

# The Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario: On the History and Historiography of a Professional Association

Greg Linnell

*Abstract: A descriptive analysis of the histories of the Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario (1960–1976) reveals not only the circumstances surrounding the creation, growth, and decline of this singular expression of the professionalization of librarianship but also foregrounds the ways in which the historical narration of the profession must look beyond the traditional delineation of intrinsic traits in order to circumscribe librarianship more adequately. To that end, consideration is given to one important factor, the Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights (1964–71). It is evident that historical recovery of this sort is crucial to the profession’s self-understanding as it negotiates its contemporary stance with respect to both librarians and the publics that they serve.*

## Introduction

An attentive reader of Encyclopaedia Britannica’s Canadian supplement to the 1961 *Book of the Year* would have noticed, in the course of perusing Chief Librarian of the University of Toronto Robert Blackburn’s entry on the status of library development, a mention of Canada’s newest library association, the Ontario-based Institute of Professional Librarians (Blackburn 1961).<sup>1</sup> Fifteen years later, in examining *Quill & Quire*’s August 1976 library news section, our reader could not have failed to notice the substantial column devoted to detailing the circumstances of the Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario’s (IPLO) demise (Walker 1976b). These two articles bookend a fascinating period in Canadian library history and comparing them provokes a number of observations and not a few questions. Blackburn’s entry, though mentioning serious problems in the Canadian library world (e.g., the lack of facilities for the National Library), nevertheless paints a picture of expansion and increase that accords well with the current commonplace that the decade to come—the 1960s—was to be a good one for libraries and librarians. Moreover, we are told that IPLO and about thirty other library associations are “working to improve and promote library service in their particular regions or types of library” (Blackburn, 27). Blackburn’s gloss on growing collections and the development of infrastructure creates an overall impression of health and vigour. Not so, however, when turning to *Quill & Quire*. Here, the prognosis for Canadian librarianship in the mid-1970s is far more troubled. For example, notwithstanding the revenue generated by a substantial membership fee increase from \$15 to \$50 in 1972, inflation had since created significant difficulties for implementing core IPLO

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<sup>1</sup> Blackburn had been involved in IPLO’s formation and had also served as the Canadian Library Association’s (CLA) president in 1959. NOTE: In what follows, IPL and IPLO refer to the same organization. Also, the career information footnoted throughout this essay was culled from diverse sources, including the *IPL Newsletter* (the precursor to the *IPLO Newsletter*), the *IPLO Quarterly*, and the CLA and Ontario Library Association (OLA) websites. It is, therefore, subject to correction and augmentation. The author welcomes any career information on these individuals that readers may care to submit.

activities (e.g., economically viable publishing and conference programs). Furthermore, the article intimates that IPLO's problems are indicative of troubles afflicting Canadian library associations and organizations as a whole. Indeed, this same issue of *Quill & Quire* also features extensive coverage of the Canadian Library Association's (CLA) annual conference. Whereas the report on IPLO merely alludes to CLA's troubles, both Susan Walker's report and CLA President Brian Land's address detail a bad situation in which three consecutive deficit budget years and stiff competition from other associations had contributed to a crisis (Walker 1976a; Land 1976). Invoking IPLO's demise as a bellwether warning, Land cites several factors that challenge the CLA's ongoing health, not the least of which is a competitive environment in which librarianship has been fragmented into ninety-four distinct Canadian library or library-related associations. In sum, 1960 seemed full of promise yet 1976 seemed to herald trends detrimental to the advancement of Canadian libraries and librarianship.

The disparity between Blackburn's hopeful prognosis and, just fifteen years later, *Quill & Quire's* dire front line reportage provokes a number of questions. First, against the backdrop of an apparently tumultuous period in Canadian and Ontario library history, what is IPLO's story? Why did the association form and how did it develop during its approximately twenty years of activity? Second, what contributed to IPLO's demise? How did internal tensions and external pressures conspire together to wound it fatally? Third, beyond an act of historical recovery, what significance might IPLO's story hold for librarians and the practice of librarianship? This last question of historical utility or application is prompted by the fact that all historical scholarship is argumentative, comprised not only of choices regarding what is selected for inclusion or defined as a proximate cause but also consisting of an authorial voice and narrative style that seek to advance a specific interpretation and agenda. That is, part of the historical knowledge to be gained from the preceding accounts offered by Blackburn, Walker, and Land, together with the historical resources to be examined, consists not only of the information they provide but also the manner in which they structure that information and communicate it. As will become apparent shortly, rhetorical choices figure prominently in IPLO's history and illuminate as much as the more prosaic matters presented by those involved.

The previously mentioned questions, then, structure this consideration of IPLO's history in a broadly chronological manner. In addition, recourse will be made to resources that speak to the social, economic, and political contexts that are also determinative for this account. Finally, parts of the analysis to follow are more thematically oriented, focusing on specific issues and the determination of how IPLO responded to and confronted them. Although it cannot be said that the following answers all—or even most—of the questions about IPLO and what it denotes within Canadian library history, the essay does augment the extant historical accounts and does suggest the value to contemporary librarianship of historical

research.

## History as enlistment

Though all new organizations display a consciousness of what they are reforming or displacing, it takes a while for that consciousness to assume the coherence of a historical narrative. So, too, with IPLO. It was 1962 and 1963, nine to ten years after the first tentative discussions and proposals, before those heavily invested in IPLO began to cast an eye backwards, appraising what had occurred and, implicitly, arguing for what should come next for the association and its members. These early efforts issued from self-professed IPLO partisans, long-time members who believed, for a number of reasons, that it would be advantageous to publish records of IPLO's past successes and current concerns. Spending some time examining these histories and the agendas implicit within them will familiarize us with IPLO's early history and the prospective strategies that would characterize the association in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s.

