Canadian Library Standards

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Library standards reflect the objectives and priorities of the nation that produces them, and change as the nation changes. Canadian standards show evidence of the shifting relationships between the federal, provincial and local governments, the leadership newly assumed by the federal government in the provision of information to citizens, the effects of urbanization, a developing consciousness of social responsibilities and, above all, the rapidly changing patterns of education.

Surveys draw attention to the importance of a tangible base for comparisons and frequently lead to the preparation or revision of standards. The first major survey of Canadian libraries was carried out at the beginning of the 1930s by a commission of three librarians: John Ridington, chairman, Mary J. L. Black and George Locke. The objective of library service was clear to them, “that in Canada there may be equal opportunities for all, an equal chance for a person to make the most and best of himself—if he wants to—by having freer access to perhaps his greatest help—books.” The three members of the commission were individualists, each of whom had built up an example of library service strongly oriented to his or her own community; yet as commissioners, they realized the need for commonly accepted standards by which to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the libraries they visited.

In 1931 Canada, with a population of less than 10.5 million, was divided into nine provinces—most of which gave little thought to library development. The commission found that: “Throughout eight of the provinces... public libraries have been abandoned by the governments to the municipalities. For city and town libraries no supervision is exercised, no standards of service set, no encouragement given.” The report of the commission strongly recommended that the public library

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be developed as part of the educational system under the supervision of the provincial government and that public library legislation be revised with standards included: "Standards of library service, in cities, towns and rural districts, should be set forth and minimum professional standards prescribed (as in the case of teachers) for librarians doing specified types of work." The commission was not satisfied with demanding that standards be developed, but itself suggested a few figures, characteristic of the depression years, and strongly recommended that larger units be established for communities that could not afford even the meager sums it had suggested.

The establishment of standards for Canada at that time was far from simple. There was neither a library association to speak for the country as a whole, nor a federal agency empowered to set standards since libraries fell into the category of education, a provincial concern. In 1941, however, the Canadian Library Council was formed, and from the beginning one of its objectives was the establishment of a national library association. The organizational conference for the Canadian Library Association (Association Canadienne des Bibliothèques) was held in Hamilton, Ontario, in June 1946. At that conference Freda Waldon, chairman of the Activities Committee of the Canadian Library Council, presented the following:

The Activities Committee would suggest that as the proposed Canadian Library Association grows in membership and experience it strive to develop: (1) Library Standards for Canada, including

(a) standards of library service for communities;
(b) standards of librarianship;
(c) standard library legislation to assist any body planning library legislation.

Other projects took priority over this recommendation, and it was not until the tenth annual conference in June 1955 that Suggested Standards of Service for Public Libraries was ready for final approval. According to a prefatory comment by the chairman of the Public Library Standards Committee, "The Committee has been guided by the ALA Post-War Standards for Public Libraries, but by no means governed by it. . . . The objective has been to set up standards which will provide good to optimum public library service to Canadians. . . . Public Library Standards are targets at which to aim, and are not binding rules and regulations."

Suggested Standards of Service for Public Libraries in Canada, typical of the mid-1950s, focused on the individual library, whether it be
the unit library in a medium-sized community or the library system of a large city. Regional libraries, however, were encouraged in statements such as, "To obtain approximately equal reading opportunity throughout the country, library book resources should be organized on a regional basis," and, "Small public libraries below the specifications for size and income proposed as minimum standard should consider carefully the definite advantages of cooperation within a larger unit."

In this framework specific numerical standards covered, for example, the desirable number of volumes per capita for various populations, the percentage of adult and juvenile borrowers, and circulation per capita. One professional librarian was recommended for every 5,000 to 7,500 population. The budget was set at $1.50 per capita for minimum service, $2.00 for reasonably good, and $2.50 for superior service.

Slight revisions were made as needed and the standards were reissued by the CLA in 1957 under the title *Standards of Service for Public Libraries in Canada*. These standards served their purpose well in the 1950s; libraries were far below the minimum and had need of a goal defined in numerical terms. In 1960 Ralph Shaw used them in a survey of metropolitan Toronto libraries and found that even Canada's second largest metropolis failed to meet all the suggested standards. However, criticism arose over the years on two sides: from libraries that considered the standards too high, and from the few libraries that surpassed them and so had no accepted goals to cite when dealing with civic and provincial bodies.

