



Regional Libraries in Canada

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LIBRARY ORGANIZATION in Canada, as elsewhere, is tending toward the larger unit. It generally depends on local initiative which has been encouraged and assisted by professional librarians at the provincial level. The problems or deterrents are familiar: inadequate finances, a result of apathy and unawareness of the need for books on the part of the citizens along with reluctance on the part of elected councillors to believe that tax dollars should be spent on books; the existence of libraries in communities too small to meet today's standards and with boards jealous of their autonomy; great contrasts in settlement—large urban centers and vast sparsely settled areas; and the zealously guarded provincial responsibility for education and library service which is delaying both federal aid and private foundation assistance.

Although all provinces now have library associations, the Canadian Library Association—Association Canadienne des Bibliothèques—was not organized until 1946. Librarians in Ontario and British Columbia have been working with each other and with colleagues in the United States since 1901 and 1911. There are five library schools in Canada—three are accredited by the American Library Association and the Canadian Library Association. In 1963, the schools graduated 171 students with the Bachelor of Library Science degree and two with the Master of Library Science degree. Ontario and British Columbia have certification regulations. Professional librarians in Ontario have organized an independent professional group known as the Institute of Professional Librarians which in 1963 was recognized by the legislature as a professional body.

In Canada, which is governed by the British North America Act, education is a provincial preserve, and there is no provision for a federal office for libraries or education, nor are federal funds specifically assigned to libraries. The Canadian Library Association—Association

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Canadienne des Bibliothèques—has organized a committee on government assistance to libraries which, using a workshop technique in 1962 and in 1963, is exploring this problem. However, libraries do receive assistance indirectly from various federal sources. The National Library has the national union catalog, which includes not only titles copyrighted in Canada, but the holdings of major libraries in Canada. The Library publishes *Canadiana*, a monthly national bibliography, with Dewey classification, of all books copyrighted in Canada. Assistance in reference and in interlibrary loans is provided by the Library. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics collects and publishes statistics on all libraries. Federal funds are indirectly available for the construction of public library buildings under the municipal winter works incentive program and will be available when a library building is selected as the local project to commemorate the centennial of our Confederation in 1967. The Canada Council provides grants towards the construction of college and university libraries. Funds from the Canada Council are also available for post-graduate scholarships and fellowships in librarianship.

Although Ontario has the longest history of continuous public library service, the promotion of regional libraries began in British Columbia in the 1920's. In 1930 the first regional library in the world was organized in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia with a grant for a demonstration from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. In 1933, funds were also provided by the Carnegie Corporation for a three-year demonstration in Prince Edward Island. The first five regional libraries established in Nova Scotia shared equally a \$50,000 grant from the Corporation for the purchase of books.

A study of the libraries acts and regulations reveals that there are many differences in detail, even in terminology. Every province, except Prince Edward Island, where the libraries are operated by the provincial government, has legislation or regulations whereby municipalities, counties, school districts, or school units—whatever the tax collecting authority is called—may cooperate and contribute tax dollars for the financing of library services. The variations and similarities in the legislation are interesting, but no attempt will be made to analyze the legislation in detail. Instead, an arbitrary selection has been made of provincial policy on some of the essential points.

Every libraries act,¹ or the act relative to public libraries, is of course the responsibility of a minister, a member of the executive council of the province concerned. In Manitoba and Alberta, the responsible

minister may be changed easily because the appointment is made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, whereas in the other provinces he is named in the act. In British Columbia² he is the Provincial Secretary; in Quebec³ since April 1, 1961, the Minister of Cultural Affairs; in Manitoba, since December 1963, the Attorney General; and in the other provinces the Minister of Education.

The organization of libraries in the territory of the Yukon and the two provinces of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island differ so from each other and the other provinces in Canada that it seems desirable to consider them separately.

In Newfoundland there are regional libraries, but the *Public Libraries Act* requires action not by local government but rather by individuals working with the provincial Public Library Board.⁴ Members of this Board, not to exceed twenty-five, are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council for three years and are eligible for reappointment. It is the duty of this Board to promote the formation of regional library boards, to define the regions within which the boards may operate, to grant such boards certification (or to cancel it), and to give financial assistance. It is generally understood that the libraries are organized and helped by the Public Libraries Board, but not operated or maintained by it. The Board pays various nominal grants including 50 per cent of the original cost of the local library building. Despite this information from the legislation and statements in "Facts Concerning Regional Libraries,"⁵ the Dominion Bureau of Statistics' survey of public libraries in 1961 does not report on regional libraries in Newfoundland.⁶ It reports only on a Provincial Library Service, "since a 'regional library' serves a relatively small area around the community in which it is situated and is *not* a regional library in the usual sense."⁷

In Prince Edward Island, the legislation in *the Department of Education Act* states in Section 7: "The Minister through his Department shall have the execution of the laws and of orders of the Province and the administration of public business relating to: . . . (7) The Prince Edward Island Libraries."⁸ One library system serves the whole island. Except for local quarters and equipment the service is financed by the provincial government. In addition to serving branch libraries, the system also loans books, by mail, to schools.

