



# 70 YEARS AND ON

HISTORY OF THE CARSTAIRS PUBLIC LIBRARY

SEPTEMBER 2021



## WHAT'S INSIDE

Celebrating our Past

Board, Staff & Acknowledgements

Looking to the Future

## LET'S CELEBRATE

It is with great excitement that we celebrate our 70th birthday this year. In part because we are coming out of a challenging year but also because we are at the start of some great new programs and services. The Library Board has just put in place our new 2021-2025 Plan of Service with some ambitious goals for our library for the years ahead. The Library Staff are hard at work planning a full slate of programs and services to help fulfill these goals and meet the needs of our growing active community.

## DEDICATION

This history would be incomplete without paying tribute to all the unsung heroes and heroines who have given their time and support to our library. They are too numerous to name individually but their efforts are recognized and appreciated. They can take pride in knowing that they have built the solid foundation that is allowing our library to grow and flourish.





## GETTING STARTED

The idea of a Public Library in Carstairs was first suggested at a Home and School meeting. Mrs. Mabel Sherriffs had heard that the Province of Alberta would provide a dollar-for-dollar grant to the Community Library. The difficulty was that the Provincial grant applied only to book purchases. Somehow the Library had to raise enough money to pay its own rent, buy its supplies, and hire any necessary staff.

Despite the difficulties, a Library Board was formed in 1951, consisting of; Reverend J. Kirk as Chairman, Kay Clark as Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. Boyce from the L.O.D.E., Jean Wilkinson from the Farm Women's Union, Bill Sheehan from the Student's Union, and Carl Pearson from the Board of Trade, and Hazel Shaw as Librarian.

The I.O.D.E. donated \$60.00 to get started. Mr. Len Hoare, the jeweler next door to Beckner's Men's Wear, offered to rent some space in his store to the Library. Mr. Joe Williamson agreed to build some shelves.

Books were donated from many private libraries,

and were collected by volunteers: Albert Hobbs, Kay Clark, Rev. Kirk and Robert Shaw. The organizations had raised \$150.00 for us to spend on new books. The first book-buying committee, headed by Hazel Shaw, traveled to Calgary to buy from the Alberta Book and Novelty Store. Mrs. Leila Alexander was our advisor on numbering and classifying books. Mrs. Marie Thew, Jean Wilkinson, Edna Hobbs and Ada Turner helped in getting the books ready for the shelves. By December 8th, 1951 the Library was ready for business. It was decided to charge one dollar for a family and twenty five cents for an individual to obtain a library card.

In 1952, supporting organizations included the Home and School, Order of the Eastern Star and Town Council. Later this list was extended to include the Maccabees Lodge, Weight Watchers, West Zion Mennonites, New Bergthal Church Women, United Church Women, Canadian Legion, Legion Auxiliary, Carstairs Volunteer Fire Department Ladies group and the Old-Timers. These groups donated money annually, supplied volunteer help, sold memberships and turned the effort into a genuine Community Library.

## ON THE MOVE

By 1956, the library had outgrown the corner in the Jewelry Shop and moved to Mrs. Marbach's building using the front area where Century 21 was later located. The Library was providing a Wednesday noon hour service to school students who came in by bus. This lasted until 1968, when the school had enough books of their own. Many students became interested in the work of the Library and were very good at helping with the desk work and shelving the books. Wendy and Geraldine Edmondson, Norma and Eleanor Hobbs, the Pointen girls, the Shaw girls, Linda Rosenke, Margaret Abeil and many others have taken their turns. Two of them, Doreen (Riddle) Bills and Ruth Shaw have gone on to become fully-trained Library Technicians

## RED INK

During 1959, the question of becoming a Municipal Library was raised but the status was not changed until much later (1983). This meant the Town of Carstairs would have to pay a regular Librarian, and it could lose all support from organizations. It just wasn't feasible. The Library existed with volunteer help, cash donations from supporting organizations, interested individuals and membership cards plus the fines for the overdue books. As rent was about \$300.00 per year, and other expenses such as maintenance, power, supplies, etc., often ran the total up to over \$600.00. The 1960 Treasurer's Report showed the library was \$94.04 in the red. Matching grant from the Province were received but only dollars spent on books qualified.

In 1960, Bessie Pointen became Head Librarian, a position she held until 1972. Mrs. Vi Tronnes became Chairman of the Repair Department and with her helpers spent many hours at this chore. 1960 also brought the first whisper of Regional Library but it took ten or eleven years to come to a reality.

