

Peterborough Town Library

First Tax Supported Library in the United States

In 1833, the first tax-supported free library in the United States was established in [Peterborough](#), New Hampshire. In an era of subscription libraries, it was a revolutionary concept that the town owned the books and citizens could read them for free!

A few years later, in 1849, the New Hampshire State Legislature passed a law authorizing towns to raise money to establish and maintain their own libraries, the first state to pass a law of this nature. Today, RSA 202-A:1, states:

Mindful that, as the constitution declares, "knowledge and learning, generally diffused through a community" are "essential to the preservation of a free government" the legislature recognizes its duty to encourage the people of New Hampshire to extend their education during and beyond the years of formal education. To this end, it hereby declares that the public library is a valuable supplement to the formal system of free public education and as such deserves adequate financial support from government at all levels.