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**Wise philanthropy: the Carnegie Corporation and libraries of the British Commonwealth in the 1920s and 1930s**

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### ***Abstract:***

*This paper reviews the grants for library development made by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) under the British Dominions and Colonies Fund in the 1920s and 1930s to Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. Although these grants were comparatively small compared to the CCNY grants for library development in the United States, they had an enormous impact. The wisdom the CCNY displayed in their grant making will be examined in more detail.*

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### **Carnegie Corporation Library Program**

The American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie set up the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1911 with an endowment of \$125 million. This foundation funding was large, over two billion dollars in today's figures. The aim of the Corporation was "to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding among the people of the United States." The trust was to continue the philanthropic work of Carnegie in the United States, the UK and the British Dominions and Colonies. In 1913 a separate fund was set up for the United Kingdom, with headquarters there. A fund of \$10 million was set aside for the British Dominions and Colonies, administered alongside the CCNY funds from New York. The term 'Dominion' was used for the self-governing countries of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. They were former British colonies, now self-governing in internal affairs.

The philanthropic gifts of Andrew Carnegie had favoured libraries from the beginning. He provided public library buildings in USA, UK and the British Dominions from the late nineteenth century. In the British Dominions the number of buildings was: Australia - 4, Canada - 116, New Zealand - 18, South Africa - 12, and a few in the colonies. After the formation of the CCNY, grants shifted to the provision of library education, books for college libraries, demonstration library services and support for library associations.

With the onset of World War II in 1939, the overseas programs of the CCNY slowed down, and virtually ceased after 1942. The income was conserved until after the war. By then the attention of the British Dominions and Colonies Fund had shifted to the social science area, as had the attention of the CCNY.

### **Keppel's Presidency 1923 - 1941**

Andrew Carnegie served as president of the Corporation from 1911 until his death in 1919. In 1923 Frederick Paul Keppel became president as a paid chief executive, a position he retained until 1941; during this period he dominated the Corporation's activity, mainly concerned with cultural philanthropy. Keppel (1875-1943) had had a career in publishing, university leadership and the federal civil service. Grants, usually modest, went to programs in the areas of adult education, museums and libraries, art and music. A recent assessment of the CCNY says that decision-making about grants during Keppel's presidency was directed more by hunch, coincidence, opportunity, friendship, and a wish to help than by clear, specific, consistently applied 'scientific' goals or principles.

The trustees of the Corporation through Keppel designed programs to popularise access to culture without 'debasement'. Reflecting the attitudes of the trustees, predominantly older males, white, and protestant and from privileged backgrounds, this culture was 'high' in the Western European tradition.

### **The British Dominions and Colonies Fund**

The programs supported by the British Dominions and Colonies Fund in Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia during the time of Keppel's presidency followed the pattern of those within the United States, with an emphasis on cultural diplomacy. Grants went to adult education, libraries, support of library associations and education for librarianship and also to collections for college and university libraries. The aim of the CCNY projects was to provide successful demonstrations and projects so that local, state and federal governments would continue them with the support of taxpayers. Usually some financial support or matching funding was required before CCNY grants were released.

Between 1912 and 1927 almost all the grants from the British Dominions and Colonies Fund were allocated to Canada. Then in the period 1927 to 1942 the program was extended to Africa, Australia and New Zealand, then the West Indies and other colonial areas. Before the CCNY could act, more information had to be gathered. Visiting experts in various Carnegie interest areas were sent to the Dominions to make reports.

### **Library Surveys**

There were detailed reports commissioned by the CCNY on the library situation in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. In South Africa two outside experts, S.A. Pitt from Glasgow Public Library and Milton Ferguson, State Librarian of California, carried out a survey and published separate reports in 1928. In Australia and New Zealand a survey of library conditions was carried out by Ralph Munn from the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and Ernest Pitt of the Public Library of Victoria for Australia, and John Barr of the Auckland Public Library for New Zealand in 1934. We can think of the visiting experts as external change agents, invited from outside the country to suggest necessary changes to librarianship

and the library profession. They brought a fresh perspective to local librarianship and as outsiders had no vested interests in the *status quo*.

In Canada three Canadians carried out their own survey in 1930, with CCNY funding. Many Canadians had already studied at American library schools and Canadian librarians belonged to the American Library Association. The Canadians already had the opportunity to receive fellowships for study at library schools or to carry out research projects through the program funded by the CCNY during the 1929-1942 and administered by the American Library Association. At the time of the survey the CCNY was already funding the Fraser Valley demonstration rural library service on the Pacific coast, and the survey report recommended a similar demonstration of a provincial library service in Prince Edward Island on the Atlantic coast. This recommendation was followed.