Charles Deane Kent, director of the London Public Library and Art Museum, composed a short history in 1962 while, in 1963, Brian Land, IPLO's most recent past president, and Jean Burness, IPLO's current president compiled, respectively, a chronology and a bibliography (Kent 1962; Land 1963; Burness 1963).<sup>2</sup> Whereas the bibliography demonstrates IPLO's growing discursive legitimacy and currency as the provincial association dedicated to exploring the practical and theoretical facets of the profession *qua* profession, the chronology is essentially a tale of emerging consensus and IPLO's successful incorporation, in May 1960, as an association autonomous from the Ontario Library Association (OLA), under whose aegis it had been nurtured. Kent's history narrates and contextualizes many of Land's dates and Burness's bibliographic sources and will, therefore, form the analytical focus of this section.

Kent's history positions itself as a guide for librarians interested in their profession and, accordingly, privileges factors internal to librarianship as determinative for explaining the origins and development of IPLO. Within this community, then, two events stand out as catalysts for all that would follow: the decision, in October of 1953, of the Windsor Public Library Staff Association to investigate whether or not to proceed with unionization, and the publication, in November of that same year, of an article by Philip McLeod, an employee at the London Public Library. To begin: after some deliberation, the Windsor librarians had approached OLA with the suggestion that the association sponsor the formation of a federation of librarians that would, in turn, take up the tasks associated with professional librarianship and promote (1) the prestige of librarians by recourse to the

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2 Kent had been OLA president in 1959-60. Burness had a long career with the Ontario Department of Health Library and was also an early IPLO *Newsletter* editor and IPLO president (1962-63). Land's career information appears in note 3.

self-regulation practised by cognate professions like teachers, doctors, and engineers; (2) the political and social influence of librarians in order to advance the profession; (3) the education and support of librarians with knowledge specific to the profession; and (4) the retention of neutrality by librarians in the face of both union political ideology and the often adversarial relations between management and labour (Kent 1962, 8–9). In June 1954 representatives of the Windsor group presented these ideas informally at the OLA conference and, subsequent to further discussion, it was decided to form a Professional Committee (Kent 1962, 13). As apparent from Kent’s history and Land’s chronology, the OLA Professional Committee would play a large role in IPLO’s development.<sup>3</sup>

“The McLeod Affair” is rendered significant by Kent not so much for what McLeod argued against—more educational requirements for librarians and the belief that librarianship had attained the level of a science—but for the fact that it provoked librarians like those in Windsor to wake up to the need to discuss professionalism seriously (Kent 1962, 7; McLeod 1953). Kent portrays McLeod’s article as sparking a *cause célèbre* with respondents issuing *cris de coeur* that engendered wide and ongoing debate about what was at stake in neglecting the concept of librarianship as a profession. In fact, the work of OLA’s Professional Committee accorded well with this literature and, as Burness’s bibliography demonstrates, its officers and those allied with it continually intervened in the public discussion, seeking to inform readers with the ideas that would further the cause of what was to become IPLO (Black 1954; Colquhoun 1954; Kent 1957; Magee 1955; Wilkinson 1957).<sup>4</sup> Despite the momentum created by the Windsor librarians, the considerable work undertaken by the OLA Professional Committee<sup>5</sup> and the publicity garnered by the articles in the pages of *Ontario Library Review*, however, the movement towards a professional association was endangered by serious setbacks.

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3 Land was a founding member of the Professional Committee along with, among others, William Graff, Louise Schryver, and John Wilkinson. Land was active in both the OLA and the CLA, assuming the presidency of the latter in 1976. In the late 1950s, however, he was the assistant librarian at the University of Toronto and, from 1964 through 1972 he was director and then dean of the School of Library Science at the University of Toronto. He would also hold many different positions within IPLO, assuming the presidency in 1961–62. Graff died in 1962, having served as a president of OLA and as the Chief Librarian at the North York Public Library. Schryver, like Land, was an early IPLO president (1960–61) and, like Kent and Graff, was also an OLA president (1961–62). She also served as Chatham Public Library’s Chief Librarian for many years. Finally, Wilkinson had a great deal of library experience, having served on the staffs of the Toronto Reference Library, the Ontario College of Education Library, and the University of Nebraska Library prior to assuming the position of Librarian at Dalhousie University in 1960. In 1965 Wilkinson became a faculty member at the University of Toronto’s School of Library Science. He became the *IPLO Newsletter* editor in July of 1967.

4 Black was librarian at Toronto’s St. Basil’s Seminary, Colquhoun was with the Toronto Public Library, and Magee was with the Windsor Public Library.

5 The Professional Committee met frequently and consulted with librarians at OLA conferences and with recognized authorities. Kent is effusive, for example, in his praise of a lecture given by J. G. Althouse, Director of Education for the Province of Ontario, in February 1955 on “The Place of a Professional Organization” because it defined the parameters within which the hoped-for association would have to operate in order to be successful. See Kent 1962, 15–17.

The nadir of Kent's history, the halfway point in his story, recounts the May 1957 failure of the Professional Committee to convince the membership to accede to the constitution proposed for what was to have been OLA's Institute for Professional Librarians Section. Disheartened, the committee decided to disband, individual members pondering their defeat during the summer and lamenting the departure of two honoured warriors, Wilkinson and Land (Kent 1962, 23–27). The sombre and somewhat melodramatic undertones of Kent's history at this point—"the general gloom"—comprise, however, the emotional and rhetorical backdrop to a grand reversal. In fact, from here on the narrative becomes a celebration of achievements, a sprint to the end of Kent's history.