The regional librarian in the Yukon Territory has written that the regional library there started in 1961 as a department of the territorial government. The librarian, a department head, is directly responsible to the Commissioner of the Yukon Territory who is, in turn, responsible

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to the federal Minister of Northern Affairs. The service is financed by the territorial government which derives 81 per cent of its funds from the federal government. For the last two years, the Canada Council has paid a grant to the library. The library, with headquarters in Whitehorse (5,000 population), serves the whole territory (207,000 square miles) through twenty-three communities and seventeen schools with a staff, at present, of one professional librarian and three clerical assistants.

With this information on the provinces of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island and the Territory of the Yukon, it is easier to consider the similarities and variations in the other eight provinces of Canada. The provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan have provincial boards or councils appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to advise the minister regarding their libraries acts, which include the development and organization of regional libraries. On the other hand, British Columbia and Quebec have commissions, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, with authority to make policy decisions. In British Columbia, a superintendent is the chief administrative officer of the commission, while in Quebec a director is the liaison officer between the minister and the commission.

The establishment of library systems is basically the responsibility of the electors or local people, with advice and technical assistance from the staff of a provincial agency, except in Quebec where ". . . It is the Commission that ought to take action concerning the establishment of a regional library in a given area . . . after studies and surveys. . . ." Although grants, publicity, and advice all favor libraries supported by a number of municipalities, there is no compulsion to unite and there are innumerable obstacles. Two obstacles that sometimes seem especially formidable are the number of local governments that have to agree before even a minimum population of 40,000 is reached, and the obliviousness of public library boards and town councils to the importance of an adequate supply of books in the community.

In Alberta and British Columbia, the councils of municipalities or boards of school trustees may enter into agreements to form regional library districts. In British Columbia the electors may petition the Lieutenant Governor in Council to constitute a regional library district. In Manitoba, the electors petition the local council. There must then be a vote of the electors before agreements with other municipalities may be entered into, and these must be authorized by the Municipal Board and approved by the minister. When the boards of two or more re-

gional libraries by resolution recommend the formation of a regional library, the councils of the municipalities may, by law, negotiate and execute an agreement for the merger and the establishment of one regional library.¹⁰ In Ontario, there are various types of systems. To establish a county library co-operative, 50 per cent of the total number of library boards must sign a petition which must be approved by the minister before the county may pass a bylaw. To establish a district library co-operative, a petition signed by at least five library boards in a territorial district is presented to the minister. To establish a regional library co-operative, two or more district library co-operatives petition the minister; when the regional library co-operative is established, the uniting district library co-operatives shall be dissolved. To establish a regional library co-operative for counties, three or more library boards in cities or towns with a population of 15,000 or more may petition the minister, but the regional library co-operative must include at least three counties with a population of at least 100,000. To establish a county library, 75 per cent of the municipalities in a county or one-half the municipalities having a population of at least 25,000 must request the county to establish a county library, and then the county council may do so for the municipalities that so request.

The members of the regional library boards in all provinces except Quebec are appointed by the participating parties. In addition, the Lieutenant Governors in Council in Alberta, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia appoint two members to the board, and additional members may be appointed ". . . in such manner and numbers as the parties to the agreement may determine. . . ."¹¹ Such regional library boards are bodies politic and have the usual authority of a public library board in a single municipality. Quebec legislation does not refer to regional library boards.

The legislation or regulations in British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan state that the regional librarian must be qualified. In Nova Scotia the appointment and the salary must be ratified by the minister. In New Brunswick the provincial government pays a grant of \$4,500 towards the salary of the regional library supervisor in each region. In British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan, the regional librarian must be secretary of the board.