Several factors combined to encourage the preparation not of a revision but of an entirely new set of standards with emphasis on regional organization. The almost incredible activity of the Canadian Library Association, the existence of Canada's new National Library and the influence of the 1955 standards themselves had all altered the library scene; beyond this larger units of organization had been generally accepted in government and social life. Consolidation of schools and of the units of regional government had been made possible by good roads and the resulting efficient methods of transportation. At the same time critics of the public library from without and administrators from within constantly hammered at the shocking waste of revenue from needless duplication of holdings and processing, as well as the inefficiency of interlibrary loan.

Canada, with a large area and a comparatively sparse population, had long looked with interest at regional libraries. As far back as 1930 a demonstration project had been set up in the Fraser Valley of British
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Columbia, and in 1933 the Ridington report, had recommended regional organization. Separate standards for regional libraries have not been published in Canada, but the standards for such systems had been an inherent part of the public library standards in 1955 and were to be a basic tenet of the new standards that were being prepared in the latter half of the 1960s.

About the middle of the century the influence of the federal government also became a factor in library development in Canada. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics had been collecting library statistics since the beginning of the 1920s, but it was left to the libraries to heed any lessons that could be learned from them. With the establishment in 1950 of the National Bibliographic Centre, succeeded by the National Library in 1953, Canada achieved a national union catalog, a current national bibliography, and gradually a national library collection. These were accompanied more recently by organized investigation into the application of automated systems to bibliography and cataloging. The leadership of the federal government was a notable factor in the preparation of the standards of 1967 and will undoubtedly have even more impact on the next revision.

The new Public Library Standards which was compiled by a project committee of CLA, appeared in 1967. It is a statement of the requirements for total library service for the nation, in qualitative, not quantitative, terms. The basic philosophy is expressed in the heading of Section I, “Public library service should be available to every person in Canada,” and in Section IV which states that the library “should actively promote the use of its resources.” Local libraries are to provide the first level of service and are to be linked together to form a system. Cooperation is to be established between university and special libraries and the public library on a basis of mutual benefit, and between public and school libraries. Each province or territory should have a program of library service, and this should be complemented by the government of Canada within the framework of the Canadian constitution.

Stress is placed on the government and organization of the library, its financial support, the functions and duties of the public library board and the chief librarian, the employment of professional librarians and the number and qualifications of nonprofessional employees. The library’s collection (which forms a major topic) should include all types of material that are required to achieve the library’s objectives and should reflect a variety of views. In a bilingual or multilingual
country, materials must be available to meet the requirements of all the people: "Public libraries in Canada should have books and other material in both English and French. Libraries that serve multilingual communities should also include in their collections material in other relevant languages."¹⁰

Numerical standards, absent in Public Library Standards, are included to some degree in the Appendix,¹¹ published in 1969. According to the foreword, "material included in the Appendix has been designed as guidelines for librarians and library trustees in certain areas of library administration, and is not intended to be used as inflexible criteria." The Appendix serves as a manual for drawing up policy statements, organization charts, budgets, salary schedules, rules for appointments, resignations and dismissals, holidays, vacations and leaves. In addition, some quantitative standards are given for collections of 50,000 volumes and over, and salary formulas are suggested. Actual beginning salaries are not included but are to be published separately by the CLA.

Since standards are closely related to regulations for provincial grants, certain provinces have set up "yardsticks" applicable only within the province. Provision is made for this in the practical but possibly controversial statement of the Appendix: "In view of the disparity in size, density of population and economic development in Canada's ten provinces, the conclusion is that certain quantitative standards should be formulated at the provincial rather than the national level."¹² In British Columbia, a province in which there has long been strong leadership from the government and the library association, interest in standards is notable. The Library Development Commission recently published Quantitative Standards for Public Libraries,¹³ designed to supplement the qualitative criteria of the Public Library Standards, and setting forth the lowest grade of acceptable library service for small and medium-sized public libraries.

From time to time demands have arisen for standards for certain identifiable aspects of public library work, notably music, reference, and work with children and young people. Music library standards consisting mainly of recommended titles of books, periodicals, printed music and recordings were prepared in 1959 and have not been revised.¹⁴ Reference standards were compiled by a committee of the Reference Section of the CLA appointed in 1955.¹⁵ This committee encountered serious problems in the lack of a workable definition of reference and the variations of service found in libraries ranging from a
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small branch to a large central library of a metropolitan district. Although the standards as drafted were approved by the CLA in June 1957, recommendations were made for further study and redrafting. New standards have never been prepared and several factors have combined to make the task continually more difficult: the rapid spread of subject departmentalization with the consequent disappearance of the general reference department in many libraries, the development of regional systems, and most recently, especially in the field of science, computerized services. In spite of these trends, the demand for specific, even numerical, standards for reference has not disappeared in Canada, and no doubt this demand will be encouraged by the new British "Standards for Reference Services in Public Libraries" which specifies numerical standards for such things as area, shelf capacity, seating, staff and salaries.

