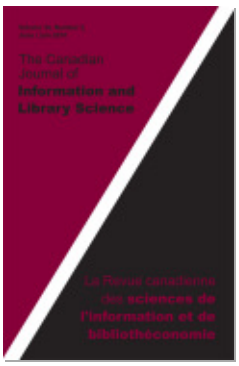
Living History: The Carnegie Library as Place in Ontario/ Histoire vivante : la bibliothèque Carnegie comme lieu en Ontario



Matthew Griffis

Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science, Volume 34, Number 2, June/juin 2010, pp. 185-211 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/ils.0.0003

Living History: The Carnegie Library as Place in Ontario[1]

Histoire vivante : la bibliothèque Carnegie comme lieu en Ontario

Matthew Griffis
Faculty of Information and Media Studies
The University of Western Ontario
1151 Richmond Street
London, ON N6A 3K7
mgriff23@uwo.ca

Résumé : Cet article réexamine les résultats d'une étude de cas menée en 2007 portant sur la bibliothèque Carnegie d'Owen Sound (Ontario), envisagée comme lieu dans l'espace. À partir d'une combinaison de méthodes provenant de la recherche historique et des études qualitatives de cas, et en utilisant la triade spatiale d'Henri Lefebvre comme cadre d'analyse, le chercheur compare certains aspects de l'espace de la bibliothèque tels que l'accessibilité, la supervision de l'espace de la bibliothèque, le sentiment de connexion du public avec l'extérieur, et le reflet de la communauté. L'article avance que la bibliothèque Carnegie d'Owen Sound représente, en tant que lieu, un nouveau modèle possible de bibliothèque publique digne d'étude : le bâtiment historique de la bibliothèque au sein de la communauté, un genre de bibliothèque qui n'est pas simplement un vestige du passé aujourd'hui désuet, mais au contraire un lieu ouvert et vibrant de vie au cœur de la communauté.

Mots-clés : bibliothèques Carnegie, bibliothèque comme lieu, bibliothèques et communautés, bâtiments de bibliothèque, espace social, étude de cas

Abstract: The article reviews findings of a case study conducted in 2007 that examined the Owen Sound (Ontario) Carnegie Library as a place. Drawing from a combination of qualitative case study and historical research methods, and using Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad as an analytical framework, the researcher compares such past and present aspects of the library space as accessibility, supervision of the library space, the patron's sense of connection to the outside, and community reflection. The article suggests that the Owen Sound Carnegie Library as a place represents a possible new type of public library building worthy of further study: the historical library building in the community, a type of library that is not merely an obsolete relic of the past but is instead a vibrant and flexible place within the community.

Keywords: Carnegie libraries, library as place, libraries and community, library buildings, social space, case study

La Revue canadienne des sciences de l'information et de bibliothéconomie 34, no. 2 2010

Introduction

As institutions, public libraries are more than just collections of books. They are fixed, physical locations within a community that fulfil many informational and social roles. Public library buildings, in addition to sheltering collections, staff, and patrons, give tangibility to the library as an organization and influence the ways in which libraries fulfil their roles.

From the day a library building opens, it establishes a relationship with its users, one that changes as communities change and user needs change. Yet within the concept of the library building there exists a fundamental contradiction creating, at times, irreconcilable challenges to this relationship: a library building, built of bricks and mortar, is permanent, while the library organization within it, always striving to meet new needs and new patron expectations, exists in a state of flux. What effects does this have on the library as a place? Is it possible for older library buildings, designed to meet the needs of ages past, to meet the needs of their present-day communities?

This article reviews findings from a case study of the Carnegie Library in Owen Sound, Ontario, which opened in 1914. It examines the differences between the library as a place today and the library as a place when

Figure 1: The Owen Sound Carnegie Library today, now the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library.

it opened. The findings suggest that, one century after the Carnegie Library "boom" in North America, a new type of public library building is emerging, one that's different, in some ways, from any other type in Ontario: the historical library building in the community, one that is not a relic from the past but rather a vibrant and active library space that is helping meet present community needs in unique ways.

Many are familiar with the story of Pittsburgh steel mogul Andrew Carnegie's library grant program, an initiative that funded the construction of 2,509 public library buildings around the world (over 1,800 in North America) from the 1890s until the 1920s (Beckman, Langmead, and Black 1984). In addition to stimulating interest in and providing an incentive for the establishment of free, tax-supported libraries (Bobinski 1969), the Carnegie library program "accelerated the movement" toward the standardization of library buildings (Van Slyck 1995, 55). In Canada, a total of 125 Carnegie libraries were opened between 1902 and 1923 (Beckman, Langmead, and Black 1984). But while Carnegie libraries were also opened in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Yukon, the overwhelming majority (111) were opened in Ontario (Beckman, Langmead, and Black 1984). Ontario's participation in the Carnegie library program was so extensive that, after the close of Carnegie's program in 1917, the province ranked only third to Indiana and California (first and second place, respectively) for the most Carnegie library grants issued to a state or province (Beckman, Black, and Langmead 1984). "The founder of our library system was Andrew Carnegie," once claimed Robert Nixon, a former leader of the Liberal Party in Ontario. "He did more for the library system of this province than this Legislature" (Bruce 1994, 165).

However, and despite the attention Carnegie libraries in general have received in the literature, we know little about Carnegie libraries in Canada and even less about how they have changed as places over the past hundred years. Since Beckman, Langmead, and Black's *The Best Gift*, a book published in 1984 for the trade market, only one scholarly work has appeared examining Carnegie libraries as places in Canada, Ann Curry's (2007) history of Vancouver's Carnegie Library of 1903.

Recent works on the subject, such as Leckie and Buschman's *The Library as Place: History, Community and Culture*, indicate that interest in the *library as place* is currently growing in LIS studies. Historical approaches to the library as a place open new doors for researchers of library buildings because they ask what relationship a library at present has, if any,

with its past. This article, which draws its findings from a supervised, master's-level major research project that the researcher conducted in 2007 at the University of Western Ontario, examines the case of Owen Sound's public library building, one of Ontario's later Carnegie libraries. Major findings examine the accessibility of the library as a place, arguing that the library today is much more accessible and thus more inclusive than it was when it opened; that the power relationships within the library space are different; that supervision of the library space is more a shared experience between the librarian and the library user; that the library has become a casual meeting place within the community; and that the library building, as an historical library building, reflects its community's past and present in ways that make it a unique place within its community.

