

Scottish Readers Remember Libraries

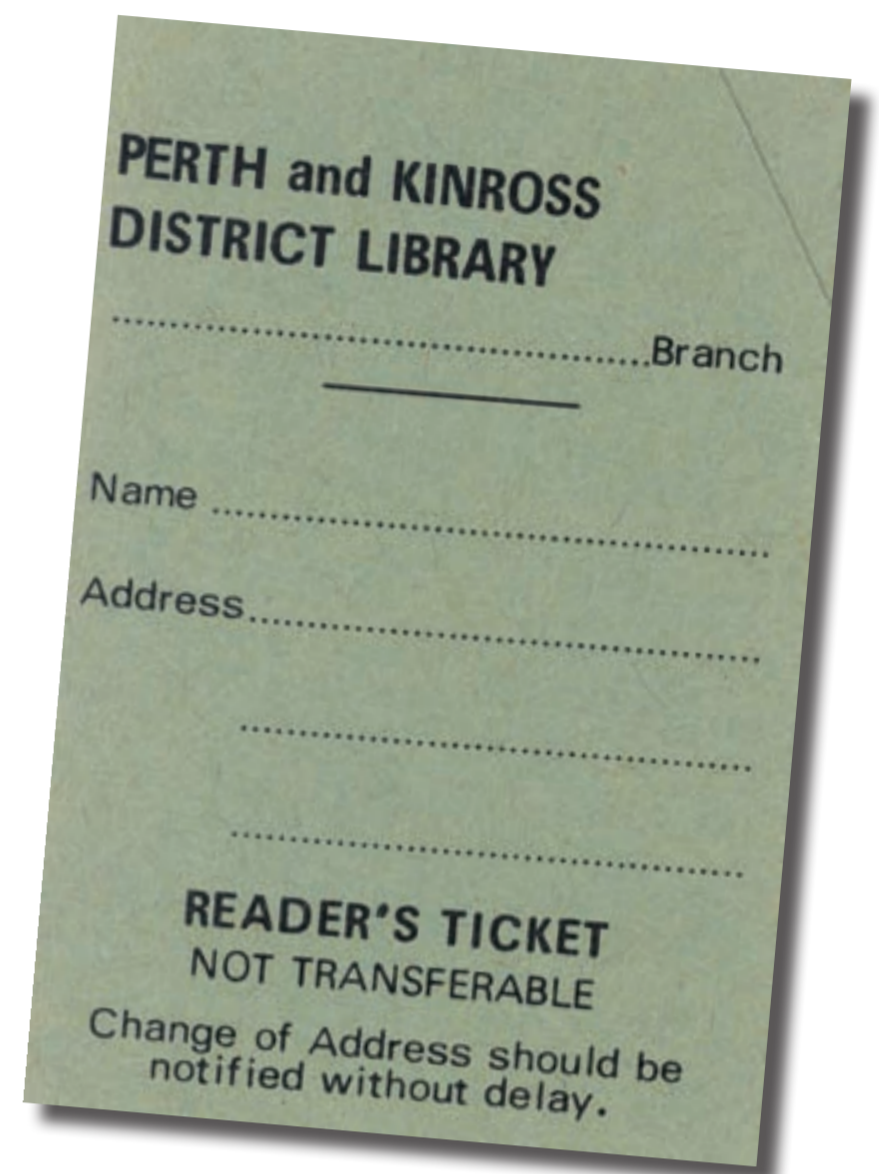


Saturday morning we would go down together and change the books and come back up and you'd find other people that were at the school with you doing the same thing ... Oh yes, everybody went to the library.

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The local library was the most important source of reading material for most Scots throughout the twentieth century. Library services, managed by local authorities but invigorated through the philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie, the Nelson family, the Coats family, and others, provided a diverse range of collections to suit the needs of all readers. The larger towns and cities offered reference collections that made the Mitchell Library in Glasgow or Edinburgh Central Library important educational centres in themselves.

Community libraries developed children's stock and spaces where the often voracious appetites of young minds for all sorts of reading could be satisfied. This service developed over time in many libraries to include story-telling sessions, puppet shows and other activities to enthrall these young readers. However, certainly until the 1980s, libraries often took a decided view on what



was suitable for children: improving books were, comics were not. In the 1980s, as well as extending the range of children's material, libraries also discovered the gap between childhood and adulthood and began to cater for the teenager.

Mobile libraries were used to bring books to readers in even the most remote parts of Scotland. They provided a regular service that was welcome as a means for people to keep in touch with the outside world, both literally in the figure of the librarian and figuratively through the books he or she provided.