Public libraries in Canada have long been noted for their service to children. As early as the 1930s children's librarians were organized in the Canadian Association of Children's Librarians which became a charter section of the CLA in 1946. They have not prepared special standards, but have been content to operate within the general standards set by the CLA for public libraries, guided in their special field by the Standards for Children's Services in Public Libraries, published by the ALA in 1964. The Canadian public library standards of 1955 included numerical standards for the percentage of boys' and girls' books in the total collection, for registration and for circulation. The 1967 standards gave no numerical statements, but the Appendix of 1969 included one figure: children's books should be 25 to 30 percent of the circulation book collection.

Young people, that nebulous group between children and adults, have had special treatment for many years in Canadian public libraries. In 1950 Canadian librarians responsible for young people's work formed the Young People's Section of the CLA. Although from the beginning the members were considering the preparation of standards, a committee was not set up until 1961 and even then progressed slowly. Preliminary drafts were prepared and discussed, but before a final draft had received official approval the Standards for Public Libraries had appeared. At a meeting of the Young People's Section on June 19, 1967 the following motion was carried: "Since Public Library Standards have been published, and since these Standards incorporate within them work with young people in a public library . . . that the Young People's Section of the CLA not publish a separate set of stan-
dards for work with young people, but that librarians use the Occa-
sional Paper No. 68—Standards for Work with Young People in Cana-
dian Public Libraries—and the revision of that paper as printed in the
CLA Young People’s Section Newsletter, May 1967, as guidelines, in-
spiration and philosophy of librarianship.20

The guidelines as they stand are primarily a plea for the under-
standing of a young person’s characteristics and needs and for the sym-
pathetic and informed guidance of librarians trained to deal with the
special problems and thought patterns of persons in this age group. It
is interesting to compare this Canadian attempt at standards for young
people’s work with the much more factual publication by the ALA in
1960.21 In both countries the preparation of standards for young peo-
ple’s work becomes more difficult every year with the breakdown of
earlier restrictions placed by society on the activities and reading inter-
ests of teen-agers and with the dramatic growth of secondary school li-
raries.

Canadian librarians have long been aware of the problems involved
in differentiating between the responsibilities of, on the one hand, the
children’s and young people’s departments of the public library and, on
the other hand, the school library. The standards of 1967, defined the
public library’s position in Section VIII with the statements “Public
and school libraries in any given area must plan and work together to
provide complete service for children and young people,” and “Public
library service and school library service complement one another.
Both are necessary for the educational, social and cultural development
of children and young people and one cannot be a substitute for the
other.”22 Although librarians agree that such cooperation at the com-
munity level is highly desirable, many realize that it only affords a tem-
porary solution, and that in the near future provinewe wide decisions
must be made by libraries and schools and the government depart-
ments responsible for the financing of both services.

School library service in Canada, both elementary and secondary,
has been subject to the same influences as in the United States: urbani-
ization, the consolidation of one-room schools into large units, changing
objectives and teaching methods and the growing availability of non-
book materials. Since education in Canada is the responsibility of the
provincial and local governments, the history of school libraries varies
from province to province. However, there has been one characteristic
in common: many school were, and some still are, at least partially de-
pendent on traveling libraries, usually supplied by the provincial gov-
Canadian standards for school libraries, as for other types of libraries, had to wait until there was a national organization to coordinate provincial thinking. As stated before, in 1950 the Young People's Section of the CLA was formed and school library services, along with young people's work in the public library, were included in discussions at the annual conferences. In 1961 the Canadian School Library Association was organized and in 1962 it established a committee to survey school libraries and to establish standards. Three years were spent preparing the standards presented to the 1966 conference and published the following year with the title *Standards of Library Service for Canadian Schools*. The introduction defines the purpose as follows: "This publication outlines the basic requirements of good library service in the form of qualitative and quantitative standards. It is intended to provide guidelines for administrators, teachers and librarians in the establishment and operation of good school libraries. It is not designed to be a handbook or manual. Rather it points out the necessary requirements for good, but not superior, library service in the individual school, the district and the province."

