

# Cross Border Influences for Librarianship: The Toronto Experience\*

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## Abstract

*Early education for librarianship in Canada was heavily influenced by personalities and relationships. There was a strong American influence on both form and content. This is particularly evident in the Toronto experience. Education in the city followed several distinct phases: in house or apprenticeship training, short courses offered by the provincial Department of Education, library institutes run by the Ontario Library Association, and finally a school operating within the University of Toronto. The University of Toronto granted a degree in Library Science for the first time in 1928.*

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Librarians and those seeking to become librarians in Ontario in the 1880's had few options locally, they needed to look internationally — so did public library boards and chief librarians. In the Toronto Public Library Board minutes from 1887 a suggestion was made that competitive examinations should be held as a way to create a pool of possible library assistants. This was to be based on a U.S. model. The suggestion was approved and so began a process TPL would follow for many years. The first exam was held December 15, 1887 and tested hopeful candidates on writing, arithmetic, reading and English literature. In 1890 they added a further component — anyone writing the exam had to be at least 5'3" tall!

In the early years of the TPL formal training in Canada was not available. Those seeking both positions and training would write personal letters to the Chief Librarian — namely James Bain and later George Locke. They were consistently referred to American schools for training. Some people wrote to respected librarians for answers to their questions, another option was to serve an apprenticeship and learn on the job. This method of training remained in force for many years.

Formal education for librarianship in Toronto can be viewed through

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distinct stages or phases. There was training through the Toronto Public Library, through Library Institutes (where we see the influence of the Ontario Library Association), a short course offered by the Department of Education and its successor a three month course and the library school at the University of Toronto. We'll start, as so many things did, with George Locke at TPL.

In 1908 TPL was seeking applicants to replace James Bain, the first real chief librarian in the city of Toronto.<sup>2</sup> George Herbert Locke was offered the position after A.H.U. Colquhoun declined. Colquhoun went on to a successful career in politics. His path would cross that of the library movement again because by 1914 he was the Deputy Minister of Education.

Locke had studied at the University of Chicago doing graduate work in classics and philosophy.<sup>3</sup> He taught at Harvard from 1897-1899. Locke returned to the University of Chicago in 1899 where he helped to develop the University Library. He was also active in library development in the middle west. In 1905 he moved east to work in the editorial department of Ginn and Company, book publishers. Then came a return to Canada with work at Macdonald College, McGill University in the training of teachers.

George Locke brought all those experiences, those contacts to his position of chief librarian at TPL. Locke would prove to be a major force in education for librarianship. He believed in formal training, he believed in hiring trained librarians and he became a convert to the cause of a library school in Toronto.

Locke should be considered a major player in the creation of formal training and in the push for professional recognition. Personally he favoured trained librarians and looked to the States to find them to head departments at TPL. In May of 1909 he brought Winnifred Barnstead to Toronto to head the cataloguing department. Barnstead was a Canadian educated in Canada with U.S. work experience. She was interviewed in the 1970's as part of the oral history program at the University of Toronto where she recalled her early education, training and first library jobs. Barnstead was a graduate of Dalhousie University and a two year training course for librarians at Princeton. Her first library job was in the Westmount library in Montreal. After completing the library training course she was hired by Princeton in their cataloguing department where she spent two years. In her first year she made \$30.00 per month and in the second year, \$50.00 per month. Barnstead herself described her experience as an apprenticeship, and felt that Princeton was not interested in library school graduates.<sup>4</sup> Barnstead would go on to a long career as an educator of librarians. In 1914 she was asked to lecture at the summer school. She instructed and supervised practical work at TPL at

the provincial training school for librarians and would become the first director of the U of T library school.

George Locke also looked south of the border to hire a librarian to develop children's services. In 1912 Locke hired Lillian H. Smith. Smith held a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto and was a graduate of the training school for librarians of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. After graduation she became an assistant at the New York Public Library.<sup>5</sup> Like Barnstead, Smith trained librarians at TPL, became a lecturer at the Ontario Library School and a faculty member at the University of Toronto.

Locke was determined to educate his own librarians. He developed an in-house training program that at the time was recognized as exceptional. New library assistants spent time working with more experienced assistants and directly with department heads like Barnstead and Smith. The TPL staff association minutes reveal that there was a great deal of traffic between TPL staff and libraries in the United States. George Locke also brought in American librarians to demonstrate techniques. In 1912 TPL staff travelled to Newark, New Jersey to see a demonstration of a new charging system. In 1915 Miss Barnstead and Miss Davis visited the Cleveland public libraries. All these visits and techniques were duly reported on and instruction given in-house. TPL librarians were always involved in ALA. Dr. Locke even served as president! ALA held conferences in Ottawa and Toronto where even more local librarians could attend.

