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The Georgia Public Library Service and Georgia's Public Libraries: A Timeline of Important Events in Georgia Public Library History

By J. Elaine Hardy and Peggy Chambliss

"IT IS DECLARED TO BE THE POLICY OF THE STATE, AS A PART OF THE PROVISIONS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, TO PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE THROUGHOUT THE STATE." (O.C.G.A. §20-5-1)

In 2008, we first compiled the timeline of Georgia library history for a policy analyst with the House of Representatives Research Office and published it in the *Georgia Library Quarterly* the same year. This year, we have updated the timeline with activities since 2008 and added more historical activities to expand the history and chronology of major events for public library development in Georgia. This stands as a chronicle of the diligent work that Georgia's libraries and librarians do to improve the lives of all Georgians. It is a compilation of historical data on Georgia's public libraries and a history of the Georgia Public Library Service from its inception in 1897. It begins with the first known subscription library created in Savannah, includes the first free public library in the state, the Mary Willis Free Library in Washington, and ends with our current status of 403 service outlets for public library service in the state.

Along with the development of public library service in Georgia was the development of the State Library, which was proposed by the General Assembly in 1831. The first State Librarian was hired in 1847. The State Library was initially a department within the executive branch until it was made a division of the Department of Law in 1972. A specialized library, it collected material on law and Georgia history for the benefit of her citizens and to support government officials and members of the bench and bar. It was a depository of official publications of the state and state agencies and departments and also was required to

distribute copies of some of those publications to counties and other states. Starting in 1914, the State Library operated a legislative research service. In 1989, the collection held by the Division of Public Library Service (DPLS), Board of Education, was named the State Library, and the former State Library became the State Law Library. At this same time, the State Librarian became the State Law Librarian. No State Librarian was named until 2001. The State Law Library was abolished by legislative action in 2005.

Georgia's public libraries have a rich history that demonstrates the evolving commitment of Georgia's leaders and citizenry to free access to information across the state. Georgia libraries have developed from small collections, sometimes in people's homes, to the diverse collections of media, including the virtual library GALILEO, we have access to today. One strong theme throughout the history of public libraries in Georgia is that they have accomplished much with little funding. While the Georgia State Library Commission was established in 1897, monies for expenses and services were not allocated until 1919. The annual budget was \$6,000 until 1926, when it was increased to \$10,000. The next budget increase by the Georgia Legislature was not until 1944. The support of the Carnegie Library of Atlanta was instrumental to improving and creating library service throughout the state during this period. Georgia now ranks forty-seventh per capita and twenty-second overall in the nation for library funding with over \$194 million in local, state, and federal funds supporting the mission of service to the citizens of Georgia. Currently, Georgia has 63 library systems with 403 service outlets, including bookmobiles, serving all of her 159 counties. Fifty-three library systems with 283 service outlets and the State Library

collection at the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) are part of the PINES network, a free, borderless library providing access to materials across the network. In addition to books and other traditional library materials, Georgia libraries provide electronic books and videos, public-access computers, high speed Internet connections, meeting spaces, and events for adults, youth, and children.

In 1897, the General Assembly created the State Library Commission by an act “to promote the establishment and efficiency of libraries in the State of Georgia.” The Commission was charged to “give advice and counsel to all libraries in the State . . . as to the best means of establishing and administering such libraries, the selection of books, cataloguing and other details of library management. The commission may also send members to aid in organizing new libraries or improving those already established” (Acts of the Georgia Legislature 1799-1999). One hundred and nineteen years

later, the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS), the legislative descendent of the Commission, empowers libraries to improve the lives of Georgians through the provision of key library support services and programs. GPLS administers state and federal library grants, coordinates youth services and literacy activities such as the statewide Summer Reading Program, and provides consultants for resource sharing, training, facilities planning, network and IT support, library advocacy, and much more. GPLS also administers GLASS, the statewide network providing library services for the blind and others who need Braille or digital audio formats for reading materials; GALILEO, the state’s virtual library; and PINES, the statewide borderless library.

