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## **"Neighborhood Library Modernization": Public Library Expansion in Milwaukee During the 1960s and 1970s**

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“NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY MODERNIZATION”: PUBLIC LIBRARY EXPANSION IN  
MILWAUKEE DURING THE 1960s and 1970s

by

Madeline Brenner

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

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## ABSTRACT

### “NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY MODERNIZATION”: PUBLIC LIBRARY EXPANSION IN MILWAUKEE DURING THE 1960s and 1970s

by

Madeline Brenner

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2022  
Under the Supervision of Professor Amanda Seligman

By the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, public libraries expanded their reach across American cities and transformed the urban landscape. With almost 10,000 libraries in U.S. cities by 1960, new library development was at an all-time high. Despite this success, few scholars have analyzed these critical changes. Since the historical scholarship on library development is limited, this thesis analyzes the history of public library development in Milwaukee during the 1960s and 1970s. The goals of community engagement and partnership through city-wide circulation of material guided the development of branch library construction under the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971*. This thesis demonstrates that the creation of branch libraries in Milwaukee was interconnected to the existence of racial inequality and changing racial demographics in the social, political, and economic context of the African American population in the 1960s and 1970s in Milwaukee. Site and budget decisions made in this context had long-term consequences for the nine new branch libraries in Milwaukee.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MPL – Milwaukee Public Library

WPA – Works Progress Administration

LSA – Library Service Act

LCSA – Library Services and Construction Act

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

HOLC – Home Owner's Loan Corporation

HUD – Department of Housing and Urban Development

SEWRPC – Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission



## Introduction

By the second half of the twentieth century, public libraries expanded their reach across American cities and transformed the urban landscape. With almost 10,000 libraries in U.S. cities by 1960, new library development was at an all-time high. Despite this success, few scholars have analyzed these critical changes. Since the historical scholarship on library development is limited, this thesis analyzes the history of public library development from the mid-twentieth century to the early 1960s in the United States and Milwaukee. This thesis focuses on the city of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) where the establishment of a coordinated branch library system and the construction of multiple branch libraries began in the 1960s and 1970s. The existing scholarship shows awareness of the development of branch libraries in Milwaukee neighborhoods. However, little analysis explores how racial inequality and changing racial demographics were involved in the creation of the nine new branch libraries in the 1960s.

By the early 1960s, MPL, Richard Krug (head librarian of MPL), and Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier and his administration became major partners in expanding the reach of branch libraries across its urban neighborhoods. MPL grew from thirteen isolated libraries to nine new branch libraries from 1961 to 1972 because of large territorial expansion and population increases in the city. The establishment of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* and the creation of the coordinated branch library system offered opportunities for city-wide circulation of books and the increase in public library services and access to education, along with programming and outreach for city residents. The plan became a pillar to the development and planning of Milwaukee's branch libraries in the 1960s.

This thesis investigates the extent to which the city of Milwaukee and MPL built branch libraries using the principles defined for each branch library under the *Ten-Year Library Plan of*

1962 to 1971. This thesis addresses the level of achievement in the goals of city-wide circulation and patron access to libraries through programming, education, and outreach in Milwaukee. This thesis examines the effectiveness of the 1962 library plan through the lens of changing racial demographics, population shifts and racial inequality that occurred at the time of the development of the nine new branches during the 1960s and after in the 1970s.

The *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* offered standardization of branch library development in Milwaukee to address the conditions of each neighborhood. Despite this success, the Milwaukee Public Library and the Common Council did not account for emerging population shifts and changing racial demographics in the 1960s and failed to recognize that the creation of branch libraries in Milwaukee was interconnected to the existence of racial inequality in the social, political, and economic context of the African American population in the 1960s and 1970s in Milwaukee. Most importantly, this thesis shows how racial inequality and changing racial demographics in Milwaukee's neighborhoods affected the implementation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* and the development of nine new branch libraries in Milwaukee by 1972, leading to long-term consequences in expansion and library programming.

This analysis utilizes 21<sup>st</sup> century terminology like “community engagement” and “partnership” rooted in today’s framework and knowledge of library collaboration to reflect the experiences of library development during the 1960s and 1970s in Milwaukee.<sup>1</sup> This thesis also refers to the 21<sup>st</sup> century standards of public library service that are comprised of “access services, government information connection, library learning services and library research support services” to clarify the goals of Milwaukee’s coordinated branch library system and why

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<sup>1</sup> “Community Engagement & Outreach,” American Library Association, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.ala.org/pla/resources/tools/community-engagement-outreach>.

development of branch libraries began.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, MPL promoted the goal of city-wide circulation in their branch library development goals. The importance of city-wide circulation encouraged opportunity for library proximity by almost all patrons in the city, access to circulating material across libraries and opportunities to foster connecting libraries to education, literacy, and programming in the coordinated branch library system.

While engagement, outreach, and public library service to and from the community did exist during the 1960s and 1970s, information pertaining to these experiences was not categorized as such in scholarship or through primary sources. According to the American Public Library Association, community engagement and outreach can best be understood as resources and strategies that encourage universal access, civic involvement, and the establishment of community impact.<sup>3</sup> These ideas reflect why the Milwaukee Public Library developed such branch libraries in the 1960s and created a coordinated branch library system in the city to foster city-wide circulation of material and accessibility to city residents through library expansion.

## **Overview**

This thesis focuses on themes related to community engagement, racial inequality, changing racial demographics in the United States and Milwaukee's library expansion during the second half of the twentieth century. Through secondary sources about the history of library development in American cities, Chapter 1 provides a broad overview on literature about library implementation and branch library development, including the shifting social, political and economic regimes in the United States throughout the eighteenth to mid-twentieth century. Most

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<sup>2</sup> Carol Henry, *The Public Library Service: IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development* (München: International Federation of Library Associations, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> American Public Library Association, 2022.

importantly, Chapter 1 addresses the pattern of racial injustice and inequality experienced by the African American population in and from library expansion, especially libraries in the South. This examination explains the characteristics of library development for U.S. cities, the historical pattern of its decisions up until the 1960s and the external influences of power and privilege that tend to dominate library expansion.

Chapter 2 analyzes the implementation of branch libraries in Milwaukee and reviews the creation of the coordinated branch library system under the development plan named the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971*. Significant goals and initiatives that encouraged this development were city-wide circulation of material, access to a library for most city residents, population increases, increasing public library service needs and growing urbanization. These developments encouraged expanding construction efforts and mobilized the development of multiple branch libraries across Milwaukee. However, the Locust Library, the last library to open under the *Ten-Year Library Plan*, is explored as an example of how the 1962 library plan failed to address the changing racial demographics and racial inequality within its neighborhoods in the 1960s.

The final chapter examines the outcome of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* and the integration of the coordinated branch library system in Milwaukee between 1972 and 1976 through the *1973 Library Report* and programming initiatives like the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services and the Community Librarian Project. This chapter addresses how these efforts were connected to the goals of the 1962 library plan, including city-wide circulation of material, access to branch libraries for residents and public library service needs. MPL created opportunities in community engagement and programming like the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services and the Community Librarian Project but failed to create distinct changes to

improve racial equality in neighborhoods. These issues are examined to identify how Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system and the 1962 library plan failed to respond to racial inequality, population shifts and changing racial demographics that were in predominantly African American communities. This chapter demonstrates how these faults contributed to long-term consequences for the Milwaukee Public Library by the 1970s.

### **Research Methods and Data Collection**

Multiple archival collections at the Milwaukee Public Library were examined. These collections included information on MPL's coordinated branch system, meeting reports, neighborhood library services and projects, community partnerships, community librarians and development planning for branch libraries. All archival research collections, excluding the Common Council Proceeding Reports at the Milwaukee Public Library, were entirely unprocessed. Therefore, the documentation and representation of this thesis is exploratory. The research materials were sparse and selected by the MPL archivist who located material in selected folders and boxes based on key terms and ideas of the research inquiry. There was no finding aid to provide an overview of what else might be available for researchers using the collection. With these unprocessed archival collections, it is imperative to note that the narrative of the expansion of Milwaukee's public libraries is incomplete. Archival material that is still in storage might contribute new insights to the history of library branch expansion in Milwaukee.

The creation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* began the expansion of public libraries across the city of Milwaukee. Public library development can have multiple iterations, interpretations and theoretical principles that affect the effectiveness and success of development in meeting the information needs of its patrons. This thesis defines public library development as the creation and construction of branch libraries in Milwaukee, including the decisions leading

up to its construction, during construction and experiences after its implementation. This study recognizes this thesis as only a small historical review of public library development and the Milwaukee Public Library during the 1960s and 1970s. The historical representation does not account for all public library developments that occurred at the same time, including bookmobile service, censorship and book purchasing, suburban library integration, etc. This thesis represents Milwaukee's library expansion as the construction and planning of nine new branch libraries and the creation of the coordinated branch library system during the 1960s and 1970s.

Lastly, it is important to include that racial inequality and inequity continue to be a problem in Milwaukee. The development of libraries has contributed to incidents of injustice and limitations for the African American community. This research is meant to provide a contextual narrative of public library expansion in the United States and Milwaukee during the twentieth century. It acknowledges that though libraries are considered a space of intellectual freedom and access to education and literacy, there remains a dark history in their involvement with racial injustice and discrimination. This thesis recognizes that these issues must be explored to effectively challenge and change the future of library expansion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Chapter 1. A Review of Library Expansion in the United States

### **Introduction**

By the mid-twentieth century, public library expansion introduced community engagement and partnerships among local governments, neighborhood residents and community associations across the United States. These relationships influenced how cities assessed access to public library service, the circulation of material and education for city residents. The purpose of this chapter is to explore public library development in the United States from the late eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century and to address the pattern of racial injustice and inequality experienced by the African American population in and from library expansion, especially libraries in the South. This chapter offers a contextual basis for understanding how public libraries expanded in the lead up to the development of the coordinated branch library system and the expansion of multiple branch libraries in Milwaukee. This analysis uses secondary sources to explore the growing partnerships between public libraries, city government and library patrons. Urban environments and libraries will be examined to introduce common trends in library expansion that explain library development in the United States and Milwaukee by 1960.

This exploration begins in the early eighteenth century with an introduction to social libraries and the implementation of public libraries in the United States. This chapter explains how philanthropy was used as a means for expanding public libraries across the country. With this foundation, the chapter then examines government intervention and federal funding for libraries across the United States. Finally, community influence in libraries is analyzed as an

introduction to how race, privilege and access affected library placement, priority, and their development for the African American communities. These themes offer a guide to the history of public library expansion in cities in the United States and are a building block to further analysis of the development of multiple branch libraries and Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system in the 1960s.

### **Libraries for Expansion and Democratic Access**

Library development in America began during the Colonial Era through private collectors accumulating books for their personal libraries. These “extensive personal libraries or social libraries” dominated the early part of the eighteenth century, when only a few European immigrants owned multiple volumes in their collections.<sup>1</sup> Collectors like Jonathan Mitchell who obtained a library of nearly 110 volumes and William Brewster with nearly 400 volumes emphasized the importance of knowledge and increased opportunity for leisure time. Social libraries were “the condition and space of private sponsorship for use and access to literacy” and as the collection of books in them increased, the demand for access to those books also grew.<sup>2</sup> Around 1730, Benjamin Franklin created the first social library that sought to circulate more books and foster “intellectual debate.”<sup>3</sup> Known as the Library Company of Philadelphia, the library included subscription-based circulation (the borrowing of books) and patron memberships.<sup>4</sup> The success of Franklin's library led to the creation of other social libraries throughout America, where the library's elements of open hours, membership subscriptions,

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<sup>1</sup> Anne E. Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities: Public Library Development in Milwaukee and Montreal” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2006), 11-14.

<sup>2</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 14.

<sup>4</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 15.



book renting, and elected library managers established critical ideas of access and free education for library development in the following centuries.

As the United States evolved, funding of social libraries became unsustainable because they were structured as joint stock companies where members had to voluntarily own shares of stock that contributed to the support of the library. Demands on this type of funding led to annual dues and a subscription service for patrons to be a part of the institution. Membership became exclusive because only wealthy individuals had the opportunity to join. Frequent criticism of social libraries addressed their means of exclusion through money and raised attention to a different type of library: a circulating library. A circulating library was a small space typically found in a printing or book shop and included small fees for book lending. These access points garnered support for the circulating library because it seemed more “democratic” in service and offered more service than a social library.<sup>5</sup> By the 1840s, there were over 1,000 social and circulating libraries in the United States.

To reduce the exclusivity of social libraries and offer actual free service over circulating libraries, local government, residents and many philanthropic social elites prioritized “publicly supported” libraries that utilized tax dollars.<sup>6</sup> To ensure library expansion, supporters of public libraries encouraged new ideas of the institution as being a “publicly accessible, open and knowledgeable” space that flourished through government entities and library patrons.<sup>7</sup> In 1849, New Hampshire became the first state to pass legislation on the establishment and maintenance

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<sup>5</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 16-18.

<sup>6</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 23.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Kevane and William A. Sundstrom, “The Development of Public Libraries in the United States, 1870-1930: A Quantitative Assessment,” *Information & Culture* 49, no. 2 (2014): 117-44, accessed March 20, 2021 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43737483>, 120.

of public libraries through tax-supported dollars. Progress for public library legislation continued across the United States. By 1876, around 200 public libraries existed in the U.S.<sup>8</sup>

Social libraries prioritized voluntary funding operations and circulating libraries did not offer entirely free lending for books. Therefore, public library development emerged through the promotion of social and circulating libraries and from those who hoped to model ideas of circulation, tax-support, and universal and free education.<sup>9</sup> By the start of the 1900s, public libraries centralized within the idea of free circulation of books and education. This was a key element in public library expansion for the twentieth century.

### **The Role of Philanthropy in Expanding Public Libraries**

While legislation for public libraries ensured the continuation of tax-supported dollars for the institution, philanthropy became a way to expand new libraries across the United States. A notable partner and philanthropist for the development of public libraries in the early twentieth century was businessman Andrew Carnegie.<sup>10</sup> Carnegie was a frequent supporter of the “American library landscape,” regularly offering library grants that funded construction projects and transformed library buildings. His affinity for libraries encouraged his funding while also ensuring the enhancement of his reputation.<sup>11</sup>

In what became known as the Carnegie Era, from 1893-1917, Carnegie’s contribution to library expansion secured construction initiatives for many libraries in the United States. Library

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<sup>8</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 26.

<sup>9</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 34.

<sup>10</sup> George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on Public Library Development* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 32; In 1893 Homestead, PA, Carnegie allowed the use of armed strikebreakers to attack and kill steelworkers who were striking in support of better working conditions and pay. He claimed he was not responsible for these attacks and distanced himself from the results. These actions remained part of his reputation and philanthropy, especially during his contribution to library expansion.

patrons improved their capacity for education and literacy through these groundbreaking library developments. Carnegie influenced the continuation of literacy, expanded public service and increased opportunities for access to education across urban neighborhoods.<sup>12</sup> In the United States, 1,412 public libraries were funded through Carnegie grants and by the early 1920s, “31 percent of the population was served by a Carnegie library.”<sup>13</sup> Carnegie contributed to branch library expansion efforts at a cost of \$5.2 million in cities like Philadelphia, East Orange, and Cleveland.<sup>14</sup>

Carnegie expanded public library development through the contribution of partnerships and philanthropy by the 1920s. He believed that libraries should support communities and his efforts inspired other philanthropists to lend support for local library development. This marked a turning point in library expansion efforts as access for patrons to these institutions increased across the United States.<sup>15</sup> At the start of the 1930s, “around 60 percent of the population in the United States was served by 5,954 public libraries... and no state was without public library service.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Government Intervention and Funding for Library Expansion**

Public library development continued to flourish during the 1930s despite America’s economic downturn.<sup>17</sup> As a result of the Great Depression, 28 percent of people in the United

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<sup>12</sup> Kevane and Sundstrom, “The Development of Public Libraries in the United States, 1870-1930,” 130. These library grants officially became known as Carnegie Grants, where collaborative planning and investment led to the increase in meaningful library projects.

<sup>13</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 33.

<sup>14</sup> Kevane and Sundstrom, “The Development of Public Libraries in the United States, 1870-1930,” 132; Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 31-32.

<sup>15</sup> Wayne A. Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives: A People's History of the American Public Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 75; Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 34.

<sup>16</sup> Banda, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 34.

<sup>17</sup> The Great Depression lasted from 1929 to 1939 with worldwide stock market failure. This event caused a trickledown effect to all major companies, investors and consumers, as well as government organizations like libraries. For more information regarding the Great Depression and public libraries, see Ben S. Bernanke, *Essays on*

States had no income or very little to make ends meet.<sup>18</sup> Most city libraries became a source of refuge and economic relief for many Americans. Intellectuals and writers fled to public libraries for free service and work while they criticized the government for corruption in the U.S. free markets and a lack of policy to help the American people during the Great Depression. These instances demonstrated the library was a place of sanctuary for patrons and a reminder that these spaces were more important than ever for communities during times of social, economic, and political trauma. However, government involvement and fiscal problems in library expansion, especially in the South, contributed to the pattern of racial injustice and inequality for the African American population in and from library expansion.

By the 1930s, library development continued because of expanding population and interest in free education and literacy. Almost 800 more libraries opened through federal and state organizations and community activism.<sup>19</sup> The Works Progress Administration (WPA), a federal agency created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated to building employment through infrastructure projects planned for new library construction projects across the country and continued federal support in the development of libraries. In the years 1935 through 1941, the WPA provided over \$51 million in support for renovation and the implementation of new libraries, furthering access to major public and educational services during the Great Depression and World War II.<sup>20</sup>

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*the Great Depression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Scott Robert Kramp, "The Great Depression: Its Impact on Forty-Six Large American Public Libraries: An Inquiry Based on a Content Analysis of Published Writings of their Directors" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1975).

<sup>18</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 137-139.

<sup>19</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 137-154.

