

## THE DOUGLAS LIBRARY IN 1964

by Hilary Richardson (originally written in 1997)

My job as a student assistant in 1964, the last summer of the original 1924 Douglas Library building, continued with my transfer from the Reading Room to the Mail Room. The Mail Room was under the jurisdiction of the Head of Acquisitions, Mrs. Lin Elliott, whose encouragement and trust in me I greatly appreciated. Mrs. Elliott, who later became Mrs. Good, had also served as a Kingston alderman (the former name for city councillors), and was an excellent conversationalist, having vast amounts of what used to be called in one of my schools "General Knowledge". She was also extremely well-read, her tastes ranging from her favourite Jane Austen right up to very recent publications.

My work in the Mail Room involved first of all sorting the mail. I put mail for the branch libraries in a special area where it must have been picked up by Campus Mail (delivery service to the branches had begun in 1962, but the first library-owned van was not acquired until 1965). Mail delivery within Douglas was my responsibility. I sorted out the monographs from the journals, and the mail addressed to specific employees from mail addressed only to the Douglas Library. I was allowed to open the latter, and decide to whom it should go. After that I marked in the unbound journals on a large wheel-like structure on which the Kardexes representing all the periodicals received by Douglas were like spokes of the wheel. This wheel rotated when you pushed a button, but the problem with it was that the Kardexes were forever falling to the bottom, and needing to be retrieved and refiled alphabetically.

The big perk with this job for me was that, after unpacking journals, monographs, and other mail addressed to the library in general, I was allowed to keep the stamps. This was before the era of automatic stamping machines, and there were some beautiful stamps from all over the world. I had never been a philatelist before, but managed to accumulate a large number of stamps over that summer. I kept the collection, and added to it for a few years, until I finally sold it in order to help finance a trip to Israel about a decade later. But that's another story.

Some people preferred to pick up their own mail earlier, but after I had finished unpacking and sorting the mail and marking in all the journals (it was generally mid-afternoon by this time), I put any mail that had not been collected on a trolley and delivered it to the various departments or to the staff members to whom it was addressed.

Closest to the Mail Room, one floor under the main floor, was the Bindery, run by Mrs. Gladys Graham. At this time, the Library did its own periodical and thesis binding. This lasted from 1925 until soon after the arrival of the new Chief Librarian Mr. Redmond in 1966, when it was decided that local binding was uneconomical. The Douglas Library Bindery was closed down in favour of commercial binding services, but repair and bindery preparation continued to be done here.

My next stop was the main floor office of Mr. H.P. Gundy, who had been Chief Librarian since 1947. Opposite it, near the main entrance, was Archives. The Queen's University Archives, which had been in existence since 1869, contained such items as records of the Presbyterian Synod of Canada, papers of some of the United Empire Loyalist families who settled in this area in the late 18th Century, and, of course, many university records, including the University Charter of 1841, granted by Queen Victoria.

The first official Archivist was a congenial man named Mr. E.C. (Charles) Beer, who had arrived in April of 1960. Mr. Beer was in a small office created by partitioning part of the Modern Languages Study, in the northwest area of the main floor, facing University Avenue. This arrangement lasted until the 1965/66 addition and renovation, after which Archives shared a Reading Room and stack area with Special Collections on the second floor of the Douglas. In 1981, the Queen's University Archives was moved to the Kathleen Ryan Hall, following extensive renovations to this edifice dating from 1907 and originally known as the New Medical Building.

The Modern Languages Study contained foreign language newspapers and dictionaries, and was also equipped with a turn-table play-back for tape recordings of prescribed readings in language courses (ear-phones were also provided). The material in here became the nucleus of the Modern Languages Reading Room, later located in Kingston Hall.

Cataloguing had originally been located on the third floor, but, after the university administration staff finally left the Douglas Building in 1954, Cataloguing and Acquisitions were brought together on the south side of the main floor. The Head of Cataloguing in 1964 was Mr. Blair Wilmot, and Acquisitions staff included Mrs. Elliott, who had been Head since 1959, Order Librarian Mrs. Barbara Aitken, and File Clerk in Monograph Orders Miss Valerie Potts (now Val Knapp).

