

History of the Aurora Public Library: Established 1929

Beginnings of Aurora

The time was 1867, and east of Denver on the plains, the site that in 40 years would become Aurora was only a dusty colony. Forty squatters and homesteaders were established here, raising crops for sale to Denver and the gold camps to the west. Before them, traders and trappers moved about the area, taking over from the Arapahoe and Cheyenne Indians who had been the first inhabitants.

Two famous thoroughfares, the Smoky Hill Trail and the South Platte River Trail, wound through the small settlement on the way to Denver carrying streams of humanity seeking their fortunes. The Kansas and Pacific Railway, taken over by the Union Pacific Railroad in the 1870s, channeled other adventure seekers through the corridor. Military expeditions and various caravans carried their followers over one old Indian trail, a route that would become Colfax Avenue in a relatively short time. Driven by their varied purposes, travelers into Denver and the Rockies passed through this prairie and some of them were satisfied to settle along the trail. Years later, the “gateway” concept was adopted as a motto of the settled Aurora, recalling the throngs who came before.

Eventually, when the locality numbered about 100 people, the land was sold for residential development as part of the Colorado land boom of the 1880s. First known as “Fletcher” for its founder, Donald Fletcher, a small town was incorporated on April 22, 1891.

The enterprising Fletcher had been deeply involved in both real estate and other business in Denver. At the peak of his financial career, he turned his attention to a greater project, that of developing a new area to the east and naming it after himself. Fletcher’s settlement covered four square miles between today’s Yosemite and Peoria streets, and Sixth and 26th avenues. Within these boundaries were several subdivisions, including the largest called Aurora, which eventually gave its name to the entire development.

Inevitably, the town’s first boom faded in 1893 after the collapse of the silver market. Growth of the community slowed and remained languid for the next forty years. The major concern of the new community was its insufficient water supply since the Highline Canal, completed in 1883, was not adequate to bring in enough water. Located on a high and dry prairie, the town found it necessary to purchase water from other areas, action that would be a burden for years to come.

Donald Fletcher’s fortunes diminished in the silver panic, and he cleared off, leaving a large water bond debt. These financial problems continued to plague the residents and not until 1917 did Aurora finally issue new bonds to pay off the old indebtedness.

In the first decade of the 20th century, telephones, electricity and its first newspaper, *The Aurora Democrat News*, came to Fletcher. Finally in 1907 while 300 people were living there, the town’s name was officially changed to “Aurora”; it had already been split into two counties in 1902. Within 40 short years, the encampment on the plains had become a true community.

Library Beginnings

The town grew. Against the backdrop of a hopeful future, an energetic and innovative group, the Aurora Women’s Club, was organized on Jan. 8, 1925. As their mission, the women

adopted an objective typical of the times, one of “mental culture, mutual helpfulness and cooperative work for the community.”

For four years, through January 1929, the Club focused its determined efforts on establishing a public library in Aurora. Archives show that to obtain the necessary funds, the club held card parties, teas and bake sales, sold stationery and gave plays (admission: 25 cents for adults, 15 cents for children). Finally, with a total of \$171 for their new venture, they opened a library at 1516 Dallas St. on Feb. 10, 1929, and dedicated it the following October. Mr. A. T. Swedborg (whose wife Margie was to devote 35 years of service to the Library Board) made the motion at City Council that the City accept the Library, with all books and equipment. The motion passed unanimously.

Sara D. Wood was the first librarian, serving from 1928 to 1939 at the library, which was actually her home on Dallas Street. Wood, originally from Corning, N.Y., was an energetic person who raised two sons alone and managed a farm near what is now the Clock Tower office facility on East Sixth Avenue. Her strength of character and talents manifested themselves in her ability to manage the library through 20 years of Aurora’s early growth.

Even before the city took it over, the Library was a growing and vital concern. Children’s story hours were already available with Club members acting as storytellers. A house-to-house canvass requested donations of books; records indicate that one member even drove to Pueblo to pick up a gift of 150 volumes. The new library—with \$200 cash, 3,100 books, two book cases, one library table and one oak rocker—served 906 people in one month. The monthly rent of \$25 included heat, lights and one librarian.

The early 1930s were not prosperous years for the city of Aurora. Not until the late ‘30s and early ‘40s did the city begin a rapid expansion with large influxes of people connected with the war effort. Lowry Field held classes for enlisted men and officers in 1938; Fitzsimons General Hospital, which had opened in 1918, completed a modern 608-bed hospital in 1941. Another boom was on.

With growth came increased demand for Library services. Instead of continuing to rent the rooms at 1516 Dallas St., the Library bought the property in October 1944. Throughout the next few years, the little house became overcrowded with books and people. In 1953, the Volunteer Fire Department offered lots at the corner of 16th and Elmira for a new library.

Lydia Cleaves became librarian, serving officially from 1947 to 1954. She had been Sara Wood’s assistant, handling administration, from 1939 on.

Mary Brown was a former nurse’s aide who had become interested in the library in a roundabout manner. In her own words:

“In the fall of 1948, with my small son in tow, I was delivering Republican handbills and rang Mrs. Hawkins’ doorbell (Mrs. Hawkins was then assistant to Lydia Cleaves, living in the apartment at the rear of the Library.). She told me that she was going to give up the library position, and if I would like it, she would recommend me to the Library Board. In October, the board told me that the members had decided to give me the position. Outside of being an avid reader, I had no experience in a library, so I went to talk to John Eastlick, director of the Denver Public Library. He thought my best bet was to take some in-service training at one of his libraries. He sent me to the Warren branch at 28th & High St...he warned me that there would be no salary. I was so glad to get the

training that salary had never entered my head. I traveled to Warren library by bus and worked all day. The librarian loaded me up with books on cataloging, Dewey Decimal and the like, to study at home. She worked with me until she decided I knew enough to be on my own.”

With her two assistants, Mary Brown took on the task of getting the collection into shape before they would move to their first real library building at 16th and Elmira. (Additionally, another of Mrs. Brown’s early duties at the Dallas Street Library had been to collect rent for the apartments upstairs.)

In 1953, Mary Brown was appointed acting librarian and several new programs began at the 16th and Elmira location: Great Books Discussions, the first Summer Reading Program, a library publicity effort and an official children’s story hour.

The librarian just prior to Mary Brown’s appointment brought the spice of controversy to the Library’s history. A member of the Library Board, as well as the City Manager, felt it would give the library more prestige to have a librarian with an MLS, so they hired Ruth Dunbar in 1955. When citizens discovered that she did not have the requisite degree nor was attending an accredited school of librarianship,

“they decided that it was an unfair situation and let the fact be known, with the result that Miss Dunbar resigned and the Library Board was dissolved (most of them were reappointed). I was appointed (permanent) Librarian”. [Mary Brown]

In 1960, when the Denver Tri-County Reference Service was formed, the Aurora Public Library joined this new Library system and began its ongoing involvement in metro library development.

In 1962, a coalition naming itself “JADA” was established to represent Adams County, Jeffco, Aurora, Englewood and Littleton in a cooperative arrangement for the lending of books from the Denver Public Library to smaller libraries. Partly because of this early inter-library cooperation, the Elmira Street premises soon became inadequate to serve the needs of the expanding population.

A New Main Library

By now, the Elmira Street Library owned over 20,000 volumes and about 800 more were stacked in piles on the floors for lack of adequate shelving. In 1960, a study indicated the obvious: more room was definitely needed. Voters were urged to approve a \$250,000 bond issue in 1961 to provide for this expansion. The newly formed “Friends of the Library” joined with city officials in backing the proposal for a new library, pointing out that the bond issue would not result in a tax increase.