## THE PUBLIC BUILDING

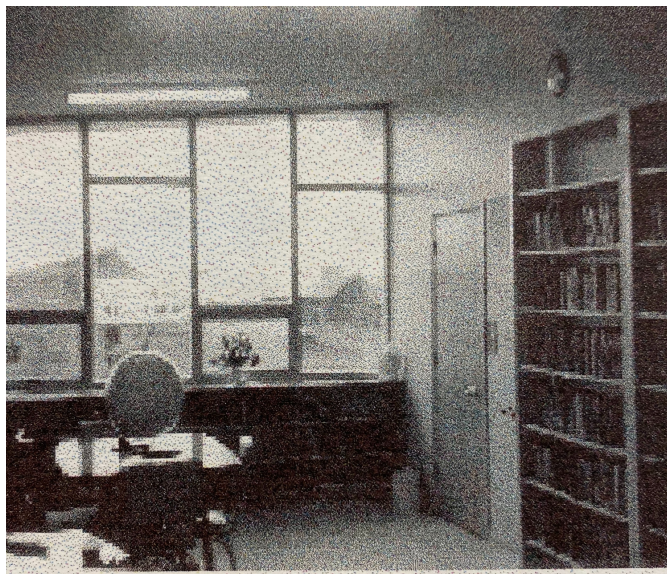
During Ivan Pointen's term as Mayor, a new Public Building was erected in Carstairs. The Library was offered a lovely large new room with a good storage space. July 15, 1961 was moving day. No more rent or utilities to pay! That was a Red-Letter day in the Library's history.



## PAYING OUR WAY

Circulation improved in the new building and more offers of volunteer help came in, both as Librarians and in the all-important Repair Department. The Library Board passed a motion to pay High School girls \$1.50 per Saturday. Margaret Downie, Margaret Pointen and Linda Rosenke became the first paid workers. For a few years the library was managing so well that donations from the organizations was not required. The Province increased the possible grant to \$500.00. Nevertheless by 1967, our Library had only been able to earn \$16.56 and once again supportive organizations were approached for donations.

Gifts of very old books came into the Library from the collections of Mr. Raymond Bell and Mr. H.W. Wood. Some of these were accepted by Mr. Wiltshire of the Alberta Libraries Branch for research. Old surveyor's maps were given to us from John Ure's office. These were of local surveys before 1900 and are now in the Glenbow Museum.



## PARKLAND REGIONAL LIBRARY

After ten years of lobbying by Carstairs, the County of Mountain View finally became interested in joining Parkland Regional Library System. The advantages included;

- a larger grant, as it is based on a per capita basis of the County,
- a professional Librarian to order books and have them fully processed at the central office at Lacombe, and
- a much greater choice of books owing to volume buying.

The Library officially became a member in January, 1970. Albert Hobbs was elected Parkland Regional Board member for the Public Libraries in the County of Mountain View. The first shipment of Parkland Regional Library books came by van in January, 1970, and each month after that at an appointed time.



## THE RECREATION BOARD

In 1972, Audrey Spensley took over Bessie Pointen's duties as Head Librarian. Audrey went to work with a will to reclassify all our local stock of books. At this time, the newly formed Recreation Board took the Library under its wing and began giving an annual grant which has helped tremendously with shelving, and for applying our summertime Library helpers. Ruth Shaw was the first student hired under the Opportunities for Youth program. She began a story hour for pre-schoolers. This has been carried on ever since.

## MOVING AGAIN

In 1977, the Carstairs Town Council needed the area the Library had been using since 1961, and the books had to be moved to the downstairs room of the Town Hall. After a year in the basement the Town Council offered to pay rent for us in the old Len Hoare building where the library first started in 1951! Floyd Beckner, who now owned the building, was our landlord. The library was using the whole building, including working space in the back. Floyd also supplied new carpeting and lighting, which made a great setting for the vastly improved supply of attractive books.





## EARLY SUPPORTERS AND OFFICERS

A list of devoted supporters who really kept the books circulating during the early years would include Albert Hobbs our local Library Board Chairman for seventeen years and Parkland Regional Library Trustee, Kay Clark Secretary-Treasurer for fifteen years and Hazel Shaw, our first Librarian, later became Secretary and later Treasurer. Subsequently, Bessie Pointen, Librarian, became Chairman of the Board.

Geraldine Stull was also secretary for many years and during that time took a correspondence Library course from the University of Alberta. Geraldine brought a knowledge of library management, of book selection and of promotional measures that we found invaluable. Vivian Price was Librarian from 1956 to 1960. Her conscientious work and attention to detail added a new efficiency to the Library and we really regretted her leaving. Mr. Joe Williamson, our shelf builder and student chaperone and Mrs. Williamson our typist, gave unstintingly of their time. Betty Downie, Vi Tronnes, Edna Hobbs and Mrs. Williamson were our dedicated repair crew and ever willing helpers.

Without them, and many others, Carstairs would not have had any library service in the early years. Nor would there have been any library setup in place to take advantage of the Parkland Regional System, the Recreation Board grants or the Municipal grants that came along in later years.

