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EX LIBRIS NEWS

Newsletter of the Ex Libris Association

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**FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Our annual meeting was held at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto on November 21, 1990, with a good attendance of between 45 and 50 members. Two excellent speeches are recorded elsewhere in this newsletter. Board members David Appelt and John Macpherson retired from the board with appreciation for their service. Al Bowron and Clara Miller were welcomed as their successors.

The meeting also supported a motion that our past president E.S. Beacock be made honorary past president, in appreciation of his role in founding Ex Libris, and of his ongoing contribution, particularly the production of the newsletter.

The 1991 annual meeting will be held in Hamilton on Thursday, November 14, 1991 and again we are indebted to the OLA for their cooperation in enabling us to meet in conjunction with their annual conference. If present plans are confirmed we expect another interesting meeting.

Efforts are being made to expand our membership to provide a larger base for our activities and a higher profile in relation to other bodies with whom we may wish to co-operate.

To this end we have sent out a mailing inviting former members who have not renewed their membership to return, and another is planned to go to a list of potential members. If anyone has any names to add to this list please send them to our secretary, Shirley Wigmore, at the Association's address.

And don't forget to mark your calendar for November 14 at the Hamilton Convention Centre.

Betty D. Hardie, President

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**EDITOR'S NOTES**

We follow tradition in this issue of putting on the record the addresses presented at the Annual General Meeting and are grateful to Drs. Blackburn and Wiseman for their cooperation in making their speeches available. The note from Hazel Roberts is most welcome, and reflects the type of item for which our newsletter is most suited as a conglomerate of previously unpublished bites of local library history. Contributions of this nature are eagerly solicited from members, as are news items from newspapers and periodical presses.

Thank you for your support of our projected fall issue.

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Please note that the mailing address of the Association is:

Ex Libris Association  
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## MEMBERSHIP

On April 15 the membership of the Association was 14 life members, 19 sustaining members and 53 regular members for a total of 86. There were two paid subscriptions but others are pending. Apologies are offered to one or two members who, for reasons unfathomable, were omitted from our last mailing list.

The Association has not been able to develop a system that will permit it to be in touch with those who would have an interest in its activities. If members do not assist us by providing names and addresses of those who have retired, are about to retire or have an interest in the history of libraries and librarianship, then it will be impossible to make the necessary contacts.

The current membership fees are:

Regular membership	\$ 10.00
Sustaining membership	\$ 20.00
Life membership	\$200.00
Subscription to <u>Ex Libris News</u>	\$ 20.00

At the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting the By Laws were amended so that the principle of life memberships is invested in long term deposits. If the Association should cease to exist, the principle will be transferred to the Canadian Library Association to be used in a scholarship fund. Meanwhile the income from the investment will be used as required for the general operation of Ex Libris.

## THE ELIZABETH HOMER MORTON FUND

It is most gratifying to be able to report that The Fund is not far off our goal of \$15,000. At the end of December 1990 it stood at \$13,963. If you have not made your charitable contribution to honour Elizabeth Morton or if you wish to make a further contribution in 1991 it would be especially thoughtful of you to do so soon. As you are aware the CLA has established this special fund for educational purposes. If we have reached our objective before our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in November we may be able to put forward a proposal for consideration by the CLA Council. Make cheques payable to the Canadian Library Association. Also write on the top of the cheque "Morton Fund".

## THE 6<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Now is the time to mark your calendar so that you will be sure to attend our sixth annual meeting on Thursday, November 14, 1991 at the Convention Centre in Hamilton. As usual it will begin with registration at 9:30am to be followed by the morning program at 10:00.

The program will include a talk from our friend and colleague James J. Talman "From the Ontario Archives to the UWO Library", reminiscences of library life in the 1930's with references to his stint as the Legislative Librarian. Negotiations are continuing with other prominent persons who will entertain and inform us during the day. The Annual General Meeting will begin at 3:00pm to adjourn about one hour later.

Lunch will be provided at cost. Please plan to attend so that you, too can enjoy the fellowship of old friends.

TEMPLES OF DEMOCRACY; A HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN ONTARIO, 1880 - 1920, by Dr. John A. Wiseman

My research on reading habits in nineteenth-century Ontario had made it clear that finding substantial and substantive sources of information to support my history of public libraries would not be easy. As part of an earlier study, I had looked at the role played by the libraries of mechanics' institutes, stopping at the 1882 legislation that provided for the establishment of free libraries. I became curious to know more about the implications of that legislation for the future of library development, and to discover the subsequent fate of the mechanics' institutes, all of which led me to the period 1880-1920. What might be termed a "baseline" study of these forty years was presented to the Library History Interest Group of the Canadian Library Association in 1981.