The large grants from the British Dominions and Colonies Fund for library projects in the Dominions of Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and supported public library development. In South Africa major funding through the State Library, Pretoria was aimed at the provision of rural library services. In Australia a smaller grant went to support a campaign for Free Library Services, which did not bear fruit until after World War II. In New Zealand the grants supported an innovative rural library and adult education service in the South Island of New Zealand. The grants to Canada funded demonstrations of rural library service, in the Fraser Valley in British Columbia on the west coast and in Prince Edward Island on the east coast.

For Carnegie Corporation programs in the Dominions local advisory committees were set up to oversee projects and advise the Corporation on small grants, including suitable recipients of travel and study grants. The CCNY transferred the funds to the institution or committee responsible for the projects.

### **Travels in the United States**

To prepare the local personnel in Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia to carry out the CCNY library projects there were grants for study and travel in the United States and Europe. The Carnegie fellows were either identified as key people for Carnegie projects by the CCNY experts and surveyors, or later chosen by the local Carnegie committees in the Dominions. When Harvey Branscomb was asked by the Corporation in 1943 to judge the effectiveness of the grants from the Special Fund for the British Dominions and Colonies, except for the grants to Canada and Newfoundland, he identified the travel grants and study fellowships as providing the greatest benefit.

The new conception of libraries and librarianship which the South Africans, Australians and New Zealanders brought back after their study and observation trips, particularly in the United States, was applied in their own libraries, in their teaching, and promoted through the library associations. Many Canadian librarians had already been exposed to this conception of libraries and librarianship, because of the proximity of their country to the United States. The refocused role for libraries comprised the following elements:

1. The idea of the library as a collection of materials, organised both intellectually and physically for access by users;
2. The concept of the library as an educational institution;
3. It was a public responsibility to provide access to organised information;
4. The conception of librarianship as a profession, with the need for professional education.

### **University Libraries**

In the Dominions the CCNY followed a similar program of library development as in the United States, where the Carnegie Corporation ran a major program to improve college libraries. In the British

Dominions funds also went to improve university library collections. In most cases the Carnegie Corporation thought it necessary to first expose the chief librarians to modern conceptions of college librarianship and collection building. Three New Zealand University College librarians, several university librarians from South Africa, and one from Australia had studied at American library schools.

In Canada the university libraries received funds to build collections also, but as the librarians were well qualified and experienced and had already been exposed to current conceptions of academic librarianship there was no need for them to study librarianship abroad.

To improve the university libraries the CCNY made direct grants to the universities which were to be spent on buying books and serials recommended by the local university librarians and library committees. This was begun in Canada from 1931, and the same policy was followed in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. In New Zealand the grants offered to the four university colleges were \$5,000 a year for three years, with the possibility of extension. These grants were larger than the annual book budget for any of the colleges. The selection of the colleges in the United States which received library grants from the Corporation had been highly competitive. The Carnegie Corporation hoped to influence the administrators of other colleges to improve their library services by showing the role a good library could perform in a college. In the Dominions the CCNY was not so selective in its grants; for example, all four university colleges received grants in New Zealand.

### **Public Libraries**

As in the area of university libraries, CCNY grants for public library programs in the dominions followed similar interests to the United States. One initiative used was setting up demonstration rural library services. In Canada the CCNY funded two demonstrations of rural library services in the period 1929 to 1936. The Fraser River Valley Regional Library was unique, in that it brought together fifteen separate local governing and taxing authorities. The Prince Edward Island Libraries gave province-wide library service. As well as the demonstration libraries receiving continuing support by local taxpayers, taxpayers supported new regional libraries on Vancouver Island and in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia and a new provincial library in Nova Scotia on the east coast of Canada. CCNY seed money helped them get started. The demonstrations had shown that there was enormous book hunger in the rural areas, and that once a library service sufficiently financed and of an adequate population base was trialled, the citizens were willing to pay for such a service through their taxes.

In New Zealand a unique initiative already begun by a Canterbury University College professor of a travelling library and adult education service to the rural areas of the province of Canterbury was combined with a home science project initiated by a University of Otago professor in the province of Otago to form the Travelling Library and Home Science Project. A grant of \$102,500 was received for a five-year project 1929-1934. The whole of the South Island of New Zealand was covered. This project continued as the Association for Country Education after the demonstration period ended.

