



THE SANTA MONICA PUBLIC LIBRARY



AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

SANTA
MONICA
PUBLIC
LIBRARY



1875 On July 10, Santa Monica officially became a town. Within a year, Santa Monica had 1,000 residents, 160 houses, 75 tents, a school district, a church, the wharf, a bathhouse, a hotel, and the *Santa Monica Outlook* was launched.

1876 The first Library Association was formed. \$2.00 annual dues were used to purchase books. Weekly meetings were held to discuss books and read papers. The community slowly continued to grow, and the Library Association started to look for a location to be used as a reading room.

1884 A room adjoining Dr. Fred C. McKinnie's drug store was established as the reading room.

1888 The reading room was turned over to the newly formed Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) on Third Street.

At this time, the collection of books numbered 400, plus popular magazines and newspapers. In July, the *Evening Outlook* described the reading room as one of the "specially inviting places in Santa Monica."



TOP LEFT: First bath house in Santa Monica, just north of Santa Monica Canyon. (1887/C.C. PIERCE)

TOP RIGHT: Summer campers on the beach looking south to Arcadia Hotel. (1890/SECURITY FIRST NATIONAL BANK COLLECTION)

BOTTOM: Gathering of Women's Christian Temperance Union in Temescal Canyon. (1892/CLEARWATER COLLECTION, PACIFIC PALISADES HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

TOP LEFT: Main Library at 1343 Sixth St. (2003/CYNNI MURPHY)

TOP RIGHT: Clouds above the Main Library at 601 Santa Monica Blvd. (2011/CYNNI MURPHY)

BOTTOM LEFT: Santa Monica Public Library built with Carnegie funds at 503 Santa Monica Blvd. (1912)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Carl Cheng's "Underwater Canopy" sculpture in the Main Library courtyard at 601 Santa Monica Blvd. (2005/CYNNI MURPHY)

1890s Despite many successful fundraising events, maintaining the reading room proved challenging for WCTU. In November 1890, WCTU proposed to turn the library of 800 volumes over to the city of Santa Monica. The town trustees accepted the gift.

In December 1890, Miss Elfie Mosse was appointed the first City Librarian.

Two rooms in the Bank of Santa Monica building, located at Oregon Avenue (later Santa Monica Boulevard) and Third Street, were set aside for the library. Use of the reading rooms was free of charge, but borrowing privileges cost 25 cents a month.

In March 1893, the library was made free to the public. At this time, the library had 1,800 volumes. By 1898, the library expanded to include another room.

TOP: Elfie Mosse in the Children's Room of Santa Monica Public Library. (ca. 1900/ERNEST MARQUEZ COLLECTION)

BOTTOM: First Santa Monica Public Library at Third St. and Santa Monica Blvd. (1890)



1903-04 In March 1903, the library moved to the new City Hall located at Fourth Street and Oregon Avenue (later Santa Monica Boulevard) which provided more room. However, this was not meant to be a permanent location.

As the city grew, so did the library's collection; and the public wanted a library building of its own. Early in 1903, Mrs. J. H. Clark wrote to Andrew Carnegie making a plea for a library building in Santa Monica. Carnegie's reply in April 1903 stated in part: "... Mr. Carnegie will be pleased to furnish Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Dollars to erect a Free Public Library Building for Santa Monica."

Within a short time, the citizens raised \$3982.50 and purchased a lot on the northeast corner of Oregon Avenue and Fifth Street. Work began on the building in January 1904. The library opened to the public eight months later, on August 11.

