

Work and Worth: A Contested History of Labour and Value in Toronto's Public Libraries

by

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Abstract

Public libraries are often thought of as inherently democratic institutions where the provision of informational resources supports social inclusion and civic participation. Inspired by a recent citywide conflict over potential library closures in Toronto, Canada, this dissertation investigates a more contested history than conventional interpretations have often permitted by revealing a series of conflicts over public library buildings, budgets, and governance across more than a century. The main argument is that understanding this history requires an account of the overall *work* done to make and remake these spaces into what they are today, as a way of understanding of what these spaces may soon become. This argument illustrates how the perceived *worth* of providing public library service, whether or not it is accounted for in monetary terms, can be seen as socially constructed and politically contested. To make this argument, I draw mainly from feminist theorizations of work, which broaden this category to encompass productive waged labour along with paid and unpaid reproductive labour coded as ‘nonwork’ or ‘unproductive’, and geographers’ insights on the contested social production of space. In so doing, this dissertation aims for a critical re-thinking of what these spaces mean for daily urban life.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Bringing Work into the Frame to Analyze the Contested Social Production of Toronto's Public Libraries

Profound contradiction haunts public libraries today. The past decade of urban austerity has deepened state retrenchments from, and sharpened fiscal discipline within, municipal public services. Effects of these cutbacks have been spatially and socially concentrated within localities, among people who were already economically marginalized and politically excluded.¹ These wider conditions have heightened local residents' needs for the informational services and resources public libraries provide, including computer terminals, Internet connections, educational programs, and items in collections. Public library workers who provide these services and maintain these resources have become a crucial pivot for accessing and using these increasingly vital supports. Amid these circumstances, however, elected officials in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom have steadily – and sometimes swiftly – reduced public funding for these municipal state agencies.²

To maintain existing services, public library governing bodies have adopted a wide range of outsourcing, corporate sponsorship, fundraising, and other revenue-generating strategies that can include selling paid commercial ad placements and merchandise retail ventures.³ Studies commissioned to prove that public libraries can remain worthwhile despite diminished revenues calculate the market price equivalent of shared services and resources, and measure monetary

¹ Jamie Peck, "Austerity Urbanism: American Cities Under Extreme Economy," *City*, 16, no. 6 (2012): 635-648; Annette Hastings et al., "Austerity Urbanism in England: the 'Regressive Redistribution' of Local Government Services and the Impact on the Poor and Marginalized," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 49, no. 9 (2017): 2018-20.

² Lumos Research, *An Analysis of Library Trends*. (N.p., Canadian Urban Libraries Council/Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada, 2011), 9; Judy Hoffman, John Carlo Bertot and Denise M. Davis, "Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study 2011-12," *American Libraries*, Online Digital Supplement (June 2011): 11; Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals/The Big Issue, *Public Libraries: the Case for Support* (N.p., The Office of Lord Bird, 2019), 11.

³ Hartwig Pautz and Alan Poulter, "Public Libraries in 'the Age of Austerity': Income Generation and Public Library Ethos," *Library and Information Research* 38, no. 117 (2014): 25.

return on local taxpayers' investment.⁴ In some places, a 'staff-less' service model has been introduced through the installation of automated self-service equipment.⁵ This model potentially enables an extension of operating hours outside regularly scheduled (and staffed) times, by allowing registered library card holders to enter locked buildings through remote authentication technologies. However, it can also facilitate efforts to (further) contain costs – in particular, and often implicitly, *labour* costs in the form of staff salaries – without (additionally) diminishing (some) users' access to branches and the (limited) resources available inside like printed materials and wi-fi hotspots.

Such "economization" of public services disseminates market logic over hitherto presumptively "non-economic" spheres, activities, and subjectivities.⁶ This widening of the scope of competitive market relations need not involve monetization, which is the conversion of existing assets into (potential) cashflows. Yet the latter looks to have been precisely the result for public libraries. How were these circumstances produced, and what may they be producing in the near future? Answering this question requires a historical analysis, to trace continuities and changes in public library finances, governance, and management at the local level. Accordingly, this dissertation explores such a history of one public library system: the Toronto Public Library (TPL) in Toronto, Canada's largest city. Specifically, in what follows I investigate more than a century of contradictions within, and conflicts over, the production and management of public library *space* in Toronto.

Returning to this history at present is important, I show, because it illustrates that what can feel unprecedented today is far from new within these spaces. Rather, fiscal pressures to reduce costs

⁴ Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, "A Helpful List of Public Library Value Studies in Ontario," modified October 30, 2017, <http://fopl.ca/news/helpful-list-of-public-library-value-studies-in-ontario/>; International Federation of Library Associations, "The Value of Public Libraries," modified May 4, 2018, <https://www.ifla.org/node/9011>; Ontario Library Association, "Public Library Research," accessed 1 November 2019, http://www.accessola.org/web/OLA/ADVOCACY/Ongoing_Library_Issues/Public_Library_Issues/Public_Library_Research/OLA/Issues_Advocacy/Public_Library_Research.aspx?hkey=e9110f49-30ea-49e3-aa81-23445a5e8ba2.

⁵ Sherry Fahim, Dawna Wark, and Shelley McKay, "Open+ Technology with Remote Staff Support Improves Branch Access and Enhances Community Engagement," *Public Library Quarterly* (2019): 1-14.

⁶ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 18.

and concomitant managerial demands to enhance organizational efficiency are *historically consistent features* of public library operations. Crucially, I highlight, the potential effects of these pressures and demands have been repeatedly *contested* in Toronto, by shifting and socially differentiated groups of key actors. Loosely organized coalitions of local residents have, since the early 20th century, objected to potential branch closures or relocations that would have curtailed their access to these spaces and the informational resources provided therein. At different times and through separate spaces, public library workers have organized against intensified workloads and job de-skilling through technological changes. A historical account linking these ostensibly divergent localized disputes, over time and across geographical locations in the city, can therefore help to explain the politics of public libraries in Toronto today. Such an account, I argue throughout, requires understanding these struggles through the wider politics of *work*: what counts as work, how work is organized, who performs which types of work, where and under what conditions.⁷ Sustaining an engagement with these politics can, I contend, help to illuminate how the perceived *worth* of providing public library service in the city has been socially constructed as a historical product and ongoing object of contestation.

To make this argument, I mobilize a broad concept of work developed among feminist scholars who encompass in this category, along with productive waged labour, paid and unpaid reproductive labour that sustains people as (future) workers daily and inter-generationally.⁸ The latter entails mental, manual, and emotional labour involved in processes of social reproduction that are central to maintaining the structure of capitalist social relations.⁹ These processes are organized across complex institutional and community networks that, feminist geographers have argued, span everyday places for daily urban living.¹⁰ In this broad concept of work, I include the

⁷ Kathi Weeks, *The Problem With Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2011), 25.

⁸ Sue Ferguson, "Intersectionality and Social Reproduction Feminisms: Toward an Integrative Ontology," *Historical Materialism* 24, no. 2 (2016): 38-60.

⁹ Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner, "Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives," *Annual Review of Sociology* 15 (1989): 382-383; Felicity Eldholm, Olivia Harris and Kate Young, "Conceptualising Women," *Critique of Anthropology* 3, no. 9 and 10 (1977): 103-104.

¹⁰ Meg Luxton, "Friends, Neighbours, and Community: a Case Study of the Role of Informal Caregiving in Social Reproduction," in *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neoliberalism*, ed. Meg Luxton and Kate Bezanson (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 264; Nicky Gregson

vital *political* work of community organizing and collective mobilization – work through which members of social groups may contest their access to resources allocated through these networks to support social provisioning.¹¹ This power to make use of space – to establish a visible and viable presence, and to see this presence reflected in networks of communication and informational exchange – is, for critical urban scholars, decisive for the ability of social groups to claim belonging in a city.¹² Public libraries, I offer, are among these politically consequential everyday spaces where processes of social reproduction take place – though these feminist and critical scholars have generally overlooked this point.

My study is a history of the present, in which I ask how the present was produced to question what the present may be producing.¹³ This method for studying public library history allows me to critically re-interpret how the past may inform the present, as a means to anticipating a plurality of possible futures.¹⁴ To do so, I bring together a range of archival materials (newspapers, official documents, photographs, architectural plans, bibliographic records, scrapbooks and other institutional ephemera) with feminist and critical theorizations of work, social reproduction, and the contested social production of space. My analysis in the four empirically-driven chapters that follow moves through multiple spaces and periods of time in Toronto (early 20th century central library buildings, post-World War II suburban branch networks, mid-20th century regional governing bodies, and early 21st century city government consultation meetings). The timeline I trace over these chapters generally proceeds chronologically, but I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive history of the TPL, Toronto, or public libraries. The TPL itself is so vast and complex that such an effort would likely exceed the scope of one dissertation, and perhaps surpass the abilities of a single scholar. However, the insights I draw from this approach can, I think, helpfully inform further historical studies of

and Michelle Lowe, “‘Home’-Making: On the Spatiality of Daily Social Reproduction in Contemporary Middle-Class Britain,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20, no. 2 (1995): 227.

¹¹ Engin Isin, *Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2002).

¹² Roza Tchoukaleyska, “Public Space and Memories of Migration: Erasing Diversity Through Urban Redevelopment in France,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 17, no. 8 (2016): 1102.

¹³ Sally Falk Moore, “Explaining the Present: Theoretical Dilemmas in Processual Ethnography,” *American Ethnologist* 14, No. 4 (1987), 727-736.

¹⁴ Michael Burawoy, “The Extended Case Method,” *Sociological Theory* 16, no. 1 (1998): 5.

public libraries and, I hope, official and popular discussions about the near future for these spaces in and beyond Toronto.

The remainder of this introductory chapter makes a theoretical and political case for the importance of bringing – and keeping – work, broadly conceived, in the frame of analysis to study the contested social production of Toronto’s public libraries. Doing so, I underscore in what follows, can show how these spaces have been produced to manage competing and contested visions of the value of providing public library service in the city that have changed historically in relation to broader shifts in relationships among states, markets, and households. I address the conceptual framework, historical timeline, scholarly literatures, and research procedures that form the basis for my study, and conclude with a short outline of each of the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

Why Work?

Work, broadly conceived, is a primary way of incorporating people not only into economies and labour markets, but also into broader political, social, and cultural life. Compulsory waged labour under capitalism makes working an obligation, and so it can be seen as a requirement to fulfill in order to assume the full rights of citizenship.¹⁵ The act of working itself connotes the liberal subjectivity of individual personhood. This subject with the “interiority” to perceive, think, and act in the world demarcates where liberal ideology delineates human being.¹⁶ This “consciousness to act” is the liberal precondition for modern freedom as the rational self-governing ability of citizens.¹⁷ This subjectifying function of work is underscored in the figure of the worker-citizen: an economic and social actor whose role in the labour force imparts (or withholds) the status of a ‘full’ member of society.¹⁸ In a historical study of public libraries, this

¹⁵ Weeks, *The Problem With Work*, 8.

¹⁶ Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 21.

¹⁷ Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 3.

¹⁸ Deborah E. Cowen, “The Soldier-Citizen,” in *Recasting the Social in Citizenship*, ed. Engin F. Isin. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 187-188.

figure is of particular importance to bring – and keep – practices linking work with citizenship in view at the local level. During this history, authoritative categorizations of which groups (can) exercise reason and judgement as citizens have been congruent with dominant beliefs about who (may) develop the intellectual capacity to do this conceptual work.¹⁹

Citizenship may here feel a more intuitively relevant, even obvious, conceptual framing for a study of public libraries. When formulated as an individual's formal legal relationship to the state, for example, citizenship directs attention toward democratic rights and freedoms that may be strongly associated with public libraries. The connection between public libraries and these formal dimensions of democratic citizenship can indeed seem self-evident. Public libraries operate to facilitate access to information on a universal basis, by making this access free (or nearly free) of direct costs to users. In so doing, public libraries mitigate inequalities in access to information based on the ability to pay, and thus provide resources supporting the self-education of (new) democratic citizens. Librarians' longstanding ethical commitment to defending the civil liberties of intellectual freedom and individual privacy from overt government censorship of collections can furthermore link these institutions to the exercise of democratic freedoms.

Yet this formal citizenship is a fundamentally exclusionary one, by which nation states differentiate between citizens who belong and all 'non-citizens' as 'others' to the nation.²⁰ For most scholars of citizenship, these categorizations are maintained through ongoing forms of juridical, material, and epistemic dispossession that can include the dispossession of knowledge created through the labour process.²¹ Such a formulation of citizenship, in other words, starkly contrasts with ideals of democracy and inclusion that may be affixed to public libraries.

Theorized more critically as the substantive enactment of political claims, citizenship can offer a

¹⁹ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-2.
Lynn A. Staeheli, "Cities and Citizenship," *Urban Geography* 24, no. 2 (2003): 99.

²¹ David K. Seitz, *A House of Prayer for All People: Contesting Citizenship in a Queer Church* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 9; Melanie Samson, "Accumulation by dispossession and the informal economy—struggles over knowledge, being and waste at a Soweto garbage dump," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33, no. 5 (2015): 825.

deeper notion of democracy and rights.²² In this view, when members of social groups together demand their rights, they enact a *scene* of citizenship and thereby constitute themselves *as* citizens: political subjects who can make rights claims.²³ A focus on everyday places within cities can, furthermore, help to highlight how formal and substantive dimensions of citizenship are together enacted and contested in daily urban life.²⁴

My study began as precisely my effort to bring this substantive theorization of citizenship into conversation with urban geographers' studies of the contested social production of public space through an engagement with public libraries. However, as my study evolved into a historical one (a trajectory I explain in the third section that follows) I found in the archives I investigated a whole alternate narrative that I had excluded from the scope of my inquiry. Internal to official institutional archives, I found a story not particularly focused on democracy and rights but rather one about productivity and efficiency, waste and value, the *work* required to provide public library service and the *worth* of doing so in the city.

As I began to more closely scrutinize my archives to gain a better understanding of this narrative, I also found that questions of work, labour, and employment have been largely set aside in existing historical studies of public libraries in favour of engagements with democratic and humanitarian ideals associated with providing access to information free of charge (a narrative that I examine in more detail in the second section that follows). I found that historically specific notions of work and worth were not uniformly applied to public library employees and public library workers during a particular historical moment, but rather served as a means for managers, administrators, and policymakers to differentiate between – and crucially *among* – these groups of key actors within these spaces. Nor did these notions of labour and value remain consistent over time, but rather altered considerably in relation to broader social changes and political-economic restructuring.

²² Isin, *Being Political*.

²³ Engin F. Isin, "Theorizing Acts of Citizenship," in *Acts of Citizenship*, edited by Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Neilsen (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2013): 18.

²⁴ Lynn A. Staeheli, et al, "Dreaming the ordinary: Daily life and the complex geographies of citizenship," *Progress in Human Geography* 36, no. 5 (2012): 639.

My arguments in this dissertation therefore arise from my questioning of what might be gained, theoretically and politically, by thinking about a history of public libraries through feminist theorizations of work, labour, and social reproduction. Drawing from these theories, I use labour as both a “limiting and enabling” framework to foreground the formation of political subjectivities through practices that may be devalued as ‘nonwork.’²⁵ I underscore that these practices constitute the material and epistemic basis for the reproduction of social relations and socio-economic values through public libraries. What this limitation enables for my study, crucially, is a way to question how these practices may point to alternative ways of living and being beyond existing forms of capitalist valorization. It is my contention here that slightly de-centring democratic ideals and citizenship allows for bringing work, labour, and social reproduction into the frame of analysis to reveal a range of everyday practices that may otherwise be excluded from scholarly analysis. By taking this approach, I do not argue, for example, that democracy or citizenship are irrelevant to public libraries – far from it, and I would hope that my arguments in this dissertation could inform future studies examining, for example, how changing normative notions of the public sphere, citizenship, or democratic inclusion can provide a critical lens for studying public libraries historically and in the present. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I further ground these claims in the empirical, theoretical, and political contexts that have informed my study.

The Timeline: A Contested History of Toronto’s Public Libraries (1903-2012)

In what follows, I mount the historical timeline that forms the basis for my analysis in the next four chapters. I highlight that bringing work into the analytical frame serves to critically re-interpret the current TPL through its history. To do so, I start with a short sketch of the events leading to the establishment of the TPL in 1883. Although I do not address these events in detail in the remaining chapters, this overview helps me to highlight major themes in the forthcoming analysis. Specifically, that Toronto’s public libraries have been since their origin helps to explain why they today remain deeply contested. My aim in this study, however, is not to simply

²⁵ Kathi Weeks, *Constituting Feminist Subjects* (London: Verso Books, 2018), 133.

document evidence of resistance to dominant power relations within public libraries, nor is it to identify groups of ‘resistors’ as authentic political actors in these spaces.²⁶ Rather, this thematic focus around contestation and conflict helps me to examine power relations that extend deeply within, and reach far beyond, the physical space of a public library building. This approach coheres with the feminist literature on social reproduction, as described above, in that it highlights the extension of capitalist social relations outside formal workplaces across everyday sites within cities where the political possibilities for resistance are inherent in daily life.²⁷ Having established this context for my study, I then introduce each historical period that I discuss in the remaining four chapters, and explain my choice to exclude some timeframes from my archival investigation.

A ‘Free Library’ for Toronto (1883)

The TPL was established in 1883 through a municipal referendum, when voters approved a city by-law that created this new municipal agency and allocated a small portion of the local property tax rate to finance its operations.²⁸ These voters were exclusively men over the age of 21 who owned property – taxpayers, in other words, though by-law campaign materials addressed them as ‘citizens’ (Figure 1.1).²⁹ Leading up to the vote, a debate on the by-law proceeded through the

²⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod, “The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Rower Through Bedouin Women,” *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (1990): 42.

²⁷ Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Social Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2020). This perspective on social reproduction draws from debates among Italian autonomist Marxist-feminists on the concept of the “social factory” to describe the re-centering of capitalist social relations around homes, domestic life, and women’s unpaid labour as a direct subsidy to production.

²⁸ “Toronto Public Library History,” Toronto Public Library, accessed January 7, 2020: <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/library-history/>.

²⁹ Joan Sangster, *One Hundred Years of Struggle: the History of Women and the Vote in Canada* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2017); Keith S. Henry, *Black Politics in Toronto Since World War I* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981). Canada did not have universal suffrage at all levels of government until 1963. The year following the TPL’s establishment, white women who owned property were allowed to vote in municipal elections in Ontario. The restriction on property ownership relaxed over the early 20th century, and by 1921 white and black women and men who were citizens of Canada formally had voting rights at all levels of government. Asian people were excluded from all voting rights until 1947, and indigenous people denied the right to vote until 1963. Black Canadian men over 21 who owned property had the right to vote on this referendum, while the black population in Toronto was very small (less than one percent of the total city population) until after 1900.

pages of local newspapers, at meetings of voluntary societies and political associations, and during special campaign events.³⁰

The ‘yes’ campaign was relatively organized, and it was led by men prominent in the city’s social elite and educated middle-class.³¹ After about a decade of advocacy and lobbying elected officials, some of these men had succeeded in persuading members of the Ontario legislature to create a legal framework for the establishment of public libraries in the province. These men then petitioned the Toronto city government to hold the by-law vote, as required under this *Ontario Free Libraries Act* of 1882. Notably, these men campaigned in the name of ‘workingmen’ in the city who were said to lack adequate access to reading material. The editor of the *Globe* newspaper, for example, appealed to voters on behalf of “the mechanic and laborer and small trader” who would be “forced to spend his evenings in listless idleness” without a public library.³² The editor acknowledged some potential secondary benefit to these men’s wives and children, who might themselves become more interested in reading if they too could borrow books from a public library. Delegates of the Toronto Trades and Labour Council, who represented 5,000 men working in skilled trades and craft industries, apparently concurred with this view and endorsed the by-law for similar reasons.³³

Critics of the by-law were somewhat less consolidated as a group, mainly writing to local newspaper editors to express their personal views.³⁴ One wrote to the *Telegram*’s editors that such ‘free’ libraries – meaning those financed by private subscriptions, rather than local governments – only distributed “trashy” literature purchased with taxpayers’ hard-earned dollars. Another, in the same newspaper, offered that the money would be better spent on more important municipal projects like paving roads and installing streetlights. Still another argued that the existing system of subscription libraries in Toronto was more than sufficient, suggesting that anyone who really wanted to read should find the money to pay the cost of borrowing books.

³⁰ Elaine A. Boone, “‘Holding the Key to the Hall of Democracy’: Professional Education for Librarianship in Toronto, 1882-1936,” PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1997.

³¹ Lorne Bruce, *Free Books for All: the Public Library Movement in Ontario, 1850-1930* (Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1994). This book provides a detailed discussion of these men’s biographies.

³² “Vote for the Free Library,” *Globe* [Toronto], December 30, 1882.

³³ “Trade and Labour Council,” *Globe* [Toronto], December 16, 1882.

³⁴ All quoted in Boone, “Holding the Key to the Hall of Democracy,” 41-44.

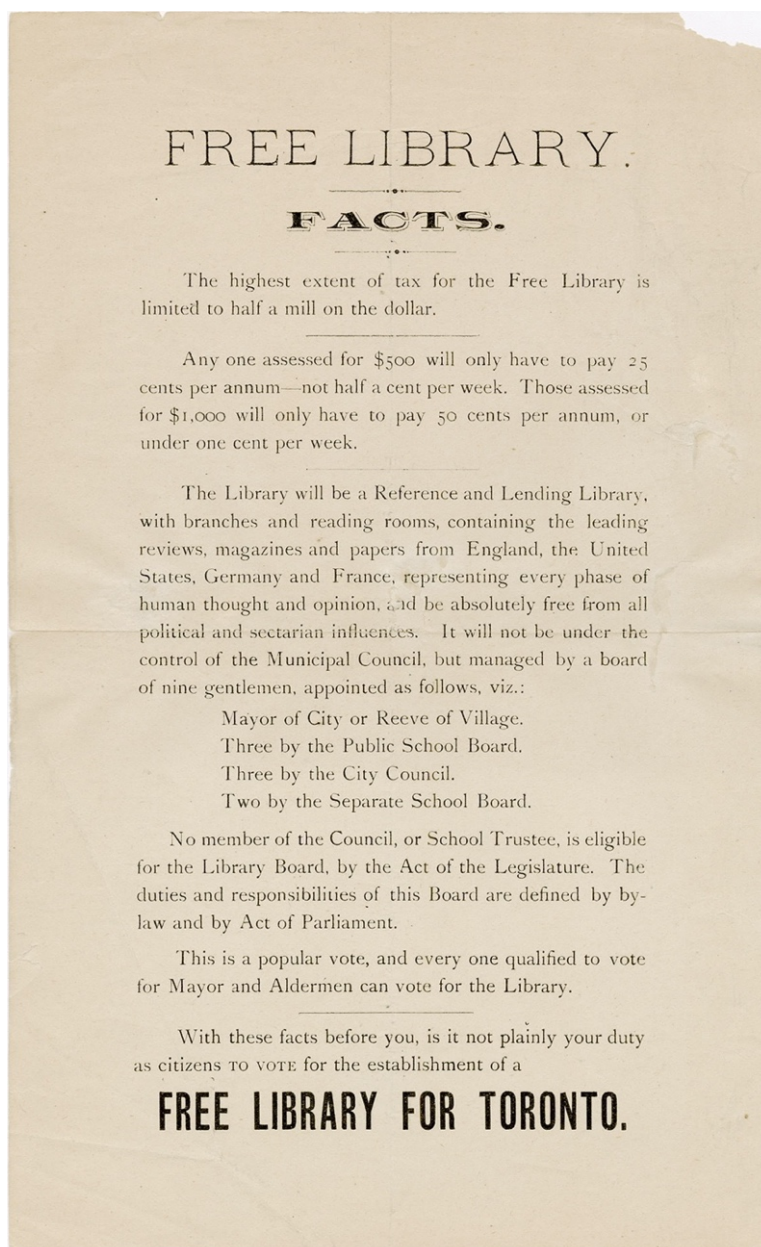


Fig. 1.1 “Free Library Facts” handbill, 1882³⁵

The institutional precursor to the TPL was the Toronto Mechanics’ Institute, a private organization that began operating a lending library and adult education courses in the 1840s. Mechanics’ institutes were part of an educational reform movement originating in Great Britain.

³⁵

Source: Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection, Accession Number: 1882.Toronto Public Library.sb.

The middle-class people who predominated in this movement aimed to influence working-class men's self-education "though the provision of sound reading material" useful for their jobs, such as technical manuals and scientific textbooks.³⁶ Members of these institutes were therefore intended to be men in skilled blue-collar occupations and their apprentices, who were more likely to have at least a basic level of literacy and some formal schooling than other working-class people at the time. Women were prohibited from joining, though in Toronto members could invite women family members to visit the library at select times. By the 1880s, the Toronto Mechanics' Institute was heavily in debt.³⁷ Membership had declined, and with it the organization's finances suffered. The relatively high cost of an annual subscription as compared to average blue-collar wages contributed to this shrinking membership, as did the relative dearth of these workers' free time outside long unregulated working hours. A small grant from the Ontario provincial government was insufficient to meet costs, and the building housing its library and lecture hall was in a state of disrepair due to years of neglected maintenance.

The referendum was a record turnout of the city's voters, who approved the by-law by a significant majority.³⁸ After voters approved the city by-law in early 1883, the board of directors for the Toronto Mechanics' Institute transferred the organization's assets, including the building and contents of the library, to the newly-created TPL.³⁹ The city government subsequently absorbed the institute's debts, and hired its librarian James Bain as the first TPL Chief Librarian.⁴⁰ It took Bain more than a year to re-organize the library and to acquire new materials more suited to the 'general' readership the TPL was tasked with serving. He hired a small staff of young women from middle-class backgrounds to assist him, who he required to remain unmarried and to have completed at least some high school education as a condition of

³⁶ Patrick Keane, "Useful Knowledge and Morality: the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute, 1854-1906," *Adult Education Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1984): 27.

³⁷ Jim Blanchard, "Anatomy of Failure: Ontario Mechanics' Institutes, 1835-1895," *Canadian Library Journal* 38, no. 6 (1981): 395.

³⁸ "Our Free Library," *Globe* [Toronto], 3 January 3, 1883.

³⁹ John Davy, Toronto Free Library: letter of the secretary of the Toronto Mechanics' Institute re transfer of property for the benefit of the free library, 13 March 1883. Toronto Public Library Archives, Baldwin Room Collection, Accession Number 1883Davy.sb.

⁴⁰ Margaret Penman, *A Century of Service: Toronto Public Library, 1883-1983* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1983), 3.

employment. By the following year, the TPL's first main library was open in the former mechanics' institute building five days a week from mid-morning to late evening, but never on weekends or holidays.⁴¹

Dynamics set up in this debate over the TPL's establishment around gender, class, employment, and the value of local taxpayers' money have altered considerably in more than a century since, but their significance has not diminished in Toronto over time. The emphasis in the debate on the education and living habits of men employed in blue-collar occupations here offers a view on historically specific, and deeply ambivalent, relationship between gender, citizenship, and class. The idea that (some) rights and responsibilities could be imparted through the employment relationship became institutionalized in Canada in the post-World War II period as part of an evolving social welfare state system.⁴² Here, an earlier iteration of this relationship can be traced through the by-law debate, with 'the citizen' conceptualized as a male taxpayer and working-class men as the primary beneficiaries of a municipal library financed with these taxpayers' money. This conceptualization of the social role and economic value of public libraries, I show in the next four chapters, evolved historically as it came to centre more specifically on middle- and working-class women, an idealized model of the family, and a self-provisioning worker-citizen figured as a rational economic actor within labour markets and social policy frameworks.

Over the latter half of the 19th century, projects including public libraries proliferated through middle-class social reform movements intended to manage the *effects* of deepening poverty and accelerating civil unrest and to reinforce compulsory waged labour, rather than eradicating the root causes of inequality and injustice.⁴³ These projects were rooted in a notion that "the efficiency of production [...] was directly related to the 'welfare' of the labourers[.]" and therefore required targeted intervention to alter workers' habits within and outside the workplace, in early master planned housing developments, parks, and recreation facilities.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1883-4.

⁴² Judy Fudge, "After Industrial Citizenship: Market Citizenship or Citizenship at Work?" *Industrial Relations/Relations industrielles* 60, no. 4 (2005): 633.

⁴³ Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: the Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Random House, 1993), 7-8.

⁴⁴ Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: the Shaping of the Private Self* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 62-63.

Public libraries were distinct among these projects for a unique potential to link the formal education system with leisure pursuits – the idea that reading could be either instructive or recreational, in other words – and supporting the productivity of the working population by improving their *intellectual* abilities. If workers could learn better working habits, the thinking was, they could become more efficient in doing their jobs and thus contribute to a firm's profitability. Learning good living habits, moreover, could help workers and their families to develop healthy, safe, and orderly lifestyles and home environments. These aspects of earlier public libraries underscore here the importance of bringing work into the frame of analysis, a point that I develop further in the following summaries of the historical periods that form the basis of my analysis in the next four chapters.

Yet this aspect of the history I examine in this study is often overlooked in existing studies. Instead, the establishment of public libraries in North America and Great Britain during the latter half of the 19th century has since been interpreted as an achievement of civic-minded visionaries who were part of a wider 'public library movement'. In Ontario, this movement has been credited with the "progressive, collective effort" that happened to coincide with the failure of the mechanics' institute system.⁴⁵ Yet this effort involved many of the same men who sat on the board of directors for the Toronto Mechanics' Institute.⁴⁶ Thus from another vantage point, what these men achieved was to bail out an organization some of them mismanaged by handing the cost of library service over to the city government. In doing so, they made access to reading material public, in two very specific ways: a potential object of contention among local residents, and a responsibility of the municipal government.

The Carnegie Era of Public Library Building in Toronto (1903-30)

In the first two decades of the 20th century, precisely the obverse relationship between private wealth and public investment spurred a mass wave of public library building across North

⁴⁵ Bruce, *Free Books for All*, 9.

⁴⁶ Bruce, *Free Books for All*, 77-82.

America and Great Britain. Scottish-American industrialist Andrew Carnegie began to donate to local governments the construction costs for new public library buildings, as part of his attempt to reinvent himself as a philanthropist.⁴⁷ This so-called Carnegie era is perhaps the most extensively documented and studied period of public library growth and institutional development. The iconic style of Carnegie era buildings has been a visible presence in hundreds of places for decades, and a commonplace object of nostalgia for generations of readers who had their formative experiences of public libraries in these types of spaces. This ubiquity and emotional resonance can, however, obscure the fact that when new these buildings could be deeply contentious among local residents.⁴⁸

In hundreds of cities and towns across North America, organized workers strenuously objected to the building of Carnegie libraries in their localities. Generally, this opposition centred on Andrew Carnegie himself, and his “tainted money” made by overseeing ruthless exploitation of workers and violent suppression of union organizing as owner of the Carnegie Steel Company in the United States. Even once a local government accepted a grant, the building projects could themselves produce further conflicts. Factions of middle-class people active in city government and municipal politics frequently fought against one another over who should control the building projects and administer the funds. Decisions about where to build, which architectural designs to approve, and whether the funds should pay for a single monumental central library or a set of smaller neighbourhood branches, could prolong the projects for years.⁴⁹

A controversy surrounding Toronto’s first Carnegie library grant in 1903 followed this pattern. Initially, union members campaigned to persuade the city council to refuse Andrew Carnegie’s offer of a grant to build a new central library. Once the city council accepted the offer, despite the opposition from unions, the process of selecting a building site evolved into a yearlong battle between TPL Chief Librarian James Bain, on the one hand, and the majority of city councillors, on the other. At issue was Bain’s insistence that the new building should be located in the

⁴⁷ George S. Bobinski, “Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Library Development,” *American Library Association Bulletin* 62, no. 11 (1968): 1361.

⁴⁸ Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 64.

⁴⁹ Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 19-22.

relatively more affluent, less densely developed, uptown district of the city, north of the relatively poorer and overcrowded downtown where the TPL's original main library stood in the former Mechanics' Institute building.

That unions' campaigns so often resulted in the building of a Carnegie library, regardless of their opposition, has since been interpreted as a failure of organized labour groups to adequately unite local opposition against Andrew Carnegie.⁵⁰ Yet these controversies could still be politically consequential for working-class people as a way to assert some influence in municipal affairs.⁵¹ These controversies took place, as did the TPL's establishment, during a time when restrictions on property ownership still limited voting rights to property-owning men. Here the status of a 'full' citizen who possesses rights and responsibilities continues to be mediated by gender, employment, and class. However, there is scant evidence that union members who opposed the building of Carnegie libraries boycotted the buildings that resulted from offers. Instead, there is far more evidence that readers made use of these spaces, politically and in daily life, in ways that contravened – or simply did not comply with – authoritative middle-class conceptions of Carnegie era public libraries.

The changes that this Carnegie era brought to public libraries were not exclusive to the building projects. This wave of expansion paralleled – but was not formally connected to – an international movement to modernize public libraries centred on the figure of reformer Melvil Dewey. Dewey designed a work process unique to public libraries, by which he intended to optimize organizational efficiency and eliminate any possible waste through strict managerial controls over staff members in the performance of standardized routines and procedures.⁵² A rigid gendered division of labour furthermore characterized Dewey's system. While public library managers, including James Bain in Toronto, had been in the practice of employing mainly young, high-school or college-educated women as assistants and clerks, Dewey designed a system that *institutionalized* the feminization of labour and employment within public libraries.

⁵⁰ Bruce, *Free Books for All*, 177-76.

⁵¹ Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 64.

⁵² Marion Casey, "Efficiency, Taylorism, and Libraries in Progressive America," *The Journal of Library History* 16, no. 2 (1981): 269.

During this important period of public library institutional development and geographical expansion, the TPL had its first wave of growth in the city. Between 1903 and 1930, the TPL gained a total of 19 new branches financed through a combination of these Carnegie library grants and, after 1912, municipal investment.⁵³ By the end of this era in 1930, all of the TPL's original six locations including the former mechanics' institute building had been replaced with new, modern structures designed specifically to function as public libraries. The first two chapters that follow interpret these Carnegie era changes in relation to the city's social geography and employment practices within the TPL. Applying the politics of work, broadly conceived, and feminist geographers' engagements with labour to address these changes, I highlight how historically specific notions of value shaped managerial and bureaucratic efforts to modernize public libraries.

Post-World War II Suburbanization and Mid-20th Century Regionalization (1958-68)

This Carnegie era history forms the background for my examination of a second wave of sustained mass public library expansion in Toronto. Following the end of World War II, the area surrounding the older downtown city of Toronto grew rapidly through astonishingly swift population growth and mass suburbanization. Formerly rural outlying areas were quickly built up into medium-density car-dependent suburbs typical of the postwar landscape in North America. This growth spurred some public investments in infrastructure and services in suburbanizing municipalities adjacent to downtown Toronto. In some places, services that had been provided through private charities and voluntary associations, such as recreation, became municipal agencies funded by local taxes.⁵⁴

Included in these investments were new public library systems. Between 1947 and 1978, about one-third of the TPL's current 100 branches were built through public, chiefly municipal,

⁵³ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, various years 1903-30.

⁵⁴ Deborah Cowen, "Suburban Citizenship? The Rise of Targeting and the Eclipse of Social Rights in Toronto," *Social & Cultural Geography* 6, no. 3 (2005): 335-40.

investments in these areas.⁵⁵ Prior to the 1950s, only the TPL provided comprehensive public library service to residents of downtown Toronto. Outside the city, a patchwork of school libraries and associational libraries – the latter operated by volunteers and funded only partially by local taxes in addition to direct fees charged to users – provided some basic services in a few localities. By the end of the 1960s, all five suburban municipalities adjacent to downtown Toronto had their own municipal public library systems funded by local property taxes and governed by a board appointed from among local residents.⁵⁶

The 1954 creation of the two-tier Metropolitan Toronto (Metro) system of government is here an important frame of reference for this second wave of mass public library expansion I address in this dissertation. Upon its creation, the regional Metro government took over most planning and resource allocation functions for its constituent municipalities that included downtown Toronto and 10 separate jurisdictions. A 1967 merger reduced the number of Metro municipalities to 6, each with their own public library system. Metro municipalities were meant to retain local autonomy over land use planning, business regulation, and some services including recreation and public libraries. In practice, however, the Metro system privileged older and more affluent municipalities that had more seats on the city-regional Metro council. This two-tier system thus frequently sparked conflicts between municipalities over resource allocation.⁵⁷

In a series of cases across the Metro area, residents protested these cuts at public meetings, through telephone and letter writing campaigns, and by writing to newspaper editors, demanding that their local library boards refuse to close branches. Around this time, public library workers in Metro suburbs began to form labour unions, starting in the North York Public Library (NYPL) located north of the older downtown. By engaging feminist geographers' analyses of labour organizing and critiques of labour geographers' tendency to treat unionization as the pre-eminent form of workers' collective agency, I address how this early unionization of public library workers in Metro Toronto took place simultaneously to widespread public sector unionization in

⁵⁵ Based on data collected from Toronto Public Library website branch histories and library board annual reports.

⁵⁶ *Metropolitan Toronto Library Board Annual Report 1967-9.*

⁵⁷ Betsy Donald, "Spinning Toronto's Golden Age: the Making of a 'City that Worked,'" *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 34, no. 12 (2002): 2127-2154.

postwar Ontario, and also drew from a longer history of public library employee organizing begun during the Carnegie era.

The Current TPL

The current TPL is a direct result of a 1998 amalgamation of all 6 Metro municipalities into the City of Toronto. Conservative Party government under Premier Mike Harris forced this amalgamation through the Ontario provincial legislature despite widespread opposition across the political spectrum. When this controversial amalgamation took place, it created a city with sharp political divisions and starkly uneven patterns of resource allocation and service provision dating from the old Metro system and amplified by federal and provincial policy reforms.⁵⁸ Across Canada, rescaling social policy toward more local levels of government has had an important role in advancing neoliberal policy frameworks since the 1980s.⁵⁹ The restructuring of federal-provincial cost-sharing agreements to give provinces increased autonomy facilitated further downloading to municipalities. In Ontario, the government under Mike Harris devolved the administration of social programs to municipalities which have limited powers to raise revenues through taxation.⁶⁰ Childcare, ambulance service, police departments, social housing, and public health clinics became the responsibility of municipalities, along with all existing municipal services like public libraries. Municipal governments dramatically reshaped service provision, cutting programs and relying on heavy deficit spending to absorb initial costs.⁶¹

Of the many direct results of this amalgamation, which have been a focus of extensive scholarly scrutiny in the years since, was one that has received considerably less attention from urban

⁵⁸ Roger Keil, "'Common-Sense' Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 578-601.

⁵⁹ Janine Brodie, "Citizenship and Solidarity: Reflections on the Canadian Way," *Citizenship Studies* 4, no. 4 (2002): 377-394.

⁶⁰ Lucy Luccisano and Amy Romagnoli, "Comparing Public Social Provision and Citizenship in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: Are There Implications for a North American Space?" *Politics & Policy* 35, no. 4 (2007): 716-751.

⁶¹ Rianne Mahon, "Of Scalar Hierarchies and Welfare Redesign: Child Care in Four Canadian Cities," in *Leviathan Undone? Towards a Political Economy of Scale*, ed. Roger Keil and Rianne Mahon (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2009), 209-230.

researchers. Upon amalgamation, the 5 suburban Metro public library systems were consolidated with the older TPL downtown, with a centralized administration and governed by a single library board. At the time, the new TPL's branch network consisted of 98 separate libraries. One neighbourhood branch that opened in 2004 was financed by the City of Toronto government. The most recent two TPL branches were financed through a combination of municipal investment and private property developers' payments to the city government, the latter of which is currently fifteen percent of the TPL's total funds for building renovations and new construction.⁶² Under Section 37 of the *Ontario Planning Act*, property developers can make payments to city governments in exchange for exceptions to building permit height and density restrictions. These Section 37 funds, as they are often called, are used to pay for a range of public amenities, and are allocated through the Toronto City Council. This process is negotiated among councillors, who tend to vote in favour of motions if they do not feel their own electoral wards will be negatively affected. Amid Toronto's protracted and highly speculative condominium construction boom, a great deal of this money comes from condo developers whose projects have accelerated the mass displacement of racialized and low-income people. This discretionary planning policy has created uneven patterns of resource allocation and amenity building, concentrating influence in the hands of city councillors most successful in obtaining these funds, and shifting the relationship of 'public goods' to private wealth.⁶³

Currently, the TPL is the largest and most heavily used public library system in the world, with 100 branches located throughout the city's neighbourhoods receiving over than 18 million in-person visits each year. Of the 70% of local residents to make use of the TPL's services and resources annually, around 40% are registered for a library card in a given year, which allows them to borrow physical and electronic items from the TPL's collection. The TPL loans to these borrowers over 30 million items each year, which is the conventional measurement of library use. A further 1 million people attend educational programs and special events within branches

⁶² "Library Finance," Toronto Public Library, accessed January 27, 2020, <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/library-finance/reports/2018.jsp>.

⁶³ Jeff Biggar, "Between Public Goals and Private Projects: Negotiating Community Benefits for Density from Toronto's Urban Redevelopment," (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2017), 20.

yearly.⁶⁴ Since amalgamation, the proportion of the local population who access public library services and resources each year has increased by about 40%, while the population has grown just over 14%. Despite this extraordinary growth, the TPL's annual operating budget allocated from local property taxes by city government bodies has overall declined. Moderate budget improvements between 2000-10 and since 2014 (usually less than three percent) restored some of these funds amid rising costs due to increased use and inflation.⁶⁵

A dramatic confrontation during summer 2011 through winter 2012 over the first of these recent TPL budget cuts is the focus of Chapter 5, drawing on context presented in the previous chapters to historicize these events. This conflict inspired my decision to focus my study in Toronto, and I describe the trajectory of my study in the second section that follows. This citywide campaign to prevent a proposed 10% cut to the TPL budget that arose in July 2011 and continued through the following winter when unionized TPL employees went on strike. During this period, thousands of local residents who identified themselves as coming from across the city's perceptibly polarized social geography protested the proposed cut online, at city government consultation meetings, and through local news coverage. I call this campaign Our Public Library, taking the name from a website sponsored by the Toronto Public Library Workers' Union (TPLWU) that circulated an online petition and news updates throughout this period.

At the time, no one I spoke to about the campaign – colleagues, other people at protests and public meetings, union leaders, or experienced activists – could recall an occasion when public libraries were so passionately defended from budget cuts or the potential branch closures that many feared would result. My historical study shows that this case was only the most recent such event, which was unique in that it involved a mobilization of local residents and unionized public library workers *together* against the same budget cut. This opposition largely centred on the figure of controversial then-mayor Rob Ford, whose office had proposed a City of Toronto operating budget proposal that included cuts to nearly every social service in the city.

⁶⁴ Toronto Public Library Board, "2018 Annual Performance Measures and Benchmarking," April 29, 2019, <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2019/apr29/17-2018-annual-performance-measures-and-benchmarking-combined.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Govind C. Rao, *The Great Equalizer: the Case for Investing in the Toronto Public Library* (Toronto: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2012), 7-12.

Understanding why TPL became a central object of contention with this widely disputed city budget guided my analysis of these events, which came around the same time as similar public library budget cuts in hundreds of places across North America and the United Kingdom after the 2008 collapse of global financial markets.

Although a fiscal crisis currently afflicting public libraries frames my study, my historical focus on the above-introduced eras shows that even *during* periods of sustained population and economic growth, governance decisions about public library buildings, budgets, and service provision have been focused on the containment of costs, in particular, and implicitly, labour costs. My analysis of historical archives furthermore documents that budget cuts have generally *preceded* substantial economic downturns, for example the Great Depression of the 1930s and mid-1970s oil shock, which may later be cited to legitimate fiscal austerity measures. The Our Public Library campaign mobilized after the 2008 financial collapse; however, public library budgets in Toronto were declining before amalgamation and barely reached previous levels by 2010. This is not to say that economic cycles determine public library budgets and resistance to cuts, but rather to gesture toward the local and institutional dynamics I discuss in this dissertation.

These changing forms of investment are not uniformly the object of my analysis in all of the forthcoming chapters. While I do focus extensively on the controversy over Toronto's first Carnegie library grant, I do not, for example, elaborate on the 2 most recent buildings partially financed with Section 37 funds. Instead, these key periods of investment in new public library buildings guide my timeline, helping me to develop major themes around the influence of private wealth in defining what, and importantly *where*, public goods can be provided. My analysis would helpfully inform, I think, future studies on changing patterns of investment in public library building construction or renovation in the context of neighbourhood redevelopment, which has so far not been a sustained focus of scholarly study.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ For one example of this focus, see: Shannon Mattern, *The New Downtown Library: Designing with Communities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

The selective timeline I have based my study on does not provide a full history of the TPL since its establishment. Nor do I aim to address all aspects of public library service provision throughout the TPL's history. Rather, I have selected these periods of time for their importance to developing a critically theorized and empirically grounded understanding of the present. This choice was driven, in large part, by the archive I collected, which centrally informs my arguments and can be surprisingly sparse during some periods and astonishingly voluminous in others. My focus on central library buildings with consolidated administrative headquarters are also guided by this archive. Moreover, these buildings have a prominent symbolic and physical place within localities, as a locus of public library activity and focal point for periodic controversy.⁶⁷

While assembling my archive for this study, I took the decision to exclude times when the building of new branches had stagnated or slowed considerably (the Great Depression of the 1930s, both world wars, and the years between about 1978-98), periods that I think would each benefit from their own focused studies. There is some precedent for these choices to limit my historical investigation, for example commentaries suggesting that public libraries operate in distinct and sometimes radically different ways during times of war and profound social upheaval.⁶⁸

I have also largely set aside studies of education and literacy that focus on schools rather than libraries, though insights from these studies are still important for my analysis in each period I study. High school completion rates in Ontario, for example, did not reach 40% of students until the immediate post-World War II period; by the 1970s, this rate had increased by about 25%.⁶⁹ The public school system in Ontario has undergone similar forms of restructuring to those I

⁶⁷ Gloria J. Leckie and Jeffrey Hopkins, "The Public Place of Central Libraries: Findings from Toronto and Vancouver," *The Library Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2002): 326-372.

⁶⁸ Steve Witt and Kerry Smith, "Libraries in Times of Crisis," *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions* 45, no. 1 (2019): 3-4; W. Boyd Rayward and Christine Jenkins, "Libraries in Times of War, Revolution, and Social Change," *Library Trends* 55, no. 3 (2007): 361-369.