<sup>20</sup> Paul T. Jaeger, Ursula Gorham, Lindsay C. Sarin, and John Carlo Bertot, "Libraries, Policy, and Politics in a Democracy: Four Historical Epochs," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 83, no. 2 (2013): 170.

Public library development across the United States gained government attention through its impact on library patrons and its relationship to free public service. People wanted libraries and many local governments knew that expansion was crucial to the success of their cities. The local government often decided policy and funding initiatives on library expansion through the social, political, and fiscal knowledge of the neighborhood, where approaches ranged from “neglect to direct intervention” and were based on city regulations.<sup>21</sup> These dynamics regulated the funding and support of neighborhood libraries, including affordability of a library and how that library could offer success for the city. In 1947, for example, the community of Winchester, KY redeveloped a 10 by 17-foot gas station into a growing library using federal and state funding for supplemental and construction needs.<sup>22</sup>

In 1956, President Eisenhower signed the Library Service Act (LSA). It was the first federal legislation intended to support public library development in rural areas. To allocate funding, LSA relied on each state's submission plan.<sup>23</sup> This allowed state-led agencies the ability to prioritize improvements based on their own initiatives and objectives. Though LSA allocated funding equally to each state, the legislation also provided southern states the ability to divert funding of libraries that serviced marginalized communities, including those often excluded from social, economic, and educational life, especially African Americans.<sup>24</sup> The first federal legislation for library expansion was harmful in its planning by failing to address the systemic issues of inequality in America. Its legislation did improve facilities, library usage and

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<sup>21</sup> Jaeger et al., “Libraries, Policy, and Politics in a Democracy: Four Historical Epochs,” 173.

<sup>22</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 179. The community of Winchester, KY also received a donation of over 500 books for the library.

<sup>23</sup> James W. Fry, “LSA and LSCA, 1956-1973: A Legislative History,” *Library Trends* (1975): 7-26.

<sup>24</sup> Michele Farrell, “A Brief History of National Support for Libraries in the United States” (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, Washington, DC, June 29, 2021), accessed on April 11, 2022, <https://www.ifla.org/past-wlic/2012/140-farrell-en.pdf>.

distribution efforts, where “many county and regional library projects reported increased book circulation of 40 percent or more,” but it often excluded African American communities from receiving equitable access in libraries.

Eight years later, the LSA Act was replaced. The U.S. Congress enacted the Library Services and Construction Act (LCSA), which offered federal funding and assistance to libraries in U.S. cities through library construction projects. LCSA emphasized new opportunities for city government and their library systems to expand the construction of libraries in growing city neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup> LCSA was approved on the “idea of what was to become the most influential library legislation in the nation’s history” and that “the public library was now widely recognized as a vital cultural and economic resource as well as a fundamental educational institution.”<sup>26</sup>

The main provisions of LSCA included a minimum of \$80,000 funding allocation to each state and an increase from \$7.5 million a year to \$25 million for construction of libraries across the country.<sup>27</sup> The legislation implemented policies that encouraged library construction and gave funds to cities to expand their libraries for city residents.<sup>28</sup> This push for expanding library development encouraged new partnerships among local librarians, city officials and community members. LSCA declared the value of a library in city neighborhoods and the ability to foster connection, collaboration and education for the community and its patrons. It was one of the first big steps toward more equitable and expansive opportunities for city residents during the 1960s. However, it also did not address or ensure equitable funds for all communities, predominantly the African American population.

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<sup>25</sup> Farrell, “A Brief History.”

<sup>26</sup> Fry, “LSA and LSCA, 1956-1973,” 15-16.

<sup>27</sup> Fry, “LSA and LSCA, 1956-1973,” 16-17.

<sup>28</sup> Wayne Riddle, “Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA): Reauthorization Issues. CRS Issue Brief,” *ERIC* (1994): 1-18, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED377888>.

## Segregation, Community Impact and Library Expansion

Community influence on public libraries increased in parallel to library expansion.

Libraries were community centers filled with social, cultural and political activities relevant to the turns of society, which did include exclusion, racial inequity and segregation in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>29</sup> Some experiences in the North supported racial justice, such as library officials in Rochester, New York agreeing to “change the name of the branch honoring Stephen A. Douglas—a mid-nineteenth century white politician who debated Abraham Lincoln and was ambivalent about slavery—to honoring Frederick Douglass, the late-nineteenth century black abolitionist.”<sup>30</sup> Other libraries like the Franklin (North Carolina) Public Library in the South sponsored an annual lunch for Confederate veterans and at the Columbus (Georgia) Public Library, celebration of Robert E. Lee’s birthday occurred every year. By the mid-twentieth century, libraries prioritized efforts that served the interests of those in power and directly influenced actions of bigotry, racism, and prejudice.<sup>31</sup>

In the South in the late 1950s, “colored branch libraries” intentionally segregated communities.<sup>32</sup> Public libraries and their development reinforced inequality and exclusion in relation to economic, social, and political regimes.<sup>33</sup> Patrons excluded from libraries took notice and protested. On March 27, 1961, nine National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Tougaloo College chapter members entered the Jackson, MS Public Library. Ten minutes later, all were arrested for disturbing the peace. There was no documentation or

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<sup>29</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 100-111.

<sup>30</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 203.

<sup>31</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 101-104.

<sup>32</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 176.

<sup>33</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 172-177.

notice that provided a reason for their arrest.<sup>34</sup> In the North, “real estate redlining and complicit city governments all but guaranteed ghettoized neighborhoods in which branches like Chicago’s Hall Branch and the New York Public Library (NYPL)’s 135<sup>th</sup> Street libraries served almost entirely Black neighborhoods.”<sup>35</sup> A recent study noted that “white neighborhoods in Chicago received more and better services than Black and Latino neighborhoods, in large part because the system still used culturally biased tradition-bound statistics focused on circulation, reference questions and library cards to determine an allocation of resources.”<sup>36</sup>

Discrimination and devaluation of Black and Brown Americans were embedded into public library development, where “libraries were one of the many institutions used to oppress Black culture and where all facets of library history as it relates to access for African Americans.”<sup>37</sup> These interactions led to barriers of exclusion and demonstrated that “public library integration was a sop to give the appearance of local progress on desegregating public accommodations, while whites continued to resist integration of institutions. Sometimes court orders ended library segregation, but segregationist boards still resisted.”<sup>38</sup> Segregation and race relations in public libraries shaped where and how libraries expanded across American cities by the mid-twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> This discrimination and prejudice in public libraries existed long before 1950. The prohibition of Black and Brown Americans from entering and using services in

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<sup>34</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 174.

<sup>35</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 176; Chicago Public Library, “About Hall Branch,” accessed March 14, 2022, <https://www.chipublib.org/about-hall-branch/>.

<sup>36</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 203.

<sup>37</sup> Aisha M. Johnson-Jones, *The African American Struggle for Library Equality: The Untold Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund Library Program* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

<sup>38</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 173-175. See Figure 2.

<sup>39</sup> Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives*, 174-175; Michael Fultz, “Black Public Libraries in the South in the Era of De Jure Segregation,” *Libraries & Cultural Record* 41 no. 3 (2006), 337-359.



most public places, which included the library, occurred across the country. This was upheld legally by the 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.<sup>40</sup>

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* proclaimed the doctrine “separate but equal” unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This landmark decision targeted all “educational facilities” and caused libraries in the South to become sites for racial protests and civil unrest.<sup>41</sup> The Miami Public Library opened its brand-new building as integrated after a local Black preacher addressed the board, “Please do not force me to bring an injunction against the opening of this very beautiful library.”<sup>42</sup> In Talladega, AL, a court order ruled in favor of integration for its public library in 1962. Yet, trustees continued to instill implicit forms of exclusion through library card access, patron disturbance or a regulation of fines according to lending policies. Issuing of library cards required verification of a phone number, but most Black Americans did not have a phone in their home.

Similarly, librarians and library administrators who did not believe in segregation were often harassed and threatened for their “obscenity and vulgarity.” Ruth Brown, a public library director for thirty years in Bartlesville, OK was fired after supporting integration efforts for the library and challenging local segregation practices. Reference librarian Julliette Hampton Morgan from Montgomery, AL was verbally harassed after submitting content to the local

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<sup>40</sup> Waldo E. Martin and Patricia Sullivan, *Civil Rights in the United States* (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2000). *Plessy v. Ferguson* was a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which the Court ruled that racial segregation laws did not violate the U.S. Constitution if the facilities for each race were equal in quality, a doctrine that came to be known as “separate but equal.”

<sup>41</sup> Johnson-Jones, *The African American Struggle for Library Equality*, ix; Audrey Fischer, “Brown v. Board at Fifty”: When School Integration Became the Law of the Land,” Library of Congress, accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0405-6/brown.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Wayne A. Wiegand and Shirley A. Wiegand, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South: Civil Rights and Local Activism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018), 59.

newspaper on the racism seen and experienced on the city bus.<sup>43</sup> In 1962, a Black teenager sought desegregation in his home library and filed a federal suit in Montgomery, AL. Though the court ordered the library to desegregate, trustees simply removed the reading tables and chairs. Recurring themes of tension from local government, library staff and library patrons dominated decision-making and policy in principles regarding library expansion, especially in the South for the African American population.

The long-standing experiences of segregation, race relations and exclusion of the African American communities was evident in library development in the mid-twentieth century. By 1960, a lack of access to libraries across the city, the absence of city-wide circulation of material and books for education and several isolated libraries marked the need to expand service to library patrons in the city of Milwaukee and for the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL). Promotion of library expansion for multiple neighborhoods in the city encouraged city-wide access to a library and sought to equalize distribution of material and public library service for all communities in Milwaukee.

### **Steps toward “Neighborhood Library Modernization” in Milwaukee**

The cornerstone to libraries was “their discernible intersection between the broader development of library history” and the “willingness of patrons to form philanthropic, social and original libraries.”<sup>44</sup> In Milwaukee, most development prior to the early 1960s was afforded to the main central library. Located in the Downtown area, the central library building was intended

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<sup>43</sup> For further information on Juliette Hampton, see Jessica Hayes, “Well-Behaved Librarians Rarely Make History: Juliette Hampton Morgan and Alabama Librarianship in the 1950s,” *The Southeastern Librarian* vol. 67 issue 3 article 4 (2019): <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln/vol67/iss3/4>.

<sup>44</sup> Milton S. Byam, “History of Branch Libraries,” *Library Trends* 14, no. 4 (1966): 368-373.

to support and serve all residents of the city.<sup>45</sup> Typical construction efforts for the Milwaukee Public Library included renovations that enhanced the beauty of the building or building extensions that housed specific services related to a particular city's needs. For the first time since 1914, from 1954 through 1957, MPL extended its physical space with the addition of a new building on Wells Street, two floors and four levels below ground.<sup>46</sup>

By the late 1950s, Milwaukee had several branch libraries in the city, including their central library in the Downtown area, McLenegan Public Library and Lapham Public Library to name a few. These libraries were designed as storefront spaces that were “typically old, obsolete, isolated from surrounding neighborhoods” and lacked basic services with no city-wide distribution of books and material.<sup>47</sup> With changes to Milwaukee's population and the small size of the libraries, service to neighborhoods remained crucial to accommodate the city's “forty-three square miles of service and a population of 570,000 inhabitants.”<sup>48</sup> The initiative to expand branch libraries in multiple neighborhoods and to focus on city-wide circulation of material and access for city residents to a library through a coordinated branch library system was encouraged by many city librarians, including Richard Krug.

Krug was the head librarian of MPL who invested much of his professional career in the “modernization of city branch libraries.” He believed that connective branch libraries could offer convenience and access that encouraged free education, literacy, community engagement and new partnerships. His belief in a coordinated library system prompted the initiative to reach city-

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<sup>45</sup> Milwaukee Public Library, “Historic Central Library,” Library History, Milwaukee Public Library, August 9, 2021, <https://www.mpl.org/content/pdfs/HistoricCentralLibrary.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Milwaukee Public Library, Historic Central Library, accessed on April 11, 2022, <https://www.mpl.org/content/pdfs/HistoricCentralLibrary.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> William J.K. Beaudot, 21 January 1972, Milwaukee Public Library System Annual Report 1971, Milwaukee Public Library Annual Reports 1940-1968.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel F. Ring, “Richard Krug: The Bookman as a Librarian,” *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1994): 265-266.

wide library mobility, proximity, and the circulation of literacy in neighborhood libraries. Krug referred to the library as “a dispensary of educational, cultural, informative, and recreational services to the customer” and he believed that neighborhood library redevelopment encouraged new kinds of relationships between librarians, libraries, and their communities. He also proposed questions about how collaboration, connection and compromise could improve between the city council, the library board, and communities.<sup>49</sup> Krug knew that branch libraries could support ideals of “neighborhood library modernization.”<sup>50</sup>

In Chicago by the early 1950s, Chief Librarian Henry E. Legler created an “extensive network of neighborhood library locations” that sought to diversify library service. Legler believed in a similar foundation that depicted a comprehensive system of branch libraries to expand resources and encourage new distribution and circulation feats for patrons.<sup>51</sup> These critical components were successful in Chicago and supported Krug and MPL’s efforts to continue ideas of branch library service in Milwaukee by the mid-twentieth century.

In 1957, Krug promoted his plan for branch library development, “a project that totaled to almost \$6 million.”<sup>52</sup> His proposal exposed the decay of libraries across the city with most having inadequate services that lacked even the most basic of needs—lavatory facilities.” Moreover, according to Krug, “community meeting rooms, which were nourished and supported by the contact with books, existed in only one branch library” at the time.<sup>53</sup> Library services for both adults and children often occupied the same space and were limited in their outreach. As Krug proposed the expansion of new branch libraries across Milwaukee, he named it the “new

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<sup>49</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 266.

<sup>50</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 266.

<sup>51</sup> CPL History, Chicago Public Library, (2021), accessed on April 11, 2022, <https://www.chipublib.org/cpl-history/>.

<sup>52</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 265-266.

<sup>53</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 265.

deal.”<sup>54</sup> He also knew that the isolation of storefront libraries from city residents and the limited access opportunities were no longer feasible for the number of people in the city and the rise of city development. Neighborhood branch libraries broadened services to residents and offered connection to a central hub like a coordinated branch library system for multiple neighborhoods. This endeavor promoted an investment in urban communities and established the beginning stages of branch library development in Milwaukee. Krug convinced the Mayor of Milwaukee, Henry Maier, and the City Council to commit to the construction of new branch libraries that would expand public library service through education and city-wide circulation for more city residents. Several council members showed support for branch library development, especially in the wards that had recently been brought within city limits. They were outspoken about the number of bookmobiles available with no permanent library in the neighborhood to serve the residents, explaining “we are not satisfied with the library's efforts to serve newly annexed areas with bookmobiles.”<sup>55</sup>

Implemented as the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971*, this library construction plan hoped to respond to issues of expanding city population, limited public library service to neighborhoods and the lack of city-wide circulation of books and material for all city residents in Milwaukee. The library plan was intended to build library-to-library connection through a coordinated branch library system and the construction of new branch libraries across the city. The hope was to create a coordinated branch library system that introduced levels of partnership with various stakeholders, including the community, city librarians, and local government. By

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<sup>54</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 266.

<sup>55</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 265-266. Bookmobiles and bookmobile service spread exponentially during the 1940s and 1950s as a way to transport literature and resources to residents in the city of Milwaukee. It was noted as a resolution to the lack of public libraries in many neighborhoods.

the early 1960s, the library's plan was "recognized as a promise for a revolution in mobility in the city."<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

By 1960, American libraries throughout the United States had a "self-perceived role in promoting democracy – through supporting continuing education, serving the information needs of poor and recent immigrants... providing education to the working classes, opening branch libraries, and other forms of service."<sup>57</sup> From the eighteenth to mid-twentieth century, public libraries reflected local economic, social, and political conditions of society. They transformed ideas of education and literacy, impacted the role of access and privilege in communities and ignited a larger push for connected branch library systems. Public library expansion evolved throughout many cities in the United States and Milwaukee contributed to this enterprise. The implementation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* in Milwaukee highlighted efforts that continued library expansion and aimed to ensure public library service needs and city-wide circulation of books for residents. However, a similar pattern of racial injustice and inequality experienced by the African American population in and from library expansion dominated experiences of public library development in Milwaukee during the 1960s.

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<sup>56</sup> Ring, "Richard Krug," 267.

<sup>57</sup> Jaeger et al., "Libraries, Policy, and Politics in a Democracy," 171-173.

## Chapter 2. The Implementation of the Ten-Year Library Plan

### Introduction

With assistance from Richard Krug, head librarian of the Milwaukee Public Library, the Library Board of Trustees, Mayor Henry Maier of Milwaukee and the Common Council, Milwaukee's first comprehensive library construction plan to build multiple branch libraries across the city began. This chapter addresses the decisions and factors leading to the creation of the library plan. The chapter then evaluates the principles and guidelines in the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* to understand progress in constructing several branch libraries in Milwaukee, including site size, location, service, accessibility, and patron populations. The chapter then addresses the implementation of the 1962 library plan by exploring how these guidelines shaped actual development of the branch libraries from 1962 through 1971.

Out of all nine of the new branch libraries, the Locust Library in the Thirteenth Ward of Milwaukee was the most controversial in its movement toward development. Disagreements regularly surfaced over fiscal priority, budgeting, and site location. Most importantly, conflict arose from themes of racial inequality in the site's development in the Thirteenth Ward. These issues demonstrated diversion and deviation from the guidelines and revealed limitations in the development of branch libraries under the *Ten-Year Library Plan* during the 1960s. The planning for the construction of Locust Library showed that the conditions of racial inequality were connected to Milwaukee's library expansion in the 1960s. Most importantly, it demonstrated how government planning and library development contributed to long-lasting extensions of privilege and power in Milwaukee by 1972.

## **The Creation of the Ten-Year Library Plan from Milwaukee's Territorial Growth**

A major impulse to the creation and installation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan* in 1962 was connected to the physical size of Milwaukee. The city was unique in its territorial borders compared to other Midwestern cities. A process of annexation expanded the city's boundaries in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> By the early 1950s, the city had almost doubled in size since 1920. This growth encouraged the Common Council to increase the number of branch libraries for city residents across Milwaukee.

