

Public Library

History

Background

Henrico County has a population of 296,415 (2009 census) living within the county's 238 square miles (U.S.Census 2000). It is a high growth area that surrounds Richmond city on the east, north, and west sides. The library system currently has 11 public libraries located throughout the county including a Bookmobile, 4 area libraries, 5 branch libraries, and a municipal law library. These facilities house a collection of over 798,943 cataloged items that were checked out 3,782,229 times in 2010 by over 227,724 library card holders. In the past year alone, over 60,350 citizens attended our programs offered throughout the library system, including a nationally recognized ALL HENRICO READS event in the community. The library provided free meeting, conference, and study room space for over 112,696 individuals and groups. Over 178,539 people used the library's free computer workstations, in addition to 92,538 WiFi connections. Henrico's public libraries are heavily used.

But the Henrico County Public Library system is a fairly new service to the citizens of Henrico.

Establishing Henrico's Public Library System

In the mid 1960's, Henrico County approached the City of Richmond Public Library about providing library service to the county under a management contract but was turned down. Henrico needed to find another solution. To address the need for public libraries in Virginia, the State Legislature had authorized a program to help localities establish locally operated public libraries. Two options were provided at that time: 1) the locality could either provide a building and the State Library would provide a 25,000 volume collection and pay all operating expenses for two years, or 2) the locality could take a per capita cash grant and build the library system itself. Henrico County chose the second option.

In 1963, following several years of study by the Board of Supervisors and a Citizens' Committee, the voters of Henrico County approved a \$1,000,000 bond issue providing the initial capital funds to establish a library system. David Rowland, hired from the Lynchburg Public Library system as the first Henrico Chief Librarian, was considered by many to be a visionary leader who had studied the Baltimore County Public Library system's branch model, as well as their early leadership in the use of computers. The initial concept for Henrico's library was three regional, or area libraries as they are known today, supplemented by smaller community branches. The three area libraries were to be Fairfield, Lakeside, and Tuckahoe. The branch libraries were to be Varina and Sandston.

On August 24, 1966, a resolution was unanimously adopted by the Henrico's Board of Supervisors establishing a Henrico County Free Library System for the use and benefit of the residents of Henrico under the provisions of Chapter 2, Title 42, of the Code of Virginia. The Board of Supervisors appointed a Board of Five Trustees for management control of the County Library System. On December 13, 1967, the Board changed the name from the Free Library System to the Henrico County Public Library.

Fairfield, Lakeside, and Tuckahoe Area Libraries Established

The Board approved the lease of the Hechler Village Office Building located at the corner of Laburnum and Nine Mile Road for the library's administrative headquarters, as well as a branch library facility that would accommodate 15,000 volumes. Rowland submitted a proposal for the use of the building and hired his first employee, Hilda Ward as his secretary, who would remain with the library until 1998.

The Fairfield Area Public Library located at the corner of Nine Mile Road and Laburnum Avenue had four rooms holding the collection in the basement, with administrative and technical services upstairs. The library had four full-time staff and two or three part-time high school students who shelved the books. The library was open six days a week and three evenings. Story times were done in a room upstairs.

Rowland also hired a temporary employee to duplicate catalog cards from the Lynchburg Public Library. The Board of Supervisors approved purchases for 15,000 volumes for the future Brookland, Fairfield, and Tuckahoe district libraries and 10,000 volumes for Varina at a total cost of \$220,000 and \$4.00 per volume.

The Lakeside Library was established in the Brookland district in 2400 square feet of the Old Lakeside Post Office Building located at 6943 Lakeside Avenue. The facility could accommodate 13,000 volumes with seating for 44.

In the Tuckahoe district the former Vandervall School located at the corner of Pemberton and Quioccasin Roads was a proposed site, but there was concern about being able to stay there. Nonetheless, the Tuckahoe Library was established at this site.

Varina and Sandston Branch Libraries Established

On December 21, 1967, the Board of Supervisors proposed the Varina Magisterial District Library site adjacent to Varina High School on Messer Road. The library plan turned the building so it could be located at 7401 Laburnum Avenue, and they voted the establishment of the Varina Branch Library there. It was completed in December 1970, with 4400 square feet, 1600 for adults and 480 for children's. There was space for 20,000 volumes.

The original Sandston Public Library predated the Henrico County Public Library system. The Woman's Club of Sandston held a community "book social" on Feb 14, 1923. 157 books were donated and housed in a room of the public school. Oliver Sands, President of the Richmond-Fairfield Railway Company, purchased a WWI era bungalow from the U.S. Government and had it moved to the library's present location on Williamsburg

Road. The library was founded in 1923 and operated by the Sandston Women's Club. The Sandston Library at 23 East Williamsburg Road was donated to Henrico County by the Sandston Women's Club in 1967. It had 950 square feet with 502 in adult and 158 in children's. There were 12,000 volumes in the library.

