

HISTORY OF THE SELKIRK LIBRARY

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for

Linda Pleskach / Selkirk & St. Andrews Regional Library

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PREFACE

Three things to remember while you read this report:

- Newspaper articles are my main source of information, and newspapers tend to put their biases and slants in stories. I've tried to credit the sources of obvious inferences and opinions, but remember most of my information comes from secondary sources.
- The concepts of 'libraries' and 'library services' have changed during the timespan of the Selkirk Library (and all its various incarnations). Prior to the 1960's, libraries were basically sources of information; after this time, however, libraries introduced more social services, such as book readings and special events. Just as the libraries changed to suit the needs of their communities, so, too, did the concept of libraries change in the perceptions of these communities.
- There are huge gaps in my research. What exactly happened in those years (1959 to 1960) when the Town shut down library services and housed them in the schools? Was the Carnegie Library really so structurally unsound it had to be destroyed (the building was only 50 years old)? And what happened in the years from 1990 - 1997?

DAVID BOROWSKI
July 21, 1998

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SUMMARY

1813 - 1870 - Books from settlers in the Red River area (and other sources) form the province's first library, the Red River Library. The books later become part of the Legislative Library.

1882 or 1887 - Selkirk Literary Association or Selkirk Literary and Debating Society begins in Selkirk.

1901 - Association opens its Reading Room (located in the town hall) to the public.

1902 - Reading Room becomes Selkirk's first library: citizens voted for a Town by-law that puts the library under Town jurisdiction, with funding from Town taxes.

1909 - A new Selkirk Public Library opens, built with a \$10,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation.

1959 - Library torn down for a new civic centre. Library services move into a small room in the civic centre. Attempts to form a regional library system with surrounding municipalities begin, continue in one form or another for many decades.

1972 - First serious proposal for a regional library fails.

1973 - Town decides to eliminate library services; library services are moved to two local schools, and continue with minimal funding from the town.

1979 - Centennial Committee (formed by the town to choose a community project to commemorate Selkirk's 100th birthday), decides on a new library building as the Centennial project.

1980 - Centennial Committee's decision rejected by town council.

1981 - Red River Region Library Fund formed to raise funds for a new library.

1982 - Selkirk Community Library opens at its temporary location at 373 Main Street. Usage improves dramatically, new services are introduced.

1985 - Interpretative Centre proposed - includes a new library. Proposal is scrapped when a major funding grant application is rejected.

1985 - Numbered company (consisting of library board members, RRRLF members and Town council members) agree to purchase Hooker Lumber building. Town council rejects the purchase, creating major disputes among all parties involved.

1986 - Numbered company buys lot at 303 Main Street.

1987 - Selkirk Community Library opens at 303 Main Street.

1998 - St. Andrews and Town of Selkirk form a regional library system - Selkirk Community Library is renamed "Selkirk and St. Andrews Regional Library".

FULL REPORT

1813 - Lord Selkirk loans books to the Red River settlement. (MCH, 1984)

1822 - Manitoba's first surveyor, Peter Fidler, dies. After his death, his 500-volume book collection is left as a circulation library. (MLA, Feb 1996)

1800's - "It had been a tradition of the Hudson's Bay men, with Company assistance, to maintain libraries in the posts, particularly in the more permanent establishments... From the beginning, St. Andrews was the library centre [of the Red River Settlement (?)]". (MLA, Feb 1946)

1818 - 1846 - Members of the British military arrive to protect the Fort Garry area in the event of war between Britain and the United States. "Isolated in the midst of this continent, members of the Britain force soon took the initiative in sending books from their homeland." (MLA, Feb 1946)

1847 (approx.) - 1946 MLA report claims a library at the settlement (the Red River Library) is created from the British army's books, along with "donations from the leading citizens located on the homesteads of those long 'lanes' of river lots", Peter Fidler's books, "and additional new books obtained by reason of a 50 pound grant from the Council of Assiniboia, the government of the territory of that period". (A Manitoba Culture and Heritage article says Lord Selkirk's books also become part of this library.) The MLA article claims this library is "the first general community library in the Red River Settlement". (MLA, Feb 1946; MCH, 1984)

The St. Andrews library centre is divided into two sections, with one at Upper Fort Garry and one at Lower Fort Garry. When the British troops leave in 1848, they leave their books behind. The MLA article says, "Reading those books, printed with small type and little illustration, was a labour of love. Lighting was from a primitive bowl filled with grease from which hung a strip of rag. Later, candles were introduced. Much reading was before the glowing fires. Books were appreciated then only to a slightly lesser extent than the Bible and the catechism." (MLA, Feb 1946) The MCH article says, "Although Fidler's books remained in good condition, others received rough treatment; many bear the scribbles of the settlers' children, and one includes the jotted recipe for cheddar cheese. All can today be recognized by their somewhat dark and dirty appearance - the result of smoke from wood stoves and open fires." (MCH, 1984)

by 1864 - Half the Settlement library books are stored away; "the other half remained in limited circulation at the home of Donald Gunn near Lockport". (MCH, 1984)

1870 - Lieutenant Governor, A. G. Archibald, establishes Manitoba's first library (later the Legislative Library) in Winnipeg. Some of the Red River collection is destroyed in the fire of the first Legislative Building in Winnipeg in 1873. Many of the books are borrowed and never returned, as management of the library was informal prior to the appointment of the first legislative librarian in 1884. By 1884, only 200 of the original 2000 books remained. Later, a portion of the books forms a part of the Historical Society library (formed in 1873). When Winnipeg's Carnegie Library was created in 1905, the

books were housed there. In 1920, the books were stored in the new Legislative Building; in 1955, the books were joined by Donald Gunn's books from Lockport. The collection is presently kept in the Legislative Library's Rare Book Room. ("A selection of the St. Andrews collection is now with the Manitoba Legislative Library in the Parliament Buildings on Broadway and includes many of the books purchased by Peter Fidler and carried with him on his surveying and fur-trading expeditions.") (MLA, Feb 1946; MHC, 1984)

1882? 1887? - Selkirk Literary Association (SE 75) or Selkirk Literary and Debating Society (Potyondi) opens (in 1882, Potyondi; in 1887, SE 75). It was "a group of adults interested in all cultural programs in Selkirk. Many of the programs of their meetings took the form of lively debates on subjects of local and educational interest... Music was a part of each meeting - solos, quartets, instrumentals". (SE, June 26, 1957) Potyondi also wrote that members met to hear political readings and hear visiting lecturers speak.

1901 - Association opens their reading room to the public. It is located in the rear Council Chamber in the Town Hall. Captain Robinson donates \$250 "in connection with the room". "It was Captain Robinson's intention... to make the donation of \$250 annually, so that in the course of a few years, Selkirk might possess a very extensive and credible Public library, which would be a lasting source of benefit to the people of the town". (SExp, Dec 6) "Any book can be read in the room. To get books to read at home each person must purchase a library card at 5 cents. This card endorsed by a responsible person and a member of the Literacy Executive entitles the holder to any book, unless books of reference, for a period not exceeding 14 days." (SExp, Dec 20)

1902 - Selkirk Enterprise states "On the 27th of September 1st Captain Robinson sent a letter to the Town Council in which he stated his willingness to expend three or four hundred dollars yearly in the purchase of new books for the library for as many years as he thought the expenditure was of sufficient benefit to the town, provided the council would assume the responsibility of maintaining the library in as good a fashion as has been done in the past." Town council meets on Oct and resolved to accept the offer; electors must pass acceptance of the by-law. (SExp, Dec 12)

Letter to the Selkirk Expositor mentions "electors will soon be called to vote on the Free Library by-law which has been before the Council... The main object of the by-law is that Captain Robinson's generous offer may be secured, and that a responsible body of men may control the library and reading room, which are now looked by the literary society. These societies, as we all know, come and go, but town councils are continuous... It is estimated that the town will be called upon for \$250.00 yearly. If a man pays \$10 or \$20 a year in taxes his share of the cost will be 12 cents or 24 cents a year accordingly. For this small sum he and his boys and girls can have the free use of the reading room, may borrow books and read them at home; the only condition being good conduct and care of the books. Was there ever such a chance offered to the people of Selkirk? Will it not be a standing disgrace to us if we do not take it? Let us all, then, do what we can to help it along. Let us not brand ourselves as being stupid,

unprogressive and behind the times, not only behind the times, but wishful to remain so." (SExp, Dec 5)