These size changes arose in four main phases for the city. The first phase happened from 1846 to 1893, when the state legislature allowed the inclusion of additional territory to Milwaukee to occur without state interference. The second phase began in 1898 when the handling of public infrastructure increased the incentive for residents to gain access to a connecting water and sewer system. According to historian John M. McCarthy, "Between 1900 and 1910, however, Milwaukee sold water service to outlying communities without requiring annexation or consolidation." Therefore, Milwaukee doubled in population size, while annexations only added 5.2 square miles to the city's borders. But McCarthy continues, "By 1920, Milwaukee's 457,147 residents squeezed onto 25.3 square miles of land, making Milwaukee the second most densely populated large city in the United States."<sup>2</sup>

The third phase of Milwaukee's annexation campaign began in 1910 when the Socialists sought infrastructure provisions for non-city residents that encouraged annexation of new territory. Emil Seidel and Daniel Hoan, two Socialist mayors from 1912 to 1940 pursued

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<sup>1</sup> John M. McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier: Planning and the Politics of Growth, 1910-1960* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> John M. McCarthy, "Annexation," *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, edited by Margo Anderson and Amanda I. Seligman, accessed on 20 February 2022, <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/annexation>.



annexation as part of their promises to the residents of Milwaukee.<sup>3</sup> The Socialist Party in the 1920s believed that annexation could “achieve well-planned, decentralized communities where residents would live in high quality homes closer to nature.”<sup>4</sup> Milwaukee expanded from its “25.3 square miles in 1920 to 44 square miles by 1932.”<sup>5</sup> The final and fourth phase of annexation occurred after 1946, when the Common Council re-established planning initiatives for annexation due to housing concerns. The post-1945 era in America increased local and federal attention to the “plight of American cities, insufficient public housing policy, racial strife, suburbanization and ill-conceived urban renewal in rapid succession.”<sup>6</sup> With support from Frank Zeidler, Milwaukee’s third and final Socialist mayor elected in 1948, the increase of territorial growth in Milwaukee continued under the progressive conviction that planning and housing should be intertwined.<sup>7</sup>

However, considerable suburban resistance slowed annexation efforts. Municipalities surrounding the city of Milwaukee including Greenfield, Wauwatosa and Oak Creek lobbied to pass new legislation that allowed unincorporated communities bordering the city to incorporate as “cities” even if they did not have four hundred person per square mile population density.<sup>8</sup> The Oak Creek Law passed in 1955 and “dramatically reduced population density requirements” and made it significantly easier for towns bordering Milwaukee to incorporate as cities. This legislation resulted in stagnation of Milwaukee’s annexation efforts.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 3-10.

<sup>4</sup> McCarthy, “Annexation”; McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 41-80.

<sup>5</sup> McCarthy, “Annexation”.

<sup>6</sup> McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 113-114.

<sup>7</sup> McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 131.

<sup>8</sup> McCarthy, “Annexation”.

<sup>9</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 340.

Awareness of Milwaukee's expansion contributed to the city government's commitment to library growth in the city.<sup>10</sup> There remained a limited number of public libraries across the city and those that were built continued in isolation from other libraries and residents. The lack of connection between public libraries in the city prompted support for the development of branch libraries in the 1962 library plan and emphasized the need for city-wide circulation of books and accessibility and proximity to libraries for residents. Elected Mayor in 1960, Henry Maier, agreed with Krug's plan to promote the expansion of public libraries across the city under the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971*. Maier was the longest serving mayor in Milwaukee history (from 1960 to 1988) and believed in city expansion efforts that emphasized efficiency and redevelopment for neighborhood communities. His approval of the *Ten-Year Library Plan* was unsurprising considering he supported city development and knew that the generous size of Milwaukee had increased population across neighborhoods.

### **The Implementation of the Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971**

Approval of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* began after full commitment from the Common Council and Mayor Henry Maier.<sup>11</sup> With assistance from the City Plan Commission under the Department of City Development and the Capital Improvements Committee, the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) and the Library Board of Trustees initiated the quick turnaround toward the creation of the library program by prioritizing library site development for neighborhoods with the most "relative needs of the area," including population size.<sup>12</sup> Richard

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<sup>10</sup> McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 168-169.

<sup>11</sup> File Number 58-578, May 27, 1958, Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee (1958-1959), Milwaukee (Wis.). Common Council, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>12</sup> Milwaukee's City Plan Commission was previously the Board of Public Land Commission from 1939-1961 and changed their name in 1961 to the City Plan Commission; File Number 60-3174, January 10, 1961, Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee (1961-1962), Milwaukee (Wis.). Common Council, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Finding aid, "Milwaukee City Plan Commission," Milwaukee County Historical Society, accessed on

Krug, head librarian of MPL, had a well-built and analyzed proposal that had been in the works since 1942.<sup>13</sup> He devoted his energy into the “complete overhaul of the city’s anticipated branch-library system” and even wrote a report on a “tentative long-term improvement program for the Milwaukee Public Library.”<sup>14</sup> The ten-year library plan called for new branch libraries with assurance that each individual library would be approved by the Common Council before initial construction under resolution 60-3174 in the Proceedings of the Common Council in 1961.<sup>15</sup>

The objective of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* was “to present a comprehensive plan for the location and construction of libraries” in Milwaukee. The plan was developed to ensure effective execution and implementation of multiple branch libraries in Milwaukee conducted by the Library Building and Development Committee.<sup>16</sup> Established in 1961, the Library Building and Development Committee hosted regular meetings and relayed decisions based on the principles of the library plan, including building development and neighborhood dynamics for each branch library.<sup>17</sup> The committee was created to implement decisions on new branch library construction and consider multiple variables in the development of a neighborhood library during the twelve years of expansion. The committee was also created to ensure the successful completion of nine new branch libraries and the coordinated branch library system by the 1970s.

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February 24, 2022, <https://milwaukeehistory.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/3323.Milwaukee.City-Plan-Commission-1.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel F. Ring, “Richard Krug: The Bookman as a Librarian” *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1994): 260.

<sup>14</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 260-261; Long-Term Library Plan, Proposed Development of Neighborhood Libraries, 1942-1961, Milwaukee Public Library Records (unprocessed), Milwaukee Public Library, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (hereafter, MPL records).

<sup>15</sup> *Milwaukee Journal* newspaper clipping on “Council Votes for 7 Libraries,” 28 November 1962, MPL records.

<sup>16</sup> Program Development, Neighborhood Library Site Program (Milwaukee’s 10-Year Library Report) 1973-1975, MPL records; File Number 62-1382, November 27, 1962, Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee (1962-1963).

<sup>17</sup> Library Building and Development Committee, date unknown, Library Building and Development Committee, 1962-1967, MPL records.

The Library Building and Development Committee, established by the city government and MPL, included mostly City Council officials and library staff who were appointed yearly. Representatives of diverse perspectives, people of color or even library patrons were not involved in the committee throughout its ten-year involvement from 1961 to 1973. Each year, Richard Krug, head librarian of MPL, remained a committee member for the library. Members in the Library Building and Development Committee identified such guidelines and regulations to accommodate funding, site coordination and programming for each branch library and its development in Milwaukee.

The 1962 library plan “offers an opportunity to project the City of Milwaukee Library needs for the future” and “the original impetus for an orderly approach to the location and construction of new neighborhood library buildings, neighborhood library purposes and a well thought out plan.”<sup>18</sup> The plan led to the development of the coordinated branch library system for MPL by the early 1970s and nine new branch libraries in the city (see Table 1).

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<sup>18</sup> Milwaukee’s *Ten-Year Library Report* (draft), MPL records.

Table 1. Branch Libraries in the Ten-Year Library Plan.

Branch Library	Date Opened
Atkinson Library	January 30, 1961
Zablocki Library (formerly Oklahoma Library)	August 12, 1963
Capitol Library	April 13, 1964
Forest Home Library	December 12, 1966
Villard Avenue Library	July 29, 1968
East Library	November 3, 1968
Tippecanoe Library	November 17, 1969
Mill Road Library	July 19, 1970
Martin Luther King (formerly Locust Library)	September 20, 1971

The plan was meant to connect residents to public library services, ensure the circulation of books for city-wide distribution in Milwaukee and replace storefront libraries in the neighborhoods to increase patron access to connecting libraries across the city.<sup>19</sup> Unlike the Library Building and Development Committee, the library plan emphasized opportunities for community engagement and partnership, including new forms of government communication, contribution from the community and increased education and literacy for patrons: “community involvement will be sought in advance to assure the library program will meet the needs of the area it will serve and to help identify the library and its service programs with the people of the community.”<sup>20</sup> The *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* was budgeted at approximately \$3.5

<sup>19</sup> Milwaukee Ten-Year Library Report 1973-1982, December 1973, box 114, folder 22, Records of Mayor Henry W. Maier Administration, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1957-1989, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI (hereafter Maier Administration records).

<sup>20</sup> Minutes, 6 March 1969, MPL records.

million in construction and development with the help of the federal LSCA (Library Services and Construction) Act to encourage public service and literacy in towns and cities across the United States.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Principles of a Branch Library in the Ten-Year Library Plan**

The *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* established principles that served as a basis for the development and construction of branch libraries in Milwaukee.<sup>22</sup> The Library Building and Development Committee developed these principles to promote consistency and efficiency in the construction of each branch library. Ideally, these principles offered fundamental guidelines for progress and continued success of the 1962 library plan.<sup>23</sup>

To merit a branch library, the neighborhood must serve a population of around 30,000 to 60,000 residents in each library area. To maximize convenience for residents and secure proximity between branch libraries, each library must be 1.5 to 3 miles apart from other branches. If plans for a new branch library did not meet these initial targets of population and distance, the branch library construction was rejected by the Library Building and Development Committee and the City Council. To be cleared for development, each branch library required at least 40,000 square feet (about half the area of a Manhattan city block) building space near mass transit and a location on designated major crossroads in the neighborhood. City officials and the

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<sup>21</sup> Details on the exact federal and city funding allocations were not described or found in the unprocessed archival collections; Library Service and Construction Act, 26 September 1963, box 114, folder 21, Maier Administration records; "OK 7 New Libraries to Cost \$3.5 Million," *Milwaukee Journal*, 16 November 1962, MPL records.

<sup>22</sup> Milwaukee Public Library System Board of Trustees Library Building and Development Committee Summary of Public Hearing (1963), Library Building and Development Committee, 1962-1967; Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Programs, Board of Trustees, Library Services and Programs Committee (1970-1974), all in MPL records.

<sup>23</sup> Milwaukee Public Library System Board of Trustees Library Building and Development Committee Summary of Public Hearing (1963), Library Building and Development Committee, 1962-1967; Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Programs, Board of Trustees, Library Services and Programs Committee (1970-1974), all in MPL records.

Milwaukee Public Library surveyed factors using city budget, traffic patterns and accessibility in a location site.<sup>24</sup> A branch library must be relatively close to a school site with around 2 to 3 blocks distance for children's access. These guidelines served as the initial level of expansion efforts for a library in the city and under the library plan.

Reports and figures from other cities like Chicago, IL and Dallas, TX encouraged the integration and development of these principles in the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971*. An excerpt on branch library principles from the Branch Library Service for Dallas, TX noted that “there are certain basic conditions that apply throughout a branch system—variations and deviations from these principles will emerge as branches adjust to their localities, but as they do, they should be reviewed to be sure that they represent genuine adaptation and no deficiencies.”<sup>25</sup> These policies offered consistency and effectiveness for the construction, funding and fiscal priority of each branch library with a goal to ensure that the construction of each branch library was not associated with the economic, social and political conditions of the specific neighborhood.

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<sup>24</sup> Letter to Jim from Alex P. Le Grand on SE Corner 3rd & Locust, 22 February 1967, box 114, folder 20; Note by Alderman Hundt, Galligan and Schallert on Acquisition of Property for Library Purposes, 23 February 1968, box 114, folder 20; Letter to Alderman Hundt from Martin E. Bruening on Traffic Patterns, 24 January 1967, box 114, folder 20, all in Maier Administration records.

<sup>25</sup> Appendix G Location of Branch Libraries, Neighborhood Library Site Program (Milwaukee's 10-Year Library Report) 1956-1971, Maier Administration records.

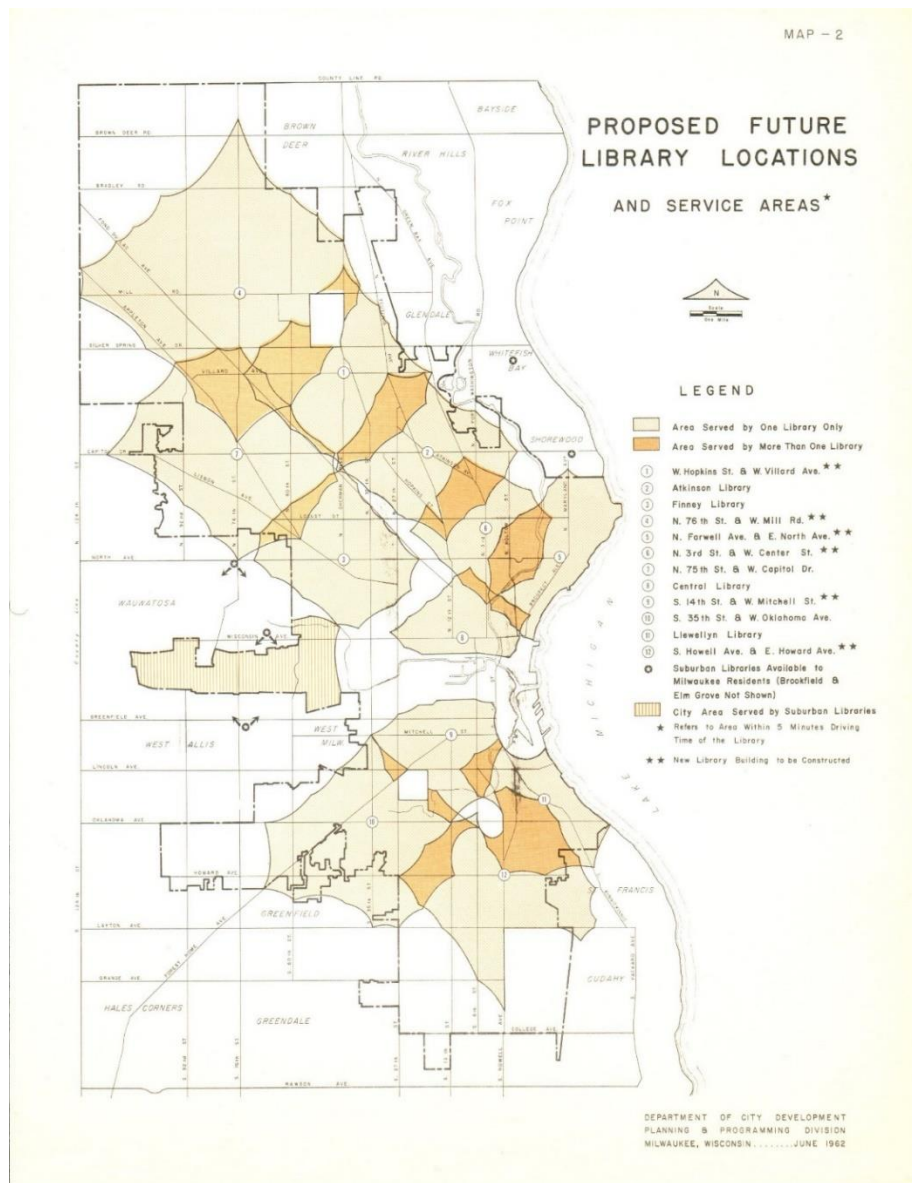


Figure 1. Proposed Future Library Locations and Service Areas, MPL records.

By January of 1962, the first new branch library, Atkinson Library, located on 1960 W. Atkinson Ave in the upper northwest side of Milwaukee opened to the public. Atkinson Library accommodated a 30,000 square foot location site with library circulation growing from 106,000 in 1959 from a previously existing library building to 136,000 in 1971 with its redevelopment.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Table IV, Annual Library Circulation, 1951-1971, Milwaukee Ten-Year Library Report 1973-1982, December 1973, box 114, folder 22, Maier Administration records.



Atkinson Library was approved to accommodate accessibility to public transit with proximity to two local bus routes, eighteen parking spaces and a primary arterial.<sup>27</sup> These actions served as a model for future branch library construction at the start of 1962. Negotiations to buy land for five additional site locations of other new branch libraries also began in 1962 after the library plan was fully developed.<sup>28</sup>

Uniformity in branch library development was strongly encouraged in the implementation of the 1962 library plan. The Library Building and Development Committee, city officials and the Library Board organized these principles to emphasize priority in efficient and equal treatment of neighborhoods and finances. The first three branch libraries to open, Atkinson, Oklahoma and Capitol suggested that the remaining libraries could move forward in a similar fashion.

However, conflict on location, financial decisions, external disagreements from local council members and library patrons, along with racial inequality and changing racial demographics shaped diversion and deviation from the 1962 library plan and Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system over the next decade. The Locust Library, the last library developed under the plan in 1971, experienced the most controversy and demonstrated inefficiency and faults of the *Ten-Year Library Plan*. Most importantly, controversy at Locust Library documented the lack of integration for African American communities and racial equality amongst other branch libraries and its surrounding neighborhoods. This conflict was a focal point during the ten-year library development in the city and dominated the expansion of

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<sup>27</sup> Table V, Branch Library Accessibility, Milwaukee Ten-Year Library Report 1973-1982, December 1973, box 114, folder 22, Maier Administration records.

<sup>28</sup> Newspaper clipping, "OK 7 New Libraries to Cost \$3.5 Million," November 16, 1962, *Milwaukee Journal*, MPL records.

Locust Library from 1963 to 1971.<sup>29</sup> These experiences illustrate the pattern of racial injustice and inequality experienced by the African American population in and from library expansion.