The public voted its approval and a new Library, able to house 50,000 volumes, was constructed on city land at 1298 Peoria St. in 1963. Built at a cost of \$196,554, the building was designed to permit further expansion which the study had also indicated would be necessary within



North Branch Library - Hoffman Heights Library

(Before renovations in 2004)

five years. The lower floor met civil defense protection requirements against radioactive fallout for some 350 persons. Other innovative features included a front sidewalk de-icer, pre-cast concrete exterior panels and a central skylight.

In April 1966, City Librarian Mary Brown, serving as consultant, assisted in the formation of the Arapahoe Regional Library District. In November of that year, Aurora also became part of the Central Colorado Public Library System and participant in the Wide Area Free Library Service (WAFLS). This service made any local public library card valid throughout the entire metropolitan Denver area.

As the library continued to expand between 1950 and 1970, Aurora's population increased from approximately 11,000 people in a 3.4 square mile area to 75,000 within 27.7 square miles. The post-war expansion had begun.

In 1981, the new Central Library opened and the Peoria Street facility became the North Branch Library. Understandably, use of the North Branch Library dropped off, and then showed slow but consistent increases from 1984. Wheelchair ramps were constructed for the outside entrances in 1981. In 1983, an elevator was installed to provide easy access to the meeting rooms in the basement. The North Branch was remodeled in September 1986, receiving new carpeting and interior paint. The rest rooms were also modified to better accommodate handicapped customers. This remodel required closing the building temporarily and providing library service from the Bookmobile in the parking lot.

The Peoria Street entrance was closed for security reasons. As North Aurora changed, so did the usage of the North Branch. North Branch customers were more interested in gardening, cooking, investments, and crafts as well as in developing their children's love of reading.

In 2000, Aurora voters approved a Library Facilities Bond to renovate the entire building and move the entrance of the library to the east side of the building. In late 2002, the design firm of Gifford-Spurck was selected for the renovations of North Branch Library. Construction began in September 2003. The construction firm was M.W. Golden Constructors. Extensive asbestos abatement was required at North Branch Library, so the entire collection was moved and stored for the duration of the project. Improvements at North Branch Library included a new east entrance, new windows in the building, a joint reference/circulation desk, relocation of the children's and adult areas inside the library, a new HVAC system and a wireless computer network. The Grand Opening was held on March 26, 2004, and citizens in the North region were thrilled with the renovations to North Branch Library. The name of the library also was changed to Hoffman Heights Library to reflect the neighborhood in which it was located.

Service to Homebound

The Homebound Extension Service officially began in December 1972 at the request of City Librarian Mary Brown, and with a grant from the Colorado State Library. Earlier that year a volunteer had been delivering cassettes to nursing homes, but preferred not to continue.

When local library patron Shirley Hoag donated monies for library books in memory of her son, Brown suggested that Hoag assume the duties begun by the volunteer. Hoag agreed and this service has continued uninterrupted to the present day.

The visitation program, delivering books and tapes to those unable to come to Libraries due to disabilities, became very popular. Hoag, at first volunteering three hours per week, eventually became a permanent city employee in 1977, spending 20 hours or more weekly bringing materials to her customers, as well as providing a social benefit to that segment of Aurora society.

In 1984, Shirley Hoag made 681 visits, delivering 3,090 items mainly to the elderly. "Large Print" materials were popular with most of the customers and for others the Talking Books for the Blind, from the Colorado State Library, were a useful feature. But it was evident that one part-time employee alone could not hope to increase services to any great degree and eventually Shirley Hoag retired.

In 1988, Candace Brown was the first degreed librarian to become the Homebound Coordinator. Her intention was to expand the program in several new directions, one of which was to recruit volunteers to deliver materials to many of the homebound customers. In turn, this action necessitated streamlining the record keeping and deliveries.

Candace Brown then developed customized forms and wrote suitable policies and procedures in order to keep the daily operation running smoothly. By 1990, Candace Brown responded to a new concept for the frail elderly at senior day care centers by initiating on-site programs for this audience.

Community awareness for the Homebound Program was enhanced through advertising in local newspapers (including Senior directed newspapers) and promoting the service by means of Public Service Announcements on local cable television. Between December 1984 and December 1990, the number of items circulating to the Homebound increased, a dramatic testament to the need for this type of library service in the community.

By now, the position of Homebound Librarian was considered that of a professional, and Eileen Dumas took over in March 1991 after the departure of Ms. Brown. The program has since continued to expand in additional directions. The service to individual homes is growing in number and programming now includes senior retirement communities. Moreover, programming has been coordinated with a Children's Librarian to provide intergenerational events for seniors and daycare children. The first event, held in September 1991 to celebrate Grandparent's Day, was such a success that a Federal Grant was obtained in 1992 to fund a training project for intergenerational programming. In 1991, there were over 16,000 items circulated.

Ms. Dumas' title was changed to Special Services Librarian. She continued to oversee the operation of homebound activities, intergenerational events, and volunteers for the library system. She also provided some programming to customers living in senior facilities. Programs included current events, reminiscing, book talks, etc.

In 2001 a part-time clerk, Cynthia Goynes, was hired to help with the day-to-day operations of the department. In 2003 there were over 29,000 items circulated. More volunteers were recruited to deliver items to homebound customers as the need increased.

As of 2004, the Homebound Extension area included the entire city of Aurora with two assisted living facilities, three nursing homes, five retirement communities and four senior day care centers. The volunteer pool in 2004 included 24 adult volunteers. Within that pool were two

mothers who brought their young children with them to “encourage a sense of civic responsibility.”

South Branch Library – Mission Viejo Library

By the early 1970s, the main library in Aurora could no longer keep up with demands for service as customer usage continued to rise. In November 1973, the citizens of Aurora financed bonds to build a Branch Library in southeast Aurora on a 2.3-acre site donated by the Mission Viejo Real Estate Company. Considerable neighborhood team planning went into the project so that the style would blend with the surrounding residential architecture. The 18,980 square foot building at 15324 E. Hampden Circle was dedicated on August 10, 1975 and opened with a collection of 10,000 volumes. Strong family and recreational concerns in this sector of Aurora heavily influenced collection development; and within three years this collection grew to over 32,000 items.



**South Branch Library -
Mission Viejo Library**

By 1978, more than 216,000 items were circulating yearly to 100,000 South Branch Library customers, and in 1980 circulation soared to 295,000, an increase of 18.5% over the previous year. South Branch began converting its collection into CLSI, the automated circulation system, in 1981 as well as earmarking excess books for the Central Library due to open in 1982.

After the completion of the South Branch, the Aurora Public Library’s upwardly climbing statistics proved that the new facility could keep pace with population growth in Aurora. Eventually in 1991, the collection, now over 70,000 volumes, included CDs, videotapes and public domain computer software. Phonograph records were phased out and selected holdings were moved to North Branch Library as quasi “collector’s items.” Finally in 1989 and 1991, remodeling funds were granted so that the 20-year-old building’s physical appearance could be brought up to date to match its modern services and collection.

In 2000, Aurora voters approved a Library Facilities Bond to improve handicapped access and the heating and air-conditioning system at South. In late 2002, the design firm of Gifford-Spurck was selected. M.W. Golden Constructors began construction at South Branch Library in September 2003. Improvements included a new HVAC system, electrical upgrades, the addition of an ADA accessible restroom, modifications to the meeting rooms, the relocation of reference and circulation into one combined desk, and new shelving for media materials. In addition, public computers were converted to a wireless network. Also, a new Youth Services area was implemented in 2004. The Grand Re-Opening of South Branch Library was held on March 29, 2004. The library was renamed Mission Viejo Library to better reflect the neighborhood in which it was located.

Growth of the Library System

The Metro Library System changed its name in October 1975 to the Central Colorado Library System (CCLS) and terminated connection with the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). As a part of CCLS, Aurora Libraries made their expanded resources available to other member libraries throughout this new system.

