

The

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE THOMAS FISHER RARE BOOK LIBRARY

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FIFTY GOLDEN YEARS OF GIVING

Loryl MacDonald

Director, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

WE CONTINUE TO celebrate the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library's fiftieth anniversary this year. Dedicated and named for Thomas Fisher (1792–1874) on 13 April 1973, the Library has become the largest and most diverse resource of its kind in Canada. The generosity of private collectors and donors over the years has been critical to the growth of the Fisher Library. Your gifts-in-kind have helped build internationally renowned research and teaching collections.

The fall *Halcyon* is traditionally devoted to gift-in-kind donations to the Fisher Library. The year 2022 to 2023 was an impressive one, with more than one hundred donors giving us rare books, archives, and other primary sources. The materials include a vellum leaf

from a thirteenth-century French bible, a nineteenth-century Burmese palm leaf manuscript, a set of the Anne of Green Gables series translated into Polish, diaries documenting farm life in nineteenth-century Glenelg Township, as well as Holocaust testimonies. Further, forty-five authors, artists, and others donated archival materials this year, including significant additions from Derek McCormack and Rosemary Kilbourn profiled in this issue.

In keeping with the year's anniversary theme, library colleagues Leora Bromberg, Grant Hurley, Ksenya Kiebusinski, Liz Ridolfo, John Shoemsmith, and Andrew Stewart write in this issue about gift-in-kind donations, both past and recent, that have intrigued them. Further, Natalya Rattan

and Hafsah Hujaleh take us to the future and explore the preservation of born-digital content in literary donations.

I am very grateful to our Head of Rare Books and Special Collections, David Fernández, and the wonderful Fisher Library staff who have fostered significant donor connections and made extraordinary additions to the collections. I also wish to acknowledge Leora Bromberg for overseeing the gift-in-kind process. Above all, I thank our generous donors who have for the last fifty years made the Fisher Library the remarkable resource it is today. This issue of *The Halcyon* is a tribute to their generosity.

Happy fiftieth anniversary to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. Here's to the future!

'TRICK TOCK. THIS IS THE SOUND OF THE HALLOWE-EN CLOCK':

the Holiday Arts Mail-Order School in the Derek McCormack Collection

Andrew Stewart

Reading Room Coordinator, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library



WILL YOU BE READY? WILL YOUR CANDY BE COOKED? WILL YOUR COSTUME BE CREEPY? WILL YOUR PUMPKIN BE CARVED? WILL YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS BE DECORATED? WILL YOUR CITY OR TOWN BE MADE UP IN A MOST MACABRE MANNER?

THESE ARE THE pressing questions at the beginning of a brochure in the Derek McCormack Collection encouraging 'hallowe'enophiles' to apply to a correspondence course and work towards a PhD, or a 'Professional Hallowe'en Degree'. The course was organized and taught by Ian Philipps and novelist and short-story

writer Derek McCormack in his capacity as 'Hallowe'enologist'. McCormack is known for novels such as *The Haunted Hillbilly* (2003), the story of a gay vampire couturier, and *The Show That Smells* (2008), which features a Parisian designer who also happens to be a vampire. McCormack's work is often characterized by brevity and a dark sense of humour, a

sense of humour liberally applied in the case of the H.A.M.S. (Holiday Arts Mail-Order School). Co-organizer Ian Phillipps runs the Pas de Chance imprint and has collaborated with McCormack on several books including *Halloween Suite*, published by Pas de Chance in 1998. This work contained four stories about death and despair and was set in 1930s

OPENING PAGE AND BELOW RIGHT: Examples of student projects (Derek McCormack Papers, MS. Coll 193D, Box 10). **RIGHT:** Lesson Book. *The Hallowe'en Arts 1936–37: Lesson Three: The Jack-o'-lantern as Costume* by Derek McCormack. Peterborough: Holiday Arts Mail Order School, [2008-2016] (Derek McCormack Papers, MS. Coll 193D, Box 8, Folder 2).

Peterborough, the same setting chosen for H.A.M.S.

Supported by the Art Gallery of York University and advertised through their newsletter as well as at various events, interested students could apply to H.A.M.S. with their contact information and the answer to two questions:

What is your favourite holiday?

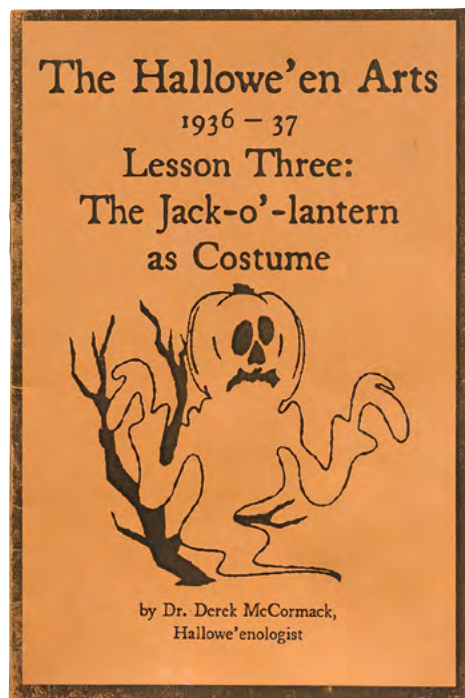
☐ Hallowe'en

What is your favourite colour?

☐ Orange ☐ Black

Once registered, students were given access to a course that was perpetually stuck in time in the years 1936 to 1937, though in actuality the project ran from 2008 to 2016. Students were issued lesson books and tasked with sending in assignments to be marked. Assignments included making crafts on a given theme, with instructions such as: 'Hold a séance by yourself or with others. Summon my mother. Send me any sign—a word, a photo, a broken mirror—that she sends to you. It might be ectoplasm. It might be ectoplasmom'.¹ The H.A.M.S. project also included a display at the Fly Gallery, a 'haunted classroom' built at the art fair ArtToronto in 2011, and a yearbook was published wrapping up the school and showcasing the work of students.

Contained in a 2022 donation from McCormack are materials related to the creation and administration of the course, correspondence with students, and student projects. Participants included some well-known artists such as Shary Boyle, Micah Lexier, and Derek Sullivan, as well as many individuals who were simply intrigued by H.A.M.S.' advertisements. Students got into the spirit of the course and the correspondence is full of amusing and half-serious quotes such as 'I hope your course will not be cute. I don't like smiling ghosts or those scarecrows that aren't scary. I am most interested in decapitation, viscera and kittens', or the student whose 'terrifying bag



for begging candy' got lost in the mail, which prompted her to write 'I take my studies with you very seriously, and am mortified to think of this mark of X "incomplete" marring my H.A.M.S. student file'.

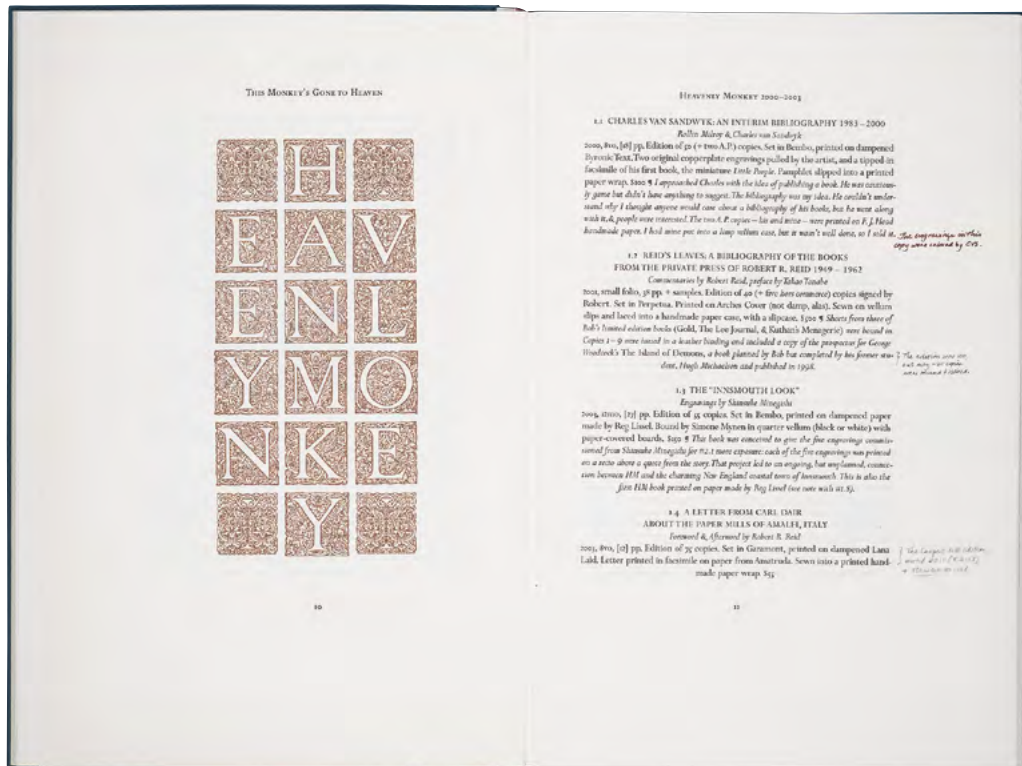
Examples of submitted assignments from students are in a variety of mediums and formats. There is a book called *Secrets of Serenity: A Treasury of Inspiration*, that has been repurposed as a ghost story called 'The Jack-o'-lantern as Game' where inspirational quotes have been turned to nefarious purposes. There is a box of chocolates where the chocolates have been replaced by plastic Hallowe'en decorations. There are paintings, works of poetry, and even a t-shirt with a jack-o'-lantern pattern. Other assignments submitted were of a more ephemeral nature and have not been included with the collection, such as a submission of cookies that the student hoped would survive the mail, sent along with their apologies that the submission did not include a plate.

