



CHEROKEE GARDEN LIBRARY

How the Garden Library Grew from a Few Treasured Books in a Closet to a Collection of Over 25,000 Rare and Valuable Works

In 1973, when Anne Coppedge Carr was chairing the Cherokee Garden Club “project-finding committee,” she and some friends visited the garden library at Cheekwood in Nashville and were inspired to establish a garden library in Atlanta. The Cherokee Garden Club voted to start the new project and began to involve others from Atlanta’s gardening world. The Cherokee Garden Library was opened in the spring of 1975, under Anne Carr’s leadership, by the Cherokee Garden Club.

The early planners included Louise Richardson Allen, Alice Hurt Carr, Mary Bowler Miller, Edith Redway Wright, Elizabeth Hale Barnett, and Mary Reynolds Morrison. Other key players in the early years of the Garden Library were John H. Beach, Virginia Groves Beach, Margaret Evins Shirley, Frankie Coxe, Edward L. Daugherty, Florence Phillips Griffin, Frances Spratlin Hargrett, and Helen B. Martini.

This talented and energetic group soon devised an ambitious master plan to make this library a leading resource for the study of gardening, landscape design, garden history, horticulture, floral design, botanical art, and ecology, with a specific focus on documenting the Southeastern region.

Anne Carr’s gracious leadership, passion and persistence inspired others to be a part of what became a much larger movement to experience and preserve horticultural heritage. One of her beliefs which continues to be a central philosophy for the Garden Library today is that all the books, even the rare books, should be used – not stored away and made inaccessible. Why have these treasures if no one can fully experience them?



*“Preservation of our heritage is so important. And if we don’t care for that heritage, who will?” –
Founder Anne Coppedge Carr*

From its humble beginnings in an old telephone closet in the basement of the Atlanta History Center’s McElreath Hall, the Garden Library rapidly grew in size and value, commanding more space, attracting more users and eventually merging with the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

The merger, which was finalized in the spring of 2005, helped ensure the long-term viability of the Garden Library. In late summer of that year, Anne Carr passed away. While it was a great loss for the Garden Library community, her original vision and wise leadership have left a lasting legacy which inspires and guides those who continue her work today.

Building on Anne Carr's Legacy of Leadership

One of the hallmarks of great leadership is effective succession planning, which Anne Carr and Board President Pat Hargrett demonstrated in 2000 when they hired Staci Catron to be the Garden Library's Director.

Staci Catron had come to the Garden Library in the summer of 2000, to work as a research fellow while completing her Master of Heritage Preservation Degree from Georgia State University. She says she was drawn to Garden Library because, "I believed in Anne Carr's philosophy about preservation and documenting the land to tell a broader story of history. I also believed in her emphasis on making our materials accessible to the public and doing community outreach. Pat Hargrett and all the presidents who have succeeded her have shared her philosophy. To this day, when I'm faced with an important decision, I think, 'What would Anne Carr do?'"

Director's Role in Opening up New Vistas for the Garden Library

Under Staci Catron's leadership the Garden Library has grown from 8,500 objects to over 20,000. She was responsible for relocating the collection to the Garden Library's current home in the Kenan Research Center



Director Staci Catron shares founder Anne Carr's belief in documenting the land to tell a broader story of history.

and launched a year-round calendar of educational and public programs, including the Ashley Wright McIntyre Lecture Series.

As Director, Staci Catron is responsible for all functions of the Garden Library, from conservation to bibliographic development (acquisitions and cataloging), to programming and exhibitions, budgeting and volunteer management.

She serves all patrons of the Garden Library, responding to over 5,000 research requests annually. In addition to core work of maintaining and operating the Garden Library, she is in demand as a speaker on a broad range of topics related to garden history and literature, pioneering women in landscape design and architecture, collection development, and horticultural research. She leads frequent curatorial group tours of the Garden Library collection.

Staci Catron has authored numerous articles published in horticultural journals and newsletters, including those of the Southern Garden History Society, the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries, the American Society of Landscape Architecture, the Georgia Green Industry Association, and the Southern Nursery Association. She contributed a chapter on Helen Hawkins Clarke to *Shaping the American Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project* published by the University of Virginia Press and co-authored *Women in Atlanta*.

Now serving as Vice President of the Southern Garden History Society and the Historic Landscape Initiative Coordinator for The Garden Club of Georgia, Catron is involved in our community and in the broader arena of historic preservation in many ways that advance the reputation of the Cherokee Garden Library.