



NOTE: This is the first in a series of articles that were released monthly throughout 2017 as part of the celebration of the NH State Library's 300th anniversary. The State Library was founded in Jan. 25, 1717 and is the first state library in America.

In 2017 Celebrate Another "FIRST IN THE NATION" for NH

January 25, 2017: New Hampshire is known for being first for many things: we hold the First in the Nation Primary, we ratified the first state constitution, founded the first public library in the United States and more. But you might not know that we also were the first state in America to have a State Library.

On January 25, 1717 in Portsmouth, the Twenty-Seventh General Assembly “voted that ye Law books be distributed among ye several towns of this Province in proportion according to their last Prov. tax, except two books which shall be for ye use of ye Govr & Council and house of representatives.” This law—made when New Hampshire was still part of England and almost 60 years before there even was a United States—makes it clear that the members of the provincial government knew that libraries are vital places of information and need to be a cornerstone of how we go about our business.

The “Law books” set aside for elected officials were the beginnings of the New Hampshire State Library, and they began a long history of libraries in New Hampshire communities: Peterborough is the first library in the country supported by public funds; “social libraries,” where members shared books and paid dues, flourished across the state in the early 1800s; philanthropists funded many public libraries—both the buildings and what went into them—a hundred years later. Soon, every city and town in New Hampshire had a library, proof that our citizens valued libraries as integral facets of our communities.

Three hundred years after it was founded, the State Library continues to serve the people of the New Hampshire by providing services that keep the libraries in our communities strong. The State Library’s professional development staff offers workshops for librarians that keep them up to speed on the most cutting-edge aspects of library science, thereby allowing them to deliver the very best library services to their patrons. We serve as a central point of delivery for both public and school libraries, helping them to share resources and strengthen their purchasing power. We also are a working library with patrons who come from across the state and the country to use our collection of more than 600,000 items, including books about New Hampshire, books by New Hampshire authors and illustrators, newspaper archives, genealogy documents, government documents and library science materials.

Throughout 2017, we’ll be celebrating the State Library’s 300th anniversary as well as New Hampshire’s strong library tradition. Look for articles in newspapers, postings to our Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/nhsl>, Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/nhstatelibrary>, and a special section on the NH State Library website: <https://www.nh.gov/nhsl/news-events/nhsl300thanniversary.html> and more.

We encourage you to play your part, too, just as those who have come before you have. You’re welcome to visit us here at 20 Park St. in Concord, right across from the State House, and be sure to take advantage of the many services that your public library has to offer. You’ll be in good company when you do.

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