This collection is a unique addition to the Canadian literary papers held at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library and represents not only the creative work of Derek McCormack and Ian Philipps, but all those Hallowe'enologists who participated in his course. As well as material related to H.A.M.S., this accession includes many drafts of his other works, both fiction and non-fiction, as well as documents from his professional life, and complements the Fisher's Library's large and ever-growing holdings of the papers of Canadian authors.



Endnotes

- 1 Derek McCormack, *The Hallowe'en Arts 1936-37: Lesson Three: The Jack-o'-lantern as Game* (Peterborough, Ontario: Holiday Arts Mail Order School, [2011]), [9].



THE TELLING OF THEIR OWN TALES: THE CANADIAN PRIVATE PRESS

John Shoesmith

Outreach Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

THE HISTORY OF the Canadian private press is a rich one extending back nearly a century. Yet the chronicling of this history is still primarily in its infancy and remains largely fragmented and incomplete. Catalogues accompanying private press and fine press exhibitions over the last forty years have been vital contributors to this area of scholarship (I include my own modest contribution, the catalogue *A Death Greatly Exaggerated: Canada's Thriving Small and Fine Press*, which was the companion to the exhibition I curated in 2013), but they have only told a small portion of the story.

Since there hasn't yet been a comprehensive historical survey of the private press in Canada, much of the story so far has been told by the presses themselves via self-published bibliographies, checklists, and histories of their work. For example, Barbarian Press, the influential Mission, British Columbia-based private press, has published two bibliographies since its founding in 1977: *Utile Dulci: The First*

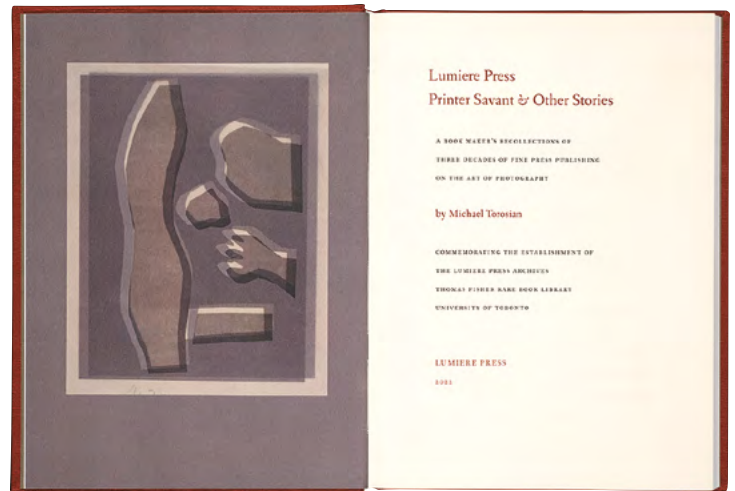
Decade at Barbarian Press 1977-87 (1988), which it claims is its most difficult book to source (it had a print run of 150 copies; the Fisher has a copy) and *Hoi Barbaroi: A Quarter Century at Barbarian Press* (2004). Aliquando Press produced *The Aliquando Century: The First 100 Books from the Aliquando Press of William Rueter* (2008). On the more ambitious scale, the legendary west coast private press printer Robert Reid published a five-volume history *Printing: A Lifelong Addiction* in 2002. These works are essential in compiling the histories and publications of these presses. This past year, the Fisher added three such books to our collection, two newly published and one that goes back over a decade.

Earlier this year, Michael Torosian donated copies of his *Lumiere Press: Printer Savant & Other Stories* (2022). The book essentially functions as a history of the press, told through individual stories about each of the twenty-two books Lumiere has published since its first publication in 1986. It's also a companion to

the exhibition that I co-curated with Torosian in late 2019 and is heavily illustrated with items from the Lumiere Press Papers held at the Fisher. In addition, the book's introduction provides the most detailed account of how Torosian discovered letterpress printing and bookmaking.

Like many private press publishers, Torosian relied on the community of local printers for his introduction to, and education in, the craft. In his case, that meant seeking out the advice of Toronto print legends such as Will Rueter, Coach House's Stan Bevington, and especially Glenn Goluska, who printed his books and broadsides from his kitchen. He describes his visit to Goluska's house on Harbord Street in the late 1970s: 'As I entered, I found the room dominated by a machine—a Vandercook Universal One cylinder proofing press. Glenn was making books. I could not believe it. I thought you needed a factory to make books and here was a guy in a kitchen.' Of course, that was only the start to becoming

OPENING PAGE: Two-page spread from *This Monkey's Gone to Heaven* (Heavenly Monkey, 2022), with hand-written annotations by Barbara Hodgson. **BELOW, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Linocut illustration included in *Leaves from the Pie Tree* (Pie Tree Press, 2006). Frontispiece and title page of Michael Torosian's *Printer Savant*. Type specimen sheet from *Leaves from the Pie Tree*.



a publisher of books: Torosian recognized he needed to develop a complete skillset. 'Now, to be a publisher, all I had to do was master writing, editing, typography, graphic design, typesetting, composition, presswork, binding, and marketing,' he writes. 'I think this is one of those instances that when it comes to self-actualization, you should be careful what you wish for.' It would be another ten years after that initial visit with Goluska before he published the first book issued under the Lumiere Press imprint: *Edward Weston: Dedicated to Simplicity* (1986). The press has focused exclusively on photography—Torosian himself began his career as a photographer—and is the only private press in the world devoted solely to the art form.

Lumiere Press is an episodic journey through both the subjects of his books, which include

some of the seminal photographers of the twentieth century such as David Heath, Gordon Parks, Paul Strand, and Lewis Hine, and the craft of bookmaking, such as choosing the appropriate typeface for a particular book or crafting the ideal cover. Owing to Torosian's meticulous bookmaking skills, the Lumiere Press books are all beautifully made. But the books possess significance beyond their aesthetic appeal: because they are also thoroughly researched, with many of them including interviews with the artists,² they contribute to the scholarship of photography and photographers. Helpfully for those studying the history of Lumiere Press, the book also includes a detailed descriptive bibliography at the back of the book. It is truly a definitive history of one of the most important private presses in the country.

While Jim Rimmer's *Leaves from the Pie Tree: Memories from the Composing Room Floor* is not a new publication—it was first released in 2006 when Rimmer was seventy-one years of age—the book is a recent and welcome addition to the Fisher. It functions primarily as a memoir of both Rimmer, who was a letterpress printer, typeface designer, and a major influence on the Canadian west coast private press scene, and the press he founded, Pie Tree. It is not, however, a conventional autobiography, as Rimmer himself admits. 'This book has been produced for the purpose of recording some type of the work that I have done since establishing Pie Tree Press & Type Foundry at my home in New Westminster BC just over forty years ago,' he writes. 'The content is somewhat varied and may be more of a scrapbook than a proper piece of bookwork. So perhaps this book's

apparent lack of direction IS its direction.³ The text covers his childhood and his dyslexia, his schooling at Vancouver Technical High School where he first learned printmaking, his first job working as a delivery boy for his grandfather at printer and publisher J. W. Boyd & Sons in Vancouver, and his printing apprenticeship by learning to set type with his grandfather. As his grandfather explained it to him: 'There are different ways to get educated. You have a fine opportunity to have a trade. Printing is an old and respected craft. There is art in printing. You are artistic; you will have a chance to use it. At one time printers were the only people aside from nobility who were allowed to carry a sword.⁴ While his imprint Pie Tree Press produced only four books, as well as several broadsides, they are all exquisitely produced and highly sought items. (Along with *Leaves from the Pie Tree*, the Fisher also has a copy of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, published in 2008 and donated by Chester Gryski to the library.)

Rimmer has done it all, as he points out in the book's introduction: printing, illustration, type design, typefounding, type engraving, bookbinding, graphic design, stonecutting, and digital type design. (One of my favourite discoveries: he designed the iconic 1970s logo for the rock band Heart.) Printing with his own type, however, was his true love. 'Although it is difficult for me to place any one part of my craft over another, few experiences can match the perfect joy of seeing the first composed words in a new type that I have designed and cut.⁵ To that end, Rimmer devotes many pages to explaining how he was able to create and cut type in his small workshop. This is the section that will delight those that want to truly get in the weeds of the craft of typefounding, covering all the steps necessary to create one's own type and including helpful illustrations and photographs. While Gaspereau Press produced a trade copy of the book in 2008, retitling it *Pie Tree Press: Memories from the Composing Room Floor* (with the helpful addition of a bibliography), Rimmer's version remains the definitive edition, and serves as an important primer on one of the titans of the Canadian private press.