⁶⁹ R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris: the Reshaping of Ontario's Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 14.

investigate in the context of public libraries in Toronto.⁷⁰ Studies of schools have more fully engaged with the development of official multiculturalism and bilingualism in Canada since the early 20th century, in relation to changes in federal immigration policy frameworks and practices of citizenship.⁷¹ Education scholars have, at times, engaged social reproduction theories to study how class difference and cultural distinction are transmitted and reconstructed as they persist across generations.⁷² There is also a growing set of literature on geographies of education, in which some researchers draw from feminist understandings of reproductive labour.⁷³

The conceptual framework for my analysis, as explained in the opening sections of this chapter, is deliberately limited to enable a study focused on the interactions between notions of work and constructs of value. This framing also means that some important and insightful themes are largely excluded from the scope of my analysis in the following chapters. Readers of this dissertation might ask, for example, whether or how the vast and rich critical literatures on modernities, settler colonialism, and the bourgeois public sphere can be linked to public libraries. Most certainly so, and I think these themes would provide the basis for fascinating and provocative study that my arguments in this dissertation could contribute to. My choice to set aside these questions arises from the archival materials I collected, and the analytical strategies I used for my study, as I describe below, which guided my inquiry toward the themes I develop in this dissertation.

The Study: Data, Methods, and Limitations

⁷⁰ Alan Sears, *Retooling the Mind Factory: Education in a Lean State* (Aurora: Garamond Press, 2003).

⁷¹ Robert Charles Vipond, *Making a Global City: How One Toronto School Embraced Diversity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

⁷² Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 1976).

⁷³ Nicola Ansell, "Substituting for Families? Schools and Social Reproduction in AIDS-affected Lesotho," *Antipode* 40, no. 5 (2008): 802-824; Sarah L. Holloway and Heike Jöns, "Geographies of Education and Learning," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37, no. 4 (2012): 482-488; Johanna L. Waters, "Emergent Geographies of International Education and Social Exclusion," *Antipode* 38, no. 5 (2006): 1046-1068.

To conduct my study, I combined in-depth qualitative and historical research tools. My approach to this study was loosely inspired by insights from extended case studies designed “to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future.”⁷⁴ My methodological approach has two main components. First, grounded in the work of feminist economic geographers, to uproot race- and gender-neutral narratives of epochal economic restructuring by studying how present changes may be more in continuity with prior eras than the recent past.⁷⁵ Second, to read institutional and official archives both ‘against’ the grain to document resistance, and ‘along’ the grain to scrutinize complexities and heterogeneities among the powerful.⁷⁶ This second thread in my approach involves viewing archives as sites of knowledge production, rather than of the retrieval of information to extract detail from documents, to turn archival silences into a terrain for interrogating who, and what, is excluded.⁷⁷

As sites of knowledge production, archives are always unsettled and incomplete. Yet I found myself bewildered at how fragmented the archive I collected for my research actually was. One might assume that public libraries, or any type of library, would keep comprehensive records due to their general function of making information available. Archivists and librarians are conventionally trained in the same university faculties or departments, including at the University of Toronto, yet each is a distinct profession in information science. Libraries, in other words, are not archives even though a given library may contain an archival collection, and vice versa.

Collecting this archive took me all over the city, across downtown and suburbs, from municipal to provincial government archives to the TPL’s special historical collections, and community archives. I was surprised to find that some of the most useful materials for my study were in University of Toronto libraries – some virtually across the street from my office on campus. I have separated the bibliography of this dissertation section into two main parts. The first lists

⁷⁴ Burawoy, “The Extended Case Method,” 5.

⁷⁵ Doreen Massey, “Flexible Sexism,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 1 (1991): 31-57; Linda McDowell, “Life Without Father and Ford: The New Gender Order of Post-Fordism,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, no. 4 (1991): 400-419.

⁷⁶ Sarah De Leeuw, “Alice Through the Looking Glass: Emotion, Personal Connection, and Reading Colonial Archives Along the Grain,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 38, no. 3 (2012): 273-281.

⁷⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 87.

archives and manuscript collections I visited, and provides a list of published documents and periodicals used as primary sources in my research. The second part provides full bibliographic details for the secondary sources I consulted for the preparation of this dissertation.

I began my analysis of textual data by reviewing annual library board reports, which are listed in the published primary sources section of the bibliography, first sampling from periods of time I intended to focus on in my study and then filling in the gaps based on key informant interviews and secondary studies that helped me to identify important periods in the TPL's history. The annual reports included qualitative summaries from board chairs, the head librarian, and the supervisors of various departments and special divisions within the organization. The reports also listed statistics documenting circulation (the conventional measurement of library use), registration of borrowers (an indication of the extent of library use within the city), and the size and content of collections (which suggest the relative emphasis on different types of materials or genres of literature at a given time). Evaluation studies by management consultants, user surveys, and reports on specialized aspects of library service by individual librarians, mainly from the mid-20th century, provided me with rich sources of statistical data (especially where annual reports were not available to me, as in the case of some suburban systems) and revealing commentary. I also consulted files on public library workforce education and training, unions' collective bargaining and grievances with employers, architects' drawings and scrapbooks, and library board meeting minutes.

I have used some of these statistics to document patterns in library use or staff workloads. Where possible, I have used other primary and some secondary sources to situate these patterns in relation to changing demographic and residential structures in the city. Reliable information about *who* made use of public libraries according to demographic categories (age, gender, race, ethnicity, occupation, level of education) was not systematically recorded for much of the history I studied, and so drawing these inferences was necessary to reconstruct past events in daily life. The TPL does now collect limited information through voluntary surveys to create demographic profiles of library users, but the dearth of historical records would render a comparison of changing patterns over the timeline I studied unreliable. Put differently, it would be impossible

for me to generalize about who did (or did not) use public libraries in a given moment or over time, in terms of their demographics or place of residence.

As with other historical studies of public libraries, electronic databases and digitized archives proved invaluable for my research. Digital indexes permit fine-grained keyword searches in vast historical newspaper databases that would have been impossible through older manual systems. With my TPL library card, I could too access historical newspaper databases, the *Globe and Mail* (Toronto) and the *Toronto Daily Star*, and find even quite brief references to events I was investigating that helped me to illustrate a more detailed picture of past-presents. Some of my most fruitful searches were for single words or short phrases (such as the name of a specific branch, libraries, or library card which were sometimes in ‘local notes’ sections of newspapers that took up no more than a few lines of tiny print.). The expertise of UTL and TPL reference librarians was essential for my ability to perform these searches. Most electronic databases automatically return thousands of results in which the word ‘public library’ appears anywhere in the full bibliographic information of a publication (for example, as the publisher or institutional depository). The TPL Archives was, at the time I conducted my research, undergoing a re-organization; a great volume of material had remained uncatalogued following amalgamation. The digitization of these archives later on, while writing this dissertation, was a fortuitous coincidence.

I began my analysis of historical data first by organizing materials chronologically. I then grouped materials into thematic categories, focusing on overt moments of protest or conflict between key actors. These strategies helped me not only to document specific cases, but also to recognize dynamics between budget cuts, service expansions, staffing levels, and rates of library use over time. From there, I sorted out primary sources by location in the city and event, to create collections of materials grouped by theme, place, and time.

Readers of this dissertation may wish to find a more comprehensive historical account of the TPL, which can be found in a range of non-scholarly sources, some of which I refer to as background in the next four chapters. Readers might also ask if a specific local branch was part of events I describe, how library board members decided where to local new branches, who used

it and their demographic information, what they read and how they made use of the information they accessed, along with a host of relevant and interesting questions that exceed the limits of my archival sources. Where possible, I have tried to cite information that can answer some of these questions using data from census surveys or secondary sources; where relevant I have attempted to indicate if data was unavailable or unreliable.

My analysis in Chapter 5 is a departure from the historical focus of the preceding ones, in which I aim to synthesize insights drawn from my archival research to re-examine a contemporary case study. That chapter is based mainly on textual analysis of social media posts, speeches and exchanges during city government meetings open to members of the public, and official city budget documents. I supplemented these texts with qualitative semi-structured interviews with key informants, who are listed in Appendix A, and my observations during public meetings and events. The proceedings of two city government consultation meetings that are central focus of my analysis in that chapter were broadcast live on local access television, and I obtained video recordings from the City Hall Information Division afterward. I reviewed the 30 hours of these recordings, noting the frequency of mentions of the TPL or public libraries, and creating transcripts of deputations from local residents that focused exclusively or centrally on the TPL budget. I also reviewed social media posts pertaining to these meetings and the surrounding events, finding them using the hashtags #OurPublicLibrary, #SaveOurLibrary, #TOPoli (on Toronto municipal politics) and #StopTheCuts (a citywide campaign against all service cuts).

Because the minutes from these meetings are in the public domain, I have not anonymized the names of speakers. However, I have chosen to refer to them by the given names rather than provide their full legal names used to sign up for deputation. For elected officials, prominent public figures, and key informants, I refer to their titles and full names. I do not describe people who appeared in these videos, posted on social media, or otherwise publicized their statements by ascribed characteristics unless they did so themselves. Readers of this dissertation may want to know how many people of colour, immigrants to Canada, first-generation Canadians, un- or under-employed, unhoused, or queer people took part in the events I describe, where they live in the city, or how they use their local libraries. My reliance on textual, online, and news media sources in Chapter 5 chapter may present a limitation to my analysis but, I think, it can also

depict how debates and discussions circulated at the time. Importantly, when these events took place I was not yet formally conducting research for this study and therefore could not obtain university ethics clearance to interview participants while these events were ongoing. These events inspired my decision to focus my study on the TPL, which is why I have retained this case study in the dissertation. The key informant interviews I completed were crucial to the first phase of my project, as I discovered how deeply historical librarians and library board members can be in their thinking, and in several cases directed me to specific parts of the city and periods of time that became the focus of my investigation.

One of the most difficult challenges I encountered in the first phase of my research, which I had intended to base primarily on interviews with current public library workers, was recruiting participants for my study. Although in casual conversation, some library workers would share their thoughts with me, all I asked refused my requests for a formal interview. A few stated, without any prompting an explanation, that their jobs and the branches they worked in were so unique that it would be impossible for an outside researcher like myself to adequately anonymize their identifying details. The problem with this potential lack of anonymity was either that their supervisors would be able to figure out who they were from my study, which could have negative consequences for them at work, or that they were unsure whether they were allowed to speak to me about their jobs at all. Others never responded to requests for interviews, though I was somewhat more successful in contacting union officials, administrative officers in the TPL, and current and former library board members. Importantly, my initial research activities took place less than a year after a round of layoffs preceded by a contentious collective bargaining process that evolved into a two-week strike. My decision not to obtain approval for my research from the TPL administration, because I did not want to be seen as a researcher for these workers' employer, also limited my access to these potential participants.

My historical research was, to a great degree, guided by my effort to understand what was happening at this time, but quickly became the primary focus of my study. In doing this research, I uncovered a wealth of archival material that propelled my thinking in directions I had not anticipated, as described in the above discussion of my arguments and conceptual framework. Having completed this historical research, I would now ask completely different questions than

what I included in my earlier interviews, based on the findings that centrally inform the arguments I advance in this dissertation.

A final note, on the conclusions I have drawn from my data analysis. My findings in this dissertation should not be read as a criticism of any individuals currently involved with the TPL as people, nor as an attempt to put personal blame on people who are fulfilling the job duties or regulatory requirements assigned to them. What I have aimed to do, instead, is to offer a historical re-reading that emphasizes continuities and changes between the current moment and previous eras, which can, I think, provide some illuminating insights about re-occurring patterns and systemic features of public library governance and finances.

The Literature: Places of Work and Sites for Social Reproduction

A broad concept of work, as introduced above, provides the entry point to my analysis in what follows, while social reproduction is the crucial pivot for engaging this framing with geographers' insights on the contested social production of space. Feminist scholars who broaden the concept of work to encompass reproductive labour have expanded the scope of their inquiry beyond productive waged labour, which has been the conventional analytical category among labour researchers in human geography and political economy.⁷⁸ Reproductive labour, these feminist scholars have argued, involves complicated webs of mental, manual, and emotional labour necessary for maintaining capitalist social relations, on an expanded scale, and regenerating the ability of individual workers to return to work each day – processes that remain largely unaddressed in Marxist and neoclassical economic frameworks.⁷⁹ This labour may be paid or unpaid, formally or informally organized, and take place across spheres of production and reproduction, and it is historically allocated among women, people of colour, (im)migrant

⁷⁸ Kendra Strauss, "Labour Geography II: Being, Knowledge, and Agency," *Progress in Human Geography* 44, no. 1 (2018): 155-156.

⁷⁹ Tithi Bhattacharya, *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* (London: Pluto Press, 2017); Shirin Rai, Catherine Hoskins, and Dania Thomas, "Depletion: the Cost of Social Reproduction," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16, no. 4 (2014): 86.

workers, (post)colonial subjects, and their descendants.⁸⁰ These overlapping racial and gendered divisions of reproductive labour allocate these workers into labour market hierarchies, perpetuating the devaluation of their labour as ‘nonwork’ or ‘unproductive,’ thereby “marshal[ling] difference into [these] categories of value.”⁸¹

By broadening work in these ways, feminist social reproduction debates have, since the 1970s, aimed to describe what reproductive labour consists of, as a means to theorizing how this labour is the basis for the overall reproduction of capitalism through daily life.⁸² This specificity, some have argued, can support a unified theory of capitalism that accounts for the creation of *all* forms of value, whether or not this value is accounted for in monetary terms.⁸³ Such theorization reveals that only a fraction of value-generating activities unfold within the realm of commodity production.⁸⁴ Instead, most of these activities take place through reproductive relations, which directly subsidize production through the externalization of costs outside wages and concomitant expansion of wageless work to sustain the total labour force. The goal with such analyses is, however, not to simply ‘revalue’ practices to ascribe a market value or monetary cost, but rather to illuminate how capital accumulation is dependent upon externalizing the costs and responsibilities for social reproduction onto the private ‘domestic’ realm of the household and family.⁸⁵ These arrangements are, crucially, racialized and gendered in ways that are

⁸⁰ Carmen Teeple Hopkins, “Introduction: Feminist Geographies of Social Reproduction and Race,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 48 (2015): 138.

⁸¹ Marion Werner et al., “Feminist Political Economy in Geography: Why Now, What is Different, and What For?” *Geoforum* 79 (2017): 2.

⁸² Sue Ferguson, “Building on the Strengths of the Socialist Feminist Tradition,” *Critical Sociology* 25, no. 1 (1999): 5-6.

⁸³ Alessandra Mezzadri, “On the Value of Social Reproduction: Informal Labour, the Majority World and the Need for Inclusive Theories and Politics,” *Radical Philosophy* 2, no. 4 (2019): 33-41.

⁸⁴ Diane Elson, “The Value Theory of Labour,” in *Value: The Representation of Labour in Capitalism*, 2nd Ed., ed. Diane Elson (London: Verso Books, 2016), 115-180.

⁸⁵ Diane Elson, “The Economic, the Political, and the Domestic: Businesses, States, and Households in the Organisation of Production,” *New Political Economy* 3, no. 2 (1998): 193-194; Nancy Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids?: Gender and Structures of Constraint* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1994); Antonella Picchio, *Social Reproduction: the Political Economy of the Labour Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

“geohistorically specific” and subject to “heteropatriarchal sexual matrices” that are legitimated and maintained through formal and informal social institutions and ideologies.⁸⁶

Furthermore, theorizing the links between social reproduction and capitalism’s reproduction as a *socio-economic* system helps to foreground the creation of *multiple* forms of value: “the production of value ‘at work’ and the social reproduction of labour-power along with the conditions that enable its deployment.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, my analysis in what follows demonstrates how public libraries have been produced to manage the reproduction of these multidimensional *values*. In the next four chapters, I address a range of activities engaged in the production of these values that may be formally recognized as work, yet are socially and economically devalued.⁸⁸ For example, I show that the waged labour of public library workers, was overtly feminized and deliberately deskilled by managers incorporate a workforce of more highly qualified but relatively lower paid employees than other white-collar municipal government jobs. Meanwhile, a range of public library users’ everyday activities within these spaces – wandering around, resting, or socializing in a reading room, for example – may be outwardly discerned as unproductive uses of time and thus constituted historically as potential objects for intervention. Such interventions have been, I show, intended by senior managers, administrators, and policymakers, to make public library service outwardly *appear* economically valuable, for example as a return on investment to local taxpayers who finance this service provision. These practices are historically specific and socially differentiated, and change over time and across geographical locations within the city.

While a broad concept of work is the entry point to this analysis, feminist theories of social reproduction are the crucial pivot for connecting the waged labour performed by public library workers and the activities of public library users within these spaces through their (presumed,

⁸⁶ Michelle Buckley, “Between House and Home: Renovations Labor and the Production of Residential Value,” *Economic Geography* 95, no. 3 (2019): 215.

⁸⁷ Katharyne Mitchell, Sallie A. Marston, and Cindi Katz, *Life’s Work: Geographies of Social Reproduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 1.

⁸⁸ Emma Dowling, “Valorised but not valued? Affective remuneration, social reproduction, and feminist politics beyond recovery,” *British Politics* 11, no. 4 (2016): 453-454.

and evolving) roles *as workers*. This use of social reproduction theory is primarily an analytical lens, rather than a descriptive category, through which work can be understood as activities that may (re)produce social relations and multiple forms of social and economic values.⁸⁹ The claim here is not that library work or library use ‘*is* social reproduction,’ but rather that these realms of social activity are indeed tied to wider *processes* of social reproduction the provision of informational resources through these places overlap with I daily life. This choice to centre social reproduction in my analysis therefore allows me to think about the *overall* work entailed in making and remaking public libraries historically, including that of political contestation, in terms of the ultimate *effects* of this work, socially and economically. This choice may invoke a tension around the use of the term social reproduction, for example as feminist theorists have acknowledged that the term can be applied in ways that appear to merely describe activities ‘as work’ and thereby implicitly aim to ‘revalue’ practices devaluated as ‘unproductive.’⁹⁰ My use of the term is emphatically *not* to pursue this line of thinking. Rather, I use social reproduction analytically *connect* practices of public library workers and public library users that, without a concept of social reproduction, may otherwise be analytically separated and reduced to dualistic categories of analysis (as waged/unwaged labour, for example).⁹¹

What Kind of Place is a Public Library?

Among Library and Information Studies (LIS) scholars, the recent fiscal crisis afflicting public libraries in North America and the UK has been widely interpreted as a crisis of *purpose* that requires rethinking what kind of *place* a public library is, or could be.⁹² Solutions these scholars have offered have often been rooted in a longstanding perception among librarians that they must

⁸⁹ Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, “Foreword” in *Precarious Worlds: Contested Geographies of Social Reproduction*, Katie Meehan and Kendra Strauss, eds. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015): ix.

⁹⁰ Meg Luxton, “The Production of Life Itself: Gender, Social Reproduction, and IPE,” in *Handbook on the International Political Economy of Gender*, ed. Juanita Elias and Adrienne Roberts (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2018), 42-45.

⁹¹ Cinzia Aruzza, “Functionalist, Determinist, Reductionist: Social Reproduction Feminism and its Critics,” *Science and Society* 80, no. 1 (2018): 12.

⁹² Candy Davis, “Librarianship in the 21st Century – Crisis or Transformation?” *Public Library Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2008): 57-58.

constantly demonstrate their ability to ‘keep up with the times’. At times, this perceived imperative to ‘remain relevant’ has contributed to the hasty uptake of trends and fads. The risk can be an uncritical acceptance of a wide range of fashionable, and even contradictory, ideas – econometrics, corporate management lingo, ‘innovation hubs’ – are just more ways to ‘remain relevant’.⁹³

An influential redefinition of ‘library as platform’, for example, deliberately invokes the idea of a digital platform software developers use to build new virtual applications. Also called Library 2.0, this idea promises unprecedented inclusivity, by making access to information available ‘everywhere, all the time’. Yet this access is implicitly online, which overlooks whether the physical place of a public library building has any continued importance. Based in a premise that ‘the Internet’ democratizes communications, this model neglects persistent inequalities in online connectivity due to the high cost of purchasing personal computers and Internet connections.⁹⁴

Another popular redefinition of ‘library as third place’ is aimed at making the physical place of a public library building more widely accessible, and therefore useful, within a locality.⁹⁵ This model is based on an argument that urban dwellers need a “third place” where they can go and simply be, and are neither at work nor at home. Confusingly, the original argument explicitly excludes public libraries (along with hospitals) because these institutions have their own internal regulatory and administrative requirements.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the “third place” idea has informed a range of efforts to attract new users into public libraries, by making these places look and feel more like the surrounding urban environment. This idea is why, for example, many public library buildings now house coffeeshops and retail outlets.⁹⁷ Yet “third places” are implicitly places of

⁹³ Kathleen Scheaffer and Geoffrey Little, “Champions of Digital Literacy: Fostering a World of Informed Digital Producers,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 40, no. 3-4 (2014): 408.

⁹⁴ Shannon Mattern, “Library as Infrastructure,” *Places Journal* (June 2014): n.p, Accessed 17 January 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22269/140609>

⁹⁵ Hui Lin, Natalie Pang, and Brendan Luyt, “Is the Library a Third Place for Young People?” *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 47, no. 2 (2015): 145-155.

⁹⁶ Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1999), 203.

⁹⁷ Cathryn Harris, “Libraries with Lattes: the New Third Place,” *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services* 20, no. 4 (2007): 145.

consumption, in that the act of making small purchases is conflated with equal access and inclusivity.

Each of these responses, albeit for different reasons and to different effects, conceives the value of public libraries in market terms. Critics of these responses have thus sought to uphold the fundamental *democratic* values they see public libraries as inherently upholding: rights to information, education, access to culture, civic participation, and social inclusion.⁹⁸ These critiques are often rooted in a “progressive interpretation of public library history” that positions public libraries as material evidence of an innate humanitarianism within democratic society.⁹⁹ This interpretation has persisted powerfully in defining “the traditional mission of the public library” as one of enabling people to fully develop their intellectual abilities so they can be(come) contributing members of society.¹⁰⁰ This definition has circulated through professional training programs, official institutional mission statements, mainstream news media, and into popular consciousness.

Calls to ‘go back’ to this traditional mission have been advanced as a way to defend public libraries from the external and existential threat of competitive market forces.¹⁰¹ Yet the progressive interpretation of public library history ignores that these institutions were established by middle-class people who were as much (if not more so) concerned with managing the effects of rising economic inequality and accelerating civil unrest in the latter part of the 19th century. These middle-class progressives were engaged in a range of efforts to assert their political, cultural, social, and economic dominance as a class, and they developed institutionally differentiated bureaucratic and professional arenas to manage working-class people’s lives by disseminating different aspects of their lives across sites and networks (for example, housing,

⁹⁸ John Buschman, “The Library in the Life of the Public: Implications of a Neoliberal Age,” *The Library Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (2017): 55-70.

⁹⁹ Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: the Public Librarian and American Society* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), xi.

¹⁰⁰ Colleen Alstad and Ann Curry, “Public Space, Public Discourse, and Public Libraries,” *Libres* 13, no. 1 (2003): 1.

¹⁰¹ John Buschman, *Dismantling the Public Sphere: Situating and Sustaining Librarianship in the Age of the New Public Philosophy* (Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 2003).

health, welfare, education, and so on.)¹⁰² An uncomplicated recitation of the purportedly humanitarian democratic principles of past eras may thus be sufficient to mount a defense of public libraries in the present.¹⁰³ What may be required, instead, is a return to this history to understand how public libraries became what they are today, as a means to grappling with the difficult question of what these spaces may soon become. I offer my study not as proof of an anticipated future, but rather to provoke this historical re-thinking.

For critical human geographers, public space is the pre-eminent site for political struggle. In this literature, the publicness of a place is not pre-given but rather must be ‘taken and made’ when marginalized people gather to proclaim their right to use and inhabit the city.¹⁰⁴ A rich range of case studies in this literature explore the political potential of places including parks, plazas, playgrounds, sidewalks, business improvement areas, and community gardens.¹⁰⁵ By making their dissent ‘seen and heard’ in these places, they thereby represent themselves as democratic citizens. These struggles are therefore also understood to be demands for recognition that marginalized people ‘count’ as members of the public. Because this recognition is grounded in marginalized people’s experiences of social difference, their struggles thereby expand an understanding of ‘the public’ to incorporate more ways of being and belonging in a city.¹⁰⁶ Space is thus imperative for members of social groups to assume publicness, allowing people and their actions to matter in some significant way.

¹⁰² Dorothy Thomas, *The Everyday World as Problematic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 217.

¹⁰³ Garrison, *Apostles of Culture*, xii.

¹⁰⁴ Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ Lynn Staeheli and Donald Mitchell, *The People’s Property?: Power, Politics, and the Public* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Setha Low and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Katharine N. Rankin and Jim Delaney, “Community BIAs as Practices of Assemblage: Contingent Politics in the Neoliberal City,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 43, no. 6 (2011): 1363-1380; Setha M. Low, *On the Plaza: the Politics of Public Space and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Steve Herbert, “Contemporary Geographies of Exclusion I: Traversing Skid Road,” *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 5 (2008): 659-666; Nicholas Blomley, *Rights of Passage: Sidewalks and the Regulation of Public Flow* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ Lynn Staeheli, “Citizenship and the Problem of Community,” *Political Geography*, 27 no. 1 (2008): 5-21.

The insights from this literature promise to powerfully illuminate the politics of public libraries I examine in this dissertation. Yet these geographers have overall neglected these spaces in their case studies due, I think, to a pronounced tendency to prioritize spectacular protests that occupy outdoor places on state property. This tendency has contributed to a perception that politically consequential struggles require the simultaneous co-presence of people within the same space to verbally articulate and symbolically express resistance.¹⁰⁷ Encounters between marginalized people and police or property managers are, furthermore, often treated as more politically authentic or inherently radical, which can restrict understandings of the political.¹⁰⁸ This limited conceptualization of the political may arise from geographers' somewhat inconsistent uses of public sphere theory, to draw selectively on notions of publicness as bracketing (the setting aside of 'particular' interests or personal experiences of inequality and injustice to secure a realm of open debate or social stability among people who can formally be treated as equal, even if in practice they are not) and contestation (the disruption to these norms, whether through an 'unbracketing' that allows inequalities into a debate, or a more radical upheaval that overturns these norms completely).¹⁰⁹

A long tradition of scholarly thinking closely associates public space with evolving notions of citizenship, participation, and democracy, extending from classical Greek philosophy to modern urban theory and its contemporary critiques.¹¹⁰ Indeed, it is *through* the city that groups may constitute themselves as citizens, though encounters with one another and through the differences among them that the city itself generates.¹¹¹ Because of this close association, public space has become, for some geographers, "virtually synonymous" with questions of rights and

¹⁰⁷ Setha M. Low, "Public Space and the Public Sphere: the Legacy of Neil Smith," *Antipode* 49 no. S1 (2015): 155-156.

¹⁰⁸ Carl Cassegård, "Contestation and Bracketing: the Relation between Public Space and the Public Sphere," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, no. 4 (2014): 689-703.

¹⁰⁹ Cassegård, "Contestation and Bracketing," 692-693. Here the author elaborates on key theories of the public sphere to distinguish how human geographers have drawn, variously, from the work of Jurgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt, Georg Simmel, Richard Sennett, Erving Goffman, Jane Jacobs, Nancy Fraser, and many others. These literatures are too vast and complex to adequately summarize here, and Cassegård's discussion provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of these literatures in relation to geographers' studies of public space.

¹¹⁰ Ash Amin, "Collective Culture and Urban Public Space," *City* 12, no. 1 (2008): 6.

¹¹¹ Isin, *Being Political*, 283.

social justice, with public space and the public sphere twinned “crucible[s] of participatory democracy.”¹¹² Access to space is therefore deeply political, and conversely exclusion from space is a contentious political act that repudiates the needs and desires of the governed.¹¹³

While theorizations of public space and the public sphere are rooted in distinct intellectual traditions with their own theoretical and methodological imperatives – human geography and political theory – the two share a genealogy in the rise of capitalist modernity.¹¹⁴ However, *concept* of the public sphere as a historically evolving notion of who and whose interests may be counted as those of ‘the public’ can be a fruitful way to engage with the politics of public space. In my study, I engage this concept primarily in relation to scholarly studies of the (re)inscription of gender ideologies in public space that have altered notions of the private, feminized space of domesticity and the family vis-à-vis the (re)articulation of the market and politics as a masculine realm, and the activities upheld as appropriate to each sphere during a particular historical configuration in ways that point directly to the state’s role in providing (or withholding) the physical infrastructure and material goods supporting social reproduction.¹¹⁵ A study of public libraries investigating the potential links between these intellectual traditions through these everyday spaces would give a more concrete basis for interrogating how the politics of public space are linked to changing conceptualizations of the public sphere – a worthy topic of study, and one that I must set aside from my inquiry here as it would be far too expansive a scope to adequately address in a dissertation focused on questions of work and labour.

For geographers, public libraries might thus, as indoor public spaces, seem more like state institutions than the open, potentially emancipatory places linked to democratic rights to free speech and assembly (a great deal of these cases are based in the US). Furthermore, geographers’ restricting political struggle to instances where marginalized people confront authority figures who are closing down their access to or restricting their uses of space, might further direct these

¹¹² Blomley, *Rights of Passage*, 11; Susan Ruddick, “Constructing Difference in Public Spaces: Race, Class, and Gender as Interlocking Systems,” *Urban Geography* 17, no. 2: 133.

¹¹³ Tchoukaleyska, “Public Space and Memories of Migration,” 1102.

¹¹⁴ Low and Smith, *The Politics of Public Space*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Sallie Marston, “A Long Way from Home: Domesticating the Social Production of Scale,” in *Scale and Geographic Inquiry: Nature, Society, and Method*, ed. Eric Sheppard and Robert B. McMaster (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 178.

geographers' attention away from public libraries if such exclusions are not immediately prevalent within a locality. Alternatively, it could be that the politics of local disputes over public library buildings, budgets, or governance decisions seem less politically radical or authentic if they take place through official institutional channels (such as library board meetings). That, and how, these channels are exclusionary has been the focus of a great deal of discussion among planning scholars examining notions of public accountability and planners' responsibilities to communities through consultation. Yet an approach that grounds, in place, 'top down' power relations can help to flesh out the complexities within dominant ideologies and their operation through global capitalism¹¹⁶ Feminist researchers on work and labour have, in particular, drawn from the conceptual tools of economic geography and Marxist theory to think about a wide range of practices and forms of agency among women working in all economic sectors and employment relationships.¹¹⁷ I take an approach in this dissertation that is deeply informed by these studies of work, drawing from the theorizations of feminist scholars researching across conceptual binaries and geographies.

Put differently, I found in my research little evidence that conformed to critical human geographers' models for identifying meaningful political struggles over access to, or inclusion within, public space. A small set of public space studies by geographers have considered public libraries: through controversies over architectural design; as sites exemplifying the consequences of urban austerity; as state property; and as inclusive civic spaces.¹¹⁸ A few have occasionally

¹¹⁶ Linda McDowell, "Elites in the City of London: Some Methodological Considerations," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 30, no. 12 (1998): 2133-2146; Karen Ho, "Situating Global Capitalisms: a View from Wall Street Investment Banks," *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (2005): 68-96; Matthew Sparke, "Political Geography: Political Geographies of Globalization (2) – Governance," *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 3 (June 2006): 357-72; Anthony Ince et al., "British Jobs for British Workers? Negotiating Work, Nation, and Globalisation through the Lindsey Oil Refinery Disputes," *Antipode* 47, no. 1 (2015): 139-157.

¹¹⁷ Priti Ramamurthy, "The Cotton Commodity Chain, Women, Work, and Agency in India and Japan: the Case for Feminist Agro-food Systems Research," *World Development* 28, no. 3 (2000): 551-558; Rosemary Hennessy, *Fires on the Border: the Passionate Politics of Labor Organizing on the Mexican Frontera* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Melissa Wright, *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism*. (New York: Routledge, 2013); Nilda Flores-González et al., *Immigrant Women Workers in the Neoliberal Age* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Lorena Muñoz, "Agency, Choice and Restrictions in Reproducing Latina/o Street-vending Landscapes in Los Angeles," *Area* 48, no. 3 (2016): 339-345.

¹¹⁸ Loretta Lees, "Ageographia, Heterotopia, and Vancouver's New Public Library," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 15, no. 3 (1997): 321-347; Fran Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift

listed public libraries among other examples of public spaces.¹¹⁹ These insightful engagements have contributed to the public space literature, yet have sometimes been premised on the notion that public libraries ‘are now’ becoming more neoliberal through the incursion of market relations or have ‘always been’ socially cohesive and democratically inclusive. I situate my historical study in these critical lacunae, offering that public libraries need not be viewed as either (potentially) radically emancipatory nor (fully) authoritatively disciplined state institutions to be sufficiently important in daily life to warrant sustained scholarly inquiry. It is therefore the overall scholarly contribution of my study to bring a historical analysis of public libraries into conversation with feminist and critical theories of work and the production of space, while it is my emphatic political purpose to critically re-think this history.

Some library and information studies (LIS) scholars have called for this kind of approach, to place ‘public libraries in the lives of users’ to overcome the theoretical limitations created by an exclusive focus within their discipline on ‘users in the life of the library’.¹²⁰ A few have specifically cited that the unique insights of urban and economic geographers may provide the conceptual tools needed to pursue this research agenda.¹²¹ Siobhan Stevenson has offered that reading government information policy by thinking about public library use as volunteer labour and librarianship as intellectual work can situate practices in wider relations of consumerism and commodification of information.¹²² My study responds to this theoretical and methodological provocation, contextualizing public libraries within daily life in the city and in broader historical events.

City,” *City* 17, no. 3 (2013): 312-324; Lisa M. Freeman and Nick Blomley, “Enacting Property: Making Space for the Public in the Municipal Library,” *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37, no. 2 (2019): 199-218; Sofya Aptekar, “The Public Library as Resistive Space in the Neoliberal City,” *City & Community* 18, no. 4 (2019): 1203-1219; Ruth Fincher and Kurt Iveson, *Planning and Diversity in the City: Redistribution, Recognition and Encounter* (New York, Macmillan International Higher Education, 2008), 185-95.

¹¹⁹ Ash Amin, “Collective Culture and Urban Public Space”; Setha Low and Kurt Iveson, “Propositions for More Just Urban Public Spaces,” *City* 20, no. 1 (2016): 31.

¹²⁰ Gloria J. Leckie, “Three Perspectives on Libraries as Public Space,” *Feliciter* 50, no. 6 (2004): 233-236; Christine Pawley, “Retrieving Readers: Library Experiences,” *The Library Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2006): 379-387.

¹²¹ Gloria J. Leckie, Lisa M. Given, and John Buschman, *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from Across the Disciplines* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010).

¹²² Siobhan A. Stevenson, “Immaterial Labour, Public Librarians, and Third-Generation Public Libraries,” *New Library World* 117, no. 3-4 (2016): 186-200.

My focus on work, labour, and social reproduction may not be substantially taken up in critical human geographers' studies of public space, but it does speak to ongoing debates among urban geographers on the contested social production of space. Although much of these debates have proceeded as though gender and social reproduction are inconsequential to analysis of the urban, studies that draw from Henri Lefebvre's work have conceptually centred dynamics around these constructs. Lefebvre's thinking was based on an acknowledgement that the family is a pivotal social institution and the household a politically consequential material site for examining elite domination and the colonization of everyday life by dominant ideologies under capitalism.¹²³ This approach resonates strongly with feminist geographers' engagements with social reproduction in cities. In this way of engaging with the urban, social reproduction can be seen as part of the daily routes, networks, and routines of urban dwellers that connect places spanning the spheres for "work, 'private' life, and leisure."¹²⁴ Inherent in the everyday is the constant possibility of disruption to mundane routines in and regulated uses of urban space, presenting the potential for uprooting the domination, inequalities, and social differences that characterise daily life.¹²⁵ Human geographers have considered this possibility through analyses of contested and creative uses of public space, by mobilizing Lefebvre's notion of spatial practice: ways that urban inhabitants appropriate space through their daily movements and everyday routines, and in so doing remake space in ways that may be unscripted or unsanctioned by planners, developers, architects, and engineers.¹²⁶

¹²³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden: Blackwell, 1991), 48; Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 7.

¹²⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38.

¹²⁵ Sarah Marie Hall, "Revisiting Geographies of Social Reproduction: the Everyday, the Endotic, and the Infra-ordinary," *Area* 00 (2020): 1. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12646>.

¹²⁶ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 288-289; Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism"; Patricia Ehrkamp, "'I've had it with them!' Younger migrant women's spatial practices of conformity and resistance," *Gender, Place and Culture* 20, no. 1 (2013): 19-36; Vanessa Parlette and Deborah Cowen, "Dead Malls: Suburban Activism, Local Spaces, Global Logistics," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 4 (2011): 794-811; Larry Knopp, "Ontologies of place, placelessness, and movement: Queer quests for identity and their impacts on contemporary geographic thought," *Gender, Place and Culture* 11, no. 1 (2004): 121-134; Phil Hubbard and Teela Sanders, "Making space for sex work: Female street prostitution and the production of urban space," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 1 (2003): 75-89; Anna J. Secor, "The veil and urban space in Istanbul: women's dress, mobility and Islamic knowledge," *Gender, Place and Culture* 9, no. 1 (2002): 5-22.

By assembling a set of conceptual tools drawn from the literatures discussed above, I situate my study across labour studies and urban geography to make a unique contribution to each field of scholarly inquiry. While labour researchers, including feminist scholars of work, labour, and social reproduction, have thus far neglected to examine public libraries, urban geographers have hitherto mainly made limited connections between public libraries and critical theories of public space. My contributions to these literatures are, however, not merely additive but rather interrogate important omissions and elisions in each field of study. I see these contributions as threefold and overlapping: an account of the evolving role and socially constructed value of providing cost-free access to information in the city; an examination of the deliberately feminized labour that maintains informational resources and provides public library service; and a critical re-interpretation of these aspects of public library history to inform an analysis of recent union-led mobilization in the city to demand continued access to these spaces and the informational resources provided therein as a struggle over public space and in the context of urban austerity and its attendant shifting geographies of social reproduction. Put differently, without the perspectives I draw from these scholarly literatures, my study would lack a basis for connecting political struggles among public library users and public library workers, or alternatively, would omit crucial historical evidence attesting to the continuities of competitive market relations within these spaces from the past to the present.

By bringing public libraries into conversation with these social reproduction debates, my study is also in dialogue with discussions among critical scholars who study infrastructure as process or social relations rather than a physical ‘big thing’.¹²⁷ Some have begun to point to social reproduction as a way to describe what infrastructures *do*.¹²⁸ These discussions highlight a number of important limitations in feminist social reproduction debates. There has been, for example, a tendency in the social reproduction literature to re-entrench heteronormative

¹²⁷ Stephen Graham and Colin McFarlane, *Infrastructural Lives: Urban Infrastructure in Context* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

¹²⁸ Lauren Berlant, “The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times*,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 3 (2016): 393–419; Ara Wilson, “The Infrastructure of Intimacy,” *Signs* 41, no. 2 (2016): 248–280.

sex/gender binaries by focusing on the category of ‘woman’ when describing feminized reproductive labour.¹²⁹ Furthermore, few analyses of social reproduction have adequately attended to gender, race, and class together, while infrastructure scholars have engaged more deeply with theories of racial capitalism and black feminist thought that can better explain the devaluation of reproductive labour as racialized differentiation.¹³⁰ A preoccupation with the idea of care work – which among feminist geographers has been at times treated as virtually equivalent to social reproduction – can fall also into a presumption that caring engenders positive ‘good feelings’.¹³¹ In contrast, a focus on (re)distributive aspects of social reproduction can show how infrastructures may “promote some forms of life and avert others.”¹³²

In sum, the subsequent analysis of public libraries offers an understanding that the publicly-funded provision of informational resources through these places hails people as socially differentiated agents in processes of knowledge production. These processes of knowledge production overlap with political-economic and socio-cultural aspects of social reproduction: creating knowledge about work and home life, transmitting job skills and practical skills for daily living, and learning how to be(come) a member of social groupings.¹³³ The boundaries between these aspects importantly blur in daily life, with the ongoing reorganization of arrangements among states, markets, and households that may subsidize or divest from social provisioning.¹³⁴ I situate public libraries at the blurring of these boundaries, as sites where this restructuring is localized, and specifically around access to information. This way of thinking about social reproduction allows for both a description and analysis of reproductive labour, to

¹²⁹ Max Andrucki, “Queering Social Reproduction, or, How Queers Save the City,” *Society & Space* (2017), Accessed 8 March 2020: <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/queering-social-reproduction-or-how-queers-save-the-city>.

¹³⁰ Kendra Strauss, “Labour Geography III: Precarity, Racial Capitalisms and Infrastructure,” *Progress in Human Geography* 44, no. 6 (2019): 1216-1217.

¹³¹ Michelle Murphy, “Unsettling Care: Troubling Transnational Itineraries of Care in Feminist Health Practices,” *Social Studies of Science* 45, no. 5 (2015): 719.

¹³² Michelle Murphy, “Distributed Reproduction, Chemical Violence, and Latency,” *The Scholar & Feminist Online* 11, no. 3 (2013): n.p.

¹³³ Cindi Katz, “Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction,” *Antipode* 33, no. 4 (2001): 712-713.

¹³⁴ Isabella Bakker and Rachel Silvey, *Beyond States and Markets: the Challenges of Social Reproduction*. (New York: Routledge, 2008): 3.

highlight how material daily practices in distinct spatialities may be organized to facilitate life (for some) or inhibit human flourishing (for many).¹³⁵

The Chapters

To clarify the thematic focus of my analysis in what follows, I have separated the next four chapters into two parts, “Places of Work” and “Sites for Social Reproduction.” The first two chapters that make up Part I, “Places of Work,” examine a series of conflicts during the early 20th century Carnegie era of public library building in Toronto by engaging with the politics of work, broadly conceived, to begin to connect historical struggles among public library users and public library workers. In Chapter 2, “Readers, Books, and Urban Space,” I argue readers became incorporated into these spaces, politically when they protested a 1903 Carnegie library grant offer and in their daily lives when they made use of reading rooms, through historically specific notions of work and ‘nonwork’ meaning their presumed relationship to the creation of value. These notions were crucially articulated through shifting constructs of class, race, and ethnicity situated within the city’s rapidly changing and deeply divided social geography. Chapter 3, “Behind the Desk,” continues with this Carnegie era history to evaluate the feminization of work and gendered employment relationships within the TPL. In this chapter, I develop an analysis of public library work as mental, manual, and emotional labour, and address public library workers’ early workplace organizing effects predating their ability to unionize in the mid-20th century.

Chapter 4 begins Part II, “Sites for Social Reproduction,” by exploring the post-World War II suburbanization of public library service provision around Toronto. Through this period, I argue, public library service became centred on an ideal of the private family in the private space of the household with public library space reconceived as “Living Rooms for (new) Canadian and (new) Suburban Families.” Chapter 5, “Our Public Library,” synthesizes the analysis in the preceding chapters to historicize a recent case study about a campaign to prevent public library closures that evolved into a strike by unionized TPL workers that closed all of the city’s branches

¹³⁵ Katie Meehan and Kendra Strauss, *Precarious Worlds: Contested Geographies of Social Reproduction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 1.

for two weeks. In this chapter, political claims to public space made by public library users present a different way of thinking about social reproduction than in the preceding chapters: here, social reproduction is part of a broader geography of austerity and state divestment that these actors in the campaign were resisting through their accounts of the purpose and value of public libraries in their daily lives. The concluding chapter brings together these discussions about the past and present TPL, to consider a how possible future politics of work may be engaged through public libraries based on key findings of my study.

CHAPTER 2

Readers, Books, and Urban Space: Creating “the Modern Library” During the Early Carnegie Era in Toronto (1903-13)

The early 20th century was profoundly transformational for public libraries, and not only in Toronto. Much of what today remains familiar within a public library building dates from this time. Among the most enduring changes originating in this Carnegie era of public library building are those that systematically re-ordered relationships among readers and books in urban space. In the first two decades of the century, Carnegie library grants deployed personal wealth in the form of philanthropic capital as investment in the built environment. This private investment spurred a minor construction boom in new public library buildings across North America and Great Britain. Local governments propelled this wave through the 1920s, as elected officials began to allocate the funds to pay for buildings designed for the express purpose to function as public libraries.¹ The architects of these municipally-financed buildings frequently copied a ‘Carnegie type’ design. By the 1930s, these “simply massed, symmetrically arranged, and classically detailed” buildings were virtually synonymous with public libraries generally, including in places where Andrew Carnegie never made a single grant.²

Inside Carnegie (type) libraries, the interior layout could accommodate a then-new and now-standard open access system that places collections on shelves located within readers’ reach. This system allowed readers – for the first time in Toronto, as elsewhere – to independently browse shelves and make their own selections outside the direct supervision of library staff members. Readers could learn how to navigate this new spatial arrangement with a self-service catalogue file, containing index cards corresponding to each item in a collection. The role for

¹ Shannon Mattern, *The New Downtown Library: Designing with Communities* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 1847.

² Abigail A. Van Slyck, “‘The Utmost Amount of Effectiv [sic] Accommodation’: Andrew Carnegie and the Reform of the American Library,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 50, no. 4 (1991): 359.

staff members became reconceived as one of guidance and welcoming, as they instructed readers in the use of this specialized equipment and standard procedures. A monumental and deliberately imposing central desk fixture afforded a vantage point from which to oversee readers in these newly self-guided routines of daily library use. Together, these changes were intended to create a new kind of public space: “the modern library,” which was both a model physical design and organizing ideal for an international movement to modernize public libraries.³

The remainder of this chapter explores the creation and contestation of “the modern library,” its idealized vision and material expression, in Toronto during the early part of the Carnegie era expansion of the Toronto Public Library (TPL), which I date from about 1903-13 for the purposes of this analysis.⁴ Throughout, I argue that understanding this project requires engaging with historically specific notions of work and nonwork that were shifting in the early 20th century. The somewhat expansive category of nonwork includes consumption and leisure, as well as paid and unpaid domestic and care work performed through social relations conceptually associated with the private sphere of the household and family.⁵ The recurring other of this nonwork is the idle time between tasks when one is not obviously engaged in an activity directed toward the creation of value. While this idleness may connote temporary or long-term unemployment, as it did colloquially in the early 20th century, it can also indicate deeper non-conformity to the norms of compulsory waged labour.⁶ These deeply gendered constructs of

³ Nan Dahlkild, “The Emergence and Challenge of the Modern Library Building: Ideal Types, Model Libraries, and Guidelines, from the Enlightenment to the Experience Economy,” *Library Trends* 60, no. 1 (2011): 18.

⁴ My purpose in this chapter, as explained the introductory chapter of this dissertation, is not to document a history of this Carnegie era, in Toronto or elsewhere, but rather re-interpret an archive through feminist and critical geographers’ theorizations of work and the production of space. This Carnegie era history has been extensively recorded and analyzed in numerous studies. See, for example: Margaret Beckman, Stephen Langmead and James Black, *The Best Gift: Carnegie Libraries in Ontario* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984); Lorne Bruce, *Free Books for All: the Public Library Movement in Ontario, 1850-1930* (Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1994); Oriel Prizeman, *Philanthropy and Light: Carnegie Libraries and the Advent of Transatlantic Standards for Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Brendan Grimes, *Irish Carnegie Libraries: a Catalogue and Architectural History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998); Robert S. Martin, *Carnegie Denied: Communities Rejecting Carnegie Library Construction Grants, 1898-1925* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993).

