

## THE BOREAL INSTITUTE FOR NORTHERN STUDIES LIBRARY

### An Information Centre on the North

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'Please send me all the information you have on the Mackenzie Delta; "Do you have any material on ice-fog?"; "I have to write a term paper on the child-rearing practices of Eskimos, can you help me?"; "I'm going to teach in Pangnirtung, can you tell me what it will be like there?"; 'What is the nick-name for the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories?'; these and many other interesting questions come to the staff at the library of the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies, and, from the resources collected over the 13 years of its existence, answers are found.

Established in 1960 at the University of Alberta, and located in Edmonton, the traditional gateway to the western Arctic, the Boreal Institute's primary aims are the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge of the north. This is effected by a threefold program involving an information centre, training and instruction, and research. The establishment of the library with a collection specifically focused on the North was the first objective. Over the years the library has grown steadily and now has some 20,000 - 25,000 items ranging from books and periodicals, to microfilms, atlases, maps, annual reports, consultant reports, and theses. These, together with a few microfiche, films and phonograph records, constitute a multimedia, multidisciplinary western Canadian opsite number to the well-known Arctic Institute of North America in Montreal.

Although the main area of interest for research projects is Northern Alberta and the western Canadian Arctic, material will be found in the library on Alaska, Greenland, and other areas of the circumpolar north, as well as studies on Antarctica and other cold regions of the world. In the early days a particular effort was made to acquire the historical accounts of the various Arctic expeditions, and the library has a substantial collection of these. More recently, the emphasis has been on consultant reports, conference proceedings, and the reports of sociological and environmental impact studies. In particular an effort is being made to subscribe to all the newspapers and newsletters published by the various communities in the N.W.T. and Yukon.

Several librarians, well known to Albertans, have helped build this collection, achieving a balance and completeness in spite of limited funds, so that it is now rated as one of the better of its kind in Canada; it is certainly the primary one for western Canada. Lois Carrier, Phil Connolly, Hilda Robinson and Betty Colyer all have had a hand in shaping the library's collection and establishing its reputation as an information centre on the North.

Since its founding, the library has had a somewhat checkered career regarding location on campus, having moved from basement to basement, basement to 'hot caf', 'hot caf' to an old house on 114th Street, and finally to the fourth floor of the brand new Biological Sciences Building.

In spite of the endless maze of passages and doorways which characterizes this building, few have trouble locating the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies as it is situated across the hallway from the cafeteria! Here, within some 3800+ sq. ft. is housed the library and administrative and research offices of the Institute.

Being located on the University's campus has many advantages; there is no doubt that it is very convenient for the library to have the backruns of periodicals, and the expensive indexes and abstracting services so close to hand when needed. However, a disadvantage is that too often potential users are deterred by thinking that the library, because it is on campus, is for University staff and student use only. Certainly, the majority of users are from on campus, but the library also loans to school or college students, businessmen in the city, residents in the Yukon or N.W.T., in fact, to *anyone* who has an interest in and need of information on the North.

Once inside the library, the user will gain much by simply shelf browsing and looking around, depending on his subject of interest. However, as in most libraries, it is better to use the catalogue, which serves not only the usual function as a guide to the items in the library, but also as an index, having many analytic entries for journal articles and book chapters. This indexing is by no means complete, but is well underway thanks to catalogue cards received from the Scott Polar Research Institute Library in Cambridge, England. The collection is classified using the "Universal Decimal Classification for use in Polar Libraries" as developed by the Scott Polar Research Institute. This system, used in conjunction with a classified catalogue, helps to locate material speedily in answer to a specific question.

The library's staff is involved in a number of projects including the compilation and publishing of "Yukon Bibliography: an update 1963-1970." Regular Supplements are planned to keep the bibliography as up to date as possible. A computer program developed especially for the library will be used to ease the workload of producing the first supplement. A KWIC Index, "Northern Titles", which provides much needed current awareness of articles in periodicals, government documents, and northern newspaper headlines is also maintained. Newspaper clipping files on northern development and Canada's native peoples are kept, and these too will be KWIC indexed from the headlines.

