

# Angus McGill Mowat

b. Nov. 19, 1892, Trenton, ON; d. Sept. 21, 1977, Kingston, ON



Major Angus Mowat c.1940. Credit *Report of the Minister of Education, Ontario*

## Education:

1912-15 and 1926-31 BA (Queen's University)

1926 Diploma from Library Training School (Ontario Department of Education, Toronto)

1935 MA (University of Saskatchewan)

## Positions:

1922-28 Chief Librarian, Trenton, ON

1928-30 Chief Librarian, Belleville, ON

1930-32 Chief Librarian, Windsor, ON

1932-37 Chief Librarian, Saskatoon, SK

1937-47 Inspector of Public Libraries, ON (interrupted by wartime service, 1940-44)

1948-59 Director of Public Libraries, ON

1959-60 Director of Provincial Library Service, ON

## Publications:

Mowat, Angus M. (1923). "Better Reading and How to Attain It," *Ontario Library Review* 8, 1 (Aug. 1923), 3-6.

Mowat, Angus M. (1929). "Adult Education," *Proceedings of Ontario Library Association Annual Meeting* (1929), 12-16.

Mowat, Angus M. (1932). "The Passage Over," *Queen's Quill* 1 (March 1932), 5-12. [short story]

Mowat, Angus M. (1933). "Panic," *Canadian Forum* 13 (Aug. 1933), 423-27. [short story]

Mowat, Angus M. (1934). "Jury-Rig in the Canadian Northwest," *Library Journal* 59 (15 June 1934), 503-05.

Mowat, Angus M. (1936). "Ex Libris: Saskatoon," *Queen's Quarterly* 43 (Summer 1936), 196-200.

Mowat, Angus M. (1938a). *Then I'll Look Up*. Toronto: Reginald Saunders, 1938. [novel]

Mowat, Angus M. (1938b). "Dead, but Not Yet Taken Away," *OLR* 22, 1 (Feb. 1938), 2-5.

- Mowat, Angus M. (1938c). "Vulture on Education," Saturday Night 53 (2 April 1938), 2-3.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1938d). "They Who Do the Job," OLR 22, 3 (Aug. 1938), 170-72.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1938e). "Some Library Experiences in the West," OLR 24, 3 (Aug. 1938), 200-1.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1939a). "Co-Operative Libraries," OLR 23, 1 (Feb. 1939), 2-5. [CBL radio address, 26 Nov. 1938]
- Mowat, Angus M. (1939b). "The Great James Bay Raid," Saturday Night 55 (9 Dec. 1939), 7. [fictional war news]
- Mowat, Angus M. (1940a). "Report on Inspection of Certain Military Camp Libraries," OLR 24, 1 (Feb. 1940), 3-7.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1940b). "School and Library Co-Operative Schemes in Ontario," OLR 24, 1 (Feb. 1940), 17-23.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1940c). "Simplified Cataloguing and Classification," OLR 24, 2 (May 1940), 136-37.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1942). "Soldiers Can Read," OLR 26, 1 (Feb. 1942), 9-10.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1944a). Carrying Place. Toronto: Reginald Saunders, 1944. [novel]
- Mowat, Angus M. (1944b). The Public Library, Why You Need It, How to Start It, How to Keep It Going. Toronto: T. E. Bowman, 1944. [2nd rev. ed. issued in 1946 by Dept. of Education]
- Mowat, Angus M. (1946a). "The Royal Commission on Education," OLR 30, 1 (Feb. 1946), 5-6.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1946b). "Glory Be! The Canadian Library Association-Association canadienne des bibliothèques," OLR 30, 3 (Aug. 1946), 227-56. [personal record of CLA's first conference]
- Mowat, Angus M. (1947a). "On Human Worthlessness," Saturday Night 62 (14 June 1947), 48.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1947b). "County Libraries of Ontario," OLR 31, 2 (May 1947), 160-62.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1947c). "The Books Drive on," OLR 31, 4 (Nov. 1947): 351-54.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1947d). "County Libraries: Amendment to Public Libraries Act," OLR 31, 3 (Aug. 1947), 265-67.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1947e). "Librarians Short Course," OLR 31, 3 (Aug. 1947), 325-26.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1950). The Public Library in Ontario; a Handbook for Its Establishment. Toronto: Public Libraries Branch, Ontario Department of Education, 1950. [3rd ed.]
- Mowat, Angus M. (1954). "Children—A Dangerous Gap," OLR 38, 4 (Nov. 1954), 299-301.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1956). "Creating New Local Service in Canada," Library Trends 4 (Spring 1956), 388-98.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1959a). "On the Personal Side," OLR 43, 1 (Feb. 1959), 4-5.
- Mowat, Angus M. (1959b). "A Word to the Wise," OLR 43, 2 (May 1959), 119-21.

