



It All Started with Books

Part 1

Teacher Reads Most libraries are open to the public, meaning that all people are welcome to use them. But in the past, that was not true.

Today there are many public **libraries** in the U.S. Anyone
10 can use them. But long ago, there was no such thing as a
23 public **library**. In the past, only rich people owned books.
33 They were the only people who could afford to pay for
44 books. Some of these people formed membership libraries.
52 Each member paid a fee to join. Paying members could use
63 books in the membership library at any time. Non-members
73 had to provide something of **value** before taking out books.

Part 2

Teacher Reads Benjamin Franklin, one of the founders of the United States of America, made many contributions to American life. One of the important things he did was to help establish one of the first public libraries in the U.S.

83 One of the oldest libraries in the U.S. was established in
94 **Franklin, Massachusetts**, in 1790. The town had chosen
102 to name itself after Benjamin Franklin. A resident of the
112 town asked Franklin to donate a bell to the town. However,
123 Franklin chose to give the town 116 books, not a bell. He
135 thought the people in the town needed books more than
145 they needed a bell.

149 The people in Franklin voted to lend the books to anyone
160 who lived in the town—for free. This library became the first
172 public lending library in the U.S. Over time, public libraries
182 were established all over the U.S.



Part 3

Teacher Reads Today's public libraries offer books and much more to children and adults.

188 Today, public libraries offer people many things. People
196 can use the library's **computers** and printers. They can look
206 for books on library shelves and check out books or films
217 with a library card. They can also download e-books to read
229 on a tablet or phone. Many libraries belong to a network of
241 libraries. That means that people can use things from other
251 libraries in the network.

255 Public libraries are good places for people to have
264 meetings. Public libraries also have events like author
272 visits and art shows. In addition, people can enjoy library
282 events such as story time for children, summer reading
291 programs for children, and book clubs for adults. Some
300 libraries offer spaces where people can work on projects
309 to make things. Public libraries of today have many good
319 things to offer. And the best part is that public libraries are
331 free to all. [Learn More](#)

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