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A Conversation with the University Librarian

On August 1 Graham R. Hill will retire as University Librarian after 34 years of service. He received a B.A. from the University of Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1968, and his M.A. from the University of Lancaster in 1969. In 1970 he was granted an M.L.S. degree by the University of Western Ontario, and came to McMaster in 1971. He was appointed University Librarian in 1979.

In 1998, Hill was the first recipient of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries' Award for Distinguished Service to Research Librarianship, and in 2000, was among 16 Association of Research Libraries Directors to be recognized for the distinction of contributing 20+ years of leadership within the research library community. We wish you a very happy retirement, Graham!

What brought you to McMaster?

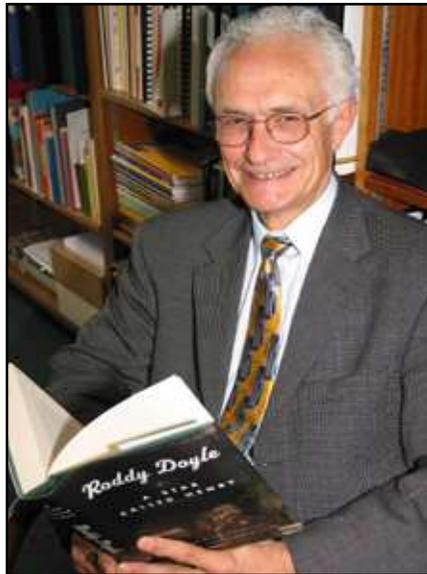
Primarily it was the 18th century collection. The possibility of working with that was very attractive.

What are some of the highlights of your career?

The things that stick in my mind are those that had a major impact, like the renovation of Mills Library in the early 1990s. That was a huge project and looking back on it, I'm amazed it went as well as it did. Certainly keeping the Library operating throughout the 33 months of renovations was a big, big challenge.

I also think of the Guatemalan archives. That is an interesting story and it's nice that it has been possible to make the collection widely

available after so many years (see article on p. 3). Some of the material we filmed back then no longer exists because it's been destroyed by the climate and the environment. So we did, in fact, do real conservation; we literally saved that record and that history.



Graham R. Hill

The Vera Brittain archives we bought under contract from Brittain's estate at a time when her name was little known. Our negotiated price included the copyright to her unpublished work. I remember going to England and negotiating an agreement with Gollancz for Alan Bishop's publication of her "Diaries", and the *Sunday Times* in England picked it up for serialization. We earned back more than we paid for the archives just through that serialization, so in fact we got those archives for free in the end.

And then there were the archives we didn't manage to get which were interesting as well. One that sticks in

my mind was Sir Harold Wilson's papers. I went to England to appraise the papers and prepare an offer to purchase them. I had spoken to Alvin Lee, who was President at that time, and to Sandy Darling, VP Administration, and we had a rough idea of the bandwidth of our offer.

Sir Harold Wilson's former secretary, Lady Falkender, had the ownership and rights to the papers. After I finished the appraisal I met with her and she suggested a figure that was more than I thought the papers were worth. I wanted to consult with someone else about it, so I called Sandy Darling back at the University, and his office told me that he was out of the country. Well, I thought that was the end of it. I was making my way back to the hotel and came up out of the underground into the main line station at Waterloo. It was rush hour in London and the place was just wall-to-wall people, and who should I walk into but Sandy! That to me was just an unbelievable coincidence! We were able to finalize our offer and Lady Falkender accepted it verbally. I had the solicitors in London write up the offer, and when I took it back to her,

(continued on p.2)

In This Issue:

- Graham R. Hill 1
- Campus Consultation 2
- Guatemalan Project 3
- Kingston and Area Donor Event ... 3
- Patricia Mary Johnson Fund 3
- Flooding in Mills Library 4
- Recent Notable Acquisitions 4
- Recent Notable Gifts 4
- Publications 4

(Graham R. Hill — cont'd from p.1)

she had changed her mind. It turned out she was using us to get an offer from a British university. She told them she had an offer for a certain sum, and they would have to match it, which they did. Some you win, some you lose. Over the years we've won a lot more than we've lost, but I remember that one mainly because of the incredible coincidence of walking into Sandy Darling in London in rush hour.