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Timeline

- 1809** Savannah Library Society opens a subscription library where members of the society pay a fee for use of the library. The fees collected go toward the operation and maintenance of the library.
- 1831** Resolution passes the Legislature agreeing to the proposal of a state library, so that “the Legislators and the Governors should always be in possession of the means which can carry into operation most beneficially those principles of human action which foster and protect the common weal.” Bill to establish state library passes the same year (Acts of the Georgia Legislature 1799–1999).
- 1847** Savannah Library Society merges with the Georgia Historical Society (Carnegie Library of Atlanta 1907).
General Assembly authorizes the governor to appoint a State Librarian who would serve at his pleasure with an annual salary of \$100. Clerk of Supreme Court of Georgia had maintained the State Library collection for the years 1846-1847 (Acts of the Georgia Legislature 1799–1999).
Robert E. Martin is appointed first State Librarian (Georgia Department of Archives and History 2007).
- 1848** Young Men’s Library Association of Augusta opens a subscription library (Carnegie Library of Atlanta 1907).
- 1850** Robert Micklejohn is appointed State Librarian (Georgia Department of Archives and History 2007).

- 1852** Duties of the State Librarian are outlined in legislation. These include keeping the books of the library in “good order” and receiving the “Laws and Journals of each session of the Legislature” and distributing them to Georgia counties (Acts of the Georgia Legislature 1799–1999).
- 1854** Dr. William Carr is appointed State Librarian.
- 1856** J. F. Condon is appointed State Librarian.
- 1858** C. J. Wellborn is appointed State Librarian.
- 1862** E. D. Brown is appointed State Librarian.
- 1867** Young Men’s Library Association of Atlanta opens a subscription library (Carnegie Library of Atlanta 1907).
- 1868** John L. Conley is appointed State Librarian.
- 1872** A. A. Beall is appointed State Librarian.
Dr. Joel Branham is appointed State Librarian.
- 1874** Macon Public Library opens a subscription library.
- 1875** James Banks is appointed State Librarian.
- 1876** Valdosta Library Association opens a subscription library.
- 1877** Frank L. Haralson is appointed State Librarian.
- 1878** Americus Library Association opens a subscription library.
- 1880** Legislation stipulating the State Librarian to be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate for four-year term is passed.
- 1882** Brooks (County) Library Association opens a subscription library.
- 1888** John Milledge is appointed State Librarian.
- 1889** The first free public library in Georgia, the Mary Willis Free Library in Washington, opens. It is endowed by Dr. Francis T. Willis and named for his only daughter (Carnegie Library of Atlanta 1907).
- 1893–1917** Andrew Carnegie, through his library program, donates funds to build free public library buildings across the United States. Georgia cities are also recipients of these grants. Carnegie libraries are built in many Georgia cities during this time, including Atlanta, Albany, Columbus, Dublin, Montezuma, Moultrie, Newnan, Pelham, Savannah, Cordele, Americus, Dawson, and Fitzgerald (Walker 1983).
- 1893** Andrew Carnegie offers \$100,000 for the construction of a public library building in Atlanta, contingent on the city providing a location and annual support money. Clarke Library Association, Marietta, opens a subscription library.
- 1897–1919** The General Assembly establishes the Georgia Library Commission in 1897. Georgia becomes the first Southern state to act on her citizens’ need for free public library service. The first five-member board is appointed by Governor William Y. Atkinson on July 27, 1897. The commission is charged by the General Assembly to “give advice and counsel to all libraries in the State and to all communities which may propose to establish them, as to the best means of establishing and administering such libraries, the selection of books, cataloguing and other details of library management. The commission may also send members to aid in organizing new libraries or improving those already established” (Carnegie Library of Atlanta 1907, 16). Although Georgia was forward-thinking in establishing the Library Commission, they lagged behind other states by not appropriating monies for the commission services or any member expenses until 1919. Even without state funding, the commission fulfills its charge and provides “aid to practically every Georgia library” (Wootten 1914, 162). Work is carried on through the sponsorship of the Carnegie Library of Atlanta, and the commission maintains offices in the library until 1920.

