



ExLibrisNews

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Our President's Report

Welcome to the last year of the Twentieth Century. Ex Libris is alive and well. Here are some thoughts on our current activities and some future plans.

The Newsletter

Members of the Executive hope that you are enjoying the *Ex Libris News*. The Newsletter Committee wants to hear from you -- what you like best and suggestions for improvements -- for, good as the News is, we want to make it better. Most important, the News wants news from you. The Committee is also keen to receive, among other things, articles (500 -- 1000 words) with reminiscences of past experiences as a librarian. Put your mind to it. No doubt you have many an interesting story to tell. Of particular interest are accounts of the "how/why I became a librarian" genre.

Membership

Our membership is relatively stable at about 150. We regret that we haven't as yet found a good way to 'advertise' ourselves. Our new members come to us by word-of-mouth and invariably say they wish they had heard about us sooner. So we are sure there are many others who would join if they only knew about us. And with a larger membership we could take on more projects and put on more get-togethers.

Cast your eye around your community. Approach friends and colleagues who might be interested -- retired or near-retirement librarians who want to maintain an active interest in the profession.

We will gladly send you application forms if you can put them to good use. Our Ottawa meeting (see below) resulted in 11 new members!

Get-Together

The 1999 Get-Together is written up elsewhere in this News. What I want to pass on to our far-flung membership is our regret that distance makes it virtually impossible for many of you to attend our annual get-togethers, which are held in the Toronto area. This is a real concern to us.

Two and one half years ago, in September 1997, we did sponsor a one-day meeting in Ottawa. We enlisted the help of one or two Ottawa members (that's all it took) for local arrangements -- finding a venue, arranging for a lunch, booking a speaker. The event was a great success. Political commentator Mike Duffy gave an inspired talk, several board members from the Toronto area attended, and non-members outnumbered members. The catchment extended all the way to Kingston with several car-loads driving to Ottawa for the day.

At our January 2000 executive meeting we decided to offer help in sponsoring similar meetings elsewhere in Canada -- why not Vancouver or Halifax or ... ? So we invite you to approach us about this. We could offer advice based on our Ottawa experience, inject some (modest) funds for a speaker or a hall rental, and provide copies of our News and membership forms. Please give this serious thought. The ball is in your court. Even a 'community' of two members could make it happen -- because that community of two would know other retired or near-retirement librarians in their area who would be interested in attending such a meeting, and some would be happy to join our association.

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How I Became A Librarian

Reflections of a Library Career

By June Munro

My introduction to library service was in 1938 when I started to work as a page in the Sault Ste. Marie Public Library. As a student at Sault Collegiate hoping to complete the fifth form (senior matriculation), a teacher who knew I was looking for work suggested I contact the public library. Fortunately part-time work was available.

My real goal was to attend university, but because of financial restraints and home responsibilities, this was not possible. The Sault was some distance from Toronto, and Normal School (teachers' college) in North Bay did not appeal to me.

The Sault library, a Carnegie building, was centrally located and attracted many citizens, including children. I enjoyed sorting and shelving books, welcomed exposure to a variety of books, newspapers and periodicals, and appreciated the assistance and encouragement of the staff.

In 1939, after graduating with a senior matriculation, I accepted a clerical position in the library and looked forward to more contact with the public and new responsibilities. Now I began to wonder about a career as a librarian. With vivid memories of the Depression and the beginning of World War II, this did not seem to be the best time to pursue further education. Evelyn Davis, the children's librarian, encouraged me to contact the University of Toronto Library School, and after taking care of some personal responsibilities, I enrolled in the 1942 Diploma course, graduating in 1943.

During the first term, the degree and diploma students attended the same basic courses, and all courses of general interest. In the second term, lectures were scheduled for degree students only.

It took some time to adjust to

Toronto, living in a boarding house on St. George Street, and studying with students from every province in Canada. Classroom seating was in alphabetical order, and I have fond memories of being between Marjorie Mews from Newfoundland and Ruth Murray from Saskatchewan. Edith Jarvi, one of our classmates, organized a reunion 40 years later. At the time, she remembered how "Miss Bassam fascinated us with the glories of incunabula, and Angus Mowat entertained us with vignettes of the Ontario public library world."

During the second term – and much to my surprise – I received a letter from Jean Smith, Chief Librarian, asking me to consider being the children's librarian on my return to the Sault. I accepted, and after graduation was fortunate to be able to spend two weeks at the Boys and Girls House. Memories of those days remain with me – the kindness and assistance of Lillian Smith, Jean Thomson, Marguerite Bagshaw and others.

I was one of three students (two women and one man) who did our practice work at the Hamilton Public Library with Chief Librarian Freda Waldon. It was a busy two weeks, and we were cautioned to restrict our social activities.

Being responsible for a busy children's department involved expanding the children's collection, story hours, puppet shows, and extending service to other areas of the city.

In 1951 my father retired from the CPR, and seeking better medical care for my mother, my family decided to move to London, Ontario. I wrote Angus Mowat telling him about the move and asking about the London Public Library. Soon a letter arrived from Dick Crouch, the Chief Librarian, offering me a position in the children's department. When I reported to Eleanor Donnelly in October, there was a warm welcome from the staff, including Laura Stewart

and Irma (Wansborough) Kadela.

Sometime later, Dr. Crouch read a letter from Angus Mowat seeking staff assistance to organize a new library in Ajax, Ontario. Now, without extra home responsibilities (my mother died in November, 1951) this project appealed to me. I moved to Ajax (called the Improvement District) in August, 1952. Munitions factories were here during the war and now the area was attracting commuters from Toronto. The Library Advisory Board had struggled to establish a library, and on December 13, 1952, Angus Mowat cut the ribbon declaring the library open in one of the wooden temporary buildings. The first borrower was John Angus Mowat. With the assistance of local volunteers and Margaret Hughes of the Ontario Public Library Service, it was possible to select, purchase and catalogue 2,500 volumes. The favourable response of local citizens was encouraging.

In June 1953, I left London to be the Children's Librarian at the Leaside Public Library under the direction of Eleanor MacAlpine. The library was an important part of the "suburb," and with a new building, it attracted both young and older citizens.

Following up on contact made at the 1947 CLA and subsequent conferences, I became interested in Young Canada's Book Week, acting as chairman from 1955-56. As part of the Week's special activities, a reception for librarians, teachers and publishers was held in the Leaside Library with Elizabeth Morton as a special guest. After the formal part of the day, she invited me to join her for dinner, and much to my surprise invited me to join the CLA staff, explaining that I would be able to work part-time and attend Carleton University. She recommended the School of Journalism.