Establishment-grants are paid to regional library boards by the provincial governments of Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. In Alberta, the grant is \$1.00 per capita for the pur-

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chase of books, equipment, or supplies if the regional library meets the standards fixed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. This also applies when any municipality, school division, or school district joins a regional library, except for the cities of Calgary and Edmonton. In Manitoba, three-quarters of the \$10,000 authorized for an establishment-grant to a regional library must be spent on books. In New Brunswick, the initial grant may not exceed \$10,000 and must be spent on books. In Quebec, an establishment grant may be recommended after a survey of the needs, payment depending on the funds available and the judgment of the minister. In Saskatchewan, the initial grant of \$1.50 per capita is for books.

Annual grants are paid by eight provincial governments to regional library boards. The formula is stated in the act or regulations, except in British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Quebec. In British Columbia the Public Library Commission shall ". . . apportion, subject to the approval of the Minister, from the moneys appropriated by the Legislature . . . and refuse aid to any library that fails to conform to the regulations and standards approved by the Commission. . . ." ¹² In Manitoba with funds authorized ". . . The Provincial Treasurer, on the requisition of the Minister, may make grants. . . ." ¹³ In Quebec, according to a letter dated May 19, 1964, from the Director, Service des Bibliothèques Publiques, ". . . The greater part of funds comes from the province." ³ In Alberta, a grant of at least thirty-five cents per capita but not more than \$10,000 is payable if the library meets the standards, based on population and local grants, fixed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, or the regional library may apply for a matching grant based on what has been spent for books, but the book grant shall not exceed \$500 and the periodical grant \$50.00. In Saskatchewan, the annual grant is seventy-five cents per capita provided that the board has received not less than an average of fifty cents per capita from the participating municipalities. The grant structure in Ontario is more complicated and is different for a county library co-operative, a district or regional library co-operative, and a county library. However, in general, on the advice of the Director of the Provincial Library Service, a specific amount is paid on condition that the participants meet certain financial conditions. In the case of a county library co-operative and a county library board, the board also receives a percentage of the approved cost determined by a table included in the regulations.

Other grants or forms of assistance are given by some provinces. In

New Brunswick, Central Library Services, and in Nova Scotia, the Provincial Library provide a centralized reference service and order, catalog, and process all books for the regional libraries (the selection of books is done in the region). In Manitoba the Provincial Library selects, orders, and catalogs books for the regional libraries as well as supplying catalog cards and maintaining a union catalog of such titles. In Saskatchewan, the Provincial Library catalogs the books for the regional library and other libraries organized under the Act. New Brunswick may also grant “. . . an amount not exceeding the equivalent of forty-five cents per capita of the population of the region for the construction of a regional library headquarters.”¹⁴ Buildings for headquarters of the established regional libraries in Alberta and Saskatchewan were provided by the provincial governments. In Saskatchewan the government also provided the furniture and equipment. British Columbia and Ontario have certification of librarians, and a grant is paid to library boards for each qualified librarian. The amount is not specified in British Columbia but is currently \$500 for every full-time certified librarian. It varies in Ontario from \$60.00 to \$600 and according to the Regulations 18(3) “Where the chief librarian for the board of a County Library, a county co-operative, a regional co-operative or a district co-operative holds a Class A [two degrees, one a master’s] or a Class B Certificate [two bachelor degrees] the grant on his behalf shall be increased to \$200 per month.”¹⁵ In Quebec, an annual grant of \$1,000 is paid for each full-time professional librarian, i.e., any librarian holding a degree in librarianship from a university.

Within certain limits, additional grants may be available for a special effort to secure higher standards or for emergencies, in Alberta by the minister upon recommendation of the Alberta Library Board and in Ontario by the director with the approval of the minister. In Quebec, supplementary or special grants may be recommended after surveys, depending on need, to municipal and association libraries likely to become the centers of future regional systems.

Four provinces in legislation and Quebec and Saskatchewan in regulations have procedures for the the disestablishment or dissolution of a regional library. In British Columbia, if all the participants desire the disestablishment they enter into an agreement; or, if after three years, one-tenth of the electors in a municipality or school district sign a petition for withdrawal the council must take a vote. If the vote is in the affirmative, the Lieutenant Governor in Council issues a proclamation stating the unit is no longer a part of the regional library. The

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Lieutenant Governor in Council directs the disposal of the assets. In Alberta, if the regional library board neglects to provide service for two years, an application is made to the Supreme Court for an order declaring the library board dissolved and the assets disposed of by the minister or council. In Nova Scotia, if a municipality wishes to withdraw from a regional library it must give twelve months' notice. In New Brunswick, where a regional library has been established and has operated for three years, a party to the agreement may withdraw on giving twelve months' notice but such withdrawal shall not affect the agreement between the other parties. According to a letter from the Director referred to earlier, ". . . In Quebec, the dissolution of a regional library is made according to an agreement between the municipalities and the managing corporate body, and to the appropriate provision of the third part of the Companies Act."³ In Saskatchewan, according to the regulations, the terms of withdrawal of a municipality are determined by the regional library board in consultation with the minister, and in the event that the functions of the board are terminated the minister may order the disposal of the assets.

