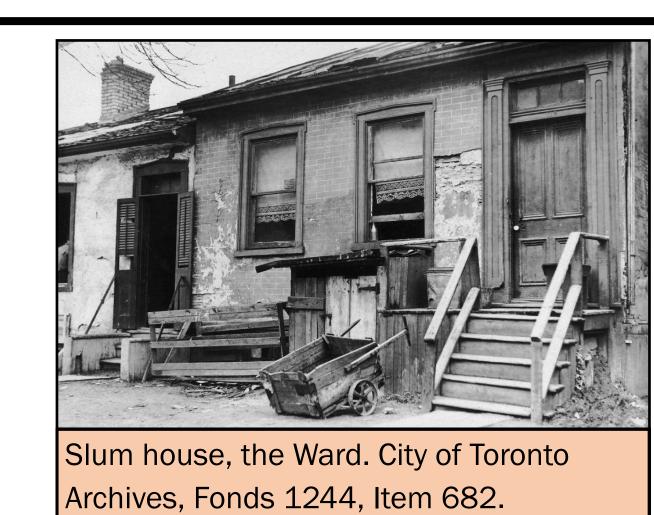
The Toronto Public Library's Participation in the Settlement House Movement

The TPL was influenced by settlement houses to do more for neighbourhoods in need, but conservativism delayed the promotion of this important work.

1910s: Slums & settlement houses

In 1911, Toronto's chief medical officer Dr. Charles Hastings issued a report on the city's slum conditions, forcing politicians and affluent residents to confront the plight of those living in poverty. As more Central and Eastern European, Jewish, and Chinese immigrants began to settle in these areas, social reformers inevitably tied the desire to eradicate slums with the integration of newcomers into Canadian society. Inspired by the Progressive movement, the "social gospel", and the success of Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago, reformers created settlement houses in Toronto's poor working class districts. Their goal was to solve the problems of industrialization



and urbanization by learning firsthand of the needs of marginalized people, and offering friendship and nondenominational support. At a time when city leaders viewed social assistance with suspicion,¹ and anti-Semitism and xenophobia pervaded all levels of government policies,² settlement houses filled a crucial social role. They offered an alternative to workhouses, charities, and church missions, and rooted their practice in academic study and fieldwork.³

Building the library & the profession

James Bain, the first Chief Librarian of the TPL (1883-1908), focused institutional building efforts on collection development and library construction. He struggled with city council over funding, and with conservatives over the value of circulating fiction, but he was also successful in earning the TPL two Carnegie grants. His successor, George Locke (Chief Librarian from 1908 to 1937), was equally determined to expand the TPL and the library profession. Locke used TPL annual reports to promote the library as a champion of education and civic values, while giving senior staff mostly women — a platform



Library at University Settlement. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1024, Series 709, Item 67.

for disseminating their

knowledge as managers and
field experts. As a result,
organizations approached
the TPL for help running their
libraries, including the public
school board and settlement
houses. The TPL initially
turned down settlement
work,⁶ but changed its tune
in 1920, after hosting the *Congress of Workers Among Boys & Girls* (a gathering of
various social agencies) at
the Reference Library.



Research by:

Elisa Sze

elisa.sze@utoronto.ca

Timeline

1897: Toronto hosts National Conference of Charities and Corrections (U.S.)

1902: Evangelia House opens.

1910: University Settlement opens. Jane Addams publishes *Twenty Years at Hull House.*

TPL partnership with settlements

Lillian H. Smith, head of the Boys and Girls Division, persuaded Locke to assist

	settlements
,	THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF TORONTO college and st deorge streets. George H.Locke, chief Librarian Children's Department, November 9,1920.
	Dear Miss Dodds,
	The Toronto Public Library being willing to co-operate with the settlement Libraries as far as possible, proposes the following scheme. The Library would buy 900 backs approximately these to be divided among the three

1911: Dr. Hastings publishes "slums report". CNH opens.

