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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN EDMONTON
PUBLIC LIBRARIES, 1907-1967

by



DIANNE ELIZABETH HARKE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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ABSTRACT

The development of children's public library services in the city of Edmonton, Alberta, in the years between 1907 and 1967 is the subject of this study. Contextual material that outlines the major events in the North American history of children's public library services is provided, as is information on Edmonton's social, cultural and educational milieu during the years under investigation. Particular attention is given to Edmonton's school library services and to the interplay between the school and the public library. Four time spans within the sixty-year span are demarcated and described in some detail. The first period, following the passage of Alberta's Public Libraries Act in 1907 and the opening of Edmonton's first two public library buildings in 1913, was one of establishment. Completion of a new main library building (partially financed by the Carnegie Corporation) in 1923 highlighted the beginning of the second phase, a period of growth in children's programming and service despite financial restraints. The third time span, encompassing the years 1940 to 1955, was characterized by the expansion of service to children through bookmobiles and branch libraries, as the Edmonton Public Library struggled to keep up with a rapidly growing population. Increased contact with school authorities, pressure for a new main building, the opening of several more branch libraries and the onset of a disturbing decline in the circulation of children's books marked the final decade.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am also indebted to Grace McDonald for her invaluable cooperation and to the other past and present employees of the Edmonton Public Library who assisted me in the search for materials and memories.

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*Photographs courtesy of the City of Edmonton Archives.

Chapter I

THE PURPOSE

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to trace the development of public library service to Edmonton's children in the years between 1907 and 1967. This time span covers the active years of growth that fall between the passing of the Public Libraries Act by the Alberta legislature in 1907 and the closing, in 1967, of the Carnegie building that served for many years as Edmonton's main library. The Edmonton Public Library was chosen for this study because it is one of two major Alberta libraries with a well-established tradition of community service (the other being the Calgary Public Library).

Description and analysis of service to children, against the general background of Edmonton's social, cultural and educational character, is the major focus of this investigation. Since the 1930's library historians have been gradually shifting away from purely antiquarian research and toward research based on the belief that libraries must be studied in the context of societal influences.¹ Classic studies such as Jesse Shera's Foundations of the public library have been based on this belief. Similarly, this study is based on the premise that public library work with children should be examined not only within the framework of the public library movement, but also within a broader cultural context. The public library, as described and interpreted by Shera² and accepted by the writer, is a social agency which is determined by the pattern of society. Another social agency, and one that has had

a particularly significant impact on the history of public library service to children, is the school. Because of this close public library/school relationship, a discussion of Edmonton's school library services was seen to be an integral part of this examination.

It is important that Alberta's library history be recorded and analyzed. Too often such research is neglected totally or left until a time when the process itself is seriously hampered by the dispersal or disappearance of people and documents. Little work has been done to this point on collecting, organizing and publishing material related to the history of Alberta's public libraries. While many individual libraries in the province have collected archival material relevant to their growth, few attempts have been made to publish in-depth accounts of early libraries or librarians. In 1964 the Edmonton Library Association initiated a project which was to culminate in the publication of a history of Alberta library development. This project was turned over, in 1966, to the Alberta Library Association (with its larger membership and province-wide scope) and a committee that included librarians E.J. Holmgren, Margaret McCallum and Eugene Olson began work. Unfortunately, the project had to be abandoned because of the Association's commitment to other activities.³ This gap in the recording of our history does a disservice to those people, some of whom are still living, who pioneered library service in Alberta. For librarians now involved in public library service in the province, a lack of knowledge about their "roots" must surely be seen as a loss, for retrospective examination is critical to future growth.

. . . a knowledge of history is essential to the librarian's complete intellectual equipment . . . history is the logical starting point for almost every inquiry into the nature and

function of the library as social agency.⁴

Nowhere is this knowledge more germane than in the area of children's public library services. Problems of declining circulation, understaffing and underfunding are forcing children's librarians to re-examine their roles and there is no better place to start than at the beginning,

We say blandly, confidently, "Children are our hope for the future." Are they? Are we making that possible?

Perhaps children's librarians can help make it possible through deeper understanding and revitalization of their historic mission and through deeper understanding of the consequences of social change and its meaning for childhood. With many aspects of our society showing strain and instability, there is no service in the public library more important than children's service. It is the base upon which future library usage depends.⁵

Historical Background

Public library service to children had its North American beginnings in the years between 1876 and 1900 when organized efforts to improve child welfare led to a desire to improve the opportunities children had to read worthwhile literature. Reading rooms and circulation desks were opened to children and the need for professional guidance in the selection of juvenile books began to be recognized. This movement for increased access by children to public library materials was first promoted with vigor in larger centres in north-eastern United States in the decade following 1876, with eastern Canadian librarians taking up the banner in the years closer to 1900, (and the western provinces following suit several years later).

In the twenty years following the turn of the century, children's work was developed across the continent by pioneering librarians who established service to children on a departmental basis and extended it

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into branch libraries. Criteria for the evaluation of children's literature were determined and individual and group methods of reading guidance initiated. This rush of activity in the early twentieth century was spurred on by the advent of recognized training programs for children's librarians. During these years pressure was also being put on public and parochial schools to provide more learning resources for their students, in a movement away from textbook centered study and toward activity-based learning. Not always were educators willing or able, however, to assume the responsibility for providing the materials needed for change and the resources of the public library were often overtaxed by the volume of reference work being carried out by pupils at both secondary and elementary levels. Patterns of shared library/school responsibility began to emerge in response to these pressures. Examples of this cooperation included bulk book loans to classroom teachers, regularly scheduled visits of children's librarians to schools and, on occasion, the establishment of a branch library in the school, providing service to the adult community as well as to the children.

The thirty years following 1920 were years of consolidation, standardization and the exploration of new horizons in children's library service. Greater numbers of children were using libraries and there were even greater demands for materials for school assignments, demands that were difficult to meet because of the drastically reduced budgets of the 1930's. During these years special rooms and book collections for teen-age readers began to appear, as did the preschool or picture book story hour. Professional associations of children's librarians, which had been organized in earlier years, grew in numbers and influence. In the schools the need for improved library service, particularly at the

high school level, was acknowledged and steps were taken to upgrade resources.

Since 1950, shifting population movements, the arrival of television, and the realities of economic and educational disadvantage have presented the public library with new challenges. Many city centres are occupied by the poor, while the suburbs are often populated by young, financially secure families. While preschool story hours have flourished as a strong family contact, children's librarians have had to undertake new directions in administration and programming to offset declining circulation. Finally, and most importantly, changes in society are bringing about an apparent change in children⁶, a change that children's librarians are just beginning to assess as they prepare to meet the challenges of the future.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary resource materials were used in the preparation of this study. Louis Gottschalk, in his well-known book on the art of writing history, defines a primary source as "the testimony of an eyewitness, or of a witness by any other of the senses, or of a mechanical device like the dictaphone."⁷ Most of the primary material used in this study has been culled from the archives of the Edmonton Public Library and includes the minutes of board meetings, library catalogues, newspaper articles and annual reports. It should be noted that annual reports for the years 1923 to 1940 were missing from the archives, along with reports by the children's librarians for these years. Another source used was the personal interview with individuals directly involved in Edmonton's library development. Although not a

primary document as such, the interview does stand in the same relationship to the original event and its value in recapturing some of the past cannot be overlooked. Whenever possible, written accounts of events that were published close to the date of the actual event were used and accepted as more reliable than later reports, particularly those that were written for posterity.

Secondary sources were chosen for their usefulness in augmenting primary material. Facts become more significant when they are considered against their social, political and economic background. Included among these secondary sources are books and articles that deal with Edmonton's growth as a city and material that examines the general history of North American public library service to children.

Definitions

"Children's library services" are, for the purposes of this study, defined as the means undertaken by individual public libraries to achieve the overall objectives of services to children. These objectives, which were developed, commonly accepted and often quoted in the years under investigation, have been stated by Harriet Long, Emeritus Professor of Case Western University's School of Library Science, in 1953 as: 1) to make a wide and varied collection of books easily available; 2) to give guidance to children in their choice of books and materials; 3) to share, extend and cultivate the enjoyment of reading as a voluntary, individual pursuit; 4) to encourage lifelong education through the use of public library resources; 5) to help the child to develop to the full his personal ability and his social understanding; 6) to serve as a social force in the community together with other agencies concerned with the

child's welfare.⁸

"Children" are, for the purposes of this study, defined as individuals between the ages of five and eighteen, encompassing, as well, the "young adult" category. Within this study the term "main library" refers to the library first opened on Edmonton's north side, which was housed in the Carnegie building on Macdonald Drive from 1923 to 1967. The "children's department" refers to the area and the personnel in the main library, or in any of the branch libraries, which provides children's services.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I - THE PURPOSE

¹For a discussion of this trend see American library history: a bibliography, by Michael Harris and Donald G. Davis Jr., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

²In the introduction to Foundations of the public library, by Jesse H. SHERA, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

³Eric J. Holmgren, interview with the writer, January 25, 1982.

⁴Jesse H. SHERA, "On the value of library history", in Reader in American library history, ed. by Michael H. Harris, (Washington: Microcard Editions, 1971), p. 5.

⁵Pauline Wilson, "Children's service and power: knowledge to shape the future". Canadian library Journal, 37:325 (October, 1980).

⁶Ibid., p. 324.

⁷Louis Gottschalk, Understanding history: a primer of historical method, (New York: Knopf, 1950), p. 53.

⁸Harriet G. Long, Rich the treasure, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1953), p. 15.

Chapter II

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Service to Children in North American Public Libraries.

The development of children's services in North American public libraries has been given some treatment in the literature, although only a limited amount of this material directly concerns Canada.¹ Perhaps the best historical outline of the American past in children's library service is found in Harriet G. Long's Public Library Service to Children: Foundation and Development.² In addition to tracing the status of childhood from colonial times on, Long attempts to place service to children in historical perspective by examining political, social and economic factors. Particular attention is focused in this study on the growth of service to children by the Cleveland Public Library. General outlines of the rise of children's libraries in the United States can also be found in a number of journal articles. Manuel D. Lopez's article, "Children's Libraries; Nineteenth Century American Origins",³ focuses on the early years of development, while Elizabeth Nesbitt's "Library Service to Children"⁴ and Sara Innis Fenwick's "Library Service to Children and Young People"⁵ both cover a broader historical spectrum and conclude with an examination of current trends in the field. It is noteworthy that both of these latter articles comment on the close relationships between the school and the library. This relationship is examined in greater depth in Dorothy M. Broderick's article, "Plus ça Change: Classic Patterns in Public/School Library Relations."⁶

Another avenue of approach to the topic of children's services is the investigation of the history of a particular library's work in this area. One example of this approach can be found in Eighty Years of Service: A History of the Children's Department of the Seattle Public Library, by Linda J. Brass.⁷ In this study, the role of the children's department in the social, cultural and educational history of the city is assessed in some detail.

Retrospective interpretations like the above become more valuable when used in conjunction with accounts from observers or participants. The United States Bureau of Education's report of 1876 on Public Libraries in the United States of America contains a special section titled "Public Libraries and the Young"⁸, in which William I. Fletcher raises crucial questions about the public library's responsibility to the young. As library work with children developed in the following years, librarians began to prepare surveys that would provide an assessment of the "state of the art". Both Caroline Hewins and Lutie E. Stearns were particularly active in this regard, and Stearns' "Report on Reading for the Young",⁹ published in 1894 which surveyed 195 libraries in the United States and Canada, is a valuable source of information about early conditions. Topics covered by this survey include age restriction policies, school use of public library material and techniques that individual libraries use to encourage young readers. Alice Hazeltine's Library Work with Children,¹⁰ which appeared in 1917, is a useful work that reprints papers and addresses from key figures in the American children's library movement such as Caroline Hewins, Annie Carroll Moore and Frances Jenkins Olcott.

On the Canadian scene, L.C. Burpee's article, "Canadian Libraries of

Long Ago",¹¹ provides some background on libraries in the West during the fur trade years, although their possible use by children is not discussed. Mary Saxe's article "With the Children in Canada"¹² presents a personalized account of early library conditions across the nation in 1912. A study of children's libraries by Gwendolen Rees¹³ published in 1924 focuses on libraries in Great Britain, the British Empire, the United States and continental Europe. Canadian children's work is discussed in a chapter that emphasizes work in the province of Ontario after the turn of the century. During the 1930's, a Commission of Inquiry Into the Library Situation in Canada, chaired by John Ridington,¹⁴ published its findings. Special attention is given to library services for children in this report and the Edmonton Public Library is one of the major metropolitan libraries discussed. Louise Riley's article "Fifty Years of Library Service in Alberta",¹⁵ presents a two page overview of public library growth in urban and rural Alberta from 1907 to 1954. An Informal History of Library Service in British Columbia by Marjorie C. Holmes,¹⁶ published in 1959, presents highlights in the development of the province's libraries from the time of the fur traders up to the late 1950's, giving some attention to services for children. As We Remember It, edited by Marion Gilroy and Samuel Rothstein,¹⁷ delves further into the history of library development in British Columbia by presenting a number of interviews with pioneering librarians. Once again, there is some discussion of children's work. Violet Coughlin's study, Larger Units of Public Library Service in Canada,¹⁸ discusses the growth of library service in rural areas with particular reference to Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. All three of these provinces have similar economic conditions, and Coughlin provides an analysis of each area's

growth in rural library services, noting the variations in amount and kind of service actually provided. A brief discussion of public library legislation and professional leadership in the West, as well as in the East in the years between 1882 and 1960 precedes the case studies, but no attempt is made to document the history of urban library services. An ambitious examination of Canadian libraries was completed several years later by Elizabeth Homer Morton in her thesis, "Libraries in the Life of the Canadian Nation, 1931-1967."¹⁹ Limited coverage is given in this document to the history of public libraries in Alberta's major centres, and to their work with children. The article by Harry Newsom and Marian Richeson, in Canadian Libraries in their Changing Environment,²⁰ is similarly limited since it surveys all types of library service in each of the prairie provinces. Alberta Rural Libraries Project,²¹ released in 1974 by the same authors, presents a detailed look at rural library services in Alberta, but once again the focus is not on the cities. This focus is provided, with particular reference to Edmonton, in Glenn Meller's non-thesis project of 1979, "Edmonton Public Library, 1923-1967; the Carnegie Era",²² which traces the history of the main library in some detail. This study covers the years from 1923 to 1967, but children's services are not dealt with in depth. Kathleen Bowman's non-thesis project, "History of the University of Alberta, Extension Library, 1913-1945",²³ gives some discussion of library service to rural Alberta children. Currently in progress is Marie Matiaszow's survey of services to children in Alberta public libraries,²⁴ which will document the level of services to children for the 1980 fiscal year. This survey will include the Edmonton Public Library, but the study's purpose precludes any discussion of historical development.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II - SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

¹ A more complete discussion of some of the items surveyed in this chapter will be found in Chapter III.

² Harriet G. Long, Public library service to children, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1969).

³ Manuel D. Lopez, "Children's libraries: nineteenth century American origins", Journal of Library History, 11:316-342, (October, 1976).

⁴ Elizabeth Nesbitt, "Library service to children", Library Trends 3:118-128, (October, 1954).

⁵ Sara Innis Fenwick, "Library service to children and young people," Library Trends 25:329-360, (July, 1976).

⁶ Dorothy M. Broderick, "Plus ça Change: Classic patterns in public/school library relations," Library Journal, 92:1995-1997, (May 15, 1967).

⁷ Linda J. Brass, Eighty years of service: a history of the children's department Seattle Public Library, (Seattle: Seattle Public Library, c1971).

⁸ William I. Fletcher, "Public Libraries and the young," in Public libraries in the United States, 1976, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876), 412-418.

⁹ Lutie E. Stearns, "Report on reading for the young", Library Journal, 19:81-87, (1894).

¹⁰ Alice A. Hazeltine, Library work with children: reprints of papers and addresses, (White Plains, N.Y.: H.W. Wilson, 1917).

¹¹ L.C. Burpee, "Canadian libraries of long ago", Bulletin of the American Library Association 2:136-143, (September, 1908).

¹² Mary S. Saxe, "With the children in Canada", Library Journal, 37:433-435, (August, 1912).