By September of 1956 I was in Ottawa adjusting to being a student again, and a change in routine working

President's Report continued from page one

in CLA's very busy headquarters' office. Encouraged and inspired by Miss Morton, the loyal and capable staff carried out a wide variety of tasks and made great efforts to serve Canadian libraries and librarians, and to create and maintain contacts with national organizations.

Miss Morton worked long hours and many weekends, and as one of the part-time staff I assisted with a number of projects. These included the preparation and production of publications including occasional papers, section newsletters, YCBW brochures and book lists. After Joyce Sowby resigned in 1958, I continued to work as secretary of YCBW. I also acted as secretary of the Canadian Library Trustees Association and was responsible for conference exhibits.

The annual conference demanded a lot of staff time, and a mammoth undertaking was the joint CLA/ALA 1960 Montreal conference. At this time, I assisted the ALTA and ALA's Exhibits Coordinator. For the first time, CLA realized exhibits could generate much needed revenue.

The Morton Years: The CLA 1946-1971, published by the ExLibris Association, is a well deserved tribute to Elizabeth Morton, and documents her tireless efforts and major accomplishments.

I was fortunate to be able to study journalism at Carleton when Wilfrid Eggleston was the director of the school. He was a legendary radio and print journalist revered by students and colleagues alike.

After graduating with a BJ degree in 1961, I moved back to Toronto to be Supervisor, Extension Service, Provincial Library Service. Bill Roedde was the Director, and it was a time of many changes in the jurisdiction and development of public libraries, with the establishment of regional library systems and country public libraries. As editor of the

Ontario Library Review from 1961-1964, there was an opportunity to keep in touch with all Ontario libraries. The professional staff included Bea Evans, Barbara Smith and Irma McDonough Milnes, Coordinator of Children's Library Services.

Now, because of my library work experience, and graduation from a regular university course, I qualified to study for the degree of BLS at U of T, graduating in 1962. This required attending a course of lectures, and completing a 'practical project.' I chose to study the role of public library trustees. Next came part-time studies towards an MLS degree, and I was happy to receive this degree in 1972 - 29 years after the Diploma course!

I have been fortunate during my library career to work at national, provincial, regional and local levels of library service. After the Ontario Provincial Library Service, I joined the College Bibliocentre in 1970 as Book Acquisition Advisor for the newly established community colleges. Then in 1972 it was back to Ottawa to establish the National Library's first Public Relations Division. Finally, in the fall of 1973, I headed for St. Catharines to hold the post of Chief Librarian. I retired in 1982.

Editor's Note: The Ex Libris News committee would like to make How I Became A Librarian a regular feature. If you would like to contribute your story for publication in this space, please contact Editor Lori Knowles, 170 Glenvale Blvd., Toronto, ON M4G 2W3. Tel: 416-423-4085. Fax: 416-423-4884. E-mail: lknowles@interlog.com

Current Projects and New Ventures

Our not-so-new archives project is alive and well. It is 'on hold' temporarily while we await the appointment of a new Ontario archivist, with whom we hope to work. More on this, we hope, in the next News.

Another current project that is just getting off the ground is to establish a library award. Details about the form of the award, what type of library and kind of service will be eligible, and the award's frequency will all have to be worked out. We'll probably focus, appropriately, on our older population. (By the way, if you haven't already seen it, I recommend you read *Changing Faces, Changing Times*, published in a recent Newsletter of the Canadian Library Association Interest Group on Library and Information Services for Older People Vol. 12, No. 2, Fall 1999). More on this project later.

Another good idea -- someone recently suggested that we might sponsor an essay contest for library students. At the moment this is still just a glint in our eyes. If you have other suggestions, let us know.

Membership Directory

With this issue of News, you will be getting the 2000 Membership Directory. With a thought for future directories, if you have an e-mail address and/or a Fax number would you ensure that Callie Israel (our membership secretary) has this information. An e-mail or Fax to her is the easiest way. Her e-mail is fisrael@csolve.net, and her fax number is (705)549-1262. Many thanks.

Ann Schabas
President, ELA, 2000

No Enemy But Winter and Rough Weather Lambton County 1952-54

By Al Bowron

It was a stunning contrast: the lush rural landscape of Hertfordshire, England and the flat, deep-ditched, low density of Lambton County, Ontario.

My wife Margaret and I came to Lambton in 1952. After a year working in Hertfordshire, travelling in Europe and living in London, we were unprepared for the rural peace of Southwestern Ontario. From our small fist in Golders Green, England, I commuted to Bushey Heath while Margaret traveled to Leicester Square where she worked in a commercial art gallery.

Our first abode in Lambton was a converted firehall in the oil capital of Petrolia. It consisted of one room with a bed against big doors and a bell tower. We were expected to toll the bell on New Year's Eve. The County Cooperative Library serves a collection of small villages, crossroads, one-room schools and towns like Oil Springs and Oil City, which are surrounded by small rigs pulling oil out of the earth.

The library headquarters was in the village of Wyoming just south of Highway 7, 20 kilometres east of Sarnia and the 'Chemical Valley.' It was a small cement block structure housing the office, the book stock and the bookmobile - all you need to provide a rural service that was needed and greatly appreciated. My capable predecessors in the position had been Mike Donovan and Stan Beacock. I had two assistants, one of whom was a strapping farm girl who easily carried the heavy trays of books into the schools and libraries.

Operating the library service became rather routine: 125 schoolrooms were visited every two months and 25 libraries received good individual service. On one occasion an exhibit of reproductions of paintings by Rembrandt, borrowed from the National Gallery, was transported in the bookmobile to several rather reluctant libraries

and hung in some very awkward places. The administration of the service may have been uneventful, but over the two years I spent on the job, an excess of excitement was supplied by the weather.

First Came The Sarnia Tornado

After my weekly radio program had been recorded at the local radio station, I went to the Sarnia Public Library to chat with Dorothy Carlisle. The office window was open to what breeze there was on this very humid, still day. Suddenly all the papers on the desk blew around the room and a large tree came down in the library park. A tornado had struck, cutting a neat but destructive swath through the city about 200 metres wide, just missing the library.

