

History of the Pointe-Claire Public Library

In 1965, the Pointe-Claire Public Library was established as a municipal service. However, the library's beginnings dates from the end of World War II when the Valois Citizens' Association established the first library in old building located in Valois. The library was housed in a small wooden cabin at the corner of Summerhill and Queen avenues. In 1950, thanks to a local branch of the Canadian Home Reading Union, the Stewart Hall branch, first known as the Pointe-Claire Memorial Library, opened its doors on Victoria Street.

The first Valois Library

In the 1950s and early 1960s, both libraries were run entirely by volunteers. Library membership fees, fines and small municipal grants provided some revenue, but it was primarily volunteer donations and fund-raising activities that provided the library with operating funds. More stable funding became increasingly necessary, and in 1960, the libraries submitted a joint request for financing to the City, and in 1965, these efforts finally bore fruit.

In the late 1950s, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Stewart donated the mansion that now bears their name, Stewart Hall, to the City of Pointe-Claire. In 1962, the Pointe-Claire Memorial Library moved into the building. That same year, the Valois Library moved into new premises on Summerhill where it would remain until 1990.

In 1963, one administration was formed to operate both libraries. Two years later, a municipal By-Law was adopted which established a bilingual public library in Pointe-Claire with a branch in Valois and one in Stewart Hall. Funding would henceforth come from municipal and provincial grants.

In 1974, the library moved its headquarters to a new 18 800 square foot building located next to Pointe-Claire City Hall and the Civic Centre. The new premises allowed the library to offer a broader range of collections, services and activities to the community. During the 1980s a toy lending library was established, videos and compact discs were added to the collection, and planning for the automation of the library was already underway.

In spring of 1992 the Valois branch moved again, this time to a former school located on Prince-Edward Avenue. The new, more spacious location allowed the collection to expand, and sound recordings as well as French language books were added to the Valois collection.

The automation of the library began the same year with the implementation of the Best-Seller software, and the project was completed with the opening of the circulation module in early 1994.

The high level of community support and of library use encouraged the Municipal Council to expand the central library. In 1994, the reference and periodical rooms and the children's department were also expanded.

CD-ROM workstations were introduced in the adult reference section and a circulating CD-ROM collection was and still is being developed. In October 1996, thanks to a grant from the Québec

government and support from the municipal administration, the library inaugurated public access to the Internet at the Central branch. The same service was later offered to patrons at the Stewart Hall and Valois branches.

In 2001, the graphic version of the Best-Seller public catalogue became available, and the Pointe-Claire Public Library's web site was inaugurated allowing members to consult the catalog and their patron record via the Internet.

During the merger period with the City of Montréal, between 2002 and the end of 2005, the library membership and circulation statistics have increased, as all residents on the Island were offered free membership. 2002 also saw the establishment of a DVD collection available for loan. The closing of the Stewart Hall branch marked the beginning of 2004, and a reading room was opened on the premises in the following months.

In 2005, the Pointe-Claire Public Library celebrated its 40th Anniversary. Many special activities were offered to the community to commemorate the occasion. With the reconstitution of the City of Pointe-Claire in January 2006, the library is gradually recovering its original clientele.

At the beginning of 2007 the library was closed for a few weeks in order to undergo major renovations, one of which was to merge the two circulation desks into a larger and more efficient one. At the same time high tech solutions were being implemented at the central library, such as, wireless Internet at the beginning of 2007 and a self-service checkout station in 2008.