Literature review

The existing literature about Carnegie libraries is varied and lengthy, much of it descriptive chronology. This study took its cue from two very recent scholarly (interpretative) pieces. First, Hersberger, Sua, and Murray's (2007) case study of Greensboro, North Carolina's Carnegie Negro Library; and second, Curry's (2007) analytical chronology of Vancouver's Carnegie Library. Both studies examine a Carnegie library as a place and its changes over time.

Hersberger, Sua, and Murray's "The Fruit and Root of the Community" (2007) tells the story of the Carnegie Negro library in Greensboro, North Carolina, which opened in 1924 for African-American members of the Greensboro community, and how it provided a place for a "community within a community" to form (79). The authors use an analytical framework from the psychology literature, a system of four "analytical units" comprising the notion of "community": membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection (82–3). First, the authors found that the library as a place fostered a sense of membership through the creation of boundaries, a sense of belonging, emotional security, and a sense of "personal investment" (89–90). Next, the authors found that the library fostered much interpersonal contact, interaction, and the formation of a "spiritual bond" among its users (95–6). The authors also found that the library became not just "a place" but rather "*the* place" (96, emphasis mine) where community members gathered casually and felt at ease: "People remember the Carnegie Negro Library as more than just a building but as a place

where all members of the community could be considered as equals. It was a neutral place, a place where everyone may be coming for different reasons but where their needs could be met" (96). This "neutrality" implies a sense of shared responsibility and shared experience among those using and within the library space—that the library space was a leveller, a space experienced collaboratively among its users.

Curry's "A Grand Old Sandstone Lady" (2007), an examination of Vancouver's first and only Carnegie library, recounts the lifespan of the library building, emphasizing its ability to adapt or reinvent itself entirely whenever community needs changed. Curry begins with the library's opening in 1903 and follows its early life as the city's public library, a "scholarly temple" for study and self-education (64). Curry explains how shifting urban trends and demographics as well as temperature-control problems and space needs threatened the library building with closure as early as the 1920s. The library remained open in the 1930s, becoming a place where transients and the unemployed could gather, even becoming a "protest rallying point" on one occasion for striking relief workers (66–7). As years passed, the Vancouver Carnegie Library changed into the city's museum and later even sat vacant for 12 years. Curry's chronology ends with an account of the library's rebirth in 1980 as a community centre, its surrounding neighbourhood now one of the most crime-ridden neighbourhoods in the city. "Despite limitations of structure and space," Curry concludes, "the Old Sandstone Lady tried her best to meet the changing needs of Vancouverites over the years" (73). In addition to emphasizing the building's flexibility, Curry's conclusions emphasize the library's constant use as "a force for good" throughout the past century: "Vancouver's Carnegie was considered a force for good in 1903, and she has carried that value in the eyes of a community for over a century—through two world wars, the Depression, and now as a force for good in a neighbourhood ravaged by the evils of poverty, crime, alcohol, and drug addiction and dealing" (2007, 73). Like the Greensboro Carnegie Negro library, Vancouver's Carnegie Library has continued to offer it community a place of gathering and, more than anything, neutrality.

Historical background

It could be argued that Carnegie's motivation for funding the construction of library buildings was simply due to his personal, life-long love of libraries. This would be only partially true, however. It is therefore

necessary, for understanding much of what follows, to review the historical contexts and social origins of Carnegie libraries as well as Carnegie's social views and the effects they had on Carnegie libraries as places.

The social origins of Carnegie libraries

Though the LIS literature never mentions the influence of social Darwinism on Andrew Carnegie, the literature on the history of social Darwinism mentions Carnegie rather frequently. Social Darwinism was, in short, a nineteenth-century philosophy frequently associated with Herbert Spencer, the social philosopher who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" not long after Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* first appeared in 1859. The philosophy imposed Darwin's theory of natural selection upon the idea of *social* evolution (Hofstadter 1992). Because of its origins in biological theory, social Darwinism lent an air of scientific validity to the social inequalities developing within industrialized society (Hofstadter 1992). As a result, social Darwinism became, by the late-nineteenth century, "one of the leading strains in American conservative thought" (Hofstadter 1992, 7).

This sense of individualism, or "Darwinian individualism" (Foner 1992, xv) as others have called it, was the major strain of thought upon which Andrew Carnegie based his philanthropy. In his writings about the "best fields for philanthropy," Carnegie, "the most prominent of the disciples of Spencer" (Hofstadter 1992, 45), made it clear that he did not give funds to cultural and educational institutions merely out of kindness. Carnegie believed that it was his duty as one of "the few exceptional managers of men" (Carnegie 2006, 15) to accumulate as much wealth as possible and redistribute it in ways that "improved the race": "For what the improver of the race must endeavor to do," Carnegie wrote, "is to reach those who have the divine spark ever so feebly developed, that it may be strengthened and grow" (26). In addition to funding public libraries, Carnegie "improved the race" by funding universities, concert halls, public parks and public baths (Beckman, Langmead, and Black 1984). As Stevenson (2005) argues, Carnegie's libraries, which provided ordinary people with the means to rise, would show that "failure to rise was a personal not a systemic failure" (70).

Carnegie did not wish to help just anyone, however. Carnegie wanted to help only those who were willing to help themselves—those, as it were, who had "the divine spark" much like he. To Carnegie, knowledge was

power, and individual success was entirely dependent on motivation for study and advancement. His individualist spirit had come from the cradle, his rags-to-riches story the result of his self-education, something he began at an early age with books he borrowed from Colonel James Anderson of Allegheny (Carnegie 2006). "[I]t was when reveling in these treasures," Carnegie later recalled, "that I resolved, if ever wealth came to me, that it should be used to establish free libraries, that other poor boys might receive opportunities similar to those for which we were indebted to that noble man" (20).

