

THE DOUGLAS LIBRARY IN 1974

by Hilary Richardson [originally published in 2002]

The completion of the 1965 addition and the renovation of the old part of the Douglas Library in 1966 had given the Douglas three times the cubic space of the old 1923 building. But a mere eight years later, the library was already becoming full. In January of 1974 it was estimated that the Douglas stacks would reach full working capacity within three to five years, and “little used material” was being identified and considered for removal to a more compact storage space. For example, it was thought that about 25% of the books in the classes BL to BS (Religion), about 2500 volumes, could be transferred to the compact storage area on the west campus, with a probable need to retrieve about 50 volumes a year (2%) for use. Over the next 20 years, the west campus compact storage area acquired more and more volumes, in almost every subject area. It is no longer in existence, as its contents were moved, some to Stauffer Library after it opened in 1994, and the rest to the Engineering/Science Library in the Douglas Library in 1997.

In those days before on-line catalogues and computer terminals on every floor, some students complained that if they could not find a book in the stacks they had to go all the way back up to the Reference Room card catalogue to verify a call number. They asked why card catalogues could not be put on each stack level, but it was decided that this would be prohibitively expensive, in the order of \$500,000 for the first year, with annual running costs thereafter of over \$75,000 for card production and filing.

Hard as it seems for us to believe today, down in those dusty stacks cigarette smoking was permitted. It was in fact 1980 before smoking was banned in public areas, although it was still allowed in private offices and technical processing areas provided that there were no terminals or equipment nearby (a concern for second-hand smoke damage to machines?). Some patrons in 1974 however complained that the fumes in the stacks were irritating to non-smokers, and that there was an obvious fire hazard. The answer came back from library administration that smoking and non-smoking areas within the library had been set aside in an effort to accommodate everyone. That smoking was permitted in the stacks would irritate the non-smoker who preferred to work there, but the non-smoking rule would also irritate smokers who preferred the Purple Room. As for the fire hazards involved in smoking in the stacks, it was felt that it was better to continue to permit smoking and furnish ashtrays than to try to enforce a no-smoking edict and face the additional fire hazard of surreptitious smoking.

Speaking of fire, unlike the 1997 to 1999 period, when workmen in the Douglas Library renovation project were tripping off fire alarms at the rate of about one a week, a fire alarm going off in 1974 was an extremely rare occurrence. It did happen, however, just after lunch on Monday March 4th, and everyone trooped docilely out into the rain. It was soon reported that two workmen, knocking apart the partitions and ceiling in the Documents office, had accidentally dropped an alarm detector on the floor and set off the system.

During all this excitement, the Chief Librarian, Mr. Donald Redmond, happened to be standing on the corner of Brock and Barrie Streets, enjoying the sight of fire engines coming out of the firehouse, and idly wondering where the fire was. When told by the fire department watchkeeper

that the fire was in the Douglas Library, he departed hastily by taxi, arriving just as the hoses were being disconnected.

Another element besides fire made news in the Douglas Library in 1974 - water. Soon after the Douglas opened on Friday, August 16th, water was discovered dripping through the ceiling along the east wall on the 4th stack level, where a double-faced two-section range was located. Water-soaked and endangered books on these shelves were immediately moved to an adjacent safe area, and within four hours a task force of fifteen staff members had the pages of 53 books interleaved with paper towels. Twenty-one books were delivered to the Department of Anatomy, which made its freeze-drying chamber available. The rest of the soaked books with interleaved towels were left on the reading tables in the Information Services room for drying, which took about three days. About 2/3 of them had to be shipped to the commercial bindery for either rebinding or new covers.

Interlibrary Resources Librarian Jane Wright reported that there were three full-time library technicians running the Interlibrary Resources office, plus a number of professional librarians who handled verification of requests. The service cost 3/4 million dollars per year, and Queen's processed in 1974 an average of 450 requests per month, or about one item for every 125 used from its own resources. An interesting fact was that total ILLing had been relatively steady for several years, while use of materials from the Queen's Library system was continuing to rise by ten to fifteen percent a year. The conclusion seemed to be that the Queen's University library system was becoming more self-sufficient.

At the same time, faculty and graduate students were likely to find it easier to use library resources from other universities in Ontario. The Board for Library Coordination (an agency of the Council of Ontario Libraries) was expected to consider a plan whereby an "Inter-University Borrowing Card" would be issued to faculty and graduate students, allowing them to borrow directly, in person, from any university library in the province.

Library users complained in 1974 because library hours had been cut back. For the last few years the library had closed at 1 a.m., but as of 1974 it closed at midnight. Library administration replied that scheduling of staff to cover the hour between 12 midnight and 1 a.m. would bring about a decrease in services during the peak hours of the day.