Interlibrary Loan became part of the Reference Department about a year later, but in 1964 it was still run from a desk in the Acquisitions Department, next to the Bibliography Room. Interlibrary Loan service is first mentioned in the new Librarian's report of 1924, where Mr. van Patten notes that Queen's borrowed books from five institutions, loaned books to R.M.C., and "rendered occasional assistance to the Government departments at Ottawa". The stated purpose of interlibrary loans was "to aid research calculated to advance the boundaries of knowledge by the loan of unusual books". Forty years later, I.L.L. traffic had increased considerably, the 1963/64 Principal's Report mentioning that Queen's had borrowed 1871 items and lent 2019. However, I.L.L. service in 1964 was still restricted to graduate students and faculty.

The Circulation Desk stood on the northeast side of the main floor, across the hallway from the Card Catalogue. Mrs. Elinor Humphries was in charge of Circulation at the time, a person whom I greatly admired. With her sympathetic ear, smiling face, and helpful answers to queries, she personified the cardinal rule of a library system, that the staff should exist to serve the needs of the user.

In a sort of reversal of the present-day situation, you were allowed to take the Reading Room books from the shelf and use them without signing for them (until closed Reserve stacks were instituted in 1969), but the main two-storey stacks were officially closed to all but upper year honours students, graduate students and faculty, who were issued permits. All others were required to fill in a Call Slip and present it to the Circulation Desk, where the person on duty would go down to the stacks and locate the book for you. When I reached my final year at Queen's I was at last allowed entry to the stacks to ferret out the books I needed, the loan period for undergraduates being at that time one week, and the fine for overdue books 5 cents per day. Occasionally I would also do some studying in the stacks, but it was not a pleasant place for academic learning, the shelves being very dusty, and the lighting rather bad.

In addition to the basement stacks, there were also two Tower Stacks running through the centre of the library. These, along with the Memorial Hall, were eliminated the following year during the renovations, but I remember them as rather interesting places, with rickety stairs providing access to the upper levels. There was no provision in the main stacks for folios, so folios were kept in the Tower Stacks, as well as some unbound periodicals, and some historical material.

In 1951, the South Tower, and the room with direct access to it (on your right as you entered from University Avenue, this room was Mr. Gundy's office by 1964), became the first home of the Documents Unit, then known as the Government Documents Department. In 1960, the Government Documents collection was moved from the three levels of the South Tower stacks to the basement stack area in the newly opened Law Library.

In the winter of 1965/66, after the Douglas Library books had been moved to the new stack area of the north addition, the Government Documents collection (whose librarian was Mr. George Henderson, now Senior Archivist in Kathleen Ryan Hall), although not the U.N. and International Documents (in 1963 Queen's had acquired full depository rights for United Nations materials, and this area was supervised by Dr. S. M. Mohan), was moved back from Sir John A. Macdonald Hall to the old Douglas Library stacks. In 1979, Documents was relocated to the Mackintosh-Corry Hall, after which the vacated Old Stacks eventually became the Douglas Library storage area. In the spring of 1997, the Old Stacks area is slated to become the main stacks for Special Collections, when it moves back into Douglas following completion of the most recent renovations.

The Douglas Library was home to the Music Department until its 1963 move to 90 Clergy Street West (about where the northwest corner of the Phys. Ed. Centre is now). This department still retained control of the Music Room, which had existed in the Douglas Library since the mid-1930s. Beautifully furnished, it contained Music reference books, a collection of records and a recording machine, and even a grand piano. This room was however being cleared out and moved to the Clergy Street house during the summer of 1964 when I was making my mail rounds. Being on the north side of the main floor, it was very susceptible to the noise of the workmen and machines who had been digging down through 30 feet of Kingston's limestone, excavating an area of 14,000

square feet in order to provide a 4-level stack area for the new north wing (actually, only three levels were ever used as stacks, as the first level was occupied first by Industrial Relations, and then by Cataloguing). Much of the rubble quarried in this procedure ended up as landfill along the waterfront near the Kingston General Hospital.