- 13 Gwendolen Rees, Libraries for children: a history and a bibliography, (London: Grafton, 1924)
- 14 John Ridington, et al., Libraries in Canada: a survey of conditions and needs, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1933).
- 15 Louise Riley, "Fifty years of library service in Alberta", Canadian Library Association Bulletin, 12:109-110, (December, 1955).
- 16 Marjorie C. Holmes, Library service in British Columbia: a brief history of its development, (Victoria Public Library Commission of British Columbia, 1959).
- 17 As we remember it: interviews with pioneering librarians of British Columbia, ed. by Marion Gilroy and Samuel Rothstein, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia School of Librarianship, 1970).
- 18 Violet L. Coughlin, Larger units of public library services in Canada, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1968).
- 19 Elizabeth Homer Morton, "Libraries in the life of the Canadian nation, 1931-1967", (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969).
- 20 Harry Newsom and Marion Richeson, "Library development in the Prairie provinces", in Canadian libraries in their changing environment, ed. by Lorraine Spencer Garry and Carl Garry, (Toronto: York University, 1977).
- 21 Alberta rural libraries project, compiled by Harry E. Newsom et al., (Edmonton: Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, 1974).
- 22 Glenn E. Meller, "Edmonton Public Library's Central Library, 1923-1967: the Carnegie Era", an unpublished M.L.S. non-thesis project, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1979).
- 23 Kathleen Bowman, "History of the University of Alberta Extension Library, 1913-1945", an unpublished M.L.S. non-thesis project, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1980).
- 24 Marie Matiaszow, "A survey of children's services in public libraries in Alberta", an unpublished M.L.S. thesis (in progress), (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 19?)

Chapter III

THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY: A MORAL FORCE IN THE COMMUNITY

Social Reform and Children's Reading

North America, at the turn of the century, was characterized by expanding industrialization, burgeoning metropolitan areas and for some, a rising standard of living. Many parents were able to devote more time and money to the improvement of their children's lives. It was a time of social reform, a time for an increasing awareness of children as future citizens and potential upholders of the democratic state. Child rearing became a subject of intense scrutiny and soul-searching and the theories of influential psychologists like Dr. L. Emmett Holt and Granville Stanley Hall were topics of discussion for the largely middle-class child study groups that sprang up all over the continent. Holt's book, The Care and Feeding of Children, went through dozens of editions between 1894 and 1934, and Hall's two volume publication, Adolescence, was the first intensive examination of the teen years.¹

But not only middle-class men and woman were involved in this turn of the century social reform movement. The working class was also active in this movement, for industrialization had brought them more than their share of problems. In the larger American cities, families were crowded into hastily built tenements and unscrupulous employers exploited women and children. If there were compulsory school attendance laws, they were seldom enforced and many children rarely saw the inside of a classroom. Unions began to take up the cause, lobbying for control of child

immigration, for limitations on the ages and hours for young workers and for changes in the educational system.²

Along with this apparent concern and appreciation for children, an awareness of the influence of reading in a child's life developed. Parents in Canada, as well as in the United States, were exhorted to guide their children to "suitable literature".

Parents in this Canada of ours have too little concern in what children read. It is in the training of the children that the hope of our country lies. If children's minds are kept pure in the early stages of their growth, fewer preventive laws will be needed for adults.³

But where to find this material? Prior to the 1850's the Sunday School libraries were often the only libraries (with the exception of private libraries) that were available to North American children⁴ and their collections left something to be desired.

The trouble with the Sunday School libraries is that those who buy the books for them are unable to distinguish between good fiction and bad and hence taboo a great deal of the best of the world's literature by condemning all fiction except the story of the boy who got converted and went as a missionary to the Fiji Islands.⁵

Mechanics Institute Libraries, because of the technical nature of their collections, were of limited value to children. Also generally out of the reach of children were the subscription libraries popular in North America in the 1800's which pooled books belonging to individual members who paid an annual fee to maintain the collection. There were some public libraries in existence at this time, but most of them also turned a blind eye to the reading needs of children by fixing a certain age, usually twelve to fourteen, below which youthful borrowers were prohibited.⁶

The situation was not static, however, and by 1876 the groundwork

was being laid for the opening of American public library doors to children. The influential report on Public Libraries in the United States (op. cit.) was published in that year. In addition to a compilation of statistics, it included articles by eminent librarians on the role of the public library in American life. Prominent among these articles was one by William I. Fletcher titled "Public Libraries and the Young". Fletcher condemned the closing of library doors to the young, claiming that it should be the public library's task as an educational institution to accept the young as early as possible. He stated that the library, working as an adjunct of the public school system, had a mission to select only the best from the world of juvenile literature and to encourage "youthful demands for culture".

To the thousands of young people in whose homes there is none of the atmosphere of culture or of the appliances for it, the public library ought to furnish the means of keeping pace intellectually with the more favored children of homes where good books abound and their subtle influence extends even to those who are too young to read and understand them. If it fails to do this it is hardly a fit adjunct to our school system, whose aim it is to give every man a chance to be the equal of every other man, if he can.⁷

It is difficult to assess the direct impact of Fletcher's article, but his plea for cooperation between public libraries and schools was answered, in part, by the course of events in the years following 1876. Changes in teaching and in subject matter called for additional study resources to supplement factual textbooks and more fiction books were needed to foster the appreciation for good literature that was being encouraged in the classroom. Cooperative arrangements, such as special loan privileges to teachers and small deposit libraries in schoolrooms, were common in the United States in the years up to 1900.⁸ A special department for service to schools was opened by the New York Free

Circulatory Library as early as 1897. In the following year, the Buffalo Public Library, with the cooperation of school authorities, devised a similar plan.⁹

Growth of Children's Library Services
in the United States and Canada
(See Table 1)

These arrangements with schools were gradually overshadowed by the public library's growing commitment to more direct forms of service to children. An outstanding pioneer in this early public library children's work was Caroline M. Hewins, who in 1875 became librarian at the Young Men's Institute, a subscription library in Hartford, Connecticut. Convinced that children should be reading worthier books than those written by Horatio Alger and Oliver Optic, she began to build a children's book collection. The list of recommended books she developed in 1883 was welcomed by librarians and parents eager for some kind of professional guidance. In 1893 the much enlarged Young Men's Institute Library became the free Hartford Public Library and Miss Hewins intensified her work with children. Stories were read and sometimes told to groups of children and public schools were visited. In the decade between 1882 and 1892, Miss Hewins also presented reports on her surveys of public library service to children to the Conference of Librarians. Response to her 1893 survey was heartening. Of the 146 public libraries which responded, one-fourth had no age limit at all and five already had special children's rooms, the first one being opened in the basement of the Brookline (Massachusetts) Public Library in 1890.¹⁰ One year later Lutie Stearns of the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Public Library delivered a paper titled "Report on Reading for the Young" to the 1894 conference of the American Library Association. She urged librarians to abolish age

Table I

The Growth of Library Service to Children in the
United States and Canada

Year	United States	Canada
1882	Caroline Hewin's first report on public library service to children	Ontario introduces free public library legislation
1890	First children's room opened in Brookline, Massachusetts	
1896	Anne Carroll Moore introduces the story hour	
1899	Course for the training of children's librarians begins at Pratt Institute Library School	
1900	Club of Children's Librarians (later to be the Section for Children's Librarians of the American Library Association) organized	
1906	Anne Carroll Moore appointed children's librarian at New York Public Library	Sarnia (Ontario) Public Library introduces open access and initiates a story hour
1908	Children's rooms operating in Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis and other major American cities	Ontario Minister of Education appoints a children's services consultant. Children's rooms open in a number of Ontario centres
1911		Children's room opens in Montreal (Westmount). Calgary Public Library opens
1912		Lillian Smith begins work at the Toronto Public Library
1919		Ontario Library School offers three-month courses with Lillian Smith as one of the instructors

Table I (continued)

Year	United States	Canada
1939	The Canadian Association of Children's Librarians is organized	

limits and to provide special rooms for children with designated attendants. It was at this conference that the first general meeting devoted to a discussion of library service to children took place. Children were finally being recognized as a part of the public whose needs could be best met by their own quarters, their own book collection and by a staff whose sole duty was to serve them.

There was no shortage of dedicated staff members for these children's libraries, as was evidenced by the organization in 1900 of a group known as the Club of Children's Librarians, chaired by Anne Carroll Moore of the Pratt Institute.¹¹ A short time later this group became the Section for Children's Librarians of the American Library Association. In 1906 Moore was appointed children's librarian at New York Public Library, where she was to remain for many years developing staff and services, and doing outstanding work in the area of selection criteria for children's literature.¹²

Children's service was no longer considered an experiment and by 1908 there were children's rooms or departments in many American cities including Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis.¹³ In Canada, the progression followed a similar path, with school/library arrangements paving the way for children's services in public libraries. Ontario, which introduced the first free public library legislation in 1882,¹⁴ was perhaps the furthest ahead. The Sarnia Public Library introduced open access and initiated a story hour in 1906. Within a few years approximately a dozen Ontario libraries had opened their doors to children, with eight of these libraries maintaining separate children's rooms.¹⁵ Added impetus was given to this trend in 1908 when the Ontario Minister of Education appointed Miss Spereman, the Sarnia librarian

as an itinerant children's services consultant.¹⁶ Library programs for children soon became firmly established in Toronto, Fort William, Kitchener and Ottawa, with Toronto leading the way in the development of innovative programs. In 1912 the Toronto Public Library had only one children's department, but by 1924 it could boast of fifteen (one at each Branch). Guided by Lillian H. Smith, head of the Boys' and Girls' Division, and the first trained Canadian children's librarian, the Toronto library established a program of services for children featuring school visits, story hours and reading clubs. Miss Smith, a graduate of Victoria College in Toronto and Carnegie Library School in Pittsburgh, had come to Toronto in 1912 at the request of George Locke, the Chief Librarian.¹⁷ Weekly round table conferences of children's librarian's that focused on book selection and program ideas were also instituted.¹⁸

Although Quebec was one of the provinces without early public library legislation,¹⁹ there was some development in children's services during this time. In the English-speaking Montreal suburb of Westmount, a specially designed children's room was opened in 1911. The chief librarian had persuaded her committee to build a wing for children, with low bookcases and furniture and a separate entrance. Children who could sign their names were allowed to take out two books at a time.²⁰ The McLennan Travelling Library from McGill University, which had been founded in 1901, offered some service to rural Quebec families.²¹

Public library legislation, modelled on the Ontario prototype, was passed in British Columbia (1891), Manitoba (1899), Saskatchewan (1906), and Alberta (1907), and services to children developed at varying rates in these provinces. In British Columbia a system of travelling libraries

was started in 1898 and by 1905 there were 90 libraries in circulation. These libraries were sent out to applicants who paid \$6.00 for a locked case of literary gems. Users included schools, Women's Institutes, library societies and reading rooms. For those who lived in Victoria, Vancouver, or New Westminster, a public library was available from 1891 on. Victoria's first library had two reading rooms, one for the general public and the other for women and children.²²

Many of Canada's early libraries were made possible by building grants from the American Carnegie Corporation. It has been estimated that between 1901 and 1917, Carnegie gave \$2,500,000 for library buildings in 125 Canadian cities and space for children was always included in the plans. The adult book collection in these libraries was generally at one end of the main room and children's books at the other, with a loan desk in the centre to serve both.²³

Alberta also had a small network of travelling libraries in use at about the same as its public libraries were beginning to be organized. Albert Ottewell, director of the University of Alberta's Department of Extension, initiated these libraries and by the fall of 1913, 25 of them were ready for circulation.²⁴ In rural areas, as well, reading and the establishment of small local libraries run by volunteers was encouraged by associations like the Women's Institute, the I.O.D.E. and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Prominent suffragettes like Nellie McClung also did much to promote the enjoyment of good literature by women and children. Mrs. McClung, for example, organized a reading club that met for a number of years around 1914, in a small Edmonton bookstore.²⁵ The public library movement expanded slowly but surely in the newly formed western provinces. By 1912 there were fully fledged

public libraries operating in Regina, Winnipeg and Calgary.²⁶ The Calgary Public Library, which opened in 1911 under Chief Librarian Alexander Calhoun, quickly developed a strong children's department. Ruth G. Hopkins of Brooklyn, a specialist in children's work, took over the Boys' and Girls' Department in October, 1913 and in later years, other highly qualified children's librarians, including writer Louise Riley, carried on the tradition of service.²⁷

Criteria for Book Selection and Specialized Training

The leaders who began to emerge in the field of children's work wasted little time in confronting the controversial subject of book selection policy. Their viewpoint, as expressed by Clara Whitehill Hunt, Superintendent of the Children's Department at Brooklyn Public Library, was clear and uncompromising.

We claim for the children's library the possibility, the duty, of being a moral force in the community. . . . We know that every book we give these boys and girls will have some effect in changing, shaping, strengthening their ideas and so moulding their habits and characters.²⁸

Although a book's ethical qualities were to be considered first in the selection process, literary qualities were not to be overlooked. Caroline Burnite of the Cleveland Public Library, another early leader in the field, stressed the need for knowledgeable librarians who could steer boys and girls away from the popular, but shallow, Alger books and "silly boarding school stories"²⁹ toward classics in juvenile literature like Treasure Island. Unless guided in this manner, she stated, children would perversely insist on reading a poor class of book.³⁰

Librarians in the United States and Canada were also encouraged to study the latest works in child psychology, the better to cope with

their young charges. M.J. Black, a librarian in Fort William, Ontario, urged her fellow workers to make use of Hall's book on adolescence.

It is unfortunate that the only book that adequately covers the specific phase of adolescence is Stanley Hall's bulky two volume one, as the beginner is apt to be frightened by its size. That could be avoided by confining one's attention to the preface, which gives a short history of the subject and to chapters eight and fourteen, which consider particularly the question of the girl.³¹

Guided by their ideals, children's librarians began to investigate methods that would motivate children to read high quality literature and that would also provide a framework for their own professional guidance. Anne Carroll Moore of the Pratt Institute introduced the highly effective story hour as early as 1896 and it was soon a common feature in children's library programs.³² Reading clubs for children, often led by community leaders with special interests or hobbies, also flourished. Cooperation with schools and other community agencies was actively pursued by many librarians. In fact, the entire agenda of the 1909 and 1910 meetings of the Section for Children's Librarians of the American Library Association centered on the value of cooperating with other agencies and individuals concerned with the welfare of children.³³ It was not uncommon for branch libraries to be located in elementary school buildings and classroom visits by librarians, who introduced the library's services or gave book talks, increased.

As the role of the children's librarian expanded, the need for special training became more and more apparent. A course for the training of children's librarians began at Pratt Institute Library School in 1899 and a year later Frances Jenkins Olcott of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh began special classes for children's room assistants. Within a year the demand was so great that the informal Pittsburgh classes were

reorganized as a formal training school for children's librarians. The curriculum was expanded, with financial encouragement from Andrew Carnegie, into a two year course.³⁴

Canadian training courses began some years later with four week summer courses offered by the Ontario Department of Education. By 1919 the course, now known as the Ontario Library School, and housed in the Toronto Public Library, had expanded to three months.³⁵ Lillian Smith was one of the instructors, bringing her enthusiasm for children's literature to librarians in training.

Figures Show Growth

An early report compiling statistics on the extent of public library service to American children appeared in a 1906 issue of Library Journal.³⁶ Results were based on the responses to questions sent in April of that year to the public libraries of 100 large U.S. cities. Seventy-six libraries sent full responses to the questions which dealt with the budget, organization and operations of children's rooms and departments. The number of children between the ages of five and fourteen averaged sixteen per cent of the total population of each of the cities. Of the sixty-seven libraries which report adult and juvenile circulation separately, juvenile circulation averaged thirty-one per cent of the total. Forty-four of sixty-two libraries reported that they had one or more assistants who gave their full time to children's work. Of the seventy-five libraries that responded to the question of age limit, thirty-six had no age limit, twenty-three required the ability to read or write, or both, and sixteen set a definite age limit. All but four of the seventy-five libraries required either a guarantor or parent signature on the juvenile

application form. Most of the libraries charged the same fine for overdue books for both adult and juvenile readers (often two cents a day). Thirty-seven libraries had a separate collection of books for use in schools. In keeping with the emerging commitment to stringent book selection standards, libraries reported that great care was taken in choosing books. One library replied that "all known methods of criticism and censorship" were used and that as a last resort every book was "prayed over". Magazines were also provided in many of the children's rooms with St. Nicholas, Youth's Companion, Birds and Nature, Little Folks, and American Boy being the most popular.

