

Ex Libris Association History

— *Contributed by Diane Henderson*

In the first issue of Ex Libris News (Spring 1987), the President wrote: "About 15 months ago a few retired librarians in Ontario met in London to discuss an idea - What happens to librarians when they retire or leave the profession? Where do they go? What are their remembrances of the earlier days? What happens to their letters and documents that haven't been thrown out?" From questions such as these, ideas for an organization came together, and a successful application for funding was made by this group to a federal program of the time, New Horizons for Senior Citizens.

An organizational meeting was held in November 1986 to found the Ex Libris Association, approve a constitution and elect a Board of Directors. Initially almost all members were Ontario based and the original constitution reflected this. However the emphasis quickly expanded to a national focus and at the second annual meeting the constitution was amended to reflect this - all of the objectives formerly stated as Ontario based, became Canada-wide.

Two projects were quickly launched. The Elizabeth Homer Morton Memorial Fund was proposed as recognition of the immense contribution of Morton, toward the establishment the Canadian Library Association and as its first Executive Director. The memorial was planned to take the form of a history of the Canadian Library Association during the period of Morton's tenure as Executive Director. The project was completed with the publication in 1996 of *The Morton Years: the Canadian Library Association 1946-1971*. The County Library Project Documentation Survey compiled information on the county libraries of Ontario, including summaries of their establishment and personnel, and a listing of material available to document their history and development.

From its beginnings the Association has published a semi-annual newsletter as a vehicle both for communicating with members and for the publication of articles and news relating to its core objectives of preserving the history of libraries and librarians. Topics covered in its issues include histories, brief and long, reminiscences and vignettes of members' experiences, as well as significant current issues. Summaries or full text of addresses given at the annual meeting appear regularly (especially important to members unable to attend), as well as news of the Association.

Other regular features include in memoriam essays and brief notes to celebrate the lives of members and others who have made contributions to Canadian librarianship, and "milestones", an update column on retirements, appointments and achievements of members and others - providing both current information and a cumulative record. ELA's distinctive logo, a design based on a woodcut by Thoreau MacDonald and used with the permission of its owner, first appeared on the cover of Ex Libris News in Autumn 1994. T-shirts boasting this elegant, quintessentially Canadian design have also been produced for sale to members and others.

The annual meeting, or "get-together" was initially held in conjunction with the Ontario Library Association's autumn annual conference. From 1994 on, meetings have been held each fall on our own. The annual general meetings have provided another means of achieving the Association's objectives by providing an opportunity for continuing personal contact with and between members, dealing with the business of the Association, as well as presenting speakers with a broad range of backgrounds--academic, archives, libraries of all kinds, politics, and the writing community--in programs on a wide range of topics.

An area of continuing concern and effort has been the goal of broadening and increasing the

membership geographically to create a truly national association and to become better known. Several outreach approaches have been discussed with some having been implemented. These include regular representation at library conferences such as those of the Ontario Library Association, the former Canadian Library Association, and occasional representation at others provincial associations. Discussion of the use of regional gatherings led to a very successful meeting sponsored by the Association in Ottawa in September 1997. Regional 'chapters' are another approach suggested but not yet explored. A regular recruitment program seeks to make the Association more widely known by means of invitations to individuals. Our website and Facebook page is one way to approach our continuing membership goals.

The W. Kaye Lamb Award for Service to Seniors is an initiative to recognize a Canadian library “that has developed an ongoing service, program or procedure of benefit to seniors and/or a design and organization of buildings or facilities that improve access and encourage use by seniors.” This biennial award was first presented in 2002.

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