What have some of your greatest challenges been?

Probably living through several years of financial austerity. Government cutbacks and reductions are a real challenge because everybody has to do more today than they did twenty years ago. Since the late 80s right through until today, almost, it's been a matter of fewer and fewer financial resources and increased needs for both collections and services.

What are the most significant changes you've seen here at McMaster?

Growth, no question. This was a relatively small campus and certainly a smaller Library when I started here. McMaster has really established itself as a research-intensive university. It didn't have that kind of a reputation when I came in the 70s. That kind of transformation and growth, I think, has been the dominant feature of my time here.

You've had a chance to meet some really interesting authors over the years. Who was the most interesting and why?

I really like Farley Mowat because he's so interesting and his breadth of knowledge is quite staggering. In the early years I used to go down there to pick up his materials once or twice a year. He was always very gracious, would always insist that I stay for lunch or stay for the afternoon. I remember once I went and I had to listen to whale songs for three hours and he gave a commentary on them for the whole three hours, what they were saying or what they were doing and what it meant.

You've been very active in the area of copyright reform. How did you first get involved?

Sometimes I can't really remember! I first got involved when I was President of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries in 1987, and copyright reform was being introduced in Parliament. Copyright is a very complex area, and the more you learn about it, the more fascinated you become. At least that's what happened in my case. It is an important public policy issue. Research libraries deal with copyright every day; it's really central for everything we do in terms of making information available to people and respecting the rights of the creators. Finding the balance between the rights of the creators and the rights of people to access material without barriers and payments—for educational research it's very important and essential to the development of society.

What is your hope for the future of the Library?

That it will continue to grow and provide services and collections. Collections are the core of the Library, so we have to continue to develop them: digital, print, archival, maps—information and knowledge in all formats. I believe it's a real priority to maintain collections in all formats because our strength in the Library is what we can give access to, be that physical or electronic. ■

Anne Plessl

My Library Space: A Consultation with the Campus Community

On March 22, 2005, two consultation sessions were held to gather input from the campus community on the future directions for study, collection and computer space in all campus libraries. The event was the culmination of several months of intense reflection and review of public spaces.

The session focussed on three major initiatives:

- The University Library's *Public Space Utilization Study*: The plan recommends increasing the density of collection space to free up 10,000 sq. ft. for additional study space, creation of a high-density storage facility to house low-use material, and the addition of at least 600 seats in Mills, Innis and Thode by 2015.
- Proposal to create a Commons facility in Mills Memorial Library: The Commons is envisioned as a vibrant, user-centred learning facility providing one-stop access to information resources, technology, productivity software, and research and technical assistance. The concept study recommends 200 hard-wired stations, powered tables supporting 120 simultaneous wireless connections, 6 group study rooms, and potential for 24 hour access should demand warrant and funding be found.
- Planned renovations to the Health Sciences Library: The renovation includes a Learning Commons, a two-storey Reading Pavilion, an elegant History of Health & Medicine Room, an Open Reserve Room and additional group study rooms.

Following brief presentations by Ken Norrie (Provost and Vice-President, Academic), Graham R. Hill (University Librarian), and Dorothy Fitzgerald (Director, Health Sciences Library), an expert panel engaged the audience in a lively and far-reaching Q & A period.

During the following three weeks, displays from the sessions were mounted in library lobbies. Fifty-three individuals submitted written comments.

A summary of all questions, comments and responses has been posted to the library web site at: <<http://library.mcmaster.ca/about/consultcampus.htm>>. This information will be used by the Libraries as they finalize their plans for public space in the coming months. ■

Vivian Lewis

New Life for the Archivo General de Centro America Microfilms

In 1969 the Library began a project, in collaboration with the Archivo General de Centro America (located in Guatemala City), to microfilm all the colonial records housed in the Archivo. Guatemala City was the central administrative headquarters for the Spanish, and the colonial records of the Central American



Courier picks up McMaster's archival films

countries continue to be housed in that city. This was a unique and worthwhile project, extending over several years, to preserve the records in the Archivo and make them available to students and researchers at McMaster and in Canada.

