

Penman, Margaret, *A Century of Service: Toronto Public Library 1883-1983*. Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1983. Pp. 102. Illustrations, bibliography. \$5.50

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garet Beckman is the Chief Librarian, University of Guelph; Stephen Langmead is a Toronto architect; and John Black is the Associate Librarian and an Associate Professor of Political Studies at the University of Guelph. The three maintain a consulting service for libraries with an international client list.

The other area of weakness is the overemphasis on the role of Bertram and Carnegie's money in the development of each facility, at the expense of recognizing the contributions made by the local population. In some cases, brief reference is made of opposition to library establishment, but these glimpses of local personalities and issues are too rare. Without a broader exploration of local conditions, the significance of the Carnegie grants in the creation of libraries cannot be seen in perspective. In the case of Ottawa's public library, for example, efforts to establish a free public library began in 1895, six years before Carnegie was approached for a grant. Carnegie's financial assistance helped to make the Ottawa facility possible because the City refused to commit capital funds at a time when it was incurring heavy costs for paving streets and other local improvements; however, without the activities of the Local Council of Women and Ottawa's leading citizens and eventually the agreement of City Council, the library proposal would not have been initiated and would never have progressed.

The production values of the book are generally good. There are few typographical errors and visual material complements the text well. Visuals include period interior and exterior photographs, contemporary exterior photographs, floor plans, and photographs of Carnegie and Bertram. The book also incorporates several water colour renderings of library buildings; they convey no unique information, however, and thus are unnecessary. Nominal and geographic indices were compiled, which are helpful for local and urban historians consulting the book. There is no thematic index, unfortunately, which would have been useful for readers studying the grant request process and its revision over the two decades of Carnegie giving in Ontario.

The main users of *The Best Gift*, apart from casual readers, are those interested in urban and local history, the history of libraries and the history of granting agencies. For urban and local historians in particular, the book is a useful starting point for research aimed at uncovering a full, balanced history of cultural institutions in Ontario communities. At the same time that *The Best Gift* answers some questions about Ontario's Carnegie libraries, it raises many more issues by dealing with the grant program in isolation from its historical setting.

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Penman, Margaret, *A Century of Service: Toronto Public Library 1883-1983*. Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1983. Pp. 102. Illustrations, bibliography. \$5.50.

To write a concise history of the Toronto Public Library (TPL) covering a full century in 100 pages (including more than 100 photographs) is a daunting task. In this well documented study Margaret Penman has achieved an admirable balance. No chronological period or chapter imposes on other eras or topics, and her lively blend of biography and subject matter fortifies the book's unifying thesis about community service.

Over the years TPL has repeatedly been a trend setter in many areas of librarianship. Penman recounts this leadership role in some detail using a variety of primary and secondary sources. The steady development of various special collections reflecting different needs — Canadiana, music, science fiction, audio-visual, multilingual, and children's literature — recurs many times. Transformations in library architecture are vividly recorded in many pictures. Changing patterns of organization that dramatically shaped library design and use are also included. Penman outlines the formation of the Staff Association and the eventual unionization of TPL, a difficult process that has occurred in many urban libraries. The gradual evolution of a fully integrated central library and branch system based on centralized book ordering, cataloguing, and staff training is described, a system that long served as a model for the management of other public libraries in Ontario. Of course, in the field of reference TPL had established a leadership role in Canada long before the transfer of its central library collection to the Metro Toronto Library Board in 1968.

Important personalities that helped stamp their imprint on librarianship are also prominent in Penman's history. Among them are George Locke: a commanding figure who began to organize TPL into an integrated system across Toronto and served as President of the American Library Association in 1926; Charles Sanderson, who planned the military camp libraries in the Second World War, then the rapid development of expanded services after 1945; James Bain, the first chief librarian, who laid the foundation for TPL's valuable Candiana collection; Winifred Barnstead, the head of cataloguing for many years before she became director of the University of Toronto library school in 1928; Lillian Smith, director of children's services for four decades and the driving force behind Boys and Girls House, a library completely devoted to children's services; Henry Campbell, who guided TPL during the dramatic shifting currents in TPL's philosophy of service necessitated by the restructuring of governments in metropolitan Toronto during the 1960s and 1970s.

