

## CALVERT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

### Calvert County Main Library

30 Duke Street  
Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678  
535-0291 or 855-1862 (D.C. Line)

Monday - Thursday	9:00 to 9:00
Friday	12:00 to 5:00
Saturday	9:00 to 5:00

### Fairview Branch Library

Rt 4 and Chaneyville Road  
Owings, Maryland 20736  
257-2101

Monday and Wednesday	12:00 to 8:00
Tuesday and Thursday	9:00 to 5:00
Friday	12:00 to 5:00
Saturday	9:00 to 5:00

### Twin Beach Branch Library

4th St. and Dayton Avenue  
North Beach, Maryland 20714  
257-2411

Monday and Wednesday	9:00 to 5:00
Tuesday and Thursday	12:00 to 8:00
Friday	12:00 to 5:00
Saturday	9:00 to 5:00

### Southern Branch Library

20 Appeal Way  
Lusby, Maryland 20657  
586-2500

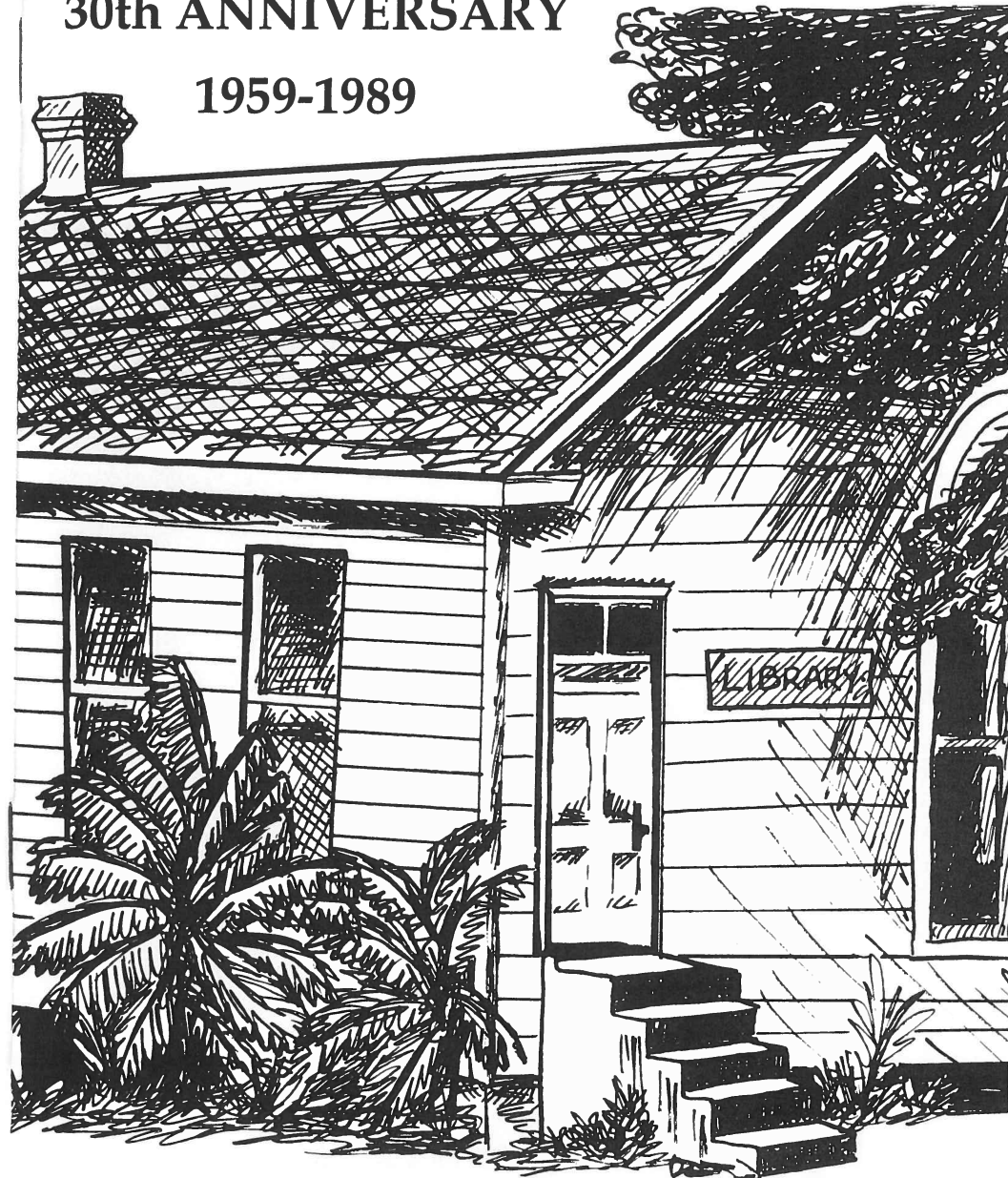
Monday and Wednesday	12:00 to 8:00
Tuesday and Thursday	9:00 to 5:00
Friday	12:00 to 5:00
Saturday	9:00 to 5:00

