



*NOTE: This is the twelfth—and final—in a series of articles that were released monthly throughout 2017 as part of the celebration of the NH State Library's 300th anniversary. The State Library was founded in Jan. 25, 1717 and is the first state library in America.*

## **300 years in, what is the future of NH libraries?**

**December 2017:** Throughout 2017, the New Hampshire State Library has been celebrating its 300th anniversary. Founded by the General Assembly in 1717 to provide “two books wch (sic) shall be for ye Govr (sic) & Council (sic) & house of representatives,” we are the first state library in America, founded even before New Hampshire was a state and the United States a country. Those two books have grown to a collection of more than 600,000 items, and our work supports every community in the state.

It's been a fun year reaching out and spreading the word about New Hampshire's library history through both traditional and social media. New Hampshire rightly claims other “library firsts” for the U.S.—first public library, first library association—but firsts by their nature occur in the past. While libraries are proud stewards of our history, they're equally proud to be on the forefront of what's new.

As some of the most adaptable institutions in our society, New Hampshire's libraries reflect the ever-changing needs and wants of their patrons. People have been drawn to our libraries for generations because of the ways that librarians adapt services in ways that best serve their communities.

Take a moment to think about the technology you use today and how it has advanced in the past five, ten or twenty years. Whether your television, your phone, your car or something else, these technologies have made adjustments to fulfill what consumers want and to make their lives better. That's how they stay relevant—and the same is true for libraries.

While print materials are still the major component of most libraries, today's collections often mean that what you check out to read isn't limited to what's printed on paper but also includes what is available in digital form. E-books and downloadable audiobook collections give you access to thousands of titles that can augment the traditional print ones your library has available, either on its shelves or through the State Library's InterLibrary Loan service.

Students and researchers used to have to spend hours looking through professional journals, periodicals, reports and other print data resources to find the facts they needed. Today, electronic databases make it possible for library patrons to access more information than most libraries could otherwise hold, and they are updated more quickly than could ever happen when the information was available only in print form.

Libraries are of course information centers, but they are vibrant community centers, too. No longer exclusively used for quiet reading and research, libraries hum with the joyful noise of babies enjoying lap-sit sessions, teens preparing for a FIRST Robotics Competition, adults sharing tips on everything from cooking to car repair to astronomy—often using baking pans, tools and telescopes they've checked out of their library—and seniors creating models using their library's 3D printer. The activities that take place at your public library are a direct reflection of your community's interests.

While no one can predict what will next capture the interest of the public, we can all rest assured that New Hampshire's libraries have the capability to be nimble and adjust to their patrons' evolving needs. And has been the case for more than 300 years, the future of libraries in New Hampshire will be shaped by their patrons: you, me and the generations that come after us. So visit your public library often, become a part of what makes it great and be sure to share with others the proud history—and future—of New Hampshire's libraries.

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