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Marshall, John, ed. *Citizen Participation in Library Decision-Making: The Toronto Experience*. Metuchen, N.J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., in association with the School of Library Service, Dalhousie University, 1984. Pp. xxvii, 392. Map Section; 18 black and white plates. \$25.00 (U.S.)

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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cial artists would be locally available. The curriculum was strong in the commercial design area and concentrated on the technical development of the students. In Winnipeg, the businessmen usually hired the principals from abroad, bypassing local artists. In Toronto the control rested with artists, who taught in and administered the School.

The history of the Winnipeg School, which includes biographical sketches of teachers, students and administrators, brings together much unpublished material. The School records seem intact, unlike those of the Ontario College of Art or the Ottawa School of Art, which are lost.

However, because much of the visual evidence of the exhibition is not reproduced, the book does not provide an adequate answer to the question implied by the exhibit's main aim: to investigate "the relationship between art education and the art produced at the time." Unfortunately it also lacks a bibliography, and is marred by a number of editorial oversights and typographical errors. Moreover, the alternate use of maiden and married names for some women, without cross-referencing, is confusing. Criticism aside, however, books like this lay the groundwork for future synthesis and we need more of them.

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#### Notes

1. The preparatory pencil drawing by Fitzgerald for the *Portrait of C. Keith Gebhardt*, (Winnipeg Art Gallery), is in the collection of the Department of Art History, Carleton University (Frances P. Barwick Bequest). It is clearly dated December 8, 1924. The painting, illustrated in the book, is dated c1927, and should perhaps be dated earlier. Thanks to Roger J. Mesley for this information.

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Marshall, John, ed. *Citizen Participation in Library Decision-Making: The Toronto Experience*. Metuchen, N. J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., in association with the School of Library Service, Dalhousie University, 1984. Pp. xxvii, 392. Map Section; 18 black and white plates. \$25.00 (U.S.).

The contributions in this book describe how Toronto's public library system was subjected to a heavy dose of citizen participation in the 1970s. The result was a wave of new ideas, about both structure and policy, crashing over the whole organization, dislocating a number of traditional conceptions about libraries held by users, staff, and Library Board members alike.

The book has a fascinating array of viewpoints — one hesitates whether to say viewpoints of the same thing — by

more than a dozen different participants, playing different roles in the whole process, plus two or three academics whose essays tend to be broader and more abstract. The contributors, aside from these latter, include a reform alderman, a publisher and a writer, all of whom were members of the board; two or three academics who became directly involved as citizens; two or three other citizen activists from a variety of backgrounds; an official of a native peoples' organization; an architect who served in an advisory capacity; an urban planner who helped plan the library's new capital budget; and a student of the book's editor attending the School of Library Science at the University of Toronto. And it might be added that this list of labels does no justice to the variety of hats worn by these individuals, and to their extremely varied fields of expertise.

Citizen participation in the Toronto Public Library thus emerges as a number of different phenomena. The process apparently started when Toronto's reform council appointed some reform-minded citizens and alderpersons to the Library Board in 1974. The newly constituted board started asking questions about "received" policy, about biases in the system, and about the lack of citizen input. The board did not stop at asking questions; it acted. The policy of building for big district libraries was changed to building up the smaller branches, after feedback from citizens indicated that this was what they wanted. Resources started flowing more equitably toward libraries in working class communities, instead of almost overwhelmingly favouring the upper middle class part of the city. Acquisitions began to reflect expressed needs of different ethnic groups, as well as preferences for more pop culture materials, such as comic books and Harlequin romances. Finally, a number of citizen advisory committees were set up, one in each of the four areas of Toronto's library system (north, central, east, and west), plus a dozen or more committees for individual branches, which were given the task of deciding how to use the capital money released by the abandonment of the district library plan.

For an organizational flow-chart fanatic, the committee scape that emerges from these pages is far from neat. In fact, when combined with descriptions of increased staff participation in policymaking, the picture of organizational change described throughout the book is downright confusing. Nor do the book's essays provide a framework on which to hang the facts (Meyer Brownstone's contribution comes closest to doing this). As editor John Marshall puts it, the book is

a faithful account of a many-sided experience, approached from as many angles as possible by a select but representative group of participants and observers, each honestly reporting what was experienced and relating it to the overall context and central theme (p. xii).