**\*\*Summer Saturdays 9:00 to 1:00 for all libraries**

# CALVERT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

## 30th ANNIVERSARY

### 1959-1989



History by Bonnie Gardner

# HISTORY OF THE CALVERT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

## Introduction

The Calvert County Public Library buzzes constantly with the activity of a beehive. People swarm to the library and its three branches every day for information, research materials, on-line database searches, the latest bestsellers, meetings and special programs. The library has become such a fixture in Calvert County that it's hard to imagine life without it.

Yet, the county had no public library until 1959. In the three decades since then, the library has grown from a one-room building next to the Court House in downtown Prince Frederick to the sprawling structure on Duke Street. The library van roves from Solomons to Dunkirk, serving the home-bound, licensed day care homes and isolated communities. Three self-sufficient branches have been opened. The collection has grown from 1,800 books to diverse multi-media holdings.

Limiting the story of the Calvert County Public Library to descriptions and dates of construction and expansion would be inadequate. The real story is a about a group of energetic people whose hard work built the library from the ground up.

The Calvert Library's staff members have always followed one basic rule: the patron comes first. Combining this rule with their natural friendliness and dedication, the staff members have created a comfortable atmosphere.

Over the years, the library staffers have explored customer's hobbies with them. They have helped students research their first high school term papers. With books on child care, they have prepared new mothers for their babies. The librarians have listened to personal problems of patrons who had nowhere else to turn. They have brought books to life for children through special programs. They have provided a taste of the performing arts to people of all ages. Most importantly, they have been, and continue to be, friends to a community of registered borrowers.

The library staff's efforts have resulted in a popular public library system that reaches out to people through the library van, Performing Arts Series and children's and adult's programs, while still providing a comfortable place for reading, studying and meeting.

It's people who make a house a home.

## BEGINNINGS

Calvert County's first library was not public. A small building that sat adjacent to the Court House in Prince Frederick, the former office of Judge William Wakefield Duke, was established as a library in 1912. While service was free, only members of the Library Association could use the library, and membership was limited. Judge Duke's own collection of books and some donations and loans from the state library comprised the holdings. This small library operated without public funds.

In 1952, a group of concerned citizens, led by Mrs. Hilmer Nelson of Scientists' Cliffs, promoted the establishment of a truly public library in Calvert County. The citizens made a preliminary agreement with Eloise Pickerall, the librarian in St. Mary's County, to provide demonstration bookmobile services to Calvert County. However, a great deal of opposition was raised to this plan, and Mrs. Nelson had to abandon the fight when her husband was transferred out of the county. The effort failed, and no more was heard about a public library in Calvert County until 1958.

The Library Services Act, passed by Congress in 1956, provided incentive funds for establishing rural library service. This federal legislation, plus a growing desire in the county for a library open to all, sparked renewed efforts to create the Calvert County Public Library.

In 1958, Governor Theodore McKeldin appointed a seven-member Calvert County Board of Library Trustees. At the first meeting, October 6 of that year, the members elected the following officers: Mrs. Earl Hicks, President; Mrs. Edwin Ward, Vice President; Mrs. Lola Parks, Secretary; and Mrs. Carl Breland, Treasurer. The other trustees were Mrs. R.B. Smoot, Mr. T.H. Williams and Mr. Arthur Dowell.

Also at the meeting, a representative of the State Department of Education, Division of Library Extension, outlined plans for the Calvert County Public Library to become the third member of a newly formed cooperative library system with Charles and St. Mary's Counties. This was necessary if Calvert County was to meet the requirements of the recently passed Maryland State Library Law which provided state aid for libraries.

After many meetings with the Library Boards of Charles and St. Mary's Counties and members of the Division of Library Extension, the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association (SMRLA) was created on February 20, 1959.

With the creation of SMRLA and the donation of Judge Duke's library building, the Calvert County Public Library began operation on Main Street in Prince Frederick, sharing the services of librarian Dee Holmes with the other two counties. Holmes resigned shortly thereafter, and Edward Hall became the tri-county librarian.



These beginnings led up to the day in 1959 when Calvert County's own librarian, Mildred Hairston, was hired, and the library's story really began.

*(Left) Jean Hicks at Calvert County Public Library's opening ceremony.*

*(Below) Gathering at opening ceremony on April 5, 1959.*



## Library to Hold Grand Opening

The Calvert County Library holds rich memories. The building itself, built around 1903 was situated on the opposite side of the road where the bank building now stands, and was the Prince Frederick Bank of the Eastern Shore Trust Company. About ten years later, a new bank was erected and the building moved to its present location. During this period, Mr. William W. Duke had a lending library set up in a near-by office. He being interested in establishing a Calvert County Library for many years, this building offered just what he had dreamed of.