The Periodicals Room, a bright and sunny south-facing room on the second floor, was under the supervision of Mr. Neil Bunker. Bound and unbound journals were arranged alphabetically by title around the room. It was here in 1962 that I first met Mrs. Mary Mayson, recently retired doyenne of the Geology Library, at that time working in Periodicals. She had emigrated from Greece not long before, and happened to notice that I was reading a Greek textbook (unfortunately it was Classical Greek, so we were unable to communicate in that language).

Circulation rules were quite strict for the Periodicals Room; unbound journals did not circulate, and the limit for bound journals was one day. Unbelievable as it may seem to us now, in those days there were no local photocopying facilities; it was 1965 before the first photocopier (in those days called a Xerox machine) was installed in the Douglas Library. In 1964 you either read the journals in situ and took notes, or took them home overnight to make your notes!

The Buchan Library, accessible from the Periodicals Room, contained the John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir), novelist and former Governor General of Canada, collection of about 5000 books and manuscripts, which had come to the Douglas in 1955.

At this time there were a number of specialized collections scattered around the library in such places as the Buchan Room, the Tower Stacks, the Treasure Room (near Circulation), the Blue Spruce Room (off the Reading Room), the Map Room, and the Lorne Pierce Room. These collections were brought together after the 1965/66 renovations in the combined Special Collections/Archives area. The first Special Collections curator was a learned bibliophile with an engaging personality, Mr. W.F.E. (Bill) Morley, who would frequently seek out new acquisitions by visiting antiquarian booksellers or attending book auctions. In 1964 Mr. Morley had the title of Bibliographer and a desk in the Lorne Pierce Room, at the end of the north corridor on the second floor, next to the staff room.

The Lorne Pierce Canadiana collection was the largest of the varied special collections held by the Douglas Library. It had begun in 1925, shortly after the Douglas opened, with a donation of almost 1000 items by Dr. Lorne Pierce, Queen's graduate and former editor of the Ryerson Press. Although Dr. Pierce had died in 1961, the collection continued to be maintained by a generous endowment fund. It contained the largest single collection of Bliss Carman manuscripts and letters, and, in addition, manuscripts or letters of almost all the outstanding Canadian authors since the 1920s.

The Map Room was located in the northeast corner of the second floor. It contained a valuable collection of historical maps, a miscellaneous collection of contemporary maps, and the McNicol Collection of manuscripts relating to radio and

wireless communications. The McNicol Collection was later absorbed by Special Collections, and some of the maps went to the Geology Library in Miller Hall. In the spring of 1965, the majority of the Map Room collection, renamed the Geography Library, was moved to some third floor rooms in Ontario Hall, which had been vacated by the Physics department after Stirling Hall was completed. In 1974, the Geography Map Unit, as it was then called, was relocated to the Mackintosh-Corry Hall, and the Art Library, which had formerly been on the second floor of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, was transferred to Ontario Hall. The Documents Unit joined the Map Unit in Mac-Corry in 1979, and in 1994 Documents and the Map and Air Photo Library were moved together to the basement of the Stauffer Library.

Finally, of course, I made it up to the third floor Reading Room, that sanctum sanctorum of the Douglas Library, where the busts of Shakespeare, Cicero, Plato, Shelley and others of their ilk looked down from atop the bookshelves. Here I would deliver the mail to Miss Eagleson and catch up with goings-on in the Reference/Reserve collection.

The summer went by quickly, and was only my first association with the Douglas Library as a staff member. I would work as a student assistant in 1965 and 1966, and eventually took a full-time job there in 1967. By then there had been so many physical and personnel changes and so much had happened since I started in 1964 that it seemed like an entirely different era.

Thanks to: Mrs. Lin Good, Mr. George Henderson, Mr. W.F.E. Morley.