

You and your library: Featuring light shows, computers and the Library of Congress



Library Survival Kit (cut on dotted line with blunt scissors)

1. Refuse to enter the Library unless they issue you with a hard hat.
2. Persist in enquiring where the books are. This asserts the power of the individual over the multiversity.
3. Remember that stealing books from the library is an anti-social no-no, not a revolutionary act. The library staff could care less, it's your fellow essay-writers that suffer.
4. Please co-operate with the security guard. Of course he doesn't think you would steal a book.
5. Take inquiries to the reference desk. They love them because it justifies their existence.
6. Take complaints to Miss Carruthers, Circulation Head. Her desk is behind the reference section. Complaints do not justify her existence, but she would like to know.
7. Every so often take a helium balloon into the library and release it in the lobby. It will go up and up. Then cry and ask them to get it down for you.
8. When you return a book return it to the desk, don't leave it in a carrel or something. It will be shelved and you will receive an overdue notice. Then you will find it on the shelf and triumphantly prove that the library was wrong. It wasn't.

As I approached the Library entrance, I was deterred somewhat by a large sign which stated that as the library was a 'hard-hat' project, I entered at my own risk without one. I did so, as no hard hat was available, hoping for the best.

Architecturally, the library could be classed as 'international-modern-sterile-airport-cathedral' in style. A ceiling that vies with the dome of St. Paul's is the key feature in this morass of steel, glass and concrete. Somehow one wishes one was wearing gloves, and begins speaking in reverent tones. This is a good effect in a way — who would steal a hymn book?

I was somewhat shocked when I realized there were no books in sight. The idea that they had built the chapel after all, in the summer when no one was looking, and that I had wandered into it by mistake, crossed my mind. "Where are the books," I whispered to a passing acolyte. Scornfully a nearby escalator was indicated. Of course! If a library is going to look like an airport or a cathedral, it can't have books cluttering up the lower floors. I levitated toward the upper floors and a less ethereal reality.

Escalators cost money
There are six escalators in the Central Library. University officials justify their presence by stating that they will 'aid traffic flow'. There are a few inconsistencies in this argument. The escalators are only wide enough for one person per stair, and to get from one 'up' escalator to the next, one must pass along a hall wide enough for only two people. Surely stairs wide enough for five or six people would have been just as compact and efficient. Escalators don't move much faster than a person walking.

The extent of the escalator rip-off is \$270,000. Otis, who installed them, gives \$45,000 as the approximate installation cost per escalator. Service is installation cost per year. The grand total for installation and service for five years will be \$324,000. Enough to buy 45,000 books.

York was probably more concerned with the escalators as status symbols, than with traffic. After all, escalators prove you are efficient, and thus worthy of receiving large grants from impressed trust funds and foundations. If York is too new to have stained glass and ivy, at least it can have the latest technological toy.

Waste space
Open space in a library is an aesthetic necessity — but is a lobby that rises fifty feet essential? To really enjoy this students would need wings! Presuming those three open floors covered the lobby there would be 10,000 more square feet in the library (about half the floor space in the bookstore). And there are 500,000 cubic feet in the lobby to keep warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

The board of governors is responsible for the building itself — but control of what's inside rests with President Slater, his vice-presidents, and Mr. T. O'Connell, the director of libraries.

Advisory committee
The senate library committee is the most important of the many committees concerned with the library. It is, however, an advisory committee, and advisory committees have very little power. Members complain that decisions are taken without even a token consultation with the committee.

Poor working conditions
The library staff association was formed a year and a half ago mainly to protect working conditions. It includes all salaried workers, although the professional librarians are thinking of forming an association of their own.

Working conditions are still a concern of the staff association. The university has never undertaken any safety program in the library — fire exits are not posted, for example. Since the workmen are still using the elevators, staff have been trying to take book trucks up the escalators — a somewhat risky procedure. And of course the staff wasn't issued with hard hats, despite the sign!

Staff turnover problems have plagued the library. There has been a university-wide job reevaluation, an attempt to standardise clerical pay scales. This has caused some concern because everyone was started at the bottom of their category despite seniority.

