

Burbank Public Library

# **MANY STORIES, ONE LIBRARY**

**- 100 YEARS OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN BURBANK**

**1913-2013**



## ***Acknowledgments***

The Burbank Public Library wishes to thank all those who contributed to this Celebration of the Century.

Bonnie Burrow, Burbank City Clerk's Office, Burbank Historical Society, Burbank Records Center, and Mike McDaniel, co-founder of Burbankia.com.

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Helen Wang, Assistant Library Services Director

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Burbank Public Library, Programs & Publicity Department

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## Library Services Directors

Mrs. Elizabeth Ripley -- June 16, 1930 - October 1, 1953, retired

Edward Caswell Perry -- October 31, 1952 - January 15, 1968, resigned

John Jolly -- September 16, 1968 - July 15, 1972, resigned

Margaret Underwood -- July 24, 1972, Interim Director

Kenneth Wilson -- April 16, 1973 - December 20, 1978, resigned

### [Library placed under the Cultural & Social Services Director]

Richard Roxburgh -- July 1, 1978 - July 1, 1979, transferred

George Izay -- July 1, 1979 -- July 1, 1982

### [Library reestablished as a separate department]

Marcia M. Richards (Bell) -- August 1, 1982 - December 30, 1990, retired

Holly Hinman -- March 3, 1991 - December 1, 1993, resigned

Sandra C. Christopher -- December 1, 1993, Interim Director

Sandra C. Christopher -- June 9, 1994 - December 15, 1998, retired

Helen Wang -- December 16, 1998, Interim Director

Barbara Pearson -- February 10, 1999 - February 15, 2000, resigned

John Fuchs -- March 16, 2000 - October 22, 2002, retired

Sharon Cohen -- October 23, 2002, Interim Director

Sharon Cohen -- April 24, 2003 - Present

*Directors list courtesy of the City Clerk's Office, City of Burbank.*





*Burbank's first library was located on the second floor of the Thompson Brick Building on the corner of Olive Avenue and San Fernando Boulevard.*

## Chapter 1: KNOW WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS? A LIBRARY!

Every city needs a library, so two years after Burbank incorporated, it was decided to offer library services to its citizens. Through the Burbank Chamber of Commerce's interest and efforts, a library was started in May 1913 with a collection of books on loan from the Los Angeles County Free Library. In the beginning, the collection was combined with the library of an organization called the "Independent Order of Foresters," an insurance fraternal brotherhood. The library was located in lodge rooms in the Thompson Brick Building at the principal intersection of the downtown business section, San Fernando Blvd. and Olive Avenue. The lodge's Ladies Auxiliary provided the custodian for the collection which was open for two hours a week.

Burbank's library in the early years was constantly on the move as the collection of books outgrew its quarters. In 1918, the library was relocated to the second floor of the old City Hall. Mrs. Minnie Humphrey was the custodian of its 500 books. Six years later, in 1923, the library returned to the second floor of the Thompson building, this time at the corner of Orange Grove Avenue and San Fernando Blvd. Mrs. Paxton and Mrs. Humphrey were the custodians.

Mrs. Elizabeth Knox was appointed as librarian in January of 1924. Two years later, the little library once again moved to a building better suited to its needs. With the help and cooperation of County Librarian Helen Vogelsson and Mr. Charleville, then the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, Burbank's library was relocated to a building in the 200 block of East Olive Avenue. This space was centrally located and on the ground floor.

Mrs. Knox continued as librarian until ill health forced her resignation in 1930. She was succeeded by Mrs. Elizabeth Ripley. When Mrs. Ripley took over the office in June 1930, County Librarian Helen Vogelston told her, "You're going to like it here." Indeed, she must have liked the Burbank Library very much; she stayed until her retirement in 1952.

It was apparent to all concerned that the Burbank Library needed a permanent building in order to grow. City fathers at the time looked to the future and realized the importance of a library to an expanding community.

Since the beginning of the charter government in 1927, Burbank had been accumulating building funds for a permanent facility. Despite being in the depths of the Great Depression, a new library building was erected at **425 East Olive Avenue** in 1935. The City provided the land, and the building was completed with S.E.R.A. (State Emergency Relief Administration) funds.



The structure of approximately 6,700 square feet was built at a cost of \$33,000 - without debt or bonds-- through the cooperation of the Burbank City Council, City Manager Howard I. Stites, and the Library Board.

Library service in the new building was still under a year-to-year contract with the Los Angeles County Library. The budget projected for the 1936-1937 fiscal year was expected to be \$6,000, more than half of that in salaries. Mrs. Ripley, the full-time librarian, earned a salary of \$120.63 a week. A full-time Assistant, two part-time assistants, and a Page rounded out the staff of the new library. A collection of 10,000 books had been maintained; but many in the community, including the Library Board, were finding this inadequate to meet the demands of the library's patrons.

*Interior of the original building at 425 E. Olive Avenue that housed the Burbank Public Library for 28 years.*



The City was experiencing rapid growth throughout the 1930s and many felt that a municipal library, such as existed in Glendale, Pasadena, and other larger cities, should be established. So the contract with the Los Angeles County Library was not renewed and on July 1, 1938 the Burbank Public Library began an independent existence as a City department.

Of course once the ties with the County Library were severed, all 10,000 books in the collection had to be returned. That left the relatively new Burbank Public Library with empty shelves. A call went out to the community and Burbank citizens responded with the donation of more than 2,000 volumes. The WPA (Works Progress Administration) helped catalog the books.

By the time the Burbank Public Library opened its doors for business on August 22, 1938, it had 5,000 of its own books ready for circulation and nearly another 4,000 in the process of being cataloged. By the following year, the library had 12,711 books that circulated 134,217 times to the library's 7,382 borrowers.

By the end of the 1930s, Burbank's population had more than doubled to 34,090. The need for additional Library services in the valley section of Burbank was becoming critical and to that end, the Library Board created a Building Fund. The fund would make it possible to build a branch library in the near future without resorting to a bond issue.

While the rest of the country was digging out from financial collapse with the help of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, Burbank was already taking steps back to prosperity due to the aircraft and entertainment industries. Warner Bros. Studios had been growing alongside Burbank. Since it bought First National Studios in 1928 and moved to Burbank, Warner Bros. was quite possibly the world's largest motion picture plant in the 1930s. Walt Disney purchased a large plot of land on Buena Vista Street and completed his studio in 1939. As the winds of war began to sweep across Europe, Lockheed Aircraft Corporation's growth was assured in 1938 when it received its first order for warplanes.



*The Children's area of the original Burbank Public Library.*

## Chapter 2: IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

With the attack on Pearl Harbor, Burbank immediately shifted gears to become a wartime industrial complex. The population in 1940 was 34,337, but the daytime and nighttime defense workers added a thousand more to that figure. During the war period, there was gas rationing and a shortage of transportation. Mrs. Ripley and the Library Board felt it was imperative to establish a branch library in the valley section of the city so valley patrons wouldn't have to travel so far to use the Main Library. A temporary location on West Magnolia Blvd., formerly a real estate office, was rented and converted to a branch library in February 1943. Miss Carolyn Robins was the Branch Librarian and the collection held 3,929 books.

