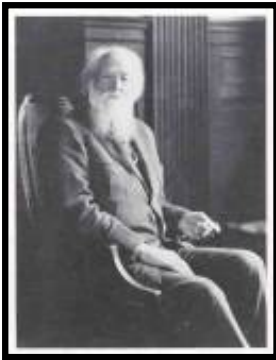


History of the Library

The history of the Millburn Free Public Library as a legally organized public institution dates from the 1930's; however, it took a determined effort to reach even that point. The following passage, written in 1958 regarding the Library and its history, is taken from Marian Meisner's **"A HISTORY OF MILLBURN TOWNSHIP"**.

"In 1938 by popular referendum, Millburn Township at last had a free public library. Many times throughout the life of the Township attempts had been made to establish a library in Millburn.



As long ago as 1873 Stewart Hartshorn had established a reading room. Later, Mrs. Hartshorn, and a group of ladies had made another effort. In the 1930's Frederick J. Clark willed his personal library to the Town as a nucleus for a library. In 1935, the Junior Service League appointed Mrs. W. S. Auchincloss Chairman of a committee to establish a reading room in the Recreation House in Taylor Park. Two thousand books were donated by citizens. The project was abandoned in 1936 for lack of help and cooperation from the public and the books were stored in the Paper Mill Playhouse. Later a meeting was held there and the Millburn Library Association was formed, supported by private subscriptions, but the Library was still not available to enough families. However, it was an important step forward for it had the effect of arousing the citizens to an awareness of the need for a free and public library.

Public-spirited citizens took up the battle and the question was at last put up to the voters in the November 1938, election, and the question was finally settled.

The first library building was located in a small house, since razed, at the intersection of Brookside Drive and Old Short Hills Road. That house had been a private home, then Cornell's butcher shop, then its ownership passed to the Township, becoming the first Library. Mrs. Shirley Hedden was one of the first librarians. She was the children's librarian and assistant to the head librarian until the resignation of Miss Frances Duck as chief librarian in 1946. Mrs. Hedden served the Library continuously from 1940 until her resignation in 1957. Miss Elizabeth Farrar succeeded Mrs. Hedden as Librarian in that year.

The first head librarian in 1938 was Margaret R. VanIngen, who was succeeded by Dorothy A. Dickie, but each served only a short time.

During the first year of its existence 23,302 books were taken out; last year, (1957) the circulation was 81,670 books. The library now houses 30,731 books, most of them acquired by purchase, but many were received as gifts also. Among the latter being the business library of Walter A. Staub, which was presented as a memorial to Mr. Staub."



Mrs. Auchincloss, the first President of the Library's Board of Trustees, was a tireless advocate on behalf of the library and drew words of support from high places, as evidenced by [this letter](#) from the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt.

As stated above, the first public library opened its doors on the corner of Old Short Hills Road and Brookside Drive in a building that had once been a butcher shop.



Over the years the Library grew and in 1952, \$97,000 was appropriated by the Township Committee to renovate a structure at the corner of Essex Street and Lackawanna Place – the original home of Congregation B'nai Israel – as a memorial library. In addition to the

Township appropriation, donors contributed another \$80,000 and in September of 1954, the doors were opened to the new Library. The building at the corner of Essex Street and Lackawanna Place remained in service until 1976 when the present Glen Avenue facility was opened.



Mayor C. Thomas Thomas and Library Board President, Arthur Spiegelman, are shown here breaking ground for the new library.

Thirty years later, the Library houses a collection in excess of 100,000 books and has substantial holdings in magazines, microfilm, compact discs, books-on-tape and on CD and DVDs. In addition, it offers high-speed Internet access at sixteen networked computers for the public as well as wireless Internet access. It maintains licenses for web-based databases that may be used only in the building, or in limited cases, at home for authenticated registered users. The 25,000+ square foot building has a seating capacity of 70 in the adult reading area and 32 in the children's services reading area. The Library provides three meeting rooms on the second floor with respective capacities of 175, 35, and 30 individuals. These are used by many township organizations for meetings and by the Library for children's story time sessions and arts & craft activities. Two small private study rooms are located on the mezzanine and are available for quiet study on a first-come/first-serve basis only – no appointments are taken. The Steinway Model "B" Piano in the auditorium was a gift of the Woman's Club of Millburn and is available for recitals at a cost of \$250 per recital.



If you would like to use one of our meeting rooms or reserve the piano, please read the policy statement on **meeting rooms** and contact the Director's Executive Assistant, Patty Giambattista - patricia@millburn.lib.nj.us - by e-mail or at 973-376-1006 (ext. 125).

Effective March 12, 2002, the Library was approved for full membership in the Bergen County cooperative Library System (BCCLS). BCCLS is a non-profit library-cooperative promoting increased access to books & other materials via a single shared automated system. Its members include all 62 public libraries in Bergen County, plus 5 in Essex, 5 in Hudson & 2 in Passaic Counties. For more information on BCCLS and its services please go to www.bccls.org.

The Library's 2007 budget is \$2,863,582 of which 94.5% will come from Township funding. State and Federal aid as well as fines & fees and generous gifts from the **Friends of the Millburn Library**

comprise other revenues. For this year, \$125,094 is budgeted for books; \$18,000 for magazines & newspapers; \$5,000 for reference databases; and \$64,000 for non-print materials such as DVDs, compact discs and books-on-tape and books-on-CD. These amounts do not include gift funding from the Friends of the Library.

A seven-member Board of Trustees governs the Library, five of whom are appointed by the Township Committee for five-year terms. The Mayor and the Superintendent (or their appointed representatives) are permanent members of the Board. The President of the Board of Trustees in 2007 is Robert Strickler and the Director of the Library is Bill Swinson.