From information gathered, we believe it became a County Library about 1913, because an old insurance receipt, bearing the above date, is in the possession of Mr. Arthur Dowell. As far as I can gather, it was used intact as it was moved; until several years later when there was need for little repairs and a few changes. It was at this time the large fireplace was built which has always made the library room very attractive.

Mr. William Wakefield Duke was the inspiration behind the Throne, so to speak. The library was kept open, and the money to do all this was made each year by a Benefit Play, plus a little County aid.

Many of you, as you read this article, may recall these affairs. They grew to be a social event of each year. The Town Hall was packed for two nights, and then some times the group would tour with the performance.

This was all local talent, directed by Mr. Duke himself, and to him goes the intuition and fortitude for keeping the Library doors open. It is true, since Mr. Duke's death in 1953, the Library

has been open just one day a week—until lately.

Now, Sunday, April 5th at 4:00 p.m. the Library will have its Grand Opening. It will live again, and echo the memories of olden days under the leadership of the new Trustees:

Mrs. Earl Hicks, President  
Mr. Thomas Williams  
Mr. Arthur W. Dowell  
Mrs. Carl Breland  
Mrs. Edwin Ward  
Mrs. Rufus Smoot  
Mrs. N.E. Parks

With Miss Doris Holm, Administrator, and Mrs. Mildred Hairston, Assistant Librarian, the program for the future should be very eventful and most successful.

The new Book Mobile is a big addition, and will serve the people of Calvert very efficiently. It will serve schools, organizations, localities and individuals who desire better reading material. A schedule has been set up whereby it will move to designated places and the library will be open in Prince Frederick every Friday from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Interest soars high as different organizations have come forth offering their assistance. The Homemakers Groups will furnish refreshments for the tea, and the Library Club of Calvert County High School will serve.

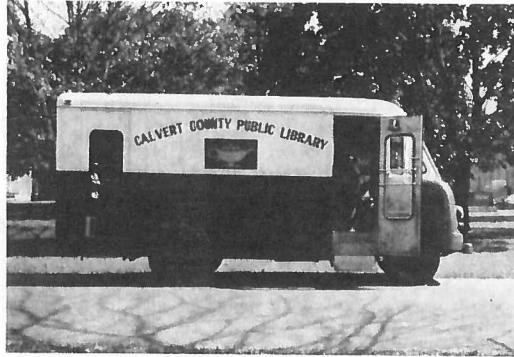
A plaque to the Memory of William Wakefield Duke, Founder of the Calvert County Library, will be dedicated at the Opening.

We should all be proud that the Library for Calvert will live again, to be of service to all who seek it. May it always be a constant reminder of the one who had the vision, and so dear to his memory, William Wakefield Duke.

*News article, Source & Author unknown*

## THE EARLY YEARS—1959 to 1961

For the first few years of the library's existence, the bookmobile was an integral element. Four days a week Mrs. Hairston drove the bookmobile to a different part of the county, serving the area north of Prince Frederick one week and the southern end the next week.



*The First Bookmobile*

"There were many, many people," Mrs. Hairston said, "who used to come to the bookmobile and tell me they wouldn't use it because they didn't like the idea of using books that other people had used. They would get all kinds of diseases, they said. And I told them that I worked there every day, and there was nowhere to wash my hands, and I wasn't sick."



*First Librarian,  
Mildred Hairston,  
inside bookmobile.*

Besides her good health, Mrs. Hairston used other means to make Calvert countians comfortable with a public library system. Since none of the County's schools had their own libraries, she included a school in each day's run. For the first time, every classroom in the county was stocked with a changing book collection.

At night, after a long day on the road, Mrs. Hairston took the bookmobile to PTA meetings or other civic groups' meetings. She described the new library's services and then invited people onto the bookmobile for a look around.

It was Mrs. Hairston's friendliness and warmth and her efforts to make the public library a familiar, comfortable place that helped ease the library into the mainstream of Calvert County life.

As the library began to catch on, Mrs. Hairston found her days full of duties. Monday through Thursday she was at the library early getting the bookmobile ready for the day's run. She swept it out and filled it with books that she would need on a particular route. Back then, the bookmobile didn't have air-conditioning, although it had a bulky gas heater for the winter months. It was notorious for reaching an alleged 120 degrees inside in the summer.

One winter night, the library's custodian mopped out the bookmobile, and Mrs. Hairston was greeted in the morning by a sheet of ice that sent her sliding across the bookmobile's floor.