- 1897** Georgia Library Club (later the Georgia Library Association) forms. Their objectives are to start a school to train professional librarians, state funding of public libraries, and a special commission to “oversee the library interests of the state” (Georgia Library Association 2003, 3).
James E. Brown is appointed State Librarian.
- 1899** City council of Atlanta appropriates \$5,000 for the maintenance of the Carnegie Library. The Young Men’s Library Association agrees to merge with the library and donate their book collection to it.
- 1899** Seaboard Air Line Railroad traveling library program is established under the organization of Mrs. Eugene Head.
Brunswick Library opens as a subscription library.
- 1900** Price Free Library, Macon, opens. The first free library in Macon, the Price Library is established expressly for the poor by S.B. Price and Bridges Smith, both mayors of the city.
- 1901** Municipal Library Law is enacted. Any city can appropriate money to establish and sustain free public libraries. The law also provides for the establishment of municipal library boards to govern the city library (O.C.G.A. §20-5-20).
C. J. Wellborn is appointed State Librarian.
- 1902** Carnegie Library of Atlanta opens, providing free public library service to the citizens of the city of Atlanta. First Carnegie library built in the state.
- 1903** Savannah Public Library opens with the collection of the Georgia Historical Society as its nucleus.
Mary Munford Memorial Library, Cartersville, opens a free public library. Founded and endowed by Mrs. L.S. Munford in memory of her daughter, it is an outgrowth of the Cherokee Club and uses no publicly appropriated monies (Carnegie Library of Atlanta 1907).
- 1905** Southern Library School, Carnegie Library of Atlanta, opens with a grant from the Carnegie Library Program.
- 1906** Carnegie Library Program donates funds to Atlanta for branch library buildings.
Free Public Library for Negroes, Savannah, opens with a combination of city monies and subscription fees.
- 1907** Nine free public libraries are operating in Georgia: Price Free Library of Macon, Savannah Public Library, Mary Willis Library of Washington, Mary Munford Memorial Library of Cartersville, and Carnegie libraries in Albany, Atlanta, Cordele, Dublin, and Newnan. A number of free traveling libraries also operate in the state. They include the Seaboard Air Line Railroad Library, mobile libraries operated by the Atlanta Woman’s Club, and traveling libraries operated by the Newton County Board of Education for their school libraries.
- 1907** Darien Free Reading Room opens.
- 1908** Maud Baker Cobb is appointed State Librarian.
- 1914** Legislative Reference Department within the State library is created. Notary publics are appointed by the State Librarian.
- 1919** General Assembly appropriates first annual funds for the Georgia Library Commission (\$6,000), including for the maintenance of traveling libraries (Georgia State Library Commission 1920). The State Librarian is made an ex-officio member of the Commission. The executive secretary of the Commission is given a salary and directed to be full-time. Charlotte H. Templeton is selected as Executive Secretary, Georgia Library Commission.

- 1920** The Georgia Library Commission moves to offices in the Capitol, hires a professional librarian, purchases books, and begins lending to all libraries in Georgia.
- 1922** Southeastern Library Association forms. The Association's goals are to adopt standards of and objectives for library service tailored to the needs of the region. Formation of regional libraries is identified as the means to provide library service to the poor, rural areas of the South.
- 1923** Frances Beverly Wheatcroft is selected as Executive Secretary, Georgia Library Commission (State of Georgia Department of Archives and History 1923).
- 1924–1925** The State Library Commission conducts a Vacation Reading Club for rural children from the first grade through high school (Georgia State Library Commission 1925–26).
- 1924** Carnegie Library of Atlanta is accredited by American Library Association (ALA). State Library expense budget increased to \$10,000, effective 1926 (Georgia State Library Commission 1924).
- 1925** Southern Library School, Carnegie Library of Atlanta, is transferred to Emory University (Brown and Rawles 1975a).
The Library Commission becomes the circulation center for supplying the blind readers of the state with reading matter. Books are furnished by the Georgia Association for Workers for the Blind, as the Commission has no funds for books of this kind (Georgia State Library Commission 1925–26).
- 1926** Ella May Thornton is appointed State Librarian.
- 1930s** Georgia Citizen's Library Committee forms to advance state aid for public libraries, certification of librarians, and the development of regional library systems to better serve the rural, poor areas of the state.
- 1930** The University of Wisconsin holds a Rural Library Extension Institute. Georgia's field librarians attend.
- 1931–1935** Recognizing the need for trained librarians, Carnegie, working through the American Library Association, funds professional librarians to work as field agents. Miss Tommie Dora Barker was the first Southern regional field agent.
- 1933–1934** The first relief agency to provide employment during the Great Depression, the Civil Works Administration (along with the Georgia Emergency Relief Administration) creates jobs in public and school libraries in Georgia. Library programs are strengthened as a result (Georgia State Library Commission 1942).
- 1935** County Library Law enacted. County governments are permitted to appropriate funds to establish and sustain free county public libraries. The legislation also allows counties to contract for library service between existing libraries and unserved areas within the county or with adjoining counties. The push for the bill is organized by the Parent Teacher Organization. It passes both houses of the General Assembly unanimously. Fulton County is the first in the state to act under the law, the county commissioners making an initial appropriation of \$5,000 to the Carnegie Library of Atlanta beginning July 1, 1935. Free library service is available to residents of Fulton County from the headquarters building in Atlanta and all branches (Georgia State Library Commission 1942).
Georgia Library Association, following recommendations from ALA, establishes objectives for library development in the state.
Fifty-three free public libraries are operating in 44 counties throughout Georgia.
- 1936–1943** The Works Progress Administration (later the Works Projects Administration), or WPA, begins library demonstration projects as part of its relief efforts. The projects' goals are to organize and run free public libraries in communities with little or no library service. During the program years, WPA funds establish bookmobile service, builds library