This survey showed that within a few short years the idea of children's services had taken a firm hold in American public libraries. The movement, however, was not without its critics. Caroline Matthews, a non-librarian observer, complained caustically about the growing tendency to "over-emphasize the children's side."

Special attendants are in readiness to meet him the instant he comes into the reading room and station after school hours. Thoughtful women are assigned to overlook and guide his reference work. Entertainment is offered him in the form of blocks to play with, scrapbooks to look at, story hours to attend. Books specifically selected with regard to his supposedly individual needs are placed on his shelves. Picture bulletins are made for his use in the schools. Where he is not segregated, he is allowed to monopolize tables and chairs. I find no corresponding effort to reach the adult, to reach the young mechanic, to draw to the library the parent.³⁷

But Mrs. Matthews' complaints were to little avail; the cause that those "thoughtful women" believed so strongly in was being taken up across the land and there was to be no looking back.

Even in Edmonton, where in 1908 there was not yet a public library, the writing was on the wall. The capital city of the newly formed province of Alberta was teeming with recent arrivals, many of them with

young families. There were also signs that the way was being prepared for the opening of a free public library.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III - THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY:
A MORAL FORCE IN THE COMMUNITY

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²Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian society: framing the Twentieth-century consensus, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, c1976), p. 16.

³Madge Merton, "Our children and their reading", Canadian Magazine, (January, 1896), p. 282.

⁴Manuel Lopez, "Children's libraries: nineteenth century American origins", Journal of Library History, 11:316 (October, 1976).

⁵Madge Merton, op. cit., p. 283.

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⁷William I. Fletcher, "Public libraries and the young", in Public libraries in the United States, 1876, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), p. 414.

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¹⁰Harriet G. Long, Rich the treasure, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1953), p. 8.

¹¹Harriet G. Long, Public library service to children, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, c1969), p. 96.

¹²Fenwick, op. cit., p. 341.

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¹⁵Gwendolen Rees, Libraries for children: a bibliography and a history, (London: Grafton, c1924), p. 68.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Dorothy E.C. Rogers, "Introducing the patroness: Miss Lillian H. Smith", Canadian Library Association Bulletin, 12:7, (August, 1955).

¹⁸Rees, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

¹⁹Quebec permitted the formation of free libraries under the municipal code; in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick free libraries were formed under individual acts and in P.E.I. there were no free municipally supported libraries - Coughlin, p. 56.

²⁰Rees, op. cit., p. 73.

²¹Daniel D. Reicher, "Les bibliothèques Québécoises d'avant 1970", in Canadian libraries in their changing environment, (Toronto: York University, 1977), p. 33.

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²³Harriet Long, Rich the treasure, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁴Bowman, Kathleen, "History of the University of Alberta Extension Library, 1913-1945", an unpublished M.L.S. non-thesis project, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1980).

²⁵Candace Savage, Our Nell, (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Western Producer Prairie Books, c1979), p. 112.

²⁶Mary B. Saxe, "With the children in Canada", Library Journal, 37:435, (August, 1912).

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²⁹ Caroline Burnite, "Good and poor books for boys and girls", Public Libraries, 7, (July, 1906), p. 360.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ M.J.L. Black, "The library and the girl", Ontario Library Review, 1:8-9, (June, 1916).

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³⁴ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁵ Mary E.P. Henderson, "Professional library education in Canada", in Canadian libraries in their changing environment, (Toronto: York University, 1977), p. 394.

³⁶ Arabelle H. Jackson, "Report on library work with children", Library Journal, 31:89-97, (July, 1906).

³⁷ Caroline Matthews, "The growing tendency to over-emphasize the children's side", Library Journal, 33:138, (1908).

Chapter IV

EDMONTON AND ITS CHILDREN

"The Land of Their Children"

September first, 1905 was a day long to be remembered by Edmonton's children. City streets were crowded with visitors who had come to take part in Alberta's provincial inauguration ceremonies. The weather was perfect; just right for the mammoth parade that the children had been anticipating for weeks. Nine large floats carried three hundred small school children down Jasper Avenue. On the sides of the floats were mottoes that reflected the youthful vitality of the children and their province: "We'll grow", "The coming citizens", "Young Canada", "The rising generation", "The hope of Canada." Twelve hundred older school children marched on foot, four abreast, as the parade wended its way toward the fairgrounds where the official ceremonies were to take place.¹ As the parade dispersed, dignitaries gathered on a platform in front of an audience of twelve thousand people. Speeches were delivered by Mayor Mackenzie, Governor-General Earl Grey and Canada's Prime Minister, Sir Wilfred Laurier. Laurier spoke of the promise that the future held for Alberta and its citizens. He welcomed new immigrants, exhorting them to become Canadian and British subjects.

We do not want nor wish that any individual should forget the land of his origin, or the land of his ancestors. Let them look to the past, but let them look also to the future. Let them look to the land of their ancestors, but let them look also to the land of their children.²

For many of those people listening to Laurier's speech, Alberta was to be "the land of their children" and Edmonton, temporary capital of the

new province, was a popular destination for many newcomers. In 1905 it was a young city of some 9,000 residents, many of them recent arrivals, who sought for themselves and their children the opportunities and wealth associated with new urban communities. Across the North Saskatchewan River, Strathcona, Edmonton's sister community, with a population of approximately 3,000, was growing too, but not as quickly as the capital.

Growing pains developed as Edmonton struggled to provide services for its new settlers. The new provincial Department of Education struggled to keep up with community demands, but in expanding centres like Edmonton there were problems. G.E. Ellis, school inspector for the Edmonton district, reported in 1907 that there was "a very abnormal growth in the school population of Edmonton, making necessary a great deal of building."³ Building could not keep up with demands and this lag led to crowded classrooms. Edmonton Public School Superintendent Jasper McCaig reported in 1908 that Norwood school had an enrollment of 51 per room and that Alex Taylor averaged 49 students per room.⁴ Students in these crowded classrooms reflected the cosmopolitan nature of Edmonton's population. A visitor at one school in Edmonton found Russia, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, England, the United States, and three of Canada's provinces represented.⁵ Although there was a compulsory school attendance act, it was seldom enforced and attendance was often irregular. The Department of Education did its best by offering grants to individual schools for student attendance: five cents per school day for 50-60 per cent, ten cents for 61-70 per cent, and so on up to 25 cents for 91-100 per cent. The effect of these incentives was minimal, at least in the early days of Edmonton area public and separate schools. Indeed, on a

province-wide basis only 50.8 per cent of Alberta's school-age children regularly attended school.⁶

If they were not attending school, where were these children? In rural areas it is probable that many were helping at home, with some venturing into nearby urban centres to find jobs.⁷ National figures for 1891 show that 13.8 per cent of all Canadian children between the ages of ten and fourteen were employed and it was still a factor in 1921 when 3.2 per cent of the same age group were working.⁸ Thriving communities like Edmonton probably offered more than their share of jobs for willing young workers. In 1905, for example, three coal mines opened in the Edmonton area, and it is perhaps not just coincidence that in the following year an amendment was introduced to the Alberta Coal Mines Act which raised the age limits for boys working in underground mines from twelve to sixteen.⁹ As late as 1913, C.B. Sissons, in discussing the problem of education, noted that many school-aged children were working, either at home, in stores, or in factories. "The future of the West lies in their children. Thousands of these, at a time when their bright, young minds should be moulded, are drudges for helpless or short-sighted parents or for greedy employers."¹⁰

But not all of the educational problems could be blamed on "short-sighted parents" or "greedy employers", for in some instances it was the consequences of rapid urban growth and poor planning that kept children away from school. At one point in 1905, for example, some Edmonton residents removed their children from school because there was no sidewalk and because the school was near a dump, a slaughter house and several houses of ill repute¹¹ - hardly the setting for the moulding of bright, young minds.

Concern for the welfare of children had been growing at the national and provincial level for years and it manifested itself, not only in private action, but also in public legislation. The 1907 Statutes of Alberta outlined the Public Health Act which provided for a Provincial Health Officer who was to supervise the areas of charity and relief and inspect hospitals, jails, orphanages and reformatories. Two years later the Children's Protection Act, a key piece of legislation, was passed. Under this Act, employers who employed children under the age of sixteen, after six o'clock in the evening could be penalized. This provision was bolstered by a new truancy act which came into effect at about the same time. This act prohibited the employment of school-age children during school hours. The Children's Protection Act called for a Superintendent of Dependent and Neglected Children who was urged to assist in the establishment of children's aid societies. Municipalities with a population of 10,000 or over were also required to maintain a children's shelter.¹² Public response to the Children's Protection Act was enthusiastic.

The recent amendment to the Children's Protection Act of 1909 make it the most up-to-date piece of child legislation extant and enable the Province of Alberta to cope with the neglected and dependent child problem in such a manner as to add valuable citizens and retard the development of criminals in the state.¹³

Edmonton's Children's Shelter, which was opened in the Ross Flats area, cared for children ranging in age from babies just several days old to sixteen year old boys and girls. The majority of these children were neglected children eligible for adoption, but the Shelter also handled delinquent children awaiting trial and children whose mothers were hospitalized. Regular school classes were conducted by a qualified teacher employed at the Shelter. Staff members were graduate nurses and an

outpatient clinic was operated which offered free treatment for poor children.¹⁴ Careful screening was given prospective foster parents, particularly those who had applied for a child between the ages of twelve and sixteen. As a local newspaper reporter remarked, ". . . the applications are scrutinized carefully, as there is a tendency for people to take children of this age merely for the sake of obtaining cheap labor."¹⁵

Another important piece of legislation was Alberta's Juvenile Courts Act (1913) which called for every village over 500 to establish a juvenile court and to provide probation officers. This Act was crucial since it brought into force the national Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1908 which took effect only after provincial governments had established detention homes and had designated or established juvenile courts. In turn, these courts were given, under the terms of the Act, wide powers in dealing with cases of juvenile delinquency. Delinquency itself was defined as an act performed by any boy or girl under the age of sixteen that violated any federal, provincial or municipal ordinance, or any other act for which he or she was liable to be committed to an industrial school or reformatory.¹⁶

But mischief was only one choice, for Edmonton offered its young people many opportunities to expend their energies in productive and non-delinquent ways, opportunities that ranged far beyond daily attendance at public or separate schools. For parents looking for alternatives to the regular school system for their children, there were a number of private schools. Alberta College, the largest of these, was founded in 1903 by the Methodist Church and by 1913 it had a registration of over 1,000 students. Instruction was offered to high school age pupils from its headquarters at 545 First Street. Classes were available in general

matriculation subjects, music, shorthand, bookkeeping, typewriting, physical culture and elocution. The College's advertisements, aimed at concerned parents, warned that a child's destiny was fixed between the ages of ten and eighteen years and that Alberta College offered to prepare a boy "for the duties and responsibilities of manhood" and a girl for "a life of usefulness in the home."¹⁷ Westward Ho! School, a private boys' school located at 532 Third Street, prepared young men for university or Royal Military College. Robertson College, founded by the Presbyterian Church in 1910, provided theological training.¹⁸

There were also opportunities for evening classes. A Ukrainian Girls' Night School, catering to ages thirteen to eighteen, opened in 1901 on the third floor of the old St. Mary's High School. Sessions were held from eight to nine-thirty, with English, reading and writing being taught.¹⁹ Later, after the 1912 amalgamation of Edmonton and Strathcona, night classes open to immigrants and other young people who wanted to improve their education, were offered in south side schools. A deep respect for learning was shown by many of Edmonton's newcomers, particularly the Ukrainian immigrants who, by 1912, were publishing their own newspaper, The New Society.²⁰

Informal recreational activities for young people flourished along with the more formal educational opportunities. Both the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. were firmly entrenched in Edmonton by 1908. These organizations, in addition to operating residences for newly arrived young men and women, offered swimming lessons and other social activities. Typical Y.W.C.A. activities between 1910 and 1912 included literary evenings addressed to topics such as "the making of a heroine" and showers to raise money for magazines for residence girls.²¹

Sunday school activities were well organized in various parishes around the city and their children's services were well-attended. The messages delivered at these sessions by adult guest speakers were graphic and to the moral point. R.B. Chadwick, Alberta's Superintendent of Dependent and Neglected Children, until his death in 1915, was a popular guest lecturer. In the fall of 1912 he addressed the children's service at Metropolitan Methodist Church. Chadwick told the story of some of the boys who had come under the care of his department - good boys who had fallen into bad company - and strongly urged his audience to avoid trouble by choosing their associates carefully.²² The following year the same R.B. Chadwick was appointed censor of moving picture films. Edmonton had, at this time, about a dozen movie theatres and they attracted many young patrons. The Bijou, one of the most active of these theatres, had a matinee at 2:30, as well as an evening showing at 7:30. Regular admission was ten cents, but children were admitted in the afternoon for five cents, an attractive proposition for the school-bound boy or girl.²³

For the child old enough to accompany his parents on evening outings, there was a lively entertainment scene. A sample week's choice in the fall of 1910 included, in addition to movies, a musical comedy at the Lyceum and a performance by Madame Nellie Melba, world famous opera diva, at the Thistle Rink. There were, of course, parks, skating and curling rinks and athletic teams as well. But whatever the activity was that interested Edmonton's young people, they were never far from the watchful eyes of their elders. In 1901 Edmonton's city council, with the welfare of its children in mind, closed down Happy Land, a private miniature park with a tainted reputation, and banned the sale of ice-cream on Sundays.²⁴

Several years later, Dr. John Park, a city school trustee, advised teachers to be total abstainers, reminding them that it was their responsibility to teach students that the use of alcohol would destroy their bodies and spoil their minds.²⁵ To its citizens, Edmonton had become the "land of their children". They were doing their best to make it a good place to live.

Forerunners of Public Library Service

From the beginning, books were a part of Edmonton life. During the fur trade years Fort Edmonton, like other principal posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, maintained a library for employees. Some of their apprentices were very young. Each year it was the company's practice to send out a selection of the best current books, along with bound volumes of popular periodicals.²⁶ This literary tradition continued in later years as the population of the Edmonton area grew and the sister communities of Edmonton and Strathcona developed. In February of 1897, the Strathcona Literary Society was formed for the purpose of the "improvement of its members in public speaking, literary and musical and culture and recreation, having in view the establishment of a reading and public library."²⁷ One of the leading businesses that catered to the "literati" in the early 1900s was Kenneth Mackenzie's Book Store. The local citizen could not only buy books for his personal library at this store and others like it, but he also had the option of renting books from small, circulating libraries.

Circulating libraries catered to popular reading tastes with a rental fee or annual due being charged to borrowers.²⁸ According to Henderson's City Directory, several of these libraries operated in Edmonton during

the early 1900's, although their exact nature can only be speculated on. The 1908 directory lists a Cambridge Lending Library at 136 Jasper Avenue West; there is a 1909 listing for Book Lovers Library at 243 Jasper Avenue West. In 1912 a Citizens' Circulating Library located at 111 Windsor Block is noted. The Hudson's Bay Company also operated a circulating library out of their store, charging two cents per day or fifty cents a month for access to "all the latest fiction and non-fiction."²⁹ Two typical titles were A Modern Chronicle, by Winston Churchill and Where the Sugar Maple Grows (Sketches of Rural Canadian Life), by Adeline Teskey.

That books were available to early Edmontonians from bookstores and fee libraries cannot be denied, but how many of these books were appropriate for, or ever reached children? Jesse Shera's study of early American circulating libraries found that seven of the eleven surveyed had no juvenile books; one had one per cent and three had less than one per cent.³⁰ If Edmonton library development parallels that of the United States, it is unlikely that local youngsters made much use of Edmonton's circulating libraries. For older children, the Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A. offered some services, with their literary programs and reading rooms. The south side Y.M.C.A. reading room, situated upstairs on Whyte Avenue, opposite the Dominion Hotel, was well-patronized.³¹ Younger children were pretty well left to their own devices. If they attended Sunday School, there might be a small collection of books available there, or, if they were fortunate enough to come from a literary home, they could choose books from the family library. For most of the children, however, the school was probably the only source of reading material.

