



# LIBRARIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## Public libraries celebrate 100th birthday in Wisconsin, 1972.

[s.l.]: [s.n.], 1972-04-03

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Public libraries throughout the state are celebrating the 100th birthday of the law which permitted the establishment of Free Public Libraries and Reading Rooms in the cities and towns of Wisconsin. The bill, which became law on April 3, 1872, also made these libraries "forever free for the use of the inhabitants" and indicated that they provide "the greatest good to the greatest number."

Until recently, however, approximately 275,000 Wisconsin citizens were without adequate public library service, and to celebrate the centennial of its birth in Wisconsin public libraries all over the state are hailing the passage, in December, 1971, of the Public Library Systems Bill. This bill will allow counties to join together and share resources and services for the benefit of all citizens.

This is a long way from the establishment of the first public library in Black River Falls, Wis., in 1872. And ideas about what kinds of books to buy and what services to provide have also changed.

In those days, there were no children's services, and children weren't allowed to have a library card. A person

FOR RELEASE: APRIL 2, 1972

could not browse through the books in the library, but had to ask the librarian for the book he wanted. Nothing "frivolous or immoral" like novels, information on childbirth and sex education, and sometimes unpopular political points of view were allowed in the library.

As the demands for new and more services and materials grew, the public library changed to meet the demand. In 1899, the first steps were taken in Wisconsin to set up a library school to train and educate future librarians. In May, 1913, Wisconsin passed a bill which would allow different towns and cities in a county (of 150,000 population or more) to join together in a county system. In 1921, legislation was passed which permitted any county, regardless of population, to form a county system.

Today, public libraries throughout the state offer many new materials and points of view to reflect the time. A library not only has books, but films, filmstrips, phonograph records and framed reproductions of famous art works. Since in a community there are many different people with different tastes and interests, the public library also offers materials and services to fill this need.

In this centennial year, visit your public libraries and discover what they can do for you.