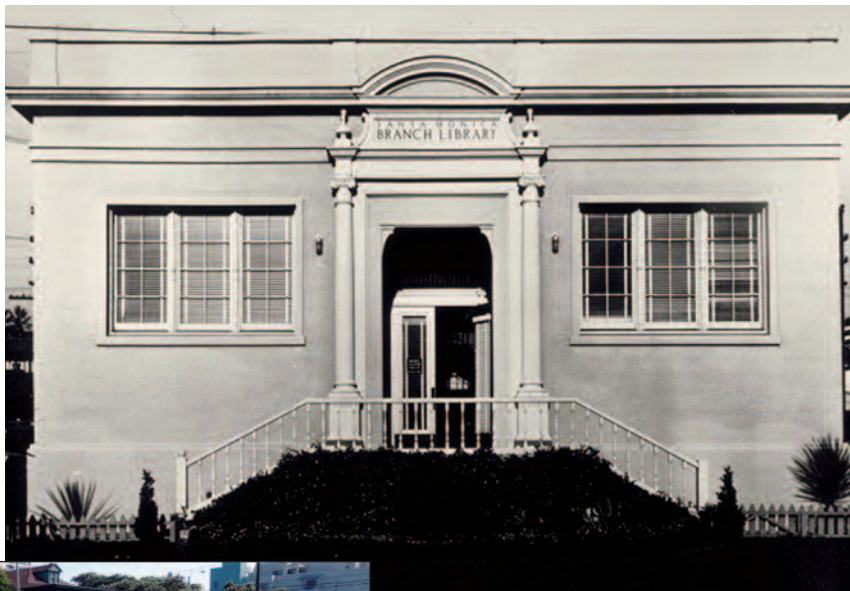
TOP: City Hall on the corner of Fourth St. and Santa Monica Blvd. (1903/H.F.RILEY)

BOTTOM: Santa Monica Public Library at 503 Santa Monica Blvd. (ca. 1920s)

1910s The need for branch libraries was also evident. As early as 1906, there was a book exchange located in the Clapp Brother's Drug Store on Pier Avenue for borrowers to return books and request new ones.

Eventually, a lot on the northeast corner of Ocean Park Boulevard and Main Street was purchased for \$8,000 to build a branch library in the Ocean Park neighborhood. The mayor wrote to the Carnegie Corporation requesting a grant to help with construction costs. Carnegie granted \$12,500.

Designed by Frank Kegley, Ocean Park Branch Library opened to the public on February 15, 1918.



TOP: Ocean Park Branch Library.

BOTTOM LEFT: Pedestal signage installed on April 18, 2011. (2011/CYNNI MURPHY)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Computer stations in the children's area. (2011/CYNNI MURPHY)



1920s-30s In 1926, a bond issue was passed in the sum of \$50,000 for the reconstruction and expansion of the Main library located at Santa Monica Boulevard and Fifth Street. The small Carnegie-funded structure was enlarged and remodeled into a Spanish-style design by E.J. Baume, with two additional wings.

This new Main library opened to the public on November 18, 1927.

By 1930, Santa Monica had a population of 37,000. It had a hospital, junior college, and was home to the new Douglas Aircraft Company and Clover Airfield.

On July 1, 1931, the Fairview Heights Branch Library opened. Located at 1903 20th Street, it was a 15-foot wide storefront, sandwiched between a grocery store and barber shop.

TOP: Homes on the beach along Pacific Coast Highway. (ca. 1935/ADELBERT BARTLETT)

MIDDLE: Douglas Aircraft Company Inspection Department group photo with the Douglas DC-4. (1938/MUSEUM OF FLYING COLLECTION)

BOTTOM LEFT: Santa Monica Public Library after the 1927 remodel. (1927)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Youngsters and Mrs. Mercer Watson Lucas in the Children's Department. (ca. 1930s)

1930s One of the most unique features of the remodeled Main Library was the murals created by artist Stanton Macdonald-Wright (1890-1973). Commissioned by the Public Works Administration Project, the extensive mural cycle depicted the history of humankind. Macdonald-Wright began work on the mural in February 1934. It would take him 18 months to complete the project.

Unveiled in 1935, the 2,000-square-foot composition made a lasting impression on visitors to the library.