The local committee formed to advise the CCNY on their grant giving in New Zealand had a survey carried out of a rural area, at Taranaki in the North Island of New Zealand in 1936, aiming to set up a demonstration rural library service modelled on the Fraser Valley demonstration of rural library services in British Columbia in Canada. However the Labour government in power in New Zealand would not approve a grant from the CCNY, so the CCNY funds went instead in 1938 to the New Zealand Library Association, a grant not requiring government approval. The New Zealand government itself established a Country Library Service to provide books throughout country areas in New Zealand. The National Library of New Zealand evolved from the Country Library Service. Once again a CCNY project had been adopted by government.

In South Africa the CCNY made a large grant in 1933 to the State Library in Pretoria. The State Library was to set up a rural library service throughout South Africa, encourage free public library services, and become a bibliographic centre for South Africa. Each of the four provinces was encouraged to set up their own rural services, and as this occurred from 1942, the State Library relinquished its rural library responsibilities.

Although many projects supported by Carnegie funding were similar in all the Dominions and followed the pattern already established in the United States, some were unique to fit the circumstances of the individual dominion country. One such unique project was the provision of Non-European Library Services in the four provinces of South Africa. These provided the first library services for Black South Africans, and led to provision of public library services for them.

### **Professionalisation of Librarianship**

The CCNY provided support to increase the professionalisation of librarianship in the British Dominions: through establishment or upgrading of library associations, and the provision of education for librarianship.

### **Education for Librarianship**

In the United States the CCNY gave grants to library schools and also scholarships for library educators to upgrade their qualifications. In the British Dominions the CCNY grants followed a similar pattern, adapted to the level of development of the particular dominion. In the case of Canada the CCNY provided money for the upgrading of the library school at McGill University. Summer schools had been held by the library of McGill University since the early twentieth century, and in 1927-28 a grant of \$134,300 from the CCNY enabled a diploma course to commence. In 1930 this became a graduate library course awarding the Bachelor of Library Science, and received accreditation from the American Library Association in 1931. This was the first library school in Canada.

In South Africa there was a local initiative at the University of Cape Town. After R.F.M. Immelman returned from study at Columbia University and visits to leading library schools in North America and Europe, the library set up a course of one-year full-time study, or equivalent part-time, in the university library. Matriculation students were admitted, but graduates were preferred. It was the first library school in South Africa. Lectures, discussions and problems formed the basis of instruction as at Columbia University. The subjects studied also followed the Columbia model.

### **Library Associations**

Library associations were set up in two dominions, Australia 1937 and South Africa 1930, with British Dominions funding. The South African Library Association was a new organisation, with open membership. The Australian Institute of Librarians was set up in 1937, allowing only professional membership. The Libraries Association of New Zealand which already existed was reorganised, to provide for individuals to be members with full voting powers and the right to hold office, and renamed the New Zealand Library Association in 1935. The associations lobbied for free library services, published journals, and organised conferences.

They also became qualifying associations, setting up curriculums and examinations modelled on [British] Library Association lines for preparing librarians. The Australian Institute of Librarians formed a Committee on Standards and Training, which planned a syllabus, and two-level qualifications based on those of the Library Association; the first examination was held in 1944. The New Zealand Library Association began correspondence courses in 1941 for its Children's Librarians' Certificate Course and in 1942 for a general certificate course. These courses ceased in 1946 when a school of librarianship was set

up in the Country Library Service. It was headed by an American library educator and offered a graduate diploma course on the American pattern. In South Africa British precedents were also followed. The South African Library Association started correspondence courses for its own examinations in 1933. The Association held a two-weeks' library school in Durban in 1931, and this became a regular event. Gradually schools were established in universities.

### **American Influence**

The influence of the United States in Canadian librarianship was marked because of its proximity to the United States. Canadian librarians had provincial library associations, but a national Canadian Library Association operated only from 1946. Canadian librarians joined the American Library Association, and conferences were held in Canada. Canadians studied librarianship at American schools, until the one at McGill University became a graduate library school in 1930, and one was established at Toronto University.

American influence was not as marked in Australian librarianship in the period of the 1920s and 1930s, as changes brought about by Carnegie Corporation funding came later. In South Africa there was European and British influence from the librarians who came to work in South African libraries. This was to be intermingled with American influence after the Carnegie grants. In New Zealand there was a marked American influence. However in all the dominions there was an intermingling of ideas from overseas countries, together with local initiatives and adaptations.