Then the Parks and Recreation Department of the city provided temporary quarters for the Valley branch in a building at Verdugo Park on California Street between Clark and Verdugo Avenues. After a year, the collection had to be moved again, this time to a converted army barracks building at 644 N. Hollywood Way in March 1947.

The City of Burbank finally acquired a plot of land on the corner of Buena Vista Street and Verdugo Avenue in 1947. A contract was awarded for the construction of a permanent library building for the valley area. The new building at 401 N. Buena Vista Street was completed on June 30, 1948. The cost of the site and the building complete with furnishings amounted to \$86,000, which was paid in full from funds accumulated by the Library Board over a period of years. The Buena Vista Branch Library was dedicated on July 26, 1948.

The new branch opened just in time for the Burbank Library's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a City department. In an interview printed in the *Burbank Daily Review* that May, Mrs. Ripley pointed out "We have been steadily expanding for the last ten years, but we have not been able to catch up with the growth of the city and the public demand for books." During 1948, the number of books borrowed from the Burbank Library totaled 267,057. This meant that every book in the library was read an average of six times during that year.

Even before the new branch opened, Mrs. Ripley revealed that plans were being considered for a third branch library somewhere in the northwest valley district. Demand for books in the valley area had proven to be so heavy, a decision to construct another branch would have to be made soon, Mrs. Ripley said. At that time, the library operated on a pay-as-you-go basis, like other city departments. This required that building funds had to be accumulated before a new construction project could be launched.

As the 1940s drew to a close, Burbank's library department maintained



two sites with a staff of 14 employees who kept both libraries in operation 11 hours daily, from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM, except Sundays and holidays. The Main Library, or Olive Vista Library, as it came to be called, was already showing signs of overcrowding. So on December 9, 1948, the Library Board purchased the vacant lot on the northeast corner of Glenoaks Blvd. and Olive Avenue, adjacent to the Olive Vista Library. They ordered plans to be prepared for enlarging the library. The preliminary plans called for a two-level building with approximately 4,300 square feet of floor space, which would nearly double the library's area.

On May 1, 1949, the Library system began a year-long celebration of the California Literary Centennial of the Gold Rush and California's admission into the Union. A large collection of literary works by California authors was displayed at the library, including many original manuscripts and autographed copies. A number of Southern California authors were among the guests of honor.

On the night of September 29, 1949, a fire of unknown origin caused considerable damage to the interior of the Olive Vista Library and the library had to be closed for a three-week period to make the necessary repairs. Library operations were further hampered by the construction of the new addition which started on December 20, 1949. A newly renovated Olive Vista Library was dedicated on May 1, 1950 to coincide with the ceremonies surrounding the California Literary Centennial.

The Burbank Library hosted a month-long exhibit of Californiana. The opening ceremony was held on May 1<sup>st</sup> in the new library annex. Murals, art work and models created by the library staff formed a background for the exhibit. Dr. Gustave Arlt, associate dean of the graduate division of UCLA and the director of the California Literary Centennial, was guest speaker at the event.

The exhibition included early maps and photographs of the Valley; books, letters and manuscripts of California Authors; 16<sup>th</sup> century parchments from the San Fernando Mission; murals of the missions by Leon Bayard de Volo; 100-year-old gold scales; and various models.

Dr. Elta Pfister, president of the Burbank Library Board, introduced a group of Burbank authors. John Burroughs High School Band gave an outdoor concert directed by Ken Helvey, and Marjorie Macrae directed the Chorus.

The 1950s was a decade of rapid growth, both for the City and for the Library. Returning servicemen, weary of the rigors of war, came home to start careers and families. Orange groves and farmland in Burbank's valley section gave way to businesses and residential housing.

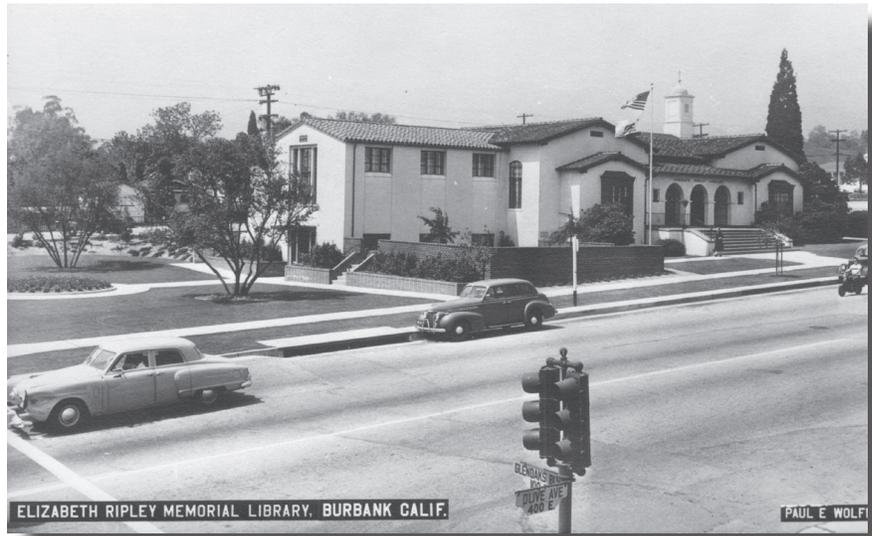


*Library staff display historical items celebrating California's Centennial in 1950.*



*Burbank citizens packed the new annex of the Main Library on May 1, 1950 for the opening ceremony of the California Centennial exhibit.*

Mrs. Elizabeth Ripley retired as City Librarian in August of 1952 and was replaced by E. Caswell Perry. On September 23<sup>rd</sup> of that year, the Library Board submitted a resolution to the Burbank City Council urging that the name of the Olive Vista Public Library be changed to the Elizabeth Ripley Memorial Library, in recognition of her long and faithful service to the City. The resolution was passed and adopted on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November, 1952. A dedication ceremony for Mrs. Ripley was held on December 23<sup>rd</sup>.



During Caswell Perry's first year as city librarian, he instituted a number of improvements and innovations. All the historical materials on California and Western Americana were gathered into a separate collection. The most notable change in library service was Burbank taking the first steps into a multi-media world. In 1953, the Burbank Library joined the Film Circuit of Southern California, an organization consisting of public libraries in the area. They purchased 16mm films cooperatively and circulated them among the membership. In the first eight months of service, Burbank Library circulated 755 films, reaching audiences of 24,420 people. A series of film programs were presented at the Main Library using films borrowed from the Los Angeles County Museum.



