

LOCAL LIBRARIES

“Lost Civilizations or a Resource to be Rediscovered?”

By Phillip Melchers



Out of all the ancient libraries known to man, it is the Library of Alexandria that remains the most famous and yet also the least known about. This is because sometime, long ago, the library was razed, the exact date still a mystery, as the library itself is recorded as having fallen multiple times. Still, when the library had actually burned is of little consequence when compared to what had been burned within it. When the library fell, years of knowledge were lost, entire archives vanished, any record of human development held within was reduced to ash. When the library fell, so fell our chances of ever knowing the histories it contained.

If this historical lesson teaches anything it's the importance of a library.

Embedded within our surrounding community is a rich history on its own, and if anything, the libraries we have today attest as artifacts to these years. Raised in 1895, the Brockville Public Library proves itself as a prime example of this, which according to its website was originally built as a lecture hall, archive, and natural science research centre, until becoming the Carnegie Library in 1904. The Prescott library is similarly aged. It too was raised back in 1895. Then there is also the Edwardsburg/ Cardinal Public Library, which was originally raised as a mechanical institute has its own history dating back to the late 1800s as well. In seeing these buildings as they stand today it is hard not to wonder about the histories their walls must contain, not just physically, but spiritually as well.

As nostalgic as a library's presence may be, a connection to the past is not a library's only function. In a world of e-books and book-rental apps like OverDrive (which allows access to most libraries), books as a physical presence may soon suffer a similar fate to the Library of Alexandria, save for the few diehard fanatics out there that refuse to give in. Luckily, library's are not just about the books they contain but are also about the spaces of knowledge they generate, the discussions that they host, and the communities they help build.

It is said that the Library of Alexandria, amongst all of the knowledge it held, also held within itself vast gardens and rooms where the brilliant minds of its centuries would meet. Today, our local libraries hold similar traditions. The Brockville Public Library hosts anything

from scrabble games, to book clubs, to even spaces of discussion for groups like PFLAG (Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays) who rely on the library as a safe space. Then there is the Gananoque Public Library which allowed seniors to play Nintendo Wii for free this spring as a social event. The Gananoque Public Library also offers their Lego Club, which serves to challenge any would-be builders every Tuesday at 6:30. Some libraries even offer special services, such as the Front of Yonge library in Mallorytown, which thanks to their "Friends of the Library" program, will deliver resources to you if you are unable to visit the library yourself.

It's hard to measure all that was lost when The Library of Alexandria fell, just as it is hard to imagine a world where there are no libraries. In the wake of the Library of Alexandria's destruction, there was only from then on an absence, an absence that we still have not recovered from. The ultimate tragedy of that library's destruction is in knowing that something is missing, but not knowing what exactly that is. As underappreciated as modern libraries may seem, if there was ever a time when they stopped existing entirely, we would know again the pain of something forever lost. If history has taught us anything, it's that knowledge in any form is a fickle thing and in the wink of an eye it could be forever gone. We must hold onto it, treat it as precious as it is, lest we lose it one day and become ourselves, phantoms of another civilization's past. **LH**



Here is where your local Library can be found and discovered!

BROCKVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

23 Buell St.; Box 100, Brockville, ON K6V 5T7

T: 613-342-3936 • F: 613-342-9598

E: info@brockvillelibrary.ca • www.brockvillelibrary.ca

PRESCOTT LIBRARY

P.O. Box 430, Prescott, ON K0E 1T0

T: 613-925-4340 • F: 613-925-0100

www.prescott.ca/library.aspx • E: library@prescott.ca

GANANOQUE LIBRARY

Gananoque Public Library

100 Park Street Gananoque, ON K7G 2Y5

T: 613-382-2436 • E: mailto:gplp@bellnet.cagplp@bellnet.ca

<http://gpplibrary.wordpress.com>

LEEDS AND THE THOUSAND ISLANDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

P.O. Box 219, 1B Jessie St, Lansdowne, ON K0E 1L0

T: 613-659-3885 • F: 613-659-4192 • E: leeds.admin@ltipl.net

SPENCERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

5 Henderson Street, Spencerville ON

T: 613-658-5575 • E: library@spencerville.ca

www.spencervillelibrary.ca

EDWARDSBURG/CARDINAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Cardinal Branch 618 County Road 2 (corner of County Road 2 and Dishaw Street)

Cardinal, Ontario, K0E 1E0

Wheelchair Accessible

T: 1-613-657-3822 • E: cardinal@edcarlibrary.ca

AUGUSTA TOWNSHIP LIBRARY

4500 Country Road 15 (in Algonquin)

RR 2, Brockville, Ontario, K6V 5T2

T: 613-926-2449 • F: 613-702-0441 • E: augusta@augustalibrary.com

TOWNSHIP

OF ELIZABETHTOWN-KITLEY

4103 County Road 29 (former Spring Valley Hall (Now Open))

LYN BRANCH IN THE VILLAGE OF LYN

14 Main West with an entrance off Main Street.

TOLEDO BRANCH Located at 424 County Rd 29,

FRONT OF YONGE LIBRARY

Box 250 76 County Road 5 South, Mallorytown, Ontario, K0E 1R0

T: 613-923-1790 • F: 613-923-2691

E: foylibrary@ripnet.com

ATHENS PUBLIC LIBRARY

5 central Street, Athens Ont K0E 1B0

T: 613-924-2048 • E: athenspl@bellnet.ca • www.athenslibrary.ca