

Changes of Guard

After Librarians Phyllis Osteen and Georgia Coffin, there was a quick succession of appointments: Denny R. Stephens in February 1964, LaVonne Axford in July 1965 and Henry A. Fontaine in April 1966.

The instability in the top post was symptomatic of real problems, money being only one. There also were serious lines-of-responsibility concerns. "The library looked to be on the point of collapsing," wrote Braswell. The *Jefferson Sentinel* concurred in April 1966, opining:

...the system, which is supported by more than \$150,000 in tax money annually, could come apart at the seams...Because of the constant bickering, there now is a distinct danger that Jefferson County can no longer attract top qualified people for key library positions.

New Librarian Tulsa Man Named For County Position

The Jefferson County Library Board of Trustees this week announced the appointment of Henry A. Fontaine of Tulsa, Okla., as County Librarian. He will assume his duties on June 1.

Since January, 1965, Fontaine has been head of the science and technology department, the collection of major strength, in the Tulsa Oklahoma city-county library system. Prior to this, he was head librarian of the St. Tammany Parish (county) Library with headquarters in Covington, La. Under his administration this county system was named as one of the Louisiana libraries showing the most progress over its previous record.

A native of New Orleans, Fontaine holds a B.S. degree in geology and a Masters degree in library science from Louisiana State Uni-



The April 28, 1966, Colorado Transcript (today the Golden Transcript) announced the hiring of Henry A. Fontaine as county librarian. He began his duties June 1, 1966, and brought calm and vision to the previously troubled library management.

With the arrival of Fontaine in 1966, however, the future of the library began to brighten. Important to Fontaine's success was passage by the state Legislature of House Bill 1502 allowing a new tax base of up to 1.5 mills for

the library, separate from the county general fund. The Jefferson County Board of Commissioners immediately set a 1 mill levy for the library system. In 1967, under the old general fund county mill levy, the library received \$175,521. In 1968, under the new, independent tax levy, the library received \$410,215.

Federal funds also began to flow thanks to the new Library Services and Construction Act, Title II, plus there were new state sources. Fontaine was quoted in the *Jefferson Sentinel* on Oct. 2, 1969, concluding:

The law has allowed us to expand and make plans to look forward. I doubt if we could have done anything under the General Fund. The legislation was the main reason for our growth. We would have been lost without it.



Gov. John Love, far left, at the grand opening of the Arvada Library in 1966

In the same *Jefferson Sentinel* article, Fontaine openly spoke about the abysmal state of affairs when he accepted the job, modestly stating:

I looked at the job like a blank canvas. I had an opportunity to build from scratch—almost below scratch. We were the worst library in the state in 1966 based on metropolitan survey standards... For once I was at the right place at the right time.

Under Fontaine, the library built the county's first two regional libraries—Bonfils-Stanton adjacent to Villa Italia and J. Lester Trezise in Golden. Two more regional facilities were planned. Plus, the Arvada and Edgewater libraries finally affiliated.

Also, during his time in office, Jefferson County developed and produced the first data-processed book catalog of the county's holdings; an automated circulation system was installed that streamlined checkout procedures; and a county salary classification scale and job descriptions for library staff were adopted. Braswell reported, "The Jefferson County Public Library had suddenly emerged into the 20th century."

After the greatest period of library growth to date, on Sept. 30, 1970, Fontaine resigned.

The Library Board of Trustees conducted a nationwide search for a replacement and hired William A. Knott, who came to work in 1971.

