Located on the “Town Square,” it contained 4,000 square feet and by the late 1960’s had become severely overcrowded. August 12, 1968, marked the date for the groundbreaking of the new 9,600 square foot library on the corner of Fremont and Main Streets. The site was designed for twenty-eight parking spaces. Opening on December 8, 1969, the building served the community well for almost twenty-five years. As the area grew and circulation of materials increased, workspace for library staff began to take up more and more of the public reading room area. Comfortable seating areas for library patrons and room for a growing library collection were no longer possible. Surveys of the community determined a need for more materials, programs, and services than the library could handle at this facility. In 1987 a Long-Range Planning Committee (made up of members of the library board, staff, community business persons, and area residents) was formed to plot the course for the library’s future. Studies were done to determine the costs of expansion of the existing building. Over the next three years it was decided that the library still lacked the space it needed, and planning for the new library location began.

Library History

In 1904, the Lowell area had a small subscription library of 500 books. Members paid dues and borrowed books free of charge. The Lowell Library was organized in 1917 and consisted of two small rooms housed on the second floor of Lizzie Davis’ hat shop.

The Lowell “Public” Library (one that is supported in whole or in part by local taxation) became a reality in 1920 through the hard work of local residents and a large donation from the Carnegie Corporation. The new (one and one-half story) library was typical of Carnegie construction. Located on the “Town Square,” it contained 4,000 square feet and by the late 1960’s had become severely overcrowded. August 12, 1968, marked the date for the groundbreaking of the new 9,600 square foot library on the corner of Fremont and Main Streets. The site was designed for twenty-eight parking spaces. Opening on December 8, 1969, the building served the community well for almost twenty-five years.

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Draft Horses Used to Clear Land

The property for the library’s current location was purchased in 1990. A team of Belgian horses, capable of pulling more than a four ton load, were part of the conservation efforts of the library board to protect the handsome trees that shade the building site. On the recommendation of a consulting forester, some fifty trees were tagged for sale. After they were cut, the problem of removing them without harming other trees in the woods was solved by bringing in the horses. They could weave in and out of the difficult areas without harming the rest of the landscape. The event was captured on video and placed in the library’s historical collection.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 5, 1992, and construction began. The present library building was completed on November 7, 1993.
PROVIDING FOR THE PRESENT—The library users of today demand far more than just books. They want magazines, compact discs, DVDs, meeting room space, and programs for all ages. The library was designed to meet those demands and to remain adaptable when needs change.

The Library

The library is nestled among mature native Indiana hardwood trees. The building is intended to be a gathering place for the community, transcending the traditional concept of a library. The 24,000-square-foot building is over twice the size of the former library.

The exterior is clad in materials of rich earth tones. A grand arched window of Palladian proportions graces the front of the library.

More than one hundred spaces provide ample room for parking at our main entrance. Special bricks on either side of the entrance walls bear the names of many donors to the library’s furnishing fund. Inside, the lobby includes a quarry tile floor, while vaulted ceilings focus attention on the main circulation desk.

Meeting rooms flank the lobby, space for use by non-profit organizations and for library programs. Each meeting room has a cozy kitchen area. A twenty-five-foot high clerestory area rises through the center of the library permitting natural light to fill the building’s interior. The circulation desk rests under a trellised canopy in the center of the main room. The staff workroom surrounds the circulation desk, allowing library staff to be available to patrons in all areas of the building. Fanning out from the circulation desk are the children’s department, young adult area, audio/visual, adult fiction, magazines and newspapers, adult non-fiction, Indiana and reference sections.

Designed To Meet Community Needs

The library is designed for accessibility for persons with disabilities with automatic doors, wide aisles between rows of shelving, and carrels at special heights for wheel chairs. A separate restroom for people with disabilities, as well as their attendants, is located in the foyer.

Energy conservation was given high priority in the planning of the library. Windows are double glazed thermal break with operating sections for natural ventilation when desired. The facility is insulated with six-inch side wall insulation and twelve-inch attic insulation. Natural gas furnaces provide controlled zoning to the various sections of the library. Lighting is high-efficiency in design and controls. Modular carpet squares were chosen for the flooring to allow easy access for future wiring needs.

The library district serves over 20,000 people and offers programs and services for all age groups. The service area includes the towns of Lowell, Shelby, and Schneider, the community of Lake Dalecarlia, and the townships of Eagle Creek, Cedar Creek, and West Creek.

Throughout the year a variety of programs, workshops, classes, and craft-making sessions are scheduled at the Lowell Public Library for patrons of all ages. One of the most popular are the free computer classes, held several times each week. Join us to learn computer and internet basics and Microsoft Word and Excel.

The library is a drop-off site of donations for various non-profit organizations in our community.
Reference

The reference area is located at the south end of the library. A reference desk is located in that area as well as seven study rooms, two of which as smaller computer rooms. Two large windows on the west side provide an excellent setting for leisure reading and a view of the splendid woods.

Card catalog computers are conveniently located in three areas of the library: children’s, young adult, and the new book catalog in the area as well. Is there something you need that we don’t have? Through a contractual agreement with the Lake County Library, local patrons can request many of their materials and have them sent to the Lowell Public Library. In addition, items may be available through the state library borrowing system (srcs).

A microfilm reader is available in order to view past issues of the Lowell Tribune. An index of births, deaths, and marriages from the newspaper (1920-2008) is on our website, making it easier to find exactly what you want.

Lowell history on our website is maintained by reference staff. Newspaper articles, photos, biographies, a yearbook name/photo index (1915-2007), and Halsted House Museum documents and photos are just a few of the things you can find on the site.

The Children’s Room

The large children’s room provides an inviting atmosphere to promote reading and encourage creativity.

Youngsters can “hitch a ride” on the library tractor and wagons. They are made of wood with padded seats and are finished in bright, vibrant colors.

The Arts are represented by six small chairs painted by Indiana artist Carole Boller. Each chair’s unique design symbolizes one of the arts. Three walls of handpainted murals (by artist Dennis Orlowski) represent an ocean, the jungle, and locally, the various wildlife in Evergreen Park.

Scheduled programs such as Toddler Time (two to three year olds), Story Time (four to five year olds), and Craft Corner (children birth age through the fifth grade), are held during the fall, winter, and spring months.

Summer Reading Club, an eight-week summer program for children, is filled with special activities and events. Our annual Santa’s Story Time is another example of the programming designed for children to foster their life-long love of reading.

Young Adult Area

The young adult area is filled with books of popular appeal for young teens, in addition to books on CD, specific to the age group, sixth to twelfth grade.

A large study table is flanked with four wood chairs.

Study carrels line one side of the young adult section. There are two “Young Adult Use Only” internet computers and a card catalog in the area as well. Young adults engage in many different activities during the year. Young adults are encouraged to join in on Summer Reading activities from reading contests to volunteering at the library.

The remaining months of the year, young adults can attend many programs such as crafts, book discussions, bean bag games, cooking classes and BBQs, game nights, video game tournaments, movie nights, ghost stories, manicures, sign language classes, Red Cross babysitting classes, and more.

Do you have a question? Can’t find what you need? Ask at the reference desk!
FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE—No one knows what the future will bring. The role of assessing and predicting demand is a challenging one for libraries in an age when communications and information technology are constantly changing. One of the goals of the Lowell Public Library is to prepare for tomorrow while remaining adaptable as changes occur.