

# Articles

## A Century of Library Support for Teacher Education in Calgary

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### Abstract

This paper traces the century-long history of a library that has served teacher preparation programs in Calgary, Alberta, since 1909. It looks at how this library's role and collections adapted to shifting notions of what constituted good teacher education and changing economic circumstances. In recounting this history, the paper examines the historical circumstances that created a separate education library at the University of Calgary and how issues of group and professional identity contributed to its continuing existence. The various themes which emerge may be common to many North American education libraries.

### Introduction

The Doucette Library of Teaching Resources at the University of Calgary is the direct successor of the library established to support teacher preparation in the province of Alberta one hundred years ago. Since its origins in 1909, the library has borne many names, been housed in at least seven locations, and had varying mandates in response to changing philosophies about teaching and teacher education. Its history reveals how issues of group identity played a role in determining that a separate education library exists on the Calgary campus. Its story also documents the struggle librarians faced in achieving professional recognition in an academic community, as well as the unique challenges of those particular librarians responsible for curriculum materials collections.

### The Normal School Library

In 1905 Alberta obtained official status as a province within Canada, thereby acquiring total responsibility for all matters in education. Its two most populous cities vied to become the capital, and when Edmonton both won that honor and also became the site of the province's first university, Calgary had to settle for the consolation prize of the provincial normal school. Educating teachers in single-purpose institutions had been the tradition in both the United States and Canada for almost a century, since the idea of training teachers in "the norm" or "the right way" of teaching was imported from Europe.<sup>1</sup> In 1908 a large new normal school building opened in Calgary, and given that Calgary's population

at the time construction began was little over 21,000, its grandeur exuded civic optimism about future growth. On the second floor of the new school was a large space designated for a library.

In 1909 the library was established when Miss Helen Mason was given the combined position of librarian and stenographer.<sup>2</sup> She did not stay long and was followed by a succession of women who played the role of both secretaries and keepers of the library, and who did not appear to have had formal library training. The lack of professional qualifications is not surprising since no Canadian universities offered library degrees at the time, although short-term coursework was available far away in Toronto and Montreal.<sup>3</sup> Calgary's first public librarian, appointed in 1911, was trained by the older apprenticeship method. In contrast, one study reveals that at least some of the normal school libraries in the American west were able to attract people with library degrees, because library education was further advanced in the United States.<sup>4</sup> It was not until 1924, when Isabella Currie took over the position of librarian

for the Calgary Normal School, that secretarial responsibilities were removed. Although she did not have a library degree, Currie had taken summer school courses in librarianship at a couple of American universities.<sup>5</sup>

To understand the nature and role of the library that

developed, one must look at the nature of the Normal School program. We learn something about its objectives from the experience of one of its earliest



students, Georgina Thomson, who later went on to an illustrious career at the Calgary Public Library. In 1908 she was a sixteen year-old farm girl whose family couldn't afford an extra year of school, so they sent her to get a teacher's certificate instead. On her first morning at Normal School, the assembled students were asked by the Principal, "What is the most important requisite for a teacher?"

*I sat in horrified silence for a moment and then piped up in a weak little voice, 'To know a lot'. There was a chilling silence while the principal fixed his reproving stare on my freckled face. 'The most important requisite for a good teacher,' he said coldly, 'is a good moral character.'*<sup>6</sup>

On a more practical level, the purpose of the Normal School was to meet the extraordinary demand for teachers in a fast-growing new province – and to do so in as quick a time as possible. The program was only four months in length; the first two months were devoted to studying all aspects of education, the last two primarily given over to practice teaching. By 1919, a second normal school was operating in the province, to meet the demand, and the length of the program was increased to eight months. When they were not practice teaching, students were scheduled into four consecutive class periods in the morning and three in the afternoon, in an attempt to cram both subject content and educational theory and methodology into their heads. Into this very busy schedule two or three library periods a week were inserted. In his 1922 annual report to the Department of Education, Calgary's Principal was gratified to note that "the Library is probably the busiest place in the building."<sup>7</sup>