Henrico County continued to grow. In 1970, the public schools in the Tuckahoe district needed additional classroom space, so the recently established Tuckahoe Public Library at the former Vandervall School shared its space with several sixth grade classes. The public library served as the school library, and the library used various classrooms for different areas of the collection.

In July of 1971, the Tuckahoe Library was relocated on Parham Road with a total square footage of 53,000 square feet that was located only on the main floor. The dedication was held on October 3, 1971, and the Tuckahoe Junior Woman's Club served 90 gallons of lemonade and 120 dozen cookies to all those who attended. Oddly enough there was no sign on Parham road until 1973 indicating this was the public library. The ground floor was completed in September of 1975.

At this time the three area libraries were open six days a week and three evenings until 9:00 p.m., Monday, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

Library Director David Rowland resigned from his position with Henrico in 1971 and Roberta Miller who had been Henrico's first head of Technical Services became the director. She stayed until 1977 when she left to start her own business. Graham Sadler succeeded Roberta.

New Fairfield and Dumbarton Area Libraries

With a growing need for additional space, in June 1976, a new Fairfield Area Library was completed at 1001 N. Laburnum Avenue with 16,000 square feet - 7056 in the adult area, 2410 in children's - with a total space for 75,000 volumes. The library's administrative headquarters was also located here with 8000 additional square feet - 2188 for offices, 2815 for mechanical, and 2406 for the Bookmobile bay and garage area.

The Brookland district's public library also needed to expand. The new library was built as an addition to the remaining cafetorium of the former Dumbarton Elementary School built in 1956 and located at Staples Mill and Penick Roads. The Lakeside Library at the Old Lakeside Post Office closed its doors on November 19, 1976, after nine years of service. Library staff from Lakeside, Fairfield, Tuckahoe, and Varina, in addition to 15 volunteers worked nights and Saturdays to move. On November 26, 1976, the Dumbarton Area Library with 22,500 square feet on 4.147 acres, opened its doors. It was the first library that had toys in the children's area. 110 new patrons registered the first two days.

Bookmobile is Added

Henrico County began to feel the need for an outreach public library service. A new bookmobile arrived in May 1977 and began full service operation on June 6 that same year. Materials were pulled from all five libraries. At that time, it served nursing homes and jail inmates.

Beginning July 1, 1977, as another form of public library outreach, quiz questions supplied by the library staff were held daily on WRFK radio morning show. There was no prize for the correct answer; the individual caller who got the first correct answer was named Scholar of the Day.

Municipal Library Opens

A very specialized library, the Municipal Library serving the courts and the county government offices, opened in 1978 with 984 square feet. A Municipal Library to serve the needs of Henrico County Government was first proposed to the County Manager in March, 1976. In late 1977, a librarian was hired and the work to build a new law collection and to consolidate dispersed County materials began. The Library opened its doors in 1979, and in October 1988, it moved to the new County Courthouse Addition to provide for its expanding collection and services.

On January 14, 1981, the Library Board of Trustees became an Advisory Board under the Library Director Graham Sadler.

North Park Branch Library Opens

The original North Park Library opened in 1985 as a 1700-square-foot double wide trailer parked in a shopping center located at the corner of Parham Road and Brook Road as a temporary library facility. Sixteen years later, the old North Park Branch Library left its trailer behind and moved into a brand new facility located at 8508 Franconia Road. It was dedicated on September 16, 2001 with 15,000 square feet that included an expanded collection and staff, expanded service hours, a computer lab that could offer computer classes to the public, two study rooms, book bins and A-framed shelving, as well as a uniquely-designed meeting room that was accessible to the community for meetings beyond the library's operating hours. The North Park trailer was eventually sold to the Pamunkey Library System for its King and Queen Branch in April of 2002.

Gayton, Innsbrook, and Glen Allen Libraries Open

With the population growing in the Tuckahoe district, the Gayton Branch Library located at 10600 Gayton Road opened in December 1988 with 12,672 square feet.

On March 28, 1989, Henrico approved a County Bond Referendum that included significant public library items - funding acquisitions totaling \$3 million for real property, construction, furnishings, equipment and materials for the Innsbrook Branch Library

located in the Three Chopt District and the Glen Allen Branch Library located in the Brookland District.

The Innsbrook Library located at 4060 Innslake Drive opened its doors in November 1992 and was to have included a business partnership that would fund the purchasing of a business library operating on the second floor of the building. This partnership never materialized as it was originally designed, so the Henrico County Public Library took over the entire facility of 17,590 square feet. Instead of focusing its collection on the various businesses in this office park, this library became another neighborhood library for families living in the area.

