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ANDREW CARNEGIE – A MODEL FOR PFI?

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Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) is perhaps the single best remembered benefactor of libraries in the English-speaking world, and for good reason. The scale of his generosity is easily revealed by a few figures and comparisons. Authorities vary in the number of libraries that they attribute to his benefactions worldwide; some say 2,509 whilst others claim 2,811 libraries were gifted to towns and cities in a dozen or more countries at an estimated cost of \$57 million. While part of the discrepancy may be accounted for by libraries for which money was promised but which were not built, both these figures exceed the total number of public library buildings in the UK today (c. 2,000). There does seem to be agreement that Carnegie established 660 public libraries in Great Britain (England 423, Scotland 147, and Ireland 90). Putting this in a different perspective, a comparison could be made with the public library building boom in England and Wales during the 60s when the British Government found the money to build or modernise 856 buildings.

The son of a weaver, he was born in Dunfermline in central Scotland. In 1848 his family emigrated to Pennsylvania. As a child, he began work in a cotton factory. Later he worked for a telegraph company, and then joined the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, rising to become the head of its Pittsburgh Division. From the 1860s onward, at first using borrowed money, he bought and expanded several iron and steel plants, and successfully invested in other businesses. In 1901 he sold the Carnegie Steel Company (into a combine that became the United States Steel Group) and devoted the rest of his life to 'good works'.

The first Carnegie Library had been given in 1881 to Carnegie's birthplace, the city of Dunfermline. He made the offer in 1879 on condition that the Town Council would adopt the Free Library Act of 1867. That legislation empowered local Councils to establish and support public libraries, but was not mandatory. The council agreed in 1880, and Carnegie provided the site, building and furniture at a cost of about £8,000. The building was officially opened on 29 August 1883.

The gift was so well received that he began to establish other libraries. The second library was in Braddock in Pennsylvania (1889), where his company had a major steel plant, and the third in Allegheny in the same state, the town to which the Carnegie family had emigrated. A gift to the city of New York for the construction of 65 branch libraries signalled the start of his major programme of benefactions.

The gift of the library to Dunfermline was accompanied by a small endowment for its upkeep, one of only five of the thousands of Carnegie libraries that benefited in this way. In other cases, the local councils were required to subsidise their Carnegie library by an annual amount that at least equalled 10 per cent of the cost of the library building, as well as providing the site. This condition, and a gift towards the construction cost usually based on about \$2 per inhabitant, became known as the 'Carnegie Formula'. Legend has it that many Councils welched on their part of the agreement, and the budgets for operating some libraries subsequently proved inadequate. There may be some truth in this, but the cause probably lies more in the impact of the Great War and the Depression and of steady inflation through the

20th century than in the philistinism of local Councillors – though that no doubt played its part. Indeed, in some cases Carnegie's offer was rejected because of the conditions attached to it. Those promoting today's Private Finance Initiatives and seeking to encourage private benefactions for library services might usefully consider the Carnegie experience. While there is clearly much to be gained from fostering individual motivation to support public services, the implications for long-term support must be assessed.

In the same vein as the other entrepreneurs who made great fortunes in the 19th century, Andrew Carnegie believed that all personal wealth beyond that required to supply the needs of one's family should be regarded as a trust fund to be administered for the benefit of the community, and he invested most of his money, some \$350 million in total, in a number of charitable foundations dedicated to the cause of education and world peace. These included, in the UK, the Dunfermline Carnegie Trust (endowed with \$3.75 million), the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland (\$10 million), and the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust (\$10 million). The last of the seven trusts to be established in the US was the Carnegie Corporation of New York (\$135 million), still the largest and most influential of the US foundations.

The Carnegie connection with libraries did not end with his gifts for the establishment of public library buildings. No less than 108 academic libraries have also been built in the US with Carnegie money. The Carnegie Corporation of New York was also particularly influential in library development in Australia, supporting the seminal Munn-Pitt report on library conditions in 1934, and a variety of subsequent activities to encourage public library development, including training courses in Australia in the 40s and study grants for overseas travel in the 50s and 60s. Carnegie funds also helped to establish the national professional association in 1949.

Recently the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust has continued to support specific developments in its local library, particularly in the Local History Department, and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland has sponsored a small study of Internet developments in public libraries. The Carnegie Corporation of New York has again become active in supporting library development, under the direction of its President since 1997, Dr Vartan Gregorian (sometime President of the New York Public Library).

In the US grants have been made to 22 major public library systems. In South Africa 13 libraries had been established with Carnegie money in the early 20th century, as well as a travelling library service for 'non-Europeans'. A new initiative called 'Gateways to Information: African Public Libraries' was launched in 2000 to revitalise Africa's libraries and to create models for service to both urban and rural citizens. At the beginning of 2001, a competitive process was established for libraries in South Africa that would support a few excellent library systems. The six chosen were singled out for their commitment to extending the library's outreach, and their innovative plans for supporting literacy and learning. In 2002, multi-year funding to the national library services of Kenya and Botswana will also be provided.

In 2002, IFLA celebrates the 75th anniversary of its foundation, in Scotland. As part of the conference programme, the National Organising Committee has decided to celebrate the work of Scotland's most famous supporter of library development. Dr Peter Reid, Graeme Baxter and Lindsey Rolinson have identified some 2,500 library buildings established with support from Carnegie that are still apparently in use. Representatives of all those libraries are being

invited to take part in the Conference, and particularly in the special events focused on Carnegie's life and work. These will include a special 'Carnegie Day', with a visit to Carnegie's birthplace and the Dunfermline public library.

The programme is expected to begin with lectures on the life and work of Carnegie, in the Carnegie Hall, a theatre and concert hall, which he gave to the town. There will be visits to the Dunfermline Carnegie Library to view the original building and recent extension. The library also houses the Murison collection of books and other memorabilia of Robert Burns. Guided tours of the nearby Andrew Carnegie Birthplace Museum will be hosted by the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust. Visitors will be able to see the cottage where Carnegie was born in 1835, and the Memorial Hall where the fascinating story of the weaver's son who became the 'steel king' is told.

Dunfermline is Scotland's ancient capital, and there will also be an opportunity to visit the adjacent Dunfermline Abbey, and the ruins of the royal palace where several Kings of Scotland (and one King of Great Britain) were born and are buried. The Abbey Church was built on the eastern limb of a great Benedictine Abbey, founded in the 12th century, and is the final resting place of the remains of Robert the Bruce. Other relics of the Bruce may be seen in the Dunfermline Museum. Alternatively, an independent visit may be made to the 16th-century Abbot House Heritage Centre, to the ruins of Canmore's Tower where King Malcolm held court after the death of Macbeth, or to Pittencrieff Park, another Carnegie gift to the city, to see its museum and art gallery or to admire the peacocks which wander freely through the park (and the city).

During the conference itself, a session by the IFLA Section on Library Buildings will examine the modernisation of a number of the 'Carnegie' library buildings, and we also hope to mount a small exhibition on the Carnegie library buildings in a VIP Carnegie Librarians' Lounge in the Conference Centre in Glasgow. We are currently seeking copies of photographs, plans, and documents relating to Carnegie buildings, past and present, which could be included. Outwith the conference, but associated with it, the University of Kent's Summer Academy programme features a one-week course (commencing 10 August) on the life and lasting influence of Andrew Carnegie.

More information about the conference and its theme, 'Libraries for Life: Democracy, Diversity, Delivery', and emerging details of the programme can be found on the IFLA Web site at: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla68/index.htm>.