

The Outside Came Inside at the Huntington Beach Public Library

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series about libraries in California that are new and/or have unique architecture. Written by Richard Moore who is a Huntington Beach Public Library and CALTAC board member.

Imagine a library where you can take a leisurely stroll down a circular walkway while listening to a fountain and the sound of running water, on your way to get coffee and a snack at the café. Welcome to the Huntington Beach Public Library!

The Huntington Beach Public Library was founded in 1909. In March 1933, the Carnegie Library was severely damaged by the Long Beach earthquake. It was not repaired until after World War II in 1949.

The current Huntington Beach Public Library was envisioned in 1967 when librarian Walter Johnson created a program citing the library needs for a growing community and the library board selected the Talbert Avenue site. The City Council placed the library program on the ballot, but the issue failed in the 1968 election. With approximately 62 percent of the vote in favor of the library, however, the council decided to fund the project through the creation of a Public Facilities Corporation and created a five-man corporation for this purpose.

The Library Board toured libraries in California that had recently been constructed. They chose Richard & Dion Neutra to design the new library. The site had been selected because of its centralized location, both geographically and by population, and because of the natural beauty surrounding it. A ten-acre plot of land was purchased for the site, including part of Talbert Lake, and the new Central Library and Cultural Center opened in 1975.

With increased use as a vital community resource through two decades, in the 1990s plans were made to expand. The City of Huntington Beach hired Anthony & Langford to design a 43,000 square foot expansion. Under the direction of the new and enterprising young library director, Ron Hayden, the Central library building was expanded to enclose the outdoor spiral ramp and fountain area. The new wing opened in 1994 and included a new Children's area with its own story time theater. The lower level featured seven new meeting rooms and a 319-seat theater.

Huntington Beach Public Library is now a medium sized public library with a collection of approximately 450,000 books, 450 magazine subscriptions, 6,000 videotapes, 4,000 compact discs, 3,500 books on cassette and books on CD, and 700 DVDs. In addition to the typical items of a medium sized public library, it also has a large genealogy collection.

So, come on in, browse, relax, and sip some coffee at the Huntington Beach Public Library.

More, including photos: <http://www.stockteam.com/hbplib2.html>