Equality by Mail: Correspondence Education in British Columbia, 1919 to 1969

By

Tara Suzanne Toutant
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University of Victoria

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This thesis traces the development of elementary correspondence education in British Columbia from its introduction in 1919 to 1969, when the elementary and high school correspondence branches were amalgamated. The development of correspondence education was significant in several ways. It marked an important step in the province's efforts to provide equitable access to publicly funded education to a population scattered across a vast and varied geography. The mailed lessons also signified the first time that provincial authorities were prepared to intervene directly in the lives of school children by delivering educational programs. The correspondence branches were also among the first organizational divisions within the education department where women could rise to prominence in leadership positions.

As a unit of the educational civil service, the elementary correspondence branch grew in organizational size and complexity during the first half of the twentieth century. Development of this small unit of government followed three distinct phases that corresponded roughly with changes in the leadership of correspondence education. During the "pioneering" phase, from 1919 to 1933, the correspondence program grew from an experiment to an important government service. Responsibility for developing and administrating elementary correspondence was added to the duties of James Hargreaves, officer-in-charge of mining correspondence courses. By the end of the period, correspondence lessons were widely valued, and government began to extend services from primary through to high school. During the "transitional" phase, from 1934 to 1937, under Isabel Bescoby's guidance, elementary
correspondence was transformed—pedagogically with the doctrines of progressivism to enhance student learning, institutionally with a set of policies and procedures to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, and perceptually with expanded public understanding and regard for the correspondence school. By the time Bescoby left in 1937, the elementary correspondence school had entered a phase of “institutional maintenance.” Elementary correspondence had grown into a mature branch of government, services to students were maintained within protocols of the larger bureaucracy. Aside from updating materials to reflect changes to provincial curriculum or textbooks, little changed from the time of Anna B. Miller’s appointment until the branch was amalgamated with high school correspondence to form a single correspondence branch.
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INTRODUCTION

The question as to how the educational wants of the interior of this Province are to be supplied, is one that I approach under a deep sense of the responsibility involved in attempting to deal with it. There are 402 children scattered along the Fraser, from Yale to Quesnel; the wagon road from Lytton to Barkerville; the Thompson, south and north branches, from Cache Creek to Shuswap and Clearwater; from Duck & Pringles, along the Okanagan Lake, down to Osoyoos; along the Nicola Valley and Similkameen. . . . It is obvious, that all those children cannot reach school in an ordinary way.¹

The 8600 elementary school pupils are housed and taught in buildings and environment of great variety and marked contrast. . . . Many are in remote and lonely places beside a lake, under a towering mountain capped with snow, or on an arid plateau where all vegetation is brown and dusty. Some are on beautiful and lonely islands in the Pacific, where the settler is part farmer, part fisherman, and part lumberman.²

From the establishment of the first schools in the 1850s to the present day, government and school leaders have wrestled with the question of how to deliver and administer school services efficiently. . . . Problems of size and distance, formidable in themselves, have been compounded by other factors, not the least of which has been the province's rugged physical landscape: the high mountains, steep forests, and surging rivers which characterize British Columbia from the 49th to the 60th parallel and from the Pacific Ocean to the Rocky Mountains.³

The quest to overcome the obstacles to equitable educational opportunity is the oldest and most persistent problem in British Columbia school history. Even before Confederation,

¹John Jessop, Supplementary Report on the Public Schools of British Columbia (Victoria, B.C.: R. Wolfenden, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1872), 38.
government officials, daunted by the province's size and topography, sought measures to address the province's obligation to provide free non-sectarian public education to all school-aged children. Through the various inquiries into the province's school system, from the 1924 Survey of the School System to the 1988 A Legacy for Learners, the commissioners' attentions invariably turned to the question of how to ensure equitable educational offering to children scattered throughout the almost one million square kilometres. Attention typically focused on the small, rural schools and the inequities brought about by meagre resources and inexperienced teachers. These commissioners did not comment about the number of children living in areas of the province where even a one-room schoolhouse did not exist.

The province's first effort to meet the needs of children in isolated areas was a central boarding school established at Cache Creek by the first Superintendent of Education, John Jessop, in 1874. The school operated until 1890, when it closed in response to declining enrolment. With the boarding school closed, families who lived in remote areas of the province had few options to school their children. They could buy textbooks from the department or use their own books to teach their children to read and write. Alternatively, they could send their children to live with relatives or friends in larger centres. Lighthouse keepers and pioneer families continued to petition the government for assistance in schooling their

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5British Columbia is 947,800 square kilometres (365,946 square miles).

6Johnson, History of Public Education, 47.

7Ibid.

8James Hargreaves to the Honourable J. D. MacLean, Minister, 9 January 1926, British Columbia Archives and Records Services (hereafter BCARS), GR470, box 1, file 1.
children. By 1919, Superintendent of Education Alexander Robinson was considering a system of travelling teachers to meet the needs of families who lived in remote areas where there were no schools; however, the program never reached fruition. Instead, the department offered parents an opportunity to school their children through a system of mailed lessons.

When officials from British Columbia’s Department of Education sent lessons to Elizabeth, Muriel, and William Spetch in the remote, “outlandish place” called Pemberton Portage in May of 1919, the province became Canada’s first to offer lessons by mail to school-aged children in areas where there were no schools. The correspondence lessons, sent initially as an experiment, represented a new hope for schooling the children scattered in isolated areas across the province’s vast and rugged terrain and became an enduring part of the British Columbia school system.

The bureaucratic arm that emerged to provide lessons by mail was unique to the department. Whereas most schools were operated through local authorities, in this case the government provided the service directly to pupils. Only one other branch in the education department’s history served its clients directly: the school broadcasts branch. Like the correspondence schools, the school broadcasting was developed in part to address rural inequities by providing programming in various subject areas that could be tuned into by

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9 British Columbia Council of Public Instruction, Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia (Victoria, B.C.: King’s Printer, 1920), 87; Samuel Walter Spetch, Pemberton Portage, Owl Creek Post Office, to the Honourable John Oliver, Premier of British Columbia, 30 December 1918, Transcript in the hand of Samuel Walter Spetch, BCARS, GR396, box 1, file 1.


11 Spetch to Oliver, 30 December 1918.
schools throughout the province.12 Interestingly, those who provide schooling from a distance have always recognized the value of, and attempted to use to their advantage, emergent technologies such as regular mail service, radio, television, and the computer to enhance the educational opportunities for children living in isolation. Indeed, Isabel Bescoby, the elementary correspondence school’s second officer-in-charge, played a role on the initial Committee for Radio in Schools.13

Given the province’s early entry into providing lessons by mail to school-aged children and the importance of the correspondence schools in lessening the inequalities of educational offering, there is surprisingly little scholarly consideration given to the development of British Columbia’s correspondence schools. F. Henry Johnson, in his 271-page A History of Public Education in British Columbia, offers only a brief paragraph outlining the initiation of elementary school correspondence in 1919 and the establishment of high school correspondence in 1929. He acknowledges the role of the programs to enhance educational opportunities for people living in remote areas.14 In a section about adult education, he states the number of adult registrants in the department’s correspondence courses during the 1930s.15

Probably the most in-depth treatment of the province’s correspondence schools to date appears in a recent study by educational historian Thomas Fleming. In the context of a broader study about women in the province’s educational civil service, Fleming discusses two

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13Ibid.

14Johnson, History of Public Education, 188.

15Ibid., 229.
of the three women who ran the elementary and high school correspondence branches. In describing their lives and accomplishments, Fleming illustrates the significant contributions these women made to the branches of government they managed and to educating children in the province’s remote regions.

**Parameters of the Study**

The provision of lessons by mail was a significant step toward addressing inequity in the system and providing educational opportunities for British Columbia children who were isolated from schools for reasons of distance, illness, or occupation. The intent of this study is to trace the development of correspondence education in British Columbia between 1919 and 1969. These dates span the initiation of elementary correspondence to the amalgamation of the elementary school and high school correspondence branches into the correspondence branch in 1969.

At the time the first lessons were mailed in 1919, government was entering what Fleming has described as the “institution building period” in provincial school history. The same year, in 1919, education was installed as a department separate from the provincial secretary. In the years that followed, the education bureau moved from an authority system that was personal and authoritative to a more modern and complex authority system where government decisions were rendered by committee within a growing, vast, and increasingly

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formal bureaucracy. In keeping with these developments, it was only natural that the correspondence branch followed a similar pattern of development. The institutional development of the province's correspondence courses can be described as following three broad phases:

1. **Pioneering phase, 1919-1933.** During this period, the correspondence program grew from what was initially an experiment to an important government service. Government came to recognize its responsibility to address regional inequalities in educational offering and provided lessons by mail as an experiment. The correspondence service was modelled on adult correspondence programs for miners. Responsibility for developing and administering elementary correspondence was added to the duties of James Hargreaves, officer-in-charge of mining correspondence courses. By the end of the period, lessons by correspondence were widely recognized as a valuable offering within the province, and the government began to extend services to students from primary through to high school.

2. **Transitional phase, 1934-1937.** In 1934, the key leadership position fell to Isabel Bescoby, a capable young woman with connections to the progressive educational community. Under Bescoby's administration, elementary correspondence was transformed: pedagogically with the doctrines of progressivism to enhance student learning, institutionally with a set of policies and procedures to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, and perceptually with expanded public understanding and regard for the correspondence school.

3. **Institutional maintenance, 1937-1969.** By the late 1930s, the elementary correspondence school had grown into a mature branch of government, and from that point services to students...
were maintained within protocols of the larger bureaucracy. Anna B. Miller, long-time correspondence instructor, was promoted from within to replace Bescoby and oversee the operation of the branch. During this period, there was sustained growth in the program offering and the number of pupils, and the program expanded as necessary to address the emerging needs of specific groups. Aside from updating materials to reflect changes to provincial curriculum or textbooks, little changed between Miller's appointment and the time her successor, Arthur Plows, retired in 1969 and the branch was amalgamated with high school correspondence to form a single correspondence branch.

In order to describe the development and assess the intent and the shape of correspondence education in British Columbia between 1919 and 1969, this historical study encompasses a variety of primary and secondary sources. In particular, the study analyzes the influence of the programs' administrators in the development of this important educational institution. The reports of these government officials, along with their letters inward and outbound, tell the story of why and how correspondence education came to be and how it evolved in the province. Official government documents such as program outlines, instructional materials, and school magazines help to illustrate the nature of the program under the various administrators. The study also draws from the director's reports to the Annual Reports on Public Schools, newspaper references regarding these individuals and the development of correspondence education, and interviews with officials who worked in the correspondence education branch.

The most significant source of primary documents used in this study was the British Columbia Archives and Records Services. Patrick Dunae's volume, The School Record, was used
extensively to locate relevant sources held in the provincial archives. In addition, keyword searches were conducted on the British Columbia Archives database to identify additional materials relating to individuals and specific programs associated with the correspondence schools. Other relevant primary sources were gathered from a variety of repositories including Kitsilano High School Archives, the BCTF Archives, the Victoria High School Archives, and the University of British Columbia Archives. Newspaper articles were also identified through the BC Legislature Newspaper Index. Journal articles were located through searches of the ERIC database, the Canadian Education Index, the Education Index, and the Readers Guide to Periodical Literature. In addition, a variety of secondary sources detailing developments in the correspondence schools and the contributions of branch directors were consulted, including books, journal articles published in scholarly and professional journals, theses, dissertations, and broader histories of education and of the province. These were identified using the various journal indexes listed above as well as the on-line catalogues from the University of Victoria, Victoria Public Library, University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, and various other national and international universities.

While the search was extensive, like all historical studies the extent of the analysis of the evidence unearthed through these various research methods is limited by the records available. There is no way to know whether the files maintained in provincial archives are complete. In fact, considerable portions of the records of the branches and individuals under study have not survived. Significant gaps exist in the archives holdings because records from the Department


of Education "were not systematically appraised and selected for permanent retention." Indeed, only about 5 percent of the records submitted to the B.C. Archives and Records Service from the office of origin are "appraised as having permanent value" and maintained in the provincial archives. Additionally, many records from the 1930s were destroyed when the archives moved from the Parliament Buildings to the Douglas Building on Government Street, Victoria in 1949. Nonetheless, the surviving record accounts for much of the development of correspondence education in the province. The chapters that follow provide what the historical record reveals about the efforts of provincial officials to address the most pervasive problem in British Columbia school history: How can government provide a scattered population equitable access to publicly funded education across a vast and varied geography?

21 Dunac, The School Record, 25.

22 John A. Bovey, provincial archivist, "Foreword," in ibid., vii.

23 Ibid., 25.
CHAPTER 1

PIONEERING LESSONS BY MAIL FOR PIONEER FAMILIES,
1919 TO 1933

... the Department of Education realized that something should be done to assist those children ... living in isolated districts. ...¹

Late in December 1918, Samuel Walter Spetch began a quest for provincial assistance to educate his three children, who were the only school-age children in his district. At the time, the Public School Act required ten children between the ages of six and sixteen resident in a district in order to establish a school.² Spetch began his endeavour at the top, with a letter to the province’s Premier, the Honourable John Oliver:

We live in an outlandish place known as Pemberton Portage, there are not sufficient children to call for a school, none but ours at school age. Would it be possible to form a correspondence school for such cases as ours with headquarters in Victoria or Vancouver where the lessons could be mailed from the many children who are as unfortunate as ours as regards to public school. The lessons to be returned by mail corrected.

Possibly the Dominion Government would consider favourably the franking of such correspondence. Even if the Dominion authorities would not grant that favour I feel sure the system once inaugurated would meet a much felt want and would prove to the settlers in out of the way places in B.C. (of which there are many) that your

¹British Columbia Council of Public Instruction, Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia (Victoria, B.C.: King’s Printer, 1919), 81.

²Donald Leslie MacLaurin, The History of Education in the Crown Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia and in the Province of British Columbia (Seattle: University of Washington, 1936), 152-3. In 1912, the compulsory attendance clause of the School Act was amended “to provide that in all municipal school districts, where the Boards of School Trustees should by resolution so decide, every child from the age of seven to fourteen inclusive should attend school during the regular school hours every school day subject to the exemptions already cited in the Act. In 1920 compulsory attendance was made effective from the age of seven to fourteen years in all school districts for every school day. In 1921 the ages set were changed to read from over the age of seven years and under the age of fifteen years.”
government is not unmindful of its obligations to its rising generation and I think you would secure the gratitude of a good many parents.

Wishing to remain
your obedient servant
Samuel Walter Spetch

The Premier's office referred the letter to the Deputy Premier, who in turn passed it to the Minister of Education. Finally, in early February 1919, Spetch's letter landed on the desk of the Superintendent of Education, Alexander Robinson.

Undoubtedly, Spetch's letter was not the first to the province's Education Office describing such a plight. Lighthouse-keepers had for some time "been seriously concerned . . . about the want of educational advantages for their children."1 Around the time Spetch's letter arrived, Robinson was pursuing a new idea to address the regional inequalities, which he detailed in his response to Spetch:

I may add that the department has now under consideration a plan whereby a teacher may be employed for say one-third of the year in localities in which the number of children necessary to establish a school cannot be mustered but where at least an attendance of three can be maintained. If the plan now under consideration by the Minister matures you will be notified at an early date.5

Evidently, Robinson did not get the Minister's support for his notion. Near the end of April, after receiving no correspondence from Robinson in over two months, Spetch wrote again asking for news about developments in the department's plans to assist with schooling his children. He offered:

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1Samuel Walter Spetch, Pemberton Portage, Owl Creek Post Office, to the Honourable John Oliver, Premier of British Columbia, Victoria, December 30, 1918, Transcript in the hand of Samuel Walter Spetch, BCARS, GR396, box 1, file 1.

3Council of Public Instruction, Annual Report (1920), 87.

4Robinson to Spetch, 4 February 1919.
... we would be pleased to pay a portion of the expense ourselves.

As the necessity for a reasonable amount of education is very obvious and in our case urgent. It is impossible for us to move from here as we have worked hard to make a ranch and hope we are succeeding in part.6

Robinson’s reply on April 24, 1919, that “no further progress has been made in connection with the proposal”7 brought the Spetch children little hope for provincial assistance with their education.

The Province’s First Correspondence Courses

Coincidentally, at around the time that Spetch was partaking in his letter-writing campaign, in another corner of the education department, John Kyle was setting in motion the vehicle that would ultimately drive the province’s offering of elementary correspondence courses. Kyle, appointed organizer of technical education for the province in 1914, had worked for the Vancouver School Board as supervisor of drawing and art and director of night school classes.8 In addition to implementing vocational programs in the public schools, Kyle’s department was responsible for the province’s night school programs for adults, which offered basic public school courses as well as vocational classes in various disciplines.9 Throughout the second decade of the new century, the technical education branch offered night school courses in coal-mining districts to help miners earn their British Columbia papers as shotlighters,

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8Johnson, History of Public Education, 227; Dunae, The School Record, 55.

overmen, and mine managers. However, Kyle noted that due to the shift system of the mines, attendance was “much interrupted.” In 1918, Kyle surveyed mine inspectors and workmen to identify ways to overcome the problem. He concluded: “It would seem advisable to give instruction to the working miner through the aid of Correspondence Courses. . . . Such Correspondence classes are proving very effective in the province of Alberta.”

On April 8, 1919, James Hargreaves was appointed to establish correspondence courses for miners who were interested in writing the examination for certificates of competency under the Coal Mines Act of British Columbia and were unable to attend an institution offering instruction in the subjects. Hargreaves, then forty-four years old, was born in Rainford, England, between Manchester and Liverpool. He was a mining engineer who held a first-class ticket from British Columbia as well as from Alberta and Nova Scotia. It is unclear how Kyle came to hire James Hargreaves. It is probable that the two met when Kyle surveyed the mines in 1917, or that Hargreaves taught mining courses at one of the province’s night schools.

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11 Ibid.

12 James Hargreaves, “Correspondence Courses in Coal Mining,” to the Minister of Mines, memorandum, January 1923. The date April 8, 1919, is noted in the records of the Public Service Commission for the years he was employed, BCARS, GR101. To date, no source has been located that pinpoints the circumstances of Hargreaves’ appointment. There was no Order-in-Council and no record that could be located in the records of the council of public instruction. According to Maclaurin, *History of Education*, 206, Hargreaves was appointed in April 1919, to provide instruction in the mining course and also “took supervision of the elementary correspondence courses.” As Kyle states in the 1919 Annual Report: “The Education Department engaged the services of a thoroughly qualified and competent mine manager as instructor, one who not only holds first-class papers in the Province, but similar credentials from Alberta and Nova Scotia... The course commenced in April, 1919.”


15 Kyle’s correspondence inward and outward between January and June 1919 is missing from the records housed in the provincial archives.

16 No records of the circumstances of Hargreaves’ appointment have survived.
also possible that Hargreaves was somehow associated with the Alberta vocational correspondence program that Kyle referred to in his report. Nonetheless, Hargreaves developed the correspondence program for mining students, and the first students enrolled later in April 1919. By June 1919, seventy-eight students were enrolled. The following year, enrolment for the mining correspondence course reached 110. The course maintained a relatively steady enrolment between 150 and 220 students throughout the first decade. In the early 1930s, the annual enrolment dropped to fifteen or twenty participants, and the program was finally abandoned in 1933.

**Developments in Correspondence Education in Other Jurisdictions**

Although British Columbia’s elementary school correspondence courses were the first of their sort in North America, it was essentially a new evolution of a system of schooling dating back to the eighteenth century. In fact, the earliest documented correspondence programs coincide with the development of a dependable postal service. For the most part,

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17 At the time of his marriage to Daisy Agnes Perkins at Proctor, British Columbia in 1907, Hargreaves lived in Tabor, Alberta.


19 Ibid.


21 It is likely that the drop in enrolment reflected the diminishing demand for coal, described by Barman, which began in the 1930s as oil replaced coal for home heating and locomotive fuel. Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 240. As well, many of the students who participated over the years came of the age where they could assume the positions for which they studied. The mining correspondence program was designed for young men between the ages of 14 and 23 who left school to work in the mines. It provided the material they needed to write exams for promotions to supervisory or technical positions. In order to be eligible for the exams, the applicants needed to be 23 years of age.

these early correspondence programs were offered by individual entrepreneurs and were utilitarian or vocational in nature. Such programs date as early as 1728, when teacher Caleb Phillips advertised in the Boston Gazette to send shorthand lessons to interested students on a weekly basis. By the mid-to-late-1800s, lessons by mail were offered in several areas in varying topics. For example, in Great Britain, in 1840 Isaac Pitman offered shorthand lessons by mail, and in the 1880s, others offered assistance through the post to prepare for civil service examinations and courses in accountancy. In the mid-1880s, Pennsylvania newspaper publisher Thomas J. Foster, sympathetic about the number of mining accidents, developed pamphlets to teach mining safety. These grew into a program of studies to assist miners in passing state examinations. His program of studies eventually evolved into the International Correspondence Schools, known today as I.C.S.