Mechanics' institutes, and their successors, public libraries, were considered to be primarily educational institutions, so it seemed logical to begin with the Education Department. The Archives of Ontario holds the records of the Education Department but they are, unfortunately, incomplete. Material pertaining to public libraries and mechanics' institutes is included under the subdivision entitled "Registrar's Branch." There are only "select files" for this branch, covering the period 1885-1913, and public libraries and mechanics' institutes are represented by just three boxes of fragmentary documents. The "Provincial Library Service" forms another subdivision of the Education Department's records, and covers the period 1874-1924, but this collection contains mostly reports from various societies.

Fortunately, it proved possible to compensate for these deficiencies through the invaluable reports of successive Ministers of Education and their inspectors. The statistical data, however, are about one year behind the reports to which they are appended and need to be used cautiously, as they are not always

reliable. After 1900, the proceedings of the Ontario Library Association provide another useful source of information.

Archival material relating to the OLA is not substantial, and I found this to be something of a surprise. There are two collections: one is in the Archives of Ontario and the other at OLA headquarters. The first encompasses the period 1899-1926, which is also the period covered by a short history of the Association, published in 1926. The collection at OLA headquarters is not large. A lack of records for the early period is due to the fact that Edwin Austin Hardy, longtime secretary to the Association, kept them in his home; he moved several times and lost many of them in the process. There are minute books that run to the 1960s, but like all minutes, they need to be read with other types of record.

At the Public Archives of Canada I examined the records of Frontier College, which have a bearing on library development. The National Council of Women of Canada was a body that had some interest in protecting the reading public from pernicious literature, and, as part of its mandate, scrutinized the contents of public libraries. Its annual reports added something to the story of the public library movement. I was able to flesh out the narrative still further through such sources as library board minutes; scrapbooks that are kept by a number of libraries; backfiles of such periodicals as Library Journal, Ontario Library Review, Public Libraries, and the Library Association Record; files of newspapers and periodicals of more general interest; histories of the province and of individual communities. Taken together, a reasonably clear picture of library development between 1880 and 1920 emerged.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, American pedlars were bringing a variety of products into the province, among which were numerous broadsides and chapbooks aimed at

children and adults. The appearance of subscription libraries after 1800 suggests that the demand for books and periodicals was increasing, and implies a reasonable level of literacy. A significant Sunday school movement developed, as the various religious denominations established themselves. Many of these schools had libraries that were patronized by adults as well as children. Commercial circulating libraries were soon in evidence. A number were connected with bookselling establishments that were part of a nascent book trade. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the province's book trade, centred on Toronto, was in a healthy condition. Catalogues for the period show a broad range of publications, frequently selling at very low prices. Missionary societies were very active in the province, distributing thousands of Bibles, Testaments, and tracts, all of which contributed to the spread of the reading habit.

The modern public library in Ontario is the offspring of an institution originally designed for the purpose of adult education, namely, the mechanics' institute. This was an institution where, despite continued efforts on the Government's part to promote evening classes, the most prominent and sustaining feature was the library. The association public library was a later phenomenon, a child of the 1895 legislation that set the course for a rational, province-wide library system. The term "association public library" is generally applied to libraries that were not completely free through municipal tax support. It was applied to mechanics' institutes (redesignated "public libraries" in 1895) that continued to be financed in the old way, to libraries organized by an independent band of citizens whose municipal council had not taken the initiative to form a library, and where the community was not a city, town, or incorporated village. The historical precedent for this type of library may be found in the early subscription or "social" libraries that became more commonly known as library associations and were sometimes combined with mechanic's

institutes.

The Provincial Government consistently maintained that publicly supported libraries, in whatever form, were integral parts of the educational system. For this reason, it provided financial support and encouragement, took a keen interest in their progress, and was never slow to exercise control whenever it was perceived to be necessary. Directors of mechanics' institutes, librarians, and library promoters generally concurred with this perception, but tensions arose when it had to be reconciled with the recreational demands of the reading public. The Government was eventually forced to agree that taxpayers were entitled to some consideration in the formation of libraries that were intended to serve them, and gradually broadened the basis of its granting system.

Mechanics' institutes had their origins in Great Britain. The first in Ontario was organized at Toronto in 1830. Their basic aim was to improve "the mental condition of the working classes," coupled with a concern for the moral welfare of the people. Such aspirations and sensitivities were to set the tone for future institutes and their successors, public libraries. The growth of the institutes was slow, at first. Fresh impetus was provided through legislation in 1851 that allowed for the incorporation of mechanic's institutes and library associations. After that date, the institutes grew steadily, encouraged by a share in a huge grant approved by the Legislature in 1851. The Government was involved in the affairs of the institutes almost from their inception. This was in sharp contrast to the British experience where government intervention was viewed with great suspicion and resulted in the institutes remaining independent.