September 1957 saw OLA President Crowley appoint Kent to chair a new organizing committee that would attempt a different strategy with the membership in the hopes of receiving sanction to form a section. Invitations to sign a petition were mailed to OLA members and publicized in the November issue of *Ontario Library Review* (Kent 1958b). By January 1958 Kent had the requisite number of petitioners to take to the OLA executive and, in February, the Institute for Professional Librarians Section of OLA was created. Amendments made the OLA membership's acceptance of the Institute's constitution at the May conference possible, and those in charge of the section set out to publicize IPLO and recruit more members from within OLA. May 1959, for example, saw the publication of a Q & A on IPLO in the *Ontario Library Review*, the start of the *IPLO Newsletter*, and IPLO's first annual meeting (Kent 1962, 42–47).<sup>6</sup> Kent's report on the annual meeting is a record of progress in the rhetorical form of meeting minutes. The message here is both explicit (i.e., look at what has been accomplished and must be done next) as well as implicit (i.e., minutes record the progressive achievement of an agenda, conferring legitimacy and credence to an organization). In such a way is the stage set for Kent's finale: the incorporation of IPLO in May 1960.

As mentioned earlier, histories are arguments and the question becomes one of ascertaining what Kent's history, together with Land's chronology, Burness's bibliography, and the articles in *Ontario Library Review*, was meant to achieve. Erik Spicer had been president of IPLO in the year prior to incorporation and had specified that the association should aim to recruit 75 per cent of the province's eligible librarians to the cause.<sup>7</sup> Increasing the membership was seen as imperative, particularly in view of the hope that IPLO would soon be able to attain legal standing within the province in order to represent its members and professional librarianship (Kent 1962, 46). Organizers felt that

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6 The section was particularly effective in publicizing IPLO to potential members during this period in the pages of the *Ontario Library Review* (see Kent 1958a; Magee 1958; Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario 1959a, 1959b, 1959c, the last of which is a report of a symposium held at the section's May meeting).

7 Spicer had been deputy chief librarian at Ottawa Public Library but soon became the Parliamentary Librarian of Canada, a position he held from 1960 to 1994. He was also president of OLA in 1962–63 and the president of the CLA in 1979–80.

membership in IPLO would be appealing to those who were eligible if they understood its mission, took ownership of its history, and came to identify with the association. Quoting Spicer, Kent reinforces the idea that it was characteristic of IPLO to invite participation, that the long march from 1953 towards incorporation was “not the end of our efforts,” but represented “a step ahead” towards the full establishment of librarianship as a recognized profession. It is telling that the true end to Kent’s history consists of a benediction given by Kent as OLA president to the new “young bird” leaving the nest. Those deciding to take flight with IPLO were, therefore, recipients of a blessing that endowed them and the association with all of the prospects attending the next stage of a heretofore momentous and adventurous life (Kent 1962, 49–50, 52). Who would not be willing and happy to join in such a noble venture?

### History as lament and jeremiad

In retrospect, and contrary to Spicer’s aspirations of attaining a membership of 75 per cent of the province’s librarians, 1963 represented a high-water mark in IPLO’s history vis-à-vis membership. Lloyd Houser, in compiling his history of the association, noted that May of this year saw IPLO representing 66 per cent of eligible professional librarians in the province—a number that, unfortunately, declined as the decade wore on (Houser 1975, 68).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Houser’s history, published in 1975 and encompassing the period covered by Kent and then up until the penultimate acts in IPLO’s life, represents a radically different perspective, one more akin to the crisis mentality exhibited in Walker’s 1976 *Quill & Quire* report and Land’s presidential address to the CLA that same year. Here IPLO’s history becomes part jeremiad and part lament, giving voice to an anger and sadness born of both the perceived betrayal of IPLO’s birthright and its impending demise. Moving on from the analysis of Kent’s history, a consideration of Houser’s account will not only familiarize us with the remainder of IPLO’s history but also reveal an alternative historiography of the association.

Houser begins with a preface that discloses a partisanship as zealous as that manifested by Kent, a preface that is also irate to the point of sarcasm. Inferring that the lack of an association archive is itself indicative of deeper problems, Houser, nevertheless, is grateful for the opportunity to provide an analysis for library school students, library scientists, those wishing to begin similar associations, and, tellingly, for new, somewhat naive, IPLO Board members engaged in the attempt to make the association both functional and relevant. Hard on the heels of addressing this variegated audience, Houser next castigates

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<sup>8</sup> Houser had joined IPLO sometime between October 1969 and March 1970. He was, at that time, an associate professor at the University of Toronto School of Library Science and had taught previously at Rutgers University in New Jersey. He had prior academic and public library experience in Springfield, Illinois, Berkeley, California, and Beirut, Lebanon. At the time the IPLO history mentioned here was published, Houser was a past-president of IPLO, editor of the *IPLO Quarterly*, and still teaching at the University of Toronto.

professional librarians as a group for their lack of professionalism (e.g., the rejection of research and a wariness about exercising social influence). In the same breath he establishes the dichotomy that will govern his history: the struggle between the unprofessional blackguards, otherwise known as “the cautious Boards,” and “a small band of activists” who have been responsible for those achievements of which we should be proud (e.g., the Private Members Bill that gave IPLO its current legal status) (Houser 1975, 3–4). With this somewhat caustic heuristic in hand, Houser’s history begins to take shape.

