

**Harris County Archives
Houston, Texas**

Finding Aid

**Harris County Public Library Records
CR57
(1920 - 2009)**

Size: 15.5 cubic feet

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Acquisition: Harris County Public Library, 2007, 2009, 2015.

Accession Numbers: 2007.005,
2009.003, 2015.016

Processed by: AnnElise Golden 2008;
Sarah Canby Jackson, 2015

Citation: [Identification of Item], Harris County Public Library Records, Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

Agency History:

In the fall of 1920 a campaign for library services began for rural Harris County. Under the direction of attorney Arthur B. Dawes with assistance from the Dairy Men's Association, Julia Ideson, Librarian of the Houston Public Library, I.H. Mowery of Aldine, Miss Christine Baker of Barker, County Judge Chester H. Bryan, Edward F. Pickering, and Rev. Harris Masterson, a citizen's committee circulated petitions for a county library throughout Harris County. Dawes presented the plans and petitions signed by Harris County qualified voters to the Commissioners Court and, with skepticism, the Commissioners Court ordered a budget of \$6500.00 for the county library for a trial period of one year. If the library did not succeed, the Commissioners Court would not approve a budget for a second year.

The Harris County Commissioners Court appointed its first librarian, Lucy Fuller, in May 1921, and with an office on the fifth floor of the Harris County Court House, the Harris County Public Library was in operation. At the close of the year, the HCPL had twenty-six library branches and book wagon stations in operation, 3,455 volumes in the library, and 19,574 volumes in circulation. The County Library was a success and for the 1922 budget year the Commissioner's Court set aside \$12,000 for the Harris County Public Library. Lucy Fuller served as Librarian until 1926. Ruth Underwood Pooley was County Librarian from 1926-1932 and under her supervision a dramatic increase in library branches, book wagon stations and circulation occurred even with a reduced budget during the Great Depression.

Elnora Edgar Buchanan was County Librarian from 1932-1939 and she too had to work with a limited budget. In 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Library Project paid the salaries of the county library's part time employees, which allowed HCPL to stay within the budget, buy new books, and pay to have books mended. During the Great Depression, HCPL provided books for the National Youth Administration (NYA) camp for girls in La Porte, to the Federal Transient Home (later Ranger Home) for men in South Houston, and the Santa Ana Home for transient boys in Pasadena. In 1937, the library received its first bookmobile, which offered library services to people living in areas with limited branches or book wagon stations. These stations varied from small collections of books in one-teacher schools to branches having several thousand books housed in separate buildings. From a peak of sixty stations throughout Harris County, the number of library locations changed from year to year due to the addition of community libraries, consolidation of rural schools, the annexation of communities by the city of Houston and schools by the Houston Independent School District.

Reba Anderson was County Librarian from 1939-1945, Bernice Snell 1945-1951, Mary Butler Owensby 1951-1974, Katherine Skinner Brown 1974-1979, Catherine S. Park, 1979-2006. After serving two years as interim director, Rhoda Goldberg was appointed director in December 2008 and retired in May 2013. Edward Melton accepted the directorship in November 2014.

The Harris County Public Library currently serves the people of Harris County with twenty-six branches and two browsing locations.

Bibliography:

Annual Reports (1922-1942), Harris County Public Library, Harris County Archives, Houston, Texas.

Collection Summary:

Reports, financial records, correspondence, subject files, printed materials, scrapbooks, photographs, audio / visual materials, and original artwork (1920 – 2009) document the founding, growth, administration, and functions of the Harris County Public Library. Of particular interest is a history written by Elnora Edgar Buchanan in 1935 and augmented in 1937. The records are arranged in two records groups: Administrative Records and Branch Library Records.

Archivist's Note:

Monthly Reports, Branch System Reports, Statistical Reports, and Budget records were minimally processed and have been maintained in their original folders and are arranged by series. Dates are an approximation.

Records Group: Administrative Records**Size:** 13.75 cubic feet**Range of Dates:** 1922-2005**Restrictions on Access:** None**Restrictions on Use:** None**Scope and Contents Note:**

Administrative Records document the daily functions of the Harris County Public Library and its responsibilities and is divided into eight series: Reports, Librarian Files, Subject Files, Printed Materials, Budgets, Personnel Records, Scrapbooks, and Audio / Visual Records.