1912: St. Christopher House opens.



St. Christopher House. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1484, Series 331, File 13.

1919: St. Christopher House asks TPL for help, but George

Settlement house outreach

Settlement house workers –



usually unmarried, universityeducated women — saw outreach as necessary for social work. Connecting with local adults, children, and like -minded agencies, they wanted to improve the lives of the poor working class.

Promoting friendship

Settlement houses facilitated a program of clubs, activities, and classes, believing that socialization and recreation were the best means of imparting "Canadian" ideals and norms to immigrants. Yet, settlement workers also celebrated the heritage of their neighbours, referring to diversity and inclusion as elements of democracy.⁴ Children in the Ward. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 8028.

often saw grants reduced for political reasons. The viability of settlement houses thus depended on donors and volunteers.

Cross-agency collaborations

Workers recruited subject experts to run specialized services: e.g., public health doctors and nurses to run baby clinics and first aid classes, university students

Central Neighbourhood House (CNH), University Settlement, and St. **Christopher House** by shifting the focus to children. Even so, new books were hard to obtain, and TPL visits were infrequent and mostly for story hours. Settlement houses relied on donors to enrich the collections, and did not add the TPL to their budgets. Six years passed before the TPL ventured to write about its settlement work in the annual reports. Even then, the narrative fulfilled a specific agenda: to justify TPL's growth by demonstrating its societal

proposes the following scheme. The Library would buy 900 books approximately, these to be divided among the three settlements, St. Christopher's, Central Neighbourhood and University, about 300 titles to each. These would rotate among the three houses, the change being made every six months, so that at the end of a year and a half, each settlement would have had the use of the 900 books. This would not apply to the books which are the property of the settlement; they would continue to be used along with those provided by the Library, but would, of course, remain at the settlement where they belong.

The Library would buy new titles from time to time in addition to the original selection and these would be distributed in ratio to the circulation of the three stations, the idea being that the settlement at which the demand is greatest should receive the largest supply.

The Library would provide a children's librarian, at first probably one afternoon a week, and later, if necessary and possible, oftener, to work along with one of the settlement workers at each of the houses, so that library and settlement might be kept in close touch with each other.

This scheme is submitted for your consideration. If you think it satisfactory and workable, the library is ready to act upon it as soon as arrangements can be made -- possibly the first of the year. Sincerely,

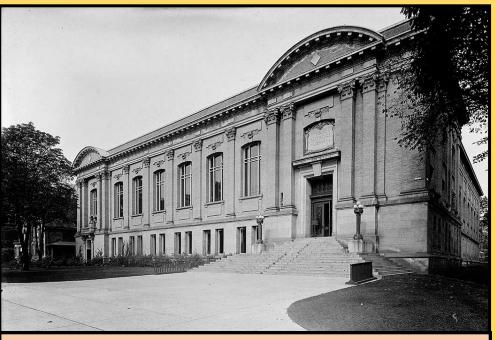
Fillian H. Smith pour . a. m. J.

City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1484, Series 1679, File 4.

value. The angle: to ensure that children grew up to be literate, civic-minded citizens. For the settlement houses, the TPL's presence was not a promotional vehicle so much as it was "an integral part of [the] work and meant so much to the quieter child who looks and needs solitude."⁷

Locke declines.

1920: Reference
Library hosts the Boys
& Girls Congress.
Lillian H. Smith agrees
to help University
Settlement, CNH, and
St. Christopher House.