Owing partly to Rimmer's influence, the west coast in recent years has produced some of the country's finest private press publishers. Heavenly Monkey has been one of the most lauded presses in Canada, admired for its book design and the overall high-quality production of its books. Founded by Rollin Milroy, the press last year released its second

bibliography, *This Monkey's Gone to Heaven: Checklist Ultimo: Heavenly Monkey & HM Editions 2000-2020*, or *HM=XX* (which is Milroy's preferred condensed title). While chronicling the publications from the press from its debut in 2000 through 2020, it also marks both an end and a beginning: it is the last book to be published under the Heavenly Monkey imprint as future books coming from Milroy's print studio will be published simply as HM. As Milroy explains in the introduction, bibliographies have always played an important role in HM's history, including its first two books: in 2000 it produced a bibliography of the published work of the British Columbia-based writer and illustrator Charles Van Sandwyk, and the second, in 2001, was a bibliography of the books of the legendary private press publisher Robert Reid. 'Press bibliographies were one of my portals into letterpress printing,' writes Milroy in the book's introduction, 'and from the start I looked forward to printing my own.⁶ Interestingly, the next HM book to be published will be a bibliography of Jim Rimmer's work. Milroy also claims he will not produce another bibliography of his own press.

HM=XX is, at first glance, a typical bibliographic checklist. There are sixty-one entries in total, divided into two separate sections: Heavenly Monkey imprints (forty-two titles, up to and including *HM=XX*) and HM Editions (twenty titles), which functioned as a collaborative imprint with other artists, writers, and bookbinders. Over the last several years, the imprint has primarily collaborated with Barbara Hodgson and Claudia Cohen, who have recently started their own imprint called Byzantium Press. The titles are arranged chronologically, containing a bibliographic description of methods, materials, edition size, and any other relevant information. What makes this checklist more comprehensive than a typical bibliography is that most of the entries include additional commentary from Milroy about the books and their production. These observations are not only a bonus, but crucial since they often reveal Milroy's printing philosophies and sensibilities, which is particularly relevant considering his current stature as one of Canada's most important private press bookmakers.

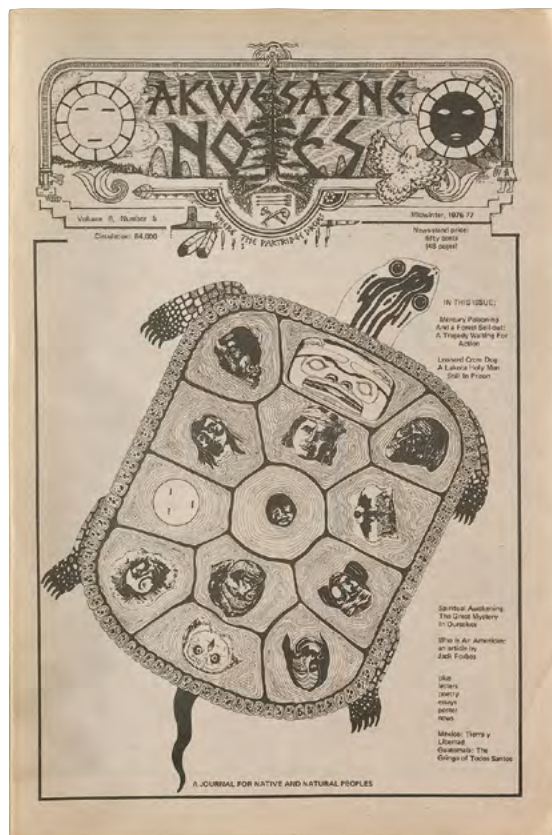
HM=XX includes eighteen samples from the press' books. He was able to accumulate enough extra leaves due to his tendency to overproduce pages when working on a project. As he explains: 'My eye was honest enough to know when a sheet wasn't well printed, so for many years I printed many more sheets

than called for, knowing my spoilage would be high; when examining the sample leaves included here, remember why they're available for inclusion.' In other words, many of the samples can be considered rejects. But Milroy points out that even that has merit: 'If nothing else, they illustrate my progress as a printer, and also my facility with different papers.⁷ Along with the samples, *HM=XX* includes handwritten annotations. As Milroy explains in the colophon, which also doubles as entry 1.42 of the checklist, 'This copy has not been defaced! All of the copies were randomly embellished, annotated and marginalized by Barbara Hodgson.' These annotations, distributed throughout the book, add a sometimes-cheeky flavour to this checklist, as well as providing additional contextual information not contained in the descriptions.

These bibliographies and checklists will surely continue to be produced by this country's private press community. With Will Rueter hanging up his printing apron, the final bibliography for Aliquando Press will soon be produced by Gaspereau Press, and Barbarian Press' fiftieth anniversary in 2027 will most likely result in another welcome retrospective of its work, adding to our knowledge and appreciation of this sometimes-neglected Canadian publishing space.

Endnotes

- 1 Michael Torosian. *Lumiere Press: Printer Savant & Other Stories*. (Toronto: Lumiere Press, 2022), 13-14.
- 2 Complete transcripts of the interviews are available in the Lumiere Press Papers.
- 3 Jim Rimmer. *Leaves from the Pie Tree: Memories from the Composing Room Floor*. (New Westminster, BC: Pie Tree Press & Type Foundry), 11.
- 4 Rimmer, *Leaves from the Pie Tree*, 22.
- 5 Rimmer, *Leaves from the Pie Tree*, 68.
- 6 Rollin Milroy. *This Monkey's Gone to Heaven: Checklist Ultimo: Heavenly Monkey & HM Editions 2000-2020* (Vancouver: Heavenly Monkey, 2022), 9.
- 7 Milroy, *This Monkey's Gone to Heaven*, 9.



FROM AKWESASNE TO THE WORLD: VOICES OF INDIGENOUS ACTIVISM IN *AKWESASNE NOTES*

Grant Hurley

Canadiana Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

AS THE THOMAS Fisher Rare Book Library celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 2023, my colleague and *The Halcyon* co-editor Liz Ridolfo took the time to explore our files of past donations to identify materials of interest that have been gifted to the library earlier in our history. One excellent example of a past donation that continues to have significant impact is our collection of issues of *Akwesasne Notes*, a long-running and influential Indigenous-led newspaper that was published between 1969 and 1992, and again from 1995 to 1997, from the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation in Akwesasne, New York. As students, faculty, and members of the public are increasingly interested in using primary sources to support research and teaching in Indigenous Studies, it is especially important for the Fisher Library to highlight materials that represent

Indigenous voices and perspectives. Indigenous writers, artists, storytellers, and knowledge keepers have been making active use of the print medium for centuries, and many examples can be found throughout the Fisher's collections. One important area of focus is the bloom of books, pamphlets, newspapers, and posters that came from the vibrant era of activism, resistance, and creative activity associated with the American Indian Movement (AIM) of the 1960s and 1970s. *Akwesasne Notes* is an incredible document of the spirit of the times in which Indigenous communities created their own newspapers to connect and share information for national and international solidarity. The Fisher Library holds twenty-five issues of *Akwesasne Notes* donated in 1987 by Kim Echlin. Recently, another six issues were acquired from a bookseller to add to the run,

and additional issues will be continuously sought with the hopes of one day holding a complete run of the newspaper in print. Many issues are also available online via the American Indian Digital History Project.

The Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne is a unique reminder that Indigenous nations are indeed sovereign nations that exist both within, and independent of, the borders imposed by colonial states. Meaning 'land where the partridge drums', Akwesasne's territory straddles both sides of the Canada-United States international border along the St. Lawrence River and the provincial borders of Ontario and Quebec. Despite the administrative difficulties that living with these imposed boundaries must create, members of the Nation consider themselves part of a single community. Canadians were reminded

of this understanding in December 1968 when Kanien'kéhaka protesters blockaded the Seaway International Bridge that connects Cornwall, Ontario and Massena, New York, with a stop at Akwesasne territory on Cornwall Island in between. The protest fought Canada's contravention of the 1794 Jay Treaty, which establishes the Indigenous right to duty-free passage of goods across the border (a right which remains unrecognized by the Canadian government). *You Are on Indian Land*, the 1969 National Film Board of Canada film directed by Akwesasne nation member Michael Kanentakeron Mitchell, documents the blockade.

Akwesasne Notes was created from the frenzy of activity that surrounded the blockade with the goal of sharing information about the event with Indigenous communities across Canada and the United States who were fighting for their own rights and sovereignty. Founded by a group of activists led by experienced newspaper editor Ernie Benedict (Kaientaronkwen) and edited by non-Indigenous community member Jerry Gambill (Rarihokwats) during its early years, the first few issues simply reprinted news items about the bridge blockade, but the paper soon started to expand its coverage to topics of national and international interest. Its circulation is listed as 7,000 on the October 1969 issue and would rapidly grow to 100,000 by 1980 thanks to its broad coverage and sense of unity it created among readers. This is even more impressive considering it was circulated, sold, and distributed outside of mainstream methods, such as alternative bookstores, college campuses, and powwows, and through Indigenous educational networks such as the White Roots of Peace, a touring initiative that brought artists, dancers, and musicians to schools, reserves, and prisons.¹

The Fisher's holdings begin with the Spring 1972 issue, which shows a representative range of topics across its 48 pages, from notes on anti-development protests in Canada and the United States, legal decisions impacting Indigenous communities, and health information, to photos of Spring planting at Akwesasne,



international reporting on the displacement of the Apyáwa (Tapirapé) of Brazil and the Mapuche of Chile, comics, book reviews, and poetry. As discussed by scholar Margaret J. Schmitz, many issues of the paper included a centrefold poster that paired an archival photograph with a contemporary quotation to challenge received narratives about Indigenous peoples and bring the work of ancestors into the present.² Editorial notes in each issue candidly recount the logistical challenges of putting out the paper, but also the intergenerational collaboration and broad support that make a community-based paper possible, from 'canning rhubarb, installing insulation, hoeing the garden, sorting clippings', to 'proof-reading, housecleaning'.³ A photo spread in the Summer 1972 issue shows volunteers young and old preparing meals, gathering pages, gluing labels, and rolling issues for mailing. *Akwesasne Notes* also started its own imprint to publish books and other materials, including titles such as *Voices from Wounded Knee, 1973* (1974), a series

of informational cassettes on Indigenous issues for schools, and even the 1972 self-titled record from Mi'kmaq-Scottish folksinger Willie Dunn.