On Fridays, Mrs. Hairston opened the library at nine in the morning and stayed until nine in the evening. There was no bathroom in the small building, and just a little oil heater in the winter. Library cards were made of paper, not plastic, and every book was stamped by hand. If Mrs. Hairston wasn't helping patrons, she was putting cards back in books or filing or doing any of the other tasks needed to keep the new library running smoothly.

"From the minute you got there until you left, there was always something that needed to be done," she said. "You used to welcome the times when you were alone and could throw a few catalog cards in the file."

Mrs. Hairston conquered the resistance to a public library. In the first year, the library registered 1,017 borrowers. With a collection of only 1,844 books, the library had an amazing first-year circulation of 27,408.

## THE FIRST MOVE AND EXPANSION

In 1961, Marie Barrett was hired part-time to share the library and bookmobile duties. With her arrival, the library opened for two days each week.

By then it had become clear that the library was reaching its capacity. The bookcases moved closer and closer together as more were added, and the library's floor became wavy under their weight.

"We had no fluorescent light then," Mrs. Hairston said. "We had two old globes that hung down. And when the shelves got so close together it was hard to read the book titles, especially in the evenings, we had to give people flashlights."

Expansion was a problem. The busy main street of Prince Frederick could offer little room for the growing library. Then in 1961, Grace and Shemwell Parran donated a parcel of land along Fourth Street (now Duke Street) to the county, stipulating that it be used for the library. The library building was hoisted onto a flat bed truck and moved to the top of a newly built basement on the Fourth Street lot. During the move all of the books and furniture were stored in a large truck trailer. When it was discovered that the trailer leaked, the Prince Frederick Fire Department gave the trailer a home in their firehouse.

When the library reopened, a third staff member, Kitty Hurrey, was added. Mrs. Hurrey drove the bookmobile three days a week and Mrs. Barrett drove it the fourth. Mrs. Barrett and Mrs. Hairston shared the library duties three days a week. On July 1, 1963, both Mrs. Hurrey and Mrs. Barrett became full-time employees and the library was opened five days a week.

Space was still a problem, and the Board of Library Trustees with the help of Stella Loeffler, the new Administrator of the Regional Library, began work on plans for an addition to the building. The new wing opened on October 23, 1964, tripling the library's space. By the end of 1965, even the new wing had become crowded, so the Board arranged to renovate the basement of the new wing for a children's room. The move was completed and ready for use in January, 1966, and was finally dedicated on April 16, 1966, during National Library Week.



*Children's program downstairs.*



*Waiting for the show to begin.*

One librarian stayed upstairs, while the other took care of young patrons downstairs. Despite the cramped quarters and overflowing shelves, there was a coziness to the library that everyone enjoyed.

"You knew everyone," Mrs. Hairston said. "When you bought books, you bought books seeing these people and knowing which type they liked to read."

## THE LATEST WING

As the library moved into the 1970s, it became apparent that the three rooms were not going to hold the burgeoning book collection much longer. The Board of Library Trustees urged the County Commissioners to purchase the adjacent land from Mrs. Parran for a future expansion, which they did, thus providing for one more addition to the bulging library.

In 1972, construction began on the library's latest addition. By the time the wing was completed in 1973, shelf space had become so scarce that books were being stacked on the floor. The library's collection was moved to the new wing, and the old library became known as the Duke Room



*Model for the new wing.*

WHEREAS, H. Dean Cochran, Library Trustee, January 1, 1963, to May 31, 1973, was appointed Chairman of the Building Committee by the President, and

WHEREAS Mr. Cochran discharged these duties in a conscientious and expert fashion, and

WHEREAS Mr. Cochran spent many long hours in pursuing the many aspects of the project from its inception in 1968 to its conclusion in 1973, now hereby be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Library Trustees for Calvert County make public its heartfelt thanks and appreciation for a job well done, and that it be further

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be presented to Mr. Cochran and placed in the county papers and that one copy be permanently displayed in the library building.

WHEREAS the Board of Library Trustees formed an advisory committee to help plan the building of a large addition to the Calvert County Public Library, and

WHEREAS H. Dean Cochran, Russell Costley, Harold Crane, William L. Dalrymple, Lester George, Underwood Graham, Jean Hicks, and Richard Ireland, accepted the charge with the greatest enthusiasm, and

WHEREAS the above named people devoted many long hours of research and deliberation to draft recommendations to the Board of Library Trustees, now be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Library Trustees for Calvert County hereby publicly acknowledges the untiring and highly successful efforts of this committee and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution shall be presented to the members of the committee, placed in the county newspapers, and one copy shall be permanently displayed in the library building.