buildings, buys books, and pays librarian and staff salaries across Georgia. The WPA also assists in the formation of the first regional library systems in Georgia. The Athens Regional and Cherokee Regional libraries are created under the demonstration library program (Georgia State Library Commission 1942). The WPA expends \$1.3 million to libraries in Georgia before it ends in 1943. Free public library service begins in 107 Georgia counties. Population without free library service drops from 71 percent to 36 percent. The Library Commission works closely with the WPA to facilitate and maintain their demonstration projects across the state.

- 1937** State law creating the certification board for librarians is enacted. The certification of librarians in public libraries serving more than 5,000 and state-operated libraries (except school and law libraries) is required (Acts of the Georgia Legislature 1799–1999).
- 1938** First bookmobile service is inaugurated in Thomas County as a WPA demonstration project.
- 1940** Athens Regional Library, the first WPA demonstration regional library in Georgia, is organized.
- 1941** School of Library Service at Atlanta University opens.
- 1943** WPA ends. WPA support of libraries in rural areas across the South creates a citizenry unwilling to give up even the limited library service they received through the demonstration projects. With the ending of the program, people turn to local authorities to provide monies to continue support of public libraries in Georgia. Local funding, while increased, is not enough for all public libraries to function. Fifty-two libraries in twenty-one counties close. Other libraries curtail hours and services. Statesboro Regional Library becomes the third regional library system in Georgia. Acting under calls from the Georgia Library Association and the Citizen’s Library Committee (an informal organization made up of trustees and friends of libraries across Georgia), the General Assembly eliminates the Library Commission, transferring its services and functions to the state Department of Education’s Division of Textbooks and Libraries. It is renamed the Library Extension Service and is tasked with “promoting the establishment and development of Public Library Service throughout the State” (Acts of the Georgia Legislature 1799–1999). School of Library Service at Atlanta University becomes first library school for African-Americans accredited by ALA.
- 1944** General Assembly appropriates \$100,000 for library service as part of the Department of Education’s budget as the first grant of special funds for state aid for the development of rural public library service in Georgia. Acquiring state aid for public libraries was a primary objective of the State Library Commission/Library Extension Service for twenty years. Several libraries closed following the loss of WPA support are able to reopen with state funding.
- 1945** State of Georgia Constitution is revised. Provision is made for taxation by counties for public libraries (1945 Georgia Constitution). Six regional libraries serve fourteen counties, and forty-one additional counties give countywide library service.
- 1944–1946** Eight additional regional libraries form. Ten regional libraries now provide service to twenty-three counties.
- 1945–1946** General Assembly appropriates additional monies for library service. With this funding, local allotments are encouraged to increase. Matching local funds are not required to receive county allotments (which are based on the number of teachers in a county). An additional allotment of \$2,000 is given to regional libraries of two or more counties with a

regional governing board and a professional librarian as director. Requirements for state aid include an effective program of library service to rural areas, libraries under the control of a legally-constituted board, and library directors certified by the State Board. Also, local funds have to provide sufficient support, and state funds are not made available if the local budget decreases.