The library has several interesting and unique items in its collection. Two recent acquisitions are the judgment of Mr. Justice Malouf in the case of Chief Robert Kanatewat *et al* vs the James Bay Development Corporation *et al* and The Attorney General of Canada, and a collection of reports and papers used by the Peace Athabasca Delta Project Group. This last set of papers is one of three and was received, catalogued and classified by the Alberta Department of Environment Library.

The Boreal Institute Library recently cooperated with Susan Moysa, the librarian for the Alberta Department of the Environment, in the compilation of a bibliography of the socio-economic and environmental studies of the Athabasca Oil Sands, Fort McMurray area. Every effort

is being made to have as many as possible of the items listed in this bibliography available at the Institute's library. To this end, a copy of the four volume environmental impact assessment prepared by Syncrude Canada Limited was received recently.

Another recent deposit has been the computer print-out of the statistical tabulations resulting from the Northwest Territories manpower survey carried out by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development between January 1969 and December 1970. There are four sections to this print-out involving data from the communities of the Mackenzie District, Keewatin, Baffin, and Arctic Coast regions. The tabulations are very detailed giving data by age, sex, ethnic group, education, etc., and are available for use by researchers. Copies of the computer tape containing the "raw" data are also available should a researcher wish to compile other tabulations and comparisons.

Although the Institute does not as yet have the space for a museum, some archival material and artifacts have been donated to or bought by the library. The more fragile of these are deposited in the University's Archives for safekeeping; some others are displayed in the library. Several years ago Dr. Dewey Soper donated over 1,000 negatives and prints taken by him when he was Chief Federal Wildlife Officer for the Prairie Provinces, 1934-48, and for Alberta, Yukon and the Northwest Territories, 1948-1952. These photographs are a valuable documentation of the landscape and wildlife at that time, and are of lasting, intrinsic interest from an historical point of view. A complete listing of the negatives describing subject and location was provided by Dr. Soper, enabling researchers to easily identify photographs of interest without thumbing through them. A more recent acquisition has been some of the manuscripts for early editions of Arctic News written by the late Archibald Fleming.

The library is but one part of the Institute's activities and services. An active program of northern research is coordinated by the administrative staff under the guidance of the Director, Dr. D. Gill, and the Assistant Director, Mr. R. Jamieson. Other activities include teaching courses with a northern interest, publication of a series of occasional papers on a wide variety of subjects, the organization of monthly meetings of the Boreal Circle throughout the winter session, and the sponsoring of conferences.

One such conference was the first meeting of the Northern Libraries Colloquy. Held in Edmonton in June 1971 and co-sponsored with the Arctic Institute of North America, this first colloquy was an experiment which proved so successful that it is now an annual meeting held at a different "Northern" library each year. These meetings are a gathering of librarians from libraries around the world whose collections are specifically northern or are physically situated in the north. The last one was held at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, England, and included participants from Norway, Finland, France, Germany, Denmark, Alaska, mainland U.S.A., and Canada.

The Arctic Summer School courses held each year are jointly spon-

sored by the Institute with the Department of Extension of the University of Alberta. Begun in 1970, the School is designed for management and professional people working in private and public organizations which are active or becoming active in the North. The objective is to familiarize those working or advising on northern operations with the special environmental conditions in that part of Canada. To back this up, the School is held in Inuvik so that the lectures and seminars can be practically illustrated by field trips. The School has proved it fulfils a need, and each year more applications are received than can be accepted.

There are many more interesting activities of the Boreal Institute and its library, but I hope the few here have helped to show the variety and range. If you need information on the North, write\* to us or visit and the staff will be pleased to help.

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\* A data sheet on the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies appeared in vol. 5, no. 1 (January 1974) on page 34. — Ed.