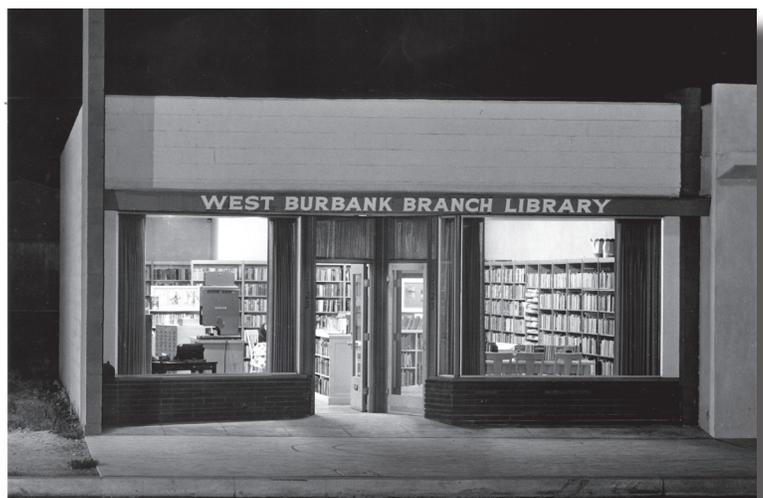
*Mrs. Martha Todt*

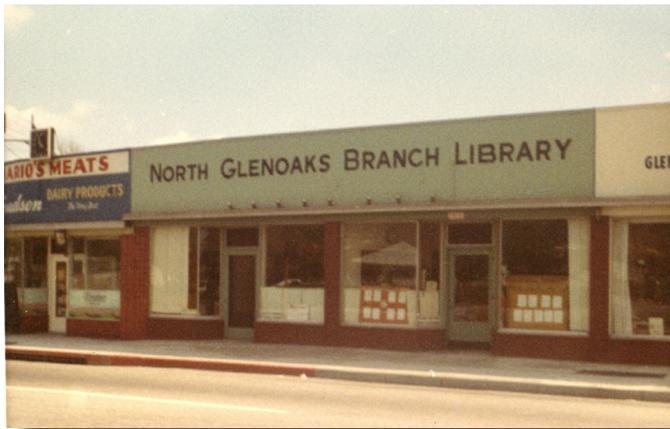
The Library also provided a selection of musical records to loan out. A small, carefully chosen collection of long playing classical records began circulating to interested music lovers on April 1, 1954. Audio-Visual services continued to thrive over the years. This made it necessary to add a new professional staff member to oversee the expanding service to the public. Librarian Martha Todt became the coordinator of the Audio-Visual Services. She continued to keep the department current and up-to-date with all the new ways to watch movies and listen to music until she retired from the library in 1982. Martha Todt was a pioneer in the development of Audio-Visual services and was respected throughout the Southern California Library community for her dedication to the field.

After months of preparation, locating suitable rental property, recruiting staff and securing books, the West Burbank Branch Library was opened at 3123 W. Burbank Blvd. on November 29, 1954.

As City Librarian Caswell Perry noted, "The population of school children in that area is the heaviest in the city." The West Burbank Branch was an experiment initiated to gauge neighborhood library service.

After three years, The West Burbank Branch had completely outgrown its space. A new lease on the building next door expanded the facility and the steadily expanding book circulation and the high proportion of city schools in the area indicated the need for library service in this section of Burbank. School visits by the branch librarian contributed significantly to the library's growth.





A fourth storefront branch, the North Glenoaks Library, was opened August 16, 1956 in a leased premises at 1915 North Glenoaks Blvd. The rent at that time was \$170. Operating with a smaller collection in restricted quarters, the branch showed positive progress over the years, almost catching up with West Burbank in circulation.

The Buena Vista Branch Library continued to be a popular venue in the valley section of Burbank with increased patronage and overcrowded reading rooms in the evening. The result of this popularity, however, was that the relatively new library was no longer adequate for the work load and public usage. Plans were made to add an expansion to the building.

Growing pains still afflicted the main library as more and more of the service areas were taken over by stack storage in order to house the expanding book collection. This further curtailed the already inadequate space available to library patrons. In the decades between 1940 and 1960, the library staff jumped from six to twenty-two and the annual circulation was 455,401 items.

By the spring of 1958 a project was under way for an addition to the Buena Vista Branch Library. The City Council approved the plans and financed the construction. A new children's room was added to the back of the building. This released space for a teen section in the old reading room area. The primary impetus for the expansion was the heavy demands for service from John Burroughs High School students.

While Audio-Visual services were only offered at the Main Library, the circulation of 16mm sound films and phonograph records grew by leaps and bounds. The collection of films permanently in stock, through purchase or donation by large industrial concerns, was supplemented by a monthly packet from the Southern California Film Circuit. But the increased demand for films spurred the library to join and help organize a new film circuit which almost doubled the monthly quota of available films for circulation. The record collection exceeded 1,000 long-playing albums and several hundred of the old 78s.

E. Caswell Perry was appointed City Librarian on October 31, 1952. Perry, who ushered in a renaissance of library service in Burbank, came by his interest in librarianship naturally. His father, Everett R. Perry, was City Librarian of the Los Angeles Public Library from 1911 to 1933. He built the main library in 1926, and developed Los Angeles' extensive branch library system.



Cas Perry, as he was known to his Burbank friends, was born in Los Angeles on July 13, 1912. He was educated in the L.A. school system, obtained his bachelor degree from UCLA in 1938, and his master of library science from Columbia University the following year. But the beginning of Perry's library career began under the watchful eyes of his father at the Los Angeles Public Library.

He served as a page and junior library attendant during the years 1927 to 1938. After getting his library degree at Columbia, Perry worked at east coast libraries for a number of years.

He was serving as the Assistant Librarian at the Oak Park Public Library in a Chicago suburb when the opportunity arose to join nationwide to interview for the position of city librarian in Burbank, California. He was successful in winning the appointment.

Perry was involved in many civic organizations during his stay with Burbank and was listed in *Who's Who in America*.

In addition to teaching library science at Immaculate Heart College and USC, Perry was a library consultant for various local communities. He was well known for his public speaking and book reviews.

Caswell Perry wrote and edited many local histories including *Burbank: an Illustrated History* (1987) and *Glendale: a Pictorial History* (1983).

In addition to the ever-popular classical recordings, the collection reflected the varied interests of the community, such as jazz, Shakespeare, poetry and drama readings, opera, language, and shorthand dictation.

In 1959, City Librarian Caswell Perry sent out a request for Burbank historical materials, including letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, and old newspapers. Although his appeal netted no written materials, the library did receive some interesting photographs and a couple of cannon balls, no doubt relics of the Battle of Providencia.

The City began active planning for a new main library in the spring of 1961. The project was part of the City's original ten year capital improvement program; but unlike McCambridge Park, the Central Fire Station and the Golf Course, it was not included in the capital bonding program. Instead it was financed by funds accumulated over several years, primarily from sales tax. It was the last city project of the original capital improvement program to be completed in July 1963.