Selkirk Expositor article backs a free library. "The offer made by Captain Robinson is a generous one, and everyone who takes an interest in the progress of our town and wishes to see Selkirk possess a free library and reading room which will be a credit to us and a lasting benefit to all who take advantage of the privileges offered, should do their utmost on the 16th in order that the bylaw may receive the necessary number of votes required to become law. We all know the great benefit in many ways our citizens have derived from the library in the past, and if the bylaw is carried these benefits will be largely increased. It would be an act of folly to refuse such a chance as is now offered us. Some people may think that if the council becomes responsible for the maintenance of the library that the cost is going to largely increase their taxes. This is a mistaken idea, however... the town will be called upon for \$350 yearly to maintain the library, so that if a citizen pays \$10 or \$20 a year in taxes his share of the cost would be 12 cents or 24 cents ... Surely there is no taxpayer in town who will object to paying this small sum for the privilege of having the free use of the reading room, where he can see all the leading magazines and also have access to a library furnished with the best standard works ... There is a danger, however, of the bylaw being lost through over-confidence and indifference, and all friends of the library should work hard and get out the necessary number of those entitled to vote, viz., three-fifths of those owning property to the extent of \$400 ... Do not let the opportunity of securing a good library for our town be lost through carelessness or indifference." (SE, Dec 12)

By-law is carried. (SExp, Dec 19)

Florence McDonald is the first librarian. McDonald: "The reading room and library was well patronized - the reading room especially providing a place where the bachelors and lonely men of the town would gather to read and play chess or checkers. There were only one or two tables and chairs, but there was a long reading-desk at which the reader had to stand to read. She says there were one or two who were there so long and often she feels sure their feet wore a depression in the floor!" (SE, June 26, 1957)

1908 - Carnegie Foundation and town council negotiate the building of a new library. The Foundation will donate \$10,000 towards a library building if the town provides a site and an annual grant of \$1000. Councillors obtain a lot on Eveline and Eaton. "Inside, there were two large reading rooms on the main floor (one for men, one for women), a board room and a library room filled with almost empty shelving. As his good deed for 1909, William Robinson completely furnished the library with modern fixtures. In the basement, provision was made for a bath-house and a gymnasium. Patrons were permitted, upon payment of five cents for a library card, to borrow one precious volume for a two-week period. In the coming years, Captain Robinson did much to stock the empty cabinets and bare shelves... [The library's] boardroom provided much-needed meeting space." (Potyondi)

1909 - Selkirk Public Library opens to the public in June. (SE, June 26, 1957) Marion Reid says the library "remained little more than a lending library and distributed books discarded from the shelves of Selkirk's citizens. Little money was spent on new material and none on programs (MLA, March 1989)

1916 - Provincial liquor commissioners hold hearings into the state of liquor traffic in town. Among the testimony, "witnesses recalled... the 'uncivilized' behaviour of soldiers at the library where a bar had been fitted up in the basement." (Potyandi)

1948 - Public Libraries Act passes, gives permissive legislation for the establishment of public library services (there were previous PLA's 1899,1914,1924,1925?)

1956 - PLS publishes a report on libraries in Manitoba. It notes "the present library [in Selkirk] has been operated on a small scale since 1927 by the town of Selkirk. It has not been established as a free public library under the Public Libraries Act of 1948, and does not receive the Government's annual grant. The imposing building has gradually been taken over by other services and clubs, e.g. the County Court, Boy Scouts, a kindergarten, and a meeting hall. The library has been confined to a room 30' x 20', with wooden shelves and a small service counter. The library is open daily except Thursday, for three hours in the afternoon... The book stock is about 5,000 volumes... Circulation has doubled since 1950, when the present librarian was employed by the Town. The circulation figure was 9,358 books and periodicals, mostly to young people as a result of the recent outlay for new juvenile books. A \$1.00 deposit, plus a charge of 10 cents per book, are required for the loan of new additions to the shelves. A fee of ten cents is charged for borrowers' cards... People from surrounding districts (Lockport, East Selkirk, etc.) receive library service in Selkirk on the same basis as town borrowers." (PLS, 1956)

The report recommends Selkirk "create a Library Board and to look into the possibility for establishment under the Libraries Act. An active and thorough campaign would have to be undertaken before such an expansion could gain the necessary public support. In the future Selkirk may wish to look into the possibilities of regional co-operation, or even library service by contractual arrangement with a larger centre. Present town projects like the hospital, arena, and school buildings tend to make immediate practical steps toward library development impracticable."

1957 - Librarian W.W. Bennett notes the library holds about 6,000 books, "and from 600 to 700 go out each month." He noted "the reading rooms have not been used as such for some time, no doubt because of radio and TV." (SE, June 26, 1957)

Unknown report (1977 or 1978?) claims town council inquired about provincial library support. "For several years following 1957, provincial representatives and a citizen library committee worked toward regional library service supported by the town and the surrounding rural municipalities (most of which participate in the school division). At that time, voted approval was required for regional libraries - and the issue of a regional library was repeatedly defeated at the polls by the rural municipalities."

1959 - Carnegie Library torn down for expansion of Civic Centre and Fire Hall; town provided a small space in the Civic Centre for library services (1959? 1960?). Marion Reid wrote the library building "was condemned for structural reasons". (MLA, March 1989)

1963 - Minnie Romanica hired as librarian (June 1). She works at the library for 23.5 years before her retirement in 1985.

1971 - Selkirk Area Development Board sponsors an effort to establish a regional library (with help from provincial funding). Report of Library Committee to the Selkirk Area Development Board (with names M. Schwanke, chairman, D. Long and W. Regehr). The report stated, "In order to establish a regional library (Library Act) a petition must first be signed by not less than 8% of ratepayers listed on the last revised Electors Roll." It suggested Selkirk, St. Andrews, St. Clements, Victoria Beach, Dunnottar and Winnipeg Beach form a regional library, with a main library in Selkirk and either two branch libraries or a bookmobile servicing the area. The report noted the success of the Evergreen Regional Library in Gimli, Riverton and Arborg, and the South Interlake Regional Library in Stonewall. It noted the Selkirk library "has a circulation of 2600 books" and the budget is \$5650. It noted the possibility of combining services and buildings with school library facilities; it advises this would be economical in terms of building space, but economically impractical since staff would still have to be hired for a regional library. There would also be cataloguing problems, and the different uses may cause confusion for the public.

According to the Selkirk Enterprise, "within a week [of the library petition] an anti-library petition was started". (SE, Feb 25, 1981)

1972 - Petition fails to obtain 8% of necessary signatures (July). "In the town of Selkirk itself nearly 8% of the electorate signed the petitions... None of the other areas... were close enough to justify further effort." (SE, July 26) Article in Selkirk Enterprise by Maureen Schwanke implied people did not want an increase in their taxes, especially for a venture that would not gain financial profit. (SE, July 26). Article suggested "you may be allowed to use the lovely library in the Regional Comprehensive High School"

Article in the Selkirk Enterprise by Shirley Herda. "Upon reading the 'Selkirk Council Notes' in the Selkirk Enterprise recently, where it stated that the Municipalities of St. Andrew and St. Clements had mutually agreed to turn down the proposal for a Regional Library, the reaction of this reader was most antipathetic. When we speak of these illustrious bodies, it is difficult not to refer to them as incongruous if not anachronistic in their behaviour. That one act epitomizes their philosophy and dedication to the community they serve. Concerning the so-called 'public apathy' toward the proposal, perhaps the cause and effect should be directed to only certain levels of our society. For example, if ignorance has been the cause and indifference the effect, then shouldn't this present a challenge rather than a defeat? A non-member of a library is less likely to be aware of the full benefits available to him and so the extent of his ignorance (relating to library service only) is one of particular importance ... An apathetic attitude toward the

creation of public libraries cannot be blamed entirely on the public in general. Pleaders for the library cause have to create public opinion and keep it alive. When favourable opinion was needed to obtain approval of our recent library proposal, where were all our community 'professionals'? Where was the 'overplus' that Wickenden says is characteristic of what professionals bring to the community when they are associated with or render services to?" (SE, May 30 1973)

1973 - Selkirk Town council decides to eliminate library to provide space for other municipal offices. "Group of concerned individuals developed a plan for interim library service. Members of the group were Dorothy Newton, Bill Regehr, Stan Petrowski, Arnold Minish, Tony Maksymyk, Counciller Lloyd Wersch, Peter Hanlon (Director of PLS), and Mary Liz Bayer, Cultural Development Officer for Manitoba". (Unknown report, 1984)