Unfortunately, "the overall context and central theme" were so general as to make their utility as unifying threads

extremely limited. In this case the central theme is taken to be the rise in citizen participation and various changes in substantive policy of Toronto's public library system in the 1970s.

Nevertheless, as Marshall did such a fine job of eliciting contributions from a cross-section of people it was inevitable that the book raise some important points about participation in urban politics, and, indeed, in politics in general. Two of these points are considered here.

The first point revolves around what Marshall calls in his conclusions the leadership issue. "Basic social processes, even upheavals," he writes, "are rarely spontaneous" (p. 284). While citizen involvement in Toronto's public libraries may have been uniquely deep and widespread — as Marshall says — that involvement was obviously stimulated by action from the Library Board; in fact, even the committee structure and the nature of the input was prompted by that institution. For many activities this action would be seen as a manipulative tactic by the library to co-opt citizens into its way of thinking. Whatever the library board's motives, urban history is full of accounts of the quick demise of government-sponsored citizen groups; and this type of group represents only one variation on the theme.<sup>1</sup>

A second form of citizen participation would presumably be orchestrated by local leaders who define issues that galvanize citizens into demanding new policies from institutions, or even new institutions.

Third, one must not discount Piven and Cloward's thesis that social movements' leadership is all but redundant.<sup>2</sup> Their argument is that the necessary and sufficient condition for the rise of effective movements lies in the personal experiences of the masses: leaders are merely riding the crest of a wave. Dorothy Thomas gives some support for this idea:

All one had to do was to show them the figures — the Board's inequitable spending priorities, the lack of ethnic and popular material, etc. The demand for equality of service with the North End throughout the rest of the city was phenomenal, spontaneous, unprecedented, and irresistible (p. 66).

A fourth pattern of the organization of citizen participation excludes public authorities altogether. In the context of public libraries, this alternative would entail the setting up of library facilities independent of the government.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to belittle the accomplishments of citizen participation in the Toronto Public Library, or to downgrade this book. In its pages is impressive evidence that library policy in Toronto was more directly influenced by the ordinary citizen than in any other urban policy arena, including land use, police services, and education. As with most other institutionally-generated interest groups, however, the citi-

zen advisory groups had all but vanished by the mid-1980s. The whole drama seems to illustrate the dreary point always made about citizen participation in public decisionmaking, that it seldom has any lasting impact and that citizen groups are themselves inherently ephemeral.

I am more sanguine about the future of participation. The fact that grass roots reforms and citizen group movements have been buried so often bears testament to their continued vitality. Groups may come and go, but participants become permanently transformed into self-confident citizen activists easily mobilized in the future. Also, we tend to measure the importance of citizen groups by their visibility in the conventional political arena, and therefore by reports about them in the press. Thousands of groups are busy running food co-ops, building or renovating housing, looking after children, starting businesses, and growing vegetables, but this kind of activity does not make the news. It should, but it does not.

A second important point this book raises relates to the historical development of city government structure. About the time of the events described in these selections, the Robarts Commission on Metro Toronto released its report. Among its recommendations was the proposal to reduce the number of independent and semi-independent boards and commissions in Toronto, of which there are many. Here are just a few of the responsibilities given to these bodies: health, transit, police, hydro distribution, the Canadian National Exhibition, taxi licences, and, of course, libraries.

Both Marshall and Brownstone offer the opinion that ending the Library Board's semi-independent status by making it a committee composed just of aldermen would frustrate the potential of greater citizen involvement in library policy. Libraries, they say, would simply be absorbed into the larger and more impersonal city bureaucracy, insulating them from grass roots demands.

Independent boards and commissions were the outcome of city government reforms first adopted at the turn of the century under pressure from upper class and upper middle class businessmen who wanted to see municipal government become more businesslike, politically neutral, and technologically oriented (for the reformers, these were not mutually contradictory goals). The very rapid growth of Canadian cities at this period provided opportunities for businessmen as well as politicians to make a lot of money; however, some politicians had gone to such excess that the most powerful elements in the system decided it would be prudent to insulate as many functions of city government as possible from "politics," that is, from the city council's direct control. Graft and corruption, it was felt, could be controlled by hiring professional staff and placing experts in charge of policy: doctors for public health, engineers for roads and transit, scholars for libraries.