*Groundbreaking ceremony for the new Central Library brought out a number of civic dignitaries, including City Manager Harmon Bennett (left front with hat); Council member Robert Brandon (second from right, front row); City Librarian Caswell Perry (front row, far right); Council member Charles Compton (second from the right, second row); Council Member Newell Cooper (third from the left, back row); Council member Jack Whitney (fourth from left, back row); and Sam Gorlick, City Attorney (far right, back row).*

When construction of the million dollar Central Library building began in May of 1962, a fifteen foot section of the rear wing of the old building was demolished to allow clearance for the new one. The contractor for the project was W. J. Shirley, Jr. of Pasadena. Eugene Fickes of the firm Fickes & Fickes of Arcadia was the architect.

Mr. Fickes had considerable experience with libraries before coming to Burbank, having designed San Bernardino, Monrovia, Ontario, and Riverside libraries. Additionally, Mr. Fickes was responsible for the library interior decoration, its furniture and fixtures.

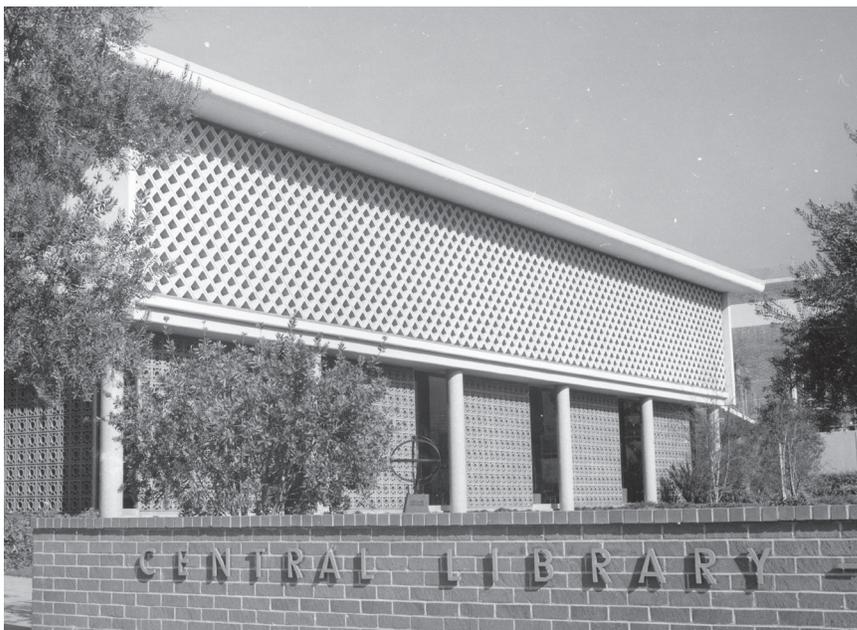
The foundation of the building was designed to support the addition of a future third floor. The building had a reinforced concrete frame, supported on concrete pillars and reinforced brick masonry on front. The first and second floors on the Olive Ave. side have a solar screen of clay and concrete blocks.

The new library was 41,000 square feet, up from 10,500 in the old building. The book capacity was 200,000 volumes.

During the construction phase, the old library continued to maintain service to the community with the new one going up immediately to the rear. Service to the public at the Main Library was suspended on June 15, 1963 when the Central Library was ready for occupancy.

The contents were transferred over and the books were loaded on book trucks and wheeled up the back ramp to fill all the shiny new shelves. Finally, the old facility was demolished so that the porches could be added to the new structure on both floors. The Central Library opened for the public on July 25, 1963. The Dedication Ceremony was delayed until the porches were finished, the final furniture deliveries made, and most of the landscaping completed. Over 500 people attended the ceremony which was held on Sunday, November 17<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM, followed by an Open House until 6:00 PM.

The Library project's final cost was \$1,133,488.48 and the total footage was 42,310 square feet. The wall finish in the foyer and stairways was vinyl fabric, public service desks were built of walnut, and the floor in the lobby was constructed of terrazzo.



*The raised courtyard patio on Olive Avenue was part of the original library. Now 75 years old, the patio currently contains several time capsules and the bust of Dr. David Burbank.*

The growing section of Western Americana and Californiana materials was now displayed in its own room behind the Reference Desk and workroom. This collection began to attract considerable attention from college students, authors, and researchers for television and motion pictures who found a wealth of information on local history. A notable donation to the Western Americana collection was a large aero-relief map of California given by the local chapter of the Native Daughters of the Golden West.

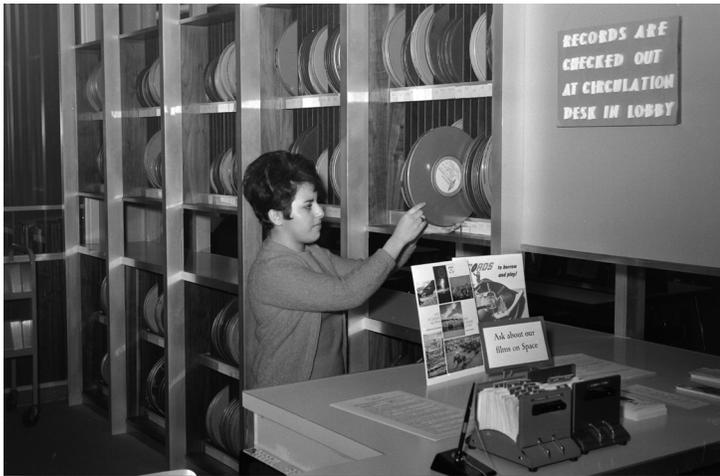
In the months following the opening, the Central Library continued to receive local recognition as a showcase facility with frequent requests for guided tours. The library was visited by numerous architects and librarians planning new buildings in the area. An article, co-authored by the architect and City Librarian Perry, described the new building in great detail. It appeared in the *California Librarian* magazine in April, 1965. The handmade wagon wheel lighting fixture above the Circulation Desk in the lobby was a distinctive design element.



The Audio Visual department blossomed in its new area of the Central Library. Improved display area and equipment created a warm welcome for the public. A wide selection of records and 16mm films were available for check out. Listening centers with turntables and headsets offered patrons the option of listening to records in the library.

Caswell Perry remained in Burbank for almost sixteen years. He left in 1967 to take a position of Director at the Public Library of Knoxville and Knox County, Tennessee, where another large main library project was in the offing. However, his wife's ill health contributed to the decision to return to California after only two years at the new job. Perry accepted an appointment as City Librarian at San Marino Public Library in July of 1969.

As the turbulent 1960s drew to a close, the Burbank Public Library continued to find ways to offer improved services to the community. Starting in 1966, library books could be checked out for twenty-eight days instead of fourteen, with no renewals. Audio Visual services began to circulate 8mm silent films, and a record collection was started at Buena Vista Branch Library in 1969. That same year the Central Library began offering library service on Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00 PM.



The Burbank City Council passed a resolution in 1969 authorizing the library to join the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System, a consortium of sixteen city libraries. This greatly enhanced the Burbank Public Library's ability to offer interlibrary loan and reference services to the public by connecting with the member libraries by means of teletype and daily delivery services. Previously, Burbank's holdings had been supplemented only by reciprocal library service contracts with Glendale and Los Angeles, both dating back to 1948.