In the early 1850s, the Reverend Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Education, was putting the finishing touches to his elementary school system. Public libraries based in the schools constituted an important part of his overall plan. The collections were

to be supplied from the Educational Depository, stocked with inexpensive books chosen by Ryerson and his colleagues. The system reached its peak in the 1860s. From roughly 1875 to 1880 the libraries were virtually dormant, if not defunct. The grants were withdrawn in 1880, and the Depository closed in 1881. Of special note is the timing of the project. The system was in the planning stage when the mechanics' institutes were receiving fresh encouragement (1851). This means that Ryerson's libraries were in competition with those of the institutes until 1858, when the latter suffered a serious setback. They were investigated, found wanting in many respects, and so the grants were withdrawn. Funding was not restored until 1868, which meant that for ten years the burden for library service fell upon Ryerson's libraries, the period of their greatest success. By the same token, it is no coincidence that their decline took place in the period when the mechanics' institutes were again in the ascendancy. In the post-Confederation period, the libraries of the institutes became the mainstay of public library service.

It may have been feasible for the institutes and the school-based public libraries to continue their co-existence, but the latter clearly lacked the means to survive. Besides, mechanic's institutes were generally more popular. They frequently offered social inducements, such as musical and literary evenings. Some had games rooms and gymnastic equipment. Libraries in schools offered little beyond basic library service, while some adults felt uncomfortable choosing books in an elementary school setting. A new era began for the mechanics' institutes with the resumption of grants in 1868. Optimism for the future was evident in the large number that incorporated between 1870 and 1880.

In January 1880 responsibility for the mechanics' institutes was transferred from the agricultural portfolio to that of education, which was intended to encourage them as centres of adult education. Subsequently,

steps were taken to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the institutes, but the movement for free libraries was already manifesting itself. Its centre was Toronto; the prime mover was John Hallam, a successful English immigrant who was generally regarded as a "self-made man."

The Globe drew attention to a lobby group intent on establishing a public library for Toronto. The city's mechanics' institute, believed by some to have served its purpose, was suggested as the nucleus of a good library and reading room. As part of the scheme, the Government was approached and asked to provide legislation that would empower municipalities to levy a tax for public library purposes. The school tax was cited as an appropriate analogy.

It soon became apparent that the legislation for free libraries and the establishment of a public library for Toronto were inextricably mingled in the minds of at least some of the promoters, but notably in Hallam's. He was asked to confirm that the legislation he proposed was intended for the whole province and not just for Toronto. In response, he claimed that there was enough evidence to suggest that a province-wide act was needed.

The Free Libraries Act became law on March 10, 1882. During the process, Premier Mowat had rejoiced in the belief that "public agitation" had brought forth the legislation. It has also been suggested that the legislation was designed by Adam Crooks, Minister of Education, as part of a long-range plan for public library development. Whatever the reason, one thing was certain: the way had been cleared for the construction of the Toronto Public Library, which opened its doors on March 6, 1884.

The pattern of library growth that followed is most revealing: only twelve free libraries were formed between 1882 and 1895 (the year of major legislation); in roughly the same period, the number of mechanic's institutes reporting to the Minister rose from ninety-six to 289. This hardly suggests an overwhelming

desire for free libraries. Consequently, despite the high-flown rhetoric, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the campaign for tax-supported, free libraries was carefully orchestrated by Hallam and his associates to facilitate the creation of the Toronto Public Library.

The major piece of legislation enacted in 1895 officially recognized mechanics' institutes as public libraries, which became their new appellation, and set the course for the growth of a rational and viable province-wide system. The act is characterized by clauses that provided for alternative types of service to cover every contingency, improved the granting system, encouraged cooperation, and urged every municipality to play a more significant role in the financing and operation of its local library.

Canadian society generally experienced radical change in the decades between 1880 and 1920. Most people's lives were affected and altered in a variety of ways, the principal transforming agents being industrialism, urbanization, rural depopulation, and innovations in science and technology. In some quarters, grave concern was expressed at a society that was becoming more materialistic and hedonistic, threatening traditional values and cherished beliefs. Many clung to the myth of an idyllic, rural society, but the realists recognized that the expansion of industry and commerce represented the future for Ontario, enabling it to maintain its position as the richest and most powerful province in the country.

From the 1890s, urban reform became a much publicized issue. Municipal standards and public taste were to be elevated. There were no direct references to public libraries as part of this process, but they would certainly have been considered in any attempts made to upgrade municipal institutions. Sustained financial support for libraries from municipal coffers was a matter that was continually pressed by the Education Department. As far as distinctive library buildings were

concerned, their presence depended upon the largesse of Andrew Carnegie and a handful of local benefactors.

The countless American and British settlers who populated our part of the continent brought many of their institutions with them (the mechanics' institute is, of course, one example). Their cultural values, too, were integrated into the new society. The importance and magnitude of the British connection cannot, however, be stressed too strongly; close ties with the mother country remained firm. Numerous literary societies, scientific societies, and debating clubs became part of the cultural fabric. From the 1880s onwards, cultural observers noticed increased interest in the arts, and in social and political affairs.

Another sign of cultural growth was the increasing demand for good quality books and periodicals, although there continued to be a steady supply of "mass market" literature, most of which came from the United States and was generally labelled "trash." Newspapers continued to be a popular form of reading matter, although, again, it was a matter of some debate whether they were improving or worsening over the years. By the early part of the twentieth century, eighty percent of imported newspapers, magazines, and literary papers came from the United States. A good deal of it was labelled "yellow literature," and was a cause of grave concern to those who considered themselves to be the guardians of morals and good taste. It is against this background that we may look at the progress of the library movement.