A school library, in the words of the standards is "a co-ordination of informational and enrichment services for a specific community (i.e. staff and students), utilizing organized material in all forms through the direction and guidance of professionally trained personnel." The qualifications given for a school librarian are a bachelor's degree from an accredited university, certification as a fully qualified teacher by the province concerned, a degree in librarianship from an accredited library school, and hopefully, some advanced courses in appropriate subjects. Although the *Standards of Library Service for Canadian Schools* recommends these qualifications, it realistically acknowledges that not all school librarians can meet them.

Little space is given in the standards to the relationship of the school library and the public library. A section on "Co-operation with other libraries and learning-resource centres" lists "Co-operation in specific areas of book selection" and "Agreement concerning student use of other libraries for school assignments" but does not suggest that the presence or absence of other tax-supported libraries in the neighborhood could affect the school library's policy on materials or services.

Although the *Standards of Library Service for Canadian Schools* regards the library as the informational resource center, supplying not
only books and periodicals but all types of media, it makes no attempt to set specific standards for the other media. In 1969 Media Canada: Guidelines for Educators was published. According to the preface "This work represents a first attempt to set down national guidelines and specifications for Canada in the very complex field of educational media." It includes both elementary and secondary schools, and covers personnel, equipment and floor plans, with emphasis on educational television. No attempt is made to relate the media center with the school library. However, although Standards of Library Service for Canadian Schools and Media Canada are both comparatively recent, a new edition of standards is in preparation jointly by the two associations, and will set up standards for a school resource center to include all types of learning materials.

When the Commission of Enquiry, under John Ridington, looked at Canadian universities in 1933, it found twenty-three varying in size from Toronto with 11,600 students to three with less than 100, and commented "Some of them—unfortunately, not many—are obviously operated on the principle that the library is the core and heart of the university." On the other hand, "A few are even content to give lectures, to hold examinations, and grant degrees without exposing their students to any risk of contact with books, outside the texts prescribed for the course taken." In the face of such variety the commission did not even suggest that university library standards be prepared.

In a 1960-61 report by the CLA on The Present State of Library Service in Canada recommendations were made by provincial library associations that the "Standards for College Libraries" and "Standards for Junior College Libraries," both formulated by the ACRL, be disseminated for use in Canada and also that the CLA undertake the establishment of standards for academic libraries. In 1962 the need for standards for the larger libraries was emphasized by the Williams report, Resources of Canadian University Libraries for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences, prepared for the National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges by Edwin Williams. In the absence of accepted standards Williams could only compare the university libraries with each other and with outstanding libraries in the United States.

The Guide to Canadian University Library Standards was prepared by a committee of the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries and issued in June 1965. For the purpose of setting standards, the committee accepted the definition of "university" used by
the Canadian Universities Foundation, "an institution of post-secondary education, professional training and research, which awards first and advanced degrees in two or more faculties" with the additional provision that it should have an enrollment of 1,000 or more.

Many sections of the Guide resemble a manual rather than standards, such as: duties and responsibilities of the librarian, functions of administration, line and staff relationships, communications within the library and the organization of a government document collection. Among the numerical standards included are: a minimum ratio of one professional to 300 students, a minimum book collection of 100,000 volumes to be increased to 75 volumes per full-time student, 1,000 periodicals for 1,000 students and 7,250 for 13,000 students. A comparatively long section is devoted to the keeping of statistics with instructions and definitions for the counting of books, periodicals and other materials. A final section deals with buildings and quotes some of the commonly accepted standards for number of seats, and space for office and stack areas. A section entitled "The Role of the Library in the Community" states that "The purpose of the university library is to give service to the students and faculty of the University," and goes on to discuss the extent to which service may be given to private individuals, other institutions and commercial enterprises.