One block away, waiting in a dentist's office, Margaret was showered with flying debris, soaked and shaken but unhurt. The next building on the street was reduced to kindling. Our little Anglia, which we were driving at the time, came to rest on the lawn of the telephone building, upside down and a complete wreck. The radio station on badly mutilated Water Street was off the air. We drove to the transmitter outside the city, got the station back in operation and Margaret was the first person to be interviewed about the great Sarnia tornado. Within weeks we were compensated for the loss of our car from the Toronto Relief Fund. We bought the four-door version of the Anglia - a Prefect.

Next, The Icy Sideroads

The 'Ladies of the Moose' were awaiting my arrival in the village of Camlachie. I was to speak to them about the library service. I never got there. It was late winter and the roads were icy with frozen rain, a condition often encountered in Lambton at that time of the year. The bookmobile drifted oh-so-slowly off the sideroad into a deep

drainage ditch. It fell on its side and all my location record cards and bookstock dumped into the water that came through the rear doors. I climbed onto the side of the vehicle, level with the top of the ditch in time to greet Dan Higley, the local provincial policeman. He helped me arrange for a tow truck and then drove me home. I'm sure the Ladies of the Moose were disappointed.

Finally, Highway 7

Again freezing rain was making visibility difficult through the windshield of the Prefect as I drove slowly toward Sarnia. When the wipers stopped working I had to roll down the window and put my head out to see my way. I was hit from behind by a car going too fast. I was knocked out, tossed into the back seat and the vehicle caught fire. Again, my hero, Dan Higley, came by and got me out with only a scorched coat. The other driver seemed to be paralyzed. Margaret, waiting at a pre-arranged spot and time, finally checked the hospital where Dan had taken me, suffering from a mild concussion and a loss of memory that lasted several days.

It was about this time that Angus Mowat informed me of a vacancy in the Galt Public Library. I decided to apply for it.

The Birth of a Librarian

By Jean Weihs

This article was originally written for Technicalities, an American technical services journal. This is why the last part of the article deals with reasons for choosing technical services rather than other aspects of librarianship. The article has been "Canadianized," e.g., Canadian spelling and omitting the fact that Montreal is in Quebec. I wish to express my thanks to the several Ex Libris members who contributed their stories to this survey.

I want to emphasize at the start of this article that the following is not a properly conducted survey. The idea came to me after a meeting of the library and information technician program's advisory committee at a local college. The director of the program told the committee that there were very many more jobs for library technicians than there were graduates to fill them. The situation had not changed since I was the director of this program. During my seventeen years as director (1969-1986), there was an average of four and one-half jobs advertised at the college for every graduate. The continuing problem since the program began has been attracting students. Library and information technicians programs in several Ontario colleges have closed in recent years in large part due to low enrollments.

What factors attract people to librarianship? I asked 62 librarians why they made this choice. (Eight of the respondents were male - probably close to the male/female ratio in librarianship.) Then I asked those who had worked, or are working, in technical services why they made the decision to work in this aspect of the profession. Although the library and information technician program's recruitment problem was the spark that started this inquiry, I limited this survey to librarians because librarians made a much greater commitment in terms of time and money to obtain a graduate degree

than did library technicians for a two-year diploma. Librarians' reasons for making a career choice should, therefore, have been more thoughtful.

Few people had a single answer to my questions. In most cases, a combination of factors came together to influence the final choice of profession. Each of these factors was counted in the figures listed here.

INFLUENCED BY A LIBRARIAN: 26

This category could be broken into two parts: people that had a relative or friend who was a librarian (15), and those who were influenced by the librarian in their local school, university, or public library (11). Respondents mentioned that they found librarians to be interesting people, that they admired a particular librarian, and that librarians were "nice people." One person mentioned that she went to library school because some friends were going and she did not know what else to do.

A soldier, wounded in World War II, was recovering in an Italian hospital. During the weeks of convalescence, a librarian in the next bed convinced him that librarianship could be an interesting and rewarding profession for men as well as for women.

PREVIOUS WORK IN LIBRARIES: 20

Almost one-third of respondents credited work as pages in public libraries, student assistants in university libraries, or clerks (after their undergraduate years) in all types of libraries as the impetus that led them to librarianship. They were comfortable about making this career choice because they felt they understood and would like the work.

CHANGE OF CAREER WANTED: 12

Twelve people did not wish to continue the kind of work they had been doing since graduating from university. One person changed his career after a bout with tuberculosis. A lawyer found her successful practice was in conflict

with her role as a mother. A writer discovered that she liked the research she had to do to prepare magazine articles, but found the writing of the articles stressful. A man experienced stressful relationships in the high-powered business world and sought a more congenial workplace. A woman in the 1960s realized that men were being paid more for the job she was doing and that prospects for women in the business world were dim.

PROCESS OF ELIMINATION: 11

Women in prefeminist days had few socially approved options for a career. Eleven people arrived at librarianship by the process of elimination. They did not want to be teachers, social workers, nurses, or secretaries, and so chose librarianship as the remaining option (in their perception) open to a respectable woman. (At one point, I voiced vague thoughts about being an archeologist. My parents were horrified - I would be travelling with men, none of whom would be married to me!)

LOVE OF READING: 11

Readers' advisory services were an important part of many public library job descriptions some (many?) years ago, and this aspect of the profession appealed to ten people. Is there a faculty of library and information studies that still has a course on this topic? Are there young readers today that claim a love of reading as a reason for a career in librarianship?

One person enjoyed her work in a bookstore and eventually became a librarian

MATCHED INTERESTS AND ABILITIES: 10

These people took a disciplined approach to the choice of a career. Three people cited high school aptitude tests for choosing librarianship. Others examined their interests and abilities by themselves and concluded that librarianship most closely matched

these abilities. They particularly wanted to make use of the knowledge and interests they had acquired as students. They had enjoyed researching information in libraries, and could see that they could function in their specific fields as librarians.

One woman was discouraged from pursuing a Ph.D. in English literature because her professor said that a woman would marry and have babies making her unsuitable for academic life. She saw librarianship as the closest alternative.

Always wanted to be a librarian: 4

There were four of us who wanted to be librarians from an early age. I say "us" because I was one of them. From the ages of seven to sixteen, I lived in Montreal when there were almost no public libraries. Nearby was a small store that rented books and where I spent my allowance. In the summers, I visited my grandmother in Ontario. Her town had a library and the books could be borrowed for no payment! I thought it would be wonderful to be a librarian. This was later reinforced when the school librarian chose me to help her in the school library. A black librarian, who grew up in the Deep South, recalled her wonder when a bookmobile appeared in her poor neighbourhood. To her amazement a white librarian invited her to look around and told her that she could borrow the books. It was the first time she had ever received anything free and, in addition, it was offered with smiles. After she had made a few more visits to the bookmobile and received the same warm welcome, she knew that she would strive to become a librarian.