⁵ Kathi Weeks, *The Problem With Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2011), 74.

⁶ Susan Buck Morss, “The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering,” *New German Critique* 39, no. 2 (1986): 137.

work, nonwork, and idleness were articulated through racial constructs that were themselves a mechanism for the fragmentation of the working population in ways that re-embedded capitalist relations of domination in processes of production and reproduction.⁷

To develop this argument, I evaluate an archive of the TPL's original, 'old' central library building and the 'new' Carnegie-financed Central Reference Library that replaced it as the administrative headquarters and primary service location. This archive is composed mainly of newspaper articles, official documents, photographs, and architectural plans, supplemented by some critical studies of Carnegie era public libraries. The questions that guide my analysis of this archive are as follows. Who did the men in control of the TPL's finances, governance, and management imagine to benefit from "the modern library," and how? And, what can interrogating this imagination disclose about their conceptualizations of readers in terms of historically specific constructs of gender, race, and ethnicity as articulated with the more obvious categories of class and occupational status? Furthermore, how did readers' own daily practices – their uses of these spaces to rest, socialize, or wander – diverge from this dominant imagination?

The remainder of this chapter proceeds from here as follows. First, I sketch the old central library around the turn of the 20th century to provide a basis of comparison for the Carnegie era changes that took place within the TPL thereafter. Second, I contextualize a series of conflicts over the new Central Reference Library in the city's changing social geography at the time. Third, I discuss the floor plan of the new Central Reference Library. Following this discussion, I consider how readers made use of this new kind of public library space after the introduction of open access throughout the TPL.

The Old Central Library, Circa 1900: Spatial and Social Control Over Readers

The TPL's original main library was located in the former Toronto Mechanics' Institute building, as noted in the previous chapter (Figure 2.1). By the turn of the 20th century, the building was in

⁷ Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance [1980]," in *Essential Essays*, ed. David Morley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 216.

a very poor condition due to years of neglected maintenance, before and after the TPL's establishment in 1883, and heavy daily use. TPL Chief Librarian James Bain summarized the problems with the building as follows during a library board meeting in 1903:

The public library building, having been erected in 1854, had become so rotten that on Saturday three men were required to bail out water which leaked through one section of the library. To place the library in anything like a safe condition would necessitate an outlay of at least \$15,000. The heating apparatus had been put in in 1872, and such was the condition of the pipes that sufficient heat could not be derived through to keep the temperature above 55 degrees [Fahrenheit] on a cold day. The attendants had found it impossible to work in the library, and many readers had been driven out by the cold.⁸

Inside, he added, the reading rooms were dimly lighted with gas lamps that emitted soot and fumes. There was an insufficient amount of space to store the library's collections, and overstuffed bookcases made the building a fire hazard. The annual insurance premium alone, the chief librarian estimated, exceeded what it would cost the city to maintain a newer building.



Fig. 2.1 The old central library building exterior, 1890⁹

⁸ "Carnegie's Offer to Toronto," *Globe* [Toronto], January 28, 1903.

⁹ *Source*: Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection. Accession Number: B 11-46a.

Little of what could today be familiar within a public library would have been found in this place.¹⁰ There were, for example, no bookshelves for readers to browse. Instead, the collections were stored in a closed-off area accessible only to library staff members. The procedure for obtaining a book was therefore time-consuming for both readers and staff attendants. A reader had to first request a specific title listed in the library's catalogue, which was printed in a large bound volume.¹¹ Though grouped into general subject categories, such as fiction or biography, the catalogue was organized like a bibliography or directory page with the author's surname listed first and little descriptive information beyond the title. The attendant would then go back into the storage area retrieve the item on the reader's behalf, returning to take another request if it was already loaned out.

It was an official TPL policy that attendants could refuse to bring out any materials they deemed inappropriate for a reader's age or interests, however they might have made that determination. Nowhere in the building was anyone allowed to audibly converse, consume food or beverages, or to wander around without an obvious destination. Children under the age of 14 were prohibited from entering any of the reading rooms, though they could visit to borrow from a selection of "juvenile" literature. There was no separate area for children's use, nor did librarians read stories aloud to groups of small children. (Such 'specialized' library services, I detail in the next chapter, were innovations of the later Carnegie era.)

The policies on borrowing were similarly restrictive. The application for a library card required either the signature of a local taxpayer, who could be an employer or family member, or a C\$3.00 deposit as a guarantee against the loss or damage of an item. For the average waged worker in Toronto at the time, this amount was the equivalent of one to two days' pay. Possessing a library card only allowed a reader to borrow one book or magazine at a time, for

¹⁰ *By-laws, Rules and Regulations of the Toronto Public Library*, Toronto, n.p. 1885. Annual reports in the following years indicate that these policies remained in place until 1908 at the latest. *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, various years 1885-1908.

¹¹ *Catalogue of the Central Circulating Library, Arranged Under Authors* (Toronto Public Library: Toronto, 1901).

two weeks maximum.¹² The card itself cost ten cents (slightly less than an hour of average wages), and it was designed like a punch card or multi-fare transit ticket with blank spaces to record due dates.¹³ Once the spaces were all filled in, the card would have to be replaced with a new one for an additional ten-cent fee. A card was only valid at the library where it was issued, meaning that a reader had to choose whether they would exclusively borrow from the central library or one of the TPL's five small branches located mainly in neighbourhoods to the far west end of the city.

These policies were standard for public libraries in North America and Great Britain at the time. For public library managers, like Bain, the purpose was to *control* readers' access to collections. These primarily middle-class men, including Bain, sometimes promoted public library use as a part of working-class people's self-education. However, they often held quite suspicious – even contemptuous – views about working-class people. They therefore designed and enforced policies that deliberately restricted borrowing to only those readers who these men felt could be entrusted with the responsibility. By physically preventing readers from taking books into their own hands unsupervised by staff, these managers believed they could preserve the value of expensive items purchased with local taxpayers' money. A secondary purpose of these policies was to reduce – if not eliminate – the popularity of fiction. This purpose was informed by Victorian belief that popular novels, such as 'sentimental' romances and adventures, introduced 'improper' ideas into the heads of easily-influenced readers. Rudimentary methods for ascertaining the contents of new books received made it difficult for librarians to evaluate, in advance of circulating the item, the perceived quality of the subject matter. The solution, as these managers saw it, was thus to discourage the reading of fiction generally.¹⁴

¹² Mary Mackinnon, "New Evidence on Canadian Wage Rates, 1900-1930," *The Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue Canadienne d'Economie* 29, no. 1 (1996): 118.

¹³ Toronto Public Library, Central Circulating Library, No. 7, Toronto: Alexander & Cable Lithography Company (1886), Baldwin Collection, Accession Number: 1886.Libraries.sb.

¹⁴ Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: the Public Librarian and American Society*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), xi-xxvi.

The was itself divided between two separate types of libraries, and further segmented into a series of enclosed reading rooms. This spatial division was also a widespread practice among mangers, who believed that different ‘classes’ of readers had divergent interests that required dedicated facilities.¹⁵ The ‘serious’ readers in the more ‘scholarly’ reference library were therefore isolated on the top floor in a studious atmosphere (Figure 2.2), away from the ‘casual’ readers who visited the circulating library below to borrow ‘light’ or ‘entertaining’ books and magazines. An attached reading room for ‘general’ use and a women’s-only reading room completed the circulating library.¹⁶ A disused lecture hall on the ground floor had been converted into a newspaper reading room, where local broadsheets and other news periodicals were on display for viewing (Figure 2.3).¹⁷



Fig. 2.2 Old central reference library interior, 1900¹⁸

¹⁵ Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 120-122.

¹⁶ A Booklover, letter to the editor, *Toronto Daily Star*, December 17, 1904.

¹⁷ JT Sunderland, letter to the editor, *Globe* [Toronto], August 17, 1901.

¹⁸ *Source*: Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection. Accession Number: X71-2.



Fig. 2.3 Newspaper room interior, old central library, 1900¹⁹

This arrangement of the reading rooms can here be understood as a spatial expression of the Victorian gender ideology of separate spheres.²⁰ This ideology, feminist geographers have argued, was essential to the rise of modern cities.²¹ Public and private space became conceptually differentiated according to the normative gender roles ascribed to each sphere of social activity. The streets were linked to masculinity and productive relations in the wider public realm of the market, with the home as a privatized arena for domesticity and family life.²²

¹⁹ Source: Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection. Accession Number: X71-5.

²⁰ Abigail Van Slyck, "The Lady and the Library Loafer: Gender and Public Space in Victorian America," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no. 4 (1996): 221.

²¹ Liz Bondi and Damaris Rose, "Constructing Gender, Constructing the Urban: a Review of Anglo-American Feminist Urban Geography," *Gender, Place & Culture* 10, no. 3 (1996): 229-45; Kim England, "Towards a Feminist Political Geography?" *Political Geography* 22, no. 6 (2003): 611-616; Sallie Marston, "The Social Construction of Scale," *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 2 (2000): 235.

²² Liz Bondi, "Gender, Class, and Urban Space: Public and Private Space in Contemporary Urban Landscapes," *Urban Geography* 19, no. 2 (1998): 161.

This ideology was, importantly, never fully coherent, nor did it mean that women were physically confined to their homes.²³

Rather, what this idealized separation did, at least in part, was to make women's presence in public a potential object of deep anxieties among middle-class people.²⁴ Around this time, in Toronto as elsewhere in North America and western Europe, middle-class urbanites were engaged in an active and conscious project to remake cities into places where they felt at home, in an environment that catered to their material needs and desires for comfort.²⁵ Pivotal to this project was the construction of rigid, if only ever conceptual, boundaries between women's roles in the private space of the middle-class family home and the public spaces of the city. More women entered the labour market around this time, in 1901 constituting 13% of the total paid workforce in Toronto, employed mainly in piecework, sweated labour, and domestic service.²⁶ The visibility of employed women in public thus contradicted this gender ideology, by making it apparent that women participated in the labour market and worked for wages.²⁷

Middle-class people could therefore accept 'respectable' women's uses of public space only when their activities were tightly circumscribed to the realm deemed most appropriate for their gender: the family home.²⁸ Because these women's 'nonwork' in the household could be conflated with consumption or leisure, activities associated with these pursuits became legitimated as reasons to venture out into the city: shopping for food and clothing, promenading through fashionable districts, visiting museums, attending concerts. These privileged women's

²³ Doreen Massey and Linda McDowell, "A Woman's Place?" in *Geography Matters! A Reader*, ed. Doreen Massey and John Allen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 137.

²⁴ Liz Bondi and Mona Domosh, "On the Contours of Public Space: a Tale of Three Women," *Antipode* 30, no. 3 (1998): 270.

²⁵ Peter G. Goheen, "The Assertion of Middle-Class Claims to Public Space in Late Victorian Toronto," *Journal of Historical Geography* 29, no. 1 (2003): 74.

²⁶ Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, *Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1870-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 26.

²⁷ Bondi and Domosh, "On the Contours," 270.

²⁸ Mona Domosh, "Those 'Gorgeous Incongruities': Polite Politics and Public Space on the Streets of Nineteenth-Century New York City," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 2 (1998): 222-223.

idleness in public was therefore a spectacle: “being seen to be conspicuously idle” was a mark of their status that distinguished them from employed women.²⁹ The provision of a women’s reading room in the old central library building thus accommodated middle-class preferences for separating ‘respectable’ women from all others in public.

Women’s reading rooms were commonplace within public libraries in cities across North America and Great Britain at the time, but were totally non-existent in the Carnegie era buildings that proliferated thereafter. In reflection of the wider gender ideology that designated women’s ‘proper’ place as the family home, these rooms were usually furnished with domestic materials found nowhere else in a public library: upholstered seating, carpets, curtains, paintings, vases of flowers. These rooms, and the gender ideology on which they were based, could function as a way to exclude women by making them feel more conspicuous or out of place in reading rooms for ‘general’ use. Some women benefitted from this spatial separation, by finding some solitude and a place of retreat from the city streets while out for the day and away from their household responsibilities, while for many this arrangement constituted yet another informal control over their uses of public space.³⁰

Feminist geographers who have studied this gender ideology in cities have generally overlooked public libraries. However, these places were unique among the legitimated destinations for ‘respectable’ middle-class women. A public library was not only somewhere for these women to go, but also to *linger*. An afternoon viewing art prints in the reference library, choosing a book to borrow from the circulating library, or perusing a magazine in the women’s reading room connoted cultural sophistication and intellectual ability. Elsewhere in public, women’s lingering was a gesture of loitering denoting “the close connection between the debasement of women’s sexuality and their presence in public space.”³¹

²⁹ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 98.

³⁰ Van Slyck, “The Lady and the Library Loafer,” 221.

³¹ Buck Morss, “The Flaneur,” 119.

Women in Toronto were such avid readers, the chief librarian reported in 1900, that it was impossible to accurately measure how much they read and which subjects they preferred. Interviewed in a local newspaper, the chief librarian stated that staff attendants routinely observed women arriving with multiple library cards in hand, which were issued to other members of their households.³² For a particularly enthusiastic reader, this practice could have been a strategy to borrow multiple item at once in contravention of the policy to lend out only one book or magazine at a time. It could also have been a way for women to obtain materials they might have otherwise been refused, by using a husband's or son's card. That the chief librarian knew of this practice and did not prevent it suggests a tacit acceptance that choosing and borrowing reading material for the family was simply another errand for women to perform while out in the city.

The newspaper room was, in contrast, implicitly designated for men working downtown to quickly stop in and catch up on current events. Access to this ground level room was relatively open to the street level outside, unencumbered by the turnstiles that metered access to the circulating and reference libraries upstairs. The lack of any seating was deliberate, to discourage anyone from occupying a paper for more than a few minutes. To prevent theft, the papers were chained down on waist-high steeply-pitched tables.

Designating separate rooms for periodicals was one strategy that public library managers used as a way to control the varied uses of 'mixed classes' of readers.³³ Containing the more 'ephemeral' news periodicals that were published more frequently, and typically on the cheapest available paper, enacted a "cultural hierarchy of reading material" within the space of a public library building.³⁴ A newspaper room was one place where men who were not at work could go during inclement weather or to occupy their time during the day, and complaints about their uses of these spaces occasionally appeared in anonymous letters to local newspaper editors.³⁵ The visible

³² "Woman's Place in Public Library," *Toronto Daily Star*, November 22, 1900.

³³ Charles Johanningsmeier, "Welcome Guests or Representatives of the 'Mal-Odorously Class'?" Periodicals and Their Readers in American Public Libraries, 1876-1914," *Libraries & Culture* 39, no. 3 (2004): 268.

³⁴ Alexis McCrossen, "'One Cathedral More' or 'Mere Lounging Places for Bummers'?" The Cultural Politics of Leisure and the Public Library in Gilded Age America," *Libraries & Culture* 41, no. 2 (2006): 177.

³⁵ Lara Atkin et al. *Early Public Libraries and Colonial Citizenship in the British Southern Hemisphere* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 53-54.

presence, physical appearance, personal hygiene, and audible conversations of ‘loafers’ or ‘loungers’ – men who the letter writers presumed to be unemployed – here points to idleness conceived as non-productive masculinity, a point that I take up in detail in the third section that follows.

Despite all of these rules and restrictions, the old central library proved quite popular among readers in Toronto.³⁶ During the busiest noontime and early evening hours, three to four hundred people crowded into the building at once, among staff work areas, furniture, and overstuffed bookshelves.³⁷ About 20% of the total city population were registered as borrowers at the central library alone in 1900.³⁸ That year, these readers together borrowed from the circulating library over 300,000 times. Notwithstanding the chief librarian’s efforts to reduce the popularity of novels, fully 60% of this annual circulation was fiction followed distantly by “juvenile” literature (13%) and magazines (5%). All non-fiction subjects combined made up the remainder. Staff attendants in the old central library issued a further 91,000 non-circulating reference materials

³⁶ It may be useful here to outline who in the city might have found some use in visiting a public library at the time. Rates of literacy and school completion can suggest some of this information, as measurements of reading ability and formal schooling. By the time of the TPL’s establishment in 1883, successive census surveys recorded universal literacy for the city’s population (as measured in >91% of the populace self-reporting at least basic ability in reading and writing English). Completion of compulsory schooling (to Grade 8, or about age 13) did not, however, surpass 50% of all students until after World War II in Ontario. Working-class children frequently left school early to work in factories, and girls in particular who might also leave to do domestic work in the family home. See: Ruby Heap and Alison Prentice, *Gender and Education in Ontario: an Historical Reader* (Toronto, Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1991); Robert Charles Vipond, *Making a Global City: How One Toronto School Embraced Diversity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 26; Lorna F. Hurl, “Restricting Child Factory Labour in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario,” *Labour/Le Travail* 21 (1988): 92-99.

Yet these metrics are not accurate predictors or determining factors in who might enter a public library building, ask for something to read, and flip through the pages if they so desired. There is, for example, no formal literacy test or educational qualification to walk through the doors and sit inside. Literacy is itself a social construct, meaning that its definitions can change in relation to shifting pedagogical theories and survey methodologies. One study, for example, found that self-employed men born outside of Canada were about half as likely to report basic literacy as men born in Canada from all other occupational categories. Middle-class women were indeed more likely to complete advanced education beyond compulsory schooling, which could indicate that they made greater use of the central library’s facilities. However, one study comparing literacy and reading practices between women working in domestic service, who constituted the majority of wage-earning women in Toronto around this time, and the women who employed them found similar rates between the two groups. See: Alan Green and Mary MacKinnon, “The Slow Assimilation of British Immigrants in Canada: Evidence from Montreal and Toronto, 1901,” *Explorations in Economic History* 38, no. 3 (2001): 318-20; Eric W. Sager, “The Transformation of the Canadian Domestic Servant, 1871-1931,” *Social Science History* 31, no. 4 (2007): 510-511.

³⁷ “Noon Hour at the Library,” *Toronto Daily Star*, May 18, 1904.

³⁸ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1900.

and periodicals for reading inside the building, indicating a high rate of use of the various reading rooms as well.

However, the cramped quarters and increasingly dismal condition of the building threatened to turn readers away, which potentially reduced circulation. As the conventional measurement of library use, circulation statistics documented patterns the chief librarian could provide to the city council as proof of the TPL's success. If circulation declined, the city council might reduce the TPL's annual budget allocation accordingly. Furthermore, within the first two decades of the TPL's operations (1883-1903), the city council repeatedly reduced this budget allocation regardless of increasing circulation.³⁹ These cuts resulted in quite minimal decreases to the local property tax rate that financed the TPL's operations, an attempt among elected officials to curry political favour among voters – all of whom had to be property owners, and therefore taxpayers. In 1900, the city council summarily slashed the TPL's budget even further, and proceeded to ignore the library board's appeals for months.⁴⁰ The board subsequently sued to restore the budget to the previous year's level, and the court's decision compelled the city government to do so.

Still, the money to repair and renovate the old central library was clearly not forthcoming. It would have been unreasonable for the chief librarian to expect the city government to pay for a new building. At the time, local governments rarely, if ever, financed the construction of new public libraries.⁴¹ An offer for a grant to build a new public library from Andrew Carnegie in early 1903 was thus, for the chief librarian, not only a "generous bequest" from a "great man," as city councillors greeted it.⁴² The grant was potentially a tidy solution to the old central library's, and by extension the TPL's, impending decline.

³⁹ Bruce, *Free Books for All*, 172.

⁴⁰ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1900.

⁴¹ Mattern, *The New Downtown Library*, 1847.

⁴² "Take the Money, Say Controllers," *Toronto Daily Star*, January 28, 1903.

A Mysterious Gift (1903)

Early in 1903, the Toronto City Council received a letter offering US\$350,000 to build a new public library.⁴³ The letter was from Scottish-American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, then one of the world's richest men who did not inherit his wealth. In the first two decades of the 20th century, Andrew Carnegie donated to local governments the construction costs for over 2,500 public library buildings. He stipulated that any local authority figure could request one of these grants, and he would usually reply with an offer outlining his conditions for receiving the funds.⁴⁴ Yet in Toronto no one on the city council or library board could claim credit for making any such request. Content to assume the offer was a spontaneous gesture expressing Andrew Carnegie's high opinion of Toronto, these city officials prepared to accept the offer posthaste.⁴⁵

Within a few days, however, this "most mysterious offer" became an object of intense local conflict.⁴⁶ As in similar controversies over Andrew Carnegie's offers elsewhere in North America, members of labour unions in Toronto began a campaign to persuade the city government to reject his donation.⁴⁷ The Toronto District Labor Council, whose delegates represented skilled trades and craft industry unions across the city, "protest[ed] most

⁴³ "Carnegie's Offer to Toronto," *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], January 28, 1903; "Mystery Surrounds the Carnegie Offer," *Toronto Daily Star*, January 28, 1903. The amount offered would be worth approximately C\$7.7 million today.

⁴⁴ Van Slyck, *Free to All*. There were three main conditions for nearly every grant, which required elected officials to allocate some portion of local taxpayers' money to support the building project: to obtain a building site (whether by purchasing, soliciting a donation, or arranging for a transfer of land); to assume all future maintenance costs upon completion; and to pay for public library service in perpetuity through local taxes. This third condition is why Carnegie library grants are credited with establishing public libraries in hundreds of places where they were previously non-existent; in Toronto, the TPL was already operating as a tax-supported municipal agency for two decades (1883-1903). Furthermore, any of these conditions could be, and were deeply contentious within localities, including Toronto as I show in the following discussion. To a great degree, these conflicts arose from the structure of the grants themselves, which Andrew Carnegie deliberately designed to treat local governments as the sole legitimate authority over his offers and the building projects that ensued. Outwardly, this structure required local governments to ensure a measure of public support and to invest some resources to protect the value of Andrew Carnegie's personal investment. However, it also had the convenient effect of removing Andrew Carnegie from any local matters entirely, allowing him to avoid any criticisms or challenges from local residents who opposed him.

⁴⁵ "Library Board Would Take Gift," *Toronto Daily Star*, January 28, 1903.

⁴⁶ "Mystery Surrounds."

⁴⁷ Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 19-22.

emphatically” against the building of a Carnegie library in Toronto.⁴⁸ About a dozen separate unions affiliated with the labour council approved similar statements, which they sent as letters of protest to City Hall.⁴⁹ Over 200 people attended public meeting held to debate the question of a Carnegie library in Toronto, where the majority voted in favour of a non-binding resolution instructing the mayor to refuse the offer with only ten opposing votes.⁵⁰

The Cigarmakers’ Union, in a typical statement, named Andrew Carnegie a “tyrant of labor.”⁵¹ The Painters’, Paperhangers’, and Decorators’ Union warned that they had “not yet forgotten the blood shed and the means used to crush the laboring man at Homestead.”⁵² This latter statement directly referenced the failed 1882 strike at the Carnegie Steel Company’s Homestead works near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (AA) led what is now considered the first organized mass strike in the United States. The months-long strike ended in a violent and deadly day-long battle, when private security agents who the company hired and armed with rifles attacked strikers and townspeople indiscriminately, killing seven and wounding hundreds. When 6,000 armed men arrived from nearby industrial towns to defend the strikers, the agents surrendered. In the aftermath, however, the company refused to recognize the AA in negotiations and the union’s power quickly declined across US steel country.⁵³ In 1903, these events were still a living memory, and for many as an early and disastrous defeat of a nascent labour movement.

In Toronto, this controversy continued for a few weeks, and as the above discussion may indicate here, it was generally divided along class lines. There were some important divergences from this pattern, however, which here help to contextualize the conflict in the city’s municipal politics at the time. Although the labour council and several union locals opposed the offer, for

⁴⁸ “Reject Carnegie Offer,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], February 6, 1903.

⁴⁹ “Local Briefs,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], February 9, 1903; “Barbers Against Carnegie,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], February 5, 1903; “Who Will Live Longer?” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 8, 1903.

⁵⁰ “Oppose the Gift,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 7, 1903.

⁵¹ “Tyrant of Labor,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 9, 1903.

⁵² “Object to Carnegie Gift,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 2, 1903.

⁵³ Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead, 1880-1882: Politics, Culture, and Steel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 1-12.

example, the Woodcarvers' Union expressed supported it and the city's building trades council declared its members "would not refuse work" on the construction project.⁵⁴ Though politically radical and known for successful, militant strikes, building trades in Toronto were highly segmented between the more craft-oriented or artisanal trades (such as woodcarving) and the more technical or industrial trades that the former group tended to view as less-skilled and lower-status (such as pipefitters).⁵⁵

Also in favour of the offer was the local Orange Order, whose members celebrated Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy as his "effort to place his money into the hands of loyal Protestants, here and elsewhere."⁵⁶ This group was not a labour union, but rather a chapter of the Ulster unionist fraternal society. Canada in general had more 'Orangemen' than anywhere else in the world, including the contested territory of what is now Northern Ireland. The Toronto chapter was one of the most powerful voluntary associations in the city at the turn of the 20th century, including in its membership prominent members of the social elite as well as white-collar professionals and blue-collar workers. Loyalty to the British Empire, of which Canada was then part, and anti-Catholic rhetoric united this cross-class alliance. For more than a century, nearly every mayor of Toronto and most prime ministers of Canada were members of the Orange Order.⁵⁷ Goldwin Smith, a right-wing philosopher, was both one of Andrew Carnegie's closest allies in Toronto and publicly linked to the Orange Order.⁵⁸

Joining with unions against the offer were two political societies whose members also crossed class, income, and occupational groups: the Single-Tax Association and the Socialist League. The former was part of an international political movement with participants who spanned radical left and centrist liberal ideological positions. Single-taxers, as they were called, opposed

⁵⁴ "Take the Money"; "Carnegie's Offer to Toronto," *Globe* [Toronto], January 28, 1903.

⁵⁵ Wayne Roberts, "Artisans, Aristocrats and Handymen: Politics and Trade Unionism Among Toronto Skilled Building Trades Workers, 1896-1914," *Labour/Le Travail* 1 (1976): 115.

⁵⁶ "Accept Carnegie Gift," *Globe* [Toronto], February 11, 1903.

⁵⁷ William Smyth, *Toronto, the Belfast of Canada: the Orange Order and the Shaping of Municipal Culture* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2015), 12-25.

⁵⁸ "The Carnegie Library," editorial, *Toronto Daily Star*, November 7, 1903.

what they termed ‘extractive’ forms of taxation, including in this category general property and income taxes as well as the payment of rent. The group advocated instead for a system of taxation based solely on land values, which they felt would protect working peoples’ incomes by shifting tax burdens onto wealthy land owners.⁵⁹ The latter emerged in Canada during the late 19th century as an alliance combining organizing around industrial workplace issues and advocating for common property ownership. Women were active in the Socialist League, in particular in challenging men within the organization who refused to recognize the dual burden of employed women who ended their workdays only to begin another at home.⁶⁰

Because the TPL was established through a municipal referendum, those who opposed Andrew Carnegie’s offer began to demand a similar vote on the question. However, on the same day the *Star* newspaper, whose editors supported unions in their opposition to the offer, reported “Ratepayers to Vote On It,” the *Globe*, whose editors supported the offer, reported that the city council had decided it was “Not Necessary to Take Public Vote.”⁶¹ Less than a month after the controversy began, and without regard for any local opposition, the city council formally accepted the offer.⁶² Throughout this time, the mystery had persisted as to the origin of the controversial offer. Finally, it became clear that “a man from Lambton” had admitted to making

⁵⁹ Gregory J. Levine, “The Single Tax in Montreal and Toronto, 1880 to 1920: Successes, Failures and the Transformation of an Idea,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 52, no. 4 (1993): 420.

⁶⁰ Linda Kealey, “Canadian Socialism and the Woman Question, 1900-1914,” *Labour/Le Travail* (1984): 77-100.

⁶¹ “Ratepayers to Vote on It,” *Globe* [Toronto], February 21, 1903; “Not Necessary to Take Public Vote,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 21, 1903. This demand may have been a strategy to mobilize greater opposition to the offer, considering the possibility that these unions may not have had a significant number of voters among their membership. As a loose estimate of these numbers, in 1901 a quarter of all homeowners in Toronto were men employed in skilled blue-collar trades with another 13% of homeowners employed in unskilled blue-collar occupations, though these groups are identified in existing data as union or non-union workers. See: Richard Harris, “The Growth of Homeownership in Toronto, 1899-1913,” Research Paper No. 163 (Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1987), 6. Harris notes that, although the percentage of skilled blue collar who owned their own homes grew during the period 1899-1905, the growth in population and the city’s boundaries through annexation makes it impossible to determine how many people of any occupational group owned their own homes.

⁶² “Council Accepts Carnegie Offer,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], February 24, 1903.

the initial request.⁶³ Amazingly, someone who did not even live in Toronto caused the whole conflict: Lambton was a small unincorporated village beyond the western outskirts of the city.⁶⁴

“Close to the Center of Population”: Relocating Readers in Toronto’s Shifting Social Geography (1903-04)

Once the city council accepted Andrew Carnegie’s offer, these elected officials began the process of commissioning an architect and selecting a building site. This process evolved into a year-long conflict between the chief librarian, on the one hand, and the majority of city councillors, over where to build the new central library.⁶⁵ Even before the controversy over the offer arose, the chief librarian began to advocate for relocating the new building outside the downtown area where the old central library stood.⁶⁶

The chief librarian’s preferred site, which he later referred to as “close to the center of population” was in a newer and less populous uptown area to the north of the downtown core.⁶⁷ This location, he suggested, would place the new building in convenient proximity to the University of Toronto campus and provincial legislature at Queen’s Park, as well as within close walking distance of a burgeoning commercial district. There, he offered, a building site would be easier and cheaper to acquire due to lower building density and land values than downtown. To further support his uptown site proposal, at one point he reported that in one month he counted fully 97% of the readers in the reference library as uptown residents and only a tiny handful who lived downtown.⁶⁸

However, the chief librarian’s main argument for this site had to do with *who* he claimed made the most frequent use of the reference library: residents of uptown neighbourhoods. The existing

⁶³ “Site for New Library,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 19, 1903.

⁶⁴ Denise Harris, “Lambton Mills,” Etobicoke Historical Society, accessed October 10, 2019, <http://www.etobicokehistorical.com/lambton-mills.html>.

⁶⁵ “A Long Wrangle Over Library Site,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], November 25, 1904.

⁶⁶ “Want to Take it Away,” *Toronto Daily Star*, January 28, 1903.

⁶⁷ “Site for New Library,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 18, 1903.

⁶⁸ “Council Again Delays,” *Globe* [Toronto], May 24, 1904.

location downtown, he insisted, had become an “impossible” destination for these readers at night, because the surrounding neighbourhood was “such an undesirable one.”⁶⁹ What made this neighbourhood so “undesirable,” in his view? Moreover, who was he identifying as the ‘serious’ readers in the reference library based on their presumed place of residence? Here, Toronto’s changing social geography at the turn of the 20th century is an important point of reference for interpreting the chief librarian’s uptown site proposal.

By 1900, Toronto was effectively segregated into a poorer area immediately surrounding the CBD and wealthier district directly within close proximity to the north – and the chief librarian’s proposal pointed directly at these circumstances. At the time of this conflict over the site for the new central library, Toronto was at the midpoint of a spectacular transformation that altered the city’s landscape for decades thereafter. Swift population growth between 1890 and 1910 more than doubled the city’s population. Toronto was at the centre of an intensive period of capital development in Canada, and the local economy became dominated by manufacturing, commerce, and financial services industries that employed white- and blue-collar workers in large numbers. This population and economic growth propelled a major commercial and residential construction boom, which was initially concentrated downtown.⁷⁰

After 1890, rapid growth downtown quickly overwhelmed water and sanitation systems designed to support far less demand. An expensive and geographically limited system of privately-owned and -operated streetcars effectively locked working-class households into the downtown grid. The lowest wage-earners paid increasingly excessive rents for substandard housing downtown. As a subsidy to housing costs, multiple occupancies of single-family dwellings became commonplace. The practice of taking on paid lodgers, as both a supplement to housing costs and an informal livelihood pursued mainly by women, further contributed to overcrowding in homes. Infectious diseases could easily spread in these conditions, while a private system of hospitals and clinics made medical treatment largely unaffordable. Nearby factories and railways spewed

⁶⁹ “Deputation Day in City Council,” *Toronto Daily Star*, March 24, 1903.

⁷⁰ Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto’s American Tragedy, 1900 to 1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 28-32; Richard Harris, “Self-Building and the Social Geography of Toronto, 1901-13: a Challenge for Urban Theory,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 15, no. 4 (1990): 396-397.

dust and smoke into the atmosphere, causing or worsening chronic respiratory ailments. The city's building inspectors did not consistently enforce permits or safety codes until after 1904, and both unsafe renovations and informal self-built structures proliferated. Mixed land-use patterns intermingled commercial and industrial properties with residential areas, heightening the risk of exposure to toxic chemicals and harmful materials.⁷¹ Wealthier and upwardly mobile households thus began to relocate to escape these conditions. This movement created affluent enclaves located to the north and north-east of the downtown core. Poverty remained concentrated downtown, which by the turn of the 20th century was an inner-city 'slum' district similar to those in other major industrial cities in North America and western Europe at the time.⁷² *These* are the areas the chief librarian called "close to the center" and "undesirable," respectively.

Downtown, the existing (old) central library was adjacent to the busy and populous central business district (CBD) and within less than a mile's walking distance of some of the city's poorest neighbourhoods (Figure 2.4). In this part of the city, an estimated sixty to seventy thousand people – fully a third of the total population – worked, shopped, conducted business transactions, and transferred streetcars each day.⁷³ The uptown site was thus hardly at the center of the city, either in terms of the density of housing or the core of daily activity. Yet the counter argument against the chief librarian's proposal barely referenced the clear polarization between the downtown and uptown districts. Instead, those who opposed the relocation focused mainly on the inconvenience an uptown central library would cause for the 'general' population.⁷⁴ As to

⁷¹ Sarah Bassnet, "Picturing Filth and Disorder: Photography and Urban Governance in Toronto," *History of Photography* 28, no. 2 (2004): 152; Michael E. Mercier, "The Social Geography of Childhood Mortality, Toronto, 1901," *Urban Geography* 27, no. 2 (2006): 130-132; Cathy James, "Reforming Reform: Toronto's Settlement House Movement, 1900-20," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (2001): 56.

⁷² James Lemon, "Plans for Early 20th-century Toronto: Lost in Management," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 18, no. 1 (1989): 12.

⁷³ "City Hall Siftings," *Toronto Daily Star*, February 28, 1903.

⁷⁴ "Want to Take it Away" *Toronto Daily Star*, January 28, 1903; Andrew Morton, Letter to the Editor, *Globe* [Toronto], February 10, 1903; East End, Letter to the Editor, *Toronto Daily Star*, March 25, 1903; Nemo, Letter to the Editor, *Toronto Daily Star*, March 30, 1903. By this point – after the formal acceptance of Andrew Carnegie's offer – unions were no longer mobilizing local opposition and appear to have redirect their energies elsewhere. The site dispute was thus primarily one between powerful city officials, the chief librarian and elected representatives on city council, as well as local newspaper editors and anonymous letter writers to these publications. (The latter group,

who in the general populace would be most detrimentally affected by an uptown location, it was the “workingmen” and “business and professional men” who were regularly downtown all day, regardless of where they lived.⁷⁵ The editors of the *Star* newspaper summarized this counterargument as follows:

The placing of [the central library] near the Queen’s Park would compel a man to make a special journey if he were to avail himself of its privileges, unless he were so fortunate as to reside in that locality – which, it is needless to say, the majority of the city’s population do not.⁷⁶



Fig. 2.4 Old and new central library building locations in downtown Toronto⁷⁷

due to their anonymity, are not clearly identifiable as to whether or not they were union members who opposed the offer.) The *Star*, whose editors joined with unions in opposing the offer, were in favour of keeping the central library downtown, while the *Globe*’s editors supported the chief librarian’s proposal.

⁷⁵ “One Library Down Town,” *Globe* [Toronto], October 20, 1903.

⁷⁶ “Keep the Library Down Town,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 20, 1903.

⁷⁷ Source: TPL, Baldwin Collection, Accession Number MsX.1921.13. This is a zoomed-in selection from a 1907 City of Toronto master plan map marked with current (red) and proposed (blue) public libraries. The old central library location can be found marked in red in the lower half of the area labelled Ward 3, with the new Central Reference Library marked prominently by a red square directly above the Ward 4 label. A high-resolution image can be accessed online at torontopubliclibrary.ca.

This site dispute continued for more than a year.⁷⁸ In what appears to be an attempt to assert some authority over the decision, the library board rejected a series of architectural proposals based on a presumed downtown site. In a series of decisions, the city council repeatedly reiterated support for keeping the central library downtown. Over time, the chief librarian began to claim that he had never suggested removing the circulating library from the downtown area, but rather that his proposal was only about the reference library. Finally, the mayor demanded city councillors take a final decision on the matter. In what could have been a compromise with, or an admission of defeat by, the chief librarian, the city council decided to split the old central library between two separate locations. The new, Carnegie-financed Central Reference Library was thus built at the disputed uptown site while the old building was converted into the TPL's main circulating library and renamed the Church Street Branch.

The New Central Reference Library, 1909: Open Access in a Place of Work

When the new Central Reference Library opened in 1909, it was a typical example of Carnegie library architecture (Figure 2.5). Though designed by hundreds of different local architects, these buildings have a “general family resemblance.”⁷⁹ The most familiar element is often the building façade, which features classical colonnades and stately main entrance prefaced by a majestic staircase. The entablature atop the doorway may be engraved with the words PUBLIC LIBRARY or some variation. Toronto's Central Reference Library was a variation on this style, and the design has been described as “an enlightened Beaux Arts composition” for the combination of modern steel and glass building materials with neo-classical details characteristic of that school of architecture.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ “Who Will Build the New Library?,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 24, 1903; “The Library Will Stay Down Town,” *Toronto Daily Star*, October 20, 1903; “One Library Down Town,” *Globe* [Toronto], October 20, 1903; “One Central Library” *Globe* [Toronto], October 17, 1903; “A Long Wrangle Over Library Site,” *Globe* [Toronto], November 25, 1904; “To Caesar City Will Now Appeal,” *Globe* [Toronto], December 16, 1904; “Mayor's Scheme to Expropriate,” *Globe* [Toronto], December 13, 1904.

⁷⁹ Van Slyck, *Free to All*, xxvii.

⁸⁰ Beckman, Langmead and Black, *The Best Gift*, 132.

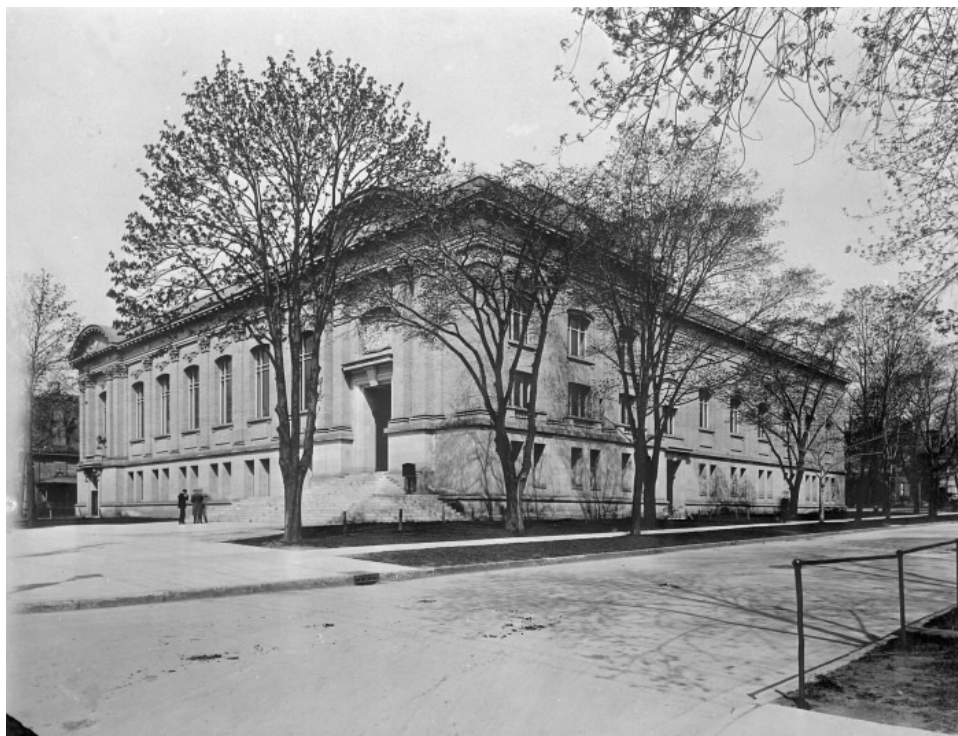


Fig. 2.5 Central Reference Library exterior, circa 1911⁸¹

Visitors entered by ascending a grand staircase from the street level outside, which extended inward to reach an above-ground main floor. There, the visitor would immediately find themselves before a formidably massed central information desk staffed by a team of assistants. These staff members would answer questions, give instructions, or deal with anything else requiring a conversation before a visitor could enter the silent inner sanctum of the reference library reading room to the left. Unlike the enclosed reading rooms, tight corridors, turnstiles, and barricaded book stacks in the old central library, the size and prominent placement of this desk was designed to slow – but not fully obstruct – foot traffic into the building. The reading room occupied most of the main floor of the building, flanked by areas set aside for special art and historical newspaper collections. Long fixed tables accommodated up to 250 readers at a time, and sturdy hardwood chairs with pitched backs and armrests afforded some comfort during

⁸¹

Source: Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection, Accession Number X71-11.

long study sessions. Tall bay windows extended nearly ceiling to floor, to admit as much natural light as possible in the daytime and electrical light fixtures brightened the room after dark.⁸²

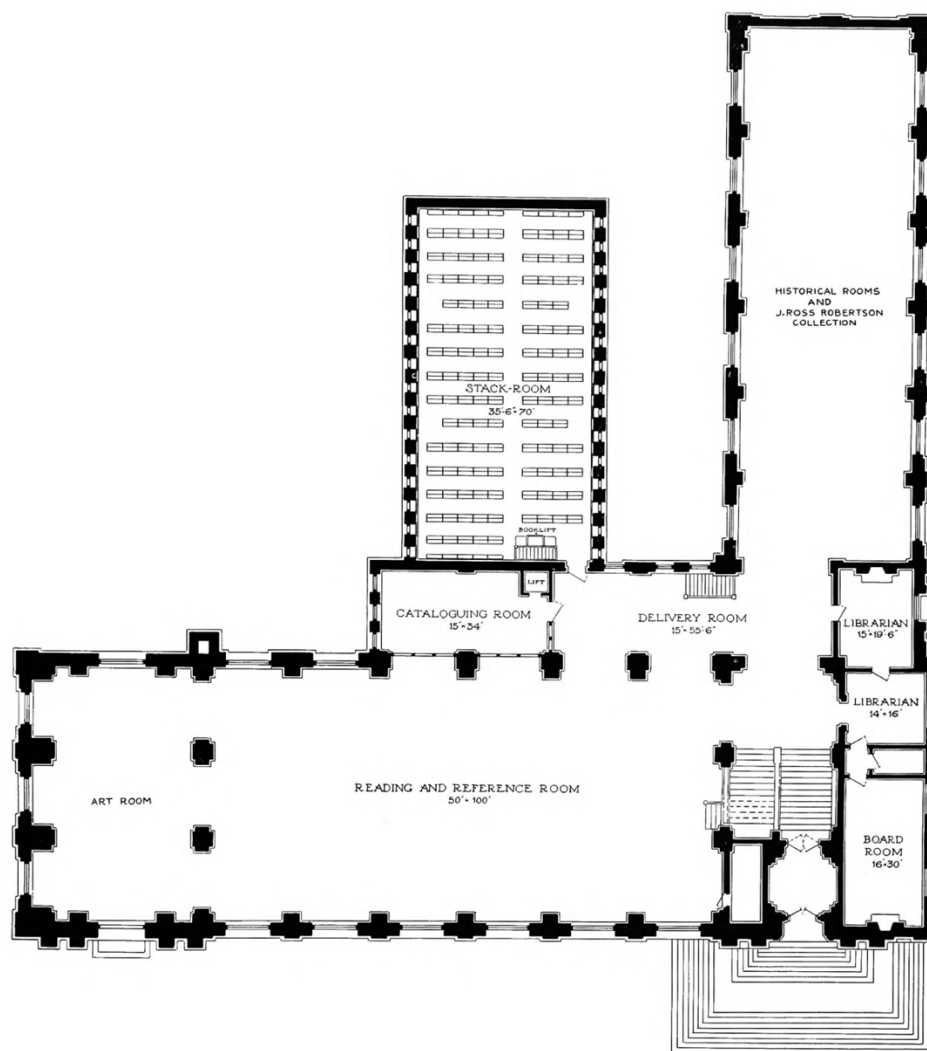


Fig. 2.6 Central Reference Library floor plan, main level⁸³

Open access shelves bordered this reading room. For the first time in Toronto, readers were allowed to browse, reach onto the shelf, pull off whatever caught their interest, and take it back

⁸² *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, years 1919-12; "New Library Opened," *Globe* [Toronto], October 29, 1909; "The New Public Library," *Globe* [Toronto], May 14, 1906; "The New Library Open at Nights," *Toronto Daily Star*, October, 30, 1909.

⁸³ Source: Snead & Co. Iron Works, *Library Planning, Bookstacks, and Shelving*, (Jersey City: The Snead & Company Iron Works, 1915), 207.

to a sturdy table to peruse at their leisure unsupervised by library staff members. A permanent wall divided the reading room from staff work areas in the rear of the building (Figure 2.6). Behind this wall was a wing of closed stacks accessible only to staff members. The ceilings in this wing were built at a reduced height, to accommodate five floors as compared to the main building's three. Unlike the closed-off bookshelves designed to prevent readers from independently accessing collections, this wing compressed the amount of storage required for a large and growing reference collection of more than 100,000 items.⁸⁴

The architectural commission approved by the library board specified that the Central Reference Library should be conceived "primarily as a place of work," for both readers and staff.⁸⁵ To prevent any wasted space, the architects eliminated corridors and enclosed rooms in favour of an open-plan main floor designated for reader's browsing and study. For efficiency and to reduce turnover time in processing materials, the design also stacked work rooms for separate departments directly on top of one another on the main and ground levels. A Delivery Room at the centre of the building was the designated command and control point for all of the daily operations in the reference library. This room was also the only place where the areas for readers' use directly interfaced with staff work areas, over a delivery desk where assistants brought out items from the closed stacks.