The Fisher Library holds an incredible variety of newspapers that document voices beyond the mainstream press, from the many activist and radical periodicals in the Robert S. Kenny collection to complete runs of important community newspapers like *The Philippine Reporter*. While newspapers may seem ubiquitous at the time of their issue, they can be ephemeral in nature as newsprint is frequently recycled or reused. We are very lucky indeed when donors have had the forethought to save these materials and bring them to our doors. Alternative newspapers often include coverage of key issues and events available nowhere else. As former *Notes* editor Doug George-Kanentiio notes in his history of the paper, the newspaper's reporters had the trust of Indigenous activists who would not let mainstream media behind closed doors of protests such as the Wounded Knee Occupation, and therefore their coverage is among the few contemporary sources of information about this important event.

'From the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969 to Wounded Knee in 1973 and far beyond, *Akwesasne Notes* was the voice of a movement' writes George-Kanentiio, concluding that 'It never compromised or shrank before controversy. It was the unwavering voice of Native people and too often their only advocate'.⁴ As Indigenous students and faculty at the University of Toronto come to the Fisher Library to hear the words their ancestors have left behind, the resonant drum of *Akwesasne Notes* reverberates with strength to us today.

Endnotes

- 1 Doug George-Kanentiio, "Akwesasne Notes: How the Mohawk Nation Created a Newspaper and Shaped Contemporary Native America," in *Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press*, ed. Ken Wachsberger (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 126-7.
- 2 See Margaret J. Schmitz, "Indigenous Temporal Enmeshment in Akwesasne Notes," *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 8, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.15034>.
- 3 *Akwesasne Notes* 4, no. 3 (1972): 43.
- 4 George-Kanentiio, 137.



HER PERSONAL INTERESTS: GIFTS OF EUSTELLA LANGDON

Elizabeth Ridolfo

Special Collections Projects Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

WHILE EXPLORING THE library's historic gift files, a group of familiar titles caught my eye. As a student in rare books class long ago, I searched the Fisher's catalogue using subject headings and keywords to find cookbooks for my mock exhibition assignment. There was no dedicated culinary collection at the Fisher Library until we began cataloguing the large 2016 donation of chiefly Canadian culinary material by Mary F. Williamson, but there were already several significant small groupings of Canadian and early European cookbooks in the stacks at that time. Many of the titles I first encountered as a student, such as the charity cookbook *Allied Cookery: British, French, Italian, Belgian, Russian* (1916) and the *Us Two Cook Book:*

Containing Tested Recipes for Two Persons (1916) had been donated to the library by the same person: Eustella Langdon (1898–1990). Eustella, also called Stella, and her husband John E. Langdon (1902–1981) were well-known as collectors of silver and books on silver, and for John's research and writing on the subject. Their books and papers on silver were donated to the Fisher in the 1980s, while the silver itself ended up in places such as the Royal Ontario Museum.

Several gifts that were given by Eustella alone tell us more about her personal interests; however locating them in the online catalogue presented a challenge at first. Very few books came up under a search for her name, partly due to missing provenance information as a

result of historic restrictions on the character length of records during the period they were first entered into the library catalogue, and partly because some of her gifts were listed in the old fashion under her husband's name, as gifts of 'Mrs. John E. Langdon'.

A charming, pocket-sized herbal from 1812 with hand-coloured engravings reflected a longtime personal interest in plants and herbs. Langdon had an Elizabethan herb garden, and near the beginning of World War II she was asked to teach CBC radio listeners to grow, harvest, and use herbs to improve their meals in light of wartime restrictions on spice imports.¹ She also wrote a book called *Pioneer Gardens at Black Creek Pioneer Village* (1972) that explored the plants and seeds brought

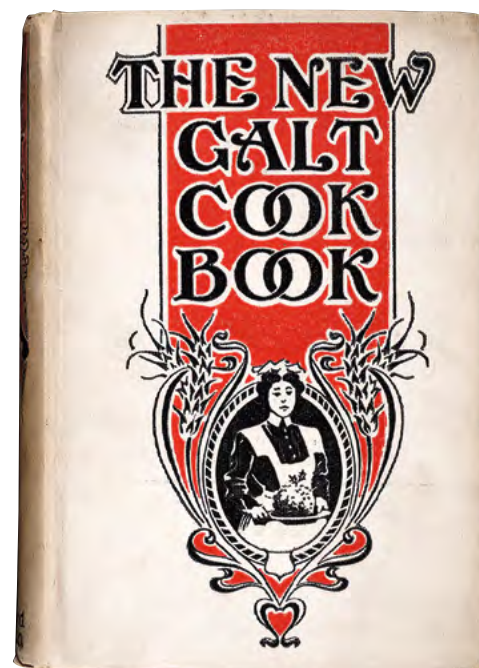
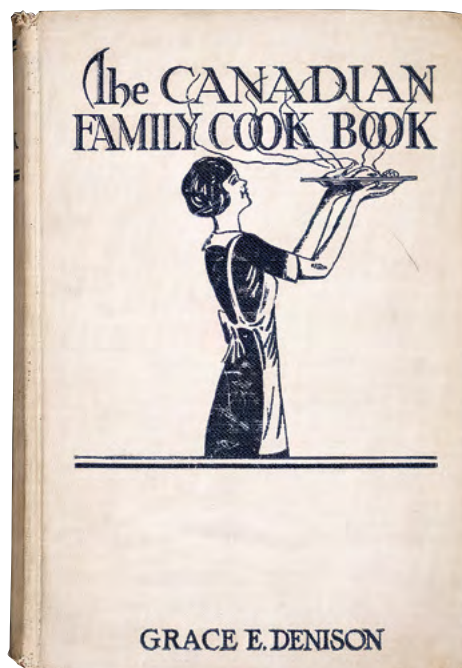
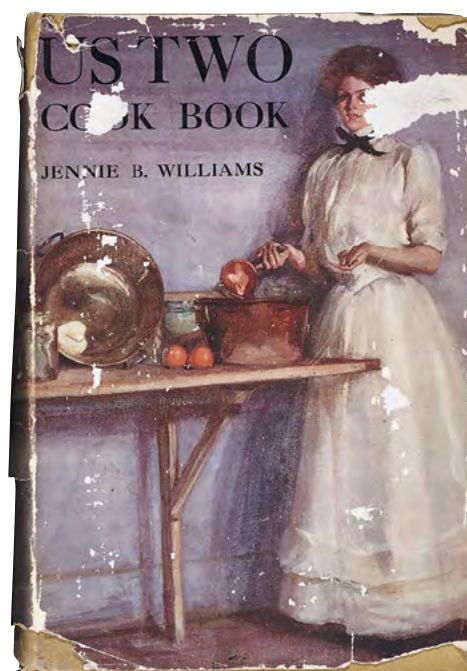
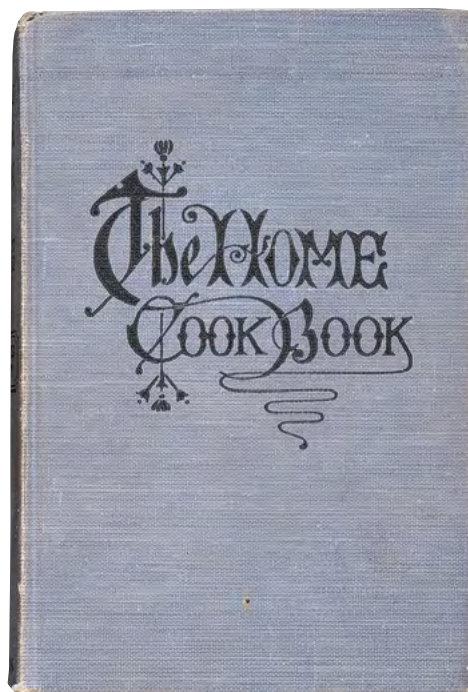
FACING PAGE: *Botanique de la jeunesse*. [France?]: [Publisher not identified], 1812. **BELOW:** A selection of the Canadian cookbooks donated by Eustella Langdon.

to Canada by settlers from England and the United States, and an article in the May/June 1978 issue of *Canadian Collector* highlighting the traditional use of herbs and other plants in Indigenous medicine as recorded in accounts such as *The Jesuit Relations* and the journals of Samuel de Champlain.

Eustella's interest in cookbooks should be no surprise considering she hosted annual 'Cooking School of the Air' radio broadcasts on the CBC for more than twenty years in collaboration with Toronto nutritionist Dr. Elizabeth Chant Robertson. She also wrote the recipes for the book *Nutrition for Today*, published by Robertson in 1951.

Cookbooks donated by Eustella Langdon include a nineteenth century English manuscript receipt book as well as a small but interesting sample of some of the most popular Canadian cookbooks of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Among them are the 1877, 1889, and 1923 editions of Canada's first community cookbook *The Home Cook Book*, the 1924 and 1932 editions of Nellie Pattinson's important school cookery text the *Canadian Cook Book*, and the *M. A. C. Cookbook* (1926), a long-running and popular publication by members of the Manitoba Agricultural College.