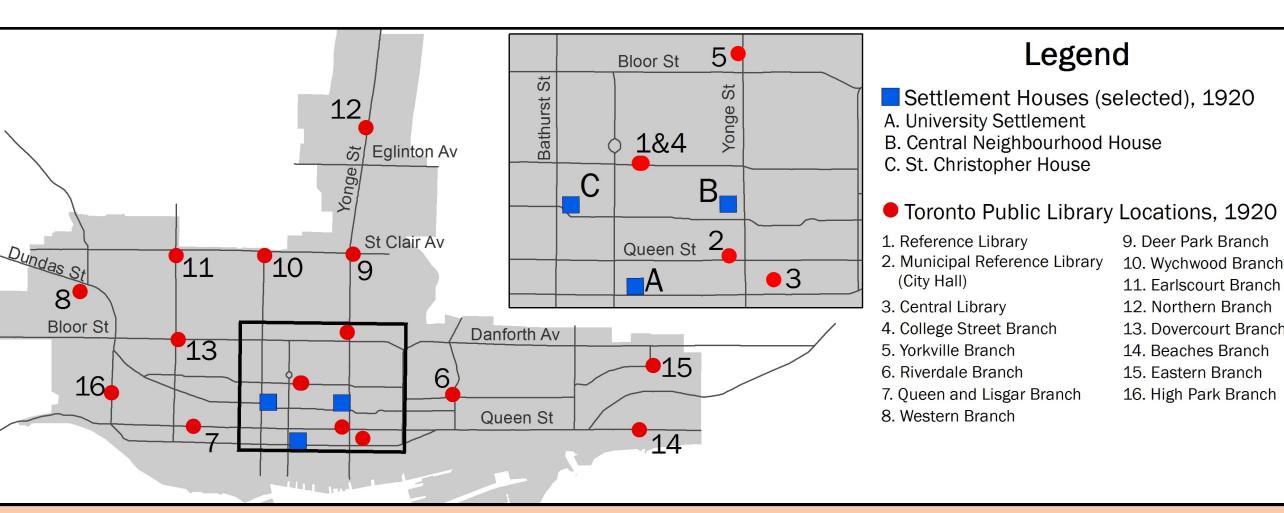


Reference Library. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, Item 722.

1923: TPL moves its CNH services to Scott Institute. CNH runs its

Donors & volunteers

Budgets covered utilities, rent, and supplies, but only a few salaries. St. Christopher House, which received Presbyterian Church funding, to teach English, and librarians to manage book collections and story hours. Just as the Chicago Public Library had a satellite library at Hull House,⁵ Toronto settlement house workers wanted the TPL to have a neighbourhood presence.



Map of Toronto Public Library branches and selected settlement houses in 1920, created by Sean Marshall.

REFERENCES

- "Eighteen Bodies Are Doing Neighborhood Work in Ward," The Toronto Daily Star, Nov.
 5, 1912: 15.
- 2. Christopher G. Anderson, *Canadian Liberalism and the Politics of Border Control,* 1867-1967 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).
- Cathy James, "Reforming reform: Toronto's Settlement House Movement, 1900-20," *Canadian Historical Review*, 82, no. 1 (2001): 55-90. "Annual Report of Central Neighborhood house, 1920," City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1005, Series 1, File 1.
 A.H. Burnett and J.J. Kelso, "11 April 1911, Minutes of the Organizing Committee and

Board of Directors." City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1005, Series 2, File 1.

- 5. *Hull-House Bulletin* (January 1896): 2. University of Illinois at Chicago Special Collections, Hull House Archives.
- 6. "9 April 1919, Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Management." City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1484, Series 1670, File 8.
- 7. A. Ethel Parker, "Things in Common for the Three Settlements" (Nov. 1962): 7-8. Toronto Reference Library, Baldwin Collection, Box S54, Documents I-IV.

With thanks to Leslie McGrath, Barbara Myrvold, Nalini Singh, Siobhan Stevenson, and staff at City of Toronto Archives, Toronto Reference Library, and UIC Special Collections.

own library using volunteers.

1926: TPL returns to
CNH. TPL writes about
settlement house
libraries in its annual
reports.

ca. 1945: TPL leaves CNH for the last time.

1957: TPL leaves University Settlement.

1959: TPL leaves St. Christopher House.