Until now the approximately 4,000 McMaster films have been the only available resource outside Guatemala City for access to the most comprehensive collection of archival documents detailing the Spanish rule of Central America. The collection offers resources for the study of all aspects of the history of the Central American states (Chiapas, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica) from 1544–1821.

We are pleased and proud to announce that McMaster University Library has recently entered into a collaborative agreement with ProQuest publishers and the Archivo General de Centro America to ensure that these original documents—many of them the sole extant copies—are

accessible to a new world of researchers. In late March ProQuest staff visited the Library to collect the loan of the original negative reels. The firm is in the process of re-mastering the microfilm and producing high-quality reproductions. The Central American Archives films will be available for purchase by research libraries world-wide. In addition, the research value of the Central American Archives collection will be greatly enhanced by ProQuest's *Online Guide to the Collection*, a web-based search tool covering over 144,000 rare documents. This tool allows researchers to search the contents of the entire collection by administrative region (Gobierno), document date, and over 640 subject classifications, giving pinpoint access to the original documents preserved on microfilm. For further information visit: <<http://www.lib.umi.com/dev/caa/gateway>>. ■

Charlotte A. Stewart

Event for Kingston and area Library Donors

On Sunday November 7th, 2004, Graham R. Hill, University Librarian, hosted an afternoon lecture and reception for the many Library donors and supporters who reside in Kingston, Ontario and the surrounding area. This event was held at the Donald Gordon Conference Centre on a beautiful fall afternoon. Dr. Charles M. Johnston, retired Professor of History, enthralled Library donors and friends with an account of his research into the lives of some of those “killed or gone missing” whose names are listed on McMaster's WWII Honour Roll.

The Library has been aware that it is difficult for many of our donors to attend our events in Hamilton, and worked with some of our supporters in Kingston to organize this first off-campus reception. All those in attendance considered the afternoon a success, and we hope to plan events for Library supporters in other locations in the future. ■

Charlotte A. Stewart

Every Fund tells a Story: Patricia Mary Johnson Fund

This is the 1st in a series of short accounts of the many benefactors of the Library who have established Trust Funds through a gift or bequest. All books purchased for the Library with one of these named funds are bookplated in recognition of the donor. We hope readers will enjoy learning about the people behind our bookplates.

At the age of 16, Patricia (Patsy) Mary Johnson won a scholarship to attend McMaster. She and her sister Paddy were graduated from McMaster in 1932 when Patricia was only 19. She returned to Bracebridge, her home town, to become the Librarian of the Public Library, a position she held for several years.

Patricia was an Arts graduate with a flair for writing and a love of theatre and literature. She wrote regular columns on books and other topics for the local newspaper and in 1940 married its editor, Robert Boyer. After her husband enlisted, Patricia became the very successful wartime editor of *The Muskoka Herald*. With the coming of peace, Patricia relinquished the editor's chair, and resumed her position as a columnist. “The Roundtownner” and “My Place in the Sun” appeared regularly over the next thirty years.

Despite the many years which had elapsed since her graduation Patricia retained a strong affection for her University. In 1982–83 her bequest of over \$50,000 to McMaster University, “for the purchase of new books for its library by means of a fund in my name set up for that purpose”, was realized. Through her generosity, this endowment provides income to purchase over 50 books each year for McMaster's students and faculty.

