

William Rentoul Castell

b. 1 Nov. 1908, Toronto, ON; d. 10 Sept. 2004, Calgary, AB

Education

1932 BA University of Toronto
1935 BSc University of Minnesota
1936 MLSc University of Michigan

Positions

1937–1945 Chief Librarian, Fort William Public Library (Thunder Bay)
1945–1973 Chief Librarian, Calgary Public Library

Publications

Castell, William (1938). "New Course of Studies Makes Heavy Demand on Fort William Public Library Shelves." *Ontario Library Review* 22 (1): 23–24.

Castell, William (1941). "A New Experiment in Library Lighting at the Fort William Public Library." *Ontario Library Review* 25 (1): 14–16.

Castell, William (1952). "Branch libraries in Calgary." *Canadian Library Association Bulletin* 8 (5): 22–23.

Castell, William (1965). "The year ahead [1965–1966]." *Proceedings of the Canadian Library Association 20th annual conference, Toronto, June 23–July 1, 1965*, pp. 20–24. Ottawa: The Association.

Castell, William (1966). "Presidential address." *Proceedings of the Canadian Library Association 21st annual conference, Calgary, June 19–25, 1966*, pp. 19–21. Ottawa: The Association.

Associations

President, Canadian Library Association, 1965–1966
President, Alberta Library Association, 1946–1947

Honours

W.R. Castell Central Library on Macleod Trail named in his honour from 1974–2018

Achievements/Comments

William Rentoul Castell was known to be an able administrator and promoter of branch libraries. When he came to Calgary in 1945, the library system consisted of the Carnegie library in Memorial Park (1912) and a small branch in Crescent Heights. During his tenure, he was responsible for the planning of a dozen new branches, the operation of several bookmobiles, and the opening of a new downtown central central library on Macleod Trail South (1963) that was later named in his honour shortly after his retirement. When he passed away in September 2004, “his former employees remembered him as a compassionate, equal-opportunity boss who had hired people of colour and people with physical handicaps long before this became common practice among Calgary employers.” — Brian Brennan, The Calgary Public Library.

W.R. Castell was also known to speak his mind: when he accepted his nomination as president of CLA at Toronto on July 1st, 1965, he questioned whether French could attain parity with English within Canada at a time when bilingualism was being debated, he deplored the tendency to continually raise library membership fees, he openly criticized CLA’s organizational structure which he felt had become unwieldy, and said a person’s first loyalty should be to Canada. — CLA 20th conference proceedings held in the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, 1965.

Sources

Robert Dykstra, “Retired library boss William Castell hasn’t ‘filed’ his affection for books.” Calgary Herald, 25 February, 1980, A7.

“Library Chief Says English Is Paramount.” Globe and Mail, 2 July 1965, 5.

Brian Brennan (2012). The Calgary Public Library: Inspiring life stories since 1912. Cochrane, AB: Kingsley Publishing.

ELA biography compiled by Lorne Bruce

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