



about 1876, the Lighthouse Service decided it would be a good idea to provide a small library at isolated stations to improve morale. The Annual report of that year states, "During the past year the board has collected fifty small libraries, consisting of about 40 volumes each, for use at the more isolated light stations. It is intended that each library remain about six months at a place, when it will be exchanged for another. By this means the keepers will be constantly supplied with fresh and interesting reading matter and be made more contented with the lonely life and routine duties of these distant and often inaccessible stations. The books constituting these libraries were in part contributed by private individuals, and were in part purchased from the appropriation made thereof. It is proposed to add to the number of these libraries until there shall be in circulation a reasonable supply for the establishment."

The 1885 Annual Report stated, "The Keepers' Libraries were so increased in number during the year that there are now in use 402 as against 380 last year. There are now about half as many libraries as there are light stations requiring them. They contain from 40 to 50 books each, and are moved from station to station as they are read. Thus it may happen that each book case can eventually visit each light station in the country."

A library was part of the Lighthouse Service display during the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It was described as, "...2 feet high, 2 feet wide, and 8 inches deep, of shellacked white pine and is strengthened with heavy brass fittings. It has two shelves of different heights. Its two doors are secured, the one

with an inside bolt, the other with a mortised lock. On the sides are hinged handles. When locked the library cases can stand rough handling.

These libraries were originated by the necessity for doing something to satisfy the intellectual requirement of the light keepers and their families. The cases of these libraries are so constructed that they can make rather a neat appearance when set upright on a table; when closed and locked they are ready for transportation. Each contains about 40 volumes of a proper admixture of historic, scientific, and poetic matter, with some good novels. A library is left at a station for some three months, when it is exchanged and passed on to another station. This is usually done when a lighthouse inspector makes his quarterly inspection. Each station to which a library is furnished sees, in this way, some 150 different books each

year. There are now some 700 of those libraries in circulation, and more in preparation. Preference is given to their distribution to those light stations most distant from towns and villages."

The last mention of light station libraries is in the Service Bulletin of December 1915, "Library Books—The inspector of the seventh district has overhauled all the libraries furnished for light stations in his district (ed. basically Florida), retaining all old books which were found to be in good condition and of interest to keepers and their families, and purchased sufficient new books of suitable quality to replenish the libraries. The expense of this work was about \$16 for each library." With the invention of the radio, radio-telephone, telephone and improved transportation between light stations and shore, libraries became less important. However, they continued to provide some service right through the Coast Guard era, until light stations were unmanned. Only in the Coast Guard years, books in a station library remained as part of the station and were not rotated. In the case of isolated, unaccompanied stations the men were transferred after a one year tour of duty, and the books stayed behind.