1974 - Library is housed in Robert Smith School Library and Lord Selkirk Comprehensive High School. Town of Selkirk contributes one salary plus \$1500 for books. The town continued to do so annually. School Division absorbed bulk of operating costs". High school holds the reference and adult non-fiction material; Robert Smith holds the children's and adult fiction. Minnie Romanica works in Robert Smith. Assistant librarian assumes responsibility for developing the community library. Marion Reid wrote, "Town Council decided to eliminate the [town] library and discard its books. As a temporary solution to save the library, the aging collection was housed in the library of an elementary school and the high school library was opened to the public. This arrangement lasted nine years, a period in which very little public use was made of either facility." (MLA, March 1989)

1976 - School housed library is formally established when the town passed the necessary by-law under the Public Libraries Act. "This by-law enabled the town to operate a municipal public library but more importantly made the town eligible for a small establishment grant [\$200] and subsequent annual operating grants from the provincial government." The community library board hopes to expand their funding base from there. There are no forthcoming grants, and regionalization is "still an impossibility". No municipality contributed funds. "The legal requirements of the [Public Libraries] Act began to create obstacles to the hoped-for expansion of public service." The board wanted to designate members from outside Selkirk (to voice municipal concerns), "found it difficult and costly to establish separate financial records and provide for an audit", and disagreed with population figures as used in PLA requirements. (Unknown report, 1978)

"[The school library] arrangement kept library service alive in Selkirk, but was awkward for patrons and students alike. It did not allow for growth or the development of programs and services. The public seemed reluctant to enter school buildings, and the elementary school students had less space than they needed." (Unknown report, 1984)

1978 - Selkirk receives first provincial grant (\$6168.70) (Unknown report, 1984)

1979 - Library's annual report shows an operating budget of \$85,526. Town of Selkirk contributes \$15,571 towards operating costs, provincial grants gave \$5278, and the Lord Selkirk School Division gives \$64,677. The school division contributed 76% of the total funding, the town added 18% of the total, and the province gave 6% of the total. (SE, March 19, 1985)

Winnipeg Tribune article states inadequacies of Selkirk's present library system. "Circulation figures at both of Selkirk's libraries indicate [the school's books] are not the books they want. Only 4,500 books circulated at [Robert Smith] last year. Lord Selkirk lent an average of 200 books per day, but these figures include student borrowings. Bill Regehr, a Selkirk school division representative, blames the low circulation rate on the location of the new libraries. 'School is not seen by people as a place to go for books', he said. Mr. Regehr also said the set-up of the Selkirk library system does not allow for one-stop book browsing. Because [Robert Smith] is an elementary school, many of the books at its library are aimed at children. At Lord Selkirk, there is little of appeal to anyone under 14. As a result, he said, a mother searching for a non-fiction book for herself and 'easy reader' for her child has to 'run all over town.'...Mr. Regehr said Selkirk's problems could be solved if the town had a library housed in its own building, supplied with its own books - a solution he and others have been working on for more than six years. He said he is going to ask the provincial government to re-evaluate the population of Selkirk at the end of the month. The provincial government gives library grants of more than \$2 per person to towns with populations greater than 10,000. According to a 1976 census, Selkirk has 400 people less than that mark. A more recent head count taken by Health and Social Development, puts Selkirk's population total at about 10,200. Even another \$20,000 couldn't buy Selkirk a library building which Mr. Regehr estimates would cost \$250,000. The money could be raised by an increase in taxes. Last year, Selkirk residents paid \$1.53 per capita to support its libraries. This is less than anyone else in the province pays towards library services. There is a problem, according to the article, in motivating the public to spend money for libraries. 'Readers aren't a very organized group,' said Mr. Regehr, 'and few complain about the lack of services.' " (Tribune, June 11, 1979)

In the same Winnipeg Tribune edition, Manitoba Library Association president Ronald Friesen says "Only two other provinces give less money than Manitoba ... to their libraries... Friesen said the government gave only \$1.58 per person towards library operating expenses in 1976, and spent even less than that in 1978. Mr. Friesen said the government should pay a larger percentage of library costs. Currently, he said, the government covers only one-third of the province's library expenses... Mr. Friesen said 20% of all Manitobans were without libraries in 1976. Some communities such as Selkirk and Churchill also had to share their public libraries with the schools. The schools provide the bulk of library funding so most of the money spent goes towards educational material". (Winnipeg Tribune, June 11)

John Veitch, Chairman of the Centennial Committee announces his committee has decided on a Community Library as Selkirk's Centennial Project (to commemorate Selkirk's 100th birthday, and to be built in 1982) (Nov 27). "He indicated his decision

was reached after a survey of the community, a community workshop and after receiving presentation from four groups representing proposals made at an earlier workshop." He says a library met the committee criteria: "not only was this a fitting expression by Selkirk citizens of their faith in the future as well as a link with the past; but as important, it is a project that can involve the whole community, and can be brought to completion within the capacity of the community's fund-raising potential." He notes a community library received ongoing provincial and municipal funding. (SE, Nov 28)

1980 - Selkirk Town Council rejects Centennial Committee's proposal for a new community library (January). Mayor Balcaen says counsel "had to consider future costs in upkeep, personnel and supplies... He added that counsel felt that any project chosen should not end up costing the taxpayer money once it was built." A Selkirk Enterprise article claims the Centennial Committee decision caused controversy. "Recreation and sports interests made it known that a new sports complex or arena would be supported." The article also claims John Veitch, chairman of the Selkirk Centennial Committee, in a December 27 council meeting, "said he would consider resigning if council didn't follow the committee recommendation." (SE, Jan 16 1980) Centennial committee funds eventually go to both the arena and the library (?)

Terry Lulashnyk, Chairman of the Selkirk Community Library Committee responds angrily to the cancellation in a letter to the Selkirk Enterprise. He says the library committee expressed "sadness, disappointment, and disbelief" over the rejection. He says the committee was shocked that town council would override the decision of a council-approved committee chosen to select a project. "For the record, the mayor's suggestion that the library would be an ongoing expense is redundant as it has always been an ongoing expense - not a debt, an expense. The Town of Selkirk contributes less money per capita to its library than any other town in Manitoba." Lulashnyk is upset that no member of the library committee was invited to attend the town council meeting in which the library was turned down. He says the library committee blames council's decision "on pressure by a few visible and verbal sports enthusiasts and not on an informed decision based on facts." Earlier in the article, he states "it appears that the "Superjocks" of Selkirk see Selkirk Centennial as the only way to arouse enough support to begin a new sports complex for Selkirk. This complex, no matter how it is proposed, will be a debt to the taxpayers long after the balloons of the birthday party have popped." Lulashnyk claims it is by the Lord Selkirk School Division's commitment "that Selkirk can even claim to have a library." He notes the financial contributions to the library: the Town contributes one librarian and \$1500 for books per year, the school supplies location, upkeep and staff, and the province supplies legal structure and grant money for operating expenses (\$7500 in "this year"). (SE, Jan 30)

A survey conducted by the Selkirk Enterprise finds respondents wanted an arena over a library by almost three to one. Fifty households in Selkirk chosen by a random phone book selection found 60% wanted an arena, 22% wanted a library, 6% wanted neither and 12% had no opinion. (SE, Jan 30)

Letter to the editor in Selkirk Enterprise supports an arena. "Not just some citizens, a great many think a library should have a low priority. The schools have good libraries. What we do need is a new arena. It is a disgrace a town this size, to have to be ashamed of their arena." (SE, "Concerned Citizen", Jan 2)

Article in the Selkirk Enterprise by Bess Corby says, "it is interesting to note that 25 years ago the circulation in that old library was around 10,000 a year. Last year, the circulation of adult books was 4,500." (SE, April 9)

Jack Veitch later states council directed the committee not to pick a project that would increase municipal taxes. He says the committee rejected the arena proposal because "it would be too expensive since the taxpayer would have to put up the money for such a project". He also says the committee "were prepared to put up a library at no cost to the taxpayer... He said the town would have to put up some of the operating costs but the town was presently paying into the existing library system... and operating costs would not increase at all." (SE, April 16)

Fall election in Selkirk. New mayor Bill Shead "promised... to help in work towards [a new library] although not officially endorsed by council to receive the town's centennial funds." (SE, Jan 7, 1981) During elections, Shead said "there are three major things people of Selkirk want... third on the list [is] better cultural and recreational facilities including an arena and library". (SE, Oct 15, 1980)