Carnegie thus issued his first library building grants to the Pennsylvania towns with Carnegie steel mills. In Carnegie's eyes, his mill workers were "to be uplifted by the libraries" (Krass 2004, 421). Not long after Carnegie issued these first library grants, the free public library took precedence, in his mind, over all other possible "gifts" to a community (Carnegie 2006). His grants would permit the construction of libraries not just in his steel towns but everywhere for, in Carnegie's own words, the "poorest citizen, the poorest man, the poorest woman that toils from morn till night for a livelihood (as, thank heaven, I had to do in my early days)" (Krass 2004, 251). By the end of his library grant program in 1917, Carnegie (or, after 1911, the Carnegie Corporation) had issued more than $56 million in library grants for libraries across the world (Beckman, Langmead, and Black 1984).

Impacts on the Carnegie library as place

Carnegie's philanthropic motivations affected the shapes of the libraries he funded. Though library building projects were difficult to supervise in the program's early years, applicant communities were not entirely free to design a library building as they envisioned one. For instance, Carnegie did not allow his funds to pay for the extension or refurbishment of existing facilities (Bobinski 1969). In fact, all libraries built with Carnegie funds were to be new and freestanding. Carnegie disapproved of any functional spaces not strictly related to library work (Bobinski 1969), and so such things as museums, art galleries, smoking rooms, and public baths (anything that might prove a distraction to serious study, in other words) were not to be included, although a single lecture room was sometimes permitted if space allowed. As a strictly informational institution, the Carnegie library was a place for individual work, a "scholarly temple" (Curry 2007), a "factory of knowledge" (Stevenson 2005), a site for self-improvement and advancement, not a place for amusement, recreation, or socialization.

The internal designs of Carnegie libraries supported this vision. Carnegie and his secretary, James Bertram, "guardian of [Carnegie's] ideals" (Krass 2004, 419), mandated a very basic design for the library floor spaces—a "shop floor" concept (Stevenson 2005, 68) that repeats itself in many Carnegie libraries, particularly those designed after 1908. While the "shop floor" concept's chief purpose was to keep library spaces economical and efficient, its emphasis on supervision and control also expressed, to a large extent, Carnegie's "deep-seated distrust of working-class readers" (Van Slyck 1995, 42–3) and further demonstrated the workspace-like conditions of the library floor. As Van Slyck (1995) points out, some Carnegie library floor plans (particularly those with radial stacks) contained elements of Jeremy Bentham's (1791) *Panopticon*, a type of prison design that maximized surveillance by positioning a singular authority figure within the centre of the space plan.[2] In the typical Carnegie library space plan, the librarian was watchman while the library users were prisoners for inspection. Most important to the shop floor concept was the placement of the "charging desks . . . the heart of the Carnegie library plan," without which "the library was incomplete" (Van Slyck 1995, 170). The desk's position in relation to all other spaces, materials, and furnishings elevated the librarian within the library space (Stevenson 2005, 67–8), allowing the librarian wide latitude of supervision and, for patrons, a clear view of their keeper. Both Stevenson (2005) and Krass (2004) compare this concept of the library floor with the social conditions (i.e., the labour movement) of Carnegie's time. While Krass (2004) notes that Carnegie "wanted his library benefactions to run as efficiently as his mills had" (419), Stevenson (2005) observes that the library "as a workplace" was "seen to duplicate conditions on the shop floor" (68).

To help local architects design their libraries, Bertram circulated a pamphlet entitled *Notes on the Erection of Library Bildings* [sic] that offered model floor plans, all of which were variations on the "shop floor" concept. The pamphlet offered additional instructions on library design, such as the inclusion of a raised basement (Bobinski 1969)—a feature that, with sufficient fenestration, allowed for another functional level in the building (usually for staff or custodial space [Bobinski 1969]) and exalted the library's main level. A raised basement also necessitated a raised entrance.

Bertram justified this architectural control with an aim to eliminate "wasteful" spending of Carnegie's funds (Beckman, Langmead, and

Black 1984). By 1908, it was decided that Bertram would inspect all proposed building plans before approving a grant to an applicant community (Oehlerts 1991). Though Carnegie and Bertram allowed library exteriors to vary in aesthetic, the overall shape and interior of a library building had to more or less conform to expectations before Bertram authorized the release of funds (Bobinski 1969). Though the *Notes* pamphlet claimed to be only suggestive, it warned local architects to "paus[e] before aiming at radical departures" from the model plans it contained (Van Slyck 1995, 37).

Though for the *Notes* pamphlet Bertram had sought the advice of librarians and architects (Bobinski 1969), the pamphlet's exemplars were not merely an adoption of the status quo, as some may be tempted to argue. In the words of Bruce (1994), "[T]here were no authoritative manuals on library architecture at the turn of the century. No clear-cut consensus existed on what constituted conventional library services, uniform administrative practices, and proper staffing. There were no library standards set by governments or professional bodies in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada to help determine overall building size or space for collections and staff" (185). Instead, as many have noted, the Carnegie library movement was in many ways where modern library design began.

While crediting the standardization of library design to a combination of forces, Van Slyck (1995) claims that ultimately the Carnegie library boom "accelerated the movement toward library standardization" (55) by financing so many building projects during an unprecedented surge in library building. In fact, in the specific case of the United States, of the approximately 2,000 library buildings (public and academic) constructed between 1890 and 1918, almost 1,800 of them were paid for with Carnegie grants (Oehlerts 1991). "The importance of Carnegie library philanthropy lies in its perfect timing," notes Bobinski (1969). "The need for library buildings was desperate, and Carnegie's gifts helped fill the void" (191). The *Notes* pamphlet, which was first printed and circulated in 1911 (Bobinski 1969), has been described as both "the beginning of modern library architecture" (192) and "one of the first codifications of useful library design" (Lushington 2002, 4). Even Cohen and Cohen (2003) begin their brief history of modern library architecture with the emergence of the Carnegie library.