What did the students find in this library? Isabella Currie purchased an accession register in which she not only noted all her own purchases but also handwrote a shelf list of the 4,750 titles in the library at the time she started. The first two pages of philosophy and psychology titles show that the books were likely organized according to the Dewey Decimal system. About one sixth of the books were works of educational theory and methodology, textbooks used in Alberta schools, and a relatively small collection of children's books, primarily folk- and fairy-tales. More surprising was the amount of shelf space given to standard works in many subject disciplines, and especially a literature section equal in

size to the education collection. It included novels by authors ranging from Dickens to Austen, and poetry collections by all the major English language poets.<sup>8</sup>

The diverse nature of this collection implies a tacitly understood role for the library. Clearly it provided resources that would help students understand educational theory and methodology and it gave them access to texts used in Alberta schools. But it also existed to help fill gaps in the students' previous education, not only their subject knowledge but also their cultural understanding and their ability to transmit the dominant English Canadian culture to a province full of immigrants from many different parts of Europe.

As for research – so near-and-dear to contemporary librarians' hearts – in a schedule which packed every minute of students' time, there was not much room for that, as the Normal School Principal mourned in his 1921 Annual Report:

*One of the most difficult things to foster, even in teachers-in-training is a disposition towards independent enquiry....To correct this notion we might do many things, were it not for the amount of academic review still found necessary.*<sup>9</sup>

A decade later, more by virtue of a major shift in the province's education system than its own designs, the Normal School began to create more room for inquiry and library research in its program. In 1936 Alberta's Department of Education introduced a radical new

curriculum - the *Enterprise Curriculum*, which had developed out of the theories of John Dewey and the work of the Progressive Education Association in the United States. Progressives rejected formal methods of instruction and favored an experience- or activity-based curriculum centered on the interests of the students. As envisioned in Alberta, it was meant to involve both the elimination of rigid promotion from grade-to-grade, in favor of groupings of grades, and the replacement of rigid subject divisions with integrated topics which were to be carried on by means of class undertakings termed Enterprises.<sup>10</sup>



The Normal School was now expected to prepare students to teach the Enterprise curriculum as well as bring their own teaching in line with the new activity

program. It reduced the number of teaching periods to give more opportunity for independent study, and largely replaced the lecture method with student reports and class discussion.<sup>11</sup>

One result was a notable new emphasis on the library. The 1937 Normal School Report recorded that the library had been increased by several hundred volumes and that a picture file had been added for students to take out into city classrooms. By 1939 Isabella Currie was giving each class a course of instruction in library classification and procedure. The use and organization of a library was now seen as important for teachers-in-training so that they could lead their pupils in doing research.

### Supporting Two Institutions

Long before these curriculum changes, the library had expanded its mandate and responsibilities. In 1922, the Normal School moved into the west wing of a new building which it shared with the province's recently created Institute of Technology. The library was a shared facility, occupying the Central Tower between the two institutions. This less than ideal situation was to change, but not for the better, with the outbreak of World War II. When its building was taken over by the Air Force, the Normal School moved into a Calgary school, while the Technical Institute took up different temporary quarters. The library collection was also split, and the Principal reported that, "the very limited reading-room space here made it impossible to continue the arrangement of having classes in the morning and independent work time in the afternoon, since it became necessary to spread library work throughout the day."<sup>12</sup>

In 1942 Isabella Currie retired after nearly 20 years, and her position was taken by Mary Isobel Grant, more commonly known as 'Belle'. She came with an education degree from Columbia University and she later took a sabbatical to get her library degree. Perhaps in recognition of the library's new role in instructing students, she was hired to teach as well as to run the library. She inherited a library of about 8,000 volumes; a collection which she felt was very unbalanced, weighed down in some places with up to twenty-one copies of one title. Her opinion was that because Currie was not a professional librarian,

she had left selection to the instructors, who each had their favorite books.<sup>13</sup>

