

Grant from Carnegie Corporation will benefit Carondelet Library

By Abby Wojcik

The Carondelet branch of the St. Louis Public Library on Michigan Avenue earlier this year received a \$10,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, as part of their nationwide initiative to support libraries originally established by Andrew Carnegie over a century ago.

Carnegie, a Scottish immigrant and one of the richest men in history, funded the construction of 1,681 public libraries across the United States between 1886 and 1917, including seven in St. Louis. Today, five of those libraries remain in operation within the city, including the Carondelet Library.

The total \$50,000 grant will be divided among those five branches—Carondelet, Central, Barr, Cabanne, and Carpenter. The funding marks the first major investment tied to Carnegie's philanthropic legacy in St. Louis since his original \$1 million gift in 1901, which at the time was one of the largest he made to any U.S. city outside of New York and his home of Pittsburgh.

"I really do think he changed the world," SLPL CEO Waller McGuire said. "Libraries certainly existed before him, but they were very different. It's something we take for granted now, which is that communities can provide a library and that they're open to everyone and that resources are available. That was really started by Carnegie. He really made that possible."

More than a century after it first opened in 1908, the Carondelet Library continues to serve



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generations of Holly Hills and Carondelet residents in a building that reflects the enduring history and character of the community.

McGuire shared that the funds will be used for capital expenses to help maintain the lifespan of these historic libraries. While Carondelet underwent an 18-month closure for renovations in 2012, the grant will make a significant difference in the upkeep of its original woodwork, molding and antique details.

The renovations also included an elevator and a wheelchair-accessible entrance, improving accessibility while maintaining the building's historic character.

"I remember when we had the reopening there and people had quite an emotional response to being back into the building," McGuire said.



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