Surprisingly, given the differing attitudes subtending their respective histories, Kent and Houser actually share much of the same perspective on IPLO’s early years. Houser does not mention the Windsor Public Library Staff Association or Philip McLeod’s article—indeed, the period from 1954 to 1958 is summarily dismissed and is concluded instead by John Wilkinson’s entertaining, albeit painful, memory of the May 1957 OLA Professional Committee meeting (Houser 1975, 11–12).<sup>9</sup> Rather, for Houser, late 1958 through early 1962 comprises IPLO’s golden years: “Not only was legislation being pursued, speaking engagements undertaken, and articles written, but practical measures were taken for the benefit of the membership” (Houser 1975, 38). The argument for IPLO appeared not only in the pages of the *Ontario Library Review*<sup>10</sup> but also, under the authorship of important IPLO members like Louise Schryver and Elizabeth Magee, in the CLA’s *Feliciter*, thereby gaining IPLO a national presence (Houser 1975, 21–24, 29–31; Magee 1961; Schryver 1960). Houser’s compilation of documents from this period also includes Land’s address from February 1962 wherein the then-president of IPLO explained to students at the University of British Columbia’s School of Librarianship the association’s distinctive mandate. The rationale articulated by Land bears examination, since it typifies the promotion of IPLO at this time and because it demonstrates continuity with and the development of the platform first formulated by the Windsor Public Library Staff Association in 1953. Moreover, Houser’s inclusion of the entire lecture asserts its significance for his conception of IPLO, a conception that was to lead him to critique developments in the association’s immediate future after the speech and colour his assessment of IPLO’s history in the 1960s.

Land’s address, echoing the sentiments expressed by Schryver, Magee, and others in the IPLO coterie, was meant not only to entice British Columbian students to seek associate-level membership in the fledgling association but was also calculated to enlist them in the professionalization of librarianship.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, some of the reasons for IPLO’s appearance would apply to librarians in British Columbia as well as those in Ontario. First, OLA’s heterogeneity of membership—the mix of individual librarians, trustees, library assistants, clericals, friends of libraries, and libraries themselves, similar, in fact, to that of the British

9 It seems that Houser’s account is in error here, in that Wilkinson’s anecdote is from May 1957 and not May 1958 (by which time IPLO had already been organized).

10 See citations in notes 5 and 6.

11 Residence and employment in Ontario were requirements for full active membership in IPLO.

Columbia Library Association—had created an association that could not identify and represent the needs of librarians as a separate professional class. Second, OLA was seen to be primarily an association of and for public libraries, marginalizing academic and special libraries, and even public librarians who did not always want the management at their institutions to speak for them. Third, there was concern about the control that the Ontario Department of Education’s Provincial Library Service administered in the certification of public librarians. IPLO saw itself as an arbiter of professional standards and hoped to contribute to the definition of what constituted librarianship by advising on the certification process. Fourth, the pressure for librarians to unionize in order to secure a favourable working environment was perceived to make the pursuit of professionalism problematic since unions often classified librarians in bargaining units that also contained library technicians, clerks, and janitorial staff. Fifth, in the wake of the Ontario Department of Education’s decision that public librarians were to be excluded from the teachers’ pension plan because they were not professionals, those behind IPLO realized the need for the development of professional standards to shore up the status of librarianship (Houser 1975, 32–33).<sup>12</sup> Land concluded his lecture, then, by demonstrating how IPLO had in fact met the challenges inherent in the reasons for its formation. Specific achievements (e.g., representation on the new Provincial Library Service’s Certification Board, the retention of legal representation to assist members with employment problems, the sponsorship of professional development seminars for members), though significant, were secondary to the next “major effort” of securing legislation granting IPLO public legal sanction (Houser 1975, 36–37). The subsequent frustration of this last aim, that of moving beyond incorporation for the voluntary membership’s private benefit towards publicly mandated regulatory power binding for all of the province’s librarians, is crucial for understanding the remainder of Houser’s history.

The reasoning behind the last statement becomes clearer when it is understood that identity is secured when it is both sought and attributed. If IPLO’s incorporation in 1960 represented librarians seeking to create a forum for themselves, then that move towards professional identity would need to be responded to and affirmed by those representing Ontario’s public voice, the Legislative Assembly. What Land’s “major effort” called for was full government sponsorship of a public bill that would, after first, second, and third readings, be passed into law, thereby recognizing IPLO as possessing self-government and regulatory power for librarians across the province.<sup>13</sup> Because of its enforceable status (i.e., IPLO could make decisions affecting librarianship and those publics dependent upon it) such a Public Bill was preferable to the other legislative alternatives—the Private Member’s Public Bill and the Private Bill. A Private Member’s Public Bill was not initiated by

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12 Land’s lecture appeared originally in the April 1962 issue of the *British Columbia Library Quarterly*.

13 This basic explanation of the difference between a public bill, a private member’s public bill, and a private bill comes from the PDFs available under the “How a Bill Becomes a Law” item found on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario’s Web page. More detailed explanation can be found in White (1989).

the Cabinet or caucus but, instead, representative of the concerns particular to a Private Member or his constituents. Though this type of Public Bill was unlikely to become law it could, nevertheless, exert considerable significance over the development of future government policy. From IPLO's perspective, however, the least desirable bill would be a Private Bill. In this scenario IPLO, through the actions of the Member of the Legislature in its head office riding, would receive from the Legislature merely a very limited form of power, restricted in scope to IPLO's members and not, therefore, holding for all librarians within the province. In other words, Land and others within IPLO felt that to not pursue a government-sponsored Public Bill for IPLO would constitute the surrender—better, the betrayal—of IPLO's originating mandate.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Houser is decidedly ambivalent about how 1963's Private Bill 40 (i.e., Bill Pr40), *An Act Respecting the Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario*, was deemed adequate by elements in the IPLO leadership. While the act allowed IPLO to exercise some control—a \$50 fine could be levelled by IPLO against non-members using the designation “RPL” (registered professional librarian) or who otherwise implied membership in IPLO<sup>14</sup>—the act, as a private, and not a public, bill failed to achieve the full regulatory powers that Houser believed to be “the primary objective of the Institute” (Houser 1975, 46). On Houser's reading, the act becomes a pyrrhic victory, marking the beginning for IPLO of failures in leadership, a declining membership, and the irresponsible assignment of limited and precious resources to committees that were of secondary importance (Houser 1975, 67). For Houser, the 1960s take on the stagnation of a holding pattern, squandering opportunities that would have advanced IPLO and professional librarianship. The inertia and navel-gazing of these years stand in stark contrast to the strides of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