However Grant, and her successors, found that it was not easy to wrestle selection responsibility away from the teaching staff. Most of the book budget continued to be allocated to faculty, although Grant did have money to buy reference and general works. In addition, a Library Committee was formed and keeping it from interfering in daily operations was a challenge. In 1954 Grant was outraged when the Library Committee asked for a detailed accounting of purchases. She responded that "the questioning with regard to the choice of books of a general nature ordered for the Library constitutes a denial of the Librarian's ability to determine the needs of the Library."<sup>14</sup> She again explained the difference in viewpoint between instructors, concerned primarily with their own subjects, and a librarian's concern for the entire collection. A few years earlier, in regard to a different incident, she'd written to a colleague that she'd been "... shocked again with the realization of what one loses in prestige and salary by being a librarian."<sup>15</sup>

### Becoming a University Library

With the end of the war both the Normal School and the Technical Institute returned to their former shared building. In the meantime the Normal School had now become the Calgary branch of the Faculty of Education of the University of Alberta. The library moved back up the fifty-two steps to the third floor of the Central

Block, to a space that was increasingly inadequate for its purposes – in size, layout and noise level. The library no longer served the Institute of Technology as well, but was now considered a branch of the University of Alberta Library, and its Chief Librarian became responsible for administration. Ironically, the transfer of teacher training to a University may have meant a return to more teacher-driven, lecture methods of instruction, judging by Grant's comment that Education courses now all had a definite text, whereas previously they hadn't and the students had been encouraged to use many sources of information rather than the authority of a single text.<sup>16</sup>

Belle Grant continued and expanded her predecessor's involvement in instruction, offering seven classes during scheduled hour-long library periods, on topics



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that included not just use of the library but also evaluating materials, using library resources in the classroom, and the role of the modern newspaper. This emphasis on instruction seems to have been common in normal school libraries at the time, according to researchers like Beck who hypothesizes that in the first part of the century "... much of the leadership in library instruction shifted to normal colleges, where women librarians were able to make full use of their abilities."<sup>17</sup> Integrating audiovisual materials was also more likely to occur in libraries serving teacher preparation students, since educators were becoming interested in the potential of multimedia, and in the 1951-52 academic year Grant reported that her collection now encompassed sound recordings and three listening tables.

That same year, a more significant change came when the institution began to define itself not just as a branch faculty, but as a branch university. By 1951 Calgary offered the first year of an Arts or Science degree, so the library no longer served just the Faculty of Education. Library materials had to be purchased to support these new programs and members of different faculties vied for access to a very limited book budget. In 1956 the Education Faculty complained that it got only a \$700 book allotment for 250 students while Arts & Science received almost \$1,000 for approximately 90 students.<sup>18</sup>

The issue of buying school textbooks was particularly contentious. Some Arts & Science faculty considered them totally inappropriate for a University Library and complained that when their students went to the shelves they found 'children's material.' Finally, says former Education Faculty member Dr Ethel King-Shaw, "we got so fed up that Bertha Newton and I pulled them all from the shelves and demanded a separate textbook collection." It was set-up as a special area within the library and included children's non-fiction as well as authorized school texts.<sup>19</sup>

By the time this happened in 1958, Belle Grant had been replaced by Dorothy Ryder, a qualified librarian with previous academic and special library experience. She came faced with huge challenges. Calgary would soon offer a full Arts and Science program, so the library needed to greatly increase its holdings, but there was almost no room for new materials when there was already a collection of 20,000 items crammed into 4,000 square feet. Ryder also had to plan for a new library on a new campus, at the same time as she was busy with day-to-day operations. Her stress was increased by tense relations with, and within, the

Library Committee, which often wanted to take more operational than administrative responsibilities, especially in determining how the budget would be divided among departments. In 1958 Ryder left it to the Library Committee to select the seventy-five titles that would be purchased with a special grant, from a list of 500 suggested by faculty members. She stated that: "she understood that there were certain professors who felt strongly against the librarian choosing the books, so she preferred not to have anything to do with the actual choosing."<sup>20</sup>