This design allowed staff in the Central Reference Library to conduct their work in total isolation from readers, a distinct spatiality that I elaborate on in the next chapter to examine the re-organization of work and employment within the Carnegie era TPL. The interior layout also separated all of the day-to-day functions in the building from the TPL's administrative headquarters. Consisting of the chief librarian's office, an office for his deputy, and the library board's meeting room, these areas were located to the right of the main entrance.

⁸⁴ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1912.

⁸⁵ *Programme of a Competition for the Selection of an Architect for the Public Reference Library Building in the City of Toronto* (Toronto: n.p., 1905).

Creating “the Modern Library” in Toronto (1909-13)

When the new Central Reference Library opened in 1909, the TPL was at the outset of a period of dramatic change that laid the foundation for the provision of public library service thereafter. When the first TPL Chief Librarian James Bain died in 1908, the library board appointed George H. Locke as his successor. Like Bain, Locke was not formally trained as a librarian despite his job title. Rather, Locke studied history at the University of Toronto before embarking upon a career in public library management, which was a somewhat conventional path to these jobs at the time.⁸⁶ (Librarianship training was, I explain in the next chapter, still becoming standardized and recognized as a job qualification around this time.)

Unlike his predecessor, however, Locke was an avid proponent of, and active participant in, an international movement to modernize public libraries. This movement developed around the turn of the 20th century in the United States and England, among the (mostly) men and (a few) women who held jobs similar to Locke's. These middle-class reformers aimed to turn public libraries from mere ‘storehouses’ managed to mainly to preserve collections into efficient, rationally-organized institutions that could reach as many parts of the local populace as possible. By becoming more active within their localities, these modernizers believed, they could democratize reading on a mass scale and, in so doing, prove the social and economic benefits public library service.⁸⁷

Locke was perhaps the most prominent Canadian in this movement, and under his management the TPL became both a testing ground for, and exemplar of, the core principles of public library modernization. If controlling readers' access to collections characterized Bain's era of management, it was the principle of open access that guided Locke's. Among his first acts as chief librarian was to introduce this new system, and to ensure that the design of the Central Reference Library reading room would accommodate open shelves. Under his advisement, the

⁸⁶ Margaret Penman, *A Century of Service: Toronto Public Library, 1883-1983* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library 1983), 19.

⁸⁷ Van Slyck, *Free to All*, 25-26.

library board cancelled a series of restrictive borrowing policies.⁸⁸ No longer did the application for a library card require a guarantor or deposit, and a single card allowed readers to borrow from any of the TPL's branches. The reference library was open for longer hours, from mid-morning to late evening.⁸⁹ In the first year after the introduction of open access in Toronto and the library board's adoption of less restrictive borrowing policies, over 10,000 people registered for new library cards. Total annual circulation increased by 20%. Use of the reference collection in the new central library uptown also grew by about 40%.⁹⁰

Public library modernization was not a project that Andrew Carnegie directly participated in, nor does it appear to have held any particular interest for him. Rather, what his philanthropy did was to provide modernizers with an opportunity to influence the design of new buildings that could facilitate the adoption of open access.⁹¹ Creating "the modern library," both its idealized vision and in practice, was an all-consuming and aspirational project for its proponents. Modernizers pursued their aims with a missionary zeal and, in Locke's case, characteristic resolve. To finance this project, modernizers had to make a case for local taxpayers' investment. Expanding the TPL's branch network, growing the size of collections, and extending operating hours required a greater and sustained level of public funding.⁹²

Locke achieved an early victory in his tenure as TPL Chief Librarian when, in 1912, he succeeded in persuading the city council to finance a special building fund to construct new public libraries in Toronto.⁹³ This fund was the first time the municipal government paid any direct construction costs for public library buildings. Between 1909 (when the Central Reference Library opened) and 1930 (in effect the end of the TPL's Carnegie era branch expansion), the

⁸⁸ "Books for Everybody," *Globe* [Toronto], April 9, 1910.

⁸⁹ "The New Library Open at Nights," *Toronto Daily Star*, October 30, 1909;

⁹⁰ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1911.

⁹¹ Wayne A. Wiegand, "Wresting Money from the Canny Scotsman: Melvil Dewey's Designs on Carnegie's Millions, 1902-1906," *Libraries & Culture* 31, no. 2 (1996): 380-393.

⁹² As noted in the sections above, Carnegie library grants, by Andrew Carnegie's own design, did not finance any daily operations which he required to be paid for with local taxes. Local elected officials in Toronto were not in the habit of allocating generous annual budgets, and indeed as noted above routinely cut the TPL's funding as a way to quite minimally reduce the local property tax rate.

⁹³ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1912.

TPL gained 19 new buildings through a combination of Carnegie library grants and municipal investment. All 6 of the TPL's original locations, including the old central library, were thus replaced with new, modern buildings designed expressly to function as public libraries with open access shelves. This Carnegie era branch network formed the basis of the TPL's provision of service in Toronto through the immediate post-World War II period.

In his promotion of public library modernization, Locke was joined by the Ontario Department of Education's Inspector of Public Libraries Thaddeus Leavitt.⁹⁴ As an officer of the provincial government, Leavitt was tasked with obtaining annual financial reports from library boards across Ontario and conducting site visits to ensure branches met minimum standards that he set based on metrics developed by the American Library Association (ALA) in the United States. If a board did not meet the reporting requirement, the inspector had the authority to cancel an annual grant from the provincial government. Although this grant was only a tiny fraction of the TPL's budget, in small towns and villages the grant could make up the majority or the whole of a board's yearly revenues. This power made the inspector a relatively powerful figure in rural Ontario, where his ability to cancel the annual grant could cost a library board their ability to continue operations. (The reporting requirement was not an issue for the TPL, whose board regularly published its own financial statements starting with the first year of operations in 1884.)

Around the time of Locke's appointment, Leavitt began to use his own annual reports to publicize the central ideals guiding public library modernization. The image in Figure 2.8 below, consisting of a table contrasting "the old library" with "the modern public library" was published in the inspector's 1908 report. Locke's annual reports to the TPL Board focused more on documenting and assessing circulation statistics and financial accounts, as a measure of his successes as chief librarian. Leavitt, by comparison, started to reflect on the idea of "the modern library," as he constructed it, suggesting methods for librarians to conduct outreach and expand readership in their localities.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Bruce, *Free Books for All*, 136.

⁹⁵ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, various years 1883-1909; *Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Libraries*, various years 1905-16.

THE OLD LIBRARY	THE MODERN PUBLIC LIBRARY
It was a place for guarding and preserving books.	It is a place for collecting the best books and for making them useful.
Intended to serve the few—the bookish men and the scholars who had the necessary influence to be admitted.	Serves the many; attempts to put the right book into the hands of every reader.
Children were denied the use of books; they were promised the future in exchange for the present.	Special service is given to children; generous supplies of approved books are furnished; boys and girls are helped and guided; stories are told for the little ones.
The librarian was a bookish library policeman.	The librarian is the guide, philosopher and friend to all possible patrons.
The visitor was looked upon with suspicion.	Patrons are eagerly sought. The missionary spirit prevails.
It was supported by private subscription or maintained by institutions.	It is supported by the people and for the people.
Lack of method and of organization prevailed.	Organized according to modern library science, thus multiplying the value of the books.
Books were kept away from the visitor's reach.	The freest access to books is given.
The library was passive.	The library is an active force.

Fig. 2.7 Comparison of “the old library” and “the modern library”⁹⁶

The main challenge to modernizers, Leavitt contended the same report, was a widespread misperception that public libraries were an inessential waste of local taxpayers’ money:

Unfortunately, in the recent past, many of our public men and some of our newspapers did not hesitate to declare that the principle use of a public library was to supply sentimental school girls and sentimental married women with vapid novels and to furnish a few men with books which not one citizen in 500 cared to read and not one in a thousand could understand. In short, the indictment read, the public library is a means for amusing those who are *too lazy to work*.⁹⁷

Proving that public library service was a worthwhile investment of local taxpayers’ money, Leavitt concluded, was the best way forward for modernizers to achieve their goals. He began to connect public libraries with a wide range of potential social and economic benefits for local people. He emphasized that the improved quality of collections that “the modern library” circulated could aid bureaucrats, professionals, and blue-collar workers in finding solutions to the most pressing social problems of the day.

⁹⁶ *Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Libraries*, 1908.

⁹⁷ *Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Libraries*, 1908. Emphasis my own.

Municipal sanitation, he named in one example, could be more effective if planned using rational methods and by the widespread proliferation of new biological studies demonstrating the importance of personal hygiene for preventing infectious diseases. In another instance, he insisted that librarians had a responsibility to more actively publicize the benefits of public library use to working-class men. One means of doing so, he offered, was to communicate to these men that reading in their local library could help them to become more knowledgeable about their work and efficient in their jobs. The inspector then connected this learning to these workers' upward mobility in the labour market, suggesting that if they could become more skilled and informed they would increase their wage-earning potential and be able to enter higher-status jobs in their fields.⁹⁸ In other annual reports, Leavitt also recommended direct advertising to targeted local populations in their workplaces, rolling cases of books onto shop floors and into offices, and experimenting with commercial retail techniques including outward-facing book displays and promotional brochures.⁹⁹

In this manner, Leavitt implicitly linked the benefits of “the modern library” to technical improvements in the work process as a means of enhancing the productivity of a firm and, by extension, society more broadly. The logic underpinning these claims – the links between funding “the modern library” and the notion of self-guided reading as making workers and society more ‘productive’ – may here look like it lacks some rigor. Put differently, precisely how self-guided reading by an individual would transmute into wider social and economic benefits is left unspecified. It is more useful, I think, to read such claims as discursive and rhetorical rather than an accurate description of what readers might actually do with collections once open access made these materials easier to find and acquire without the direct involvement of library staff members. What Leavitt, and Locke in his reviews of statistics and successes, did instead was to assert a particular vision of “the modern library” that dominated in institutional and official accounts.

⁹⁸ *Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Libraries*, 1908.

⁹⁹ *Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Libraries*, years 1909-12 inclusive.

Reading Rooms: Work, Nonwork, and Idleness in Public

Making the nonwork time of public library use appear economically relevant animated this project to create “the modern library” in Toronto, as I have suggested in the above discussion of Leavitt’s and Locke’s activities. The middle-class men who promoted public library modernization began to connect this time to potential improvements in the productivity and living conditions of the working population. In so doing, I offer here, they imagined local *taxpayers* as the chief beneficiaries of “the modern library,” whose contributions would provide them with indirect but nevertheless profitable results.

Whether or not public library modernizers intended to do so, they in effect introduced a system that allowed for a much wider range of uses for reading rooms than their ideals might have admitted. Open access, because it is based on the idea of self-guided reading, allowed for readers to exercise some autonomy over their choices of reading material and activities while inside a public library building. These uses could be called unintended or unsanctioned, as when readers slept, socialized, ‘loafed’ around or ‘lounged’ about, scribbled marginalia, tore out pages, or walked away without performing the borrowing procedures.

These daily practices and everyday acts, I suggest in what follows, *exceeded* middle-class conceptions of “the modern library” as a sedate, orderly environment that would (quite naturally, modernizers believed)-inculcate in readers respect for others and deference to authority.-In this excess, I contend, the purposes of these spaces in readers’ daily lives can be discovered afresh in an archive predominated by official institutional accounts recording the achievements of public library modernizers and celebrating the successes of their project. Containing the visibility of these forms of ‘idleness’ – that is, the presence and practices of people presumed to be ‘idle’, meaning unemployed – became crucial for modernizers to prove the value of public library service provision as a productive, if indirect, investment of local taxpayers’ money.



Fig. 2.8 Central Reference Library reading room, 1909¹⁰⁰

Within the first few years of open access throughout the TPL, the chief librarian and library board reported a series of incidents in the new Central Reference Library uptown and the old, repurposed Church Street branch downtown. About 40 books disappeared from the Central Reference Library's open shelves each year, and around 200 from the Church Street branch. For the latter, Locke institute a system for checking readers' library cards before they could enter the open shelf room – though he later reported that this practice had little effect on the number of books missing from the branch.¹⁰¹ It seemed, he noted, that readers unfamiliar with the open shelf system were sometimes unaware that they were required to bring their selections up to the counter to perform the procedure for borrowing. He saw these 'thefts', in other words, as arising from the unfamiliar new system rather than malicious intent, as some readers simply walked out of the building with their chosen book in hand.

¹⁰⁰ *Source:* Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection. Accession Number: X71-18.

¹⁰¹ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board, 1912.*

In a few cases, staff members in the Central Reference Library found books stored on the open shelves vandalized.¹⁰² In some instances, the books had pieces of pages torn out or the text heavily marked up, but in others whole sections were removed or the entirety of the book's contents gone and the empty covers left behind. In other examples, readers dog-eared page corners, or inserted makeshift bookmarks (such as ribbons, personal letters, shopping lists, or postcards; and once, a cheque for C\$100 that library staff returned to the payee)¹⁰³. The library board investigated these problems, concluding that open shelves did indeed increase the possibility of loss and damage but concurring with Locke that it was relatively rare in comparison to the exceptionally high volume of circulation in all of the TPL's libraries.

Public library modernizers had to contend not only with their critics, who believed that the open access system was too expensive. The primary complaint about the cost of open access arose from a widespread perception among middle-class people that working-class readers were unprepared for the responsibility of stewardship over shared resources on which this system was based. These critics felt that open shelves were far too accessible, and would result in theft and vandalism that resulted in further costs to local taxpayers to replace or repair items in a collection. On his part, in his annual reports Locke repeatedly insisted that open access was so inherently beneficial to all readers, and those who 'abused' or misunderstood the new system so few, that this complaint was hardly a reason to keep collections locked up behind counters and barricades.

These modernizers also had to find ways to contain an essentially working-class street culture that middle-class people frequently perceived as disorderly and unregulated uses of public space. Crowded living arrangements within working-class households contributed to the prevalence of socializing outside their homes, on streets and in parks. The bustle of the city could enshroud multiple uses of public spaces, in crowds on sidewalks or in marginal or liminal sites like alleys

¹⁰² "Library board wants \$75,000," *Globe* [Toronto], April 22, 1911; "Vandalism at Library" *Globe* [Toronto], November 12, 1910; "Tore Books from Covers," *Globe* [Toronto], December 10, 1910; "Those Who Slash and Mutilate," *Toronto Daily Star*, July 10, 1909.

¹⁰³ "Things Used as Bookmarks," *Globe* [Toronto], April 9, 1913.

and recessed doorways. In relation to wider gender, racial, and class struggles over uses of public space, working-class uses of ‘the streets’ could provide the interstices for the formation of sexual subjectivities. Finding “privacy only in public,” for example, gay men and unmarried heterosexual couples appropriated urban spaces for intimate sociality and sexual relations. These practices were viewed by the dominant middle-class culture as outside prevailing social norms; for gay men, especially, these uses were criminalized in a legal system and social climate where arrest was violent and catastrophic.¹⁰⁴

Rather than view working-class readers’ (potential, presumed) uses of public libraries as aberrant or abject, here I want to underscore how these practices are linked to a distinct political economy of idleness in the production of “the modern library.” The notion of idleness, as cited in the introduction to this chapter, may imply non-compliance the social requirement to work productively. Viewed more capaciously, however, idleness can point to time outside the demands of productive and reproductive labour. In this latter sense, idle time contradicts, rather than re-inscribes, the hegemony of work itself, by which all endeavours not pressed into the creation of surplus value are deemed economically worthless and socially undesirable.

In what follows, I perform an archival re-reading of “the modern library” in Toronto after the introduction of open access. This attempt requires a focus on newspapers, and in particular on editorial letters, which show the widespread circulation of this middle-class ideal and its contestation in daily life. It is quite impossible to specify the identity of each letter writer or reporter, who often published anonymously and engaged in complicated acts of positioning themselves as subjects in these texts. This subjectification could, I highlight, take the form of differentiating ‘proper’ or ‘productive’ uses of reading rooms from the activities of unnamed ‘others’ whose uses connoted idleness as lack of work to the writer. From these archival

¹⁰⁴ George Chauncey, “Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public: Gay Uses of the Streets,” in *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, ed. Joel Sanders (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 225-226. From the available archival materials, I did not find examples of these uses of public libraries in Toronto in particular. On gay men’s uses of public space, formation of sexual subjectivities, and policing in Toronto, see: Steven Maynard, “Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 2 (1994): 207-242. On police surveillance and arrest of men suspected of engaging in sexual activity in a public library washroom, see: John Howard, “The Library, the Park, and the Pervert: Public Space and Homosexual Encounter in Post-World War II Atlanta,” *Radical History Review*, no. 62 (1995): 166-187.

fragments, I draw out important archival silences that here help to illuminate working-class readers' activities within public libraries in relation to historically specific constructs of gender, race, and ethnicity that were rapidly shifting in early 20th century Toronto.

I locate this archival re-reading in both the new, Carnegie-financed Central Reference Library and the old Church Street building repurposed TPL's main circulating branch. The geographical distance between these buildings, I noted in the discussion above, spanned sharply polarized division between the older, poorer downtown and newer, more affluent uptown districts. When chief librarian Bain proposed the controversial uptown site, as "the center of population," this area was not where the majority of the local populace lived or worked. Over the next decade, however, sustained population and economic growth propelled an early suburban expansion outside the downtown core. A ring of newer blue- and white-collar neighbourhoods developed around the downtown core, between the old and new central libraries, buffering the most affluent uptown neighbourhoods from the inner-city.

Social geographers who have studied this period of time in Toronto have sometimes argued that this relatively class- and income-mixed residential structure distinguished the city from other major urban centres in North America. However, it was the extraordinary racial-ethnic *homogeneity* of Toronto's population that made the city unique at the time. The population was overwhelmingly white and "British" at the turn of the 20th century (>91%). This "British" supermajority was, furthermore primarily protestant of varying denominations (>80% around the turn of the century), including people from Catholic-majority Ireland.¹⁰⁵ These demographics show the lived consequences of federal immigration policies of the time, and the proportion of the "British" population in Toronto barely declined with rising levels of immigration in the following decade (to >80%).¹⁰⁶

In Canada, the concept of "Britishness" evolved over the latter half of the 19th century, coming to incorporate both people born in Canada who traced their descent mainly to Great Britain and

¹⁰⁵ Hiebert, "The Social Geography of Toronto," 57-60.

¹⁰⁶ Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*, 26.

recent immigrants from the British Isles. Unlike the idea of Englishness, which was politically divisive, “Britishness” could encompass people born in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and their descendants. This concept of “Britishness” was rooted in the dominant racial ideology of the time. The basic philosophy underlying this racial ideology legitimated a belief that racial difference was biological, and therefore innate, rather than geographical in origin. This view informed an idea that national populations – conceived as ‘nations’, ‘races’ or ‘civilizations’ – were defined by the relative prevalence of perceived ‘superior’ traits. The implication was to encourage the reproduction of racially ‘superior’ people, and to inhibit the reproduction of ‘races’ deemed ‘inferior’. Complicating these ideas was a belief that some ‘races’ were more adaptable than others, and could learn to assimilate to the ‘superior’ culture of the dominant ‘nation’.¹⁰⁷

Federal immigration policies of this period were designed around the dual, if sometimes conflicting, priorities of securing cheap supplies of labour when needed and ensuring that the future citizens of Canada would be primarily white. The federal 1885 *Chinese Immigration Act* was intended to prevent Asian people in particular from permanently living in Canada, and created a legal framework for excluding future immigrants based on perceived racial characteristics.¹⁰⁸ Over the 1900s, federal officials routinely enforced policies to exclude black people from the Caribbean and the United States, regardless of their job skills or expertise and labour market demands. These methods of enforcement were formalized to create a system of overt racial ‘preferences’ in the administration of immigration policy that remained in effect through the post-World War II period.¹⁰⁹ The 1906 *Immigration Act* empowered immigration officials to deny entry to anyone their deemed to be poor, carrying infectious disease, potentially

¹⁰⁷ Ted Rutland, *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth-century Halifax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 108.

¹⁰⁸ Agnes Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 4 (1994): 135.

¹⁰⁹ For a full discussion of these immigration policies and citizenship regimes in Canada, see: Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

criminal, or “feeble-minded.”¹¹⁰ The 1910 *Citizenship Act* expanded these powers, allowing for the exclusion of anyone “belonging to any race deemed unsuitable for the climate or requirements of Canada.”¹¹¹

After 1896, the federal government began to more actively recruit potential immigrants from elsewhere in Europe to work as unskilled labourers on farms and in rural areas. Tens of thousands of people from central and eastern Europe, the former predominantly Italian and Catholic and the latter including a significant number of Jewish people, were thus deemed eligible for entry to Canada. Despite the recruitment strategy, most travelled directly to Toronto and often lived, at least initially, downtown where potential workplaces and sources of informal livelihoods were more densely concentrated.

In this distinctly segregated social geography, poverty concentrated in the downtown inner-city became closely tied to historically specific notions of racial and ethnic difference from the “British” majority population. In reflection of the federal immigration policies, all ‘other’ immigrants were classified as “foreign” to the nation. In practice, this category of “foreign” was applied to anyone who did not meet the above-cited criteria of “Britishness,” including white people born outside the British Empire (or the United States, depending on their heritage). These ‘national’ identities were crucially racialized, which is not to say that people from Slavic or Mediterranean countries were perceived as, or had the same lived experiences of, people of colour. Rather, this racialization was a means for federal officials to maintain the whiteness of Canada as a nation, by allowing for the inclusion of some less ‘superior’ but more adaptable ‘races’ to the higher “British” culture and ‘civilization’.

The purpose here is less to quantify the city’s demographics, which has been extensively documented and analyzed in existing studies. My aim is instead to offer a context for the ways

¹¹⁰ Carla Marano, “‘We All Used to Meet at the Hall’ Assessing the Significance of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Toronto, 1900–1950,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada* 25, no. 1 (2014): 150. The source quotes the original *Statutes of Canada*.

¹¹¹ *Statutes* quoted in Marano, “‘We All Used to Meet at the Hall’,” 150. The author notes here that the use of the term “climate” became the basis for an argument that black people from the Caribbean came from a warm climate and would be unable to withstand winter weather in Canada.

constructs of racial-ethnic difference and patterns of socio-economic polarization threaded together in the landscape between the old and new central libraries. This articulation of race and class in urban space is an important grounding for my discussion of idleness in public library reading rooms, which was furthermore tied to ideas about gender and sexuality that were changing in relation to broader shifts in the city's labour market.

Gender and the Politics of Un/employment: Idleness as a Discourse on Labour

The Church Street library, in particular, was an object of complaint from visitors who apparently shared previous Chief Librarian Bain's views of the surrounding neighbourhood as, in his words, 'undesirable'. One letter writer identified only as G.S.S. described a visit to the Church Street branch as follows:

The twenty-six chairs at the two tables of the large reading room contained each an individual clearly there for repose or cheap amusement [...] one man was fast asleep, with a penny-dreadful on the table before him. Several were reading newspapers brought in by themselves and the remainder were immersed in such edifying literature as is offered by the [...] ten-cent, all-story trash which is thoughtfully provided by the library board.¹¹²

G.S.S. was especially offended during this visit because the "lady friend" in G.S.S.'s company was approached by a "foul, seedy fellow" on her way out the door, having obtained her first library card. This "present inexcusable state of affairs," G.S.S. concluded, was "just neither to taxpayers nor to the lady [reading room] attendants."

In response to the complaint from G.S.S., the *Globe*'s editors agreed that "the presence of many idle men of the laboring class" at the Church Street branch "makes it a very undesirable place for ladies either with or without an escort."¹¹³ But, the editors rhetorically questioned, where else should these men go all day while unemployed during cold winters? Surely not a saloon or beerhall, the editors proposed, but rather the Church Street library was the best place for them to spend their days during cyclical periods of unemployment.

¹¹² G.S.S. "A Public Library Problem," letter to the editor, *Globe* [Toronto], February 21, 1912.

¹¹³ "The Laborer in Winter," *Globe* [Toronto], February 21, 1912.

This exchange here points to the idleness of working-class men in public. Colloquially, around this time loafing and loitering – synonyms for the idleness of unemployment – became differentiated to refer to distinct forms of men’s non-participation in the paid labour force. Loafing, or ‘bumming’, came to imply ‘mere’ laziness or dallying while loitering came to refer more specifically to malingering, which is the deliberate shirking of duties, and took on a connotation of pathological or criminal behaviour.¹¹⁴ In contrast, the conspicuous idleness of women in public was subjected to a different, but closely related, form of scrutiny over the appropriate gender roles ascribed to them by the conceptual separation between public and private life.

In another editorial letter, a writer called Rose Rambler detailed at great length an encounter with a woman described as a “street beggar” in the Church Street library.¹¹⁵ The writer depicts the woman’s demeanour and appearance as rather pathetic, even abject, and passive but somewhat noble. She is a “forsaken wreck of humanity,” “pitiful looking,” skin “brown with age and weather,” “primitive,” and “a helpless old soul.” Rose Rambler wrote that she gave the woman a coin, and received an Irish blessing for good health and happiness in return. The letter writer was apparently so satisfied with her own generosity and pity that she was compelled publish her account of the interaction in a newspaper, as the letter concludes having only sketched the exchange between the two women and without any particularly discernable commentary outside the scene. The image of the ‘beggar woman’, in this letter, is an object for the construction of Rose Rambler’s own self-image as sympathetic and charitable. The letter here shows how women’s idleness in public contrasted to that of working-class men’s. The figure of the beggar is distinct but connected image of the consequences of both labour market non-participation and non-conformity to gendered divisions of labour. The presence of women roaming, loitering, or lingering in public, as I suggested in the first section of this chapter, contradicted the bourgeois gender ideology of separate spheres.

¹¹⁴ Atkin, et al., *Early Public Libraries*, 54.

¹¹⁵ Rose Rambler, “Laces and Pencils,” letter to the editor, *Globe* [Toronto], July 24, 1909.

A further indication of the reproduction of gender difference within public library reading rooms, as articulated through constructs of class and race (vis-à-vis the conception of racial difference as biological cited above), can be found in a range of commentaries about young women working for wages in the city. By the time the new Central Reference Library was open in Toronto, the local labour market was going through a significant upheaval in relation to sustained population growth through continually rising levels of immigration, patterns I outlined in the second section above. Skilled blue-collar trades and craft industry workers became the predominant occupational group among wage-earning men, who began to own their own homes in much larger numbers than in previous decades.¹¹⁶ With restrictions on voting still based on property ownership as cited above on union members and homeownership rates, this shift altered who might be considered the part(s) of the taxpaying public benefiting from the creation of “the modern library” in Toronto.

Paralleling these developments, across Canada the period between 1901 to 1911 also saw an unprecedented feminization of the total paid labour force. Although the absolute numbers of women working in waged employment remained somewhat stable (>13%), the jobs these women did fundamentally changed. In 1901 (just before the start of the TPL’s Carnegie era expansion in Toronto) the overwhelming majority of women in paid employment worked in domestic service and ‘light’ manufacturing industries such as clothing, textiles, canning, and cardboard. By 1911, the number of women working in clerical jobs and related occupations in offices had nearly doubled. Almost ten percent of all employed women worked in offices, and nearly a third of all clerical jobs in Canada were done by women – a proportion that steadily increased through the mid-20th century.¹¹⁷

The rise of office work as a conventional source of women’s employment and the overall feminization of the paid labour force were intricately tied to mass urbanization in the early 20th century. Amid rapid and sustained growth, Toronto’s economy became more oriented toward

¹¹⁶ Daniel Hiebert, “Jewish Immigrants and the Garment Industry of Toronto, 1901–1931: a Study of Ethnic and Class Relations,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no. 2 (1993): 251.

¹¹⁷ Kim England and Kate Boyer, “Women’s Work: the Feminization and Shifting Meanings of Clerical Work,” *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 2 (2009): 308-9.

financial services and commercial enterprises, industries that employed ‘office girls’ in large numbers. Mechanization and early automation, such as typewriters and Dictaphones, enabled a routinization of office work that, due to employers’ attitudes toward women as cheap sources of moderately skilled labour, facilitated the entry of more women into office work. Clerical jobs previously performed exclusively by men with some education and training, such as typists and secretaries, were not so much de-skilled during this transition but rather more overtly gendered as ‘women’s work’.¹¹⁸

Some newspaper commentaries related to this feminization of the labour force can here suggest some of the ways “the modern library” ideal circulated into popular conversations around the time of Locke’s taking up the chief librarian position. One letter, published in the *Globe* under the pseudonym “The Eternal Feminine,” described a young woman’s typical day working an office job in a downtown Toronto warehouse. The writer says that she lives alone, and keeps to a frugal budget. So, she states, she finds “wholesome” pursuits for entertainment in her off-duty hours:

In the evenings I sew, read, and visit my friends. I have about fifty books, mostly classics, and few high school books, nor forgetting the morning daily paper, for I think it one’s duty to be informed regarding the leading topics of the day. *Fiction can always be obtained through the public library*, and as books are an item when moving I leave that class of literature off my bookshelf.¹¹⁹

Another letter writer, called “Chris of R.” identified herself as a “business girl” who worked a clerical job in a private business. Chris of R. drew a contrast between herself and other young women’s “fascination” with “pretty dresses,” here a veiled reference to the presumed frivolity of young working women though it could also refer to the ostentatious fashions popular among factory girls. Specifically, Chris of R. emphasises that she spends her free time reading, stating that “I prefer patronizing Andrew Carnegie, and my conscience is clear, as I find reading more restful [than dressmaking].”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ England and Boyer, “Women’s Work,” 310.

¹¹⁹ The Eternal Feminine, “What Our Business Girls Say,” letter to the editor, *Globe* [Toronto], June 8, 1908. Emphasis my own.

¹²⁰ Chris of R., “The Postoffice,” letter to the editor, *Globe* [Toronto], June 11, 1910.

In Toronto, young single women began to migrate to the city from small towns and rural areas in much larger numbers than men. Depending on the level of formal schooling and class background, these women went to the city to seek out jobs in either offices or factories. This occupational segmentation gave rise to two separate terms used to describe these groups of young women, which were based in their class differentiation: ‘business girls’ working in offices, and ‘factory girls’ in blue-collar manufacturing jobs. The ‘factory girls’ were, in particular, an object of intense scrutiny from bourgeois women active in a range of social and moral reform movements, which were themselves increasing in size and activity over this time. A “girl problem” in Toronto was constituted in relation to the boisterous manner, elaborate fashion, and visible public presence of ‘factory girls’ who seemed to delight in indulging all the pleasures and vices the city could offer them.¹²¹ These ‘factory girls’, who worked in jobs that brought them into close physical contact with men who they were not related to through a family structure or social connections, were furthermore suspected of being especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation or coercion into sex work. Women’s voluntary associations began to fixate on these young women’s behaviour outside workplaces, and middle-class women’s groups led campaigns to control working-class women’s sexuality that became more aggressively punitive during this time.

One of the most prominent of these women’s reform groups in Toronto was the chapter of the National Council of Women in Canada (NCWC), whose members were mainly from middle-class backgrounds. The NCWC led an active campaign for “sexual purity” meaning, in the prevailing racial ideology outlined in the sections above, *racial* purity in terms of the biological reproduction of perceived ‘inferior’ traits. The goal of the campaign was to control working-class women’s presumed sexual promiscuity, to which NCWC members connected ‘racial’ inferiority the moral degradation of the national population as a whole. Building on older associations between women’s paid employment and sexual debasement, campaigns for ‘sexual purity’

¹²¹ Carolyn Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 1; Mariana Valverde, “The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-century Social Discourse,” *Victorian Studies* 32, no. 2 (1989): 170.

furthermore reworked the racial connotations of working-class women's sexuality by positioning them as potential 'victims' of "foreign" (that is, not "British") men.¹²²

As part of these wider activities, the NCWC vigorously sought to suppress what its members called "pernicious literature" for decades, which amounted to a censorship campaign.¹²³ By this term, NCWC members meant socially 'harmful' or morally 'corrupting' reading material, which encompassed more types of literature than older Victorian suspicions about 'sentimental' romances and adventures described the first section of this chapter. NCWC members were specifically concerned with young working-class women's presumed preferences for salacious 'dime store' romances and lurid, macabre "penny dreadful" novellas. Though to inspire in readers "foul acts," these cheap forms of literature were also, at the time, among the most affordable and accessible forms of popular entertainment available.

TPL Chief Librarian Locke supported the NCWC's wider efforts, for example by instituting a system for distributing pamphlets and brochures at library branches, including those authored by the NCWC (and another, loosely affiliated group, the Women's Christian Temperance Union). Due to pre-existing attitudes about periodicals and 'popular' forms of literature, such as newspapers and magazines, introducing such ephemeral and officially non-authoritative publications into public libraries was, at the time, a quite radical new idea. (Locke did not invent this idea, it should be said, but rather picked it up from librarians in major cities in the United States, who could also be supporters of temperance and moral reform movements.) He was also active in broader efforts to control the circulation of literature through pay-per-use lending libraries operated as informal businesses, and in providing small crates of library books to

¹²² Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 105-110.

¹²³ Anne-Marie Kinahan, "Cultivating the Taste of the Nation: the National Council of Women of Canada and the Campaign Against 'Pernicious' Literature at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 23 (2007): 161-179; S. Craig Wilson, "Our Common Enemy: Censorship Campaigns of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the National Council of Women in Canada, 1890-1914," *Canadian Journal of Women & Law* 10 (1998): 438-479.

settlement houses where middle-class women including the NCWC conducted some of their volunteer reform work.¹²⁴

Among middle-class women, the rising popularity of ‘women’s clubs’, which are sometimes also called literary societies, contributed to notable increases in their use of the reference library, which Locke noted in his reports. The members of these clubs would prepare speeches or essays to present at meetings, for which they might conduct some research in a public library. Though membership was often limited to white middle-class women, who as the wives and daughters of white-collar professionals and civil services were afforded more educational opportunities, social histories of women’s clubs in the United States and Great Britain document the prevalence of more inclusive working-class and black women’s clubs.¹²⁵ These ‘clubwomen’ engaged in self-directed literacy practices that generally corresponded with prevailing expectations of their race, gender, and class status. In these clubs, members also improved their abilities by doing research in public libraries on topics of their choosing.¹²⁶ Intimacy and literacy became closely intertwined in this environment, while members began to “imagine themselves as participating in a widespread activity that connected them with multiple invisible others.”¹²⁷ In constituting themselves as knowledgeable and enlightened subjects, women’s club members often began to find in the gender ideology of separate spheres opportunities to assert some influence in the public sphere, for example by making claims to their unique position as mothers as they became active in reform movements and campaigns like the NCWC’s.¹²⁸

The spectacular idleness of middle-class women in public was itself a laborious occupation, by which they were expected to erase all signs of their work within and outside the home. Their public activities were therefore scripted to present themselves as a reflection of their husband’s or father’s ability to support them financially. This arrangement helped to differentiate these

¹²⁴ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, various years 1908-1914.

¹²⁵ Elizabeth McHenry, “Rereading Literary Legacy: New Considerations of the 19th-Century African-American Reader and Writer,” *Callaloo* 22, no. 2 (1999): 477-482.

¹²⁶ Anne Firor Scott, “Women and Libraries,” *The Journal of Library History* 21, no. 2 (1986): 400-405.

¹²⁷ Anne Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women’s Clubs, 1880-1920* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 21.

¹²⁸ Ted Rutland, “‘Where the Little Life Unfolds’: Women’s Citizenship, Moral Regulation and the Production of Scale in Early Twentieth-century Halifax, Nova Scotia,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 42 (2013): 167-179.

women from employed women, but the former's idleness paradoxically depended upon the latter's labour. The typical middle-class family home could be maintained as this space of luxury and 'nonwork' only through the invisible labour of working-class women, whose jobs positioned them in labour market hierarchies through gender and racial divisions of reproductive labour. This idleness was "less the absence of work than a conspicuous labor of leisure," which was important to maintaining the social organization of work not because the perception of luxury and affluence was particularly important but rather because of the "undervaluing of work women's work that the spectacle achieved."¹²⁹

The narrative of idleness, its gendered differentiation, is a story about "desirable and undesirable labour" and the reliance of middle-class leisure on the invisible and devalued labour of working-class white women and people of colour.¹³⁰ The word idle could refer, in the early 20th century, to unemployment or joblessness. One could broaden the meaning of the term here to include anything not obviously involved, even indirectly, in capitalist value production. Idle time, when one is engaged in no outwardly discernable 'productive' activity, can hold these dual meanings. Loitering as a synonym for idleness presents this non-productivity as the "hellish, negative image" of the exploitation of labour and endemic unemployment that capitalism relies upon. Idleness as non-conformity to capitalist social relations can be seen as an externality to productivist work ethics. In this sense, idleness is an 'othering' practice by which concepts of work and nonwork, as introduced at the start of this chapter, can be conceptualized in terms of production and reproduction. While nonwork may be overall devalued, though its positioning as fundamentally outside the realm of commodity production, it can be indirectly connected to the reproduction of the labouring population and thereby paradoxically afforded some social purpose. Idleness as lack of labour is, then, a fundamental contrast to capitalist value production, including the systemically excluded costs, risks, and responsibilities to sustain people as workers daily and over the long-term.

¹²⁹ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 162.

¹³⁰ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 292-293.

A notion of idleness as time beyond the hegemony of work points to the “unregulated and unscripted time” for reinventing and (re)creating relations of intimacy, reciprocity, and solidarity.¹³¹ In this more expansive sense, loitering in a public library reading room might thus not point to malingering – the shirking of one’s duties, or the delaying of work with ill intent, whether by staying away or disruptions in workplaces – but rather promise the possibility of non-exploitative work.¹³² Improvements in production systems as savings in labour time could, under more radically emancipatory circumstances, erase the contradiction between ‘work time’ and ‘free time’. If free time includes both idle time within the work process and the “time for higher activity” for pursuing greater human flourishing, then the capabilities of individuals in production could also become untethered from compulsory waged labour.¹³³

Conclusion

The TPL’s Carnegie era began, as I outlined in the above discussion, with a controversy over whether the city government should accept Andrew Carnegie’s money. That these controversies so often resulted in the building of Carnegie libraries, despite unions’ protests, has since been interpreted as their “failure” to adequately unite local opposition against Andrew Carnegie. Yet these conflicts could still be politically consequential for union members, I showed, as a way to assert their influence in municipal politics. The site dispute that followed from this controversy ultimately, however, consolidated middle-class control over the TPL in the hands of the chief librarian and TPL Board. This overtly geographical controversy over the TPL’s finances and governance decisions was firmly rooted in the city’s starkly polarized city centre.

In this chapter, I have aimed to demonstrate how conditions for creating “the modern library.” locally and internationally, were a direct result from the earlier Carnegie controversy. Grounded in this effort, I have furthermore attempted to show that “the modern library” was a project that was not only crucially spatial and concentrated socially on groups of readers defined by their presumed roles as workers (or ‘nonworkers’) in relation to their relative position in an imagined geography of the city centre as unclean, disorderly, and racially ‘inferior’ in contrast to the civil

¹³¹ Weeks, *The Problem With Work*, 168.

¹³² Buck Morss, “The Flaneur,” 137.

¹³³ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1993), 711.

and dignified uptown. By suggesting a conceptual framework of work, ‘nonwork’, and idleness in this chapter, I have not attempted to prove an argument that Carnegie era public libraries were ‘undemocratic’ or authoritatively disciplined readers. Rather, what my analysis suggests is that public library modernization was embedded within, and not set aside from or merely responsive to, wider social changes and political struggles at the time that modernizers themselves consciously aimed to contribute to.

By uncovering an archive from newspaper articles to critically re-examine official reports, I have tried to illustrate public libraries as everyday places rather than upholding an uncritical vision of “the modern library” as the perfection of democratic values and humanitarian ideals. Readers’ own practices could contravene the middle-class institutional norms and rigid routines public library modernizers believed would teach working-class readers the orderly behaviours of ‘serious’ readers. These practices linking work, broadly conceived, and the figure of the modern citizen, ground political subjectivity and public agency in urban space.

Historically shifting ideas about work and the feminization of the paid labour force, discussed in this chapter provide important background for my analysis in the next three chapters. The introduction of open access bookshelves and Locke’s management of the TPL centrally inform my exploration of the changing organization of work and employment policies during the later Carnegie era in the next chapter. This Carnegie era built a foundation for the mid-20th century suburbanization of public library service provision around Toronto (the focus of my discussion in Chapter 4), and which today continues to form the material and epistemic basis for providing public library service today (which is part of my analysis in Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 3

Behind the Desk: The Labour of Public Library Service Provision

The Carnegie era, as discussed in the previous chapters, was a wave of mass public library building across North America and Great Britain. Prior to this Carnegie era, both public libraries and qualified librarians were somewhat scarce in Toronto. At the start of Toronto's Carnegie era in 1903, the TPL operated only six libraries including the old central library described in in Chapter 2, which was the only building owned by the local government. The remaining five small branches were in space rented from private building owners, located mainly in the west end of the city. By 1930, the effective end of Toronto's Carnegie era, had gained 19 new buildings financed through a combination of Carnegie library grants and, after 1912, municipal investments (Figure 3.1).¹

This Carnegie era growth required a significantly expanded workforce for the TPL. At the start of Locke's term as Chief Librarian in 1909, the TPL's total workforce was only 26 people; by 1916, just after the height of the TPL's Carnegie era expansion, this number had more than tripled to include 96 trained librarians and assistants.² Part-time, temporary, or seasonal employment in the TPL was, by this time, becoming more commonplace as well. Throughout his tenure as chief librarian, Locke continued to enforce his predecessor's policy of hiring only women in jobs directly involving readers or collections.³ Thus although men were only a tiny fraction of students in librarianship training programs, they occupied nearly every senior and supervisory position within the TPL until the post-World War II period.⁴

¹ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, various years 1903-30.

² *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1919.

³ "A Busy Man and His Job," *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], November 25, 1916. The reference to casual employees is very brief, indicating only that these jobs existed at one point in time and were intended to occasionally reduce permanent employees' workloads when necessary. Subsequent annual library board reports in various years between 1918-28 also refer, again only briefly, to this hiring practice.

⁴ Margaret Penman, *A Century of Service: Toronto Public Library, 1883-1983* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1983), 38.

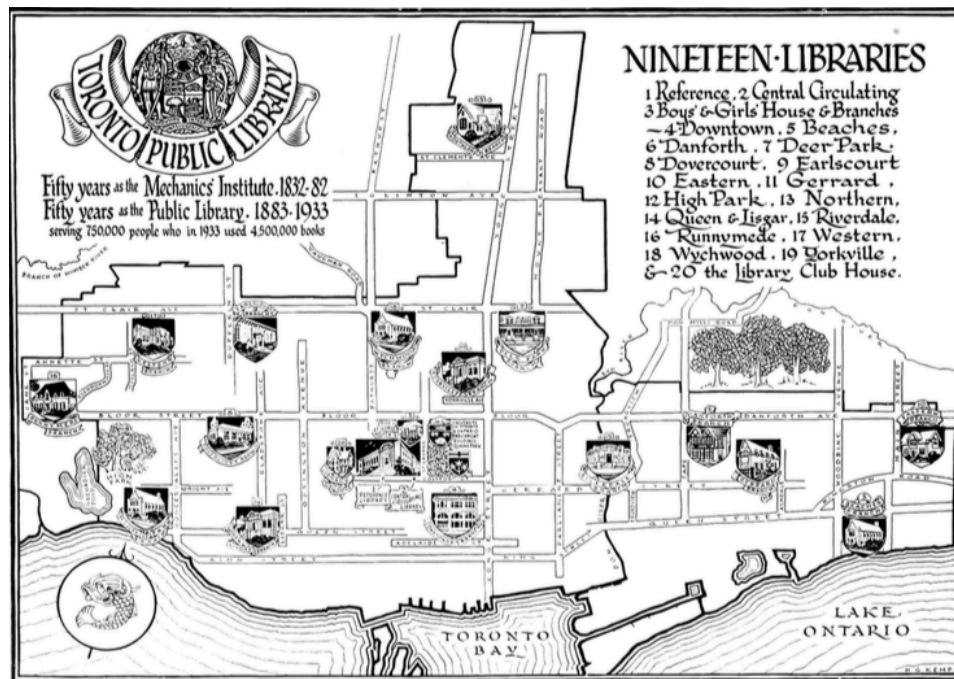


Fig. 3.1 Map of the TPL as of 1930⁵

This chapter continues my engagement with this important period of time, in the later years of the TPL's Carnegie expansion (about 1918-29 for the purposes of this analysis). My focus shifts from the public service floor designated for readers' activities to the hidden abode of the public library work process enclosed 'behind the desk' (Figure 3.2). Looking to the back rooms and back end of public library service provision, I examine the changing organization of work and employment within the later Carnegie era TPL. Throughout, I argue that this work process was the site for restructuring public library service provision. Consequently, I contend, public library workers' collective organizing *as* workers can be understood as contesting the conditions under which they provide service to the local populace. Based on this analysis, I then provide an outline of "public library work" as the *overall* intellectual, emotional, and manual labour required to maintain the material and epistemic basis for providing public library service,

⁵ Source: *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1935. Though dated 1933 in commemoration of the TPL's 50th anniversary and published in the library board's 1935 annual report, this map shows the entirety of the TPL as it stood from 1930 to 1947.

incorporating job categories that may be perceived as semi- or unskilled as well as white-collar professional librarianship.



Fig. 3.2 A view from ‘behind the desk’ in the Central Reference Library, circa 1909⁶

This argument puts public libraries into conversation with feminist geographers’ insights on the spatiality and material daily practices of paid and unpaid work, and gendered employment conditions.⁷ In this literature, persistent patterns of occupational segregation are crucially spatial, in which women are socially and geographically placed into women in to low-status, under-paid, and part-time work.⁸ This spatial ordering can, furthermore, (re)inscribe differences between and among workers within workplaces. In the case of public libraries, gendered occupational segmentation differentiates public library employees from other white-collar professionals and

⁶ Source: Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection, Accession Number: X71-17. The photograph shows a view of the Central Reference Library main entrance from the vantage point of the central information desk.

⁷ Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 89; Kate Boyer and Kim England. “Gender, Work and Technology in the Information Workplace: from Typewriters to ATMs,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 9, no. 3 (2008): 241-256; Beverley Mullings, “Sides of the Same Coin?: Coping and Resistance Among Jamaican Data-entry Operators,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, no. 2 (1999), 290-311.

⁸ Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt, *Gender, Work, and Space* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-2.

civic employees historically, while a technical division of labour specific to work within public libraries differentiates among the (primarily) women workers who provide services and maintain resources. A relatively high level of education expected of public library workers, in all job categories, signals how the feminization of this work is articulated through constructs of class. Historically these constructs have been congruent with whiteness, which in Toronto were congruent with the idea of “Britishness” described in the previous chapter.⁹

Grounded in this literature, my analysis in this chapter shows not only how public library service is produced, but also that this work process has been subjected to fiscal pressures to reduce costs concomitant managerial demands to increase productivity more typically associated with manufacturing, industry, and consumer services. Although professional librarianship is perceived as white-collar labour, much of the work process within public libraries is organized similar to that of blue-collar factory work. Like clerical jobs in private sector ‘information workplaces’, public library work is furthermore coded as pink-collar ‘women’s work’ in ways that reinscribe difference among this labour force. This gendered work organization, and its links to a broader politics of work as discussed in the previous chapter, helps to understand public library work as paid reproductive labour. The distinct spatiality of “the modern library” that, as described in the previous chapter, deliberately encloses staff work rooms from the areas designated for readers’ uses was a crucial development in making this work organization largely invisible ‘behind the desk’ during the Carnegie era.