By 1977, the Aurora population had increased to 129,000 in a 56-square-mile area. The highest rate of population growth as well as the highest average yearly income was found in the southeast sector of the city. Aurora had experienced a period of phenomenal growth that was reflected in the expansion of the Library from a 1972 staff of 18 and budget of \$231,832 to 42 staff members and a budget of \$784,920 in 1978.

The 2000 census showed that the population of Aurora had increased to 285,000 people in a 144-square-mile area. The highest rate of population growth and average yearly income was still to be found in the southeast section of the city. In 2004, the Aurora Public Libraries had 118 staff members and a budget of \$5 million.

An Era of Rapid Change: 1977 to 1984

On June 13, 1977, David M. Price, formerly the assistant director for the Austin Public Library in Austin, Texas, became the fifth library director of the city of Aurora. Price's chosen approach to library services was new and challenging. A series of reorganizations and new policies established an atmosphere of optimism and direction paced to the increasing expansion of the population and the demand for services.

Price's achievements between the years 1977 through 1983 were quick to bring the Aurora Public Library to the forefront of library development in the State. The vitality of growth and a stream of changes with the expansion of facilities serving the cities, expansion of the collection, expansion of direct services to the public, and expansion of the library's mission gave these years a character of vibrant excitement.

During David Price's first year as director, the Library joined OCLC (the Ohio College Library Center) as a step toward automating the technical services operations. Replacing a manual cataloging operation with an online material cataloging service resulted in the elimination of a two-year backlog of nearly 6,000 uncataloged materials plus another 3,000 titles purchased in 1977. Over the next six years the Library would catalog over 130,000 items.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Reading Center

In November 1978, after the Police Department vacated the premises, David Price reclaimed the original Aurora Public Library at 16th and Elmira for the opening of the first neighborhood library, the Northwest Reading Center. Two years before, the Northwest Neighborhood Association had been formed to improve the community in that sector of the city. One of the top priorities was a library to fill the gap left when the main facility moved to Peoria Street in 1964.



Original Martin Luther King, Jr. Library

The Northwest Reading Center opened to the public in early 1979, part of it being made available to the newly established Community College of Denver/Aurora Center, ready to commence classes. Eagerly accepting this challenge, the

Reading Center began to include materials helpful to CCA students in its collection development.

Although the concept of small neighborhood libraries had not been new, Price introduced the idea of yet smaller 1,500- to 2,000-square-foot facilities in place of the standard 4,000-square-foot branch. The mission of the smaller units was simply to respond to the general and popular interests of children and adults in a given neighborhood.

During 1980, major steps forward were made in library service and a full-time clerk staffed the Center. In preparation for automation, half the year was devoted to collection conversion efforts by an enthusiastic staff and by year's end, the Center went online in computer checkout.

Northwest Reading Center also served the neighborhood by accepting payments for water bills, a popular feature for local residents.

By 1983, the facility was serving almost 24,000 people yearly and presenting a variety of children's programs to schools and daycare centers. More than 10,000 items were located in the collection and Northwest geared up for the receipt of the computer book collection of the Community College of Aurora (CCA) under a new shared services program.

On Jan. 14, 1988, the Northwest Reading Center was officially rededicated as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Reading Center.

In addition, four other reading centers were strategically located throughout the city. One was a rental facility, another was a joint-use library at Horizon Middle School and another was a remodeled mobile home relocated near Altura Elementary School.

As northeast Aurora changed, the staff of MLK refocused their services. MLK was in contact with a wide variety of community groups in the area and provided tours and story times to local daycares; elderly care agencies, clubs and schools. When Crawford Elementary School nearby changed to a year-round schedule, the MLK staff quickly contacted the school to see how library services for students could be adapted. In 1991, a portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was obtained for the library and dedicated during the annual King birthday reception held by the Aurora Human Relations Commission. Each year an anniversary event is held at this library to commemorate civil rights.

In 2000, Aurora voters approved a Library Facilities Bond to provide for the creation of a municipal service center with a new expanded Martin Luther King, Jr. Library and a joint facility with the city's Community Development Division and Original Aurora Renewal. The new MLK was designed by Michael Brendle to fit with the existing architecture on the Colfax Corridor. The library was about 10,000 square feet plus the meeting rooms, and the larger facility included a coffee shop. The library, which had shelving for 25,000-plus items, was designed so that the entire facility would have good visibility from the circulation/reference desk. The Grand Opening of the new MLK Library took place on May 4, 2004.

The Regional Concept

Rather than just adding a facility per year, the Aurora Public Library adopted a philosophy of facility service, setting a trend in Colorado, which the Denver Public Library adopted in principle

to handle a decreasing budget in 1982. The concept was simple; establish a hierarchical library system where standards of size, collection, services and staffing fitted efficiently together.

In Aurora, the Aurora Central Library, nationally regarded for its architecture and use of space, would serve as the hub of the system. The most specialized and in-depth materials would be available at this central location; regional and neighborhood branch libraries would provide more general interest materials with the potential for reflecting in their collections the special interests of certain areas of the city.

In 1980, the official Regional Management concept was put into effect. This organizational approach allowed and encouraged each major geographic region to be responsible and responsive to the needs for library services in the region. Each Regional Library Supervisor would manage personnel, budget, maintenance, service and other concerns within that region, bringing decentralization of management functions for the first time.

Development of Internal Operations

Staff Services, the internal operations unit of the library, made major advances in 1980 by converting the materials collection into the Library's CLSI Automation and Information System Database. The CLSI system used a minicomputer located at the City's Data Processing Department connected to a series of Library online terminals for such activities as circulation, overdues, inventory, reserves, statistical and managerial information. This move was a giant step away from manual checkouts, card catalogs and paper copies of user registrations toward a future of high-speed electronic record keeping.

The Arapahoe Regional Library District became a member of this computer system and work began toward the creation of single database of Library holdings for the city of Aurora and Arapahoe County libraries. In 1981, an interface feature was successfully installed between OCLS and CLSI, which permitted sharing of data and input information without duplication. The incompatible computer systems were thus interfaced to contribute data to each other, opening the door to future expansion of database networking for these libraries.

An interesting development occurred in 1984: Aurora received permission from the federal government to establish a selective government documents depository. With only minimal staffing, this project was up and running efficiently within a few months. Two full years passed before the Government Printing Office arrived for an official inspection, but the inspector commented on the excellent organization of the collection and awarded a "satisfactory to excellent" rating. Three years later, in 1987, special Energy and Literacy collections were purchased with funds provided by the State of Colorado, adding to the store of governmental holdings.

In 1985, Library Department reorganization transformed Staff Services into a new program named System Support. This new section included the old functions of Community Services, public relations, long range planning, courier and the mailroom. Incorporated as well into System Support were the Technical Services work unit composed of the CLSI automated system, cataloging and processing, government documents and collection development. A five-year collection development plan was written to guide the division up to the final decade of the century.

Also in 1985 came an entity dubbed the IRVING network, which interfaced Aurora Public Library's computer database with Jefferson County, Boulder and Denver Public Library's computer systems. The collections of other libraries were now accessible to Aurora residents. Plans were also underway in 1988 to convert the CLSI database to the industry standard MARC record and index, a conversion process which was a prelude to providing fully functioning Public Access Catalogs (PACS) to the public in 1989.

More innovative directions soon changed the scope of System Support: 1988 – consolidated cataloging taken from the fading SEMBCS processing consortium, a long-range plan for extending services into newly annexed areas beyond the 1984 Blue Line; 1989 – overseeing of privatized building maintenance, CLSI upgrade to CL-CAT automated catalog format; 1990 – adoption of overdue fines collection agency program, a second five-year collection development plan; 1991 – cataloging for Aurora Public Schools.