The catalogue records for these cookbooks, which are so well complemented by some of our recent donations and purchases, have now been edited to ensure that they reflect the identity of their former owner. It is reassuring that considering the many changes in focus for research in special collections that have taken place since the library accepted this donation, the files show a recognition of the value of materials in this increasingly important subject area. The contemporary study of cookbooks and culinary manuscripts finds space in the landscape of women's life writing, in studies of the material culture of the home and kitchen, and the movement of commodities and culture across space and time, rendering Eustella Langdon's personal interests widely appealing.



Endnotes

- 1 'The Born Cook: A Fairy Tale!' CBC Times, 12, no. 46 (1959): 3-4, accessed November 7, 2023, <https://www.worldradiohistory.com/CANADA/CBC-Times/1959/CBC-Times-1959-11-06.pdf>.



CLICKING THROUGH THE ARCHIVES: PRESERVING DIGITAL FILES IN WRITERS' PAPERS AT THE FISHER LIBRARY

Hafsah Hujaleh
Preservation Resident Librarian
University of Toronto Libraries

Natalya Rattan
Fisher Library Archivist
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

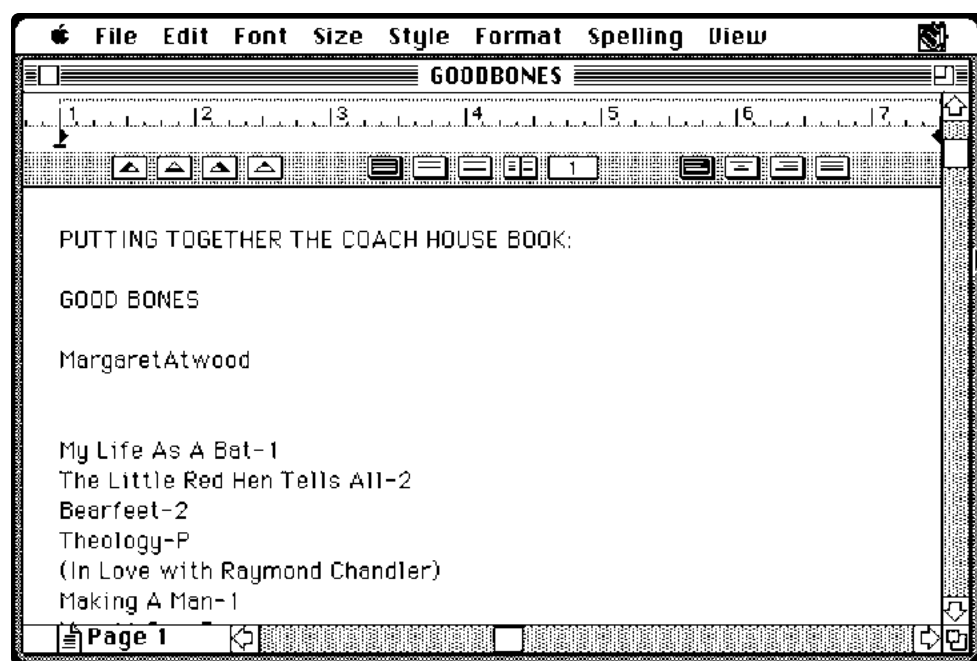
TECHNOLOGY HAS CHANGED the way writers work, and as a result, literary archives are changing too. From cut-and-paste edits on typescripts to track changes in Word, writers' digital files can provide detailed insights into their working methods. Until relatively recently, the Fisher Library's collections of authors' papers consisted primarily of textual and audiovisual materials: everything from handwritten, typewritten, or printed-out word-processed drafts of work, to letters, diaries, photographs, audio records, and film. However, as writers shifted to using computers to create and compose their works during the 1990s and 2000s, donations have expanded to include a diverse array of unique digital materials, from floppy disks, Zip drives, and CDs in earlier donations, to emails and

files saved onto USB sticks, external hard drives, and cloud storage services in recent years.

Until recently, born-digital content in the Fisher's collections was processed and preserved in the same way as textual files: the physical media was listed in a finding aid then placed into acid-free archival boxes and stored in a climate-controlled environment. The files on these disks were mainly thought of as backup copies of printed documents and were not used as functional research tools, even though they potentially contained unique files and information not replicated in print. In addition, storage media like floppy disks and CD-Rs are prone to degradation despite environmental controls, meaning that the files on them can become inaccessible within a decade or less. For years, the files on the disks were not

migrated or backed up, which inevitably made them difficult to access and put them at risk of becoming obsolete.

Since 2013, librarians including Digital Preservation Librarian Steve Marks, Digital Assets Librarian Jess Whyte, and more recently Preservation Resident Librarian Hafsah Hujaleh, have been instrumental in assisting with recovering born-digital data in the Fisher's collections and ensuring their long-term sustainability and preservation. In 2013, Steve Marks acquired a specialized suite of tools called 'KryoFlux' for the Library to assist us in processing an almost entirely digital donation that included 160 floppy disks. In combination with the appropriate disk drive, KryoFlux enables the safe migration of data from 5.25" and 3.5" floppy disks and allows these



files to be subsequently stored in the University of Toronto's digital preservation environment. One best practice in retrieving data from legacy formats like floppy disks is to ensure that the archivist does not inadvertently change or edit the data on the disk: simply opening a file can change important details like the date a file was created, edited, or last accessed. Tools for digital preservation like KryoFlux prevent this. Using KryoFlux and other digital preservation tools, Jess Whyte completed an extensive project from 2015 to 2017 in which she identified, migrated, preserved, and created metadata for over thirteen hundred disks and other born-digital material across 115 archival collections held at the Fisher Library. As a result of this project, workflows were developed that have helped us retrieve content on disks and other born-digital media when processing new archival donations. In addition, we have now figured out ways to provide researchers with access to these files without the risk of damaging the original media.

Retrieving data from the original media is just the first step: identifying what kinds of files the disks contain and how to make them accessible is the next. In a recent initiative, preservation assessments have been completed on digital material from the collections of

Margaret Atwood, George Elliott Clarke, Lawrence Hill, and Shyam Selvadurai. These assessment reports provide detailed information on the collection's condition and content, which are used to make informed decisions related to access, appraisal, and preservation. The assessment process was inspired by the conservation work done at the Tate Museum, which gathered all important information on the software-based artworks in their collection.¹ The templates produced by Tate were adapted to conduct in-depth assessments of the digital materials held at Fisher Library. Adopting a file-by-file approach to provide recommendations, the assessments examine the relevance and possible accessibility of each file on each piece of media. The process begins by retrieving a collection of files from preservation storage and creating a working copy: this copy can be examined without accidentally altering the originals. The working copy of each file is opened to confirm its renderability. Some files can easily be opened, while others in older formats require a viewing tool such as LibreOffice or QuickViewPlus. Once the files are opened, they are examined to determine their relevance to the author's work and life. Files considered of high interest include manuscript drafts and personal correspond-

ence. Software files, files belonging to third parties, and exact duplicates are considered irrelevant. At each step of the process, notes are taken and recommendations are given for each piece of media. Recommended actions for each media are discussed and implemented at a later date. This process is highly intensive and typically takes between two to three months to complete depending on the size of the collection. The hundreds of files that were examined encompassed a wide range of different topics, from common or expected documents such as manuscript drafts, personal correspondence, journals, diaries, manuscript notes, and photographs, to unexpected and interesting information such as course syllabi, birthday speeches, recipes, and grocery lists. In one instance, we were even able to recover a previously deleted draft a writer was looking for.

A few challenges arose while conducting these in-depth assessments. As noted above, a file-to-file approach is time-consuming, and therefore assessing larger collections can be difficult. Another challenge is close duplicates, which refers to files that contain the exact same content but have slight spacing differences or an extra blank page. Near-duplicates can be hard to identify without manually comparing files, meaning that researchers may be presented



with many versions of files that only differ in minute aspects. Finally, when completing this process, caution must be exercised when assessing which files should be discarded or deleted. Like the processing of physical material, not every saved file is relevant to a writer's work or essential to preserve in perpetuity.

In listing the content and creating detailed preservation reports, we can get a full picture of the digital content in writers' papers, including how the files were organized, when the documents were created, and other details that reveal the writing process. Through this work, we have uncovered additional drafts relating to some of Margaret Atwood's books, such as *Cat's Eye* (1988), *Good Bones* (1992), and *The Penelopiad* (2005). Typed letters found in Lawrence Hill's files document early submissions of his work, including short stories, essays, and his first novel, *Some Great*

Thing (1992) to various editors and publishers. Correspondence found on the disks includes messages between Hill and his friends looking for feedback on drafts of work, including essays, such as 'Zebra: Growing up Black and White in Canada', which was eventually published in *Talking About Identity: Encounters in Race, Ethnicity, and Language* (2001). Shyam Selvadurai's digital files contain drafts and notes for both published and unpublished stories and articles, including some material which only exists digitally.

Currently, access to born-digital material happens on a case-by-case basis, with researchers required to use a computer in the Library's reading room to access files. It is important to note that researchers can request the files, not the actual disks, as accessing the physical disks can potentially damage or alter the original content. When disks are requested, access

copies can be made on demand by staff and provided to the reader.

As writers continue to produce digital content in ever-evolving formats, the preservation of this material has become an essential part of the work that we do as archivists and digital preservation librarians. And as researchers start to seek the unique insights that can be found in digital archives, its importance will only increase.