While the intellectual and emotional aspects of librarianship have received considerable attention in the professional public library literature for decades, that public libraries are *workplaces* for waged workers is barely recognized in these discussions.¹⁰ The routine tasks aspects of work within public libraries have, consequently, also been the focus of far less scholarly scrutiny, despite the fact that a great deal of day-to-day public library operations involves standardized procedures for collecting, sorting, storing, and retrieving informational resources that

⁹ Shane Hand, “Transmitting Whiteness: Librarians, Children, and Race, 1900-1930s,” *Progressive Librarian* 38/39 (2012): 34-63.

¹⁰ Siobhan A. Stevenson, “Immaterial Labour, Public Librarians, and Third-Generation Public Libraries,” *New Library World* 117, no. 3-4 (2016): 186.

professional librarians may themselves perform, supervise, or delegate. These procedures including the processing of large volumes of materials, today in both physical and electronic formats, meaning that work within public libraries – at least partially and, I underscore in this chapter, importantly – physical and embodied as well as intellectual and affective. My analysis in this chapter emphasizes manual and mental aspects of work within public libraries, which allows for a view linking some of the most highly-skilled (and highly valorized) and perceived lowest-skill (and least valued) tasks involved in providing services and maintaining resources. To do, I focus my discussion on functions known as technical services, which involve the sequential procedures for entering new entering new materials into a collection to make them available for circulation to readers.¹¹

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. The first section, “Factories,” examines the feminization, professionalization, and de-skilling of librarianship in the early 20th century. The second section, “Working the Spaces of Public Library Service Provision,” explores how TPL employees responded to changes in their work process. Specifically, I connect the increasing consolidation of technical services work within the Central Reference Library building introduced in the previous chapter with the formation and key activities of the TPL Staff Association (TPLSA). Importantly not a labour union – public sector organized remained low in Ontario through the immediate post-World War II period – in practice the TPLSA functioned as the sole advocacy group for employees’ interests to the chief librarian (their boss) and TPL Board (as representatives of their employer, the city government). By making gains on behalf of all TPL employees, I highlight, the TPLSA effectively disrupted a prevailing model of worker-manager relations based on an idealized model of the paternal-patriarchal family with the chief librarian as its self-appointed father figure.

Factories

To begin to uncover the creation of gendered occupational segregation within public libraries, and how these patterns form the basis for a new work organization in the early 20th century, a

¹¹ Michael Gorman, *Technical Services Today and Tomorrow* 2nd ed. (Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 1998), 3.

short foray into the life and times of US-based public library reformer Melvil Dewey is first necessary. Through the implementation of routines and procedures Dewey codified and publicized around the turn of the century, public libraries were to become “efficient machines for the distribution of books” on a mass scale.¹² TPL Chief Librarian George Locke did not invent a new system for reorganizing the public library work process in Toronto, but rather adopted Dewey’s system as part of the broader modernization of the TPL during the later Carnegie era. What Locke did contribute to this project was a consolidation of technical services work in the Central Reference Library building described in the previous chapter, which, I explain in the subsequent sections of this chapter, also effectively de-skilled individual branch librarians at precisely a moment when women in the profession were starting to gain more recognition as qualified experts.

Melvil Dewey and Scientific Management in Public Libraries

While the figure of Andrew Carnegie hovered in the background of my analysis in the previous chapter, here it is Melvil Dewey who lurks in every nook and cranny of the work process within public libraries. It is difficult to overstate Dewey’s lasting influence, and it would not be an exaggeration to point out that he attempted to single-handedly invent the discipline of library science. Dewey established the first formal librarianship education program at Columbia University in New York City, where he trained the first generations of professional librarians. He was a founding member of the American Library Association (ALA), which was in practice the international professional body for librarians and their managers.¹³ His eponymous Dewey

¹² Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 170.

¹³ Wayne A. Wiegand, *Irrepressible Reformer: a Biography of Melvil Dewey* (Chicago and London: American Library Association, 1996). Although a Canadian Library Association (CLA) and Ontario Library Association (OLA) became active during the Carnegie era, a formal relationship between the TPL and ALA can be seen in the fact that both Locke and the first director of children’s services for the TPL, librarian Lillian Smith, were active on the ALA executive in the 1920s; in 1927, the TPL hosted the annual ALA meeting. See: Brendan Luyt, “The ALA, Public Libraries and the Great Depression,” *Library History* 23, no. 2 (2007): 93; Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman, *Picturing Canada: a History of Canadian Children’s Illustrated Books and Publishing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 41.

Decimal Classification (DDC) system remains the standard for public libraries worldwide today, and it is used in over 135 countries.¹⁴

His fervent desire to re-organize nearly every aspect of work within public libraries was perhaps matched only by his steadfast conviction that women were best suited to these jobs. Dewey believed that women innately possessed the patience, diligence, and manual dexterity required for working in a public library. He therefore designed procedures that took advantage of these perceived feminine traits. Dewey's early period of activity in the last two decades of the 19th century came around the same time that a new generational cohort of university-educated women began to enter the formal labour market in unprecedented (albeit relatively small) numbers. He began to promote librarianship as a less physically exhausting and more rewarding profession suitable than other professions conventionally open to these women such as teaching or nursing. By publicizing librarianship as a white-collar profession for women, Dewey secured a uniquely low-paid but highly-qualified workforce for public libraries. These women's privileged status as members of the educated middle class connoted, to Dewey, gentility and respectability that he hoped to confer onto public libraries. However, their subjugated status as women in the paid labour force implicitly made them more amenable to accepting lower salaries, longer working hours, and more demanding working conditions than similarly- or less-qualified men.¹⁵

Having designed procedures for these women to perform, Dewey furthermore profited from his innovations. The DDC is a *proprietary* system that requires an organization to purchase a license or official manual to implement and update. Dewey was also an owner of the Library Bureau, a supply company that manufactured and sold specialized tools, materials, and equipment directly to public libraries. These products met his exacting specifications, from the correct size pen nibs to index cards used in the catalogue file to sorting trays and the file cabinet itself. Anything from the correct size pen nibs and rubber stamps to card catalogue cabinets could be purchased from

¹⁴ Joan S. Mitchell and Diane Vizine-Goetz, "The DDC and OCLC," *Journal of Library Administration* 49, no. 6 (2009): 662.

¹⁵ Dee Garrison, "The Tender Technicians: The Feminization of Public Librarianship, 1876-1905," *Journal of Social History* 6, no. 2 (1972): 131-159.

the Library Bureau. Its most transformative product for public libraries, even today, is the “book truck” invented by Dewey, which is a rolling storage cart built as a kind of movable mini-bookshelf. (The standard size 3-by-5-inch index card and vertical hanging file storage were also originally Library Bureau products, which later became mass consumer products.)¹⁶

The Carnegie era, with its sustained mass expansion of modernized public libraries adopting the DDC, was therefore highly lucrative for Dewey. Yet, Dewey insisted, the primary benefits of his system were emphatically *public*, in the sense that he conceived ‘the public’ as *taxpayers*. These taxpayers were (implicitly) men, such as himself, who owned property and therefore financed public libraries. Librarians, Dewey believed, owed these taxpayers a robust return on their investment. Any kind of wasted time, effort, or money was, to Dewey, an unforgivable failure of librarians to show respect for these wise and generous benefactors. He fixated on eliminating any kind of ‘waste’ including idle periods between tasks, inattentive record-keeping, and chatting with coworkers during working hours. The unfailing politeness and business-like conduct he expected from librarians were, in his view, simply extensions of this imperative to enhance the value of taxpayers’ contributions.¹⁷

As this emphasis on efficiency may imply, Dewey was an avid proponent of scientific management. Often associated with the time-motion studies of F.W. Taylor, scientific management consists in the application of a codified body of knowledge (‘science’) to control the labour of others from above (‘management’). Taylorism can be summarized in three inter-related principles: separating the conception of a task from its execution, to achieve a firm’s monopoly over knowledge in the workplace, through strict managerial control over the whole production process.¹⁸ In manufacturing, Taylorism contributed to the rise of assembly line production. The spatiality of the factory floor facilitated strict managerial scrutiny over workers’ bodies in the performance of tasks typically involving rapid and repetitive movements.

¹⁶ Gerri Flanzraich, “The Library Bureau and Office Technology,” *Libraries & Culture* 28 no. 4 (1993): 404.

¹⁷ Marion Casey, “Efficiency, Taylorism, and Libraries in Progressive America,” *The Journal of Library History* 16, no. 2 (1981): 269.

¹⁸ Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), 77-83.

In manufacturing, Taylorism contributed to the rise of assembly-line production. The spatiality of the factory floor facilitated managers' close scrutiny over workers' bodies in the performance of routine tasks typically involving rapid and repetitive movements. The goal was the break down tasks in ever-more discrete and specialized units, as a means of achieving gains in productivity. This technical division of labour under Taylorism was, importantly, also a sexual one that produced the "valorized masculinity" of the industrial male working body.¹⁹ This figure was valued not for his skill or knowledge about his work, but rather his physical strength and presumed ability to withstand exhaustion. Taylor himself claimed that raising workers' wages to compensate them for their toil was part of his system.²⁰ In practice, however, Taylorism achieves gains in productivity – and thereby a firm's profitability – specifically by containing labour costs.

Dewey's system for public libraries predated Taylor's 1911 study, *Principles of Scientific Management*, by more than a decade and there is some evidence that parts of Dewey's systems inspired parts of Taylor's study.²¹ Although scientific management may today be treated as virtually synonymous with Taylorism, historically this connection is not particularly surprising. Neither Dewey nor Taylor invented a new system of production, but rather each synthesized a set of ideas that were circulating for a few decades and applied their methods to a particular type of workplace. Both were active during the Progressive Era in the United States, so called because bourgeois bureaucrats, reformers, and professionals sought to direct the trajectory of social change toward an orderly society. These progressives perceived rapid technological advancements, mass urbanization, rising levels of immigration, and pervasive government corruption as chaotic threats to a social order that protected their interests. Eliminating 'inefficient' forms of social organization to make society function on a more 'scientific' basis was, they believed, the solemn duty as members of their superior class. Starting with efforts to

¹⁹ Deborah Cowen, *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 107.

²⁰ Frederick W. Taylor, "Scientific Management: Reply from Mr. FW Taylor," *The Sociological Review* 7, no. 3 (1914): 266.

²¹ Casey, "Efficiency, Taylorism, and Libraries," 270.

eradicate corruption in local governments, eventually these progressives expanded the benefits of scientific management to nearly every aspect of society. Anything from personal hygiene to municipal sanitation, household budgeting to corporate finance, marital relation to nation-building, was said to be improved by the application of ‘science’.²²

Dewey’s specific contribution to this project was to scrutinize even the most excruciatingly minute details of work in public libraries. As difficult as it may be to exaggerate Dewey’s lasting influence, it is almost impossible to adequately summarize how exacting he was in his specifications. To give only one representative example, below are his instructions for the *size* of handwriting librarians and their assistants to use when creating cards for the catalogue file:

The standard card has lines 6 mm. apart, or four spaces to the inch. Of these the small letters should be 2½ mm. high; and b,f,h,k and l, 5 mm. high, thus leaving 1 mm. margin below the top of the tallest letter and the line above.²³

Dewey furthermore specified the optimal style of penmanship (called library hand, which Dewey participated in creating); the size, thickness, and colour of the index card and location and diameter of hole punch to keep it in the correct location in the catalogue file drawer; the procedures and materials for filing new cards and replacing worn or outdated ones. The necessary tools, materials, and equipment, needless to say, could all be purchased from the Library Bureau.

A perceptible admiration among librarians for Dewey that has continued to the present – biographies hail him as a ‘genius’ and ‘visionary’ – can obscure the fact that, during his lifetime, he was a highly controversial figure in his professional and personal life. At the first meeting of the ALA, Dewey attempted to take over the proceedings to force the ratification of organizational policies and a mission statement he personally preferred. During a subsequent ALA meeting, two women members publicly accused him of sexual assault and harassment. That they did so during a time when the primarily male members of the ALA would hardly have viewed his behaviour as a problem might suggest how extreme and habitual he was in this

²² Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: the Public Librarian and American Society* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 161-169.

²³ Garrison, *Apostles of Culture*, 131.

misconduct. One biographer of Dewey noted that he was widely known among librarians at the time, many of whom had been students in his library school, as a serial offender. There were rumours that he required women applicants to his library school to describe their physical features to be considered for admission. He routinely discriminated against black and Jewish applicants, in essence preventing people from these groups from becoming librarians for a whole professional generation. As the library school dean, he was also criticized by faculty members and students for his harsh and emotionally manipulative treatment of women in the school.²⁴

In his personal life, Dewey was an investor in a private club in upstate New York, which prohibited black, Jewish, and Catholic people from joining. By 1906, Dewey was: excluded from the ALA due to unprofessionalism, fired from his job as director of the New York State Library following complaints from Jewish community organizations in New York City about his involvement with the exclusionary and discriminatory private club, and lost control of his library school because of poor job performance and his refusal to participate in any kind of meeting with his colleagues and deans. As he aged, Dewey isolated himself in a bubble of sycophants drawn from his favourites among the young women enrolled in his library school, some of whom lived with him and his wife in their home. Although these facts of this life have often been swept aside in celebration of his achievements in developing the DDC, recently the ALA removed his name from the organization's highest professional honour explicitly due to his sexism and racism.²⁵

These facts of Dewey's life may seem somewhat of a diversion here. However, this context is crucial to examining how his ideas transformed public libraries in the early 20th century because Dewey's personal beliefs were embedded into the DDC itself. The innovation of the DDC is that it allows for a system of 'open' classification, meaning that the numerical categories could be almost infinite amended to add more specific sub-categories. The DDC uses a standard vocabulary, meaning that the terminologies used can be profoundly exclusionary.²⁶ Cataloguing itself is therefore deeply political, expressing an individual cataloguer's views on a certain

²⁴ Clare Beck, "A 'Private' Grievance against Dewey," *American Libraries* 27, no. 1 (1996): 62-64.

²⁵ Anne Ford, "Bringing Harassment Out of the History Books: Addressing the Troubling Aspects of Melvil Dewey's Legacy," *American Libraries* 49, no. 6 (2018): 48-52.

²⁶ Emily Drabinski, "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," *The Library Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2013): 97.

subject or reproducing the epistemic dispossession that Dewey effectively designed his classification scheme around. Dewey died in 1931, but even after his death, old classifications could persist for years. Librarianship education, more or less invented by Dewey, trained professionals to apply the DDC rather than subvert its conventions. A wide range of other tasks can often priority over the quite elaborate and time-consuming project of re-cataloguing. In the meantime, generations of readers found books about themselves classified as ‘foreign’ or ‘deviant’.²⁷

Even when the DDC was new, for example, Dewey was criticized for giving a greater level of attention to Christianity in the religion classification scheme, lumping all other major world religions into a general ‘catchall’ regardless of the thematic content or type of literature. For decades, books by black authors or about black people, regardless of the subject matter or type of literature were classified as social sciences; any books that were not about black history were classified in categories about ‘foreign’ people. In the 1910s, Howard University librarian Dorothy Porter created the first bibliographic index that contravened this system. Dewey forbade her from sharing the index, but she distributed it to other librarians and thus built the epistemic infrastructure for black texts. It was not until the 1970s, after generations of librarians advocated for the adoption of Porter’s creation, that the index gained ‘official’ recognition within their profession.²⁸ Furthermore, until the 1980s the only sub-categories for books related to homosexuality were under subject headings for ‘psychological disorders’ or ‘abnormal’ sexualities. By the 1980s, these books were moved into a category for ‘social problems’ before the creation of a new category on sexual orientation in the 1996 edition of the DDC manual.²⁹ That edition was also the first time any category specific to Asian American people or topics was

²⁷ Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

²⁸ Laura E. Helton, “On Decimals, Catalogs, and Racial Imaginaries of Reading,” *PMLA Quarterly* 134, no. 1 (2019): 99-120.

²⁹ Doreen Sullivan, “A Brief History of Homophobia in Dewey Decimal Classification,” *Overland*, July 23, 2015, <https://overland.org.au/2015/07/a-brief-history-of-homophobia-in-dewey-decimal-classification/>.

included, something that Asian American librarians themselves demanded through professional associations for years.³⁰

Dewey's system was not without its critics at the time. Librarians in the United States, for example, warned that his rigid procedures and strict routines could result in burnout.³¹ In Toronto, for example, workers in the Central Reference Library asked for their windowless workrooms to be repainted in bright colours and to clear out stacks of old newspapers Locke collected so they could have enough space to move around.³² What these critics were identifying was the soul-crushing grind and deprivation of mental stimulation that scientific management inflicts upon workers. Reduced to automatons in the performance of tightly controlled tasks, workers under scientific management become alienated not solely from the products of their labour as is the general condition under capitalism. These workers also become disassociated from their own bodies as they are compelled to command themselves to *keep moving*.³³

Early forms of mechanization intensified these demands, for example by constantly increasing the pace of production on factory assembly lines, yet the consequences of these Taylorist (and proto-Taylorist, in Dewey's case) divisions of labour were crucially social rather than dependent upon technology. This degradation of workers in the production process underpinned broader changes in capitalist social relations that secured the reliance of workers on waged labour and their subjugation within workplaces as 'unthinking' or 'unknowing' bodies. The purpose was to reduce labour costs by decreasing the number of jobs required to produce greater surpluses (in the form of profit, and in the form of a surplus of workers), rather than to ease the toil of work.³⁴ In feminized workplaces, like private sector offices, this mechanization could be smaller-scale and more incremental than in industry or manufacturing, but still served the purpose of assisting

³⁰ Molly Higgins, "Totally Invisible: Asian American Representation in the Dewey Decimal Classification, 1876-1996," *KO Knowledge Organization* 43, no. 8 (2016): 610.

³¹ Casey, "Efficiency, Taylorism, and Libraries," 134.

³² *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1924.

³³ Mark Bahnisch, "Embodied Work, Divided Labour: Subjectivity and the Scientific Management of the Body in Frederick W. Taylor's 1907 'Lecture on Management'," *Body & Society* 6, no. 1 (2000): 64.

³⁴ Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, 319-321.

employers in dividing workers from one another to achieve greater control over their labour. Technologies could aid in this segmentation fragmentation of the workforce, for example in the form of job classification schemes that scaled compensation to workers' uses of different technologies (such as lower-paid and mainly women typists and bookkeepers).³⁵

Public library workers were clearly not exposed to the same physical risks of workplace hazards as factory workers, nor were their jobs ascribed a similarly menial status. There are, however, some instructive parallels that can be drawn between Dewey's and Taylor's systems here. The technical division of labour under Taylorism was also a sexual one that valorized industrial workers' masculinity, as cited above. In part, what was unique about Dewey's version of scientific management was that it was based on a particularly middle-class and implicitly white form of conventional femininity.³⁶ He valorized these women's mental acuity and manual dexterity not because these capacities connoted, to him, their high level of skill or specialist expertise but rather their embodied performance of this femininity.³⁷ He therefore preferred librarians to be physically attractive (to him) and modestly but smartly dressed, which he felt signalled their close attention to detail, nimble fingers, and deference to men in authority. Men did have a place as librarians, but in supervisory and management positions where he believed their presence encouraged women staff members to work diligently to please the men who oversaw their job performance.³⁸

Working the Spaces of Public Library Service Provision (1918-28)

The Carnegie era, with its mass expansion of modern public libraries, required a considerably enlarged workforce for the TPL. Once built and financed, every new TPL branch had to be first

³⁵ Melanie Nolan, "Female White Collar Factories? Braverman and Inter-war Victoria," *Labour & Industry* 5, no. 1-2 (1993): 62.

³⁶ Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, "The Legacy of Lady Bountiful: White Women in the Library," *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 667-686.

³⁷ Garrison, *Apostles of Culture*, 189.

³⁸ Thad E. Dickinson, "Looking at the Male Librarian Stereotype," *The Reference Librarian* 37, no. 78 (2003): 104.

stocked with books, and then staffed, cleaned, and maintained daily. With rising levels of circulation came the near-constant work of checking in, checking out, and re-shelving items in collections. Following the height of the TPL's Carnegie era branch expansions, between 1918-28 an average of about 35% of all local residents registered for library cards each year while the total population grew about 17% to nearly 600,000 people.³⁹ These readers borrowed from the TPL's collections at various branches over 1 million times each year. Table 3.1 below is a chart showing increasing rates of circulation during this decade, figures that notably exclude the use of non-circulating reference materials or periodicals that remained inside libraries.

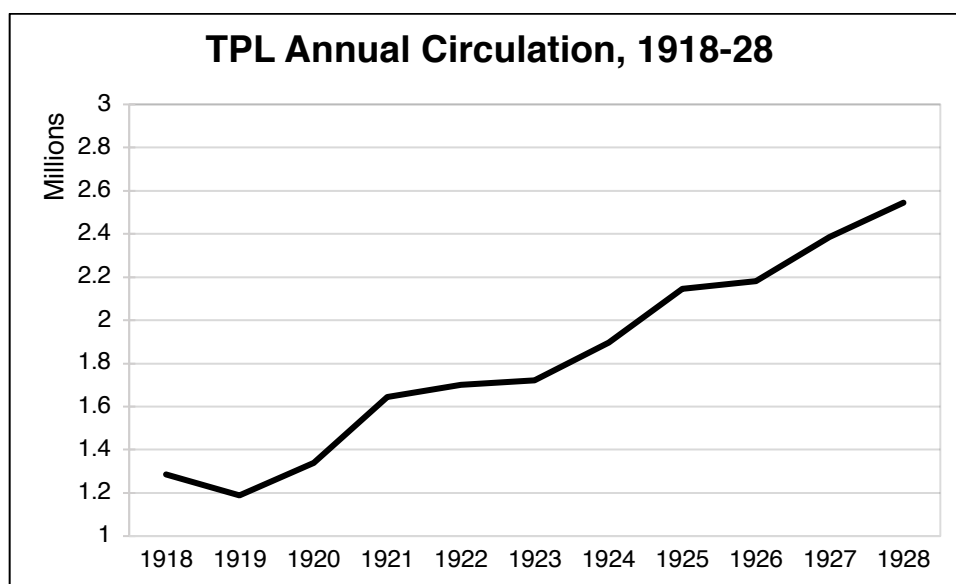


Table 3.1 TPL annual circulation, 1918-28⁴⁰

On an average day, branch staff working in separate locations across the city would, in aggregate, perform multi-step circulation and shelving procedures up to a thousand times a day, or hundreds of times an hour. They did this work while also devoting time to answering readers' questions and giving instructions in how to use open access shelves and card catalogues. Depending on their assigned duties, these workers would also have to keep accurate records,

³⁹ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, years 1918-28.

⁴⁰ Source: *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, years 1918-28.

search for lost items, collect overdue fines, work on special or long-term projects, and respond to anything disrupting their daily work routines. Extended daily operating hours (from early morning to late evening) and additional weekend days of operations (Saturdays and Sundays) introduced in the later Carnegie era placed further pressures on workers in branches.⁴¹ Long overtime hours late into the night after 9.30 pm closing times became a norm, as these workers attempted to manage their ever-increasing workloads.⁴²

In the first two decades of Locke's tenure as TPL Chief Librarian (1908-28), the TPL acquired a total of 600,000 items for its collections mainly through purchase and some donations.⁴³ Every single one of these items had to be handled by multiple workers before shelving in a branch. One of his crowning achievements as TPL Chief Librarian was to consolidate these procedures by in the Central Reference Library over the 1920s. He began by separating each step in the codified sequence of technical services procedures into departments, each with their own dedicated work rooms located mainly in the ground-level basement of the building. This effort culminated in his creation of a consolidated Technical Services Division in the Central Reference Library in 1927.

A typical day in the TPL's technical services jobs might thus have been characterized as much by monotony and isolation as by intense managerial pressures to maintain a rapid and constant pace. Although the DDC is extraordinarily efficient in terms of information management, the proto-Taylorist work organization Dewey designed and Locke implemented demanded physical fortitude and intense mental focus from individual workers. Performing rigid procedures at a rapid pace exacerbates repetitive motion injuries, eye strain, and mental exhaustion. Again, not the same as that experienced by industrial or manufacturing workers, but quite in contrast to popular images that sexualize librarians, as motherly figures reading stories to groups of children or cranky matrons who sternly shush loud talkers.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, years 1918-28.

⁴² Staff Association Vertical Files, Baldwin Room Collection, Toronto Reference Library.

⁴³ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1928.

⁴⁴ Marie L. Radford and Gary P. Radford, "Power, Knowledge, and Fear: Feminism, Foucault, and the Stereotype of the Female Librarian," *The Library Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (1997): 250-251.

The rate of book acquisitions in the TPL can here help to illustrate the increasing volume of work in technical services during the later Carnegie era, as these functions were being re-organized and becoming more centralized in the main reference library building (Table 3.1). Taking from annual reports the average number of new books acquired in a given year between 1918-28 (34,000), and assuming a five-day workweek minus the 5 statutory holidays when the TPL was closed, technical services workers would have to collectively deal with up to 132 books *per day* to keep up with their workload. They did these duties in addition to processing pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, and other periodicals that were all dealt with separately from bound books. Depending on their job descriptions, these workers would also be responsible for completing routine clerical tasks; staffing desks in the main reading room of the Central Reference Library; correcting mistakes in classification or re-cataloguing items to keep collections up to date; repairing wear-and-tear on materials; and moving heavy loads of books through the closed stacks or between work rooms.

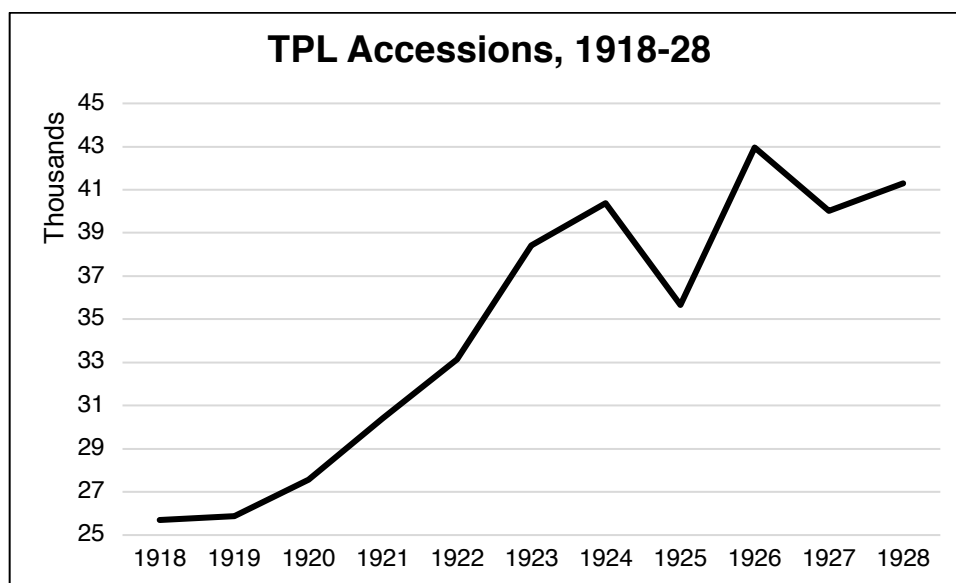


Table 3.2 TPL book acquisitions, 1918-28⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Source: *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, years 1918-28 inclusive. The decrease in acquisitions in 1925 was a result of the city government's reducing the TPL's annual budget that year, which I address below.

In case this workload does not here seem sufficiently demanding, one might consider the sequence of tasks for preparing one new book for shelving to make it available to readers in a branch library.⁴⁶ Once the new Central Reference Library opened in 1909, Locke stipulated that all new books purchased or donated would be received through the ground-floor staff entrance. The deliveries would then be brought into a dedicated room for unpacking, where a staff member would inspect the shipments and compare items received to invoices or order forms, noting any discrepancies. This worker might then inspect each of the books for defects or uncut pages, returning any with the former if in an unacceptable condition and carefully slicing open the latter with a fine pen-knife.

The shipment could then be moved into a separate labelling room, where another worker would paste into the book a card pocket into the inner cover and insert blank circulation cards.⁴⁷ In a two-card system such as that used by the TPL in the Carnegie era, one card remained inside a branch as a record of the item when it circulated, and on the other a staff member would write the due date for the borrower's reference. Once the paste dried, the book could then go to the Book Bindery room, where a skilled bookbinder or an assistant would apply the TPL's imprint to the other inner cover. From there, the book could then be taken into the accessioning room, where another worker would give the book an accession number and record corresponding entry into the TPL's accession catalogue. This number is not the same as the call number that identifies where the book should be placed on a shelf according to its subject matter. Rather, this numerical code records the sequence in which items are added to a collection, and the acquisitions catalogue is a total record of all collection materials received.

The book could next be moved upstairs to the cataloguing room where specialist librarians and their assistants classified the content of the book, and assigned a DDC code that best described the subject matter. This procedure entered the book into the library's bibliographic record (its catalogue, hence the verb cataloguing). In that room, an assistant would then create an index card

⁴⁶ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, various years 1909-28.

⁴⁷ Manual library record-keeping systems using circulation cards were replaced by systems using scannable electronic barcodes starting by the early 2000s, while the workflow for processing printed material remains organized much the same way as here described.

for the catalogue file listing the subject category along with the bibliographic information. (Initially by carefully writing by hand, but or purpose-built typewriter, likely bought from the Library Bureau). Yet another worker could then painstakingly paint the DDC code onto the book spine using lacquer and a fine brush (with electronic stylus pens and then self-adhesive typed labels replacing those materials). The book would then be placed into the area for storing and delivery to the correct branch with the accompanying catalogue cards attached. Once delivered, the catalogue cards could be inserted into the appropriate filing drawers for readers to find. The book would then be sorted again for shelving, a process of breaking large volumes of material into smaller workable units on rolling 'book trucks.' The catalogue cards could be inserted into the appropriate filing drawers. After all of this work, the book was finally shelved.

In the first decade of the Central Reference Library's operations (1909-19), staff work rooms became so overcrowded that the Locke began to document the problems this situation created in a series of his annual reports (1920-24). By 1923, the situation had become sufficiently dire that Locke wrote in his annual report to the Board that:

Our Accessioning, Stock, Registration, and Binding Departments are so overcrowded that I am afraid *we cannot comply with even the Factories Act*. It is really unfair to ask for efficiency under such working conditions.⁴⁸

Locke was referring to the Ontario government's *Factory Act* of 1884, the result of lobbying from social reformers who aimed to reduce child labour and women's employment in factories. The act included workplace health and safety regulations and specified mechanisms for enforcement that were only haphazardly followed around the province. By making workplaces formally 'safe' for workers, in practice the act limited employers' liability in cases of injury or death.⁴⁹ If the central library's work rooms could not pass the standards of this legislation, the implication was that staff members were more or less entrapped without an unencumbered route of escape to the outside if a fire broke out. What recourse might these workers have had to

⁴⁸ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1924. Emphasis my own.

⁴⁹ Lorna F. Hurl, "Restricting Child Factory Labour in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario," *Labour/Le Travail* 21 (1988): 119-120.

materially improve their working conditions, if, as Locke complained when he pointed out how inefficient the work rooms had become, the Board refused to take any action?

Reworking and Resilience as Resistance? The TPL Staff Association

The consolidation of technical services in the main reference library building during the later Carnegie era for the TPL effected a de-skilling of individual branch librarians, by removing some of the most highly-valued and specialized aspects of their jobs from their hands. These duties may be considered the exclusive domain of qualified professional librarians, such as decisions about cataloguing and book acquisitions that require specialized skills in abstracting information and determining the suitability of new items for inclusion in a collection. Ostensibly, centralizing technical services ‘frees up’ branch librarians to focus on more urgent and interpersonal aspects of their jobs, including reference services and assisting readers in finding the materials that best match their stated interests. For many women working as librarians in the early 20th century, demonstrating their mastery of techniques and expertise in the intellectual aspects of their jobs was pivotal to claiming their status as white-collar professionals. With increasing managerial controls over technical services work, however, among branch librarians specialized services, including children’s library service and reader’s advisory services, emerged as a crucial domain of autonomy over their work despite the fact that these services consisted of the direct front-line work with readers devalued within the profession.⁵⁰

The formation and key activities of the TPL Staff Association closely followed these changes in workloads and working conditions during this later Carnegie era. The group was initially established under Locke’s purview as a professional development society for TPL librarians in 1910, though he does not appear to have been particularly active in overseeing the group thereafter. Early TPLSA meetings included presentations by librarians and assistants on DDC classification methods and discussions about topics ranging from fine art to current events. The TPLSA invited guest speakers and donated used library books to local charities; members of its

⁵⁰ Garrison, “Tender Technicians,” 138.

Art Society visited museums and artists' studies; and the Drama Club performed plays and skits written by members at TPL holiday parties.⁵¹ Within the first few years of the group's activities, Locke estimated that 90% of all librarians and assistants employed in the TPL attended the association's monthly meetings.⁵²

After about eight years with no changes to their base salaries, in 1918 TPLSA members demanded raises and a new schedule for future wage increased from the Board. The group opened up their membership to include temporary or part-time workers and the small staff of men working as custodians, and succeeded in obtaining wage increases for all TPL employees. Some association members struck a Salary Committee, and in 1920 presented a proposal to the Board for wage increases due to rising costs of living. A sample budget one committee member prepared to support the proposal included basic expenses for room and board in a shared apartment and streetcar fares, as well as items that would have been required for 'respectable' women at the time (gloves, stockings, sewing supplies, hairpins). The budget showed a monthly debt of forty dollars, which was about four percent of a librarian's take-home pay.

During that time, the Salary Committee pointed to extreme discrepancies between librarians' salaries and those of other municipal government employees, including teachers and some whose jobs required fewer educational credentials. The Board surveyed municipal employees' salaries and concluded that librarians did, in fact, make lower wages and approved a raise. Librarians were leaving their jobs at the TPL for work the private sector, which Locke attributed to higher salaries in business and industry. However, his policy of demoting married women no doubt contributed to the rate of attrition among librarians. Furthermore, a cohort of librarians and assistants were approaching retirement age, and many were already preparing to retire. The association thus also began to insist on a pension scheme in 1922, another benefit that other municipal employees and private sector professionals might receive. Neither the Board members nor Locke had ever considered pensions, nor does it seem they took the proposal seriously for a

⁵¹ Staff Association Vertical Files, Baldwin Room Collection, Toronto Reference Library.

⁵² *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, 1912.

few years; though they did ponder the possibility of financing a pension scheme with overdue fines and borrowers' fees for lost or damaged books.

Although ultimately the Board and Locke did concede the point that public library workers were indeed municipal employees, these men neglected salaries and benefits for the next six years. The association again successfully agitated for raises in 1928, explicitly due to increased costs of living. The association also succeeded in convincing Locke and the Board to provide them with a headquarters, in a house the Board purchased a few years before located next to the Central Reference Library, and paying for the renovations. (It opened as the Staff Association house in 1930, which I address in more detail in the following discussion.) At least one Board member, who was the first woman appointed to sit on the Board, strenuously opposed these decisions; it appeared in the association files that she had to be slowly persuaded to give her approval. The year the staff house opened in 1930, the Salary Committee finally prevailed in the matter of pensions. The federal government's Ministry of Labour administered the pensions, and the letter laying out the structure of the scheme noted that paying pensions recognized that "library employees [are] city employees."⁵³ (As a reflection of the feminization of the work these employees did, the documents exclusively used the gender pronouns she/her.)

The TPLSA thus became, in practice, the representative body for employees to the chief librarian and Board, their boss and employers' representative respectively, a role it continued to fulfill through the mid-1970s when TPL employees formed a union. (This was not, I explain in the next chapter, the first public library workers' union in the Toronto area.) Table 3.3 below displays annual total expenditures and total library service salaries between 1918-28. The annual budget increased 40% during this period, with salaries on average 60% of total expenses. During this time, as cited above, the TPL workforce more than doubled and the number of branches increased from 15 to 18. The above-cited growth in borrower registration, circulation, and acquisitions indicates an increasing volume of work and intensification of workloads.

⁵³ City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 36, File 115.

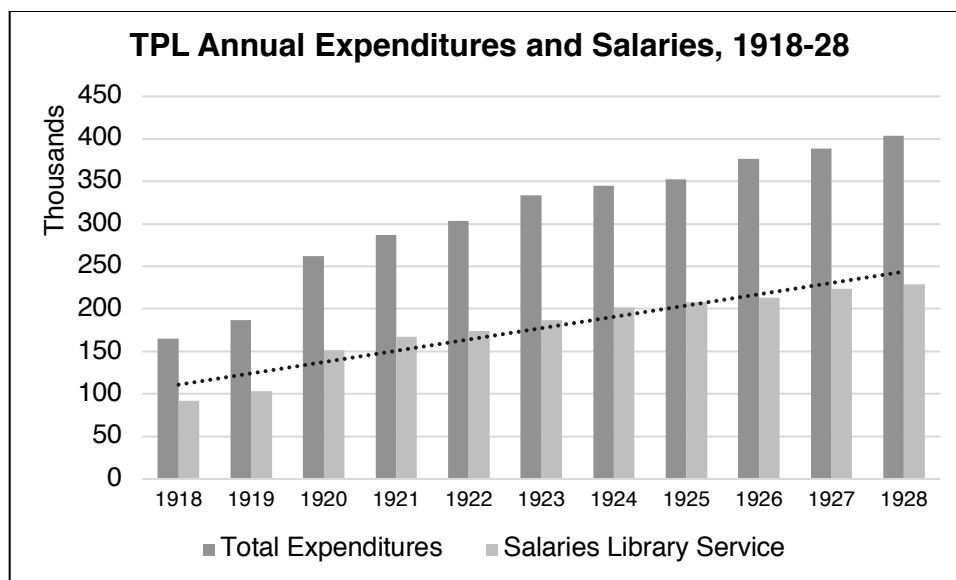


Table 3.3 Comparison of TPL total annual expenditures and salaries, 1918-28⁵⁴

Over this period, the city council repeatedly cut the TPL's annual budget allocation; at some points, as part of an overall 'revenue freeze' or budget reduction for municipal services generally.⁵⁵ In 1925, however, elected officials who allocated these funds singled out the TPL among all other municipal services to scrape quite small amounts off the city budget. Locke announced to a newspaper reporter that the two newest branches would have to be closed as a result of the cuts.⁵⁶ The Conservative Party association in one of the neighbourhoods registered their objections through their elected representative on city council, underscoring that increasing unemployment among younger men in the city made it an especially bad time to close branches. Ultimately, the cut came out of the book acquisitions budget that year, which explains the noticeable dip in Table 3.2 above.

⁵⁴ Source: *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, years 1918-28; dollar amounts are from original source documents, and are not adjusted for inflation.

⁵⁵ "Civic Expenditure Has Been Halted," *Globe* [Toronto], February 25, 1924; "Library Estimates but Little Changed from 1926 Figures," *Globe* [Toronto], February 12, 1927; "Higher Levy Urged by Library Board," *Globe* [Toronto], June 11, 1929.

⁵⁶ "Attacking the Libraries" [Editorial], *Globe* [Toronto]; March 4, 1925; "Must Close Branches Says Chief Librarian," *Toronto Daily Star*, March 7, 1925; "City Hall Economy is Roundly Scored," March 7, 1925; "Branch Libraries Will Remain Open," March 7, 1925.

In the early 20th century, public sector workers in Canada frequently formed associations that, like the TPLSA, did not have either the legal right to collective bargaining or political support from wider organized labour movements. Through the 1950s, unionization among private sector workers outstripped that of public sector workers in Canada generally, which began to shift in the 1960s when associations became unions to gain collective bargaining rights that had been won and maintain by private sector employees who led the labour movement. These associations have thus been described as lacking the official recognition and radical potential of “bona fide labour unions.”⁵⁷

That public library associations, like the TPLSA was, are professional societies including bosses and senior managers as well as front-line or back-room workers has been attributed to the latter two’s limited gains in salary negotiations and working conditions. This structure can focus questions about costs on ‘what’s good for the library’ rather than what benefits employees whose jobs place them at the receiving end of top-down workplace power hierarchies. Large professional bodies, such as the ALA, have been accused of upholding employers’ interests over those of service providers whose salaries and benefits have long been far lower than those of other civic employees in similar job categories, and also those of private sector workers with similar educational qualifications and experience.⁵⁸

These associations have also had an important place in women librarians’ efforts to gain professional recognition, both locally as civic employees and among librarians as a professional community. The entry of more women into librarianship, paradoxically but unsurprisingly given Dewey’s efforts, accompanied the overall devaluation of their skills and qualifications. The rigid power hierarchies within their workplaces further entrenched this devaluation, with men dominating in the aspects of librarianship deemed most highly skilled and technical: management, supervision, cataloguing, and acquisitions.

⁵⁷ Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage, *Public Sector Unions in the Age of Austerity* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), 11.

⁵⁸ Tina M. Hovecamp, “Professional Associations or Unions? A Comparative Look,” *Library Trends* 46, no. 2 (1997): 241.

Yet material gains the Association made *as waged workers*, suggests the real, political stakes of these decades of organizing and advocacy. Over the 1920s, workers in separate municipal departments and agencies engaged in similar struggles for recognition of their jobs and, in so doing, disrupted technocratic managerial control over their work.⁵⁹ What distinguished the TPLSA was not only the feminization of the TPL's workforce, but also that this employee Association remained formally under the guidance of Locke and a small number of Board members who sat on the Association's own board of directors. The demands the Association collectively made on Locke and the TPL Board is, I think, an indication that they organized among themselves outside the purview of their boss and employer(s). That they did so in a workplace where their identities as library employees had been constructed for them by men like Dewey and Locke suggests to me that their insistence on compensation, benefits, and working conditions potentially disrupted an imagination of public library workforces as 'families'.

What Were They Doing in the Staff House?

Before the house opened, the only breakroom facility in the Central Reference Library – where the majority of TPL employees worked – was in a small cloakroom on the ground floor, squeezed between a washroom and an office for the chief librarian's secretary. In a letter memorializing the Staff Association house, preceding its demolition and replacement in a new administrative building at the same location in the early 1960s, I found a glimpse into this space. Written by two Association members, who claimed the letter reflected the experiences of the group's members over the past 30 years, described meals and tea taken in the dining room together, friendships formed, confidences shared, and convivial debates during meetings. The letter acknowledges an extreme paucity of men among the group's membership, in part due to the overall predominance of women as TPL employees but also, the writers (I think cheekily) added, they were perhaps not quite as comfortable in the 'women's house'.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Chris Hurl, "From Scavengers to Sanitation Workers: Practices of Purification and the Making of Civic Employees in Toronto, 1890-1920," *Labour/Le Travail* 79 (2017): 97.

⁶⁰ The TPLSA files I found in the TPL Archives were frustratingly sparse, with a huge gap in records between the 1930 opening of this Staff House and the early 1960s when the house closed; I describe this in further detail below.



Fig. 3.3 Toronto Public Library staff outside the Central Library, circa 1920-22⁶¹

Labour geographers have conventionally studied workers' resistance to workplace restructuring through formal labour unions.⁶² In these struggles, union members can express collective agency and, in so doing, create space 'for' organized labour. However, as many have emphasized, industrial workplace unionization historically proceeded through deeply gendered and racialized exclusions (both overt and covert) to promote the interests of a traditionally 'white' male breadwinner model that became fused with notions of working-class agency.⁶³ Displacing this traditional working-class agency is crucial for understanding how workers who are socially marginalized and economically entrapped in their jobs can subvert domination within their workplaces and subvert established norms for expressing their agency as workers.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Source: Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Room, Accession Number: TPL-A-0164-P35-I01. Caption from original

⁶² David Christoffer Lier, "Places of Work, Scales of Organising: a Review of Labour Geography," *Geography Compass* 1, no. 4 (2007): 814-833.

⁶³ Ann M. Oberhauser, "Feminism and Economic Geography: Gendering Work and Working Gender," in *A Companion to Economic Geography, A Companion to Economic Geography*, ed. Eric Sheppard and Trevor Barnes (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2017), 60-76; Linda McDowell and Doreen Massey, "A Woman's Place?" in *Geography Matters! A Reader*, ed. Doreen Massey and John Allen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 128-147.

⁶⁴ Kendra Strauss, "Labour Geography II: Being, Knowledge and Agency," *Progress in Human Geography* 44, no. 1 (2018): 150-159.

Overt resistance to workplace restructuring may indeed highlight the continued importance of collective bargaining rights, and the ability of unionized workers to ‘take’ space and to ‘make’ it for their struggles. Alternative strategies that do not conform to a traditional notion of working-class agency have, however, received considerably less attention among labour geographers. Some feminist labour geographers have suggested focusing attention on reworking and resilience strategies among workers.⁶⁵ The former consists of short-term strategies workers use to gain leverage within their workplaces and materially improve their conditions. The latter describes mundane acts and everyday coping strategies through which workers can develop bonds of reciprocity and solidarity, which may not radically alter capitalist social relations but bind workers together in under-appreciated ways. The importance of “homespace” in these reworking and resilience strategies has, furthermore, largely been neglected although workers themselves may be supported in these activities within their homes, by family members or when they visit one another outside working hours.⁶⁶

So when the TPLSA organized to obtain material improvements in their working and employment conditions – raises, pensions, a break room and a group headquarters – this reworking strategy had important economic and political consequences. That this Staff House functioned as a ‘home away from home’ for generations of TPL employees, suggests the possibility of resilience through this space, which importantly could be used by workers in separate locations spanning the city who otherwise not meet. A retreat to an intimate homespace like the Staff House might have thus been a short-term material gain that supported longer-term resilience among workers.

Conclusion

Here I outline public library work as waged labour to link mental, manual, and emotional aspects public library workers’ jobs, as well as to situate these jobs within labour market hierarchies that

⁶⁵ Cindi Katz, *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children’s Everyday Lives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004): 246-250.

⁶⁶ Mullings, “Sides of the Same Coin?” 291.

devalue reproductive labour as 'nonwork' or 'unproductive'. From this grounding, public library workers' material and employment conditions can be understood not solely as 'workplace issues' or 'employee concerns' but rather as providing the basis for library service provision daily and over the long-term. Consequently, changes in the work process within public libraries can be conceptualized as restructuring how informational resources are provided to local residents.

