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# A Twenty-Five-Year-Old Dream Becomes Reality

Nancy F. Bates

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The Lexington Public Library, founded in 1928 as part of the Davidson County Public Library System, had never been in a building designed and constructed for library service until June, 1985. Prior to that time, the facility had been housed in four different locations ranging from a small store to a former post office building.

As far back as 1962, efforts had been made to secure a new building but each time some other need—a new school, hospital, YMCA—superceded that of the library. When I arrived in 1974, the Lexington facility had been located in the old postal building for only four years but already space was at such a premium that my office was moved to the nearby Chamber of Commerce building. In 1974, a concentrated effort was begun to focus county commissioners' attention on the problem

by emphasizing the need at each budget presentation. As a result of this action and a 1976 county space assessment, the library was placed fifth on a list of county building priorities. The more in-depth 1979 community analysis, prepared by the library staff as a requirement for receipt of state aid, was also presented to the Board of County Commissioners and generated considerable publicity for the library's space needs.

By 1981, the Library Board of Trustees had taken the initiative by commissioning Hoyt Galvin of Charlotte to do an analysis of the Lexington Library building. This report revealed the immediate space requirements to be three times that presently available in the old postal building. The Galvin report was presented to the county commissioners in April, 1981, and received favorable but cautious response. A commissioner was appointed to work with the library board on seeking potential sites for a new building; however, the

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The new Davidson County Public Library is a renovated grocery store.

trustees were advised that such a project would have to be a community effort not one funded solely with tax dollars. Further credibility was extended to the project that year when both the city and county governments appropriated \$65,000 toward purchase of a site.

The search for sites continued until late 1982 when three-quarters of a city block of downtown property became available for the very reasonable price of \$375,000. The site included two buildings, one containing 20,000 square feet, the other 14,000. After consultations with Mr. Galvin and architects, the decision was made to renovate the 20,000 square foot structure and retain the smaller building as an income generating property until it would be needed for future expansion. Architects were hired and schematic drawings and design work were developed to give the

public an idea of the building's potential.

Prospects for immediate action on renovation were enhanced with the receipt of a \$200,000 state grant in July, 1983. Thereafter, events unfolded rapidly. A feasibility study was commissioned to determine the public's support for the library building program and the very positive results enabled the board of trustees to hire a consultant to manage a \$600,000 building fund campaign. The campaign's organizational phase began in September and by May, 1984, pledges in excess of \$636,000 had been received.

A 25-year-old dream became a reality on June 30, 1985, with the formal opening of the Lexington Library. Over 500 people attended the ceremony which was highlighted by the dedicatory address delivered by Dr. William C. Friday, President of the University of North Carolina.

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