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TOP: Stanton Macdonald-Wright with Barbara Douglas, daughter of Donald Douglas, at the installation and unveiling of his murals on August 25. (1935/ADELBERT BARTLETT)

BOTTOM: Stanton Macdonald-Wright murals in the reference area. (1935)



Stanton Macdonald-Wright Murals



The Stanton Macdonald-Wright mural series was on view in the Main Library for three decades before it was dismantled when the Library moved to a new location in 1965. Because it had been created as part of the New Deal art projects, the mural was transferred to the federal government. Most of the series remained in storage for many years near Washington, D.C. In 2005, selected panels of the mural were returned on loan from the Smithsonian American Art Museum to be conserved and reinstalled in the new Main Library when it opened in January 2006.

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TOP LEFT: Roger Bacon with assistant Copernicus (left panel) and Galileo (right panel).

BOTTOM LEFT: Group of musicians :Samuel Lifschey on viola, Norris Tivin on double-bass, George Barrere on flute, Ugo Savolini on bassoon, Van der Elst on trombone, Carl Heinrich on trumpet, Josef Franzl on French horn, Karl Muck of the Boston Symphony orchestra, conducting.

RIGHT: Shooting a film with actress Gloria Stuart, Leo Carrillo, his father Judge Juan J.Carrillo and director Frank Tuttle.

Children's book illustrator Eulalie Banks Wilson painted the murals for the Boys and Girls Room in the Main Library. Peter Pan, Cinderella, and other characters from children's books graced the walls of the children's section for more than two decades.

The murals were demolished when the building was razed in 1974.



1940s By 1942, it was clear the storefront Fairview Branch Library could no longer adequately handle increased patronage, and the Library began to look for a more suitable location. On July 13, 1942, Fairview Branch Library opened its second location at 2030 Pico Boulevard.

During World War II, long time Fairview Branch Librarian Nellie Sullivan initiated a service she had read about: preschool story times. It was the first of its kind on the West Coast.

Also during the war in 1945, the basement of the Ocean Park Branch Library was converted to a Young People's Room where teenagers gathered to study and play games. In subsequent years, this room housed children's books and then was used for meetings and programs.

TOP: Eulalie Banks Wilson with her mural. (1959)

TOP RIGHT: Captain Hook from Peter Pan.

BOTTOM LEFT: Stepsisters from Cinderella.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Young boy reading Treasure Island.



TOP LEFT: Second Fairview Branch Library.

TOP RIGHT: Young People's Room in Ocean Park Branch Library. (ca.1940s)

BOTTOM: Children's story hour with Mary Margaret Dyer. (ca.1940s)

In 1947, Santa Monica Public Library became the first public library in California to have a Film Department. It began with three 16mm films and some projection equipment. By 1949, the department had expanded to include recordings.

TOP LEFT: Mr. Leavitt and Kathleen Crowe browsing the phonograph record collection in the Audiovisual Department. (ca. 1950s/VICTOR BARNABA)

TOP RIGHT: Performance in the Boys and Girls' Room. (1954/LEW NICHOLS PHOTOGRAPHY)

BOTTOM LEFT: Boy playing the violin in front of a young audience. (1960)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Authors at "Celebrity Night", left to right: Joan Leslie Cornett, Craig Rice, Lawrence Lipton, Margaret Leighton and Earl Schenk. (NOVEMBER 1946)



1950s By the 1950s, the north side of Santa Monica was in need of library services, and the Montana Avenue Branch, located in a rented building at 1528-30 Montana Avenue, opened in February 1952.

The newest branch thrived, and within six years, the circulation climbed to over 80,000 items. The branch library had outgrown its rented space and plans were underway for a new building. Two lots on Montana Avenue were purchased. On August 20, 1959, groundbreaking ceremonies were conducted at 1704 Montana Avenue. On March 1, 1960, the new Montana Avenue Branch Library opened to the public.

TOP LEFT: First Montana Branch Library. (1952/DEL HAGEN STUDIOS)

TOP RIGHT: Interior of the first Montana Branch Library. (1952/DEL HAGEN STUDIOS)

BOTTOM LEFT: Second Montana Branch Library. (1960/DEL HAGEN STUDIOS)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Interior of the second Montana Branch Library. (1960/DEL HAGEN STUDIOS)

Plans were also underway for a larger building for the Fairview Branch, which, since the opening at its second location on Pico Boulevard in 1942, had grown tremendously. In 1956, the third Fairview Branch Library at 2101 Ocean Park Boulevard opened to the public.



