

## Literate Canadians



## Try This:

- Open the interactive map "Public Libraries, 1779-1891."
- Under LAYER CONTROLS, turn on the checkbox for "Collective Libraries 1779-1830."



## Notice ...

- The term "Collective Library" is not defined in the legend box.



## Try This:

- Click on the "Related Materials" drop-down menu and select *Notes* - "Text from the Atlas."
- Scroll to the heading "Public Libraries" and read about collective libraries.
- Close the *Notes* pop-up box and return to the map.
- Click on the "Zoom to" drop-down menu and select "Southern Ontario."



## Notice ...

- Libraries before 1820 were strictly urban features.
- This map offers no clue as to the language of the library holdings.
- Canada's earliest libraries were private, not public, institutions.



## Consider!

- General reading in the early 19th century bears the earmarks of an elitist activity, restricted to those people with disposable income.

Historical Atlas of Canada Online Learning Project

The Printed Word, 1752-1900

**Text from the printed Atlas**

In 18th-century British North America the tasks of daily survival were all-consuming, leaving little time for cultural pursuits. The wretched of the land and the insupportable terrain were formidable impediments to the movement of people, goods, and ideas, and travel was slow. Before 1850 a newspaper sent by steamship from London (England) might reach London (Ontario) in six weeks. But what could it tell its readers about Canada? In the 1750s Halifax brought the country into the information age with the establishment of the first press, the first indigenous newspaper, the first published advertisement, the first post office, and the first bookstore. While ship, canoe, and stagecoach could move newspapers and books between the colonies, rapid duplication of the Halifax experience throughout British North America showed there was no substitute for a local press, a local bookstore, and a reading room or library.

Early colonial newspapers benefited financially but suffered intellectually from their dependence on government or religious patronage. Invariably the most independent newspapers were those based in major urban centres, where there was a large market. As the century advanced, published political and economic opinion became more sophisticated as the relationships between advertising and circulation strengthened. But the partisan preoccupations of 18th-century continued. Printer, publisher, editor, and owner were often united in one person, serving Canadians the printed fare they most loved, the range of contentious debate.

**Methodist Book Room**

The largest and most powerful publishing operation in Canada in the 19th century was the Methodist Book Room in Toronto, originally established in 1809 to produce a church newspaper, the influential *Christian Guardian*. Separated from the newspaper in 1843, the Book Room broadened its publishing list to include a more eclectic mix of text and trade books. After 1879 its new director, William Briggs, nurtured a stable of well-respected Canadian authors and began an agency to serve several prominent British and American publishers. Among those apprenticed in the Book Room were Thomas Allen, John McClelland, and George Stewart, who would leave to create their own publishing companies.

Settlement  
 Settled area (examine)  
 Unsettled area

LAYER CONTROLS

Collective Libraries 1779-1830

Founded

- 1779 - 1799
- 1800 - 1819
- 1820 - 1830

Mechanics Institutes 1815-1852

Public Libraries, 1891

Modern Geography