New arrivals in 1974 included Mary-Lou Ranger as an LT1 in the Education Library in February, and Christina Todd (now Chris LeSarge of Law) as an LT1 in Cataloguing in March. In the summer, Marilyn Brooks (later Marilyn Brooks-Mantle) started as an LT1 in the Cataloguing Unit, and Shirley Spragge (later to be University Archivist) as an LT4 in the Documents Unit, to replace Jean Stevenson in the U.N. and International section, still located in Macdonald Hall. Nancy Gilmour (later Nancy Loudon) became an LT1 in Education in September, and in October two LT1s started: Maureen Yearsley (now of Administration) in Periodicals and Kathryn Manders (later Kathryn Harding) in Serials. Jane Walker (now of Douglas Library ILL and Reference) began work as an LT1 in Documents on December 2nd.

There were also a number of job changes and promotions in 1974. In August, Mr. George Henderson left his post as Head of Government Documents, which was then located in the

basement (now the ground floor) of the old part of the Douglas, and was appointed as a Principal Librarian in Archives, which was then on the second floor of the Douglas. George retired from Archives (by then located in the Kathleen Ryan Hall) in March of 2001. Doreen Rutherford, now of Cataloguing but then working in CI/RS (Central Information/Resource Services), was given the additional job of Acting Head of Documents until December 2nd 1974, when a new Head arrived - Ian A. Hodson, who had been for the previous five years Director of the Briefing Centre in CIDA (External Aid).

Vivien Taylor (now Librarian for Special Collections/Music) and Elizabeth Fox (now a Systems Librarian in the Stauffer Library) joined the staff of the Faculty of Law Library in Macdonald Hall in May and September respectively. During the absence of Irene Bessette from Sept. 1974 to August 1975, Mr. V. Mahalingam (known as Maha), Deputy Head in Cataloguing, was to be Acting Chief Law Librarian. Marcia Stayer (Sweet) of the Law staff was also on leave for the same period of time because of her husband's sabbatical in Europe. Mai Chen was made supervisor of technical processing for the Law Library.

Ted and Elinore (Brown) Phillips left the Douglas in September, as Ted was to take up duties as University Librarian at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Elinore would be Assistant Education Librarian at the same institution.

This left the Associate Librarian job vacant. It was decided to reorganize the structure at the top, and have two Assistant Chief Librarians. Mrs. Lin Good's title was changed from head of the Bibliographic Operations Division to Assistant Chief Librarian (Bibliographic Operations). Likewise, Miss Diana Blake, who sadly and unexpectedly passed away the following year, became Assistant Chief Librarian (Public Services).

Technician promotions included Thelma Fernando as an LT5 in the Reserve Room on the third floor of the Douglas (a job she held until 1996), and Jean Stevenson, who became the LT5 in charge of the Biology Library.

Other branch library transfers included Fran Sexsmith to be the LT4 in the Math library. The following year, Phyllis Egan would become the LT4 in the Civil Engineering Library. Many of the branches continued with the same supervisor they had had for several years, including Harriet Scott, Librarian of the Geology Library, Lyn Howard of the Physics Library, Janet (Wendy) Innis of the Chemistry Library, and Kay Paget of the Mechanical Engineering Library.

Donna Allen was in charge of the new Geography/Map Library, which had just been moved out of Ontario Hall into the new MacIntosh-Corry Hall. Ontario Hall was being completely refurbished for the Art Department, and plans were afoot to move the Art History Library from the Agnes Etherington Art Centre to Ontario Hall. Sylvia Spasoff was seconded from Cataloguing to be the new Art/Music Librarian, and was immediately involved in changes, as the Music Library was moving to the recently completed Harrison-LeCaine Hall, named after Dr. Frank Harrison, the first professor of Music at Queen's, and an eminent musicologist and ethnomusicologist, and Dr. Hugh LeCaine, a graduate of Queen's and a pioneer in the field of electronic music. The Music Library was at this time an integral part of the Music Department, and consisted of over 11,000 volumes of musical scores and books, and 4000 recordings and

tapes to support courses given in performance, musicology and music education. In addition to Sylvia Spasoff on a half-time basis, it was staffed by two full-time library technicians, Marge Webster (mother of Jim Webster, now of Special Collections/Music) and Janie McCann (now Janie Haig of Education).

On November 9th, 1974, Harrison-LeCaine Hall, the new Music Building at Queen's, was officially opened. For 25 years it was the home of the Music Library, until its 1999 move to the Douglas Library.