Endnotes

- 1 Tom Ensom, Patricia Falcão, and Chris King. "Software-Based Art Preservation – Project." Tate. Accessed October 27, 2023. <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/software-based-art-preservation>.



THE PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI CARPATHO-RUTHENICA COLLECTION

Ksenya Kiebusinski

Head, Petro Jacyk Central & East European Resource Centre

IN 2019, THE Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library became the custodian of what has been described as the Carpatho-Rusyn national library. On 4 April 2023, the University of Toronto Libraries celebrated this remarkable donation with an exhibition of selected items from the collection and a lecture by Nicholas Kupensky, a professor of Russian at the Department of Foreign Languages, United States Air Force Academy. The bequeathed material is both an archive of a place, Carpathian Rus'—a borderland of borderlands in the heart of Europe—and the cultural heritage of a stateless people, the Carpatho-Rusyns. The ten thousand-volume library is not one evacuated during national border changes or the wars of the twentieth

or twenty-first centuries. Paul Robert Magocsi, a professor of history and political science and the holder of the John Yaremko Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto, assembled it over the course of six decades. Professor Magocsi has been called the national awakener of Carpatho-Rusyns, and a liberal humanist and cosmopolitan. However, the role most dear to him is that of curator of the Paul Robert Magocsi Carpatho-Ruthenica Collection.

The impetus for developing the Carpatho-Ruthenica Collection came from Magocsi's wish to create a national bibliography. But to create one, he needed the material to describe: in other words, a library. The budding bibliographer and fanatic bibliophile set about

collecting everything he could find about Carpatho-Rusyns beginning in the 1960s while in Prague undertaking research on his doctoral dissertation, *The Development of National Consciousness in Subcarpathian Rus, 1918-1945* (1972), and continuing to the present day. Magocsi describes his multi-pronged approach to building the collection in his soon-to-be-published book, *From Nowhere to Somewhere: The Carpatho-Rusyn Movement—A Personal History*.

Building the collection involved visits to used and antiquarian bookstores in European cities like Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Kraków, and L'viv, in addition to Prešov, Uzhhorod, and Mukachevo in the Carpatho-Rusyn homeland. Magocsi arranged to photocopy



or microfilm, or obtain duplicate copies, of other Carpatho-Ruthenica material from national, religious, and university libraries. Book dealers fulfilled *desiderata*, among them George Sabo (1896–1983), a Carpatho-Rusyn immigrant to the United States from the Kingdom of Hungary, and Otto Sagner (1920–2011), a Munich-based importer and exporter of books from Eastern Europe and Russia. More recently, bookstores Lexicon in Warsaw and Kobzar in Uzhhorod carried on this function. Colleagues and friends have helped by seeking publications in Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, Russia, and the Czech Republic. Chance also played a role in his acquisitions. Individuals age, and institutions outgrow their function, purpose, or need, so material was acquired from heirs of private collectors and reorganized or defunct organizations.

For example, the Greek Catholic Union, a fraternal benefit society headquartered

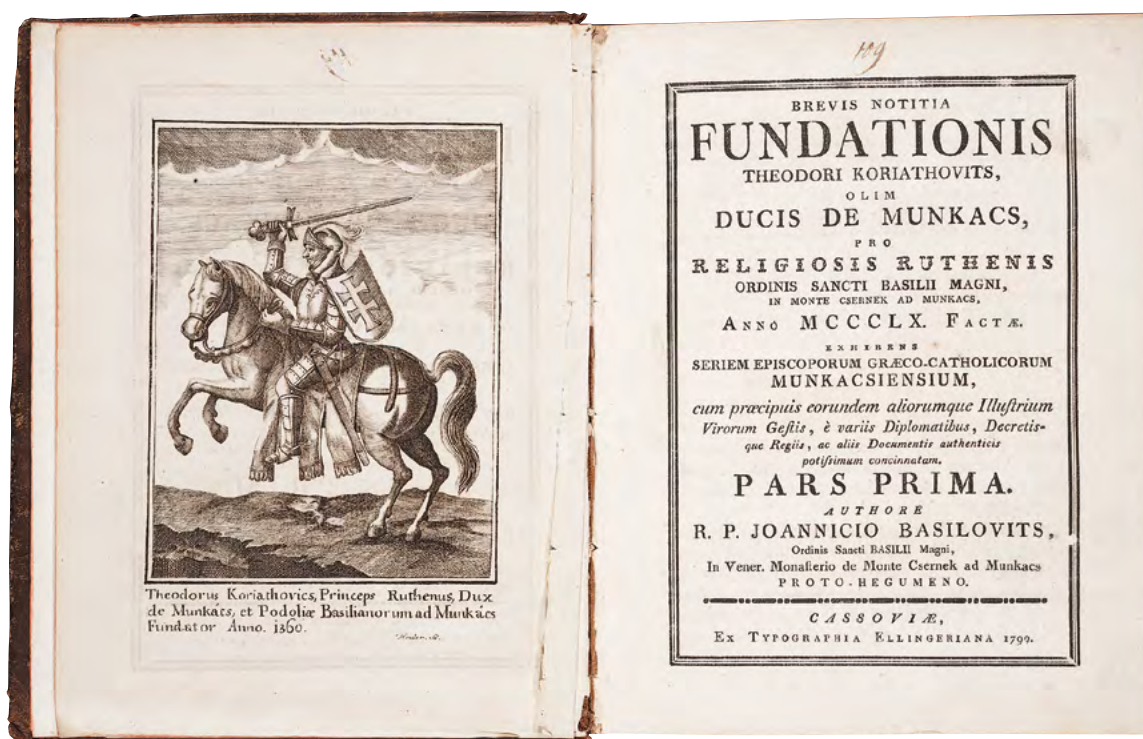
in Beaver, Pennsylvania, was downsizing its museum-library of superfluous material, ‘written in “funny” and not understandable languages’ in 2002.¹ Magocsi discovered in their collection rare European publications from the 1920s and 1930s and a providential find for the collector: a much-desired copy of the book *La Ruthénie subcarpathique* (Geneva, 1944) by the Swiss geographer Aldo Dami (1898–1977). A decade later, scores of religious titles, some dating back to the seventeenth century, as well as bound runs of pre-World War I Carpatho-Rusyn American newspapers were discovered during a visit to the sold premises of the Benedictine Monastery of Eastern-rite monks in Butler, Pennsylvania, whose library had to be liquidated. In Butler, just as in Beaver, Magocsi casually discovered a book that he had tried hard to locate at the great libraries in Vienna, L’viv, and Budapest: the multi-language dictionary, *Ó-szláv-, magyar-, ruthén-, (orosz) német szótár a szentírás olvasásához* (Old Slavic, Hungarian, Ruthenian, [Russian] German dictionary for reading the Holy Scriptures; Uzhhorod, 1906), by the priest, lexicographer, and belletrist Emilij A. Kubek (1857–1940).

Magocsi also purchased material from private individuals, often family members of deceased collectors, and in this way, the Carpatho-Ruthenica collection was supplemented by the following treasures: the first published history of Subcarpathian Rus’,

Brevis notitia foundationis Theodori Koriathovits (A brief account of the donation made by Fedor Koriatovych; Košice, 1799–1805) by the Basilian monk, Ioanykii Bazylovych (1742–1821); a literary almanac, *Поздравление русиновъ на годъ 1851* (Greetings from the Rusyns for the year 1851; Vienna, 18[50]), compiled by the priest, writer, and historian, Aleksander Dukhnovych (1803–1865); the first history of Carpatho-Rusyn literature, *Очеркъ литературнаго движенія угорскихъ русскихъ* (Outline of the Carpatho-Rusyn literary movement; Odessa, 1888), written by the educator and gymnasium director, Petro Feierchak. The 1851 literary almanac is notable for two reasons. First, it includes the poem that became the national hymn, ‘I was, am, and will remain a Rusyn,’ by Dukhnovych. Secondly, the copy, like many other items in Magocsi’s collection, includes traces of notable previous ownership: Stefan Pankovych (1820–1874), bishop of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo from 1867 to 1874, and Basil Shereghy (1918–1988), a well-known Byzantine numismatist and Greek Catholic priest from Uzhhorod who was active in the United States after World War II.

While the above were all remarkable purchases, the biggest one of all, for a price of ten thousand dollars, was the private library of Carpatho-Ruthenica assembled by Ivan Komloschii (1920–1996), a teacher and director of a gymnasium in a small Hungarian-inhabited village near Berehovo,

OPENING PAGE: Exhibition catalogue for the Paul Robert Magocsi Carpatho-Ruthenica Collection and *Поздравление русиновъ на годъ 1851*, an early literary almanac for Carpatho-Rusyns. **ABOVE:** Paul Robert Magocsi at the exhibition and lecture event, with Sally Jones. **FACING PAGE:** *Brevis notitia foundationis Theodori Koriathovits*, the first published history of Subcarpathian Rus’.



Ukraine. Komloszhi's library enriched Toronto's collection with thousands of works on Carpatho-Rusyn literature and education, as well as newspapers and journals published in Subcarpathian Rus' under Czechoslovak and Hungarian rule. The books were brought in small batches across the border into Slovakia and eventually to Toronto, and the rare serials were secreted out for microfilming with the help of an acquaintance's diplomatic passport into Hungary. Magocsi jokes of this experience in his memoirs that he became not only a purveyor of culture (*Kulturträger*) but also a professional book carrier (*Bücherträger*), doing whatever it took 'to get Carpatho-Rusyn publications across land borders and the proverbial pond to North America.'² The result was the establishment of a true Carpatho-Ruthenica research library housed at the University of Toronto that attracts scholars to Ontario from the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, the United States, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Serbia, and Austria.

