

Mission

The Samuels Public Library Mission Statement is to bring people, information, and ideas together to enrich lives, and build community.



History

Every major step forward for the Library since its beginning in 1799 was achieved through good faith negotiations with the goal of finding the best structure for Samuels Public Library and Warren County that fulfills the Library's mission and benefits the community. The history of SPL shows that at every decision point the community recommitted to an interlocking structure that relies heavily on volunteers, individual donations, grants, civic organizations, partnerships, and government funding.

- **1799:** The Front Royal Librarian Society formed
 - Continued after 1836 as the Front Royal Library Society.
 - A small private subscription lending library
 - Moved to different locations in the downtown including the **City Hall**, **Trout Building**, and **Thompson's Harness Shop**
- **1921:** First "**Silver Tea**" to raise money to rent **Steele House on Chester St.**
 - County Board of Supervisors paid rent after first month
 - Randolph Macon Academy students worked off tours by painting and papering the Steele house
- **1952:** **Samuels Public Library, located in Ivy Lodge on Chester St., opened to the public**
 - **Dr. Bernard Samuels** donated Ivy Lodge: cost \$12,500 (value \$144,400 in 2024)
 - Graduate of RMA and UVA
 - Lived in Philadelphia and Pueblo, Colorado
 - Lived abroad in Vienna and Prague to train as ophthalmologist
 - Returned to U.S. in 1913, served in WWI, and taught at Cornell
 - Spoke several languages
 - Had no children
 - Library = portal to the world for Warren County
 - First person hired: librarian Mrs. Norton from NY Public Library: importance of professional staff and specialized expertise.
 - Reliance on volunteers and community support to run library
- **1976:** **Walter Samuels**, Bernard's brother, who also had no children, donates \$250,000 (\$1.3 million in 2024) to build new library and community negotiates to create best arrangement for community as a whole
 - Original plan to raze Ivy Lodge and build bigger library
 - Community protested so the Library negotiated solution
 - RMA stepped up and sold 1.5 acres on Villa Ave. for \$15,000 but then raised \$9000 to help cover the sale price.
 - Sidewalk at the back of the Villa Ave. library site goes up to RMA so the students could easily use the library.
 - **Ivy Lodge given to the Warren Heritage Society for use as its headquarters.**
 - Civic groups, clubs, industry, and individuals raise \$100,000 to furnish library
 - 30 year history of volunteering integral to success of library continues in new building
- **1978:** **IRS Determination Ruling Samuels Public Library a 501(c)(3) non-profit with new Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, and an all-volunteer Board of Trustees.**

- **1980: Samuels Public Library opens its doors at the Villa Ave location. 1980 - 2009**
 - SPL Board of Trustees made up of community members representing business, industry, service organizations, residents, and parents to provide guidance, financial oversight, and resources
 - Winning combination of County, State, and individual funding coupled with 100s of hours of volunteer hours and community donations allows the library to flourish and it eventually outgrows its building
- **2004:** Warren County Board of Supervisor agrees to fund library's new building for **\$7m**
 - SPL Library Board of Trustees agrees to fundraise for furnishings (\$600k)
- **2008:**
 - County obtains land on Criser Rd. from School Board with plans to rent building to Samuels Library - 2008 groundbreaking occurs
 - **Library exemplified good stewardship overseeing building construction delivering the project on time and under budget for \$6.3m saving taxpayers about \$600k**
- **2009: Library on Criser Rd.** opens as a vibrant community center that goes way beyond just books; an incredible, cooperative venture
 - County, School & Library sign 30-year lease
 - More than \$1.2 million in community donations represented on the donor wall
 - Volunteers contribute more than 8000 hours each year (equal to four full-time staff members)
 - Service organizations such as Rotary, Elks and Kiwanis support every year
 - SPL continues to be successfully managed by its 15-member Board of Trustees that is a cross section of the community with members who work in business, technology, education, management, accounting, military, and civic organizations. They use their professional judgement and expertise to set goals and priorities, secure funding, review financial reports, serve on committees, and support the library's services.
- **2011: Villa Ave Sale**
 - County opts to buy the Villa Ave building for **\$550k**. Payment included loan forgiveness for balance of furnishings along with **\$318,628** cash payments over time. (property estimated at = \$2.1 million today)
- **2017: First MOA in Library History:** A complete study with all parties involved was conducted in 2017 to determine whether the County should take over the operation of the library.
 - It was confirmed that the library was a cost effective, vital asset to the community as a non-profit and Samuel Library, Inc. should continue to manage the library
 - Noted that library enjoyed tremendous community support through donations and volunteering which would be jeopardized by losing non-profit status
 - Showed financial stability through its endowment accrued over decades of fiscal responsibility
- **2023:** Unprecedented Book Challenges resulted in new tools for parents put in place with approval of Warren County Board of Supervisors
- **2023:** Oct 3 Second MOA signed and agreed by both parties
- **2024:** Oct. 17 **Samuels Library awarded 2024 Library of the Year** by Virginia Library Assn.