The Francis Clare Library Endowment was established in 1998 in honor of the Franciscan Sisters who guided the library for its first century of service. Sister Frances Claire Mezera, who has continued to inspire the service ethic of the library since 1955, inspired the name. However, the name also honors all of the Franciscan Sisters who put their faith into practice in daily library service at Viterbo College libraries. The names of these sisters may be found on the library Web site and also on a plaque in the library.

As the names of sisters changed, library changes can also be followed. The library was founded in 1890, but it was not until 1926 that books were first cataloged. In 1932 the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) System was first used to classify books. In 1941 the St. Rose library was conveyed by a human chain to the new building called Viterbo College. In 1970 the Fine Arts library opened using the Library of Congress (LC) Classification System.

One hundred years after the library was founded, in 1990, directorship of the library passed to a non-sister for the first time. When the new Todd Wehr Memorial Library opened in 1991, the Viterbo College library collection merged with the Fine Arts library collection into the new facility on first floor of Murphy Center. Two additional changes soon followed. Conversion to LC began shortly after the merger, and the affiliated museum coordinated by library staff closed in 1992. Conversion to LC was completed in 2002. However, the children’s collection will continue to use DDC so students learn to use the system commonly used by school libraries.

In 2003 library endowment funds played an important role in expanding the library to the second floor. Gifts to the endowment fund helped plan and furnish the expanded facility. The Frances Claire Endowment continues to play a vital role in funding special projects for the library. Contact the library director or the Office of Institutional Advancement for further information about the endowment fund.