The '90s saw heavy usage of the CLSI database, requiring continued computer upgrades in order to serve the needs of the community. Negotiations began for funding the array of improvements to meet the challenge. Also, in the mid to late '9's, APL had a WAN (Wide Area Network) to provide database information throughout Central Library, but it didn't work very well in the branch libraries. This was used for a couple of years until the new online system made it possible to easily provide databases to all library facilities, home, school, and office via Web access.

Aurora Public Library migrated from the CLSI system to their "new" Libs Plus system in the early 1990s and began to get PCs for the customers, as opposed to just "dumb" terminals. In September 1998, APL migrated to the Innovative Interfaces, Inc. (III) system on full-blown public PCs and added authority records to our catalog. The library wasn't just for bookworms anymore. With the advent of the Internet and the World Wide Web, the horizon for information gathering at the Aurora Public Library was just about limitless. Content Management was implemented in 1999 as well as a filtering system for the Internet Web sites and the PLUS network was formed in 2000.

In October 2003, the Library purchased a 2-line Telephone Renewal System. The ILS and Proxy were moved from Jefferson County to the city of Aurora Information Technology Department in September 2003, and in February 2004 the library moved from the PLUS INN-REACH system (4 libraries) to the PROSPECTOR INN-REACH system (22 libraries). In May 2004, an ILS System Specialist position was added to assist the System Coordinator.

Business Resource Center

The concept of a small business center began in 1986 when oil prices tumbled and construction dwindled to a virtual standstill. In those lean times during the 1980s, throngs of displaced business people turned entrepreneur and sought library resources to research their ventures. The Business Resource Center at the Central Library was started in 1992 to provide access to business information for the Aurora small business community. Business Librarian Betsy Baxendale came on board and began work expanding the BRC even further. Working together with the Aurora Business Development Center, the Community College of Aurora and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, the BRC became an integral part of the city's commitment to support existing businesses and to encourage successful new businesses. The BRC subscribes to various online business databases, which can be accessed both inside and outside the library. These provide sales leads, competitor information, custom company

comparisons, trade journal news, industry analysis and much more. To assist job seekers, the BRC maintains a one-stop career information center with free access to computers and a wealth of career information.

The strength of the BRC is found in its knowledgeable business information specialists. They have produced a Virtual Business Library that highlights sites of interest to Aurora job seekers, investors and business students as well as the business community. The friendly BRC librarians can be seen at NABA, the Chamber of Commerce and other meetings of the business community. They teach classes, make presentations to business groups, and are available for individual consultations on a drop-in basis or by appointment.

Municipal Reference Library Central Records

A popular public service developed in 1979 by Director David Price was the accumulation of a collection of city government materials as a Municipal Reference Library (MRL) in the city offices at 1470 S. Havana St. Unique materials were housed there containing a wide range of highly specialized information of interest to municipalities for use of city departments.

The Library eventually installed features such as LOGIN, a database searching service, and PTI.NET, an electronic mail system to serve the growing informational needs of city staff. Reference materials eventually grew to a point that a weeding program was necessary, especially when the library added the Planning Department's collection of materials in 1984.

ACCESS AURORA, also housed at MRL, had also been brought under the sponsorship of the Library Department earlier in 1978. This telephone service, proving popular with local citizens, processed information, questions, concerns or complaints pertaining to Aurora City Government. Calls increased dramatically by the end of 1983. Contributing factors to the increase were cooperation with the new SHARE program of government distribution of surplus food to the needy. A phone message machine was eventually installed to allow citizens access to the office on a 24-hour basis.

In 1985 several city offices were reconstructed, resulting in a move for MRL to the first floor of the Aurora Municipal Building, near Havana Street. The space was shared with the Central Records/Archives Division recently transferred to the Library's jurisdiction. ACCESS AURORA was eventually moved to the Community Relations Division of the Administrative Services Department, eliminating the need for Library staff to handle city informational calls.

The Municipal Reference Library continued to function as a resource for both urban affairs and popular reading materials for city employees and the public. A bulletin board was installed to showcase recently published books. A newsletter, ON RECORD, describing newly arrived departmental reading material was distributed monthly to City Division Heads.

In 1986 and 1987, research projects for the city's executive staff and other key city personnel became a standard activity for MRL staff. Although the facility garnered high percentage levels of satisfaction from customers for delivery of information, staffing cutbacks related to the economy resulted in closure of library reference service at this site by 1989.

Central Records

Prior to 1977, there was no organized method of city records preservation. The City Clerk kept vital documents in filing cabinets and other departments retained most of their own hard copies in a variety of formats. Then, the first city archivist began gathering files and records from their casual locations so that microfiche preservation could begin. Use of temporary staff evolved into a system of permanent employees. The erratic journey of the City Archives from Finance to Administrative Services ended for the time being with the Library taking the reins in 1985.

Lack of storage space was painfully evident. To alleviate the worst of the problem, the microfilming and storage sections of Central Records were transferred to more spacious quarters in the basement space of the North Branch Library, which once housed a children's department. Part of the records staff was moved there to film and store documents.

In June 1987, the Records Manager—who had succeeded the original Archivist—left and plans were made to hire a replacement who could complete the records retention project begun only six months earlier as well as help refocus attention on critical objectives.

By the second quarter of 1987, the Municipal Reference Library changed its name to Municipal Records to signify a downscaling as part of the Library's budget reduction plan. After reference services were dropped, the division devoted itself exclusively to the filming, storage and retrieval of Aurora's civic records. Within another year, Municipal Records was returned to the jurisdiction of the City Clerk's Office where it had been before the Library assumed custody in 1985.

Southwest Reading Center – Iliff Square Library

In March 1980, the Library leased 2,500 square feet from a commercial shopette for the new Southwest Reading Center to handle customer overflow from the South Branch Library. Work began early in the year as a conversion team entered books into the automated circulation system. By May, the conversion was complete and Southwest's shelves were filled with 8,000 books, magazines, records and tapes prior to the opening dedication. The success of the Reading Center was evident when it attained a total circulation in August 1980 of 4,951. Monthly averages for the first year were 3,800 items per month.



Iliff Square Library

For the next eight years, this concept of the neighborhood storefront library held high appeal for citizens in the Southwest area of Aurora. New items were added to the collection and attention was given to weeding materials that had not circulated since the opening of the facility. At the end of 1988, circulation approached 50,000 items a year.

In December 1989, however, with the inevitable budget crisis looming, the Aurora City Council targeted Southwest for closure. A determined group of library users sprang up and petitioned Council and the Library Board with promises of neighborhood support and a great deal of emotion. Bowing to a flurry of media publicity, the facility was reopened in January 1990 with

library staff and community volunteers providing service. The facility continued to function satisfactorily, even opening a few hours on Saturdays in response to customer requests.

Eventually in 1991, Library Administration began to investigate possibilities of moving Southwest to a more favorable location in the same quadrant of Aurora. Finally in 1993, the branch was moved a few blocks to the north to larger quarters in the Iliff Square Shopping Center. Community support was strong for this change and a bright, roomy facility opened on January 15, 1993. Usage immediately jumped upwards, justifying the hard work that had gone into locating and implementing the new site. The Southwest Reading Center was appropriately renamed the Iliff Square Library.

In 2004, the Iliff Square Library expanded into additional space next to the current space they occupied in the Iliff Square Shopping Center. The Friends of the Aurora Public Library had been looking for a larger space and approached the Library about possibly renting some of the space in the expanded Iliff Square Library for the Book Outlet. After much discussion, it was decided there would be benefits to both the Library and the Friends if the Book Outlet were located at the Iliff Square Library. The Friends moved the Book Outlet to Iliff Square Library in 2004.

