

**Harris County Archives
Houston, Texas**

Finding Aid

**Harris County Public Library Records
CR57
(1921-2002)**

Size: 14 cubic feet

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Acquisition: Harris County Public
Library, 2007

Accession Numbers: 2007.005

Processed by: AnnElise Golden 2008

Citation: [Identification of Item], Harris County Public Library Records, Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

Agency History:

In the fall of 1920, a campaign for a library services began for rural Harris County. Under the direction of Arthur B. Dawes, an attorney, and assistance from the Dairy Men's Association, Julia Ideson, librarian of the Houston Public Library, I.H. Mowery of Aldine, Miss Christine Baker of Barker, County Judge Chester H. Bryan, Edward F. Pickering, and Rev. Harris Masterson circulated petitions for a county library throughout Harris County. Arthur B. Dawes presented the plans and petitions signed by Harris County qualified voters to the Commissioner's Court and, with skepticism, the Commissioners Court ordered a budget of \$6500.00 for the county library for a trial period of one year. If the library did not succeed, the Commissioner's Court would not approve a budget for a second year.

The Harris County Commissioners Court appointed its first librarian, Lucy Fuller, in May 1921 and, with an office on the fifth floor of the Harris County Court House, the Harris County Public Library was in operation. At the close of the year, the Library had 26 library branches and book wagon stations in operation, 3,455 volumes in the library, and 19,574 volumes in circulation. The County Library was a success and for the 1922 budget year the Commissioner's Court set aside \$12,000 for the Harris County Public Library. Lucy Fuller served as Librarian until 1926. Ruth Underwood Pooley was County Librarian from 1926-1932 and under her supervision a dramatic increase in library branches, book wagon stations and circulation occurred even with a reduced budget during the Great Depression.

Elnora Edgar Buchanan was County Librarian from 1932-1939 and she too had to work with a limited budget. In 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Library Project paid the salaries of the County Library's part time employees, which allowed the Library to stay within the budget, buy new books, and pay to have books mended. During the Great Depression, the County Library provided books for the National Youth Administration (NYA) camp for girls in La Porte, to the Federal Transient Home (later Ranger Home) for men in South Houston, and the Santa Ana Home for transient boys in Pasadena. In 1937, the Library received its first Bookmobile, which offered library services to people living in areas with limited branches or book wagon stations. The number of library locations changed from year to year due to the addition of new branches and stations, consolidation of rural schools, the annexation of communities by the city of Houston and schools by the Houston Independent School District. These locations varied from small collections of books in one-teacher schools to branches having several thousand books housed in separate buildings.

Reba Anderson was County Librarian from 1939-1945, Bernice Snell 1945-1951, Mary Butler Owensby 1951-1974, Katherine Skinner Brown 1974-1979, Catherine S. Park, 1979-2006. After serving two years as interim director, Rhoda Goldberg was appointed director in December 2008. As of 2008, there are twenty-six branch locations to serve the people of Harris County; the administrative offices are located at 8080 El Rio, Houston, Texas.

Bibliography:

Annual Reports (1922-1942), Harris County Public Library, Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

Collection Summary:

Reports, Subject Files, Correspondence, Memorandums, Published Materials, Manuals, Budgets, Scrapbooks, Photo Album, and Photographs (1922-2002) document the Harris County Public Library. Of special interest are the Annual Reports (1922-1944) that record the early functions of the library, the formation of branch libraries, the bookmobile, and the populations they served. Of equal interest are the Scrapbooks and a Photo Album that document the history of branch libraries, the librarians, library constituents, and the Bookmobile.

Archivist's Note:

Monthly Reports, Branch System Reports, Statistical Reports, and Budget records were minimally processed and have been maintained in their original folders and are arranged by series. Dates are an approximation.