Public library work is a technology for collecting, organizing, storing, and retrieving information, which can take whatever physical or virtual form deemed relevant to a local populace. Professional librarians and assistants are not the only employees who do the daily work required to provide public library service, though their jobs may seem virtually synonymous with this service provision. Clerks and secretaries do routine clerical and administrative support tasks; pages, who are often part-time or temporary employees, perform shelving and some basic circulation procedures. These workers may learn on the job, and move into more specialized duties like answering basic reference questions or showing readers how to use the card catalogue file. Delivery truck drivers move materials between geographical locations; cleaners, custodians, and groundskeepers do the work of maintaining physical buildings. These front-line and back-room workers do the essential physical, intellectual, and emotional labour required to provide public library service daily.

In this work, these workers are overseen by senior managers and administrators who may be responsible for supervising separate departments in centralized headquarters. A library board is the legal authority and decision-making body for the organization overall, and represent the employer in negotiations with workers. These groups of institutional actors are differentiated from front-line and back-room employees in terms of their authority to determine resource allocations, enforce policies, and create long-term planning strategies. The chief librarian (who may be called a library director, or as in the case of the TPL once the first woman was hired for the job in the final years of the 20th century, City Librarian) is at the top of this institutional hierarchy, with direct responsibilities to advise library board members, to whom all other employees report.

I propose this way of thinking about public library work to describe the overall front-line and back-room labour essential to provide public library service, materially and epistemically, day-to-day and over the long term. These categories can usefully draw together embodied and interactive service work formally separated by job classifications that differentiate workers between one another within their workplaces according to perceptions of skill, knowledge, and value.⁶⁷ By differentiating managers, administrators, and board members from this categorization, the direct costs of service provision can be seen as *labour* costs. Reducing these costs has, my analysis in this chapter has illustrated, centrally propelled the restructuring of local conditions for providing library service. This proto-Taylorist work organization facilitates workforce segmentation and fragmentation in the work process, which continues today to form the basis for the provision of library service, in which workplace flexibility and the reduction of costs are increasingly offered as the exclusive solutions to declining public revenues and fiscal pressures for efficiency.

As paid employment, public library work is organized through overlapping racial and gendered divisions of labour that place these workers socially into labour market hierarchies. While the feminization of librarianship, and work within public libraries more generally, is connected with high-status and well-paid white-collar jobs, gendered occupational segregation facilitates the devaluation of this work, which is lesser-valued, lower-paid, and employment tenure frequently less secure than comparator jobs in civil service or private sector offices performed by men. The above-cited findings of the TPL Board on the gender gap between librarians' salaries and those of other civic employees shows how compensation and job classification can fragment a labour force through gender and class constructs.

⁶⁷ Linda McDowell, *Working Bodies: Interactive Service Employment and Workplace Identities* (Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2011); Linda McDowell, "The Lives of Others: Body Work, the Production of Difference, and Labor Geographies," *Economic Geography* 91, no. 1 (2015): 1-23. While I have focused on mental and manual aspects of public library work in this chapter due in part to the contents of my archive, my analysis here would support further discussion of interactive and embodied service work through the feminist geography literature on embodiment and performativity.

In feminist debates on paid service work and reproductive labour, domestic work and blue-collar jobs in the lowest-paid and perceived lowest-status segments of the labour market have been a more consistent focus than white-collar jobs constructed as highly skilled.⁶⁸ Along with paid and unpaid domestic work, these blue-collar service jobs are historically, and disproportionately, allocated among women of colour who do the essential daily work of supplying goods and services to maintain the overall labour force.⁶⁹ Paid reproductive labour can therefore be a vector for seeing how the social organization of work relies upon the construction of differences among women, as opposed to simplistic ideas about ‘women’ as a homogeneous group with shared interests and experiences of paid employment or unpaid work. White women, whether or not they in waged employment or under-paid jobs, depend upon this low-wage work to supplement their household responsibilities and to provide for the needs of family members, an arrangement that men directly benefit from due to social norms that largely exempt them from these responsibilities. The point here is not to create a rigid hierarchy of class, gender, and racial oppression but rather to highlight how the social status of public library work is congruent with whiteness that, in Toronto in the early 20th century, was linked with the idea of “Britishness” as the dominant racial-ethnic category in the city as described in the previous chapter.

These points undergird my analysis in the following chapters that form Part II of this dissertation, titled “Sites for Social Reproduction,” wherein I explore changing relationships between public library workers and public library users as a politically consequential and analytically fruitful grounds for collective mobilization between these groups of key actors to make more expansive claims to public space.

⁶⁸ Eleonore Kofman and Parvati Raghuram, “Gender and Global Labor Migrations: Incorporating Skilled Workers,” *Antipode* 38, no. 2 (2006): 283.

⁶⁹ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Division of Paid Reproductive Labor,” *Signs* 18, no. 1 (1992): 2.

CHAPTER 4

Living Rooms for (New) Suburban and (New) Canadian Families: Suburbanizing Public Library Service in Metro Toronto (1958-68)

Rosie the Robot

The image below is an illustration of a multi-armed robot in the midst of working within a library (Figure 4.1). The robot's appearance is emphatically feminine, wearing a frilly collar and matching apron, with long eyelashes and full lips suggesting the application of makeup, and hair set in high stiff curls. From one robotic hand dangles a pair of high-heeled shoes; the others grasp books, scrolls of paper, and a sturdy rubber stamp. Stood behind a waist-high table, the robot's workspace is cluttered but sufficiently organized to place the necessary tools and materials within reach of telescoping arms. The style of the illustration suggests constant and expeditious movement. The cylindrical shape of the robot's head, mechanical limbs, and decorative attire remind me of Rosie, the humanoid maid who serves the Jetsons family in the eponymous television cartoon series. The artist might have intended the resemblance: the TV show began broadcasting in the early 1960s, while the drawing dates from later that decade.

I happened upon this image while conducting research on librarianship education in the Archives of Ontario. Without any caption, the drawing prefaced the Lakehead University's Library Technicians' Training Program yearbook celebrating the graduating class of 1969. The prominent placement of the drawing and lack of any further commentary implied to me that the depiction required nor further explanation for graduates of the program. Perhaps the artist was aiming to capture the feeling of working robotically, in the performance of routine procedures characteristic of a technicians' job. The illustration could also be a critique of future work supervisors' expectations that technicians work *like* robots, at a rapid pace with unfailing accuracy.

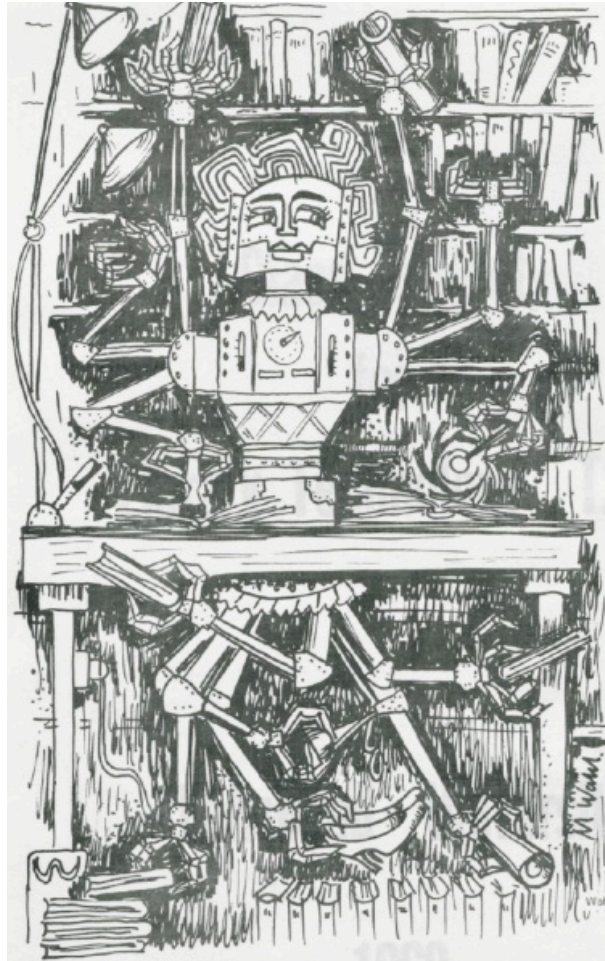


Fig. 4.1 Rosie, the robot library worker¹

The job of a library technician dates from the post-World War II period, during a shortage of qualified professional librarians at the outset of a planned period of mass public library expansion. The high level of education required for entry into professional librarianship contributed to this recruitment crisis. However, the low pay, long working hours, and insecure employment tenure typical in public libraries perpetuated a workforce retention problem. Rather than improve librarians' working or employment conditions, public library directors introduced technicians' jobs as a way to re-allocate workloads within branches. There is no standard

¹ Source: Lakehead University Library Technicians' Training Program Yearbook (1969), Archives of Ontario (RG2-81-4).

definition of a technicians' duties; rather, this job category is differentiated from librarianship based on the level of education required for employment.² While professional librarians must hold a university degree in library science, technicians may either learn on the job or hold a diploma such as those awarded by Lakehead University's library school to the class of 1969. As mid-level skilled paraprofessionals, technicians perform routine clerical tasks and standard procedures, working under the supervision of professional librarians. Over time, technicians took on more of the tasks entailed in day-to-day public library operations. New information technologies had an instrumental role in redefining this job category, for example electronic databases that automated some aspects of record-keeping and information retrieval previously performed exclusively by qualified librarians. Programs like Lakehead's established over the 1950s in Canada, the United States, and Australia, provided standardized instruction in specialized techniques and procedures. This standardization deliberately reflected the formalization of librarianship education in the early 20th century.

I begin this chapter with Rosie to keep the organization of work within public libraries, the feminization of this labour, and its de-skilling through technical improvements in the work process unique to public libraries in view. My analysis in this chapter focuses on the suburbanization of public library service provision and the regionalization of public library policy in Metropolitan Toronto (Metro). Recreation policy in Metro Toronto suburban municipalities became, in the postwar period, centred on "the private family in [the] private space" of the household. This reorientation of social policy instantiated a specifically "suburban citizenship" that "was both intensely familial and entrepreneurial in form."³

To develop these claims, the remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I discuss the postwar suburbanization of public library service provision around Metro Toronto. To evaluate working conditions within branches, I examine the findings of a landmark 1960 report assessing public library service provision across Metro. I focus on the North York Public Library (NYPL),

² Frances Davidson-Arnott and Deborah Hay, "Library Technician Programs: Skills-Oriented Paraprofessional Education," *Library Trends* 46, no. 3 (1998): 541-542.

³ Deborah Cowen, "Suburban Citizenship? The Rise of Targeting and the Eclipse of Social Rights in Toronto," *Social & Cultural Geography* 6, no. 3 (2005): 335.

where new information technologies and rigid divisions between job descriptions contributed, I suggest, to the formation of the first public library workers' union in 1959. Reviewing language in the first NYPL Employees' Union (NYPLEU) collective agreement, I highlight a strong emphasis on the active participation of union members in enhancing the quality of services financed by local taxpayers, especially to eliminate waste and prevent disruption.

Second, I discuss family-centred public library service provision in Metro suburbs, first in North York and then in the Scarborough municipality to the east. I contrast the Scarborough Public Library (SPL) with the NYPL, including local population demographics and municipal cultures, to foreground the SPL's use of popular culture and mass media (such as pocket paperbacks and TV rooms in branches). I address the 1968 regionalization of public library policy and governance through the Metropolitan Toronto Library Board (MTLB), which was a contentious process that reflected tensions between municipal councils in the wider Metro system of government. I then investigate two local disputes over public library budget cuts in North York and Scarborough, respectively. Explaining how these conflicts reveal wider problems produced through the Metro system that were an object of contention at the time and which have since been attributed to sharp political and geographical differences since, I point to my analysis in the next chapter.

Returning to the figure of Rosie, I briefly conclude by emphasizing that, for public library workers themselves, automation can be highly ambivalent – while some types of machine automation can relieve widespread repetitive motion injuries, for example, it can also accelerate job de-skilling and ongoing devaluation of these workers' jobs. Decisions about which technologies to adopt, and for what specific purposes, are therefore not neutral improvements to the work process or simple cost-saving tools but rather can be highly political.

“Housekeeping” 1955-60

The Carnegie era of expansion for the TPL, which I addressed in the two preceding chapters, came to an end in 1930. Following the municipally-financed renovation of the modern Carnegie Central Reference Library that year, no new public libraries were built in Toronto until after

World War II. Public library *use* dramatically increased overall during the Great Depression of the 1930s and continued through the war years, far exceeding the capacity of staff, collections, and buildings. In contrast to a longstanding focus on promoting ‘serious’ reading, during these years librarians across Canada and the United States began to publicize ‘light’ and ‘entertaining’ books as a way to escape from the deprivations of war and depression.⁴ At the end of the war, readers in TPL branches began to request more books on ‘serious’ subjects: cattle-grazing, homesteading, home gardening, postwar planning.⁵ Readers in Toronto were perhaps either longing for an imagined bucolic past or looking toward a modern future.

The first new public library in Toronto opened in 1947, and it was named after Carnegie era TPL Chief Librarian George Locke. The Locke branch bore little resemblance to the buildings its namesake had controlled the architectural design and construction of. With clean modernist lines and a rough stone exterior, it looked more like the public library buildings that would proliferate around North America and the UK in the following three decades. The location of the Locke branch in the far north end of the city also pointed toward the direction of a new wave of public library expansion: in rapidly suburbanizing municipalities adjacent to the downtown city of Toronto, where the TPL continued to operate.

In the immediate postwar period, breathtakingly swift population growth around the older city of Toronto spectacularly transformed outlying areas. Formerly rural and sparsely populated areas outside the city boundaries saw explosive population growth; in some places, over 400% between 1941 and 1955 and public investments in infrastructure and some services ensued.⁶ The conversion of wartime production into mass consumer product manufacturing altered the economic landscape and labour market for decades thereafter. Private property developers quickly built low-density, car-dependent suburbs planned and designed around the presumed needs of families living in detached or semi-detached homes. This period was the greatest production of housing in Canada’s history, yet mass suburbanization barely addressed an extreme postwar housing shortage in major cities. In Toronto, planners and developers

⁴ *Annual Report of the Toronto Public Library Board*, various years 1932-45.

⁵ Wellington Jeffers, “Finance At Large,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], June 2, 1945.

⁶ Cowen, “Suburban Citizenship?” 339.

prioritized more affluent potential homeowners, which resulted in highly uneven patterns of investment and housing provision. Public investments subsidized this postwar suburbanization, paying for infrastructure and services that firms viewed as unprofitable to provide directly to employees.⁷

Prior to the 1950s, only the TPL in the downtown city provided comprehensive public library service to local residents. Outside the city boundaries, a patchwork of volunteer-run subscription libraries and libraries in primary or secondary schools provided some basic materials and resources to local residents.⁸ Parallel to recreation services and facilities, in the immediate postwar period these volunteer-run libraries began to convert into tax-supported municipal agencies, movements that middle-class women were frequently active in shaping.⁹ By the end of the 1960s, five new public library systems established after World War II operated in suburban municipalities adjacent to the older downtown city of Toronto where the TPL continued to operate. In the first two decades of this mass suburban public library expansion, 40% of the public libraries that are today part of the TPL's branch network of 100 were built with public, and chiefly municipal, investments (Table 4.1)

⁷ Pierre Filion, "Metropolitan Planning Objectives and Implementation Constraints: Planning in a Post-Fordist and Postmodern Age," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 28, no. 9 (1996): 1637-1660; James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985).

⁸ Lorne Bruce and Karen Bruce. *Public Library Boards in Postwar Ontario* (Toronto: Lorne Bruce, 2012). Some of the former, called association libraries, dated from the late 19th and early 20th century, while others from the later Carnegie era.

⁹ Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Library Feminism and Library Women's History: Activism and Scholarship, Equity and Culture," *Libraries & Culture* 35, no. 1 (2000): 51-65.

Board	Year Est.	Branches (1967)	Municipality
North York Public Library	1955	12	City of North York
Scarborough Public Library	1955	10	City of Scarborough
Etobicoke Public Library	1950	8	City of Etobicoke
East York Public Library	1950	5	Borough of East York
York Public Library	1945	5	City of York
Toronto Public Library	1883	28	City of Toronto

Table 4.1 Metro Toronto public library boards¹⁰

Following the 1954 creation of the two-tier Metropolitan Toronto (Metro) system of government, constituent municipalities were meant to retain local autonomy over some services, business regulations, and land-use planning. As elsewhere in North America and in Great Britain, metropolitanization in Toronto was an attempt to make government ‘match’ patterns of economic and population growth on a city-regional basis.¹¹ The structure of these regional systems can be idealized as cooperative and non-antagonistic, but in practice it heightens competition between municipalities.¹² Conflicts over resource allocation and which political institutions held legitimate authority over planning decisions characterized the Metro system in Toronto, as in similar systems. One of the main criticisms of the Metro system, both during and after its existence, was that in practice it concentrated political power both geographically, in the older city centre in Metro Hall, and symbolically, in the downtown and more affluent municipalities. Smaller municipalities with lower property tax bases and less political influence on the Metro council frequently ‘lost out’ in competition over resource allocations.¹³

¹⁰ Source: *Metropolitan Toronto Library Board Annual Report 1967-9*, 11-12.

¹¹ Betsy Donald, “Spinning Toronto’s Golden Age: the Making of a ‘City that Worked’,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 34, no. 12 (2002): 2127-2129.

¹² Christian Lefèvre, “Metropolitan Government and Governance in Western Countries: a Critical Review,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 22, no. 1 (1998): 10-12.

¹³ Gwyndaf Williams, “Institutional Capacity and Metropolitan Governance: the Greater Toronto Area,” *Cities* 16, no. 3 (1999): 174-175.

A pivotal moment of reckoning came in 1960, with the publication of a report evaluating the quality of public library service across Metro.¹⁴ Its author, Ralph Shaw, was a librarian at Rutgers University, who was commissioned by the Metro council to conduct a study and make recommendations for improvements. Shaw spent more than a year (1958-9) visiting branches around Metro and gathering statistics. His report measured each public library system against the Canadian Library Association (CLA) minimum standards for basic public library service. These standards included annual expenditure (assessed at C\$2.00 per capita for adequate service); proportion of librarians to local residents (1 to every 5,000-7,000); collection size, circulation, and number of borrowers registered (varying dependant on branch size); and the percent of the local population within three-quarters of a mile walking distance from the nearest branch (to indicate the extensiveness and comprehensiveness of service). These standards set benchmarks understood to describe the quality of existing service, and objectives accepted among professional librarians responsible for providing quality service.¹⁵

Shaw found, in sum, that nowhere in Metro Toronto did any public library system meet any of the minimum standards. Although he acknowledged the impressively rapid growth of public library service in Metro suburbs in less than a decade, he asserted that only residents of the older city of Toronto who lived nearby the Carnegie era Central Reference Library had “sufficient” library service. Everywhere else, he added, what was available was “inadequate.”¹⁶ In newer suburban municipalities, he documented, there were neither enough branches nor enough materials available in them. Downtown, the TPL had more branches dispersed among neighbourhoods, but the Carnegie era buildings needed such extensive repairs and renovations that they would better be replaced.

He furthermore identified clear discrepancies within and between municipalities in terms of annual expenditure on public libraries, pointing out that funding levels did not map directly onto

¹⁴ Ralph Shaw, *Libraries of Metropolitan Toronto: a Study of Library Service Prepared for the Library Trustees' Council of Toronto and District* (Toronto: Library Trustees' Council of Toronto and District, 1960).

¹⁵ Florence B. Murray, “Canadian Library Standards,” *Library Trends* 21, no. 2 (1972): 300-303.

¹⁶ Shaw, *Libraries of Metropolitan Toronto*, 1.

which municipalities had relatively more affluence concentrated locally (and thus potentially more financial resources to pay for services). In Toronto, North York, and Scarborough, the respective municipal governments spent at least twice as much each year on recreation centres that, Shaw cited, “are used by a smaller number of people than public libraries” in each area.¹⁷ In North York and Scarborough, he noted, public library service rapidly expanded while elsewhere there was barely any to speak of following an initial establishment centred in a single small branch. Shaw attributed these pronounced variations to the fact that public libraries remained governed by municipal councils and financed with local property taxes, meaning that locally-specific political dynamics that prioritized some services over others produced these patterns. Public library funding, he underscored, was either being determined by municipal elected officials’ “willingness to pay” in places where there were adequate resources, or else their “ability to pay” where budgets were more meager.¹⁸ He stressed that every public library system in Metro would need *double* their annual spending to reach the CLA minimum standards.

As to what (some) municipalities were willing to pay for, Shaw reported some of his observations from visiting branches around Metro. Though he did not name where or which branch, he underscored that across Metro he routinely found librarians working unpaid overtime on tasks that fell outside their job descriptions. Using quite overtly gendered language reflecting the composition of the librarian workforce in Metro, he called this work “housekeeping,” suggesting that the librarians he visited were doing routine clerical work, clearing up workspaces and reading rooms, and organizing collections or workspaces.¹⁹ These tasks, he stated, were better done by clerks and pages rather than trained librarians and assistants with specialized skills in library techniques.

This housekeeping work, Shaw estimated, was the equivalent of about twenty librarians’ workloads across the city, and reallocating these tasks to para-professional technicians and clerical workers would make these librarians available for the more urgent work of assisting readers. To reallocate this work, Shaw recommended centralizing technical services procedures

¹⁷ Shaw, *Libraries of Metropolitan Toronto*, 16.

¹⁸ Shaw, *Libraries of Metropolitan Toronto*, 18.

¹⁹ Shaw, *Libraries of Metropolitan Toronto*, 87.

within municipal public library systems and considering a Metro-wide consolidation in one facility. By calling this work housekeeping, Shaw was, in effect, acknowledging that the routine work of maintaining collections essential for day-to-day operations formed the material basis for public library service provision. This essential daily work preoccupied librarians' workdays, preventing them from developing special projects or creating long-term plans, but nevertheless had to be done in order to prepare for the next day's operations. Shaw also gestured to the fact that, in some Metro suburbs, individual librarians were starting to conduct more targeted outreach activities. In North York, some librarians began visiting local residents at home to personally invite the members of the household to visit their local library, despite heavy workloads.²⁰

The recommendations included in Shaw's report became the blueprint for public library institutional development and service expansion in Metro for more than a decade thereafter.²¹ Even when I conducted my research, senior librarians I spoke to in Toronto identified the Shaw report as the definitive account for changes within Metro public libraries thereafter. His rebuke to municipalities unwilling to pay for sufficient public library service propelled some advocacy among librarians' professional associations, giving some evidence for their claims that municipalities wanted to provide public library service due to its popularity but that elected officials proved, time and time again, that they were not committed to adequately financing this service. This unwillingness, I also show below, contributed to widespread opposition to public library budget cuts across Metro the following decade.

The Worth of Public Library Work: Unionization and Mechanization

²⁰ Shaw, *Libraries of Metropolitan Toronto*, 1; North York Librarian, "The Library and the Community: North York Public Library (4) Out-reach Services for Libraries in North York," *International Library Review* 3 (1971): 333-338.

²¹ James G. Montgomery, *Scarborough Public Library User Study* (Scarborough: Scarborough Public Library Board, 1972); Mary Joan Edmonds, *North York Public Library Exploratory Survey of Users* (Toronto: North York Public Library, 1971).

At the end of 1959, NYPL employees signed their first collective agreement as National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) Local 771.²² They were the first public library workforce in Metro Toronto to form a union; it was not until the early 1970s that public library workers in other municipalities began to unionize, including the TPL downtown.²³ Around the time the NYPL Employees' Union (NEU) formed, public sector workers in Ontario were beginning to unionize in greater numbers; in the next few decades, the majority of public sector employees were in unions. Prior to the 1950s, unionization was far more prevalent within the private sector in Ontario, and the "typical union member was a relatively [...] skilled male worker within a large industrial corporation."²⁴ Federal officials deliberately excluded municipal employees from the *Labour Relations Act* (1948), and municipal governments had to approve by-laws for these employees to be covered under the Act. The recognition of unions for municipal workers could therefore be highly uneven between municipalities. With the rapid mass expansion of services in swiftly growing municipalities during the postwar period, however, existing clientelist networks within municipal governments were no longer an effective means to discipline workforces.²⁵

Municipal employees could be dispersed throughout workplaces located across a large geographical area, and the interpersonal enforcement of managerial control became infeasible. In this context, municipal employees' unions gained recognition specifically because this geographical fragmentation enabled them to gain some leverage. The earliest municipal employees' unions in Ontario represented workers in 'outdoor', blue collar jobs in maintenance and utilities departments predominantly held by men. The men in this labour movement adopted a model of industrial workers' organizing combined with notions of craft work and local autonomy. Through the 1960s, unionization rates for 'indoor', administrative personnel slowly

²² NYPL Local Union 771 Collective Agreement, 1959. Ontario Government Fonds, Series RG 7-33, North York Public Library Board Folder, Archives of Ontario.

²³ Margaret Penman, *A Century of Service: Toronto Public Library, 1883-1983* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1983), 90.

²⁴ Chris Hurl, "Local Government, the Standard Employment Relationship, and the Making of Ontario's Public Sector, 1945-1963," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 48, no. 2 (2016): 333. The source quotes C. Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Lorimer, 1996), 83.

²⁵ Hurl, "Local Government," 333-338.

increased; these jobs included women and men in blue collar clerical, technical, and white collar office work.²⁶

The NEU's organizing in 1959 was therefore quite early not only for public library workers, but also for 'indoor' municipal employees in jobs most frequently done by women and associated with the white collar status of 'information work' or office employment. What I found in NYPL records pertaining to union's organizing and negotiations amounted to almost nothing: one sentence in a 1980 history of the NYPL authored by a local librarian, and the NEU's first collective agreement. Considering the Carnegie era work organization outlined in the previous chapter, the preamble to this collective agreement stresses a similar focus on efficiency, waste, and value to taxpayers. It reads:

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of the Board to provide the **taxpaying public** with **uninterrupted, skillful and efficient** library service; and it is the **responsibility of the employees** working under the direction of the Board **to contribute** toward this and; and it is desirable that a **spirit of co-operation** and understanding be promoted between the Board and the Union; and the Board and the Union recognize the mutual value of joint discussions and negotiations in matters concerning working conditions, hours of work, scale of salaries, **efficiency of operation, the elimination of waste** and to promote the morale, wellbeing and economic security of all members of the bargaining unit, and whereas it is desirable that methods of bargaining on all matters pertaining to the working conditions of employees be drawn up in agreement NOW THEREFORE THIS AGREEMENT WITNESSETH that the parties hereto in consideration of the mutual covenants hereinafter contained agree each with each other as follows[.]²⁷

Here, NEU members are positioned as active in preserving the value of taxpayers' investment in the NYPL. The members of the union are tasked with actively working to prevent any disruption in their provision of library service, under the oversight of the NYPL Board. The language about cooperation and responsibility constructs NEU members as both the potential cause of 'disruption' and those responsible for avoiding it.

²⁶ Hurl, "Local Government," 333-338.

²⁷ *NYPL Local Union 771 Collective Agreement 1959*, Ontario Government Fonds, Series RG 7-33, North York Public Library Board Folder, Archives of Ontario. Emphasis is my own.

Dissimilar to the TPLSA's activities in the Carnegie era, this collective agreement divides up the NYPL's workforce based on employment status and job category, and instantiates (or re-entrenches) a 'performance-based' compensation structure. The collective agreement covered only full-time, permanent professional librarians and workers in jobs categorized as 'non-professional' (technicians, clerks, delivery truck drivers, custodians included). All part-time and temporary employees, who were, I show, becoming a larger part of public library workforces over this period, were explicitly excluded from the bargaining unit. Elsewhere, the agreement underscores that the NYPL Board had the prerogative to introduce new job categories and to change existing employees' job classifications at will – meaning, in effect, that the Board had the authority to determine whether they would hire more temporary and part-time employees over full-time/permanent or create new jobs that divided duties or allowed for technological changes to drive job classifications. Furthermore, the article on salaries highlights that raises are not automatic but rather based on the recommendation of an employees' direct supervisor or the chief librarian.

Congruent with the TPLSA's earlier gains, however, the NEU's collective agreement positions employees, senior managers and administrators, and the NYPL Board as mutually responsible for enhancing the value of public library service to taxpayers. This connection indicates how this early unionization may have been neither a radical departure from existing workplace politics within public libraries, nor an acquiescence to managerial authority. Both of these cases highlight that workers themselves, despite ongoing narratives prioritizing 'what's good for the library' over the interests of employees, constructed public libraries as places of waged employment.

The early date of the NEU's collective agreement surprised me, because I assumed downtown Toronto to be more politically progressive and pro-labour and therefore TPL employees most likely to unionize. The clear differentiation between workers by employment status in the agreement, the NEU's organizing could have been an attempt to make some gains for permanent full-time workers as they experienced greater managerial pressures in their own jobs. The possibility that they initially intended to organize all workers, as the TPLSA did, but made that concession in bargaining is also a distinct possibility. These divisions between workers through

collective bargaining and union recognition are not unique to this case, nor, as I address in the next chapter, are unions like the TPLWU that include part-time and temporary employees in their membership immune to these differences in job classification.

When I interviewed current TPL Workers' Union (TPLWU) President Maureen O'Reilly for this study, she offered that the NEU organized much earlier than other public library workers' unions in Metro because of the NYPL Board's employment practices. Recalling some accounts she heard when she began working as a librarian in the 1980s, though she could not say for certain from who, Maureen pointed to poor working conditions and a rigid administrative culture within the NYPL. These administrators, she added, relied on low-paid, temporary or part-time, women employees who were often recent immigrants to Canada and overqualified for their jobs.

A 1962 study on technical services in the NYPL's main library documented that the bulk of the work in book processing, cataloguing, and ordering departments was being done by clerical, and mainly part-time, workers. The report described the clerical duties in these separate departments, showing a discrepancy between Shaw's 1960 recommendation to centralize technical services and the amount of work within branches that would still have to be done even if the NYPL Board created one consolidated facility. The author concluded that it would be more expensive to centralize technical services, due to the higher cost of librarians' salaries in branches and the likelihood of duplicated work between branches and a central facility.²⁸

'Family Togetherness' in the North York Public Library (1959)

The year 1959 was an important one for the North York Public Library (NYPL), and not only because full-time permanent employees unionized that year. Established only four years prior, by 1959 the NYPL served a population of around 180,000 people in what had quickly become Ontario's fourth-largest municipality. A quarter of all North York residents, adults and children

²⁸ North York Public Library, *Survey on Technical Services in North York in Connection With Centralized Cataloguing*, North York, Ontario, North York Public Library, 1962.

included, were library card-holders. The NYPL's reference collection was second only to that of the TPL's downtown – quite a feat in four years, as compared to the TPL's seven decades.²⁹

In 1959, the NYPL opened its first dedicated main library, which was named after founding NYPL Board member Gladys Allison.³⁰ The Allison building was located in the Willowdale neighbourhood on the Yonge Street corridor, the primary transportation route for commuters to jobs in the Toronto city centre. The brick, plate glass, and chrome building materials and modernist design were at the cutting-edge of mid-century public library architecture. The Allison building contained separate areas for adult's and children's collections, an administrative headquarters, and a consolidated technical services division based on the TPL's Carnegie era model. It was the only permanent public library building in North York until a new branch opened in 1961. Each day of the week, six bookmobiles departed from the Allison building to supplement existing service, making stops of one to three hours in duration across the municipality.

²⁹ Ralph Hyman, "Incurable Infection Spreads Among North York Youngsters" *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], 7 May 1960. The infection is 'the reading bug.'

³⁰ Mary Ann Cross, *Historical Walking Tour of North York Centre : Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of North York Central Library, 1987-2012* (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 2012), 9-11.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 217 f0217_s0249_f0130_it0001

Fig. 4.2 North York Public Library Gladys Allison building exterior, circa 1964³¹

That year, the NYPL observed the first annual Canadian Library Week, which was timed to coincide with the second annual National Library Week in the United States.³² This week of special events was designed to raise local residents' awareness of public library services and resources available to them. To promote the occasion, the NYPL Board presented a local family with an award for "best exemplifying 'togetherness' in library use."³³ The newspaper article publicizing the award described the family and their use of the NYPL main library as follows:

During their five-year residence, Mr. and Mrs. John Owen of Princess Ave., Deborah, 10, and John, seven, haven't missed visiting the library together 50 weeks a year. The other two weeks they spend on a vacation trip planned together with library books as a guide.

³¹ Source: City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 217, Series 249, Box 152526, Folder 30.

³² Grace T. Stevenson and John S. Robling, "National Library Week 1959: the Values, the Plans, the Organization; and a Staff Report," *ALA Bulletin*, 53 no. 1 (1959): 47.

³³ "'Togetherness' in Library Use Brings N. York Family Award," *Toronto Daily Star*, 12 April 1959.

The Owens say they find library services become more interesting and meaningful when they are made a family affair.

Mr. Owen uses its facilities for help with home movies, repairs, and electronic studies. His wife, Dylis, reads up on music, history, and fiction, and many new recipes on the Owen dinner table come from the library. Deborah, a grade five student at Hollywood Avenue public school, brings home books on Brownie activities, besides those on school subjects. John, in grade one, prefers animal, building, and model railroading books.³⁴

Nothing more is recorded about the Owens, but the above-quoted sketch provides some illuminating details.

Like most of their neighbours, the Owens were somewhat recent arrivals to their home located just under a mile away from the NYPL main library. The family's surname and Mrs. Owen's given name (Dylis), suggest that the parents were of at least partially Welsh descent, whether they had been born in Canada or emigrated from the United Kingdom. That the family income could take an annual vacation suggests that, if he was the primary household wage-earner, Mr. Owen's job was relatively well-paid and his employment secure. Furthermore, each of the Owen's reading preferences, as identified in the above-quoted article, neatly correspond to the gender roles ascribed to each of them in a paternal/patriarchal family model. At home, Dad is the family documentarian, do-it-yourself repairman; his interest in electronics might be a hobby or related to his occupation. Mum cooks the family's meals and devotes her free time to reading about culturally enriching arts, literature, and non-fiction subjects. Older Daughter is obedient and diligent, doing her homework and participating in Girl Guides, while young Son likes science and technology.

During the postwar period, a "suburban ideal of family togetherness" promised personal fulfillment and familial happiness through a strict separation between work and home.³⁵ This ideal was promoted by social welfare state policies, financial interests in real estate and

³⁴ "‘Togetherness’ in Library Use."

³⁵ Laura J. Miller, "Family Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal," *Sociological Forum* 10, no. 3 (1995): 415.

insurance sectors, and mass media representations.³⁶ The suburban built environment gave this ideal a spatial expression, with an extreme differentiation between (public) streets and (private) homes and little transition between. The architecture of the typical suburban single-family house further reproduced this ideal distinction, segmenting shared living spaces (living rooms, kitchens, dining rooms) from even more private personal spaces (bedrooms, bathrooms, home offices).³⁷ Reproducing this normative family structure became the focus of a range of social policies designed to regulate sexuality and teenagers' behaviour in public space.³⁸

Yet, feminist scholars have long argued, Fordist mass consumption and mass production presumed this family model that barely existed in practice, if at all.³⁹ Rather, what this idealized separation achieved was a re-ordering of relations between, and importantly within, public and private spheres.⁴⁰ The gender ideology of separate public and private spheres became re-entrenched, in ways that re-inscribed a conceptual association between women's 'nonwork' in the household and the private realm of domesticity and family life. In this context, public space took on a new meaning: a way to share an experience as a family, thus breaking the isolation of the suburban home that separated the family from all others. If the Owen's use of the NYPL main library best exemplified 'togetherness' to the NYPL Board, it was perhaps because their private family life could appear to revolve around a space and reading material purchased by North York taxpayers such as themselves.

³⁶ Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2001).

³⁷ Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): S184.

³⁸ Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997): 80.

³⁹ Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State," *Signs* 19, no. 2 (1994): 309-336; Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (New York, Palgrave, 1997).

⁴⁰ Melissa R. Gilbert, "Feminism and Difference in Urban Geography," *Urban Geography* 18, no. 2 (1997): 168.

Through the 1950s, suburbanization in Metro Toronto was primarily white and middle-class.⁴¹ Enabled by municipal land-use plans and zoning codes, private property developers catered to more affluent homeowners, producing starkly uneven patterns of housing and wealth in the suburban landscape.⁴² Providing for the presumed needs of young married couples with small children living in single-family homes preoccupied the concerns of planners and policymakers. Compulsory school attendance rose to the majority of students, for the first time in Canada, while completion rates of formal schooling tended to mainly be white and middle-class children.⁴³ Federal immigration policies of the pre-war era designed to secure the whiteness of the Canadian ‘nation’, as discussed in Chapter 2, continued to prioritize whiteness and “Britishness.”

These dynamics altered over the 1960s, though changes in federal immigration and provincial housing policies. Following decades of advocacy and organizing centred in Toronto, demanding changes to exclusionary immigration policies that prevented black people from permanently living in Canada, the federal immigration system slowly liberalized over the 1960s.⁴⁴ A new points system based on labour market demands formally opened up immigration to Canada for people from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and more new immigrants moved to Metro Toronto than anywhere else in Canada.⁴⁵ While the points system formally eliminated race as a requirement for immigration, the previous policies combining notions of racial difference with class and gender constructs to portray people of colour as semi- or unskilled, undisciplined

⁴¹ Cowen, “Suburban Citizenship?” 339.

⁴² Martine August, “Social Mix and Canadian Public Housing Redevelopment: Experiences in Toronto,” *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 17, no. 1 (2008): 85.

⁴³ Mona Lee Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 133.

⁴⁴ Carla Marano, “‘We All Used to Meet at the Hall’: Assessing the Significance of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Toronto, 1900–1950,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada* 25, no. 1 (2014): 165.

⁴⁵ Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 147.

or immoral workers biologically unable to withstand Canadian weather, were ‘grandfathered’ into the new points categories formally based on skill and labour market requirements.⁴⁶

Also in the 1950s, the Ontario provincial government’s housing provider, the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) began to purchase rental units across the Metro Toronto suburbs, breaking up older downtown neighbourhoods in an effort to disperse poverty concentrated in the city centre.⁴⁷ Social housing tenants who paid subsidized rents moved into the master-planned suburban utopias built for idealized white, “British,” and middle-class families. Class constructs articulated with notions of race, the normative family, and national identity perpetuated perceptions of ‘otherness’ about social housing tenants among white residents who paid market rents or privately owned their homes. This “territorial stigmatization” reproduced narratives that linked socio-economic status to perceived racial difference in space, constructing the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality in terms of social housing tenants’ isolation in high-rise apartment towers and geographical segregation in neighbourhoods where the OHC purchased rental units. This stigmatization informed a range of social policies targeted at ‘foreign’ or criminal behaviour that distorted the lives of residents, for whom their neighbourhoods could be sites for developing political alliances and community networks to contest the real problems of housing quality, maintenance, and affordability they faced.⁴⁸

Civic Living Rooms: the Extension and Re-articulation of Domestic Space

During this postwar period of mass suburbanization, the physical space of branch buildings was reconceived as a kind of civic ‘living room’ for an idealized family private family life. This ‘domestication’ of public library interiors, with lower-profile bookcases and lightweight modular

⁴⁶ Carl E. James, “African-Caribbean Canadians Working Harder to Attain Their Immigrant Dreams: Context, Strategies, and Consequences,” *Wadabagei: A Journal of the Caribbean and its Diaspora* 12, no. 1 (2009): 92-113.

⁴⁷ Barbara Wake Carroll, “Post-war Trends in Canadian Housing Policy,” *Urban History Review/Revue d’histoire urbaine* 18, no. 1 (1989): 64-74.

⁴⁸ Martine August, “Challenging the Rhetoric of Stigmatization: The Benefits of Concentrated Poverty in Toronto’s Regent Park,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 46, no. 6 (June 2014): 1317–33. 1320-1321.

furniture, contrasted sharply with the rationalized modernist construction of the buildings themselves.⁴⁹ In this context, front-line librarians' began to approach (potential) users in new ways that contributed to the maintenance of a normative nuclear family model. Librarians' ability to enact this approach relied on the re-allocation of work to paraprofessional and 'non-professional' job categories. This changing work organization was based on the earlier Carnegie era model in the Toronto Public Library (TPL).

What I aim to do in the remainder of this chapter is to think through consequences of this conceptual expansion and rearticulation of domestic space for public library workers and public library users in postwar Metro Toronto suburbs. To draw this connection between public library use and public library work, I offer these spaces as part of a particularly suburban infrastructure for social reproduction.⁵⁰ I offer that this perspective helps to see how social relations of maintenance, repair, and (re)distribution are enacted and contested in daily life.⁵¹ Although feminist geographers often connect these relations to positive feelings, for example in studies focused almost exclusively on care work to concretely specify social reproduction in daily life, infrastructure scholars have shown how this work is organized to improve life for some while inhibiting the possibilities of life for many.⁵² This way of thinking about social reproduction is more an analytical lens for interpretation than a descriptive category for enumerating the daily practices and everyday acts that constitute paid and unpaid reproductive labour.⁵³

There is some scholarly precedent for my effort here to connect public library work with public library use in this chapter. A small literature within library and information studies (LIS) has

⁴⁹ Alistair Black, *Libraries of Light: British Public Library Design in the Long 1960s* (London: Routledge, 2016), 16.

⁵⁰ Jean-Paul D. Addie, "Theorising Suburban Infrastructure: a Framework for Critical and Comparative Analysis," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 41, no. 3 (2016): 273-285.

⁵¹ Michelle Murphy, "Distributed Reproduction, Chemical Violence, and Latency," *The Scholar & Feminist Online* 11, no. 3 (2013): n.p.

⁵² Michelle Murphy, "Unsettling Care: Troubling Transnational Itineraries of Care in Feminist Health Practices," *Social Studies of Science* 45, no. 5 (2015): 719.

⁵³ Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, "Foreword," in *Precarious Worlds: Contested Geographies of Social Reproduction*, ed. Katie Meehan and Kendra Strauss (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), ix.

aimed to explore how changing practices of professional librarians are linked to wider, emergent political-economic and socio-cultural transformations at distinct historical moments.⁵⁴ In general, these analyses are premised in the idea that national and global economic transitions alter the importance of information and knowledge requirements for (implicitly) waged workers. Regulation theory has been offered as a way to think through these transitions in relation to librarians' shifting professional practices, by periodizing distinct periods of capitalist development to highlight what professional librarians (may) do to respond to wider structural changes.⁵⁵ One example cited is the early 20th century emergence of readers' advisory services, a specialized technique by which professional librarians structured a course of self-guided learning based on a reader's stated interests.⁵⁶ By thinking about these readers' advisory services in relation to broader changes in the requirements of the industrial economy under early Fordism, professional librarians can be seen as ordering and directing readers' activities toward an individualized course of study to constitute readers as disciplined workers, mass consumers, and citizens who 'enjoyed life'.

Regulation theory can be summarized as a way to think about epochal transitions over distinct periods of capitalist development. Regulation theorists explore these transitions to uncover the restructuring of relationships between the formal economy and (often implicitly) national state. Although regulation theory may be used to identify periods of capitalist development, as in the transition from Fordist to post-Fordist systems of production, some regulation theorists have critiqued this instrumental use of the theory's models. Instead, regulation theory might best be described as an effort to understand how capitalism's inherent tendency toward crisis can be offset over the medium-term, albeit temporarily, to stabilize relationships among states and markets. These relatively durable social organizations are termed "temporary institutional fixes,"

⁵⁴ Gloria J. Leckie, Lisa M. Given, and John Buschman, *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from Across the Disciplines* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010).

⁵⁵ Siobhan A. Stevenson, "New Labour in Libraries: the Post-Fordist Public Library," *Journal of Documentation*, 67 no. 5 (2011): 773-790.

⁵⁶ Brendan Luyt, "Regulating Readers: the Social Origins of the Readers' Advisor in the United States," *The Library Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (2001): 443-466.

a concept regulation theorists use to explain how political, economic, and social systems come to correspond to dynamics emanating from relationships between the state and capital.⁵⁷

From this perspective, regulation theorists contend, the *correspondence* between economy, state, and society can be seen as a historical product that only ever momentarily ‘matches’ capital accumulation with political institutions and social geographies. This correspondence is, for regulation theorists, rooted in historically specific social consensus mediated by compromise and negotiation among national-scale economic actions (such as unions, banks, and investors) rather than determined by structural forces in the economy or targeted, intentional efforts by state or corporate actors. In regulation theory, the concept of ‘regime of accumulation’ describes these constantly moving overall formal relationships among investment, consumption, and production, while ‘mode of social regulation’ refers to the whole complexity of political institutions, social practices, and cultural norms that reproduce the societal outcomes of the regime of accumulation. The mode of social regulation is thought to secure, but not to determine, the regime of accumulation – importantly, not in an intentional or structurally determined way, but rather through ongoing contestation and antagonistic negotiation among socially differentiated groups of key institutional actors. These factors are why, for example, Fordist production may be described as a state-mediated compromise between capital and labour, understood to secure a relatively long-term sustained economic expansion during the postwar ‘golden age’.⁵⁸

These debates, which I have only outlined above, have important limitations that severely restrict the political horizons for critiques of capitalism in ways that preclude meaningful discussion of any possible noncapitalist practices or alternatives.⁵⁹ An almost exclusive focus in regulation

⁵⁷ Ash Amin, *Post-Fordism: a Reader* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1994); Mark Goodwin and Joe Painter, “Local Governance, the Crises of Fordism and the Changing Geographies of Regulation,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (1996): 635-648; Adam Tickell and Jamie A. Peck, “Social Regulation After Fordism: Regulation Theory, Neo-liberalism and the Global-local Nexus,” *Economy and Society* 24, no. 3 (1995): 357-386.

⁵⁸ Bob Jessop, “Revisiting the Regulation Approach: Critical Reflections on the Contradictions, Dilemmas, Fixes and Crisis Dynamics of Growth Regimes,” *Capital & Class* 37, no. 1 (2013): 5-24.

⁵⁹ J.K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 149.

debates on industrialized Global North economies has largely restricted these analyses to productive waged labour, formal workplaces, and the standard employment relationship. These factors have contributed to a scholarly oversight that the Fordist compromise was itself rooted in particular notions of whiteness and maleness, presuming a single-breadwinner family model. Feminist scholars have therefore critiqued this literature for presuming whiteness and maleness as a norm, and neglecting the fact that a range of exclusions around race, gender, and sexuality were an essential component of this compromise.⁶⁰ Regulation theory, furthermore, has tended to exclusively focus on the formal economy at the national scale, and so can lack an account for how the mode of social regulation “becomes something like a day-to-day worldview.”⁶¹ Regulation theory, in other words, has subjects but no *agents*, and so anti-essentialist feminist theories of agency can help to overcome functionalist structuralism and economic determinism in regulation debates.⁶²

Feminist theories of social reproduction can, in contrast, illuminate *how* crisis and stability are produced, or put differently, “what structures have to be reproduced in order that social reproduction as a whole can take place.”⁶³ From this vantage point, social reproduction can be seen as taking place across complex institutional networks that include public libraries. Postwar social welfare state subsidy to support the social reproduction of (new) suburban and (new) Canadian families can thus be furthermore positioned in geohistorical context, something that feminist social reproduction theorists have continually emphasized in a rich body of study.⁶⁴ By

⁶⁰ Parminder Bakshi et al., “Gender, Race, and Class in the Local Welfare State: Moving Beyond Regulation Theory in Analysing the Transition from Fordism,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 27, no. 10 (1995): 1539-1554; Linda McDowell, “Life Without Father and Ford: the New Gender Order of Post-Fordism,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, no. 4 (1991): 400-419; Kate Driscoll Derickson, “The Racial Politics of Neoliberal Regulation in Post-Katrina Mississippi,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104, no. 4 (2014): 889-902.