### **Education establishes a Materials Centre**

When the library moved over to the new campus in 1960, the separate textbook library remained a self-contained collection, and Ryder described it as the beginning of a curriculum laboratory. This presumption, presumably agreed to by the Faculty of Education, remained until 1964. Then suddenly, in a move that seems to have been driven by identity politics, the new Curriculum and Instruction Department of the Faculty of Education announced the establishment of its own curriculum lab, to be called the Ed CI Materials Centre. A former Education professor recalls that the faculty got so fed up with the attitude of the rest of the campus to having children's materials in the University Library, that they unanimously passed a motion instructing their Department Head to get back their textbooks, "even if he had to shed his own blood to do so."<sup>21</sup>

The Ed CI Materials Centre was created for two specific purposes: to provide resources to students for practice teaching and, in the eyes of Kay Snow, newly appointed to the faculty to teach courses in school librarianship, to be a model school library. School libraries were beginning to blossom in Alberta, as in the rest of North America, and they were badly in need of trained teacher librarians to run them. The textbook library moved to the Faculty of Education, along with the picture file and 500 items from the pamphlet collection. Some works of educational theory and methodology were also transferred, but the majority remained with the university library, which today continues to buy works of education theory and research.

The first purchase for the new Materials Centre was 856 filmstrips from Encyclopedia Britannica, evidence that the Ed CI Department valued different kinds of material than did the University Library, where buying was limited to print. With the emerging emphasis on using multimedia in schools, student teachers were encouraged to integrate resources such as filmstrips in

their lesson preparations and could borrow them to use in their practice teaching. Lending was limited to students taking Ed CI courses at this time.

As in Calgary, many teacher education institutions in Canada created curriculum materials centers in the early 1960s.<sup>22</sup> They were a variation on the concept of 'curriculum laboratories' that had emerged in the United States in the 1920s as part of the curriculum reform movement. In their early years, curriculum laboratories developed slowly, often not in universities, and they focused not just on collecting but on producing instructional materials. They increased substantially in number in American universities throughout the 1940s and 1950s, driven by two main factors: a proliferation in the quantity and formats of available curriculum resources, and the transfer of responsibility for teacher education to degree-granting universities.<sup>23</sup> Then, in 1960, inclusion of a curriculum laboratory became an accreditation requirement for teacher institutions in the United States, when it became a standard of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.<sup>24</sup> In spite of that, there was inconsistency and uncertainty about their role and purpose, shown in wide variability in the names given to these units.<sup>25</sup>

In naming their facility a "Materials Centre," Calgary's Curriculum and Instruction Department tacitly acknowledged that, in most places, the curriculum laboratory had evolved into a facility for acquiring, organizing, and circulating curriculum materials, rather than for producing them. The Head of the Curriculum and Instruction Department listed four new educational practices which required good resource centre support:

- enquiry methods of learning
- open area facilities
- increased use of media in schools
- individualization of learning<sup>26</sup>

In 1966, the campus became the autonomous University of Calgary. That same year, Calgary's Curriculum and Instruction Department hired Mohan Sharma, head of the Education Library at the University of Alberta, to prepare a report about the role and scope of their Materials Centre, in anticipation of the Faculty's move to its own building. Sharma said that the Centre's basic purpose should be to support the student teaching program and that this required going far beyond collecting textbooks. He recommended that the Materials Centre should buy in almost every conceivable format, again making it demonstrably different from most academic libraries. His recommendations reflect the *Standards of Library*

*Service for Canadian Schools* published in 1967. Sharma ambitiously suggested that the Centre should develop, within the next two years, a basic core collection in all subject areas equivalent to "the standard instructional materials a teacher is expected to find in an established school."<sup>27</sup> When he stressed the importance of the Centre taking "an active role in selecting and evaluating materials," he may have been making a pitch for professional library staff to play an enlarged role in selection, although he also proposed the creation of a Materials Selection Committee.

