One County, Two Libraries: Watsonville and the Organizing of the Santa Cruz County Library System, 1900-1930

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Abstract
This thesis investigates the creation of California's Free County Library System during the Progressive Era. Previous histories of the topic have conveyed a partial picture of those involved in organizing county libraries, focusing on leaders at the state level, such as James L. Gillis and Harriet Eddy. Using Santa Cruz County as a case study, this thesis examines the overall process of organizing a county library system at the local level.

Primary source materials consulted include correspondence and publications from the California State Library, newspaper accounts from the time period, California Library Association meeting minutes, News Notes of California Libraries, and local records from Santa Cruz County. This study discusses the Progressive Era's influence on California county library organizing in general and Santa Cruz County libraries in particular. It also considers how the Progressive Movement affected the rising power of women's groups and their invaluable work organizing public libraries. In addition, the thesis explores the early development of reading rooms and libraries in Santa Cruz County and the creation of the area's first county library system. The thesis pays particular attention to the early history of the Watsonville Public Library and its adamant stance against joining the Santa Cruz County library system. Based on comparative histories of the two library systems, the thesis concludes with an analysis of the positive and negative characteristics of a countywide library system versus an independent city library.

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