The emphasis here (as with so many library histories) is on library organization, personalities or leaders, and the library's functional roles. While these ingredients provide

the focus for describing projects, services, and staff contributions, they do have some drawbacks. The reader learns the library "has been a mirror of the social history of the city," but little about the actual degree to which the library helped satisfy the needs of Toronto's citizens or what different groups felt the library's roles should be. As a result, the library's relationship with individuals, organizations, or urban trends remains sketchy. For example, the introduction of children's services before the First World War is not considered in relation to contemporary developments generally described as the new child centred education movement that emerged at the turn of the century in Ontario's school system.

What does clearly emerge in these pages is Penman's major theme bridging one hundred years: a deep commitment to service and pursuit of excellence. Ultimately, it is staff members who have pride and are dedicated that provide the basis for any successful organization. In this area TPL has been well served itself.

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Lees, Andrew. *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820-1940*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Pp. xi, 360. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$30.00.

In *Cities Perceived*, Andrew Lees draws together a massive amount of articulate comment on the most remarkable phenomenon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century — urban expansion and concentration. These 'monster growths' engaged the attention and concern of writers, physicians, clergymen, architects, sociologists, politicians and poets, and Les has done a commendable job of bringing coherence and intelligibility to the jumble of observations, criticism, and justifications they produced. Although the organization is chronological and national, several themes emerge which bridge time and place. All of the commentators appear to have accepted the idea that the city was a distinctive entity, a peculiar mechanism with its own dynamic, but few were prepared to consider difference on its own merits. Instead, most took urbanity to be both emblematic and symptomatic of modernity — a perception which largely shaped their reaction.

To conservatives, cities represented "perfect disorder." Out of chaos grew "a complication of evils:" physical wretchedness, moral turpitude, materialism, cosmopolitanism, spiritual ennui, and death. Liberals, by contrast, tended to see materialism as the means to human betterment, and applauded the power of the city to liberate the individual

from restraint. While admitting certain shortcomings, they were initially confident that the energy of urban expansion would fuel the engine of Progress. The very concentration of individuals' creative energy was self-correcting; out of the festering morass would come "germs of invention" to advance mankind. Both groups reacted not so much to the city as a locale or even as a social organism, but to the city as an idea — an expectation — which either signified their faith or symbolized their worst fears. Growth and change in London, Paris, Berlin or New York only marginally affected the nature of the reaction; the state of affairs within the cities over the course of a century appears to have been far less a factor than the state of mind of the observers.

The same might be said of Lees' own treatment of the topic. Despite an ambivalent, even slightly hopeful conclusion, readers fond of cities and urban life will find this a discouraging and depressing book. Unconsciously perhaps, the author seems to have adopted the approach and orientation of urban critics. In a sense the title is misleading, since Lees has focused not so much on perceptions of urban society as on reactions. Reaction by its nature implies a response to threat or danger, and an undertone of the problematical informs both the organization and language of the discussion. Each section opens with a catalogue of charges and indictments, followed by the "case for the defense." The latter consists less of responses to the city *per se* than reactions to the attacks of the anti-urbanists on a vision of modernity that liberals and others were attempting to advance. The city becomes simply a battleground over which this war of ideas is fought. Adams and Orwell, among others, were critics of modern culture and capitalism; that these found expression in cities was really incidental but urbanity is a casualty.

Semantics add to the atmosphere created by arrangement. Critics of the city have insights, make observations, express concerns; civic boosters apologize, justify, rationalize. While Lees chronicles their optimism that problems could be solved, he seems to confuse faith in amelioration with genuine positivism; the occasional suggestion that cities might make a special contribution he characterizes as "extravagant enthusiasm." Claims by Lindeman, Anderson and others that urban morals and order were different, but not inferior, get only passing mention. Overall, the choice of commentary favours the attack. Those who regarded urbanity as a threat to culture (to take one example) have twenty-six pages to make their case; those who defended cities as a cultural stimulus only half as many. As Lees moves into the modern period much of the material is drawn from sociologists, settlement workers, civic officials and other professionals self-admittedly concerned with the difficulties, the deviant, the abnormal in urban life. Here and elsewhere, Lees makes little attempt to consider the motives and context which prompted the remarks he quotes. Again to take a single example, what architect has not berated the awfulness of his surroundings. Think of poor Nash and Wren,