The Glen Allen Branch Library serving the Brookland district from its location at Staples Mill Road opened in August of 1995 with 13,000 square feet on 7.95 acres. The Glen Allen Branch Library opened in August 1995 with its distinctive design and attractive wood-accented interior. A time capsule and marker were placed at the front entrance in 1996. Glen Allen was the first Henrico County Public library to include a computer lab and to offer free computer instruction classes. In 2005, Henrico voters approved a 13,000 sq. ft. expansion, which was to double the size of the building. The Glen Allen Branch Library closed its doors on June 6, 2009, for renovation and expansion and reopened on October 25, 2010. The facility has grown from 12,000 to 25,000 square feet. This Henrico County construction project was made possible by the 2005 Henrico Bond Referendum.

New Technologies for Libraries

A major technology initiative was begun in 1997. Facilities needed upgrading and an up-to-date technology infrastructure needed to be built. One of the first tasks was the upgrading of the electrical and HVAC systems in 1998, soon followed by the installation of telecommunications infrastructure to support Internet access at all facilities. In July 1998, all library buildings had Internet access, with the installation of public Internet workstations soon to follow in March of 1999. In April 1999, classes were offered for the public in how to access and use the Internet.

Also in April 1999, Henrico County Public Library purchased and implemented a new integrated library system called SIRSI. Approximately 600,000 library items and more than 50,000 current library cards had to be rebarcoded to ensure that these were compatible with the new automated software. The cataloging module was the first to be activated in May of 1999, followed by the library acquisitions module in June. Circulation followed in July, and as of August 1999, library users could access the catalog on a network showing library users items in the collection from all libraries. Two months later, the library catalog became a web-based product so that anyone with Internet access could see Henrico's library catalog instead of only those who were using the catalog in the library buildings. Online databases could also be accessed from a remote site. This was a tremendous step towards offering library services remotely to the community.

Continuing to grow a more user-based menu of services, self check-out machines were introduced to the public in November 1999, and by 2000 nine were installed throughout

the county. These functioned similar to an express line used in businesses. Library cardholders were now able to use the new web-based catalog to find materials, reserve items online, check the status of materials or renew materials, or browse the collection by call number, all from anywhere that had access to the Internet. "Getting Started on the Web" classes were now offered by library staff members for the community.

A fully Internet-ready Bookmobile utilizing wireless technologies was implemented in January 2000. Customers could now have access to the Internet no matter where the Bookmobile visited in the County. And books and materials could be circulated live from the Bookmobile instead of having to be uploaded upon their return.

Magazines and journals were added to the online library catalog in August 2000, and ebooks were introduced to the public in January of 2001.

Now with over 180 public use computer workstations providing access to the Internet, the Library Catalog, 15 electronic resource databases, and Microsoft Office software, the library system is clearly working to implement the latest technologies to better serve its customers. The library technology support staff had to shift their focus from individual building technology maintenance to maintaining the library network that handled all staff PC's, 15 servers and a number of associated peripherals (such as printers) and services.

But with all the added technology, Henrico's library continued to focus on its core services of comprehensive resources, innovative technologies, and excellent services to enrich community life.

The Henrico County Public Library system was beginning another era of tremendous growth. With the Tuckahoe Area Library's parking lot bursting at the seams, planning for a new Tuckahoe Area Library replacement building began in 2002.

Community meetings and focus groups offered the opportunity for the current library users to recommend desirable features for their library. Expanded parking, additional computer workstations, a drive-through materials return, a computer lab, study rooms, and a café were among the suggestions.

Thanks to a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant, sixteen additional public use workstations were added to the Dumbarton, Fairfield, North Park, and Varina libraries. \

This funding boost provided special children's software programs that could now be added to the collection, as well as allowing library members to take online college courses.

To respond to the federal government's guidelines for better control of the Internet in libraries, software that provided a filtering choice for library cardholders was implemented. All Internet use now required a library card, and all children under the age of 18 were only allowed filtered access to the Internet.

With the increase in computer workstations and an ever-growing Internet population, 15,000 e-Books were added to the collection through Henrico's participation in the Library of Virginia's Infopowering Virginia database grant program.

Technology growth continued to dominate 2003. SAM (Smart Access Management) provided one of the most extensive and effective initiatives ever completed by the Library. With this software, a family-friendly public computing environment has been provided, and has upheld constitutional law by providing unfettered Internet access to adults. SAM has also provided improved self-service convenience printing services throughout the library's 220 computers, as well as the installation of account payment machines so library users could add money to their SAM accounts for printing or fines – another modern, self-service convenience for customers.

Technology Partnership with Henrico County Public Schools

Another technology convenience was added for Henrico County Public School students. With a technology initiative that provided every secondary student a laptop, Henrico's public libraries provided a wireless connectivity to the students' school network as well as the library network.

In 2004 *TrackIt* management software was added allowing Henrico's library technology staff to log computer difficulties throughout its eleven facilities and increase the efficiencies in dispatching staff to further diagnose and troubleshoot these problems.

