

Off The Record



AAO

Archives Association of Ontario

Volume 33, Number 2

Spring 2017

ISSN 2370-1099

Table of Contents

Message from the Editor	3
Message from the President	4
Member Spotlight: Jeremy Heil	5
Release of Ottawa Jewish Bulletin Online	6
Preserving Ontario's Past Using Historical Topographic Maps	8
Adele Torrance Joins CSTMC	10
taag Update	10
Announcements	12
Practicum Profile:	
The National Ballet Archives	13
Conservation Treatment of a WWI-Era Sarnia Newspaper	15
Archives in Fiction: Bear	18

Board of Directors, Support & Staff

Dana Thorne President president@aoe-archivists.ca	Grant Hurley Director Without Portfolio/ OTR Editor director2@aoe-archivists.ca
Tracey Krause Vice-President vp@aoe-archivists.ca	Jennifer Weymark Chapters Stakeholder chapters@aoe-archivists.ca
Marissa Paron Past-President	Amanda Tomé Web Administrator webadmin@aoe-archivists.ca
Jodi Aoki Secretary/Treasurer secretary.treasurer@aoe-archivists.ca	Iona McCraith Archives Advisor archivesadvisor@aoe-archivists.ca
Paul Henry Institutional Development Chair idc@aoe-archivists.ca	Lisa Snider Archeion Coordinator archeion@aoe-archivists.ca
Nick Richbell Director Without Portfolio director1@aoe-archivists.ca	Managing Matters Secretariat aoe@aoe-archivists.ca

On the Cover

The cover features a 1979 photo of the University of Waterloo's Dana Porter Library viewed through some tree blossoms. UW is celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2017. Dana Porter Library (initially called the Arts Library) was named after the Honourable Dana H. Porter, former Chief Justice of Ontario and the University's first Chancellor.

About Us



Archives Association of Ontario

The Archives Association of Ontario (AAO) was established in 1993 as a result of the amalgamation of the Ontario Association of Archivists and the Ontario Council of Archives. It is a network of archives and archivists providing programs, education, advocacy and shared knowledge, consisting of approximately 300 members.

The AAO promotes the development of a co-operative system of archives in Ontario by:

- Advocating on behalf of Ontario's archival community to the government of Ontario, local government and other provincial institutions in order to advance archival practice and promote the value of archives
- Promoting professional standards, procedures and practices among archival repositories
- Facilitating archival communication and cooperation among institutions, users and sponsors
- Providing leadership through communication and co-operation with individuals, groups and associations interested in the preservation and use of Ontario's documentary heritage

Additionally, the AAO offers a number of different services to its members. Please visit <http://aoe-archivists.ca/Services> to learn more.

Message from the Editor

by Grant Hurley

Up there with “digitize,” “collaborate” and “community” are common buzzwords often invoked in the archives world. While “collaboration” is the subject of this year’s AAO conference, “community” is an idea we come across just as frequently, as in “community archives” or the “archival community.” What do these senses of “community” really mean? And as I look forward to the AAO conference sessions, what does it mean to collaborate between and within our communities? Despite common use, both terms still hold much weight, and it is worth exploring how they are realized. I recently finished Canadian essayist Erin Wunker’s excellent 2016 collection, *Notes from a Feminist Killjoy: Essays on Everyday Life*. There are many worthy observations in the book that might apply to our work as archivists, but one that struck me was a quotation from the poet Lisa Robertson. Robertson observes that the “notion of community is an abstraction of the real texture of friendship, with all its complicated drives and expressions.” The concept of “community,” Wunker relates in response, is “a vocabulary that is stripped of the intimacies - by which I mean closeness in all its forms - of individual relationships ... a way of talking about friendship in the general” (p. 137). It is interesting to ground the abstract idea of community in the concrete and lived experiences of friendship. Can communities exist without the closeness of friendship? It is hard to imagine feeling part of a community without some kind of connection to other individuals, even if those connections are mediated somehow, such

as on the web. And in-person connections are why we value events such as conferences. The AAO conference is a chance to renew our sense of community in the concrete through the friendships that we create as we enter our educations and professions in the field: seeing former classmates and colleagues is definitely part of the joy of these events beyond the sessions themselves. Smaller-scale events such as this past month’s Archives Awareness week or the various chapter AGMs happening this spring are equally important to continue cultivating and supporting as sites where our relationships among ourselves and users can be reinvigorated. As a visitor to the recent NOAA chapter AGM in Thunder Bay this past month, I greatly enjoyed sharing a meal with the chapter’s members. Hearing of the many ways the members of the NOAA chapter are working to improve access to the region’s history was a humbling experience. At our events and conferences, we meet, talk, debate, complain, drink too much coffee and/or eat too many pastries. Sometimes we might even dance. And through these activities, which are very much embodied in our feelings, our experiences, and ourselves, we are enabled to continue to get the work done. There’s plenty of proof in this issue alone that our community is in full force, with large scale digitization projects on the go, an active and engaged student population, interesting conservation projects, and a great conference to come!