In the United States, other movements emerged with a cultural and avocational focus, intent on providing educational opportunities to those whom might otherwise be denied. Anna Eliot Ticknor founded the Society to Encourage Studies at Home in 1873. The Society offered courses in history, science, art, literature, French, and German to women throughout the country who had little hope of obtaining an education. Another movement emerged in the early 1880s that offered local lectures in combination with correspondence instruction for college credit, the Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts. One of the organizers of the system of

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23Ibid.
24Ibid.
correspondence was William Rainey Harper, who founded the university correspondence teaching department when he became the founding president of the University of Chicago in 1892.\textsuperscript{27}

The earliest documented program to offer lessons by mail to school-age children was the home instruction department, created by Virgil Hillyer at the Calvert School in Baltimore, Maryland.\textsuperscript{28} Beginning in 1906 with six pupils, the private day-school offered lessons that followed those offered in the school’s classrooms.\textsuperscript{29} By 1907, thirty-six students were enrolled in the program, and by 1909, the number rose to 171.\textsuperscript{30} The school, still running today, charges a tuition fee to cover materials, and parents have the option of marking the lessons themselves or paying an additional fee for teaching services.\textsuperscript{31}

Within a decade of Calvert’s first mailed lesson, several government departments of education in different parts of the world began to implement their own programs aimed at reaching pupils in remote areas. The first government-established correspondence program began in the state of Victoria, Australia in 1914. It was followed by one in New South Wales in 1916, Western Australia in 1918, Tasmania in 1919, South Australia in 1920, Queensland in 1922, and New Zealand in 1922.\textsuperscript{32} British Columbia’s elementary correspondence program,


\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., 37.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32}John Penberthy, “Elementary Education of Children at a Distance,” Learning at a Distance: A World Perspective (Edmonton, AB: Athabasca University. International Council for Correspondence Education, 1982), 82-85.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., 82.
established in 1919, was the first in Canada, followed by Alberta in 1923, Saskatchewan in 1925, Ontario in 1926, and Manitoba in 1927. These programs were founded primarily to address the needs of families in isolated areas as provincial governments "accepted the responsibility of providing free education for children disadvantaged by distance."34

Lessons by Mail for British Columbia’s Isolated Elementary Children

Spetch’s request for lessons by mail demonstrates a public awareness of the correspondence method. However, at the time lessons by mail were not common for school-age children, and they were untried in the sphere of public schooling. Robinson, and likely many of his peers, did not consider schooling by mail a viable alternative for school-aged children:

Your proposal, namely, to carry on the education of children in remote country districts unprovided with a school through a system of correspondence cannot, I am afraid, prove successful. Some degree of success would attend the system in the case of say high school pupils but constant supervision by a teacher is necessary if progress is to be made by pupils who have never before attended school.35

Evidently, the Minister of Education, J. D. MacLean, did not share Robinson’s assessment that correspondence education was unsuited to young children.36 Shortly after the first packages were mailed to mining students, Hargreaves was asked, though it is unclear by whom, if his

33Ibid.
34Ibid., 83.
36Fleming, “Letters From Headquarters,” 31-2, describes a relationship between MacLean and Robinson that was thorny. From the time MacLean was appointed Minister, he held 'definite ideas as to what education should be,' ideas that Robinson had sometimes disregarded or resisted. The two men were constantly at odds over educational matters, and no doubt, their differences had some influence on Spetch’s success in gaining a system of correspondence learning for his children and Robinson’s failure to implement a system of travelling teachers.
office could help the Spetch family by the correspondence method.\(^\text{37}\) He agreed to offer lessons by mail to the Spetch children on an experimental basis.\(^\text{38}\)

On May 13, 1919, Hargreaves wrote to Spetch to inform him of the department’s decision to offer his children lessons by mail.\(^\text{39}\) He offered the family a correspondence course based on the British Columbia authorized program of studies, along with free tuition and free textbooks. Before he could send the textbooks, he asked that Spetch provide information about each child’s age, sex, and prior education.\(^\text{40}\) With the information furnished, on May 23, 1919, Hargreaves mailed the first lessons to the correspondence pupils: number one, Elizabeth Spetch; number two, Muriel Spetch; and number three, William Spetch.

The same day, Hargreaves also mailed letters to the families at Lucy Island Light Station, near Prince Rupert, and at Sheringham Point Light Station, near Sooke, to inform them about the education department’s decision to “grant free education to the children of Light-house keepers.”\(^\text{41}\) The offer was accepted. The correspondence courses the education bureau offered were an immediate success. By the end of the school year, eighty-six children were registered for elementary correspondence courses; thirteen were living at various lighthouses.\(^\text{42}\) The following year, enrolment in the elementary correspondence courses reached just over 200.

\(^{37}\) J. W. Hargreaves, Office of Instructor, Elementary Correspondence School, Department of Education, to A. C. Harrison, Esq., Home Editor, North-West Farmer Ltd., Winnipeg, Man., 25 August 1924, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.


\(^{39}\) J. W. Hargreaves, Office of Instructor, Coalmining, Industrial Education, Department of Education, to Samuel Walter Spetch, Pemberton Portage, Owl Creek Post Office, 13 May 1919, BCARS, GR396, box 1, file 1.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.

\(^{42}\) Council of Public Instruction, \textit{Annual Report (1919)}, 81.
Enrolment in the elementary school correspondence courses grew steadily, and by the end of the first decade, close to 500 students took lessons by mail.43

According to a 1965 newspaper article, Spetch won for his children “a hastily-devised course of study in question and answer form.”44 Indisputably, the methodology associated with distance learning evolved considerably over the decades. However, the initial correspondence course offered isolated children opportunities they had not previously known. Prior to the first correspondence lessons, parents who wanted to educate their children purchased the books in use in public schools, or used “antiquated” books they had on hand. Using these, Hargreaves asserted, their children “acquired (at waste of time, labor, and misdirected effort) some ability to read and write.”45 Undoubtedly, parents met with varying levels of success in teaching their children basic numeracy and literacy. However, prior to the introduction of correspondence lessons parents did not have the guidance or the materials necessary to guide their children through the provincial program of studies in the elementary grades.

Although there is no evidence that Hargreaves possessed teaching credentials, it appears he was at least conscious of the principles of pedagogy and competent in promoting student learning, even from afar. Where Robinson and others believed that correspondence education was inappropriate for young children, Hargreaves sought ways to ensure students could succeed against the odds. First, the program Hargreaves developed addressed one of the key obstacles Robinson identified with providing correspondence instruction to elementary level

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43Enrolment figures are in Table 1: Enrolment in the British Columbia Correspondence Schools, 1919-1969, in appendix.

44Tom Hazlitt, “Farmer’s Demand Created School by Mail,” Vancouver Province, 4 January 1965, 9.

45James Hargreaves, Untitled typed report, 1926, BCARS, GR 470, box 6, file 1.
students: that they lacked prior schooling. Likely, what he meant was that they did not have the reading skill required to manage the directions associated with the lessons. To address this, the program was designed to encourage parent involvement to assist students to study successfully in isolation from a school. Hargreaves sent all lesson materials directly to the parents who were to act as home instructors, with explicit directions about what was being taught and how best to present the material to their children. He advised parents to keep track of the amount of time students spent on their lessons, to ensure students signed their work "at the upper right hand corner," and to have students read lessons aloud. Parental involvement proved invaluable to students' success. As he noted after several years, foreign children did not progress as quickly as their English-speaking counterparts, likely because "they receive very little assistance from their parents."

Secondly, the program Hargreaves developed also recognized how difficult it was for students to learn in isolation even with parental support. His procedures were designed to make each student feel special and to provide encouragement. Children received from their instructor, upon completion of one lesson, the next, which provided direct, individualized outlines for the work they were expected to complete. This often reflected the areas students needed to work on or their strengths. The tone was personal. Typed at the top of each lesson was the child's name, grade level, and lesson number.

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46 Robinson to Spetch, 4 February 1919.


48 Hargreaves, Untitled typed report.
Recognizing the importance of timely feedback on students' motivation and their success, Hargreaves also established processes to return students' corrected work as quickly as the mail allowed. When enrolled, a pupil was mailed the first several lessons of the grade. The number depended on the distance from a post office. Those who received regular mail were sent two or three lessons, while those with sporadic mail delivery were sent up to ten lessons. Students with regular mail were instructed to complete the first, mail it, and then start on the second while awaiting the marked reply that would accompany the next lesson(s). Those who waited longer for mail were asked to complete several lessons before mailing.

Hargreaves took additional steps to create a sense of community and to brighten students' lives beyond their studies. Every year he sent each pupil a Christmas card. In 1923, he tried to arrange subscriptions to a children's publication, My Magazine, for all correspondence students at low or no cost. The company sent 250 copies free of charge and then offered a 10 percent discount on subscriptions, a cost Hargreaves' department could not bear. In 1927, Hargreaves located a Vancouver publication, School Days, which he arranged to have mailed monthly to the homes of all students who were registered in elementary school correspondence courses.

The program covered, as well as was possible through correspondence, the first eight years of schooling. Initially, the program was offered in five grades, the fifth containing Grades V through VIII. In 1927, the program was revised so it followed an eight-grade pattern

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50 British Columbia Department of Education, Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia (Victoria, B.C.: King's Printer, 1927).

51 Hargreaves,Untitled typed report.
similar to that of the public schools. Each grade was made up of approximately thirty lessons that included full instructions for each subject. Instructions generally directed students to read specific pages from a text and answer specific questions, to redo work from a prior lesson, or to write a story on a specific topic. The lessons reflected well the curriculum of the day. Subjects included literature, arithmetic, spelling, first steps in English, grammar, writing, how to be healthy, Canadian history, geography, and nature study.

Throughout the first decade, the correspondence school provided lessons by mail to meet the needs of three different groups. The majority of pupils were children living in isolated areas who were working on elementary school subjects. As well, Hargreaves and his staff provided correspondence lessons in mining subjects for adult students working in the mines. Beginning in 1923, and at different times through its history as needs emerged, the correspondence school offered its service to other populations. In 1923, correspondence in commercial subjects was provided to twelve teachers, "holders of First-class and Academic Certificates, who desired to qualify for teaching commercial subjects in high schools."

"Bringing a Note of Pleasure and Profit into Their Otherwise Lonely Lives"

The service that began with three pupils reached eighty-six by the end of the calendar year. By the end of the first full school year, 122 pupils had enrolled for lessons by mail. By

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52 Ibid.
53 BCARS, GR396, box 1, files 2,3,4.
1926, 1,276 students had received lessons and 260 were current at that time. At the end of the first decade, 455 students regularly completed their elementary school correspondence lessons. By 1929, Hargreaves and his staff of three provided lessons spanning from Grade I through VIII as well as various vocational and commercial courses designed to meet the needs of miners and teachers. That same year, the unit Hargreaves’ managed, which provided elementary school correspondence courses, was granted branch status.

Success of the correspondence service was reflected in the numbers of children who enrolled; it was clear that the service addressed a significant need in the province. After the first year, Kyle reported: “Evidence comes from the most unexpected quarters of the inspiration which the lessons bring to the homes of those who are doing the pioneer work in the province.”

Through the years, children and their parents wrote to Hargreaves and his staff to express their pleasure with the quality of the education provided through the correspondence lessons and their gratitude to the teachers. For example, one parent wrote:

The strong point about your course is that it’s thorough. The student has time to reflect and absorb all that’s in it. Then every lesson is thoroughly checked; this gives the child the maximum benefit; besides, the returned lessons afford an everlasting record of all work. Another wrote:

I beg to extend to yourself and staff my sincere thanks for the painstaking manner in which you have conducted my daughter’s education. Due to the carefully selected studies and the patient manner in which her faults were detected and corrected, I am


firmly convinced that she got far more educational value from this course than she
would have received in school.  

Yet, another parent commented:

My son's training in initiative and self-reliance is very valuable, and I am grateful to the
Correspondence School for making it possible for him to obtain an education.

Even in its initial years, the education provided by elementary correspondence was
considered comparable to the education that was offered in the regular schools. In 1926,
Hargreaves reported to the Minister of Education:

It is evident that a child taking this course retains his knowledge better by having to
secure his information without the supervision of an instructor.

As one parent described:

I am anxious for them to have as thorough an education as possible, and I think they
are getting it in the correspondence course. When B---- went to school after a term of
correspondence, he headed a class of forty in his second month—came fourth the
first month.

Beyond the academic accomplishments, the correspondence courses were credited with
bringing the outside world to young children who lived in isolation. With such recognition, the
correspondence service was seen as an aid to the province's development:

Pioneer settlers do not have to worry about taking their families to the site of the
frontier developments because they know their children can keep up with their
education by mail until a school can be opened.

60 Department of Education, Annual Report (1929), 49.
61 Department of Education, Annual Report (1930), 44.
62 Hargreaves, Untitled typed report.
64 "Novel School is Described," Victoria Daily Colonist, 9 March 1934, 2; see also Hargreaves' comments in early
departmental annual reports.
News of British Columbia's successful experiments in correspondence courses for elementary students drew queries from across Canada and North America, and even from abroad. Administrators in various jurisdictions sought information about how the courses worked so they could set up their own systems to provide lessons by mail. Others, who wrote from various journals and newsletters, sought to publicize the program. When asked for information about the correspondence school, Hargreaves provided a standard letter that evolved marginally over the years. However, when pushed for more information, he retreated into his work. In one instance, members of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare had received a package outlining the program, containing several samples of the materials used. They asked Hargreaves to write a bulletin that they could circulate. Hargreaves replied: “Owing to heavy pressure of work, it is impossible for this Department to carry out your suggestion of publishing a bulletin regarding our course.” Despite additional pressure from other members of the council, Hargreaves maintained he was unable to assist:

I must again state that it will be impossible to undertake this work, as our time is entirely taken up with the correction of lessons and other detailed work of the office.

To give you some idea of what is being done by a staff of three, I quote as follows from our records:

Lessons corrected and new ones prepared
Jan. 303

66See BCARS, GR470, box 2. Some examples include: Superintendent Department of Public Instruction W. H. Holmes to Department of Education, 11 March 1925; Chief Director of Education F. W. Marchant to Department of Education, 19 October 1925; Honorary Secretary Dublin Branch Kathleen LeFroy to Department of Education, 31 August 1927; Secretary Mr. H. Voss to Department of Education, 7 September 1932; Deputy Minister of Education R. Fletcher to Department of Education, 15 July 1927.


Feb. 305
Mar. 422
April 350

From the above you will readily understand the amount of work involved, and the reasons for not being able to comply with your request. Indeed, as time went on and the demands of serving his charges grew, Hargreaves rarely responded to letters except those sent to him from the Minister or the Superintendent of Education with a specific request that he reply. He maintained his standard reply with minor modifications over the years.

Probably what made the program so successful under Hargreaves' management was not only that it provided a service people genuinely needed and appreciated, but also that he spent his energy serving his clients. He invested little effort in writing letters to explain the program, even less promoting the courses to potential "clients" or to his superiors. At the same time, he had little trouble meeting the needs of new client groups as they emerged. When asked to take on a new group of pupils, he simply developed the lessons and sent them to those who enrolled. It appears he saw his role as meeting a demand, not creating a demand or enticing supervisory interest.

**Identifying New Opportunities: The Push for High School Correspondence Courses**

In contrast to Hargreaves' indifference to promoting correspondence services, his supervisor, John Kyle, saw many opportunities to extend correspondence programs to other audiences. With a growing number of students continuing to the high school level, it was only

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69Ibid.
natural that high school courses would be grafted on to the department's offerings, and Kyle confidently championed the cause. In his 1927 submission to the department's annual report, Kyle suggested that since the current correspondence courses were well established, the branch could readily extend correspondence education to commercial and industrial disciplines:

... we have now the courses and machinery for taking students in commercial subjects such as book-keeping, typewriting, and stenography. We are nearly prepared to give electricity, carpentry and joinery, sheet-metal work, drawing and design. In fact, an opportunity might well be given students to prepare for all examinations demanded by the Provincial Government for stationary engineers, electricians, etc. 70

Beyond that, he pointed out the advantages lessons by mail offered to smaller high schools:

The establishment of these correspondence or home-study courses would give the Department of Education the teaching material and equipment necessary to give instruction in some high-school branches to pupils living in sparsely populated districts where it is impossible to expect superior schools. Moreover, it will make possible the introduction of the 'Benton Harbour' scheme, whereby the scope of work in small high schools may be broadened and an almost unlimited range of studies may be taken by correspondence. 71

The following year, the government had done little toward his cause, so he wrote again:

Consideration has already been given to an extension of correspondence work to embrace high-school subjects. There are a great many young people in pioneer homes and it seems unfair that they should be unduly handicapped. If a decision is made to proceed with this extension-work the instructor should be engaged early enough to prepare the necessary high-school courses of study. 72

In 1929, when work finally began on the course materials for high school correspondence courses, Kyle wrote in the Annual Report of the Public Schools his vision of the future of correspondence education:


71 Ibid.

When one considers that a man, engaged in industrial work during the day, has the privilege of dividing his matriculation examinations into four sections and of trying one section each year, it will readily be seen with what comparative ease a mine-worker could step upward to work of an advanced character. This type of correspondence instruction has not gone beyond that required by coal-miners and by those who desire the commercial subjects of book-keeping, typewriting, and stenography. 73

Kyle’s interest was in technical and vocational education. However, he saw the potential that correspondence learning could provide a range of educational opportunities to serve the interests of many. He also saw the potential of material developed for one group having a cross-purpose to support the needs of another group. He noted the work already completed to develop materials for vocational programs that were offered under the auspices of the correspondence branch to teachers seeking vocational training:

Considerable preparation has been made and courses of work have been arranged to teach the subjects of machine-shop work, carpentry, joinery and building construction, sheet-metal work and electricity. Therefore, when the teaching of high-school subjects by correspondence is firmly established, the addition of those of a technical nature may be desirable. 74

As with the elementary lessons by mail, Kyle’s vision and drive provided the catalyst for government to offer the service.

“A High School Course Within Reach of Every Boy and Girl in the Province” 75

Following the Conservative Party’s landslide victory in 1928, the new Minister of Education, Joshua Hinchliffe, decided to extend correspondence learning to the high school level. On April 4, 1929, government terminated the elementary agricultural program and

73Department of Education, Annual Report (1929), 49.

74Ibid.

75“Education by Mail,” Vancouver Province, 24 August 1929, 6.
passed an Order-in-Council placing its high-profile director, J. W. Gibson, in charge of developing high school correspondence for the province.\(^{76}\) At that point, Gibson was one of a handful of senior officials in the education department and a close confidant to S. J. Willis, Superintendent of Education.\(^{77}\)

John Wesley Gibson was born in September 1874 to a Methodist farmer in Carleton County, Ontario.\(^{78}\) He was involved in supervising school gardens early in his career, as part of the MacDonald-Robertson progressive movement in Ontario.\(^{79}\) He moved to British Columbia in 1914 to direct the elementary agricultural program when it was established by the province with federal funds granted through the Agricultural Instruction Act, 1913.\(^{80}\) If sheer volume of paper produced indicated importance, Gibson’s elementary agricultural education program was a pinnacle of the education department’s offering. Gibson wrote voluminously and with missionary zeal about the value of agricultural education and the program’s success in the annual reports of the public schools. However, teachers and other school officials were unable to tend school gardens on a 12-month basis, as many teachers left their schools for two-month holidays in July and August each year. Despite his efforts, Gibson was unable to


\(^{77}\)In 1931, Deputy Minister was added to Willis’ title.


\(^{79}\)Ibid., 42.

\(^{80}\)Through the act, the federal government allocated $10 million to the provinces over a ten-year period. Like several other provinces, British Columbia used its share to establish an elementary agricultural education branch within the Department of Education. Jones, “Agricultural Schooling,” 30.
convert the masses. The program, considered a “frill” by many teachers, parents, and school trustees, had little staying power once federal funds were withdrawn in 1924.\(^1\)

It is interesting irony, or perhaps destiny, that placed Gibson at the helm of high school correspondence when the agricultural program was dealt its final blow. The *Agricultural Instruction Act*, intent on fostering rural values, operated on the principal assumption “that education would stem the tide to the cities by enhancing life on the land.”\(^2\) Interestingly, the province’s correspondence program was credited throughout its early years with aiding development by encouraging pioneer settlers, who would be more likely to move to unsettled regions knowing they need not worry about their children’s education.\(^3\) However, high school and vocational correspondence courses also opened the minds of rural youngsters to new opportunities. Ultimately, Gibson’s lessons by mail provided the opportunity for farmer’s children to leave agriculture and pursue other occupations.

No doubt disappointed with the demise of the elementary agricultural program, a cause he had advocated throughout his career, Gibson buried himself in developing high school correspondence for the province. Through the summer of 1929 he established processes and guidelines for admission and oversaw the work of subject specialists who developed course materials.\(^4\) By the opening of fall term in 1929, the education department was able to offer high school work for Grades IX through XI leading to Junior Matriculation, Normal Entrance, 

\(^{1}\)Ibid.; Jones, “Rural Minded Teachers.”


\(^{3}\)“Novel School” *Colonist*: Hargreaves’ comments in early annual reports.

\(^{4}\)“Free Correspondence High School Course in B.C.,” *Vancouver Province*, 23 August 1929, 4.
and High School Commercial. In all, 35 grade subjects were developed, each comprised of 20 mimeographed instruction papers.

Gibson approached his new task with his typical zeal and infused the new courses with elements of progressivism he had embraced throughout his career. He placed considerable emphasis "building up in careful pedagogic form the subject-matter of the various courses to be offered." He believed that the success of the high school correspondence courses "would depend on the intrinsic merit of the instruction given through the medium of these mimeographed courses of instruction." To enhance this, Gibson promoted a strong instructor-student relationship mainly to "guide the process of the child’s learning and presently to withdraw from the scene as the learner gains the power of self-direction." His program for independent learning he later described as "virtually the Dalton Method on paper." The Dalton Method was one of two methods of individualized learning that gained popularity in Canada in the 1920s. The other was the Winnetka System.

Like the elementary program, high school correspondence was an immediate success. In the first year, 522 pupils enrolled. About 65 percent of them took a full course load, and 30 percent were adults. The following year, the number of students surged to 847, with 45 percent of the student body comprised by adults. Just over 50 percent of students were

86Ibid. None of these first lessons were preserved in the Provincial Archives.
88Ibid.
enrolled with a full course load. The third year, enrolment dropped to 617, reflecting fees implemented that year. All students over the age of sixteen were required to pay a $2 registration fee. In addition, pupils 16-18 years of age paid a tuition fee of $1.50 per course, and those over nineteen years of age paid tuition of $3 per course. However, Gibson noticed students that year “showed more stability and greater determination than did those of previous years.” By 1932-33, enrolment resumed its climb and reached 695.