After Alberta became a province in 1905, all school districts were

required by law to spend a fixed portion of their annual government grant on library books selected from a list authorized by the Department of Education.³² In 1905, there were 602 school districts in Alberta. The total number of volumes found in their libraries was 9,496, an average of 15.7 volumes for each school district. By 1906 the situation had improved somewhat, with 13,956 volumes for 746 districts, or 18.7 volumes per district.³³ The principal, or teacher, of the school was designated as the librarian, and it was his duty to prepare a catalogue of books. Each pupil could take out one volume at a time, for a two week period, with fines levied for overdue or damaged books. Books in these school libraries were covered with stout wrapping paper and numbered on their backs.

Pupils in this era were also given the bonus of "free readers". Alberta and Saskatchewan had authorized the preparation of new readers and, in 1908, the Alexandra Readers were distributed free to the student as required, becoming his absolute property.³⁴ This arrangement pleased those concerned citizens of the time who worried about the transmission of unhealthy viruses from student to student via books.

Problems soon arose with the grant system for school libraries. There were purchasing difficulties; cheap editions were sometimes obtained which fell apart. There were also annoying complications with import duties. By 1913 the system had changed, making it permissible for the Department of Education to withhold the book grant and to supply the actual books instead. A School Libraries Branch, which reported to the Deputy Minister of Education through his assistant, was set up for this purpose.³⁵

In Edmonton, school libraries began to emerge slowly, but surely. An Edmonton Bulletin report in the spring of 1914 stated that the public

schools of the south side each had a library. A reading room had also been started at the high school. King Edward School had 300 books, the high school, 235 books, Queen Alexandra, 175 books, Rutherford, 134, Ritchie, 50, and Bennett School, in Gallagher Flats, 40 books. These books were generally supplemental reading material on classroom subjects, but, as the Bulletin stated, there was nothing to prevent parents, or their adult friends, from reading books that the pupils took home.³⁶ Not too many adults took advantage of this opportunity, however, for by 1914 both adults and children had another option available. Citizens striving to improve "the land of their children" had succeeded in bringing about the opening of two tax-supported public libraries in Edmonton.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV - EDMONTON AND ITS CHILDREN

¹"The inaugural celebration", Edmonton Bulletin, September 2, 1905, p. 1.

²"Laurier's speech at the inaugural", Edmonton Bulletin, September 5, 1905, p. 7.

³Alberta. Department of Education, Second Annual Report, 1907, p. 39.

⁴"The Superintendent's report", Edmonton Bulletin, December 11, 1908, p. 2.

⁵The Canadian annual review of public affairs, 1909, (Toronto: The Canadian Review Company, n.d.), p. 544.

⁶Harry Sparby, "A history of the Alberta school system to 1935", (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University, 1958), p. 160.

⁷In 1907 it was estimated that the Ruthenian Colony (made up of immigrants from the Austrian provinces of Galicia and Bukovina) northeast of Edmonton numbered 15,000. Newspaper reports of that era indicate that it was not uncommon for daughters of these immigrants to work in Edmonton homes.

⁸Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian society: framing the twentieth century consensus, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, c1976), p. 165.

⁹The Canadian annual review of public affairs, 1908, (Toronto: The Canadian Review Company, n.d.), p. 506.

¹⁰C.B. Sissons, "Illiteracy in the West", The University Magazine, 12:450, (October, 1913).

¹¹J.G. MacGregor, Edmonton: a history, (Edmonton: Hurtig, c1975), p. 156.

¹²David Edgar Lysne, "Welfare in Alberta, 1905-1936", (Edmonton, University of Alberta, 1966), p. 67.

- 13 Strathcona Plaindealer, February 7, 1911, p. 3.
- 14 "Bad housing conditions responsible for neglect of children of Alberta", Edmonton Daily Capital, March 8, 1913, p. 6.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Neil Sutherland, op. cit., p. 121.
- 17 The Saturday News, July 27, 1907, p. 6.
- 18 Henderson's Edmonton Alberta city directory 1913, (Vancouver, B.C.: Henderson Directories).
- 19 J. Skwarok, The Ukrainian settlers in Canada and their schools, (Toronto: Basilian Press, 1958), p. 25.
- 20 J.G. MacGregor, op. cit., p. 184.
- 21 First fifty years, Edmonton Y.W.C.A. 1907-1957, (Edmonton: Metropolitan Printing, n.d.), n.p.
- 22 "Boys' friend advises boys", Edmonton Bulletin, October 4, 1912, p. 2.
- 23 Edmonton Bulletin, September 23, 1912, p. 10.
- 24 J.G. MacGregor, op. cit., p. 182.
- 25 "Teachers' habits may be copied by children", Edmonton Bulletin, September 26, 1912, p. 8.
- 26 L.C. Burpee, "Canadian libraries of long ago", Bulletin of the American Library Association, 2:142, (September, 1908).
- 27 Strathcona Plaindealer, February 11, 1897.
- 28 Harriet G. Long, Public library service to children, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1969), p. 21.
- 29 Edmonton Capital, March 7, 1913, p. 3.
- 30 Jesse H. Spera, Foundations of the public library, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 149.

³¹"Y.M.C.A. (South) closed", Edmonton Bulletin, October 18, 1912,
p. 2.

³²See the School Grants Ordinance, Chapter 31 of the Ordinances of the North West Territories, 1901, as amended by Chapter 10 of the Ordinances of 1904, Section 9.

³³Alberta. Department of Education, Annual report, 1906, pp. 14-15.

³⁴MacEachran, John M., "History of education in Alberta", in Canada and its provinces, ed. by Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1914), p. 487.

³⁵Harry Sparby, "A history of the Alberta school system to 1935", (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University, 1958), pp. 173-174.

³⁶"School libraries", Edmonton Bulletin, March 12, 1914, p. 7.

Chapter V

WORK WITH CHILDREN IN THE EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

"A Very Fair Beginning", 1913-1922

In March of 1907, Alberta, under Premier A.C. Rutherford, passed its first Public Libraries Act. This Act stated that any municipality could establish a free library, if three-fifths of the voters were in favor of it. Municipal councils were given the power to levy a tax not exceeding one mill per dollar on the assessed value of all rateable real and personal property. The appointment and nature of library boards was outlined, and councils were given permission to raise money for building, by issuing special debentures. Grants on a dollar for dollar basis, with a ceiling of \$300.00, would be provided by the provincial government. There would also be a \$50.00 reading room grant.¹

Within a year of the passing of this legislation, John Travis-Barker, an Edmonton businessman, had circulated the required petition. Not enough signatures were collected in this first attempt. A second petition was needed, in 1910, to obtain additional signatures before Travis-Barker's efforts were eventually successful.² Edmonton city council passed the necessary bylaw and appointed its first library board. Property on College Avenue, overlooking the river was purchased by the board in June of 1910. Negotiations were also opened with the Carnegie Corporation for a building grant of \$100,000.00.³

Across the river, Strathcona, Edmonton's sister city, was taking similar steps, and their library board had also entered into correspondence with Carnegie. Frustrated by slow progress in these negotiations, the

Strathcona Library Board decided to ask council for \$25,000.00 in debentures to finance a municipal library.⁴ The civic bylaw passed and construction of the Strathcona Library began in 1912.

Edmonton's negotiations with Carnegie had also reached a stalemate. The situation was complicated further by the passing, in February of 1912, of the Edmonton-Strathcona Amalgamation Act, combining the two cities under one municipal authority.⁵ The two library boards continued to exist, so that both could clear up outstanding business. Ironically, it was the Strathcona Library, closer to being a reality, that was to become a branch of the main Edmonton Library. The pressure was on, and the Edmonton Library Board hastily made arrangements for temporary quarters. The second floor of the Chisholm Block, 10357 Jasper Avenue, was rented, books were ordered and staff enlisted. This north side library opened to the public, with little fanfare, on March 13, 1913. Home loans began several weeks later.⁶

Construction of the Strathcona Library had been completed in February of 1913. The official opening ceremony, attended by ex-Premier Rutherford, was held on the evening of March 13th. J.J. Duggan, former mayor of old Strathcona, and chairman of the library board, presided over the event. In his opening address, Duggan outlined the library's brief history. He pointed out that the stock of books provided would benefit not only children, but all classes of people. Mr. Rutherford noted that the south side library was the second to be established in the province, the first being in Calgary, erected at a cost of \$100,000.00 with the assistance of a Carnegie grant. Edmonton, he stated, intended to build one even better than the Calgary edifice.⁷ What Rutherford could not know was that it would take ten years, and several moves, before

Edmonton's main library was finally settled in a new building. But, for the time being, Edmonton's citizens were more than satisfied, for they now had two libraries at their service. The Strathcona Library Board was dissolved. E.L. Hill, who had been appointed librarian for both boards in the fall of 1912, became the librarian for the Edmonton Public Library Board.

Ethelbert Lincoln Hill, Edmonton's new librarian, had been born in Oxford county, Ontario, on September 29, 1863. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Toronto in 1888. He taught science in several Ontario collegiate institutes before moving to Calgary with his young family in 1907. Libraries had always interested Hill - from 1903 to 1907 he served as secretary to the Guelph Public Library Board - and this interest followed him West. Although only in Calgary from 1908, he served as secretary-treasurer of the Calgary Public Library Board. In 1908 Hill was appointed Provincial Inspector of Schools for the Strathcona Inspectorate. Hill also completed a Master of Science degree at the University of Alberta in 1911. From 1911 to 1912 he served on the Strathcona Library Board. When a committee was being formed to select plans for the new Strathcona Public Library, Hill had eagerly volunteered his services.⁸

Edmontonians were pleased with their new librarian's efforts. The Strathcona Public Library cost \$33,000.00 to build and furnish. Its opening day collection of 4,827 volumes, 37 monthly magazines, 17 weekly publications and 25 daily newspapers was impressive. The Edmonton Journal was delighted with the comfortable, noise-deadening cork flooring, the modern electrical lighting system, the fumed oak furniture and the white enamelled steel bookracks.⁹ There were three reading rooms to appeal to

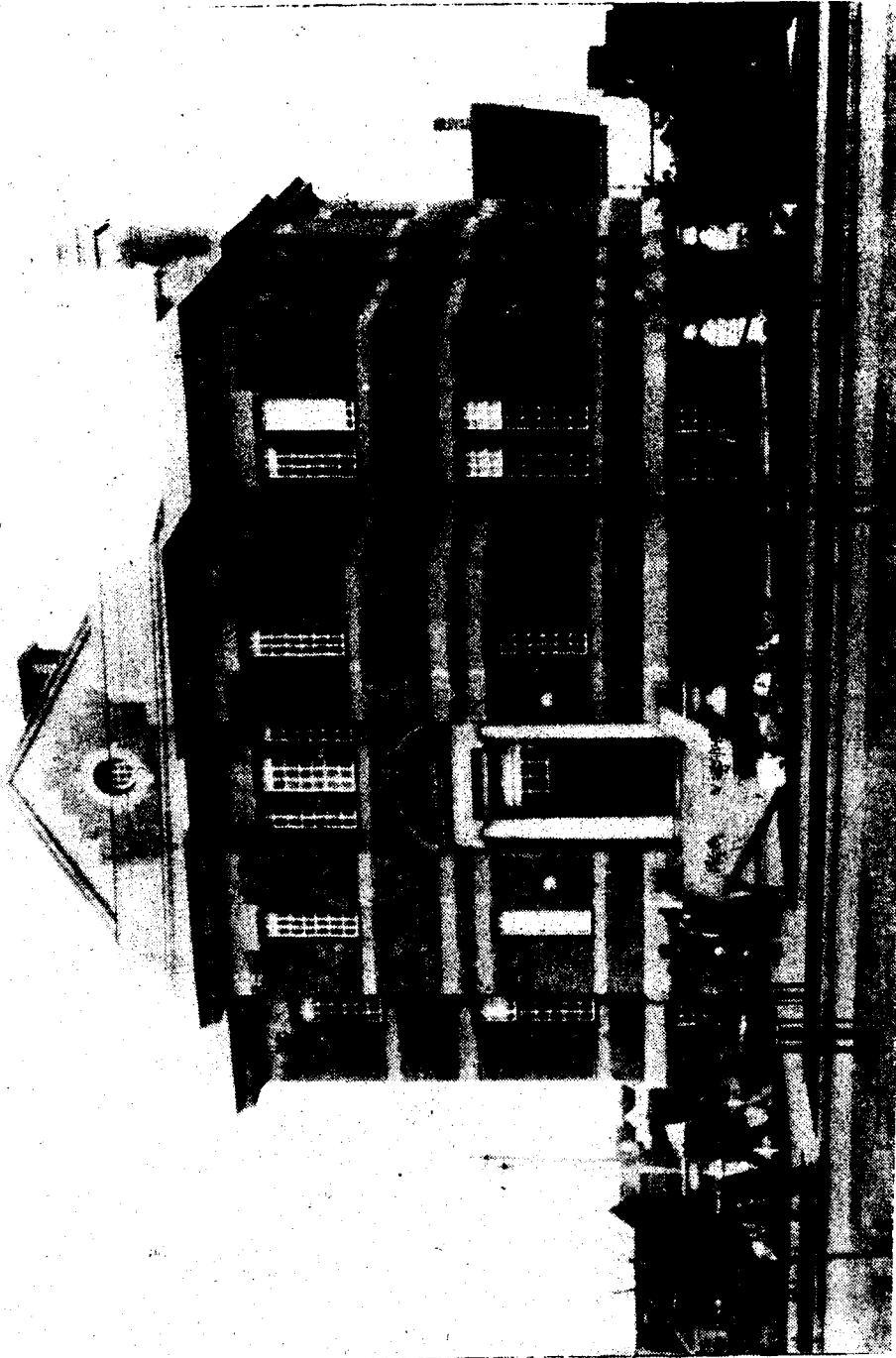


Plate I: Strathcona Library, 1913

different groups - one for ladies, one for the general public, and one for children and young people. Although the main library's quarters on the north side were not nearly as impressive, its opening day collection of 3,000 books (with another 3,000 in preparation) was well-used, its reading room was always busy.

From the beginning, E.L. Hill encouraged children to come to the public library and come they did.

A very fair beginning in regards to the number of books used at the library yesterday when ninety-four volumes were given out. Of this number, forty-two were juvenile works and thirty-two fiction, leaving twenty of a general nature. To the children of the south side, the inauguration of the library has been a delight. This morning scores of them could be seen in the reading room set apart for them and also examining the many splendid boys' books. Not a few girls were around either, but they seemed to prefer a more advanced class of fiction . . . At a later date it has been thought that lectures to juveniles will be established with the object of thereby giving the youngsters an insight into the arts and sciences.¹⁰

It is interesting that the Bulletin reporter should have noted the boy/girl dichotomy in reading tastes, for it was a phenomenon that had been troubling parents and librarians for years. Madge Berton, writing in the late 1800's, had cautioned against this split in juvenile literature, claiming that "what is right for a woman is right for a man and a girl should read the same books her brother should read."¹¹ Too many girls' books, Merton claimed, were filled with dolls and tearful scenes. Closer to home, Gertrude Balmer Watt, Edmonton author and columnist, bemoaned not only the proliferation of vapid juvenile serials, but also the dearth of noteworthy Canadian books for girls. Canadian publishers, she stated, were at fault for not publishing the works of their own authors.

If I were a millionaire I would one day have a great bonfire and I would gather together all the Elsie books and all the other tommyrot yarns and have them utterly consumed. In their place I would substitute first a diet of Beatrix Potter for very little kiddies,

next Kipling, Louisa Alcott, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, Oliver Hereford, Lewis Carroll, Isabella Mackay, Sara Jeanette Duncan - for then these women and others have added their store to the general treasure. My philanthropy having made possible what business-like publishers in Canada have never been able to accomplish.¹²

There is no doubt that E.L. Hill was well aware of these book selection problems. The Edmonton Public Library's Fiction Catalogue for 1913 lists three basic selection aides of particular relevance to juvenile literature.¹³ Children's titles included in this catalogue are generally of high quality. Noticeably absent are any of G.A. Henty's popular boys' stories. Those Delightful Americans by Sara Jeanette Duncan and House of Windows by Isabella Mackay are listed, along with a number of titles by Nellie McClung. There can be little doubt, as well, that the library had books on its shelves that did appeal to young people, for juvenile circulation figures for the first nine-and-a-half months of operation were high (see Table II). At the main library, 19.3 per cent of the total circulation was juvenile. At the Strathcona branch the percentage was even more significant at 25.4 per cent. The 1913 Annual Report notes that 3,445 borrowers were registered at the Strathcona branch and 6,867 at the main library, but the number of those borrowers who were children is not recorded.

