Library services thrive in this community. We can review more than 100 years of public library service with pride and distinction. The Bryan + College Station Public Library System serves the citizens of Brazos County.

From the opening of the historic Carnegie Library in 1903, to the construction of the Bryan Library in 1969 and its remodeling in 1995, the beginning of the College Station Branch Library in 1987 and its new building in 1998, we came full circle with the restoration of the Carnegie Library in 1999. The expanded Sterling C. Evans Library at Texas A&M, restoration of the Cushing Library, the Bush Presidential Library and the ever expanding school libraries add to library resources available to residents of this community.

A comprehensive look at the history of library services from 1903 through 1986 is in a chapter of the publication “Brazos County History--Rich Past, Bright Future”, the city of Bryan’s award winning Sesquicentennial project, available to check out from the Bryan and College Station Libraries.

Old and new photographs, scanned and digitized, are reproduced in this document to help the reader visualize the history of the library system.
This background paper describes the growth of the system, innovations and transitions over the past.

**BRYAN + COLLEGE STATION**

Bryan and College Station participate in a unique situation, having signed an interlocal governmental contract in 1986 for Bryan to operate a branch library in College Station. How did this come about? In 1979 College Station began contributing money to Bryan to purchase books for the Bryan Library. The funding began at $15,000 and reached $30,000 annually in just a few years. Minutes from a CS city council meeting stated the $30,000 was in appreciation of a well-run library. The funds provided a spurt of growth for the Bryan Library collection.

In 1989 a second citizen committee was formed. In 1990, the City Council downsized the recommendation by that committee to build a 30,000 square foot library. However, the bond issue to construct a new facility of half that size failed by seven votes in 1991. In 1995 a bond issue finally passed that resulted in the construction of a 16,000 square foot library. A library task force was appointed by the CS city council. Larry Ringer, having retired from being Mayor, was chosen to head the group. A member of the Bryan
Library Board, the late Bill Barzak, was appointed along with others who were active in the Friends of the Library. This board traveled in Texas to visit libraries and raised an additional $300,000 to pay for added features in the new library, which was designed by architect Bill Hidell.

The contract with Bryan was revised and designated the Bryan City Librarian as the Community Librarian to be the administrator of the library staff and operations. It provided for a new makeup of the Library Advisory Board. Four members are from Bryan and four are from College Station.

The new College Station Library opened March 12, 1998 and circulation promptly doubled. The Library opened in a highly visible location across from the high school with 10 public access computers with Internet connections, a snack bar, two study rooms, a meeting room, modem outlets for laptops, in an attractive, colorful modern building.

In 2004 the College Station Library was renamed in honor of former Mayor Larry J. Ringer.

LIBRARY AUTOMATION

When the Bryan Library acquired its first computer in 1981, the concept of automating the card catalog, the circulation services, and cataloging was a staggering thought. Technology to automate libraries was very expensive and still evolving at that time. The questions we had were common to many libraries our size in Texas. Where would the money come from? Who had enough
technology training to get us there? Could we do it by ourselves? How long would it take? In a few years we were at the right time to begin retrospective conversion of the library card catalog. Using a work station of a personal computer enhanced with six CD ROM drives donated by the Friends of the Library, the Central Texas Library System automation consultant trained the Bryan librarians to use a bibliographic conversion program to create a union catalog with 59 other libraries. Searching was accomplished by using six Library of Congress disks containing millions of titles. The results provided downloadable descriptions of more than 50% of our holdings. A library vendor could extract our bibliographic records from this union catalog. That feature, plus the access to a union catalog, launched the library on the highway to automation.

Librarians began the transition to this new technology with enthusiasm. They were trained to create MARC records, a national standard for bibliographic records. The database creation underway, the City Librarian began visiting automated libraries -- Waco, San Marcos, Austin, Round Rock, Georgetown, and Hillsboro.

Interest centered on a system developed by librarians in Provo, Utah, called Dynix. The library literature gave it the highest evaluation of automation for public libraries. Four of the libraries we visited were automated with Dynix. Several staff members visited these libraries and tried out the online terminals and talked with the staff about what they liked and disliked. Finally in 1995 the needed amount of money from both cities was pledged and a 70 page RFP was issued.

Then remember what happened?

