

The Public Library

HALIFAX citizens for the first time have access to a modern library. The movement, which began a hundred years ago with great objectives, has achieved another, important stage. New, well-equipped quarters have been provided to replace the cramped, single room into which the institution had been crowded for many years.

Fittingly, the library is a memorial to the men of this city who sacrificed their lives to protect, among the many rights of the democratic state, the right to read and study, to analyze and compare and to extract the best from all that has been written. Knowledge, as it has been written into books up to this day, is made available.

But a library is more than a beautiful building and stacks of books. There are two other elements. One is the public itself. It will be interesting to see how a City, which never has had a real public library, responds to the opportunity to read more freely than any but those with the deepest purses could afford. Patrons may be many in the beginning, may dwindle in number for a time, but, if the experience of other cities is a guide, there will be a steady over-all growth through the years.

The second element involved the nature of the library itself, it must live and expand if it is to remain a library. Otherwise it will become a museum of books, useful in its own way, but not a library in the true sense. The original institution started off with the highest hopes but when it attained a certain size and age it was starved. It did not progress gradually to become the library of today. It stood still and, after a lapse of many years, a tremendous and costly leap had to be taken to cross the gap created by City Council's lack of concern for this basic part of the educational system.

The leap has been taken; the library has been launched. Undoubtedly, many will use it but the extent of the continued use will be extent to which civic authorities are prepared to give it continuous support on the generous scale which has marked the library's beginning.