Despite the popularity of the Carnegie library program, not all applicant communities succeeded in obtaining a grant or even wanted one in the

first place. In the earliest years of the program, all an applicant community had to do to qualify for a grant was provide proof of having secured a suitable site for the building as well as pledge to make their library free and support the library at an annual rate of 10% of the original grant amount (Beckman, Black and Langmead, 1984). But from 1908 on, applicant communities were expected to submit building plans for final approval before receiving funds (Bobinski 1969). Some proposed designs were so far from what Carnegie and Bertram preferred that those communities were not issued grants (Martin 1993). In a sense, there was a contradiction to the later Carnegie libraries: they were in one sense a local institution reflective of local needs and yet their forms had been more or less dictated by forces external to the communities they served. Accepting a Carnegie grant meant agreeing to construct a library building not according to a community's own sense of what a library should be, but according to how Carnegie and his representatives conceptualized a public library building.

The Owen Sound Carnegie Library

The community of Owen Sound, located at the very north of the Western Ontario "peninsula" and along the southwest edge of Georgian Bay, was a predominantly industrial community in 1904, the year Andrew Carnegie first offered it a library building grant. Carnegie's offer was $17,500 ("Carnegie Offers a $17,500 Library," 1904). Owen Sound's population in 1901 was 9,479 (Beckman, Langmead, and Black 1984). First founded as a Mechanic's Institute in 1855 (Owen Sound & North Grey Union Library 2005), Owen Sound's library would have needed to become a free public library to accept Carnegie's offer. However, local opposition delayed immediate action. While some citizens felt the taxation rate of 10% too great, others felt that a public library ought to be conceived and maintained "by a self-relying people" ("Mr. Carnegie's Offer," 2004). The debate lasted years. Only after free public library services were established in 1911 (Owen Sound & North Grey Union Library 2005) and Carnegie raised his offer to $26,000 ("New Library Open Today," 1914) did Owen Sound finally accept. The finished Carnegie Library building opened to the public in February 1914.

Original blueprints for Owen Sound's Carnegie Library were never published and could not be located (even among the library's private collections) for use in this study. It is nonetheless clear that local architects Forster and Clark based their final design on the exemplar in Bertram's

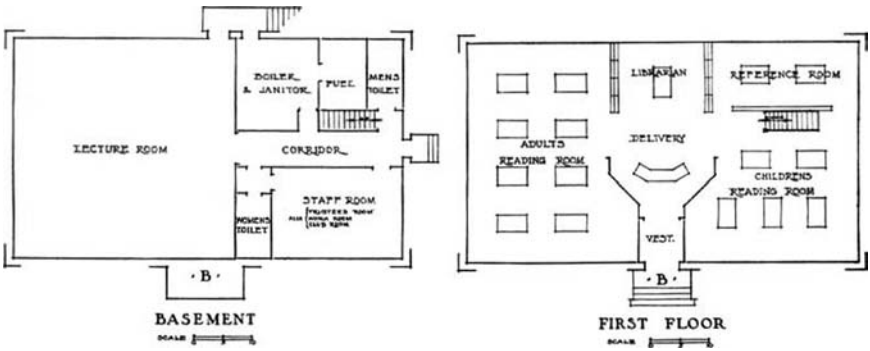


Figure 2: Library "B" from *Notes on the Erection of Library Bildings* [sic]. "Notes on the Erection of Library Bildings" in Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Series VIII.A (CCNY Publications), Miscellany Volume No. 1.

Notes labelled library "B." In fact, the architects had endured a succession of design rejections from late 1911 to early 1912 until a journey to the Hoboken, New Jersey, offices of R.A. Franks, Carnegie's chief financial officer (and overseer of the library grant program when Carnegie and Bertram were abroad) appears to have settled the matter (Board minutes, fall 1911 to spring 1912). Forster and Clark's final building plans were approved by April 1912 (Board minutes, 19 April 1912).

The plans for library "B" show a two-level, rectangular library with a raised front entrance leading through a small vestibule and into a large, open space. At one end of the main level is a space for adult collections; opposite is a space for children's materials with a reference area directly behind it. Space for the librarian is located at the very back, with the charging desk situated at its front, central within the overall space plan. The basement plan shows a large lecture room comprising half the total space, leaving the remaining space for staff, janitorial, storage, and other functions. The basement plan also shows the back entrance as well as one from the side. The Owen Sound Carnegie Library, as built, was strikingly similar to the pamphlet's "library B"; however, its basement featured only one entrance, a side entrance leading into the lecture room instead of the staff area. There was also a small expansion at the back of the main level for the librarian's office as well as a fireplace at the north end of the main level. It is unlikely there was ever a partitioned reference room or staircase on the main level or even a partitioned vesti-

bule. This researcher could not ascertain during data collection what the library's original arrangement of functional spaces was on its main level, but, knowing how Carnegie and his representatives imposed these plans on recipient communities from 1911 onward, it was assumed that the original arrangement of functional spaces on the main level of the Owen Sound library was reasonably faithful to the arrangement in library "B."

However, throughout the years, the library changed as its community's needs changed. For instance, increases in circulation ("O.S. Public Library Completes 25th Year Outstanding Service," 1939), collections ("Public Library Circulation Up for September," 1952) and, in the early 1970s, an increase in patrons when the library expanded its jurisdiction to include outside townships,[3] meant that expansion of the library was necessary. Reopened in 1972, the expanded library included massive extension to the Carnegie structure's north side. The extension was possible due to the City Council's acquisition of the plot immediately to the library's north, on which had stood the city's Royal Canadian Legion Building ("Owen Sound Library Founded in 1855," 1967), which was razed to make room for the library addition.[4]

Figure 3: Exterior of 1972 extension with the library's current main entrance.

The extension offered three functional levels: a top level, which contained the new children's section; the main level, which contained space for a variety of collections and functions; and the lower level, which included public washrooms and an auditorium. Architectural trends had strongly influenced design and style, making the extension different from the original Carnegie space of 1914. Advancements in construction technologies (for instance, reinforced concrete, glass, and steel) as well as the philosophies of modern library design (which called for large, open parcels of space [Oehlerts 1991]) had signalled the age of the "modular library," a mode of library space design that mandated free-standing bookshelves "to maximize book storage capacity" and "reintegrate readers and bookshelves in larger libraries, while also fulfilling librarians' dreams of complete flexibility" (Van Slyck 2007, 231). As a result, the main and upper (children's) levels were conceived as open parcels of space, save for an office for the children's librarian and, directly beneath it on the main level, a boardroom for library administration. The extension was constructed of reinforced concrete (with a brick exterior); steel and glass allowed for extensive fenestration, particularly on the extension's front.