Lola Parks,  
President  
Katharine Ward,  
Vice-President  
Nancy Haifley  
Prentiss Porter  
Russell Costley  
Jean Hicks  
Dorothy Ward

and the Red Room. These rooms were used for meetings, and the old children's department was converted to a staff lounge.

The opening of the new wing heralded a new age in the library. The library experienced a whirlwind of increased use unrivaled by any previous move. As the county grew, so did the library staff to meet the increased use.

While in the early days Mrs. Barrett, Mrs. Hairston and Mrs. Hurrey did a little of everything in the old library, the newly hired staff members were given specific duties. Reference, Fiction, Non-fiction and Children's Departments were set up in the corners of the new building. In the meantime, Mrs. Hurrey had moved on to the Regional Library and in 1968 became the Director of the Southern Maryland Regional Library Association.

The library began to offer services it could never offer before. With a microfiche reader and microfiche plates detailing the holdings of every large library in the state, the library's collection magically grew. Patrons found it easy to use interlibrary loan to get books that the Calvert County Library did not stock. The magazine collection grew enormously due to demand, and *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report* on



*Ben Williams at a "Sing-out".*

microfilm, along with a microfilm reader/printer, became valuable reference tools.

As circulation grew, patrons with varied tastes in books started coming to the library. Mrs. Barrett, who ordered non-fiction at the time, remembered a heavy demand for books on the Vietnam War a few years ago. Books on pregnancy, child care, health and fitness have become increasingly popular, as have "how-to" books on every imaginable topic.

The library also grew in terms of its collections and services. In 1976, with the help of Ben Williams, a local high school teacher, a series of "Saturday Night Sing Outs" began. Mr. Williams found local musical talent to perform, and the library staff provided refreshments. These events became so popular that many times the performance required moving out the furniture in order to accommodate the crowd.

On several occasions the library staff had to shoo people out well after midnight. The popularity of these "sing-outs" prompted the library to branch out, and with the cooperation of the newly formed Calvert County Cultural Arts Council, the Performing Arts Series began. This series has brought to Calvert County ballets, puppet shows, plays, operas, country music, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, theatre and the U.S. Marine Band. With the continued support of the Calvert County Commissioners, the library enriches the cultural offerings of Calvert County.

During this time of rapid growth, Gary Vaughan was appointed Assistant Director of the library, freeing Mrs. Hairston to become the library's first Community Services Librarian—the library's voice in the community. Mrs. Hairston served in this capacity until her retirement in 1984. Shirley McCarthy fills this position at present.





# THE REFERENCE DEPARTMENT—AN EXAMPLE OF DIVERSIFICATION

In the beginning, the Reference Department only offered walk-in service. The reference collection was limited to essentials such as almanacs, Maryland and U.S. government directories, Thomas Register and telephone books.

Moving into the new wing gave the Reference Department room to expand its holdings. Mrs. Barrett became the head of the department, assisting patrons with questions.

The biggest change in the Reference Department, however, came in 1980 when the INFO line was added. With the INFO line, the answers to many reference questions were just a phone call away. Patrons could call in and find out "how many people go to high school in the Congo," "the names of Maryland's U.S. Senators" or "the location of Qatar."

All means within or without the system may be employed to find the correct answer. Most questions are answered quickly. A response is given within 24 hours—either the answer itself or an update on progress toward the answer if additional time is needed.

The Reference Department exemplifies the library's philosophy of serving the patron. For years, Mrs. Barrett, with her characteristic kindness and willingness to help, answered questions ranging from practical facts needed for a term paper to bizarre trivia.

"I found the Reference Department very interesting" Mrs. Barrett said. "I loved looking up INFO questions."

Mrs. Barrett retired from the Reference Department in 1983. Marcia Hammett became the new reference librarian and has helped usher in the "Age of the Computer." When Gary Vaughan, the Assistant Director, left in 1985, Mrs. Hammett was promoted to Assistant Director, and Pat Hofmann joined the staff as Branch Chief and Head of Reference. Many additional reference services are now available as a result of the library's new IBM Personal Computer. Quick reference to periodicals, government indices and a variety of databases are at our fingertips. With expanding technology, the reference department will continue to be a changing service area.

## CALVERT'S LIBRARIES ARE TOPS IN THE STATE

Which United States presidents died at the age of 90? Two friends ponder the question and disagree. One says none lived that long; the other says two did. Neither can really remember, but each one is certain he is right. For the sake of verification, they call the Calvert County Public Library. That's where the answer can be found.

Librarians settle disputes of this sort every day, and according to a recent statewide survey, the ones in Prince Frederick do it better than anybody else.

The survey, sponsored by the Maryland Department of Education, tested the quality of reference service of 60 public libraries across the state. Calvert libraries finished in the top two spots as the Prince Frederick and Fairview branches finished first and second, respectively.