### **Changing Racial Demographics in Milwaukee in the 1950s and 1960s**

By the 1950s, Milwaukee's population grew significantly. Because of the "Late Great Migration," the African American population size grew in Milwaukee from 22,000 residents in 1950 to 105,000 by the early 1970s. Migrants hoped that in the North they would not experience the racial oppression that occurred in the South. However, the city of Milwaukee only highlighted more of the regular pattern of injustice, inequity and exclusion that dismantled opportunities and successful socio-economic experiences for the African American population in Milwaukee.<sup>30</sup> Many white people fled from Milwaukee into "newly-formed and racially exclusive suburbs," leading to segregation and racial inequality that has continued into the twenty-first century. This influx of new residents shifted the racial makeup of the city and institutionalized power and privilege in white, middle- and upper-class suburbs at the expense of those in the city.<sup>31</sup>

Racial issues in the city remained prominent in the politics of Milwaukee and directed policy and decisions regarding the city's racial tensions.<sup>32</sup> Protest and resistance to racial oppression occurred through Milwaukee's civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. African Americans resisted these practices by highlighting school desegregation, lawsuits, and demonstrations. Local activists engaged in policy-making that reflected neighborhood dynamics

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<sup>29</sup> The Locust Library opened in 1971 and is now known today as the Martin Luther King Library.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Geib, "The Late Great Migration: A Case Study of Southern Black Migration to Milwaukee, 1940-1970" (Master's thesis, History, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 193-194.

<sup>32</sup> McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 197-198.

and reinforced positive integration efforts, including organizations like the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).<sup>33</sup>

The economic, political, and social life of African Americans cannot be ignored in the discourse of Milwaukee library development by the 1960s. How these libraries developed, were prioritized, and represented by the Common Council and MPL emphasized the experiences and recurrence of racial injustice and racial inequity in Milwaukee's neighborhoods. The construction of new branch libraries under the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* ignored the changing racial demographics in Milwaukee's neighborhoods and demonstrated the pattern of racial inequality in the development and planning of libraries in the 1960s. The last remaining library under the library plan, Locust Library, in the Thirteenth Ward, proved this truth.

### **The Thirteenth Ward and the Development of the Locust Library**

Conversation surrounding the construction of the branch library building, Locust Library, in the Thirteenth Ward of Milwaukee began in 1963. External neighborhood changes and conditions like redlining, block-busting and other forms of segregation predated the creation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan* and the expansion of Locust Library. However, the development of Locust Library in the Thirteenth Ward experienced these pre-existing conditions within their construction and planning in the neighborhood during the 1960s.

In 1938, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a corporation created under the New Deal by Franklin D. Roosevelt, prepared a color-zone map of Milwaukee County. This "residential security" map designated residential security grades of neighborhoods in the city. The presentation of the map was meant to reflect mortgage security that documented perceived

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<sup>33</sup> Robert S. Smith, "African Americans," *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, edited by Margo Anderson and Amanda I. Seligman, accessed on February 28, 2022, <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/african-americans/>.

risks to real estate investments for borrowers and lenders on property. However, these grades reinforced the discrimination and exclusion of loans and property in areas that were predominately filled with African Americans and people of color.<sup>34</sup> The areas colored red were later deemed redlined. Redlining referred to “lending (or insurance) discrimination that bases credit decisions on the location of a property to the exclusion of characteristics of the borrower or property.”<sup>35</sup>

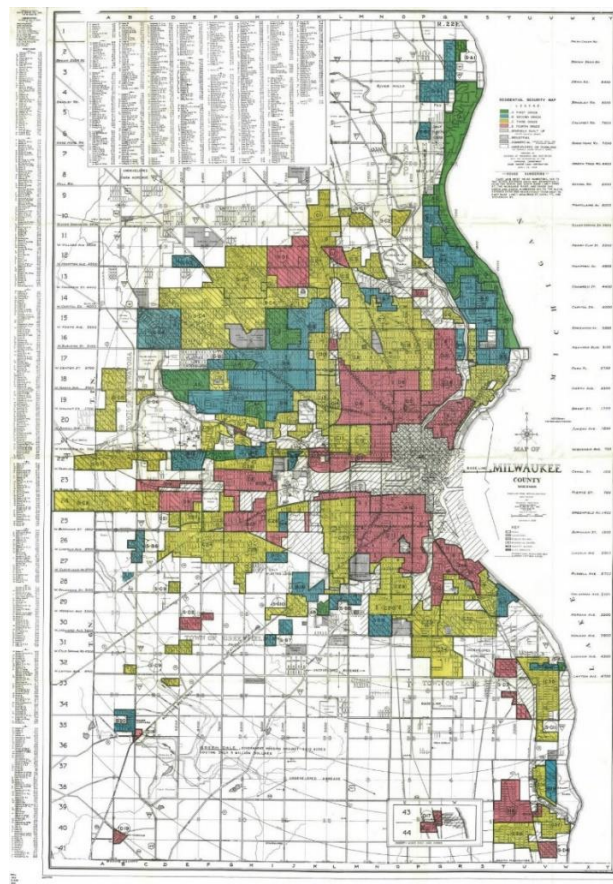


Figure 2. 1938 Map of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin Residential Security Map.

United States. Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Division of Research and Statistics, *Map of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin: Residential Security Map*, 1938, “American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection,” <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/3028/>, accessed February 27, 2022.

<sup>34</sup> United States. Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Division of Research and Statistics, *Map of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin: Residential Security Map*, 1938, “American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection,” <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/3028/>, accessed February 27, 2022.

<sup>35</sup> Amy E. Hillier, “Redlining and the Homeowners’ Loan Corporation,” *Journal of Urban History* 29 Issue 4, (2003), 394-420.

The Thirteenth Ward was red — the Fourth Grade and reflected by the HOLC as “the Negro and slum area of Milwaukee. It was old and very ragged.”<sup>36</sup> As one of the many forms that led to segregation and racial inequality in Milwaukee, the development of the 1938 map isolated the African American community through the 1940s and 1950s, leading to historic redlining, blockbusting, and segregation in the city of Milwaukee. Other forms of racial exclusion and inequality also contributed to segregation in the city of Milwaukee in the twentieth century, including violence and discrimination in policing, schooling segregation, urban renewal projects, housing discrimination and unemployment.<sup>37</sup> By the early 1960s, a lack of movement or progress toward the elimination of these exclusionary forms of segregation and inequality continued the decline of the Thirteenth Ward.

Richard Krug, head librarian of MPL, knew that the Thirteenth Ward “departed from the typical branch libraries in the MPL Library system” and “that additional public service and expansion of access points were of utmost importance when considering the development of Locust Library.”<sup>38</sup> The Thirteenth Ward was near the center boundaries of the city and had a population of 32,944 according to the 1960 Census (see Figure 3).<sup>39</sup> The area boundaries sat directly above the Sixth Ward in Milwaukee, known as Bronzeville and the historic core of

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<sup>36</sup> Robert K. Nelson et al., “Mapping Inequality,” *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed February 27, 2022, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/Milwaukee>.

<sup>37</sup> David Stingley, “The Creation of Milwaukee’s Segregation: A Look at Milwaukee’s Past from 1900-1930s” (Master’s Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2013); James K. Nelsen, *Educating Milwaukee: How One City’s History of Segregation and Struggle Shaped Its Schools*, Wisconsin Historical Society, 2015; Greg J. Carman, “Wall of Exclusion: The Persistence of Residential Racial Segregation in Metropolitan Milwaukee” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2010).

<sup>38</sup> Letter to the Common Council from Richard Krug on RE: Locust Library and Branch Building Standards, November 1969, Martin Luther King Branch Construction, MPL records.

<sup>39</sup> Milwaukee City Engineer’s Department, *City of Milwaukee Showing Ward Boundaries*, 1934, <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM99049>, February 27, 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, *Milwaukee WI Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960 Final Report PHC (1)-92*, Prepared by U.S. Department of Commerce, <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/41953654v6ch4.pdf>.

African American Milwaukee.<sup>40</sup> Alderman Eugene L. Woehrer, Thirteenth Ward representative in the Common Council from 1964-1972, noted that the area was a predominately African American neighborhood and claimed that “Negro population of his ward had increased voluntarily” by 1963.<sup>41</sup> A local resident quoted the Thirteenth Ward as a high-density area with young residents, one-parent homes, crowded housing conditions, high rates of unemployment with low-income levels and a below average literacy rate.<sup>42</sup>

### Figure 3. 1960 Population in Milwaukee Wards

By the 1960s, neighborhoods and wards near the Thirteenth Ward in Milwaukee were integrated into public policy on urban renewal and housing projects through federal funding under the Model Cities program.<sup>43</sup> The Model Cities program was “an ambitious federal urban

<sup>41</sup> Proceedings and Debates in the Congress of the United States. Volume 113 part 27, S. Doc., (15 December 1967). [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Congressional\\_Record/fSKzwYf4EPQC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=inauthor:%22United+States.+Congress%22+1967+woehrer&pg=PA37042&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Congressional_Record/fSKzwYf4EPQC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=inauthor:%22United+States.+Congress%22+1967+woehrer&pg=PA37042&printsec=frontcover).

<sup>42</sup> MPL Memorandum to Unknown from Linda Knutson, July 2, 1969, Martin Luther King Branch Construction, MPL records.

<sup>43</sup> For information on the development of the Model Cities program in Milwaukee see Niles William Niemuth, "Urban Renewal and the Development of Milwaukee's African American Community: 1960-1980," (MA thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014).

aid program” created under President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. It offered “a new program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)” for improvement on existing urban programs that emphasized rebuilding and rehabilitation in social service and civic participation.” In Milwaukee, the Model Cities program began urban renewal projects during the 1960s and 1970s in African American communities.

Mayor Henry Maier encouraged “bringing state and federal dollars to Milwaukee” through these urban renewal projects and aid during the 1960s. He was adamant that “resolving racial problems required state and federal, rather than municipal, reform.”<sup>44</sup> These urban renewal projects often exacerbated racial tensions during Milwaukee’s civil rights movement.<sup>45</sup> Maier frequently chastised the Milwaukee suburbs for their failure to address the “iron ring” that cushioned wealthy suburbanites and allowed them to disregard community-building and residential zoning. Maier was often criticized for “his handling of racial issues” because he often side-stepped policy that directly targeted open housing and anti-poverty programs for the city.<sup>46</sup> These elements contributed to the experience and existence of racial inequality in the Thirteenth Ward, including their two storefront libraries, Lapham and McLenegan.

In 1960, there were two stand-alone storefront libraries located in the Thirteenth Ward: Lapham and McLenegan. The construction of Locust Library was intended to replace both the Lapham and McLenegan libraries (see Figure 4 and 5).<sup>47</sup> Lapham, located on 642 W. North Ave, originated in 1952 and served a population of predominately African American individuals and

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<sup>44</sup> Bethany Harding, “Henry W. Maier,” *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, accessed on February 20, 2022, <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/henry-w-maier/>.

<sup>45</sup> McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 218-220.

<sup>46</sup> Harding, “Henry W. Maier”; Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee*, 340-343; McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 219.

<sup>47</sup> William J.K. Beaudot, January 21, 1972, Milwaukee Public Library System Annual Report 1971, Milwaukee Public Library Annual Reports 1940-1968, MPL records; Paul Wellington, “MPL Branch History: Martin Luther King,” Milwaukee Public Library (2022), Accessed on February 24, 2022, [https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl\\_mlk\\_branch\\_history](https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl_mlk_branch_history).



families.<sup>48</sup> McLenegan, located at 433 E. Locust St, constructed in 1926 until 1967, typically offered services to white individuals and families.<sup>49</sup> McLenegan was located on the outskirts of the Thirteenth Ward and was in closer proximity to the lake and higher income communities (see Figure 6).



Figure 4. The McLenegan Public Library in the Thirteenth Ward of Milwaukee, WI.

Paul Wellington, "MPL Branch History: Martin Luther King," Accessed on February 24, 2022, Milwaukee Public Library, [https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl\\_mlk\\_branch\\_history](https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl_mlk_branch_history).

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Wellington, "MPL Branch History: Martin Luther King," Milwaukee Public Library, Accessed on February 24, 2022, [https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl\\_mlk\\_branch\\_history](https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl_mlk_branch_history).

<sup>49</sup> William J.K. Beaudot, January 21, 1972, Milwaukee Public Library System Annual Report 1971, Milwaukee Public Library Annual Reports 1940-1968, MPL records.





Figure 5. The Lapham Library in the Thirteenth Ward of Milwaukee, WI.

Paul Wellington, "MPL Branch History: Martin Luther King," Accessed on February 24, 2022, Milwaukee Public Library, [https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl\\_mlk\\_branch\\_history](https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl_mlk_branch_history).

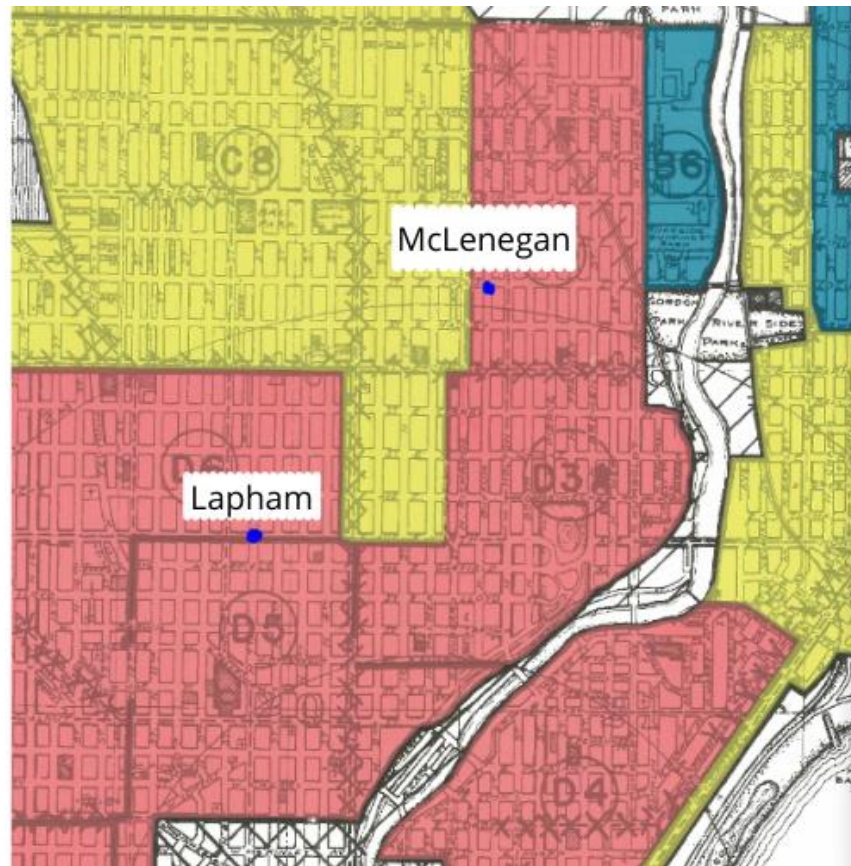


Figure 6. Location of 13<sup>th</sup> Ward Libraries in 1938 Milwaukee Residential Security Map.

United States. Federal Home Loan Bank Board, Division of Research and Statistics. Map of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin: Residential Security Map, 1938. “American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection.” <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/3028/>. Accessed February 27, 2022.

According to Dorothy L Arnold, city staff librarian in the Annual Report of 1969, McLenegan Library was “not ideal nor inclusive to its community or residents,” including people of color because of lack of accommodation to services for those in the community and failure to respond to local interests and projects.<sup>50</sup> By 1965, the *Milwaukee Journal* reported several incidents including “racial undertones and racial aggression” in the closure of McLenegan library because of new discussion regarding Locust Library.<sup>51</sup> Library patrons at McLenegan addressed

<sup>50</sup> Dorothy Arnold, January 20, 1970, Milwaukee Public Library System Annual Report 1969, Milwaukee Public Library Annual Reports 1940-1968, MPL records.

<sup>51</sup> Undated newspaper clipping, “Council Vote Tied on Library Site, (no date),” (*Milwaukee Journal*), box 19, folder 1, Martin Luther King Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

that they “naturally hated to lose its closeness, while some of them also, are motivated by an underlying resentment of the racially mixed use there would be at the more central site.”<sup>52</sup>

Racial inequality and discrimination in the Thirteenth Ward impacted the development of Locust Library. These influences demonstrated how important the social, economic, and political conditions of the Thirteenth Ward were in the development of Locust Library in Milwaukee. In fact, the construction of Locust Library in the 1962 library plan took almost eight years of negotiation and construction at the expense of its residents in the Thirteenth Ward. The lag in development from 1963 to 1971 demonstrated the lack of accountability in decision-making under the 1962 library plan and failure to address the pattern of racial inequality and the changing racial demographics in the neighborhood that led to conflict on library site location, budget cuts and racial priorities under the *Ten-Year Library Plan*.

### **The Conflict over the Site for Locust Library**

Conflict surrounding the construction of Locust Library began with prolonged disagreements about the appropriate library location site in the Thirteenth Ward. By 1965, only three branch libraries opened since the start of the library plan in 1962.<sup>53</sup> Frequent media accounts, city government officials and local community emphasized little hope of the plan concluding by its target date of 1971. Multiple disagreements between city officials, the library board and local community slowed down these efforts toward the construction of branch libraries. Alderman James J. Mortier, the Common Council’s finance committee chairman and member of the Library Board, commented “there are many complicating factors which work against sticking to the timetable and that most aldermen do not argue with the regional library

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<sup>52</sup> Newspaper clipping, “Library Board Right in Choice of New Building Site,” March 6, 1965, *Milwaukee Journal*, box 19, folder 1, Martin Luther King Branch Construction (unprocessed).