Sharma's suggested budget was based on his vision of bringing the Centre to its full potential within five years. His grand plan was that by then it would have a budget of \$200,000 and a staff of seven professional librarians supported by ten non-professional staff. He estimated the Centre's space needs for 1968-69 as 10,000 square feet, increasing to 30,000 square feet within five years.

In principle, the Materials Centre Committee concurred with many of Sharma's recommendations but, in reality, only considerably scaled-down versions were actually implemented. In 1967 the Faculty of Education got its own building and the library moved into 5,000 square feet in the Education Tower. Between the 1968/69 academic year and 1970/71, the Centre's budget did double, increasing from \$53,000 to \$102,000. The space and money were each only half what Sharma's plan had advocated. Nevertheless the growth of the collections and staff was remarkable. By July 1970 the Centre held 20,000 books and 8,200 audiovisual items. It had a professional staff of four full-time school librarians. This staff had an instructional role to play in assisting future educators, so considerable emphasis was placed on their teacher qualifications.<sup>28</sup>

### **Challenging times**

Shortly thereafter, however, the situation changed. The Centre began to experience somewhat of a struggle for survival, as the Faculty's share of overall University enrollment declined. The collection budget drastically decreased, staff numbers declined and hours of opening were reduced, causing discontent among students who circulated a petition asking for the Centre to be open longer. While in 1972 four professional librarians staffed the centre, by the late seventies professional staff had decreased to one and three-quarters. Lack of space caused what was labeled a 'deconcentration' of the collection, as different components were dispersed into several rooms spread over two floors.

These were troubled days for the whole Faculty, which climaxed with a scathing Presidential Taskforce Report in 1976. One of the few things about the Faculty that the Report found to praise was the Materials Centre, which it said “has gained a national reputation for excellence and innovation. It is unfortunate that recent budgetary restraints have curtailed its growth and limited its hours of operation.”<sup>29</sup> Heartwarming words, but the Center was still left competing for money with all other Faculty units from a sharply declining budget.

Not surprisingly, one solution that was explored was for the Ed CI Materials Centre to go under the administration of the University Library. In 1973 and again in 1987, with the impending retirement of the Centre’s Director, consideration was given to this option. However arguments for keeping the Centre independent prevailed. These revolved around three components of the Centre’s self-identity. First was the Centre’s teaching role. One Centre librarian noted the amount of time they spent instructing future teachers about using library tools and resources, and argued that this would be lost in the Main Library which “has no philosophy of teaching as far as I can see.”<sup>30</sup> A second argument related to loss of both specialized staff (librarians who were also teachers) and specialized cataloguing. The third, and perhaps most persuasive, argument revolved around the great difference in the kind of materials purchased by the two libraries. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction argued that it was almost certain that in an amalgamation, the strengths of the Centre would disappear and “no clear gains to the Faculty of Education have been demonstrated.”<sup>31</sup>

During the 1970s in the United States, there seems to have been a movement of curriculum centers away from schools of education toward main libraries. A 1983 survey of Canadian curriculum materials centers contrasted the situation in Canada with an American study showing that 71% of American centers were part of the main libraries<sup>32</sup>. Unfortunately this survey provided singularly unhelpful Canadian statistics, since it stated that 39% of Canadian centers were under the direction of schools of education and 35% under the main library. The fact that there was no mention of the remaining 26% creates some question as to the validity of the data.

Strong leadership was important in ensuring the continuance of Calgary’s Materials Centre within the Faculty of Education. Philomena Hauck, who was appointed Director in 1977, had credibility with both

the school library and the academic communities. Along with Kay Snow, she co-authored the book: *The Media Centre in the Secondary School*. She came with an MEd in Curriculum and Instruction, later acquiring a doctorate, and was involved in teaching in the Faculty’s School Library program. Hauck continued to stress the Centre’s differences from the university library and its identification with the school library community. In 1977 the Centre started reporting to the Dean’s office instead of being associated with only one Department, and this helped increase its status. It dropped the Ed CI from its name and became the Education Materials Centre, or EMC, and by 1981 all students in the Faculty had borrowing privileges.