Misconceptions: 3

Three people reported either humourously or sardonically that they chose librarianship because of misconceptions about the profession. One person believed that she would be able to read much of the day. Another woman thought that it looked like a "cushy" job, no stress or hard work, congenial co-workers. One man overheard the chief librarian of a large pub-

lic library system tell his father, a full professor, that his salary exceeded the professor's remuneration, and decided on librarianship because of the large salaries.

Other reasons

Three people had worked in retail sales part-time jobs during their teenage years and wanted a career where they could work with people. Three sought a career where they could use their minds creatively to solve problems and find interesting information. Two were influenced by the articles they read about librarianship. One person stated that she liked to travel and a library degree was recognized in other countries without additional study. One woman, who could not afford the books necessary to prepare for an English exam in Hong Kong, was able to borrow the books from the public library and thought the public library a wonderful place (she has spent her library career in public library work). Another woman's father remarried and she applied to a library school in another city to escape the house.

One person stated that she had no idea what she would do after her graduation present trip to Europe. While on the boat at the start of the trip, a stranger talked about her career choices, one of which was librarianship. Although the stranger had decided not to pursue this career, the future librarian thought it sounded interesting. She wrote to her mother asking her to look into the profession. Her mother, concerned about her daughter's lack of direction, quickly enrolled her in a library school, and the woman cut short her European tour just before the first day of classes.

Two people mentioned that they were not readers. The husband of one woman, a young mathematics teacher, was killed in the final days of World War II. In order to deal with her grief, she decided to do something entirely different as far away as possible. She chose California, a long way from Toronto in the days before jet airplane travel. The only program in California that would accept a last minute appli-

cant was librarianship. She became an effective library administrator, but never a reader.

School librarians

There were no common reasons why respondents changed from classroom teachers into school librarians. One person worried about job security and felt that he needed an additional qualification. Another did not want to teach the grade assigned and moved into the school library vacancy. One woman had taken the school library option during her teacher training, and years later, when she returned to Canada after many years abroad, found the only job available was in a school library. One person switched because the library looked like more fun than teaching in a classroom.

An elementary school teacher was concerned that students found reading tedious, that children did not know what to read, and that the teachers in her school did not know what books to suggest. She believed that the library should be the heart of the school and decided to try to be that heart by becoming a school librarian.

Most of these school librarians eventually obtained graduate degrees in library and information science.

TECHNICAL SERVICES

Twenty-one of the 62 respondents worked, or are working, in technical services. This does not include librarians in small public or special libraries who undertake all, or almost all, professional work. The fact that they catalogue as part of the general operation of the library does not constitute a career choice for technical services.

Intellectual stimulation: 9

Nine people found cataloguing to be the most intellectually challenging part of their library school education. Cataloguing was an enjoyable puzzle and "aboutness" an appealing concept. Two of these librarians had to accept jobs in reference work while waiting for a position in technical services to become vacant. Despite a wait of three years for one and six years for the other, both librarians were not swayed

from their original choice. A third person switched from public services because she did not find it satisfying – she never felt entirely certain that the information she was giving a patron was complete.

Regular hours: 6

Six people admitted to regular hours as the main reason for seeking a job in technical services. All had children and most were single mothers. My story is typical. During my librarianship education, I declared that I would NEVER catalogue. But when I was widowed with a preschool child, I realized that cataloguing was the best solution to the necessity of earning a living. And I discovered that cataloguing could be fascinating. One single mother, who rose through many positions to be the CEO of a large public library, stated that Coordinator of Acquisitions was "the most enjoyable job I ever had."

Limited choices: 7

Three people did not make a choice or search for a particular type of work because they were offered jobs in technical services on graduation. Three others found that the only jobs available were in technical services. One person was transferred to cataloguing "temporarily" when the cataloger left and remained "forever."

Upward mobility: 4

Four librarians saw technical services work as the most likely route to an administrative job and, possibly, to the top job. One administrator expressed the value of this work:

"The T.S. experience has been extremely useful. It provided balance to what might have been a career centered in the public service. When we moved into the period of library automation, it was always beneficial to know first hand about the processes you are attempting to improve and what the end results must be." 2

Another administrator felt that people undervalue technical services until they can see the public ramifications of

the work, such as more titles on the shelves more rapidly and the ability to search more effectively in an OPAC.

Other reasons

Professors, who taught technical services courses, influenced three students ("wonderful teacher"). Three librarians found great satisfaction in using their organizing skills "to create order out of chaos." One liked the ability to plan her day, an ability much less possible in public services. One person admitted that she chose cataloguing because she did not like working with the public.

A fine profession

Only two people expressed regret or dissatisfaction with their career choice. Despite the sometimes haphazard reasons for entering the profession, most respondents had a positive view of their careers in libraries and many were very enthusiastic. For many it was, and is, professionally rewarding, intellectually stimulating, and/or fun. In how many other professions would 97% of such a sampling of 62 of its practitioners find the same joy in their work?

REFERENCES

1. I telephoned, e-mailed or faxed 65 people. Two did not answer my message and one person could not remember her reasons.
2. I promised that people would not be identified in this article so that they would feel free to give the "real" reasons.

Advertisements

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space available and assignable throughout *News* except for front page



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column/ 1/6 page



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deadlines: spring issue
March 15/fall issue
September 1

How I Became a Librarian

By Pearce J. Penney

Growing up on the Northern Peninsula in Newfoundland, one did not encounter many librarians. So the chances of being influenced by one was somewhat remote, to say the least. However, the seeds may have been sown through the use of the library books received at the school from the Regional Library Services in St. John's. Those books arrived in small gray boxes in the fall of the year – we referred to the boxes as the "little Gray coffins" – and remained in the school until spring, when they were sent back in exchange for more the next fall.

It so happened that the person responsible for overseeing the library service to schools was Jessie Miffen, and during one of her visits on the Northern Peninsula she spent a night at my home, not by design but out of necessity. The boat that was transporting her to each of the communities developed engine trouble just outside my hometown. It was towed into the community where it stayed overnight while repairs were carried out. As was the case always, visitors were accommodated at our home. So my first introduction to a professional librarian would turn out to be the person I succeeded when I was appointed Provincial Director for Public Library services in Newfoundland – but I am a little ahead of myself.