An arsonist set fire to the Bryan Library in the early morning hours of March 28, 1995 and our technology transition came to a standstill. The Dynix RFP was accepted but postponed. During the five-month reconstruction of the library building, we moved our database operations to a warehouse where we also cleaned and stored books and other items. During the reconstruction, the staff spread out, some working at the branch library, some located in the city’s municipal building, and others in the warehouse. After what seemed a very long time, the Bryan library reopened in September of 1995 and implementing the automation system became the priority. Equipment was ordered and installed in July 1996 with the card catalog and cataloging going online first. Barcoding, an intensive project, took several months. Circulation went online in May of 1997. We preregistered 5,000 patrons before summer started.

Gates Computer Lab Opens January 2001

What a difference automation makes in our services! We offer patrons access to materials with improved searching tools. The library has its own website where you can place a hold on a circulating item and...
have it sent to the library of choice. You can renew materials on the website. If a patron doesn’t have the Internet at home there is a dial up number to “talk” with the library card catalog. Patrons can return materials to either library. Patrons can renew books by telephone. An electronic system notifies a patron by telephone of books placed on hold or materials overdue by a few days. The system automatically generates notices to mail to patrons.

Librarians are called upon to do many things—kissing a donkey was the prize for the largest amount collected by United Way. Clara won by a large amount.

This improved service for users is done with little or no effort by clerks who formerly spent hours typing overdue notices, making telephone calls, carding returned materials, and manually checking out books. With automation, library services overall have improved by leaps and bounds. The Library System upgraded its automated system in March of 2005. Funds for this migration were donated by the Doak Estate. The Dynix System has now migrated to the Horizon System, Version 7.3.4.

**TIF GRANT**

A 1998-99 grant from the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund of $99,580 provided the library system with the equipment and software to put its database on the Web. It is also paying for public access computers with Internet at the Bryan and Carnegie libraries and two additional PCs for College Station.

**GATES FOUNDATION GRANT**

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation contributed almost $100,000 to establish a computer lab in 2001 of 11 computers in the Bryan Library. The grant paid for adding four additional computers at College Station, the Carnegie and the Bryan Library. Each site has a Spanish language computer. Practically all the Microsoft software that exists is installed in these computers. The Gates
Foundation helped install the systems and trained staff members for a full week. Classes for beginners, intermediate and advanced are available at the Bryan Library Lab. The Gates Foundation donated funds to replace the computers in the lab at the Bryan Library and purchase 5 new computers each for the 3 libraries. There are 50 public access computers in the 3 libraries, 25 of which are in the Bryan Public Library.

**SELF CHECK OUT UNIT**

In addition to the automated system there are self-check out units at both the Bryan and College Station libraries. Patrons use this equipment to check out books and periodicals by themselves with a minimum of explanation. It provides backup to a clerk and frees another clerk to shelve books and straighten the book stacks. It doesn’t take a vacation, and barring a computer glitch, it doesn’t get sick for an extended period of time. It comes fully trained! It also provides privacy to a patron.

**BRYAN LIBRARY RESTORED**

When the fire occurred, I was reminded of the novel that begins, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”. While I would never recommend a fire, as the trauma of such a devastating event and the criminal trial were almost overwhelming, one should always look on the positive side and appreciate how reconstruction resulted in a more beautiful library. The arsonist’s trial was moved to Marlin to give him a fair trial. As the victim, I was called to the stand to testify as to the magnitude and cost of damages, the extent of the work to restore the building, and the sense of loss suffered by the community. The challenge of asbestos abatement, new carpet, new fabric walls, reupholstering and refinishing the furniture, cleaning the smoke and soot from 10,000 boxes full of books and materials, and all the other tasks was really one formidable responsibility I hope never to have again. The support from the entire community at the time provided the project leaders the encouragement to move faster than predicted. Citizens contributed more than $60,000 to the Friends of the Library to help restore the Bryan Library. Part of the money paid the city’s deductible insurance costs of $25,000.

Ms. Hanna Greeted The Children In The Carnegie in 1953 As The First Children's Librarian.
CARNEGIE RESTORATION

The restoration of the Carnegie was the most significant project of my library career. The library was rededicated July 10, 1999 after a soft opening in June. More than 300 people attended the historic occasion and helped carry the final 30 books into the Carnegie. To define its new purpose, the name was changed to Carnegie Center of Brazos Valley History.

