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Georgia Library Spotlight - Athens-Clarke County Library, Athens, Georgia

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GLA SPOTLIGHT

Athens-Clarke County Library Athens, Georgia

The Athens-Clarke County Library celebrated two major milestones in April with a series of special programs and events. Not only did April mark the end of the library's long-running construction project, but this year is also the library's 100th

anniversary. In 1913, the Athens Library Association received its charter. For one cent per day per item, Athenians could borrow from the small collection of 500 books, which was housed in a room in the Athens Railway

and Electric Company Building. The small library had 200 registered readers. The one-cent-per-day fee helped pay for rebinding of books and purchase of new books.

Through the years, the library moved around town as it grew, first to a building adjacent to the National Bank of Athens on Broad Street in 1936, then to the YMCA building at the corner of Lumpkin and Broad streets in 1937, to the Stern House at the corner of Hancock Street and College Avenue in 1949, to Dougherty Street in 1970, and finally to its current home on Baxter Street in 1992. The Baxter Street building has just completed a \$10 million renovation and expansion project, which began in May 2011 and includes two additions and a complete makeover for the entire building. With the additions, the formerly 63,000-square-foot building is now 83,000 square feet. The library now has a larger Heritage Room for local history and genealogy, a larger and newly



designed Children's Department, more room for books and other materials, and a new 300-seat multipurpose room.

With the renovation also came the arrival of self-checkout and an automated materials handling system, which automatically checks in returned items and sorts them into bins for quicker return to the shelves, freeing library

staff to assist patrons with more complex requests. A formal dedication and grand opening of the building took place on Sunday, April 7.

In one hundred years, the library's collection has grown from a small room of books with a

weekly story hour for children to a full-service resource center and hub of regional library services with access to thousands of items—housed both locally and throughout the state—dozens of programs for all ages each month, and more. From 200 registered readers one hundred years ago, the number of registered patrons has grown to over 66,000 in Athens alone. Those patrons checked out more than one million items last year. To commemorate its one hundred years serving the Athens community, the Athens-Clarke County Library hosted a month full of exciting programs in April. Every department held special events, including Family Fun Day sponsored by the Friends of the Athens-Clarke County Library, a visit by Georgia author Joshilyn Jackson, an Edible Book Contest, and more.

Visit the Athens-Clarke County Library website at <http://www.clarke.public.lib.ga.us>.