The summer of 1970 saw the inauguration of the very popular Family Film Night at the Starlight Bowl and the further expansion of Audio Visual services. A new electronic film cleaning and inspection machine was installed in the department for the 16mm film collection.

The 1971 Sylmar Earthquake caused considerable damage to the Burbank libraries, primarily by falling books and ceiling tiles. The February 9<sup>th</sup> shaker caused shelving units in the Central Library's storage areas to collapse and waist-high piles of books and magazines had to be returned to the shelves. Despite the shaky start to the year, the Library and City completed the design work for a new branch library in the northwest area of Burbank. A construction contract was issued and work began on the Northwest Park Branch Library.

The North Glenoaks Branch Library, which had been opened in a leased space in 1956, was beginning to see a decrease in circulation. By 1970, the Library Board recommended that the branch be closed. However, local patrons protested this plan and through petitions and personal appearances at the City Council meetings, the plan was reversed. It was decided to keep North Glenoaks Branch open on a one-year trial basis with services and staff reduced. During that year, patronage increased enough to effectively demonstrate that there was a need for a library in that area.

A decision was made to move the branch to another rented space that was more accessible. North Glenoaks Branch Library relocated to 411 Irving Drive in January 1972. This move to the Shopping Bag Market complex proved to be a huge success with the neighborhood. Circulation increased more than 50% in a short time, thanks to the new location and an attractively decorated building.



The construction of Burbank's third permanent facility was completed in 1972. Approved by voters in a 1968 bond election, the Northwest Park Library at 3323 W. Victory Blvd. opened to the public on September 11, 1972. It replaced the West Burbank Library, which was then closed as soon as the new branch opened. The hours of the new neighborhood branch was noon to 9:00 PM Monday and Wednesday, and noon to 6 PM Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Kenneth Wilson was appointed City Librarian in April of 1973. Soon afterwards, library employee Mary Jane Strickland approached Mr. Wilson with a proposal to start up a Burbank Historical Society. He gave his blessing, feeling it was something in which the library should be involved. Burbank clubs and organizations, as well as long-time residents, were invited to participate in the formation of a society to preserve the City's past. The first meeting was held at the Central Library on August 16, 1973. Forty years later, the Burbank Historical Society is still going strong, thanks to the efforts of Mary Jane Strickland.

When Warner Bros. Studios closed their research library in 1975, they donated their collection to the City of Burbank. Mr. Wilson designated space in the second floor gallery of the Central Library to house the materials and appointed staff to run the operation. The Warner Collection was estimated to include over 40,000 books, 30,000 magazines and technical journals, and over 5 million clippings from print sources that spanned 60 years. Warner Bros. started the collection in the 1920s to provide specialty research for the studio's costume and set designers, art directors, writers, and actors.



For more than two decades, the Burbank Public Library provided this fee-based service to the entertainment industry, both locally and internationally. During that time the Library more than doubled the collection. Librarians answered a multitude of questions on a wide range of subjects, from art, fashion, and history to license plate designs.

By 1993, however, the Warner Research Collection was becoming a drain on City resources. A task force convened to study the situation and recommended that the City consider selling the collection. According to the study, the Central Library was running out of space to adequately house the materials. Over 50 boxes of books that couldn't be added to the shelves were stored in a City warehouse. Filled

beyond capacity, the 2,900-square foot facility was not properly equipped to archive the collection and some of the rare and more valuable items were falling apart.

Safety issues were also noted in the report, but it was the 1994 Northridge Earthquake that demonstrated the validity of these concerns. The Warner Research Collection was hardest hit when the shaking pulled the shelving from the walls; shelving in the rest of the library had been seismically reinforced and did not sustain as much damage. Many file cabinets in the Warner Research Collection tipped over when their drawers slid out. Much of the office furniture was original equipment that came with the collection when Warner Bros. donated it to the City. A lot of clean-up was needed before Warner Research could safely re-open.



Technology was also taking its toll. Many of the materials were fast becoming obsolete as the entertainment industry began to demand more high-tech databases for research. Without the means to digitize the photos, news clippings, and other items, much of the collection would soon be deteriorated beyond repair.

Library Director Sandra Christopher began marketing the Warner Research Collection nationally and internationally. Appraised at \$5 million, the sale of the Warner Research Collection would benefit both the City and the future preservation of a valuable research library. If the collection was sold in its entirety, the funds would then help replace the outdated Buena Vista Branch Library. Despite some interest, though, the collection never sold. In 2000, the City of Burbank returned the material to its original owners, Warner Bros. Studios.



On June 6, 1978, voters in California passed the landmark Proposition 13, the Tax Limitation Initiative, which drastically affected the financial ability of local governments to maintain public services to the community. This action had a rippling effect in city governments and the Burbank Public Library had to prepare for the worst. Plans were discussed for staff layoffs, shortened hours, and branch closures. Summer Reading Club for Burbank children was cancelled. A last ditch effort was made by the City Council who took money from funds received under the State Senate Bill 154 and added it to the library's budget. This allowed the Burbank Library to halt layoffs and keep the relatively new Northwest Park Branch Library open to the public.

From 1978 to 1982, following the resignation of Library Director Kenneth Wilson, who left to take a job in San Diego, the Library was placed under the management of the Cultural and Social Services Department, which was seen as a cost-cutting move in a post-Prop 13 city government.

On August 1, 1982, the Library was re-established as a separate department. Marcia Richards, who had worked her way up from an entry-level librarian to Coordinator of Children's Services to the Manager of Outreach and Analysis, was appointed Library Services Director.



She became the first non-elected female department head in the City of Burbank government, as well as being the first Director to have risen through the Library ranks rather than recruited from the outside. Even before her appointment by the City Council, Mrs. Richard was instrumental in forming the Friends of the Library organization.

During her time as Library Director, Mrs. Richards' main goal was to increase visibility for the Burbank Public Library. She wanted to erase the image of the library as an "ivory tower" and encourage people of all ages and walks of life to utilize the resources available.

To open up library services to the community, Mrs. Richards encouraged more grant applications. A federal grant under the Library Services and Construction Act created the "Media Project" in 1982. The Project functioned as a free, professional-level clearing house with information on a broad range of motion picture and television production. Books, trade journals, clipping files, equipment brochures, and training videotapes were available for people working in the entertainment industry or students wanting to enter the field. Coordinator Barbara Stones developed the collection and acted as liaison with industry sources. When the grant ran out, the Media Project collection was absorbed by the Library.

## Chapter 3: YOU GOTTA HAVE FRIENDS!

A significant decision was made at the Burbank City Council meeting of March 25, 1980, one that would have long-lasting effects on library service in Burbank. Recognizing the Library as a formidable asset in the community, the council members approved the formation of the Friends of the Burbank Public Library. This non-profit organization of volunteers has dedicated itself to raising public awareness of the Library and providing financial support through a variety of fundraising activities.

