


History of the Corpus Christi Public Libraries

- November 1905** ● Several young, single Corpus Christi women organize La Retama Study Club, named for the flowering tree. The Club’s objectives are study and social enjoyment.
- 1907** ● La Retama Club defines an urgent need for a public library and begins raising funds. The club's first project, a book shower held at the Ladies Pavilion, brought 200 books for the library.
- 1909** ● The library stocked with 500 books, opens in one room of the Hatch & Robertson Building in downtown Corpus Christi. Club members serve as volunteer librarians. Patrons pay \$1.25 for library cards. Revenue goes towards the purchase of books. Fundraising efforts continue. At a peanut hunt, children pay 10 cents for a glass of lemonade and all the peanuts they can find. The event raises \$20.
- 1914** ● Marie von Blucher is hired as the first librarian.
- 1916** ● Fire breaks out in the building that houses the library. Fearing books would feed the flames, firefighters threw volumes out the windows. La Retama Club members carry some books to safety, hang wet and smoke-damaged books on ropes to dry.
- 1919** ● Club members announce a fundraising drive. Goal: \$1,000. September hurricane destroys most of the library's collection. Books are soaked with saltwater, mud, and oil. Club members again dry and treat as many volumes as possible. Library closes.
- September 1920** ● Library re-opens in the Timon home on Mesquite Street. Library moves again this year to rooms in the State Hotel.
- 1925** ● Library returns to building across the street from 505 Mesquite.
- 1926** ● Although the City of Corpus Christi had provided some funds to the library over the years, budget limitations had never allowed full funding. In 1926, La Retama Club members launch a campaign to turn the library over to the City. In June, City agrees to pay club \$1 for the library and to take over operations.
- 1927** ● City takes over library operations, moves library to City Hall at 505 Mesquite.

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- 1935** ● City Hall was remodeled and became La Retama Library and remained in that location until 1986.
- 1960's & 1970's** ● Library collection and services are expanded through these decades. Branches are added to serve growing areas of the city. Branches added: Parkdale (1962), Greenwood (1966), a small Flour Bluff branch (1978), and Northwest (1982).
- 1979** ● The third floor of La Retama Library closed due to structural problems. Serious efforts, to plan new central library begin.
- 1982** ● Corpus Christi voters authorize \$5 million capital improvements city bond sale to build a new library to replace La Retama. The Library Board organizes a fundraising campaign to augment \$5 million planned for construction. Ultimately \$1.5 million is raised.
- 1984** ● New library construction begins at Comanche and Tancahua streets with a ground-breaking ceremony held on Sept. 18.
- 1985** ● Herb Canales appointed Library Director.
- 1986** ● New Central Library opens on June 10.
- 1987** ● Library automated system installed.
- 1991** ● Greenwood Branch Library expanded and remodeled.
- 1992** ● Parkdale Branch Library expanded and remodeled.
- 1997** ● LINCC (Library Information Network of Corpus Christi) implemented. First Lady of Texas, Laura Bush, dedicated computer system on February 14, 1997.
- 1998** ● Janet and Ed Harte donate \$1.84 million to the City of Corpus Christi for a new branch library in Flour Bluff.
- 1999** ● Ground broken for new branch in Flour Bluff.
- 2000** ● New Janet F. Harte Public Library opens.
- 2007** ● Northwest Branch Library expanded and remodeled with the addition of the Clif Moss Nature Education Center. Ground broken for new branch on the south side.

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- 2008** ● Parkdale Branch Library expanded and remodeled and renamed the Anita and W.T. Neyland Public Library. Central Library renamed La Retama Central Library.
- 2009** ● The Dr. Clotilde P. Garcia Library opens on the south side of Corpus Christi, next to the Kaffie Middle School. This sixth public library serves a large residential population in one of Corpus Christi's rapidly growing areas.
- 2009** ● Laura Bush opened our centennial celebration in October.
- 2010** ● The Corpus Christi Public Libraries hosted nearly 30 events in honor of our 100th anniversary.
- 2011** ● Greenwood Branch Library closes for a year-long renovation and remodeling.
- 2012** ● On August 28 the City Council approved the renaming of the Greenwood Branch library for Mayor Ben F. McDonald, who promoted the development of branch libraries during the 1960s. In September the library opened with a new name and new children's area. The Velia and Joe De Leon Children's Library is located inside the Ben F. McDonald Public Library. Both were library supporters and, like Mayor McDonald, were involved in the construction of the Greenwood Library which opened in 1966. The focus of the children's library is astronomy, engineering, math, science and technology.
- In October long-time library director, Herb Canales, is appointed Interim Assistant City Manager. Laura Zavala Garcia is appointed Interim Library Director.
- On October 30 the City Council approved the renaming of the Northwest Branch Library for popular local geologist and educator Owen R. Hopkins. He was instrumental in arranging for the installation of a 14-foot Columbian Mammoth Front Leg Bone at the Northwest Branch Library.
- 2013** ● In January long-time library employee, Laura Zavala Garcia is appointed Director of Libraries.
- 2019** ● The McDonald Library is chosen as a member of the National Network of Family Place Libraries.