1981 - A 1985 "Library News" article states that in 1981 "Selkirk stood 25th out of 25 library systems in municipal funding". (SE, March 19, 1985)

Newsletter from Selkirk and District Chamber of Commerce quotes on the need for a new library from the Steelelex report on the feasibility for downtown development. The report says, "There is substantial demand for a new Library. The present library facilities were a major issue with a considerable number of people. In Phase I we noted 'while the community appreciates the fact that the public library is located at two schools, it is evident that the facilities are inadequate. There is substantial demand for a centrally located downtown library with additional library material.' A good and adequate library is a public facility for the public good. It is something bordering on disgrace that Selkirk, a town of more than 10,500 people has its library split in two sections closeted by schools. There are those well able and prepared to operate a good library system and the children and other residents of Selkirk and district should not be without one... there seems to be no good or justifiable reason why Selkirk should be culturally deprived without a proper library facility. This is a centennial project which should get underway immediately. Surely the Manitoba Lottery Commission would support the cause to purchase a building and the Province would match the Town in annual operating grants. Lotteries, raffles and other promotions would provide the capital to provide the capital to provide this extremely important and essential facility." (SE, Jan 7)

Selkirk Library board receives its annual provincial library grant: \$16,900, matching the Town's contribution. (SE, Jan 21)

A Selkirk Enterprise article mentions some of the suggestions for a new library location from the past year. A town counsellor suggested it be moved back into the civic centre. A 1979 Parks and Recreation Department plan for a large recreation complex (with space for a library) was again looked at. But this facility would require a site near the town limits, and the article suggests that most people backing the library want a downtown location. The old post office is suggested, but the article claims it's "considered too expensive to refurbish for any use". Another suggestion is to place a library in the recently proposed Riverview Mall shopping complex. (SE, Jan 21)

A community library workshop is held at the high school. Karen Adams, director of provincial library services, says Selkirk provides the lowest financial support for library services in the province. She says the average contribution of the 32 library systems in the province was \$3.57 per capita; Selkirk contributed \$1.71 per capita. Dorothy Newton, library co-ordinator at the Lord Selkirk Comprehensive High School, says a major problem was getting more Selkirk residents interested in a new library system. Karen Adams suggests "support for a regional library in the rural municipalities might come from the people moving from Winnipeg to the residential sub-divisions south of Selkirk since they are used to good library service in the city." Newton notes that invitations to attend the workshop were sent to both St. Clements and St. Andrews council members but both groups declined the invitations. Lord Selkirk School Board Chairman George Schreyer "said it was unreasonable to expect support from the two rural municipalities until the town had made a commitment to a new library". Karen Adams says the present library system had difficulty getting grants "because of its tie-in with the school division.". Mayor Bill Shead requests people not think "library versus arena". Shead says, "We need a library as much as we need a new arena." Some possibilities from the workshop: "starting small and working in steps up to larger facilities", renting space to save capital costs, or building a complete regional library in order to receive more provincial funding. (SE, Feb 25)

According to a Selkirk Enterprise article, "separate steering committees representing Selkirk, St. Clements and St. Andrews have been formed to work towards the library project." (SE, Feb 25)

At the Community Workshop on the Future of Libraries (which was backed by the Selkirk and District Chamber of Commerce) (in January? April?), a twelve member Steering Committee is formed to plan all phases of a new library. (The Steering Committee was renamed the Red River Region Library Fund at a later date.) Members include: Carol English (chairman), Alice Belanger (co-chairman), Beth Maclaren, Dorothy Newton, Mickey Reid (recording secretary), Janet Smith, Marilyn Souter (Selkirk representative), Donna Borgford, Janet Collingwood (corresponding secretary), Judy Hookham (Treasurer and St. Clements representative), and Helen Johnson and George Schreyer (St. Andrews representatives). Bill Regehr (Chamber of Commerce member) and Karen Adams (Director of PLS) will serve as advisors. The committee is

preparing a presentation to the involved councils of Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements regarding the size, cost, location and services of a library, and will also plan fund-raising and enlist community support. (Regional News, April 21)

In a May 21 meeting, the library steering committee officially renames itself "The Red River Region Library Fund". In the meeting, recording secretary Marion Reid (who moved the motion to name the committee) mentions that the first public library in Manitoba was called the Red River Library. (Library Steering Committee minutes, May 21)

Marion Reid wrote, "over a five year period, the library building committee investigated 23 sites, five of them in great detail. Each investigation added greatly to the workload of the board, the librarian and her staff and the library's fundraising group." (MLA, March 1989)

In a Sept 28 meeting, Selkirk Town Council agrees to donate town-owned land for a library building, and to share operating costs for a regional library with St. Andrews and St. Clements. Council also "approved in principle the [library] committee's proposal [for a library]." The committee must raise the capital funds to build the building, a 10,000 square foot building, to be centrally located. Members of the committee will now meet with municipal representatives "to seek approval for their project". (SE, Sept 30)

1982 - Library at Lockport School officially named the Dorothy E. Newton Library. The article notes her community contributions: she set up the Lord Selkirk High School library, in 1971 she set up Centralized Libraries in the Division, training staff, organizing the libraries, and establishing operating procedures at each division library. She was an original member of the Public Library Committee that moved library facilities to the schools in 1974. She served as a library trustee when she was a resident of Selkirk and was an Advisory Member from 1976 to 1987. She also served from 1974 to 1982 as secretary of the Public Library Board, and when the Red River Region Library Fund began, "she became an active and contributing member of that group". (Regional News, March 16, 1982; SE, Sept 29, 1988)

Meeting of the Selkirk Community Library board. Janet Smith, committee member, reports the Lord Selkirk School Division contributes \$48,000 towards the cost of library services per year "that could be considered the town's expense". She reports that "over crowding at Robert Smith School has forced staff to take more than 2,000 books off the shelves and pack them away". Mayor Bill Shead says the town contributes so little (\$1.71 per capita or \$17,000 per year, the lowest per capita operating grant in the province) because the school division absorbs the largest library costs. "The board would have to demonstrate that the public uses more than what the present cost-sharing arrangement works out to", says Shead. He also says the community attitude is "one of satisfaction with the present library set-up. We have become so used to using the school facilities that we have lost sight of what a good public library can offer." Steve Banera, council member and library committee member, says he "supports the idea of more money for the present library system but he added that a better solution lies with building

a separate library for public use." Judy Hookman, treasurer of the RRRLF says, "This co-operative venture between the town and school board was viewed as an interim, not a permanent measure eight years ago". (SE, March 17)

Article in Regional News supports increased town funding for a library. "Though the library board's proposal will cost the town taxpayers an average of about \$7.00 on their tax bills this year it will be money well spent. The Community Library has languished for too long in the space it now shares with school libraries... The present physical arrangement clearly has a negative effect on use and makes it difficult to promote. The use of the library by the general public would appear to be lower than the board feels that it could be or would be if its objective of higher accessibility could be achieved". The article claims "there seems to be movement at least in St. Andrews for participation in a regional library concept with Selkirk. It is time that the town led the way to developing a regional library by establishing its own town library with a strong suggestion to the Community Library Committee to win regional funding through the co-operation of St. Andrews and St. Clements. To date, the Selkirk Community Library Board and the Red River Region Library Committee have been uncoordinated in their efforts to establish a regional library. If Selkirk comes through with its share of the funding for a library the two library groups will have to take well-co-ordinated and appropriate approaches to the three municipal governments." (Regional News, April 6)

Janet Smith, Public Relations Officer for the library board and library fund replies to April 6 Regional News article. She writes "the budget approved recently by Selkirk Town Council will cost Selkirk taxpayers \$4.00 per capita in 1982, while the estimated budget for 1983 is around \$7.00 per capita." She refutes the article's claim of uncoordination between the library board and library fund. (Regional News, April 18)

On April 5, town votes to increase library funding. Three of the four councillors express reservations, according to the Selkirk Enterprise. "Dave McKenzie opposed provision for \$39,796 to set up a new community library in the downtown area. Instead, he called for the original plans for a regional library with support from the R.M.'s of St. Clements and St. Andrews to be set up before any changes are made in the present system. 'It's high time the (rural) municipalities paid their share in some of these things. The people of Selkirk shouldn't have to pay the full shot.' He warned that indications are the new library would need double the funding in the following year. McKenzie's amendment to take the increased library funding out of the budget was defeated 3 to 1. Steve Banera countered that the books stored in boxes at the schools could deteriorate." The article claims funding will increase from under \$2 to "a little over \$3". It also says the library committee will consider space proposals in the Arena Plaza Shopping Centre and the old federal building on Main and Manitoba. The committee says "they plan to begin operation in new quarters by June 1". (SE, April 7)

Selkirk Community Library Board agrees to rent a 2500 square foot space in the Arena Plaza Shopping Centre. They expect to open on August 3; the community library services in the schools would then close. The board agrees to a three-year lease with Komco Ltd., starting July 1. The library will be charged \$5.50 - \$5.00 a square foot for

the first year, \$6.50 the following year, and \$7.50 the year after that. The library will also have to pay for utilities, land taxes, maintenance, repairs and renovations. Staff will increase from one librarian with occasional clerical work, to two full-time librarians and one part-time clerk.