With a population of 18,238,247, Canada in 1961 had thirty-eight regional libraries, including seventeen library co-operatives in Ontario.¹⁶ Only twenty of the thirty-eight served a population of 50,000 or over, and nine served a population of 100,000 or over. The average per capita payment for current operating expenses was sixty-seven cents, in regions with population over 100,000 it was forty-one cents, and where the population was between 50,000 and 100,000 it was \$1.07. The total current operating receipts were \$1,742,723, of which \$871,607 were from local taxes, \$786,255 from provincial grants, and \$84,861 from other sources. Of the total, 31 per cent was spent for books and periodicals, 52 per cent for salaries, 2 per cent for mobile services, and 15 per cent for other needs.¹⁷

A somewhat closer look at Saskatchewan shows that there is considerable flexibility in the legislation for regional libraries. Actually, there are only three sections in the act, and two clauses. These sections permit municipalities to establish regional libraries and to make a special levy, and the province to make grants and pass regulations. The establishment, authority, and responsibility of the regional library board are defined in the regulations. The participating municipalities sign an agreement with the regional library board. The agreement covers terms of withdrawal and of the annual grant to be paid by each municipality, which may vary between cities, towns, villages, and rural municipi-

palities. The conditions under which provincial grants are paid and the per capita amount of the grant are in the regulations. The area to be served by a regional library is suggested, not defined, although it is understood that it should serve approximately 40,000 people.

After the legislation was passed in 1946, the promotion of regional libraries started with the appointment of a supervisor of regional libraries. The first meeting of the North Central Saskatchewan Regional Library Board (the first and to date only regional library in Saskatchewan) was held in 1950. The region established by eight municipalities representing a population of 25,345 grew slowly until 1957 when suddenly additional municipalities started asking for service. In 1961 there were twenty-seven municipalities participating, with a population of 63,648 and a budget of \$89,465; in December 1963, there were thirty-five municipalities, with a population of 74,752 and a budget of \$116,723.¹⁸

Promotion of regional libraries has been carried on continuously by enthusiastic and devoted men and women assisted first by one and, since 1953, by two professional librarians. The usual methods have been used, e.g., talks to rural groups and to provincial conferences, and book displays at meetings, fairs, and conferences. Films, leaflets, newspapers, radio, and television have been helpful. The monthly letter from the Provincial Librarian to individual board members of all the libraries in the province always has a reference to regional libraries. In the fall of 1963, a workshop tour, by chartered bus, of the North Central Saskatchewan Regional Library was organized and sponsored by the Provincial Library; the response to an exploratory invitation had been so enthusiastic that participants had to be limited to two from the communities where there were active committees promoting regional libraries. At the request of the West Central Saskatchewan Regional Library Steering Committee, in May 1964, the Provincial Library started a demonstration bookmobile service in the municipalities which have so far agreed to participate in the regional library when one is established in this area. The demonstration is to last for two years.

There are five regional library committees working in Saskatchewan. One group has been working for five years in an area where the largest center has a population of 2,500 and where 117 councils have to agree before there is a population of 71,000. A typical steering committee consists of housewives, farmers, businessmen and women, teachers, and occasionally a councillor or a mayor. These sincere, hard-working volunteers usually meet every month to plan or to attend a district meeting. They have zoned the area and appointed a representative from

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each district to be responsible for promotion. Travel and personal expenses are the responsibilities of the individual. The Provincial Library maintains a mailing list and provides mimeographed materials and other publicity, books for display, clerical staff as required and, on request, the part-time assistance of an extension librarian. In two areas, about one-half of the local councils needed to form a system of 40,000 people have passed resolutions signifying that their municipalities will join the regional library when it is organized.

Future regional libraries will be organized, of course, patterned on the same basic structure as the one now in operation, but there will undoubtedly be variations to suit the particular regions. The voluntary contribution of time, effort, and money given by dozens of men and women in various parts of the province is truly remarkable and encouraging. The results of their efforts coupled with the increasing emphasis on the importance of reading are evident in the growing demands for library services.

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