

Section 3.—Public Libraries in Canada.¹

It is more than three and a quarter centuries since the first known library came to what is now the Dominion of Canada—the library brought by Marc Lescarbot to Port Royal in 1606. A library was connected with Laval College at its establishment in 1663, although it was many years later before this institution became important. During the next century record is found of several libraries in Quebec city; one of these, a Jesuit library mentioned by Peter Kalm, the Swedish traveller (its existence is recorded again in 1789) was afterwards sold to the *Quebec Gazette* and again sold in 1851 to the Library of Parliament. The volumes, which have survived the ravages of time and two fires, may still be found on Parliament Hill at Ottawa. Two other libraries founded in Quebec in the 18th century were a subscription library established in 1779 and the Quebec Legislative Library established in 1792. Four years later a public library was opened in Montreal. The Legislative Library of Upper Canada was established in 1791. The Legislative Library of Prince Edward Island is somewhat older, as it was founded in 1773. The King's College Library, located until recently at Windsor, Nova Scotia, and now at Halifax, dates from 1800, the year of the founding of the oldest existing public library in the Dominion, the library at Niagara. During the first quarter of the 19th century there were several libraries founded in Nova Scotia, several in Montreal, and at least one in Western Canada.

The first quarter of the 20th century was most active in the establishment of libraries for public use. Of the 1,110 existing Canadian libraries for which statistics have been secured, 256 are known to have been established during that period, without regard to the fact that the dates of founding have not been secured for all libraries and the certainty that for one reason or another some libraries did not survive.

Library legislation in the different provinces was probably one of the spurs to the establishment of libraries. Other reasons there must also have been; such as, for instance, the influence of immigration of a highly literate people to certain communities during the early part of the present century. A large proportion of these libraries was established during the years from 1910 to 1920, which include those of the Great War when men in training camps and in hospitals were needing books, and the immediate post-war years when numerous memorial libraries were built. The stimulated interest regarding other countries, a result of the War, must also have had a tendency towards promoting reading.

The statistics secured for Canadian libraries cover (a) 640 free public and association libraries, with which are included those maintained by the Women's Institutes; (b) 133 university, college and normal school libraries and those of other educational institutions; (c) 59 Government libraries, both Dominion and Provincial; (d) 59 commercial and technical libraries, including those of business corporations, historical or scientific societies, law societies, literary and art organizations and similar libraries; (e) 219 other libraries, including the parish libraries of Quebec, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. libraries, and those not included in any other group.

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