Among the distinguished scholars who have worked with the collection is Nicholas Kupensky, who in his Fisher Library lecture 'Archive, Nation, Text: The Lives of the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library' described his amazement at the collection's systematization—a system ranging from bibliographies to maps, with topographies, biographies, histories, language, literature, and architecture and art, ethnography and folklore, as well as other subjects in between—that 'we are told

is even superior to the Library of Congress.' He marvelled at the casual discovery of his grandfather's name listed as a priest in a nineteenth-century Greek Catholic church *schematism* on a shelf in Magocsi's office library. From there, Kupensky realized that he:

[J]ust had to reach down a shelf to see his [grandfather's] curriculum, turn to the left to see maps of the roads he took, jump into the next alcove to read the histories of the villages he served in, walk around the corner to learn the variant of Rusyn he would have known, walk across the room to see the icons he venerated.

It was then, seeing his grandfather's name, and surrounded by books, that Kupensky felt something akin to the sublime. He was not in a library dedicated to Carpathian Rus'; he was *in* Carpathian Rus'.

To be *in* Carpathian Rus' is not limiting in terms of geographical or national scope. The publications in the collection deal with the history, language, and culture of Carpatho-Rusyns in all the regions where they reside in the European homeland as well as in the diaspora, especially in the United States and Canada. These take the form of encyclopedic and statistical guides, histories, church *schematism*, school texts, original literary works, folk songs, primers, atlases, maps, and complete runs of serials (significantly, a wide range of immigrant and homeland annual almanacs), with a chronological range from the seventeenth century to the present. One

cannot study Carpatho-Rusyns without noticing how their culture is embedded in regional and global networks. There are studies too, in diverse languages, about other peoples in Carpathian Rus' who have interacted with Carpatho-Rusyns—Hungarians, Jews, Slovaks, Germans, Roma, Czechs, Russians, and Ukrainians, among others.

In his closing remarks, Nicholas Kupensky thanked Larry Alford, University Chief Librarian, University of Toronto Libraries, and Loryl MacDonald, Associate Chief Librarian for Special Collections and Director of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, for taking 'a leap of faith that there will be Rusyns tomorrow.' By accepting this unique and outstanding donation from Paul Robert Magocsi, they took 'a step to ensure that there will be Rusyns in the future,' as well as scholarship on them for years to come.



A copy of the *Carpatho-Ruthenica Exhibition Catalogue* is available gratis; send your name and postal address to: ukr.chair@utoronto.ca.

Endnotes

1 Magocsi, *From Nowhere to Somewhere*.

2 Ibid.



ROSEMARY KILBOURN: A CANADIAN WOOD ENGRAVER'S LEGACY

Leora Bromberg

Acquisitions Specialist, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

IN THE LATE 1950s, a young Rosemary Kilbourn returned from her studies abroad and purchased her new home and studio: a late nineteenth-century schoolhouse in rural Caledon Hills, Ontario. Known as the 'Dingle Schoolhouse,' her home and its surrounding natural landscape came to be the primary subject of this talented artist's sketches, paintings, and wood engravings.

Rosemary Kilbourn (b. 1931, Toronto) is a Canadian printmaker, painter, and stained-glass artist, best known for her wood engravings depicting natural and religious scenery. On graduating from the Ontario College of Art in 1953, she was awarded the prestigious Medal for Drawing and Painting. She then travelled to London and enrolled at the Slade School of Fine Art. Kilbourn returned home to embark on her artistic career with a newfound pas-

sion for wood engraving. Her earliest wood engravings were designed to illustrate books on Canadian history, including two by her brother William Kilbourn (1926–1995), *The Firebrand: William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion in Upper Canada* (1956) and *The Elements Combined: A History of the Steel Company of Canada* (1960), as well as *The Desperate People* (1958) by her neighbour Farley Mowat (1921–2014). Later, she illustrated a fine press edition of Florence Wyle's poetry, *The Shadows of the Year* (Aliquando Press, 1976). Drawing inspiration from nature and spirituality, much of Kilbourn's works to follow would demand a larger scale than the text block could contain. The woodblocks she worked with steadily grew in dimensions and she would later go on to apprentice in and design stained-glass windows that adorn churches across Canada.

Insights into these artworks and formative experiences can be traced through Kilbourn's archival collection that was recently donated to the Fisher Library. The collection comprises realia, including original woodblocks and the tools used to carve them, and an abundance of process work and personal papers. Altogether, the collection includes seventy-eight hand-engraved woodblocks, several of which are double-sided. They range in size from smaller blocks (around 10 x 5-8 centimetres) used to illustrate books and cards, to oversized blocks (around 20-50 x 30-70 centimetres) used for large-scale prints. Many of these woodblocks and their corresponding prints relate to materials throughout the collection that hint at Kilbourn's artistic process, including proofs and sketches, journal entries, letters, and reference photographs. Some of the process



work also reflects Kilbourn's other artistic pursuits, including drafts for paintings and stained-glass windows. As a result, the collection facilitates connections that can be drawn between different artistic disciplines, such as the role of light in both wood engraving and stained-glass compositions.

Much like her process work, Kilbourn's personal papers reflect her multidisciplinary artistic pursuits and connections across the art world. Her childhood scrapbook arranged by her mother, letters to family members, and journals dedicated to meditations on biblical scripture, dreams, and art provide a glimpse into her early life and roots. Through her professional correspondence, we can trace her friendships with artists from across disciplines, including letterpress printers, poets, musicians, painters, and stained-glass artists. These connections may also shed light on the broader links between the worlds of printing and the fine arts.

This collection carries a great deal of potential for research and outreach at the Fisher Library. The woodblocks and engraving tools offer tangible insight not only into Kilbourn's own printmaking process, but also book production and print culture broadly. By handling these materials and noticing their heft and hand-carved details, we can truly appreciate the talent and labour involved in this art and the dedication of one of the many artists who has contributed to keeping these techniques alive today. At the Fisher Library, the Kilbourn collection is in good company among existing archival holdings from celebrated local wood engravers, including Wesley Bates, George Walker, Alan Stein, and Shanty Bay Press, as well as a broader collection of historic printing realia. To these holdings, Kilbourn's collection contributes her multidisciplinary approaches, and crucially, a woman's original artworks and voice in the Canadian fine press and fine arts scene.

FACING PAGE: 'The Dingle School 1872-1972' print from wood engraving (1972) (Kilbourn Papers, Box 15, Folder 13). **THIS PAGE:** Pencil study for 'Toulouse Geese' (ca. 1979) (Kilbourn Papers, Box 15, Folder 38). Hand-engraved woodblock for 'Toulouse Geese' (1979) (Kilbourn Papers, Box 5, Item 10). 'Toulouse Geese' (1979), print from wood engraving, number 21 of 35 copies (Kilbourn Papers, Box 15, Folder 17). Large stained-glass window mock-up labelled 'East, Resurrection Window, Trinity, Ottawa,' (ca. 1960s) Paint and ink on transparent film (Kilbourn Papers, Map case folder 3).





IN MEMORIAM: MICHAEL WILCOX

Marie Korey

Friends of Fisher Steering Committee

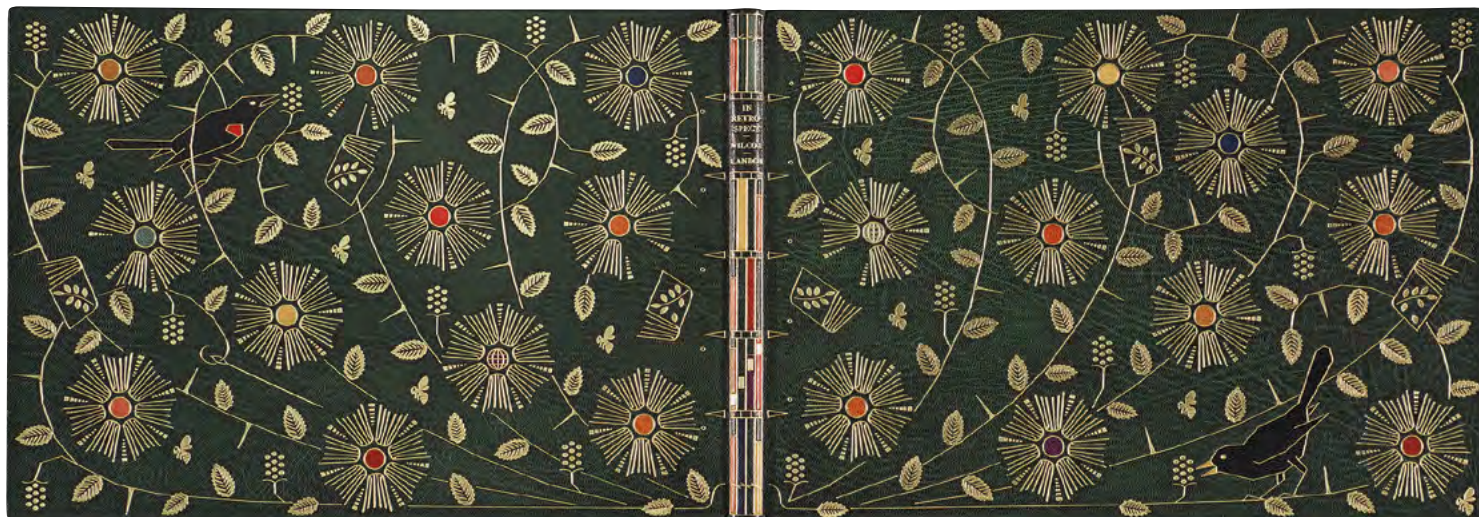
WE WERE SADDENED to learn of the death of designer bookbinder Michael Wilcox on 19 March 2023. Michael was born on 22 December 1939 in Bristol, England where he received his training.¹ When, in 1954, he began a six-year apprenticeship as a bookbinder at the printing house of Edward Everard, the work of a trade bindery was divided into forwarding and finishing: the processes involved in sewing up and covering a book, followed by the work of decorating the outside of the book and any additional tooling or gilding. Although he was apprenticed as a forwarder, Michael took classes at the School of Printing at Bristol

College of Technology where he learned the basics of designing and finishing. In the final year of his apprenticeship, Michael transferred to the fine bindery of George Bayntun of Bath. Upon completion, Michael returned to Bristol for a year where he worked as a journeyman while also taking classes in bookbinding and life drawing at the West of England College of Art. But the ideal setting—a place where he could carry out all the work of bookbinding from start to finish—eluded him, and he felt the need of a change.

