

Introduction

I virtually visited the Clearwater Public Library's Public Memory digital collection, which contains historical resources from Clearwater and Pinellas County. Six libraries throughout Pinellas County contribute resources to this digital archive. Within Clearwater's Public Memory digital archive, eight useful collections exist directing users to various archives. I followed my virtual visit up with a site visit to the Heritage Studio of Community Memory at the Clearwater Public Library – Main located at 100 N. Osceola Ave.

Question – What events led to the 1916 creation of the Clearwater-based, Carnegie Foundation grant-funded library?

Archives and Records Used

I looked at the history page on the Clearwater Public Library System's website for key dates surrounding its Carnegie library's opening, which occurred on September 14, 1916.

I browsed the Public Memory's Clearwater Community History collection, Clearwater Library Association Minutes 1911-1920 for "Carnegie" and dates leading up the library's opening. A meeting from April 12, 1915, stated that the Mayor and City Council have secured a donation of \$10,000 from the Carnegie Foundation "for the erection of a free library, conditioned on its proper maintenance as prescribed" (CLA, n.d., p. 38-39). The minutes also stated that this action by the Mayor and City Council must be further approved by a popular vote. If the public were in favor, then "books, shelves, and effects of all kinds belonging to the Clearwater Library Association shall be transferred to and become the property of the City of Clearwater" (CLA, 1915, p. 39). In these same minutes, a committee of five was appointed to select a lot(s) to erect a library building, solicit and receive subscriptions, create an architectural

plan, and act in all ways for furtherance of this project. All this was needed to arrange for a clear deed to give to the City before August 1st. Meeting minutes from November 22, 1915, mentioned that a “[m]otion made and carried that books and furniture and other articles now owned by this board be turned over to the Carnegie Board on Dec. 1” (CLA, n.d., p. 42).

Meeting minutes from April 1, 1916, stated that the Board was directed to pay Clearwater Abstract Company for its abstract work on the Padgett Lot. I presume this is the lot where the library was to be built. The Board moved to transfer its funds to the Carnegie Library Board. The April 18, 1916, board meeting minutes reaffirmed its 4/1915 and 11/1915 resolutions donating their “books, periodicals, furniture, and other equipment, including also the balance of cash on hand” (CLA, n.d., p. 50). That was the last entry of board meeting minutes included in the archive until a list of discarded books on November 10, 1920.

The next collection I utilized was the *Clearwater Sun* newspaper, published from 1914 to 1989. This archive should have contained news about the original library opening and any renovations, and it may have but there were no papers from 1915 or 1916 available to peruse.

I visited the main branch of the Clearwater Public Library Heritage Studio of Community Memory and spoke with the librarian on site but did not obtain much in the way of information beyond what I had already located.

Interactions with Archives/Records Manager

The librarian on site at the Clearwater Public Library listened to my research question and informed me that if I had not located the sought-after information from the Public Memory Collection, then it did not exist on site. She mentioned the history section on the library’s website as another possible lead. She lamented that the library did not have further

documentation regarding its establishment as a Carnegie-funded institution, but noted that when the original building was torn down around 2002, they found the original Carnegie library sign (although it remains missing today). Finally, she pointed me to a locked box of photographs of city library buildings that included some of the main branch.

How do you compare the experience of using an archival repository or records center and with the experience of using a library?

Information found in the archive was located in chronological order making it somewhat easy to locate facts based on year. However, this proved problematic when it came to looking up scanned newspapers. Using regular library databases requires a knowledge of keyword and connector searching, and as I have more experience using those I find them user-friendly compared to this online archive. I am not a historian so trying to research local history was a great challenge, especially as I am unfamiliar with sources and metadata terms. Next time I go to a larger archive I plan to have a more detailed list of potential search terms and a more thorough understanding of how an archive works.

What I Learned About Archives/Records Management From This Site Visit

I learned that comprehensive archives depend on organizations having a solid records management system that preserves documents relating to an institution's creation. It is likely that Clearwater was not thinking of preservation at that time since archives had not yet been established on a national level. Since the Clearwater library only had the meeting minutes of the Library Association, and did not have news articles, city council minutes, deed/contract information, or evidence from the popular vote taken prior to approving this library, the picture was not entirely complete. Perhaps another archive could fill in the gaps here.

References

Clearwater Library Association. (n.d.). *Meeting minutes 1911-1920*. Pinellas Memory.

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[resources/clearwater-library-history](https://www.myclearwaterlibrary.com/books-more/historical-resources/clearwater-library-history)

Good job! The paper is well written. It shows you have become familiar with archival collections and an archival repository. please see one more comment inserted in your paper.