The Education Department assumed responsibility for the mechanics' institutes in 1880, and through a variety of controlling devices, was able to exert considerable power. The degree to which adequate and reliable financing was available proved to be the crucial factor that determined the success or failure of every type of public library. Financial stability was a matter of continuing concern to library boards, particularly as the

Education Department tended to change the ground rules for grants from time to time, sometimes without much warning.

At the local level, municipalities exercised similar financial power. Libraries of every type were dependent to some extent upon their municipal councils. A library board could not always be sure that it would receive its due from the municipality, whether from the library rate or special grants, particularly if the financial situation was bleak. Because of the relationship between government grants and local appropriations (matching dollar for dollar, etc.), it was incumbent upon library boards to ensure that they complied with all the regulations and stipulations of the Education Department to qualify for the maximum grant.

The regulatory powers of the Education Department were enormous, for it was allowed considerable latitude in the interpretation of the statutes. In this respect, the Department had a further advantage: not infrequently, library boards were unable to interpret correctly the legislation and the regulations governing it. So, to some extent, they were at the mercy of the Department. Annual library inspections allowed officials to ensure that all the requirements were being met, to make suggestions for improvements, and reassure themselves that library collections contained nothing objectionable. None of this is intended to portray the Minister of Education and his staff as bureaucratic tyrants; rather, the Department's general approach was paternalistic. It recognized the need and importance of dialogue with, for example, organizations like the Association of Mechanics' Institutes of Ontario (until 1886) and, later the Ontario Library Association. The usual intermediary was the Inspector of Public Libraries. He attended conferences and library institutes (regional workshops) on a regular basis, frequently as an instructor. It was not unusual, however, for delegations from the O.L.A. to meet directly with the Minister, especially if crucial matters like

changes in the legislation were in the offing.

The formation of the O.L.A. in 1900 sprang from the need to organize and channel efforts directed at promoting the public library movement throughout the province. It received much of its initial inspiration from the example of American librarians, taking the A.L.A. as its model. It also drew upon the British experience, a debt it was not slow to acknowledge. The Board of Arts and Manufactures, established in 1857, and its successor the Association of Mechanics' Institutes of Ontario (1868 - 1886) represent early attempts at organized effort. The influence of the O.L.A. upon library development was considerable, but it should not be assumed that it was a cohesive, single-minded body, unwavering in its pursuit of clearly defined goals.

It was created at a time when the country was without a recognizable library profession. Many in the library field could not, in fact, decide whether they were in a profession or a business. Those who belonged to the class that viewed itself as missionaries or priests, and libraries as temples, had to reconcile that view with the increasing pressure to modernize and put their institutions on a more business-like footing. For some, librarianship remained "a queer intangible thing," a view compounded by the difficulty of distinguishing "librarians" from "library assistants." But this was a distinction that had little meaning and hardly existed in the numerous small libraries that were scattered throughout the province. Before 1920, there seems to have been no serious attempts made to develop a philosophy of librarianship, or to create a sound theoretical base that would identify librarianship as a profession. Goals and objectives aimed at a rational, province-wide system, and the declared mission of cultural and moral uplift, may have been considered acceptable substitutes.

In 1916, W.O Carson, Inspector of Public Libraries, recognized the need for a philosophy of librarianship, taking practical



view that the tax-paying public was entitled to the highest standards of service available. As it transpired, a truly professional ethos would not evolve until practice gave way to a greater emphasis on theory. The beginning of this transition became evident during the 1920s, and in 1927, the University of Toronto assumed responsibility for professional library education.

The trend was not embraced by everyone, however. Mary S. Saxe, of the Westmount Public Library, espoused what might be termed a "paste pot" philosophy which she borrowed from John Cotton Dana, the eminent American librarian: the first principle of library training was to learn techniques "from the paste pot to the catalogue." She reinforced this view on another occasion by relating a story about a young, aspiring librarian who failed miserably in her first library appointment. "The fact that she was trained in theory had gone to her head, and it took her several years to forget it." Meanwhile, most people in the field continued to refer to themselves as "library workers."

Many of the topics discussed at O.L.A. conferences had a strong practical flavour, and reflected basic themes and concerns of library development. Fundamental issues included access to library services for the entire population, supported by a sound and reliable financial system; the fostering of a climate more amenable to self-determination (a euphemism, I believe, for lessening the control of the Education Department); raising the profile of the public library and establishing it as a vital cultural force in the community. More specific discussions centred on legislation, buildings, equipment, publicity, administration, children's services, book selection, and reference work. The provision of smoking rooms, chess and similar table games typify suggestions for attracting more readers to the library.