Central Library

For some time a new central facility had been viewed as crucial to effective public library service in Aurora. With a Central Library, the old Main and the South Branch would become regional branches and additional small facilities would serve as neighborhood or Reading Center libraries to a population rapidly approaching 200,000 Aurora residents.



Aurora Central Library

On April 24, 1979, David Price's dream was realized. A special bond election was held in Aurora to consider three new proposed civic projects: a Central Library, a Cultural Arts Center and an Ice Arena. By an overwhelming vote (63%), the citizens voiced approval for the construction of the Central Library, but rejected the other two proposals. In one of the largest voter turnouts (21%) in the history of an Aurora municipal election, traditionally a passive event, 5,413 people voted for the Library while 3,177 persons voted against.

The proposed location for the Central Library was adjacent to the Aurora Criminal Justice Center near the geographic center of the city off of East Alameda Circle and Chambers Road. Construction of the facility began in 1980 and the 55,000-square-foot building opened on March 27, 1982, at a cost of \$3.3 million.

Special features in the striking three-story structure included public meeting rooms, a public lounge, drive-up book return, exhibit gallery and a children's storytime theater. Unique open architecture with balconies, contemporary color schemes and extensive use of interior plants and trees added much to the visual effect. Public access computers in place of the traditional card catalog, complete Media and A/V center and an opening collection of nearly 250,000 items provided the finishing touches to a long awaited community asset.

The facility's staff was a blend of newly hired and veteran workers ready to provide quality services to Aurora's 187,000 residents. By the end of 1982, the Central Library had served 166,673 customers. The computerized circulation system, installed at a cost of \$200,000 had cut library costs and improved services, halting the Library's continual need for additional personnel.

In 1983, Central Library staff served over 346,000 persons and circulated 556,000 library materials, with 550 community groups meeting at the facility.

The Central Library received a much-needed face-lift in 1990. New carpeting was installed on the main floor and the lower level, a fresh coat of paint applied and additional shelving erected. New service desks were received for the Information Desk, the Media Desk, and the new Business Resource Center, and a special area next to the Public Lounge was set up to accommodate back issues of newspapers and magazines.

In 2003, the Central Library circulated over 1,271,051 library materials, served over 399,552 customers and many others via the Internet.

Meeting Services

During the same year a conference service was developed as an additional benefit at Central Library. One full-time Library Assistant handled customer use of public rooms and arranged room setups. There is no record of attendance or revenues, but during 1984 the first month's revenue was only \$5. Within another year, community, educational and government groups made wide use of the public rooms at Central, North and South; a computerized database for recording financial records and statistics was established. Soon public service employees were called upon to contribute to room set-up assistance and perform before-and after-hour services to users. The service was well received and bookings in the public rooms at Central, North and South branches increased rapidly.

Eventually, such events as wedding receptions became extremely popular but finally had to be discontinued due to the labor-intensive efforts involved. From annual revenue of \$7,696 for 31 events in 1984, business zoomed to a high of \$49,163 in 1990 for over 2,200 events. By 1991, the new Municipal Justice Center, next door to Central Library, came under the wing of Meeting Services. On the request of City Council, other rooms in the three main library facilities were offered free to community groups, bringing revenues down and refocusing objectives of this library division more to services rather than income.

In 2003, Meeting Services staff hosted 2,703 events with 77,618 attendees and \$20,224 in revenues. In addition to the public rooms Meeting Services was already booking, they took on several more public rooms at the new Aurora Municipal Center in 2003 and at the new Tallyn's Reach Library in 2004. As of 2004, Meeting Services had responsibility for booking a total of 37 meeting rooms. This was done with two full-time staff and two temporary staff for evenings and weekends.

Tallyn's Reach Library

In 2000, Aurora voters approved a Library Facilities Bond. Part of this Bond was to build a library in the southeast part of Aurora (vicinity of Smoky Hill and E-470). The



Tallyn's Reach Library (side view)

Grand Opening of Tallyn's Reach Library was March 23, 2004. The building housed the Tallyn's Reach Library, a Fire Station and a Police Station and the communications center for the emergency call center (9-1-1).

The Tallyn's Reach Library facility was open to the public four days a week.

KACT – Channel 8

The Beginning

In 1980, when the city of Aurora negotiated its franchise agreement with United Cable, the resulting ordinance called for the cable company to provide four channels for use by the Aurora Public Library. This was the beginning of Aurora Community Television, or KACT-TV, Channel 8.

Facilities

A fully equipped television studio was built in the Central Library for Television Services productions and was completed in 1981. KACT-TV has continued to upgrade the equipment and expand the facilities. In 1984, a second studio was created at the Municipal Building for the coverage of City Council meetings and other public hearings. The acquisition of a fully equipped television production van for location programs was realized in late 1988. The van has allowed KACT-TV to tape local cultural arts programs and high school sports, which attract a large number of viewers.

Productions

KACT-TV maintained a steady growth in local origination series produced for the community. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of the weekly City Council meetings began in 1983 with a modest single camera taping and has progressed to live three-camera productions enhanced by character generation to identify speakers and explain complicated issues as they are discussed. "Dateline...Aurora," a public affairs interview program began in 1983 as "Aurora in Progress," has had such distinguished guests as Mayor Dennis Champine, Denver Mayor Federico Pena, Governor Roy Romer, as well as authors and local community leaders.

Community events and public interest stories have been covered since 1983 beginning with "Around Aurora," and later "Midweek in Aurora" (1984-1986), which combined studio interviews with taped segments, and finally the current "Aurora News Weekly," with more emphasis on news stories directly affecting Aurorans. A children's series included "The Blue Whale," with a library activities format; "Once Upon A Rhyme," featuring plays based upon fairytales performed by the Aurora Civic Theater; "Story time," with emphasis on storytelling; and finally "Mrs. Plumjoy's Place," which focused on concerns of children growing up in the 1980s.

"Sportscope" began in 1985 exploring sports-related subjects and expanded to previews and reviews of the local prep sports scene, culminating with an annual live awards program co-sponsored by KACT-TV and *The Aurora Sentinel*.

Special interest groups have also been targeted with series like "More Alive" (1985) for seniors, "New Perspectives for Effective Living" (1984) and "Parks and Recreation Magazine" (1986-1987).

KACT-TV also produces single-event programs, including coverage of the Aurora Municipal Elections since 1983, Candidates Nights for local government and school board elections, a "State of the City" address by the mayor and local press coverage, various messages by the City Manager, and public meetings and events as requested by city and community groups.

Public Service Announcements have been taped since 1983 as a free service to non-profit groups and agencies. In addition, KACT-TV has been commissioned by City departments and outside organizations to produce informational and training tapes. The Community College of Aurora began using one channel in 1989 for cable casting college courses for credit. And, in 1990, KACT-TV arranged the first transmission of Mind Extension University daily on a third city-owned channel.

While the number of programs has increased, the staff at KACT-TV has remained approximately the same since 1985, with seven full-time members and two part-time staff members. To augment the crews, KACT-TV has designed a comprehensive volunteer and college intern program.

Volunteers and Interns

Volunteers serve a vital role in maintaining KACT-TV's production schedule. On the average, a studio shoot requires 10 crew positions. Volunteers serving as floor assistants, floor directors, and camera operators fill 50 percent of these positions. In the control room, they run the teleprompter, audio, VTR and graphics generator. For field segments, volunteers operate the videotape deck, monitor the audio, direct, produce and serve as talent.

KACT-TV's Internship Program began in the fall of 1983 with an audio major from Metropolitan State College running camera at City Council. Gradually, a comprehensive intern policy was developed with the goal of the successful intern having the knowledge necessary for an entry-level position in television production. Interns perform the same functions as volunteers, but their time is scheduled and they must successfully pass a test and complete a semester project.