The advertising of positions inside the university has also been a sore point. Most professional jobs are opened to those inside the library before being advertised outside. With clerical staff it was unofficial policy to do this as well. In December last year, the staff association executive was told that this would no longer be done.

Canadian material
There is no one bibliographer specifically in charge of acquiring Canadian material, although Miss Grace Hettie, because of her own interest, does a lot of work in this area. The major source for Canadian material is the catalogue put out by the National Library of Canada. Much important Canadian material is not put out in book form however and thus does not find its way into this catalogue. The papers and publications of the major political parties, the working papers for conferences, student council publication, underground papers — all these are important, and at the same time difficult to get.



Computerama
In three years there have been three checkout systems at York. The first used cards which had to be filled out by hand. The second system, called card punch was designed to speed service. It lasted six months. The new machines broke down so often the old system was often reverted to. Besides, somehow the computer had missed making cards for 10 - 15% of the books, so even when the machines were working, these books had to be taken out by hand.

Inefficient inventory
Inventories are done frequently in the library, presumably to keep track of missing books. No one, however, not even the director, could supply even rough figures on the cost or number of missing books. If a book is missing at the inventory it is recorded as missing but the cards are left in the catalogue until it is recorded missing in the next inventory. Since inventories are not done every year it could be two years before it is indicated to the student. Inventories are expensive and time-consuming. Perhaps it would be cheaper just to hire a man to stand at the door with a machine gun.

Bureaucracy of service
By the time a book hits the shelf, a lot of time and money have been lavished on it. Fifteen dollars is the minimum amount spent on processing a book. This is on top of the purchase price. Much of this goes to pay professional salaries.

By Margery Fee
Also, as many desperate essay writers may know, a book can spend a lot of time getting from publisher to shelf. In fact the minimum time for most books is around three months. Ordering takes from 6 to 9 weeks.

Photos by Tim Clark
But cataloguing is what can really hold a book up. Ten per cent of the books spend a year in cataloguing. These are the obscure little things that Library of Congress has not seen fit to catalogue — like Canadian stuff. The fastest books take around three weeks.

The reason that there is such an astounding time-difference is that if a book has been catalogued by the United States Library of Congress then there is very little work remaining to be done. American methods, spelling and subject headings are used throughout the York Libraries.

Unfortunately, using Library of Congress cataloguing saves enormous amounts of time and money. The National Library of Canada provides a similar service for books published in Canada, but it is often slow, and uses the Dewey decimal system, instead of the more detailed Library of Congress system used at York. Thus, for reasons of economy, York, (like almost every other large library system in Canada) must put up with an essentially American catalogue.

Computerama
In three years there have been three checkout systems at York. The first used cards which had to be filled out by hand. The second system, called card punch was designed to speed service. It lasted six months. The new machines broke down so often the old system was often reverted to. Besides, somehow the computer had missed making cards for 10 - 15% of the books, so even when the machines were working, these books had to be taken out by hand.

Inefficient inventory
Inventories are done frequently in the library, presumably to keep track of missing books. No one, however, not even the director, could supply even rough figures on the cost or number of missing books. If a book is missing at the inventory it is recorded as missing but the cards are left in the catalogue until it is recorded missing in the next inventory. Since inventories are not done every year it could be two years before it is indicated to the student. Inventories are expensive and time-consuming. Perhaps it would be cheaper just to hire a man to stand at the door with a machine gun.

Bureaucracy of service
By the time a book hits the shelf, a lot of time and money have been lavished on it. Fifteen dollars is the minimum amount spent on processing a book. This is on top of the purchase price. Much of this goes to pay professional salaries.

By Margery Fee
Also, as many desperate essay writers may know, a book can spend a lot of time getting from publisher to shelf. In fact the minimum time for most books is around three months. Ordering takes from 6 to 9 weeks.

Photos by Tim Clark
But cataloguing is what can really hold a book up. Ten per cent of the books spend a year in cataloguing. These are the obscure little things that Library of Congress has not seen fit to catalogue — like Canadian stuff. The fastest books take around three weeks.

The reason that there is such an astounding time-difference is that if a book has been catalogued by the United States Library of Congress then there is very little work remaining to be done. American methods, spelling and subject headings are used throughout the York Libraries.