Programmes were leavened by lectures on such diverse topics as "the foreigner," "rural life," "the making of a book," and "the clergy

and the library." Discussions of broader philosophical aims are hard to find unless such matters as book selection, reference work, and the relationship of the library to the community can be characterized in this way. A vague philosophy may be perceived, however, in discussions of the library's mission as an agent of democracy, a topic of special significance during the First World War and in the years of reconstruction that followed.

In the O.L.A.'s early period, library leadership was in the hands of men like James Bain, Chief Librarian of the Toronto Public Library, his successor, George Locke, and E.A. Hardy, high school teacher, public library trustee, and, for many, many years, secretary to the Association. Hardy exemplified the hard-working trustee, an official he described as the backbone of the public library system. Trustees often took responsibility for functions that would eventually become part of the professional librarian's duties, notably book selection. Bearing in mind that it was still "a man's world," a number of women rose to prominence in the profession. Mary Black, of the Fort William Public Library, was a dynamic individual who was never slow to voice her forward-looking views on library development. Lillian H. Smith, responsible for children's services at the Toronto Public Library, was a pioneer in that field. Patricia Spereman was a children's librarian who became a field consultant for the Education Department. The proceedings of O.L.A. conferences reveal other women who also helped shape library development in Ontario.

Communities possessing successful public libraries have histories that display a number of common characteristics. In choosing sites for their first settlements, pioneers took into account accessibility. At first, this meant proximity to waterways and trails. Later, access to rail facilities became crucial: communities that were bypassed faced the danger of stunted growth. For small communities, proximity to a large, urban

centre was also an advantage. As pioneer settlements grew, they encouraged a variety of cottage industries in the form of grist and lumber mills, tanneries, and foundries. The larger towns soon included firms that turned out consumer products that ranged from pianos to cigars; hand in hand with economic prosperity went civic pride and the fostering of culture. The public library was, of course, considered to be a cultural landmark, and was one of the signs that a community had "arrived." Prosperous municipalities tended to be successful in attracting Carnegie grants, even those with public libraries that were quite modest in size. Unfortunately, not every community that achieved economic stability sustained it, for there are instances where the public library remains as a legacy of a more prosperous past.

Similar patterns are discernible in northern Ontario. Although even now there are not many large cities and towns in the region, their growth and subsequent prosperity may be ascribed to locations that favoured communications and possessed abundant natural resources. Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie are notable in this respect, and both have extremely good public libraries. In southern Ontario, the first tax-supported, free libraries appeared in the southwest, which is characterized by large and affluent urban conurbations, built upon the foundations of some of the earliest settlements in the province. Free libraries grew steadily in numbers over the years, but the progress of association public libraries, scattered all over the province, was much less predictable. From year to year, libraries were added to or subtracted from the Education Department's official list, as their fortunes waxed and waned.

The Carnegie benefactions gave a significant boost to the library movement, and, of course, many of these distinctive buildings remain as landmarks of public library progress. The hope was that every public library would eventually become tax-

supported and free. But together with travelling libraries and the resources of farmers' and women's institutes, association public libraries remained the mainstay of library service for small communities, especially those in remote areas.

In February 1919, the Ontario Library Review compared the modern public library to the institution of former days. It had abandoned its custodial role and now encouraged patrons to explore the library's resources for themselves. To this end, acquisition policies had become more liberal and innovative. Reference services had been developed so that collections could be exploited more fully. The introduction of modern administrative methods had further increased access to the library. All segments of the population were now encouraged to use the library, especially young children, a group who had been denied access in earlier days. The new breed of librarian was described as "guide, philosopher, and friend" to every patron, regardless of age, race, creed, or standing in the community.

At any given point in time, a comparison of the contents of public library collections would reveal a striking uniformity. This is hardly surprising, as librarians more or less sharing the same moral and cultural standards, were influenced by the same bibliographical aids, were guided by boards who held similar views on book selection, drew on the same sources of supply, and, in many cases, had attended the same library school.

A catalogue from a typical, combined library association and mechanics' institute, located in Peterborough, and one from a school-based public library in Vaughan Township, both produced in the 1850s, bear some comparison. Each of these communities, at this time, could be characterized as agricultural (although Peterborough was larger and its daily life more diverse). Consequently, both collections had a strong base in works relating to farming, animal husbandry, mechanics, hydraulics, and carpentry.

Standards works of English literature, classical history, natural science, philosophy, and biography were also present. The Peterborough library subscribed to a number of standard periodicals among which were the Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly Review, and the Penny Magazine. The Vaughan library possessed a small number of dictionaries and encyclopedias to support its main collection. Despite collection similarities, it is important to remember that the selection processes were radically different: Vaughan Township was restricted to the contents of the Educational Depository; the Peterborough Library Association and Mechanics' Institute, on the other hand, could select and purchase from any source it wished.