In 1962 Michael emigrated to Canada with the prospect of a position in the Life Sciences Division of the Royal Ontario Museum in

Toronto. When that opening was delayed until the following year, he fell back on bookbinding, and took on a series of temporary jobs. Then he took a hiatus from bookbinding during the four years he worked as a technician in the Mammalogy Department of the Royal Ontario Museum. There he met his wife, Suzanne. In 1967 they moved to the Kawarthas to assist her parents in running a general store. They loved being in the countryside but found the work less satisfying. After a few years they moved to a small house near the store where Suzanne took up weaving and Michael began setting up a one-man bindery in a twelve-by-fourteen-foot garden shed on the lot. There he

FACING PAGE: Michael Wilcox (right) and Richard Landon photographed by Alan Horne at Wilcox's studio in 1977. **THIS PAGE:** Michael Wilcox's binding for the exhibition catalogue featuring his own works, *In Retrospect: Designer Bookbindings by Michael Wilcox* (1998). Commissioned and later donated to the Fisher Library by Jay Okun Yedvab.



was able to carry out all the tasks of binding while surrounded by the natural world that so delighted him. Suzanne often helped with the sewing and working the headbands.

By 1970, Michael was working on antiquarian books doing restoration for dealers, collectors, and libraries. From 1976 to 1981, he was employed on a part-time contract by the Fisher Library to restore books from the Jason A. Hannah Collection in History of Medicine and Related Sciences. This work provided some security while the commissions for bindings of his own design began to grow. One of earliest commissions came from Roddy Brinckman of Monk Bretton Books in Toronto on a copy of the Kelmscott Chaucer. It was exhibited at the New York Antiquarian Book Fair in 1977 and expanded Michael's reputation to a wider audience. It also was featured in an article on Michael by Richard Landon, 'Happily in A Bind', which appeared in the May 1977 issue of *Books in Canada*. By 1981 Michael was able to work exclusively on fine design bindings for antiquarian booksellers and collectors internationally. In December of 1983, there was an exhibition of his work at the Thomas J. Watson Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, arranged by W. Thomas Taylor and the Guild of Book Workers. Taylor also commissioned several bindings that were offered for sale in the 1985 catalogue, *Twelve Bindings by Michael Wilcox*.

Examples of Michael's work often were featured in exhibitions on fine bookbinding.

A more comprehensive review of his work was held at the Fisher Library in the 1998 exhibition, *In Retrospect: Designer Bookbindings by Michael Wilcox*, with a memoir and descriptions of the bindings by Michael and an essay on designer bookbinding by Richard Landon. Michael also spoke at a meeting of the Friends of the Fisher while the exhibition was on display. These events prompted Friends' member Jay Okun Yedvab to commission and later donate to the Library a design binding by Michael on the exhibition catalogue. It and four other Wilcox bindings were included in the 2019 Fisher exhibition, *Uncovering the Book: An Exhibition in Honour of Greta Golick*.

Michael's approach to his design work was consistent. He read the books he was asked to bind, as well as books about the author or illustrator to gather ideas for his designs. As the concepts developed in his mind, his drawings, done in both pencil and ink, moved in stages of increasing detail until the final ones were completed. These he then traced onto pattern papers. He also gave careful thought to the binding structure so that the contents of the book, the binding structure, and the design of the covers would come together as a whole in the finished product. He relied on gold tooling and leather onlays as his decorative techniques and often cut his own tools to achieve a particular effect.

Michael's achievements were acknowledged with the Saidye Bronfman Award for Excellence in Crafts in Canada in 1985. He

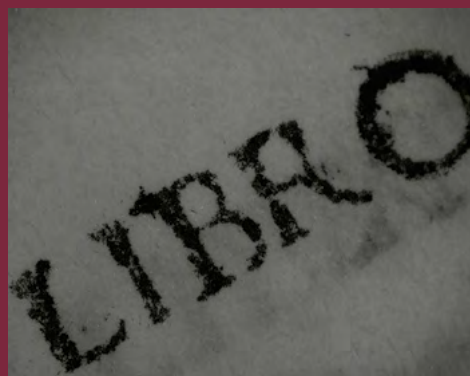
was asked to bind the *Merchant Navy Book of Remembrance*, one of eight such books on display in the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower of the Canadian Parliament buildings in Ottawa. In 1997 he received a Canada Council for the Arts award, which gave him the opportunity to design and bind books of his own choosing. These he could retain—a luxury for someone who usually worked on the commissions of others—to be used in exhibitions or competitions. Michael occasionally gave lectures and wrote articles about his work, including ones for the Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild (CBBAG), the Society of Bookbinders, and the Designer Bookbinders. In 2013 he produced privately (and in a very limited edition) *Notes from a Country Bindery (Forwarding)*, recounting his observations of how books were bound in a fine bindery (Bayntun's) in the twentieth century. Michael was considered by many to be one of the finest bookbinders of his time.

Endnotes

- 1 The information on Michael's training is based on his reminiscences in *Twelve Bindings by Michael Wilcox* (Austin: W. Thomas Taylor, 1985) and Michael Wilcox and Richard Landon, *In Retrospect: Designer Bookbindings by Michael Wilcox* (Toronto: Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, 1998).

FISHER SUMMER SEMINARS 2024

The Fisher Library will offer two seminars in June 2024. Since 2017, the Fisher Summer Seminar series has provided continuing education in the fields of book history and bibliography for librarians, archivists, curators, scholars, antiquarian booksellers, students, and the public.



Book Science

5–7 June 2024

The first seminar is a collaboration with the Mellon-funded 'Hidden Stories' project on the subject of 'book science': low-barrier, non-invasive scientific imaging and analytic techniques appropriate for the study of manuscripts and printed books from a variety of global book traditions. Participants will gain a practical introduction to a range of interdisciplinary collaborations and overlaps between specialists in book history, paleography, conservation science, forensic chemistry, archaeometry, engineering, molecular biology, and other disciplines.



Black Community Archives and Libraries

13–14 June 2024

The second seminar will explore the role of community and institutional archives and libraries in the making, preservation, and dissemination of Black histories from multidisciplinary practices. During this two-day seminar, participants will learn together with community activists, scholars, archivists, and librarians on various methodologies and themes and reflect on cases studies designed to promote collaboration and activation of print and archival records on Black histories across time and regions.

The call for applications for both seminars will be sent out in January 2024. The deadline for completed applications is Friday, 1 March 2024.

Application forms will be available for download at fisher.library.utoronto.ca/summerseminar2024.



TO LEARN MORE about how to support the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library through gifts of materials, donations or a provision through your will please contact the library advancement office to confirm the nature of your gift. We will be in touch with you regarding recognition, should you wish to join our list of distinguished Heritage Society donors or remain anonymous.

For more information please contact
Anna Maria Romano at **416-978-3600**
or visit <http://donate.library.utoronto.ca>.

Thank you!

EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS 2023

EXHIBITIONS 2024

Exhibition Location and Hours

9–5, Monday–Friday

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

120 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario

Before visiting, please check our website to confirm hours of opening.

24 January to 26 April 2024



The Immersive Movable Object: Contemporary Pop-up Books

This exhibition is a celebration of the movable pop-up book, from the use of paper wheels as calculators to three-dimensional pop-up paper sculptures. It looks at the re-interpretation of movable books mostly published in the last seventy years. Subject areas include classic literary works and popular media, explorations of human physiology,

human exploration, religion, teaching, artistic endeavours, and the effect of human activity on the Earth. This exhibition is curated by Joan Links.

EVENTS 2024

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

120 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario

Some events may take place in person and online.



Friends of Fisher Lectures

Please visit the News & Events sections of our website and our social media channels for information about upcoming lectures.

fisher.library.utoronto.ca

EDITORS' NOTE

This issue was edited by Grant Hurley, Liz Ridolfo, Loryl MacDonald, and Maureen Morin, and designed by Maureen Morin. Comments and/or suggestions should be sent to:

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The Halcyon: The Newsletter of the Friends of The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library is published twice a year in June and December. *The Halcyon* includes short articles on recent noteworthy gifts to and acquisitions of the Library, recent or current exhibitions in the Library, activities of the Friends, and other short articles about the Library's collections.

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For more information about the Fisher Library, please visit the website at fisher.library.utoronto.ca.

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