

Celebrating 100 Years of the Mary Coutts Burnett Library

THIS YEAR, THE BELOVED MARY COUTTS BURNETT LIBRARY CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL AS A CORNERSTONE OF THE TCU COMMUNITY

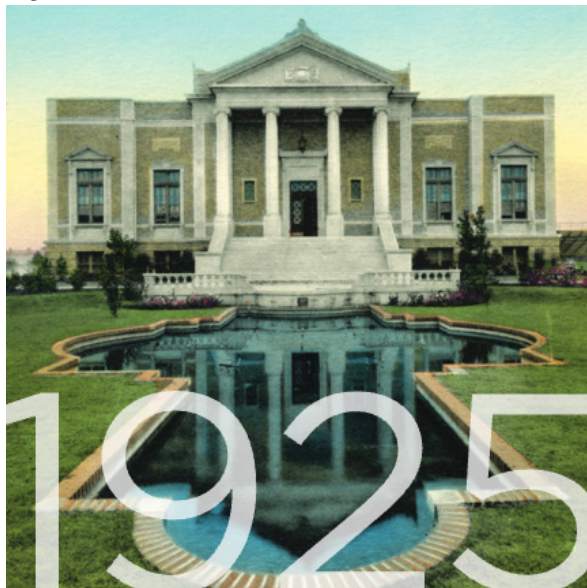
So much has changed in the world of information over the past century and the Mary Coutts Burnett Library has stood at the heart of TCU's academic journey through it all. Since its founding, the library has not only been a repository of knowledge, but a sanctuary for learning and a vibrant hub for creativity and a focal point for community engagement at TCU. As we celebrate the library's 100-year legacy, we reflect on the rich history and transformative role it has played in the intellectual and personal growth of countless students, faculty and staff.

A LEGACY OF VISIONARY PHILANTHROPY

The story of the Mary Coutts Burnett Library begins with a visionary gift from Mary Coutts Burnett, a philanthropist whose legacy continues to shape TCU. After the death of her husband, Samuel Burk Burnett, in 1922, Mary inherited a significant portion of his \$6 million fortune. With a deep commitment to community service, Coutts Burnett sought to make a lasting impact through education. On December 2, 1923, she contacted TCU President E.M. Waits and Board of Trustees President Van Zandt Jarvis to announce her intention to bequeath \$3 million to the university in a trust, with the stipulation that a portion of the funds, \$150,000, be used for a building that would bear her name. President Waits immediately designated the funds for a new library.

Though various myths have circulated about why Burnett chose TCU—including the supposed influence of her husband, who had been famously opposed to supporting educational or religious institutions—Burnett's decision was, in fact, profoundly personal. While some, like her close friend Dr. Harris, claimed to have steered her toward TCU,

Burnett herself set the record straight in an interview with *The Weatherford Daily Herald*. After the heartbreaking loss of her only son, Burk Burnett Jr., she explained, she longed to give Texas children what she could no longer give her own: an education. Burnett stated, "I decided that the greatest good I could possibly accomplish would be to help the boys and girls of Texas to gain one asset which cannot be taken from them—an education."



Sadly, Coutts Burnett passed away in December 1924, before she could see the completion of the library. Yet, her legacy lived on as the Mary Coutts Burnett Library opened its doors on Wednesday, February 25, 1925, to much excitement and anticipation.

A CENTURY OF GROWTH AND INNOVATION

Originally designed to serve between 500 to 1,000 students, the library's capacity was quickly surpassed and by the 1950s, the growing need for space led to multiple expansions in the 1950s, 1980s, and most recently 2015. From its modest beginning with a collection of 32,000 books, the library collection now boasts more than 2 million items, offering a wealth of academic resources to support TCU's students, faculty and researchers.

The library has not only evolved in its physical space, but it has also kept pace with the ever-changing landscape of technology and education. Its expansion into digital resources, databases and multi-media collections ensures it remains an indispensable asset in the academic success of the TCU community. The dedicated library staff continue to play a vital role in guiding research, fostering innovation and empowering students to achieve their goals.

A CAMPUS ICON

Standing proudly against a backdrop of blooming tulips, the Mary Coutts Burnett Library is more than just a building; it's a symbol of TCU's commitment to intellectual growth, community and lifelong learning. As we reflect on the past century, we are reminded of the library's profound impact on the university's academic environment and its role as a central gathering place for those who seek knowledge.