- 1947** Georgia Citizen's Library Committee adopts the slogan "Books in Reach of Every Georgian."
Southeastern States Cooperative Library Survey is conducted by the Southeastern Library Association.
- 1948** State aid to libraries equals \$0.30 per capita (National standard is \$1.00 per capita).
Report of the Georgia Library Survey Committee.
Twenty-eight bookmobiles are in operation, providing service in twenty-five counties (Georgia Library Survey Committee 1948).
- 1949** Minimum Foundation Program for Education (MFPE) is enacted by the General Assembly and includes provisions for funds for public libraries and payment of state salary for one public librarian per county.
- 1951** MFPE funding appropriates \$500,000 for public library materials, salaries, and travel (Brown and Rawles 1975b).
- 1954** Jane Oliver Green is named State Librarian.
- 1956** Library Services Act (LSA) is passed. First federal funding for libraries is signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Appropriation is for five years and is limited to library service to rural areas. LSA provides monetary aid to the Library Extension Service's objectives and plans. Staff, materials, and bookmobiles are added.
- 1957** Survey of Georgia Public Library Service to Negroes (Brown and Rawles 1975b).
- 1958** Through either a county or regional library, 158 counties have free public library service.
- 1959** John Dalton Murphy Folger is named State Librarian.
- 1961** Library Services Act is renewed for another five years.
- 1964** LSA is amended to Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA). LSCA includes two titles: Title I provides money for both rural and metropolitan areas, and Title II provides funds for construction. LSCA provides funds to build forty-nine public libraries.
- 1965** The Georgia Citizen's Library Committee officially becomes the Georgia Library Trustees Association and a section of the Georgia Library Association.
- 1966** Two additional titles added to LSCA: Title III, Interlibrary Cooperation, Title IV-A State Institutional Library Service, and Title IV-B State Library Service to the Physically Handicapped.
- 1967** Thirty-five regional libraries serve 129 counties with countywide library service in all of Georgia's 159 counties.
- 1969** Georgia Library Information Network (GLIN) is founded. Located at the Library Extension Service offices, GLIN coordinates interlibrary loans between public, academic, and special libraries.
- 1970-1971** Library Extension Service is expanded within the state Department of Education to the Division of Public Library Services (DPLS) (Brown and Rawles 1975b). The division continues its original directive from 1897 to give counsel, advice, and aid on establishing and administration of libraries, both to existing libraries and to those communities wishing to establish them. Additional functions added over the years include: supervising all public libraries; encouraging and assisting cooperative library service inside and outside Georgia; gathering and compiling public library statistics; developing statewide plans concerning libraries of all kinds; supervising state and federally funded programs;

facilitating programs for continuing education for librarians and staff; supplying expertise in the form of consultants to public libraries; supplementing regional and county library service by providing reference, bibliographic, and interlibrary loan services; and encouraging the network model to facilitate the provision of library service and resources to all citizens.