The reformers who introduced these changes were not concerned with citizen participation. In fact, most contemporary analysts of the reform movement and its institutional legacies have concluded that siphoning off money and responsibilities to these boards and commissions, dominated by experts, also cut them off from citizen input.<sup>4</sup> Often their meetings were closed to the public, their budgets and therefore priorities determined in a cryptic fashion intelligible only to the experts, and their policies unassailable even by the most determined political pressure.

How ironic to have come full circle and to witness the semi-independent Toronto Library Board defended as a more conducive setting for public participation than City Council. This development should give the student of local government reason to pause.

Without exploring all the implications of this paradox, the importance of decentralization provides a clue to one possible resolution. Most of the contributors comment, and comment favourably, on how decisionmaking in Toronto's libraries was decentralized through the exercise in citizen participation. Despite the anti-democratic features of the independent commissions (intentionally incorporated by turn-of-the-century reformers), large scale city government seems to throw up even more formidable obstacles to citizens seeking to influence policymaking. No matter how open an institution is to citizen input in a formal sense, its scale could be sufficient to deter activists in practical terms.

In the context of these two points, the Toronto library system's experience with citizen participation was a brave experiment on a number of fronts, with important implications for those interested in the history of citizen activism and of institutional reforms encouraging or discouraging that activism. This book serves as an extremely useful source of information and opinion about that experiment; the appendices contain a variety of the most relevant documents, which should be doubly helpful to the historian.

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#### Notes

1. One is reminded of the now almost moribund Resident Advisory Groups set up for Winnipeggers (in legislation influenced heavily by Brownstone, incidentally). James Lorimer, another important contributor to this volume, was also for a brief time consultant to the Winnipeg citizen participation experiment. See Matthew J. Kiernan and David C. Walker, "Winnipeg" in Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton, eds., *City Politics in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) and their many useful references.
2. Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor Peoples' Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail* (New York: Random House, 1979).
3. For examples of this point of view, see Bruce Stokes, *Helping Ourselves: Local Solutions to Global Problems* (New York: W. W. Norton,

1981) and Donald Keating, *The Power to Make it Happen* (Toronto: Greentree Press, 1975).

4. Warren Magnusson, "Introduction: The Development of Canadian Urban Government," in Magnusson and Sancton, *City Politics*, and John C. Weaver, *Shaping the Canadian City: Essays on Urban Politics and Policy, 1890-1920* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Public Administration, 1977).

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Hulchanski, David. *St. Lawrence and False Creek: A Review of the Planning and Development of Two New Inner City Neighbourhoods*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, School of Community and Regional Planning, U.B.C. Planning Papers: Canadian Planning Issues #10, 1984. Pp. ix, 224. Illustrations.

Case histories of the urban planning and development process have become a rare commodity in the literature on urban affairs and planning. Those that offer a well developed analysis of Canadian planning examples are particularly scarce, which is why the Hulchanski effort is notable. The report offers a detailed analysis of the development of two major inner city neighbourhoods in Canada: False Creek in Vancouver; and St. Lawrence in Toronto. What is significant about these developments in particular is the fact that they represent a new built form response to inner city renewal efforts. Unlike the massive urban renewal efforts of the 1950s and 1960s which created subsidized housing projects of immense scale, False Creek and St. Lawrence are indicative of an experiment with a development concept that gained popularity in the late 1970s. Instead of addressing housing needs as an isolated land use planning problem, this approach ties housing to broader social policy goals and related planning matters. The outcome is a development approach which seeks to integrate new residential development into the surrounding community, and offers the rich mixtures of land uses, social groups, housing type and tenure, and services representative of the historical role of inner city neighbourhoods. It marks a departure from a single land use philosophy which has been responsible for the dramatic decline in affordable housing downtown and a pronounced loss of diversity in our urban environments.

Hulchanski has prepared a thorough analysis of each of the developments that traces the historical context of the public decision-making processes at play. The planning and development process from initial design requirements through public review to implementation, costs and financing are reviewed in some detail for each case and are linked to discussions of the historical and contemporary political constraints that framed the public debate and decision-making in Vancouver and Toronto. This approach, by linking political concerns with the technical, administrative and financial constraints experienced in each development process, makes these case reports more useful as studies of planning practice than the recent proliferation of analyses