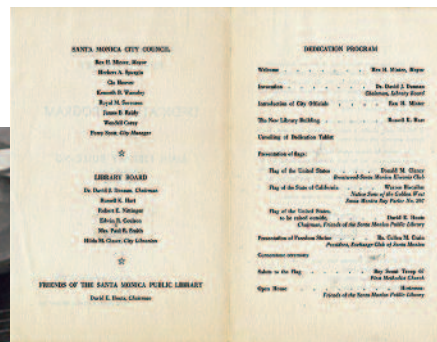
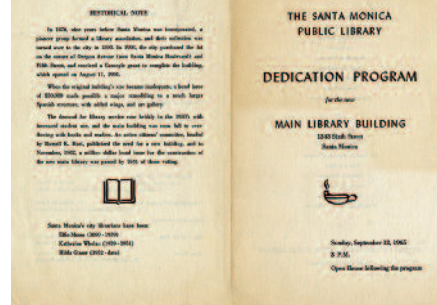
TOP: Third Fairview Branch Library. (1956)

BOTTOM LEFT: Seating area by the entrance in Fairview Branch Library on May 2, 2014. (KATHY LO)

CENTER: Interior of the third Fairview Branch Library. (1956/VICTOR BARNABA)



BOTTOM RIGHT: Magazine area in Fairview Branch Library on May 2, 2014. (KATHY LO)



1960s-1970s In 1962, a bond issue was passed and land purchased on the corner of Sixth Street and Santa Monica Boulevard for the building of a new Main Library.

Construction began in February 1964. Designed by architects Matthew Robert Leizer and Thomas J. Russell, the new Main Library at 1343 Sixth Street opened to the public in September 1965.

TOP LEFT: The new Main Library at 1343 Sixth St. (1965/THELNA HOOVER)

RIGHT: Dedication program for the new Main Library. (1965)

BOTTOM LEFT: Interior of the new Main Library. (1965/THELNA HOOVER)

1980s In the early 1980s, asbestos was discovered in the composition of the Main Library's ceiling. In August 1986, the building was closed for asbestos abatement. The building reopened in March 1988 with minor changes in layout.

The Ocean Park Branch Library also closed in June 1984 for a renovation that respected the look of the beloved Carnegie building. When it reopened in September 1985, it had a new entrance, a children's area, and a community room. The community showed its support by increasing usage 40%.

TOP LEFT: Main Library. (2003/CYNNI MURPHY)

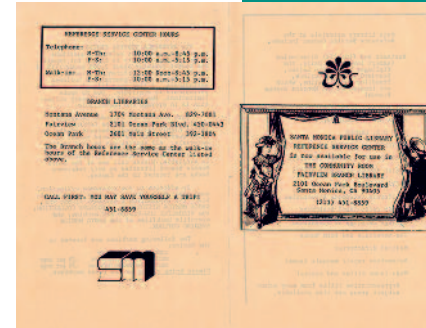
TOP CENTER: Films and Recordings Department. (1967/DEL HAGEN STUDIOS)

TOP RIGHT: Periodicals Room. (1967/DEL HAGEN STUDIOS)