As a child of the Conservative government, the high school correspondence program was nurtured with better-than-adequate funding and media attention garnered through strong public relations. Throughout the summer of 1929, the Minister publicly promoted the high school course and barely mentioned the elementary program of studies. In the initial years, the high school program flourished, as funding for the Liberal-initiated elementary correspondence program waned despite surging enrolment.

Undoubtedly, a high school program had higher status because it linked the educational system with its external environment. Even at a time when government was cutting costs, expenditures at the high school level could be justified. The high school program operated at a significantly higher cost than the elementary program, although enrolment was generally lower. Hired to operate the higher status high school program, Gibson was deemed to be entitled to a salary significantly higher than Hargreaves. He was a seasoned senior bureaucrat and was evidently more skilled at gaining the resources he needed. The high school program required

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91 Department of Education, Annual Report (1932), 42.
92 Ibid.
93 See Table 2: Salaries, Enrolment, and Total Expenditures for the Elementary Correspondence School and the High School Correspondence Branch, 1929-1934, in appendix. Even after the initial development was met in the high school and expenditures dropped, the high school branch received double the funding of the elementary correspondence school.
specialist teachers for each subject, so more instructors were required at higher salaries. The cost per pupil in the first year of the high school program was approximately $50. This dropped to about $35 the following year, which was a bargain given that it cost the province and municipalities an average of $118 per year to keep a student in a non-correspondence high school at the time.\textsuperscript{94} However, even with the fees collected, the costs of offering high school correspondence courses were significantly higher than for elementary courses, which averaged $11.25 per pupil per year.\textsuperscript{95} Moreover, in the elementary program, students usually took a full course load, whereas many of the secondary students took only one or a few courses.

From its humble beginning, the elementary correspondence service grew within the first decade, from 1919 to 1929, to be an essential and important part of the province’s education system. Hargreaves and his staff were showered with accolades from parents and students. Only with implementation of high school courses, which were developed with careful consideration to popular progressive ideas about pedagogy, were the faults of the elementary program fully identified. The contrast between the services and materials provided by the two correspondence schools was striking and underscored the need to change the elementary program.\textsuperscript{96}

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{94}"Education by Mail," \textit{Providence}.
\end{quotation}

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{95}James Hargreaves, "Why Hinchliffe Fired Me," \textit{Victoria Times}, 27 October 1933, 12.
\end{quotation}

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{96}The government’s recognition that improvements were needed in the elementary correspondence course was implied in several sources, including: Department of Education, \textit{Annual Report} (1933); "Mail Course Head Dismissed: Hinchliffe Turns Out Hargreaves From Correspondence Department," \textit{Victoria Times}, 3 July 1933, 1; Hargreaves, "Why Hinchliffe Fired Me".
\end{quotation}
"A Beautiful Camouflage" for Neglect

In the months preceding the 1933 provincial election, responsibility for managing the elementary correspondence branch was passed to Gibson when the Conservative Minister of Education, Joshua Hinchliffe, eliminated Hargreaves’ position. At the same time, Hinchliffe also abolished the coal mining correspondence program, as enrolment dropped from a high of 221 in 1929 to fewer than 20 in 1933. However, the elementary correspondence branch furnished lessons to 830 students and operated at less than half the cost of the high school correspondence branch, which provided instruction to only 695 students.

The public record shows that J. W. Hargreaves retired from his elementary correspondence post in the summer of 1933. Although customary, no notice of his retirement and years of service appeared in the department’s annual report that year. News of Hargreaves’ dismissal made the front pages of the province’s newspapers, rather than the social pages typically associated with a golden handshake. The Daily Province reported that a letter dispatched to Hargreaves July 3 claimed his position was being abolished, effective July 31. The conservative local paper, the Victoria Daily Colonist, linked Hargreaves’ dismissal to a pending reorganization but offered no particulars of the reorganization. The more liberal Victoria Daily Times suggested, “there were no reasons for the dismissal other than on the

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97Hargreaves, “Why Hinchliffe Fired Me.”

98Head Dismissed,” Times.


101“H.C. Correspondence School Head Retired,” Vancouver Province, 5 July 1933, 8.

grounds of political expediency,” and acknowledged Hargreaves as “one of the best known educationists in the province.”

The political motivation for Hargreaves’ dismissal transcended questions about his effectiveness in managing the branch. To be sure, Hinchliffe’s neglect of elementary correspondence made it increasingly difficult for Hargreaves and his staff to meet the demands of their posts. As enrolments climbed, Hargreaves was unable to secure the additional help he needed to meet the growing need for elementary school correspondence courses. Despite his best efforts to attain additional staff and funding, he was forced to “refuse 135 students enrolment in the correspondence course” in the 1932-33 school year. In his frustration, Hargreaves saw no alternative but to inform the public about the government’s neglect of the program. In May 1932, Hargreaves sent a letter informing parents that the branch would have to withhold lessons during the month of May. He explained that he barely had the staff necessary to mark the lessons currently on hand or to revise lessons based on new textbooks so they would be ready for the fall term. He informed parents that despite requests to government for additional teachers, no assistance was forthcoming. When a parent wrote to

103 "Turns Out Hargreaves," Times.
104 Ibid.
105 Hargreaves, “Why Hinchliffe Fired Me.”
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
Hinchliffe asking if government would hire more teachers for the correspondence school so that the children could continue their lessons, Hargreaves was notified of his dismissal.\footnote{Ibid.}

Undoubtedly, Hargreaves' dismissal had more to do with his public disclosure than any government reorganization. It is likely that because of his indiscretion in commenting about government policy, the government of the day decided to dismiss Hargreaves from public service, rather than relocate him in another government post, as was commonplace.\footnote{Gibson's transfer when the elementary agricultural education program was abolished in 1929 was but one example of this tradition.} Once Hargreaves was removed from his post, Hinchliffe offered to furnish all necessary help so children would not have to do without their lessons as they had in the past.\footnote{Ibid.}

With Hargreaves' "services dispatched with,"\footnote{Hargreaves, "Why Hinchliffe Fired Me."} responsibility for the elementary correspondence courses fell to J. W. Gibson, who headed both elementary and high school correspondence courses for the following nine months. Days before citizens went to the polls in October 1933, an embittered Hargreaves wrote a letter to the \textit{Daily Times} suggesting that "abolishing the position was only a beautiful camouflage" to disguise years of wilful neglect of the elementary program while government favoured high school correspondence. According to Hargreaves, during Hinchliffe's five years in office, the minister:

\begin{quote}
... has not done one thing to help these unfortunate children, and for the simple reason that the branch originated under a Liberal government. He tells you the high school correspondence is a success. It is, because he started it and it does not go wanting for financial assistance or adequate help.\footnote{Public Service Commission, \textit{PSC Report} (Victoria, B.C.: Provincial Secretary, 1934), BCARS, GR101, box 4, file 4.}
\end{quote}
The 1932-33 submission to the Annual Report, likely penned by Gibson or Kyle, hints that other members of the department were distressed about the quality of the elementary correspondence program:

Correspondence instruction for boys and girls in the elementary school grades is capable of great development and during the coming year every course will be examined with a view to its improvement.116

Evidently, the report's author also saw the department's failing in funding elementary correspondence adequately:

The growing demand for correspondence instruction for those who are unable for various reasons, to take advantage of regularly organized schools will call for a somewhat larger appropriation for the coming year and in all probability for a number of years. No one who realizes the great value of this service to the Province will regard such an expenditure other than as a profitable investment.117

Expectations for the officer-in-charge position had changed since the first lessons were mailed in 1919, and it may be that the branch was abolished in order to facilitate the changes needed. Hargreaves may have been qualified to provide correspondence lessons to miners, but he was not an educator. What began as an experiment, with the hope of providing the rudiments of education to students who lived too far away to attend school, grew to a high-profile service that required a different kind of leader. It required someone who could not only oversee the

116Department of Education, *Annual Report* (1933), 59. The report was not authored by Hargreaves, who had run the branch through the 1932-33 school year. It is likely that it was written by Gibson, who managed the elementary correspondence courses from the point of Hargreaves departure, or by Kyle, who headed the technical education division, which housed the correspondence schools.

117Ibid.
development of quality educational programming, but who would also promote the cause of
the branch.
CHAPTER 2
TRANSFORMING LESSONS BY MAIL,
1934 TO 1937

By the early 1930s, British Columbia was reeling from the effects of the Great Depression. With unemployment soaring, over 200 relief camps dotted the province. Those fortunate enough to have jobs saw their wages cut drastically. Government was caught in a predicament where falling revenues meant the province was strained to meet the growing expectations for relief. In 1931, under pressure from business, Conservative Premier S. F. Tolmie appointed a committee of non-partisan businessmen headed by George Kidd to investigate the state of government finances and to make proposals. In July 1932, the Kidd Committee issued their report. The committee maintained further taxation was impossible and set out proposals aimed at slashing government expenditures in the province.¹ The committee suggested that government could cut expenses by close to 25 percent by cutting salaries, reducing the size of the legislature, discontinuing service on the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, and refusing to increase social services.² Education was particularly targeted. The Kidd Report recommended abolishing the provincial grant to UBC and reducing the years of free public schooling to children ages six to thirteen. Families wanting an education for their children


²Ormsby states: “The committee suggested that instead of a budget of $25,000,000 the province could manage very well on one of $19,000,000.” Margaret A. Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto: MacMillan, 1971), 448.
beyond the eighth grade would be left to pay for it themselves. Despite the government's dire financial situation, the proposals proved unacceptable to most British Columbians, who had grown to view public supported schooling as an obligation of the state.3

Duff Pattulo and the Liberal Party capitalized on the Tolmie Conservative Party's association with the Kidd Report and rose to power in November 1933. Promising social reform, Pattulo espoused a "socialized capitalism." He advocated that "the state should take a more activist role in dealing with the social inequalities and economic limitations created by unbridled capitalism."4 Once elected, Pattulo assigned his Cabinet and set them to task. To the post of Provincial Secretary and Minister of Education he appointed Dr. George Moir Weir, a man who exuded "the zeal of the real reformer."5

Weir, who had been appointed UBC's first professor of education in 1923, was regarded as the "province's most authoritative voice on the theory and practice of progressive education."6 Along with J. Harold Putman, he had advised the previous Liberal regime with the publication of the monumental Survey of the School System in 1925. Once in office, Weir set quickly to work to refocus the education system toward the progressive recommendations of the Survey. Weir and his staff sought ways to alleviate social and educational hardships brought about by a faltering economy, as well as problems inherent in the province's geography. The

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4Ibid., 254.
5Ormsby, A History, 456.
new administration's agenda only solidified the previous government's conviction that the elementary correspondence courses needed revision.

The change in government also signaled a change to the way the elementary and high school correspondence programs were described in the department's annual reports to the legislature. In 1932-33, reports on correspondence education were contained within the technical education division under the heading "Elementary School Correspondence Courses" or "High School Correspondence Courses." The following year, the reports were housed under the heading "Correspondence Schools." This change signaled a shift in how these branches of government were perceived. No longer was it suitable to have the responsibilities for this organizational unit of educational government supervised by a mining-engineer-turned-civil-servant. A new type of leader was required, a strategic leader guided by the same progressive views the new men in power held—someone who could improve educational service levels and increase program efficiency at no great cost. Government found what they required in a young woman named Isabel Bescoby, and her appointment was made official through an Order-in-Council on April 14, 1934.¹

A New Officer in Charge

Isabel Marie Leone Bescoby, born March 18, 1913, grew up in the south Vancouver neighbourhood of Kitsilano with her father, Frederick Ernest Bescoby, an engineer for the British Columbia Electric Railway; her mother, Aida; and two sisters, Hazel and May.² By the time she assumed her post in 1934, Bescoby already had an impressive list of accomplishments

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¹Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, "order in Council, 467," 12 April 1934.
²Isabel's younger sister May died in June 1933 of peritonitis following an acute appendicitis.
to her credit. During her years at Kitsilano High School, Bescoby was a high-profile student, strong in academics and public speaking. She twice won oratorical contests while a member of the public speaking club and was designated the school's standard bearer in the district finals of the Second Annual British Columbia Oratorical Contest. Her topic, "Canada and the League of Nations," suggested what for her would become an enduring interest in Canadian history.

At nineteen years of age, she completed a baccalaureate degree in history with first-class honours at UBC. Only she and F. Henry Johnson, later a UBC historian of some renown, received such high standing in history in 1932. Her minor area of specialization was Education. While at UBC, Bescoby was active in a number of student organizations and nurtured her public speaking abilities, presenting papers at the Women's Literary Society, the Letters Club, and the Historical Society. Following her graduation, she attended a teacher training program at UBC in 1932-33. By the time Bescoby was appointed to her position with the elementary school correspondence course in 1934, she was enrolled in graduate studies in

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9"I. Bescoby Wins Prize in Contest," (Unknown); "Isabel Bescoby Wins Oratorical Contest at Kitsilano School," (Unknown); "Wins Again: Isabel M. L. Bescoby," (Unknown). These newspaper articles are included with Bescoby's personal records in the BCARS. They are undated and unreferenced.

10University of British Columbia, "Faculty of Arts and Science: Conferring the Degree of Bachelor of Arts With Honours," (1932).

11Ibid.

12University of British Columbia, Enrolment Services, Transcripts Office.


16University of British Columbia, Enrolment Services, Transcripts Office.
history. She completed an M.A. in history in 1935, submitting her thesis, *Some Social Aspects of the American Mining Advance into Cariboo and Kootenay*, to her supervisor, Walter Sage.\(^{17}\)

Bescoby was among the first women to complete a master's degree at UBC and one of several women from the university's history department who carried on to prestigious positions in academia and the public service.\(^{18}\) These women all benefited from encouragement and mentoring from provincial archivist D. C. Harvey and UBC history department head Walter Sage.\(^{19}\) Alison Prentice suggests that Harvey, Sage, and other professors at UBC encouraged young women scholars in history during the late 1920s and early 1930s.\(^{20}\)

Through a mix of good fortune and her own competence, Isabel Bescoby was also well connected with some of the most influential provincial educators at the time. Her strong understanding and advocacy of the principles of progressive education suggests that she studied under Dr. Weir while he was head of the Department of Education and she was taking her teacher training.\(^{21}\) H. B. King, who was appointed technical advisor to the Minister of Education shortly after Bescoby's appointment, was principal of Kitsilano High School during


\(^{19}\)Alison Prentice, “Laying Siege to the History Professorate,” chap. in ibid., 204-205.

\(^{20}\)Letters from Harvey congratulating Bescoby on her accomplishments demonstrate she was one of these young women. He wrote: “I wish to congratulate you on receiving your M.A. degree and to assure you that I had no doubt you would be able to get this recognition after my experience with you as a student in the University.” D. C. Harvey, provincial archivist, Nova Scotia Public Archives, to Isabel Bescoby, 12 June 1935; D. C. Harvey, provincial archivist, Nova Scotia Public Archives, to Isabel Bescoby, 7 December 1935, BCARS, E/D/D/846.

\(^{21}\)According to her official transcripts, Bescoby took her teacher training course during the 1932-33 academic year while Weir headed the Department of Education at UBC.
the years she attended and also taught part-time at UBC. Undoubtedly, she impressed the two men, who were "friends, confidants, and political allies."

Bescoby was also mentored by another prominent Vancouver educator, Dr. Norman Black, who was a colleague and steadfast supporter of both King and Weir. Like King and Weir, Black was an educational progressive who also advocated the educational efficiency movement and spent his time "crusading for school surveys." Black, who held a doctorate in pedagogy from the University of Toronto, specializing in English, French, German, and history, was a popular teacher who organized Kitsilano's course in geography and lectured in geography at UBC. He also organized the public speaking club at Kitsilano where Bescoby honed her oratorical skills. Black's influence was manifest in Bescoby's interest in public speaking, history, writing, literacy, and ultimately pedagogy.

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23Like King and Weir, Black was a prominent educator in the province who was also a social and educational progressive. While no evidence can be found to show the three men were friends, they were contemporaries, they were colleagues, they held common views, and they frequently sat on committees together. Black worked on King's staff at Kitsilano and lectured at UBC at the same time as King and Weir taught there. Black's editorials and articles in the BC Teacher suggest strong support for both men and their activities. In an appendix to his survey of the province's high schools on behalf of the High School Teachers' Association, Black unabashedly states his support of Weir: "All friends of childhood, and especially those who are concerned for the increase of peace and efficiency in school administration, are indebted to Dr. Putman and Dr. Weir for a comprehensive statement of the best thought of their day..." Norman Fergus Black, Peace and Efficiency in School Administration (Toronto: Dent, 1926), 209. Similarly, Black spent much ink in the pages of the BC Teacher in the months following King's report on school finance; Black wrote: "It is a serious and scholarly contribution to the literature of educational finance and administration...very serious student of education should be studying the report first hand." Norman Fergus Black, "School Finance in British Columbia," BC Teacher (October 1935): 8.


25"Hi-lites of '41," Kitsilano High School Annual (1941), 45; 1932 Kitsilano High School Annual (1932), 27.

26The relationship between Bescoby and Black went beyond vocational mentoring. Black and his family lived only a few blocks from the Bescoby's home; Black's daughters were close friends with Isabel; and his daughter Margaret and Isabel shared similar interests in public speaking. Margaret Black came second in the oratorical contest that Bescoby won in high school.
Given her association with Weir, King, and Black, it is not surprising that Bescoby was hired by the education office in Victoria and put in a position to promote the progressive social and educational objectives these men advocated. They evidently considered her intelligent, competent, and capable. No doubt these men recognized Bescoby’s skills as a writer and speaker and believed that she had the necessary abilities to revise the correspondence program and to manage the branch’s staff. Clearly, Bescoby was equipped for the job. She had proven her tenacity as a researcher, she was blessed with an inquisitive drive, and she shared a passion for progressive education with her mentors. Despite these stellar qualifications, it was nevertheless unusual for a woman to be appointed to such a senior post within the educational government in the mid-1930s.

When Miss Bescoby began her public service career at a youthful twenty-one years of age, she assumed a role few women before her attained within the province’s civil service. Only Miss Jessie McLennahan, domestic science director, preceded her to the realm of management within the education department. Miss Lottie Bowron, the social welfare officer for rural female teachers, also held a rank equivalent to that of a school inspector. However, her work helping teachers across the province meant that she was not a typical manager within the educational civil service, having no staff and no continuing “line” responsibilities. Teacher education was also operated under female auspices—notably under the rule of Miss Kate

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22 McLennahan was hired as director of domestic science in 1926 by the previous Liberal government in response to the recommendation of Putman and Weir that home economics could not be “organized and directed properly except by a thoroughly competent woman acting as provincial director.” Putman and Weir, Sunny, 338.

Scanlan, who ran the province’s Model School in Victoria. But elsewhere in the provincial public service, no other women held the title of officer-in-charge of a government branch.

In 1934-35, the provincial civil service employed 461 women, comprising close to one-third of the government’s workforce. Bescoby was one of twenty-two females appointed to permanent positions that year. Of those, seven were assigned positions that earned them over $100 per month. The remaining two-thirds earned between $65 and $75 per month as stenographers, clerk-stenographers, or positions of similar status. By far the majority of women employed as civil servants in 1935 occupied these lower-paying positions. Indeed, a 1931 report shows that the designation “stenographer” was an exclusively female domain, with salaries ranging from $60 to $100 per month. The male equivalent, “unskilled labour,” included occupations such as janitor, watchman, and elevator operator, with salaries of between $95 and $150 per month. Fewer than 10 percent of women employed in the public service in 1934-35 made over $100 per month, and less than 3 percent held supervisory titles.

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29 British Columbia, Special Historical Supplement, 103.
31 Ibid. See also, Table 4: Gender Composition in the British Columbia Civil Service, 1935 and 1937, in appendix.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid. These appointments were to posts related to social welfare and education predominantly: Dr. H. A. R. Anderson, Assistant of the Victoria Normal School, at $241.66; Mrs. Moody, Follow-up Officer for the Industrial Home for Girls and Boys Industrial School, $140; Miss. J. R. D. Gilley, Social Welfare Secretary at the Provincial Secretary, $120; Miss J. Sargeant, Branch Librarian, “Public Libraries Act,” Provincial Secretary, $150; Miss C. Cooper, Matron, Provincial School for Incurables, Provincial Secretary, $120.
34 See Table 3: Women in the British Columbia Civil Service, 1935, in appendix.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
Of the twelve women who occupied higher-paying professional or managerial positions, most worked in the areas of social welfare, education, and library/archives, with the exception of those working in the provincial laboratory, which employed women in roles of assistant director, chief of bacteriology, bacteriological technician, and bacteriologist. Lower-paid mid-range professional women were employed primarily in the areas of education and social welfare as instructors, matrons, and investigators. From janitors to officers-in-charge, women earned less than men doing the same job. At $166.66 per month, Bescoby’s starting salary was less than Hargreaves’, who earned $250 per month when he was dismissed from his post. In fact, she made less than Hargreaves did in 1919, when he was appointed with a salary of $175 per month.

Several factors help explain why the twenty-one-year-old Bescoby was selected for the job. First, the men responsible for Bescoby’s appointment were social progressives, who were largely disposed toward promoting the notion of equality and social welfare in many areas. They advocated universal medical care, universal free education, and welfare services such as mothers’ allowances to benefit women and children. They likely considered promoting a bright young woman to a managerial position as a statement of their social progressivism. Beyond that, Bescoby shared with these men a common spirit of social reform pronounced in both some Protestant churches and the educational bureaucracy.