If May 1957 had been troubling for Kent, then February 1970 and the publication of a special supplement to the *IPLO Quarterly* was heartrending for Houser, confirming his suspicions about the misguided and self-destructive direction in which IPLO was headed. The supplement was the result of deliberations by IPLO's current president, Erich Schultz, with former Board members.<sup>15</sup> He had then presented these findings on the future of IPLO to the Board, and they, in turn, had passed motions and associated rationales that were now being offered to the membership for further discussion and implementation. Houser focuses in on two significant areas, legislation and collective bargaining. The push for legislation granting IPLO regulatory powers for the profession had been narrated by Houser and (less so) by Kent as the logical outworking of the early wish for increased prestige, social and political influence, and resistance to unionization. The supplement, however, maintained that this push had been contested from the start, that some within

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14 See section 11(2) of the act.

15 Schultz had been OLA president from 1968 to 1969 and was with Waterloo Lutheran University Library. (Waterloo Lutheran University became Wilfrid Laurier University in 1973.)

the movement felt it to be unfortunate, and that, for the foreseeable future, “IPLO should be concerned about people, not things” (Houser 1975, 47).<sup>16</sup> Citing extensively from a letter sent to IPLO by a local member of Provincial Parliament who, in turn, found authority for his remarks in the opinion of the clerk of the Legislature of Ontario, the supplement all but stated that pursuing a public bill was a dead end. Houser’s counterargument was that the membership, seeing no real power in a private bill, would wane and recruitment, so vital to the viability of the association, would become more difficult.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the implications of this stance on legislation had a profound effect upon any hope of IPLO playing more than an advisory role in collective bargaining. Moreover, with a membership that included professional librarians as employers and employees, the supplement proposed withdrawing from the foreseeable entanglements and conflicts of interest that would have emerged had IPLO considered acting as an agent in collective bargaining (Houser 1975, 51–53). The idea of IPLO operating as a quasi-union was, therefore, dismissed.<sup>18</sup>

Significant for Houser’s historical perspective at this point, however, was his reluctant acknowledgement that there were forces both internal and external to IPLO that the supplement spoke for and reflected. With respect to IPLO’s internal politics, Houser’s recognition reiterates his earlier distinction between activists promoting professionalism and that much larger group—led by the “cautious Boards”—refusing to rise to the challenge. Houser’s naming of a majority “conservative element” within IPLO appears to be an instantiation of the fact that his view is polemical and not simply hortative and celebratory. By comparison, Kent’s earlier account is nostalgic, refraining from stressing the dissension within the developing association in favour of a linear, progressive, and unitary history.<sup>19</sup> Just as important for Houser’s historiography is the awareness that social, economic, and political forces external to IPLO had had a role to play in the decision not to press for a public bill and IPLO’s subsequent retreat from direct action vis-à-vis collective bargaining. Whereas Kent’s account is largely insular and restricts historical agency to various librarians, Houser’s history breaches that insularity and references, for example, the Ontario government’s Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights (hereafter, the McRuer Report). These external forces are, as will be shown, far more determinative than Houser allows, yet his identification of them midway through his history, subsequent to

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16 The entire supplement runs to 14 pages and, in addition to covering legislation and collective bargaining, comprises sections on continuing education, library schools, library technicians, the executive director, the board of directors, the *IPLO Quarterly*, and undergraduate programs in library science.

17 Houser’s overview of IPLO registrant statistics and the comments of successive Registration Committees and Membership Recruitment Committees prove his point. As mentioned earlier, summer 1963, when the IPLO act came into being, also represented the high-water mark for membership as a percentage of all of Ontario’s eligible librarians (see Houser 1975, 66–74). Houser’s statistics are also available in Bow (1985).

18 The idea of a library association acting as a quasi-union recurs frequently in the literature. For two important studies, see Schlachter (1973) and Todd (1985). The American Library Association has taken up some of the issues that engendered discussion about quasi-unions by establishing the Allied Professional Association.

19 John Wilkinson characterizes Kent’s history as nostalgic (1969, 278n2).

the heights and accomplishments also mapped by Kent, contribute greatly to the gloom and uncertainty that hover over his conclusions.

The penultimate chapter in Houser's history, however, marks a turnabout of sorts, not unlike the grand reversal narrated by Kent in the wake of May 1957. Though, in Houser's view, the supplement of 1970 constituted a "non-program," the years subsequent to its appearance—wherein Les Fowlie in 1971 and then Houser himself in 1972 assumed presidency of the association—inaugurated a return to activism (Houser 1975, 81).<sup>20</sup> The self-styled "New Program" years shook off the defeatism of the supplement and the quiescence of most of the 1960s and undertook activities, publications, and seminars that echoed the golden years of 1960–62. Workshops and seminars on censorship and labour relations were published together with position papers on intellectual freedom, ethics, grievance procedures, working conditions and employment contracts (Houser 1975, 87–109; IPLO 1972a, 1972b, 1974). Amidst the joy at IPLO's renewal, however, it is easy to overlook one crucial question for Houser's history: if the "New Program" represented a radical departure from the IPLO of the mid- to late-1960s, then how to explain its displacement of the regime signaled by the special supplement? The relief and joy attending the "New Program" achievements is so great that Houser fails to indicate how these substantial efforts were able to take root and grow in what must have been, on his account, inhospitable soil. It is certainly possible, for example, that direct action of the type associated with two grievance cases—one with Conestoga College and the other with St. Lawrence College—contributed to IPLO's new pragmatism and "can do" attitude (see Board of Directors, IPLO, 1971a, 1971b). Yet the inertia Houser attributes to the association and large portions of the membership can only have been countered by a longer-lived factor within IPLO.