## Associations/Committees:

American Library Association

Ontario Library Association, councillor and second vice-president (1931-32)

Canadian Library Council, councillor

Canadian Library Association, councillor and second vice-president (1948-49)

## Awards:

The Angus Mowat Award of Excellence was established by the Province of Ontario in 1985 to public libraries in recognition of excellence in public library service. It is given annually to projects that

demonstrate an innovative application or methodology which other libraries might use as a model and which has resulted in the achievement of improved library service.

## Accomplishments:

Mowat's education was interrupted by the First World War. He served in the Canadian Engineers, reaching the rank of Lieutenant before he was wounded in the right arm. After the war, he held a number of positions as chief librarian at Trenton, Belleville, Windsor, and Saskatoon, before being appointed in 1937 as Inspector of Public Libraries for the province of Ontario. He remained head of the provincial library office, a part of the Department of Education, until his retirement in 1960. He was a dynamic and positive force for library progress in Ontario, especially his advocacy for county and regional library service in rural and northern parts of the province. Throughout his career he encouraged better quality collections for adults and children, professional staffing and library training, the necessity for improved finances, more efficient management by trustees and librarians, and upgraded or new buildings. He believed strongly that the personal touch was essential for library service and that local effort, supplemented by provincial assistance, was the key ingredient in advancing local library development. His personal efforts to establish a public library at Moose Factory stimulated improvements for aboriginal library service on reservations throughout Canada. After his retirement, Mowat resided in Port Hope where he was a trustee for several years on the local library board. He became a friend of the poet, Al Purdy, and was the subject of the National Film Board short documentary *Angus* in 1971.

## Sources:

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- Editorial (1960). "An Assembly of Affection," *OLR* 44, 2 (May 1960), 59-61.
- Roberta Wilson Weiner (1960). "Angus Mowat: Civil Servant," *OLR* 44, 2 (May 1960), 65-66.
- Al Purdy (1973). "Angus Unlimited," *Queen's Quarterly* 85 (Autumn 1973), 454-55.
- William Roedde (1978). "Memories of Angus Mowat," *Focus (OLA)* 4 (Dec. 1978), 4-5.
- Stephen F. Cummings (1986). "Angus McGill Mowat and the Development of Ontario Public Libraries, 1920-1960," Ph.D. diss., School of Library and Information Science, University of Western Ontario, 1986.
- Stephen Cummings (1986). "On the Compass of Angus Mowat: Books, Boats, Soldiers and Indians," in Peter F. McNally, ed., *Readings in Canadian Library History*, 245-58. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1986.
- Farley Mowat (1992). *My Father's Son: Memories of War and Peace*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1992.
- Farley Mowat (1992). "Remembrances of My Father," *Ex Libris News*, 11 (Spring 1992), 9-19.
- Beatrice Margaret Blackstock Corbett (1995). "Lord of the Inland Seas: The Regional Fiction of Angus Mowat," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1995.
- Ruth Miller (2013). *Turning Back the Pages: 100 Years at the Saskatoon Public Library* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2013), 17-29.
- Lorne Bruce (2014). "An Inspector Calls: Angus Mowat and Ontario's Rural Libraries, 1937-40," *Ontario History* 106, 1 (Spring 2014), 77-99.
- ELA biography compiled by Lorne Bruce

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