39 Ibid.
40 See Table 5: Directors, Salaries, Pupils, and Staffing for the Elementary Correspondence School, 1919-1969 in appendix.
correspondence branch was not considered a central unit of the educational civil service and certainly lacked the status of the high school correspondence branch, it was an important, in some ways essential, service to rural British Columbia. Beyond recognizing Bescoby’s intelligence and other capabilities, these men likely calculated that in a Depression-scarred economy, they had found a person of high quality whose labour was inexpensive. Indeed, Bescoby was hired at a significantly lower salary than her predecessor and other male officers with similar titles and responsibilities.

Survey of the Elementary School Correspondence Course

If our British Columbia school is to acknowledge these three principles of correspondence instruction—to develop independence of thought, to stimulate and create social consciousness, and to recognize individual differences to the utmost—a decidedly new organization and new methods of instruction must be introduced.42

Regardless of government’s reasons for appointing her, Isabel Bescoby was expected to be a catalyst for change for the elementary correspondence courses in the province. Government was fully aware that the elementary correspondence program required updating, and Bescoby’s first task was to review the correspondence school’s offerings and procedures. Within a few weeks of her appointment, she detailed her findings and recommendations in a forty-five-page confidential report to the Deputy Minister and Superintendent of Schools, S. J. Willis, and the Minister of Education, G. M. Weir. Well schooled by her mentors in the technique and importance of surveys, Bescoby’s review was thorough. Her report detailed the

42Isabel Bescoby, Confidential Report on Elementary Correspondence Course, to the Minister of Education and the Superintendent of Education, Victoria, B.C., May 1934, 10, BCARS, GR470 Box 2, file 3.
current shortcomings of the program and offered a comprehensive plan to revise the lessons and procedures of the elementary school correspondence unit.

Bescoby's report was anything but complimentary—a view evidently shared by her departmental superiors. In the report's introduction, she wrote:

In spite of the fact that parents and teachers have expressed gratitude for the wonderful results that the course has obtained, it is poorly arranged, badly written and unscientific in its details. . . . It has been saved from condemnation because anything was better than nothing. . . .

But Bescoby's task was to provide more than an inventory of problems. Rather it was to set out a comprehensive plan to improve elementary school correspondence across the province. This she did by adapting the Winnetka Plan to the challenges of elementary correspondence learning and instruction.

The Winnetka Plan was an educational experiment in individualized ungraded learning that sought well-rounded development of the whole child. It was developed by Carleton Washburne in 1919 in the elementary school system of Winnetka, Illinois. Based on the work of John Dewey at the University of Chicago, the Winnetka Plan was a reaction to traditional educational practices that emphasized intellectual development by teaching skills and knowledge through rote learning methods such as memorization and drill. Bescoby was obviously inspired by the Winnetka Plan's intent to address students' individual differences,
claiming that “no class need retard the advancement of a bright and industrious pupil or rush a slower pupil.”

Bescoby’s report identified similarities between the principles of correspondence instruction and the aims of teachers in the Winnetka Plan:

Not only do our aims find similar expression, but also our methods may be alike in many particulars. Throughout the following report, many recommendations are really adaptations of the Winnetka plan of study, to which we are sincerely grateful for suggestions.

Bescoby based her suggestions on Winnetka principles yet linked them to specific workings of the correspondence course. In her report, she cited problems in the instructional methodology and made specific suggestions for improvement. To improve elementary correspondence, Bescoby proposed a mastery system of correspondence instruction modelled after the Winnetka Plan where each lesson consisted of a separate unit of work with a specified goal or aim. She proposed that each lesson would be “written in an informal manner, just as a teacher would speak to his pupils” and would consist of two to three practice exercises that pupils mark themselves. She carried on to describe the mastery system:

If he succeeds in doing 90% of the questions perfectly in the first set, he may omit the practice work in the other two sets of questions. When the child has satisfied himself that he can apply the new rule... he tried what may be known as Mastery Work. This exercise is mailed to the school. If the Mastery Work is not done with at least a mark of 90% the whole unit is repeated.

To illustrate, Bescoby provided several sample lessons with her report.

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47 Bescoby, Confidential Report, 10.
48 Ibid., 11.
49 Ibid., 21.
50 Ibid.
Beyond the pedagogy applied, Bescoby criticized the varying length and number of lessons in the existing correspondence program. In her opinion:

... there evidently has been no scientific organization of the course so that pupils could expect to spend a definite number of hours per day and weeks per year on a grade’s work.\textsuperscript{51}

Accordingly, she suggested that Grades I through VI should each be divided into thirty-six lessons per grade and that Grades VII and VIII be divided into twenty lessons per grade.\textsuperscript{52} Her reasoning was that each lesson would take about one week to complete, and there were approximately thirty-six weeks in the school year. For Grades VII and VIII, she asserted that the twenty lessons would be double in length, and this would be a stepping stone to the high school program, which comprised twenty lessons. She also recommended a Grade VIII honours course. Additionally, she called for detailed revisions to the existing courses and the addition of nature work, handwork activities, games, and music so that the learning experiences of students taking correspondence would be similar to classroom learning as much as possible. Bescoby envisioned that perhaps one day the correspondence school would teach elementary music appreciation over the radio.\textsuperscript{53}

Bescoby also saw the need to enrich the materials sent to parents or adults who acted as home instructors. She pointed to the “excellent general circular” already in place but suggested that it could be extended to assist more fully the home instructor:

I believe we should provide the home instructor of primary grade pupils with a greater number of suggestions for helping the correspondence teacher. It would be well to

\textsuperscript{51}ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{52}ibid., 15.

\textsuperscript{53}ibid., 20. It is likely that this suggestion led to her appointment on the Committee for Radio in Schools in 1937.
provide each home instructor with two or three printed pages of material on the science of teaching. . . .

Although Bescoby acknowledged that what pupils learned and how they learned was important, she also suggested: "It would be a fine thing if correspondence pupils felt as much a part of school as do attendants at regular schools." To that end, she proposed that correspondence instructors send personal letters to pupils with each mailing. She also proposed that the correspondence director send a welcoming letter to all students at the beginning of the school year, "outlining the work of the year, giving suggestions for correct study habits, and naming the child's 'class teacher.'" This, she stated, would "take the place of the opening address by the principal of a school." She suggested that school spirit could be further enhanced by creating a correspondence school crest, offering a school newspaper and radio broadcasts and providing "a visit to pupils by a member of the staff."

Bescoby's critique did not stop at instructional and curriculum issues. She provided suggestions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the school. Conscious of the government's fiscal limitations at the time, Bescoby proposed several ways to enhance the correspondence school's offering without additional costs. She determined that the school could make greater use of charity organizations such as the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire and might even consider commercial advertising. She suggested that the

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54 Ibid., 12.
55 Ibid., 39.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 41.
59 Ibid., 28.
correspondence program would benefit from using printed materials from other government departments and making greater use of the education department’s travelling library. Bescoby also noted that relatively little had been done to promote correspondence services to families in isolated regions. As a remedy, she advocated that the education department use circulars, newspapers, and the radio to promote lessons by mail. To illustrate why the previous director had done little to promote services, she provided figures and commented: “The staff of the department has been increased only when the quantity of work became very burdensome for an understaffed department.”

In addition to finding ways to keep spending in check, identifying funding sources, and promoting correspondence services, Bescoby suggested changes to staffing and facilities were necessary to enhance the school’s efficiency and effectiveness. She recommended improvements to the physical accommodations of the correspondence school so staff could function more efficiently, and suggested that instructors’ salaries be raised, as they were less than the lowest paid teachers in municipal schools. She proposed that the correspondence instructors “be encouraged to develop themselves educationally by receiving salaries at the provincial teachers’ schedule.” Additional staff efficiencies could be achieved, she maintained, by giving one or two staff members full responsibility for all clerical work; introducing form letters for standard responses; reorganizing the school’s filing system; and developing and

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60 Ibid., 29.
61 Ibid., 28.
62 Ibid., 4.
63 Ibid., 7.
64 Ibid.
housing a reference library of general education books and reference texts within the department.65

All in all, Bescoby’s report advocated sweeping changes that would transform elementary school correspondence in both pedagogical and organizational terms. However, the existing correspondence courses that Bescoby critiqued were not far from common practice at the time. Up until that point “decisions taken by the educational bureaucracy to change the curriculum often meant simply changing the textbook.”66 Throughout the province, many inexperienced teachers who taught in rural schools employed formal pedagogical methods, directing students to read from textbooks and answer questions. In terms of pedagogical practice, what Hargreaves offered his charges differed from what occurred in most British Columbia classrooms at the time only in that instructions for learning were written and mailed rather than given verbally.67 However, as Bescoby demonstrated, the programs offered by the education department could showcase what government valued in pedagogy rather than simply mirror typical classroom practice.

Superintendent of Education, S. J. Willis, was obviously impressed with the scope and detail of Bescoby’s analysis of the materials for elementary correspondence. On May 21, 1934, Willis wrote: “In a very short time you have made quite an exhaustive study of the problems

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65Ibid., 35-38.


67For a variety of reasons, in particular the effects of inadequate funding and a lack of training for teachers in progressive practices, progressive classroom practice was not widely realized in the province’s classrooms. See for example Patterson, Chalmers, and Friesen, “Herbert B. King”; Mann, “Weir and King”; Giles, “Career of Willis”; R. S. Patterson, “The Canadian Response to Progressive Education,” chap. in Essays on Canadian Education, eds. Nick Kach, Kas Mazurek, Robert S. Patterson, and Ivan DeFavero (Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises, 1986).
involved in carrying on the work and have made some very valuable suggestions.\textsuperscript{68} However, there is a hint that Willis was somewhat sensitive to the critique and that he believed Bescoby was delivering directives from above rather than proposals from a subordinate.\textsuperscript{69} He retorted to her critique: “The defects of the existing courses are all well known to me and it was to remedy these that a separate Officer was appointed to take charge of the Elementary School Correspondence Courses.”\textsuperscript{70} Bescoby addressed her report directly to the Minister and his Deputy, going outside the regular chain of command which would have included John Kyle. Nonetheless, it appears these senior educational bureaucrats were hesitant about hiring a new officer in such financially trying times, and they wanted to be certain that she was capable before announcing her appointment. Although appointed in April 1934, news of Bescoby’s appointment was not publicly announced until June 5, when her recommendations for improving the correspondence offering were approved and the department formally announced changes to the program.

Willis’ letter approved Bescoby’s recommendations related to revising the pedagogical foundations of the correspondence course with few exceptions. He approved the Grade VIII standard and honours courses, a revision to the number of lessons, application of the Winnetka system, new methods of reproducing lessons, and using the travelling library. Willis

\textsuperscript{68} J. Willis, Superintendent of Education, Victoria, to Isabel Bescoby, Officer-in-Charge, Elementary Correspondence Course, 21 May 1934, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 3.

\textsuperscript{69} With Weir’s appointment as Minister of Education, S. J. Willis, who had for fourteen years been the expert bureaucrat advising the men who held the cabinet post responsible for education, experienced a decline in his authority. As Giles describes in “Career of Willis,” 121: “For the first time, Willis was in a position of support to a Minister whose stature in educational circles exceeded his . . .”

\textsuperscript{70} Willis to Bescoby, 21 May 1934.
suggested Bescoby should wait to revise social studies materials until new textbooks were issued, stating:

As there are impending changes in Grades VII and VIII in English, Social Studies, Arithmetic and Geography, I doubt that the Department would be wise in going to the expense of providing new courses in these subjects for 1934-35.71

Willis also took issue with several of Bescoby’s recommendations for changes to the branch’s infrastructure. In some cases, his tone was almost condescending. For example, while he agreed that the salaries for correspondence instructors were inadequate, he asserted that they should not be paid on the same scale as classroom teachers. He argued that classroom teachers have “many troublesome problems to face which never arise in the case of correspondence teachers.”72 In response to her comments about the unsatisfactory room, Willis replied:

This is, of course, well known to the Minister and myself, and, unfortunately, it is not the instructors in the Elementary School Correspondence Courses only that are handicapped in this way. We shall try to secure more satisfactory quarters . . . if it is possible to do so without too much expense.73

Willis suggested that Bescoby should use her own judgment “so far as the clerical work and filing system are concerned.” While he agreed in principle to building up a library for staff, he cautioned her about developing the estimates for her branch:

Your Vote should be carefully examined and proposed expenditures set out in detail so that you may know exactly how far you can go this year.74

71 ibid.
72 ibid.
73 ibid.
74 ibid.
With the blessing of her superiors, Bescoby set quickly to work revising the elementary correspondence courses and setting in place organizational structures aimed at improving efficiency and enhancing student learning.

The Woman Beyond the Job

In addition to her work the first year as officer-in-charge of the elementary correspondence school, Bescoby completed her master’s thesis in the spring of 1935. In May 1935, Bescoby accepted Carleton Washburne’s invitation to attend the summer school at Winnetka. Bescoby impressed Washburne as she had impressed those who had taught her before. While attending Winnetka, when Washburne was called away unexpectedly, he asked her to present in his place to the Rotary Club. Following the summer session, Bescoby and Washburne continued a regular correspondence that showed a mutual respect and a strong friendship.

Her experience at Winnetka obviously inspired Bescoby to continue her education. While she was still at Winnetka, she considered registering at the University of Chicago in a doctoral program. Shortly after she returned home, in August 1935, Bescoby confided to her former teacher and mentor, D. C. Harvey:

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74 Isabel Bescoby, Horace Mann School, Winnetka, Illinois, to Alice Dill, Elementary Correspondence School, Victoria, B.C., 20 June 1935, BCARS, GR 470, box 2, file 1.

75 Washburne, as vice president of the Progressive Education Association, had encouraged Bescoby to present a paper at a conference entitled “Education in a Free Society” in February 1936. She declined, citing that her work was not original and that attending the conference might create a very awkward situation for her in the department. Isabel Bescoby to Dr. Carleton Washburne, Winnetka, Illinois, 19 November 1935, BCARS, GR 470, box 2, file 1.

76 Isabel Bescoby, Horace Mann School, Winnetka, Illinois, to the staff, elementary correspondence school, undated, BCARS, GR 470, box 2, file 1.
I intended to register at Chicago for my Ph. D. but I find that courses more useful for my purpose are given at Columbia. So I am waiting to register until I see whether or not I shall ever be able to get to New York for work.8

Despite inquiring about several post-graduate programs, she never enrolled in a doctoral program.7 Instead, she continued her work revising the elementary correspondence program and likely found herself unable to take time away from work in 1935 to pursue further study.8

In a relatively short time, Bescoby gained a reputation in educational government as a competent and committed educator. In September 1935, Education Minister Weir placed H. B. King in charge of a comprehensive provincial curriculum review. After over a year of revisions to the elementary correspondence courses, Bescoby commented in a letter to Washburne:

The curriculum for the whole province needs revision and I'd rather spend my time at that and then rewrite the correspondence lessons to follow the new curriculum.8

Bescoby's strong academic background and her commitment to progressive education made her an ideal candidate for the staff committees selected to transform provincial education. Not

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7Isabel Bescoby, Victoria, B.C., to D. C. Harvey, provincial archivist, Nova Scotia Public Archives, 20 August 1935, BCARS, GR 470, box 2, file 1.


8In a letter to Carleton Washburne, Bescoby considered whether she was better going to a Ph.D. program or a graduate teachers college at Winnetka. She stated that if she stayed with the department: "My work will not take me into the classrooms again except once in a while, and so lectures might help me more than practice teaching after all." She closes the letter: "I must make another attack upon this pile of applications for courses. If I don't get this routine stuff cleared away, I'll never get 'round to preparing my lectures." Isabel Bescoby to Dr. Carleton Washburne, Winnetka, Illinois, 28 September 1935, BCARS, GR396 Box 1, file 12.

8ibid.
surprisingly, in 1935, she was appointed to the junior high school curriculum revision committee, and the following year, she was appointed to the primary social studies curriculum committee.

Transforming Lessons by Mail to a Province-Wide School

By reorganizing the offices and staff and rewriting the courses of lessons, the Elementary Correspondence School was able, during 1934-1935, to provide its students with an enriched programme of work and more vital school-life than heretofore.

Completely revising the elementary correspondence course proved to be no small undertaking. Between the time that Weir formally announced Bescoby's appointment on June 5, 1934, and the beginning of the school year in September 1934, Bescoby and her staff completely revised all the correspondence lessons from Grades I through VI. Because Willis had cautioned against revising materials for Grades VII and VIII, the elementary correspondence staff developed special sheets to supplement existing courses in literature, grammar, arithmetic, and drawing so they would fit the new format. The following year, in 1935-36, "an enriched program of studies was provided," and new health and nature lessons were offered for Grades II through VI. By the end of the 1935-36 school year, the elementary correspondence staff had also developed several new junior high school courses.

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82 Bescoby to Washburne, 19 November 1935.

83 Isabel Bescoby to S. J. Willis, memorandum, 30 March 1936, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.


85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 S. J. Willis, Superintendent of Education, to Isabel Bescoby, 21 May 1934, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 3.


89 Ibid.
During the 1936-37 school year, staff remodelled lessons in all regular subjects from Grades I to VI to conform with the new provincial programme of studies. They also developed a new course in Grade V history, and new junior high-school courses were developed for students in Grades VII and VIII. These, Bescoby expected, would be completed the following year, in 1937-38.

Bescoby and her staff revised the correspondence lessons following the guidelines she sketched out in her 1934 report. Each course in each grade was divided into thirty-six units or lessons, with each unit covering a week’s work. The lessons were designed to be “informal and stimulating,” and they all followed a consistent format. Each lesson featured three components. First, a “teaching lesson” set out the instructional goal and provided instructional material and directions. Next, the lesson provided “practice work” where students could apply their understanding. An answer key was provided so home instructors could review a pupil’s work. Finally, the lessons provided “mastery work” exercises to be submitted to the correspondence school for marking. Students using this system were expected to achieve a high level before they moved on to the next lesson. The first lessons developed in 1934 contained only one practice work exercise and one mastery work exercise. As instructors had

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89Department of Education, Annual Report (1937), 70.
90Ibid.
91Ibid.
93Ibid.
94Isabel Bescoby to Carleton Washburne, 26 October 1934, BCARS, GR396 Box 1, file 12.
time and as the lessons were reprinted or revised in line with new curriculum changes over the years, efforts were made to improve and enhance the lessons.95

As she worked to revise the elementary correspondence program, Bescoby adjusted the Winnetka Plan when necessary to fit the needs of school. For example, she acknowledged the benefits of using a "mastery system" in the correspondence lessons:

There have been suggestions that correspondence pupils suffer because there is too great a lapse of time between the date on which they submit a lesson and the date when they receive it back corrected. This difficulty is avoided by providing self-testing exercises. The student knows, before he submits his work, whether or not it is mastered.96

Following the Winnetka Plan for mastery learning proved impracticable sometimes for the correspondence school, as she explained to Washburne:

While correspondence work necessarily means individual instruction, I am finding it difficult to insist that pupils master each unit or single lesson individually before proceeding to the next unit of instruction. Because of mail conditions, it is impossible for us to return a marked lesson to a pupil before work on the next lesson is commenced.97

Instead of withholding lessons when one was "not mastered" by a student, Bescoby instructed her staff to mark three lessons following one "not mastered." Responses beyond three lessons would be held up in the department of education until the "not mastered" lesson was returned by the student "mastered."98

95Letters between Bescoby and the elementary correspondence school secretary Alice Dill provide insight to the ongoing revisions and updates, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.

96Isabel Bescoby to H. B. King, technical advisor to the Minister of Education, "Elementary Correspondence School," memorandum, 14 October 1937.

97Bescoby to Washburne, 26 October 1934.

98Ibid.
While the mastery learning notion worked well for the correspondence setting, Bescoby also lauded the Winnetka Plan’s emphasis on individualized learning, noting: “In Winnetka, individual instruction is a matter of choice. In correspondence schools, it is a matter of necessity.” She described the unique experiences some rural British Columbia pupils faced:

In the past, some Correspondence School pupils have suffered from lack of time for studies. They have been engaged long hours per day with home duties. This meant that they had only one or two hours per day for study and that it took several years to complete a grade’s work in all subjects. This led to a high percentage of over-age students in the upper grades of the school.

Bescoby and her staff took pains to address the difficulties students had in attending to their studies and applauded the flexibility that correspondence study afforded students in differing situations:

For those student who are so busy with home duties we try to arrange partial courses in essential subjects only. Thus students are able to make more rapid progress while omitting no material which they require for their particular types of living.

The correspondence staff also tried to express encouraging language in the way they wrote instructional materials and marking procedures to make students feel better about the work they were doing. Bescoby frequently consulted Washburne regarding the development of correspondence materials. In October 1935, Washburne provided his feedback regarding marking lessons:

Instead of saying, “This lesson has not been accepted because the writing is poor” it should say something to this effect: “Your story was very interesting (if it was) and we enjoyed reading it. Don’t you want to make its form better? You miss-spelled a great

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99Isabel Bescoby, article submission for the Winnetka Bulletin, to Gertrude Laing, Kansas City, Kansas, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.


many words (or you wrote very poorly), and it's too bad to have this story wear such a bad dress. Don't you want to copy it and make it look as good as it is?\textsuperscript{102}

Recognizing Bescoby's own desire for excellence, Washburne cautioned: "Be sure that the mistakes are really carelessness and not inability to reach the high standard you've set."\textsuperscript{103} No doubt instructed by this response, Bescoby and her staff genuinely sought ways to applaud students' efforts, even when they had not completely mastered a lesson. Bescoby further recognized that the absence of verbal communication between teachers and students made correspondence learning text-dependent. With this in mind, Bescoby and her staff took pains to prepare lessons so that "too much labourious writing is not required on the part of the student."\textsuperscript{104}

Bescoby was quick to set out the advantages of the new "mastery approach" lessons, which allowed pupils to progress at rates that suited them individually. Unlike students who attended regular schools, correspondence students did not miss lessons due to illness or inability to attend.\textsuperscript{105} And, because all lessons were submitted in writing, instructors were able to determine from textual evidence when a student needed additional assistance.\textsuperscript{106} Despite handicaps of geographic isolation, elementary correspondence students who transferred to other provincial schools did exceptionally well.\textsuperscript{107} At one point, Bescoby hoped, as she put it,
“to investigate statements that students develop more initiative, judgement, and self-reliance in this school than in other schools of the province.”