It is likely that the emergence of the *IPLO Quarterly* contributed to an environment in which Houser's "New Program" could flourish. John Wilkinson had played a variety of roles in IPLO's history but, in 1967, he took on the editorship of the *IPLO Newsletter*. Though recognizing that the newsletter functioned as a record of the association's activities and programs, Wilkinson was also adamant that it take up "research into basic concepts" (Wilkinson 1967, 1). Contrary to those wishing to retain a "newsier" newsletter<sup>21</sup>—which, at the very beginning in 1959, had also informed the membership of marriages and births—Wilkinson quickly set about soliciting and publishing more lengthy pieces on, for example, professionalism, the state of IPLO, and the implications of the McRuer Report (Chester 1968; Marshall 1969; Mathews n.d.; Wilson n.d.).<sup>22</sup> Further reflection on where the

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20 Fowlie was with the St. Catharines Public Library at the time and, among other IPLO tasks, would also serve as the acting editor when Wilkerson left the *Quarterly* in 1972 and before Houser assumed that responsibility with the July 1973 issue.

21 See Jean Burness's comment in Mathews (1968, 29).

22 As a result of a change in format the month of publication was omitted for some of these issues.

association should head was prompted by not only letters to the editor critical of IPLO but also Wilkinson's pointed ruminations and introductions to each issue. A letter from Kent proposed that IPLO negotiate terms with and join a union, lest the association wither away (Kent n.d., 56–57). Similarly, a letter from David Skene Melvin urged IPLO not to lose “sight of its original goal—to be a professional ‘union’ ... for all eligible librarians in Ontario” (1968, 50–1). Perhaps most interesting, however, was Erik Spicer's lengthy letter to the *IPLO Quarterly* in which he critiqued the special supplement and stated his intention to leave IPLO (1971). Though congratulating Les Fowlie on his election as president of IPLO, he also left no doubt as to his profound disillusionment with IPLO's decision not to pursue legislated control of librarianship and its willingness to cede collective bargaining to groups like the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Canadian Association of University Teachers. Wilkinson did not disagree with Spicer, finding much of what he wrote to be true. Yet what was required in the present moment was more commitment, not less, and Spicer's contributions to IPLO would be missed, particularly his criticism (Wilkinson 1971). It should not be inferred from this exchange, however, that Wilkinson was uncritical in his support of IPLO and professional librarianship. Rather, he found it appropriate to use his editorials to reprimand librarians for neglecting the scholarship and research programs necessary to raise the standards of library service and for also refusing the obligations that followed from professionalism (Hambleton 1970, 7–8; Wilkinson 1970, 82–3).<sup>23</sup> Wilkinson, in short, encouraged a sustained and thorough dialogue on all matters of significance to IPLO, a conversation that was formative and helped prepare the way for the successes enjoyed by Houser's “New Program.”

The conclusion to Houser's history registers the criticisms of Kent, Melvin, Spicer, and Wilkinson. The “New Program” gives way to “The Crunch” in which Houser, like those already mentioned, detailed IPLO's shortcomings. The promotion of guidelines rather than standards, the proliferation of committees—sixteen in 1975 for a total membership of around 400—and the refusal to engage politically, led Houser to warn that “this same reluctance to take a stand, this fear of taking a chance, this preference to wait and see, this desire to be nice and to be fair will be the end of the Institute” (Houser 1975, 114). The prescience of Houser's conclusion would be proven in April 1976 when he would sign off as the *IPLO Quarterly's* last editor and IPLO itself would disband just four months later.<sup>24</sup> In

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23 In their last editorial, Wilkinson and associate editor Alixe Hambleton, stated, “We have found that Canadian librarians appear, on the whole, to be either apathetic readers of their professional literature or poor correspondents with respect to the issues raised by that literature ... in general the reactions of *Quarterly* readers to issues which we thought were controversial have been sufficiently non-verbal to discourage editors and authors alike” (Wilkinson and Hambleton 1972, 6). For an earlier allusion to the same problem, see *IPLO Newsletter* editor Dorothy Madge's comments in the January 1965 issue (the *Quarterly* grew out of the *Newsletter*). Wilkinson and Hambleton were recognized for their achievement with the *Quarterly* by the IPLO Board in the October 1972 issue.

24 Houser's last editorial echoes that given by Wilkinson and Hambleton four years earlier: “This is the last issue of the *Quarterly* which we shall edit. We should have liked to have included more research but there isn't any.

1979 Houser offered a post-mortem on IPLO for the benefit of members of La Corporation des bibliothécaires professionnels du Québec (Houser 1979). In 1973 Miriam Tees had written on how this young association, created in 1969 by a private bill in the National Assembly of Quebec—and still active—owed much to IPLO and now, six years later and after IPLO's demise, Houser offered further observations on what had happened, in the hope that a similar fate for Quebec professional librarianship could be avoided (Tees 1973). Houser reiterated some of the reasons IPLO had failed but went on to emphasize that, at root, the Achilles heel of the profession and its associations remained the hostility towards the creation and development of scientific knowledge, theory, and methodology (Houser 1979, 20). Ironically, given all of the work that IPLO undertook, this finding echoes that of Philip McLeod's critique in 1953 and is, furthermore, an affirmation of Wilkinson's finding that librarians in Ontario continued to have almost no appreciation of basic research. Houser's post-mortem ends with a reference to current examinations of professionalism, positioning IPLO's failure as an early symptom of the increasingly hostile scrutiny of the professions by the governments of North America.

