

A Short History of the Library

1917 American libraries ship one and a half million books to U.S. service personnel – the Library War Service, founded by the American Library Association.



1920 A core collection of those books seeds the newly-established American Library in Paris at 10, rue de l'Elysée. A prime mover in establishing the Library is Charles Seeger, father of Alan Seeger, the celebrated young poet killed in the war.

1923 The Library launches **Ex Libris**, a monthly review whose early contributors include Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein.



1933 Literary evenings at the Library are launched. Among the guest authors are Colette, André Gide, and Ford Madox Ford.

1936 The Library moves its 60,000 volumes to new premises at 9, rue de Teheran.



1939 As war comes to Europe, the Library circulates books to French and British soldiers.

1940 As French libraries close under Nazi occupation, the Library remains open and attracts hundreds of French patrons.

1941 Director Dorothy Reeder is sent home to the United States for her safety, but board member Countess Clara de Chambrun arranges with Vichy authorities for the Library to remain open. Library staff provide an underground lending service to Jewish members.

1948 The Library opens a branch on the Left Bank on the boulevard St. Germain. It closes six years later as branch libraries are opened across France.

1951 Sylvia Beach closes Shakespeare and Co. and donates its circulating collection to the American Library.



1952 The Library moves to spacious and elegant quarters on the Champs-Elysées.

1953 Investigators Roy Cohn and David Schine, on a mission from Senator Joseph McCarthy to root out Communist-inspired literature in Europe, are turned away at the American Library door by Director Ian Forbes Fraser.



1955 The Library launches The English Language Library for the Blind, the first collection of Braille books in English on the continent.

1964 The Library loses its lease on the Champs-Elysées – the building would be torn down to make way for the Publicis Drugstore – and moves to 10, rue du Général Camou.

1989 The Library catalogue is computerized.

1992 The Library is given Marlene Dietrich's personal library. The research center opens.



1995 A gala evening at the Chateau de Versailles marks the 75th anniversary of the Library's founding.

1998 The internet comes to the Library. Public access terminals are named Gertrude and Ernest.

2003 The Annenberg Foundation endows the Director's and Children's Librarian positions, and later supports a revived Evenings with an Author program at the Library.

2004 Wireless access (WiFi) comes to the Library.

2008 Monday book groups are launched. The Library subscribes to two on-line periodical databases. **E-libris**, the electronic newsletter, is launched and a new website is unveiled. The Library blog quickly follows.

2009 The reading room is expanded and refurbished. The Library celebrates Laurent de Brunhoff and Babar. Computer access broadens. New projection and screening equipment makes possible movie nights.



2011 The Library is renovated to include a new children and teen spaces, a conference room, a further expanded reading room and a dedicated reference area. The Second Century campaign begins.