Having completed high school and teacher training at summer school, I embarked on a teaching career, which was a traditional career path in those days. After teaching three years in one-room schools with all grades, I knew that this was not the career I wanted to follow. During the last year of teaching I became a candidate for the ministry of the United Church of Canada. After a couple of years as a student, it was off to university, where I spent the next six years preparing myself for the ministry. Following graduation and ordination, I came back to Newfoundland and served in two Pastoral Charges. It was while

serving in the second one that I would find myself considering the third career of my life.

In 1961, Memorial University of Newfoundland moved to its new campus on Elizabeth Avenue in St. John's. Expansion and growth were the key components for the next number of years. In order for Memorial to support its programs, it was imperative that the library resources, both materials and staff, be increased. One thing the library was lacking in was professional librarians. So the university undertook a recruitment program, supported by a bursary, available to any Newfoundlander with the prerequisite qualifications.

The successful applicant would receive the bursary and upon completion of the library degree would return to work at the library for two years. After that you were free to accept a position anywhere you wished.

The same time all this was taking place, I was serving the congregation of St. James U.C., just a stone's throw from the university. In 1967 I was feeling the need for a career change and saw this as an opportunity to branch out into the field of librarianship and become a part of a growing university community. However, it was not going to be an easy decision because the financial requirements far exceeded the bursary. There was also the reaction of the congregation, and what if I didn't make it through university? My family would have to stay behind – my wife and four children – and we would have to find a place for them to live. Since the church provided accommodations, we had no reason to have a place of our own.

The first step was to check with the university librarian as to the detailed procedures. I wanted to be sure that there was an opening should I be successful. The university librarian was very encouraging and suggested I make application to one or more library schools right away. When I asked him about the bursary, he said that I would have to see the Vice President of the

university.

So off I go to meet with the VP, who was a staunch churchman and very concerned with the relationship of the university to the community. I outlined my plans and the reasons for it and asked him what my chances were of receiving the bursary. There was a long pause and I suspected he was wondering how people outside the university would view the decision if he were to say yes. Then he said: "But what will the head of the United Church Conference say if we accept you? The university will take the blame for yet another minister leaving the church to work here. I will have to think about it and get back to you."

Well, to say the least, I was somewhat floored by this response. So my reaction to him was: "I really am not concerned about what the people at the church conference office might think of my decision. This is what I have decided to do, and whether the university grants the bursary or not, I intend to proceed with the plan." With that I left the office.

I reported back to the university librarian on the outcome of the meeting. He assured me that in all probability I would be granted the bursary and I should begin sending out applications to the library school. Most schools could be filled already, since it was late June or early July. Three schools were selected, two in Canada and one in the United States. The two schools in Canada, U of T and UBC, replied that it was too late for that year since they had received their full complement. There was one left to hear from, and I had still not heard from the VP as to whether approval was granted for the bursary. My hopes began to fade and I felt it might be necessary to put it on the back burner for another year.

I went on vacation for two weeks – this brought me into August. Upon my return, I checked the mail and there it was: Syracuse University had accepted my application for library school. I was to be at the university the first week in September. My next contact was the

university librarian to see what had happened with the bursary request – it had been approved and I was to visit the library and sign the necessary documents. What a relief that the waiting was over. However, there was just one month to attend to a mountain of decisions resulting from my decision. By the end of the first week in September, everything was taken care of and, with my family settled into an apartment, I headed off for Syracuse and a brand new career – the third over a span of 20 years.

That was 1967 and in the fall of '68 I graduated with a Masters in Library Science and returned to Memorial University to work in the library as a cataloguer. Mission accomplished. I worked at Memorial University from 1968-71, the University of Guelph from 1971-72. In the summer of 1972 I accepted the appointment of Provincial Director for Public Library Services in the province of Newfoundland, a position I held until my retirement in 1993.

So there you have it, the saga of Pearce J. Penney, often referred to as Ms. Penney Pearce!

Editor's Note: Pearce Penney is a Past President of the Canadian Library Association.

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From A Barn and a Lab to A Library: An Immigrant's Story, Part II

By Marie Zielinska

Only an immigrant can fully understand the sweetness of the first success in a new country. No wonder that having finished my studies I decided that I deserved a few weeks of vacation to recuperate from the physical and mental stress of a student's life. This was a big mistake. I did not realize that students are job hunting well before obtaining their diplomas. When I woke up from my euphoria of having a degree from a Canadian university, I realized with horror that all interesting jobs had been taken. My choices were limited.

In the midst of this distressing situation, one of my colleagues told me about an opening at the library of Dr. Selye's *Institute de Médecine Expérimentale*, affiliated with the University of Montreal. It seemed like a godsend – a prestigious position (Chief Librarian) at a renowned scientific institution. I had no idea I was stepping into the most unusual and traumatic work experience of my life.

Dr. Hans Selye was born in Vienna and in 1932 he joined the staff at McGill University. In 1945 he became the first director of the *Institute de Médecine Expérimentale*. He devoted his entire life to the development of a theory of biological stress.

The Institute's library carried millions of items, mostly reprints, each fully catalogued. A recent fire had destroyed a good part of the collection and the rebuilding was in full swing. I launched myself into my new duties with great enthusiasm, hoping to be able to apply all principles I had just learned in Library School. Only later did I realize the staff was hoping that I would bring some organization to their work and protect them from Dr. Selye's tantrums.

Most of the subject specialists

employed in the cataloguing section were elderly immigrants, well educated, many with Ph.D's in chemistry, physics or biology. They worked for salaries well below their qualifications, happy to earn a modest living. It was an intellectual sweatshop! The discipline was worse than in a factory. The work hours were regulated by the sound of a clock. If someone was late more than three minutes he or she was obliged to provide a valid explanation to the boss himself. Dr. Selye installed intercom connections in all rooms and listened to what people were doing and talking about.

The most un-nerving aspect of my job was my pre-lunchbreak duty. Dr. Selye loved to take a mid-day sunbath, stretching naked (as I was told) on a wide exterior window sill. His favourite window for this acrobatic routine was in my office on the eighth floor! To avoid falling off the sill, he would put on a leather contraption similar to those used by window cleaners. One of my duties was to check every day at lunch that all straps and buckles were in order to ensure his safety. I had to leave the library after that was done, and spend the rest of my lunch praying that I didn't become an involuntary murderer. I always looked forward to rainy days!