During the summer-long survey, interviewers, posing as patrons, asked 40 questions at all of the participating libraries. Each library received the same questions.

Calvert librarians provide patrons with correct answers 97.5 percent of the time, according to the results. The overall state average is 65 percent, and the national average is just 50 percent.

"This tells me that staff training has really paid off," said an elated Kitty Hurrey, the regional director of Southern Maryland Libraries.

She recommended the training after the last survey, conducted in 1983, showed Calvert answered 70 percent correctly. "Everybody was surprised to find we didn't do as well as we thought we did," Hurrey said.

"The results mean we took advantage of the training, and we can prove it," Hurrey said.

All staffers in the tri-county area received training during three day-long sessions given by the Maryland Division of Library Development and Services. During the session librarians improved their reference skills through lectures, films and role playing, Hurrey said.

"Built into the whole thing was coaching so they would remind each other," Hurrey said. "Marsha (Hammett) and Pat (Hofmann), Calvert's head librarians, even designed a competition to encourage coaching," Hurrey added. Eileen Mozingo and Martha Mackall won the competition. "It really worked and it's still working. We have a lot to live up to now."

Hammett said the ranking boosted the staff. "The staff is just so thrilled, but it's enough to make you want to keep on doing good."

Many of the survey questions escalated in difficulty, beginning with general queries and forcing the librarian to define specific requests. Also important was the courtesy and helpfulness of each librarian.

The Calvert libraries bettered several much larger libraries including Enoch Pratt in Baltimore which has the highest per capita use in the country.

"Everyone cares and everyone puts out 110 percent. I think they all like what they are doing," Hurrey said. "I'm just tickled to death they beat out the big boys."

Hammett credited the staff's dedication as a big factor in the good results. "The staff members really want to provide service to (the public). The staff does a good job, and I'm glad they've been recognized."

## THE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT

In May, 1984, while the library celebrated its 25th birthday, another celebration took place—the official opening of the new Children's Department in the Duke and Red Rooms. The meeting rooms were moved to the lower level in newly renovated space. A red ribbon was cut to commemorate the library's latest move. Although that move was just down the hall, it was an important step in the growth of the library.

The Children's Department has a purpose that is a little different from the rest of the library. The department introduces children to reading and to using a library. The children's librarians try to foster a love for reading in their young customers that will last a lifetime.

The Children's Department's appearance is inviting, with its miniature chairs and tables and short bookcases. Books are arranged in attractive displays, and bright posters adorn the walls.

The department has a varied collection that includes books for all reading levels up to middle school; reference books, non-fiction and fiction, filmstrips, cassettes, records, magazines and comics.

"I feel very good about our collection," said Children's Librarian Nancy Fissel.

But even a great collection isn't always enough to entice children to read. The Children's Department tries to arouse interest in reading through its programs and contests. Contests promote reading in a good-natured, competitive way. A recent contest had children fill out a "deposit slip" for every book they read and deposit it in a cardboard bank. A winner's name was later drawn. The more books a child read, the better the odds.

Children's programs are another way the librarians make using the library fun. The programs have witnessed a lot of growth over the years. While they used to be held once or twice a summer, they are now offered at the Main Library and all three branches several times each week.

During the school year the programs are geared to 3-5 year old children, and there is a special program for 2 year old children that began in 1983. In the summer the programs provide fun for all ages.

Half of the children's programs involve guests, such as a reptile expert who brought snakes to the library. The other half of the programs are generated by the librarians, and may include reading a story, showing a film or putting on a puppet show. The children's librarians at all four

locations get together to brainstorm ideas, and each librarian is responsible for planning three programs.

The children obviously enjoy the programs, and having a hand in creative work, like puppetry or contest planning, is very rewarding for the librarians. Indeed, some librarians' fondest memories involve children's programs.

"We make our own tapes and puppets," Mrs. Fissel said. "You can do the same old things every day, but when you create something, it gives you a good feeling."

Mrs. Hairston remembered one of Nancy's "exciting" programs some years ago. "When we first moved into the new wing of the library, we were having children's programs, and one of our programs dealt with animals. One of our patrons had baby goats, and she decided she was going to bring these goats, which she did."

"She brought two of them, and she put them in a cardboard box, which is nothing to a goat. They'll jump right out of it. Everything was brand new here—the rugs were brand new—and I had two goats flopping all



*Micaila Worrell with her goats.*

over the library, jumping like jumping jacks. The kids thoroughly enjoyed it, and I had a good time catching goats all day long."

When the Children's Department moved to the Duke and Red Rooms, both children and adults benefited. The adult side of the library now is much quieter; it inherited a lot of space to expand the Reference Depart-

ment and shift the rest of the collection. The children now have a self-contained library to call their own, with its own play area and study area. In the new, cozy quarters, the children's librarian on duty seems more accessible than ever before.