### **IPLO's history redux: Incorporating the McRuer Report**

One of the suppositions guiding this analysis of the histories of IPLO has been the idea that a problematic library historiography can itself become constitutive of the challenges that librarians and librarianship continue to face vis-à-vis the profession *qua* profession. The way in which the profession has been narrated creates analytical problems as much as it reveals new approaches to historical understanding. Kent's history is the insular story of individuals striving to give birth to a new association. Houser's history is more subtle, noting dissension within the ranks, and, more importantly, referring to external political and social realities with which IPLO must contend. In common, however, these histories argue for a conception of librarianship that is marked essentially by acts of (heroic) self-determination. In this respect, the traditional sociological view of professionalism that focuses almost exclusively on the traits to be acquired before an occupation can become a profession is the archetype for these histories; the history becomes the record of the incremental steps undertaken by individuals towards the autonomy characteristic of a profession.<sup>25</sup> What is noteworthy about Houser's history is that this perspective is brought up against the idea that professional identity is attributed, that it is essentially relational, and that it must be negotiated continually (i.e., with its own practitioners, with

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Producing factual material was itself a challenge. This fact alone should have excited the professional librarian. Apparently it does not. Like my predecessor, I marvel at the indifference to his literature by the professional librarian. Editing this journal has been rather like working in a vacuum. Apart from the occasional if often complimentary remark of a friend or colleague, we have no evidence that any one reads the journal" (Houser 1976, 197–8). Given his concerns, it is not altogether surprising that, two years later, Houser would co-publish with Alvin M. Schrader *The Search for a Scientific Profession: Library Science Education in the U.S. and Canada* (1978).

25 For an analysis of the sociological models of professionalism available to librarianship, see Vice (1988).

governments, with the public).<sup>26</sup> This second perspective on professionalism, professional identity, and the formation of associations decentres the individual and lends itself to the writing of histories that problematize individual agency. Canadian library historians have made recourse to this second perspective wherein, for example, librarianship in this country is seen as crucially dependent upon developments in the United States. Lorne Bruce's examination of Andrew Carnegie's role in the growth of Canadian public library infrastructure and Toni Samek's examination of the American Library Association's involvement in the formation of the Canadian Library Association are but two examples (Bruce 1994, 165–203; Samek 1992). What is intriguing about such exercises in history is that the lament and jeremiad underscoring Houser's history—his legitimate reaction to bewildering and incomprehensible behaviour by Ontario's librarians—becomes itself contextualized by forces larger than the practice of librarianship and, in retrospect, a somewhat less severe indictment of a behaviourally conservative subculture. The self-loathing that subtends Houser's account is, on this reading, misplaced.

To understand how this second perspective could work more fully to augment or even recast Houser's history of IPLO, it is necessary to mention only one of the external forces that he touches upon: the McRuer Report.<sup>27</sup> In 1963 the newly elected government of Premier John Robarts stumbled into a self-inflicted crisis when it introduced what some characterized to be draconian legislation—legislation that would radically increase the investigatory and detention powers of police in their struggle against organized crime. Robarts countered the uproar expressed by politicians, the media, and many private citizens by launching the Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights in 1964, headed by Chief Justice J. C. McRuer, and charging it with the broad mandate of examining and making recommendations on the relationships between the state and the rights of individual citizens. The resulting McRuer Report, the three parts of which were tabled in the Ontario Legislature between 1968 and 1971, had many effects, all of which sought to protect individuals from unwarranted government or government-sponsored interference in civil rights. More germane to our purposes, the report signaled a change in what IPLO could hope to expect from the government on the self-governance and regulatory powers of professions within the province.

As the McRuer Report itself makes clear, coincident with IPLO's golden age in the early 1960s was the recognition by the Ontario government that twenty-two professions

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<sup>26</sup> The relational model of librarianship figures prominently in Wilkinson and Harris (2002–3). Wilkinson and Harris draw on Elizabeth Graddy's investigation of how legislative assemblies, public interest, and special interest groups are all determinative in the public recognition and legal regulation of those professions characterized by information asymmetry (e.g., librarianship). See Graddy (1991).

<sup>27</sup> This explanation of the McRuer Report owes much to the relevant sections of the report itself and to chapter 14 in Boyer (1994). For a good and recent overview of the essential elements of the McRuer Report relevant to this study, see Mullan (2005).

encompassing dentists, embalmers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, optometrists, engineers, accountants, surveyors, veterinarians, and others had “been given the statutory power to license, govern and control those persons engaged in them” (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General 1968, 1160). It is not surprising, then, that subsequent to incorporation in 1960 and recognition by the Legislative Assembly with Private Bill 40 (i.e., Bill Pr40) in 1963, IPLO had believed it to be only a matter of time until it, too, could self-govern and license like the aforementioned professions. However, the storm over the government’s possible infringement of individual freedoms and liberties resulted in a McRuer Report that countered the earlier trend that had allowed government-sanctioned bodies like IPLO to regulate occupational domains at the expense of, in this situation, individual librarians who might not want IPLO to manage their profession. The McRuer Report, then, signaled a sea change in the government’s attitudes toward the professions.<sup>28</sup> The euphoria evident in IPLO communications at the beginning of the decade gave way to sobriety in the face of Justice McRuer’s insistence that “the granting of self-government is a delegation of legislative and judicial functions and can only be justified as a safeguard to the public interest.” More striking, particularly for those professions like IPLO,

The power is not conferred to give or reinforce a professional or occupational status. The relevant question is not, “do the practitioners of this occupation desire the power of self-government?,” but “is self-government necessary for the protection of the public?” No right of self-government should be claimed merely because the term “profession” has been attached to the occupation. The power of self-government should not be extended beyond the present limitations, unless it is clearly established that the public interest demands it. (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General 1968, 1162)

The impact of McRuer was, therefore, devastating for both IPLO’s Legislation Committee and its participation with actions like those undertaken by the Steering Committee on Negotiation Rights for Professional Staffs and its ill-fated “Professional Negotiations Act.”<sup>29</sup> As one IPLO commentator asked rhetorically,

<sup>28</sup> Houser registered some of this change in his history of IPLO: “There had been a growing concern by the Ontario government about licensing powers such as those held by doctors, dentists and engineers. This concern was personalized by the plight of foreign-trained professionals who were unable to practice in Ontario at a time when there was a shortage of professionals. Local newspapers played up stories of immigrant doctors being reduced to driving taxis to make a living” (1975, 50). The McRuer Report appeared to be in step with the times and, to a certain extent, betrayed a popular questioning and wariness about the benevolence of governmental regulation coincident with greater restrictions on that regulation of the expression of individual and civil rights.