Series: Reports

Daily, Monthly, and Branch Reports (1963-2002) document the materials and services used by library constituents. The Annual Reports (1922 – 1986) contain correspondence, statistical reports, and narratives concerning the library system. Annual statistical compilations filed with the Texas State Library are included in the Texas Library Reports (1952 – 1974).

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Monthly Reports	1963-1978	0936-X-00
Daily Multimedia Statistical Reports	1973-1974	0936-X-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1975-1976	0936-X-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1977-1983	0937-X-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1982	0093-V-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1984	0094-V-00
Daily Statistical Reports	1985, 01 - 1990, 12	0938-X-00
Branch System Reports	1990, 03 – 1995, 02	0939-X-00
Branch System Reports	1995, 03 – 1998, 02	0940-X-00
Branch System Reports	1998, 03 – 2001, 02	0941-X-00
Branch System Reports	2001, 03 – 2001, 08	0942-X-01
Branch System Reports	2001, 09 – 2002, 02	0942-X-02
Annual Reports (includes a history of the Harris County Public Library, 1935)	1922 – 1942	0942-X-03

Title	Date	Location
Annual Reports	1943 – 1960	0942-X-04
Annual Reports	1975 – 1986	0942-X-05
Texas Library Reports	1952 – 1965	0942-X-06
Texas Library Reports	1966 – 1974	0942-X-07

Series: Librarian Files

Correspondence, memos, notes, and printed materials document the work of the children’s librarians (1985 – 1993), Catherine S. Parks, the county librarian (1986 – 1992), and Rhoda Goldberg, the assistant librarian (1980 – 1992).

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Children’s Library Meetings	1985	0942-X-08
Children’s Library Meetings	1986	0942-X-09
Agendas and Narratives Children’s Meetings	1988-1989	0942-X-10
Agendas and Narratives Children’s Meetings	1991-1992	0942-X-11
Children’s Specialist	1993	0942-X-12
County Librarian – Catherine S. Parks	1986, 01 – 12	0943-X-01
Legislative Correspondence	1986, 09/04 - 05	0943-X-02
County Librarian – Catherine S. Parks	1987, 01 – 06	0943-X-03
County Librarian – Catherine S. Parks	1987, 07 – 12	0943-X-04
County Librarian – Catherine S. Parks	1988, 01-10	0943-X-05
County Librarian – Catherine S. Parks, Memos	1988, 01-10	0943-X-06
County Librarian – Catherine S. Parks	1989	0943-X-07
County Librarian – Catherine S. Parks	1990, 03 – 1991, 02	0943-X-08
County Librarian – Catherine S. Parks	1991, 03 – 1992, 02	0943-X-09
Assistant County Librarian – Rhoda Goldberg	1980 – 1985	0943-X-10
Assistant County Librarian – Rhoda Goldberg	1988	0943-X-11

Title	Date	Location
Assistant County Librarian – Rhoda Goldberg	1990, 03 – 1991, 01	0943-X-12
Assistant County Librarian – Rhoda Goldberg	1991, 04 – 1992, 01	0943-X-13

Series: Subject Files

Of particular interest is a copy of an article from the 1930 *Library Journal* by Ruth Underwood, “Yes! We Have a Library!” detailing the successes of the Harris County Public Library system. Also of interest is an outreach program (1980 – 1981), Morning at the Library.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Administrative Offices 8080 El Rio	1989 – 1991	0943-X-14
Branch Openings	1971 – 1983	0943-X-15
Brazoria County Library	1966 – 1984	0943-X-16
Jail Services	1973 – 1983	0943-X-17
Miscellaneous Library Information	1930 – 1987	0943-X-18
Morning at the Library	1980 – 1981	0943-X-19
State of HCPL: Friends Council	2004 – 2005	0943-X-20
Regional Library Council	1965 – 1967	0943-X-21
Texas Conference on Library and Information Services	1978, 08/22 – 1978, 11/16	0944-X-01

Series: Printed Materials

Printed materials contain published materials from the library’s collections and policies and procedures for operating the county’s bookmobiles.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Municipal Book of Houston	1928	0944-X-02
Organizational Manual for Harris County	1958	0944-X-03

Title	Date	Location
Manual for Bookmobiles and Branches	1958	0944-X-04
Manual For Bookmobiles and Branches	1958-1960	0944-X-05