Meanwhile, the rebuilding of the library was progressing successfully and after my three-month trial was over, Dr. Selye showered me with praises for my workplan. One can imagine how thrilled I was receiving congratulations... but little did I know my end was near.

It started in a rather innocent way. A young woman in charge of reorganizing the collection of periodicals told me she was leaving in two weeks to get married. Before I could discuss it with Dr. Selye, the news reached him through the grapevine. She was one of his favourite employees and he was

upset by her leaving. He went into her office, created a scene, then asked her to leave immediately. She came crying to me and I went to him explaining that personnel was my responsibility. I also used the opportunity to discuss my working responsibilities and salary.

His reaction can only be compared to the eruption of a volcano. I was told he had no money to pay a professional librarian. Then he sent me home. I was given two weeks' severance. Needless to say, I was completely shattered, but packed my belongings and said goodbye to the staff. I arrived home to a bouquet of roses with best wishes from my former colleagues.

After my departure the library was taken over by an older, charming gentleman – an ex-colonel of the Polish army – whom I had selected as my assistant. When I met with him several months later I asked him how he was managing. "My relations with Dr. Selye are quite friendly," he said. "Afterall, I was in the army in charge of a penal detachment and learned to deal with difficult people!"

As for me, within a few weeks I had a new job with the university's main library, where I spent 10 happy years working my way up through the ranks from circulation clerk to head of periodical publications for all university libraries.

Marie Zielinska's stories have appeared in earlier editions of Ex Libris News.

Ex Libris Association Annual Get-Together 1999

PROGRAM REPORT

By Nancy Hall

(With the assistance of notes provided by M.R. Schantz; J. Wellheiser; K. Smartz.)

The Annual Get-Together of the Ex Libris Association took place on Monday November 1, 1999 at the North York Central Library in Toronto. The program - Our Library Heritage for the New Millennium - focused on the importance and use of archival material.

The morning began with a panel discussion moderated by Scott James, Archivist of the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto and former Director of the Toronto City Archives. Scott introduced the panel members and explained they would be dealing with two issues affecting the collection and management of records:

1. The recent amalgamation of the seven municipalities of the former Metropolitan Toronto (now the new City of Toronto) and its impact on archival record keeping, specifically the documentation of public library service.

2. The impact of technology and the digitization of records.

Mary Rae Schantz, Special Collections Librarian, Toronto Reference Library, addressed the first concern. On January 1, 1998, the seven public library systems in the former municipality of Metropolitan Toronto came together as the new Toronto Public Library - an organization of 96 branch libraries and two research facilities. As one of the five largest public library systems in North America, the merger represents a combined total of 439 years of public library experience, history and tradition.

Our speaker's background summary was an awesome portrait of a daunting task. An official archives program existed only in the former Toronto Public Library, and that was supported for a brief 12 years. In 1967, all the

papers of the Mechanics Institute and many of those of the Toronto Public Library were transferred to the newly formed Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library. Although the latter did not have a formal archives program, it maintained an unofficial but reasonably efficient documentation of its corporate history.

As Mary explained, the collection and retention of records became even more complex with the amalgamation of 1998 when five library jurisdictions were added to the picture. Most were formed from independent library associations that were in time subsumed by larger entities which developed their own often informal policies with respect to record retention.

The task of unearthing the many disparate and often incomplete records presented an immediate first challenge. The second emerged from the complexity of an amalgamation process that created numerous organizational and service delivery issues. Where, for example, does archival integrity fit in a list of competing and pressing priorities?

After much deliberation, visioning and consultation, a staff planning team produced a mission statement and a list of core values to guide the new Toronto Public Library into the next millennium. Although the need to preserve the documentation of the community's cultural heritage, including the official record of public library service, is not specifically addressed, a sub-committee has recommended a corporate archive be established. For the present, when time permits, material is collected and described. In the absence of a strong archival tradition and because the provenance of much of the material has been disrupted, items of historical importance are included. As Mary explained, the end result will be a "hybrid" consisting of a collection and an archival resource.

Other on-going challenges include

the question of diminishing space, the impact of technology, and funding constraints. These issues will be addressed by actively demonstrating the relevancy of the service; by the digitization project which will raise the profile of both the archives and the library; by the continued pursuit of partnership agreements (Virtual Reference Library); and by flexible staff and creative solutions to a reduced staffing component.

The second speaker was Johanna Wellheiser, Preservation and Digitization Specialist, Toronto Reference Library. Johanna addressed the second concern - the impact of technology and the digitization of records. Acknowledging the importance of the offsite user, this project provides electronic access to selected categories of frequently used reference material. The result is VRL - the Virtual Reference Library.

This project began with the formation of a cross-organizational team to recommend collections and technical options for digitization. As guiding principles, it was determined the selected collections would be Canadian, unique to the library and of historic, artistic or research value. User demand, state of deterioration, uniformity of size and type, the availability of electronic finding aids, copyright expiration and the potential for attracting new users were considered. After extensive deliberation and consultation, the decision was made to provide electronic in-house and offsite access to the following: York, Upper Canada, Minutes of Town Meetings and Lists of Inhabitants, 1797-1823; York Directory, 1833-34; and Toronto Directories up to and including 1900.

The issues, as summarized by Johanna, were many and complex. These included selection criteria and the time consuming task of collection preparation; the level of bibliographic description and the implications of full text indexing; the selection and testing of

hardware and software; long term storage and service delivery, including the management/maintenance of the site as it grows; the impact on service and use of collections; and a plan for project management which takes into account effective communication, a steep learning curve, task integration and quality control.

To date, the bibliographic description of 100 years of Toronto history with full text searching for all entries has been achieved. In retrospect, Johanna indicated projections in terms of time and resources have been difficult and the impact on other library operations not always predictable. Staff and user training will require ongoing modification.

The afternoon speaker was Karolyn Smartz, a Public Heritage Consultant, whose Ph.D. research is in the area of the fugitive slave movement into Upper Canada. Speaking as a user of archival material, her presentation was particularly interesting because her research has included an archaeological dig in a Toronto schoolyard.

One of John Simcoe's first acts as Governor of Upper Canada was a bill intended to end slavery in the territory west of Montreal, and the British colony soon became a haven for those seeking freedom. At the time of the Fugitive Slave Act in the United States (1850), Toronto had a black population of close to 1000, most of whom were freed blacks and fugitive slaves.