Hill seemed particularly interested in extending the library's services to children. His first annual report stresses the accomplishments of the Young People's Department. Emphasizing the care taken in book selection ("the library seeks to bring the child into contact with the best in art, as well as the best in literature"),¹⁴ Hill pointed out that a special "Clean Hands Collection" had been established in a closed case at the Strathcona Library. Clean hands and a promise of

Table II

Edmonton Public Library 1913 Circulation

Main Library

	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Adult Non-Fiction	63	428	698	732	898	1137	1296	1500	1649	1690	10091
Adult Fiction	228	2325	3843	4141	5035	6116	6671	7309	7977	8165	51810
Juvenile Fiction	14	461	1042	1283	1328	1442	1335	1565	1655	1354	11479
Juvenile Non-Fiction	4	50	264	378	279	322	380	492	675	534	3378
Periodicals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total for Month	309	3264	5847	6534	7540	9017	9682	10866	11956	11743	76758

(Table II continued)

Strathcona Library

	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Adult											
Non-Fiction	213	433	432	435	454	421	451	545	642	656	4682
Adult											
Fiction	1300	2865	3448	3505	3750	4171	3895	3751	4090	4000	34755
Juvenile											
Fiction	648	1148	990	944	1236	1115	889	1179	1304	1308	10761
Juvenile											
Non-Fiction	201	354	311	307	259	224	185	240	298	339	2718
Periodicals	-	3	-	-	1	9	21	43	33	60	170
Total for Month	2362	4803	5181	5191	5700	5940	5441	5758	6367	6363	53106

Source: Edmonton Public Library and Strathcona Public Library. First annual report, 1913, pp. 19-20.

special care were demanded before children could look at these choicely-bound and illustrated books. A story hour had also been started at the Strathcona Library on October 4th and attendances were high. Conducted by Grace Sanders, the chief assistant, these hours featured a reading or recitation, stories from a particular author or period, with a short talk on books or book care. Fairy and folktales were often featured, with lantern slides to illustrate the highlights. During these early years, volunteer story tellers from the community often made guest appearances. On one occasion a very proper looking woman conducted the story hour for children at the Strathcona Library without deigning to remove either her gloves or hat.¹⁵ After the story hours, newcomers were encouraged to apply for borrower's cards.

Edmonton's population, which had peaked in 1914 at 72,516, had dropped by the 1916 census to 53,846. Children between the ages of five and nineteen made up 26.3 per cent of this total, and 18.7 per cent of these children were classified as foreign-born (see Table III).¹⁶ According to Hill's first annual report, many of these foreign-born children were regular library-users. Some of them had "read an astonishing number of good books during the year."¹⁷ The parents of many of these children had a deep respect for learning, which no doubt encouraged this avid library use. In February of 1916, the Edmonton Public Library Board received a petition from Russian citizens requesting that some Russian books be placed in the library. The Board responded by approving the purchase of \$50.00 worth of material in the Russian language.

During these early years the Edmonton Public Library also served its young community by providing small deposit libraries. Loan deposits for

Table III

Edmonton 1916: Ages of People by Birthplace

Ages	Total		Canadian born		British born		Foreign born	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
All Ages	27,462	26,384	13,818	13,919	7,985	7,419	5,659	5,047
Total under 5	3,755	3,747	3,578	3,558	89	105	88	84
Total 5-9	2,800	2,851	1,921	1,970	509	496	370	385
Total 10-14	2,206	2,226	1,153	1,168	646	634	407	424
Total 15-19	1,821	2,256	804	991	574	646	443	619
Total 20-24	2,000	2,642	785	1,120	584	725	631	797
Total 25-29	2,867	2,954	945	1,205	1,061	976	861	773
Total 30-49	9,452	7,531	3,459	2,886	3,690	3,057	2,303	1,588
Total 50-79	2,498	2,177	1,144	994	810	765	544	373
Total 80+	40	29	15	19	16	8	9	2
Unknown	23	16	14	7	6	7	3	2

Source: Canada Bureau of Statistics Census of Prairie Provinces, 1916, Ottawa, 1918.

Edmonton's military camps and the Y.M.C.A. were authorized by the Board early in 1915. Five years later deposit stations were set up, at the request of local groups, in a number of locations, including schools, a church and a drugstore. The Annual Report of 1922 indicated that five deposit stations with a combined circulation of 14,792 were operating.¹⁸

Librarian Hill continued to stress the importance of children's work and on June 14, 1916, the Board approved the provisional appointment of Miss Fife as children's librarian at Strathcona. Her salary was set at \$45.00 per month, with an additional \$3.00 for extra work involved in the story hour program. Community support for the library's work with young people was noted in the Board minutes for March 15, 1918. "In view of increasing interest and favorable comment the Board expresses its approval of the work with children and appreciation of the services of the ladies who are devoting much time and energy in this connection."¹⁹

The cultivation of support from school authorities was also characteristic of the library's early years. Late in 1918, after the children's departments had been closed for several months because of the influenza epidemic, the chairman of the Library Board spoke of the value of suggested reading courses for school pupils. A motion was passed in "favor of the linking up of the library boards in the province with the Department of education."²⁰ The Board also went on record as favoring the educational extension of the library.

As the library expanded, the need for more formalized staffing procedures became evident. The first labor agreement between the Civic Service Union Number 52 and the Edmonton Public Library Board was approved on March 9, 1920. The minimum salary for a children's librarian was set by this agreement at \$110.00 a month.

Despite the success of its services, the main library was still only a transient collection plagued by the lack of permanent quarters. Negotiations with Carnegie floundered while the library moved from one insuitable location to another. In late 1914 the library moved from its original rooms in the Chisholm Block to the first two floors of the Roberts Block at 10212 - 102 Street. Determined to reduce its rental expenses, the library moved again at the beginning of 1918. It occupied the ground floor of City Hall at 10202 - 99 Street for several months before being ousted to the second floor to make way for the consolidation of several civic departments.²² Despite and transience of the main library, children still sought out its books, particularly during the summer months. Edmonton-born children's writer Audrey McKim remembers these early years.

. . . I think I received my first library card in 1920 when I was ten or eleven. I don't remember winter or autumn visits. Darkness fell quickly after school and I was expected home by four-thirty. Saturdays were for outdoor play. During the summer months, however, if we weren't at one of the lakes, I remember the long walks on the hot pavement from 102 Avenue and 107 Street to the Civic Block east of 101 Street. . . . After the glaring sunshine, the library always seemed dark, as I searched for interesting books along the shelves. Allowed only one fiction and two non-fiction books at a time, it was frustrating to choose. Most of the books looked alike as they were rebound in brown leather. The non-fiction fare suggested school to me, so I was haphazard in the selection of them. My favorite stories featured British orphans and school girls. It was a rare delight when I discovered such American books as Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, Pollyanna and Freckles. I would hurry home to spend the rest of the afternoon in a hammock, sipping a lime juice drink and lost to the everyday world as I read. It was at that time that I began writing my own stories. They were always in the form of chapters of books written in a ten-cent scribbler. The first three were about - you've guessed it - orphan heroines.²³

The City Hall location was the library's last temporary resting place, for a few years later a ray of hope appeared in the Board's dealings with the Carnegie Corporation.

Writing to the Carnegie Corporation in November of 1921, the Board

had appealed to the committee's humanitarian instincts.

By the establishment and maintenance of a free public library, the youth of the city are afforded facilities for acquiring a taste for good literature, as well as for supplementing their education after having, in many cases, been compelled to leave school at an early age.²⁴

Whether it was the eloquence of this appeal that made the difference, or perhaps just the sheer tenacity of the Edmonton petitioners, the Carnegie Corporation finally responded with an acceptable commitment. They would contribute \$112,500.00 for a new building if the city would raise \$37,500.00. Fortunately, the local economy was healthy and the civic administration wasted little time in approving the expenditure. The makeshift days of Edmonton's main library were soon to be over.

"Hopeful Activity" and Some Hard Times, 1923-1939.

Construction of the new library building began, in June of 1922, on a site overlooking the Saskatchewan river valley that had originally been purchased by the Board in 1910. Architects H.A. Magoon and G.H. MacDonald designed the building, using the plans for the Carnegie library in Somerville, Massachusetts as their model. Materials chosen for the building were cream brick and Bedford stone, with reinforced concrete construction. The floor plan itself was designed, upon agreement of the Board, the architects and the librarian, to be as flexible as possible in order to accommodate changing conditions. The main floor was one large open room with departments divided only by book stacks and barriers.²⁵

The reading room and reference department occupied the south half of this floor, the circulation department the north half. Natural light streamed in from north and south windows, as well as from a large skylight overhead. A book hoist from the two floors below and the main

switchboard were also located on this floor. The ground floor housed the staff rooms, cataloguing department, a small lecture room, the branch libraries office and the children's department. All of these rooms were arranged around an ingenious double-tier stack area that occupied a central position under the main floor. This stack room would provide space for the expansion of bookstock for years to come. The basement housed the boiler room, the fuel room, the machinery room, shipping and receiving and the bindery.

The new library's holdings were substantial, 60,000 volumes in the stacks, 5,000 in the children's department and 35,000 on the main floor, with provision for future growth.²⁶ It was an attractive and dignified building that delighted those Edmontonians who gathered for the opening ceremonies on August 30, 1923. The building was officially opened by Premier Herbert Greenfield and Edmonton Mayor D.M. Duggan, with the opening address given by Dr. George H. Locke, of the Toronto Public Library. Dr. Locke stressed the work that libraries could do with young people, telling of the work of the Boys and Girls House in Toronto, and of their story hours, emphasizing their value as training grounds for children.²⁷

Trainable children were in abundance that fall in Edmonton as schools struggled to keep up with the growing numbers of children. Fifteen school rooms had been added since the previous year and they were all full. The problem was particularly acute in the high schools and Highlands School was hastily converted into extra high school rooms. A new "lighter" course was introduced for grade nines, composed of courses in English, science, history, mathematics, a language and physical training.²⁸

It was obvious that the Edmonton Public Library was dedicated to serving the reading needs of these studious young people. In his 1922

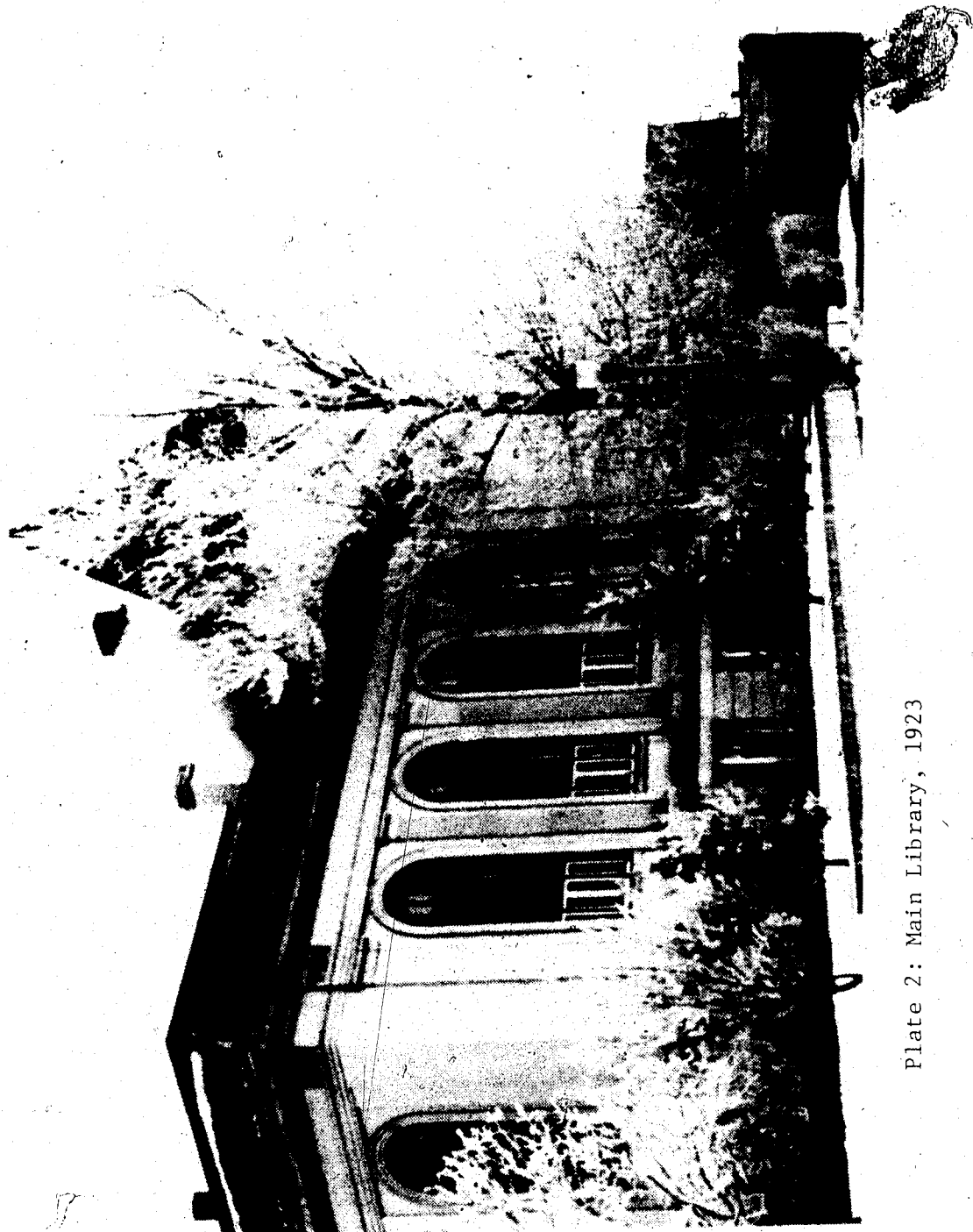


Plate 2: Main Library, 1923

report, E.L. Hill had called for increased space in the children's department.

The need for larger and better accommodation for the children has become increasingly urgent during the year. Once more it should be emphasized that no portion of our library activity is productive (sic) of larger or more far-reaching results. The judicious handling of the problem of the child's reading calls for the wisest and most mature judgment. The Children's Department is one of the features of our work that cannot be curtailed.²⁹

Weekly story hours were being held in both libraries, with an average attendance of 136 per week for each November and December session,³⁰ while the library's reference department daily helped scores of students with their essays and debates. Children's Book Week was an annual observance, with the library displaying "the better types of children's books" and offering advice to parents on gift book selection. In the professional journals, North American librarians were being urged to be mindful of the form and appearance of children's books. They were also being cautioned against letting their choices be ruled solely by budgetary considerations.³¹ Clara Whitehill Hunt, a noted American children's librarian, was particularly outspoken on this subject.

There are two "principles" of selection that chiefly determine the juvenile book buying of an appalling number of American libraries. They are a cheap price and the children clamor. Recent letters (1923) from most of the Secretaries of State Library Commissions tell of children's rooms stocked with cheap trash. . . . Much of this modern trash comes in the form of interminable series.³²

Librarian Hill's plea for more space for children was answered in part by the 1923 opening of the new Carnegie building. The spacious children's area on the ground level, with its new oak furniture and gleaming battleship linoleum floors, was an immense improvement after years of cramped, temporary quarters. But for the Strathcona Children's Department, space was still a problem. Poor heating in the basement ruled out its use for children's work, so the situation was handled by

modernizing the shelving system to free more space.³³

Late in 1923 Miss Jean Hennessy was offered the position of children's librarian at the main library, but within a short time she submitted her resignation. Apparently there was disharmony amongst the staff members and the Board, after a review of events, reappointed Miss Hennessy. Mr. Hill was advised to take steps to restore harmony, as rumors circulated that his inability to delegate authority was the major source of dissension. Miss Hennessy stayed only a few months after her reinstatement, but it appeared that staff morale had been restored. In August of 1924, Miss Dorothy Richards was appointed children's librarian at Strathcona and several years later the Board minutes note that Miss Violet Burden was to take charge of the main library's children's department on December 1, 1926.