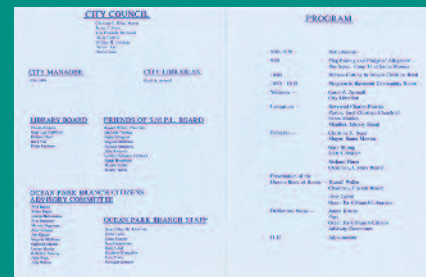
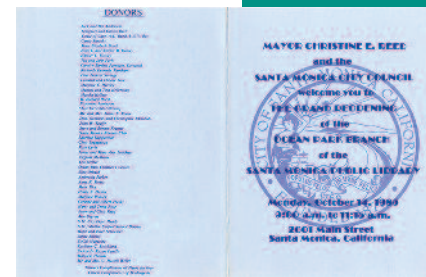
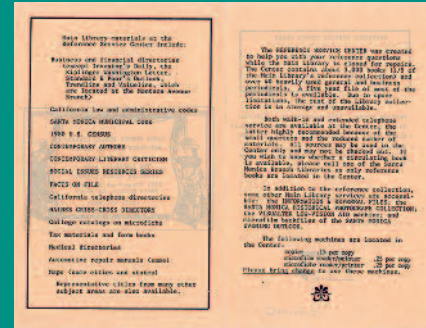
BOTTOM LEFT: Story hour in the Children's Room. (1967/DEL HAGEN STUDIOS)

BOTTOM RIGHT: The interior of Main Library gutted for asbestos removal. (1987/CYNNI MURPHY)

Main Library at 1343 Sixth Street



1980s TOP ROW: Brochure describing the Reference Service Center at Fairview Branch Library during Main Library's closure from 1986 to 1988.



BOTTOM ROW: Program for the ceremony marking the reopening of Ocean Park Branch Library on October 14, 1985.

1990s In 1996, a formal planning process began for the expansion of the Main Library, including community focus groups, surveys, and meetings. The result was the development of a Library Master Plan, and Moore Ruble Yudell (MRY) Architects & Planners of Santa Monica was chosen to formulate the conceptual design.

In 1998, a bond was passed by 81% to fund library improvements.

In 1999, the Main Library underwent a remodel, designed by Architects Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer.



TOP LEFT: Interior of Main Library after the remodel. (1999/CYNNI MURPHY)

TOP RIGHT: Public computer terminals in the Main Library after the remodel. (1999/CYNNI MURPHY)

BOTTOM LEFT: Audiovisual Department in the Main Library. (1999/CYNNI MURPHY)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Children's Room in the Main Library after the remodel. (1999/CYNNI MURPHY)

2002-2005 In 2002, after extensive community input, the Santa Monica City Council approved MRY's design. Razing of the old library building, construction of the three-level subterranean parking garage, and construction of the two-story Main Library began in spring 2003.

From 2001 to 2002, Montana Branch Library underwent improvement renovations, designed by Architects Killefer Flammang.

While the Main Library was under construction, the core of the library's adult collections was housed in a temporary location at 1324 Fifth Street. The "Temp Main" served the public from May 12, 2003 to December 4, 2005. The Main Library's children's and youth collections were housed in the lower level of the Ocean Park Branch Library during this time.

TOP: Temporary location of Main Library at 1324 Fifth St. (2003/CYNNI MURPHY)

BOTTOM LEFT: Interior of Montana Branch Library showing the 2001-02 remodel. (2002/CYNNI MURPHY)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Exterior of Montana Branch Library showing the 2001-02 remodel. (2002/CYNNI MURPHY)

The new Main Library, a 104,000-square-foot facility honored with a Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) award, opened to the public in January 2006. It features a large array of public computer facilities and expanded meeting facilities, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium. Visitors can also enjoy the beautifully landscaped outdoor café.

The Building of the New Main Library 601 Santa Monica Boulevard



TOP LEFT: Construction of the cistern. (12/3/03)
(ALL PHOTOS BY CYNNI MURPHY)

TOP CENTER: Construction of the first floor, looking towards Sixth St. (4/13/04)

TOP RIGHT: Construction of the second floor, corner of Seventh St. and Santa Monica Blvd. (7/22/04)

MIDDLE LEFT: Topping off ceremony. (8/10/04)

MIDDLE CENTER: View of the construction from the corner of Sixth St. and Santa Monica Blvd. (10/6/04)

MIDDLE RIGHT: Construction of the courtyard. (10/16/04)

BOTTOM LEFT: Installation of Carl Cheng's "Underwater Canopy" sculpture. (3/28/05)

BOTTOM CENTER: Construction of the first floor. (7/28/05)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Main entrance on Santa Monica Blvd. (5/12/05)