Research questions and analytical framework

The study was guided initially by an open-ended research question: how has the Carnegie library in Ontario changed over the last century of service? This question entailed a consideration of only the physical flexibility of the library spaces. As a result, the researcher collected data about how the library had adapted physically to the changing needs of library users. As the study progressed, interest in the social effects of these changes superseded interest in only the physical adaptations. A new research question, accompanied with a suitable analytical framework, was needed to reflect this new emphasis. The research question then became: how has the Carnegie library *as place* changed? Answering this question will entail a comparison of the library space when it opened with the library space today.

Analytical framework

To examine this question, this article will use as an analytical framework Henri Lefebvre's *spatial triad*, which encompasses three principles for looking at and understanding how space is created, how it influences

behaviour, and how it changes over time. The spatial triad comprises the ideas of *spatial practice* (the perceived space), *representations of space* (the conceived space), and *representational spaces* (the space as lived) (Lefebvre 1991).

Lefebvre (1991) contends that every society creates its own space socially, not just physically, and that these spaces express and give form to power relationships within, between, and among those who create and share the space in question. These spaces can be large, such as in urban design and planning, or of much smaller scale, such as a neighbourhood's shape or a building's design.

The first of the three concepts, spatial practice, describes how a user *perceives* a space. It explains how every space carries with it a series of behaviours within itself as a result of the space's physical design. For example, spatial practice explains how students will automatically recognize a set of social or power relationships in a school classroom (perhaps where rows of student desks face a single teacher's desk at front) and adjust their behaviour to suit or to conform to those perceived power relationships. As the physical space itself is reproduced, spatial practice is reproduced, which (keeping with the former example) explains why students will continue to perceive those same relationships in not just one but many classrooms they visit. These power relationships within the space, however, are not born in a vacuum; they are often if not always predetermined, introducing the idea of representations of space—how planners create or *conceive* space in abstraction (think of building plans). This is the level on which planners, designers, and architects predetermine spatial practice by carefully mapping out the physical environment. As they design the physical environment, they "design" the behaviours appropriate within the space. The third level of space, representational space, describes how users experience space as a result of the first two spatial concepts. It explains the space *as experienced* and is sometimes known as the "lived" space (Lefebvre 1991).

These three levels of space, however, are not fixed or static (Lefebvre 1991). As spaces change, so does how users perceive and experience them. Thus, according to Lefebvre's theory, spaces designed at one point for certain purposes can be appropriated at a later point for different purposes. This article examines in what ways a library space at one time (its opening) is different from another time (the present).

Methodology

The researcher followed a combination of qualitative case study and historical case study approaches. Though sometimes the "case study" is defined not as a methodology "but [rather] a choice of what is to be studied" (Creswell 2007, 73), Creswell (2007) and Yin (1989) (especially the former) believe strongly that the case study is a methodology all its own. Creswell (2007) describes case study methodology as "involv[ing] the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)" (73) and employing a variety of tools for data collection. Yin (1989) identifies six data collection methods for use in case study research: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artefacts (85–95).

Consistent with case study approaches, the researcher employed a variety of data collection tools, including site visits and tours of the library; audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews with librarians and staff; observations of how patrons use the library currently; and photographing the library's interior, site, and surrounding neighbourhood. (The researcher sought permission to photograph the library in advance of the visits. To ensure privacy, the researcher did not photograph users or staff.) The researcher also employed historical data collection methods (Storey and Jones 2004), obtaining details about the library's past from Library Board meeting minutes, period newspaper articles, and other primary documents, such as period photographs (there were not many of these, however). The library has collected much of this material in special collections folders and boxes and made it available to the researcher during his visits to the library.

After the researcher confirmed the library's interest and participation, a succession of site visits began that spanned approximately three months. During the visits, the researcher first toured the library alone, observing the overall library space plan and how patrons used the library space. During interviews with library staff, the researcher began each interview as an audio-recorded tour of the library. Additional interviewing, if required, took place in the staff member's office. Interview transcripts were later coded and analyzed using an axial coding scheme (Strauss and Corbin 2008). The researcher conducted historical research during site visits.

Because a study of the library's past and present would reveal unique details about the library, the researcher could not guarantee anonymity to the Owen Sound and North Grey Union Library or the staff members interviewed for the study. Signed consent forms were collected prior to interviews.

Limitations

The research design has limitations, beginning with the subjective nature of the case study approach and its perceived lack of generalizability. Yin (1989), however, claims that case studies do offer some degree of generalizability when theoretical frameworks are used, giving the case in question a form of "analytical generalizability" to other cases. Further, just like Hersberger, Sua, and Murray (2007), the researcher feared that, since most data collected about the library came from the library itself (i.e., staff members, official records and files), the information examined might seem "skewed toward a positive image of the library," as they put it. "Newspaper accounts offer critical views of the library, providing a diversity of opinions of the library service over time, but these accounts are also overwhelmingly positive" (84). The researcher has based findings on a data set as balanced as is possible, given that no other sources of information about the library are known to exist.

The case of the Owen Sound Carnegie Library

Purposeful sampling, common in case study research, does require the researcher to establish a rationale for choice of case or cases (Creswell 2007). The researcher deemed the Owen Sound's Carnegie Library an ideal case for study because, when it opened, the Carnegie library in Owen Sound was in many ways the quintessential Carnegie library. Its designers appear to have followed the *Notes* pamphlet very closely. The Owen Sound library is, in the opinion of this researcher, one of the best examples of Carnegie library design congruent with the *Notes* pamphlet's models and guidelines. There is even reason to believe that the Owen Sound Carnegie Library's original architects, Forster and Clark, sought advice directly from one of Carnegie's own representatives on the design of the building. Further, the original library's exterior is neo-classic, the aesthetic that Carnegie libraries commonly adopted, especially in Canada (Beckman, Langmead, and Black 1981). The researcher also deemed the present state of the library ideal for study since the original library building has, like many Carnegie libraries built in North America (Jones 1997), been expanded with an addition.

