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## **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Central Library Re-opening Commemorated with Panel Discussion Saturday, October 5, 2 p.m.**

**Library's Phoenix-like rise following devastating 1986 arson fires that burned 400,000 books and nearly destroyed the iconic building is among L.A.'s most legendary stories**

(Los Angeles – September 19, 2013) The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Central Library's re-opening after two devastating fires and a massive renovation and expansion that followed will be commemorated with a panel discussion led by University of Southern California Professor and architecture historian Kenneth Breisch at the Central Library, 630 W. Fifth St, downtown, on Saturday, October 5, at 2 p.m. The program is free.

The panel will feature experts whose professional and personal lives have been affected by their connection to Central Library: Margaret Bach, founding member and first president of the Los Angeles Conservancy; Sheila Nash, LAPL Senior Librarian, Art, Music & Recreation Department; Betty Gay Teoman, former Central Library Director; Frank Rinaldi, Division Manager, L.A. Department of Public Works; and Kenon Breazeale, a Central Library docent.

"The Los Angeles Public library is one of the oldest cultural institutions in the city and the Central Library building is one its greatest architectural masterpieces," said Breisch. "The panel discussion will help draw attention to the almost miraculous survival and resurrection of this Southern California treasure."

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**Peter Persic**, Public Relations & Marketing Director

On April 29, 1986, an arson fire that the Los Angeles Fire Department termed the most difficult in local history, roared through the historic building nearly destroying it and consuming a vast number of books. The millions of gallons of water used to fight the fire damaged even more volumes. After a second arson fire, a total of 400,000 books had been lost and the historic building closed. An immediate and extraordinary fundraising effort led by community, government and corporate agencies, raised more than \$10 million to replace the destroyed collections.

The fire also accelerated a planned \$211.4-million renovation and expansion of the building. After years of construction, on October 3, 1993, more than 80,000 people crowded downtown for the historic reopening of the “new” Central Library, which featured the restored historic building, the new Tom Bradley Wing that doubled the library’s size to 540,000 square feet, and the new 1.5-acre Robert F. Maguire III Gardens.

“Thanks to the extraordinary support of Angelenos, our elected officials and L.A.’s creative community, the Central Library has become a cultural and educational destination for people throughout the city and around the world,” said City Librarian John F. Szabo. “With more than 5,300 people visiting every day, the Central Library is more popular than ever before.”

The Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse population of any library in the United States through its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, and Web-based services accessed at [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org).

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