(Article compiled with information from the Library's records and from A Man & His Words, a biography of Robert Boyer by J. Patrick Boyer, Toronto, Canadian Shield, 2003.) ■

Charlotte A. Stewart

Flooding in Mills Library

Flooding in Mills Library on May 12th caused much scrambling, but little permanent damage to valuable rare periodicals in the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections. In the early morning, workmen cleaning carpets in the



Carl Spadoni & Dave Ouellette assess damage building discovered that a pipe fitting had leaked on the 1st floor. When Security Services was notified, an officer discovered that water from the leak had seeped through the 3-foot concrete floor to the area below, where the Library's rare journals and maps are housed.

Quick action by staff from Security Services, the Library, EOHSS (Environmental and Occupational Health Support Services) and Physical Plant ensured that damage was minimal. Research Collections Librarian Carl Spadoni arrived on the scene and rushed water-soaked 18th century journals to the Library's Preservation lab, where he fanned them all out to dry.

Dave Ouellette, a Library staff member and freelance conservator, was called in to manage the drying process. Smaller journals were placed between paper blotters to soak up the water and many fragile journals were hung on strings to dry. Several volumes were placed in a freezer to arrest paper damage. As the paper in the larger books began to dry, they were put into presses to minimize distortion. Amazingly, only a few volumes have sustained permanent water-staining and warping.

"We really dodged a bullet on this

one", said Spadoni, "the damage could have been extraordinary. In another few hours we could have lost all our journals and rare maps". Spadoni points out that important journals such as the *London Chronicle* and the *Monthly Review*, the primary reviewing journal of the 18th century, would be next to impossible to replace, since they are rarely available for sale. Some 300–500 volumes were affected by the flood, which was the most severe flooding incident in the Library in more than ten years. ■

Anne Plessl

Recent Notable Acquisitions

The Library has acquired the following important research materials:

- ◆ archives of the ARP/Blitz for Westminster in London, England, containing 15m of letters, surveys, reports and many other documents pertaining to the bombing of London in 1940–41. ■

Recent Notable Gifts

The Library has received the following gifts from:

- ◆ Rob Anderson, 2 vols. of John Harris, *Navigantium atque itinerantium bibliotheca* (1764).
- ◆ Peter J. Bassnett, a collection of 650 books, journals and manuscript material related to the Powys brothers and their circle.
- ◆ Bob and Barbara Beardsley, 4 letters from Marian Engel.
- ◆ Betty Brade, a collection of German books, scores and a copy of Vidalin, Jón Thorkelsson. *Sjð Predikaner wt af Theim Sið Ordum Drottens Vors Jesu Christi* (1745).
- ◆ Robert Fulford, the 4th accrual of his archives.
- ◆ the Estate of Sir Edwin Leather, an accrual of congratulatory letters on his knighthood and other documents.
- ◆ Judy Pocock, 2 b&w Tamio Wakayama photos (ca. 1965).

- ◆ John Riddell, announcement leaflets issued on behalf of the Militant Labour Forum regarding Toronto meetings.
- ◆ the Estate of Marina Salmon, two vols. of Samuel Clarke's edition of *C. Julii Caesaris quae extant* (1710–12) and many books on classics.
- ◆ Alan Walker, the second accrual of his archives.
- ◆ Paul Woods, a collection of journals on the topic of rock music (*Rolling Stone, Record, Revolver & Spin*).

We are grateful to all donors for their generosity to the Library. ■

Publications

The following recent publications made use of our collections:

Greenwald, Marilyn S. *The Secret of the Hardy Boys: Leslie McFarlane and the Stratemeyer Syndicate*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004.

Grescoe, Paul and Audrey, eds. *The Book of Letters: Canadian Kinship, Friendship, and Romance*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2005.

McNeill, David. "Collage and Social Theories: An Examination of Bowles's 'Medley' Prints of the 1720 South Sea Bubble," *Word & Image* 20, no. 4 (October–December 2004): 283–98.

Milz, Sabine. "'Publica(c)tion': E. Pauline Johnson's Publishing Venues and Their Contemporary Significance," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 29, no. 1 (2004): 127–45.

Russell, Bertrand. *Detente or Destruction, 1955–57*. London: Routledge, 2005. Andrew G. Bone, ed. Vol. 29 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*. ■

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