The Library Board and the Friends of the Library added support to the council resolution that the Carnegie Library, the oldest of 11 still standing in Texas, be restored to be used to provide additional space for the Bryan Library. An ISTEA grant came along making the project feasible. Moving the genealogy collection, historic photographs, documents, the Ana Ludmilla Gee ballet collection, rare books and Texana items freed space needed for the main library collection of current material. Genealogy has become one of the most popular hobbies in the United States today. The Library inherited $150,000 from the Ed and Billie Madeley estate to be used to increase the Carnegie collection of family history materials. The city committed to paving the “road” behind the Carnegie and enhanced it with curbs, gutters, landscaping and historic lighting. It is marked with a sign that calls it the Carnegie Alley.

The Carnegie has public access computers for genealogists to search the Internet for their family history. The second floor is devoted to the genealogy collection. In May of 2007 a new piece of sculpture will be placed in front of the Carnegie Xeriscape Garden. The artist, Lynn Haste has created Andrew Carnegie reading to two children. They are seated on a bench that has room for real children to sit on either side for an historical picture. Mr. Carnegie is reading “Treasure Island.” The City of Bryan, the Friends of the Library and the Arts Council are sponsors of the sculpture. Across Main St. is another sculpture, the Bryan Bomber, also created by Lynn Haste. This new one is called “Treasured Moments.”

On the first floor visitors view an antique dollhouse furnished with miniature antique furniture and decorated seasonally. The collection of rare books for children and adults, plus Texana materials, is available on the first floor. A
history lab, funded by the Holt Foundation, provides equipment to scan and digitize old photos and documents. The collection of historic photographs and documents and early day periodicals is housed on the first floor.

Furnishings originally in the Carnegie were refinished for use on the first floor. Early day pictures of Mayors were returned to the walls of the Carnegie entrance.

Carnegie staff members have assisted many researchers and have provided jpeg files of early day pictures for authors and downtown merchants. The staff includes an expert genealogist, Nancy Ross, who is the Carnegie manager and Shirley Ferguson, an archivist/librarian.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Services and materials provided include a genealogy collection, genealogy computers with CDs, rare books for adults and children, scanned and digitized historic photos and documents, email delivery of digitized files, antique dollhouses furnished and decorated seasonally, second antique dollhouse furnished for the Carnegie, a computer lab, 50 public access computers with Internet, with a Spanish computer in all three libraries.

Spanish language collections, IRS forms and assistance by volunteers, reference collections, LexisNexis legal database, Value Line on the Internet, email reference/research, periodicals, Texas
telephone books, Elf Atochem collection, meeting rooms with 150 seating capacity, 45 capacity, and two study rooms, audiobooks on CD, videocassettes, DVDs, art prints, sculpture, original art and outdoor sculpture, TexShare (60 databases). Electronic databases, snack bars, story time for preschoolers, programming for teens, Ana Ludmila Gee ballet collection, Interlibrary Loan, Twin City Interlibrary Loan (TCILL) consumer evaluation information, Value Line, car repair manuals, maps of major cities throughout the world, framed art prints and sculptures are available to check out.

FRIENDS OF THE BRYAN + COLLEGE STATION PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
HONOR CLARA’S 75th BIRTHDAY AND 25 YEARS AS “THE BOSS”—THE COMMUNITY LIBRARIAN 2006

On March 4, 2006 the Friends invited the community to help celebrate Clara’s 75th birthday and her 25 years of being the Community Librarian. Former Mayors Marvin Tate and Larry Ringer and Pat Tuohy of the Central Texas Library System “roasted” Clara for the occasion.—it was billed as “Celebrate Clara”. The friends announced a new fund “Clara Mounce Young Readers’ Fund” at the luncheon. The fund started with an anonymous donation of $9,000.
BRYAN PUBLIC LIBRARY RENAMED

Community Librarian Clara Mounce retired in December 2009 after serving as a librarian for over 30 years for the communities of Bryan and College Station. On January 20, 2010, the Bryan City Council approved the renaming of the Bryan Public Library to the Clara B. Mounce Public Library in her honor.

" New section added September 2010.