For 100 years, the library has been the heart of TCU, supporting generations of students and faculty as they come together to learn, explore and grow. The library has truly become a sanctuary for inquiry and a beacon of hope and opportunity for all who walk through its doors.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we celebrate this incredible milestone, we look forward to the next chapter of the Mary Coutts Burnett Library's story. The library remains as dedicated as ever to fostering a culture of discovery, inquiry and intellectual exploration. As we honor a century of service, we embrace the promise of continued growth and innovation, ensuring the Mary Coutts Burnett Library will remain an essential hub for learning and discovery at TCU for generations to come.



"Enter the open door often and all around the room your silent servants wait. Your friends in every season, bright and dim. The library staff greets you and awaits your visits with happy anticipation."

—Message to freshmen in *The Skiff* from head librarian Bertie Hall Mothershead

Centennial Celebrations

TCU's Mary Coutts Burnett Library marked its 100th anniversary with a series of exciting events, inviting the campus and the greater TCU community to join in the celebration.

BOOK DRIVE

Throughout the month of February, the library partnered with Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS) to host a book drive benefiting foster children across Texas, Louisiana and Missouri from preschool to high school. The goal was to inspire a love of reading, and thanks to the generosity of the TCU community, we collected an impressive 268 books!

LET'S CELEBRATE WITH CAKE!

On February 5, the campus was invited to join in the 100th anniversary festivities with a slice of cake and a special 100th anniversary swag item. It was a sweet way to celebrate a century of service to the TCU community.

WHAT I LOVE ABOUT THE LIBRARY

During Valentine's week, students, faculty, staff and alumni were encouraged to share their thoughts on what they love most about the Mary Coutts Burnett Library. The heartfelt responses showcased the library's importance to all who use it.

FUNDRAISER EVENT

On February 27, exactly one hundred years after the dedication of the Mary Coutts Burnett Library, the library celebrated its 100th anniversary with *An Evening of Great Conversation*. The event offered guests an evening of fine dining and engaging conversation, all while raising vital funds that directly support the continued growth and excellence of the library. It was a memorable night celebrating the library's rich history and its bright future.

STUDENT DANCE

Students were invited to step back in time and attend a 1920s-themed dance, embracing the spirit of the library's founding era. It was an evening of fun, music and celebration, capturing the essence of the library's rich history and the vibrant student life today.

PANEL DISCUSSION

On April 14, the library hosted a captivating panel discussion titled, "The Past, Present and Future of the Mary Coutts Burnett Library." Moderated by Chancellor Victor Boschini, the panel featured three distinguished experts—former deans Bob Seal and June Koelker, along with current dean Tracy Hull.

1925

1,098
TCU Students

Library Hours
8 am - 6 pm
daily except
Sunday

Staff of 6
plus
students

32,000
books

67
serials

2025

12,938
TCU Students

Library Hours
24 hours a day
except Friday &
Saturday nights

Staff of 54
plus
students

1,371,324
books

12,577
serials

1,599,125
digital books

644
digital databases

202,439
digital media

252,435
digital serials

THE NEXT CENTURY

The future of TCU's Mary Couts Burnett Library promises transformative advancements in both technology and the ways we interact with information. As more content becomes widely accessible online, the hallmark of a truly impactful library will increasingly lie in its Special Collections. As a cornerstone of intellectual growth and historical preservation, Special Collections will play a pivotal role in ensuring that future generations have access to invaluable primary sources, rare texts and cultural artifacts that tell the story of TCU and its surrounding communities.

In the years ahead, innovations such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality and advanced digitization techniques will open new doors for the library. Interactive platforms—including immersive virtual tours and augmented reality experiences—could revolutionize how patrons engage with the collections, allowing them to explore historical contexts and interact with objects in ways not possible with physical materials alone. AI-driven research tools will help users uncover hidden connections within the library's holdings, offering new insights into the past and driving new avenues of scholarship. Enhanced metadata and discovery systems will further ensure that the treasures within the library—both physical and digital—remain accessible and discoverable for year to come.

Over the past century, the Mary Couts Burnett Library has continually evolved to meet changing needs for space and services. Today, it is home to more than 2 million items and continues to expand its world-class collections as TCU advances its mission as a premier research institution. With a dedicated team of librarians and expert staff, the library is poised to remain a vital resource for the TCU community—nurturing a culture of learning, innovation and academic excellence.