Taking a line from Casablanca: "...I think this is the start of a beautiful friendship," and so a wonderful relationship was formed. The first meeting of the Friends of the Burbank Public Library was held in June of 1980 and Penny Cockerill was the charter president. Their first order of business was planning an open house at the Central Library on Sunday, October 5. At the event, the Friends collected \$600 in new memberships and \$900 from its first week-long book sale.

The Friends' first purchase for the library was an answer phone in 1981. In the coming years, the Friends would continue to donate time and money to supplement library needs. In the early 1980s, when personal computers were starting to go mainstream, the Friends purchased the Burbank Public Library's first Apple computers for public use. Librarians offered classes in this new technology and the public was eager to learn. Instructional software for typing, language, and SAT preparation proved to be increasingly popular with the public.

By 1984, the Friends donated a second Apple IIe to the Central Library along with \$1,000 for educational software. They also purchased a TRS-80 computer and programs for the Buena Vista Branch Library to demonstrate the effectiveness of public access computers for the children. The experiment was wildly successful. The computer explosion was underway in Burbank - all thanks to the friendship and support of these passionate, library-loving volunteers.

Over the years, the Friends of the Burbank Public Library have filled many gaps in the operating budget and allowed the Library to keep up with the rapidly changing technology. A substantial donation in 1986 made it possible for Burbank to become one of only three public libraries in Los Angeles County to offer compact discs for public use. When public use of vinyl records diminished, the Friends raised money for the library by selling the collection. In 1999, the Library started a Video (VHS) Rental Collection with 21 titles, all funded by the Friends. When DVDs began to replace the videocassette, the Friends supplied the seed money to start buying the new format for movies.



By the mid-1980s, the Friends began funding the Summer Reading Club and other special programs for children. Today this organization sponsors almost every program the Burbank Public Library offers, as well as purchasing needed supplies and equipment.

The Friends of the Burbank Public Library hold week-long used book sales twice a year and operate the Friends' Bookstore in the new Buena Vista Branch Library. Currently, the Friends combined book sales bring in thousands of dollars in support of the Burbank Public Library. In addition to their financial support, the Friends supply a pool of volunteers to help out in the Library's many activities and services.



The Amateur Photography Contest, held every year since 1981, is one of the Friends' most beloved events. Local photographers enter the contest year after year and eagerly anticipate the judging. Entries are displayed in the Central Library auditorium following the judging.

The Friends partnered with the Burbank City Federal



Sharon Wright's photograph won the 2013 Best of Show.

Credit Union in 1999. People who join the Friends of the Burbank Public Library would also be eligible to join the Credit Union.

Friends of the Burbank Public Library celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on June 15, 2005. A big celebration was held at that evening's City Council meeting, and retired Library Director Marcia Richards Bell returned to accept a plaque in commemoration of the milestone. Her efforts in 1980 brought about the formation of the group.

In May of 2007, the first "Volunteer of the Year" award was announced at the annual luncheon to honor library volunteers. Jane Mulder, a charter member of the Friends of the Burbank Public Library, received the award for 27 years of volunteer service, donating 1,000 hours in 2006 alone. In succeeding years, this Volunteer of the Year Award became known as the "Jane Mulder Award."

Long-time Friend, Gloria O'Donohoe, began a one-woman campaign to raise money for the library by recycling printer cartridges. She distributed flyers promoting her recycle efforts throughout the City, at municipal buildings, at local events, and at any hazardous waste roundups. She put collection centers at all the libraries, and stored the laser and ink jet cartridges in her garage until she had enough to sell to the highest bidders. For five years, from 2003 to 2008, Gloria O'Donohoe raised \$38,000 for the library and kept thousands of ink cartridges out of the City's landfill. Needless to say, due to Gloria's efforts, she was a recipient of the "Jane Mulder Outstanding Volunteer



Jane Mulder (left) with Gloria O'Donohoe, recipient of the 2008 "Jane Mulder Outstanding Volunteer Award."

Award” in 2008. Other recipients of this award were Doris Crutcher (2009), Doreen O’Donohoe (2010) and Tom Carson (2013).

The Burbank Public Library received a \$96,000 state grant to establish adult literacy services in 1992. The grant was to get the program started, but the state was also committed to providing future support. Literacy Services provides free one-to-one tutoring to adults, 18 or older, who speak and understand English, but read and write below 8th grade level. Over the years, a total of 1,541 volunteer tutors have provided 53,261 hours of instruction to 1,615 adult learners.

Various fundraisers were held to supplement the grant money and keep the program going. The first Trivia Challenge was held at the Castaway Restaurant on September 28, 1995. Television personality Stephanie Edwards hosted the event which became a popular fundraiser for Literacy Services. KNBC weatherman Fritz Coleman also hosted Trivia Challenge several times, as well as Jack O’Neill, a local NBC executive and businessman.

The Burbank Public Library survived the January 17, 1994, Northridge Earthquake in better shape than the previous Sylmar shaker. In the intervening years, bookshelves at the Central Library had been replaced with seismically safe shelving which held up well during the quake. Of course, thousands of books spilled onto the floor and had to be reshelved. Library staff quickly finished the job and was able to help out with disaster relief. Books and magazines were delivered to the Red Cross Shelter set up at McCambridge Park. Children’s librarians read stories to the children in the shelter. Staff at the Central Library answered phones and assisted with the phone bank set up at the Emergency Operations Center to field citizens’ questions and concerns in the days following the earthquake.



*The Burbank Chamber of Commerce team was the 2011 Trivia Challenge Champs, pictured here with former Public Information Officer Keith Sterling and Burbank Leader columnist Bryan Mahoney.*



Forward thinking management did much to assist the Burbank Public Library’s leap into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sandra C. Christopher was appointed Library Services Director in June 1994, following six months as Acting Director. She began her 33-year career with the Library in 1965 when she was hired as a librarian. Ms. Christopher has served the library as Branch Services Coordinator, Principal Library Coordinator, and Assistant Library Services Director.

She put the Burbank Public Library firmly on the road to the millennium by implementing new technologies, including the automation of library procedures, utilizing online databases, and expanding the computer Learning Center for students. Programming for both children and adults expanded under Ms. Christopher’s direction, and she expanded and staffed a Young Adult section of the library. The groundwork for the construction of a new Buena Vista Branch Library was laid with Ms. Christopher’s determined efforts.

## Chapter 4: TO THE MILLENIUM...AND BEYOND!

The Burbank Public Library continued to incorporate new technologies to better serve the community. As the needs of the people changed, the Library upgraded services and materials. Long-playing vinyl records evolved into compact discs; 8mm and 16mm films were replaced by videocassettes, which in turn were supplanted by DVDs. By 2012/2013, the library was offering eBooks and eAudio Books to download.