Personalizing Learning from a Distance

There is a tendency for a Correspondence School to become merely a highly organized office: lessons sent out according to mail schedule, letters sorted and filed, marks recorded according to routine, and reports issued. This danger has been thoughtfully avoided in the Victoria School. Each teacher is responsible for becoming a personal friend of each of the pupils in her grade.

As an educator, Bescoby realized it would take more than improved lessons to enhance student learning by correspondence. Because her pupils worked in isolation, they missed the motivational aspects of learning in a social environment. Bescoby recognized that students’ commitment to learning would be enhanced through a sense of belonging and sought opportunities to give them a sense of belonging similar to what students received when attending a school in person. The personal letters that the instructors wrote to each pupil every term were a huge success. As Bescoby noted: “Students were delighted to hear from their teachers and quickly replied giving interesting pictures of their home living conditions.” In 1934-35, Bescoby arranged for the Canadian Red Cross Society to send a monthly newsletter to intermediate and senior students and a monthly magazine to primary students. The Red Cross also helped support a letter exchange program that Bescoby designed where correspondence pupils were matched with pen pals in city schools. In the winter of 1936,

108Ibid.


112Ibid.
Bescoby and her staff developed a school magazine to provide encouragement and to instill a sense of community in students. The first issue included encouraging messages to students from Bescoby, as the correspondence school's director, as well as from the Minister and the Superintendent of Education. To attract students' interests, they published students' stories and poems and photographs of students, and ideas for handicrafts, games, and recipes filled the pages. The magazine also included notices about the whereabouts of the travelling library so students could plan to borrow books when the library was within reach. Subsequent issues included photographs of the instructors so students could gain a more personalized sense of their teacher.

Bescoby also recognized the importance of personal contact and encouraged her staff to visit students. Through the 1935-36 school year, several instructors visited correspondence school students during their holidays. Modelling this behaviour herself, Bescoby spent part of the summer of 1936 visiting pupils along the west coast of Vancouver Island. Noting the powerful effect of these visits, Bescoby explored the idea of an itinerant teaching corps who would travel the province and visit correspondence students. She observed:

Where teachers of the Correspondence School have already paid visits during their vacation to pupils, considerable improvement in the pupil's work has resulted. No doubt, to be effective, travelling teachers would have to visit each student at least three or four times each year. This indicates the necessity of at least six or seven such teachers over the province, if the plan is to be at all useful.

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113Copies of these are included in BCARS, GR470, box 8.

114Isabel Bescoby to Carleton Washburne, 3 August 1936, BCARS, GR396, box 1, file 12.

115Isabel Bescoby to Mr. E. T. Kenney, "Itinerant Teachers to Supplement the Work of the Elementary Correspondence School," memorandum, 30 March 1936, BCARS, GR396, box 1, file 7.
She proposed that such itinerant teachers could supplement correspondence services by assisting students with academic problems between mail deliveries and by creating "an atmosphere of friendliness and confidence, which would be reflected in better school work." As with the case of Alexander Robinson's similar proposal in 1919, the service was deemed to be too costly and was never implemented.

Lessons by Air

Bescoby's enthusiasm about making lessons come to life for her pupils lead to her appointment in 1937 to the Committee for Radio in Schools. Like many other forward-looking educators of her time, Bescoby was taken with the possibilities presented by the radio and repeatedly recommended its use to enhance correspondence courses. It is possible that as a student at Kitsilano High School in 1927, Bescoby participated or at least tuned-in to the programming developed in 1927 by radio CNRV in Vancouver and the Vancouver School Board. Despite government promises, these programs were never adopted over the long term. Documentary records show, however, that Bescoby gave radio addresses as early as 1935, describing how lessons by mail worked, offering encouragement to students enrolled in elementary courses and advising British Columbians about how to conduct a correspondence school at home.

116 Ibid.
118 For a full description of the development of school broadcasting in the province, see Fleming and Toutant, "School Radio."
119 A talk over Radio Station CRCV in Vancouver B.C. from 7:30 to 8:00, Tuesday, February 5, 1937, 4, BCARS, Add. MSS 2585.
120 Ibid., 1.
As an advocate for school radio, Bescoby was involved in early discussions with departmental officers about the feasibility of developing radio programs for schools in the province. In the autumn of 1936, Education Minister Weir announced that the Department of Education planned to explore the possibility of using radio in schools.121 A few months later, Superintendent Willis asked Bescoby to identify broadcasts that she and her staff could provide, listing the names of subjects and speakers.122 Instead of providing Willis with such a list, Bescoby recommended that the education department appoint a director of radio education, a position that would oversee all matters concerning school broadcasts.123 Whether she was vying for the position herself is unknown, but she did indicate that her branch would be happy to:

... cooperate in whatever programme of radio education the Department may sponsor. ... I think we could make the best contribution in the division of junior and intermediate grade Social Studies.124

Around this time, Miss Margaret Ecker contacted Bescoby in response to an offer Bescoby made to assist with her thesis.125 Ecker was a student of W. N. Sage, Bescoby's thesis supervisor. In her letter, Ecker offered to develop radio scripts for the correspondence school in British Columbia history.126 Evidently, earlier when Bescoby offered to help Ecker, she had suggested that the department planned to develop radio lessons to benefit elementary

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121 "Radio is Urged as School Aid," Victoria Times (22 September 1936) 3.

122 S. J. Willis to Isabel Bescoby, memorandum, 20 April 1937, BCARS, GR470, box 1, file 1.

123 Isabel Bescoby to S. J. Willis, memorandum, 4 May 1937, BCARS, GR470, box 1, file 1.

124 Ibid.

125 Margaret Ecker, 4606 West Eleventh, Vancouver, B.C., to Isabel Bescoby, 20 May 1937, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.

126 Ibid.
correspondence students. In her reply of June 2, 1937, Bescoby noted that she was unable to discuss the radio programs with Dr. Weir but noted: "I have the matter in mind and I shall do so as soon as possible." On June 14, 1937 she advised Ecker:

The committee which will organize Radio Education for the province is not yet completely organized. Dr. Weir therefore suggests that we wait to make any definite arrangements with you until the committee begins to function. In the meantime, the Minister thinks that you might write in detail two or three scripts and submit them to the head of the Department of History in the University. Before authorizing them as educational programmes, the Department of Education would want to feel that they had been approved by the University History Department.

Later in June 1937, Bescoby wrote: "A committee to study School Broadcasting has now been appointed by the Superintendent of Education."

It was not surprising that Bescoby was among the members appointed to the Committee for Radio in Schools. In addition to Bescoby, the sartorially splendid and powerful Albert Sullivan, one of the government's two high school inspectors, was appointed to chair the committee. Alex Lord, then principal of Vancouver's Normal School, was appointed secretary. Other committee members included BCTF representatives Harry Charlesworth and R. H. Bennet from Vancouver's John Oliver High School. Through the autumn of 1937, the committee developed three series of short instructional programs. Of these half-hour programs, ten offered strategies for music appreciation, five dramatized "important events in

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127Isabel Bescoby to Margaret Ecker, 2 June 1937, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.

128Isabel Bescoby to Margaret Ecker, 14 June 1937, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.

129Isabel Bescoby to Margaret Ecker, 28 June 1937, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.

130Fleming and Toutant, "School Radio," note that the 1938-1939 Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia lists all of these people as members of the committee. Lambert, 1963, p. 37, suggests the membership grew throughout the investigation period.

131By the time the committee first met, Bescoby had taken on a new position and was no longer involved with the elementary correspondence school.
British Columbia History," and five surveyed "simple phases of Elementary Science." Because the experimental programs were well received and because educators were generally delighted with students’ retention, the provincial education office eventually decided to appoint a director and establish the school broadcasts branch. But Bescoby’s hopes for using radio’s potential to enhance learning opportunities for correspondence students were never fully realized. As Fleming and Toutant explain in their brief history of provincial school broadcasting:

Unfortunately, however, the exact nature of the relationship between school broadcasting and the correspondence branches was never clearly specified. As a result, school radio was destined to remain “a supplement to the regular course of studies” rather than a means of delivering the “authorized program of studies” to the province’s schools or to students dependent on “education by mail.” School broadcasting was restricted to three general purposes—providing material for appreciation (in particular, music), providing information on current events, and providing material to enliven or enrich the regular curriculum.

Meeting Emerging Needs

By the mid-1930s, the responsibilities for the elementary correspondence school were again expanded in response to the special social and economic circumstances of the Great Depression. As part of a special grants initiative covered in Vote 63 of the provincial legislature in 1935, the provincial government decided to use its educational institutions “for relief measures to assist men and women who were out of employment, and the particular object in view was the development of their skill and the preservation of their self-respect and


133 Ibid., 71.

morale. In line with a growing public response, the elementary correspondence school circulated notices in November 1934 offering lessons free of charge to unemployment camps. Bescoby reported that interest in these courses was overwhelming. Before long, twenty-eight men had enrolled, and by December 22, 1934, ninety-five men from the relief camps had enrolled in elementary correspondence. By the end of the school year, 211 individuals had registered. By 1935-36 enrolments soared even further to encompass 330 adult students. Of those, 160 were from relief camps, fifty were from Oakalla Prison Farm, forty were from the Tranquille Sanatorium, and eighty registered individually.

Rising enrolments caused a great deal more work for correspondence instructors. But this growth did not necessarily achieve the results the measure intended. Bescoby noted in her submission to the Annual Report of 1936 that many from the relief camps “failed to complete the work of their grades. They enrolled for only a few winter months and dropped their courses when they left to accept employment elsewhere.” Bescoby also reported that the work received from inmates from Oakalla Prison Farm “was unsuccessful” because the inmates’ terms were often too short to guarantee any reasonable period of work. She noted,

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137Isabel Bescoby to S. J. Willis, 22 December 1934, BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 1.
139Isabel Bescoby to S. J. Willis, 10 June 1936, BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 1.
140Ibid.
141Ibid.
142Ibid.
however, that forty students at the Tranquille Sanatorium, under the direction of a tutor, “made very satisfactory progress.”

Determined to improve the rate of lesson returns from the relief camps, Bescoby promoted a system where better-educated men could act as “home instructors” for men enrolled in the courses, particularly for non-English speakers. In April 1935, she pursued assistance from the Frontier College, an Anglican Missionary organization. G. H. Cockburn, from the Anglican Theological College at UBC, contacted Bescoby regarding a cooperative effort between Frontier College, which operated out of Toronto, and the elementary correspondence school. In his letter, he noted:

Frontier College . . . has a past history of over thirty years work in education in logging camps, construction jobs, etc.—it works both on the frontiers of learning and of civilization. Its personnel consists of University graduates, who when on the job share the same work and quarters as the men, and who teach as opportunities offer at nights, besides assisting in recreation etc. Subjects vary with felt needs, but a basis is found in elementary instruction in English (particularly to foreign born) and arithmetic.

During the summer months of 1935, Frontier College placed men in several camps to work as labourer-teachers. Despite the extra assistance in the field, course completion rates from the relief camps remained less than satisfactory.

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144 bid.

145 Bescoby to Willis, 20 December 1934.

146 G. H. Cockburn, Anglican Theological College, University Hill, Vancouver, B.C., to Isabel Bescoby, 23 April 1935, BCARS, GR 470 Box 3, file 1.

147 Isabel Bescoby to A. E. Graham, Frontier College representative, Project #67, Shoreacres, B.C., 5 December 1935, BCARS, GR470, box 2; Isabel Bescoby to H. B. Caraco, Frontier College representative, Salmo Airport Camp, Salmo, B.C., 14 January 1936, BCARS, GR470, box 2.
In 1936-37, the number of adult students in elementary correspondence courses dropped to 147 as relief camps closed and the Oakalla program was suspended. After these changes, adults who remained enrolled in elementary correspondence courses did so on their own initiative or were among those at the Tranquille Sanatorium who again were assisted by regular tutor. Bescoby was, no doubt, much relieved when she noted a marked improvement in the quality of work and course completion rates. She attributed the improvement “to the fact that adults were asked to purchase this year all the required textbooks. The enrolment, therefore, has been almost entirely of those who desire to improve their education.”

Although Bescoby had long associated the school’s success with rising enrolment figures, she was likely also pleased to see a drop in the number of adult participants but an improvement in rates of student completion.

Building Institutional Foundations

Transforming the pedagogical foundations of correspondence education was but one part of Bescoby’s work. A no less important part of her work lay in the organizational changes she made to support correspondence services and to transform a government initiative into a full-time functioning unit of educational government. She believed that the elementary correspondence school would be like any other school in the province. Even as she and her staff plotted the curricular revisions to be undertaken, Bescoby began to implement plans to increase the branch’s efficiency.

147Department of Education, Annual Report (1937), 70.
148Ibid., 76.
149Ibid.
150Isabel Bescoby, “Going to School by Mail,” Vancouver Province, Magazine Section (11 November 1934) 3.
As a first step, Bescoby formalized the correspondence school's structure to match the larger provincial school system. She departmentalized the school into primary, intermediate, and junior high school departments, extending from Grade I to VIII. In so doing, she mirrored the dominant pedagogical pattern found even in British Columbia's smallest rural communities. Bescoby also sought to increase efficiency by differentiating staff into correspondence instructors and clerical staff. She then assigned one instructor to each grade and assigned responsibility for clerical support to two staff members. To support the work of the school's staff, Bescoby established systems for recording students' work and redesigned the filing system. To save time and standardize responses, she established a system of form letters, some adapted from Winnetka, others from the work of predecessors.

Enrolment continued to climb throughout Bescoby's tenure as director. When she assumed leadership of the elementary correspondence school near the end of the school year in 1934, 876 pupils were enrolled in Grades I through VIII. By 1936-37, 1,140 pupils enrolled, an increase of 30 percent in three years. Throughout this period, children living in remote areas comprised the bulk of the correspondence student population. From 1934 to 1936, close to a quarter of the correspondence students were adults taking lessons in relief camps, in Tranquille Sanatorium, in Oakalla Prison Farm, and in individual homes.

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151 Ibid.
152 Isabel Bescoby to S. J. Willis, memorandum, 16 November 1934, BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 1.
153 BCARS, GR 396, box 1, file 6.
154 Bescoby to Washburne, 26 October 1934.
155 Bescoby, Confidential Report; Letters between Bescoby and Alice Dill discuss the development and revision of various forms and form letters, BCARS, GR470 Box 2, file 1.
156 Bescoby to Willis, 20 March 1936; Department of Education, Annual Report (1937).
To address this growth, Bescoby sought additional funding each year in her submissions prepared as part of the education department’s “estimates.” Additional funding was essential, she believed, to improve learning opportunities for a growing number of students and to improve working conditions and salaries for her staff. Throughout her term, staff size grew from three permanent instructors and seven temporary instructors in 1934 to four office staff and nine instructors in 1936-37. Unwilling to accept Willis’ denial of better wages for her staff, Bescoby sought higher ratings and better salaries for the permanent staff on the civil service salary “tree” or schedule that determined compensation in the public sector. As she put it:

For the 1935-36 year I suggest that the name of the position held by one correspondence instructor be altered to that of Secretary-Clerk and that salary be not less than that at present paid to the Senior Correspondence Instructor, $960. I wish to suggest that the two permanent positions of Correspondence Instructors be rated equally, at a minimum salary of $960 per year with authorized deductions.

Bescoby also requested salary adjustments for temporary instructors to reflect a correspondence instructor’s salary schedule, pointing out that they were all qualified teachers: “Two are university graduates and two hold stenographic qualifications as well as teaching certificates.” In the 1936 estimates for her branch, Bescoby requested a salary increase for herself as officer-in-charge, as well as for the secretarial and clerical position. She pointed out that the “duties of both these officers have increased to a large extent due to the improvement and extension of School services.” She requested an additional clerk-stenographer to assist

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157 Isabel Bescoby to S. J. Willis, memorandum, 16 November 1934.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
with the increasing workload of the branch. Her estimates were generally approved, although through the 1930s all civil service salaries were frozen or reduced.

Despite a full-scale curriculum revision, a growing staff, and increasing salaries, the correspondence school's cost to the provincial government amounted to only $13.89 per pupil by the end of her term in 1937. This was just marginally more than Hargreaves' $11.25 per pupil. Bescoby's efforts to streamline costs had paid off, allowing the school to offer greater services for no more than a modest increase in budget. In a memorandum to H. B. King, Bescoby reminded her superiors about the efficiency of her branch and the savings it generally produced on behalf of the education department.

In addition to being able to effect change, Bescoby proved herself a capable manager of people. Through her efforts to secure better working conditions and wages for her staff, she created a relatively stable organization with little staff turnover. Despite her youth, Bescoby was clearly in charge of her branch, and when she was away from the office, she maintained regular correspondence with Miss Alice Dill, the correspondence school's secretary, who became her chief resource in the office. All correspondence between Bescoby and the instructors went through Dill. Frequently, Bescoby would send comments for Dill to share.

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161 Isabel Bescoby to S. J. Willis, memorandum, 24 September 1924, BCARS, GR470, box 1, file 1.

162 Department of Education, Annual Report (1937). This included the cost of writing, printing, distributing and marking lessons but not the cost of postage, textbooks, and the travelling library. In 1936, Bescoby reported the cost per pupil at $12. This included the cost of printing lesson assignment sheets, exercise paper, stationery supplies, the correction of lessons and postage. Bescoby to Willis, 20 March 1936.

163 Hargreaves, "Why Hinchliffe Fired Me."

164 Bescoby to H. B. King, memorandum, 14 October 1937.

165 During Bescoby's stay at Winnetka, Dill kept her apprised of all developments in the office, BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.
with one instructor or another. For example, Bescoby noted about her studies: “Miss Miller will be glad to know that I am busy making a puppet show these days! We are doing a Grecian play.” On several occasions, Dill forwarded questions from the instructors. One such example illustrates clearly Bescoby’s control over small organizational matters, even when she was away from the office. Early in Bescoby’s stay at Winnetka, Dill wrote:

I understand that you wanted all letters other than personal letters from instructors to pupils signed with your name by rubber stamp. The primary and intermediate grade instructors tell me that you told them they were to sign the letters themselves after you left. Please let me know which you prefer.

To this Bescoby replied to Dill on June 18, 1935:

Enclosed you will find answers to all the girls’ questions. Will you read them first, please. The note to Miss Cornett and Miss Miller applies also to the VII and VIII instructors, of course.

The contrite response suggests that while the instructors were annoyed with Bescoby’s response, they respected her authority:

Dear Miss Bescoby,

We have received your letter of June 18, and note what you say about the signing of letters.

We want you to know that neither of us had any idea of assuming an undue amount of authority in your absence. The day you came to our room to tell us that you were going away, you said that after you left we were each to sign the letters for which we were responsible. All four of us remember you doing so.

166 Bescoby to Dill, 20 June 1935.

167 Alice Dill to Isabel Bescoby, Horace Mann School, Winnetka, Illinois (14 June 1935), BCARS, GR 470, box 2, file 1.


169 Bescoby’s letters are not on file in the Provincial Archives.
Since we did not receive any other instruction, we naturally thought that this was what you intended. Now that you have made the matter clear, the letters will all be signed in the regular way, although we will continue to write them, as we have been doing since your departure.\textsuperscript{170}

That Bescoby assumed her authority is unquestionable in an undated memo, typed in red, all caps:

In my office we have prepared a map showing the locations of the homes of our pupils. I would like you each to study the map carefully. A good time to do this would be when I am away at lunch time! I.B.\textsuperscript{171}

Efficient as always, she even included a time for viewing that would not disrupt her work. Bescoby's high self-esteem and her high expectations of others were essential to her ability to create an organization that was both theoretically cohesive and efficiently productive. Through her leadership, the staff diligently mastered the intricacies of the Winnetka program and developed lessons across the curriculum that earned the respect of students, parents, and educators alike.

Like the first lessons that were sent to the Spetch children in 1919, the revised lessons put British Columbia on the forefront of correspondence education in North America. Departments of Education from across Canada and the United States purchased the lessons to use as models for their own.\textsuperscript{172} Teachers, in particular recent Normal School graduates, often purchased lessons to use as reference or to supplement in areas where their training was not

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\textsuperscript{170}Margaret Cornett and Ann Miller, Elementary Correspondence School, Victoria, B.C., to Isabel Bescoby, Horace Mann School, Winnetka, Illinois, undated, BCARS, GR 470, box 2, file 1.

\textsuperscript{171}BCARS, GR470, box 2, file 1.

