

Robert Louis Stevenson Branch Los Angeles Public Library

History

The Robert Louis Stevenson Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library opened in 1914 as the Stephenson Branch in rented quarters at 3431 Stephenson Avenue in response to a Neighborhood Improvement Association petition to the City Librarian. During its first year of operation, 982 books were checked out.

In 1925, Stephenson Avenue became Whittier Boulevard, and the library's name was changed to the Robert Louis Stevenson Branch. In that same year, a City Library Bond Issue to build 14 branch libraries was approved by the voters. Property was purchased on the corner of Spence and Percy Streets for a new, larger branch facility.

The new branch building, designed by architect George M. Lindsay to harmonize with neighboring public buildings, opened to the public on February 1, 1927. A little boy who lived next door stayed home from school so that he could be the first person to get a library card at the new building. An enthusiastic community checked out 1,284 books that day.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the building, 500 people danced in the library reading room from 9 p.m. to midnight to the music of a 15 piece Work Projects Administration (WPA) orchestra. During the 1930's Depression, circulation of books increased to 200,000 a year.

In 1987, the branch building was entered into the National Register of Historic Places. A Housing and Community Development Block Grant, administered by the City of Los Angeles' Community Development Department, provided funds for the seismic reinforcement, renovation, and expansion of the historic structure.

Damage from the October 1, 1987 Whittier Narrows Earthquake caused the closure of the building. The branch reopened in temporary quarters at 3500 Whittier Boulevard on July 28, 1988.

The renovation and expansion of the library building, which is being dedicated on July 3, 1991, has been designed by Martinez-Hirsch Associates. The library and all its facilities are handicapped accessible. New features in the facility include an electronic book security system, microcomputer and telecommunications technology, air conditioning, carpeting, a water fountain, and seismically safe shelving for books.

The Robert Louis Stevenson Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library is located in the Fourteenth Council District, ~~Richard Alatorre~~, Councilman.

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