Karolyn described their flight as a hazardous undertaking characterized by frequent and covert movement. Most were illiterate. Names were kept secret and frequently changed. Personal data, when available, is often held by families and not in the public domain. The availability of source material is therefore limited. With respect to secondary material, there are few books dealing with Canadian black history.

Karolyn's investigation has focused on Thornton and Lucie Blackburn - fugitive slaves who travelled a circuitous route from Louisville Kentucky to arrive in Toronto in 1834. Assisted by a provincial grant to establish an

Archaeological Resource Center for the Toronto Board of Education, she began searching for an archaeological site that would uncover aspects of Toronto's immigrant heritage. The selected site was the schoolyard of the present Sackville Public School.

The school was built in 1887 to serve an influx of Irish immigrants. Available land was scarce and the school board of the day decided to expropriate the double lot owned by the Blackburns. By this time, however, Thornton and Lucie were elderly and respected members of the community. The decision was made to spare their home and the school was built behind the house. Shortly after Thornton's death in 1890, Lucie sold the house and barn to the Board of Education and they were subsequently demolished to provide additional playground space.

The "dig", with additional assistance from the Ontario Black History Society, took four months and included the participation of hundreds of volunteers and thousands of schoolchildren - as Karolyn indicated, an appropriate project for those who were themselves the sons and daughters of immigrants. The Blackburns lived in their house for 54 years and, as the excavation progressed, many household items were uncovered.

Karolyn's research has been ongoing for more than 13 years and is an excellent illustration of a merging of disciplines. For example, the archaeological evidence is supported by the City Directory of 1850 which lists Thornton as "cabman, coloured". His small frame house and story-and-a-half barn are described in Tax Assessment Rolls. Shortly before his death he was interviewed for a newspaper article by John Ross Robertson where his house is again described. We discover he was for a time a waiter at Osgood Hall and his taxicab (the first in Toronto) was built from the pattern of a Montreal cab. The Blackburns gave money for the building of a local Anglican church. From Canadian and US State Archives, we learn about his life as a slave, his marriage to Lucie and their hazardous escape, including capture and imprison-

ment in Detroit where attempts to gain their freedom provoked the "Blackburn Riots" of 1833. The subject of two extradition requests, the Blackburns were finally freed to begin a new life in Canada.

Thornton died in 1890; Lucie in 1895. Both have been designated "Persons of National Historical Significance" by the National Sites and Monuments Board. It's Karolyn's opinion that their real monument can be found in the several curriculum packages based on the Blackburn story, produced by the Toronto Board of Education.

In conclusion, the 1999 Get-Together offered a fascinating medley of the "old favorites" of librarianship - the effort to collect and preserve, the harnessing of technology to enhance accessibility, and a stimulating "user report". In other words, a lively, optimistic and still timely tune. Thanks to Ann Schabas for arranging the program.

In Memoriam Essays

Dr. W. Kaye Lamb 1904-1999

Dr. W. Kaye Lamb passed away on August 24, 1999 at the age of 95. His was an extraordinary career in libraries, archives and most importantly, in the service of Canada. A simple listing of the positions he held hints at something of his influence and capabilities:

- Provincial Archivist and Librarian of British Columbia, 1934-40
- University Librarian, University of British Columbia, 1940-48
- Dominion Archivist of Canada, 1948-1968
- Founding National Librarian of Canada 1953-67

William Kaye Lamb was born on May 11, 1904, in New Westminster, BC, and attended the University of British Columbia where he earned a BA and an MA. In 1928-29 he studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and in 1933 obtained his PhD from the London School of Economics. He returned to BC and at 30 was appointed provincial librarian and archivist. In 1937 he founded the British Columbia Historical Quarterly.

Over the years, he served as President and a very active member of The Canadian Historical Association, the Canadian Library Association, the Society of American Archivists, the British Society of Archivists, and the Royal Society of Canada. In the midst of all this intense activity, he took a lively and continuing interest in the Champlain Society, serving as President for 11 years (1953-64) and as Honorary President for many years since.

Dr. Lamb earned many honours in the course of his career, being named as an Officer of the Order of Canada, recipient of the Tyrell Medal of the Royal Society, and with honorary degrees from 10 universities. The Association of Canadian Archivists paid unique tribute to him by dedicating one key issue of their journal, *ARCHIVARIA*, as a *Festschrift* in his honour and establishing

an annual W. Kaye Lamb Prize recognizing the best article published in subsequent years.

Dr. Lamb's minister for many years, colleague and friend, the Honourable J.W. Pickersgill summarized just part of Dr. Lamb's dedication in writing: "It is not an exaggeration to say that no other country in our day had a greater archivist."

Indeed, all of us involved in the study of Canada have lost an eloquent voice and a great friend.

Compiled with notes from The Champlain Society and the Globe & Mail.

James William Pilton 1921-1999

Those who knew Jim Pilton will be saddened to read of his death on September 28, 1999 in Vancouver, British Columbia. He had retired there after serving as the Associate Director of Central Services in the Edmonton Public Library (EPL).

Jim was born in Hamilton, Ontario, and although he was small in physical stature, he had a commanding voice and infectious laughter. Like so many young men coming of age at the end of the 1930s, there were few opportunities to advance one's economic status other than joining the nation's military. There one could enhance their skills and education, and Jim Pilton took advantage of this opportunity.

Trained in Gander, Newfoundland to work on extremely secret radar equipment, Jim was shipped overseas and assigned to a British military airfield. He often spoke of his visits to London during the worst period of the German blitz. He was later transferred to Canadian forces.

Back in Canada, Jim earned a BA and MA in history from the University of British Columbia. His master's thesis was called *Negro Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1871* (247 leaves) – quite a unique topic for a Canadian student! This period was followed by two years at the University of Paris where he studied history and French – which he read and spoke fluently.

Jim worked in the UBC library system during his years as a graduate student and attended the University of Toronto for a BLS, which was granted in 1953. His praise of the faculty was endless, as was his admiration and respect for the first president of the CLA, Elizabeth Morton. Having come from the States, my early knowledge of the Canadian library world came from the many stories he related to me. Before coming to the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) in 1959, Jim served in Ottawa as librarian for the Department of External Affairs.