Findings

In what ways, then, is the Owen Sound Carnegie Library as a place different from the way it was in 1914? First, the space plan of the Carnegie library today is very different from what it was nearly one century ago. The original space as conceived defined all other spaces within the library floor and privileged the librarian and his or her duties within the space (see Library B in the section entitled Historical Background). For instance, the grand entrance and vestibule channelled the user from the street and directly on to the library floor, where a central aisle beginning from the interior edge of the entrance led directly to the librarian's desk. This aisle served as a central axis from which all other spaces in the original space plan radiated: the adult collections and workspaces to the south, the children's collections and workspaces (and reference collections) to the north. As perceived space, this central axis plan put the user directly in contact with the librarian immediately upon entering. There was nowhere on the main level—the only publicly accessible level of the library (save for the occasional use of the lecture hall in the basement)—that the user was not under direct supervision of the librarian. As experienced or lived space, this space plan indicated to all users whose domain the library space was: the librarian's, not the user's.

Today's space plan is very different. The 1972 extension substantially displaces the Carnegie structure, which is no longer central within the larger library building as conceived space, and interrupts the inner centrality of the original Carnegie "rectangle." The original Carnegie structure is now merely a part of a larger complex, no longer the locus of all library collections and functions but merely a repository or container of selected ones. What is immediately apparent is the lack of staff presence within the Carnegie space: the original librarian's desk has long since been removed; the original librarian's office has been converted into a local history room (sans personnel and always open for browsing), and the new chief librarian's office, now in the former stairwell and vestibule, is fully enclosed and not visible to users of the Carnegie space. The Carnegie wing as conceived space now features two main aisles running horizontally across the rectangle, down which tables and chairs are found on the eastern perimeter and wall shelving along the western perimeter. Freestanding bookshelves take up most space in the centre. The aisles begin on either side of the fireplace along the north wall of the original Carnegie structure, where portions of the original wall were removed in 1972[5] to allow for two doorways to serve as connections between the

Figure 4: Current interior of the Carnegie library space, with extended windows along the east side (at left). The original entrance and vestibule (at centre, left) is now enclosed as an office.

original Carnegie wing and the extension. The plan privileges the user, not the librarian. The Carnegie space as perceived disconnects the user from the librarian, who is now a flight of stairs down from the north wall, at a desk on the ground level of the extension. She or he cannot see the Carnegie space from the desk, save for who enters or leaves the space. The contemporary Carnegie space as experienced or lived is one of self-supervision and allows for contemplative self-discovery without the distracting gaze of a librarian or staff member.

Indeed, there is much less need for the immediate presence of a librarian within the Carnegie space, and so the librarian has been displaced as "commander" of the library floor. In some ways, the librarian and the patron share responsibility for supervising the entire library space. For instance, even though service and reference desks exist in the extension, there is neither in the Carnegie building. Thus while the librarian maintains a presence within the overall library plan, it is a more incidental one. Although still an authority figure as an employee of the library, his

Figure 5: Main reference desk, now in the 1972 extension.

or her role is not merely to command as much as assist, facilitate, and leave patrons to experience the library space on their own terms. In fact, the original Carnegie is almost entirely the domain of library patrons, who, in effect, supervise the space as a community.

The library is much more accessible than when it opened nearly one century ago. This accessibility plays out in two ways: physical and conceptual. The library's current front entrance was opened in 1972 as part of the extension.[6] The original front entrance has been retired. Consisting of what must have been no fewer than eight steps, the original grand entrance as conceived space had been a barrier between the library and the outside public. As perceived space, the original raised entrance conveyed the sense that the library was above its community, and in this way, was in the community but not of the community—was a space apart from, rather than an extension of, the space outside. The new front entrance operates very differently. Though not exactly at street level, the new entrance is only a few steps from the sidewalk and includes a ramp allowing for all, not just some, to access the library. As conceived space,

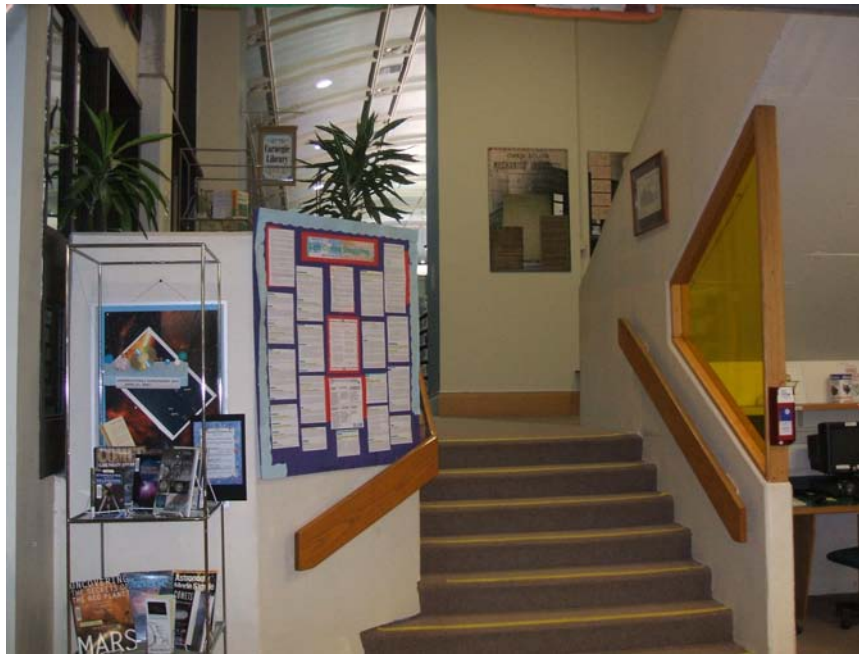


Figure 6: The stairwell separating the Carnegie structure from the 1972 extension.

the new entrance is a facilitator, not a barrier. As perceived space, the new entrance invites users with physical mobility problems or parents with strollers into the library. The new entrance as a space experienced, as lived space, conveys a sense of letting the outside in—the library has become more accessible and thus more inclusive. There is also an elevator in the extension, automatic doors at the front entrance, and wheelchair-accessible bathrooms in the lower level of the extension.