Part-time pages assisted in the day to day operation of the children's departments. Grace McDonald, daughter of J. Hamilton McDonald, the former editor of the Strathcona Plaindealer, began working as one of these pages at the main library in her last year of high school. When Miss Burden asked for a transfer to the adult section in September of 1929, the Board recommended that Miss McDonald "should undertake, under the Librarian's direction, an intensive course of study with a view to preparing her to fill the position of children's librarian."³⁴ While most of this preparation took the form of on-the-job training provided by Mr. Hill, books such as Jenny Flexner's outline of circulation procedures were used as well.³⁵ Work days were generally split shifts, with either a morning-evening, or afternoon-evening assignment. Children who could write their names and were in grade one received a library card for a charge of five cents. A parent or guardian's signature was also

required and the card was intended to be used up to the eighth grade. Noon hour opening of the main library's children's department encouraged visits by school children from the 103 Street, Donald Ross, Talmud Torah, Alex Taylor, Sacred Heart, Queen's and McKay Avenue schools and from those parents who worked nearby. School enrollments in these years were growing rapidly, particularly at the high school level since fewer students were dropping out. In 1906 the percentage of Alberta's entire school-eligible population actually in high schools was only 2.4 per cent, but by 1928 this figure had climbed to 11.44 per cent.³⁶

Library associations had begun, by this time, to be organized across Canada. In December of 1930 the first conference on library services for Alberta was held in Edmonton, with delegates from 22 libraries attending. A provincial library association was formed at this meeting, with its proclaimed aims being to improve library standards, to promote province-wide library service and to encourage the cooperative effort of all library agencies towards these ends.³⁷ E.L. Hill and Grace McDonald were members of this group from its inception.

Although the Alberta Library Association's goals were admirable, their achievement was being hampered by the economic depression that gripped all of North America in the early 1930's. Edmonton's population in 1931 was 79,197, with 14,573 of these people drawing relief benefits. By 1934 the city itself owed the Imperial Bank \$2.5 million.³⁸ The Board pared expenses to the bone by discontinuing deposit stations, freezing salaries and cutting back on expenditures.

These cutbacks had a significant effect on the level of Edmonton's library services, as was made all too clear by the findings of the Commission of Enquiry into Library Conditions and Needs in Canada. The

Commission, chaired by John Ridington, described Alberta as "a land of hopeful library activity" but the Edmonton Public Library's book collection of one volume per capita was judged quite inadequate for a city of 80,000 people.³⁹ The children's section was assessed as being notably weak (as were children's libraries all across the province). It was also noted that little work with the schools was done. The Commission conceded though, that were prospects of improvement. A new spirit of optimism had been growing and the need for better children's library services was considered vital.

A mother, a child and a good book are three of the greatest forces for good in national life. The public library can inspire and supervise this work in every community and can, through youth and adult life, lead into realms of adventure, interest, contentment and wisdom through books.⁴⁰

Edmonton's public library, under the direction of E.L. Hill, continued to expand its children's services in spite of hard times. In his report to the Board in November of 1933, Hill called attention to this expansion, stressing that it was crucial that more and more attention be given to children's needs. His staff struggled through the busy 1930's with small salaries and few fringe benefits.

Edmonton's school libraries grew little during these years, although fresh attempts were being made by school authorities to provide for the ethical and physical needs of the city's children. Bible readings were introduced into the public schools in 1930, along with a school savings system modeled after Ontario's School Penny Bank. By 1934 \$27,923.65 was on deposit for the boys and girls of Edmonton's public schools.⁴¹ A sight-saving class was established at Queen's Avenue School in 1931. In 1934 a travelling teacher was appointed to give home instruction to physically handicapped children.

By the early 1930's there were other temptations vying with books and library programs for the time of Edmonton children. Movies had arrived with soundtracks to enhance the action and the films of stars like Ken Maynard, Douglas Fairbanks, Marie Dressler and Greta Garbo interested the children, as well as their elders. A 1933 study which sampled the leisure time pursuits of 661 children in grades six to ten in 12 Edmonton and 6 Calgary schools⁴² indicated that 42 per cent of the children sampled preferred going to the movies to either reading a book or playing a game. Once a week movie attendance was the average for 36 per cent of the sample and 8 per cent went more often. Cowboy and western movies were the most popular, with love, war and gangster films following much further behind. It is interesting to note that this study revealed a definite decline in movie popularity with the older students. Movies get nearly 50 per cent of the votes in grades six and seven, but in the higher grades, the proportion of votes for games, by the boys, and for books by the girls, continuously increases, until in high school, the movie is in second place, for both boys and girls. Many of these high school students in Edmonton were making good use of the public library's study and research facilities. The Board was more than willing to give them priority treatment.

. . . attention is called to the difficulty in securing adequate space at the tables in the Reference Department for the students who require one or more volumes at a time for study purposes. This difficulty is caused by the desultory readers constantly using this seating accommodation.⁴³

The offending desultory readers had their space cut back as the Board passed a motion to keep at least one table reserved for students only from 4:30 to 9:30.

For younger children the library offered fall juvenile library weeks

with colorful new books and special displays arranged by Miss McDonald and other staff members. The new books for 1938 included The Magic Hill by A. A. Milne, Kate Seredy's The White Stag, and Wee Gillis by Munro Leaf.⁴⁴ The average daily circulation that year for the main children's department was over 300 books.. The weekday hours were 10:00 to 1:00 p.m. and 3:30 until 7:30 p.m., with Saturday operation extending from 10:00 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. without a break. Perennial favorites with the young patrons included Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, Tom Sawyer, Alice in Wonderland and Heidi.⁴⁵ Children were also instructed in the use of the card catalogue and good behavior was stressed at all times. When behavior got out of hand at the main library, offenders were asked to study an illustrated poetic scroll that summarized all the rules:

When you enter the library door
 Just turn your eyes to the floor,
 And wipe your feet upon the mat;
 If you're a boy, take off your hat,
 See if your hands are clean - if not,
 Use soap and water, good and hot.

Don't push or crowd. Remember this,
 Good manners never come amiss.
 No talk, no laughter, please try,
 To be as silent as you can.
 No eating is allowed in here,
 No nuts or candy must appear.

If you should move, we would like to know,
 The address of the house to which you go.
 Protect your books from rain and mud.
 Don't tear or drop them with a thud.
 From smears and pencil marks and ink,
 You well can keep them if you think
 That each of them is like a friend.⁴⁶

E.L. Hill's 24 year association with the Edmonton Public Library came to an end with his resignation in November of 1936. He was seventy-three when, with his wife, he retired to the milder climate of Victoria,

British Columbia. Because of the library's stringent budget, the Board decided that it was unnecessary to "incur the additional cost of a new librarian."⁴⁷ Grace Dobie, a long-time employee, was appointed Acting Head Librarian at a salary of \$2,000.00 per year. According to The Edmonton Journal, Miss Dobie was being accorded a rare honor as "one of the few of her sex to hold such a position of like size in America."⁴⁸ The honor was a short-lived one, however, for in February of 1939, Alexander Calhoun, Calgary's public library head, was asked by the Board to survey the Edmonton system. His specific duties were to suggest improvements in public service areas and to assist in the selection of a new head librarian. Calhoun's report on the library's level of service was particularly critical of the reference department which he found to be functioning inadequately with a limited number and range of books. The Board, now fully cognizant of the need for direction, responded by setting the wheels in motion for the hiring of a new chief librarian. Advertisements were placed in The Edmonton Journal, Edmonton Bulletin, Winnipeg Free Press, Vancouver Province, Toronto Globe and Mail and the Library Journal.

In June of 1939, Hugh Gourlay, then Librarian at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, was offered the Edmonton position. He was to begin in September at a salary of \$3,000.00 which would increase by \$200 per year to a maximum of \$3,800.00.⁴⁹ Gourlay had graduated from Queen's University with a bachelor's degree and from the University of Michigan with a Master of Library Science degree in 1935. Although he was only thirty-six years old, Gourlay had worked as a reference librarian, as a circulation department head and as the assistant to the chairman of the Advisory Group on College Libraries for the Carnegie Corporation. This

breadth of experience would serve Gourlay well in the years ahead, as he worked to reorganize and extend the services of the Edmonton Public Library. Nowhere would his energy be more valuable than in the area of children's work.

Soon after Gourlay took over his position, The Edmonton Journal reported that children were becoming more book conscious. A total of 5,220 children, out of a possible 14,000, were enrolled at both libraries and since school opening in the fall of 1939, more than 500 had taken out cards at the main library, more than double the number who had joined in the same period the previous year.⁵⁰ Teachers were encouraging young people to read books other than their textbooks and to use the library to obtain material for school assignments. Children flocked to the library armed with intriguing questions. Staff members at the Edmonton Public Library coped with the onslaught as best they could.

Innovation and Expansion, 1940-1955

Hugh Gourlay had innovative ideas about the role the public library should play in a growing community and he wasted little time in making them known. Soon after arriving in Edmonton, he told a meeting of the Edmonton branch of the Canadian Business and Professional Women's Club that, although the book collection was excellent, the city's library distribution facilities were seriously lacking. Edmonton's population was now approaching 90,000 with many areas out of reach of either the main library or the Strathcona branch. Gourlay was especially concerned that of a possible 14,000 city school students, only 5,500 (39 per cent) were enrolled at the library. New and used bus prices were being investigated since the new librarian felt that books could be put in every city school if the means of transportation was available.

Edmonton's school libraries were poorly developed at this time and Gourlay was convinced that the public library had an educational role to fulfill. The Library's nonchalant approach to older children also bothered Gourley.

. . . although our children's department is fairly up-to-date, we have no section for the inter-legiate or teenage boys and girls who are a little old for the younger books, yet not mature enough for the adult library. Toward a middle library we are working.⁵¹

Circulation of juvenile books had peaked in 1939; more than 84,000 books had been loaned at the main library's children's department, an increase of some 10,000 over the preceding year,⁵² but Hugh Gourlay was determined to enhance the library's work with children even more.

In January of 1940, a three year program of internal reorganization and evaluation began, with the full support of the Board. A departmental system was introduced, with the heads of the cataloguing, reference and children's departments being directly responsible to the chief librarian. Goals for each department were formulated, with the children's department being:

. . . responsible ultimately for all work with children, both in the library and outside agencies; giving individual attention; treating children as citizens of the community entitled to such services; guiding reading, providing reference service and helping to find books whether for enjoyment, hobbies or special interests.⁵³

Providing reference service to children kept the staff in the library busy, as an article by Grace McDonald in The Edmonton Journal indicated. School enterprise assignments accounted for many, but not all, of these questions. These queries included the predictable ones: What do elephants eat? and the not so predictable: Mary had a red book last time, all about a fairy princess, may I have it please? Standard reference



Plate 3: Grace McDonald with Young Readers, Early 1940's

works like the Britannica Junior and World Book were used, along with common sense, to answer questions and a special school collection made it easier for the children to help themselves.⁵⁴

Summer reading clubs were popular with the children. In November of 1940, the second annual National Book Week, with its slogan "good books, good friends", was celebrated. Special invitations were sent out to Edmonton school teachers, encouraging them to bring their classes to the library to see the displays. Late in that same year Miss Anna Malone, a McGill University library school graduate, was named acting head of the children's department, with Grace McDonald designated as her first assistant. At the same Board meeting, plans to redecorate the main library's children's room were revealed. New shelves and a new fireplace were the main improvements. This work was completed in April of 1941.

Gourlay's idea for a mobile library materialized in October, 1941 when a reconditioned streetcar went into service. The car, which had been used in the city's transit system for over 900,000 miles, had been refurbished at a cost of approximately \$1,700 and rented from the city for \$1.00 per day plus the wages of the motorman required to operate it.⁵⁵ It was an experiment which attracted interest locally and nationally. Several thousand volumes were carried by the streetcar, with one side reserved for children's books. Children, in fact, outnumbered adults in the use of this mobile collection. Special spur lines had been laid so that the car could remain in one spot for any length of time. The first stop was in the Calder district at 127 Avenue and 120 Street, where the bright royal blue car with silver and gray trimming was parked from 3:00 - 9:00 p.m. on Fridays. Response was enthusiastic. On its first Calder stop, 700 residents (more than half of them new borrowers) visited the car. More

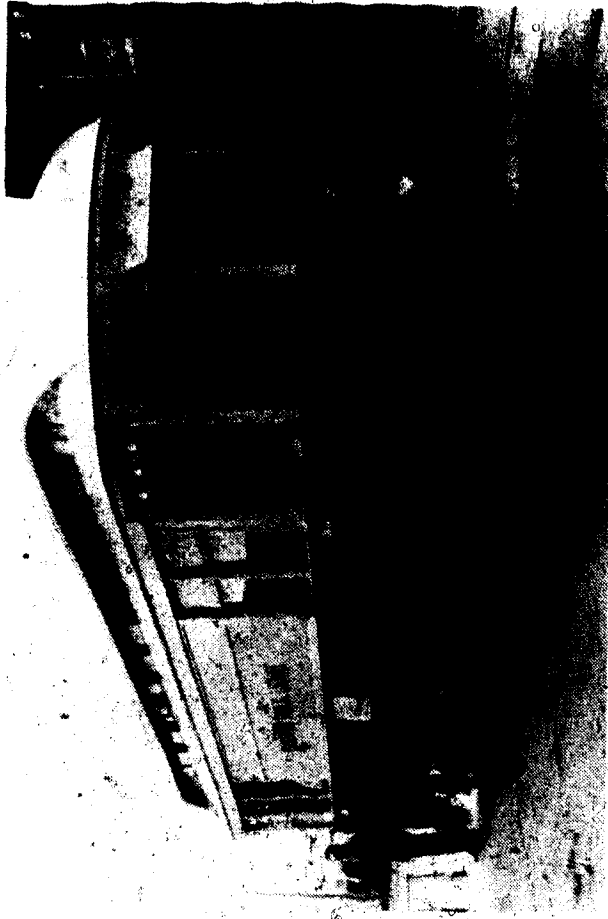


Plate 4: Streetcar Library, 1941

than 75 per cent of these borrowers were children.⁵⁶ A Wednesday stop was established in North Edmonton at 66 Street and 124 Avenue. On its first visit there a total of 576 books were borrowed. Four hundred and twelve of these books were borrowed by children, and of the 424 new cards issued, 348 were to children.⁵⁷ Margaret Auxier and Grace McDonald, the librarians in charge of this collection, did their best to cater to the children's reading demands. The war was having an influence on these reader's choices: books about airplanes, submarines and other war-related subjects were becoming more popular. By early December the streetcar library had loaned 9,515 books and had registered 4,210 new adults and 1,020 children.

On a typical day the streetcar would first serve early afternoon adult readers, with primary grade children arriving soon after. After 4:00 p.m. the older children would appear, often in search of materials for school assignments. Staff members would eat in relays during the supper hour lull before the evening visits of adults and high school students. There could be little doubt that Gourlay's experiment was a success. The novelty of his idea had spread the news over Canadian borders. Articles appeared in the American periodicals Library Journal and Architectural Forum and the streetcar library was even the subject of a Paramount newsreel short.

Under Gourlay, improved public relations became a priority for Edmonton's public library. Several radio programs were initiated: "Mr. Information" referred questions from the public to the library staff, while the "Town Talent" program for children under fourteen was held on Saturday afternoons. Performers applied through the library and were auditioned by Evelyn Baker, a musical staff member. Worthy children were

escorted to the station and back to the library, with prizes being awarded by the library.⁵⁸

Nor was the "middle library" that Gourlay had envisioned forgotten. A new youth section designed for fourteen to eighteen year olds, labelled "Books for Youth" opened in September of 1942. Although the books were chosen mainly for recreational reading, books on more serious subjects were also included. Titles like Exploring Today by Lincoln Ellsworth, Mapmakers, How Music Grew and various books on crafts and hobbies were placed on the shelves along with such well-known fiction standards as The Yearling, The Three Musketeers, and A Christmas Carol.⁵⁹

Library membership continued to grow. Seven-thousand, seven-hundred and forty-five of the 13,320 Edmonton children in grades one to eight in 1943 were library members, an increase of 500 over 1942.⁶⁰ During the summer months, story and music hours were held outside on the library lawn. For children confined to the University Hospital, a story hour was hosted by the children's department on alternate Wednesday afternoons. Late in 1944, after the demise of the "Town Talent" program, the Board decided to inaugurate a radio program that would stimulate interest in reading among children. The program, called "Boys, Girls and Books", which originated from the children's room of the main library, was heard every Saturday morning over C.F.R.N. radio.