TOP LEFT: Main Library at night. (11/15/05)
(ALL PHOTOS BY CYNNI MURPHY)

CENTER: Belvedere in the Library. (1/7/06)

TOP RIGHT: North courtyard entrance. (1/7/06)

BOTTOM LEFT: Courtyard landscape. (1/7/06)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Lamp in the courtyard. (1/7/06)

2010 – In 2009, the City Council approved construction of a new branch library in Virginia Avenue Park and selected Koning Eizenberg Architects (KEA) as part of a competitive process. The groundbreaking ceremony took place on August 15, 2012.

The Pico Branch Library incorporates many sustainable features and is sited to preserve park open space, integrate with the Farmers Market zone and other park buildings.

In 2014, the Pico Branch Library had its “soft” opening on April 24, and the ribbon-cutting, grand opening ceremony took place on June 28.

In July 2015, the Fairview Branch Library closed temporarily for a major renovation.



TOP LEFT: Foundation construction at Pico Branch Library site on March 14, 2013. (CLAUDIA FISHLER)

TOP RIGHT: Construction at Pico Branch Library on November 14, 2013. (CLAUDIA FISHLER)

CENTER LEFT: The front entrance of Pico Branch Library. (2014/COURTESY OF WILLIAM SHORT)

CENTER RIGHT: Children’s area at Pico Branch Library. (2014/COURTESY OF WILLIAM SHORT)

BOTTOM: Twilight view of Pico Branch Library from Virginia Avenue Park. (2014/COURTESY OF WILLIAM SHORT)



Chronology

1890s In November 1890, the city of Santa Monica accepted Women’s Christian Temperance Union’s gift of 800 volumes. In December 1890, the first City Librarian, Elfie Mosse, was appointed.

Two rooms in the Bank of Santa Monica building at Oregon Avenue (later Santa Monica Boulevard) and Third Street were set aside for the library,

1903-04 In March 1903, the Library moved to the new City Hall located at Fourth Street and Oregon Avenue (later Santa Monica Boulevard) which provided more room.

A lot on the northeast corner of Oregon Avenue and Fifth Street was purchased to build a new library. Work began on the building in January 1904. The Library opened to the public eight months later, on August 11.

1918 The Ocean Park Branch Library opened to the public on February 15.

1927 The Main Library was enlarged and remodeled into a Spanish-style design by E.J. Baume, with two additional wings. The new Main library opened on November 18.

1931 On July 1, the Fairview Heights Branch Library opened. Located at 1903 20th Street, it was a 15-foot wide storefront branch between a grocery store and barber shop.

1942 On July 13, Fairview Branch Library opened its second location at 2030 Pico Boulevard.

1952 In February, the Montana Avenue Branch Library, located in a rented building at 1528-30 Montana Avenue, opened.

1956 The third Fairview Branch Library at 2101 Ocean Park Boulevard opened to the public.

1960 On March 1, the second Montana Avenue Branch Library at 1704 Montana Avenue opened.

1962 A bond issue was passed and land was purchased on the corner of Sixth Street and Santa Monica Boulevard for the building of a new Main library.

1965 The new Main Library, located at 1343 Sixth Street, opened to the public in September.

1977 In May, the Ocean Park Branch Library, an original Carnegie building, was declared an official city landmark.

1978 The Fairview Branch Library expanded to include a new community room and an alcove area.

1979 Staff began to remove historic photographs found in an album and preserved them on microfiche, forming the foundation for the Library’s Image Archives.

1985 In September, the Ocean Park Branch Library reopened following a 15-month renovation that included a new entrance, a children’s area, and a community room

1986 In August, the Main Library closed for asbestos abatement.

1988 In March, the Main Library reopened with minor changes in layout.

Automated circulation and catalog systems were implemented.

Chronology

1989 Staff began answering questions via electronic mail as part of the City's innovative Public Electronic Network.

1994 On January 17, the Northridge earthquake heavily damaged the Main Library and Fairview Branch Library. Both locations closed for weeks for repairs.