Further changes have brought the outside in. The original Carnegie library, on opening day, included twenty-two large windows, stretching from midway up the walls to the vaulted ceiling overhead: four on the south side, two on the north (one on either side of the fireplace), eight on the east side (four on either side of the entrance and vestibule), and eight on the west side (four on either side of the original library's office, now the local history room). Bertram encouraged high windows to allow for perimeter shelving below (Beckman, Langmead, and Black 1981). When the library was expanded in 1972, the windows along the east and south walls were extended to the floor[7]—presumably to maximize the intake of natural light—the space as conceived privileging window

space over collection space. The space as perceived increases the library user's awareness of the outside. Wherever users are in the library space, they always have a visual connection to the surrounding neighbourhood. The space as lived creates an experience very different from what existed in 1914: the extended windows reduce the sense of separation between the user and the outside community. As a result, the library user feels less isolated within the space.

This increased sense of connection between the inside and the outside plays out in other ways. The Owen Sound library—particularly the Carnegie building, a place originally designed for quiet, individual work, and study—has since become a place to gather and socialize casually. In this sense, the library space now seems like an extension of other forms of public space. Just as the grounds outside the library feature benches and areas for reading in the warmer months, tables and reading chairs are placed throughout the library space so that patrons feel encouraged to remain as long as needed, using the space for homework or for reasonably quiet social activity.[8] The space as experienced reinvents the library as an extension of the community outside: almost as though there are no "walls" between the library space and the public parks and sidewalks.

The library space generates a sense of community in other ways. For instance, though originally functioning only as a heat source, Owen Sound's fireplace has, over the years, been transformed into something very meaningful to library users, a place for gathering and interaction. Historical photographs show that, by mid-century, librarians gave Christmas Eve story-times at the fireplace. Today, the fireplace, no longer wood burning but instead a gas insert, is a major draw for patrons not just in the colder months but year-round as well. Around the fireplace today are several comfortable chairs in which patrons of various ages gather and either read silently or chat with each other quietly.[9] The fireplace and chairs provide a traditional element of the home in what is, by definition, institutional space. While in 1914 spatial practice discouraged patrons from remaining in the library longer than required, as perceived space the Carnegie space today is inviting, encouraging patrons to stay and relax as long as they would like. Some patrons even nap in these chairs.[10] As space experienced, the library is like a home away from home; it is a place where library users can be among strangers but still feel welcome and safe. It is a concept one librarian has referred to as the "community living room."[11]

Figure 7: Reading tables and mission oak chairs in the Carnegie space.

The library as a historical library space creates a rich experience for library users, one that prompts them to contribute, collectively, to the library's upkeep and one that reminds them equally of the community's past, present, and future. The library building, once paid for with funds from outside the community and based, by measure of Forster and Clark's use of Bertram's exemplars, upon an external vision of what a library building should be, is now as a place much more the product of local vision and local identification. For instance, when the library was renovated in 2003, instead of returning the Carnegie space back to its original tans and browns, the planners, in consultation with the librarians, chose whites and blues—"Georgian Bay colours,"[12] as one librarian calls them, referring to colours from the local landscape. The addition of a local history room in the Carnegie building, in the space that was formerly the chief librarian's office from 1914, further demonstrates an increase of local identification within the library space. Recent fundraising has afforded the installation of panelled oak veneers overtop the ends of the freestanding bookshelves in the Carnegie wing. The library has named these panels the "Pillars of the Community" since each panel features a brass plaque that recognizes community pioneers and

Figure 8: The gas fireplace and the reading chairs that surround it were donated by

their contributions. The Mission oak chairs and tables in the Carnegie wing were also made possible through community fundraising and local donors; even the gas fireplace and its accompanying chairs were donations from local community organizations.[13] As perceived space, the Carnegie library today invites a consideration of both past and present contributions to the library and the greater community. As space experienced, the library has been reinvented as a product of community efforts; it is a space that celebrates local heritage and promotes a sense of community ownership and community pride within the library.

Conclusions

The Owen Sound Carnegie Library is, as a place, a library very different from what it was when it first opened nearly one century ago. True, one can argue that all library spaces change over time and that, by this measure, the Owen Sound Carnegie Library is no more worthy of attention than any other library building. Yet what the case of the Owen Sound

Carnegie Library shows us is that, with many surviving Carnegie libraries either approaching or having already passed their centenary, a new type of library building all its own is emerging from these remaining libraries, one very much in touch with its past, one that will not nor cannot exist as long as we choose to raze older library structures rather than adapting them. This new library building type is the historical public library in the community.

Though it was not a major objective, this study's findings do contradict the notion (for instance, see Dahlgren [1987]) that Carnegie libraries as spaces are incapable of flexibility or perhaps even unworthy of conservation. True, with their raised entrances, their (sometimes) internal partitioning (though this was not true in the Owen Sound library's case), their often limited sites and their original lack of public washrooms, Carnegie libraries are notorious for the challenges they create for present-day library planners, and certainly not all these challenges have easy solutions. The Owen Sound library, however, with its structural extension, its elevator, its wheelchair ramp, and its automatic doors, shows us that the successful upgrading of an older building is indeed possible and, in a strong sense, worth it. We must ask, in the case of the Owen Sound library, would a user's sense of the public library as a local institution diminish with the opening of a newer building?

Arguably yes. In fact, the case of the Owen Sound library is most important because it shows that, whatever their physical limitations, Carnegie libraries, over and above being merely physical constructions, are not incapable of adapting to newer *visions* of the public library in the community, particularly that of the "community living room," a vision different from Carnegie's own of the library space. As a place, this updated Carnegie library offers library users a unique kind of library environment: one where fireplaces and inviting easy chairs, in many ways mimicking the comforts of home, are available for use; an environment where the neo-classic architectural style of yesteryear, reinterpreted with local colour schemes, offers today's users a majestic and inspiring environment in which to read, converse, relax, and learn; an environment where there now seems little disconnection from the outside; and an environment expressive of community heritage, a place where past and present meet. The Owen Sound Carnegie Library today is not a relic from the past but instead a living piece of history very much a part of the present. As a historical library in the community, the Owen Sound Carnegie Library, with all its modifications and updates, acts as a record of its community's

changing service philosophies and changing standards of inclusiveness. As a building type, the historical library in the community is itself a historical artefact. The unnecessary demolition of a library building capable of being preserved only buries a community's awareness of what and who has come before.