Other sites were rejected because the lease price would have exceeded the Arena Plaza bid, and because the board had no capital outlet. Other reasons for rejection include access problems for the handicapped and elderly, and lack of parking space. Town council approves the lease in a June 28 meeting, again with the objection of Councillor McKenzie. A Selkirk Enterprise article claims St. Andrews and St. Clements rural municipalities were approached separately for support by the RRRLF in 1981, and also "this spring" at the Selkirk District Planning Board meeting. "No answer has been given [by the rural municipalities], according to the article. It states "with no funding coming in from the rural councils to make the library a regional operation, residents outside the town of Selkirk will have to pay a user fee for the library services which will likely be in the \$8 to \$15 range." The article also says the RRRLF and library board will meet with the Cultural Affairs Minister to explore more provincial funding to build a permanent facility. (SE, July 7)

Selkirk Community Library, 373 Main Street opens to the public on September 1. Minnie Romanica reports that "274 new memberships had been signed out as well as 653 books in the first four days the library was open." Selkirk residents receive free memberships; non-residents pay a \$10 membership, or \$15 for a family membership. Official opening is on October 31.

A Selkirk Enterprise article states, "The taxpayers of the town of Selkirk contribute \$40,148 to the operation of the library. The provincial government provides a matching grant of 437,163. The local municipalities of St. Clements and St. Andrews do not, at present, contribute to the operation of the library. The Selkirk Community Library Board and the Red River Region Library Fund hope to establish a regional library in Selkirk with all three municipalities contributing. At that time, residents of the municipalities would have the use of the library without a direct charge" (SE, Sept 15).

A Selkirk Enterprise article states the rural municipalities are unlikely to join a regional library effort. " 'Maybe it's just as well they go to Winnipeg' said Rural Municipality of St. Andrews Secretary-Treasurer Leslie Price. He added that councillors had little direct contact and information from the Red River Region Library Fund Committee for the last six months. 'Our boys weren't too impressed.' A committee made up of Deputy Reeve Herman Wherle and Councillors Al Shrupka and Curly Gagnon has been appointed to look into the matter, but Reeve Peter Duchek commented that the municipality had more important problems to deal with." Duchek said St. Andrews councillors did not want to ask taxpayers for money to support a library because of a bleak economy and tight finances. "St. Clements Reeve Victor Watko looked at the possibility of a regional library cautiously. 'Over half our people would be so far away from the library they wouldn't use it,' he said." Watko said it would be easier to support a stripped-down version of the library concept presented at the Selkirk and District Planning Board last

April, which called for 12 employees and 10,000 square feet. The article states the floor space is determined by a provincial government formula that accounts for the population to be served. Regional library committee chairman, Vic Loewen, says the council might consider proposing a smaller venture if it would gain rural support. Red River Region Library Fund committee member Janet Smith says she didn't expect a reply from the R.M.'s for about a year, until residents give more feedback. (SE, Sept 15)

Cultural Affairs Minister endorses a regional library concept, but commits no funding. He urges the library board and regional library board continue their efforts to get the rural municipalities involved. He suggests the boards prepare a regional library proposal. (Regional News, Sept 28)

Regional News article states the new library is "booming". "Circulation statistics for the month of September show an increase of 268% over the average circulation April to August at Robert Smith School. Not only citizens of Selkirk are enjoying the new facility; 93 non-residents registered and paid their fees during that month." (Regional News, Oct 13) Marion Reid wrote, "The outstanding success that resulted from this move boosted the library's image as a desirable and essential service. People rushed to investigate the library and use its services. Innovative programming for children and adults attracted people who had previously shown little interest in the library. An interlibrary loan service was established and reference services provided at the library surprised and pleased people seeking information". (MLA, March 1989)

1983 - Marion (Mickey) Reid hired as new Head Librarian, starting Jan 1. Minnie Romanica stays as assistant. (Regional News, Dec 21, 1982) One library technician and two clerks are also hired. (SE, Jan 19) A "Library News" article states membership is 1,967 members: 1,525 from Selkirk, 257 from St. Andrews, 167 from St. Clements and 18 from other towns. In February, 3,610 items were borrowed. (SE, March 9) Marion Reid later wrote, the library "was soon overcrowded". (MLA, March 1989)

"Library News" article claims "one out of every five residents of Selkirk is a library member. As of August 31, one year after moving to the downtown location, 2221 Selkirk citizens have borrowed 31,176 items from the library. Of the total membership of 2856, one in every five library members is a non-resident member. St. Andrews has 350 members, which is over 12% of our total membership. St. Clements, with 264 members, comprises over 9% of the total membership, and 31 patrons live in nearby towns. These 635 non-residents have borrowed 10,919 items in the past year." (SE, Sept 13)

Marion Reid wrote that the town council contributed \$62,145 (\$6.45 per capita) in 1983 from tax dollars, and the province contributed \$46,700. (MLA, March 1989)

Questionnaire on regional library concept sent to rural and town council candidates. 12 of 16 town Mayoral candidates reply; 3 of 13 candidates from St. Andrews respond, 7 of 13 St. Clements candidates reply. Two of the three replies from St. Andrews are in favour of a regional library. From St. Clements, two supported the concept, two opposed it, and the rest were non-committal. One St. Clements candidate who supported the

library, Jacqueline Ash, comments, "perhaps if this election brings forth some candidates who know what the true value of a true library is, we will have one." An opposed St. Clements candidate, Dorothy Craigie "suggested the school division be approached for such a regional library project instead of the municipality". Mayoral candidate Bud Oliver says he is in favour of the concept, but says the funding should come from community efforts, not tax dollars. "I do not see the Town of Selkirk entering a movement to help convince the two R.M.'s how they should spend their taxpayers' money," he said. Selkirk incumbent, Dave McKenzie, says the rural municipalities would have to support the town before the concept would work. "Red River Region Library Fund board chairperson Carol English said she wasn't surprised by the local rural response since both municipal councils never got back to the board after presentations were made to them two years ago. She said the board might have to look closely at the implications of the survey and perhaps concentrate their efforts on building adequate facilities for the town only ... In general, the fundraising board chairman says, new candidates tended to be more positive than the incumbents." (SE, Dec 18)

"Library News" states library membership is at 3,225 patrons, and 42,870 items were checked out in 1983. The article says the library has 8 staff members, "whose combined working hours are equivalent to 4.5 full-time employees. Minnie Romanica, Ev Milner and Pam Linklater "check out your books and share workroom routines"; Jan Cook is secretary and "Storylady"; Linda Simard is Library Technician; Dawn Bandar and Dawn Southern are casual workers; Marion Reid is Head Librarian. (SE, Dec 6)

1984 - Marion Reid says "library users will suffer if Town Council fails to give the public library an additional \$5000 this year. The library board had asked the finance committee for \$5160: \$3160 to cover its deficit and \$2000 for new books. Before it went to council the amount was pared down to just the deficit figure. Councillor Dave McKenzie opposed the increase, saying it would open other departments to ask for more money. Councillor Sharon Shewchuk refuted this, saying decisions regarding department funding are looked at individually. Council split the decision 3-3; Mayor Bud Oliver cast the deciding vote, opposing more funding. He claimed "my position was to stay with the status quo... I didn't feel I should be making new decisions for council". Reid says the town gave \$67,145 to the library this year, and the province gave \$46,688. Councillor Shewchuk was disappointed with council's decision. She said "when council cut back the library's 1984 budget increase from \$20,000 to \$5000 it said it would consider additional funding if the library couldn't make ends meet". (SE, Oct 30)

