

# The History of Little Free Library



## The People Who Started the Movement

In the beginning—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. He built several more and gave them away. Each one had a sign that said FREE BOOKS. Rick Brooks of UW-Madison 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. Each brought different skills to the effort. Bol was a creative artisan experienced with innovative enterprise models; Brooks was a youth and community development educator with a background in social marketing.

- Andrew Carnegie's support of 2,509 free public libraries around the turn of the 19th to 20th century.
- "Take a book, leave a book" collections in public spaces.
- Little Free Library is the registered trademark of the Little Free Library organization. The official Little Free Library motto is "Take a Book, Return a Book."
- On October 27, 2015 Little Free Library was awarded the Library of Congress Literacy Award for its effective implementation of best practices in literacy and reading promotion.
- They don't require library cards or late fines, don't insist that patrons whisper or stay quiet, and don't mind if you do not return a book.
- People meet more neighbors and passers-by than they have in years.
- They often spend time getting to know people as well as books.
- They value the free-wheeling exchange of books, especially because they are often surprised by the variety and quality of the collections.
- They like giving as much as –or perhaps even more than—taking books. Little Free Libraries are likely to have a positive influence on community quality of life and social capital.
- Children, youth and adults of all ages and backgrounds can share in the give and take. People of widely diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds participate in this grassroots effort.