- 1971** *Handbook on Constitutions, By-Laws, and Contracts for Georgia Public Libraries* is published.
- 1972** Executive Re-organization Act relocates State Library from a department under the Office of the Governor to a division within the Department of Law. Attorney-General now appoints State Librarian, who must be a certified librarian or an attorney at law. Wiley Howard Davis named State Librarian. General Assembly passes into law the Interstate Library Compact Act, which permits state, local, and private libraries to enter into interstate agreements for provision of services and utilization of facilities. The Public Library Service Unit of the Georgia Department of Education is designated the state library agency as part of the compact (Acts of the Georgia Legislature 1799-1999).
- 1973** Georgia Library for the Blind is established. Cessation of federal construction funds under LSCA. The General Assembly provides funding for library construction in the state. Carlton J. Thaxton is named director of the Division of Public Library Services, Georgia Department of Education. Donn C. Odum is named State Librarian.
- 1974** Adequate Program for Education in Georgia (APEG) is passed by the General Assembly, replacing the Minimum Foundation Program for Education Act (Brown and Rawles 1975b).
- 1975** General Assembly appropriates funds to implement APEG. Georgia has 36 regional library systems providing library service to 147 counties and 11 single-county public libraries. Southeastern States Cooperative Library Survey, released by Southeastern Library Association, provides an assessment of libraries in the Southeast in the 1970s. Georgia Library Survey is completed, delineating library resources, services, and funding. The General Assembly provides funds for Talking Book Centers, sub-regional libraries for the blind and physically handicapped. The Georgia Council of Public Libraries is organized. DPLS becomes a member of Solinet (Southeastern Library Network) and OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) (Brown and Rawles 1975b).
- 1976** Materials grants for public libraries increase from \$0.16 per capita to not less than \$0.35 per capita under APEG.
- 1977** Governor's Conference on Georgia Library and Information Services, a state preconference for the White House Conference on Library and Information Services, is held.
- 1979** White House Conference on Library and Information Services is held.
- 1980** Standardized statistical measures and definitions for collection of library statistics are adopted in Georgia. Joe B. Forsee is named director of the Division of Public Library Services, Georgia Department of Education.
- 1981** First Library Legislative Day is held under Georgia Council of Public Libraries sponsorship to facilitate contact between library supporters and their legislative representatives.

- Georgia Intellectual Freedom Manual is first drafted at the Georgia Library Association Biennial Preconference (Georgia Library Association, Intellectual Freedom Interest Group 1985).
- 1982** The General Assembly revises state formulas for aid to public libraries and Talking Book Centers. The revision of the formulas is the result of consultation between DPLS, public library directors, and the State Board of Education.
Librarians employed by libraries of the University System of Georgia are exempt from certification (O.C.G.A. § 43-24-4).
- 1984** Revision of library law accomplished. Article 2 of Chapter 5 of Title 20 of the OCGA is clarified on questions of creation of trustee boards, whether library boards could hold property, how a county system moves from one regional library system to another, and on whether an individual is required to return books borrowed. The revisions also allow for the establishment of a public library as a tax-exempt entity.
- 1985** Federal LSCA Title II funds for library construction are reauthorized.
- 1986** LSCA funds and local matching funds are used to open a portable library kiosk in a MARTA station. This kiosk is the first of its kind in a rapid transit station in the United States.
- 1988** Georgia OnLine Database (GOLD) is developed to facilitate the interlibrary loan process in Georgia among member libraries. GOLD goes online with a database of over six million holdings. First GOLD membership conference is held.
Emory University Division of Library and Information Science issues its final Master of Library Science degree.
- 1989** The State Library becomes the State Law Library, with some of its duties, powers, and books transferred to the Department of Archives and History, the Board of Education, and the Board of Regents of the University System. The collection of books held by the Division of Public Library Service is designated the State Library. The State Librarian becomes the State Law Librarian, with some powers and duties transferred to the Secretary of State and the Board of Education (Acts of the Georgia Legislature 1799-1999).
GLIN membership is closed to new members on July 1, 1989.
- 1995** GeorgiA Library LEarning Online (GALILEO), a virtual library of electronic information resources for the citizens of Georgia, goes online.
DPLS is downsized as part of the Department of Education's reorganization. Approximately half of all the positions in the division are eliminated.
- ca. 1995–**
1996 Tom Ploeg becomes acting director of the Division of Public Library Service.
- 1996** Amendments to the state education laws by the General Assembly transfer the Division of Public Library Services to the Department of Technical and Adult Education, designating it the Office of Public Library Service (OPLS) (Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, Office of Public Library Service 2000). Responsibilities of OPLS include administering federal and state grant funds, coordinating cooperative library activities, providing training, coordinating children's summer programs, promoting family literacy, supporting technology, and coordinating and promoting resource sharing among all types of libraries.
Division of Public Library Service, Department of Technical and Adult Education becomes the state library agency under the Interstate Library Compact.
Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), part of the Museum and Library Services Act, replaces LSCA. LSTA funding emphasizes technology and infrastructure while retaining focus on underserved areas for library service. Funding under LSTA is extended to all

