

History of the Kenosha Public Library

- 1872 First circulating library in Kenosha was opened in the Unitarian Church which was established by Zalmon Simmons and Reverend Henry Simmons.
- 1895 Committee of citizens met to plan a public library. First library association is formed.
- 1896 The library – housed in a room above the First National Bank and leased by Zalmon Simmons for \$5.00 per month – was opened to the public. On the first day 60 books were checked out and 60 cards issued. Clara Barnes was the first librarian.
- 1899 Zalmon Simmons announced that he would offer to construct a library building in Central Park if it will be named in honor of his late son, Gilbert. Zalmon also paid for the building of the soldier's monument that today stands in Library Park.
- 1900 The Gilbert M. Simmons Library and the soldier's monument were dedicated on May 30th. Construction of the library cost \$150,000 and a patron named Cyril Kupfer checked out the first book in July.
- 1904 First library "stations" opened around town but were discontinued due to lack of patronage.
- 1907 The Woman's Club room, which was the lecture room in the basement of Simmons Library, was transformed into a children's library.
- 1910 Zalmon Simmons dies on February 11th.
- 1911 Alterations are made to Simmons library lower level. Cora Frantz became the 2nd Head Librarian.
- 1916 Reading room opened at Bain School Social Center.
- 1923 Three branch libraries are built and equipped on the grounds of the junior high schools to serve the communities and the schools.
- 1925 The West Branch library, currently the Uptown library, is built to better accommodate the expanding Westside. Construction costs total \$50,000 and there are 6,000 books in the collection on opening day.
- 1929 Children's room at Simmons library moves to the Unitarian church and was named the Boys and Girls library.
- 1946 Dorothy Huth becomes the 3rd Head Librarian.
- 1954 Booktrailer service to schools begins on June 30th.
- 1960 Second booktrailer is added in September of this year.
- 1960-1962 The public libraries in junior high schools and in Bain Elementary are changed to a school operation.
- 1962 Washington Branch opens July 9th at 3817- 22nd Avenue.
- 1963 George Earley becomes the 4th Library Director.
- 1968 Booktrailer No. 1 service is discontinued in June.
- 1974 The Gilbert M. Simmons library is dedicated as a Wisconsin Registered Landmark on July 7th.
- 1977 New Washington Branch opens on November 18th in shopping center located at 2053 22nd Avenue.
- 1977 Ginnie Cooper becomes the 5th Library Director.
- 1978 Name of library changes to Kenosha Public Library.

- 1981 Southwest Branch opens to the public on January 16th at 7979 38th Avenue.
- 1981 Simmons Library is remodeled and is reopened on February 11th. The second story floor of glass is removed as well as the anchored two-story stacks from the west wing.
- 1981 Louise Pittman becomes the 6th Library Director.
- 1986 The new bookmobile, a customized Great Dane semi-trailer, is purchased for \$39,880 and Library service is expanded into the county.
- 1986 Current director Douglas Baker becomes the 7th Library Director.
- 1991 The computerized card catalog (OPAC) goes online in December.
- 1993 Newly constructed Northside Branch is dedicated on June 6th and opened on June 7th at 1500 27th Avenue. Construction costs including furnishings are \$2,510,000.
- 1999 623,297 people visit Kenosha Public Library branches and the Bookmobile. There are 324,000 items in the library collections. 1,041,546 items are checked out from all locations. 104,018 customer information inquiries are answered.
- 2000 Simmons Library celebrates 100 years of service.
- 2004 Southwest Library is expanded and renovated. New Bookmobile goes into service.
- 2007 KPL begins offering free Wi-Fi internet connections at all Library branches.
- 2009 Laptop computers are made available to the public at Southwest Library. 846,285 people visit Kenosha Public Library branches and the Bookmobile. There are 405,934 items in the library collections. 1,157,686 items are checked out from all locations. 178,693 customer information inquiries are answered. 27,851 people attended library programs.