All public computer workstations were loaded with Office 2000 including Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access. The public also now had access to the desktop publishing program Publisher, as well as Front Page for web authoring. All of these applications became available from any of the library's 220 public workstations.

Sandston Branch Library Renovations Complete

2004 saw the reopening of a larger and better equipped Sandston Branch Library that featured an expanded parking lot, a larger collection, and a new community meeting room.

In 2005 Henrico County Public Library played a major role as a community host. Following hurricane Gaston, the Dumbarton Area Library acted as a FEMA assistance site, supporting local community organizations and insurers while serving 777 victims of the storm.

One of the most significant technology improvements was the library's implementation of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) for all items in its collection. This enhancement required all materials to be rebarcoded, but it ensured more rapid checking in and out of items by making it a one-step process. Rebarcoding approximately 800,000 items in the library collection was projected to take 2 years. Community volunteers and members of the Friends of the Library played a key role in getting this job accomplished.

As Henrico County Public Library continued to plan for the new Tuckahoe and Twin Hickory Area Libraries, other facilities received modest improvements. Gayton Branch Library received new picture book shelving, Dumbarton Area Library had newly designed entrance walkways to ensure that handicapped patrons would not need to cross a high traffic area of the parking lot. Fairfield Area Library benefited from a beautiful mural in the children's area painted by a local artist, Steven Walker, a former library employee.

2006 saw another milestone with technology for the library with the introduction of online new library card registration on July 1 resulting in over 500 individuals who successfully applied for cards online. This greatly helped the library circulation staff, reducing the number of people waiting in line to complete new card registration forms. After the new library members applied online, their new cards were mailed to them and were activated when they came into the public library.

The increased public demand for audiobooks resulted in Henrico expanding its contract with NetLibrary to provide downloadable books. Library users could now use portable listening devices such as MP3 players to download a variety of non-fiction, bestselling fiction, beloved classics, and even foreign language instruction. This service exemplifies the ultimate customer convenience – there are no materials to return to the library since the files “expire” in 21 days.

New Tuckahoe Area Library Opens

In 2006 with the opening of the new Tuckahoe Area Library, the community's expectations for public library facilities and services were greatly expanded. Over 3500 people attended the October 8 opening gala to see the library's new café, a greatly expanded collection, study rooms, a meeting room with a capacity for 100 people, a computer lab, and a drive-through window that could be used not only for returning books, but also for picking up reserved materials. One of the most popular amenities was the library's free WiFi capabilities.

Also with this new library, the multi-year RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) project had been completed, resulting in faster, more efficient service. Check in and out of materials was now done in one step instead of two separate steps that saved staff time and got materials back on the shelves much faster.

A new software enhancement to the library's website called Evanced now could provide all library customers a complete online library calendar. Events and programs could be sorted by library branch, specific date, specific age groups, or the type of events. Registration for special programs such as Summer Reading could now be done completely online. Library customers could also use this same system to reserve meetings rooms and study rooms.

Mobile computer labs using laptops became a flexible tool to teach computer classes at those libraries that did not have space for dedicated labs.

With a new communications plan now in place, Henrico County Public Library launched its first issue of a quarterly publication called CONNECTIONS. This publication was developed as a comprehensive guide to public library programs, events, and specially featured news items. It was distributed through the Richmond Times-Dispatch daily newspaper to over 65,000 Henrico homes. Additional copies were available for pick-up at all libraries as well. A copy of the publication was also available on the website.

Twin Hickory Area Library Opens

Henrico's newest area library, the Twin Hickory Area Library in Glen Allen, opened on July 9, 2007, to the delight of more than 3500 community members. With 40,000 square feet and room for expansion, it held more than 110,000 items in the collection, 97 public-use computers, a café, a computer lab, study rooms, a large meeting room, a drive-through window, and free WiFi.

In 2008, there were greater efforts to standardize services throughout the county. All area library hours were standardized to Monday through Thursday, 9 am – 9 pm, with Friday and Saturday, 9 am – 6 pm. All branch library hours would be Monday through Wednesday, 10 am – 9 pm; Thursday, 1 pm – 9 pm; and Friday and Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm. Free WiFi was made available in all Henrico libraries.

Continuing to update facilities, the groundbreaking for the renovation and expansion of the Glen Allen Branch Library was held on September 25, 2007, with a projected reopening on October 25, 2010. Going from 12,000 to a projected 25,000 square feet, new features will include a special Founding Fathers Collection, study rooms, a larger meeting room, a courtyard, and a fireplace.

In 2008, the library completed the upgrade of its wide area network (WAN) to a fiber-based network with increased bandwidth to provide more reliable service and to support the newer web technologies such as streaming audio and video for public use computers and Voice Over IP, and Internet based telephone service.