

Yakima Valley Libraries History of Leadership

Bessie Hall – Librarian, North Yakima Public Library (June 1902 – December 1913)

Bessie Hall (1876-1964), who served as librarian from June of 1902 through 1913, was the first professionally trained librarian, having attended 6 weeks of classes at University of Washington in the summers of 1906 and 1907. She was also the first librarian to be identified as a contributor in meeting notes.¹

Acting on the recently announced Carnegie grant, in January of 1904 the Yakima Library Association transferred all library property to the city of North Yakima, formally changing the library from a private to a public institution. In June of that year Mayor A. O. Fechter appointed the first Board of Trustees for the North Yakima Public Library.

Bessie Hall remained as librarian at \$20.00 per month. When the Carnegie building was completed in 1907 the librarian's salary was increased to \$45.00 per month, about 60% of what a teacher was paid at that time. Later that same year a library assistant was hired to work 10 hours a week at 15 cents per hour.²

Although 'librarian' was still not viewed as a leadership role during Bessie Hall's period of employment, records show that before she resigned in 1913 she was responsible for cataloging, conducting outreach services, supervising staff, book selection, and was consulted on policy.³

¹ Librarians' Reports, 1905-1907.

² Suzuki, "Foundations and Development," 36-41.

³ Ibid., 40-46.