The Automation Age got underway in 1986 when the Burbank Public Library began the conversion to an automated system. Library catalogs first had to be digitized and all the books barcoded. CLSI automated catalog and checkout system was introduced in 1989. Ten years later, the Library changed to SIRSI, a Windows-based system that was the latest in library automation technology. The new system allowed the library's catalog to be mounted on the Internet.

An Information Center was established at the Central Library in 2000 with computer terminals for public Internet access and CD-ROM databases. A grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation enabled the library to purchase six computer terminals with of variety of software to educate and entertain. In the first three weeks of providing Internet access for the public, over three hundred people signed up to make use of this new service.

New Library Services Director John Fuchs relocated to Burbank from Indiana where he was the Director of the award winning Carmel Clay Public Library. From 2000 to 2002, Mr. Fuchs oversaw a number of public service innovations, including the library's website, public access Internet, online book renewals, and the construction of the new Buena Vista Branch Library.

Plans for the new library were presented by the architectural firm Charles Walton and Associates in Glendale. The design of the 28,000 square foot library was reminiscent of the 1930s-style Southern California architecture combining Art Deco elements with Spanish Colonial. The building plans called for a large children's area, a 200-seat community room, state-of-the-art technology, and a dedicated Friends' Bookstore.

Groundbreaking for the new Buena Vista Branch Library was held on Saturday, October 6, 2001. Following the ceremony, area schoolchildren painted a colorful mural on the wooden fence surrounding the construction site.

Library Director John Fuchs resigned prior to the project completion. Library Services Manager Sharon Cohen was appointed Acting Library Services Director on October 23, 2002, and oversaw the new Buena Vista Branch Library's grand opening.

Mrs. Cohen rose through the ranks at the Burbank Public Library, starting as a Library Assistant in 1975. In 1993, she became one of three division heads in the Library department. A graduate of Wilmington College in Ohio, Mrs. Cohen also has a Master of Library Science degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Hawaii.



*Library Directors past and present attended the Buena Vista Branch Library Groundbreaking Ceremony. Pictured are (from left) Library Director John Fuchs, retired Library Director Sandra Christopher, City Manager Robert (Bud) Ovrom, and retired Library Director Marcia Richards Bell.*

The Dedication for the new Buena Vista Branch Library and Abraham Lincoln Park was held on December 7, 2002. Following the ribbon cutting, an afternoon of entertainment, refreshments, and tours of the new facility were enjoyed by the community.

The new Buena Vista Branch Library was built for the future with 40 computers and 11 online public access computers (OPACS). Other features included enclosed study rooms, computer stations, study carrels, and tables and chairs located around the library.

The Children's area of the library was decorated in a magical forest theme with murals throughout. A delightful turreted Reading Room entices children and parents to sit and enjoy a book together.

Rising up in the center of the room is a magnificent faux oak tree, a gift to the children of Burbank from the Friends of the Burbank Public Library. The 12-foot life-like oak tree provides a 20-foot canopy over the Picture Book area.

The first day of operation was Monday, December 9, 2002. Since the new library was three times the size of the original Buena Vista Branch, there was plenty of room for expansion.

The City and the Friends of the Library each donated \$75,000 to buy new books and audio visual materials for the "Opening Day" collection. Senior Girls Scout Troop #1535 of Burbank also donated \$1,000 to buy books for the library.

*Re-enactor John Kimble portrayed Abraham Lincoln for the Dedication Day activities. (Photo by Bonnie Burrow)*



*City Manager Robert (Bud) Ovrom and Interim Library Director Sharon Cohen. (photo by Bonnie Burrow)*



*Families read together under the oak tree in the Buena Vista Children's Library. (Photo by Bonnie Burrow)*



Sharon Cohen was appointed Library Services Director on April 23, 2003. That year, the Library's circulation reached the milestone of over a million items loaned. A large part of the credit goes to the new Buena Vista Branch Library, where the circulation has increased 135% since their opening.

All three libraries in Burbank became Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) hotspots in 2005, making it easier for the public to access the Internet through their laptop computers. Numerous databases have been added to the library's website, including Help Now, a free, live online homework help from certified tutors; Jobs Now, an online database for job seekers; and many other helpful reference sources.

Reaching out to embrace the community, the Burbank Public Library organized Burbank READS, a grassroots reading program designed to start a community dialogue and rediscover the joy of reading. Burbank READS was based on "One Book, One City," the successful program that started in Seattle in 1996 and has been repeated in cities and states across the nation.

Burbank READS was inaugurated in 2007 with the selection of *Marley & Me* by John Grogan. As a debut program, it was an overwhelming success. The February 17 opening event was a community dogwalk down Chandler Bikeway with over 200 people with their dogs participating.

The 2008 selection of *Rocket Boys* by Homer H. Hickam, Jr. was ideally suited to Burbank with its past ties to the aerospace industry. Space enthusiasts had the opportunity to meet retired astronaut Vance Brand and hear about his experiences.

Burbank READS went green in 2009 when the community was invited to read *Living Like Ed* by long-time environmentalist Ed Begley, Jr. Mr. Begley made a personal appearance at the kickoff event to a standing-room only audience. Burbank READS concluded on Saturday, April 4, with a Sustainability Showcase to provide the community with the information, resources and contacts needed for a greener lifestyle.

*Good Night, Irene* by bestselling mystery author Jan Burke was selected for the 2010 Burbank Reads. "An Invitation to Murder," an after-hours, interactive murder mystery in the Buena Vista Branch Library kicked off the program. Burbank Reads 2010 concluded with a Tea Party in honor of the author, who made a special appearance.



*Burbank went to the dogs in 2007 on the Chandler Bikeway. Pictured are Library Services Director Sharon Cohen and City Manager Mary Alvord.*



The City of Burbank celebrated its centennial in 2011. So it was appropriate that Burbank Reads spotlighted local author Todd Jensen and his book *On Gratitude*. Growing up in Burbank, he is a graduate of Burbank schools and was a frequent visitor to the Buena Vista Branch Library. Mr. Jensen led the campaign to make his hometown the most grateful city in America.

Currently, the Burbank Public Library has been offering a Summer Reading Club for Grown-ups. Readers can sign up online and submit short book reviews to be eligible for prizes. Special programs are also presented to coincide with the Club themes.



*Library Services Director Sharon Cohen, Vice Mayor Dr. David Gordon, Mayor Emily Gabel-Luddy, Council member Jess Talamantes, and Interim City Manager Ken Pulskamp assisted with the ribbon cutting for the opening of the Northwest Branch Library.*



*The community was eager to try out the new furniture at the re-opened neighborhood library.*

The Northwest Branch Library went through several renovations over the years. The most recent involved closing the facility from August 2012 to July 2013, for a mandatory seismic retrofit funded by a grant from FEMA.

The building needed a number of improvements to make it both ADA-compliant (Americans with Disabilities Act) and structurally safe for the community during an earthquake. A happy outcome of the renovations was a bright, new interior with new carpeting and furnishings. A grand opening ceremony was held on July 20, 2013.

