

## Humble Beginnings

In 2009, Todd Bol of Hudson, Wisconsin, built a model of a one room schoolhouse. It was a tribute to his mother; she was a teacher who loved to read. He filled it with books and put it on a post in his front yard. His neighbors and friends loved it, so he built several more and gave them away.

UW-Madison's Rick Brooks (retired from Little Free Library 2014) saw Bol's do-it-yourself project while they were discussing potential social enterprises. Together, the two saw opportunities to achieve a variety of goals for the common good. They were inspired by community gift-sharing networks, "take a book, leave a book" collections in coffee shops and public spaces, and most especially by the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

Around the turn of the 20th century, Carnegie set a goal to fund the creation of 2,508 free public libraries across the English-speaking world.

That goal inspired Brooks and Bol to set their own goal of surpassing 2,508 Little Free Libraries by the end 2013. They wound up exceeding that goal in August of 2012, a year and a half before their target date

## Rapid Growth

By 2010, the name Little Free Library was established and the purpose of these Little Free Library book exchanges became clear: to share good books and bring communities together. The first official Little Free Library outside of the Hudson area was put on a bike path in Madison in the summer of 2010. Within a few months, thousands of people had seen the Library.

As Bol and Brooks continued to give away Little Libraries with wooden charter signs, engraved with official charter numbers, curiosity and demand for more Libraries grew.

The movement centered on the enthusiasm of early adopters and stewards, who were crucial advocates. Some small grants and informal partnerships began to have an impact on Little Free Library's ability to keep up with demand.

The year 2011 brought [national media attention](#), and by the end of the year there were nearly 400 Little Free Libraries in existence. That number would skyrocket to over 4,000 Libraries by the end of 2012, the same year in which Little Free Library became a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

## Our Mission

*Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization that inspires a love of reading, builds community, and sparks creativity by fostering neighborhood book exchanges around the world.*

## Milestones

In 2013, Little Free Library was honored to receive the Innovations in Reading Prize from the National Book Foundation, and Bol and Brooks were bestowed with the Movers and Shakers award from the American Library Association, highlighting them as thought leaders in the library industry.

In 2014, Brooks retired from Little Free Library. The organization continued to grow and receive national media attention, with features in prestigious publications such as the New York Times, Washington Post, NBC Nightly News, USA Today, The Chronicle of Philanthropy, Reader's Digest, and many more.

2015 marked the debut of *The Little Free Library Book*, written by Margret Aldrich, and published by Coffee House Press. In October, Little Free Library was awarded the Library of Congress Literacy Award for its effective implementation of best practices in literacy and reading promotion.

With 2016 came [The Little Free Library Festival!](#) Thousands of people gathered in Minnehaha Park in Minneapolis on May 21, 2016, to celebrate the joys of reading and sharing books.

On October 18, 2018, Todd Bol passed away from complications of pancreatic cancer. He remained dedicated to Little Free Library's mission in his last days, saying, *"I really believe in a Little Free Library on every block and a book in every hand. I believe people can fix their neighborhoods, fix their communities, develop systems of sharing, learn from each other, and see that they have a better place on this planet to live."*

## Where We Are Today

Little Free Libraries have continued to grow by leaps and bounds every year. In 2018 we reached 75,000 registered Little Free Libraries, and in 2019 we surpassed 80,000 registered Libraries in more than 90 countries worldwide.

Startzville Elementary School has permission to install 8 Little Free Libraries around the community. CLFUMC was the first to join our school in sharing books and the love of reading with the community. Thank you to Pastor

Mark, Kendra Murphy, Mr. Whitney Lee and Troop #57 for all their help in installing the Little Free Library on your campus. It is our hope that all ages will enjoy reading books, sharing books and getting to know each other better.