The children's librarians have created an environment for children that can be both fun and challenging. Through colorful books, contests and programs, the librarians try to develop children who genuinely enjoy reading for pleasure and for information. The emphasis in the children's department is on stimulation. The librarians don't teach children how to read—they teach children to love to read.

"I guess in a sense we are teachers, but we just make everything available to children. They have to use their own resources," Mrs. Fissel said. "I think we have opened a lot of children's and parents' eyes as to how important reading is."

## BOOKMOBILE

Since 1959, the Bookmobile has been an important part of library service. Carol Bays, Bookmobile Librarian, served many areas of special need in the county and was instrumental in the growth of the system.

Some of the planning for the Fairview and Twin Beach branches was based upon bookmobile circulation. It was their patronage in the northern half of the county that provided the impetus for expansion.



MONOLITE® registered trademark of the Moroney Co.

*"The Rolling Tomes"*

The bookmobile's large circulation in the southern end of the county prompted the Board of Library Trustees to plan for the Southern Branch.

In 1988, the opening of the Southern Branch and the demise of the 18 year old bookmobile gave the library staff an opportunity to revise its outreach service. A new van named "Traveling Editions" replaced the old bookmobile. With this new van, the outreach staff—still supervised by Carol Bays, now Branch Head at the Southern Branch—serves the home bound, shut-ins, nursery schools, licensed day care providers and senior centers, as well as visiting several isolated communities.

No chapter on the bookmobile would be complete without a sampling of the many funny and interesting stories that the bookmobilers tell. In the early days, Mrs. Hairston came down with the measles thanks to a young bookmobile user. Another time, a child undid the gear shift lever. Mrs. Hairston put it back together and kept on going. Another user regularly came on horseback, and Mrs. Hurrey would hold the horse while the lady picked out books and checked them out herself. A dog adopted the bookmobile in North Beach one day and refused to leave, so Mrs. Hairston and Mrs. Hurrey took him along to the next stop. Many customers brought cookies and lemonade and other goodies to the bookmobile staff. This warm relationship between users and staff continues today.

## THE BRANCHES

In the 1970's, Calvert County underwent a startling metamorphosis. Attracted by the county's rural setting and low taxes, people packed up and left the Washington area in droves. Subdivisions popped up in the northern end of the county like jack-in-the-boxes.

The new bedroom communities put a strain on the bookmobile, which tried to satisfy the new residents' appetite for books. The bookmobile only came every two weeks; not often enough for many people. Many residents complained that a 20 minute drive to Prince Frederick was a little too far to go for the latest bestseller.

But books weren't the only things the new residents needed—other county services were also unavailable. In Dunkirk and Owings, the population spurt became the catalyst for the creation of community centers housing county offices in the northern end of the county. The old North Beach Firehouse on Dayton Avenue and 4th Street was renovated in 1980 to make room for offices for senior citizens services, drug abuse,

mental health, Parks and Recreation and alcoholism services. The old Fairview Elementary School was renovated the following year to house a Sheriff/State Police sub-station and the Chamber of Commerce/Tourism Office. Both buildings were designated to be the first branches of the Calvert County Public Library.

Sheila Hejl was selected as the staff person to supervise the new expansion. Beginning with Twin Beach Library, she arrived a month ahead of the official opening to organize the arriving books, furniture and equipment. The Twin Beach Library opened February 3, 1981.

In June, 1981, Mrs. Hejl was replaced as Twin Beach Librarian by Maryann Dillon, and Mrs. Hejl was off to Fairview Library to repeat the same process—preparation followed by the official opening on July 6, 1981. Converting two large, empty rooms into two completely functioning libraries was quite a feat—especially considering that each was done in four weeks.

“Setting a library up is amazing,” Mrs. Hejl said, recalling the heavy physical work that left her arms aching day after day. “All of the books were packed in boxes by category—fiction, non-fiction, children’s and paperbacks. Each book had a complete set of catalog cards in its pocket. The cards had to be taken out and separated by author/title and subject, then alphabetized to form the catalog.”

“Then we had to line the books up on the floor in Dewey or alphabetical order before we could move them to the shelves. By doing this we were able to determine how many books to put on each shelf.”

The hard work yielded perfect results, almost. The only thing missing was Fairview’s furniture, which arrived after the opening. “As soon as each library opened, we offered every service Prince Frederick did, which is remarkable,” Mrs. Hejl said.

The Calvert County Public Library now has a third branch located in the Southern Community Center. The County Commissioners, recognizing the economic efficiency of a joint-use facility, commissioned the design of a new community center in the southern end of the county. Like its predecessor, the Twin Beach Community Center, the 15,000 square feet of the Southern Community Center was designed to house Office on Aging activities, Parks and Recreation programs, alcoholism services, drug abuse services and a branch of the public library.

