

# William Oliver Carson

b. Mar. 8, 1874, London, ON; d. Sept. 27, 1929, Toronto, ON



 William O. Carson, n.d. Credit London Public Library

## Education:

Carson completed high school at London Collegiate Institute

## Positions:

Before turning to librarianship, Carson operated a photography business on Dundas Street and in 1905 served as an alderman in London

1906-1916 Chief Librarian, London Public Library

1916-1929 Inspector of Public Libraries, Ontario Department of Education

## Publications:

Carson, William O. (1909). "Newark (Modified) Charging System." In Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting, 68-69. Toronto: L.K. Cameron.

Carson, William O. (1909). "Reference work in the library." In Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting, 22-35. Toronto: L.K. Cameron.

Carson, William O. (1912). "The status and training of the public librarian." In Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting, 106-114. Toronto: L.K. Cameron.

Carson, William O. (1914). "Book purchasing." In Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association

Annual Meeting, 110–116. Toronto: L.K. Cameron.

Carson, William O. (1915). "The Canadian public library as a social force." In Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting, 36–42. Toronto: L.K. Cameron.

Carson, William O. (1917). "Libraries in war-time and some factors that require consideration." In Proceedings of the Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting, 59–62. Toronto: L.K. Cameron.

Carson, William O. (1921). "The Ontario public library rate." American Library Association Bulletin 15 (7): 126–128.

Carson, William O. (1924). "Public libraries of Canada." In British Association for the Advancement of Science, Handbook of Canada, 74–77. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Carson, William O. (1926). "Canadian considerations [on adult education]." In Libraries and adult education; report of a study made by the American Library Association, 93–102. New York: Macmillan Co.

Carson, William O. (1926). "Canadian Chapter [reprint of Libraries and adult education]." Ontario Library Review 11 (2): 28–35.

Carson, William O. (1927). "Public libraries of Ontario." Library Journal 52 (9): 451–456.

Carson, William O. (1927). "Special libraries of Toronto [editorial introduction]." Special Libraries 18 (5): 147–153.

Carson's annual reports on the development of Public Libraries, Historical, Literary, and Scientific Societies submitted to the Minister of Education, Ontario were printed by the King's Printer from 1916-1928.

## Associations/Committees:

President, Ontario Library Association 1914-1915.

Member of American Library Association: ALA Council (1928-1929), the Board on Library and Adult Education, the Curriculum Study Advisory Committee, and the Committee on Legislation.

## Honours:

London's East End branch at the corner of Dufferin Avenue/Quebec Street was renamed the W. O. Carson Branch Library in 1961 to commemorate his tenure as chief librarian. A new building opened at this site in 1977 and received major renovations in 2010.

## Comments:

In speaking of Inspector Carson's passing, George H. Locke said: "Mr. Carson has done a very notable

work in spreading the influence of the public library through the Province. He was recognized in the United States, where he was made a member of the most important of library commissions ... Mr. Carson organized the Library Training School, which made librarianship a profession in the Province." Carson's most notable achievement was a complete revision of the Public Libraries Act in 1920 which provided for an enhanced municipal library rate set at a minimum of 50 cents per capita; better regulations governing qualifications for librarians; and more powers to the minister of education to improve travelling libraries, library training, and administrative standards. This legislation served as a framework for provincial library legislation until 1966. Carson also founded the Ontario Library Review in 1916, a publication which continued until 1982.

## Sources:

"Mr. W.O. Carson" (1929). Ontario Library Review 14 (2): 40-41.

"William O. Carson." In Arthur L. Tunnell and Charles G.D. Roberts, Standard dictionary of Canadian biography, vol. 1, 101. Toronto: Trans-Canada Press, 1934-1938.

"Carson, William Oliver." In Dictionary of Canadian biography, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003. Accessed Sept. 8, 2020.

Giles, Suzette (2018). "Libraries named after librarians." ELAN no. 63 (Spring): 11.

ELA biography compiled by Lorne Bruce

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