PART III
COLORADO STATE LIBRARY

Territorial Library

On November 6, 1861 the first Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Colorado passed legislation establishing a Territorial Library and Cabinet and declaring the Territorial Superintendent of Common Schools, Ex-Officio Librarian. The law charged the librarian with the responsibility of safe-guarding the collection, of keeping "a record of all books and documents ..." of directing all expenditures, of exchanging documents with other legislative bodies and libraries, of controlling the sale of Supreme Court reports and statutes, of reporting to the Assembly on the first day of every regular session, and of controlling the use of the collection through rules and regulations promulgated by him. The Territorial Cabinet was a collection of minerals, fossils and ore samples, and the law required the librarian to request the deposit of specimens in the library by interested citizens for display purposes.

In 1865 the Territorial Legislative Assembly amended the first library statute on the books and named the treasurer, Ex-Officio Territorial Librarian. In 1877, however, the job was transferred back to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

State Library, 1877-1933

When Colorado achieved statehood, the Territorial Library and Cabinet became the State Library. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction became Ex-Officio State Librarian. Prior to statehood, only officers and ex-officers of the government were allowed to borrow materials from the library. With the change in the form of government, this privilege was extended to all persons upon the deposit of sums of money equal to twice the value of the material borrowed.

In the beginning the State Library did not offer traditional public library services. Its small staff was engaged in the collection and processing of local, state and federal documents, and in the distribution of Colorado publications to public agencies (primarily state libraries and library commissions) outside the state and to offices of government, both local and state, within Colorado.

State Board of Library Commissioners

In 1899 the State Board of Library Commissioners was created by the 12th Session of the General Assembly to strengthen and stimulate library service throughout the state.

Appointments to the commission were made by the governor. The law required the body to provide counseling service to all free libraries; to assist in the establishment of new libraries; to provide help in methods of library management and control; and to make a biennial report to the governor, publishing 500 copies of this document for distribution. It also required all libraries supported in whole or in part with public funds (including public, school, college, and university libraries and the State and Supreme Court libraries) to make annual reports to the commission. The law provided $250 per year for the operation of the program.

Colorado Traveling Library Commission

In 1903 the Colorado Traveling Library Commission was created by the Legislature as the result of an intensive campaign by the State Federation of Women's Clubs. With the establishment of this agency, school and public library service in the form of quantity book loans was begun in Colorado.

Colorado Library Commission

In 1929 the General Assembly merged the State Board of Library Commissioners and the Colorado Traveling Library Commission, since the functions of the two agencies were closely related, naming the new agency the Colorado Library Commission. Until 1933, this consolidated library program provided limited service and operated on lean budgets. In 1933 a new administrative code went into effect, and the rights, powers and duties imposed by law in and upon the Colorado Library Commission were transferred to the Colorado State Library.

State Library, 1933-

Under the new code the program of the library was expanded to include general and extension library services, in addition to the documents function which was its original responsibility. The collecting and cataloging of mineral specimens were gradually eliminated from the program.

In 1947 the 36th General Assembly repealed all of the library legislation on the statutes and enacted a completely new and modern omnibus library law for the state. Since 1947 this law has been amended three times. In 1955 the method of financing county library units was changed to conform with financing procedures for other county programs. In 1961 an amendment was passed which reinforced sections of the law dealing with advisory and financial assistance available from the State Library to local units and areas wishing to establish or strengthen local programs, and to persons employed by local libraries in which better trained personnel is required. Bookmobile service as a means of distributing materials to borrowers was mentioned specifically for the first time in Colorado law in the 1961 amendment. The 43rd General Assembly contributed further to the development of libraries in the state by appropriating $100,000 for public library grants to be distributed to...
In 1975 an amendment was passed which allowed for the legal establishment of regional library service systems. The seven systems in Colorado had been funded by the state in addition to federal Library Services and Construction Act funds since 1967.

The Library Services and Construction Act was passed in 1956 and signed by President Dwight Eisenhower, making funds available through the Colorado State Library to libraries for development and for services. The federal government has appropriated funds annually since 1956.

Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provided federal funds to schools to develop and improve school libraries and media centers. Until 1974 these funds were channeled through the Colorado State Library for distribution. In 1974, Title II, ESEA and Title III of the National Defense Education Act became Part B of Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; the administration of this new program left the Colorado State Library to come under the direct supervision of the Colorado Department of Education.

The Directors of the Colorado State Library

This is a partial list of the Directors of the Colorado State Library and its predecessor, the Colorado Traveling Library Commission.

Mrs. Julia V. Welles, President, Colorado Traveling Library Commission, 1903-1912
Miss Anne Marie Strasser 1929-1937
Robert A. Luke 1939-1941
Mrs. Clara Holland Cutright 1941-1943
Gordon L. Bennett 1943-1969
James D. Meeks 1969-1974
Richard M. Cheski 1974-1976
Dr. Arvin C. Blome, Acting Director Feb.-Sept., 1976
Ms. Anne Marie Falsone 1976-1988
Nancy Bolt 1988-2005
Eugene Hainer 2005-