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# The Ontario Legislative Library Marks 100 Years in the North Wing

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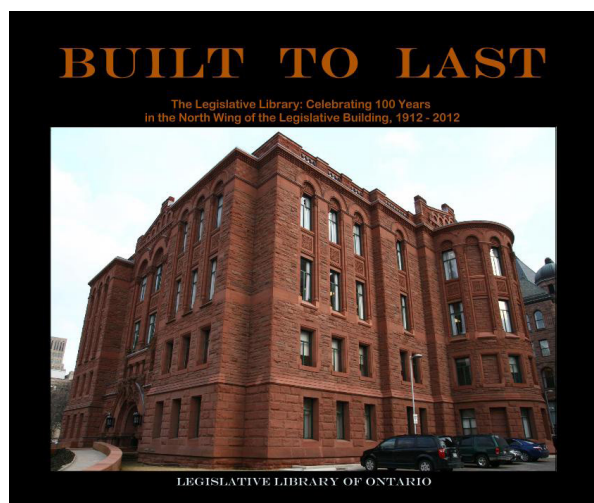
Susanne Hynes

*In May 2012 the Ontario Legislative Library published an illustrated book, Built to Last, to tell the story of the planning, construction and evolution of the Library in the North Wing and provides a snapshot of the facility in its 100th year. The book draws on the Library's photo collection, original architectural drawings, archival materials of former Legislative Librarians, interviews with staff and contemporary photographs.*

The year 2012 marks the centenary of the Ontario Legislative Library's move into the North Wing of the Legislative Building situated at Queen's Park, Toronto. The move took place three years after a devastating fire destroyed its predecessor facility in the West Wing. Today, the Library that was planned by Toronto architect George Gouinlock and librarian Avern Pardoe, retains the same floor plan and many of the unique architectural features envisioned more than 100 years ago.

The North Wing was planned with the Library's needs in mind: an innovative central bookstack wired for electric lights, high ceilings to allow for two stack levels per storey, and many fireproof features such as steel stacks, marble floors, metal window frames and a corridor with retractable steel doors at each end connecting the Library to the Main Building.

The Library, built and furnished in 1912, remained largely unaltered over the next fifty-three years. In 1914 an iron grille or fence was installed around the third level of the stacks to protect the book collection and light bulbs from "attrition" and in 1949 the Library was repainted and new light fixtures were installed. By the early 1960s, the Librarian's desk from 1912 was still in use, the Library was getting dingy, and its furnishings shabby. In 1965, under the direction of Jean Kerfoot, a much-needed facelift was accomplished with the addition of custom furniture, a dropped



ceiling to accommodate lighting and air conditioning, carpeting and a new blue Naugahyde cover for the stack perimeter counters.

Another major renovation, under the guidance of Brian Land, was undertaken in 1980 to provide better reading facilities for Members, suitable office space for the Legislative Librarian and better service desks. Subsequent changes included new work stations and public service desks designed to accommodate telephones and computers, new carpets, and consultation areas. In the 1990s a project to restore historic details was undertaken and today many "artefacts" from the past are still in use and provide the Library's interior with a sense of continuity.

The concept of a library collection surrounded by areas of work and consultation has proven its worth

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A new inquiry desk was one of the pieces of furniture designed specifically for the Legislative Library.

over a century of service to the Members of Ontario's Provincial Parliament. Perhaps the greatest tribute to the people involved in planning and constructing the Library is the fact that the use of the Library's space in 1912 is almost identical to its use today. The stacks, Members' Reading Room and the Librarians' workroom are all located in the same areas. The Library's solid backbone of steel and marble and its unique layout is the foundation that has allowed the structure and the facility to adapt to the changing needs of clients and staff.

The Library has sponsored a number of events to commemorate the centenary. A winter speaker series featured Catherine Dowling, Assistant Professor, Ryerson School of Interior Design, Christopher Hume, Architecture Critic and Urban Issues Columnist,



The 1965 Members' Reading Room was furnished with the "latest" sofas and chairs and custom-built reading carrels.

*Toronto Star* and Mark Osbaldeston, author of *Unbuilt Toronto: a History of the City That Might Have Been*, and *Unbuilt Toronto 2: More of the City That Might Have Been*.

It also celebrated the centenary at Doors Open Toronto, the opening reception of the CALL (Canadian Association of Law Libraries) Conference in May, and at the annual APLIC (Association of Parliamentary Libraries in Canada) and Parliamentary Researchers Conference in September 2012. An illustrated Timeline of notable events in the life of the Library was unveiled at this Conference.

*Built to Last* can be viewed online in a pdf version or as a Flip Book. It is a companion to *From Ashes to Steel* which documented the destruction by fire and water of the earlier Library facility in the West Wing.



The motif on the face of the Circulation desk installed in 2003 reflects the motif on the 1912 stack railings seen behind it.