<sup>29</sup> The Steering Committee on Negotiation Rights for Professional Staffs had been established in November 1964 on behalf of seven engineers associations. The committee had extended invitations to other professional associations in January 1965 to participate in lobbying the government for a Professional Negotiations Act. It appears, however, that the committee was unsuccessful in its efforts to convince the Ontario Legislature. The January and March 1965 newsletters record IPLO’s first dealings with the committee.

How then can we justify licensing and other controls as necessary to “safeguard the public interest”? Will the people perish if library service is withdrawn? Will the state fall into chaos? We hardly qualify under what may be called the “law of inverse effects,” that is, the more damage it is possible to inflict on the client, the more readily does the profession qualify for powers of licensing and self-government. (Marshall 1969, 45)<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, the McRuer Report was adamant that membership fees be used solely for the protection of the public interest and not for an association’s service functions (i.e., the welfare of the association’s members). The consensus among the then IPLO leadership was that this meant that the institute could not endeavour to act as a bargaining agent on the behalf of its members (Houser 1975, 51–53). Moreover, IPLO’s push, through its own Legislation Committee, to agitate for the Legislature’s recognition was not only dissipated, therefore, by the decision in 1966 to take up membership in the Steering Committee, but was also frustrated by the changing political and social realities represented by and advanced through the recommendations of the McRuer Report. Thus eviscerated, IPLO’s marginalization with respect to the OLA and the CLA and its resulting ineffectuality as a professional association would seem to have been a foregone conclusion.

Closer attention to complex external pressures like the McRuer Report<sup>31</sup> and the move of unions to incorporate white-collar workers in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s—a trend that IPLO could not help but notice and, in fact, comment on via the *IPLO Quarterly*<sup>32</sup>

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30 This statement can be read as indicative of the self-inflicted defeatism that plagues librarianship to this day. As librarians have also recognized, however, particularly as information has become more ubiquitous electronically, the socio-political and ethical costs of questionable information policy and commodified information flow foreground the crucial significance of librarianship not only in terms of the public’s access to information but also the public’s evaluation of that information. Indeed, how can professional librarianship not be “in the public interest”?

31 For example, there remains the intriguing role of one of IPLO’s friends, MPP Allan Lawrence (Toronto–St. George). Lawrence had sponsored Private Bill 40 (i.e., Bill Pr40) within the Legislature for IPLO and had recommended to IPLO that it proceed as a private bill because of the furore that the Robarts government was weathering in 1963. Granting self-government and regulatory powers to yet another professional association would only have made civil libertarians angrier. Interestingly, Lawrence himself was one of the members of the Robarts government, the criticism of which, as we have seen, resulted in the establishment of McRuer’s Royal Commission. Indeed, as Ontario’s attorney general in 1971–72, Lawrence championed the implementation of the McRuer Report. In other words, it does not appear to have been in Lawrence’s political self-interest in 1963 to have advised IPLO to push ahead for a public bill and self-government. He would have been creating problems for himself had he done so (i.e., it could have made some constituents upset and would have been hard to reconcile with his demonstrated pro-individual rights stance). On the other hand, it is possible to interpret his recommendation to IPLO as a pragmatic attempt to get the association the best possible deal in an unfavourable political climate with the hope that a public bill could be secured at a later date (see Boyer 1994, 299, 324; Houser 1975, 45–50).

32 See *IPLO Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1976), a substantial contribution to understanding the impact of unionization on

—would displace inefficacious visions of professionalism and its history in favour of more analytically (and, therefore, practically) useful histories. Though some scholarship has addressed these and related issues, much more archival and theoretical work remains to be done before a better understanding of IPLO will emerge.<sup>33</sup> It is unfortunate, then, that this kind of historical research seems so marginal to the current practice of library and information science education.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, such lacunae perpetuate bewilderment in the face of and an indifference to the complexities of professional identity among new librarians, create ever-greater cynicism among established librarians (who see almost no appreciation for what has been accomplished prior to the latest technological development), and make the work of those Canadian library associations outlasting IPLO all the more challenging and difficult.<sup>35</sup>

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public and academic librarianship. Also noteworthy was a recurring feature, the Labour Relations Information Exchange, wherein IPLO members communicated reports on unionization in various institutions.

33 See Mudge (1984) for an industrial relations perspective on some of these issues. Helpful work also appears in Spencer Garry and Garry's anthology (1977), particularly Spencer Garry's essay on Canadian library associations and Garry's essay on the unionization of the profession. Though anthologies of articles have their place—see, for example, Peter McNally's anthologies in Canadian library history (1986, 1996)—what seems to be missing is the historical monograph, a format that allows a more sustained treatment.

34 See Christine Pawley's (2005) excellent report on and analysis of this situation.

35 Here I am thinking of the critiques of information technology and technophilia evident in writers like Michael Gorman (1995, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) and John Buschman (2003). Even more problematic, however, is the fact that the pragmatic and utilitarian foundations of library and information science, together with a residual positivism in its self-conception as a social science, have marginalized theoretical and historical analyses, particularly in library and information science curricula. In other words, the acquisition of administrative skills and technical proficiencies needed to practice librarianship is but a minimal requirement for (short-term) success. Given the number and character of contemporary challenges to librarianship and the information professions, it should be apparent that studies in political economy, intellectual history, ethics, and the philosophy of information have much to contribute to the development of the profession and, indeed, librarians themselves.

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