Series: Administrative Records

Size: 13.25 cubic feet

Range of Dates: 1922-2002

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Scope and Contents Note:

Administrative Records document the daily functions of the Harris County Public Library and its responsibilities concerning branch operations and staffing, library programs, outreach, the Bookmobile, and professional development. The series is divided into six subseries: Reports, Subject Files, Correspondence and Memorandums, Published Materials, Manuals, and Budgets.

Subseries: Reports

Daily, Monthly, and Annual Reports (1922-2002) document the materials and services used by library constituents.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Monthly Reports	1963-1978	0936-X-00
Daily Multimedia Statistical Reports	1973-1974	0936-X-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1975-1976	0936-X-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1977-1983	0937-X-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1982	0093-V-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1984	0094-V-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1985, 01 - 1990, 12	0938-X-00
Branch System Reports	1990, 03 – 1995, 02	0939-X-00
Branch System Reports	1995, 03 – 1998, 02	0940-X-00
Branch System Reports	1998, 03 – 2001, 02	0941-X-00
Branch System Reports	2001, 03 – 2002, 02	0942-X-00
Annual Reports	1922-1942	0942-X-00
Annual Reports	1943-1960	0942-X-00
Annual Reports	1975-1986	0942-X-00

Title	Date	Location
Texas Library Reports	1952-1965	0942-X-00
Morning at the Library	1980-1981	0942-X-00

Subseries: Subject Files

Subject Files document the daily functions of the professional library staff, and the opening and closing of branch libraries, and library services for the Harris County Jail.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Children's Library Meetings	1985	0943-X-00
Children's Library Meetings	1986	0943-X-00
Agendas and Narratives Children's Meetings	1988-1989	0943-X-00
Agendas and Narratives Children's Meetings	1991-1992	0943-X-00
Children's Specialist	1993	0943-X-00
County Librarian	1986	0943-X-00
County Librarian	1987	0943-X-00
County Librarian	1989	0943-X-00
County Librarian	1991	0943-X-00
County Librarian	1992	0943-X-00
Assistant County Librarian	1985	0943-X-00
Assistant County Librarian	1988	0943-X-00
Assistant County Librarian	1991	0943-X-00
Assistant County Librarian	1992	0943-X-00
Baytown Branch	1925-1974	0943-X-00
Wooster Branch	1961-1968	0943-X-00
Branch Openings	1971-1983	0943-X-00
Bear Creek Branch	1983	0943-X-00

Title	Date	Location
Brazoria County Library	1966-1984	0943-X-00
Jail Services	1973-1983	0943-X-00
Miscellaneous Library Information	1930-1987	0943-X-00
Regional Library Council	1965-1967	0944-X-00
Texas Conference on Library and Information Services	1978, 08/22-11/16	0944-X-00
Administrative Offices 8080 El Rio	1989-1991	0944-X-00

Subseries: Correspondence and Memorandums

Correspondence and Memorandums contain information on the daily functions and activities of the Harris County Public Library and their constituents. Records may also include notes, newspaper clippings, cartoons, and surveys.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Correspondence	1998, 01-10; 2009, 03/14	0943-X-00
Memorandums	1988, 01-12	0943-X-00

Subseries: Published Materials

Published Materials contain one book on the City of Houston with brief histories on city departments and department heads (1928) and one thesis (1958) on the organizational structure of Harris County with brief histories on County Departments and their responsibilities.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Municipal Book of Houston	1928	0944-X-00
Organizational Manual for Harris County	1958	0944-X-00

Subseries: Manuals

Manuals record the responsibilities, rules, and regulations for the Bookmobile and Branch Librarians.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Manual for Bookmobiles and Branches	1958	0944-X-00
Manual For Bookmobiles and Branches	1958-1960	0944-X-00

