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CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

(Prepared in the Information Division,
Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. *)

Historical background

Canada is a bilingual country with two cultural traditions. As a consequence, two systems of higher education have developed. One, originally patterned on the French system before the secularization of higher education in France, with the majority of the institutions under the direction of Catholic orders or groups, has in recent years been adapted more and more to North American higher education traditions while still retaining distinctively French characteristics. The other system was originally designed according to English, Scottish and United States practices, instruction being given in English and the institutions being controlled by a variety of groups - religious denominations, governments and private non-denominational bodies. A third small group offers instruction to both English-speaking and French-speaking students. The first such bilingual institution to be established, the present University of Ottawa, developed from a Catholic college opened in Ottawa in 1848. Laurentian University, established in 1960, is also a bilingual university.

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Until 1763 Canada was a French colony. Education was provided only by institutions under religious auspices. The first institution where studies were undertaken at college level seems, according to available records, to have been the Collège des Jésuites, founded in 1635 in Quebec City, one year before the establishment of Harvard University (the first institution of higher learning in the United States), and from 80 to 100 years after the creation of the first universities in the Americas, in what is now the Dominican Republic (1538), and in Mexico and Peru (1551).

A complete arts course was probably given at the Collège by 1655. Soon afterwards teaching in theology began and, at about this time, the Séminaire de Québec was founded by diocesan priests. In 1852, the Séminaire was instrumental in the establishment of Laval University in Quebec City. A

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