Marion Reid says "In the past three years, the library board has stepped up its 'gentle push' for the regional body by sending more information to the councillors, but those reports aren't filtering down to the people. 'Until the residents clamour for participation' the municipalities are not going to join, she said." She also says parent councils from St. Andrews, William S. Patterson and Happy Thought Schools have approached their councils. Olaf Hardy, library board member, says, "many people assume the library is a regional one". Non-resident fees account for only 2.5% of the library budget, although non-residents borrowed 30% of the items circulated at the library. "Financial equity doesn't concern the two municipal councils because not all their constituents use the

Selkirk library. St. Andrews Reeve Peter Ducheck and St. Clements Reeve Victor Watko both said their municipalities cover such large areas that only a portion of the residents use the services in Selkirk. 'What will the library do for the people in the north. The library wouldn't service all our people,' Ducheck said. Residents in the south end of St. Clements shop in Winnipeg and those in the north travel to Beausejour, Watko said. Only the people in the East Selkirk area are geared to Selkirk." The library board claims it will expand its services to help distant communities, through book corners in local establishments or with a bookmobile. (SE, Dec 11)

Provincial government closes the Legislative Library, which contains Lord Selkirk's and George Gunn's books, to the public (WFP, May 3)

In January, non-resident fees rise to \$25 for individuals, \$35 for families. The increase is in response to circulation statistics that show while 30% of library users are non-residents and 25% of circulated items are withdrawn by non-residents, only 2.5% of the library's total income comes from non-resident fees. Library board members again stress regionalization would eliminate this discrepancy, plus the province would match the financial contributions of the rural municipalities. (SE, Dec 11, 1985)

Happy Thought School Parent Advisory Council supports a regional library, saying "it is far more economical to belong to a regional library than any other scheme of library service. Therefore it is resolved by the [HTSPAC] that there be active exploration with the adjacent municipalities about forming a regional public library... This motion was carried unanimously and I'm sure a good many more residents of St. Clements would agree with this motion". (SE, Feb 7)

Library traffic increases. January 1984 loans are a 70% increase over January 1983 items (5018 in 1984; 2958 in 1983). Total membership is 3421. Selkirk members total 2599 - 25% of the total population. 24% of the membership is non-residents: 13.5% from St. Andrews, 9.5% from St. Clements, 1% from other towns. (SE, Feb 14) In the first five days in March, library attendance rose 53% from the previous year. A Regional News article claims "It is obvious that the increased and heavy usage has a lot to do with the library's central and highly visible new location in the centre of the Arena Plaza... A few years ago, [when the library was in the schools]... the lack of visibility and easy access meant a much reduced use by the general public... The library and those who use it have a good case to make for continued support by town council and citizens... The library's figures justify it. Congratulations." (Regional News, March 20)

The library board attempts to purchase the old Toronto Dominion bank building, but are outbid in a public auction. (Regional News, April 10 & 17)

Library budget is set at \$149,457. The library board receives its 1984 provincial operating grant of \$46,688.56. The town of Selkirk's contribution is \$67,145. Other funds coming from employment grants and gifts total \$35,624. The town contributes 45% of the total income, the province adds 31% of the total, and grants and gifts added 24% of the total. A "Library News" article claims, "In 1984, Town of Selkirk's subsidy

was 4.3 times the amount contributed in 1979, a 331% increase. The province's support was nine times that given in 1979, a 785% increase. At the same time, book borrowing has increased to 14 times the 1979 level, an increase of 1280%, from 4500 books borrowed in 1979 to 62,000 books borrowed in 1984... In Selkirk, one in every three people is a registered library member, and 65% of these resident members are adults." (Regional News, July 24, 1984; SE, March 19, 1985)

1985 - The library board, regional library fund, Selkirk Waterfront Development Corporation and town council propose a \$1 million multi-purpose waterfront building to house a public library, tourist information centre and interpretative centre of the natural history of the region. Board waits for approval of a \$400,000 grant from Destination Manitoba. The board also applies for a \$50,000 grant from Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation Department. Red River Region Library Fund makes its first contribution for the building of a new library, \$25,000, to the library board. (Selkirk Enterprise, Jan 22)

Town of Selkirk gives the library board official support for a new library, Mayor Bud Oliver breaking a 3-3 split decision by council. Council will establish a non-profit corporation to construct a building, the building is to be leased to the town, and the town will arrange a long-term lease with the library. The three councillors who opposed the commitment say they did so out of monetary concerns, not because they were opposed to a new library. Councillor Dave McKenzie believes the town can't afford any further expenses, given that it's boosted its contributions to the library by 580% in the past five years. Mayor Oliver, however, claims owning a building will cost no more than the library's current operating costs, and the RRRLF will be responsible for the mortgage. Oliver states the town's increase in library contributions was a result of moving the library from the schools to its present home, plus the rent and book purchase costs. "There are certain services that are required in town and the Selkirk library is one of them," he said. Sharon Shewchuk, council's library board representative, and Otto Gebhardt "mentioned that more money is set aside for the parks and recreation department although fewer people use the services. 33% of townspeople use the library, compared with 18.25% who use the arena, according to Shewchuck". (SE, March 19)

"Library News" claims in 1984 "Selkirk stood 10th out of 37 rural public libraries in municipal contributions to operating expenses". The article claims in 1981 Selkirk stood 25th out of 25 library systems in municipal funding. (SE, March 19)

In April, Destination Manitoba declines the board's \$400,000 grant application. The reasons given: that a large part of the project was a library, which does not contribute to tourism, and that a great amount of the necessary money was not yet raised. The Interpretative Centre concept is scrapped; the board now looks at purchasing the Boberg and Pruden building on 415 Main Street. (SE, April 30)

In May, the board drops its plan to move into the Boberg and Pruden building, claiming "the building would not meet the special needs of a library as recommended by the Canadian Library Association Committee on Standards". In a Selkirk Journal article,

library board chairperson, Olaf Hardy, says the building would have been too small (5000 square feet) if the rural municipalities chose to develop a regional library. (SE, May 21; SJ, May 22)

St. Andrews Parents Council continues to encourage the R.M. to set up a regional library system. They recommend either a grant to the Selkirk Library in exchange for free memberships or that the R.M. pay for non-resident fees. The R.M. turned them down due to lack of funds. The R.M. also rejected the establishment of a municipal library, saying it would also be cost-prohibitive. "According to [St. Andrews Reeve Peter] Duchek, there are only 500 out of about 9000 residents who are currently members of the Selkirk Library, a number which does not justify the RM's use of municipal funds... According to Duchek, a regional library would not be able to serve both the north and the south of the region by virtue of its location." He also says "something could be arranged for next year once the new budget is set up for the RM but he adds some of the councillors are totally against the idea". (SJ, July 3)

Library receives its provincial contribution of \$46,463. (SE, July 23)

Board narrows its choices for a new location from 23 to 3: Superior and Eveline, the Hooker Lumber building, or space in the Civic Centre. (SJ, July 31)

A numbered company (consisting of town council members, library board members, and RRRLF members) is formed, and negotiations to buy the Hooker Lumber building are begun with owner Joe Slogan. (Marion Reid later wrote, "Because the town was unwilling to contribute any capital costs other than the gift of land, it was necessary to form a numbered company in order to secure a mortgage.") (MLA, March 1989) The deal calls for a ten-year lease on an annual rent cost of 50% of the mortgage. The annual mortgage payment would be \$34,780 - half to be paid by the town, half by the library fund. The total price of the building is \$352,000, which some town counsellors feel is too high. The town commissions an independent appraisal of the building by Warren Baldwin. (SJ, Sept 18) The appraisal values the property at \$250,000, which indicates Slogan's asking price is too high; Slogan rejects this appraisal and orders another by independent appraiser Dennis Browaty, who confirms Slogan's \$350,000 asking price (SJ, Sept 25). In a related incident, Councillor Dave McKenzie claims in a Selkirk Enterprise article that a fellow councillor, Bernie Wagner, "threatened to sue him [McKenzie] if he made the appraised value of the Hooker Lumber building public." Wagner denied the allegation.

