

Gleaves, Edwin S. "Libraries In Tennessee." *Tennessee Encyclopedia*. University of Tennessee Press , 2002. Web. 1 Mar. 2019. <<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/libraries-in-tennessee/>>.

Although Tennessee libraries developed slowly from early statehood until the twentieth century, early Tennesseans placed a high value on their collections of books. Given the demands of frontier life and the relatively high cost of books, it is not surprising that early private collections were small. When John Sevier died in 1815, his library contained 35 volumes. In Middle Tennessee, Lardner Clark willed his 47 volumes to the Davidson Academy in 1795. As the state developed, private collections grew accordingly, and dues-paying members established social or subscription libraries well before the Civil War. By 1860 29 independent subscription libraries had been created throughout the state, but only two lasted more than ten years. Colleges and universities also founded libraries early in the state's history. In 1860 most college libraries in Tennessee held no more than 3,000 to 6,000 volumes. By far the largest were the University of Nashville, with 14,000 volumes, and East Tennessee University in Knoxville, with 8,000 volumes. The collections of the college literary societies often rivaled those of the college libraries.

The Tennessee State Library and Archives was founded in 1854 as the Tennessee State Library; Return Jonathan Meigs served as the first State Librarian. The library had acquired 15,000 books by the time of the Civil War. In 1871 the Catalogue of the General and Law Library of the State of Tennessee listed 18,383 volumes. The State Library merged with the State Archives in 1919, with historian John Trotwood Moore serving as the first state librarian and archivist. The State Library and Archives occupied space in the State Capitol until the mid-twentieth century, when it moved into the newly constructed State Library and Archives Building. Current collections total well over a million books, periodicals, documents, microforms, photographs, tapes, and nonprint material, and include 27 million official documents and 4.8 million manuscripts.

Public and school libraries were virtually nonexistent in Tennessee before the twentieth century. Legislation enacted around the turn of the century provided for the establishment of city libraries, but few cities took advantage of the law. In 1933 only sixteen of Tennessee's ninety-five counties supported public libraries; there were only 25 public libraries in the entire state. Several of these public institutions, like the libraries in Brownsville and Harriman, were built with support from the Carnegie Library building program of industrialist Andrew Carnegie. Two-thirds of the state's population was without public library service. School libraries were equally scarce, as few possessed funds to establish libraries. The existing libraries rarely exceeded a few hundred outdated volumes.

Public library service made dramatic improvement with the coming of the Regional Library System, which began in 1939 at the Watts Bar Dam site in a cooperative project between the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Knoxville Public Library, and the Division of Public Libraries of the State of Tennessee. The project resulted in the establishment of the Fort Loudoun Regional Library. The Regional Library System now consists of the 4 metropolitan libraries (Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville) and the 12 multi-county regions. The multi-county regional libraries promote public library development by acquiring, processing, and distributing materials found in Tennessee's local public libraries while also operating bookmobile service within their regions. They also provide in-service education for local librarians and library trustees. The multi-county regions and the sites of the regional library centers are the Blue Grass Regional Library, Columbia; Caney Fork, Sparta; Clinch-Powell, Clinton; Forked Deer, Halls; Fort Loudoun, Athens; Highland Rim, Murfreesboro; Nolichucky, Morristown; Reelfoot, Martin; Shiloh, Jackson; Upper Cumberland, Cookeville; Warioto, Clarksville; and Watauga, Johnson City.

Currently, the state of Tennessee is rich in libraries and the resources and services they offer. School libraries, the most numerous, are found in virtually all public and private schools. Despite recent local and state funding cuts for school libraries, their roles have expanded as media and computer centers. In 1996 a special statewide initiative connected all school and public libraries to the Internet.

Colleges and universities account for 40 academic libraries, and two-year colleges and technical schools add another 18. A dozen libraries, mostly associated with universities, hold more than 50 percent of the bookstock in Tennessee libraries. Vanderbilt University holds the largest collection with over two million volumes, followed by the University of Tennessee and the University of Memphis.

Tennessee's special libraries vary in size and purpose. Fifty-eight special libraries serve industry, associations, clubs, foundations, institutes, and societies. Other special libraries include four armed forces libraries, 14 government libraries, 16 law libraries, 36 medical libraries, and 28 libraries of religion. Budgets and holdings of special libraries vary according to size and function and range from small business and institutional libraries to large scientific libraries such as those of the Lockheed Martin Energy Systems in Oak Ridge and the Eastman Chemical Company in Kingsport. Most special libraries in Tennessee are found in the metropolitan areas.

In 1996, 125 public libraries and library systems in Tennessee met the Tennessee minimum standards for nonmetropolitan public libraries. Library systems in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville include 60 libraries and branches. In recent years, local appropriations for library services in Tennessee exceeded forty million dollars per annum, or eight dollars per capita, which ranks nationally in the lowest quartile. State government subsidizes local library service through the Regional Library System. Federal funds administered through the State Library and Archives are used for coordination of statewide activities such as networking and other special projects. Public libraries in Tennessee, including the regional libraries, jointly hold over 10 million items, the largest being the Memphis-Shelby County Public Library and Information Center with over 1.7 million items.

While the holdings of libraries are traditionally given in terms of books, periodicals, and certain nonprint materials, many public libraries have now turned to computerized systems, not only for processing their materials, but also for storing and locating information. The impact of the Internet and the World Wide Web on library and information services, already substantial, has yet to reach its full potential. Even so, it appears that electronic resources will not replace existing formats so much as supplement them with value-added services.