Series: Budgets

Budgets document the policies and procedures the County Librarian and staff use to obtain supplies, equipment, and professional and non-professional staff for the operation of the library.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Working Budget	1983	0944-X-06
Budget File	1983	0944-X-07
Budget Meeting	1983	0944-X-08
Budget	1983	0944-X-09
Budget Requests	1984	0944-X-10
Budget File	1984	0944-X-11
Branch Budget Requests	1984	0944-X-12
Budget Allocation Meeting	1984	0945-X-01
Working Budget	1985	0945-X-02
Budget Requests	1985	0945-X-03
Budget Requests	1985	0945-X-04
Budget (Actual)	1985	0945-X-05
Budget Allocation Meeting	1985	0945-X-06
Budget Requests	1986	0945-X-07
Budget Requests	1986	0945-X-08
Working Budget	1986	0945-X-09
Budget (Actual)	1986	0945-X-10
Working Budget	1987	0945-X-11

Title	Date	Location
Budget Requests	1987	0945-X-12
Interim Budget	1987	0945-X-13
Budget Allocation Meeting	1988	0946-X-01
Budget (Actual)	1988	0946-X-02
Budget Requests	1989	0946-X-03
Working Budget and Forms	1989	0946-X-04
Budget Requests	1990	0946-X-05
Budget Forms	1990	0946-X-06
Branch Budget Meeting	1975 – 1976	0946-X-07
Branch Budget Log	1975 – 1976	0096-V-00

Series: Personnel Files

Employee Files comprised of applications, resignation letters, and assignment histories document employee educational backgrounds, available jobs, salaries, and personal histories of 175 employees of the Harris County Public Library from 1932 – 1970 (Bulk 1940 – 1959). Of particular interest is the resignation letter of County Librarian Ruth Underwood Pooley written to Commissioners Court in 1932. An application in 1935 from sixteen year old LaVerne McCullough includes a photograph. Several applications are post-1960.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
A – B	1941 – 1959	0946-X-08
C	1934 – 1957	0946-X-09
D-E	1938 – 1959	0946-X-10
F-G	1941 – 1959	0946-X-11
H	1940 – 1970	0946-X-12
J-L	1943 – 1959	0946-X-13
M-N	1935 – 1969	0946-X-14

Title	Date	Location
O-R	1932 – 1956	0946-X-15
S	1940 – 1956	0946-X-16
T-Z	1938 – 1959	0946-X-17

Series: Scrapbooks

Size: 9 Scrapbooks

Range of Dates: 1920-2000

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Scope and Contents Note:

Newspaper clippings, programs, invitations, correspondence, photographs, and ephemera comprise the scrapbook materials. Arranged chronologically, the newspaper articles document the creation of the Harris County Public Library, branch openings, branch closings, outreach, the Bookmobile, library programs, and professional development.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Scrapbook	1920, Fall – 1927, 12	0128-V-00
Scrapbook	1928, 01 – 1934, 11	0128-V-00
Scrapbook	1934, 11/02 – 1937, 08/05	0128-V-00
Scrapbook	1937, 01/03 – 1941, 07/07	0129-V-00
Scrapbook	1938, 07/03 – 1941, 07/07	0129-V-00
Scrapbook	1941, 09/19 – 1948, 05/09	0096-V-00
Scrapbook	1948, 05/26 – 1951, 05	0129-V-00
Scrapbook	1951 – 1952	0096-V-00
Scrapbook	1996, 10/24 – 2000, 03/08	0128-V-00

Series: Audio Visual Materials

Range of Dates: 1925-1990

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Scope and Contents Note:

Photograph albums, photoprints and negatives, and digitized copies are included in this series. Audio Visual Materials created as a part of branch records are arranged within each branch series.

Subseries: Albums

Range of Dates: 1925 - 1938

Albums contain photographs, histories, and newspaper clippings that document Harris County Public Library, staff members, branch libraries and their constituents. Of particular interest are the photographs of early book wagons and bookmobiles, WPA art exhibits, school libraries, including two African American libraries and one Hispanic school library, and branches that subsequently closed. Included in the collection are the histories of Goose Creek, Crosby, Humble, and La Porte branches.