<sup>53</sup> Newspaper clipping, “Even Critics Like Over-All Plan,” April 16, 1965, *Milwaukee Journal*, MPL records.

concept, with its emphasis upon extending a variety of services beyond the mere dispersal of books... But instead, the issue on site location and cost.”<sup>54</sup> Beginning in 1963, negotiations for the Locust Library on the library site location began.<sup>55</sup> MPL’s Library Board and staff approved a site at 3rd & Center. But ultimately the decision on the library location depended on approval from the Common Council, which believed that the residents of the Thirteenth Ward would be better served at 3rd & Locust.<sup>56</sup> The approval of this decision did not consider the pattern of racial inequality in the planning and development of Locust Library and suggests that the Common Council failed to improve equitable access across all neighborhoods in library expansion, leading to long-term consequences in public library service needs and funding.

The lack of support and agreement on the new library site location for Locust Library stemmed from disagreements between aldermen and the library board, where the “insistence of library officials on building the branches as close to the plan as possible” caused worry from council members who argued about expansion costs.<sup>57</sup> It was not uncommon for the Common Council and the Library Board to become transfixed on the granular details, including funding and affordability, as well as current budgeting and construction costs. In fact, all nine branch libraries in Milwaukee under the library plan had small adjustments in relation to location site, building size, fiscal priorities, and the design of the interior space. However, Locust Library was the most long-lasting, conflicted, and argued over branch library in the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971*. It took over eight years to negotiate a compromise.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Newspaper clipping, “Little Hope to Make 1971 Goal,” *Milwaukee Journal*, April 15, 1965, MPL records.

<sup>55</sup> Newspaper clipping, “Urge Revised City Library Branch Plan,” November 11, 1964, *Milwaukee Journal*, box 19, folder 1, Martin Luther King Branch Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>56</sup> Newspaper clipping, “3rd & Locust Favored as Library Site,” June 9, 1966, *Milwaukee Journal*, Martin Luther King Branch Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>57</sup> Newspaper clipping on “Even Critics Like Over-All Plan,” April 16, 1965, *Milwaukee Journal*, MPL records.

<sup>58</sup> Newspaper clipping, “Urge Revised City Library Branch Plan,” November 11, 1964, *Milwaukee Journal*, box 19, folder 1, Martin Luther King Branch Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

The agreement on Locust Library's site proved unproductive from 1963 until 1968. Those in favor of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center like the Milwaukee Public Library and its Library Board disagreed on the approach to fiscal spending and branch library construction plans compared to those in favor of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust, which included most members of Common Council. Krug attended several government and committee meetings to represent MPL's desire for expansion in public service, literacy, and education at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center. His push emphasized the value of literacy in the Thirteenth Ward for the African American community, while continuing proximity and convenience to mass transit and local school sites for children and youth.<sup>59</sup> Krug and the library board also pushed for 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center because of public access and designated crossroads for those who did not own a car.

Alderwoman Vel Phillips was one of the more outspoken Common Council members who was favorable to 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center. Phillips was elected the first woman and first African American to hold office in Milwaukee's Common Council. She served on multiple committees in the council and was most remembered for her activism against housing discrimination during the 1960s. Phillips engaged in library expansion discussion and was vocal about the placement site of the Locust Library. She was especially opposed to locating a library right next to a police station. She explained, "Now I will speak on the Police Station thing. Alderman Lanser thought it was a good idea, but I do not think the Police work and Library are complementary to each other or necessary."<sup>60</sup> Policing and police power in the city of Milwaukee during the 1960s contributed heavily to racist accounts of violence and discrimination against African American

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<sup>59</sup> Undated newspaper clipping, "Library's Trustees Won't Yield on Site," box 19, folder 1, *Milwaukee Journal*, Martin Luther King Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>60</sup> Notes on Library Board and library site selection circa 1966, Box 22, Folder 40, Vel Phillips Papers, 1946-2009, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries; Phillips to Hundt (page 27), date unknown, MPL records.

communities.<sup>61</sup> Milwaukee's insistence on the spending and protection of police contributed to the maintenance of racial oppression for people of color and reinforced deteriorating and harmful conditions for African Americans. Alderwoman Phillips' reaction to the proximity of the police station to Locust Library at 3rd & Locust in a predominately African American neighborhood emphasized the lack of accountability in the Common Council's policies regarding harmful policing and library development in the city at the time.

In addition, the proposed library location site at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center was in closer proximity to mass transit, while 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust was closer to the highway.<sup>62</sup> At 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center, the site offered a relatively larger square foot building plan settling at 41,445 square feet over the 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust site with 36,770 square foot of building space.<sup>63</sup> According to the Board of Trustees' *Library Building and Development Report*, 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust also needed the addition of water and sewage, while 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center already had these utilities.<sup>64</sup>

Mayor Henry Maier, most members in the Common Council and his administration differed in their approach to library site location for Locust Library, including the impact of traffic flow, transportation service, square footage of the building plan, utility services and tax revenue.<sup>65</sup> City officials let on that they hoped to acquire the most ideal representation of "library culture" with as minimal spending as possible for Locust Library. However, the acknowledgement of racial inequality in the Thirteenth Ward was not a factor in their decision-

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<sup>61</sup> William I. Tchakirides, "Accountable to No One: Confronting Police Power in Black Milwaukee," (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2020), 13-20.

<sup>62</sup> Letter to Alderman Hundt from Martin E. Bruening on Traffic Patterns, January 24, 1967, box 114, folder 20, Maier Administration records.

<sup>63</sup> Letter to Jim from Alex P. Le Grand on SE Corner 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust, 22 February 1967, box 114, folder 21, Maier Administration records.

<sup>64</sup> Board of Trustees Library Building & Development Committee Report, January 26, 1967, Martin Luther King Branch Construction, MPL records.

<sup>65</sup> Comparative Analysis of Library Sites, 5 December 1966, Martin Luther King Branch Construction (unprocessed), MPL records.



making, where they ultimately declared that both library sites were too minor to consider a more expensive site at 3rd & Center.<sup>66</sup> The cost of 3rd & Center would be an additional \$30,000 to spend through “building size and public site” compared to 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison Figures on 3rd & Center Location Vs. 3rd & Locust Location

<b>3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; Center Site Location</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; Locust Site Location</b>
Favored by MPL and Library Board	Favored by Common Council members
Mass transit to buses and sidewalks	Proximity to highway
Central to school sites	Not central to school sites
41, 445 square feet	36,770 square feet
Proximity to area post office	Adjacent to district police station
Total cost: \$119,000	Total cost: \$97,500

In 1964, after a full year of negotiations, there continued to be disagreements revolving around “finances, traffic patterns, racial segregation and library needs for adults as well as children.”<sup>67</sup> In July of that same year, Krug threw a book at one of the Common Council members, claiming failure from city officials to choose the better location site over financial reasons and for continuing to delay in decision. According to several articles from the *Milwaukee Journal*, these fights resulted from “racial undertones and resentment” because of the two libraries joining for Locust Library: Lapham and McLenegan: “Let’s get this out in the open so that it can be repudiated. The council disgraces itself by being used in such a sordid contest.

<sup>66</sup> Consideration on Capital Improvement Program at Locust Library, 19 March 1970, Milwaukee Public Library Board Minutes, MPL records.

<sup>67</sup> Newspaper clipping on “Library Site Proposals Argued at Hearing,” January 11, 1965, *Milwaukee Journal*, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

Right minded aldermen would ignore and rebuke any consideration of ‘whose’ library it is to be, racially or ethnically.”<sup>68</sup>

Four years later, in 1968, the city council overruled the Library Board and Krug’s push for 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center because of financial priority. Under the principles of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971*, the 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center site would have been a more appropriate fit for the selection. The decision caused speculation regarding the city officials’ social responsibility to the greater public good and their lack of commitment to African American communities and library patrons in the Thirteenth Ward.<sup>69</sup> Alderman Norman J. Hundt, chairman of the Library Building and Development Committee noted, “officials charged with the responsibility of the expenditure of public funds, are obliged to move on a reasonable basis and to give the maximum service at the lowest possible cost.”<sup>70</sup> Remarkably, Alderman Eugene Woehrer, responsible for the Thirteenth Ward and in which the Locust Library would be located, favored the decision for 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust.<sup>71</sup>

The Library Board, a few aldermen and alderwoman, Vel Phillips preferred 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center for the Locust Library and questioned the financial situation in the city budget. Alderman Papen asked, “I am wondering why we are hearing about the cost problems that we never heard of in any other library. What happened here?”<sup>72</sup> It was possible that “many aldermen only played out a role for the benefit of their constituents” and even more likely that the library board eventually defused the situation through compromise and knowing they needed to ultimately succeed in

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<sup>68</sup> Newspaper clipping, “Shabby Library Fight,” July 29, 1964, *Milwaukee Journal*, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>69</sup> Newspaper clipping, “Secret Sessions Asked on New Library Site,” September 29, 1966, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>70</sup> Board of Trustees Meeting Memo of February 23, 1967, February 23, 1967; Board of Trustees Library Building & Development Committee Report on 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center and 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust, January 26, 1967, all in Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>71</sup> Undated newspaper clipping, “Council Vote Tied on Library Site,” *Milwaukee Journal*, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>72</sup> Board of Trustees Meeting of February 23, 1967, February 23, 1967, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.



opening Locust Library at all.<sup>73</sup> The final decision of the library site demonstrated strenuous resolution in the development of Locust Library.

The delay in decision-making from Common Council members prioritized profit and budgeting in the city over library access for library patrons and African American communities. The decision represented inconsistency in branch library development, especially in the Thirteenth Ward, a predominately African American neighborhood that has experienced recurring racial inequality and changing racial demographics.

The Common Council disregarded the established principles in the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* and proved that potential efforts toward racial equity and justice through library site location and branch library construction were not considered. The decision to place Locust Library at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust suggests that MPL and the Common Council did not account for racial inequality and changing racial demographics in the development of the branch libraries in Milwaukee, particularly in African American neighborhoods like the Thirteenth Ward. Since this decision prioritized budget cuts, long-term consequences including issues in funding and public library service needs in the Thirteenth Ward compelled other external funding opportunities like the Model Cities Program in library development by the mid-1960s.

### **External Funding through Model Cities Program for Locust Library**

Locust Library was the only library under the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* that requested additional funding using the Model Cities and Community Facilities program. The Locust Library was not given adequate budgeting compared to the construction of other branch libraries in the city and fit into the requirements for federal support. In a memorandum from

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<sup>73</sup> Ring, "Richard Krug," 267.

Richard Krug to the Common Council in 1969, the Locust Library needed “the inclusion of additional space for greater group activities and for supplementary services” because it would emphasize “the community aspects of library service.”<sup>74</sup> The lack of funding and continued fiscal frugality from the Common Council demonstrated that the implementation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* and the development of nine new branch libraries in Milwaukee, particularly Locust Library in the Thirteenth Ward, had long-term consequences like growing public library service needs, limited funding and programming. These consequences failed to expand opportunity in public library services, education and outreach for city residents and suggested negligence and insufficiency in the expansion of branch libraries by the Common Council.

As part of the Model Cities Program, Milwaukee built their First Year Action plan that included “provisions for 56 different programs that covered housing, employment, education, welfare, commercial development, protection, health, transportation, and recreation.”<sup>75</sup> The Model Cities programs targeted most of the north central areas of Milwaukee through urban renewal projects, where Locust Library was in the Thirteenth Ward.

The Library Board and staff librarians believed in maintaining representations of and by the people in the library. Richard Krug committed some efforts to increase expansion for all residents, especially those in the Thirteenth Ward.<sup>76</sup> MPL and Krug used surveys and data from city residents in the Thirteenth Ward to gauge and foster patrons' interests and needs in the area.<sup>77</sup> Krug expressed his frustrations with city officials about a lack of commitment to funding

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<sup>74</sup> RE: Locust Library and Branch Building Standards, Letter to the Honorable Common Council, box 13, folder 1, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>75</sup> Niemuth, “Urban Renewal and the Development of Milwaukee's African American Community,” 17-18.

<sup>76</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 265-270.

<sup>77</sup> Milwaukee Ten-Year Library Report 1973-1982, December 1973, box 114, folder 22, Maier Administration records.

and acknowledgment of race in the community. His advocacy often became critical debate with aldermen on discrepancies and concerns regarding priority and access in the development of the Locust Library.<sup>78</sup>

Per survey data and city resident analysis, staff librarians and Krug recognized the importance of additional services in the Thirteenth Ward and for the African American community.<sup>79</sup> No available primary sources specified the exact type of public services needed; however, investigation and promotion of these services emphasized “special needs of the area” and the importance for “greater group service facilities.”<sup>80</sup> In the Thirteenth Ward, there were typically lower-income minority communities of below average reading comprehension and high rates of impoverishment.<sup>81</sup> In Milwaukee, the program contributed to the expansion of urban renewal projects in surrounding neighborhoods with a focus on urban housing.<sup>82</sup> Krug saw an opportunity to acquire additional funding through this initiative to gain extensions in public services at Locust Library. Krug encouraged city agencies to explore both the Model Cities and Community Facilities program for an additional \$130,000 of funding to the Locust Library.<sup>83</sup>

The push to include a funding portion out of the Model Cities or Community Facilities program seemed ideal to MPL and Krug because of its location directly “on the border of the so-called Model Cities area.”<sup>84</sup> Still, as the local government shifted the narrative of public library

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<sup>78</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 265-270; Undated newspaper clipping, “Library OK’s 3<sup>rd</sup> and Locust Site,” box 19, folder 1, Martin Luther King Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>79</sup> Letter to Mr. Whittow (Director of Liaison for Dept. of Intergovernmental Fiscal Liaison), no date, box 13, folder 1, Martin Luther King Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>80</sup> Letter to Capital Improvements committee, June 12, 1969, Library’s 1970 proposed Capital Improvement budget, box 13, folder 1, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>81</sup> MPL Memorandum to

<sup>82</sup> Sarah Rachel Siegel, “By the People Most Affected:” Model Cities, Citizen Control, and the Broken Promises of Urban Renewal” (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2019).

<sup>83</sup> Letter to Mr. Whittow (Director of Liaison for Dept. of Intergovernmental Fiscal Liaison), no date, box 13, folder 1, Martin Luther King Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>84</sup> Letter to Capital Improvements Committee (June 12, 1969): Library’s 1970 proposed Capital Improvement budget, June 12, 1969, box 13, folder 1, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

development to budgeting and fiscal priority, the suggested additional funding was not granted nor was Locust Library able to successfully gain funds for further public services in the Thirteenth Ward. In a 1969 monthly meeting, the Library Board confirmed that the Model Cities federal funding grant did not adequately fit the “present standards of community service space and facilities” for the Locust Library.<sup>85</sup>

The development of Locust Library in the 1960s to early 1970s showed how the construction of branch libraries in Milwaukee was connected to racial oppression and inequality in the city. Fiscal priority and exclusive budgeting for Locust Library in the Thirteenth Ward emphasized clear Common Council member agendas and the lack of accountability in ensuring consistency across the construction of all new branch libraries under the 1962 library plan. In fact, the East Branch Library, located in a predominately white neighborhood on the east side of Milwaukee, received an additional \$71,000 increase in external construction costs due to its proximity to Downtown and with no reasonable reason for its increase around the same construction timeframe as Locust Library.<sup>86</sup> The Tippecanoe Branch Library identified construction cost comparison related to the business activity and employment rates in its neighborhood, ensuring an additional funding expense for these services.<sup>87</sup> These limitations did not guarantee that the Common Council purposefully withheld funding to the construction of Locust Library because of its location in the Thirteenth Ward, but it does recognize the failure of branch library development in Milwaukee and the focus on budget priorities at the time of recurring racial oppression and injustice in the 1960s.

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<sup>85</sup> Board of Trustees Regular Meeting, September 11, 1969, Milwaukee Public Library Board Minutes 1969, MPL records.

<sup>86</sup> Memo on East Library Receiving \$71,000 extra costs for construction and development, June 5, 1967, box 11, folder 2, East Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

<sup>87</sup> Construction Cost Comparison on Tippecanoe Library, September 18, 1968, Tippecanoe Library Construction Collection, MPL records.

## **A Coordinated Branch Library System was Born in 1971**

Commitment to the development of nine new branch libraries in the span of 10 years in the city of Milwaukee was not an easy or small feat. The effort engaged in the construction of nine new branch libraries that included issues with the city government, budget cuts and funding, construction costs and federal grants. The *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* represented Milwaukee's critical need for city-wide circulation of books and material, proximity, and access of a library for patrons and public library service needs in Milwaukee. Yet, Locust Library demonstrated that the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* was not flawless and that those in power, the Common Council and city government, were not held accountable for their decisions in library construction and lack of consideration for racial inequality and changing racial demographics in the neighborhoods. Key failures in the plan identified that no neighborhood was exempt from its social, political, and economic conditions.

This chapter explored the implementation and principles of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971*. By 1972, a coordinated branch library was born in the city of Milwaukee, where community engagement and partnerships fostered emerging trends in the success of library-to-library connection through city-wide distribution of books and access to libraries for city residents. Richard Krug, head librarian of MPL expressed that the ultimate "purpose is to encourage the development of library systems so as to improve the overall service to the state and various regions, to streamline their organization to more effectively use what resources are available and to eliminate duplication."<sup>88</sup> These objectives proved successful in the physical development of nine new branch libraries. However, the success of the 1962 library plan failed to connect library expansion to changing racial demographics and racial inequity in

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<sup>88</sup> Library Services Programs Committee Meeting, January 13, 1972, MPL records.

neighborhoods, leading to long-term consequences of library location sites, funding issues, public library service needs and expanding programming and outreach like the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services and the Community Librarian Project in MPL by the 1970s.