⁶¹ Janine Brodie, “Meso-discourses, State Forms and the Gendering of Liberal-Democratic Citizenship,” *Citizenship Studies* 1, no. 2 (1997): 223.

⁶² Jane Jenson, “Thinking (a Feminist) History: the Regulation Approach as Theatre,” *Cahiers de recherche sociologique* 17 (1991): 185-197.

⁶³ Felicity Eldholm, Olivia Harris and Kate Young, “Conceptualising Women,” *Critique of Anthropology* 3, no. 9 and 10 (1977): 105.

⁶⁴ Rianne Mahon, “Of Scalar Hierarchies and Welfare Redesign: Child Care in Four Canadian Cities,” in *Leviathan Undone? Towards a Political Economy of Scale*, ed. Roger Keil and Rianne Mahon (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2009), 211; Janine Brodie, “Citizenship and Solidarity: Reflections on the

invoking these debates here, I offer the following discussion of postwar suburban public libraries in Metro Toronto as an empirical story about what kinds of paid and unpaid work may be valued, and the attendant geographies of social reproduction through which these activities are organized and politically contested.

Community Organizing and Pop Culture: the Scarborough Public Library (1967)

The eastern Metro municipality of Scarborough was, unlike North York, a place where public libraries emerged not from a private philanthropic ethos but rather directly from local residents. In the early 20th century, Scarborough developed as urban growth in the eastern part of the older downtown city of Toronto expanded outward, and became rapidly built up in the immediate post-World War II period. Whereas in North York single-family housing developments were predominantly as middle-class, Scarborough became a suburban city of predominantly white “British” and working-class households. Similar to other parts of Metro Toronto, over the 1950s and 1960s, enclave neighbourhoods where recent immigrants from central and southern Europe developed in Scarborough. Scarborough gained, over this period, a reputation in Metro Toronto as a suburban cultural void that persists in the imagined geography of Toronto to the present – a theme I pick up in the next chapter, tracing demographic and municipal investment changes since the 1970s.⁶⁵

Prior to the 1950s, there were three separate libraries around Scarborough that were volunteer-run. Women have long been active in these ‘association’ libraries, organized and operated not as local state agencies but rather on a volunteer basis.⁶⁶ The Ontario *Public Libraries Act* severely restricted how much funding these association libraries could get from local taxes, less than a penny a dollar. A Committee for the Establishment of Public Library Service in Scarborough

Canadian Way.” *Citizenship Studies* 4, no. 4 (2002): 379; Meg Luxton and Kate Bezanson, *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neoliberalism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006).

⁶⁵ Ranu Basu and Robert S. Fiedler, “Integrative Multiplicity through Suburban Realities: Exploring Diversity Through Public Spaces in Scarborough,” *Urban Geography* 38, no. 1 (2017): 29.

⁶⁶ Paula D. Watson, “Founding Mothers: the Contribution of Women’s Organizations to Public Library Development in the United States,” *The Library Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (1994): 233-269.

formed, as a coalition of local residents and community organizations, represented before elected officials by the director of the Provincial Library Service agency Angus Mowat.⁶⁷ (One might recall here my discussion of the Inspector of Public Libraries in Chapter 2 – this provincial office was the successor to that position, and the director was in charge of collecting financial reports from each public library board in the province.)

The committee advocated for years for a public library system in Scarborough. The earliest record I found was a newspaper article discussing a 1947 meeting of the local women's voters league, in which the reporter wrote: "[t]he fact that there is no public library [...] has the women all stirred up."⁶⁸ The article explains that the league's members have organized a panel discussion and prepared a brochure to distribute, to mobilize local residents for the establishment of a public library. A subsequent article about a month later mentions the municipal council's discussion of an upcoming ballot measure to vote for a public library by-law, the same method by which the TPL was established as I addressed in the introductory chapter. That article refers to the "library ballet," and notes that one councillor and the mayor strenuously opposed the fact that *tenants* in rental housing were going to be included in the vote, and not only homeowners.⁶⁹ The councillor stated, "It is undemocratic to allow tenants to vote on something they will not have to pay for."⁷⁰ That ballot measure failed, and the committee ceased its activities for a few years; ultimately the council approved a by-law creating the Scarborough Public Library (SPL).⁷¹

⁶⁷ Robert R. Bonis, *An Abridged History of the Township of Scarborough*, (Scarborough: Scarborough Public Library Board, 1969), 335.

⁶⁸ "Scarboro Women Sponsor Move for Free Library," *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], October 23, 1947.

⁶⁹ "Library Ballet Sparks Debate," *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], November 27, 1947.

⁷⁰ "Library Ballet."

⁷¹ Bonis, *An Abridged History of the Township of Scarborough*, 36.



Fig. 4.3 Scarborough Public Library bookmobile in the 1950s⁷²

Shaw noted in his 1960 report that public library service expanded rapidly in some parts of Metro, while the building of new branches stagnated. The SPL was an example of this tendency, but due to prioritizing bookmobile service to bring library collections into neighbourhoods around the geographically extensive municipality, over expensive and time-consuming building projects.⁷³ Within the first decade of its operations, the SPL had three bookmobiles that made about thirty stops at different locations each week, usually at schools and in the parking lots of shopping plazas (Figure 4.2). On busy summer days, one bookmobile might loan out a thousand books total. Each vehicle carried a small collection of two to three thousand different items. The inclusion of electronic circulation card readers made the equivalent of photocopies of each circulation card, automating the process of recordkeeping and also allowing for the bookmobile

⁷² Source: Toronto Public Library, Toronto Reference Library, Accession number SPL1. Caption from catalogue description; undated 195-.

⁷³ Scarborough Public Library Board Annual Report, various years 1956-66.

driver to be a clerk rather than a trained librarian or technician – which, annual reports noted, both saved space for more books and saved on the cost of operating bookmobiles.

The SPL was distinct within Metro, and gained recognition from librarians in other municipalities over the 1960s for its unusual popularity and high rates of visits to branches and bookmobiles. Libraries in Scarborough were regularly filled to the brim on weekday afternoons and on weekends, and became especially popular among elderly adults and teenagers. What distinguished the SPL was that librarians and policymakers (meaning the chief librarian and SPL Board members) began to redefine their overarching mission and to more actively adopt popular information technologies and library materials. The SPL Board purchased radios, TV sets, a film collection, and a gallery of art prints for residents to check out or use in a library. It had an early version of a VCR, to screen recent episodes of popular TV shows inside library branches, and included popular pocket paperbacks in its collections. These materials were, at the time, still widely perceived by many librarians as a divergence from their more profound social mission to popularize reading of ‘serious’ books on subjects useful for schoolwork or job training.⁷⁴

The SPL Board also began to outsource some acquisitions and cataloguing work, to vendors known in libraries as jobbers. Jobbers purchase batches of books on behalf of libraries, rather than direct sales from publishers. Over time, jobbers began to perform more acquisitions procedures, in effect automating the process of book *selection*. The batching system can be used to purchase lower-cost but less popular books along with more expensive or in-demand titles; in other words, a way for publishers to offload stock to public libraries.⁷⁵ In the SPL, this outsourcing included commercial cataloguing, meaning that contractors in private firms classified books and prepared catalogue cards according to information in automated databases rather than librarians working in local branches. (One might recall here the discussion of the importance of DDC classification decisions in the previous chapter.)

⁷⁴ *Scarborough Public Library Board Annual Report*, various years 1956-66.

⁷⁵ Dana L. Alessi, “Book Jobbers — There Yesterday, Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?” *Library Acquisitions: Practice & Theory* 5, no. 1 (1981): 21-22.

These forms of outsourcing can easily seem to be yet another cost-effective way of reducing labour time on routine tasks within branches, by reallocating workloads and freeing up staff to do more work directly with readers and to do special project. Yet, as librarians in the SPL observed in their yearly reports, the jobber system actually cost more in the end. The commercial cataloguers' cards, the SPL's director of technical services documented, frequently arrived with errors in classification, or with numbers transposed by automated databases, which required workers in the SPL to spend time correcting the mistakes before the cards were usable. This represented not a cost savings, but rather an increased cost due to the amount of money paid for jobbers combined with SPL workers' labour costs to fix problems.

Another of Shaw's 1960 recommendations was to coordinate policies and implement resource sharing agreements across Metro, to make up for discrepancies in services and collections between municipalities. Some systems began to recognize the library cards of others, and the TPL downtown opened up its music and A/V collection to residents of North York. The creation of a regional public library governing body was contentious among members of the six different local boards who would be involved in its governance. Smaller and newer municipalities opposed the possibility of losing their local autonomy. The local board members and library directors in places where the municipal culture prioritized entrepreneurialism and private provisioning in policy frameworks objected to being 'forced to pay' for services they did not, as a rule, provide for local residents.⁷⁶

A 1967 merger of the 11 Metro municipalities reduced the number to 6, and combined some association libraries with public libraries in smaller municipalities west of Scarborough. Municipalities in Ontario are often called a 'creature' of the province, meaning that regulatory powers and the ability to incorporate are centralized in the provincial government. In striking parallel to the later 1998 City of Toronto amalgamation, the Ontario government forced through

⁷⁶ "Metro Body Proposes New Library Board," *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], July 15, 1961; "Six Library Boards Put Sweetness, Light on Metro Reading List," *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], May 20, 1964.

the bill merging the Metro municipalities.⁷⁷ This bill also mandated a regional body for coordinating public library service across Metro, the Metropolitan Toronto Library Board (MTLB).⁷⁸

The MTLB did not directly provide library service but instead “took over control of the books” to harmonize policies between local boards.⁷⁹ Because these public library boards remained municipal agencies, they were, in the Metro system, meant to retain local autonomy. In 1967, the Scarborough municipal council demanded the SPL Board cut its annual budget by 25%.⁸⁰ The Board members voted to do so, in part by closing one branch and cancelling the plans to build two new branches. They did so, they emphasized at their budget meeting, to avoid laying off any staff. The chief librarian was so incensed that he stormed out of the meeting; in an interview with a newspaper reporter the next day, he stressed that the Board had *chosen* to cut its own budget, and explained:

When I asked how the [municipal] council arrived at its estimates, I got a scolding instead. I’m sure nobody on the council has considered what the cut means to the people.⁸¹

He furthermore noted that library use had already increased one-third since the previous year, which he expected to continue based on the SPL’s previous decade. The MTLB had bail-out funds for the local library Boards facing precisely these circumstances, but the MTLB refused to give the SPL an emergency grant. No one, in sum, was willing to take direct responsibility for the controversial decision, which the machinations of the two-tier Metro government facilitated.

⁷⁷ Alan Redway, *Governing Toronto: Bringing Back the City that Worked* (Victoria: Friesen Press, 2014), 72. Toronto and North York combined more than half the votes on the merged Metro council and Scarborough only 5, and the new Metro council chair (in effect, a Metro mayor) was selected by council members rather than a vote of electors; Bill 81 was a compromise by a Conservative Party government to reduce constituent municipalities rather than a full amalgamation, which officials considered and some favoured as a way to reduce costs and consolidate political authority.

⁷⁸ *Metropolitan Toronto Library Board Annual Report 1967-9.*

⁷⁹ George S. Wood, “A Visit to the Libraries of Metropolitan Toronto,” *Library Review* 23, no. 8 (1964): 334.

⁸⁰ “Scarboro Library Board Slashes Budget by 25%,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], April 11, 1967.

⁸¹ “Scarboro Library Board Slashes Budget by 25%.”

The Scarborough municipal government, like some others in Metro, did not regionalize its services – meaning that residents of other Metro municipalities were not provided for in their policies, and were either excluded or had to pay user fees. This context explains why the MTLB chose not to bail out the SPL Board – it was a way to press the municipality to acquiesce to regional governing bodies. An MTLB spokesman, also interviewed for the above-quoted article, stated that if the SPL Board wanted financial help, “maybe Scarborough will have to give some of its autonomy to the Metro system.”⁸² The SPL Board was not alone in facing those cuts that year; the Metro government demanded cuts from every Board in the city-region. Yet the SPL was, arguably, the hardest hit due to an extraordinarily high rate of library use and relatively low expenditures.⁸³

A subsequent newspaper report describes Scarborough municipal officials “deluged with phone calls” in the following days.⁸⁴ One councillor “said his wife was badgered about library matters when she attended a lecture at Cedarbrae [library] on Tuesday and his daughter had ‘been given heck by a minister on the phone about it.’” One councillor accused the Board members of politicking by deciding to close the Taylor branch, to embarrass city officials and “arouse the ratepayers.” These officials claimed that they SPL Board could have found other ‘efficiencies’, especially in staffing, to reduce the budget rather than close a library. The municipality’s “budget chief” offered the SPL Board about to reduce the cut by about 15% in exchange for keeping the Taylor branch open.⁸⁵

The Taylor branch opened in 1962, and it was one of the first municipally-financed new public library branches in Scarborough.⁸⁶ When the SPL Board decided to close it, the Taylor branch was the only SPL branch within about a five mile radius, covering an area spanning neighbourhoods with low- to medium-income households and buildings where OHC tenants lived. This relative location might, as I argue more directly in the next chapter about a citywide conflict over potential library closures, explain some of the opposition to the closure. While

⁸² “Scarboro Library Board Slashes Budget by 25%.”

⁸³ “Libraries are Plagued with Money Problems,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], April 12, 1967.

⁸⁴ “Scarboro Residents Protest Over Library,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], April 13, 1967.

⁸⁵ “York Library Threatens Cut in Service,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], April 29, 1967

⁸⁶ “Library’s Expansion Parallels Township’s,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], May 9, 1958.

bookmobile service filled in between branches in Scarborough, the vehicles had only the basic collections, while SPL branches had more and different types of materials, including the audio-visual technologies and community meeting spaces as described above.

Bookmobiles in North York: Flemingdon Park and Territorial Stigmatization

In 1968, the NYPL Board decided to cut all bookmobile service in the municipality, calling it a lower priority than planned future branch expansions and book purchasing.⁸⁷ The bookmobile drivers began handing out leaflets to children who arrive to borrow books, to inform their parents that the North York government was making cuts, and forcing the bookmobiles to shutter. The North York mayor called the move “outrageous” in a news report, insisting that the NYPL Board determined its own expenditures; another city official commented that the Board members should be “axed” if they didn’t keep the bookmobile service running. The mayor, on his part, accused the Board members of retaliating due to an earlier proposal he made to substitute neighbourhood public library branches with existing school libraries. Around the same time, the Metro government continued to cut public library budgets, which made local library boards dependent on the MTLB’s discretionary bail-out funding.⁸⁸ The goal, it seems, to limit the autonomy of local boards, as a means to securing cost-sharing and interlibrary loan agreements to introduce a single Metro library card that could be used anywhere in the area.

Ultimately, the NYPL did not eliminate bookmobile service; the leafletting perhaps had the intended effect of provoking the mayor to recognize the importance of public library service. In both Scarborough and North York, bookmobiles provided the vast majority of public library service to local residents through the 1960s. By the mid-1960s, the NYPL operated 4 bookmobiles that made more than 30 stops around the municipality.⁸⁹ In most places, there was

⁸⁷ “Bookmobile Cut in North York is Criticized,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], May 2, 1968;

⁸⁸ “Where Penury Persists,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], March 12, 1968; “Library Chairman Says Services are Threatened by \$250,000 Deficiency,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], May 7, 1968;

⁸⁹ North York Public Library, *Survey of Branch Needs* (North York: The Library, 1966).

no permanent branch until the 1970s or 1980s, meaning the bookmobiles were the only local library for tens of thousands of people throughout North York for decades.

Flemingdon Park was one neighbourhood where there was no permanent branch until 1981.⁹⁰ The Flemingdon Park development was originally designed to be a fully contained master-planned neighbourhood for families renting apartments in high-rise towers and in their own semi-detached homes.⁹¹ The development won national and international honours, and there are neighbourhoods all over the world that are based on the Flemingdon Park model.⁹² The original master plan included space for two schools, churches, community centres, a shopping plaza – and a library.⁹³ The conception of the design was specifically to build out of whole cloth an ideal neighbourhood, an escape from – and solution to – ‘urban’ problems downtown. This concept positioned the centre city, where poverty remained concentrated and associated with shifting notions of perceived racial difference, as ‘other’ to the suburban utopia. In 1966, the OHC purchased over 500 apartment units in Flemingdon Park, concentrating tenants who paid subsidized rents into two buildings in the neighbourhood (Figure 4.3)

⁹⁰ “Flemingdon Park,” Toronto Public Library. <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/flemingdonpark/>.

⁹¹ L.J. Evenden and G.E. Walker, “From Periphery to Centre: the Changing Geography of the Suburbs,” in *Changing Social Geography of Canadian Cities*, ed. Larry S. Bourne and David F. Ley (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s Press-MQUP, 1993), 241.

⁹² Graeme Stewart, “Toronto’s Modern Suburbs and the Concrete High-Rise,” in *Concrete Toronto: a Guide to Concrete Architecture from the Fifties to the Seventies*, ed. Michael McClelland and Graeme Stewart (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2004), 214.

⁹³ Anne Setchell Gray, *Flemingdon Park* (Toronto: North York Public Library, 1967), 7



Fig. 4.4 Flemingdon Park apartments, circa 1966-7.⁹⁴

Flemingdon Park was built on an isolated pocket of land, bordered on all sides by major roadways; a railway line and industrial belt separated the area from all other nearby residential neighbourhoods. While this ‘blank slate’ provided planners and developers with the opportunity to create their vision out of whole cloth, this geographical separation segregated residents from the rest of North York. The plans to immediately build a shopping plaza, library, and other facilities did not materialize due to financial problems for the investors. The NYPL’s first permanent neighbourhood branch, in nearby Don Mills, opened in 1961 but the route was basically unwalkable, requiring a long detour on busy roads. The NYPL’s bookmobile stopped once a week for two hours; during that time, the clerk regularly loaned out about six hundred books at a time.

A North York librarian conducted a survey of Flemingdon Park in 1968, to evaluate the potential need for a local branch in the neighbourhood and to record “general problems of high-density, suburban living which may affect the design of future North York Public Library Services.”⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Source: Toronto Public Library, Toronto Star Archives, Don Dutton. Original captions are “The Place: Flemingdon Park; Where OHC Bought 524 Units” and “Flemingdon Park has gained low-rental housing but has lost its nursery school. The school has been relocated to Don Mills.”

⁹⁵ Gray, *Flemingdon Park*, 1.

The survey was based on responses from a range of people in leadership roles at community organizations, including school principals, clergy, and non-profit directors. The picture that emerges from the study is a neighbourhood segregated between social housing tenants and private market renters or owners. This segregation is, by the respondent to the survey, attributed to the arrival of OHC tenants who are constructed as bringing urban ‘problems’ with them to Flemingdon Park. The respondents describe “suspicion about [social housing] tenants” among private market renters and homeowners.⁹⁶ In reproducing racially coded tropes of territorial stigmatization, these commentaries define Flemingdon Park as a place where crime, poverty, and non-normative family structures have proliferated due to a lack of public services in the area. The report concludes that the existing weekly two-hour bookmobile stop is inadequate for the clear interest among residents in borrowing books, and suggests that a new branch could be shared with social workers or other service agencies. However, the report ends on the note that any future plans involving targeted services for OHC tenants would have to “carefully avoid [...] reinforcing the barriers between the two” major groups in the neighbourhood.⁹⁷

Understanding public libraries as situated amid geographies of social reproduction through a view of suburban infrastructures can here broaden the scope of this report to grapple with difficult questions about *who* constitutes ‘the library’s public’ in this contested historical moment. The range of exclusions that define Flemingdon Park in the above-cited report – the articulation of spatial isolation with social inequalities, through gendered and racial constructs of ‘delinquency’ and ‘family breakdown’ with non-participation in the paid labour force, are what give the NYPL’s broader policies to geographically expand and technically improve the provision of public library service greater meaning in the report. Community-based service provision is thereby constituted as an intervention into this context, to ameliorate the effects of these inequalities among local residents, but importantly by *further* incorporating politically excluded and economically marginalized people into the wider social benefits of public library use.

⁹⁶ Gray, *Flemingdon Park*, 55.

⁹⁷ Gray, *Flemingdon Park*, 61.

This assimilationist logic must, furthermore, be understood here in light of changing federal immigration policies over the mid-20th century, as described in the above discussion. The extension of domestic space through the socialization of (some) costs and burdens of reproductive labour among citizens of Canada required a project of national identity building that, though no longer formally expressed through, was rooted in the older notion of “Britishness.” This project contributed, in Metro Toronto suburbs, to dominant narratives explaining social inequalities and economic marginalization with reference to the racial and ethnic makeup of households in specific neighbourhoods. When local residents contested starkly uneven patterns of resource allocation and service provision, created and entrenched by tensions within the Metro system of government, this context becomes more explicit in the archival materials I analyzed in this chapter.

Public libraries, in other words, emerged as one site – among many, including schools, parks, recreation facilities, and commercial developments – for local residents to express their belonging in the city, as agents in processes of social reproduction. It is here the space of a public library building itself, and the geographical extension of these spaces through bookmobile networks, that is the object for these claims, rather than, for example, the specific informational resources that collections may provide to residents. An analysis that extends my discussion this chapter might, therefore, bring greater insight by exploring what kinds of materials and acquisitions or borrowing policies shaped how local residents gained access to information and what types of knowledge this information may have contributed to producing.

Conclusion

My analysis in this chapter has been centred on the idea of public library service provision becoming reoriented around the social reproduction of a normative family ideal in Metro Toronto’s postwar suburbs. Drawing on my overview of public library work from the previous chapter, I have suggested that changing relationships between public library workers and public library users can help to think about this shift in social policy. By attending to the ways that experimental new techniques, from machine automation to regional governance, altered the social organization of work within public libraries, I have aimed to highlight that these technical

improvements can be highly ambivalent for both public library workers and public library users, but for different reasons and with distinct effects. Automation may relieve workers' repetitive motion injuries, speed up some aspects of their work, and reallocate workloads to allow librarians to more actively engage with local residents.

Yet this reallocation of work can, paradoxically, de-skill some aspects of librarianship and present its own potential disruptions to the continuous provision of service, for example by enhancing employers' reliance on temporary, part-time clerical workers. With this reallocation of workloads, the outcomes of librarians' efforts at outreach and targeted, specialized services can also be highly ambivalent for library users. While on the one hand, this changing relationship implies the possibility of more popular, and less exclusionary, kinds of service – as the SPL exemplified – the outcomes can be highly dependent upon *who* designs and implements new techniques.

The struggles among public library workers and public library users that I highlighted in this chapter could be analyzed in terms of citizenship: demands for professional recognition in the material provision of library service, and political claims to maintaining access to public library space as a means to the material resources allocated to support social provisioning through these spaces. My focus on waged work and reproductive labour in this chapter does not, I think, exclude the possibility for this kind of analysis to illuminate the politics of postwar suburban public libraries. However, I do think that bringing social reproduction into the foreground can provide some perspective on *what* these struggles were contesting, by *who* and *how*. This perspective may, I hope, provoke a rethinking of conventional interpretations of public library history that situate these institutions as responsive to – but not embedded within, or active in shaping – broader changes in dynamics emanating from relationships among states, markets, and households that feminist critiques of regulation theory have scrutinized.

Themes around territorial stigmatization, normative family structures, class, gender, and race developed in this chapter inform my analysis in the next. The tensions within the Metro system of government addressed in this chapter provide important historical background for the next chapter's discussion of a recent 2011-12 citywide controversy over potential library branch

closures and a strike by TPL employees. I extend the analysis begun in this chapter to further connect struggles among public library users and public library workers through social reproduction debates in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

‘Our Public Library’: Contesting the TPL’s Publicness (2011-12)

Democracy of reading, democracy of space: our public library, wherever we live in the wide world, was incredibly hard-won by the generations before us and ought to be protected, not just for ourselves but in the name of every generation after.¹

One brisk October afternoon in 2012, I sat across from Maureen O’Reilly in the conference room of the Toronto Public Library Workers’ Union (TPLWU) executive office. As President of the TPLWU, Maureen was recounting to me how fiscal pressures facing the Toronto Public Library (TPL) had affected the union’s 2,400 members. Peppering her remarks with tidbits drawn from her expansive knowledge of public sector statistics and municipal employees’ organizing in Toronto, Maureen pointed out that the TPL budget had declined overall since the early 1990s. During this time, she emphasized, public library use in Toronto had continued to grow by nearly every measure: branch visits, annual circulation, and attendance at programs and special events. So I asked Maureen to explain how the TPL could meet these demands given ongoing fiscal constraints.

“We have done it all to ourselves,” Maureen declared, clarifying that she meant librarians. “We are always the first to find solutions” to financial problems, she continued. But why, she asked rhetorically, should these solutions be to reduce spending on collections, programs, and – most obviously involving the union’s members – staffing? Fiscal responsibility, she was quick and careful to add, is “certainly a reality” for public libraries, and of vital importance in the public sector generally. Yet, she emphasized, other city services used by far fewer people than the TPL had regularly received budget increases. “So shouldn’t you be supporting this service, if so many people are using it?” she inquired, directing her question at decisionmakers in city government who determine the TPL’s annual budget allocations.

¹ Ali Smith, *Public Library and Other Stories* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2016), 6.

Maureen's story about the TPL budget – the discrepancy she identified between levels of funding and rates of service use, and her questioning the solutions librarians had offered in these circumstances – indicates the value of public libraries in terms of *cost*. Current “vocabularies of the economy” code public services as an expense, rather than an investment, by reproducing a rigidly economistic distinction between public and private finances.² This language can make paying for these services seem like a burden because this use of taxpayers' money appears to only increase state deficits. Staff salaries are thus positioned as an additional onerous cost to taxpayers, because these payments purportedly subsidize the profligacy of public employees who are seen as impervious to market imperatives.³ That public library workers, like many other public and private sector service providers, are primarily women and are often part-time or temporary employees suggests some of the deeply political implications of this coded language. However, as my analysis in the preceding chapters has underscored, these notions of value and competitive market forces are not new within public libraries, but rather part of a long-term trajectory toward a present that I examine in the remainder of this chapter.

Crucially, my conversation with Maureen took place less than a year after a dramatic confrontation over the 2012 City of Toronto operating budget, and a subsequent TPLWU strike that closed all of the TPL's then-98 branches for two weeks. In this chapter, I examine the content and context of these moments, their political dimensions, and immediate outcomes. These crucially spatial struggles, I argue, illustrate the importance of public libraries as potential sites for mobilizing wider political claims to public space and resources allocated to support social provisioning. What was unique about the events of 2011-12 was not that they were unprecedented, though commentators in mainstream media generally suggested as much. This mobilization, I show, importantly spanned geographical divisions perceptible in an increasingly polarized city, bringing together a loosely organized coalition of people across constructs of difference.

² Doreen Massey, “Vocabularies of the Economy,” *Soundings* 54, no. 54 (2013): 16-17.

³ Bonnie Honig, “The Politics of Public Things: Neoliberalism and the Routine of Privatization,” *No Foundations* 10, no. 1 (2013): 59-60.

These public library advocates constructed these spaces as essential to their visions for the city, and how its built environment might be organized for the sustenance or flourishing of people living in the city. Although they were outwardly concerned with stopping library closures that many feared would be the ultimate result of a ten percent TPL budget cut, in practice they articulated a competing vision to that figuratively centred on controversial then-mayor Rob Ford. In so doing, they produced knowledge about daily life and power structures in the city, and they did so not exclusively by expressing resistance to fiscal austerity or right-wing populism espoused by the mayor and his allies.

I first provide an overview of the Our Public Library campaign (OPL). Second, I discuss some of the contributions to public meetings and social media exchanges during this campaign, highlighting how participants produced critical knowledge about public libraries in their own daily lives, to then expand these claims into a wider vision for the city and its inhabitants. Third, I examine the TPLWU strike in light of these prior events. To conclude, I synthesize findings from my archival research presented in the previous three chapters to identify how these recent events differed from, and were in continuity with, the preceding historical analysis.

The Our Public Library Campaign, 2011-12

Rob Ford was elected mayor in 2010 on promises to 'respect taxpayers' and 'cut the gravy train' at City Hall, and repeated these phrases with astonishing regularity throughout his term in the mayor's office (2010-14). At the time of his election as mayor, Rob Ford was already a deeply divisive figure in municipal politics, having served as a city councillor for a decade (2000-10). Throughout his terms in these elected offices, Rob Ford attracted a great deal of controversy and condemnation, and sometimes more so for his behaviour in public than for his politics, though of the boundary between the two was often blurry.⁴

⁴ Robyn Doolittle, *Crazy Town: The Rob Ford Story* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2014).

In his public speeches as mayor and remarks to journalists, Rob Ford exclusively addressed himself to ‘taxpayers’ as customers of public services. This choice allowed him to avoid any reference to Torontonians as citizens, members of the public, or residents of the city. This rhetorical device aided him in perpetuating a myth that these ‘taxpayers’ were the deserving contributors to the city, as contrasted to an ‘undeserving’ population of perpetual ‘outsiders’.⁵ He also described his supporters as a mythical “Ford Nation,” which the media reproduced in coverage of the campaign. The residents of this fictional Ford Nation were said to be, like he claimed to be himself, suburban homeowners who gained few benefits from the city government. These suburban homeowners purportedly bore excessive local property tax burdens to pay for a superabundance of services that they did not need, and did not want to pay for. Rob Ford’s campaign messaging constructed ‘the suburbs’ as the home for this imagined Ford Nation, where ‘taxpayers’ were the legitimate but disenfranchised public, positioning him as their anti-establishment champion at City Hall.⁶

In this imagined geography, ‘downtown’ symbolized all of the problems with the city that the proposed budget cuts would ostensibly fix. The Ford Nation fiction was an attempt to rework political divisions set up during the Metro government years and sharpened by the forced 1998 amalgamation. (That these divisions did not necessarily map onto city-suburb divides, or accurately describe residents in the city by 2011, was entirely beside the point.) Rob Ford and his supporters in City Hall portrayed the ‘downtown’ as a bastion of liberal elitism filled with people who were contemptuous of ‘everyday’ Canadians in ‘the suburbs’. This construction of ‘downtown’ was widely inconsistent, and sometimes incoherent, but generally applied to any perceived to be unsupportive of his mayoralty. At various times, for example, ‘downtown’ described people of colour, new immigrants to Canada, unionized public sector employees, queer people, low-income people, unhoused people, bicycle riders, transit passengers, progressive and left-wing activists, and anyone else who might support paying taxes to pay for public services.

⁵ Valentina Capurri, “‘Residents’ or ‘Taxpayers’? Neoliberalism, Rob Ford’s Mayoral Campaign, and the Meaning of Urban Citizenship,” *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 22, no. 2 (2013): 1-2.

⁶ Alan Walks, “Stopping the ‘War on the Car’: Neoliberalism, Fordism, and the Politics of Automobility in Toronto,” *Mobilities* 10, no. 3 (2015): 403.

The core service review and subsequent budget directives were not only an appeal to the mayor's political base, but also a clear attack on 'downtown' residents.

In advancing his political agenda, Rob Ford was joined by his brother, rookie City Councillor Doug Ford, who was elected to Rob's former seat in 2010.⁷ During Rob Ford's mayoralty, Doug Ford seemed to speak publicly on behalf of his brother while the mayor frequently refused to give interviews to journalists, contributing to a perception that Doug essentially governed the city in Rob's place. (Which is why, in this chapter, I often use the terms 'the mayor's office' rather than attributing actions to the mayor himself.) One of the Ford's early victories in city council following the 2010 election was to persuade councillors to approve a pilot program outsourcing garbage collection.

Doug Ford subsequently boasted to a journalist that "we're going to be outsourcing anything not nailed down."⁸ The Fords furthermore succeeded in convincing councillors to cancel the city's Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) and freezing local property tax increases, thus eliminating the major sources of revenue for the city government. (In Ontario, municipalities have limited powers to raise revenues through taxation beyond these types of sources.) The mayor's office then calculated a C\$774 million discrepancy in the city operating budget, which the Fords and their political allies falsely and persistently described as a 'deficit crisis'.⁹ Their critics contended that, due to the elimination of revenues, it was in fact a 'manufactured budget crisis' that amounted to an urban austerity program.¹⁰

⁷ Rob Ford died in 2016. While he was running for a second term as mayor in 2014, he dropped out of the race due to illness; Doug Ford took his place in the election but did not win, and he is now the Ontario Premier as the leader of the province's Conservative Party.

⁸ Sue Ann Levy, "Ford Moves to Contract Out Trash Collection," *Toronto Sun*, February 7, 2011.

⁹ Sheila Block, *Countdown to Zero: Balancing Toronto's Budget* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Wellesley Institute, 2011).

¹⁰ Under Ontario law, municipalities must balance annual budgets to bring deficits down to zero, which the City of Toronto had historically been able to achieve; due to the elimination of revenues, the amount specified above was in fact a budget shortfall (the difference between the previous year's revenues and the next year's projected expenditures). In the five years prior, the city budget cycle began with an average half-million dollar shortfall. In economics, austerity is the reduction of public deficits by cutting fiscal spending rather than raising revenues.

The mayor’s office announced that a series of cuts would have to be made in order to fix this ‘budget crisis’, and proceeded to hold a ‘core service review’ ostensibly to find the ‘gravy’ that could be cut in the city budget. The review was partly based on local residents’ contributions during 5 consultation meetings held in disparate parts of the city. During the meetings, attendees were asked to rank all city services according to the criteria of “necessary for the city,” “contributes to the city but not important” and “not required for the city.” In July 2011, the mayor’s office released a report authored by KPMG management consultants (hereafter, the KPMG report) commissioned by the mayor’s office. The scope of the report was to identify cuts to all city Agencies, Boards, and Commissions (ABCs) deemed ‘non-essential’ during the review process.¹¹

In Toronto, ABCs provide the overwhelming majority of municipal services, both mandatory and non-mandatory. The former are the services that the municipality is either required by law to provide, or those fundamental to the basic operations of the city, such as transit, police, or garbage collection. At the time of the 2011 consultations, 96% of the City of Toronto operating budget was already devoted to mandatory services.¹² The mayor’s office used the terms ‘essential’ and ‘non-essential’, perhaps deliberately, in confusing and contradictory ways throughout – sometimes referring to legally mandated services and at other times to the ranked services. These ABCs are governed by quasi-autonomous bodies, whose members are appointed by the mayor’s office (they are, in other words, neither city departments nor independent oversight bodies, and the appointments process can be contentious, as I address in the second section that follows).¹³ The TPL Board is among these ABCs, all of which are required to submit annual budget proposals to the city council for final approval.

¹¹ City of Toronto, “Core Service Review – Final Report to the Executive Committee,” September 9, 2011, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-40702.pdf>. This document summarizes the full report and includes links to separate documents that the city government released as part of a single report.

¹² KPMG, “Public Works and Infrastructure,” in *City of Toronto Core Services Review*, accessed 17 January 2020, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/96c7-backgroundfile-39506.pdf>.

¹³ “Agencies & Corporations,” City of Toronto, accessed May 2, 2019: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/city-administration/city-managers-office/agencies-corporations/>.

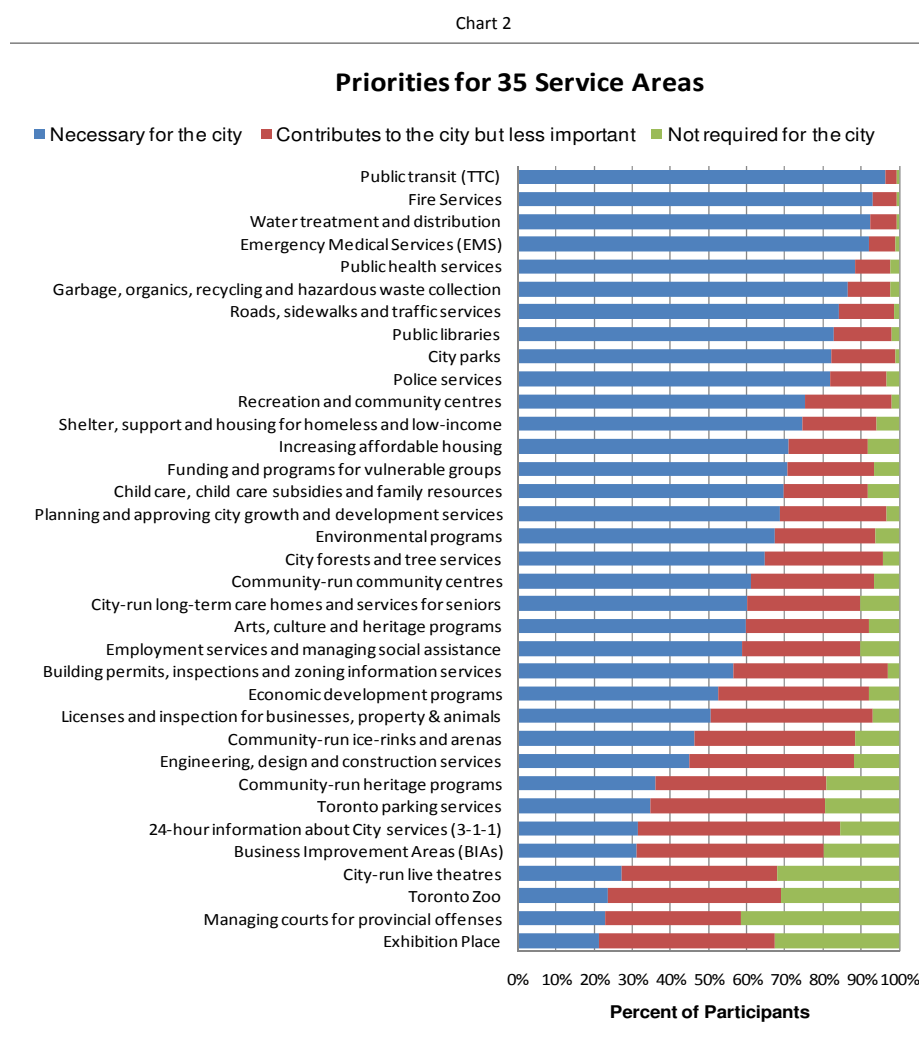


Fig. 5.1 Residents' ranked responses.¹⁴

Many people in the city were already poised to oppose the review. Activists engaged in longstanding campaigns against cuts to childcare, shelters, and social housing criticized the lack of transparency and accountability in the process. They charged that the meeting time and

¹⁴ Source: City of Toronto, "Appendix B to the City Managers' Report on the Core Service Review," in "Core Service Review Public Consultation," July 12, 2011, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/pw/bgrd/backgroundfile-39507.pdf>.

locations were poorly publicized and largely inaccessible to commuters and people with responsibilities at home. Most alarmingly, some participants in the meetings later stated that they had been unaware their responses would be used to identify which services to cut. Instead, they believed that they were providing the city government with useful information about the quality and importance of municipal services.¹⁵

The mayor’s office deemed virtually every non-mandatory service ‘non-essential’ and instructed the KPMG consultants to find potential ‘cost savings’ in each of budget. City Councillor Mike DelGrande, who the mayor dubbed his ‘budget chief’, then instructed the governing bodies of each to adopt the KPMG recommendations into their 2012 operating budgets implement an overall ten percent ‘across the board’ cut in their budget submissions. (The precise relationship between these two directives remained unclear, for example if the recommendations equalled the ten percent or if one took priority over another.) ABCs were historically responsible for preparing and approving their own budget proposals, forwarding them to city council for final approval; cuts were then determined by elected officials, and not appointed board members.

Participants in the consultation meetings ranked the TPL 8th overall, the highest of any non-mandatory services and notably above the police department (Figure 5.1). Nevertheless, the KPMG report recommended elected officials “consider rationalizing the footprint of libraries to reduce service levels, closing some branches.”¹⁶ The report’s authors acknowledged that “residents may strongly disagree with library closures” but estimated a “medium” level of cost savings that would result.¹⁷ A few days after the report’s publication, the July 2011 TPL Board meeting was packed with local residents and union officers objecting to the proposed library closures. The audience overflowed into an adjacent meeting room, where they could watch the proceedings on CCTV. The Board members were, at that time, four city councillors and eight local residents appointed by the previous mayor, David Miller, a progressive who, while mayor, was prominently featured in one TPL annual report as a book-lover and son of a librarian.

¹⁵ Robyn Doolittle, “Critics see KPMG report as ‘smoke and mirrors’,” *Toronto Star*, July 22, 2011, https://www.thestar.com/news/city_hall/2011/07/22/critics_see_kpmg_report_as_smoke_and_mirrors.html.

¹⁶ KPMG, “Executive Committee Governance,” in *City of Toronto Core Services Review*, accessed January 17, 2020, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-39626.pdf>.

¹⁷ KPMG, “Executive Committee Governance,” 154.

Because it was unclear if ABCs were somehow required to follow DelGrande’s instructions, at that meeting the Board voted to defer its budget decision to their next meeting in September.

Opposition to the mayor’s budget proposals quickly grew in the following days; in practice, the directives meant that nearly every social service in the city had been slated for a deep cut. A website sponsored by the TPLWU and administered by a former union member hosted an online petition against library closures. The OPL Twitter account posted the link to the petition, accompanied by the message: “Toronto’s libraries are under threat of privatization. Tell city council to keep them open + public.”¹⁸ For a few days, as the Tweet began to circulate online the petition slowly gained signatures. Then, author Margaret Atwood – who is internationally renowned, a noted women’s rights advocate, a long-time Toronto resident, and prolific social media user – forwarded the tweet to her 225,000 Twitter followers. The ensuing online traffic to the petition temporarily crashed the website’s servers. In one day, the petition gained over 17,000 signatures.¹⁹

In a purportedly conciliatory gesture, to ‘let all voices be heard’ on the results of the core service review, the mayor called a special meeting before his Executive Committee of City Council. The committee, composed of city councillors, is formally tasked with advising the mayor on planning and policy directions. (Rob Ford appointed his committee exclusively from his political allies on city council, who seemed to have an unprecedented amount of influence on his decisions as mayor.) Local residents were allowed to sign up for time to give a deputation to the committee in advance of the meeting, at City Hall downtown. This arrangement was criticized by organizers and activists, for again making a consultation geographically inaccessible and burdensome for people with jobs and families. Hundreds of people signed up for deputations; the mayor announced that their time would be limited to three minutes, not including time for follow up

¹⁸ Margaret Atwood (@MargaretAtwood), “RT@OurPublicLibrary Toronto’s libraries are under threat. Tell city council to keep them open + public,” Twitter post, July 24, 2011. Accessed on September 30, 2013: <http://twitter.com/MargaretAtwood>.

¹⁹ David Rider, “Margaret Atwood Fights Library Cuts, Crashes Petition Server,” *Toronto Star*, July 22, 2011, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/07/22/margaret_atwood_fights_library_cuts_crashes_petition_server.html.

questions. A few, more politically progressive, city councillors who were not allied with the mayor prevailed in their demands to be allowed a seat in the meeting and to ask questions.

The meeting went on for 22 hours, from the morning of July 28 into the early hours of following day. Nearly 170 people gave three-minute deputations, a number notably reduced when people who signed up to speak began to leave as the meeting continued late into the night. Some who could stay repeatedly pointed out, in their own speeches, that the people who left had said they needed to return home before transit service stopped or because they had work and family responsibilities. The tenor of the meeting was, at various times, raucous, sarcastic, confrontational, and heartfelt.

There was wide swath of services slated for cuts in the core service review report, and deputants raised forceful and impassioned objections to cuts in childcare, housing, shelters, and arts and cultural programs. Surprisingly to many, the TPL budget cut quickly emerged as a central object of contention, with a majority of speakers either focusing exclusively on public libraries, or connecting the importance of public libraries in relation to other city services that would potentially be cut. (I explore some of these speeches in the second section that follows.) When TPLWU President Maureen O’Reilly entered the room around 2 am, a standing ovation and chants of “save our libraries” temporarily halted the proceedings. She brought with her large boxes containing printouts of the 35,000 Our Public Library website petition signatures. In the weeks after the meeting, organizing against the proposed cuts accelerated. The StopTheCuts coalition coordinated actions with community advocacy groups and activist organizations located across the city. The OPL online petition gained more signatures, and discussions on social media about public libraries and the cuts generally accelerated.

In July, the TPLWU contracted the firm Forum research to conduct a telephone poll surveying Toronto residents on their opinions about public libraries in the city. The results of the poll showed an overwhelming degree of support for the TPL. Three-quarters of the respondents opposed library closures, and 55% were against the possibility of privatization. Fifty-one percent

confirmed that library closures, if they happened, would be a determining factor in whether they would vote to re-elect a city councillor who supported the decision.²⁰

In September, the mayor called another consultation before his Executive Committee; this time, the meeting went on for 18 hours and around 150 people gave deputations. During both meetings and after, the mayor was criticized for his apparent disinterest, as repeatedly he left the room to take breaks (sometimes for 20 minutes or more), read the newspaper, chewed gum, and checked his phone while the proceedings continued. Also in September, the mayor’s office began to appoint new members to ABC governing bodies. The process became controversial, as the budget cuts were as yet undecided, and the mayor’s office appeared to select nominees whose politics aligned with the mayor’s. The mayor’s office replaced all 8 of the ‘citizen members’ of the TPL Board appointed by David Miller, some of whom were outspoken critics of the mayor, and replaced them with appointees who, one journalist pointed out, included a lobbyist and former KPMG consultant.²¹ The new Board members were, almost immediately, confronted with the budget controversy; over a year later, I observed a conversation during a Board meeting attesting to a feeling that they had been thrown into a situation they neither created, nor were prepared for.

The contentious city budgeting process continued through the fall, culminating in a theatrical ‘budget showdown’ at City Hall in early January 2012. While the city council prepared for a final vote on the widely disputed budget proposals, which included the ten percent ‘across the board’ cut to nearly every ABC (the sole exception was the police department, which received a C\$1 million increase its governing body did not include in their submission to council). Meanwhile, hundreds of people attended a demonstration outside that was organized by StopTheCuts. A last-minute motion, introduced by a city councillor previously aligned with the mayor, reallocated money from a discretionary fund to prevent most of the cuts from going

²⁰ These results are based on survey data shared with me by TPLWU President Maureen O’Reilly in November 2012.