Subseries: Budgets

Budgets document the policies and procedures the County Librarian and staff uses to obtain the necessary supplies, equipment, and employment of professional and non-professional staff for all branch libraries.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Working Budget	1983	0944-X-00
Budget File	1983	0944-X-00
Budget Meeting	1983	0944-X-00
Budget	1983	0944-X-00
Budget Requests	1984	0944-X-00
Budget File	1984	0944-X-00
Branch Budget Requests	1984	0944-X-00
Budget Allocation Meeting	1984	0945-X-00
Working Budget	1985	0945-X-00
Budget Requests	1985	0945-X-00
Budget Requests	1985	0945-X-00
Budget (Actual)	1985	0945-X-00
Budget Allocation Meeting	1985	0945-X-00

Title	Date	Location
Budget Requests	1986	0945-X-00
Budget Requests	1986	0945-X-00
Working Budget	1986	0945-X-00
Budget (Actual)	1986	0945-X-00
Working Budget	1987	0945-X-00
Budget Requests	1987	0945-X-00
Interim Budget	1987	0945-X-00
Budget Allocation Meeting	1988	0946-X-00
Budget (Actual)	1988	0946-X-00
Budget Requests	1989	0946-X-00
Working Budget and Forms	1989	0946-X-00
Budget Requests	1990	0946-X-00
Budget Forms	1990	0946-X-00

Subseries: Plaques

Plaques document the materials presented to the Harris County Public Library by their constituents.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Jacqueline B. Freeman Memorial Library	1978	0947-X-01

Series: Scrapbooks

Size: 9 Scrapbooks

Range of Dates: 1921-2000

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Scope and Contents Note:

Newspaper clippings, programs, invitations, correspondence, photographs, and ephemera comprise the scrapbook materials. Arranged chronologically, the newspaper articles document the creation of the Harris County Public Library, branch openings, branch closings, outreach, the Bookmobile, library programs, and professional development.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Scrapbook	1921-1927	0947-X-00
Scrapbook	1928-1934	0947-X-00
Scrapbook	1934-1937	0947-X-00
Scrapbook	1937-1941	0947-X-00
Scrapbook	1938-1941	0947-X-00
Scrapbook	1941-1948	0096-V-00
Scrapbook	1948-1951	0947-X-00
Scrapbook	1951-1952	0096-V-00
Scrapbook	1996, 10/24- 2000, 03/08	0947-X-00

Series: Photographs

Size: 1 photo album, .15 cubic foot loose photoprints

Range of Dates: 1925-1983

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Scope and Contents Note:

Photographs record the history of the Harris County Public Library, the County Librarians and library staff, branch libraries, the Bookmobile, and the citizens they served (1925-1983).

Subseries: Photo Album

Photographs (1925-1939) document a pictorial history of the Harris County Public Library, staff members, branch libraries and their constituents, the Book Wagon and

Bookmobile, Bexar County Book Wagon, WPA art exhibits, school libraries, including two African American and one Hispanic school libraries, and branches that subsequently closed. Included in the collection are the histories of Goose Creek, Crosby, Humble, and La Porte branches.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Library Staff and Central Office	1925-1937	0017-P-01
Goose Creek and Highlands Branches	1925-1939	0017-P-02
The Bookmobile	1937-1938	0017-P-03
Humble and La Porte Branches	1929-1938	0017-P-04
Crosby and Fairbanks Branches	1930-1935	0017-P-05
Garden Villas, Pasadena, and South Houston Branches, and Bexar County Book Wagon	1929-1935	0017-P-06
Pelly Branch and the Library Book Wagon	1936	0017-P-07
Schools and Smaller Libraries	1931-1935	0017-P-08
Negro Schools, Former Libraries, Exhibits and Displays, and Summer Camps	1924-1935	0017-P-09

Subseries: Photoprints

Photoprints (1937-1983) record activities such as the Bookmobile and children's programs.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Bookmobile	1937-1954	0017-P-10
Central Office, Fairbanks, Northwest and other Branches	n.d.	0017-P-11
Wooster Branch Children's Program, Houston Allegro, Northwest Branch, and Unidentified Group of Women	1968, 12; 1983	0017-P12