



History Policy

Section: History, Authority, Mission

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The earliest known reference to a "Public Library," probably a subscription library of some sort, was in The Ames Intelligencer of November 4, 1886. This short-lived library may have been the inspiration for the Ames Library Association, a subscription library founded on November 7, 1892. As early as November 21, 1893, the Association began attempts to secure the cooperation of the City Council in establishing a free city library.

Mayor Parley Sheldon requested \$10,000 from Andrew Carnegie in December, 1902, which was granted the following February. The citizens of Ames voted to accept Carnegie's gift on March 29; and the City Council passed an ordinance establishing a free public library on April 16, 1903. The first Board of Trustees was appointed immediately, and met on May 7, 1903, at the Story County Bank. The site of the original building was donated by Wallace and Mary Greeley. The cornerstone was laid April 15, 1904; the building dedicated on September 16; and the Library opened for service on October 20, 1904.

The first addition, west and south of the original building was completed in 1907, with a second gift of \$6,000 from Andrew Carnegie. An \$85,000 bond issue was passed in 1938, to build the second addition to the Library building, which was completed in 1940.

The Ames Branch Library on Welch Avenue operated from May 7, 1946 to July 25, 1950. Bookmobile service began on August 11, 1966. The Library has served rural Story County by contract with the supervisors since 1975. The City of Gilbert was served under contract from July 1, 1976 to June 30, 2011.

On November 8, 1983, the citizens of Ames approved issuance of \$3,937,000 in bonds to construct a major building addition and to remodel the existing facility. The 35,000 square foot addition opened for service April 25, 1985, and the entire 50,000 square foot facility was dedicated September 8, 1985.

On November 8, 2011, Ames residents approved a ballot measure authorizing the City to issue \$18,000,000 in bonds for another building expansion and renovation. Private donations and library bequest funds were committed to cover the remaining \$2,000,000 needed for the project.

Construction efforts to "renew" the library began in December 2012. Portions of the 1985 structure were removed and building's footprint was expanded to cover the entire east half of the 500 block of Douglas Avenue. A second story was added over the west portion of the lot and south end of the alley west of the building was relocated to accommodate a drive-through garage for the bookmobile.

The public was served from a temporary facility in Lincoln Center from December 2012 to August 2014. The Grand REopening of the renewed 78,992 square-foot library building was held on September 14, 2014.

In response to the national COVID-19 Pandemic, the Library building was closed to the public on March 17, 2020 with some staff working remotely and some on-site. The Library continued to meet community needs through online access to collections and virtual programming. Curbside pickup of holds began on May 18, 2020. The Library's lobby area was reopened for holds pickup on July 1, 2020, with safety protocols in place. Services soon expanded to include socially-distanced computer access, copy and printing services, browsing materials, and program kits for youth. As cases increased in late November 2020, the Library returned to curbside service, and lobby service was resumed in February 2021. Full library access returned in March 2021 and full hours resumed in May 2021. Programming was provided outdoors or online through summer 2021 and meeting room use resumed in July 2021. Despite challenges, library staff managed to connect with customers and meet their needs throughout the pandemic in ever-evolving ways.

History of Ames Public Library Directors 1904 – Present

1904	Lorena Webber
1905-1924	Kittie B. Freed
1924-1926	Olive Ryder
1926-1927	Grace Hill
1927-1929	Winnifred Wennerstrum
1929-1963	Letha M. Davidson
1963-1975	Margaret E. Davidson
1975-1981	Mona Carmack
1981	Clare DeCleen (served only 2 months)
1981-1992	George Lawson
1993-1995	Sally Reed
1996-2005	Gina Millsap
2006-2012	Art Weeks
2013- 2019	Lynne Carey
2019-	Sheila Schofer