The early album has been disbound and the individual pages stored in folders. This album is available in a digital format.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Library Staff and Central Office	1925 – 1937	0017-P-01
Goose Creek and Highlands Branches	1925 – 1939	0017-P-02
The Bookmobile	1937 – 1938	0017-P-03
Humble and La Porte Branches	1929 – 1938	0017-P-04
Crosby and Fairbanks Branches	1930 – 1935	0017-P-05
Garden Villas, Pasadena, and South Houston Branches, and Bexar County Book Wagon	1929 – 1935	0017-P-06
Pelly Branch and the Library Book Wagon	1936	0017-P-07
Schools and Smaller Libraries	1931 – 1935	0017-P-08
Negro Schools, Former Libraries, Exhibits and Displays, and Summer Camps	1924 – 1935	0017-P-09
Scrapbook II, Branch negatives and photoprints	1928 – 1938	0017-P-13

Subseries: Photoprints

Photoprints (1937-1990) record activities such as the bookmobile and children's programs, branch openings, branch functions and staff.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Bookmobile	1937 – 1954	0017-P-10
Central Office, Fairbanks, Northwest and other Branches	n.d.	0017-P-11
Wooster Branch Children's Program, Houston Allegro, Northwest Branch, and Unidentified Group of Women	1968, 12, 1983	0017-P-12
Rhoda Goldberg with 2 winners of a writing award	ca. 1990	0017-P-14

Records Group: Branches

Size: 1 cubic feet

Range of Dates: 1925 - 2003

Restrictions on Access: None

Restrictions on Use: None

Scope and Contents Note:

Correspondence, legal records, audio and visual materials, works of art, and printed materials document the history, programs, staff, and friends groups of branch libraries in the Harris County Public Library system.

Inventory

Title	Date	Location
Baytown Branch Library		
Baytown Branch	1925 – 1974	0947-X-01
Wooster Branch	1961 – 1968	0947-X-02
Bear Creek Branch Library		
Printed Materials	1975 – 1983	0947-X-03
Jacqueline B. Freeman Memorial Library		
Plaque	1978	0947-X-04

Title	Date	Location
Northwest Branch Library		
Correspondence	1984, 05/17 – 1984, 11/21	0947-X-05
Programs	1984, 2002	0947-X-06
Newspaper Clippings	1983 – 2003	0947-X-07
Children’s Drawings	2005	0947-X-08
Scrapbooks		
Scrapbook	2009, 05/19	0103-V-00
Guestbook, Branch Opening	1984, 05/17	0103-V-00
Audio / Visual Materials		
Photo Album	1985 – 1990	1200-B-03
Photoprints		
Northwest Branch Opening	1984, 05/17	0036-P-01
Northwest Branch	1984, 08	0036-P-02
Northwest Branch Balloon Launch	1987, 04/07	0036-P-03
Northwest Branch staff and functions	1997, 09/22 – 1998, 06/12	0036-P-04
Northwest Branch staff and functions	1998 – 2004	0036-P-05
Northwest Branch staff and Functions	2004, 10/24 – 2004, 10/27	0036-P-06
Northwest Branch staff and functions	n.d.	0036-P-07
Slides	1984, 08	0036-P-08
Digital Photographs		
Children’s Programs	2004, 06/28 – 2004, 10/30	5 CDs, Digital Archives
Video – Branch Opening	1984, 05/17	VHS 398
Friends of the Northwest Branch Library	1983 – 1986	0947-X-09

Title	Date	Location
Fairbanks Branch Library - Unprocessed		
Includes photo albums, financial records, card holder logs, photoprints.	ca. 1929 - 1990	
Kingswood Branch Library		
Kingwood Bound Plat Maps – 63 pp	1974 – 1988	1004-B-03
Municipal Maps – Atascocita, Humble, Spring, Crosby, Huffman, Kingwood	2005 – 2008, n.d.	1028-A-04
Newspapers (microfiche)		
Kingwood Observer	1987, 01 – 1998, 08	Reference
Kingwood Sun	1995, 06 – 1998, 01	Reference
Kingwood Observer and Sun	1982, 09 – 1999, 10	Reference
News Messenger	1979, 11 – 1985, 12	Reference
Chamber of Commerce Serials – Spring, Lake Houston, Humble, Atascocita, Kingwood	2009 – 2013	1028-A-04
Promotional information – Friendswood Development Corporation	1982, n.d.	1028-A-04
Audio-Visual		
Slides – <i>The Kingwood Story</i>	1976 - 1985	0036-P-09
Posters –		
The History of Houston (1832 – 1985) 2 sets of 4, 18 x 24 inches	n.d.	0001-M-07