



NEWSLETTER

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We reached our membership goal

By Ellen Dambrosio

When I became membership director in 2007, we had just 30 paid memberships (some singles, and some couples or families). To raise more money and promote our cause, we needed new members. It took 19 years, but in September we finally reached our goal of 200. In fact, we're at 205, and I'm elated!

Our members care deeply about the Modesto Library and the valuable services it provides to our community. One way they support this treasure is by renewing their Friends of the Modesto Library memberships year after year. Many, including myself, have been members for decades.

What about you? Are you a member this year? Membership begins at just \$25 per calendar year. It's easy to join or renew through the website. And please, invite a friend to join us in supporting the Modesto Library. Many thanks to all who've joined or renewed this year.

The History of Stanislaus Libraries

By Maree Hawkins

In 1884 a Modesto newspaper mentioned a private circulating library. At that time the town had over 1,000 people. By the 1890s, several free reading rooms had been established. The reading rooms had books as well as periodicals on current events and agriculture and served as



community meeting places.

In 1905 the Rodgers Free Reading Room merged with a reading room sponsored by the Women's Improvement Club of Modesto to form the Modesto City Library. The library was funded by \$120 from

taxation and \$1,000 from fees on the town's pool hall operators. Oramil McHenry's 1906 bequest of \$20,000 and partial ownership of three downtown properties led to the building of the Modesto Library in 1912 (pictured when new above.) The building, at 14th and I streets, was known as the McHenry Library and is now the McHenry Museum.

Modesto wasn't the only Stanislaus County city with library fever in the early 1900s.

In 1907 the Turlock Women's Improvement Club opened a local reading room and included evening hours in hopes of becoming an alternative to the saloon. In 1916 the Carnegie Corporation provided a \$10,000 grant to build a Classic Revival structure on North Broadway

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January Opening Date Confirmed

We have the date we've been waiting for: Jan. 11, 2027, the day the Modesto Library will reopen to the public.

At its Sept. 29 meeting, the Board of Supervisors approved extending the closure through Jan. 9. The additional time allows for installation of some of the custom furniture and other enhancements being provided through FOML's Lifelong Legacy Campaign.

It also allows time for staff to get books back on their shelves in correct order. The Modesto collection has been stored at the Salida Library but books were available for check out during the two-year closure.

During this time, people have been able to select books and DVDs and pick up reserved materials at the Express Library, in Tenth Street Plaza downtown. That small library will remain open through June 30, 2027, and possibly longer.

"This reopening is more than the return of a beloved building. It's a celebration of what our community can accomplish when we invest in places that bring people together," said County Librarian Sarah Dentan.

Plans are being made for a grand reopening. Watch the library website, www.stanislauslibrary.org/ for details. We'll also share information in the December issue of this newsletter.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Lives On in Stanislaus

With the passing of Imagination Library's patron, Dolly Parton, we've been asked if that means the program has ended. No!

FOML is still helping families enroll children for free books from birth to their 5th birthday. They can sign up at any of the county libraries. -And FOML is still helping. Thanks to our own Cathie Peck's original involvement in the pilot STANREADS program, any child in the county is now eligible through the county-wide expansion. Long-time FOML board director Anne Britton was added to the Imagination Library of Stanislaus County council in 2020. FOML has contributed \$2,000 to the Stanislaus Imagination Library annually since 2022-23.



All that is needed to add more children is the small local portion of the cost: \$1.30 per book per child per month. Lack of funding has meant that currently only 20% of eligible children in the county are signed up. With more money, more children can be enrolled. More Info at <https://www.stanc2c.org/focus-areas/imagination-library>.

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and Florence Streets. That location is now the site of the Carnegie Art Center.

1909: The Newman Women's Club (later the Women's Improvement Club) was organized with the objective of opening a community reading room. They also purchased lots in Newman for a library.

1912: A very busy year for libraries! Waterford, Ceres, Patterson and Hughson opened libraries that year and joined the county library system. The Stanislaus County Library established a small public library in Patterson--first in a school and then in the Del Puerto Hotel. Oakdale joined the county system and set up a small branch while pursuing funds for a dedicated building.

**Read more about
Andrew Carnegie
on our website.**

1913-14: Denair and Salida opened libraries, followed by Empire in 1914.

1916: Oakdale received a \$7,000 Carnegie grant.

1917: The county applies for Carnegie grants for Riverbank and Patterson. Each community received \$3,000. Library building was postponed until after World War I. The citizens of Patterson raised \$8,000 to complete the building of its library. That same year Newman received a \$7,600 Carnegie grant.

1921: Riverbank, Patterson and Newman opened new Carnegie libraries. They also purchased lots in Newman for a library. The original Newman Library is now a history museum.

1922: Grayson and Westley libraries were established.

The Stanislaus County Free Library system grew rapidly in its early years by using creative solutions to reach rural residents. By 1922 there were 27 community branches, often in a store (Empire), church basement, local jail or fire station. The first head librarian, Cornelia D. Provines, used a horse and buggy or the local train system to get around the county. In 1920, the library system got its first automobile, a Dodge Roadster.

In Short

Mark your calendar – Friends of the Modesto Library will benefit from your spending if you set aside the weekend of Dec. 12 to shop at Barnes & Noble at 3501 McHenry Ave., Modesto. The store gives a portion of its sales to the Friends. Members will be on hand to explain our organization to shoppers who don't know about us.

From Staff to Friend – FOML board members Isa Wiechmann and Anne Britton were on hand to congratulate Brian Lillie at his retirement party on Sept. 17. To celebrate his 30+ years with Stanislaus Libraries, most recently his time as "Mr. Brian" in the Children's Department, FOML presented Brian with a retirement gift and welcomed him as the newest member of the Friends.

Another Book Fair – Watch for FOML's Online Scholastic Book Fair in mid-November – in time to order for the holidays. There will be announcements on our website and social media, and a timely email reminder as it opens.

Friends of the Modesto Library thanks Dittos for printing our newsletter.