The new conceptions of libraries and librarianship coming from the United States were accepted. Library collections were organised both intellectually and physically for access. Thus the adoption of the Dewey Classification Scheme, and the Library of Congress Classification Scheme in some academic libraries, together with the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, was accelerated in the four dominions. The educational role of public and college libraries was emphasised. Communities assumed responsibility for providing access to information. Librarianship was recognized as a profession, with the need for professional education. These changes had been brought about by fellowships to study and travel in the United States and national surveys of libraries in the four dominions, demonstration library services in Canada, funding to support library associations in three of the dominions, support of library education, and strengthening of university library collections. The CCNY British Dominions and Colonies Fund had made this possible.

### **Wise Philanthropy**

In seeking to improve the standards of librarianship and library services in the four British Dominions the CCNY followed procedures now recognised as best practice in bringing about library development.

For the library surveys carried out to gather information on the current situation and recommend changes to bring improvement the Corporation chose leading international and local librarians.

It was local librarians who were prepared by study in American library schools and travel to selected libraries in the USA, UK and Europe, to take a leading role in bringing about change in library services. There was an emphasis on locals, not overseas experts. These librarians to study abroad were carefully selected and the ground prepared for them to play an effective role on return home. Thus important administrators to whom librarians reported were sent overseas for short travel trips to see the possible roles that library services could play.

The grants for university library collections were contingent on the newly returned librarians having adequate library buildings to house these collections and also having academic status and membership of administrative committees within their universities.

The grants for public library services needed matching funds from governments at various levels: national, provincial and local. The CCNY's aim was to change government policy to support public library services.

The CCNY also aimed to continue the process of change after their grants had ended. So there were grants for setting up professional library associations in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The associations held conferences, published journals and lobbied governments. There was also a major push to set up local education courses for librarians, and the overseas returned librarians played a major role in teaching.

The CCNY library experts gave good political advice to their overseas students. The advice given by William Warner Bishop, and later Ralph Munn, to their Australian and New Zealand students had the political realities of their home situation in mind. They warned the young students of the strong British bias they would encounter when they returned home. Australians and New Zealanders were said to be more British than the British, and there existed a strong British cultural imperialism. Ideas known to have come from America would not be welcome. C. Collins from Canterbury University College recalls that "we all wanted to go to England to find precedents." In England Collins visited the University of Reading Library, which used the Library of Congress classification, and was then able to go home and say, "they do it at Reading," and not be so quickly dismissed by the members of the University Council when he wished to adopt the Library of Congress classification scheme for the library. Ralph Munn gave political advice to two New Zealand students who received CCNY grants to study children's librarianship at the Carnegie Library School in Pittsburgh; he told them to go to Canada to find examples of good library service which could be quoted in New Zealand. They visited the Boys and Girls House of the Toronto Public Library, where high standards of American children's library services had been adopted.

The projects chosen for support in each of the four countries suited the local situation; for example, country library services in Canada, the Non-European Library Service in South Africa. The CCNY always encouraged setting up local committees of librarians and administrators to oversee these projects, and to advise on further funding. These local groups also advised on suitable people to receive study and travel grants, both abroad and locally. The CCNY also chose the librarians to oversee these projects very carefully. In all cases they accomplished the objectives of the projects, so that they continued with local support. They also stimulated further developments along the lines of the original projects.

Library users made a ready response to the provision of new library services with good library collections. Use of academic libraries jumped, there was found to be a book hunger among rural people, and city libraries were crowded with adults and children. Selection of library materials was linked to reading interests of the local population.

## **Conclusions**

An analysis of the Carnegie Corporation aid program for libraries in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s shows the expertise that the Corporation brought to these programs. An essential prerequisite to planning is a survey of libraries to establish current structure and the quality and quantity of library services. There needs to be investment in the education and training of professional and non-professional staff to carry out development plans. A major contributor to library development is a strong professional library association which can increase its influence by associating with national library agencies.

To increase the supply of skilled library personnel the CCNY preferred to develop the skills of local nationals. The task of library development in the dominions was accomplished by locals. The quickest way to increase the supply of skilled library personnel was to bring people from the Dominions of South

Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and a few from Canada, to study in the United States. Then the Carnegie Corporation grants to the library associations in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand increased opportunities for the study of librarianship within the Dominions. The Corporation funded special library development programs appropriate to each Dominion.

The planning and implementation of the CCNY aid program in each of the four Dominions was wisely done to bring improvements in libraries and librarianship, and was judged to have achieved its objectives, so funding moved to other areas.

### **Sources**

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