\textsuperscript{172}Department of Education, \textit{Annual Report} (1936), 105.
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Parents and pupils alike were delighted with the new lessons. For example, one parent wrote to Bescoby:

There is far greater variety and so much more of the ‘play’ element in the new lessons that I have found D------ quicker to learn and far less easily bored or tired.174

Yet another stated appreciatively:

I wish to express my thanks to you and your staff for their (and your own) efforts to make the correspondence course interesting and clear. I am greatly taken with the splendid way the whole course is planned and conducted and the personal interest shown in the unseen pupil by the various teachers.175

Promoting the Public Image

Your article from the Vancouver Province gave me the feeling that you had the knack both of popularizing your teaching and of “selling” your work to the community.176

Bescoby took every opportunity to enhance public regard for the province’s elementary correspondence school. Throughout her three years in the branch, Bescoby published newspaper and journal articles,177 made radio addresses,178 and fulfilled speaking engagements for various organizations.179 In 1937, she completed a 106-page manuscript entitled Kindergarten at Home that was requested by Dent Publishing Company in 1936. Dent tried unsuccessfully to

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173Ibid.
176Harvey to Bescoby, 12 June 1935.
177Bescoby, “Going to School by Mail”; Bescoby, “Outpost Education.”
178Ibid.
find an American publisher for the book, so her work never made it to press. But Bescoby’s literary endeavours did not stop at promoting the correspondence school. In addition to publishing several historical works, she also wrote about progressive education, with an emphasis on the Winnetka Plan. One of her many mentors, Dr. Norman F. Black, had taken on the position of editor of BC Teacher in 1935. In this capacity, he solicited articles from Bescoby, thereby offering her opportunities to promote herself and her work through BC Teacher. Throughout her time in government, Bescoby appeared to recognize that good public relations and good press were important elements of running a successful government program.

**Bigger and Better Things**

Under Bescoby’s administration, elementary correspondence in British Columbia was transformed in three ways: pedagogically in the way that it embraced the doctrines of progressivism and applied them to student learning; institutionally in the way Bescoby adopted policies and procedures to enhance efficiency and effectiveness; and politically by the new understanding and higher public regard that Bescoby brought to the correspondence school. For many, these changes may not have been evident. The children who received lessons from

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182 Isabel Bescoby, “Can We Make Our Children Happy in the Classroom?” Vancouver Province, Magazine Section, 23 May 1936, 8; Bescoby, “Article Submission.”

the correspondence branch may have noticed little change save for the wording of lessons or the use of mimeographed paper or booklets rather than typed sheets. Pupils still received individualized correspondence from instructors. From a departmental perspective, however, she instituted consistency in pedagogical approach and streamlined procedures that enhanced the branch's effectiveness and efficiency. Overall, Bescoby was successful in transforming a fledgling educational service into a well-functioning organizational unit with a specific educational mission.

With her work transforming the branch complete, Bescoby was ready to move to other educational challenges. In 1937, when Kate Scanlan retired as principal of the Victoria Model School, Bescoby applied for the position and was appointed. Her post-graduate work with the Winnetka School under Carleton Washburne and her success in the implementation of the progressive methodology into the correspondence program made her an ideal candidate for the principalship. She already had some knowledge of the Model School's operations, having lectured there in 1936. When the Model School closed in 1942, Bescoby successfully applied for a federal government position as an employment and claims officer with the National Employment Services. As head of the women's section, Bescoby assisted hundreds of

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185 Evidently, there was some interest in including the principles of progressive education through the Winnetka System in teacher training in the province. In 1936, Harold Campbell of the Victoria Normal School attended the Winnetka Summer School.

186 Isabel Bescoby to N. F. Black, editor, BC Teacher 21 April 1936. A letter to Carleton Washburne suggests that she was lecturing somewhere in September 1935. Bescoby to Washburne, 28 September 1935.

187 Through her term there, the department she worked for was variously named Unemployment Insurance Commission, National Selective Services, Employment and Selective Services. Sun British Columbia Directory, 1942-1952.
physically and mentally handicapped women in finding meaningful work. In 1951, she moved back to her hometown, Vancouver, as regional supervisor of staff training for the Unemployment Insurance Commission, the first Canadian woman to be appointed to such a position. Bescoby was promoted to chief of the training division for the Civil Service Commission in 1963, yet another first for a woman in the Canadian public service and a move that obliged her to relocate to Ottawa. Throughout her new career in the federal government, Bescoby maintained an interest in adult education, continuing to lecture and speak at conferences in Canada and the United States. In November 1968, Bescoby was diagnosed with colon cancer. In April 1969, Bescoby returned to British Columbia to recover from her surgeries. She died in Sidney seven months later, on November 3, 1969, at the age of fifty-six.

**Development in the High School Program**

In the years that the elementary correspondence school was becoming increasingly institutionalized between 1934 and 1937, the high school correspondence program carried on

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in much the same manner as it had since its inception. Back in 1929, J. W. Gibson, a seasoned bureaucrat, had initiated the branch of government with a high level of bureaucratization and developed the correspondence services in a highly institutionalized manner. He imbued the program with the educational progressive ideology that cemented the school's identity firmly within the government's progressive agenda.

Nonetheless, the political and economic climate brought about some significant changes to the school's demographics and the course offerings between 1934 and 1937. By 1937, high school correspondence, initially established to extend educational opportunities to "young people who lived too far from a high school to be able to attend," was transformed to "a wider constituency." Between the 1933-34 school year and the 1936-37 school year, the student population nearly tripled, in part from surging adult enrolments.

Several factors influenced the changing demographics for high school correspondence. When he announced Bescoby's appointment and revisions to the elementary school correspondence courses in June 1934, Education Minister Weir also noted that the high school program would be extended to include senior matriculation. Over the next few years, as Gibson and his subject specialists worked to add the new senior matriculation courses, others worked to develop new vocational courses. These changes drew more and more adults into

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194From 702 to 2,068; Department of Education, Annual Report (1934-1937).
195"School Course is Reorganized: Correspondence System in Province is Redrafted and Scope Enlarged," Victoria Times, 5 June 1934, 1; "B.C. Students May Take Senior Matriculation By Correspondence Course," Vancouver Province, 5 June 1934, 3; "Mail Pupils' New Course," Vancouver Sun, 5 June 1934, 15.
196Department of Education, Annual Report (1936), 53; The school offered only one technical/vocational course in 1933, Mechanical Drawing and Drafting, Department of Education, Annual Report (1933). By 1937, the number of these courses increased to fourteen, including Commercial Art, Lettering and Displaycard Writing, Engineering Drawing, Automotive Engineering I and II, Diesel Engineering, Practical Electricity, Principles of Radio, Aviation I and II, Prospectors
the program. Senior matriculation attracted mostly adult pupils, largely teachers with second-class certificates. Adults also registered from Tranquille Sanatorium, from Oakalla Prison, and from apprenticeship programs, as well as others from all walks of life who wished to "improve their general education or receive help along vocational lines." Beginning in 1935, the British Columbians in relief camps also spurred enrolments in high school correspondence under Vote 63(a).

In 1933-34, adults comprised roughly one-third of the school's population of 1,000. The following year, in 1934-35, with growing registrations from the relief camps and the introduction of senior matriculation courses, adult pupils rose to about 40 percent. However, when relief camp numbers dwindled to nothing in 1936-37, the adult population dipped only minimally and then continued to grow to new heights the following year. As Gibson predicted in 1935, vocational courses proved a great "draw" for adults:

As the opportunities offered for beneficial study through correspondence courses become more widely known, and as the number of vocational courses increases, the proportion of adults registering will also increase. There is much to support the prediction that three years from now we shall have as many students over 18 years of age as under it.


By 1938, three years later, adults comprised 52 percent of the high school correspondence branch's population.202

Under Gibson's guidance, high school correspondence flourished, providing many new opportunities for high school students in rural, remote, and small schools. By adding senior matriculation courses, along with new vocational and technical courses, the correspondence school's offering grew from forty-nine courses in 1933-34 to eighty-eight courses in 1937,203 each course equivalent to a year's work in a subject. Courses offered through the high school correspondence branch were greater in number than most of the province's rural high schools. In the 1935-36 school year, provincial school regulations were relaxed to allow students to take correspondence instruction in up to three courses free of charge upon recommendation of the local school principal or school inspector.204 By the end of the school year, Gibson was glad to report that "upwards of 200 high-school students registered for supplementary instruction by correspondence."205

Supplementary instruction by correspondence allowed many students to take courses not offered in schools they attended or to make up for failed classes without disturbing their regular program. It also allowed students who moved mid-year to continue courses not offered in a new school. Supplementary instruction also provided opportunities for students who were not planning to attend Normal School or university to take vocational courses in place of academic subjects. Teachers in schools where students were registered in supplementary

205Ibid.
instruction were "relieved of responsibility insofar as any formal teaching of correspondence subject is concerned."³⁶⁰

During this period, from 1934 to 1937, the high school correspondence branch moved from providing basic high school education to pupils unable to attend a school to an extension of the public high school system and of the fledgling adult education system. The organizational structure of the high school correspondence branch grew as it responded to surging student enrolments, demands for new and revised courses, and a floodtide of public interest in vocational education. In 1934, the high school correspondence branch operated with three full-time instructors and twelve part-time instructors who were paid according to the number of papers they marked. By 1936, the branch included six office staff, four full-time instructors, and twenty-eight part-time instructors.

³⁶⁰ibid.
CHAPTER 3
MAINTAINING LESSONS BY MAIL FOR A GROWING POPULATION,
1937 TO 1969

In 1937, Anna B. Miller, who had been the Grade IV correspondence instructor for the previous five years, was promoted from within to replace Bescoby and to oversee the operation of the elementary correspondence branch. This change in leadership again signaled an organizational transition. Whereas Bescoby had spent much of her time shaping the province's elementary correspondence services into a fully functioning branch, Miller was charged with the task of managing lessons by mail for a growing provincial population. Over the next three decades, the creative and constructive character of Bescoby's work would give way to the administrative requirements of managing an increasingly bureaucratic branch of educational government.

In the years that spanned Bescoby's appointment in 1933 and Miller's appointment in 1937, the British Columbia civil service grew by 14 percent. This growth had occurred in spite of the Depression and, more likely, because the Liberal Party's policies were directed toward alleviating the social and educational effects that the Great Crash of 1929 had occasioned. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the province's economy was transformed, and the public service continued a pattern of incremental growth that continued until the early 1970s.

1BCARS, GR 101.
Growth in educational government was marked by the presence of increasingly bureaucratic structures and procedures for the sake of greater organizational effectiveness and efficiency. As the elementary correspondence school became bureaucratic for its own purposes, the director's job was extended beyond the operational tasks of the school to meet the demands of larger and more complex government structures.

A New Officer in Charge

Unlike most of her female contemporaries who achieved similar positions within the education bureaucracy, Anna Beatrice Miller did not come from a privileged or an academic background. She was born June 11, 1904, to working-class parents, Kenneth and Valgerdur (Vala) Miller. Although she was born in Sedro Wooley, Washington, and spent her first three years there, her parents met in Victoria and ultimately returned to British Columbia's capital city to care for her aging grandparents. Through much of her youth, Anna lived with her parents, grandparents, and two sisters, Albertine and Margaret Jeannette, in a small house on Fernwood Road in Victoria. She attended Victoria High School and completed junior

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2Jessie McLoughlan, hired in 1926 to head domestic science, was “the first woman to join the Department of Education’s administrative fraternity . . .” She held a degree in domestic science from New York’s Columbia University. Fleming, “Ladies in Gentlemen’s Quarters.” Isabel Bescoby was the second female to head a unit within the education department; Other women who rose to positions of similar status in education prior to 1938 included Lottie Bowron who was hired in 1926 as the social welfare officer for rural female teachers and Kate Scanlan who assumed the principalship for the Victoria Model School. Bowron who was “the daughter of a celebrated pioneer family,” was well connected with the provincial Conservative party. Fleming, Smyly, and White, “Beyond Hope and Past Redemption,” 105-107; to date little is known about Kate Scanlan’s background except that she was an educational progressive who taught in Nelson prior to her appointment to the Model School, Fleming, “Ladies in Gentlemen’s Quarters.”

3Miller’s father was a baker and later drove a delivery truck; her mother was a homemaker.

matriculation in June 1923 at nineteen years of age. In June 1924, she earned a second-class teacher's certificate from the Provincial Normal School in Victoria.

Following graduation from Normal School, Miller spent several years as a substitute teacher in Victoria. In 1929, she moved to 150 Mile House to teach in a one-room school. She returned to Victoria in 1932 and took a series of temporary positions in the Department of Education. She worked first as an instructor at the elementary correspondence school from September 1932 to June 1933 and then spent the summer of 1933 providing clerical support marking high school entrance exams. Although classified as a “temporary,” Miller was a permanent fixture in the correspondence school as the Grade IV instructor from 1932. During her early years in this capacity, she worked from September to June. Later she held her post year-round.

It is likely that Bescoby expressed her intention to leave the elementary correspondence school as early as 1936 and that Miller saw this as an opportunity to advance her career. In 1937, Miller completed senior matriculation at Victoria College, a move that no doubt would have improved her chances of gaining a management position in the public service. In April

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5 At that time, as Johnson describes, a second-class certificate was issued to individuals who completed junior matriculation and teacher training. First-class certificates went to individuals who completed senior matriculation plus teacher training. There were also academic certificates issued to individuals who held degrees and completed teacher training as well as special certificates issued to teachers of manual training, domestic science and commercial subjects. Johnson, History of Public Education, 210.


7 Willis' notebook, BCARS, GR 139.

8 Isabel Bescoby, n.d.

9 There is ample evidence that Bescoby was seeking alternative employment throughout her post to the Correspondence School. As early as 1934, she applied for an assistant archivist position with the provincial archives, BCARS, GR 1738, box 14, file 4. Her letters to Carleton Washburne imply that she was looking for another position, one that might put her in a position to pursue further studies, BCARS, GR 470, box 2, file 1.
1937, Miller was appointed to a permanent position as an instructor in the correspondence school, at a salary of $75 per month. Later that year, in September, she was appointed officer-in-charge, with an accompanying raise to $125 per month.

When Miller assumed her post as officer-in-charge of the elementary correspondence school, women managers in government were still a rarity. Little changed in the composition of the public service in the four years Bescoby held her position. Women still comprised about one-third of the civil service workforce, but most worked in clerical support and service positions. Fewer than 2 percent held managerial and professional posts.

When Miller took the job, the elementary correspondence branch was comprised of an entirely female staff serving a clientele mostly made up of young children. Compared to the high school branch, elementary correspondence was relatively low in status. With a provincial economy in a state of collapse, provincial officials were likely looking for someone who would do the best job for as little money as possible. It is also conceivable that no men applied for the position. Miller proved to be a competent leader, and she was also motivated by and committed to her job at the elementary correspondence school. She remained in this role for the next fifteen years. In the 1951-52 Annual Report, Superintendent and Deputy Minister of Education F. T. Fairy reported:

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10Public Service Commission, PSC Report (1938).

11Ibid.

12See Table 7: Women in the British Columbia Civil Service, 1938, in appendix. When Miller assumed the post as officer-in-charge of elementary correspondence, 556 women were employed in the provincial civil service, compared to 451 when Bescoby was hired.

13BCARS, GR 101, box 5.
The Elementary Correspondence Branch lost the services of Mrs. Anna B. Nash (nee Miller), through marriage during the year. She is largely responsible for the organization of this branch and the splendid work carried on for many years. Thousands of children in sparsely populated parts of the Province, who have no regular school, have cause to remember the work this lady has done.  

In September 1952, Miller resigned her position as director of the elementary correspondence school to join her husband in Vancouver. She had married Fred Nash, a surveyor, in late 1951. The couple spent the next few years travelling around British Columbia for Nash's work but divorced in 1956. Following her divorce, Anna B. Nash taught in the Burnaby school district until she retired in 1969. Upon retirement, she became interested in her maternal Icelandic heritage and became an active member of the Icelandic Canadian Club of British Columbia. Upon her death, in November 1969, the Icelandic Canadian Club of British Columbia established the Anna B. Nash Memorial Scholarship for a university entrant or undergraduate taking a degree in education.

Managing the Elementary Correspondence School

The period of time from the late 1930s to the early 1950s was the high point of correspondence education in British Columbia. Enrolment soared during World War II, and student subscriptions continued to climb afterwards. Although annual enrolments fluctuated, the number of pupils grew from around 1,100 in the late 1930s to almost 2,000 in the early

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15Ibid.; Arnason, “Nash Memorial Scholarship.”
17Arnason, “Nash Memorial Scholarship.”
18Ibid.
1950s. To meet the needs of these students, Miller’s staff grew from fourteen instructors and stenographers, including one part-time instructor in 1937, to thirty-three instructors and stenographers, including thirteen part-time workers hired on a piecework basis, in 1952. Beginning in the 1948-49 school year, Miller began using outside markers in addition to regular instructors in order to keep up with the volume of marking. These outside markers, experienced teachers themselves, worked part-time in their homes marking lessons and returning them to the correspondence school for recording and distribution.

During her years in office, Miller continued to streamline procedures and introduce processes to enhance the branch’s efficiency. For example, she developed a new enrolment outline to guide her staff in the process of enrolling a new pupil. These guidelines specified ways to record student information and to track lessons and materials distributed to each pupil. In addition, Miller established a system where sample lessons were sent to pupils so they could see what was expected in their work. Miller noted the benefits of these sample lessons for students: “Less time is required for commencing work and much confusion and misunderstanding is eliminated.” Throughout Miller’s tenure, correspondence lessons were

19See Table 5: Directors, Salaries, Pupils, and Staffing for the Elementary Correspondence School 1919-1969, in appendix.

20Ibid.

21Anna B. Miller, “Elementary Correspondence Education, Department of Education, Victoria, B.C.,” Typed manuscript, n.d., BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 1.

22Ibid.

23BCARS, GR 396, box 1, file 6.

24Ibid.
updated and revised as new stocks were ordered and as curriculum changes took place. By 1941, mimeographed lessons had been replaced with direct plate printed lessons.

Miller’s files illustrate the increasingly managerial character of a branch director’s work, especially what was required in balancing her responsibilities for students with the growing organizational demands of government itself. A great deal of Miller’s time was taken up with administrative tasks related to the management of human resources and employee relations, budgeting, reporting on the branch’s progress, and defining the organization by developing organizational charts and employee descriptions. She managed all these tasks competently and professionally and earned the respect of her staff, students, and colleagues, as well as her superiors.

A New Pragmatism

Although Miller was a competent manager and dedicated to correspondence education, she did not share Bescoby’s progressive zeal. Under Miller’s direction, the branch’s emphasis was directed far less toward progressive pedagogical developments and far more toward

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{25}}\text{See for example Department of Education,} \textit{Annual Report (1938)}, 66; (1939), 71; (1941), 86. \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{26}}\text{Department of Education,} \textit{Annual Report (1941)}, 86. \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{27}}\text{BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 2 contains correspondence between Anna B. Miller and the Superintendent of Education, S. J. Willis, primarily dealing with budgets, employees, salaries, and administrative issues such as the school’s accommodations.} \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{28}}\text{F. T. Fairey, Deputy Minister of Education, to head of branches, Department of Education, memorandum, 12 December 1951, BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 4. Fairey requested branch information for a Civil Service Commission survey conducted during January 1952. He also notes similar information was requested for a survey conducted by Stephenson and Kellogg.} \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{29}}\text{Gibson,} \textit{Teacher Builder}, 108, J. W. Gibson maintained contact with Miller after he left the Department. When Miller died in 1986, the Gibsons were among the donors to Miller’s memorial scholarship, Arnason, “Nash Memorial Scholarship.” In 1952, F. T. Fairey, Superintendent and Deputy Minister of Education, praised her work. Department of Education,} \textit{Annual Report (1952)}, Hugh Weatherby, “British Columbia’s Elementary Correspondence School,”} \textit{Family Herald and Weekly Star,} \]
meeting pupils’ needs. As happens with so many “movements,” the enthusiasm of one reformer is lost inside an organization once the reformer leaves. Nevertheless, some elements of Bescoby’s reforms remained. Miller was, indeed, conscious of the progressive methods her predecessor had put in place and ensured that elementary correspondence lessons incorporated the principles of individualized learning and mastery learning. She also encouraged instructors to use positive reinforcement and encouragement when replying to student work. However, she did not appear to view these actions as things that were “progressive” in nature but as actions that were the best, and possibly the only, way to provide an adequate education from a distance.

In April 1940, Superintendent and Deputy Minister S. J. Willis wrote to Miller that he planned to present a report at the Canadian-Newfoundland Education Association Conference in September that year. He indicated that he wished to outline outstanding progressive movements in the province and asked Miller to report on the “most important movements in connection with Elementary Correspondence Education covering the school years 1938-39 and 1939-40.” Miller’s response highlighted how correspondence education enabled children who were out of school due to illness to stay on track and to resume their educational studies later. Although she noted that the British Columbia Radio School, in particular its music appreciation programs, were valuable to those who had access, she reported nothing about actual progressive practices employed by the elementary correspondence branch.31

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August 30, 1944, p. 29, describes Miller as the “young, pleasant, and very competent director of the Elementary Correspondence School.”

30S. J. Willis to Anna B. Miller, 1 April 1940, BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 2.

31Anna B. Miller to S. J. Willis, 29 April 1940, BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 2.
As an advocate for correspondence education, Miller was more pragmatic than either her predecessor, Bescoby, or the director of high school correspondence, J. W. Gibson. Both Bescoby and Gibson held a somewhat narrow view of correspondence education, stating only what they saw to be the advantages accruing to pupils through such study. Miller, on the other hand, openly acknowledged that students who took their schooling by mail suffered certain disadvantages. Distance learning to Miller was something of a "stop-gap." Years of working as a correspondence instructor had taught her first-hand about the struggles that students faced working in isolation. Although she touted the benefits of self-reliance that correspondence offered under good supervision, she returned repeatedly in her reports to the disadvantages correspondence pupils faced:

It is the opinion of the teaching staff here at the school that "school by correspondence" is only a substitute for the fuller educational opportunities offered in a regular classroom, and the pupil who has had to receive all his education by correspondence may have missed very valuable and satisfying experiences by being denied association with his contemporaries in a classroom. According to Miller, progressive methods used in an isolated learning environment simply could not take the place of the classroom learning environment.

