On September 7, 1910, the Edgewater Free Public Library "informally" opened to the residents of Edgewater. The library was then located in a room in borough hall. It was quickly discovered that the room was too dark, not very welcoming, and did not have enough space for materials nor proper seating. Just add a few coats of paint, some rearranging of the furniture, and additional shelving, and the library's popularity soared.

As I sit in my office today, it could be 1910. The smells of newly laid carpet and fresh coats of paint are distracting as I puzzle over the new furniture and shelving floor plan, trying to figure out how many books need to fit on each shelf and whether or not we can place that armchair in that spot without blocking access to the shelves. Now, all we have to do is hope that as in 1910, our patrons flock back to us in greater numbers than ever before.

I am struck by the amazing change I see in this library, even though it is presently devoid of all the things I consider essential to a library: patrons, staff, and the books and other materials. I am confident that when you visit the library, you too will be awed.

As with any remodeling job, there is always a problem. Ours is minor — even though our shelving has been delivered, a few pieces are missing, and the finishing touches and furniture won't be here until the middle of September.

A Year of Celebrations

The Board of Trustees decided to celebrate our anniversary in a big way: each month for the next year we will be celebrating a different library related event. Some events will be huge, and some will be quiet, but they will all be fun and informative. We will also have surprises for you each month, so be sure to visit us on a regular basis. Some details are still being finalized, so keep an eye our for more information.

A Year of Celebrations

September 7, 2005: 95th Anniversary kick-off

October 16-22, 2005: Teen Read Week. Grand opening of our Teen Room

November 25, 2005: Andrew Carnegie's birthday

December 10, 2005: Melville Dewey's birthday

January 2006: New Year, New Services

February 2006: Library Lover's Month

March 2, 2006: Read Across America

April 2-8, 2006: National Library Week and grand reopening of the library

May 2006: National Book Month

June 2006: Audio books Month

July 2006: National Foreign Language Month

August 2006: May Your Reading Be a Haven Month

Seal of the Edgewater Free Public Library

So, we decided to follow tradition — we will be hosting an "informal" opening of the newly redecorated library on September 7, 2005 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Please join us and celebrate 95 years of library service.

Stop by and take a look around, enjoy some light refreshments (just promise you won't spill on our new carpet!).

Here's to an exciting year!

Donna Bachowski, Director
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LIBRARY

This account is from Ethel Sims Mulligan, Edgewater Librarian, 1911.

The present library grew out of a local women's book club which had existed for several years. Early in 1910 one of the members proposed that the books which had been accumulated be given to start a library. The New Jersey Library Commission was called upon for assistance, and the Edgewater Free Library Association was formed.

Miss Matilda Meyer was instrumental in obtaining the library and the books for it. A room in the Municipal building was provided, it was partly fitted and a librarian was secured. Dodgers were sent out to every conceivable part of the Borough announcing the date of the opening and on September 7, 1910, the library was formally opened to the public.

In 1911 a radical change was effected when, after a favorable public vote, the library passed out of the hands of the association to be made free and taken over into Municipal control and supported by the 1/3 of the mil taxation law.

The direct result of this change meant that the library for its support was no longer dependent on donations; but instead would have funds with which to buy books and make the improvements necessary to its welfare and progress.

A few months use of the room given for the library proved that some changes were needed in order to have it adequately serve our purpose.

In April, we were enabled to carry out plans for improvement. The wall paper which was dark and not a good reflector of light, was removed and two tones of buff paint substituted.

More shelving was added to accommodate the increasing number of books. The sunniest corner of the room was reserved for the children and small tables and chairs procured for them. Here they can read and the smaller ones amuse themselves with picture books, without disturbing the older people.

We have been well repaid for these changes, in the attractiveness and efficiency of our room. Although we are obliged to use the same room for a Reading Room as well as everything else, the number of people (2,231) who have used the magazines and newspapers during this time shows conclusively that they just get some enjoyment out of this sort of reading, in spite of the occasional disturbances and unavoidable traffic in the room. It has been most gratifying to note the number of half grown boys who have come in to read in the evenings. Heretofore they possibly have spent the time unprofitably.

"It has been most gratifying to note the number of half grown boys who have come in to read in the evenings. Heretofore they possibly have spent the time unprofitably."

Ethel Mulligan, 1911

FUNFACTS

- The first librarian was Mrs. Nellie Sawyer and her assistant was Miss E.J. Newton. Each received $10.00 per month for their services.
- The library opened with 817 books on the shelves and the first year's circulation was 9,140. Fifty-seven books were checked out the first day.
- At the November 1910 election, 90% of the ballots cast approved of the forming of a Municipal Library, to be officially started on January 1, 1911.
- The existing library building was built in 1915 with funds from Mr. Andrew Carnegie's Foundation.
- The total cost for the current building was $17,500.
- Today the library has over 21,000 items, circulates more than 50,000 items per year, and is visited by at least 3,000 people per month.
- Currently, 3,479 residents of Edgewater have active library cards.