## Chapter 3. Analysis of Milwaukee's Coordinated Branch Library System by 1972

### Introduction

The *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* planned to construct and complete the development of nine new branch libraries across Milwaukee. These libraries were constructed by the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) and the city government, which initiated the *Ten-Year Library Plan* as an opportunity to grow public library service, city-wide circulation of material and access to education and literacy for residents across neighborhoods. The outcome was the development of nine new branch libraries servicing around 30,000 to 60,000 residents in each neighborhood and the creation of Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system by 1972. All new branch libraries under Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system increased circulation numbers, study room use and programming. In October 1977, the Martin Luther King Library (formerly the Locust Library) circulated 60,401 materials with over 450 programs a year. At the East Branch, similar increases in circulation hit 145,000 materials and 245 programming events.<sup>1</sup>

The *1973 Library Report* evaluated the implementation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* and showed that the physical development of branch libraries in Milwaukee had been accomplished. This achievement was not flawless and multiple issues occurred under the 1962 library plan including limited awareness toward changing population sizes and evolving neighborhoods in Milwaukee by the 1970s, leading to long-term repercussions in library programming like the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services and the Community Librarian Project. Most importantly, the 1962 library plan and the *1973 Library Report* failed to

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<sup>1</sup> "Neighborhood Library Use Statistics: July 1, 1976, through June 30, 1977," October 10, 1977, MPL records.

recognize how racial injustice and inequality in the city of Milwaukee impacted library expansion at the time. Changing racial demographics in neighborhoods with a predominately African American population demonstrated the lack of action from the city in maintaining consistency in the principles of the library plan, the prioritization of fiscal frugality over racial equity and the limited analysis of patron demographics and needs of the neighborhood for each branch library. These actions shaped the meaning of library expansion in the city and suggested that the 1962 library plan developed within a city that was ultimately different by the time of its implementation in 1962 and completion in 1972.

This chapter highlights the outcome of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* using the *1973 Library Report* and identifies how the plan achieved some success in library development, while also comparing weaknesses in meeting the needs of the community and improving racial inequality in neighborhoods. Reporting and recommendations using the 1973 *Ten-Year Library Report* address evaluation of the library plan and improvements considered by the city government and MPL for future library expansion. This chapter also analyzes the implementation and representation of programming opportunities created by MPL and the Common Council like the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services and the Community Librarian Project to signify how racial integration and equality often fell short of its goals and led to long-term consequences in branch library programming and outreach by the 1970s. These experiences led to minimizing prospects toward racial equity initiative in branch library expansion.

The creation of the coordinated branch library system in Milwaukee and the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* transformed the landscape of library development and suggested the importance of expansion efforts for libraries across the city. Yet its success contributed to



limitations in equality and access for multiple neighborhoods with branch libraries. Racial inequality and changing racial demographics affected the implementation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971*, the development of nine new branch libraries in Milwaukee and programming efforts by the 1970s. The Common Council, MPL and those in power miscalculated evolving neighborhoods dynamics during the development of the branch libraries and lacked improvement in racial inequality or accounted for changing racial demographics in the 1960s and 1970s. By 1971, this outcome led to long-term consequences and the continued experiences of racial injustice and inequality in expansion efforts and branch library programming moving forward.

### **The Ten-Year Library Report of 1973 in Milwaukee**

By 1972, nine new branch libraries were successfully constructed under the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971*. The 1962 library plan proposed a “drive-to pattern of branch library distribution for all of Milwaukee except a few outlying areas reserved for future analysis.”<sup>2</sup> A drive-to pattern meant that library patrons could reach a library in their neighborhood either on foot, by car or through public transportation and that distribution efforts increased circulation opportunity for residents. This representation demonstrated that library expansion in Milwaukee was meant for the people and important to the city by the 1970s. Expansion of libraries garnered support of partnership between the libraries and local community because of its integration into neighborhoods. However, the *Ten-Year Library Plan* lacked significant action on how racial inequality affected the development of branch libraries in the 1960s. By 1972, little to no

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<sup>2</sup> Ten-Year Library Report 1973 p. 1, MPL records.

reflection or analysis on changing racial demographics and racial inequality in Milwaukee's library expansion occurred.

To analyze the creation of the coordinated branch library system and the development of branch libraries by the 1970s, MPL partnered with the Common Council to survey the results of the 1962 library plan and prioritized how branch library development could move forward in Milwaukee. Under File No. 71-1000, the Milwaukee Common Council directed the City Plan Commission in cooperation with the Library Board of Trustees to review the 1962 library plan with reporting and recommendations at present and for the future. This resolution served as a critical assessment of branch library expansion in Milwaukee and an analysis on the goals of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971*.<sup>3</sup>

Known as the *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973*, the resolution finished in December of 1973 with key results and recommendations according to the existing branch libraries developed by 1971.<sup>4</sup> The report was conducted and authored by the Milwaukee Public Library and approved by Milwaukee's Common Council in 1973. The *1973 Library Report* addressed the success and effectiveness in the construction of the nine branch libraries that developed under the *Ten-Year Library Plan*. Behind the report were multiple partners with the Milwaukee Public Library based on the specific study analyzed, including librarians that were and were not involved in the 1962 library plan and other city institutions to reflect changing perspective and limit biased results.<sup>5</sup> The *1973 Library Report* identified the strengths and weaknesses of the *Ten-Year Library Plan* and included recommendations, resolutions and evaluations of each library based on circulation, population, and accessibility.

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<sup>3</sup> Ten-Year Library Report 1973 pp. 1-2, MPL records.

<sup>4</sup> Ten-Year Library Report 1973 pg. 1-2, MPL records.

<sup>5</sup> Ten-Year Library Report 1973 appendix, MPL records.

A fundamental goal of the 1962 library plan was to provide public library service and city-wide circulation of books and material to Milwaukee's residents. The *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973* conducted research using multiple organizations that surveyed themes related to circulation, population, and access in its analysis to understand the effectiveness and success in library expansion in Milwaukee during the 1960s. These results included population size in neighborhoods and the service of each branch library, the development of the library building (including design layout and sizing), annual library circulation of material and patron demographics according to their mode of transportation and age group. The results in the *1973 Library Report* demonstrated the importance of library expansion in Milwaukee amongst evolving city development, increasing population size and expanding city boundaries. Its evaluation described in detail the importance of library expansion in Milwaukee, but it fell short on including the integration of racial inequality to public library development in the 1960s.

Each evaluation held specific construction dimensions and notes, as well as circulation statistics, library population demographics, programming, and recommendations for branch libraries in the coordinated system after 1971. These results were concluded in 1973, only one year after the 1962 library plan ended with the construction of Locust Library in 1971. The *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973* did not determine why these specific factors were surveyed over others or changing outcomes of the branch libraries that could have occurred after such a date in 1973. The report also did not mention the influence of race or racial inequality in Milwaukee's neighborhoods by the 1970s.

Overall, the documentation of the *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973* was important and valuable to frame the boundaries, limitations, and success of the development of branch libraries in Milwaukee. However, the plan did not anticipate evolving neighborhoods, population growth

and territorial increases in Milwaukee during the 1960s and 1970s. Nor did it analyze racial inequality in branch library development. The *Ten-Year Library Plan* did not consider branch library construction through the lens of racial inequality and there were no further steps to engage in these opportunities after the development of the nine branch libraries as “the Milwaukee’s Ten-Year Library Program 1962-1971 has generally been carried out” by 1973.<sup>6</sup> This conclusion suggested how little the Common Council and MPL acknowledged failures of the 1962 library plan or recognized the importance of racial inequity and changing racial demographics amongst the development of the nine new branch libraries in the 1960s and the Milwaukee coordinated branch library system by 1972. Review of specific studies within the *1973 Library Report* emphasized these faults, including the lack of analysis in population growth, building site size, city-wide circulation, accessibility in roads and transportation, and patron demographics.

### **Evaluation of Population Size in the 1973 Library Report**

Overall, the 1962 library plan introduced service to over 715,000 residents with an initial estimated capacity of 850,000.<sup>7</sup> The *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973* linked the 1970 existing populations of each branch library to the 1962 estimated capacity of a population for each proposed library under the 1962 library plan using analysis from Milwaukee’s 1970 Census data (see Table 3). The population estimates compared to the actual population sizes in each branch library by 1970 were significantly off.

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<sup>6</sup> Resolution A-1 in Ten-Year Library Report 1973, MPL records.

<sup>7</sup> Existing Populations A-2 in Ten-Year Library Report 1973, MPL records.

Table 3. Population Sizes from 1973 Ten-Year Library Report.

<b>Milwaukee Libraries</b>	<b>1970 Population (In thousands)</b>	<b>1962 Population Capacity (in thousands)</b>
Atkinson	38,000	32,000
Capitol	78,000	87,000
Center	31,000	25,000
Central	47,000	62,000
East	40,000	68,000
Finney	71,000	74,000
Forest Home	66,000	59,000
Llewellyn	29,000	32,000
Martin Luther King (formerly Locust Library)	55,000	42,000
Mill Road	48,000	73,000
N. Milwaukee	55,000	55,000
Oklahoma	93,000	100,000
Tippecanoe	22,000	29,000

Existing Populations A-2 in Ten-Year Library Report 1973, MPL records.

Data from the 1973 report showed that some of the new library branches were rapidly oversubscribed. By 1970, the Atkinson branch library served around 38,000 residents with an intended capacity report of 32,000. The Locust Library, now the Martin Luther King Branch, noted service to a population of 55,000 with an estimated capacity of 42,000 in 1963. The East

branch served around 40,000 by 1973 with an estimated population of 68,000 in 1966. The results concluded that all nine branch libraries did serve a population of around 30,000 to 60,000 as addressed in one of the principles in the library plan.<sup>8</sup>

However, the estimate of the actual population compared to those that reached capacity for the city was significantly off.<sup>9</sup> The MLK Branch was 130% over its target capacity, meaning that the growth of the Thirteenth Ward by 1973 exceeded the intended audience for the library. In comparison, East branch was under capacity, at about 58% to its intended audience for the neighborhood. These percentages documented the lack of efficiency in the process of determining population capacities in the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* and the failure to accommodate Milwaukee's rapidly changing neighborhoods throughout the 1960s. The original 1962 library plan failed to anticipate dramatic population changes in Milwaukee's population.

The *1973 Library Report* reported the lack of effective analysis in determining the correct population sizes for each branch library in Milwaukee's neighborhoods and emphasized one of the faults of the 1962 library plan. The population estimates compared to the actual population showed that population sizes of the city were changing by the time the development of the branch libraries occurred in the 1960s. By 1972, these changes challenged and transformed how the Milwaukee Public Library and the coordinated branch library system involved changing population sizes, neighborhood development and patron demographics by the 1970s. This fault highlighted the lack of anticipation for population increases and also recently acquired city boundaries that did not have a branch library or serve new city residents. The *1973 Library Report* concluded that "references in the report dealing with the program suggest that further

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<sup>8</sup> Existing Populations A-2 in Ten-Year Library Report 1973, MPL records.

<sup>9</sup> Existing Populations A-2 in Ten-Year Library Report 1973, MPL records.

study may be necessary to determine the need for facilities in the southwest and northwest sections of the city, and residential development has taken place at a much more rapid rate in the northwest part of the city than originally anticipated.”<sup>10</sup> The 1962 library plan failed to successfully anticipate the growing changes of the city, including population increases and territorial expansion. These problems led to issues in branch library accessibility for increasing residents and expanding differences in physical sizing and design of each library in each neighborhood.

### **Analysis of Building Size under the 1973 Library Report**

The results of the size area of each branch library and the breakdown of divisions within the building design, including coverage that was for the public, staff and meeting rooms were evaluated in the *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973*. The importance of identifying these results in the library report was meant for reflection on the prescribed consistency in the principles of the 1962 library plan and to evaluate the success rate of increasing population sizes to building size and design.<sup>11</sup> The results identified that multiple branch libraries constructed under the *Ten-Year Library Plan* did not reflect consistency because of varied site sizes compared to the actual 1970 population size. Consistency did not occur in all the branch libraries’ construction in the 1960s and was a major fault in the implementation of the *Ten-Year Library Plan* by 1971.

Atkinson obtained a site area of 30,418 square feet with a floor area of 11,548. East branch was one of the largest spaces purchased with a site area of 44,450 square feet and a floor area of 15,000. The Locust Library (now MLK) held 36,750 square feet with a floor area of 14,610 square feet. The East Branch library, located in the Eighteenth Ward, held a relatively

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<sup>10</sup> Resolution A-1 in Ten-Year Library Report 1973, MPL records.

<sup>11</sup> Existing Site and Floor Area A-3 in Ten-Year Library Report of 1973, MPL records.

larger space while also serving a smaller population of 40,000 compared to Locust Library (now MLK) with a population of 55,000 (see Table 4).<sup>12</sup>

The site area size of each branch library was not uniform or consistent as intended in the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* by MPL and the Common Council. This suggested that the library plan did not account for changing population sizes and evolving neighborhoods in building sizing and design. Much of the decision-making was approved by the population size in the 1960s and often at the expense of the library site area for library patrons. The East Branch received a larger site location over the Locust Library that had a larger population by the 1970s. Emphasis on library development in areas with more money like the Eighteenth Ward were prioritized and given more privileged means of expansion than libraries like Locust Library located in the Thirteenth Ward. These decisions from the Common Council and MPL to expand library site areas for branch libraries with an estimated population size in the 1960s showed that the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* was not uniform and did not consider or anticipate rapidly changing neighborhoods or city population growth. This outcome integrated into the goal of city-wide circulation within Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system by the 1970s.

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<sup>12</sup> Existing Site and Floor Area A-3 in Ten-Year Library Report of 1973, MPL records; Paul Wellington, MPL Branch History: East Branch, last updated on 21 October 2021, [https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl\\_east\\_branch\\_history](https://www.mpl.org/blog/now/mpl_east_branch_history).



Table 4. Site Size and Population Comparison in 1973 Ten-Year Library Report.

Branch	Site Area (in square feet)	Population (in thousands)	Square Feet per Person
Atkinson	30,418	38,000	1.24
Capitol	37,488	78,000	2.08
Center Street	6,805	31,000	4.55
East	44,450	40,000	0.89
Finney	19,203	71,000	3.69
Forest Home	41,214	66,000	1.60
Llewellyn	20,632	29,000	1.40
Martin Luther King	36,750	55,000	1.49
Mill Road	36,600	48,000	1.31
N. Milwaukee	38,576	55,000	1.43
Oklahoma	56,441	93,000	1.64
Tippecanoe	64,400	22,000	0.34

### **Library Circulation and City-wide Distribution in the 1973 Library Report**

The importance of city-wide distribution in the construction of the nine new branch libraries and the creation of Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system were examined

under the *1973 Library Report*. One of the goals of the 1962 library plan was to create city-wide distribution of books and material to all city residents in Milwaukee. This circulation study examined the effectiveness of library expansion to the circulation of material across the city and for city residents. Annual library circulation in the *Ten-Year Library Report* compared numerical figures in the calendar years from 1951 to 1971. These dates reflected the transition of local distribution of books to city-wide distribution and access of books across Milwaukee in the span of twenty years.<sup>13</sup>

Results in city-wide distribution demonstrated that there were increases in circulation for residents in the city, but they were largely inconsistent across branch libraries. In 1951, circulation at Atkinson was roughly 106,000. Circulation increased to 250,000 by 1963 and decreased to 107,000 in 1971. With Milwaukee's population shifting frequently in neighborhoods throughout the 1960s, the decline of circulation at Atkinson demonstrated the lack of effective analysis on changing population sizes to the development of the branch library during the 1960s. Similarly, the East branch circulated at 100,000 in 1951 and increased to 180,000 in 1971. The two storefront libraries, Lapham and McLenegan libraries in the Thirteenth Ward during 1951, did not have circulation statistics available in the *1973 Library Report* and Locust Library, built in 1971 in the Thirteenth Ward, did not have any circulation statistics for 1971. Results of city-wide circulation highlighted efforts that encouraged new opportunities for distribution and library-to-library connection. However, inconsistent performance in the statistics and unexpected changes in population sizes prompted dramatic shifts in library capacity and the distribution of library material. The 1962 library plan failed to represent or evaluate how library expansion across the city in the 1960s could change rapidly for neighborhoods and increasing

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<sup>13</sup> Annual Library Circulation 1951-1971 A-5 in Ten-Year Library Report of 1973, MPL records.

city residents. These changes contributed to further inconsistency in accessibility efforts through arterial roads.

### **Accessibility through Arterials under the 1973 Library Report**

The *1973 Library Report* reviewed branch library accessibility through existing arterials at each branch library compared to the proposed arterials from the principles of the *Ten-Year Library Plan*.<sup>14</sup> Arterials were accessible roads that provided city residents with access to local transportation by automobile and bus. These arterial roads were indicated by means of primary and secondary streets which documented the routes a patron could take to get to their branch library. The purpose of arterial roads in the construction of branch libraries in Milwaukee emphasized opportunity of access and city-wide public library service needs for city residents by promoting the importance of libraries near patrons in the neighborhoods.

With the conflict on library site location that arose under the development of the Locust Library in the 1960s, one of the key factors in the decision-making was having access to arterial roads. The decision to purchase the library site location at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust by the Common Council over 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center, favored by MPL, determined that there would be significantly lower access points to public transit for patrons and a closer proximity to the freeway.<sup>15</sup> This was important in reviewing the results under the *1973 Library Report* because it highlighted how the Common Council did not consider city residents without cars or who needed access to libraries through public transportation.

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<sup>14</sup> Branch Library Accessibility A-7 in Ten-Year Library Report of 1973, MPL records.

<sup>15</sup> For further information regarding freeway construction in Milwaukee, see Gregory Dickenson, "Through Highways: Construction of the Expressway System in Milwaukee County, 1946-1977" (MA thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015).

The number of transport bus routes with stops within one block of each library were analyzed in this transportation study and determined that there were frequent differences between access points for each branch library in the *Ten-Year Library Plan*. Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system did not have consistency across branch library construction in the 1960s. The Atkinson Branch that opened in 1962 had a primary arterial with no secondary road. East and Locust both included a primary and secondary arterial. Atkinson and East both had two points of access to bus routes, while Locust Library only had one. With Locust Library only having one access point to bus routes, fiscal frugality over patron access in branch library construction seemed the most important objective for the city government.