Moving forward to the last decade of the nineteenth century, the eclectic nature of the 22,000 entries in the Toronto Public Library's catalogue suggests what must have been considered the ideal in urban reading tastes. More specifically, though, it reflected the needs of a cosmopolitan population in the province's largest city. The library attempted to include all the major literary figures and popular writers of the day, but was careful to exclude Zola and Maupassant. Their brand of realism was, no doubt, too rich for Toronto's genteel middle-class reader. Such omissions make it clear that censorship was part of the selection process, despite the overall impression gained from the catalogue that Toronto's library epitomized liberal thinking and catholic taste. Within the natural sciences, the library possessed several volumes on evolution, which was still a controversial subject. Under "mental, social and medical sciences," there were works on topics as varied as logic, temperance, slavery, and phrenology. Religion, technology, domestic economy, decorative and fine arts, music, history, politics, and biography were also represented. Governed by such factors as financial resources, community tastes, and the predilections of librarians and trustees, miniature versions of this collection could be

found in public libraries across the province.

The literature on the fiction question is vast. In common with their colleagues elsewhere, Canadian librarians agonized over the matter. Opinion ranged from those who advocated a complete ban to those who believed the public library should collect everything except "sensational" literature, epitomized by the dime novel. A number of public libraries, in fact, stocked popular and "sensation" novels, which may have been a response to the competition from the commercial circulating libraries, but was more likely due to the difficulty of categorizing fiction satisfactorily. Mrs. Braddon's novels seemed to have been acceptable, although they do belong to the sensational school. Mary Black, of Fort William, did not think that "wholesome" love stories would do harm to girls, but thought, nevertheless, that there should be some restriction on the degree to which they were read. To be excluded completely, however, was the modern love story that had, according to Miss Black, a "sensuous atmosphere." Of course, even within the genre of sensational literature, there were degrees of competence and good taste, most of it being fairly innocuous.

The Education Department was always very nervous about fiction, and there are frequent references to it in the annual reports. In common with the majority of librarians, the Department (perhaps, with some reluctance) allowed that good, clean fiction of the standard variety was generally acceptable, but not to the exclusion of other types of literature. For example, when it was discovered (1909) that the Kingston public library would admit nothing but fiction to its shelves, the Inspector of Public Libraries declared: "Let us pray for Kingston." Librarians had to be careful about their attitudes to fiction because it was the mainstay of the public library, a characteristic inherited from the old mechanics' institute libraries. Nevertheless, librarians, trustees, and Education Department officials spent a great

deal of time examining ways of encouraging a broader use of library collections. Attention was also given to the possibility of grading fiction in some way. Among the more radical proposals was that which called for the creation of a Canadian Reviewing Bureau, intended to measure all new works of fiction against a set of predetermined standards. It would be headed by the Dominion Archivist, and any work that failed to meet the criteria would be banned. Fortunately, the idea was not pursued.

Some librarians operated on what was termed "the ground bait" theory, which entailed weaning readers away from fiction through subterfuge. Librarians worried about their statistical submissions to the Minister which invariably showed high levels of fiction circulation. Consequently, they were not adverse to hiding this fact by classifying fiction as "voyages and adventure," or "general literature," or "miscellaneous works," often in collusion with the book trade, which provided invoices classified in the same way.

The recreational role of the public library became more important as the twentieth century progressed, for the competition from cheap, popular literature that flowed in vast quantities from the United States remained on the increase. In addition, such innovations as the pianola, the phonograph, and the motion picture created further competition. It was not that there was real opposition to such new forms of popular entertainment; it was only if they appeared likely to usurp the position of the book in Canadian society, would they become a matter for concern.

Evangelism had been implanted early in the province's history by fundamentalist Methodists and Baptists, who sometimes joined forces with Presbyterians in their efforts towards social and moral reform. Prohibition was among their chief goals, though initially, they were prepared to settle for temperance. Public libraries were considered allies in this work, for they were regarded as attractive alternatives to the tavern

and the saloon. In view of this, it is not surprising therefore that librarians began to see themselves as "missionaries." A sense of mission sprang from a myth of public library service that was important to librarians as a means of self-justification, especially when funding battles were being fought, or the movement generally was being promoted. The essence of the myth presented the public library as an agent of fundamental change in society. It could combat crime and vice, improve moral standards, wean people away from materialism, and produce model citizens who were happier and wiser. The goals and objectives of the library movement were enshrined in the term "mission," a concept that was reassessed and modified as circumstances dictated.

The Government officially recognized the public library function of the mechanics' institutes as early as the 1870s; but it would be two more decades before the title became official. The provision of "wholesome" literature was to share first place with technical instruction. The latter remained important because the advance of industrialization in the 1880s demanded skilled labour. But as the decade drew to a close, an expanded long-term mission became apparent. As before, adults whose schooling had been curtailed would have the opportunity to continue their education; but now, particular attention was to be paid to young people. The principal aim would be to lure them from the streets, taverns, and other "low amusements" through the dissemination of literature that was both instructive and entertaining. This was a mission that would be pursued by the public library.

In fact, in 1908, the Inspector of Public Libraries stated that the time had come for the public library to be regarded as the "People's University." Lack of opportunity and economic constraints were among the factors that denied numerous individuals access to higher education. For example, at the turn of the century, it had been estimated that only

five percent of the population had acquired a high school education. The public library was to close the gap between actual and potential educational attainment.

