

The answer lies in the reference room at the library

by Shirley Whittington
If you've got a question, the chances are pretty good that the answer lies in the reference room of the Midland Public Library.

The reference room is open to everyone - not just library members - and research librarian Catharine MacKenzie is there to help information seekers find what they need.

There seems to be no limit to the kind of information available in the books that line the bright basement room.

Who uses the reference library?

Elementary school youngsters use it to dig up information for school projects. "We have publications that can tell you more about a ruffed grouse than you'd ever want to know," says Catharine.

High school students use the reference room to research essays. The library holds mountains of data on drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Some youngsters come in looking for information on the specifications of a particular kind of automobile. Using a cross indexing system, Catharine is able to direct the student to the right issue of Popular Mechanics or Consumer Reports.

A lot of people come in to check on points of law and civil rights in the legal volumes. There are copies of federal and provincial statutes, Royal Commission reports, Hansard, and minutes of the Simcoe County Council. So far there are no copies on file of the minutes of the Midland Town Council but Catharine feels they would be a valuable addition to the library's resources.

Midland Library news

Library hours: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

From the new book list:
The Weekly Library Report heard each Thursday at 6:30 p.m. on CKMP, continues to present interesting news about books and writers. On upcoming programs Mrs. Helen Delaney will have interviews with Arnold Edinborough, author of the recent book "Some camel...some needle", and Don Sims, well known broadcaster who was recently appointed Ontario film censor.

At the library for the next two weeks there is a display of work by the distinguished Midland photographer, Bud Watson. Be sure to come in to see this.

New Book List
How to Live Dangerously. Fleming. An elderly ex-Naval man living a quiet life in Oxford plans to "live dangerously" and becomes involved in unexpected adventures.

Sawbones Memorial. Ross. Canadian novelist Sinclair Ross recreates the feelings and events of the life of small town doctor Hunter, as he retires after a long career in Upward, Saskatchewan.

Zero to Airtime. Watson. Patrick Watson, well-known as a television producer, has written his first novel, and tells an exciting story, filled with inside information and contemporary political issues.

Pierre and Janet Berton's Canadian Food Guide. 641.59 BER. An enjoyable book to enrich your cooking and your reading pleasure.

The Fate of the Griffon. MacLean. Based on many years of careful research, this book tells the story of the "Griffon", which was built in the seventeenth century and sank in Georgian Bay. Its remains are believed to be in an island cove near Tobermory, Ontario.

Snow Job: Canada, The United States and Vietnam (1954 to 1973). Taylor. 959.704 TAY. Veteran journalist Charles Taylor offers a disturbing look into the world of Canadian/U.S. relations.

Designing for Crafts. Parker. 745.5 PAR. This book explains the technical elements of design - form, colour, texture; gives a concise history of formal art from early times to the present and has numerous illustrations.

Senior citizens who are curious about recreational opportunities, accommodation, financial assistance or legal advice can usually find what they want in a bulging file of publications directed to their specific interests.

Last week, a gentleman came in seeking the names of companies that manufacture steam boilers. Catharine directed him to the appropriate publications, and he found what he was looking for.

There is a fairly constant stream of university and college students who find the Huronia Archives a rich resource area.

Catharine MacKenzie is in the process of cataloguing all the books and periodicals in the reference room, and because she scans each publication carefully before entering information on catalogue cards, she has a good idea of what's in each of the books in her realm.

"Librarians," says Catharine, "Have a good memory for the kind of thing they are doing."

Patrons with a question fill out a slip of paper detailing

their requirements, and Catharine directs them to the right book or periodical. There are large work tables in the reference room, and there's lots of room to spread papers and books about, and to copy down information.

Catharine and her staff, technician Rosemary Bald, and Anni Baur, also handle telephone requests, (526-5112). Short questions are answered almost immediately. If more extensive research is required, the material is lined up and the patron is notified by telephone.

Catharine MacKenzie is well qualified to be in charge of the reference room. She taught for seven years at the Faculty of Library Science at the University of Toronto. Her particular field was in reference book selection and school libraries.

In 1973, she returned to her birthplace, Victoria Harbour, and began part-time work at the Midland Library. When the new reference room opened, she took charge of the last numbers of books which were liberated from storage.

"Fifty per cent of them were uncatalogued," she

says, "and the rest were catalogued, but not from the point of view of reference service."

Meticulous cataloguing is the magic key that opens the storehouse of knowledge on the shelves. Each book has at least one card, which records its Dewey number, title, author and a summation of its contents. Nearly always, a book has a number of cards, cross indexed by author(s) titles, and general and specific interest areas. Magazines and periodicals are also indexed.

The massive job of cataloguing continues. "It will take us almost two years to complete it," says Catharine.

One room in the reference library is devoted to periodicals, and it contains current and back copies of almost 50 per cent of Canada's leading magazines, including the Canadian Geographic, MacLean's and local newspapers.

Some of the back issues go as far back as the forties and are very fragile. For this reason, they are not available for browsing,

although Catharine will gladly search out a specific issue on request.

Catharine MacKenzie is surrounded by reading materials at work and at her Victoria Harbour home, and she admits that books really turn her on. "I read all the time," she says. And she thinks a reference library is just about the most interesting place in the world. "I could spend days poring over a new national atlas," she smiles.

Admittedly, not everyone is turned on by research - not at first anyway. "I have seen students come in hew looking pretty bored about the whole business of looking things up. By the time they leave, they are fascinated by the mind of miscellaneous information that is available in reference books."

When this happens, it means that she herself has communicated her own fascination with the printed word.

All of which proves that Midland's reference librarian knows a lot about books, but what's more important, she knows how to bring people and books together.



Catherine MacKenzie, librarian

Midland's Reference Library is open the same hours as the library itself. Scholars and people who are just curious about the world and the people in it are welcomed by Catharine MacKenzie, who has a high batting average in finding apt answers for puzzling questions.

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