### **Patron Demographics under the 1973 Library Report**

Lastly, the *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973* reported on patron demographics to identify how the transition of library expansion in the 1960s improved patron access and city-wide access to libraries for all residents in the city. The patron demographics included in the study were the mode of transportation and age group. Limitations in these demographics meant there was a lack of analysis on changing racial demographics and racial inequality that occurred during the 1960s in multiple Milwaukee neighborhoods. This outcome suggested the lack of commitment from the Common Council to improve equitable opportunities for all library patrons in the city and was a major fault in the reporting of the *1973 Library Report* and the development of branch libraries in the 1960s. Most importantly, this study showed power and privilege in Milwaukee's library expansion and depicted the disregard of race and changing racial demographics in multiple neighborhoods with branch libraries by the 1970s.

The results were analyzed by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC).<sup>16</sup> Results of the patron demographics were documented in April 1969 under a survey conducted by SEWRPC for existing branches only. Therefore, the results of patron demographics for both Lapham and McLenegan in the Thirteenth Ward were used in the 1969 survey in the *Library Report of 1973* over patron demographics for Locust Library (now MLK) since it opened in 1971 (see Table 5).<sup>17</sup>

Table 5. Patron Demographics in 1973 Ten-Year Library Report.

Branch	Mode of Transportation (%)				Age Group (%)			
	Auto	Bus	Walk	Other	Child	Teen	Labor Force	Senior Citizen
Atkinson	34.4	8.9	47.0	1.7	30.3	33.8	25.6	1.9
Capitol	77.2	1.3	14.8	3.1	24.3	34.1	37.3	1.4
Center Street	8.8	8.0	14.8	3.1	60.8	15.1	9.1	1.2
East	47.8	6.9	39.5	2.3	16.1	27.1	47.3	4.4
Finney	41.4	9.1	43.4	2.7	28.3	39.8	28.4	1.8
Forest Home	33.3	7.0	54.5	1.6	33.8	39.2	23.0	1.0
Lapham	18.0	7.2	72.1	0.7	56.9	19.0	12.4	0.2
Llewellyn	35.6	3.9	55.7	2.9	37.2	37.6	22.6	1.7
McLennegan	17.7	1.7	78.4	1.5	57.6	23.7	14.5	0.7

<sup>16</sup> Branch Library Patron Breakdown, Mode of Transportation & Age Group A-8 in Ten-Year Library Report 1973, MPL records.

<sup>17</sup> Branch Library Patron Breakdown, Mode of Transportation & Age Group A-8 in Ten-Year Library Report 1973, MPL records.

Mill Road	69.0	n/a	18.4	9.2	33.1	27.1	35.8	0.4
N. Milwaukee	65.2	1.0	26.5	3.9	30.3	35.3	31.2	1.2
Oklahoma	76.4	6.7	13.2	2.4	23.7	38.6	36.1	0.7
Tippecanoe	56.9	2.0	31.5	6.6	28.5	30.7	34.8	2.7

Atkinson and East branch were similar in their patron demographic results where most city residents walked as their mode of transportation and typical age groups were children and the labor force (adults). However, the results of the 1969 patron demographics for the Lapham and McLenegan libraries in the Thirteenth Ward represented how the new location site controversy in the 1960s impacted the neighborhood. Results concluded that most patrons in the Thirteenth Ward preferred access to public transportation near the library. The decision to choose 3<sup>rd</sup> & Locust, favored by the Common Council over 3<sup>rd</sup> & Center, favored by MPL, suggested that the 1962 library plan did not accommodate the changing racial demographics and racial inequality of the Thirteenth Ward.

By 1971, over 70% of patrons who used Locust Library walked a significant distance to their libraries. The result of multiple patrons walking over those by car or public transportation demonstrated that there was no actual analysis by MPL or the Common Council on appropriate transportation patterns, arterial roads and access opportunities for city residents in the Thirteenth Ward. This evaluation suggested that the principles under the *Ten-Year Library Plan* did not accurately reflect the needs of residents in the city. Failure by the Common Council and MPL to improve equitable opportunities for all library patrons in multiple Milwaukee neighborhoods

suggested the failure of the *1973 Library Report* and contributed to minor recommendations for library expansion moving forward.

### **Recommendations in the 1973 Ten-Year Library Report**

Recommendations included in the *1973 Ten-Year Library Report* addressed limitations of the *Ten-Year Library Plan* and were significantly underwhelming in scope. Most of these recommendations offered opportunity in library expansion efforts according to population size and territorial growth and were assessed by MPL using partners and librarians that conducted the surveys and data analysis in the *1973 Library Report*. These recommendations addressed some limitations in survey evaluation of the branch libraries and the 1962 library plan, including population sizes and territorial growth. However, they failed to document key opportunities in improving racial injustice and inequality across branch libraries in multiple neighborhoods. The recommendations did not include the branch library development controversy in the Thirteenth Ward at Locust Library from 1963 to 1971 and did not emphasize flaws of the 1962 library plan like patron accessibility, building sizes and growing populations. These recommendations were minor in scope and lacked potential improvements regarding racial inequality in library expansion by the 1970s.

The consideration of expandable structures for the future of branch library development was one of the main recommendations in the *1973 Library Report*. An expandable structure was defined as structural elements that allow a building to become re-worked, re-developed, and re-processed after its initial use was completed. An expandable structure offered efficiency for MPL and allowed the design of a facility that could change its footprint, the structure's shape and building materials. The recommendation of expandable structures in branch library development emphasized the city's priority in maximizing spending and budgeting, while ensuring that

through changing environments of the city, the structure would remain equipped for all outcomes and avoid starting over if a library was to be re-developed.

A major goal of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* was to ensure city-wide distribution through the circulation of material and proximity of libraries for patrons across Milwaukee. The development of the nine branch libraries during the 1960s increased expansion efforts toward these goals. Still, the *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973* noted areas that lacked libraries due to high population demands and newly annexed areas of the city. These city neighborhoods included Good Hope, the airport area, near the Oklahoma Road and Hawley Road.

Documentation in the *1973 Library Report* of these areas in crucial need of branch libraries encouraged recommendation on further library expansion in the city because of annexation that didn't get coverage before the 1970s. The *1973 Library Report* stated that "after ten years of building libraries, there would still be four sizable segments of Milwaukee unserved by Milwaukee branches," including the Granville area, the airport area, near the Oklahoma branch service area and the Good Hope area.<sup>18</sup> This recommendation emphasized the importance of library expansion using the goals in the *Ten-Year Library Plan* to achieve library access to all city residents and city-wide distribution through circulation and public library services in the 1960s. But it also highlighted one of the failures in the 1962 library plan to consider these changing population sizes and city growth in its ten-year span. This recommendation suggested how little the 1962 library plan reflected possible city changes and branch library expansion by 1971.

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<sup>18</sup> Recommendations (p. 26), 1973, Neighborhood Library Site Program (Milwaukee's 10-Year Library Report) 1973-1975, MPL records.



The last recommendation in the *1973 Library Report* focused on efforts according to the existing branch libraries.<sup>19</sup> Consideration of potential closures for existing branch libraries that no longer needed service because of population changes, services needed elsewhere and/or a lack of funding from city government were included as the recommendation in the *1973 Library Report*. This recommendation emphasized that there was no strategic plan in the 1962 library plan on the removal of branch libraries that were not needed because of population shifts and changing services during the 1960s. This recommendation emphasized a lack of future evaluation in the *Ten-Year Library Plan* and limited recognition of changing populations.

These three recommendations identified some assessment of the 1962 library plan and fostered new ideas that connected the achievements of library expansion in the 1960s to potential improvements for the future of Milwaukee's coordinated branch system, including emphasis on analyzing population shifts and changing public library service needs at the time of the construction for a branch library. But there remained little to no integration or evaluation on evolving racial demographics and the recurrence of racial inequity that occurred in library expansion during 1960s.

The Milwaukee Public Library and the Common Council had the opportunity to address the importance of racial injustice in Milwaukee neighborhoods and for branch library development. They failed to document or acknowledge how racial inequality played a role in Milwaukee neighborhoods during library expansion in the 1960s or offer potential improvements for equitable branch library expansion moving forward. The lack of inclusion and documentation of racial inequality suggested the imminent failures of the 1962 library plan, the *1973 Library Report* and library expansion overall.

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<sup>19</sup> Recommendations (p. 5), 1973, Neighborhood Library Site Program (Milwaukee's 10-Year Library Report) 1973-1975, MPL records.

## **The Lasting Outcome of the 1973 Library Report**

The *Library Report of 1973* compared several themes from the twelve-year library expansion efforts in the city and for MPL. These themes included circulation statistics, results in transportation patterns, access opportunities to arterial roads, comparing population sizes, analysis of building site size and patron demographics. The results in the *1973 Library Report* showed some increase in city-wide circulation, community engagement and accessibility in the city of Milwaukee by the 1970s. However, the *1973 Library Report* demonstrated that the development of branch libraries in Milwaukee severely underestimated the population shifts and increasing sizes, changing racial demographics and the social conditions of multiple Milwaukee neighborhoods.

This outcome suggested that the reporting and recommendations in the report were oversubscribed. An improved *1973 Library Report* could have incorporated a more long-term review process and included an evaluation on the equity and social conditions of the neighborhoods with branch libraries. The *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973* was not flawless. It did not review the cultural and social impacts of branch library development that occurred in Milwaukee's neighborhoods during the 1960s where frequent population shifts and changing racial demographics occurred in the city. By 1973, there were no statements or surveys included that sought critical understanding in how racial inequality existed within branch library development and neighborhoods that continued to dominate much of the city's political, social, and economic discourse in the 1960s and 1970s.

The lack of documentation of racial injustice, especially in neighborhoods like the Thirteenth Ward that held a predominantly African American population severely diminished the value of the findings in the *Ten-Year Library Report of 1973*. The results demonstrated that

library expansion in the 1960s was severely miscalculated, understudied and not accurate. It means the development of the nine new branch libraries by 1971 was not considered through the lens of racial inequality and changing racial demographics that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s and led to lasting consequences in the improvement of equitable access and services in the city of Milwaukee. This inefficacious outcome was reinforced through long-term programming and outreach efforts like the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services and the Community Librarian Project that occurred during the implementation of Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system and the development of branch libraries in the 1960s and 1970s. These results hoped to increase and improve equitable services across branch libraries and in the coordinated library system, but their approach and goals lacked evidence of racial inclusion and progress in multiple neighborhood communities.

### **Programming and Outreach in the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services**

Simultaneously with the physical development of the *Ten-Year Library Plan*, the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services desired to improve equitable access and services across Milwaukee's neighborhoods through community events and public library services during the creation of the coordinated branch library system and branch library expansion in the 1960s and 1970s. The Neighborhood Libraries Extension Services was created in 1963 alongside library expansion and offered new services and programming for all newly created branch libraries to increase the number of available resources, maximize patron proximity to a library and reach literacy across Milwaukee.<sup>20</sup> The system included service programs like book and social activities, community-oriented public service programs and children's and adult programs

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<sup>20</sup> Activities Report Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services' Activities, Neighborhood Library & Extension Heads Meeting 1972-1974, MPL records.

to name a few. The Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services upheld the goals of city-wide library access through the circulation of books and material, public library service needs and accessibility to library patrons from the 1962 library plan.

The head of the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services was Nolan Neds, a former assistant city librarian at MPL under Richard Krug. Neds engaged in partnership efforts that sought opportunity in accessibility and community engagement through programming and service throughout the city.<sup>21</sup> In regular monthly reports and meetings, he explained daily procedures related to programming that increased adult and children service and library outreach.<sup>22</sup> Neds reported on issues related to city-wide distribution through the increase of circulation for branch libraries in the neighborhoods and public library services needs including, bookmobile service and programming needs like Spanish-speaking services, employment assistance and potential daycare opportunities. Neds also connected with library partners outside of the city of Milwaukee to create expanding suburban distribution and the circulation of books and materials beyond city limits.<sup>23</sup>

The creation of the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services involved increased opportunities for branch library programming and outreach in Milwaukee neighborhoods. Support for disadvantaged communities was evident in the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services through service opportunities related to people of color. However, its transformation and appearance were often limited in scope. The Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services had only a few ongoing projects that instilled these ideas of equality and integration for all library patron communities in the branch libraries. One of the most prominent

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<sup>21</sup> Activities Report Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services' Activities, Neighborhood Library & Extension Heads Meeting 1972-1974, MPL records.

<sup>22</sup> Nolan Neds, Activities Report February-April, Activities Reports, MPL records.

<sup>23</sup> Nolan Neds, February 23, 1973, Activities Report February-April, Activities Reports, MPL records.

and influential to the community was the Community Librarian Project that used the role of librarians to collaborate and connect with partners and agencies across the city of Milwaukee for efforts to improve racial inequality and injustice in the coordinated branch library system.

### **Community Engagement in the Community Librarian Project**

The *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962-1971* introduced physical neighborhood library expansion to build and fit libraries into neighborhoods with goals of city-wide distribution and public library services. A component to achieve these goals stemmed from the implementation of programming, community engagement, outreach and equity using the Community Librarian Project.<sup>24</sup> The goal was to emphasize the recruitment of librarians who would foster relationships with their communities, “train to work with children and adults,” and to “think about their clientele” through their assigned neighborhood.<sup>25</sup> These ideas, instilled by Richard Krug, head librarian of MPL, earned their way into the foundation of the Community Librarian Project undertaken by the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services.

Initiated from the 1962 library plan, the Community Librarian Project was established to create change through the awareness of community and library collaboration. In 1963, the project launched in conjunction with the coordination of the branch library system and promoted education and service throughout neighborhoods in the city.<sup>26</sup> The community librarian “would work with disadvantaged people of the community in their places of business, homes and in their natural gathering places, such as churches, grocery stores, and social centers” and they would “develop relationships to connect disadvantaged patrons to existing library agencies.”<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>24</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 267.

<sup>25</sup> Ring, “Richard Krug,” 267-268.

<sup>26</sup> Notes from meeting: Role of the Community Librarian, Community Librarian, February 25, 1963, MPL records.

<sup>27</sup> Notes from meeting: Role of the Community Librarian, Community Librarian, February 25, 1963, MPL records.

community librarian would “coordinate and relate library progress to other educational agencies (school classes or educational centers), to information agencies (newspapers), to social agencies (daycare or recreation centers), to churches and to youth organizations” (see Figure 7).<sup>28</sup>

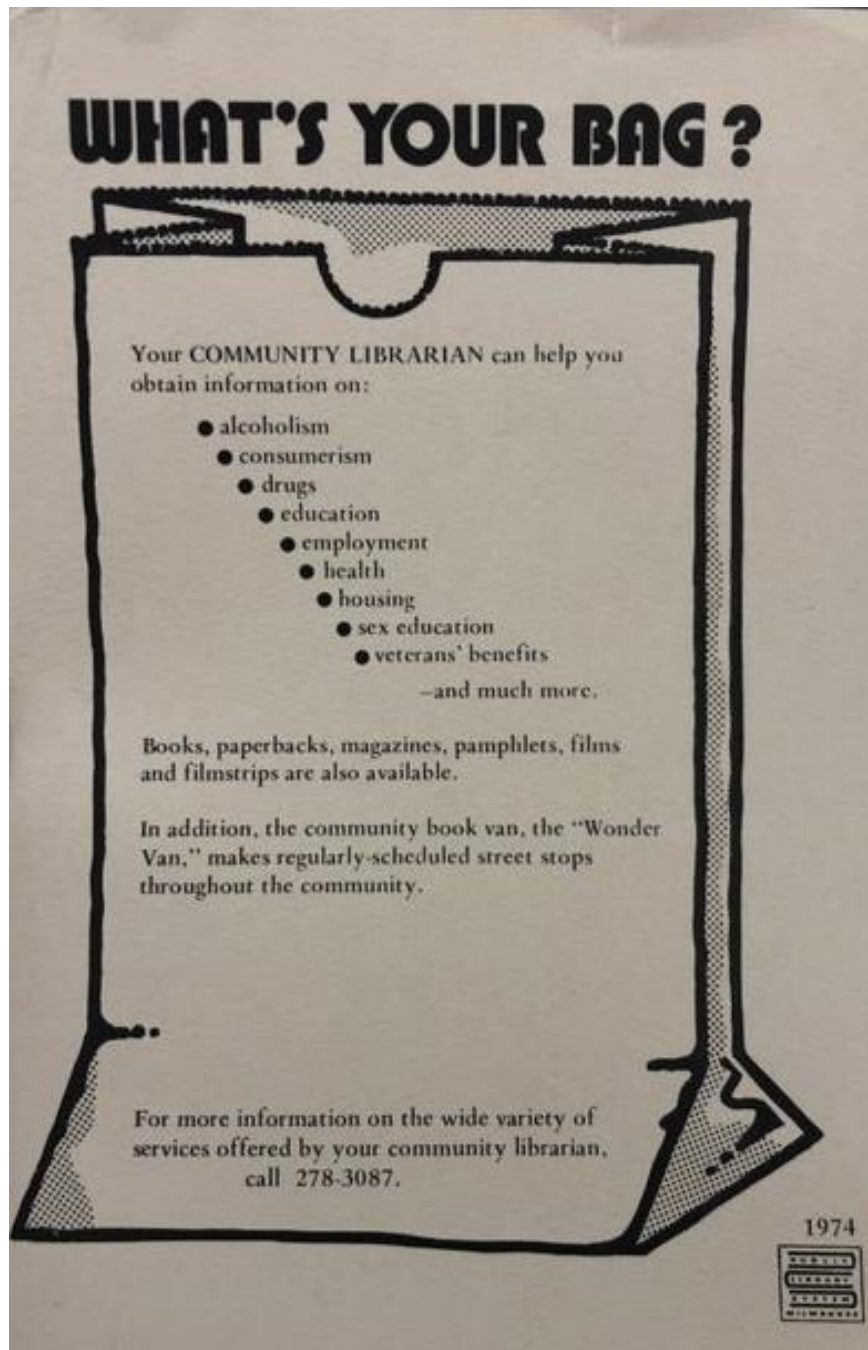


Figure 7. A Community Librarian Brochure Advertised to Library Patrons (1974). What's Your Bag, Community Librarian Judy Werner (1966-1967), MPL records.