The staff association minutes are a great source of information, they really give a glimpse into the world of TPL. The minutes reveal an active social life—from skating parties to teas and comments about salaries—usually looking for a little more!<sup>6</sup> But it is also a good resource to see who shared what knowledge, skills and information with branch heads, department heads and assistants.

During his years as chief librarian George Locke kept up a lively and prolific correspondence with librarians all over North America. He wrote about training issues, plans for ALA and kept friends and colleagues up to date with the call for formal training in Toronto and Ontario. George Locke was, for many years satisfied with his training at TPL and did not endorse the Department of Education's early attempts at training. This is probably due to an on going negative relationship with the inspector of public libraries, Walter R. Nursey.

Along with his many duties as chief librarian George Locke was also interested in an expansion of the Dewey Decimal system, one that better represented Canada. His personal correspondence contains many references to this, including letters to Melvil Dewey and John Cotton Dana. Dr. Locke

was proposing an expansion to the classification system and sent his proposals to people all over North America. The responses from Dewey can be described as “lukewarm”! After a time Locke turned his attention and intellect elsewhere—his new system languished and never came to fruition. Locke must be seen as a major player—a forceful personality and a successful educator. His influence was far-reaching—he helped determine the course of training and education for librarians for over 30 years. Locke was chief librarian at TPL from 1908-1937.

A contemporary of Locke’s was Edwin A. Hardy, best known for his work with the Ontario Library Association. Hardy spent a significant amount of his life struggling for training, for better education and for professional respect for librarians. Hardy was closely identified with the library institutes and the Department of Education in his role as secretary of OLA from its inception in 1901 until 1925, then as President from 1925-26. For a quarter century Hardy’s voice was the voice of the OLA. From 1902 Hardy was vocal in his call for formal training for librarians. He wrote and he spoke on this theme time and again. He favoured summer institutes and recommended the Albany summer course as a guide. Hardy’s fear was that Canadians who journeyed to the United States for training would not return to Canada. This drove him to call for education in Canada.<sup>7</sup>

Opportunities to educate librarians occurred outside the annual conference, correspondence and an association with the American Library Association. The OLA was very involved in the library institutes offered by the department of education. They were designed as a one day program on a regional basis and were held at larger libraries. It was a request from the OLA that led to regular and dependable funding from the Provincial Government. This was funnelled through the office of the Inspector of Public Libraries and became part of his annual report. In fact funding was guaranteed in the revised Public Libraries Act in 1909. “The first Institute was held in Brantford July 11, 1907.”<sup>8</sup>

The Institutes were very popular and were soon taking place all over the Province. It was an opportunity to provide some training on an informal basis and to build professional relationships. The *Ontario Library Review* and the Inspector of Public Libraries Annual Reports contained details of the institutes, location, presenters, number of participants and topics. The Library Institutes quickly became part of the landscape—successful and long lasting, part of the fabric of education for librarianship.

But the OLA and its recognizable spokesman Hardy, did not see the Institutes as sufficient for the training of librarians. They wanted something more. Their intentions were clear in a resolution at the 1910 annual confer-

ence, “that the Department of Education be requested to establish a summer library school for the benefit of the librarians of the Province.”<sup>9</sup> Hardy requested catalogues from American Schools to strengthen their case.

Supporters of such a school were gratified to learn that one would operate. The first summer school would run in 1911 under the direction of Mabel Dunham of the Berlin Public Library. The course was a hybrid, modelled on both American schools and the normal schools which educated teachers in Ontario. It once again emphasized the close ties between education and the public library.

For the first course the Department of Education paid all expenses — including travel by train. In later years the students were eligible for refunds upon successful completion. This short course was for librarians already employed, training people who wanted to be librarians was not part of the package. It was a four week course always run in the summer, when public libraries felt able to spare some staff. It ran this way until 1919 when it was extended to 3 months and reconstituted as the Ontario Library School.

Although modelled on U.S. short courses the Ontario version was far more successful than its American cousin, probably due to the role of the Department of Education and the Inspector of Public Libraries. The inspector played a vital role in developing education for librarianship. T.W.H. Leavitt, Walter Nursey and W.O. Carson shaped the form and the function. Both used their positions to make professional education a reality, in the institutes, the short course, the Ontario Library School (the 3 month course) and the plans for a University based library school.

The 3 month course remained in place until 1928. The short course and its successor were under the complete control of the Department of Education. This was a situation unique to Ontario. The Department of Education would continue to fund, regulate and control education for librarianship even as the school moved into the University of Toronto.<sup>10</sup>

Even though the short course was judged a success there was always an acknowledgement of the need for more time for the students. In Ontario, librarians were treated much the same as teachers in terms of education. Thus the Ontario Library School was compared to a normal school. Librarians continued to fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. This proved to be a double edged sword. There was always funding, but the Inspector of Public Libraries and the librarians themselves were not free to push their own ideas or agenda. After years of working for a full year program W.O. Carson was able to persuade the Minister of Education to conduct such a course.