In recent years, the Burbank Public Library has incorporated new ways to reach out to the community. The Library has a definite web presence with a number of social networking sites: a library blog, mystery readers' blog, children's and teen blogs, a library wiki, several Facebook pages, Pinterest, and a twitter page.

## Chapter 5: THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

After the Second World War, the Burbank Public Library encouraged children to read during vacation by means of a competitive summer reading club. School classes made trips to the library throughout the school year and the Boy Scouts were given practical training in bookbinding to qualify them for merit badges.

Children in the third through the sixth grades attended the library's Summer Reading Club in July and August. Those who had read and submitted reports on twelve or more books were awarded "diplomas."

By 1950, story hours were conducted for children every Friday from 3:30 to 4:30 PM at both the Main and the Buena Vista libraries, attended by 25-77 at each location. Special semi-annual book festivals offered the librarians a chance to publicize good books and the weekly story hours encouraged younger children to visit the library weekly.

A preschool story hour for children three to five years old was started in 1955 at the Central Library. It proved to be very popular. Children in grades one to six continued to enjoy a weekly story hour as well.

In addition to the annual Summer Reading Clubs, the Library offered the first Read-To-Me Club in 1988. This program focused on parents and preschoolers reading together then attending fun programs at the library.

By 2013 Children's Services for the Burbank Public Library offered a wealth of activities for children and their families. Each library in the system presents a preschool storytime; Buena Vista conducts four Toddler Time story hours for children under the age of five and the Central Library has one session; the Central and Buena Vista libraries also invite families to attend monthly Film Festivals and a Family Night at the Library. During the summer, each of Burbank's three libraries offers a preschool Read-To-Me program as well as two sessions of the Reading Club.

Teen Services has expanded over the years to provide fun activities for an underserved population. A teen Summer Reading Program was held for the first time in 1997. Other teen events included Anime festivals and Cosplay, Book Clubs, writing contests, Readers' Theater, and craft programs.

In 2011, a new teen area was created through a \$20,000 grant from the California state Library. The Teen Scene has become a destination for teens with a defined seating area and their own computers.



In honor of the Burbank Public Library's One Hundred Years of Service, several members of the community shared their memories of the library.

**James Pittsford, 1950s/60s:** I was born in 1951, raised in Burbank and currently reside here! My fondest memories of the "original" Buena Vista Library are as follows: while in elementary school, my mom would take me to the library during the summer to attend the Reading Club.

A few years later, I'd ride my bike to the library myself and use my very own library card to borrow various "Hardy Boys" mysteries. I believe I read all of them and even today I love to read a good mystery story! These are among my best memories of growing up in Burbank. During very hot summer days, I remember vividly being curled up on my bed with the air-conditioner on, reading books borrowed from the Buena Vista Library.

**Anonymous:** When I was four years old (50 years ago!), my grandmother took me to the old Central Library and I could look at any picture book I wanted. It was magical! Marcia Richards recommended so many great children's book that opened up new worlds for me in the 1960s. When I lost my job two years ago, I read all the Harry Potter books, and somehow, I didn't feel so bad. I just discovered the DVD section! I can find almost any new book I want to read and don't have to buy it myself. The Summer Reading Club for adults was a blast! I LOVE my Library because it's a fun, happy, safe place...it's my happy place!

**Sandi Sutter, 1980s:** My family had just moved to California from Texas. My brothers were about to attend our fourth elementary school and we knew no one. Schools and libraries were my friends, so I made us join the reading club at the Central Library.

We lived by Olive Park and would walk every week up the hill to the library. The trip was an adventure and so were the books I got to check out in the quiet, air conditioned rooms. I read and read as much as I could to catch up on all I had missed in my patchwork education. My younger brother, who was dragged along, enjoyed the adventure more than the books! We dressed up as clowns for the end of the club party and walked all the way up the hill that way! I cherish this memory because the library was a safe, welcoming place where I got to live in other people's lives and learn about the world and myself. Thank you, librarians!

**Anna Cremarosa, 1987-90:** Every summer my mom would take us to the library for the Summer Reading Club. I loved getting the bag with the pencil, bookmark and reading list. I loved checking out the books on the list.



*Buena Vista Branch Library's much-needed expansion included a new Children's Room in 1958.*



*A new Children's Room on the ground level was added to the Burbank Main Library. It opened in October 1953.*

*Andrea Espinoza, 1990s/2000s:* There are not sufficient words to describe my gratitude and appreciation for the outstanding resources offered by the Burbank Public Library. Having been born and raised in Burbank, I have had the opportunity to be in a few clubs and organizations at the library.

When I was in first grade at Providencia Elementary, my parents enrolled me in the Summer Reading Club. Oh, how I looked forward to it every summer! I loved the chance to read books for fun and get rewarded for it, in addition to watching the entertaining and engaging shows every week. My mother encouraged me to enter the writing and art contests, and together, we came up with the most spectacular entries. One year, for example, I decorated a butterfly with only edible things, like beans and sunflower seeds, and I won first prize in the art contest! What a proud moment for me as a child. I will never forget how the Summer Reading Club helped to keep my love of books alive during those long, hot summer breaks.

In 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I had the privilege to become a member of the library's High School Book Club, and got to meet other teens who loved reading books as much as I did. During those three years, I met some wonderful friends and got to know two spectacular librarians, Anarda Williams and Melissa Elliott. I will always be grateful to the Burbank Public Library for making my childhood that much more rewarding.

## Looking to the Future...

Innovative programming for all ages, from Toddlers to Seniors, encourages the public to view the library as the go-to place for entertainment and education. Where will the Burbank Public Library be in the next one hundred years?

*It can soar as far as imagination and dreams can take it.*

## BURBANK PUBLIC LIBRARY CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

A How-To-Festival was held from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM on Saturday, October 5, 2013. The community was invited to “Learn a little About a lot” as mini-workshops on a variety of topics were presented throughout the Central Library.

Various stations were set up in the library where selected city departments, local vendors, businesses, and nonprofit organizations had an opportunity to spend 15-20 minutes demonstrating how to do something throughout the day. Participants had a chance to learn a little about everything from how to knit to preventing identity theft to establishing a garage band, to researching family history. It was an informative and fun-packed day!



*How to extinguish fires with the Burbank Fire Department*

*How to make pizza with Northend Pizzeria owner Dominic Scarola*



*Do It Yourself tips from Lowes*





*Quilting tips from librarian Chris Rodriguez*

*Burbank history and lore with Burbankia co-founder Mike McDaniel*



*Kevin Bulone offered pointers on playing chess*



*Say it in Sign Language with Donna Lichtman*



# BURBANK PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM



**Burbank Central Library**  
110 North Glenoaks Blvd.  
818-238-5600

[BurbankLibrary.com](http://BurbankLibrary.com)





**Buena Vista Branch Library**  
300 North Buena Vista Street  
818-238-5620



**Northwest Branch Library**  
3323 West Victory Blvd.  
818-238-5640

