

By the mid 90's, an important and fervently hoped for goal had been achieved. Every citizen in Wells County had access to a modern, full-service library facility along with the educational, informational, and entertainment benefits that accompanied its presence.



A GOOD HEAD AND A GOOD HEART ARE ALWAYS A FORMIDABLE COMBINATION. Nelson Mandela

On April 8, 1994 an exceptional honor was bestowed upon Library Director, Barbara Elliott. During a Library Federation luncheon in Indianapolis, she was named Outstanding Librarian for the state of Indiana. This award is presented annually to recognize individuals who have contributed to the excellence of Indiana libraries and who have given distinguished service to the profession.

Several letters of nomination had been submitted on her behalf, including letters from the Library Board and from the library staff. A reception was held in her honor at the library so that local supporters could express their congratulations and pride in Mrs. Elliott's achievement.

A year later, at an Open House celebrating her retirement and illustrious career in the library field, the Library Board named Barbara "Director Emeritus."

EVERYTHING CHANGES BUT CHANGE ITSELF. EVERYTHING FLOWS AND NOTHING REMAINS THE SAME...YOU CANNOT STEP TWICE INTO THE SAME RIVER, FOR OTHER WATERS AND YET OTHERS GO FLOWING EVER ON. Heraclitus

At the end of the nineties, as we approached a new decade, a new century, and, most significantly, a new millennium, the emphasis subtly shifted from construction to enhanced services in other areas.

Programming has grown dramatically over the years. Beginning at birth and continuing to adulthood, every single age group is now targeted with customized programming.



The position of Young Adult Librarian was added so that our teen patrons would have a staff member specifically focused on their needs. This is an age of natural attrition for library users, so we want to encourage our teens to remain loyal to their library habit.

Winter Reading Programs, Family Reading Programs, Teen Reading Programs, and Summer Reading Programs encourage and reward reading at all age levels throughout the year.



As we celebrate our centennial, we are able to do things never dreamed of by patrons in 1902. We can listen to professionally produced books on cassettes and CD's, we can watch video tapes and DVD's, we can access a variety of CD ROM databases to find phone numbers, study Indiana laws, chart a trip from door to door, investigate American businesses, research medical information, consider colleges, and examine poetry (and much, much more.) Often a keyword is all that is necessary to find the information we are seeking.

The library has a computer available for people with disabilities. On this computer, the keys come equipped with the Braille alphabet, the monitor enlarges images, and the sound card has the ability to read text to a patron.

Internet stations are available where patrons can search an immense network of information or instantly mail a friend electronically. The library has a website where patrons can search the library's holdings from the comfort of their homes and place reserves on materials they wish to check out.

The vast variety of materials available to today's patrons would have seemed positively preposterous to Wells County residents one hundred years ago. Imagine—nearly 90,000 books, 130 art prints, 2,000 musical cassettes and CD's and an equal number of audio books, subscriptions to over 350 magazines and newspapers and more than 6,000 videos—all available to any Wells County citizen with a library card.

As we look forward to the next one hundred years, we can anticipate changes as enormous as the ones library users have experienced during the previous one hundred years. Will libraries become all digital? Will people, passionate about their books and reading, be unwilling to relinquish the fragrance of paper and ink, the tactile experience of holding a book in their hands and turning its pages? Will the library, with its roots back to ancient times, survive technology, indeed embrace it and evolve with it?

In 2102 will Wells County citizens still cherish a place where they can meet communally with other kindred spirits, and yet be alone with their own imaginations and with the thoughts and words of all those who have come before? Will this warehouse of human memory be revered well into the next century? We believe, most emphatically, that it will.

At the dawn of this new millennium (and at the end of this history) let us each remember the words of Malcolm Forbes:

THE RICHEST PERSON IN THE WORLD, IN FACT ALL THE RICHES IN THE WORLD—COULDN'T PROVIDE YOU WITH ANYTHING LIKE THE ENDLESS, INCREDIBLE LOOT AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY. YOU CAN MEASURE THE AWARENESS, THE BREADTH AND THE WISDOM OF A CIVILIZATION, A NATION, A PEOPLE, BY THE PRIORITY GIVEN TO PRESERVING THESE REPOSITORIES OF ALL THAT WE ARE, ALL THAT WE WERE, OR WILL BE.

LIBRARY DIRECTORS

IT IS EASY TO GET A THOUSAND SOLDIERS, BUT DIFFICULT TO GET A GENERAL. Chinese Proverb

1902-1909—MISS BERTHA CRAVEN, a daughter of Mr. And Mrs. J. H. Craven of Miller Street in Bluffton, was in charge of the library that was housed in the high school building. When the Bluffton Public Library was established, she was employed as the first librarian. She resigned to marry Homer D. Baker, who was a superintendent of the W. B. Brown Chandelier Company.

1909-1911—MISS MARY ROTHERMAL resided in Bluffton for all of her pre-married life. She was the daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Albert Z. Rothermal of East South Street. She resigned her position to marry Mr. Ralph Silver of Wooster, Ohio, who was working as a newspaperman for the Birmingham Age-Herald in Birmingham, Alabama.

1911-1912—MISS ISOBEL DUBOIS was born in Newpaltz, New York, and graduated from the Library Department of Drexel Institute of Art, Science and Industry in Philadelphia. Prior to coming to Bluffton, she worked at the Newpaltz Normal School Library. She resigned to accept a position at the South Side Library in Fort Wayne.