The branches are miniature copies of the main library, offering services on a smaller scale. Their collections do not have the depth the main

library’s has gathered over 30 years, but they manage to house a sprinkling of most subjects.

The branches offer children’s programs identical to the main library’s, as well as their own evening programs for adults. When the branches do not have the books or information a patron requests, the staff brings the main library’s resources to them, or arranges for interlibrary loan requests from SMRLA or from one of the 700 libraries that make up the State Library Network.

When buying non-fiction and children’s books, librarians from the four libraries make sure no new titles are overlooked. If expensive books are beyond the branches’ limited budgets, the main library can buy them and branch users can get them through interlibrary loan.

The three branches are more than satellites of the main library—they are distinct entities with their own personalities. However, what really sets the branches off from the main library is the intimacy the main library simply cannot attain because of its size.

A small staff of full-time and part-time employees contributes to a feeling of closeness. With no big changeover in staff each day, users and staff get to know each other. The branches’ hours are shorter, and they are not usually as busy as the main library, giving staff a lot of time to work with patrons.

The branches have carved out niches in their respective communities. The transplanted residents of northern Calvert County need not make the trip to Upper Marlboro for books anymore—they now refer to the branches as “my library.” The same is true for residents in the southern end of the county who either had to travel to Prince Frederick or to Lexington Park, or wait for the bi-weekly visit of the Bookmobile. They enjoy a familiar staff who will order the latest in whatever books answer their information needs—a staff who remembers their names.

## KEEPING THE HOME-STYLE FLAVOR

The library is now far removed from its humble beginnings. It has been transformed into a modern facility that buzzes with constant activity. But the library was founded on the idea of putting the user first and treating each library-user like family. It would logically follow that the library has had to sacrifice its homestyle flavor to progress. Not so! While the library's appearance and offerings have changed, the spirit of its staff has remained the same. Even when the new addition was being planned, measures were taken to guarantee that patrons would continue to feel comfortable in the new library.

"Marie Barrett and I asked for the fireplace and the deck and windows that would open," Mrs. Hairston said. "Everyone enjoyed the fireplace in the old building; occasionally, we would light fires around the holidays."

"We felt that a story pit was needed where the children could sit, and you'd have them sort of contained, and you could tell them stories."

Although each library staff member was given specific duties and responsibilities as the new wing opened and the departments evolved, they all knew their first priority was to help the patrons.

As a result, no quality of service was lost when the new wing opened. Even as the number of patrons ballooned, the library never lost its homelike quality of the old days.

"Even though you can't know all of the people anymore, having them come in, being friendly to them, helping them, that's the important thing," Mrs. Hairston said. "Growth's been good. It wouldn't be worth the years of working if you couldn't see it grow. I think if anything stands still, it's just another way of dying slowly. It has to move forward."

## CONCLUSION—THE LIBRARY'S PHILOSOPHY AND ROLE

The story of the Calvert County Public Library system is one of continual growth and expansion to meet the needs of a growing county. Throughout this time the philosophy of the Library Board and staff has remained constant.

"Our staff over the years has believed that it's the patron that counts," Mrs. Hairston said. "We know the nitty-gritty has to be done. We know the books have to be put on the shelves. But whatever it is, the patron has to be first. They're the reason we're here, and if we ever get to the point where the paperwork and the behind-the-scenes things take a greater part of our time, then we lose the patrons. If we don't have them, we don't have jobs. We are truly a service organization. Our whole setup is towards the community."

What the library's employees are doing, then, is really very selfless work. Many have given over a decade of hard work and dedication, but what they have created does not belong to them—it belongs to the people of Calvert County.

While the library's building and collection have undergone many changes in the past 30 years, the library's philosophy has stayed the same. Through their approach to serving their community, the library's employees have expanded a small building into an indispensable county-wide system where people can read, find information, meet and learn. The library's staff have made a house a home.

## MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

The library is at the end of its first Five Year Plan and just moving into the next Five Year Plan, July 1989 - June 1994. Many changes have occurred in the 30 years of the library's existence. The rapidly changing technology will create many more changes in the next 30 years—searching of remote data bases by computer, accessing data stored on compact discs, access to the library's resources by telephone line from home or business computers and automating the library's many routine functions such as circulation, acquisition of materials and interlibrary loan to name but a few.

Though there will be many future changes, the library staff will continue to follow the same philosophy: "The user comes first."

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## 1959 - 1960

1,844 hardback books	1 library and 1 bookmobile
24,408 circulated items	1 employee

## 1989

69,193 hardback books	31 employees
358,821 circulated items	17 full-time
4 libraries and	7 part-time
1 Outreach Van	7 student pages