The course would be housed in the Ontario College of Education, physi-

cally located on the University of Toronto campus. Winnifred Barnstead was named the first director. Barnstead found herself in a unique position, she was head of the school, but all funding and hiring decisions were made by the Dean of the College of Education and the Minister of Education. Barnstead created the curriculum but had to seek approval for it from her multiple superiors. She also answered to the governing structure of the University of Toronto. Winnifred Barnstead had to serve many masters. It is important to note that graduates of the program from 1928 to 1937 did not receive a degree. They were awarded librarian's certificates from the Minister of Education and a diploma from the University of Toronto.

The year course was designed to train librarians more widely, to give an academic and professional complement to the technical training of earlier courses. At the library school the course of instruction included required and elective courses. Required subjects included: Administration of librarians, history of books and libraries, book crafts and printing, book selection, cataloguing, classification, circulation, accession and shelf list records and work with boys and girls. Subjects that were elective were "college and university libraries, school libraries, special libraries and storytelling."<sup>11</sup>

Winnifred Barnstead was a scholar, a librarian and an effective diplomat. She had years of experience at TPL, as an instructor and head of the provincial library school. She was able to move within the system to offer the courses she wanted and to hire excellent instructors. One of the new staff members was Bertha Bassam, a Canadian who trained and worked in the United States. At the time of her appointment to the U of T school Bassam had graduated from the Pratt School and spent five years at Princeton and Columbia. The partnership of Barnstead and Bassam would determine the course of education for librarianship at the University of Toronto for many, many years. Bertha Bassam would eventually succeed Winnifred Barnstead as the Director. Both became full professors at the University of Toronto in the 1930's.

Winnifred Barnstead's early staff was made up of the Inspector of Public Libraries, the University of Toronto Librarian, George Locke and Lillian Smith and Jean Merchant from TPL. The Toronto Public Library continued to enjoy a role in the library school—offering practical experience, instructors and revisors of practical work. Winnifred Barnstead was also eager to bring in professional librarians as guest lecturers. She maintained friendships and professional relationships with many librarians. She was active in ALA. As a result, Barnstead's personal papers and the records of the library school reveal a strong presence of American librarians and even some American student applicants.



Although the library community now had a Toronto based, Canadian school for librarianship, there remained a fluid border in terms of employment, shared knowledge and shared ideals. This is particularly evident in the twin goals of the staff of the University of Toronto library school. They wanted a degree, the Bachelor of Library Science and they wanted ALA accreditation. Interestingly it was the Dean of Education, Pakenham who assisted. Dean Pakenham felt the school should be separate from his. He felt a degree should be granted and he agreed with the need for ALA accreditation. By 1933 it was a constant source of discussion at staff meetings. It would take until 1937 for a degree in library science to become a reality and even longer for accreditation and a master's degree.

Dean Pakenham's successor, Dr. Althouse continued the fight. He approached the President of the University in 1935.<sup>12</sup> By 1936 even the Minister of Education was onside. With the granting of a degree and promotion to full and assistant professors of the University of Toronto, the staff of the library school had truly come into their own. They were a separate, recognized school within the University. They had moved away from the paternal attitude of the College of Education and out from the direct control of the Department of Education. A new era for education for librarianship had begun. In the early years the school had been a bridge between vocational and professional. The granting of a bachelor of library science meant a professional degree, an academically based course of study. The year 1937 brought an important change, a break with the older ways of training librarians. Education for librarianship in Toronto was a hybrid or marriage of ideas and methods, shaped by personalities, dominated by TPL, the OLA and the Department of Education.

## Notes

1 Toronto Public Library Board Minutes, 1880 -1890.

2 Toronto Public Board Minutes, 1908.

3 Toronto Public Library Archives, Personal Papers of Dr. George Herbert Locke.

4 University of Toronto Archives, University of Toronto Library School, Personal Papers of Winnifred Barnstead, Audio Recording, Oral History Project.

5 Toronto Public Library Board Minutes. 1908-1912.

6 Toronto Public Library Archives, Metro Reference Library, TPL Staff Association Minutes, 1910-1928.

7 Ontario Library Association Papers, Edwin A. Hardy, Personal Papers.

8 Lorne Bruce, "Public Libraries in Ontario, 1882-1920," *Ontario History*, 77 : 2 (June 1985) : 140.

9 *Op Cit.* 7, Hardy Personal Papers.

10 Elaine A. Boone, "Holding the Key to the Hall of Democracy," *Professional Education for Librarianship in Toronto 1882 -1936*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Toronto, 1997.

11 *Op. Cit.* 4, Barnstead Personal Papers.

12 University of Toronto Library School Papers, University of Toronto Archives.