It is only a short step from the use of terminology like "mission" to even more obvious ecclesiastical terms. In an article published in the Canadian Magazine in 1917, the author reminded librarians, authors, editors, and publishers that they were banded together in the same "great ministry" to the "minds and souls" of men, women, and children. It was, moreover, a sacred ministry, as passing on the records of civilization to posterity was a "solemn trust." In view of this attitude, it not surprising that public libraries were considered to be "temples," and librarians sometimes called "high priests." Bearing in mind the direction the profession would take, it was perhaps prophetic that women were considered to be the best qualified to undertake this public library "ministry."

What may be termed the "social force" argument for the support of public libraries began to be voiced in the 1900s. Basically, it reiterated the notion of the public library as a force for good. It provided literature and guidance that enabled the average citizen to improve the quality of life. With the conclusion of the First World War, a new era was anticipated; it was here that the public library would be expected to become a particularly strong social force. It was presented as part of a greater social movement that included the churches, and organizations like the Red Cross, the Rotary Club, and the Daughters of the Empire. All were expected to have a part to play in post-war reconstruction. As early as 1915, it was presumed that there would be enormous social problems to be faced after the armistice. It would require an informed public to solve them, which suggested an ideal mission for the public library. Meanwhile, those individuals who loved the material comforts of modern society, but felt nothing for books, would have to be re-educated; this was truly a missionary

endeavour. In the end, it entailed little more than the provision of library resources aimed at producing a more informed public, facing the unfamiliar problems of the post-war years. The notion that the public library was capable of making a significant contribution to the "onward march of civilization" proved to be just as unrealistic as the hope that the public library would be the "mother" of the new Canadian Utopia, and that an ideal state would emerge from its "womb."

Although the agitation for tax-supported, free libraries began as an independent movement, the 1882 legislation includes a clause that permitted the conversion of mechanics' institutes into free libraries. Clearly, the expectation was that the institutes would be phased out, leaving the field entirely to the tax-supported, free library. As it happened, municipalities were slow to take advantage of the act, and mechanics' institutes continued to increase and flourish. The government, meanwhile, maintained its preoccupation with technical and vocational education; from 1889, free libraries were given the opportunity to offer evening classes, and a number did so until about 1902. At the same time, art schools were permitted to amalgamate with public libraries, if they so wished.

Although it may not have been perceived by everyone as an essential institution, the public library (whatever its type) survived. Interest groups promoted it vigorously, and the public was encouraged to view books as powerful, even mystical, objects that were capable of changing for the better the lives of those who read them. Some did read for self-improvement, but many more read for entertainment, giving the fiction collection central importance. The place of the public library in the community was frequently under review, and its promoters were never slow to identify and encourage roles suited to it. During the First World War, the public library became an information centre, and frequently a rallying point for patriotic effort, all of

which helped establish its standing and reputation.

Practically nothing is known, however, about the average citizen's opinion of the public library, or the degree of importance individuals attached to it. The library's interaction with the community tended to be passive, even though its administrators considered themselves to be aggressive and missionary in spirit. The influences the public library exercised on the community were subtle and the results not readily apparent. Never the centre of great controversies, although objections were sometimes made to taxation for its support, the public library was taken for granted as one of several community services. As a consequence, the general public was seldom, if ever, moved to write about it. Patrons probably neither knew nor cared about the institution's goals and aspirations, simply taking from it what they needed as individuals.

By 1920, a recognizable public library system existed in the province, monitored and supported by the Education Department and the O.L.A. A large proportion of the population had access to libraries that varied in size and quality, but provision for rural communities, especially those in remote areas, remained less than satisfactory. Although there were now quite a number of tax-supported, free libraries, they were still outnumbered by association public libraries. At the local level, libraries, both large and small, strove to provide their communities with the best service they could manage; at first, the Toronto Public Library was the model all wished to emulate, but as it gradually outstripped the rest in size and significance, the impossibility of this dream was, no doubt, brought home with some force.

Much stress was laid on the public library as a classless institution. An editorial in the Ontario Library Review (November 1918) described it as the "most democratic of all public institutions." It was more universal than the church, where denominational

differences caused divisions; the school system only catered to certain age groups, and was also split by religious differences. A Mrs. Dorrington, addressing the O.L.A. in 1918, summed it up (apparently without any sense of hyperbole) when she declared that "all are equal in the grave and the public library," a sentiment for which she received loud applause.

The notion of the public library as a "temple of democracy" manifested itself in several ways. As part of the educational system, it was expected to provide suitable reading matter for every inhabitant that could read, thus contributing to a literate and informed population, essential to an effective democracy. Legislation enacted over the decades assisted in the democratization of literature, and when the O.L.A. was formed, its members pursued this goal with an extremely strong sense of mission. More specifically, the democratic role of the public library could be seen in the gradual move towards making all libraries completely free, in promoting open access, in providing for young readers, and in the adoption of more liberal book selection policies, although fiction continued to be a contentious issue.