1912-1919—MISS NANNIE JAYNE was born in Queensville, Jennings County, Indiana, and graduated from North Vernon High School. She was a teacher for many years before obtaining her library training in Indianapolis. She served in the Alexandria Library before coming to Bluffton. Miss Jayne was stricken with illness in August 1918, from which she never recovered. She died March 28, 1919.

1919-1938—MRS. IDA ASHBAUCHER, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Mast, was born in Rockcreek Township in 1867. She was graduated from Bluffton High School, Terre Haute Normal School, and attended the Bluffton Business College. Prior

to her work in the library, she worked as a cashier in a store, a teacher, a secretary in a law office, and as the deputy recorder for Wells County. Upon the death of her husband, Benjamin Ashbacher in 1914, she began work as an assistant librarian. She was appointed head librarian in 1919 and served in that position until 1938, when she again worked as assistant librarian until her retirement in 1941 at the age of seventy-four.

1938-1940—MISS MARGUERTIA McDONALD was a native of British Columbia, Canada, and later became a naturalized citizen of the United States. She attended the library school at the University of Wisconsin and served as librarian at the Whitewater, Wisconsin Public Library and reference librarian at the Seattle Public library before coming to this city She resigned to accept a position in the West.

1940-1944—MISS ELSA STRASSWEG lived in Evansville, Indiana, where she was in charge of the county work at the Evansville library. She resigned that position to continue her education in library science at the St. Louis Library School. After the completion of her training, she accepted the job as head librarian here. She resigned the Bluffton position to accept the job of director of the New Albany-Floyd County Public Library.

1944-1966—MISS CLARA STURGIS was a daughter of Dr. Charles and Anna Deam Sturgis of Bluffton. She graduated from Bluffton High School and DePauw University, later returning to DePauw as a teacher of French and Spanish. She joined the Bluffton Library staff in 1941 as a reference librarian and accepted the head librarian position three years later. She retired at the age of seventy in 1966.

1966-1975—MRS. ELIZABETH MASON is a native of Huntsville in Randolph County, Indiana. She graduated from Lynn High School and Purdue University and received a Master's Degree in Library Science from Indiana University. Mrs. Mason's previous library work before coming to Bluffton included library director of the Winchester Public Library and reference librarian at

Richmond's Morrisson-Reeve Library. She retired from the Bluffton-Wells County Public Library in July 1975.

1975-1981—MR. CHARLES JORAY was born in Bluffton but spent his childhood in Berne. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from Ball State University and a Master of Library Science Degree from Indiana University. Prior to coming to Bluffton, he held positions as assistant medical librarian at the Marion County General Hospital and head librarian at the Hartford City Public Library. Charles left the Wells County Public Library to accept the position of Director at Kokomo-Howard Public Library, where he is still serving today.

1982-1989—MISS MARILYN HITE was a graduate of Spencer High School in Spencer, IN. Marilyn received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Indiana University and, subsequently, her Masters of Library Science also from IU. Marilyn came to Bluffton in 1978 to serve as Children's and Outreach Librarian. Under her leadership, the children's and outreach programs significantly expanded. Upon Mr. Joray's resignation, Miss Hite was named Director of the Wells Co. Public Library in April 1982. She prepared much of the groundwork for the arduous building project for the new library. Amid great praise and commendation for her outstanding work for the library, Marilyn resigned in 1989 to pursue career opportunities in Ohio.

1989-1995—MRS. BARBARA ELLIOTT was a Bluffton native where she graduated valedictorian of her high school. She graduated with a chemistry degree from Indiana University, Summa Cum Laude. Barbara set up and operated a medium-size technical library in the fields of chemistry, metallurgy and ceramics for the Uranium Division of the Mallenckrodt Chemical Company in St. Louis. When she moved back to Indiana, Mrs. Elliott worked in the St. Francis College Library in Fort Wayne. She then returned to Indiana University to earn her Masters of Library Science Degree in 1979. She began her tenure at the Wells Co. Public Library as the Reference and Adult Services Librarian, became Assistant Director in 1982, and then in 1989 was named Director, a position she held until her retirement in 1995.

1995-1997—MR. JOHN CASTLEMAN was raised on a farm near Monroeville, IN. John graduated from Monroeville High School (which later became Heritage High School.) He received a teaching degree from Ball State University and a Masters in Library Science at Indiana University. Prior to coming to Bluffton, he was Director of libraries in Crown Point, IN and in the North Madison County Library in Elwood, IN. He resigned in 1997.

1997- — MRS. STEPHANIE DAVIS was born in Indianapolis where she graduated from St. Mary Academy. She earned her undergraduate degree in math education and psychology and a master's degree in guidance and counseling from Ball State University. Stephanie taught math at New Palestine High School before moving with her family to Bluffton in 1977. She divided her time among substitute teaching, involvement in service organizations, volunteering, and caring for her three children. Her library career began in 1986 when Stephanie began working in Children's Services. She was named Interim Director in 1997 and then became Co-Director with Sara Gartin (who is currently Systems Director) in 1999. Sara, who holds the requisite Masters in Library Science degree, graciously served in that capacity until Stephanie completed her MLS from Indiana University (a state requirement for her position.) Stephanie was named Director in 2001 and holds that position today.



Looking across the CD collection in the Main Library's concourse toward the Young Adult alcove and the "READ" fabric art, created and constructed by staff member, Cindy Burchell