Unfortunately, using Library of Congress cataloguing saves enormous amounts of time and money. The National Library of Canada provides a similar service for books published in Canada, but it is often slow, and uses the Dewey decimal system, instead of the more detailed Library of Congress system used at York. Thus, for reasons of economy, York, (like almost every other large library system in Canada) must put up with an essentially American catalogue.

Library director doesn't know costs



Mr. O'Connell has a B.A. in Economics from Boston College and a M.L.S. from Columbia. He spent ten years in circulation work in the Harvard libraries. At York for almost eight years, Mr. O'Connell is a landed immigrant.

EXCALIBUR: Could you tell me how the library building was chosen and who designed it?

O'CONNELL: The architects were chosen by the Board (of Governors) and they did the whole thing.

EXCALIBUR: But the final decision rested with the Board of Governors?

O'CONNELL: In buildings I suppose yes, I think that's a fair statement.

EXCALIBUR: I was very interested in seeing the escalators. They seem to be a sort of an expensive item. Do you think they're justified?

O'CONNELL: Sure.

EXCALIBUR: What was the reason for having them in there?

O'CONNELL: If you want to make this building as adaptable and as flexible as possible then you allow for this kind of transportation where there's no waiting for elevators and you don't have to climb the stairs. It flows from the very philosophy of the building itself which is to make all parts as easily available to people as we possibly can.

EXCALIBUR: I know that they've been revising the job categories and I know that before there was a lot of turnover with the clerical staff. Do you have any explanation for that?

O'CONNELL: No. I think there's always a turnover in clerical staff. I expect a certain amount is going to continue. It's no greater than in most other institutions.

EXCALIBUR: Who actually decides on what's going to be the budget and how it's going to be divided up?

O'CONNELL: So far I think the key man in this kind of thing is the President.

EXCALIBUR: Could you give me any breakdown on this budget?

O'CONNELL: Yeah. Three million, of which we'll spend about one point three million for books. The rest will go into expenses, salaries and so on.

EXCALIBUR: Does the board of governors take a regular look at library policy, or do you take care of that some other way?

O'CONNELL: The president. The board would not concern itself with any academic matters — it's not supposed to — including the library.

EXCALIBUR: I know there's a senate library committee. Do they have any say in the budget at all?

O'CONNELL: The budget is shown to them. The senate committee is an advisory committee to the director of libraries.

EXCALIBUR: How would you feel about the faculty controlling the policy of the library?

O'CONNELL: I have no comment on that at the present time.

EXCALIBUR: O.K. I found out that the senate library committee meetings were secret. Do you think that's necessary.

O'CONNELL: That's incorrect.

EXCALIBUR: Is it? Then they do have public meetings. I wanted to get their minutes and they were muttering about closed meetings.

Ed. note: Senate library committee meetings are open to members of the senate, but closed to the public.

EXCALIBUR: What would you think of enlarging the senate committee — I know it's got 11 members now.

O'CONNELL: It doesn't make much difference to me. The more people, the more good advice you get on the thing.

EXCALIBUR: I know the library's had three checkout systems, and the second one was in my eyes sort of a failure — the card punch system — do you have any idea how much that cost?

O'CONNELL: No.

EXCALIBUR: Do you think it was a failure?

O'CONNELL: No.

EXCALIBUR: I know there were a lot of thefts, last year, — well, a lot of missing books, we'll put it that way — have you any idea how much it cost you last year in thefts?

O'CONNELL: No.

EXCALIBUR: Are you going to do anything about it?

O'CONNELL: Well we designed the security system in this library — hope it works. The check-out is fairly strict now — we'll let it go a little while now and see how it works out.

EXCALIBUR: Do you know who could give me figures on the number of books missing?

O'CONNELL: No.

THIS IS A HARD HAT PROJECT YOU ENTER WITHOUT A HARD HAT AT YOUR OWN RISK ELLIS-DON LTD



The Ellis-Don foreman said that this sign would save the company from lawsuit if anyone is hurt on the site. Although hard hats are not supplied by the company, you can buy one at almost any corner store. Just another one of those contradictions...



The \$324,000 escalators lack their light show.