A Sept 25 Selkirk Journal article claims the numbered company has agreed in principle to buy the building. Joe Slogan says the final asking price is \$313,172, not \$352,000, which was the original negotiating price. Mayor Oliver suggests council thinks the price is still too high and will reject the offer. Councillor Dave McKenzie is also sceptical of the operating costs. McKenzie claims the building's heating bill last year was \$10,000, based on Manitoba Hydro estimates. "Slogan, using figures from income tax statements, said the buildings total utility costs between 1982 and 1984 averaged about \$5000 per year". (In a related note, Slogan submitted a letter to town council on September 23 which states Councillor McKenzie "appears dedicated to killing the opportunity for a suitable

permanent home for the Selkirk Library".) The town's position infuriates library supporters. "Selkirk fundraisers say they will scrap a four-year effort to find the town library a new home unless the local council allows them to buy the building they want. Jerry Loan, co-chairman of the fundraising group, said \$50,000 in donations collected so far will be put into a trust fund if the council rejects the proposed library site. 'We'll shut the whole thing down and let the people decide what they want to do with them (councillors) next fall in the election,' Loan said... Loan said the fundraisers have fought the council over the library for four years and, if the proposal dies, they will quit. 'We've just had it,' he said. 'We're burned out.' Fund chairman John Moss says the fund will hold a campaign to win support - they will send letters to library members, asking for support. 'If the councillors still won't let them [the numbered company] buy the Hooker building, the [library] groups will support candidates in next fall's election who say they want the new home', says Jerry Loan." "Moss said the groups were surprised council rejected the proposal last week because they had the unanimous support of council to negotiate for the building. He said the proposal failed because two of the three councillors who support the purchase were out of town. 'The vast majority of people want a library done,' says Moss".

Mayor Oliver says "the [library] issue goes beyond rent because the town would be responsible for the building if the groups failed to make the mortgage payments." A Selkirk Enterprise article claims "some councillors have expressed concern that the RRRLF will not raise enough money each year to cover the mortgage costs [with 12% interest charges per year], making the town and the taxpayers pick up the rest of the costs. 'With the arena out there looking for money and the library board at the same time? How can they do it? It's impossible,' said McKenzie. Library supporters, however, say that other revenue besides fundraising will go towards covering the mortgage. Revenue such as office space rented out on the second floor of the building and the possible sale of surrounding land to a developer building a downtown mall around the library may also be a potential revenue, said John Moss."

In an October 1 Selkirk Enterprise article, Joe Slogan says, "regardless of appraisals, the building is still a 'good deal' when compared to the cost of constructing a new building for the library." The article also says "The Library Board and RRRLF re-iterated Slogan's figures of around \$28 per square foot cost for the lumber building excluding land and renovations, compared to \$60 to \$85 per square foot for a new facility to be built. 'Why build a building when we got one right here,' said Olof Hardy... Hardy and John Moss said that the town's portion of the lease agreement to cover the mortgage payments would be \$1300 less than the annual lease payments for the library in it's present location."

Meanwhile, the possibility of moving back to the high school is considered, since the high school was constructing a new library facility. "Setting up a free-standing library in this town is about tenth on my list of priorities," says LSSD Trustee Don Callander. "Don't get me wrong, I'm not opposed to a new library but I don't like the way they [the RRRLF] are going about this," he adds. Town councillor Bernie Wagner was also suspicious of the RRRLF. "The RRRLF [board] has been playing games so no one would know what they are up to," he claims, "They knew about [the new high school

library construction] weeks ago and council never knew it existed... We had to pull the information out of [John Moss, chairman of the RRRLF]". Don Callander thinks merging the two libraries has merit, and that the library board has not looked at options other than their own building. "The building [the RRRLF] are looking at [Hooker's] will be one horrendous expense; it's a bloody barn, a cinderblock box," he argues. School board trustee Shirley Herda disagrees with a school-public library merger, however, stating it was tried before and was unsuccessful. John Moss claims the RRRLF considered a merger and rejected it. The Selkirk Journal says, "There were a number of considerations in this decision. The Manitoba Library Services Branch disagreed with the idea, the provincial government would withdraw its grant support and it was not recommended in the feasibility study done by the RRRLF (SJ, Oct 9). Town councillors Bernie Wagner and Dave McKenzie were still interested in discussing the concept of merging. "We can amalgamate, regionalize and cut costs at the same time," says McKenzie. "We want to make sure we don't put up two structures at the taxpayers expense," says Wagner. Wagner originally backed the Hooker purchase, but changed his mind after hearing of the high school option. He believed the school site would distribute costs among all area taxpayers, not Selkirk taxpayers alone. Counsellors Dave McKenzie and Al Baty claimed the new school facilities made the purchase of a 10,000 square foot building (Hooker's) unnecessary. In the end, town council rejected the possibility of moving public library facilities back into the high school. (SE, Oct. 8)

In an October 15 meeting, town council vetoes the purchase of the Hooker building. "Council voted unanimously to reject the building's \$313,000 price tag and told the group it could try to negotiate a better deal (Winnipeg Free Press, Oct 16)." Council said they would consider further negotiations with Hooker Lumber owner, Joe Slogan. The Free Press also states "most of the people were at the meeting to push for a new building". The Selkirk Enterprise claims attendance was about 100 people. Council claims the Hooker price was more than taxpayers should bear, the price was more than they had the building appraised for, consideration should be given to joining the high school location, and St. Andrews and St. Clements municipalities would not contribute to the library's costs. There was also speculation that renovation costs would exceed the proposed \$16,000 limit, and that operating costs would also be more than anticipated. Earlier, Marion Reid said "operating costs would be higher at the new location, but the building is almost four times larger than the present library." RRRLF chairman John Moss argued at the meeting "that the town would not be liable to pay more than it's 50% share of the annual library mortgage at a cost of \$17,390, \$1300 less than what it pays annually for it's current location. The library board would pay the remaining 50% of the mortgage through RRRLF fundraising, grants and donations. Once the mortgage is paid off (in ten years), the board had agreed to sell the building to the town for one dollar. At the request of council Moss stated he had persuaded 20 people to sign guaranteed notes of \$5000 a piece to assure the library fund would meet it's annual mortgage share (SE, Oct 22)." The night after the meeting, Moss announces he will step down as RRRLF chairman. (Hooker Controversy sources: SE, Sept 17 - Oct 22; SJ, July 31 - Oct 23; Winnipeg Free Press, Sept 30 & Oct 16)

After the vote, the RRRLF urges town council in a letter to establish its position on library services regarding funding, size, price, location and time frame for a library building. (SJ, Oct 23)

Marion Reid later wrote, "Political battles were well-publicized in the local media, with public library issues making headlines week to week." (MLA, March 1989)

A building at 474 Main Street is considered as a new library site, as is a new offer to purchase the Boberg and Pruden building at 145 Main Street. The library board rejects the sites because, according to board member Olaf Hardy, "they don't fit the criteria that has been set by town council". Hardy then announces the search for a site has been temporarily suspended "until the board meets jointly with the councils of Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements [and the RRRLF] 'to encourage the formation of a regional library'." The town council decides to arrange a meeting between the four parties after receiving the RRRLF letter asking for town's position on library services. (SJ, Nov 13)

Minnie Romanica retires from the library, after 23.5 years of service. A public reception at the library honours her retirement on Nov 20. (SE, Nov 26; SJ, Nov 27)

1986 - As of December 1985, the library has 4353 registered members. 3625 are from Selkirk, 397 from St. Andrews, 291 from St. Clements and 40 from other towns. (SE, Jan 14)

Marion Reid later wrote, "municipal elections in 1986 saw an upswing in library support and new encouragement from elected officials". (MLA, March 1989)

Selkirk Kiwanis Club donates \$10,000; Selkirk Lions Club donates \$5000; Selkirk Rotary Club donates \$6000. (SE, March 11)

St. Clements municipality vote against a regional library 4-1. Councillor John Kuzminski said he doubted residents in the RM's northern wards would travel to Selkirk to use the library. He added only 10 to 15 percent of ward four residents would use the library. St. Clements Reeve Victor Watko noted southern St. Clements residents already had free access to Winnipeg library facilities. Meanwhile St. Andrews Reeve Peter Ducheck "admitted that his council does not consider the [regional library] concept to be a priority. 'I can say that there's quite a strong feeling that we're against the concept,' said Ducheck, adding that the costs involved are a major drawback." (SJ, April 16)

The numbered company signs papers to purchase an 8,700 square foot site at 303 Main Street; town council approves the sale. The property cost is \$66,000. The town contributes the \$38,000 it made from the sale of adjacent property to a Robin's Donut franchise, and the library committee contributes \$28,000 to pay off the land. The town also has the option to purchase the lot next to 303 Main when it goes on the market. (SJ, April 23, May 28, June 18) On September 30, town council approves in principle conceptual designs for a 5000 square foot building by A.J.R. Custom Drafting and Building, Ltd. The RRRLF and library board begin an aggressive fund-raising drive (SE, Oct 14).