Seeking Ways to Overcome Isolation

Miller's years as an educator in both rural and city schools and as a correspondence instructor convinced her about the importance of direct personal contact as a way of encouraging and inspiring learning. This conviction caused Miller to maintain many of the processes established by her predecessors to overcome the sense of loneliness that isolated students faced.

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32Weatherby, "Correspondence School."

youngsters experienced. Like those before her, she insisted that instructors write encouraging comments on lessons they were returning and put interesting stickers on all good work. Each year, she ensured that instructors wrote at least two individualized letters to each pupil. These letters were enormously well received. Parents wrote back describing how important correspondence was to children living and learning in isolation. As one parent put it: "I wonder if you people have any idea what a wonderful tonic you are for the children. You are really their friends and your encouraging remarks mean so very much." Another wrote: "Thanking you for the splendid work you do in directing the education of isolated children and particular thanks to Bill's teachers, who took such an individual interest in his work."

In addition to writing to students, Miller encouraged her staff to visit pupils whenever possible. She also took a personal interest in going to see students herself. Perhaps it was because of her teaching experience in the area that she took a particular interest in visiting the Cariboo. Late in May 1937, Miller travelled to the Cariboo area and met with students throughout the region, with the assistance of Inspector Herb McArthur. In 1947, Miller travelled to Williams Lake and Prince George to visit pupils, and in 1949-50, she travelled to Williams Lake again and used a classroom at the Williams Lake School to meet with

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51 Anna B. Miller, Mimeographed typed speech, 1937, BCARS, GR 396, box 1, file 6.

52 See for example Department of Education, Annual Report (1938), 67; Department of Education, Annual Report (1939), 71; Miller, Mimeographed speech.


54 Ibid.

55 Correspondence between Isabel Bescoby and H. McArthur, April-May, 1937, BCARS, GR 470, box 2, file 2.
elementary correspondence students. About this meeting she noted: “It is interesting to see the pupils in their home environment, and personal contact with someone from the school is good from the pupils' view-point.”

Under Miller’s direction, staff from the elementary branch continued to develop a school magazine twice a year to arouse a sense of school spirit among the students. The magazine, renamed The Elementary Correspondence School Round-Up, became more professional-looking under Miller’s guidance. It continued to provide information about the travelling library as well as activities and craft ideas. However, under her direction, there was a new emphasis on using the magazine to create a sense of belonging and allow children to get to know their peers and teachers. Each issue provided news about past pupils and photographs of instructors and office staff, as well as photographs of students and examples of students’ work. Miller also used the magazine to inspire students to pursue studies beyond the elementary level by including a letter from Gibson introducing the high school correspondence program. Unfortunately, a shortage of money or the need to devote greater financial resources to marking lessons undermined the use of this powerful tool. In the mid-1940s, the magazine was cut back to one issue per year. By 1948-49, the magazine had lost its “professional look,” and it disappeared altogether after Miller left the school in 1952.

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41BCARS, GR 470, box 8 contains a copy of each issue of the Elementary Correspondence School Magazine spanning 1936, when it was implemented, until 1952, when it was curtailed.
42The Elementary Correspondence School Round-Up, May 1939.
43BCARS, GR 470, box 8. Beginning in the 1945-46 school year, the magazine is only issued once a year. In 1948-49, the magazine became more homemade-looking.
During Miller’s tenure, the school broadcasts branch began regular educational programming, providing a valuable way to enhance learning experience for correspondence students. Much of rural British Columbia could not access the earliest programs. However, by 1946, ten CBC-affiliated stations throughout the province aired the school broadcasts, along with nine additional low-power relay transmission stations. This meant that “people living in isolated valleys up-country . . . [had] practically the same reception as citizens in Vancouver.” From the first broadcasts aired, these programs proved to be effective in enhancing lessons.

As Miller reported in 1939:

The broadcasts of the British Columbia Radio School are listened to with interest by many of our pupils. Notices concerning these have been sent out to pupils of the school. For various reasons it is not possible for all of our pupils to hear these programs, but for those who can they are proving valuable supplementary lessons. They also help to create a classroom atmosphere in the home.

By the late 1940s, radio had become a valuable part of the elementary correspondence school’s program. Miller and her staff notified students about the school radio broadcasts and sent each family a school radio calendar so they could plan to listen at designated times. One parent described her son’s learning experience combining correspondence and school broadcasts:

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I appreciate the radio program which has so inspired him with pride of ownership. . . we might not have discovered it if Robin didn’t take Correspondence School. . . . In the impressive parcel which arrived last fall from the Department of Education there was among other things a beautiful Radio School Calendar which now covers vast areas of Robin’s bedroom wall. If he doesn’t answer right away, I can always find him at last, standing rapt, before his beloved calendar. 50

Using technology to enhance learning for isolated children did not end with radio. Beginning in 1946, the elementary correspondence school procured a number of filmstrip viewers, and filmstrips were loaned by the newly established visual education branch. “The pupils were enthusiastic about this material,” wrote Miller. 51

Idea for Visiting Teachers Comes of Age

Correspondence learning, particularly at the elementary level, was always fraught with a concern about a lack of adequate pupil supervision. This was particularly the case when mail service was infrequent and considerable time passed between the times when students mailed their lessons and received the corrected lessons back. These problems underscored a need to decentralize correspondence education in some way. The idea was not new. Both education czar Alexander Robinson and Isabel Bescoby had promoted the idea of providing itinerant teachers to students in isolated areas. Costs of providing this service seemed prohibitive until J. F. K. English, director of education for the Peace River Educational Administrative Area in Pouce Coupe, contacted Miller in the spring of 1941 about low enrollment rates in his district. He reported that numerous pupils in the area were not receiving any education despite the elementary correspondence branch’s offerings, and thereby suggested:

50Loretta Parker, “We Go to School at Home,” Vancouver Sun, Magazine Supplement, 31 December 1949, 4.

I realize at present there are comparatively few pupils enrolled in the Elementary Correspondence course from this district but the pupils are here nevertheless and for one reason or another they are not receiving an education. My idea would be to go out after them and make the necessary contacts. The teacher would have the opportunity occasionally of meeting both parents and children. By such methods proper habits of study could be encouraged which would later reflect in better work being done during the high school period, should any pupils desire the more advanced courses. The parents of some of the children are tax payers yet are not receiving the benefits of our educational programme.52

The details were worked out through correspondence between English, Miller, and Willis over the following months.53 In the 1941-42 school year, a branch of the elementary correspondence school opened at Pouce Coupe for Peace River pupils.54 The Department of Education paid the grant usually paid for elementary teachers, and the elementary correspondence school provided the lessons. Lessons were corrected by an instructor at Pouce Coupe, which greatly improved the turnaround time between student submission and the return of the corrected lessons.55 The program proved successful. In 1941, thirty-eight pupils in the Peace River District were taking advantage of this service,56 and by the end of the first full year, enrolment from the area jumped to seventy-nine.57 Enrolment remained relatively

52J. F. K. English to Anna B. Miller, 31 March 1941, BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 2.
53BCARS, GR 396, box 1, file 9; BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 2.
54Miller, “Elementary Correspondence Education,” n.d.
56J. F. K. English to Anna B. Miller, 30 April 1941, BCARS, GR 470, box 1, file 2.
57Department of Education, Annual Report (1942), 86.
steady through the mid-1940s but surged in 1948 to 117, and reached 130 in the 1951-52 school year. 

**Addressing Emerging Needs**

When Miller assumed the leadership of the elementary correspondence school, the student population was predominantly comprised of children from four different groups, as she noted in the department's annual report:

1. Those who live over three miles from the nearest school;
2. Those whose only access to school is by water;
3. Those who cannot attend school because of a permanent disability; and
4. Those who are recuperating from illness.

About 10 percent of the school's pupils were adults. Following war's outbreak in 1939, the elementary school's enrolment grew to include several new groups. The war fueled demand for workers in manufacturing as well as recruitment for the armed services. Consequently, "labour became virtually unattainable" in the province. As teachers were drawn into the war effort, schools were forced to close, and the elementary correspondence school filled in the gap. In several cases, pupils took lessons by mail because they were employed in jobs vacated because of war conditions. Hundreds of others also benefited from correspondence schooling.

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60 Department of Education, *Annual Report* (1940), 78.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
although they were never formally enrolled with the elementary correspondence school, as teachers throughout the province purchased correspondence lessons to use in their own classrooms. When Japanese families were interned in inland camps in 1942, many elementary level Japanese children received their lessons from the elementary correspondence school. In this case, lessons were sold to the British Columbia Security Commission, which in turn provided them to Japanese people in the camps. The Japanese found their own instructors largely "from among their own young men and women who had graduated from Canadian universities, to assist and supervise the education of the children."

**Developments in the Correspondence School for High School and Vocational Courses**

Leadership of correspondence education for high school and vocational courses changed with the outbreak of war. In June 1940, the province loaned Gibson to the Dominion Government to organize correspondence courses for men in service. His appointment, as initially conceived, was to last only for the summer of 1940. However, he remained in Ottawa until his retirement from the provincial public service in August 1941. He continued to hold the post of superintendent of correspondence instruction and editor of correspondence

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67McKelvie, "Correspondence Courses."


courses for the Canadian Legion Educational Services until October 1945. During his time in Ottawa, Gibson oversaw the development of 108 courses, including elementary and high school courses leading to senior matriculation as well as technical and commercial subjects. These he modelled to a large degree after British Columbia’s correspondence lessons. Gibson worked in consultation with the provincial education departments across the country to achieve reciprocity of credits. Special credit courses were even instituted for men who had low literacy levels. However, keeping the audience for his work in mind, the booklets were designed to fit in the pocket of a man’s uniform. When the war ended, Gibson returned to Victoria to enjoy retirement.

In Gibson’s place, Dr. Edith Lucas was promoted from her role as correspondence instructor with the school. Edith E. Lucas was born in April 14, 1904, in Southern Ireland. One of seven children, she and her family moved to Victoria when she was a young child. She attended North Ward School and the Model School, then graduated from Victoria High School at the top of her class in 1920 at sixteen years of age. After completing her teacher training at the Victoria Normal School in 1921, Lucas carried on to complete a baccalaureate degree at the University of British Columbia in 1925 with double honours in French and

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70Gibson, *Teacher Builder*, 111.

71Ibid., 115.


73Gibson, *Teacher Builder*, 115.

74Ibid.

75Ibid.
Latin. She won the Governor General's gold medal as head of her graduating class. After teaching briefly in Powell River, in 1927 she won the Nichol scholarship which enabled her to study for three years at the Sorbonne in Paris, where she earned a doctoral degree in French literature. When she returned to British Columbia, the province was deep in the Depression, but her outstanding record landed her the only available position teaching French in the province, at Chilliwack. The following year, in 1932, she moved to Prince Rupert where she taught French for a year before she was made principal of the high school, one of only a handful of women who were senior school principals at the time. During this time, J. W. Gibson asked her to develop the first high school correspondence course in French, and in 1937, she moved to Victoria to work full-time as a correspondence instructor and course writer. After three years, she was promoted to director to replace Gibson.

In the twenty-two years Lucas managed the branch, it grew significantly, more than quadrupling its enrolment from 4,000 to almost 18,000. Summarizing her work, Lucas wrote:

The chief aim of this department is to equalize educational opportunities of school age children and to encourage adults to improve their educational standing.

By the 1940s, the school increasingly served adults and youngsters enrolled in high schools around the province in supervised correspondence study. By the 1950s and 1960s, between

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71 Ibid.

72 "Personality of the Week,” Victoria Daily Colonist.

73 Ibid.

80 “4,092 Took Courses By Correspondence,” Victoria Times, 28 August 1942, 11.

81 See Table 9: High School Correspondence Student Demographics, Selected Years, 1929-1969, in appendix.
50 and 60 percent of the student population were adults, and 30 to 40 percent took supervised correspondence study at a local high school. Fewer than 5 percent of the high school branch’s pupils consisted of the target group the correspondence school was originally designed to serve—that is, those living too far from a school to attend.

The war effort increased the demand for high school correspondence courses. High school students working in a variety of circumstances in Japanese internment camps and school closures due to wartime and post-war teacher shortages fuelled considerable growth in enrolment. In 1942, Cabinet passed a special regulation enabling high school students in good standing to work during the summer and fall months on farms short on labour. As a result, enrolment doubled through the war years and surged slightly just after the war’s end, as young soldiers returned and wished to continue their education. In 1948, the Department of Immigration for the Dominion Government sought Lucas’ expertise to assist the new arrival of “displaced people” in British Columbia. To deal with the language needs of these new arrivals, Lucas developed *English I for New Canadians*. In 1949, she also developed *English II for New Canadians* to “teach the principles of sentence construction and to acquaint newcomers with our way of life.” Thousands of course packages were mailed out and used in classes set

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82Ibid.

83High school students in the Japanese internment camps were required to pay tuition fees. See for example: Department of Education, *Annual Report* (1942).


86“Academics Mourned,” *Times Colonist*.

up by employers or sometimes went directly to homes where immigrants were assisted in learning by their neighbours.\(^8\) In addition to developing these course materials, Lucas also arranged night school courses for new immigrants in various parts of the province.\(^9\) By the late 1940s, the high school correspondence branch was British Columbia’s largest high school. The Honourable W. T. Straith, Minister of Education, asserted in 1948: “University officials had found . . . that graduates from this school have a higher standard than graduates from ordinary high schools.”\(^10\)

Lucas proved exceptional at promoting the work of the high school correspondence branch. She was known for her outspoken nature and had no problem claiming correspondence education was better than learning in the regular high schools. As she put it: “All high school students could improve their study habits if they took at least one course by correspondence.”\(^11\) Indeed, graduates from the correspondence school won scholarships on a regular basis.\(^12\) Lucas described the school as “the great equalizer” because it gave students in smaller schools as many subjects to choose from as a larger school could provide.\(^13\)


\(^10\)“B.C. School of Correspondence ‘Bigger Than Any High School,’” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 29 October 1948, 3.

\(^11\)“One Course by Mail Urged for Students in High Schools,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 21 October 1959, 17.


\(^13\)“One Course,” *Victoria Daily Times*. 
Like her predecessor, Lucas was exceptionally well organized and a skilled manager. Her annual reports were restrained to factual accounts of the branch's work. She emphasized accounts of enrolment numbers, number of papers marked, and new courses developed or old ones revised to match the British Columbia Programme of Studies. During her tenure, Lucas became regarded as one of the top experts on correspondence education in North America. She won praise for her treatise on correspondence school administration published by UNESCO. In 1961, the Ford Foundation asked Lucas to set up a national correspondence school in Jamaica. Upon her retirement, it was reported:

Over more than a quarter century Dr. Lucas built into international prominence the reputation of the particular branch she headed. By some it has been called the finest correspondence course on the continent operated by a state department.

In October 1963, Lucas resigned at sixty years of age, after twenty-two years in the job. She noted that she felt the impending reorganization of the program should be in younger hands, and she added: “I don’t want to crawl to the goal post.”

Managed Decline, 1952 to 1968

When Anna B. Miller resigned as director of the elementary correspondence school in 1952, she was replaced by Major Arthur H. Plows. Plows was new to the education
bureaucracy, but he had years of experience as an educator. He taught in the Shawnigan Lake and Duncan areas through the 1920s until war broke out in 1939. After a military stint that earned him the title of major, Plows returned to his post at the Fairbridge Farm School in Duncan until he was assigned the principalship in 1949.

By the time Plows took over elementary correspondence in September 1952, the Department of Education—indeed, the whole provincial government—had become highly bureaucratic. To guide budgeting and reporting responsibilities, Plows was confronted with detailed descriptions of what should be submitted by directors in their annual reports, including specifications about the length and content of reports. The province also provided directors with specific guidelines about the type of information to be included and the format to illustrate budget estimates.

Once established in his new position, Plows and his staff maintained and updated the curriculum in line with changes in the British Columbia Programme of Studies. He described this process in his submission to the 1958-60 royal commission on education headed by UBC’s Sperrin Chant:

The courses offered, all of which are devised, written and illustrated by the staff, contain the minimum amount of subject matter to be studied at the various grade

100In 1928, Plows taught at a rural school in Shawnigan Lake. BCARS, GR 461. In 1938, he was day school principal and basketball coach at the Fairbridge Farm School in Duncan. The day school was located on the Farm property and accepted local youngsters as well as the child migrants from the United Kingdom. “Fairbridge Farm School,” Fairbridge Gazette, Internet. Available at http://fairbridge.ca/fb-newsletter1.htm, accessed August 2003.


102BCARS, GR 470, box 1.

103Ibid.
levels. However, all the lessons must be mastered before the pupil is promoted. Social promotion has no place in correspondence instruction.\textsuperscript{104}

In September 1955, the elementary correspondence school had introduced a self-contained kindergarten service. Although students did not mail in lessons, the package had the dual purpose of providing pre-school training for children who would later enrol in elementary correspondence courses and, at the same time, keeping them busy while older siblings studied.\textsuperscript{105} In 1963, Plows and his staff also developed and distributed instructional kits for teaching illiterate adults.\textsuperscript{106} True to the traditions of the branch, Plow and his instructors remained mindful of the students they served. One newspaper article described the correspondence school's relationship with students in the following terms:

To these teachers of pupils they never see, a child is not just a number, or an abstract student sending in a paper to be corrected as one might suppose. The instructor knows a surprising amount about her students and corrects his work with great interest, watches for little things that reveal his character, discusses his problems and progress with Director Plows, writes to him, sends him greeting cards, encourages him with his lessons, his hobbies, the care of his pets.\textsuperscript{107}

Despite Plows' intentions, by 1961 formal efforts to enhance personal contact with students began to slacken. Plows reported that “the Instructors write encouraging comments on the lessons whenever possible and put interesting stickers on all good work.”\textsuperscript{108} But school magazines had been eliminated, and instructors were no longer required to write two personal

\begin{footnotes}
\item[105]Ibid.
\item[107]Nancy Gildersleeve, “These Pupils Attend a School They Never See,” Vancouver Sun, Magazine Section, 18 April 1953, 19.
\end{footnotes}
letters to each pupil every year. Efforts to humanize learning were left, more or less, to individual instructors. Nevertheless, Plows sought other ways to accommodate learners’ needs. The correspondence office in Pouce Coupe continued to assist isolated students in the Peace River region, and beginning in 1961-62, correspondence instruction classes were established in eighteen centres around the province.109

During Plows’ administration, elementary correspondence continued to provide lessons to children living beyond the reach of rural schools or those who were housebound because of illness or disability, as well as a growing number of children who accompanied parents abroad but wished to study the provincial curriculum. Correspondence education also continued to work with new groups as they emerged. British Columbia, in fact, remained the sole province to offer correspondence courses to pupils outside its borders.110 Consequently, the children of parents who worked abroad for the United Nations as missionaries or for oil and engineering companies could enrol in the British Columbia program of studies.111 Despite such developments, enrolments declined gradually in the decade and a half that Plows managed the correspondence school. Post-war government subsidies and a growing provincial population meant construction of new schools in areas once considered too rural or remote to be served by a school.112 The number of pupils who required elementary correspondence lessons


111Ibid.

112“B.C. School of Correspondence,” Colonist.
dwindled from 1832 in 1952-53 to a paltry 643 in 1967-68.\textsuperscript{113} As a consequence of these declining enrolments, the elementary correspondence school was consolidated with the secondary school correspondence branch in 1968 to form a single correspondence education branch under the direction of J. R. Hind, who had run the high school division since Lucas’ retirement.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{113}See Table 5: Directors, Salaries, Pupils, and Staffing for the Elementary Correspondence School, 1919-1969, in appendix.

\textsuperscript{114}BCARS, GR 396, box 1, file 6 contains copies of a speech that Anna Miller first developed in 1937. Over the years, the mimeographed sheets were edited and presented by Plows as late as 1961. The edits are interesting in themselves. They show that little changed with regard to how the correspondence program was offered in the 24 years since Miller drafted the description.
CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Development of correspondence education in British Columbia marked the beginning of an important historical experiment to equalize educational services among a population scattered over a vast provincial landscape. Because conventional schooling proved impracticable in rural and remote areas where it was impossible to assemble ten children of school age, provincial authorities had little choice but to explore alternative possibilities for instruction. The 1872 School Act held provision of educational programs to be strictly a local matter. However, geographic circumstances and logic compelled the province to overcome its own reluctance to offer school programs by authorizing, in 1919, the delivery of elementary instruction by mail under departmental auspices. Offering educational services directly to pupils from an office housed in Victoria was an important decision in the history of educational government. It signified the first time in the province's development that provincial authorities were prepared to intervene directly in the lives of school children by delivering educational programs.

The history of correspondence education is notable for another reason. The correspondence branches were among the first organizational divisions within the education department where women could rise to prominence in leadership positions. Throughout public service generally, female leaders were rare in administrative roles during the 1930s and
1940s. However, education was one of the first departments of government where women were encouraged to apply for leadership positions. The appointment of women such as Bescoby, Miller, and Lucas in the educational civil service may be attributed in part to the doctrine of employment equity advocated by social progressives in education such as King and Weir. That female managers in government were also less costly was also likely a factor in their appointment, especially during the Depression years, when government's financial coffers were strained.

These female appointments paralleled developments in local school administration, where female leaders had emerged even before the beginning of the twentieth century. In three of the province's largest cities—Victoria, Nanaimo, and New Westminster—women were a powerful part of elementary principals' groups. Women generally comprised about one-third of elementary principals in settlements around the province during the first three decades of the twentieth century, demonstrating that schools were far more welcoming institutions for women managers than other public agencies in the province's formative years.

