. Witter Traveling Libraries, boxed books to provide service for up to forty-nine rural stations, is endowed by Witter. This endured until 1947.

**Witter Traveling Libraries
1896-1947**

- 1900 - Centralia and Grand Rapids merge and city offices move across the river. The Library gradually took over the entire floor. The City began funding operation of the Library.

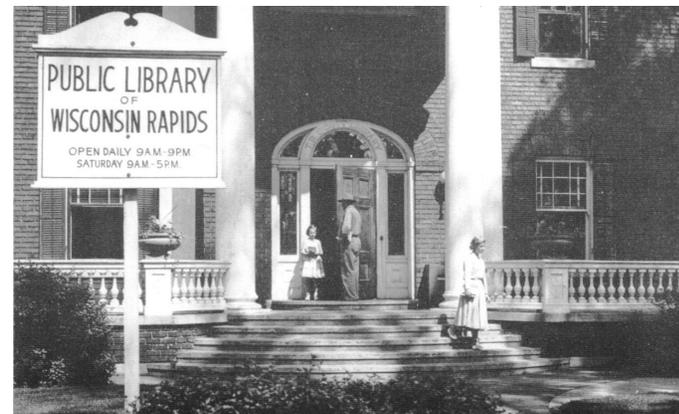
- 1905 - School room collections started for elementary schools.

- 1907 - Assisted by the Women's Federation, a children's room is created.

**Second Library
1892-1948**



- 1912 - Book station established in Nekoosa, which later develops into the Nekoosa Public Library. The Library later helps establish libraries at Arpin, Vesper and Pittsville.
- 1923 - County first partially reimburses the Library for service to rural residents.
- 1924 - West side branch established in the River Block. This operated until 1970.
- 1933 - The Library almost closes during the Great Depression.
- 1934 - Tom Taylor Books donated. Put on the Internet in 1995.
- 1941 - As the building deteriorates, the Library Board requests a new facility. WWII delays any action on the request.



Third Library 1948-1970

- 1948 - George Mead purchases the former Isaac Witter home on Third Street and donates it for library use. Opens April 19.
- 1954 - Edith Dudgeon, the first degreed librarian, hired. She served as Director until 1975.
- 1964 - Mary McMillan Burt donates \$500,000 for new library.
- 1968 - After further private donations, City appropriations and Federal grants, ground is broken for new library.
- 1970 - McMillan Memorial Library opens on May 17.
- 1974 - First county levy for library service.
- 1975 - The Library assists in the founding of Wisconsin Rapids Community Theater, then housed in the Library.
- 1979 - McMillan named Library of the Year by the Wisconsin Library Association.
- 1996 - Library joins the South Central Library System.
- 2006 - Library Commons opens. New fountain and sign.
- 2007 - County levy raised to 70% reimbursement by state law.
- 2010 - Charles & JoAnn Lester fund new entrance
- 2013 - Children's Room renovated. WoodTrust Bell Foundation Garden opened.