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Selah library has a long interesting history

Library's move to new building to conclude this summer

By CHRIS THORN

Before 1951 there wasn't an organized countywide library system in Yakima, yet most towns had libraries ran in the basement of churches with donated books. During that same year the Rural Library District and the City of Yakima combined efforts and formed Yakima Valley Regional Library.

Selah received a boost to local library efforts in the 60s as a bond was passed in 1962 expanding the building that currently houses the City of Selah to add the Selah library.

Current Selah librarian Michael Martin said fire engines used to be housed in the back of where the library is, but with passage of the bond the fire station was moved across the street to it's current location. He added that the council paid the librarian at that time and the librarian requested books and those were bought with approval from city

council.

As years went by, the library

continued to be ran this way until 1977 when Selah decided to join the Yakima Valley Regional Library via contract.

With the contract the city's responsibilities changed to just providing the building while the YVRL provided staff and books.

In 2005,

there were several cities that decided to annex into the YVRL.

rather than continue with the contract agreement. Selah was

were unsuccessful.

"The people of Selah voted to annex in," Martin said.

"If the vote would have gone down the other way the library would have closed."

The annexation passed with 77 percent approval.

Martin said he was hired on as the librarian for the Selah library shortly after the annexation took place.

Since Martin took over the library's traffic has increased in dramatic fashion. In

2005 foot traffic for the library was 29,238 and in 2009 that number was 65,295, an increase of 66 percent or 2,000 more visitors per month.

"I promote the library shamelessly," Martin said. "My goal since starting here was to make the Selah library a vibrant place."

Now with the Selah library set to transition to their new location at 106 South Second St., Martin will have a chance to build the library up even more. He said he's relishing the opportunity.

The new building is more than 1,000 square feet larger with many new additions including extra computer stations, an early learning center, an activity meeting room open to the public and of course, more of Martin's signature wildlife.

Martin said the move would likely be completed this summer.



Photo courtesy of Selah Library and Walt Ready

Mrs. Baker reads to a group of youngsters who attended a story session at the Selah library many years ago.