To conclude, if this study has contributed anything to the larger literature about Carnegie libraries, it has suggested that, whatever uniformity the general public perceives among Carnegie library buildings, this is merely an illusion. What makes a library unique is not so much the building but the library organization inside it, the community it serves, and the specific ways that the library adapts its environment to meet that community's needs. Nearly one hundred years later, Owen Sound has in its library a kind of place very different from what existed in 1914, showing that, ultimately, the community of Owen Sound has at last made the library as a place their very own.

Acknowledgements

The researcher gratefully acknowledges the support of a Research Development Grant from the Canadian Library Association, which covered most of the original 2007 study's necessary expenses. The researcher would also like to thank the Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library for their interest and cooperation, for access to their historical collections, and for permission to reproduce photographs of the library. The researcher would also like to thank this study's original supervisor, Gloria Leckie, and its advisor, Pamela McKenzie, whose advice and encouragement throughout all stages of the project was invaluable. Many thanks also to Dr. Leckie and Lynne McKechnie for additional help and suggestions on the written findings. The researcher gratefully acknowledges the Carnegie Corporation of New York for permission to reproduce "Library B" from the *Notes on the Erection of Library Bildings* [sic] pamphlet. Last, many thanks to this article's anonymous reviewers whose comments and suggestions on the original version were an invaluable part of the revision.

Notes

1. The researcher delivered a review of the 2007 study's preliminary findings at the 20th Annual Western Research Forum, May 9–11, 2007, and at the Library Research Seminar IV: The Library and Its Cultural Contexts, October 10–12, 2007.

2. The architectural terms *site*, *structure*, *skin*, *services*, *space plan*, and *stuff* are from Brand (1994).
3. J. Armstrong, chief librarian, Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library. Interview by Matthew Griffis, May 3, 2007.
4. Ibid.
5. R. Sulkers, deputy chief librarian, Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library. Interview by Matthew Griffis, April 2, 2007.
6. Armstrong interview.
7. Ibid.
8. Armstrong and Sulkers interviews.
9. Sulkers interview.
10. Armstrong interview.
11. Sulkers interview.
12. Armstrong interview.
13. Armstrong and Sulkers interviews.

References

Beckman, M., S. Langmead, and J. Black. 1981. Carnegie libraries of Canada. *Canadian Library Journal* 38 (6): 386–90.

——. 1984. *The best gift: A record of the Carnegie Libraries in Ontario*. Toronto: Dundurn.

Bentham, J. 1791. *Panopticon: Or, the inspection house*. Dublin: Byrne.

Bobinski, G.S. 1969. *Carnegie libraries: Their history and impact on American public library development*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Brand, S. 1994. *How buildings learn: What happens after they're built*. New York: Penguin.

Bruce, L. 1994. *Free books for all: The public library movement in Ontario, 1850–1930*. Toronto: Dundurn.

Carnegie, A. 2006. *The "Gospel of Wealth" essays and other writings*. New York: Penguin.

"Carnegie offers a $17,000 library." *Owen Sound Sun* June 24, 1904.

Cohen, E., and A. Cohen. 2003. Library architecture and interior design. In *Encyclopedia of library and information science*. 2nd ed., ed. Miriam Drake, 1578–84. Abingdon, Oxford: Taylor & Francis.

Creswell, J.W. 2007. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage: Thousand Oaks.

Curry, A. 2007. A grand old sandstone lady. In Leckie and Buschman, 61–76.

Dahlgren, A.C. 1987. Planning expanded facilities: Issues for small public libraries. *Library administration and management* 1 (3): 80–4.

Foner, E. 1992. Introduction. In *Social Darwinism and American thought*, ix–xxviii. Boston: Beacon.

Hersberger, J.A., L. Sua, and A.L. Murray. 2007. The fruit and root of the community. In Leckie and Buschman, 79–99.

Hofstadter, R. 1992. *Social Darwinism and American thought.* Boston: Beacon.

Jones, T. 1997. *Carnegie libraries across America.* New York: Wiley.

Krass, P. 2004. *Carnegie.* New York: Wiley.

Leckie, G.J., and J. Buschman, eds. *The library as place: History, community and culture.* Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Lefebvre, H. *The production of space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

Lushington, N. 2002. *Libraries designed for users: A 21st century guide.* New York: Neal-Schuman.

Martin, R.S. 1993. Introduction. In *Carnegie denied: Communities rejecting Carnegie library construction grants 1898–1925*, ed. Robert Sidney Martin, vii–xiii. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

"Mr. Carnegie's offer." *Owen Sound Times* June 24, 1904.

"New library open today." *Owen Sound Sun* 3 February, 1914.

Oehlerts, D.E. 1991. *Books and blueprints: Building America's public libraries.* Westport, CT: Greenwood.

"O.S. Public library completes 25th year outstanding service." *Owen Sound Daily Sun-Times* February 4, 1939.

"Owen Sound library founded in 1855 may soon be joint city-county centre." *Owen Sound Sun-Times* June 29, 1967.

Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library. 2005. *Celebrating 150 years of service 1855–2005.* Owen Sound: Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library.

Owen Sound Public Library Board minute typescripts. Special Collections, Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library, Owen Sound, ON.

"Public library circulation up for September." *Owen Sound Sun-Times* October 10, 1952.

Stevenson, S.A. 2005. The post-Fordist public library: From Carnegie to Gates. PhD diss., University of Western Ontario.

Storey, W.K., and T. Jones. 2004. *Writing history: A guide for students.* Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Strauss, A., and J.M. Corbin. 2008. *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

Van Slyck, A.A. 1995. *Free to all: Carnegie libraries and American culture 1890–1920.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

——. 2007. Managing pleasure: Library architecture and the erotics of reading. In Leckie and Buschman, 221–33.

Yin, R.K. 1989. *Case study research: Design and methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.