<sup>28</sup> Notes from meeting: Role of the Community Librarian, Community Librarian, February 25, 1963, MPL records.

The community librarian served their designated neighborhood and library patrons, while fostering and encouraging system-wide planning for other libraries in the Milwaukee coordinated branch library system.<sup>29</sup> The Community Librarian Project assisted in MPL's goal to foster city-wide distribution through the circulation of books and material and public library service needs. To ensure consistency in community librarians across the city libraries, the guidelines of the Community Librarian Project emphasized areas like personnel. The community librarian had to have a social work background, library degree and a desire to solve city problems. They must orient themselves with community leaders and agencies and report to Mr. Neds, supervisor of the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services.<sup>30</sup>

There was typically one community librarian to each branch library in Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system. Each community librarian reported monthly on the current programming opportunities for their library and noted how the Community Librarian Project and their position duties were successful, could be improved and reach further community opportunities.<sup>31</sup> Operationally, the community librarian connected with groups throughout the city, including the Urban League, Neighbor to Neighbor Headquarters, churches, community councils in the area and the Milwaukee County Welfare Department to name a few. They also fostered visit groups, visited individual homes, developed reading programs, encouraged the use of the library and library programs and implemented workshop programs.<sup>32</sup>

These guidelines observed collaboration and cooperation between MPL, the community librarians and library patrons. Similarly, the training and hiring of successful candidates for the

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<sup>29</sup> Notes from meeting: Role of the Community Librarian (page 2), Community Librarian, February 25, 1963, MPL records.

<sup>30</sup> Community Librarian Services, Community Librarian Project, MPL records.

<sup>31</sup> Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, Community Librarian, MPL records.

<sup>32</sup> Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, Community Librarian, MPL records.

community librarian position was essential, “If the final goal of the project (that of getting people to the library) is to be realized then this type of working togetherness and rapport is something to be strived for.”<sup>33</sup>

Outwardly, the Community Librarian Project suggested that it could achieve success in improving city-wide public library services and circulation for library patrons. However, there remained a lack of efficiency from community librarians in neighborhood knowledge, funding from the city government and integration efforts with community residents. The performance of the Community Librarian Project opened insight into the reality of racial inequality and experiences of racial injustice across the city through branch libraries, but it certainly did not achieve major success.

### **The Failure of the Community Librarian Project**

The Community Librarian Project was designed to extend programming, outreach, city-wide circulation, and public library services to multiple neighborhoods in the city through the coordinated branch library system. Some of the developments of the plan included Spanish-speaking proposals on programming events, services to the handicapped and the blind and Book Van services.<sup>34</sup> These extensions were intended to service the needs of the community and establish the value of the library as a transforming and collaborative space for library patrons and their neighborhood. More importantly, the Community Librarian Project was established to improve racial equality and integration in branch libraries across the city. Though the Community Librarian Project did create meaningful interactions with the community and ignited

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<sup>33</sup> Community Librarian Monthly Report South (page 3-4), February 1968, Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, MPL records.

<sup>34</sup> The Book Van was a mobile library to extend door-to-door circulation for patrons who could travel to their local library. It housed built-in shelving and a storage unit; Community Librarian Monthly Report, June 1967, Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, MPL records.



partnerships between local agencies and the government, there remained gaps. The project attempted to achieve groundbreaking change and often collaborated on services that only instilled minor transformation for community development and to people of color, especially African Americans and the growing Latino population in Milwaukee.

By the 1920s, most of the Latino community settled near the South Side with the arrival of *Los Primeros*, the first Mexican colonia (or barrio).<sup>35</sup> The Latino population in Milwaukee was mainly Mexican, though there also included Puerto Ricans and South and Central Americans. Most of Latino population in Milwaukee migrated because of labor demand and agriculture. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, the Latino population fell under 1,500 and picked up again after World War II with growing urbanization and industrialization. The Latino community migrated to Milwaukee to harvest crops and resided in the Walker's Point neighborhood in the city's South Side.<sup>36</sup> By the 1960s, there were around 10,000 migrant workers and families residing in Milwaukee, where most faced discriminatory practices and forms of inequality, especially in the workplace. This racial inequality inspired social movement activism in the city during the 1950s and 1960s when union groups and labor activists like the Obreros Unidos, United Workers, and United Migrant Opportunities Services (UMOS) began.<sup>37</sup> Acknowledgement of Milwaukee's growing Latino population increased action to achieve public library service needs by the Milwaukee Public Library through the Community Librarian Project in the early 1970s.

However, these community librarians often lacked knowledge of their community and did not have full success or opportunity to foster integration efforts. MPL did not have access to

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph A. Rodriguez, "Mexicans," *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, accessed March 20, 2022, <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/mexicans/>.

<sup>36</sup> Rodriguez, "Mexicans."

<sup>37</sup> Joseph A. Rodriguez and Walter Sava, *Latinos in Milwaukee* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2006).

create such an implementation and the city government including the Common Council failed to address the key issues and problems of their wards to increase library funding.<sup>38</sup> A major failure of the Community Librarian Project was its overreaching goal to become a pillar of change in the community. It failed to create any achievable goals that could target such a change other than minor programming opportunities like the Book Van.<sup>39</sup> The Community Librarian Project seemed structurally sound in its efforts to create value in the city, but ultimately fell short of performing partnership and engagement between the library, community and the government.<sup>40</sup> These developments stemmed from the inconsistent effects of library expansion and the failure of the Common Council to address racial inequalities to neighborhood libraries like Locust Library.

In a Community Librarian Monthly Report from 1968, community librarian, Judith Werner addressed the lack of orientation or familiarity with the area they represented. Werner noted the “lack of written material concerning the community,” which appeared as “to the fact that the aldermen are afraid, biased or simply are not concerned with the poor to admit that they exist.”<sup>41</sup> Werner went on to state that “denial by the political power structure that deprived, and ‘disadvantaged’ are a part of the reality on the South Side has undoubtedly curbed many constructive efforts. It partly accounts for the few social agencies and lack of organization which is characteristic of the South side.”<sup>42</sup> A separate community librarian, name unknown, reported

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<sup>38</sup> Monthly Report Community Library Project, 1966 November, Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, MPL records.

<sup>39</sup> Donna U. Vogt, Report on Community Library Project as Participated in by Peace Corps Volunteer, Community Librarian Judy Werner (1966-1967), MPL records.

<sup>40</sup> Vogt, Report on Community Library Project as Participated in by Peace Corps Volunteer, Community Librarian Judy Werner (1966-1967), MPL records.

<sup>41</sup> Community Librarian Monthly Report South, February 1968, Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, MPL records.

<sup>42</sup> Community Librarian Monthly Report South, February 1968, Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, MPL records.

that most agencies near branch libraries did not view the library as a vehicle for change, and that the role of the community librarian should foster a communication bridge between the library and people, as well as the patron and library staff, where unfortunately, this effort was not implemented successfully.<sup>43</sup>

The Community Librarian Project handled minor interactions between the community and the library through the establishment of the Book Van, Spanish-speaking projects, services for those who were handicapped or blind, daycare assistance and senior service programs. However, there was no assertion of goals to ensure effective change in city-wide distribution or manage and track the efficiency of the project. The Community Librarian Project was even concerning for those who were community librarians. One explained, “By this I mean that activity should have a focal point aimed at achieving goals related to the library. Working in a poverty area, it is easy to forget that we are working for the library. I question the working role of the library and the related goals of the community librarian project.”<sup>44</sup>

Around 1975, the Neighborhood Libraries and Extension Services and the Community Librarian Project ended. The results of the organization and programming intended growth in city-wide distribution and circulation of books and material and increased public library service opportunities through each branch library in Milwaukee’s coordinated branch library system. However, the Community Librarian Project lacked “in changing people’s view toward the library as a strictly middle-class institution to one of the libraries as an institution concerned with social change, committed to serving the deprived and disadvantaged and willing to meet the poor on

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<sup>43</sup> Community Librarian Monthly Report South (page 3), February 1968, Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, MPL records.

<sup>44</sup> Dianne Terliocke, Community Librarian Monthly Report South, date unknown, Community Librarian - South Program, MPL records.

their terms with a non-judgmental attitude.”<sup>45</sup> By 1976, neighborhood libraries in Milwaukee appeared to foster relative change in community engagement and partnerships. However, there remained a lack of action from the Common Council to emphasize library collaboration with communities of color, especially African Americans and the growing Latino population.

### **Milwaukee’s Coordinated Branch Library System’s Efforts toward Equality**

Milwaukee’s coordinated branch library system aimed to connect residents and communities to branch libraries to ultimately address the lack of access to libraries and city-wide circulation of material during the 1960s and 1970s. These endeavors promoted ideas of equality in the city and presented MPL’s goal in creating connections for the library in addressing city problems and emphasizing community opportunities. However, the physical expansion of branch libraries does not altogether imply that Milwaukee’s coordinated branch library program fulfilled opportunities in access, equality, and city-wide distribution for residents, and it does not mean that the creation of MPL’s coordinated branch library system led toward inclusive services for all potential patrons in the city.

In fact, the Milwaukee Public Library and the Common Council did not prioritize goals of equality in the *Ten-Year Library Plan* or reporting in the *1973 Library Report*. They failed to recognize how racial injustice across the city affected the process and progress of library development in the 1960s and by the 1970s. The results of the planning and construction of Locust Library in 1971 demonstrated the power and privilege of fiscal frugality over patron services and needs. Moreover, the development of public library services and programming for patrons, including the Neighborhoods Libraries and Extension Services and the Community

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<sup>45</sup> Community Librarian Monthly Report South (page 2), February 1968, Community Librarian Monthly Reports 1966-1969, MPL records.

Librarian Project failed to initiate goals or priorities toward racial equity with little support for funding. Multiple factors were dominated by fiscal frugality and clearly represented the lack of efforts toward equality. Only so long as MPL's budget allowed, and the Common Council approved, did opportunities for equity occur.

MPL participated in these small steps toward equality through public library service projects like the Community Librarian Project. As explained Judith Werner, a community librarian at the Milwaukee Public Library, "It is almost impossible for the white person to realize how acutely color conscious the Black person is forced to be in America today."<sup>46</sup> This implication stated that these projects were only an appearance to appease communities of color, largely the African American population and growing Latino population across Milwaukee neighborhoods, including the Locust Library in the Thirteenth Ward. The legacy of Locust Library remains an example of how MPL, the Common Council and the city government failed to address the racial inequality and changing racial demographics of the Thirteenth Ward in the 1960s and by the 1970s in Milwaukee.

### **The Legacy of Locust Library by 1972**

By 1972, the name-change of Locust Library to the Martin Luther King Library (MLK) in the Thirteenth Ward became a promotion of Milwaukee's promise to commit to the principles of justice and equality. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood for these values in his service in life. The preservation of historic moments and individuals in society through markers, monuments and historic landscapes can be met with results of racism and white supremacy through the glorification of placing names on specific sites and calling it as though justice and equity was

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<sup>46</sup> Essay, "It is almost impossible," Community Librarian Judy Werner (1966-1967), MPL records.

served in the neighborhood.<sup>47</sup> The name-change from Locust Library to MLK demonstrated how commemorative community spaces constitute personal understanding of the city, while asserting racial inequality and remaining the tokenism to handle injustice in city neighborhoods.<sup>48</sup> Ironically, the Common Council failed to address racial inequality amongst branch library development in the 1962 library plan and through the 1973 library report.

Little was done by the Common Council and other government agencies beyond the name-change to analyze the framework and structure of library development on changing racial demographics and racial inequality by the 1970s. Upon the death of a civil rights leader, MLK, the importance racial equality of Locust Library in the Thirteenth Ward became more prominent.<sup>49</sup> This memorial tribute was authorized by the Common Council and the Library Board of Trustees, where the name-change felt more like an appeasement to undermine the actual issues of equity in the Thirteenth Ward after the long-run negotiations and arguments of library access at Locust Library during the 1960s. This outcome became a resolution to discredit the underlying themes of racial inequality and lack of improvement at Locust Library from MPL or the Common Council.

The name change from Locust Library to the Martin Luther King Library was a small initiative in the widespread inequality and injustice that existed in Milwaukee. Moreover, the expansion of branch libraries across the city demonstrated how frequently racial inequity was tied to library development and the Milwaukee Public Library. In a 1966 interview “Community Action Agency in Service to Disadvantaged,” Evelyn Levy, staff librarian at Enoch Pratt Free

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<sup>47</sup> James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: New Press, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> Ayodeji Oladipo Obayomi, "Milwaukee's Unequally Gendered Commemorative Street Names (1920-2021)," (Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2021); In similar fashion, the naming of Milwaukee's 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to King in the 1980s in recognition of Dr. Martin Luther King's passing contributed to the culture, race and historical influence of Milwaukee's treatment and acknowledgment of neighborhoods.

<sup>49</sup> Letter by Ald. Pitts, Martin Luther King Branch Construction Collection, MPL records.

Library and Margaret Monroe noted that “the library experience is important up to a point, in terms of being able to estimate what the library can mean in the lives of people.”

Racial inequality that occurred in Milwaukee during the 1960s and 1970s was inherently fixed to the development of branch libraries under the *Ten-Year Library Plan* and Milwaukee’s coordinated branch library system. The creation of these plans led to the successful completion of city-wide circulation and access to libraries for patrons, along with increased opportunities in education and literacy for city residents. However, it was not flawless and had long-term consequences. The *Ten-Year Library Plan* and its resolutions and recommendations in the *1973 Library Report* showed how little MPL or the Common Council addressed library development through racial inequality or changing racial demographics in neighborhoods. These outcomes led to frequent inconsistency across branch libraries and their development in Milwaukee and a lack of action toward or insight on equitable opportunities in programming and outreach. As Levy suggested, “On the other hand, I think it also must be a person who has some understanding of social conditions, of what it means to live in the poor parts of our city. All of us can understand this only up to a point because we are not living in that area. Therefore, I think it is important to be more understanding of the shortcomings of the people who come in.”<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

The *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* achieved the success of expanding branch libraries across the city of Milwaukee. Still, this success was not faultless. Conditions on guidelines and principles demonstrated that no branch library could be like its counterpart and that changing racial demographics and racial inequality of each neighborhood must be

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<sup>50</sup> Interview Transcript with Evelyn Levy, Enoch Pratt Free Library and Margaret Monroe, April 1966, Community Librarian, MPL records.

acknowledged. The development of the Neighborhood Extension Libraries and Services and the program, Community Librarian Project, was a start to improve equity across the branch libraries but led to incremental progress and a limited scope in community development and racial inequality. The 1962 library plan proposed a desire for library access and city-wide distribution through the expansion of branch libraries across the city. But it failed in promoting equal opportunity in neighborhoods like the Thirteenth Ward and those often in disadvantaged areas.



## Conclusion

This thesis examined the impact of public library expansion in the city of Milwaukee during the 1960s and 1970s with particular focus on the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971*. The creation of the library plan led to the development of nine new branch libraries in the city by 1971 and generated efforts toward city-wide circulation, programming and public library service needs like education and literacy opportunities for patrons in the city under Milwaukee's coordinated branch library system.

Acknowledging the development of library expansion in Milwaukee emphasizes the importance of libraries in city development and for library patrons in the United States. Library historian Wayne Wiegand called this period, 1964-1980, "the second golden age of American public libraries, and with reason. In 1964, the United States had 9,517 public libraries (3,376 were branches). Six years later, the country had 14,653 public libraries (including 5,936 branches), the population served had increased from 73 percent to 96 percent."<sup>1</sup> Milwaukee's *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* succeeded in the physical construction of new branch libraries in Milwaukee, which in turn encouraged new developments in community involvement and partnerships. However, the 1962 library plan failed to recognize how racial inequality and changing racial demographics affected library development in Milwaukee's neighborhoods during the 1960s and 1970s and led to long-term consequences in the city.

Today, the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) has continued its coordinated branch library system with fourteen branch libraries in its city borders. Since the early 2010s, MPL has redeveloped almost all its branch libraries that opened under the 1962 library plan, including

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne A. Wiegand, *Part of Our Lives: A People's History of the American Public Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 193.

Atkinson, Forest Home, Oklahoma (now Zablocki), Villard Avenue, East, Tippecanoe, Mill Road, and Capitol. Despite its initial shortcomings, Locust Library, now known as the Martin Luther King Library (MLK) has never been redeveloped. Since 1971, the MLK Library has remained in the Thirteenth Ward under the same conditions that were set by the Common Council in the 1960s.

Ongoing plans to open a new mixed-use facility that continues to serve the neighborhood population are scheduled for 2023. The new structure will be built upon the current site and will “be larger, with better access to technology, and will feature flexible spaces similar to our other new branches in the system like East, Mitchell and Good Hope.”<sup>2</sup> MPL has been facilitating an online survey regarding community interest in the redevelopment of MLK with open-ended questions that seek prominent features and values of the community.<sup>3</sup>

These plans are important to acknowledge in review of the *Ten-Year Library Plan of 1962 to 1971* in Milwaukee because it represents how branch library development is crucial at the time of its construction and how it remains a part of the neighborhood for future generations. Therefore, the recognition of changing racial demographics and racial inequality that continues to remain in the city of Milwaukee is important to recognize in library development because it builds upon itself with long-term effects. Most importantly, the redevelopment of MLK Library represents that library development continues to be important and that location sites are still in question in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>2</sup> Katie Crowther, “Government Funds for Milwaukee will Help Redevelop MLK Library Branch into Upgraded Community Apace,” WTMJ-TV Milwaukee, accessed on February 23, 2022, <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/government-funds-for-milwaukee-will-help-redevelop-mlk-library-branch-into-upgraded-community-space>.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther King, Milwaukee Public Library, accessed on March 3, 2022, [https://mpl.org/hours\\_locations/mlking.php](https://mpl.org/hours_locations/mlking.php).

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