²¹ Steven Kupferman, “Toronto Public Library’s Citizen Board Members Replaced,” *Torontoist*, September 30, 2011, <https://torontoist.com/2011/09/toronto-public-librarys-citizen-board-members-replaced/>.

through. In the case of the TPL, the new Board had already approved a budget that included a 5.7% cut; it was the only ABC to do so. The last-minute motion therefore saved the TPL budget from a *further* cut to reach the ten percent target. Notably, the new Board explicitly did not approve any library closures but instead combined reduced spending with raising revenues.²²

In the following months, the TPLWU’s collective bargaining negotiations proceeded toward a strike that closed all 98 TPL branches for two weeks in February 2012. At issue were job security provisions and employment benefits for part-time employees, who were half of the union’s members and who had no entitlements to paid leave or overtime pay. During the strike, the union commissioned another Forum Research poll, this time to gather data on support for the union’s members in bargaining. Three-quarters of the respondents opposed replacing full-time with part-time employees; 61% supported the union’s positions.²³ Throughout the strike, the union enjoyed a high level of support from local residents, as expressed from visitors on picket lines, social media, the OPL website comments, and the survey responses. The ultimate outcomes of the strike were somewhat mixed, which I further contextualize in the third section that follows. The new collective agreement did not include cuts to paid leave, preserved language that prevented the conversion of existing full-time positions to part-time, and eliminated proposed language that would have made it possible to increase the number of unpaid volunteers and extend operating hours without full staffing.

“Doug Speaks, Margaret Tweets”

Having given an overview of the period of time and events I describe generally as the OPL campaign, I now elaborate on the context for the campaign within the city’s recent politics and social geography. Specifically, I begin by focusing on a widely publicized exchange between author Margaret Atwood and City Councillor Doug Ford. The exchange took place mainly

²² Steven Kupferman, “Why Last Night’s Library Budget Vote Isn’t Necessarily Good News,” *Torontoist*, December 13, 2011, <https://torontoist.com/2011/12/why-last-night%E2%80%99s-library-budget-vote-isn%E2%80%99t-necessarily-good-news/>. The *Ontario Public Library Act* prohibits charging direct user fees for public library services, but overdue fines and fees for special services can be charged, such as printing or photocopying and booking rooms for events.

²³ This result is also drawn from data Maureen O’Reilly shared with me in November 2012.

between the two Executive Committee consultation meetings in July and September 2011. While Margaret Atwood posted on social media platforms, primarily Twitter, Doug Ford responded to some of her statements in remarks he made to local journalists covering the budget controversy. Maureen calls this aspect of the campaign as the “Doug Speaks, Margaret Tweets” phase, when the OPL website petition and social media posts received high online traffic.

During an interview on a local talk radio station in July, Doug Ford claimed that, in Toronto, “[w]e have more libraries than any other city in the entire world. I have more libraries in my area than Tim Hortons.”²⁴ His reference to the ubiquitous Canadian fast food chain quickly gained attention on social media. An anonymous Internet user created a Google map showing all of the TPL’s 98 branches overlaid with all of the city’s Tim Hortons outlets. Although his first claim was true (the TPL, since amalgamation in 1998, does have the largest branch network in the world), the map revealed that his second claim was quite obviously false. In his electoral ward, located in the suburban Etobicoke municipality to the west of downtown, there were 3 TPL branches and over 20 Tim Hortons locations.²⁵

Tim Hortons, its double-double (cream and sugar) coffees and Timbits (doughnut holes) project a powerful and specifically Canadian image to many. Named after the famous retired hockey player who founded the chain, ‘Timmies’ (as the company’s outlets are often called) has a pervasive presence throughout much of Canada. The chain’s conspicuous disposable red cups dot the urban, suburban, and rural landscape, held in hands and discarded as litter. Tim Hortons is so strongly associated with doughnuts, the “unofficial national food” of Canada, that the company has an almost iconic status.²⁶ What makes it so iconic is perhaps how unremarkable it seems, and the company’s branding and advertising have promoted both. Canadian national identity is often casually described through its negation, that is, ‘neither American, nor British’. Tim Hortons advertising is designed to give an image of ‘everyday’ Canadianness as surpassing these hegemonic influences, as more polite (than Americans) and more rugged (than Britons).

²⁴ “Reality Check,” Our Public Library, July 19, 2011, <http://ourpubliclibrary.to/2011/07/19/reality-check/>.

²⁵ Derek Flack, “Tim Hortons vs Toronto Public Libraries Mashup,” BlogTO, July 20, 2011, https://www.blogto.com/city/2011/07/tim_hortons_vs_toronto_public_libraries_mashup/.

²⁶ Steven Penfold, *The Donut: a Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 166.

Through this “articulation of a national identity that insists it is inarticulate,” the chain’s publicity suggests that ‘everyday’ Canadianness can be enacted through the “sensual, mundane enjoyment” of eating and drinking sugary, mass produced treats which, perhaps ironically given the messaging, are typically made by workers who are low-paid, precariously employed, and often temporary residents or recent immigrants.²⁷

Both Rob and Doug Ford professed to represent the interests of this kind of ‘everyday’ Canadian, although the brothers came from a wealthy and politically well-connected family (their father who started the family business that made the brothers their money was also a Conservative Party member of the Ontario legislature). Based on an imagination of the city as fundamentally divided between ‘others’ and ‘everyday’ Canadians, Rob Ford’s mayoralty consolidated an erratic but “deeply racialized form of authoritarian populism.”²⁸ Following Doug Ford’s radio interview, Margaret Atwood began to tweet her responses to his remarks. Referring to a belief that Doug often spoke for Rob, and perhaps also made important decisions for his brother, she called them the “twin Fordmayors.”²⁹ In one Tweet, she stated that the budget cuts proved how “out of touch” they were with ‘everyday’ people. In another, she added that the proposed library closures implied that the Fords “think that people who eat Timbits (like me) don’t read, can’t count, and are stupid, eh?”³⁰ In a series of interviews he gave to journalists, Doug Ford began to comment on some of Margaret Atwood’s Tweets. In one interview, he stated:

Good luck to Margaret Atwood. I don’t even know her. She could walk right by me, I wouldn’t have a clue who she is. She’s not down here [at City Hall]. She’s not dealing with the problem. Tell her to go run in the next election and get democratically elected.³¹

²⁷ Patricia Cormack, “‘True Stories’ of Canada: Tim Hortons and the Branding of National Identity,” *Cultural Sociology* 2, no. 3 (2008): 381.

²⁸ Stefan Kipfer and Parastou Saberi, “From ‘Revolution’ to Farce? Hard-Right Populism in the Making of Toronto,” *Studies in Political Economy* 93, no. 1 (2014): 134

²⁹ Margaret Atwood (@MargaretAtwood), “Twin Fordmayors want to close libraries + nursing homes. Out of touch?” Twitter post, July 25, 2011. Accessed 30 September 2013: <http://twitter.com/MargaretAtwood>.

³⁰ Margaret Atwood (@MargaretAtwood), “Twin Fordmayors think those who eat Timbits (like me) don’t read, can’t count, and are stupid, eh? @torontolibrary,” Twitter post, July 25, 2011. Accessed 30 September 2013: <http://twitter.com/MargaretAtwood>.

³¹ Paul Moloney, “Doug Ford Blasts Margaret Atwood Over Libraries, says ‘I Don’t Even Know

In a subsequent Facebook post, Margaret Atwood teased, "Doug Ford says he doesn't know who Margaret Atwood is. Sounds like he needs to expand his library, not reduce Toronto's."³² More to the point, she rejected his implication that only elected officials had the right to express an opinion.

This exchange pivoted around an idea of who in Toronto, precisely, were actually the 'everyday' Canadians the Fords said they represented – those who 'loved libraries' and wanted to pay taxes to provide services (like Margaret Atwood), or those victimized for years (like the Fords) by a downtown liberal elite that Margaret Atwood and her online supporters represented to them. Incongruously, it was one of the most famous living Canadians (Margaret Atwood) and, arguably, the most powerful city councillor in Toronto at the time (Doug Ford) who engaged in this debate. Later, following sharp criticism and ridicule online for his remarks, Doug Ford shifting his stance, slightly. He stated in an interview that:

This is not about closing libraries or Margaret Atwood or anything. It's about finding ten percent efficiencies in every single department, and I'm hoping the management in the libraries are going to find [it].³³

To which Margaret Atwood's riposte was, "the issue isn't about me [...] the issue is libraries," in an interview she gave to a local journalist.³⁴

Contesting Work Knowledge and Belonging in the City

Her'," *Toronto Star*, July 26, 2011, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/07/26/doug_ford_blasts_margaret_atwood_over_libraries_says_i_dont_even_know_her.html.

³² Margaret Atwood, "Doug Ford says he doesn't know who Margaret Atwood is. Sounds like he needs to expand his library, not reduce Toronto's," Facebook post, accessed September 30, 2012: <http://www.facebook.com/MargaretAtwood>.

³³ Natalie Alcoba, "Doug Ford says He Appreciates that Atwood Doesn't Think He's Stupid," *National Post* (Toronto), August 25, 2011. Accessed on 2 November 2013: <https://nationalpost.com/posted-toronto/doug-ford-says-he-appreciates-that-atwood-doesnt-think-hes-stupid>.

³⁴ David Rider, "Margaret Atwood on Libraries, Graffiti and Democracy," *Toronto Star*, August 2, 2011, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/08/02/margaret_atwood_on_libraries_graffiti_and_democracy.html.

What was it about libraries, in particular, that caused all of this controversy? Why did the threat of library closures and (perhaps) of privatization compel so many people to confront the Executive Committee at City Hall in the summer of 2011? The answers to these questions can be partially found in the arguments that people themselves made when they demanded the city keep their local libraries open and public. In the following, I evaluate some of these public statements to begin to answer these questions. At stake in the Our Public Library campaign, I contend, was not only whether libraries closed but also whose vision of the city would prevail.

First, I situate these statements within the context of Toronto's changing social geography, specifically by drawing from urban researcher David Hulchanski's 'three cities of Toronto' framework. The three cities idea describes alterations in the overall pattern of income polarization within Toronto, prior to and following amalgamation. The argument is that neighbourhoods in Toronto fall into three increasingly divided 'cities within the city'. City 1 is made up of high-income neighbourhoods where overall incomes have increased 20% or more over the citywide average since 1970. City 2 are middle-income neighbourhoods where average incomes have more or less stayed close to the citywide average during this period. City 3 are the lower- and lowest-income neighbourhoods, where incomes have fallen 20% or more against the citywide average since 1970.³⁵ Figure 5.2 below is a map of census tract data and TPL branch locations.

³⁵ J. David Hulchanski, *The Three Cities Within Toronto: Income Polarization Among Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005* (Toronto: University of Toronto Cities Centre, 2010), 1-2.

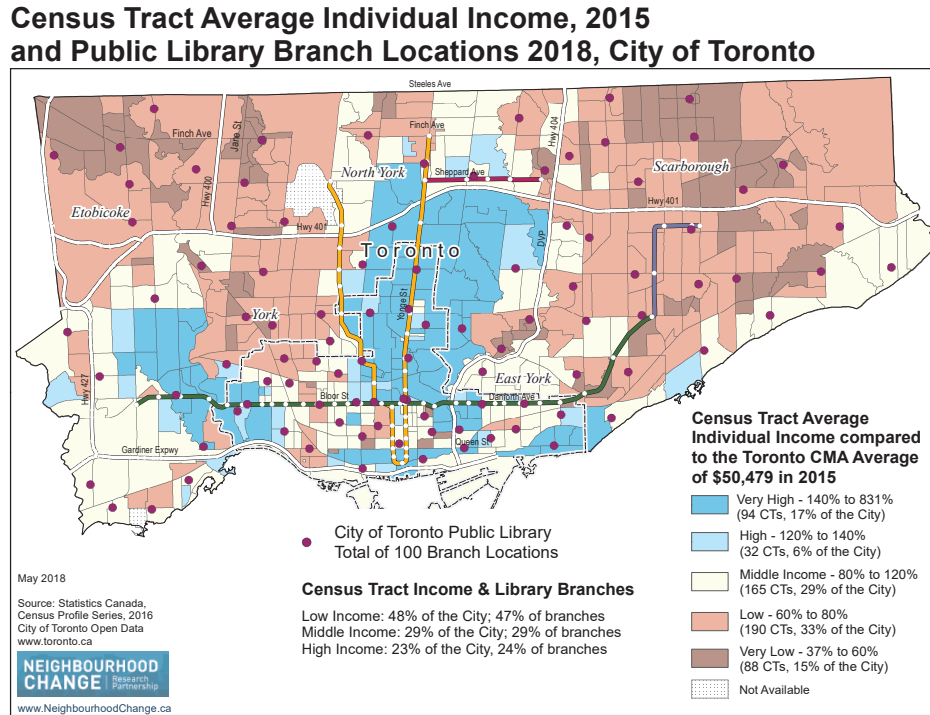


Fig. 5.2 Map of TPL branches in the three cities of Toronto

On the above map, City 3 is symbolized in orange and brown, and is most visibly located to the northwest and northeast of the ‘old’ Toronto city boundary (denoted by a black and white dashed line on the map). The total number of neighbourhoods in city 3 have increased the most since 1970 (from 19% to 48%). Close to half of all TPL branches are located in City 3, spanning the former Metro municipalities Scarborough, Etobicoke, York, and parts of North York. The number of neighbourhoods in City 2 shrank the most since 1970 (from 66% to 29%), and are where just less than a third of TPL branches are located. Slightly less than a quarter TPL branches are in neighbourhoods in City 1 did not significantly increase in number (15% to 19%), though the data importantly does not precisely specify how much wealthier these neighbourhoods became. Importantly, as the map clearly shows, these ‘three cities within the city’ are not geographically contiguous, nor do they conform exactly with Metro era municipal boundaries. Rather, the framework can describe long-term patterns of increasing polarization. Since 1970, at about the mid-point of the public library expansion I discussed in the previous chapter, poverty has moved from the centre of the city toward suburbs; meanwhile, the relative number of low- to very low-income neighbourhoods has increased and incomes in these

neighbourhoods have fallen the most.³⁶ The above map, in short, shows that the great majority of public libraries in Toronto are in neighbourhoods where incomes are lowest and in parts of the city where relative poverty has increased the most. I refer to these patterns, and the above map, in the following to situate my discussion within this polarized landscape.

Taxpayer/Citizen/Library User

Margaret Atwood’s debate with Doug Ford, via a number of journalists acting as intermediaries in the exchange, had a highly visible presence throughout the above-described city budget cycle. However, it was not Margaret Atwood who waited all night for a chance to speak for three minutes to the mayor’s executive committee at City Hall (For his part, Doug Ford was one of the councillors in attendance, who ran the meeting while his brother repeatedly left the room to take breaks.) To give a sense of the amount of attention directed toward library closures, the OPL online petition and separate emails or phone calls to city councillors together generated over 60,000 messages to city councillors – more than all other issues in the city combined that year.³⁷ Qualitatively, what happened at the executive committee meetings and in news media coverage here guides my analysis.

Around 2 am during the July meeting, teenager Anika sat down to give her three-minute deputation. Accompanied by two adult family members, Anika broke into tears and struggled to finish speaking:

*My name is Anika, and the library I go to is the Woodside Square [branch]. I hate public speaking, but this branch is so important to me. If branches were taken away, branches like mine, the most busiest in the city will get even busier. And the wait for computers is already so long, we don’t need it to be any long[er]. People who don’t have Internet access at home depend on these computers in the library to do homework and if we don’t have homework, then what will we do with our lives? **And I’m no taxpayer**, but when I get to use the computers in the library and do my homework I’ll be able to get a good job someday and when the day comes to pay taxes I’ll be glad that you support people paying taxes to keep the system going, so I can pay taxes for the kids who depend on computers when it’s my time. People really depend on these things, and they’re already so busy.*

³⁶ Hulchanski, *The Three Cities Within Toronto*, 3-4.

³⁷ This statement is also based on information provided to me by Maureen O’Reilly.

Sometimes I have to sit on the floor because there's so many people in the library.
[Emphasis my own]

When Anika finished, the audience in the room loudly erupted into cheers and applause. For months following the meeting, the video of Anika's speech circulated online, and it became emblematic of the opposition to library closures, and the mayor's politics more generally. Journalists covering the controversial budget positioned Anika and the impassioned speech as representative of the spirit of the protests, as a young woman of colour living and first-generation Canadian living in Scarborough.

The Woodside Square library where Anika goes in a Scarborough neighbourhood within City 3 on the above map. It is the busiest of all TPL branches classified as 'neighbourhood libraries', the smallest of a three-tier categorization designed to serve about 25,000 residents living within a 1.6 kilometer radius.³⁸ (These are guidelines; there is, for example, no rule that prevents someone from travelling outside their area to go to a library branch.) Though imagined, like most of Metro Toronto, to be primarily white and "British" in the mid-20th century, Scarborough has long been an object of deep racial and class anxieties tied to mass suburbanization and changing federal immigration policies. An imagination of Scarborough a suburban 'dump' of culturally unsophisticated white working-class has transmogrified into racially coded concerns that Scarborough may be 'too diverse' due to the visibility of racialized immigrant 'others' within neighbourhoods. Planners who prioritized commercial developments over (formally) open and accessible public spaces never took local residents' needs for these spaces into account.³⁹ Complex webs of privately-owned businesses, including 'ethnic' grocery stores, shopping malls, and non-profit organizations' offices, have been actively made into community spaces by local residents, who have defended their access to these spaces under the threat of demolition or

³⁸ Toronto Public Library Board, "Service Delivery Model," April 29, 2010, https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2010/may10/19_1.pdf; Toronto Public Library Board. "Branch Summary Statistics: January to December 2013," March 14, 2014, https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2014/apr28/16_2.pdf.

³⁹ Ranu Basu and Robert S. Fiedler, "Integrative Multiplicity through Suburban Realities: Exploring Diversity Through Public Spaces in Scarborough," *Urban Geography* 38, no. 1 (2017): 29.

closure.⁴⁰ In this context, public libraries in Scarborough are among the few publicly-owned and -operated places where there is a formal legal right to access. This right is not radically or universally inclusive; some users may benefit from a feeling that they are ‘official’ permitted to enter and stay, and both overt and covert exclusions deny people access to these spaces.⁴¹

Anika promised to pursue an education, “get a good job someday,” and pay taxes to support public libraries “for the kids who depend on computers when it’s my time.” This promise resonates with novelist Ali Smith’s claim that public libraries have been contested by members of previous generations and “ought to be defended” in the present, in anticipation of the future.⁴² Anika’s speech gave this kind of claim a greater rhetorical and emotional weight, substantiating precisely *how* public libraries are important for daily life in the city and identifying *what* people can do with the informational resources they access through these places. Most crucially, Anika’s emphasis on being in the branch, on the overcrowding and necessity for the branch to stay open, underscores the ongoing importance of the physical space of a public library building as one of these increasingly vital resources.

Anika was not the only participant in the campaign against library closures who used the mayor’s favoured language of ‘taxpayers’ to dispute the budget cuts. Many, in executive committee meetings and online, strategically and deliberately used the word to signal their opposition to the divisive imagined geography that figuratively centred around the Fords. Some proclaimed themselves to be taxpayers – but taxpayers who wanted to pay property taxes to provide services, and who opposed library closures. Others rejected this language, describing themselves in terms of their belonging in the city as citizens or residents of their neighbourhoods. For example, at the same meeting where Anika spoke, Matthew shared his “personal philosophy of library space:”

[...] a place of introspection and books are the technology for this. This can compound personal isolation, but this is where the library comes in, the aspect of a shared space of

⁴⁰ Vanessa Parlette and Deborah Cowen, “Dead Malls: Suburban Activism, Local Spaces, Global Logistics,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 4 (2011): 795.

⁴¹ Lisa M. Freeman and Nick Blomley, “Enacting Property: Making Space for the Public in the Municipal Library,” *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37, no. 2 (2019): 199-218.

⁴² Smith, *Public Library and Other Stories*, 6.

*learning [...] the feeling of awe in diverse people learning, and this [teaches] you that you are **citizens and not customers**, overseen by librarians who are the secular mothers and fathers in society. Look for money [to balance the city budget] in the opposite direction by changing the question: how much money to libraries need to continue?*

In this statement, to be a citizen is to be *more* than a taxpayer who is a customer of public services; it is to be a member of the political community of the city, to enact this membership within a public library, and to see this membership through the presence of multiple other people in the same place.⁴³ Citizenship in this sense is enacted as a claim to rights – to paying taxes, accessing services, using a public library. Although the language of rights is a language of political legitimacy within a mainstream liberal-democratic public sphere, these claims need not explicitly use this language to substantively constitute the political subjectivity of citizenship.

Matthew used the term ‘diverse people’, perhaps in a gesture to the heterogeneity of Toronto’s population or as a stand-in for ‘downtown’. Although Matthew did not name a specific local branch or part of the city in this philosophy, this reference suggests one of the more troubling aspects of the campaign against library closures as expressed during the executive committee. A number of people claimed to be advocating *on behalf* of ‘everyone’ in the city, or to represent the interests of innumerable other people for whom the meetings in City Hall were geographically inaccessible or exclusionary.

Many who advocated for public libraries during the campaign claimed to be speaking *on behalf* of other, more marginalized people. Planning scholars, for example, have long recognized that public consultation meetings tend to privilege middle-class people, who feel more entitled to participate in these procedures and view their own interests as universally good.⁴⁴ Knowledge of bureaucratic proceedings and the structure of consultation processes can work to exclude residents from formally inclusive meetings open ‘to all’. Grassroots social movements, on the other hand, are importantly also sites for collective learning and knowledge production. From

⁴³ Engin F. Isin, “The City as the Site of the Social,” in *Recasting the Social in Citizenship*, ed. Engin F. Isin, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 261-280.

⁴⁴ James DeFilippis and Peter North, “The Emancipatory Community? Place, Politics and Collective Action in Cities,” in *The Emancipatory City*, ed. Loretta Lees (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 75.

these scenarios, critical understandings of dominant ideologies and power structures can inform alternative visions of social change.⁴⁵ The Our Public Library campaign may have taken place within state institutional spaces (like City Hall) but it also happened alongside a much broader, organized, citywide movement against the proposed service cuts.

Get Information

Early in the July meeting, Nigel introduced himself to the committee as “a grade three teacher from Rexdale”:

*Every year we take the children to the Albion library. It's the only library they can go to. Most of the students that I have don't have Internet access. The only way they get to [go online] like the other children from Forest Hill and from all the other more affluent neighbourhoods is to go to the library [...] I came here today not because I believe the Executive Committee will do anything but because **there are other city councillors here** who know what the impact will be on my community. In 2005, we had the Summer of the Gun [when] almost 75 to 80 **young black men that look like me were shot and killed**. And it wasn't until the previous administration brought the resources in my community that were necessary that helped to take some of these youth off the streets and give them opportunities, the **same** opportunities that are in wealthier neighbourhoods. Remember these 8-year-olds that I teach **don't have Internet access**; it is true, this isn't grandstanding, these are people's lives [you're] playing with.⁴⁶*

Nigel's points of emphasis in the above-quoted speech underscore *for whom* public libraries are most important, and *why*, in relation to the city's social geography and starkly uneven patterns of resource allocation and income disparity.

The only library Nigel's students can go to is located in the suburban western Etobicoke area where voters elected both Fords to a city council seat, where Doug Ford claimed there were ‘more libraries than Tim Hortons’. Asked about this statement during follow up questions, Nigel called it “devastating.” Referring to Tim Hortons as an exploitative employer, Nigel emphasized: “The jobs that are being brought into communities are poverty jobs. *We don't need more Tim*

⁴⁵ Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor, “Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production,” In *Learning from the Ground Up*, ed. Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2-3.

⁴⁶ Emphasis in the original.

Hortons, we need more libraries!” to which the audience responded with thunderous applause. This statement did circulate on social media and news coverage, but the substance of Nigel’s speech received less attention than it warrants.

The Albion Square library is the busiest of all ‘district libraries’ designated for 100,000 residents in a 2.5 kilometer radius, and it is in the Rexdale neighbourhood that the above map locates in City 3.⁴⁷ Nigel pointed to the 2005 ‘summer of the gun’ in Toronto, when gun-related homicides quickly reached an unprecedented high. That summer and for years after, a narrative circulated through official policies, academic research, and popular media that blamed the causes of gun violence on people of colour living in low-income neighbourhoods concentrated in suburbs. Rexdale was one neighbourhood mapped into this imagined geography of gun violence, designated as ‘high risk’ because it fell outside conventional city policy frameworks. Previous mayor David Miller’s office reworked its ‘priority neighbourhoods’ framework around the mitigation of these causes of gun violence through targeted investments in some services.⁴⁸

Nigel’s emphasis on students use of computers and the Internet to support their education parallels with Anika’s speech. The emphasis in Nigel’s speech on the dire consequences of his students’ access to these resources in the Albion library point to deep inequalities within the city that, as the three cities framework and the above discussion suggest, are linked to constructs of perceived racial difference and household income. Nigel’s students do not, in other words, have the “same opportunities” that children have in affluent neighbourhoods, and the Albion library is here positioned as a crucial mediator in mitigating these inequalities.

In a sense, Nigel’s description of his students’ use of the Albion library gestured to some widespread misperceptions about the Internet and digital devices. For some, the rapid diffusion of new information and communications technologies (ICTs) since the 1990s hails a new era of democratized access to global networks of communication and informational exchange. In recent

⁴⁷ Toronto Public Library Board, “Service Delivery Model”; Toronto Public Library Board, “Branch Summary Statistics: January to December 2013.”

⁴⁸ Amy Siciliano, “Policing Poverty: Race, Space and the Fear of Crime after the Year of the Gun (2005) in Suburban Toronto,” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2010), 8.

years, a commonplace misperception that the proliferation of smartphones, apps, and wi-fi hotspots means that 'everyone is connected all the time' has contributed to a belief that 'the digital divide' is no longer relevant. However, ICT diffusion has been starkly uneven across all scales. "Urban digital divides" within cities characteristically involve close geographical proximity and sharp social polarization between "superconnected information elites" and people whose online access is more tenuous.⁴⁹ Furthermore, most online users are incorporated into a "power geometry" of global communications networks as customers of monetized digital content.⁵⁰ Increasingly, they are the product themselves who tacitly consent to generate data and content as users of online platforms.⁵¹

In Toronto's predominantly precarious, knowledge-based 'new economy' labour market, access to information is not a 'nice to have' (something the Fords used to describe public libraries and other services slated for cuts throughout the campaign).⁵² This access is a crucial pivot for entry into a highly segmented labour market, in which perceived knowledge and fluency with digital technology can determine economic and socio mobility. The Albion library is thus, for Nigel's students, not only a place to go and get information; it is also a space of promise reflecting to them the importance of their learning and knowledge.

On a somewhat similar theme, but in a markedly distinct tone, Mary also emphasized the importance of public libraries as places to get information, learn, and become active in the city. Self-identifying as "a senior from North York," Mary offered to the mayor and his allies "a few modest proposals." This reference to Johnathan Swift's satirical 1792 *A Modest Proposal* telegraphed that Mary's suggestions were intended to be ironic. The phrasing was evocative: Swift's pamphlet condemns the English ruling class, but on its surface argues that poor Irish

⁴⁹ Stephen Graham, "Bridging Urban Digital Divides? Urban Polarisation and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)," *Urban Studies* 39, no. 1 (2002): 34.

⁵⁰ Doreen Massey, "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," in *Mapping the Futures*, ed. John Bird et al. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 75-85.

⁵¹ Joe Shaw and Mark Graham, "An Informational Right to the City? Code, Content, Control, and the Urbanization of Information," *Antipode* 49, no. 4 (2017): 907-927.

⁵² Wayne Lewchuk, et al., *It's More than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-Being* (Toronto: McMaster University & United Way, 2013).

people should improve their fortune by selling their children as food for the rich. Mary’s first ‘modest proposal’ was about public libraries:

First, the library. You’ve made a good start closing the [Urban Affairs] branch. Don’t stop there. You should get rid of the entire public library system. You can see from the thousands of petitions and emails complaining about the proposed service cuts, far too many people use the library to improve literacy and learn about government and politics. It would save millions! [...]

Mary was referring to a controversial TPL Board decision in September 2010 to close a small branch with a special collection of municipal government materials located in the City Hall building. As a small library with a special collection, it was not designed to function as a full-service branch but rather to store materials relevant to politics and government in City Hall. However, condominium developments quickly developed nearby in the early 2000s, and some condo residents began to use the urban affairs library as their main branch, because they could request materials from anywhere in the city online to be delivered to the nearest location.

I interviewed former TPL Board member and Vice-Chair Adam Chaeleff-Freudenthaler, a youth advocate and activist who was one of the ‘citizen appointees’ replaced in 2011. Adam was on the Board during the debate and vote about the urban affairs branch, and he explained to me how it had become, in essence, the only neighbourhood library available to people living in condos downtown. The decision was contentious, and local residents registered their opposition to the Board, though not nearly to the extent as in 2011-12. Ostensibly, the closure was in preparation for the 2014 opening of a new branch nearby in the downtown core; there was also a City Hall TPL branch in the building with a ‘general’ collection and circulation services. Adam shared with me that his opposition to the closure was not only because he felt that the Board, as a general rule, shouldn’t vote to close branches. Rather, his opposition came from the fact that the closure was meant to be a ‘cost-savings’.

Mary’s suggestion that public libraries are places for learning about government and politics connects these spaces to civic participation. Indeed, fostering this participation is the basis of an idea that public libraries have a traditional “educative” mission to equip people with sufficient

information to be active in their own self-government.⁵³ Mary’s satire was also a rebuke to the Fords and their allies, with the implication that they should want to close public libraries because “too many” people had become informed and were using that information to oppose their political agenda.

“75% Women, 50% Part Time”: Public Library Workers on Strike

Following the conclusion of the city budget cycle, after which no libraries permanently closed, the TPLWU’s negotiations with the city government (their employer) proceeded toward a strike. Due to a breakdown in bargaining over job security and part-time employee benefits, the union struck in March 2012 for almost two weeks while all 98 TPL branches were closed. The strike enjoyed a high level of public support, again mobilized in part through the OPL website and as indicated by the results of the union’s second telephone survey cited above. What made the TPLWU strike somewhat unique among a series of labour struggles during Rob Ford’s mayoralty was that it illustrated how public libraries could be(come) a site for “deeper mobilization of workers and community” against right-wing populist attacks on public sector workers than would have been possible solely by lobbying elected officials.⁵⁴

The support for and success of the strike, furthermore, illustrates how public libraries can be (re)constructed as public spaces *for* resources used to support processes of social reproduction, *against* fiscal austerity and state retrenchments from public provisioning. While these state retrenchments were not unique to this time, and instead dated from earlier restructuring of neoliberal social policy across all scales in Canada, which I addressed in the introductory chapter. In Toronto during the campaign and strike these dynamics pivoted around the figure of Rob Ford and the imagined geography of racialized poverty and violence the Ford Nation fiction implicitly upheld.

⁵³ John Buschman, *Dismantling the Public Sphere: Situating and Sustaining Librarianship in the Age of the New Public Philosophy* (Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 2003).

⁵⁴ Mark Thomas and Steven Tufts, “‘Enabling Dissent’: Contesting Austerity and Right Populism in Toronto, Canada,” *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 27, no. 1 (2016): 37-39.

The union's strike strategy was, in part, driven by the widespread opposition to library closures, but informed by a concern to, as Maureen later explained it to me, avoid public perceptions that public library employees were 'just out to save their own jobs'. This strategy enabled the union to side-step some of the coded language the Fords and their allies frequently used to present public sector employees as wasteful, ineffective, or entitled. The union's strategy combined these elements with some messaging and aesthetics that played on the feminization of public library work, and stereotypes of 'librarians' (as a general descriptor) that invoked positive emotions. Although not intended to cohere completely to one image of 'librarians', the strike slogans; visual design of posters, signs, OPL website posts, and other materials; and atmosphere on picket lines deliberately called up ideas of librarians as warm, welcoming, front-line civic employees with the best intentions at heart. Sometimes these materials presented a more recent stereotype of librarians as hip and cool, subversively radical knowledge-economy action heroes.⁵⁵

Strike slogans positioned public library workers in relation to gendered work and employment: "75% Women, 50% Part-Time" and "Library Work *is* Library Service." The high level of public support during the strike was, Maureen shared with me, crucial to the success of this strategy. Public library workers, Maureen stated, are often reticent to take an overtly political stance. She attributed this to a formally non-partisan stance embedded with public library mission statements, and reproduced through professional training programs and workplace socialization. That is to say, the idea is that public libraries as institutions ought not act to promote the interests of one political part or one ideology over another.

Following the strike, when I began doing interviews for the first phase of my research, I felt like the dynamics between Board members and Maureen as the president of the union were still quite tense. City Councillor Paul Ainslie, the Chair of the TPL Board at the time, characterized the strike as "mind-boggling," given the good relationships with staff that he experienced as a Board member. He told me that the union ultimately didn't win the concessions they went on strike over:

⁵⁵ Christine Lutz, "From Old Maids to Action Heroes: Librarians and the Meanings of Librarian Stereotypes," (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2005).

I don't know what was pushing the union executive ... like there seemed to be a disconnect between the union and what they were telling their membership. Because, I was going [outside City Hall] where they'd be picketing, and [...] they'd say, well you know, we need this and we need this. And I was like, well, I gave you that, we gave you that. Maybe you should ask your union executive because we gave you better job security provisions. They went back to work for the same offer we gave them.

A few months after the strike, in late spring 2012, one important aspect of the plan to reduce costs approved by the TPL Board during the budget cycle took effect: the elimination of the equivalent of 107 full-time jobs through a Voluntary Separation Plan (VSP). Categorized as full-time equivalencies (FTEs), the plan potentially affected more than 107 people.⁵⁶ The collective agreement protected workers with 15 years of seniority from layoffs but, Paul emphasized, the VSP was a ‘gapping’ plan for eliminating FTEs by leaving positions unfilled after employees retired or resigned from their jobs.

Considering the context of public library associations discussed in the previous chapters, which operate to prioritize ‘what’s good for the library’ over service providers’ interests as employees, there are deeply rooted tensions at play in this scenario. The implication of this dynamic within professional associations is that drawing attention to working conditions or employment practices push on boundaries of what issues are permissible as ‘good for the library’. If ‘the library’ is congruent with an employer’s interests, then improving conditions interferes with cost-savings. Yet if, as the TPLWU’s slogan declared, library work *is* library service, then what’s good for workers is what’s good for ‘the library’ in terms service provided to users. These tensions illustrate some of the ways that the *value* of public libraries can neither be calculated in terms of cost, nor adequately accounted for through a recitation of liberal-democratic rights affixed to formal citizenship.

All of the key informants I interviewed agreed that public libraries in Toronto are important, worthwhile, and desirable; none implied that they wanted to dismantle or ruin the TPL. Yet each

⁵⁶ Toronto Public Library Board, “2012 Operating Budget and Associated Capital Impacts Update,” December 12, 2011, <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/content/about-the-library/pdfs/board/meetings/2011/dec12/09.pdf>.

had their own interpretations of the outcomes of the protests against library closures and the strike, divided over the question of who should, or whether anyone could, be blamed for the TPL's budget problems. My aim in this discussion is emphatically not to 'name and shame' specific individuals who made decisions about the TPL budget in 2011-12, nor to participate in ongoing conflicts between differently-situated, powerful key actors. My analysis in the preceding chapters supports, I think, a broader understanding that the overall work involved in making and remaking public libraries has historically been, and so remains, contested and contradictory in ways that exceed discrete interpersonal conflicts or the intricacies of financial reports. Rather, my aim in this chapter has been to explore and illuminate the meaning that participants in the OPL campaign gave to public library space and they enacted and contested a wider political claim to livable life within the city.

Conclusion

The energy and attention directed toward the TPL during these months led to my decision to do my research for this dissertation in Toronto. At the time, I was new to the city and had few connections beyond my workplace at the University of Toronto. Initially, I observed the events with some interest, at times from a distance while I traveled to do some preliminary research for the project I intended to do when I entered the PhD program in the geography and planning department. It was not until the demonstration outside city hall in January 2012 that I could more fully appreciate the breadth and depth of the opposition to the mayor's budget and the contrasting level of support for public libraries and then later, public library workers. My learning about the city, its history and politics, and social geography, was centrally guided by those who advocated on behalf of the TPL during the contentious budget process. I therefore now turn to a discussion of the context for, and content of, these communications online and at public meetings.

In presenting some of the discourse around the proposed library closures, my aim has been twofold. First, to treat these scenarios as a site for critical knowledge production, through which speakers, social media commentators, and campaigners illustrated their collective visions for the city. Second, to underscore that this campaign was not only a crucially spatial struggle to

maintain access to *all* of the city’s public libraries, but also importantly geographical, spanning an increasingly polarized landscape where access to a local branch can be decisive for offloading or absorbing the worst effects of declining public provisioning. My analysis in this chapter has been centred on documenting this contested moment, to show how public libraries became sites for contesting multiple meanings of the TPL’s publicness, as a way to resist wider conditions of austerity.

By drawing on the purposes of public libraries in their daily lives, and situating their uses of libraries in the city’s social geography, participants in the campaign gestured to aspects overlapping political-economic and socio-cultural aspects of social reproduction: the production of knowledge about work, and learning how to belong in the city. In doing so, I suggest, these participants in the campaign revealed that a rigid economic distinction between public and private finances may be insufficient to dispute how public libraries are changing today. This distinction indexes publicness to the level of taxpayer funding, which provides a theoretically and politically limited understanding of what these spaces do and who they are for. Rethinking these questions through the knowledge produced by participants in the campaign, I offer here that an understanding of public libraries as contested political spaces helps to consider why they are (and should remain) publicly funded.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: Considering a Possible ‘Future of Work’ in Public Libraries

Through a historical case study of the Toronto Public Library (TPL), I have sought to show how public libraries can be understood as places of work and everyday sites for overlapping processes of social reproduction where the provision of informational resources hails both public library workers and public library users as differently-situated actors in processes of knowledge production. In this history, I have shown, fiscal pressures to reduce operating costs have been inherent within the production and management of these spaces where access to informational resources is publicly provided, rather than a new or unprecedented recent attack on public libraries as contemporary narratives may presume.¹ Amid dramatic changes within the city’s social geography, labour market, and municipal politics, historically shifting and socially differentiated groups of public library users and public library workers have contested potential effects of these pressures through changing geographical locations across the city. The ultimate aim of this study has been to connect these historical struggles that have been largely set apart from one another, as either political demands from local community members or workplace disputes led by collectivities of public library employees. By basing this analysis on labour as a category that can fruitfully limit the scope of inquiry to enable a focus on the politics of work, broadly conceived, and attendant geographies of social reproduction, I have offered in my contemporary case study in the previous chapter that these social relations may provide a basis for mobilization between these groups of key actors. Put differently, by showing that public library work *is* public library service, my arguments in the preceding chapters suggest that current calls to maintain access to these spaces ought to substantively engage with how work is organized within public libraries.

My conceptual framing for this study furthermore points to the need for labour researchers and urban geographers to consider more deeply not only the politics of work, but also that social

¹ Kirsten Forkert, “Austere Creativity and Volunteer-run Public Services: the Case of Lewisham’s Libraries,” *New Formations* 87 (2016): 11-28.

reproduction can provide a crucial pivot for engagements between these two fields of scholarly inquiry. Opportunities to examine precisely how the role and purpose of public libraries have evolved historically in relation to broader changes in relationships among states, markets, and households arise directly from the contributions my study makes to these literatures. Focusing on the material daily practices within public libraries, and power relations that extend outward from as well as deeply within these spaces, can, for example, foreground the circulation of information in processes of knowledge production that overlap with social reproduction. Furthermore, a focus on the deliberately feminized labour that provides the material and epistemic basis for this circulation of information demands that scholars more fully consider how job deskilling, the devaluation of labour, and perceptions of social and economic values are embedded within urban spaces through which resources to support social provisioning may be allocated or withheld. While the TPL is the basis for this study, it is also a potentially revealing starting point for further studies that take seriously the complex, contradictory, and at times deeply ambivalent relationship between public libraries and the wider geographies and social relations in which they are embedded, and can actively reshape.

Over the previous four chapters, I have traced a long historical trajectory toward the current TPL across a vast geographical landscape that now forms the City of Toronto. In tracing this trajectory, I have examined a series of conflicts and contradictions over access to, and the production of service within, these spaces where informational resources are publicly provided. Linking continually re-occurring historical disputes among historically shifting and socially differentiated groups of public library workers and public library users through the wider political struggles these actors draw from can support an approach to public libraries as both places of employment and sites through which informational resources are allocated to support social provisioning. This approach shifts focus from traditional notions of democratic rights and formal citizenship, toward the complexities that have animated these spaces for more than a century. These struggles, I have underscored throughout, are not only crucially spatial but are overtly geographical, localized in an increasingly polarized and dramatically changing city over time.

I began in Chapter 2 by re-examining the Carnegie era history of the TPL grounded in Toronto's changing social geography in the early 20th century. I underscore how authoritative visions of the value of providing public library service in the city were centred on notions of productivity and improvement. Emphasizing how these visions incorporated readers into these spaces through their presumed roles as workers and 'nonworkers,' I highlighted that readers' own daily practices within these spaces exceeded such middle-class conceptions of public libraries. By detailing the reorganization of work and employment within the TPL during the later Carnegie era in Chapter 3, I illustrated how a work process designed to maximize efficiency and eliminate waste intensified managerial pressures on staff members in an overtly feminized workplace. Together, these chapters offer a way of thinking about public libraries as formal workplaces for waged employment, as in the case of my analysis in Chapter 3, as well as everyday places where the politics of work may be useful for understanding how readers are differentiated among one another.

Chapters 4 and 5 more centrally engaged changing relationships between public library users and public library workers through discussions of a series of local disputes to maintain access to local branches and bookmobile networks. I suggested that these disputes were a way for differently situated key actors to assert their competing notions of who the city is for, and what makes a public library valuable for daily life in the city. Taken together, what these chapters each give is a snapshot of what can be at stake for local residents *and* public library workers when they contest the conditions under which access to informational resources is provided in the city. What made the recent Our Public Library campaign unique in this history was that it was initially mobilized by the TPL Workers' Union (TPLWU), which later contributed to widespread support for the union's subsequent strike that closed all branches. By drawing attention to shared experiences of labour market insecurity, gendered employment, and the consequences of ongoing fiscal austerity at the municipal level of government, this campaign shows how public libraries could become a site for collective mobilization among heterogeneous groups and across socio-spatial divisions within the city.

One final note here on the potential scholarly contributions and political aims of my study. The history I documented in the preceding chapters indicates that budget cuts and financial

constraints have repeatedly propelled demands from local residents and public library employees that have at times deferred the potential effects of these state retrenchments. That these dynamics are not new within these spaces, but also that their effects do not inevitably portend the future demise of public libraries, is a point that I insist upon throughout this dissertation. I maintain this stance to here emphasize that under-funding and under-staffing are not necessarily an unavoidable reality for public libraries. What I want to suggest here is that, rather than simply showing that public libraries have ‘always been’ operating under these restrictions, my study can, I hope, support a broader argument for *abundance*. If public libraries are indeed constantly at risk of divestment, despite measurements of the social and economic values they generate suggesting the importance of these spaces, then what is to be lost by demanding *more*, not less, and not just a maintenance of the status quo?

I see here a possible avenue for further study and collective action, which centres on how public libraries may be conceptualized as political spaces using critical human geographers’ theorizations of space is socially produced through ongoing struggle and historical social changes.² At times, public libraries may be described in popular media as a commons, an idea that is premised on the assumption that shared resources provided through the state are virtually the same as common resources. Yet this assumption overlooks the realm conflicts that happen within and through public libraries, and furthermore that the state is itself not a guarantor of common property but rather manages property on behalf of the polis.³ A state can, in other words, exclude as many parts of the public as it includes and still maintain at least a semblance of democracy. While a trendy trope about ‘libraries as commons’ may hold some appeal for commentators seeking to prove that these institutions have remained relevant, an uncritical ideal of ‘the commons’ can flatten actually existing structures of authority and domination.⁴ Public

² Neil Smith and Setha Low, “Introduction: the Imperative of Public Space,” in *The Politics of Public Space*, ed. Setha Low and Neil Smith (New York: Routledge, 2013), 7.

³ Elizabeth Blackmar, “Appropriating ‘the Commons’: the Tragedy of Property Rights Discourse,” in *The Politics of Public Space*, ed. Setha Low and Neil Smith (New York: Routledge, 2013), 51.

⁴ Lauren Berlant, “The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times*,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 3 (June 2016): 393–419.

spaces might ‘hold open’ the possibility of a commons, as an anticipation of alternative ways of knowing, being, and living.

Yet the commons is itself a product of human labour – the everyday material, emotional, and intellectual work of creating and maintaining a commons is part of the work of social reproduction, by which real assets can be appropriated and managed collectively to facilitate human flourishing.⁵ Public libraries may not already be held or maintain as a commons, but as a radical alternative to existing conceptualizations of these spaces, they are perhaps a site for anticipating a future commons, and preparing for the work of maintaining collectivities. From this vantage point, I think, the provision of informational resources through public libraries could be seen not as a way of inculcating dominant ideologies or reinscribing social differences but rather as a “communal luxury” that contravenes existing divisions between mental and manual labour that allocate highly valorized intellectual work to some and dispossesses the knowledge created by many.⁶ In this more expansive sense, public libraries might instantiate a space for flourishing in a future beyond productivist work ethics and marketized metrics of value.⁷

⁵ Amanda Huron, *Carving out the Commons: Tenant Organizing and Housing Cooperatives in Washington*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 140-148.

⁶ Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: the Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London: Verso Books, 2015), 50.

⁷ Kathi Weeks, *The Problem With Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2011), 230.

Appendix A: Key Informants

City Councillor Paul Ainslie, TPL Board Member and Former Board Chair

Adam Chaeleff-Freudenthaler, Past TPL Board Member

Kathy Gallagher-Ross, Past TPL Board Member

Maureen O'Reilley, TPL Workers' Union President (Retired)

Jane Pyper, Toronto City Librarian (Retired)

Jenny Schnoll, Senior Services Specialist, TPL Community Connections and Partnerships

Magdalena Vanderkooy, TPL Librarian (Retired)

Archives and Bibliography

In this section I list only the archival collections and publications I consulted as primary sources for the preparation of this dissertation. This list is not a complete record of all the textual sources cited in full in the previous chapters, such as newspaper articles found in each publication and unpublished archival materials, and I intend for this list to serve as a reference for the data collected for my research. Where I have sequential years of annual reports, I have included the years consulted rather than list each report separately.

Archives and Manuscript Collections

Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario
Mechanics' Institutes Collection

Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, Toronto, Ontario

City of Toronto Archives, Toronto, Ontario
City of Toronto Archives Collection
Board of Trade of the City of Toronto Collection

Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario

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