The 1960s were years of unparalleled growth for Canadian universities. Several important committees and commissions reported on university development and examined the growth of graduate programs, the library resources needed to implement them and the role of the federal government. In 1965 a survey of libraries in Ontario by Francis St. John, Library Consultants, Inc., covered both college and university libraries and made some use of the Guide but criticized it for not going far enough toward cooperation: "It focuses on the individual university library but does not recognize its responsibilities in the larger cosmos. . . . We are convinced that only a truly cooperative network of libraries of all kinds in Ontario can provide economically the high type of library service which is needed." The Spinks Commission (named for its chairman, J. W. T. Spinks) went even further in its 1966 report on graduate programs in Ontario universities which recommended "That the Research Libraries of all the provincially-supported universities be designated as provincial resources and be available to faculty and qualified graduate students on the basis described in these recommendations." The unprecedented growth of university libraries in the 1960s led to
a demand for a new set of standards. In 1969 the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries appointed a committee with two teams, one from Montreal and one from Toronto. In the two years since its appointment the committee has prepared a draft report entitled "Trends for the Seventies: Guidelines for Canadian University Libraries," but at the end of 1971 the report had not yet received formal approval. (Since the above was written, the executive of the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries decided not to adopt the draft standards and a new committee is being formed—CACUL Newsletter, 4:28, Aug. 1972.) It is a substantial document, written in English and French, and differs from the earlier standards in scope and sophistication. The chairman of the committee, Daniel Reicher, reported that "since the emphasis had shifted from state-of-the-art approach to that of a theoretical model, the content of the new document would differ substantially from that of the old," and added that "standards based on existing practices could not realistically be usefully applied to future situations."

In contrast to the United States, where standards for college libraries and junior college libraries have been in existence for many years with standards for larger universities yet to be published, Canada began with standards for the large universities and only recently has undertaken standards for small universities and colleges. Two committees have been appointed by the Canadian Association of College and University Libraries, one to formulate standards for community colleges and technical institutes and the other for degree-granting colleges and smaller universities, but neither committee had completed the standards at the end of 1971.

In all libraries, but especially in academic and research institutions, the coordination of library service demands that common standards be accepted for aspects of the work once subject to the whim of the individual. Agreed standards for cataloging and classification are of vital concern to the National Library of Canada and so to the country as a whole if libraries are to take full advantage of the automation of national and international bibliographical services. In 1970 a National Conference on Cataloguing Standards was held in Ottawa, and following this the national librarian set up a task group to consider standards both for manual systems and for the exchange of information in digital form. Since the problems facing this task group are extensive and time-consuming and subject to constant change in techniques for storing, processing, and transmitting information, no final report can be expected in the near future.
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Special libraries in Canada, as might be expected, strongly resemble special libraries in the United States. As a result, the Canadian chapters of SLA and the Canadian Association of Special Libraries and Information Services Section of the CLA have not attempted to set separate standards for Canada, but have used the *Objectives and Standards for Special Libraries* compiled by SLA, or standards of special fields already available. It is generally agreed that Canadian efforts may best be expended on types of institutions in which the influences of history and government have resulted in marked differences of organization in this country, such as provincial or legislative libraries.

Provincial library standards are probably the most urgently needed in Canada and the most difficult to write because of the wide variety of functions found among these libraries. A provincial library, as well as serving as a library for the legislature of the province (and often called a legislative library), may or may not operate a library extension service, and may or may not serve as a historical research center with special collections of government publications, newspapers and even provincial archives. Services combined under the provincial library in one province are divided among a variety of agencies in another. As long as these circumstances exist the setting of standards can have little meaning unless the complex of agencies, of which the so-called legislative or provincial library may be only one part, is considered as a unit.

The necessity of provincial library standards has become acute with the growing stress placed on the province in the attempt to provide total library service for every citizen. The *Public Library Standards* issued by the CLA lists the ten responsibilities of the library service of a province, headed by the following general rule, “Each province or territory should have a programme of library service designed to supplement that provided by the public library systems within the provincial or territorial boundaries.” Although no standards have yet been set, an extensive study, *Canadian Provincial Libraries*, by John Beard, 1967, concludes with a set of recommendations that will serve as a basis for further development.

A study of Canadian library standards leads to the conclusion that standards, if successful, have a short active life; they promote the development of service that makes possible new objectives that in turn demand new standards. In Canada they have been an important factor in the growth of library collections that now justify the dream of total library service for every citizen. With the acceptance of this concept, new standards for public, school, academic and special libraries will have to be written as part of the standards for a total integrated library.
system that places the individual Canadian, not the type of institution, at the center of the plan.

References

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32. Commission to Study the Development of Graduate Programmes in Ontario Universities. *Report to the Committee on University Affairs and the Committee of Presidents of Provincialy-Assisted Universities.* Toronto, 1966, p. 84.