Funding

As part of the ordinance, five percent of United Cable's income was supplied to the city, with three percent going to the General Fund and two percent to Television Services for staff salaries and equipment purchases. In 1984, due to changes in national cable legislation, the entire five percent went to KACT-TV. However, in 1987, the five percent was directed to the General Fund, and now KACT-TV must request its budget from the city of Aurora.

Audience Survey

KACT-TV's first audience survey took place by phone over the summer months of 1985. Two hundred responses were tabulated and KACT-TV developed the beginnings of an audience model.

In February 1986, 35,000 surveys were sent to Aurora in their United Cable bills, with a return of 996 responses. The second survey confirmed the same findings of the first: 75 percent of Aurorans with cable had watched Channel 8, "City Council" was the most watched program, followed by "Dateline...Aurora", and viewers wanted more coverage of local events and sports.

In direct response to the request for Aurora news, "News Inside Aurora," was developed. The 1987 survey confirmed the audience's desires when it revealed the program was the second most popular show directly behind "City Council" after only six months of cablecasting. Subsequently, "News Inside Aurora" became, and remains, the most watched program on KACT-TV.

Awards

Peers in the industry have progressively recognized programs produced by KACT-TV. Locally, Channel 8 programming consistently garners recognition from the Front Range Chapter of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (NFLCP) through the Franny Awards. KACT-TV also captured six local STARWARDS, sponsored by the Colorado MAC News, an industry magazine. Nationally, the station has won numerous awards, including the designation as "Best in the Nation" twice, from the National Association of Television Officers and Advisors (NATOA). Also in the national arena, KACT-TV has received numerous awards from NFLCP and an ACE Nomination for sports.

In January 1999, Television Services was moved under the Communications Office. Television Services staff moved to the new Aurora Municipal Center in March 2003.

Library Volunteer Programs

For many years the Library had welcomed volunteers on an informal basis and much had been accomplished through their contributions. In 1983, the Department initiated a formal recruitment and training plan so that volunteers could benefit the Library, respond to community needs and enrich their personal lives. This program acted as a conduit for individuals and organizations to contribute positively to the betterment of the community and the delivery of Library services. An adjunct to this program was the development of the Alternative Service concept whereby persons referred by local courts could volunteer in lieu of legal sanctions.

As the Library continued to grow and expand, its need for volunteers from the community increased. In order to recruit new volunteers, an active advertising campaign was begun in local newspapers, the local cable station, and the library newsletter. Taking advantage of the vast pool of retired senior citizens, the Library had begun to advertise with most of the senior organizations and newspapers in the area.

In one year, over 9,000 hours had been donated in volunteer time. In order to recognize the importance of this contribution to the library and community, an annual Volunteer Recognition party was instituted in the fall of each year. In addition, volunteers with over 100 hours of donated time have had their name inscribed on a special plaque on the first floor. Community recognition was given through the Aurora Sentinel's column, "The Aurora Insider". A personal article devoted to the individual volunteer was written and published weekly. By 2003, 8,605 hours were donated in volunteer time to the library for various programs.

In January 2001, the Library hired a Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for recruiting volunteers for city-sponsored events. KidSpree and PumpkinFest are several of the larger events volunteers are recruited for.

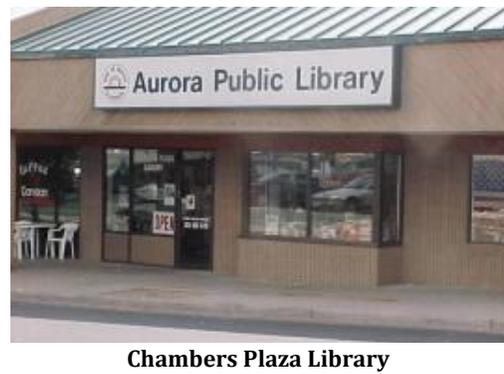
School/Library Cooperation

A joint-use library opened in October 1983. This was the first of its kind in Aurora. This concept combined library features of the Horizon Middle School, in the Cherry Creek School District, with that of the Aurora Public Library. Located on the second floor of the middle school, the Library offered services and materials to the students and staff during school hours and public use in the afternoon and evenings.

Through use of the Library's computerized circulation system and the Public Access Catalog, students and public alike had access to all the materials owned by the Aurora Public Library and the Arapahoe Regional Library District.

Northeast Reading Center – Chambers Plaza Library

Through the efforts of the Northeast Aurora Citizen's Council, the Homeowner's Association and other neighborhood organizations, the Northeast Reading Center opened in 1983 near 17th and Altura. The building, donated by the Aurora Public Schools as part of a cooperative effort, was remodeled and furnished through funds provided by a Community Development Block Grant.



Chambers Plaza Library

At the end of the year, a collection of almost 8,000 items served nearly 3,000 customers with 6,800 circulations. The Altura Chapter 1 program, whose purpose was to provide extra instruction for students needing help in reading, was involved in the Library Card Drive at the facility.

Due to its somewhat secluded location, the facility did not draw large public response. The building, though within walking distance of two major arteries, Colfax Avenue and Chambers Road, was not close enough to attract users. And by its proximity to Altura Elementary School, it was sometimes perceived as another school building. Efforts were begun to make Northeast Reading Center more cost efficient. Staffing was revised to place temporary help at the site and the Library Assistant in charge alternated part of her hours with North Branch Library.

The year 1986 saw the development of the Cooperation in Action Program, which radically increased the usage of Northeast Reading Center. Taking advantage of the proximity of Altura and Laredo Elementary Schools, the program provided more library services to students than were otherwise available from their own schools' libraries.

Northeast Reading Center also became the base for the long postponed Telephone Renewal service. First conceived in 1984 and dropped due to staffing reorganizations, the project was approached from new angles, moving ahead quickly to implementation in December 1986. Within six months, renewal statistics had jumped 55 percent from the first full month of operation. By July 1987, 3,000 people had renewed over 9,000 items on the special phone number. Public response was overwhelming in favor of the service and many of the initial doubts about successful delivery failed to materialize.

In 1991, the Telephone Renewal Service was improved by the substitution of the Voicemail system for the answering machine used previously. The Voicemail system allowed for the storage of more renewal messages overnight, a longer, more detailed greeting message, and remote processing of renewal transactions. In October 2003, a 2-line Telephone Renewal System was purchased.

In June 2001, The Northeast Reading Center was moved to a leased space in the Chambers Plaza Shopping Center. The library was renamed the Chambers Plaza Library. The library was more visible to the community and it wasn't long before the staff was very busy. From June through December 2001, Chambers Plaza Library had 18,365 customer visits. This is a

considerable increase of customers if compared to January through December 2000 when the customer count was only 11,793. The yearly total of customers in 2003 was 54,661 and circulation was 72,609.

Moorhead Library Center

The Recreation Division combined with the Library Department in the summer of 1995. The Department name changed to Library, Recreation and Television Services. This move was highly beneficial for both the libraries and recreation because of the services they could offer to one another and to the public.

In 1999, recreation and library staff began meeting to see how they could cooperatively work to better meet the needs of North Aurora residents. Original Aurora Renewal, as well as North and West after school programs, had surveyed residents about desired programs. Computers, ESL classes, financial management, and home repairs were among the educational topics adults wanted access to.

Staff began to talk about how to utilize the Library's resources best and the idea of a library outreach and computer lab at the Moorhead Recreation Center began to evolve.

On June 10, 1999, Moorhead hosted an ice cream social for neighborhood residents. At that event, citizens, both youth and adults, completed a "60-second survey" identifying what they would like to see at Moorhead. One of the top five items for both youth and adults was "library services," It was number one for the youth.