Jim brought a high level of enthusiasm and competence to problems and projects during his period with the EPL. At the time, the EPL was quite isolated from the Canadian library world – few librarians came to Prairie cities to enjoy long, cold winters, and other than the library school in Toronto, schools were yet to be established at UBC and the University of Alberta. To meet EPL's need for a quality staff, Jim worked with his librarians and his Co-Associate Director, Aleta (Viske) Sherriff (branch libraries), on an in-house training program for library associates – employees with university degrees who showed potential.

Another Pilton accomplishment was the re-cataloguing of an entire library's collection just in time for its records to be incorporated into the computerized record being established at the National Library.

Jim's last research project, *Radar and the Canadian Connection in World War II*, 2nd. ed., was 241 leaves, six leaves shorter than his master's thesis. Aleta Sherriff and I will miss our Christmas letters from Vancouver.

Author Morton Coburn is the Former Director of the Edmonton Public Library.

Rose Vainstein 1920-1999

An excerpt from an obituary written by Ronald Hagler, a colleague of Ms. Vainstein's at UBC's School of Librarianship and sent to us courtesy of Basil Stuart-Stubbs.

Rose Vainstein was born in Edmonton in 1920 but moved as an infant with her rabbi father and family to the USA. After graduating from library school at the end of World War II, she became an army librarian in occupied Japan, a Fulbright Scholar in England, a student for a second professional degree (the Master's then) in Illinois, a county librarian in California, and a library consultant with the US Office of Education in Washington. She got around, and prided herself on holding a position only long enough to serve it and learn from it in a spirit of freshness and enthusiasm. Four years seemed her limit until her final position.

At the University of Illinois, she met the first two directors of the later UBC School of Librarianship: Sam Rothstein, who was completing his Ph.D., and Roy Stokes, who was a summer lecturer. Rose so impressed Sam that he later recruited her to join the School at its inception in 1961. With only four of us that first autumn term, Rose had to bone up on special librarianship and library history as well as the collection development and public library services/administration with which she is primarily associated.

What she put her heart and soul into, and drummed into others, is what we now call "advocacy." During her second and third years here, much of that advocacy became the British Columbia Public Libraries Research Study. Under the auspices of the (then) BC Public Library Commission, she visited almost all parts of the province talking to trustees, library workers, civic politicians and officials, influential members of the lay public – and anyone else who would listen – on the topic of library service and province-wide cooperation that would later be called some kind of "network."

Some of the recommendations in the resultant Vainstein Report were actually implemented. All of it formed the springboard for later discussion of library-service planning, at least until 'The Computer' began to change everything.

Rose suffered her first bout of cancer while she was at UBC. Before the diagnosis, however, she had already answered the call of yet another career change -- this time to start something from scratch on her own. She took on a public library service for a wealthy Detroit suburb which had had no local library service to that point. Following the requisite four years there, she decamped one final time, having been lured back into library education by the University of Michigan. This time she stayed put for over a decade until her early retirement at age 60.

On her retirement, Rose gave away or destroyed notes, books, etc. related to librarianship and teaching, saying that she did not want to be lured into consulting. Knowing that her health was never robust, she took a long time to find the ideal retirement situation for someone who did not want to intrude into other families, while remaining able to associate with them (of four siblings, only Rose remained single). She was happy at a Quaker-run facility near Philadelphia, where she began with as much liberty as a separate apartment allowed and ended with all the care she finally needed in the intensive-care unit.

She could not, and probably did not want to, abandon entirely the political process at which she was so good. She worked for the US Democratic party during the Reagan years, joined administrative committees inside and outside her retirement community, worked for favourite causes such as literacy and free access to information, and no doubt enriched the lives of many of her co-retirees as she had enriched the life and career of her junior colleague here at UBC so many years ago and for so many years afterward.

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Milestones

In Memoriam

Ada Esther (Wagner) Jacobsen passed away November 28, 1999 in Belleville at the age of 97. Born in Houghton, Michigan, Esther went to Queen's in 1921, then obtained a Librarian's Certificate in 1936. She later graduated with a BLS in 1939, then with an MLS in 1951. For her work in bibliography and librarianship, Esther received the Centennial Medal in 1967 and the Queen Elizabeth II medal in 1977. She was made an Honourary Member of the BSC in 1989 and received a unique calligraphic testimonial from the Society in 1994.

Elizabeth Mary Morwick died on April 9, 1999 at the age of 82. Miss Morwick served as a Librarian at the Forest Hill Public Library for 40 years and spent the latter part of her career as Head Librarian.

Ella Maud Milloy passed away on December 12, 1999 at the Toronto General Hospital at the age of 92.

John D. Hoover died September 17, 1999. At the time of his death, he was in his 36th year of continuous employment at the University of Western Ontario. Mr. Hoover earned his library science degree at McGill University and returned to Western as Business Librarian in 1963. In 1972 he became Assistant Director of Libraries for Collections Development and for almost 20 years led the on-going effort to broaden the range of the library's collections.

Marissa Natasha Tadross passed away November 27, 1999. Ms. Tadross had worked as a Reference Librarian at Sigmund Samuel Library at the University of Toronto.

Sarah (Sadie) Jordan died December 20, 1999. Sadie was a former Librarian with the Toronto Public Library.

Margaret Beverley Whiteman passed away in Parry Sound November 16, 1999 at the age of 81. Ms. Whiteman was a librarian in Etobicoke and served as President of the Ontario Library Association in 1967 and 1968.

Gladys L. Osborn died recently at the age of 92. Ms. Osborn was the retired head librarian of the engineering library at the University of Western Ontario.

Helen Elizabeth (Carr) Delaney passed away October 29, 1999 at the age of 81. Mrs. Delaney was a librarian in the town of Midland from 1967 to 1980.

Isabel Gwynneth (Heaven) Weese died suddenly on May 8, 1999 at Bath, England while visiting her sister. Her library career included 20 years with the Vancouver Public Library.

Elizabeth (Van Every) Piersol died peacefully in her 87th year on January 14, 2000. Ms. Piersol was the former children's librarian for the East York Public Library.

Isabel Mary Elizabeth (Coulthard) Monkhouse passed away April 13, 1999 in Ottawa. Isabel was a retired librarian from Imperial Life.

Susan A. Gillespie died in London, Ontario, on August 22, 1999. Ms. Gillespie was the retired Chief Librarian of University Hospital in London, Ontario. Ms. Gillespie also served as a cataloguer at the University of Waterloo and at the Osler Collection of the McGill University Library.

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