- types of libraries. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which oversees LSTA funding, is created by the act.
- The Telecommunications Act of 1996 expands Universal Service to the Internet and provides discounts to public libraries and public and private schools for telecommunications and Internet-related technology.
- 1997** Gates Library Foundation is created to “bring computers and Internet access to public libraries in low-income communities in the United States and Canada” (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2015).
- GOLD Advisory Committee and GALILEO Users Group join to become GOLD/GALILEO Users Group Advisory Committee (Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, Office of Public Library Service 2000).
- 1998** A telecommunication network for high-speed access for all public libraries is established. The required annual statistical report for libraries is automated.
- First Children’s Services Annual Conference is held.
- ca. 1998** David Singleton becomes acting director of the Office of Public Library Service.
- 1999** GPLS, in consultation with libraries across the state, creates PINES (Public Information Network for Electronic Services), a library automation and lending network for public libraries in Georgia. The first phase consists of ninety-six service outlets across twenty-six systems.
- Access to GALILEO becomes available on all public library computers.
- Gates Library Foundation awards Georgia’s public libraries \$7 million in equipment, software, and training.
- Glascocock County opens a public library facility for the first time. All 159 counties in the state now have a building housing a public library.
- 2000** The A Plus Education Reform Act makes OPLS a unit of the Board of Regents and names it the state library agency under the Interstate Library Compact. The collection held by OPLS becomes the State Library (O.C.G.A. § 20-5-2).
- Georgia libraries begin purchasing and installing equipment and software purchased with Gates Foundation monies.
- Standards for Georgia Public Libraries are adopted (Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, Office of Public Library Service 2000).
- 2001** Lamar Veatch is named State Librarian, the first since 1989, and Director of the Office of Public Library Service.
- State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is renamed Georgia Library for Accessible Services (GLASS).
- PINES phase II inaugurates service in 110 additional facilities across 11 systems.
- Valdosta State University Master of Library and Information Science program admits first students.
- 2003** Office of Public Library Service is renamed the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS).
- GPLS closes its Trinity Avenue facility. The Georgia history collection of books and materials is moved to the Middle Georgia Regional Library in Macon. The staff and professional collection are moved to the main offices on Clairmont Avenue.
- Friends of Georgia Libraries (FOGL) is established.
- The board of Clark Atlanta University decides to close its School of Library and Information Studies, the only ALA-accredited library school in Georgia at the time.
- 2004** PINES Evergreen Project begins. GPLS initiates developing open-source software for an integrated library computer system for its PINES network libraries.
- 2005** Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies graduates final class.

- GPLS's first partnership program, the Check-It-Out Reading Challenge, begins. Co-sponsored by GPLS and the Atlanta Hawks, the challenge is designed to enhance summer reading programs, with young readers earning basketball-related rewards by reading and participating in other literacy activities.
- 2006** PINES libraries debut the Evergreen software, revolutionizing library automation by using open-source software to run circulation, cataloging, and the public library catalog in an integrated library system designed expressly for PINES policies and needs. Prior to this debut, PINES contracted with vendor-developed software (Georgia Public Library Service 2009).
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Public Access Computing Hardware Upgrade Grant (PACHUG) program awards Georgia public libraries \$1.499 million (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2016).
Regents Public Library Advisory Committee is formed.
Georgia Library for Accessible Services (GLASS) receives a 2006 White Cane Award from The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) for assisting in the mission of achieving equality, opportunity, and security for the blind.
- 2007** GPLS wins Mellon Award for Technology Collaboration for the development and release of the Evergreen open-source library automation system.
GPLS inaugurates PINNACLE, the Public Library Institute for New and Creative Leadership Education, to ensure the future of high-quality library leadership across the state.
Valdosta State University Master of Library and Information Science program is accredited by ALA.
- 2008** Georgia has 61 library systems serving all 159 counties with 387 service outlets and 20 bookmobiles. There are 33 regional library systems providing library service to 133 counties. There are 26 single-county library systems. Forty-eight library systems with 275 service outlets are part of the PINES network, providing a borderless library for Georgians with a free PINES library card.
Georgia Download Destination begins, offering anytime, anywhere access to digital books and audiobooks. Twenty Georgia library systems serving fifty-three counties participate.
GPLS Strategic Planning Committee finalizes a long-range strategic plan and a new mission statement. The plan establishes an overall vision for the agency: "Achieving excellence in library service for all Georgians." The mission statement is "The Georgia Public Library Service: Empowering libraries to improve the lives of Georgians" (Georgia Public Library Service News February 2008, 4).
The Georgia State Park ParkPasses and Historic Site passes program, a joint initiative of GPLS and the Parks, Recreation, and Historic Sites Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, begins. With a valid library card, patrons can check out passes good for free parking and admission at more than sixty parks and historic sites statewide.
PRIME TIME Family Reading Time, a program developed by the Louisiana Endowment of the Humanities, expands to Georgia, with seven public library systems chosen to participate. Based on illustrated children's books, PRIME TIME is designed to help low-income, low-literate families bond around the act of reading and discussing books.
GPLS holds its first Facilities Summit to help educate the Georgia library community about best practices in construction and maintenance of library buildings.
- 2009** GPLS sponsors the inaugural Evergreen International Conference in May in Athens, Georgia.
IMLS awards GPLS a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program grant, used to fund "Librarians Build Communities," a GPLS program that provides forty-five scholarships for