A CDBG Grant proposal for \$20,000 was submitted for the renovation of one of the offices at Moorhead Recreation Center for use as a library outreach center. This center would include two or three computers for community usage.

In October 1999, the CDBG grant award was announced and work began. The old Teen Scene office was converted into a library center. One wall was taken out to expand the room into an adjoining closet. This also created a natural skylight and new carpeting, wiring for computers, shelving for books, and table and chairs for computers were put in. There were three computers providing access to the library online system and the internet. A small collection of books and tapes, some in English and others in Spanish, were also provided. Customers could get library cards and checkout and return books to Moorhead. They could also request materials from other libraries and pick them up at Moorhead. Customers could type resumes, search the Web and perform other computer functions.

The new Moorhead Library Center opened for use by local residents on Aug. 15, 2000. In March 2001, a small grant from Parks and Recreation for People was obtained to support a teen library team. The "LibTeens" formed and began training immediately. By April 2001, five youth were taking turns staffing the library learning center every afternoon from 3 to 5 p.m. These youth checked materials in and out, helped users on the computers, and assisted customers with library card applications. In addition, the LibTeens also held story time during the summer months when many younger children were out of school and attending Moorhead Recreation Center for swimming and other recreational activities.

In 2001, Moorhead Library Center won an award from the Colorado Library Association for Exemplary Library Services to Ethnic Populations.

Cooperative Ventures

The APAL Group (Arapahoe Public Access to Libraries), consisting of four public library systems in Arapahoe County, was formed in 1983 to explore cooperative endeavors and to provide the highest quality library service to residents of the county. The purpose of the group was to facilitate communication and cooperation and to maximize the potential of each library by complementing, rather than duplicating each other's efforts. Participating libraries were Aurora, Englewood, Littleton and Arapahoe Regional.

With a combined collection of over 530,000 items, the APAL system offered resources in genealogy, State and Federal documents, large print, Western History, cassettes and videotapes and many other interests.

A major strength was CLSI computer compatibility between the four member systems. Agreements were drafted providing for cooperative cataloging, projects with school districts and involvement with the IRVING network group. A Union List of Periodicals in APAL Libraries was a long-awaited feature as was the pooling of money for joint purchase of reference materials and establishment of a Reference Subcommittee. Future goals included continued collection evaluation and cooperative training and programming. The online CLSI collection database experienced a major hardware upgrade in March of 1992, which gave the system added data storage room and increased speed. A significant software upgrade and format change became operational in October 1992. This change allowed the staff more flexibility in accessing records and gave the customers more options when looking for material.

Other joint efforts included participation in the CLSI Round Robin Apple project and the Arapahoe/Aurora sharing of Interlibrary Loan functions.

A most unusual cooperative arrangement came into being in 1981, much of it initially verbal, between David Price of the Library and Donald Colberg of the Southeast Metropolitan Board of Cooperative Services (SEMBCS). SEMBCS was already providing cataloging services for the Cherry Creek School libraries and since it was using the Dewey classification scheme and the OCLC database, just as the Aurora system did, the possibility existed for an extremely useful joint venture. SEMBCS had a smoothly running operation of twelve years' duration, using professional and Para-professional catalogers.

SEMBCS agreed to catalog for both the schools and the Library in a more consistent operation. The library gained a welcome reduction of its huge backlog of uncataloged materials, a faster turnaround of new items and the elimination of a separate cataloging staff at the Library.

This cooperative union with SEMBCS, while initially advantageous due to processing shortcuts and faster delivery, eventually was dissolved when the Library established its own on-site cataloging and processing section. The arrangement was so successful that the Library even performed book processing for other school systems. However, in March 2002, the schools changed software and decided to do their own cataloging in-house. In 2003, the onsite cataloging and processing section processed approximately 50,000 items for the seven Aurora Public Libraries.

Community College of Aurora

Another major cooperative effort unfolded in 1983 when the new Community College of Aurora contracted with the Aurora Public Library for college library services. The benefits of this unique arrangement provided the college with accreditation as a college without walls.

The contract required that the Aurora Public Library and the college work jointly on the development of library services associated with an institution of higher education. Some of these services were:

- Reserve Center: specific area for material reserves to be used primarily by CCA students.
- Media Services: development of media collections most closely supporting college curriculum.
- Collection Development: contribution of three percent of the departments' bookstock/collection development funds toward the selection and acquisition of research-related materials.

In addition to integrating the resources of CCA and the Aurora Public Library for the provision of curriculum-related materials and services for both students and faculty, the enterprise was viewed as an asset to the community at large. The Library and its clientele would benefit through the expanded numbers and kinds of resources available from the college. Thus the resources of both the Community College and the Aurora Public Library were maximized through this joint venture.

New Directions

In 1984, the city of Aurora welcomed James R. Griesemer, the new City Manager, who brought with him concepts of management not unlike that of the Library's David Price. Strongly emphasizing budgeting for results rather than the previous line item request method, the City Manager began to implement sweeping changes to thought and action long prevalent in city activities. To accomplish his reforms, he began to gather talented and forward-thinking employees as the core of his management team. One of those tapped to join this group was David Price, who was appointed one of several Deputy City Managers.

Price's departure left a vacancy at the library during a time of continuous growth and an immediate replacement was essential. Price would still oversee the Library's progress at a city administrative level, so he was able to appoint his own successor from existing Library staff. Chosen to fill this vacancy was Thomas Nicholas, who had been associated with the system for a number of years in many capacities and now functioned as Staff Services Manager. Thomas Nicholas was appointed Acting Library Director in April 1984 and officially as Library Director in August 1984.

Thomas Nicholas, like his predecessor David Price, believed in placing qualified staff where they would do the most good, but chose to emphasize operations over administrative developments. More opportunities were created for Librarians through greater responsibilities. A number of management concepts were devised to handle growing public service needs. Nicholas' past experience in library operations gave him the insight needed to creatively organize and revamp both budget and operations, skills that would be dramatically tested in the years to come.

Like the city itself, the Library now headed toward a leaner, tighter organizational structure, reflecting the needs of the community while remaining within more realistic fiscal boundaries.

Trends in the City and the Library

As Thomas Nicholas was establishing his leadership within the Library, a disquieting trend in City fortunes began to surface. In the '70s and early '80s, the economy had propelled Aurora into expansion as the second largest city in Colorado. The Library had enjoyed a rapid growth in facilities and services and more was planned for the rest of the decade. But in early 1983, economic indicators warned of a sudden decline as annual revenue began to drop. The city suddenly faced prospects of financial catastrophe as federal revenue sharing ceased and the economy continued to flatten.

Preventative action began in 1984 and proceeded on into 1987. The Library, following the lead of the City Administration, devised the first of many creative plans to regain economic strength. One was new and increased fines and fees for city services, another was the elimination of non-essential functions such as Bookmobiles, and a third was planning short-term service reductions. Notwithstanding the significant impacts these actions had on the Library, they were very sound and proactive measures, which helped save the City from certain fiscal bankruptcy.

Another management tool introduced in the mid-'80s was the concept of "user level-of-satisfaction," a measurement of operational effectiveness in which users of city services evaluated a department's ability to deliver services. The standard was set at 80 percent level-of-satisfaction for all operations. Nicholas' philosophy of management not only enhanced the City Manager's philosophy of results budgeting and user level-of-satisfaction, but focused on a systematic concept of "quality of services" as developed and delivered from employee to employee, from management to employee and from the organization to the library user.

By 1985, the Library budget began a trimming process, both from within the Library and from external sources, such as a \$50,000 reduction in bookstock by City Council to meet overall general fund reductions. Internally, a broad consolidation in organizational structures such as reclassification downward of selected positions, consolidation of Collection Development staff and the merging of City Archives and Municipal Reference Library resulted in a savings of over \$200,000.