The extension of library services throughout the entire province remained the primary goal of library promoters, while an important motivating force was that which echoed the principal aim of the A.L.A.: "the best reading for the largest number at the least cost," which, if nothing else, is truly a democratic principle.

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ANECDOTES FROM THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY. An address by Dr. Robert H Blackburn (Report by John Macpherson)

The afternoon session of the A.G.M. opened with an address by Dr. R.H. Blackburn, former Chief Librarian of the University of Toronto, on some of the human aspects (characters) pertaining to the history of the University of Toronto Library up to 1981. Dr. Blackburn drew from his recently published book, Evolution of the Heart (U of T Library, 1989), for examples to illustrate his talk.

Ubiquitous in the history of the first half of the nineteenth century in Ontario is the name of John Strachan. It was not therefore wholly surprising to learn from Dr. Blackburn that Strachan negotiated the royal charter of 1827 which is the founding document of the constitution of what we recognize today as the University of Toronto and its Library. Dr. Blackburn proceeded with thumbnail sketches of the academics who in the years up to the turn of the century subsumed the organization and management of the Library in their other

responsibilities. Naturally these individuals left their imprint on the development of the Library as well as the University.

John McCaul (1843-1852), the first librarian, is credited with establishing the original basis of the classification scheme that was used in the ledger catalogues up to 1890. It was the progenitor of the scheme which appeared in subsequent card catalogues up to 1959, and is still present as "old class" on the shelves and in the present computer catalogue. He was succeeded by John William Small who "having been elected by Senate on 2 September 1852 he seems never to have been mentioned again in Senate, nor to have troubled the Senators with his growing disillusionment about his position and the smallness of its rewards". Next came Alexander Lorimer (1854-1868). Having survived, as a 13 year old, a frigid reception into his church at an open air service in 1834 when the ice had to be broken and the water constantly stirred, he

was well prepared for the reception he received 20 years later at the University of Toronto. He did eventually earn the respect of the community for his knowledge of the collection and his maintenance of the catalogue. And on to John Thomson (1863-1872), the most notable event of his whose career seems to have been his leaving it - destined for the provincial asylum; and to William Van der Smissen (1873-1891) and his able assistant James Brebner who faced up to the unenviable task of rebuilding the collection after the destructive fire of 1891.

Dr. Blackburn also paid tribute to the resourceful and supportive members of Senate and Board of Governors without whom no library cause will succeed. While overly interfering in some respects, the initiative of Vice-Chancellor John Langton in the 1850's in establishing a clear set of procedures for the librarian to follow and in granting the Library Committee the authority to buy books, set appropriate precedents. Walter Barwick, a barrister and member of the Senate, became Chairman of the Library committee in 1890 and thanks to his drive and administrative corner-cutting the planning for and construction of a new library, made necessary by the fire, went on apace. He was also largely

responsible for setting the scene which led to Van der Smissen relinquishing responsibility for the library and the subsequent appointment of the University's first fulltime librarian, Hugh Langton, son of the renowned Vice-Chancellor.

For the next 90 years the fortunes of the U of T Libraries were in the hands of three people: Hugh Langton (1892-1923), W. Stewart Wallace (1923-1954) and R.H. Blackburn (1954-1981). The terms of office of Langton and Wallace were presented with particular reference to the modernization of library service - for example, the advent of typing, the employment of women, the establishment of courses for library staff leading to the U of T library school, the opening of the undergraduate reading room, reacting to change in University governance and finance, and of course some reference to Dr. Blackburn's own arrival at Toronto and his working relationship with Wallace. He concluded his address with some observations on his own term of office, and with legitimate pride spoke of the leading role the U of T Library played in the further modernization not only of the practical but the philosophical and cooperative aspects of academic library service.

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#### TALES FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE, by Marjorie George

Predictions of another economic depression bring back memories I dread. Chief among them is that of the "old men", as we called them, in the public library in Hamilton, Ont., where I worked in the 1930s. Their ages probably ranged from about 50 to 65, but discouragement and hopelessness, combined with poor and insufficient food, had made them old.

They spent their days in the library, choosing to occupy a rectangular gallery on the second floor that overlooked the main entrance. Here, 10 to 15 newspapers were hung on racks, and tables and chairs were in place for the convenience of anyone wishing to consult them. The rooms on either side were blocked off by glass partitions that gave this area an aspect of privacy appealing to men

who already felt set apart by poverty. They cannot have been unaware that they were shabby, dirty and smelly, and must have felt comfortable only in the company of those in like case.

There was little they could do to improve their physical condition. Probably, most of them were wearing the only garments they owned. Facilities for washing either themselves or their clothes must have been nonexistent. A similar group in a nearby library had taken to washing their socks in the men's room. Our library had no public washrooms. We who worked there were uncomfortable about this, but it must have been a relief to the janitors who cleaned the building.

From 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. these men occupied