Music had, by this time, become an important part of the Edmonton Public Library's program. Nicholas Alexeeff, a caretaker with a colorful musical background, had been appointed music director by Gourlay in 1943. Alexeeff had begun building a collection of recordings, the forerunner of the library's strong audio-visual department and recorded concerts had become a regular library attraction. Young people

were encouraged in their musical pursuits by the library. A series of Sunday afternoon student recitals was organized by Alexeeff in 1946 and the Fine Arts room with its collection of recordings was open to all ages. Jack Fowler, a winner in the "Town Talent" contest three years earlier, conducted a junior orchestra which met regularly in the library.⁶¹ Popular musical tastes were not neglected either, as the library co-sponsored a Library Week program in the fall of 1946 with the Junior Chamber of Commerce. "About two hundred teen-agers swayed, rocked and stamped to a record program of solid jive and bouncing boogie-woogie."⁶² Whether the young people took time from their swaying and rocking to look at the books and classical records displayed by the library was not noted.

A sense of professionalism was becoming increasingly evident within the ranks of Alberta's children's librarians. Librarians from Calgary and Lethbridge cooperated with Edmonton Public librarians in the preparation of a selected list of recommended children's books. Arrangements were made with the Department of Education to have a portion of this annotated list published in a catalogue of books for elementary schools, while work began on a list of titles suitable for junior high schools. But, laudable as the Edmonton Public Library's efforts were in serving school needs, financial constraints could not be overlooked.

Reference service relating to school curriculum has reached the point where our present book appropriation is inadequate. The number of requests from teachers for classroom library loans for both school and recreational use emphasizes the desirability for some financial agreement with the school board.⁶³

A report on service to schools presented to the Board on January 20, 1946, indicated that between 93 and 95 per cent of reference questions answered at the main library in 1945 were for school purposes (75 per cent

at the Strathcona branch) and that 120 teachers had, in the same year, borrowed collections of books for classroom use.⁶⁴ A meeting of Edmonton Public Library Board representatives, children's department staff members, city commissioners and the Superintendents of the Separate and Public School Boards was held in 1947 to discuss the problem of providing books for school needs. The suggestion was made at this meeting that it would be more economical if the library were utilized as a distributing depot for books required only seasonally for school enterprise projects and that the school boards should provide some financial assistance. Neither of the school boards could agree to the idea, however, so the issue was dropped.

Edmonton continued to grow rapidly during these years. Large reserves of gas and oil were discovered around the city in 1947 and 1948, with workers pouring into Edmonton. From 1946 to 1951, the city's population increased by 46,515 to a total of 159,631. With this growth came change. The city's electric transit system was phased out in favor of diesel buses and with it went the public library's streetcar branch. Mobile library service was continued with a reconditioned bookmobile obtained in 1947 and a second one purchased in 1948. The 1947 bookmobile was the only one of its kind in any Canadian city. It distributed books to more than 400 children and adults daily. Working on a six day schedule, it served the districts of Forest Heights, Bonnie Doon, Westglen, Glenora, Jasper Place, Allendale, King Edward Park, Ritchie, Riverdale and Highlands. The truck, piloted by driver Jack Fearon, carried 1,500 books, and volunteers helped with their distribution in each district. Three of the stops were alongside schools where children were sent out to get their books according to grades. Two of the most popular books with children

were Paddle to the Sea and Homer Price.⁶⁵

Librarians from the Edmonton Public Library also ventured out into the community in ways other than by bookmobile. School visits with 15 minute book talks were standard and librarians were often invited to speak to parents groups. Comic strips and their influence on young minds was one of the most popular topics of discussion. At a March, 1948 meeting of the University Home and School Association, Aleta Vikse, a librarian with the Edmonton Public Library, reviewed the elements of comic strips which appealed to children, explaining how these elements were being used in books to attract children to better types of reading.⁶⁶ Despite this reassurance that comic strips, or at least their format, had some merit, the public remained convinced that the library was an ally in the battle against the comic book.

"Young Canada Book Week" should provide a useful and effective antidote to the iniquitous publications dealing with sex and violence which are misnamed 'comic books.' It is admitted everywhere that these so-called "comic books" exercise a dangerous and perverting effect on children. Juvenile crime has been traced, in more cases than one, to the influence of these publications. But it is admitted, too, that little can be done to mitigate the effects of these cheap and tawdry thrillers unless something is provided to take their place in children's affections.⁶⁷

School library service took an important step forward in 1949 when Miss Alma Webster, a former high school teacher with a Bachelor of Library Science degree, was hired by the Edmonton Public School Board to organize a library for Victoria Composite High School. Because the budget provided was so limited, Miss Webster made many visits to the main public library, to use its professional tools, and to pick up reference books no longer needed by the library. As the collection grew at Victoria Composite, a noticeable decline in the use of the public library's reference department was observed.⁶⁸

The immensely successful Puppet Club began at the Strathcona Library in 1950. Blanche Irvine, head of the branch's children's department, had explored the idea in Bachelor of Library Science classes at the University of Toronto and was anxious to put her interest into practical use. Every Saturday afternoon about 40 children between the ages of ten and fifteen met at the library to make their own marionettes and puppets. The children wrote and produced their own plays, basing their ideas on library books they had read.⁶⁹ Between 1950 and 1951, the Puppet Club presented about 20 plays to overflowing audiences in the basement of the Strathcona Library.⁷⁰ Renovations had been completed in the basement which now housed the children's department. New young patrons, who could make use of the enlarged facilities, were sought each fall during the early 1950's when the staff at the Strathcona Library undertook an inter-school children's membership drive. Staff members visited nearby schools, encouraging students to register at the library and prizes were given to schools with the most new library members.

At the main library a children's music hour which was held every Thursday at 4:30 began in November, 1950. Patricia Kerr, of the library's music department, organized these music appreciation hours for upper elementary and junior high age students. Summer reading clubs continued to attract a steady following, with the 1951 club at the main library drawing over 250 registrants. The most popular books, with these summer readers, were ones on scouting, woodcraft, sports, outdoor activities and how-to-do-it projects.⁷¹

Although the library's attempts to solicit financial support from Edmonton's school boards had been abandoned, at least for the time being, the cooperation of school personnel was still given a high priority. A

special open house for teachers was held in the fall of 1951 in conjunction with Young Canada Book Week. About 1,000 teachers attended the evening which was designed to acquaint them with the facilities and services of the library. The school/library relationship was strengthened even further in the next year when a library orientation program for a number of grade five classes was conducted by Grace McDonald, who had become Head Children's Librarian in 1945, and Alixe Lyons. Five separate and eleven public schools adjacent to the libraries participated. Each class attended three lectures; the first was introductory and covered the care of books, arrangement of the library and the classification system; the second dealt with the use of the catalogue. The final visit included a practical review and a catalogue game.⁷²

As the years went by it became obvious that Hugh Gourlay's efforts at extending library service to Edmonton children were not in vain. By November of 1955, 65 per cent of Edmonton's school children had library cards⁷³ - a great improvement over the 39 per cent enrolled when Gourlay had first joined the staff. Circulation of juvenile books had also climbed steadily during the Gourlay years (see Table IV). It had become apparent, as well, that two libraries, and an overtaxed mobile service, were inadequate to meet the needs of a growing city. The Board had started to investigate the opening of additional branches as early as 1948. A formal inquiry commissioned by them was completed by Noel Dant, an Edmonton city planner, in 1952. Six branches were proposed, four to be on the north side of the river and two on the south.⁷⁴ Within a year of the report the Sprucewood library opened, in a renovated church, at 11824 - 85 Street. The East Edmonton Business Association funded interior remodelling and Elizabeth McCallum was appointed head librarian. Hundreds of neighborhood

Table IV

Circulation of Children's Books, Edmonston Public Library 1940-1966*

Year	Total Circulation	Children's Books Circulated	Percentage of Children's Books Circulated to Total Circulation
1940	514,407	130,865	25.4
1941	602,225	169,279	28.1
1942	720,782	251,408	34.9
1943	652,909	219,064	33.5
1944	746,800	274,426	36.7
1945	651,665	245,662	37.7
1946	611,376	212,418	34.7
1947	616,689	216,277	35.0
1948	659,437	248,737	37.7
1949	660,064	259,584	39.3
1950	655,451	265,860	40.6
1951	728,433	300,847	41.3
1952	736,239	305,148	41.4
1953	746,143	320,421	42.9
1954	910,362	432,614	47.5
1955	927,038	456,889	49.2
1956	1,001,102	526,822	52.6
1957	1,057,500	583,321	55.2
1958	1,264,194	722,171	57.3
1959	1,413,519	828,424	58.6
1960	1,739,788	1,037,909	59.6
1961	1,907,385	1,127,892	59.1
1962	2,104,858	1,287,404	61.2
1963	2,334,278	1,402,665	60.1
1964	2,252,745	1,277,835	56.7

Table IV (continued)

Year	Total Circulation	Children's Books Circulated	Percentage of Children's Books Circulated to Total Circulation
1965	2,094,837	1,149,876	54.9
1966	2,013,528	1,124,452	55.8

*All Figures taken from Edmonton Public Library Annual Reports.

children flocked to the new branch, putting a strain on the limited collection. For the first six weeks after its opening, children were allowed only one book and after that just two books, one for school and one for pleasure.

In Edmonton, and in Alberta generally, there were more encouraging signs of professional growth in the library field. An Edmonton Library Association, which worked at extending library service to hospital-bound children, had been formed. The Canadian Legion provided funds to establish a library for young polio patients in St. Joseph's Hospital. Grace McDonald of the Edmonton Public Library was appointed chairman of the buying committee. The library, which was christened "The Junior Bookshelf", was formally presented to the hospital on November 28, 1954. The provincial government had agreed, in 1947, to give the fledgling Alberta Library Association an annual grant and by the early 1950's it too had undertaken a number of projects. A committee from this Association gave assistance to the Reading Committee of the Home and School Association. Talks on the library profession as part of high school career sessions were initiated in 1955.⁷⁵

In February of 1955 Hugh Gourlay submitted his resignation to the Board. A stroke had seriously impaired his health, leaving him no longer able to perform his duties effectively. The program of innovative and imaginative reorganization and expansion that Gourlay had spearheaded remained, as his legacy to the people of Edmonton. Long-time employee Aleta Vikse was appointed Acting Head Librarian. In the annual report for that year, Miss Vikse noted that the demands on the library would be even greater in the future, because of the probable amalgamation of Jasper Place and Beverly with Edmonton. Nor was there any significant slowdown in

the library's work with children. Grace McDonald, in the same report, commented on the increased number of requests for books by parents of pre-school children, as well as by kindergarten and playschool leaders. Friday morning visits to schools had been consistently carried out and weekly story hours had been held at the main, Strathcona and Sprucewood libraries. Attendance at these story hours was down somewhat from the previous year, perhaps because of time conflicts with television programs, a new attraction for Edmonton youngsters. At the Strathcona Library a special youth section proved popular. A total of 20,543 books were borrowed from this collection of carefully chosen volumes, on topics such as sports, personal development, adventure and science fiction.⁷⁶

The years since 1940 had been ones of energetic expansion in the Edmonton Public Library's service to children and the future looked promising.

Looking to the Future, 1956-1967

In the fall of 1956, Morton Coburn, Edmonton's third public library head, took over from Aleta Vikse. Coburn was an American who had been selected to fill the position from a short list of 20 applicants. Born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1921, Coburn received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1949 from the University of Illinois, after having served with the United States armed forces during World War II. In 1950 he completed a Master of Library Science degree at the same university, before going to his first full-time library position, as assistant reference librarian, at the University of Kansas. Prior to coming to Edmonton, Coburn spent four years at the Ohio State University Library, in Columbus, as head of the gift and exchange division and the book purchase division. At an informal

reception on August 30, 1956, two days before officially taking office, he was introduced to library staff, Board and civic dignitaries.⁷⁷

Morton Coburn's arrival in Edmonton came at a time of unabated growth. The 1956 census tabulated the city's population at 22,549. The Edmonton Public Library, with its 32 service points (the main library, 3 branches and 29 bookmobile stops) struggled to keep up with the demands.⁷⁸ With a total budget of \$309,987.00, more than double that of 1951, the library circulated over a million volumes in 1956, with 47.4 per cent of these borrowed by adults, and 52.6 per cent by youngsters.⁷⁹ A new Public Libraries Act which became law on March 29, 1956, gave some increase in financial assistance, as did an improved government grant a year later, but on a per capita basis the Edmonton library was still receiving only minimal support with combined municipal and provincial grants.⁸⁰

Like his predecessor, Coburn first turned his energy toward streamlining the Library's operations to conform with his own ideas of organizational efficiency. A key part of this plan was the formulation of an "administrative staff conference", composed of senior librarians which was to serve as a committee of investigators and advisors to the library administration.⁸¹ The library ordering was changed, from a semi-annual to a semi-monthly schedule. As well, a Book Order Division, that would receive input from the newly formed Book Order Committee, was created. To report progress within the system, Coburn began News Notes, a monthly newsletter, whose first issue appeared in October, 1956.

As these changes began to take effect, the Library's work with young people carried on. The teen-age department at the main library offered approximately 3,000 books to young readers. Romances, or stories concerned with professions, were popular with girls, while boys chose mysteries or

space stories. Although this collection was supposed to be restricted to those fourteen years or older, Mrs. Blanche (Irvine) Friderichsen, the acting head of the circulation department at the time, remembers one eager, under-age girl who, with the authorization of a letter from her parents, was allowed access to the teen collection.⁸²

Very early in his career with the Edmonton Public Library, Morton Coburn expressed concern over the strain that school use was putting on the library's limited resources. Only three of the city's high schools had library collections. Elementary schools fared even more poorly. Young Canada Book Week, in the fall of 1957, was an appropriate time for the Library's new director to begin his campaign for enlarged facilities.

Our branch libraries are as much a part of our school buildings as the classrooms themselves. The extensive growth of our school population, and our inadequate number of branch libraries works to the disadvantage of both teachers and their pupils. When citizens vote against libraries they are voting against girls' and boys' education.⁸³

Fourteen out of twenty-eight stops in the library's 1957 bookmobile schedule were at schools, but as Coburn stressed, the need for new branch libraries, to replace mobile service was urgent.

Another urgent need was also becoming apparent at the main library. Study space was at a premium, shelving in the public area was inadequate and there was no space for a proper staff lounge. Coburn was convinced that it was time for a new building. Once again, he made his views known.⁸⁴ The new Sprucewood Branch, which moved to enlarged premises at 11555 - 95 Street, eased the pressure for new branches somewhat, but it would be years before the necessity for a new main building was acknowledged.

The Library's children's departments enjoyed a record breaking year in 1958. Circulation, which was well over 700,000 volumes, had

doubled in five years, with the average number of books read by each child rising from 18.1 to 23.8.⁸⁵ The launching of Sputnik had sparked a particular interest in space travel books, and they were in continuous circulation.⁸⁶ Television was also influencing children's choice in books. Canadian explorers like Mackenzie and Radisson, featured in television programs, became popular heroes with young readers. For the preschoolers, a trend had been started with the publication of Cat in the Hat, by Dr. Seuss, whose books were in constant demand. The bookmobile service, now in its eighteenth year, had been expanded from 28 to 40 stops weekly, with its two buses manned by a staff of eight full-time, and three part-time employees.

Although Nicholas Alexeeff had retired in 1953, the Music Department's tradition of service to children did not cease. His successor, Helen Sinclair, a trained music librarian, worked at upgrading the collection and encouraging music appreciation in young listeners. Music hours were organized for Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. summer day camps and children's wards of local hospitals. A series of music workshops, designed to help elementary school teachers, were also jointly sponsored by the Library, the Edmonton Public School Board and the Education Policy Committee of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Several documents, released in 1959, graphically demonstrated the inadequacy of Alberta's school libraries, an inadequacy that Morton Coburn and other public librarians were only too well aware of. A Department of Education Library Sub-committee, which had been appointed several years earlier, came out with its report in May: ". . . some schools lack books, others lack the necessary organization and personnel to use the books they have properly, while others are unable to organize library service because

they lack space."⁸⁷ These findings were echoed a month later by the province's Royal Commission on Education, which also revealed a lack of trained school library personnel, as well as a lack of adequate quarters. The time for administrative initiative in the area of school libraries was long overdue, and these two reports provided the impetus that was needed. A recommendation was implemented, in September of 1959, deeming libraries in new elementary schools and additions eligible for Department of Education building grants. Professional interest was stimulated by the First National Library Service in the Schools Workshop held in Edmonton.⁸⁸ One year later, the Edmonton Public School Board appointed L.G. Wiedrick as its school library specialist.

