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## Orinda commemorates 'new' library, remembers old

By Sora O'Doherty



Current Orinda Library Photo Sora O'Doherty

At its Nov. 16 meeting, the Orinda City Council presented a proclamation commemorating the 20th anniversary of the "new" Orinda library. The proclamation praises the Friends of the Orinda Library for raising \$5 million, which was matched by the city, for the construction of the building on Orinda Way. The project included the library, an art gallery, meeting rooms, an auditorium and an outdoor plaza and sculpture garden that the proclamation says is used and enjoyed by residents of all ages and serves both a functional and a symbolic role in the community. The city expressed its deep appreciation to all the volunteers and staff who have worked so hard to make it an outstanding library that is treasured by the Orinda community.

The proclamation was read into the record by Mayor Amy Worth, who promised to deliver it to library manager Michael Beller. Worth was on the board of the Friends of the Orinda Library for a number of years until she was elected to the city council. During that time she represented Orinda on the Contra Costa County Library Commission.

The Orinda Library is in the heart of the civic space in the Village section of Orinda that also houses the community center and the community park, close to Orinda city hall. The library provides a gathering place for citizens of all ages and interests, serving, the proclamation explains, as the community's link to the expanding knowledge base of the world and imparting the values and visions of the community.

The first circulating book collection was established in 1915 by Contra Costa County in an Orinda deposit station with an annual circulation of 344 books. By 1925 the library occupied a small bookcase in the Orinda store, but, due to limited supervision of the collection, the county considered removing the station. To ensure continued library services, the Orinda Parent Teachers Association moved the library to a donated space in a nearby vacant store, and the library was staffed by PTA volunteers every afternoon until a librarian was hired.

In 1935, the Orinda Improvement Association and the Orinda Fire Department agreed to build an addition to the firehouse, then located at 107 Orinda Way, now the location of Orinda Village Antiques, in order to house the library. The building was designed by local Orinda architects who donated their time and was funded by the State Employment Relief Administration.

The library stayed in the firehouse until it was moved to the Orinda Community Church in 1949. In 1954, the newly established Orinda Library Board began fundraising for a new library, which was dedicated in 1958. The building was enlarged in the 1960s to provide for a children's wing.

Following Orinda's incorporation in 1985, the city worked in partnership with the Friends of the Orinda Library to maintain the library building and preserve library services and hours, which were significantly reduced with county budget cuts in the early 1990s. In 1997, the city and the Friends recognized the need to build a new library, which was opened in November 2001.

The city's proclamation recognized the library's role as a resource to students and adults, offering book checkout, enhanced online library resources, and programs for youth and seniors, including free delivery of books and library materials to seniors in their homes in conjunction with the Orinda Association.

The Friends of the Orinda Library will be celebrating the library anniversary on Saturday, Dec. 4, with a holiday book sale and candy cane giveaway on Library Plaza from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Friends are also looking for volunteers for the candy cane giveaway and for work in the library bookshop, which is trying out adding morning hours on Saturdays to coincide with the Orinda Farmers Market. If enough customers and volunteers come forward, the early hours will be added to the schedule.

For info, visit [www.friendsoftheorindalibrary.org](http://www.friendsoftheorindalibrary.org)



Orinda Library, circa 1935 Photo courtesy Orinda Historical Society

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