1995 A proposal to digitize the photographs and slides in the Image Archives' collection was approved.

1996 A formal planning process began for the expansion of the Main Library. The result was a Library Master Plan, and Moore Ruble Yudell (MRY) Architects & Planners of Santa Monica was chosen to formulate the conceptual design.

1998 A bond was passed by 81% to fund library improvements.

2000 Santa Monica Public Library became the first public library to offer Internet-based chat reference services as the pilot site of the 24/7 Reference Project.

2002 The Santa Monica City Council approved MRY's design for the new Main Library.

In December, the Montana Branch Library reopened, following a 14-month renovation that added a community room to the facility.

2003 Razing of the old library building and the construction of the new two-story Main Library began in spring.

On May 12, the Main Library moved to a temporary location (1324 5th St.) while the new building was under construction.

The Library presented its first **Citywide Reads** (later **Santa Monica Reads**) program with Da Sijie's *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*.

2005 On December 5, the temporary location on 5th Street closed as the Library prepared for the grand opening of its new Main Library.

2006 On January 6, the new Main Library, a 104,000-square-foot facility honored with a Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) award, opened to the public.

2007 In collaboration with the City's Environmental Programs Division, the Library presented its first **Green Prize for Sustainable Literature**. The winner was Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*.

2009 The City Council approved construction of a new branch library in Virginia Avenue Park and selected Koning Eizenberg Architects (KEA) as part of a competitive process.

2010 The Library began lending eBooks.

2012 On August 15, the ground breaking ceremony for the Pico Branch Library in Virginia Avenue Park took place.

2014 The Pico Branch Library had its "soft" opening on April 24, and the ribbon-cutting, grand opening ceremony took place on June 28.

2015 In July, the Fairview Branch Library closed temporarily for major improvements and upgrades.

Locations of Main and Branch Libraries

Main Library

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 1884-1888 | McKinnie's Drug Store Third Street |
| 1888-1890 | WCTU Building Third Street |
| 1890-1903 | Bank of Santa Monica Third Street & Oregon Avenue (Santa Monica Blvd.) |
| 1903-1904 | City Hall Fourth Street & Oregon Avenue (Santa Monica Blvd.) |
| 1904-1927 | Carnegie Building 503 Santa Monica Boulevard |
| 1927-1965 | Enlarged Carnegie Building 503 Santa Monica Boulevard |
| 1965-2003 | 1343 Sixth Street |
| 2003-2006 | Temporary location 1324 Fifth Street |
| 2006-present | 601 Santa Monica Boulevard |

Ocean Park Branch Library

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 1918-present | Carnegie building 2601 Main Street (Main St. & Ocean Park Blvd.) |
|--------------|--|

Fairview Branch Library

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 1931 -1942 | Storefront 20th Street & Delaware |
| 1942-1956 | Rented building 20th Street & Pico Boulevard |
| 1956-present | 2101 Ocean Park Boulevard |

Montana Branch Library

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 1952-1960 | Storefront 15th Street & Montana Avenue |
| 1960-present | 1704 Montana Avenue |

Pico Branch Library

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|--------------|---|
| 2014-present | Virginia Avenue Park Campus 2201 Pico Boulevard |
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City Librarians

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|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 1890-1939 | Elfie A. Mosse |
| 1939-1951 | Katherine Whelan |
| 1951-1952 | Harold Helmrich |
| 1952-1972 | Hilda Glaser |
| 1972-1974 | Patricia Terrill Brownell |
| 1974-1989 | Carol Aronoff |
| 1990-2004 | Winona Allard |
| 2004-2013 | Greg Mullen |
| 2014- | Maria Taesil Hudson Carpenter |

Most information here is extracted from *The Santa Monica Public Library: 1890-1990* by Ellen Braby and Janet Hunt.

Unless otherwise noted, the images are from the Library's Imagine Santa Monica digital collections (digital.smpl.org).

SANTA MONICA PUBLIC
LIBRARY

601 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD, SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA 90401