## MUNICIPAL STATUS & A PERMANENT HOME

After many years of community support, it was decided to change to Municipal Library status which closely coincided with the Grand Opening of the new library in its permanent home on Osler Street made possible by the efforts of Ursula Meyers, a former Town Administrator, the Carstairs Town Council the Half Century Association and the generous grants from our Provincial Government. The Bob Clark Municipal Library is aptly named for the popular local M.L.A. who represented the Olds-Didsbury constituency in the Alberta Legislature for 21 years. Board Chairman is Peggy Moody, Audrey Spensley combines her work as Librarian with that of Recording Secretary, Eileen Hamilton is the Treasurer, and Bessie Pointen, a former Chairman, provides continuity on the Board. Anne Strilchuk succeeded Audrey Spensley as Head Librarian since 1989 to her retirement in early 2010.



## MOVING AGAIN

In the mid-90s, it became obvious that major changes were coming to libraries because of communication by electronics and the sorting and storage of information by computers. Web-based public access catalogues over the internet had come of age. By 2002 the library had benefited from the Community Access Program funded by the Federal government which enabled all Alberta libraries to purchase computers open to the public thus ensuring every resident of Alberta would have free access to the internet through their library.

By 2002 it became apparent that a bigger library was needed to accommodate both the changes in services and growing community needs. In 2003 the library board set up a Building Fund account and fundraising began in earnest. Many options were explored including a library expansion and in the end it was decided that a joint effort with Chinook's Edge School Division, the Town of Carstairs and Olds College made sense as it would provide some efficiencies and savings for all. Thus the new facility which included a Kindergarten to Grade 4 School, community engagement site and a new library opened in April 2010. With the move came changes in staffing. Joanne Merrick who started with the library in 2004 moved from Assistant Manager position to Library Manager and Marg Reid who started with the library in 2007 as a volunteer, then casual call-in, moved first to permanent part-time, then full time and then to her current position as Assistant Manager. The new library became a hub in the community and saw patronage increase from just over 7,000 visits in 2009, prior to the move, to almost 22,000 visits in 2016! Programming also increased substantially with over 7,000 people of all ages participating in programs during 2016.

## A PANDEMIC

In 2019 Joanne Merrick retired and the Library Board hired Megan Ginther to lead our growing staff. Marg Reid continues as the Assistant Manager and Chantelle Carr and Coraley Ortman are the dynamic programming staff.

In 2020 the world came to a stop as it dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic. Our library staff put their ingenuity to work to find ways to continue to offer library services and programs even while the building had to be closed. They packed programs into bags that could be taken home, video taped puppet shows, moved online with Zoom and set up the Curbside pickup service outside the back door of the library. Despite cycling through closures and health restrictions over the course of the pandemic the community borrowed 51,446 items and we added 233 new members. We did programs online and outside in parks reaching 1,763 people and gave out 1,560 take home program kits. It was a very challenging year to say the least but we were here for our community. We have refreshed our library collections while were closed, the Friends of the Library helped us purchase some shelving and Connect First Credit Union helped us purchase a floor projector game and learning system for some touch free fun in our children's area.





## CURRENT LIBRARY BOARD

Eric Beresford  
Melissa Madore  
Bob Green  
Shannon Wilcox  
Lesley Morasch  
Don Holmes  
Don Speers  
Sarah Chicquen  
Melissa Dussault  
Colleen Donaven



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 2021 STAFF

Megan Ginther MLIS -Library Manager  
Marg Reid-Assistant Manager  
Chantelle Carr-Library Programmer  
Coraley Ortman-Library Programmer



# PLAN OF SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS



## GOAL 1: GROW LITERACY

**Objective 1:** The library helps every child in Carstairs start Kindergarten ready to learn, through a suite of preschool programs, parental supports, and home reading incentive program.

**Objective 2:** Carstairs children and youth have the supports they need to become strong learners through year round program options, including Summer Reading Club, Young Writers conference, and Homework supports

## GOAL 2: SATISFY CURIOSITY

**Objective 1:** Carstairs area residents will have access to programs, services, and opportunities for job hunting and career development.

**Objective 2:** All people will feel empowered to pursue their passions and find a community with similar interests. The library will serve as a hub for community discussions, support, and learning through facilitated speakers, information nights, and discussion groups.

## GOAL 3: STIMULATE IMAGINATION

**Objective 1:** Carstairs library will provide a comfortable and welcoming presence, available to the community, both in person and online.

**Objective 2:** We will provide access to the books, DVDs, and digital collections that library members want.

## GOAL 4: EVERYONE'S AN ADVOCATE

**Objective 1:** Develop and implement an Advocacy Plan to raise awareness and knowledge of Carstairs Public Library.

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

## MISSION

A place to connect and inspire through ideas, programs, resources, and technology.

## VISION

To engage the mind, strengthen the community, and enhance the quality of life, by being the gathering place of our dynamic community.

## MOTTO

A Place for Everyone

## VALUES

Welcoming, Responsive, Engaging, Innovative, Accessible