1987 - "Library News" says as of December 31 1986, the library has a total membership of 4535. 4161 are Selkirk residents (91.8%), 374 are non-residents (8.2%). 42% of the entire population of Selkirk are registered library members. Selkirk taxpayers paid \$89,250 or 53% of the library budget. Provincial grants equalled \$45,925 or 27% of the total budget. The town's contribution is 7th highest out of 35 library systems in Manitoba. (SE, Jan 27)

As of February, the board is in phase II of the new library plans - completion of detailed blueprints and final specifications for a 5000 square foot building. Once town council approves these plans, a contract will be formed with a general contractor and tenders will be called for. Library Chairman Fred Coppock says the project will cost \$300,000, \$70,000 of which the RRRLF has already raised. He also said the board's immediate goal is to provide a library for Selkirk, but he hoped to someday form a regional library with St. Andrews and St. Clements. (SJ, Jan 24)

Joe Slogan offers to sell two-thirds of the Hooker Lumber building to the board for \$300,000. The library board considers the offer but rejects it, saying they are happy with progress at the 303 Main Street location, and had no interest in only owning two-thirds of a building. (SJ, March 24)

The province announces a 21% increase in its support of rural library operating costs. (Winnipeg Free Press, April 10)

Construction of the library is delayed when the library and ARJ Custom Drafting and Building Ltd. fail to agree to terms for the building of the library. Library seeks tenders within a \$300,000 price limit. (April 14)

Library board publishes an open letter to residents of St. Andrews and St. Clements urging them to encourage their councillors to form a regional library system (SE, SJ, June 9)

Provincial government awards last of the Rural Public Libraries grant money to the library board (\$37,500 on June 16, \$12,500 to be awarded upon library completion). Construction of the library proceeds: Thomas Design Builders is contracted to build the new library at a cost of \$239,850. (SE, June 16) Construction begins in July.

July 1987 is the busiest month to date at the library. People borrowed 8,380 items - 43% more than in July 1986. 100 people joined the library in July, bringing total membership to 4900, a 13% increase over July 1986. 45% of Selkirk's population are now library members. (SE, Aug 11)

Kiwanis Club of Selkirk donates \$7806 towards the library building fund (SE, Oct 20).

Library announces the last day to check out books at 373 Main Street is October 31. The library will be closed from November 1 to 11, and will reopen in its 303 Main Street location on November 12. (SJ, Oct 27)

On November 12, the Selkirk Community Library opens in its permanent home, 303 Main Street. It holds an official opening on December 13. (SJ, Nov 10; SE Dec 8)

The library receives some generous grants and donations in 1987. Among them: \$12,500 from the Manitoba Community Places Program for carpet and sidewalks, \$11,400 from the Manitoba Community Services Council to purchase a microfiche/printer, \$5000 from the Selkirk and District Lion's Club, \$2000 from Gaynor's, \$2000 from the Toronto Dominion Bank, \$2000 from the Manitoba Rolling Mills, \$689 from the Notre Dame Catholic Women's League and \$200 from the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 42. (SE, Dec 8)

Library use continues to grow. "In the first two weeks [of the new library's opening] there was a 58% increase in the use of materials over the same period last year". (SJ, Dec 22)

According to a report by the Manitoba Library Development committee, nearly 200,000 Manitobans have no access to public libraries. "The private report by representatives of the Manitoba library community has called for major changes to public library legislation and development in Manitoba" (SJ, Jan 19).

By the end of 1987, the library has 5136 members who borrowed 70,729 items. Membership increased 13% over last year, and circulation increased 18%. 4668 members (91%) of the total memberships are Selkirk residents - 47% of Selkirk's total population. All non-residents accounted for 468 (9%) of the total membership. Selkirk residents borrowed 52,962 items in 1987, 75% of the total circulation. Non-residents borrowed 17,767 items in 1987, 25% of the total circulation. (SE, Jan 26, 1988)

1988 - Library board again campaigns in an attempt to form regional services. St Andrews Reeve Peter Ducheck says his councillors discussed regionalization, but "they again took a negative approach to joining". Again councillors believed a small number of constituents would use the library, too few to justify a tax increase (SJ, April 12).

As of April 7, the library fund has paid \$257,000 of its mortgage, with only \$179,000 left to pay. When the library first agreed on mortgage terms, they were allowed up to ten years to pay it off. Marion Reid hopes to have the mortgage paid off within three years. (SJ, April 12)

In July, Dorothy Newton donates \$5000 to finance the library purchase of a computer. Selkirk becomes only the second rural library in Manitoba to have a computer (SJ, Nov 1).

On September 22, Dorothy Newton passes away (SE, Sept 28).

Effective January 1 1989, the library announces it will charge \$35 for non-resident fees - regardless if the membership is for a family or an individual. "This change is an attempt to bring the non-resident user fee closer to the average cost-per-member to operate the library" Non-residents are asked to consider taking steps to form a regional library (SJ, Dec 13)

1989 - On April 23, Minnie Romanica passés away (Winnipeg Free Press, April 23)

Manitoba Culture Minister Bonnie Mitchelson appoints an eight-member public library advisory board to develop a multi-year plan for improving library services. She also plans a detailed review of the Public Libraries Act. She noted the province has been without a library advisory board since 1969. "Manitoba has a higher percentage of citizens unserved by public libraries than any other province," says Michelson. "She said she wants to improve accessibility to library services in areas that are now underserved, as well as finding ways to improve the way services are delivered." (Winnipeg Free Press, June 1)

Marion Reid retires on June 22. A public reception at the library honours her. (SJ, July 27) Nancy Vandenberg replaces her.

Marion Reid wrote the town contributed \$115, 300 (\$11.50 per capita) from tax money ("the fourth highest in municipal support for libraries in rural Manitoba"), and the province contributed \$58, 900 (MLA, March 1989)

As of September, the mortgage is down to \$130,000 (SJ, Sept 26).

In 1989, total library membership increases again, up 16% from the previous year. The current membership stood at 6449 members. 54% of Selkirk residents have a library membership. Non-residents made up 16% of the total membership; they checked out an average of 23 books per person, compared to 13 items per person for residents. Almost half of the new memberships in 1989 were non-residents. Members signed out 83,398 items that year, a 2% increase over last year. (SJ, Feb 27) Marion Reid wrote "rapid collection development has been necessary, with holdings growing from 10,500 to 24,000 titles in six years and periodical titles increasing from 35 to over 100 titles at present." (MLA, March 1989)

1990 - The mortgage is down to \$100,000 by April (SJ, April 10)

Maxine Watson becomes Head Librarian on August 13 (SE, Aug 16)

1991 - Dave Rozniatowski becomes Head Librarian (SJ, Jan 29)

1995 - Library begins automation in September.

1997 - The RM of St. Andrews schedules a consultation meeting with the public for October 16 at the Clandeboye Hall to discuss forming a regional library system. The library board presents a proposal that would give St. Andrews residents full-standing membership on the library board for \$3.75 per capita. St. Andrews residents would be entitled to free memberships. A branch library office in Clandeboye is considered (the idea is later dropped). (SJ, Sept 29)

Late in the year, the library no longer charges for renewals of St. Andrews residents' library cards. St. Andrews residents wishing to join the library for the first time are advised to wait, pending the results of the RM of St. Andrews' decision.

1998 - Effective January 1, all residents of St. Andrews have free access to the Selkirk Community Library. The RM will contribute \$37,500 annually to the library board (that amount will be matched by the province). The RM says the "cost to join the library will come from the RM's operating expense fund, so taxes will not go up". (SJ, Dec 1, 1997)

On February 10, the library introduces an Internet computer available for patron access (The Reader, Jan/Feb). A multi-media computer holding encyclopaedias on CD-ROM is added a few months later.

By April 31, the library has issued 778 new non-resident memberships (The Reader, May)

WORKS CITED

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Library Steering Committee minutes
Manitoba Culture and Heritage (1946)
Manitoba Library Association (1984)
Manitoba Library Association (1989)
Public Library Services (1956)
Regional News
Report of the Library Committee to the Selkirk Area Development Board (1971)
Selkirk Enterprise
Selkirk Expositor
Selkirk Journal
Selkirk: The First Hundred Years
The Reader
Unknown report (1977/1978?)
Unknown report (1984?)
Winnipeg Free Press
Winnipeg Tribune