In 1985, 773,000 customers were served and over 1.3 million items circulated. These figures were doubled that of 1981, just before the new Central Library was opened. Citizen support and satisfaction was evident.

The Library was asked to fund its own 1986 Cost-of-Living increases and employee step increases, yet was able to revert the required 5 percent due to the reorganizations directed by Nicholas. Although a proposed Fire Station/Library joint-use facility was postponed, public level-of-satisfaction rose from 91 percent to 94 percent and general management of operations improved.

Dial-A-Story was a new community service in 1986. Children could now call the library at any time to hear a new story or a classic favorite tale by dialing a free local number.

The Meeting Room Services, begun in 1984, were now serving over 32,000 customers annually in 1,400 meeting events; significant strides toward recovering operational costs were made by concentrating on business clients.

Despite some cutbacks, the collection grew to 287,000 items. Access to materials was brought up-to-date by the installation of the Public Access Catalog terminals in all library facilities. Although some customer dissatisfaction with an automated catalog was recorded, staff pursued the training of the public in use of the PACs. More and more simplified user instructions were provided in the next three years.

In 1986, library staff cooperated with the non-profit group Aurora Musica, Inc. to raise \$11,500 to purchase a grand piano for the Central Library Community Room. In that same year a new security system to prevent unauthorized removal of library materials was installed at the Central Library and an indoor bookdrop was installed at South Branch Library.

In 1990, the Aurora Public Library retained the services of a collection agency to encourage customers to return checked out items. Library users with overdue materials receive two notices. If items are not back within seven days of the second notice, accounts go to a collection agency for processing. This process has been very successful.

In an effort to make paying fines, fees, lost-book and meeting services charges more convenient, the Aurora Public Library started accepting Visa and MasterCard in 1990.

In 1991, the library installed modems to allow the public to dial into the online catalogue from personal computers at home or work. Now, anyone with a PC or modem could find out which Aurora library had an item(s) and whether it was checked out before going to the library to look for it.

The Magni-Cam, a small hand held camera and magnifying reader, was introduced to Aurora's visually-impaired community in 1992. The camera gave people who are visually impaired the ability to read almost any item.

The Library received a grant from the Colorado State Library in 1992 to train senior citizens in the art of storytelling. Three half day workshops were held and from these, the first Aurora "Spellbinders" group was launched. This program has proven extremely popular among children as they listen to stories told through the wisdom of our senior citizen "Spellbinders".

In 1992, Central Library did a major reorganization of service desks in order to provide better service to the customers. The Reference and Media desks were combined into one unit and items previously housed in the Media area were consolidated with circulation items to make it more convenient for customers.

The city of Aurora was instrumental in the development and implementation of a statewide Colorado Library Card Program in 1992 that allowed any resident to use libraries within the state with their home library card and without fees. The program was unique in the country because it included school libraries, special libraries, public libraries and academic libraries.

The Aurora Public Library joined with the University of Colorado at Boulder in providing live engineering classes, to begin in the Spring of 1993. The classes were broadcast via microwave

to the North Branch Library and by speakerphone the students could actively participate in these classes.

The Downward Trend Continues

The year 1986 loomed less than optimistic. The planned budget was 7 percent less than in 1985 and Personal Services funding was reduced by 9 percent, all in permanent salaries. Bookstock support decreased nearly \$50,000 from the previous year and Council reduced initial CIP appropriation by \$100,000 to offset general fund shortages.

Despite the sustained financial pinch, the Library continued to identify and implement creative methods of providing current and new services. Public Service hours were reduced in the summer of 1986 at the Central Library as well as being reduced in the Branch system through the end of the year.

Phase II of the IRVING Network was completed to bring on-line the public libraries of Denver, Boulder, Louisville and the academic libraries of the University of Colorado, Auraria and Northern Colorado. Technical Systems Support staff was instrumental in developing IRVING technology step-by-step.

Despite cutbacks in funding and services, the 1986 Junior Reading Program received 2nd place in the Colorado Library Association competition for best summer reading program in its division, a tribute to creativity in hard times.

A 33,000 increase in collection items over the previous year brought the total to 310,000. A notable addition was a major purchase of Business Periodicals on microfilm to increase business resource materials. Collection development analysis was automated using CLSI and IBM technology. Additionally, the mending services program used the skills and labor of nursing home residents to increase the number of mended materials to over 15,000 annually.

Friends of the Aurora Public Library

The Friends of the Aurora Public Library was incorporated in January 1987 in the State of Colorado as an active group for the first time since 1977. The Aurora Library Board initiated the organization and was its parent until the organizational structure was formed.

For some years an annual book sale provided operating revenues for the organization as well as some financial support to the Aurora Public Library.



Book Outlet

The annual book sale took on another aspect when the Friends, in a combined effort with the city of Aurora and the Library, were granted permission to reactivate a bookmobile as a used book outlet. In July 1990, the bookmobile (*Mobile Aurora Book Library Exchange: MABLE*) opened for business. Appropriate signs covered the sides of the van making it a visible vehicle. It was first parked at the Central Library, but later was moved to other Branch Libraries

In January 1991, the Friends opened a storefront for permanent book sales at 14573 E. Alameda Ave., eventually to be known as the Book Outlet. The extra space and stable location

facilitated the acceptance and sale of donated materials from the community and the Library. The project was successful due to the generosity of Bank Western, which donated store space. Also contributing was the support of the community and the Friends' membership, which provided the volunteers who ran the Book Outlet.

In addition to book sale efforts, the Friends have sponsored entertaining and educational programs, free to the public. Mystery Night, Book Evaluations, and local authors have helped the Aurora Community become aware of the Aurora Public Library's important position in the life and culture of Aurora. The Friends continue to improve their offerings of fine programs to the public as one of their important goals.

The Friends annually recognize the importance of the volunteer, contributing to the Library's appreciation as well as recognizing the many volunteers who support the Friends projects. The libraries' staffs are also honored with a special breakfast celebration every year.

Of special interest to the Friends is sponsorship of the Summer Reading program for children as well as children's programs throughout the year. Additional financial support to the Aurora Public Library is made when funds become available; the group has obtained equipment, films and special supplies for the entire Library system. Between 1990 and 2003, the Friends donated \$252,580 to the Library for programs and items not covered in the library budget. In 2003 and 2004, the Friends took on the total sponsorship of the Summer Reading Program.

The Friends moved the Book Outlet to a new location, 340 S. Chambers Road, in May 2000. This location was more visible and business thrived. Space was a problem with all the books that were being donated and the Friends started looking for a bigger space at the end of 2003. When the Library decided to expand Iliff Square Library, the Friends asked if there would be space for the Book Outlet. After much discussion with city staff and the Friends, it was decided that the city would lease space to the Friends for the Book Outlet.

On March 5, 2005, the Friends opened for the last time at 340 S. Chambers Road. On March 7, 2005, the Friends started packing to move to a new, larger space, adjacent to the Iliff Square Library. The Book Outlet at 2243 S. Peoria St. has about twice the space of the old Book Outlet.

A Proud Heritage of Service

Since the 1920s, the Aurora Public Library has developed from one room in Sarah Wood's home to a public library system with the second largest circulation in the State of Colorado.

Several thousand dedicated Aurora residents have built this community resource. Members and leaders of supportive organizations from the Aurora Women's Club to the Friends of the Aurora Public Library have given their efforts and time to provide the community support needed. Officials of the Library Board of Trustees and the City Council provided leadership in establishing the library system. The dedicated staff have made quality library service a reality.

In 2009, the Aurora Public Library celebrated its 80th Anniversary. Library services and resources will change, but the tradition of support will maintain the commitment to provide Aurora residents a valuable resource for future generations.