In 1960, the Edmonton Public Board's 1960 allotment for library books was \$80,000.00, allowing for an average expenditure of \$1.40 per pupil in established schools, with a sum, in excess of that amount, in the new ones.⁸⁹ Teachers were expected to choose books for classroom and library use. To help make these decisions, they called on the expertise available at the Edmonton Public Library. A nine member sub-committee, under the chairmanship of L.G. Wiedrick, was set up, with Grace McDonald acting in an advisory capacity. The Committee prepared a list of basic titles, with annotations, grade placements, Dewey numbers, publishers and prices, that was distributed in 1961. In 1962 the School Board adopted an ambitious five year School Library Policy, with the goal of increasing the number of books per student from 6.5 to 10, and providing every school with a library, and the services of a teacher-librarian.⁹⁰ This flurry of activity to promote the development of school libraries, signalled the beginning of an era of rapid growth nationally, as well as locally.

The development of school libraries in Canada was accelerated in the 1960's because educators realized that the new educational

programs had little chance of succeeding without the support of good library resources and services.⁹¹

Reference librarians at Edmonton's main library quickly noticed the improvement in local school libraries. The number of school-related requests dropped somewhat as students showed familiarity with an increasing number of reference works.⁹²

As school library service to Edmonton's children gained momentum, the public library pursued its goal of keeping pace with one of Canada's fastest growing cities. The new branch libraries that Morton Coburn had seen on the horizon began to materialize. In mid-1960, the Idylwyld Branch opened at 8310 - 88 Avenue. In the fall of 1961, the Library and the Town of Jasper Place combined human and financial resources to open the Jasper Place Branch, at the north end of the Meadowlark Shopping Centre. Several years later, when Jasper Place amalgamated with Edmonton, this branch was integrated into the system. A renovated bungalow was the first home for the Highlands Branch, in 1962, and a new structure opened on the same site, in 1964. For the children of Edmonton, these branches meant greatly enhanced accessibility to library resources, as well as a marked improvement over crowded bookmobiles or long bus trips to and from the closest library.

Temporary relief was given to the overcrowded quarters at the main library, in September of 1962, when a portable structure that had been constructed on the front lawn, to house the children's collection, was officially opened. The structure, which had cost \$30,000.00 was designed to hold approximately 35,000 volumes. It was connected to the main library by a narrow passageway. An international exhibition of children's art had been arranged to mark the opening, and a fair amount of

radio, newspaper and television publicity was given to the event. The old children's area was taken over by the Cataloguing Department, but space at the main library was still inadequate.

Children's library privileges were the focus of a controversy that erupted in October, 1962, when Dr. Metro Gulutsan of the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education, told a teachers' convention that the rules of the Edmonton Public Library "were not designed to further the mental stimulation of young people."⁹³ Basing his criticism on the experience of his own children, Dr. Gulutsan claimed that the level of books children could borrow was restricted, that overdue fines were too steep, and that the borrowing period was too short. Morton Coburn responded by refuting some of the charges that were, in fact, incorrect, but he stood firm on the Library's policy of restricting children's borrowing to the children's libraries. "I don't think there is any library system in North America which permits children to wander back and forth between adults' and children's books",⁹⁴ Coburn contended, adding that this would only discourage them because the material would be too difficult for them. In addition, there was always the possibility that they would pick books that their parents would find objectionable. Dr. Gulutsan countered, by pointing out that in Berkeley, California, children's borrowing was not restricted. The controversy simmered for several weeks. The Edmonton Journal, curious about children's reactions to this dissension, sent a reporter to this main library to shadow young borrowers. Thirty youngsters (only four of them girls) were observed choosing and discussing books. In a five minute period, three cowboy books, a story of fighter plans, a submarine drama and a dozen pictures of cavalrymen, sailors and soldiers were checked out. One eleven year old girl defended her interest in

detective and horse stories.⁹⁵ None of the children interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the choice of books available to them, but since the ~~sample~~ and time span were so limited, the "survey" had little value, aside from its human interest appeal to newspaper readers.

The Library's Annual Report of 1963 showed that Edmonton children borrowed more books in 1963 than in any other period in the Library's fifty year history. Significantly, it was estimated that one-third of the children's books in circulation, at any one time, were books of facts. Even seven and eight year old children were showing an interest in scientific topics.⁹⁶ Teachers and other adults also made greater use of the children's libraries. One thousand, three hundred and thirty four school classes were given book talks, and 205 teachers brought their pupils to the libraries for group instruction. Education students from the University of Alberta made use of children's books in preparation for their practice training. These demands were hampered by a serious shortage of trained personnel; heads of branches served dual roles as adult and children's librarians and the amount of quality of reading guidance to individual readers were adversely affected. This shortage of trained librarians, together with a change in viewpoint that recognized the young adults' eclectic tastes, had brought about the closure several years earlier of the main library's youth section.⁹⁷ Despite the staff shortages, three joint projects were undertaken, and completed, by the children's departments of the main and branch libraries in 1963. A number of bibliographies related to school enterprise projects, were compiled. Analytics were made up for the collective biographies in the collection, and the children's staff manual was revised. A small collection of children's books in the French language had also been

established. The local French-Canadian association donated the funds for the initial purchases, while the books themselves were featured in Young Canada Book Week displays.

The year 1963 had also been crucial for the bookmobile service. At the beginning of that year, five bookmobiles had been providing service, at 45 stops, to predominantly young patrons. Ninety-one percent of the 405,319 books borrowed in 1962 were taken out by children⁹⁸ but a breakdown of the oldest bookmobile brought about a re-assessment of the entire operation. The Library Board, the two school boards, and the Library Sub-committee of the Edmonton Council of Home and School Associations cooperated in a major study that investigated the service and its costs. Fifty per cent of the bookmobile stops were at public and separate schools, but as a result of the study, an agreement was reached, that this preferential direct school service could, and should, not continue. Too great a demand was being placed on the resources of the main library. A revised schedule was carefully drawn up so that not one of the 25 schools from which would be withdrawn was denied a library outlet within a reasonable distance. The curtailment of service to schools did seem to have an adverse effect, however, for circulation figures for children's books in 1964 showed a decline for the first time in many years.

Brief public interest in book selection policies was generated once more in January, 1964, by the statement, by Margaret Beckman, a member of the Public Library Board in Waterloo, Ontario, that children's series like the Bobbsey Twins, the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew should be banned from school libraries. Grace McDonald stated that these books were not found in the public library system, because "regulating books is like regulating a child's diet", and that children who began with better quality books

would learn to discriminate between good and bad writing. The Library's selection procedure was thorough, with main and branch representatives meeting twice a month, to review new juvenile books. The Edmonton Public School Board's library specialist, L.G. Wiedrick, had a different opinion about the series, calling them "bait books". He said that there was no hard and fast policy on the matter and that, in his view, each school library collection depended on the students and their needs.⁹⁹

Another cutback in service to schools occurred, in the fall of 1965, when class room loans to teachers were discontinued. Morton Coburn was convinced that the two Edmonton school boards were not contributing their share toward library costs. The public library was attempting to service the city with a book budget of \$147,000.00, or only 45 per cent of the \$327,000.00 which was the combined book budget of the public and separate school systems.¹⁰⁰ Coburn was particularly distressed with the library's book budget because a new building had finally been approved in 1964, as the city's Centennial project. He was anxious that it not open with empty shelves. The children's section on the lower level of the new library was to be relatively spacious (approximately one-fifth larger than the old quarters). Plans called for a theatre, with a stage and seats, for story and puppet hours,¹⁰¹ features that were sure to attract greater numbers of young readers.

As construction on Edmonton's new main library began, there were heartening signs of growth in children's library services all across the nation. Urban public libraries, that, in 1927, numbered only 640, with a circulation of 16,791,734 volumes, had by 1965 increased their numbers to 910 and their circulation to 78,288,557.¹⁰² A Canadian School Library Association had been formed, at the Canadian Library Association

Conference, in 1961. In 1966 the C.S.L.A. developed Standards for work with young people in Canadian public libraries. In Alberta a School Libraries Council, affiliated with the Alberta Teachers' Association, was founded in 1964, and by 1966 a Provincial School Library Consultant had been appointed. Approval had also been given to the establishment of a School of Library Science at the University of Alberta. In 1966 the Edmonton Public Library increased its potential for service to children by opening the Calder and Capilano branch libraries.

Offsetting these positive signs, however, was a disturbing shift in borrowing patterns. Circulation of children's books at the Edmonton Public Library had dropped again in 1965, and 1966. Although some of the decrease could perhaps be attributed to local changes, such as the addition of 4,000 names to the delinquent borrowers file, the discontinuation of classroom loans, and the improvement of school libraries, the decline seemed to be a more general trend, that had been noted in many North American libraries. The popularity of television was thought by some to be a contributing factor, but whatever the case, it was becoming apparent that outside forces were shifting and that public libraries would have to adapt to the changes. For Morton Coburn and Edmonton's children's librarians, the completion of the impressive Centennial Library, in May of 1967, heralded a challenging new era of service.

Conclusion

In the continuum of Canadian library development, the history of the Edmonton Public Library's children's services provides a representative example of growth and expansion in response to community standards and

needs. By examining such patterns of growth, we gain both a better understanding of our roots, and information on which to build the future.

Between 1907 and 1967, the pattern that had been observed some years earlier in the history of American public library service to children developed in Edmonton. Community concern for child welfare, combined with a strong belief in the value of education that was particularly evident among early European immigrants, provided the social climate for the development of children's public library service. In this climate, the Edmonton Public Library provided service that responded to those community needs.

Early reading rooms maintained by staff with no special background in children's work were the forerunners of a children's department supervised by librarians with specialized training. Service to Edmonton's children grew steadily over sixty years, particularly in the years following 1940 when Edmonton's population began to burgeon. Although the techniques changed, the goals for this service remained stable.

Edmonton's public libraries sought to provide children with a collection of books of high quality, as well as to promote reading that would meet the child's educational, recreational, and developmental needs. The responsibility of establishing sound criteria for the selection of children's books was undertaken vigorously by the children's librarians of the Edmonton Public Library. Community support for these principles was evidenced by laudatory newspaper editorials, while increased circulation gave credence to the belief that popularity and high quality in literature could go hand in hand.

School library service in Edmonton developed at a slower pace, with the financial and human resources of the public library often taking up

the slack. As school libraries improved, a shift in emphasis occurred in the public library's reference services, as well as in some budget allocations. Despite problems over the years, both agencies sought to cooperate in meeting the educational goals that they shared for children. Public librarians visited the schools, while teachers brought classes to the libraries, often signing out books for classroom loans. Authorities from both areas worked together on committees, seeking solutions to some of the problems associated with rapid urban expansion.

A chronological history provides a convenient framework to trace the growth and accomplishments of public library service to the children of Edmonton, but it is the energy and dedication of the librarians who served so selflessly that brings the story to life. Their efforts laid the foundations on which library service to each new generation was built.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER V - WORK WITH CHILDREN IN THE
EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

¹Louise Riley, "Public library legislation in Alberta", Alberta Library Association Bulletin, 2:2-3, (1955).

²Edmonton Public Library and Strathcona Public Library, First annual report, 1913, p. 10.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

⁵J.G. MacGregor, op. cit., p. 489.

⁶Edmonton Public Library and Strathcona Public Library, First annual report, 1913, p. 12.

⁷"Library is formally opened by Dr. Rutherford", Edmonton Journal, March 14, 1913, p. 8.

⁸Esther Marjorie Hill, "Ethelbert Lincoln Hill: Edmonton's first public library director", Edmonton Public Library News Notes, 11:32-44, (June, 1966).

⁹"Library is formally opened by Dr. Rutherford", op. cit.

¹⁰"Library is kept busy", Edmonton Bulletin, March 15, 1913, p. 5.

¹¹Madge Merton, "Our children and their reading", Canadian Magazine 6, (January 1896), p. 286.

¹²"The mirror", [a column by Gertrude Balmer Watt], The Saturday News, July 27, 1907, p. 3.

¹³As listed in the Edmonton Public Library's 1913 Fiction Catalogue these selection aids were: G.E. Hardy's Five hundred books for the young, Leyboldt and Iles's List of books for girls and women and their clubs, and Sargent's Reading for the young.

¹⁴Edmonton Public Library and Strathcona Public Library, First annual report, 1913, p. 25.

¹⁵Grace McDonald, interview with the writer, July 23, 1981.

¹⁶Canada Bureau of Statistics, Census of prairie provinces, 1916, (Ottawa, 1918).

¹⁷Edmonton Public Library and Strathcona Public Library, First annual report, 1913, p. 26.

¹⁸Edmonton Public Library, Annual report, 1922.

¹⁹Edmonton Public Library, Board minutes, March 15, 1918.

²⁰Ibid., December 11, 1918.

²¹Ibid., March 0, 1920.

²²Ibid., May 8, 1918.

²³Audrey McKim, letter to the writer, March 28, 1981.

²⁴Edmonton Public Library, Board minutes, November 10, 1921.

²⁵E.L. Hill, "Edmonton Public Library", The Journal, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, 3:154, (July-August, 1926).

²⁶Edmonton Public Library, Board minutes, July 12, 1923.

²⁷"New library is officially opened", Edmonton Bulletin, August 31, 1923, p. 2.

²⁸"School accommodation to be taxed to limit when city schools open next Tuesday", Edmonton Bulletin, August 30, 1923, p. 2.

²⁹Edmonton Public Library, Annual report, 1922.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Violet McEwen, a children's librarian at the Toronto Public Library, writing in the November, 1928 issue of The Ontario Library Review praised the work of illustrators John Tenniel, E.H. Shepard, Randolph Caldecott, Waler Crane, Kate Greenway and Wanda Gag claiming that illustrations had much to do in the formation of taste and the awakening of a child's interest in art.

³² Clara Whitehill Hunt, Library work with children, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1924), pp. 2-3.

³³ Edmonton Public Library, Board minutes, September 20, 1928.

³⁴ Ibid., November 21, 1929.

³⁵ Grace McDonald, interview with the writer, July 23, 1981. Jennie M. Flexner's book Circulation work in public libraries was published in the United States in 1927.

³⁶ Canadian annual review 1928-1929, (Toronto: The Annual Review Publishing Co., 1930), p. 503.

³⁷ Annie E. Race, "Formation of Alberta Library Association", Ontario Library Review, 15:112-115, (August, 1930).

³⁸ J.G. MacGregor, op. cit., p. 246.

³⁹ John Ridington, et al., Libraries in Canada, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1933), p. 86.

⁴⁰ Hon. Perrin Baker, Minister of Education, Province of Alberta. As quoted in Ridington, p. 82.

⁴¹ G.A. McKee, Edmonton School District No. 7, 1885-1935, (Edmonton: Commercial Printers, n.d.).

⁴² Elliott Henry Birdsall, "A Questionnaire investigation of the reactions of school children to moving picture shows", (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1933).

⁴³ Edmonton Public Library, Board minutes, January 20, 1938.

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⁴⁵ "Library officials mark children's book season", The Edmonton Journal, November 20, 1937, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Edmonton Public Library, Board minutes, December 17, 1936.

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⁶⁷"For healthy young minds", [editorial], The Edmonton Journal, November 15, 1949, p. 5.

⁶⁸Alma Webster, interview with the writer, December 17, 1981.

⁶⁹Blanche (Irvine) Friderichsen, interview with the writer, January 22, 1982.

⁷⁰"Children's puppet club thrives under South Side librarian", The Edmonton Journal, February 10, 1951, p. 15.

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⁷²Edmonton Public Schools Magazine, January, 1953.

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⁷⁴"6 branch libraries proposed by Edmonton town planner", The Edmonton Journal, April 22, 1952, p. 13.

⁷⁵Norma Freifield, "The Alberta Library Association through twenty-five years", Canadian Library Association Bulletin, 12:113, (December, 1955).

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Alberta School Broadcasts, 1978/79
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