- students preparing to be public librarians (Georgia Public Library Service News October 2009).
- 2010** GPLS holds its first Technology Boot Camp. Forty-five library systems send representatives to discuss and learn new ideas regarding current library technology issues. State Librarian Lamar Veatch is elected to serve a two-year term as president of the Chief Officers of State Library Associations.
- 2011** Atlanta Metro Library for Accessible Services (AMLAS) relocates to the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System's Central Library from their shared warehouse space with the GLASS Distribution Center (GDC) at an industrial area in southwest Atlanta. GLASS Distribution Center moves to the Georgia Archives building in Morrow. GPLS holds its first Business Training for Business Managers and Directors Conference. GPLS holds its first Public Library Cataloger's Conference. GPLS is awarded a National Leadership Grant from IMLS to plan the development of an open-source library management system (named Loblolly) for libraries that serve users with visual and other impairments (Georgia Public Library Service News October 2011).
- 2012** GPLS begins organizing and cataloging the Governor's Mansion collection in order to create an online catalog using the Evergreen library management system. Volunteer catalogers from metro Atlanta area libraries participate in the project (Georgia Public Library Service News August 2012). Open Education Database ranks GPLS's roster of strategic partnership programs as number one on its top ten list of national public library trends and innovations for 2012.
- 2013** Greater Clarks Hill Library System, a new regional library system, is formed. Marshes of Glynn Libraries begins as an independent system for Glynn County.
- 2014** Julie Walker is named State Librarian. Finalization of statewide network upgrade, resulting in broadband speeds in every public library in Georgia. IMLS awards GPLS a National Leadership Grant to develop a customized early literacy program within libraries to reach parents of young children (Georgia Public Library Service News August 2014). GLASS (Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services) consolidates some of its services. East Central Georgia Regional Library System disbands. Augusta-Richmond County Library System is formed.
- 2015** GPLS awards public libraries LSTA STEM grants to be used for programming and materials related to science, technology, engineering, and math. GPLS holds its first Georgia Accessibility Conference. GPLS holds its second PINNACLE (Public Library Institute for New and Creative Leadership Education), in collaboration with Carl Vinson Institute of Government, for 2015–2016. More than half of the inaugural institute's graduates have gone on to serve as library system directors (Georgia Public Library Service News October 2015).
- 2016** Inaugural Georgia Public Library Awards honoring the outstanding service and achievements of Georgia's public libraries, librarians, and library champions are awarded. 2015 Public Library of the Year—Lee County Library. 2015 Public Librarian of the Year—Steve W. Schaefer, retired director of the Uncle Remus Regional Library System. 2015 Public Library Champion of the Year—Kathryn Ash, president of the Friends of Georgia Libraries and a trustee of the Piedmont Regional Library System.

Georgia currently has 63 library systems, regional and single county, serving all 159 counties with 403 service outlets, including bookmobiles. Fifty-four library systems with 283 service outlets are part of the PINES network, providing a borderless library for Georgians with a free PINES library card (Georgia Public Library Service 2016a).

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