### **More than a name change**

When David Brown joined the EMC as librarian in 1980, later becoming its Director, he established a cooperative arrangement with the University Library that allowed the Centre to automate its catalogue and circulation system, creating efficiencies that compensated for declining numbers of staff. Brown was interested in the opportunities that technology offered, and recognized early on the potential of the internet. He developed a website, *The Children’s Literature Web Guide*, which became internationally known. Because of his technical expertise, he became the logical person to supervise the Faculty website, which led to his taking responsibility for the Faculty’s technology support staff. This was very useful politically because, as Brown comments, “technology gets a seat at the table even if libraries don’t.”<sup>33</sup> Brown’s supervision of technology staff also laid the groundwork for a close integration of technology and library services within an “Information Commons” in a newly remodeled Centre, where students and faculty have one-stop access to both library and technical support services.

The remodeling, which took place in 2000, followed the Centre’s 1994 name change to the Doucette Library of Teaching Resources. Both changes were an indication that the nature of the library had again shifted. By the 1990s Brown had begun to re-conceptualize the Centre’s role:

*It frustrated me that the message was that they were trying to integrate theory and practice, but we had a theoretical library in one place and a practical one in another place. My goal was to blur that a little bit, so we didn’t have such a giant gap.<sup>34</sup>*

In its renaming, the Doucette Library returned to the Normal School library's original mandate of supporting all aspects of student study about the nature and practice of teaching, as well as providing curriculum materials. It moved from being a curriculum library to becoming more of an undergraduate library supporting all aspects of the teacher preparation program.

Brown's philosophy meshed with the Faculty's desire to re-imagine its teacher preparation program. In 1998 they replaced the traditional course-based, four-year Bachelor of Education program with a two-year post-degree program, in which students spend time in schools right from the beginning. This closer orientation to the field was acknowledged by opening up the library to practicing teachers. Most importantly, the program was inquiry-based. For the third time in a century, just as in the thirties and sixties, an inquiry approach meant paying special attention to the library.

### Today's Challenges

Today, the Doucette Library is a large and attractive facility, incorporating a wide-variety of educational technology resources and collaborative workspaces along with its collection of over 48,000 titles. All formats of materials (other than the poster file) are interfiled on the shelves in Dewey Decimal order, insofar as possible. Technical service and reference functions are performed by the same small group of staff, who possess intimate knowledge of the nature and requirements of both the teacher preparation program and of the Alberta program of studies. They bring this knowledge to their cataloguing, selection decisions, reference work and their extensive instructional workshops. In addition to offering the kind of information literacy instruction characteristic of academic libraries, Doucette staff go into many classes and conduct inquiry-based workshops. These workshops encourage students to consider integrating interesting and thought-provoking subject resources into their teaching.

That said, it must also be acknowledged that the current economic recession will present new and not

yet defined challenges. It is an additional expense for any faculty to fund its own library, and it would be interesting to know how many curriculum libraries exist today in North American faculties of education. Judging by the websites of Canadian faculties, the majority of curriculum libraries in this country now exist within university library systems, although they may be housed in an education building. From their websites, it appears that some newer education programs may not be even trying to provide curriculum resources to education students.

### Conclusion

This article has explored the local and organizational circumstances, and the personalities, that shaped the history of one particular teacher preparation library over the last century. It has also looked at the many external forces which played a significant role in its evolution: changing economic circumstances, ever-shifting notions about effective teaching, the increasing variety and availability of educational resources, and advances in educational technologies. The history of Calgary's education library shows that its librarians

faced particular challenges arising from the nature of their collections, which were given only peripheral status within the university. Further research into the history of other libraries of this kind would determine whether the same issues arose in other teacher education libraries and how they were dealt with elsewhere. Such research would show how

education librarians have constructed a unique identity within the profession, based on factors particular to their environment.

Photo on page 6 courtesy of the University of Calgary Archives



Doucette Library



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