The fact that correspondence bureaus were considered “schools” rather than other managerial units within the education department was amply illustrated in the salaries paid to directors. During the years when Bescoby, Miller, and Lucas held management positions in the


2Indeed, as Fleming points out, although leadership positions staffed by women were rare in many provincial departments up until the 1970s, women had made their presence felt in the Department of Education before mid-century. Thomas Fleming, “Women in the Educational Government of British Columbia, 1917-1965,” Paper presented at the 24th Annual Conference of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe, University of Barcelona, 29 August 2000.

province's correspondence divisions, it was common practice to compensate women less
than men, despite equal work, training, or qualifications. Systematized wage disparities
persisted long after women teachers earned standard credentials through the province's normal
schools established in Vancouver in 1901 and Victoria in 1915.

Even allowing for the gender bias toward salaries at the time, salaries paid to officers in
charge of elementary correspondence were lower than those awarded to heads of other
departmental units, including the head of high school correspondence. When Gibson was
hired to establish the high school correspondence courses in 1929, he earned $60 per annum
less than his supervisor, John Kyle. In contrast, elementary correspondence head James
Hargreaves earned $1,000 less than Kyle. Hargreaves' salary, in fact, was almost 30 percent
lower than Gibson's. When government hired Isabel Bescoby to direct the elementary
correspondence branch in 1934, her starting salary was only a little more than half what
Hargreaves had been paid and a mere 40 percent of what Gibson earned for directing the high
school correspondence courses. When Lucas assumed the leadership of the high school
correspondence branch, her salary was about 20 percent lower than Gibson's, reflecting a bias
in salaries on the basis of gender. However, Lucas still earned considerably more than
elementary directory, Anna Miller. When Plows was hired to replace Miller in 1952, he was
granted roughly the same salary as Miller. But Plows' high school counterpart, Edith Lucas,

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5 See Table 5: Directors, Salaries, Pupils, and Staffing for the Elementary Correspondence School, 1919-1969; and Table 8: Directors, Salaries, Pupils, and Staffing for the High School Correspondence Branch, 1929-1969, in appendix.

6 In 1941-42, Lucas earned $2,730 to Miller's $1,600. See Tables 4 and 7.
earned 30 percent more, demonstrating both her superior credentials and the higher status accorded to high school administrators within government and schools. In short, official salaries reflected gender biases in pay as well as differences in salary levels for elementary and high school directors. Similar variance could be found in the salaries generally awarded to secondary and elementary principals throughout the province.

Although the correspondence branch assumed the persona of a school, as a unit of the educational civil service, like government itself, it grew in organizational size and complexity during the first half of the twentieth century as presence of government generally became more influential in the daily lives of British Columbians. And, like other branches of the public service, correspondence education became increasingly bureaucratized as the Department of Education expanded and became more specialized in its functions. Development of this small unit of government followed three distinct phases that corresponded roughly with changes in the leadership of correspondence education—a pioneering phase, a transitional phase, and a phase of institutional maintenance, or organizational maturity.

During the first phase, or "pioneering" chapter, government offered lessons by mail within a small and largely unstructured provincial education bureau characterized by meager human and financial resources and burdened by the need to supply educational services to a vast interior region unconnected by road or rail. Early provision of correspondence schooling on an experimental basis sought to assuage growing demand for educational services from pioneer families in isolated areas far from the reach of schools, as well as to uphold the idea of educational equity between urban and rural areas. Providing lessons by mail proved to be the most cost-effective system of making schooling available to children in remote farms and
ranches or in the many small logging and fishing camps that dotted British Columbia's unyielding topography. During the first phase of the elementary correspondence school's development, the obligation to develop and administer lessons by mail fell to James Hargreaves, an educational official primarily responsible for furnishing mining correspondence courses to adults and, later, supplying correspondence courses in vocational and technical subjects.

Correspondence education for grade-school children was an inexpensive venture for the conservative-minded government of the 1920s. Because such instruction could be offered within an established branch of the education office, the provincial government could offer the service at little expense and, at the same time, extricate itself from this responsibility if the lessons-by-mail experiment somehow proved unsuccessful. As originally conceived, it was neither a costly nor a highly visible undertaking and something that could be abandoned with few political costs.

However, as lessons by mail became a popular and, indeed, an essential service for families beyond the elementary school's reach, educational services were naturally extended in the 1920s and 1930s to meet demands for high school education evident even in the province's most remote parts. Development of sophisticated high school correspondence courses by J. W. Gibson, a seasoned and pedagogically progressive educator, underscored what was possible in elementary correspondence under the direction of someone with a sense of leadership and vision. Gibson's educational prowess, more than any other event, signaled the time was right for a change in the leadership of the elementary correspondence unit.

This change soon came about with the appointment of the capable, young, and ambitious Isabel Bescoby, who presided over the second phase, or "transitional" chapter, in
the elementary correspondence school's development. In Bescoby, the provincial government found someone equal to the task of revising British Columbia's elementary correspondence branch and transforming what was little more than a fledgling educational service into a well-functioning organizational unit with a sharpened educational mission. Under Bescoby's leadership, the pedagogical foundations of the province's elementary correspondence offering were revised. She applied progressive doctrines of child development popular at the time to the provincial curriculum and to the learning materials published by the branch. Ever organized, Bescoby ensured that the elementary branch became a smoothly functioning sub-department with operating policies and procedures requisite for branch efficiency and effectiveness. During Bescoby's watch, elementary correspondence enrolments climbed steadily, and the services the branch offered grew in public esteem.

Bescoby's departure in the late 1930s heralded the third phase, or the "institutional maintenance" chapter, in the branch's development. From Miller's appointment in 1937 to Plows' retirement in 1968, the elementary correspondence branch blossomed into a mature sub-department of government, all the while expanding services to students within the organizational protocols of a large bureaucracy. During these three decades, instructional offerings and student enrolments were characterized by sustained growth as the unit expanded to address the needs of more and different students, all looking for a place in an economy that was becoming more complex. Apart from updating curriculum materials and instructional strategies, the managerial structure of correspondence services changed little in the post-Bescoby years. Structurally, the unit remained more or less the same in the late 1960s as it was when Bescoby left this part of the educational civil service thirty years earlier.
Through the three stages of the branch’s development, the lines of reporting for elementary correspondence grew increasingly formalized. Under Hargreaves’ care, correspondence for Grades I to VIII was regarded by the officer-in-charge as a supplementary service of the technical education branch and, as such, simply one of the services offered by the branch. Hargreaves’ first reports on elementary correspondence education were included as mere addenda to John Kyle’s larger report on technical education in the department’s annual report to the legislature. Beginning in 1930-31, Hargreaves was obliged to submit a discrete report under the heading “Correspondence Courses in Coal-Mining and Elementary School Subjects,” and two years later (1932-33), the branch filed a report more directly titled “Elementary School Correspondence Courses.” Under Bescoby and Gibson, correspondence services were greatly refined, and branch programs took on an institutional persona, earning the honorific of “schools” in the annual reports.

In the early years, Hargreaves and his instructors enjoyed considerable latitude in course development and, working with only a small cohort of students, developed lesson sheets on an individual basis to reflect each pupil’s needs. When students required additional assistance, instructors sent supplementary materials or directions to redo portions of the work. Christmas cards and letters to students, along with encouraging comments from instructors, disclosed the close relationship between students and the branch. During Bescoby’s tenure, elementary correspondence lessons became more standardized. Pre-printed lesson packages were distributed to students, filled in and returned to the branch, marked and annotated by

1For example, in 1919-20, reference to correspondence was under subheadings within Kyle’s Report: “Correspondence Courses in Coal Mining and Mine Surveying,” and “Lessons by Correspondence to Children Who Live in Isolated Parts of the Province.”
instructors, and returned to students again, in a seemingly endless cycle of correspondence.

Nonetheless, Bescoby and her staff endeavoured to imbed in the correspondence lessons, the principles of progressive pedagogy that were popular after the end of the 1920s. The lessons used informal, conversational language to engage student interest. Instructors also penned personal letters of encouragement to students, a practice that continued under Miller’s direction. Throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, correspondence directors and instructors expended considerable efforts to reach out to students and to offer them a sense of belonging. Unfortunately, increasing administrative demands and enrolments reduced the time both directors and instructors had to develop relationships with students. By the post-war era, efforts at relationship-building were routinely left to an individual instructor’s discretion. Accordingly, the instructor-pupil relationships so prized in the branch’s formative years had largely disappeared by the end of the 1960s. Although the satellite in Pouce Coupe proved successful in bringing northern students closer to the correspondence branch, it became increasingly clear that direct services to students were at variance with generally less flexible bureaucratic structures within the education department itself.

The situation improved somewhat in the early 1990s when the Ministry of Education divided the province into nine regional correspondence schools that were better able to address students’ individual needs. Ultimately, it took advancements in technology to enhance learning from a distance and create the opportunity for one-on-one interaction between

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8The regional distance education schools assumed responsibility for student enrolment, supervision of work, and issuing transcripts. The central body, ultimately named the technology and distance education branch in the late 1990s, maintained responsibility for managing the funding for the regional distance education schools and developing correspondence instructional materials based on the provincial curriculum. Dave Rogers, “RF: Information on Distance Ed,” 5 September 2003, personal email.
students and their instructors. With the advent of computers and the Internet in the 1990s, several school districts and consortia developed electronic learning programs and enrolled students from around the province, providing one-on-one instruction in the provincial curriculum via the Internet and e-mail. Today, these advances serve well the elementary level students who are unable to attend a school for reasons of distance or disability. However, the population that the initial lessons by mail were intended to serve has dwindled as settlements in outlying areas expanded and the province's population became increasingly urbanized through the twentieth century.

In 1998, the technology and distance education branch joined the Open Learning Agency and became the Open School. The Open School developed provincial curriculum for distance education and made it available electronically to the general public. The nine distance education schools now operate as schools within their local school districts instead of being administered from the Ministry of Education. Ibid.

The bulk of students enrolled in correspondence lessons take high school level courses. In 2003 there were approximately 20,000 course registrations by about 9,000 students, the equivalent of several large high schools. About one-third of the course registrations represent full-time distance education, another third are students enrolled in a regular high school but who take a course or two by DE to round out their studies, and the final third is comprised of adults completing their secondary studies from home while working or caring for small children. Ibid.
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TABLE 1
ENROLMENT IN THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS, 1919-1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Elementary School</th>
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<td>1927-28</td>
<td>447</td>
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<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>455</td>
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<td>1929-30</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>522</td>
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<td>1930-31</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>1,007</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>1,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>2,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>2,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>3,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>3,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>1,151</td>
<td>3,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>1,394</td>
<td>4,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>1,537</td>
<td>3,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>1,763</td>
<td>4,695</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table 1

**Enrolment in the British Columbia Correspondence Schools, 1919-1969**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Elementary School</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>5,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>1,563</td>
<td>6,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>1,597</td>
<td>5,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>1,536</td>
<td>5,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>1,406</td>
<td>5,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>5,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>1,624</td>
<td>5,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>1,969</td>
<td>5,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>1,835</td>
<td>7,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>1,805</td>
<td>8,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>1,772</td>
<td>9,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>1,722</td>
<td>10,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>1,646</td>
<td>11,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>1,596</td>
<td>14,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>16,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>1,571</td>
<td>17,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>1,405</td>
<td>18,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>1,389</td>
<td>19,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>1,155</td>
<td>17,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>17,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>18,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>17,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>16,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>16,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>14,186</td>
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</table>
TABLE 2

SALARIES, ENROLMENT, AND TOTAL EXPENDITURES FOR THE ELEMENTARY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL AND THE HIGH SCHOOL CORRESPONDENCE BRANCH, 1929-1934

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Elementary Correspondence School</th>
<th>High School Correspondence Branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>Total Dept Expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>$2,473</td>
<td>$6,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>$2,520</td>
<td>$6,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>$2,457</td>
<td>$6,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>$2,325</td>
<td>$6,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>$746</td>
<td>$6,141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 3

WOMEN IN THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CIVIL SERVICE, 1935²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Support/Service¹</th>
<th>Professional/Technical¹</th>
<th>Managerial¹</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premier's Office</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney General</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lands</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mines</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Secretary</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works¹</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>391</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>461</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


¹Includes Stenographer ($65-$91); Clerk-Stenographer ($90-$135); Clerk ($110); Cheque Writer ($80); Addressograph Operator ($75); Filing Clerk ($65); Ledger Clerk ($100); Computing Clerk ($70-$125); Cashier ($120); Legislative Reference Clerk ($131); Reference Clerk ($100); Cataloguer ($125); Archive Indexer ($79); Archives Assistant ($106); Asst. Cashier ($100); Asst. Janitor ($60); Laboratory Assistant ($85); Outfit Maker ($55).

²Includes Attorney General: Departmental Secretary/Assistant to Accountant ($120); Assistant Censor ($125). Education: 13 Correspondence Instructors ($65-$80); Instructress, Model School ($138.33); 4 Asst. Mistresses, Vancouver Normal School ($175-$200); 2 Asst. Mistresses, Victoria Normal School ($100-$191); 8 Instructors, School for the Deaf and Blind ($95-$150); Matron, School for the Deaf and Blind ($100). Finance: Inspector, Amusement Tax ($150); Labour Secretary, Minimum Wage Board ($160); Inspectress, Minimum Wage Board ($114); Assi. Inspectress, Minimum Wage Board ($90). Lands: Draughtsman ($140). Provincial Secretary: Bacteriological Technician ($120); Bacteriologist ($95-$105); Asst. Social Service Worker ($125); 3 Matrons ($80-$115); 3 Teachers ($91.66); 11 Investigators, Welfare, Neglected Children ($100-$130); Psychiatric Social Worker ($183.33); Follow-up Officer, Boys Industrial School ($140).

³Includes Agriculture: Superintendent, Women's Institutes ($150). Education: Officer-in-Charge, Correspondence Education ($166.66); Director, Home Economics ($228.33); Assistant, Victoria Normal School ($241.66); Principal, Model School ($175). Labour: 2 Chief Clerks, Women's Department, Vancouver and Victoria Employment Offices ($100-$122). Provincial Secretary: Assistant Director, Provincial Laboratory ($250); Chief of Bacteriology ($208.33); Branch Librarian ($150); Superintendent, Girls Industrial School ($165); Deputy Superintendent of Neglected Children ($250).

⁴Includes Workers Compensation Board.
TABLE 4
GENDER COMPOSITION IN THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CIVIL SERVICE, SELECTED YEARS\(^7\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>461 (31%)</td>
<td>1,021 (69%)</td>
<td>1,484 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>556 (32%)</td>
<td>1,162 (68%)</td>
<td>1,718 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 5
DIRECTORS, SALARIES, PUPILS, AND STAFFING FOR THE ELEMENTARY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL, 1919-1969*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Officer in Charge</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>No. Pupils</th>
<th>FT staff</th>
<th>PT Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,059</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,220</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,220</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,220</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,220</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,220</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,340</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,340</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,310</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928-29</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,425</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,473</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,520</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,457</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$2,325</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>J. Hargreaves</td>
<td>$746</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>I. Bescoy</td>
<td>$1,234</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>I. Bescoy</td>
<td>$1,350</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>I. Bescoy</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>I. Bescoy/Miller</td>
<td>$1,545</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>1,161</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>1,151</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,600</td>
<td>1,394</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,600</td>
<td>1,537</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,600</td>
<td>1,763</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


*From 1942, the elementary correspondence school included a branch at Peace River. The numbers include the students and staff from that branch.

*Up to 1949, part-time workers worked for several months a year, usually not over the summer months. After 1949, the part-time instructors were pieceworkers who marked lessons in their own homes.
## TABLE 5

DIRECTORS, SALARIES, PUPILS, AND STAFFING FOR THE ELEMENTARY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL, 1919-1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Officer in Charge</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>No. Pupils</th>
<th>FT Staff</th>
<th>PT Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,680</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,740</td>
<td>1,563</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>1,597</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$2,919</td>
<td>1,536</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$3,384</td>
<td>1,406</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$3,060</td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$4,176</td>
<td>1,624</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>1951-52</td>
<td>A. Miller</td>
<td>$4,596</td>
<td>1,669</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>A. Miller/A. H. Plows</td>
<td>$4,233</td>
<td>1,935</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>1953-54</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>$4,428</td>
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<td>1954-55</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>$4,722</td>
<td>1,599</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>1956-57</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>$5,400</td>
<td>1,521</td>
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<td>1957-58</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>$5,880</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>1,521</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1,494</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1,506</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1,389</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1,155</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>A. H. Plows</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>Branch Consolidated with High School under J. R. Hind</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>School-age Children</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


12Adults not differentiated.
### TABLE 7

**WOMEN IN THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CIVIL SERVICE, 1938**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Support/Service$^{14}$</th>
<th>Mid-range/ Technical$^{15}$</th>
<th>Managerial/Professional$^{16}$</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premier's Office</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney General</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lands</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mines</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Affairs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Secretary</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works$^{17}$</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and Industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>458</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>556</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{14}$Public Service Commission, PSC Report (1938).

$^{15}$Includes Attorney General: ass't. censor ($125); Education: twelve elementary correspondence instructors ($65-$77.50); high school correspondence instructor ($150); librarian ($110); instructor, Model School ($138.33); three instructors, Vancouver Normal School ($171-$180); four instructors, Victoria Normal School ($150-$241); nine instructors, School for the Deaf and Blind ($85-$135); matron, School for the Deaf and Blind ($105); Finance: inspector, amusement tax ($150); Labour: secretary, Board of Industrial Relations ($160); five inspectors ($100-139); special investigator ($100); Provincial Secretary: six bacteriological techni- nicians ($105-$130); three social service workers ($100); nurse ($100); psychiatric social worker ($183.33); follow-up officer, Boys Industrial School ($140); lab technician ($100); matron ($140); two teachers ($95-$100); twenty-six welfare visitors ($100-$150); bursar ($80).

$^{16}$Includes Education: officer-in-charge, correspondence education ($125); director, home economics ($228.33); principal, Model School ($160); vice principal, School for the Deaf and Blind ($150); Labour: two chief clerks, Women's department, Vancouver and Victoria employment offices ($100); Provincial Secretary: asst. director, provincial laboratory ($250); chief of bacteriology ($208.33); branch librarian ($150); superintendent, Girls Industrial School ($165); superintendent of neglected children ($175); supervisor, destitute, poor, sick fund ($125); supervisor, welfare field services ($250).

$^{17}$Includes Workers Compensation Board.
TABLE 8
DIRECTORS, SALARIES, AND PUPILS FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL CORRESPONDENCE BRANCH, 1929-1969 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Officer in Charge</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>No. Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,420</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,540</td>
<td>847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,416</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,195</td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,073</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,073</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,073</td>
<td>1,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,260</td>
<td>2,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,540</td>
<td>2,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,540</td>
<td>3,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
<td>$3,540</td>
<td>3,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson/Lucas</td>
<td>$2,785</td>
<td>3,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$2,525</td>
<td>4,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$2,730</td>
<td>3,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$2,820</td>
<td>4,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>5,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$3,120</td>
<td>6,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$3,280</td>
<td>5,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$3,920</td>
<td>5,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$4,344</td>
<td>5,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$4,740</td>
<td>5,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$4,956</td>
<td>5,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$5,496</td>
<td>5,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$6,432</td>
<td>7,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$6,432</td>
<td>8,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$6,432</td>
<td>9,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$6,432</td>
<td>10,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From 1942, the elementary correspondence school included a branch at Peace River. The numbers include the students and staff from that branch.
TABLE 8

DIRECTORS, SALARIES, AND PUPILS FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL CORRESPONDENCE BRANCH, 1929-1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Officer in Charge</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>No. Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>11,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$7,775</td>
<td>14,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>$7,800</td>
<td>16,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>17,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>18,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>19,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>E. E. Lucas</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>17,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>J. R. Hind</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>17,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>J. R. Hind</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>18,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>J. R. Hind</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>17,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>J. R. Hind</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>16,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>J. R. Hind</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>16,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>Branch Consolidated with High School under J. R. Hind</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes no specific data available.
### TABLE 9

**HIGH SCHOOL CORRESPONDENCE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS, SELECTED YEARS 1929-1969**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School-age, isolated, physical disability or illness</th>
<th>School-age, registered in school</th>
<th>Adult 22</th>
<th>Institutionalized</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>348 (67)</td>
<td></td>
<td>174 (33)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>605 (50)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>493 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>1699 (42)</td>
<td>586 (14)</td>
<td>1,636 (40)</td>
<td>133 (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>549 (14)</td>
<td>1,399 (37)</td>
<td>1,459 (38)</td>
<td>40 (1)</td>
<td>155 (4)/ 211 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>419 (12)</td>
<td>1,553 (45)</td>
<td>1,261 (37)</td>
<td>31 (3)</td>
<td>156 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>278 (4)</td>
<td>2,779 (30)</td>
<td>3,969 (55)</td>
<td>44 (6)</td>
<td>140 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>747 (5)</td>
<td>4,404 (31)</td>
<td>8,967 (62)</td>
<td>169 (1)</td>
<td>140 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>523 (3)</td>
<td>6,489 (37)</td>
<td>8,694 (49)</td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
<td>578 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>7,039 (43)</td>
<td>9,204 (57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. [John Jessop, *Supplementary Report on the Public Schools of British Columbia* (Victoria, B.C.: R. Wolfenden, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1872), 38.]


21. Due to rounding, percentages do not always add up to 100.

22. Adult is defined as over 19 years of age.

23. This was the first year correspondence lessons were offered to students registered in high schools. Their numbers were calculated with the school-age pupils.

24. Men in relief camps.


26. School-age, gainfully employed.

27. In this year, the number of students in each classification do not add up to the stated enrolment for the year. As a result, the percentages do not add up to 100.

28. Adult is defined as over 19 years of age.

29. Under 18 years of age. Distinctions are not clearly made, although 284 were noted as living too far from a school.