Robertson, L. (2009). Dispatch from Jouhet! Harriet: A Poetry Blog. Retrieved from [here](#).

Wunker, E. (2016). *Notes from a feminist killjoy: Essays on everyday life*. Toronto: BookThug.



Message from the President

by Dana Thorne

As I sit down to write my final President's Message, I marvel at how quickly a year has gone by! I spent the majority of my term as President on maternity leave, and when I saw Professor Robert Kelly's [viral video](#) featuring two pint sized intruders during a live interview with BBC, it summed up many of my AAO teleconferences quite nicely. Despite the fact that I was not at my usual place of work for the last year, I was still able to enjoy a connection to the archival community through the AAO. Never underestimate the importance of this network and the opportunities that we have to grow together!

I was blessed to work with an amazing group of volunteers this year. If you are looking for a rewarding experience, consider reaching out to one of our Committees or getting in touch with your local Chapter. Although nominations for Board positions closed on March 27, nominations from the floor will be accepted for the Secretary-Treasurer and Vice-President/President Elect positions at our Annual General Meeting on April 27.

Speaking of the AGM, our annual conference is just around the corner. The Local Arrangements Committee and the Program Committee have put together an unforgettable couple of days. Thank you to all the volunteers on the conference planning committees for their dedication. This year, we "Come Together" to explore how new con-

nctions and partnerships can be created within and outside the archival community.

The AAO celebrates many accomplishments this year. Two new resources were introduced to our website to assist archivists in responding to the Calls to Action released by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in locating Indigenous archival materials: [Toward Truth and Reconciliation](#) and [Indigenous Resources](#). The Provincial [Acquisition Strategy](#) remains a central focus, so please continue to participate and spread the word about this initiative to other archival institutions across Ontario. The Organizational History Committee and volunteer writers are hard at work on this publication, and are currently canvassing the community for photographs that could be included in the book. You can review the [technical guidelines](#) regarding the submission of images and send your pictures to [Terra Belanger](#)!

I am grateful to the AAO Board of Directors for their tireless work this year. We bid a fond adieu to our Secretary-Treasurer Jodi Aoki, whose detailed minutes have kept us all on track. As our first Chapter Stakeholder, Jennifer Weymark has paved an excellent path for improved communications between the Board and our Chapters. Past President Marissa Paron is completing her term on the Board, and thank you to Marissa for her vision and dedication over three years. As Vice-President, Tracey Krause has brought enthusiasm and energy to our association that will no doubt transfer into her time as President. Her support has been invaluable over the past year. Thank you to the entire Board, the leadership team, our AAO staff, and our secretariat, Managing

Matters! Returning to my archival institution after a year at home has reminded me how important it is to acknowledge the vital role that archives can play. Let us continue to celebrate our achievements and keep working together! I look forward to catching up in Toronto.



Member Spotlight: An Interview with Jeremy Heil

When When and why did you first join the AAO?

I started my current job in May 2001, and my new colleagues recommended that I get to know the Ontario archival community. Paul Banfield had long been involved in the AAO, and he suggested that I attend the Conference at Black Creek Pioneer Village that June. It was easily the best decision I could have made as a fledgling archivist in the province! The Ontario archival community is an incredibly welcoming group. Conferences and committees are where I forged so many connections and long-term friendships. The then-Chair of the Professional Development Committee invited me to join them, and it really helped me understand the nature of

the Ontario archival community, and the inner workings of the Association.

What is your fondest memory from your involvement with the AAO?

The AAO Conference in Sudbury. This was a smaller affair than many conferences due to the distance for many to travel, but the discussions were out of this world! I came away from that conference feeling invigorated, and many of us felt it was a revitalization moment for the Association. And the wild rice, venison, and bannock served at the awards dinner were simply superb (but I digress!).

Reflecting on your career so far, what are you the most proud of accomplishing?

It's less of a completed project than something I continue to work on. I had only a vague idea of what digital preservation

would entail when I became an archivist. It has taken my entire career up to now to feel comfortable with acquiring digital records, and knowing what I need to do to preserve them for longer than five years. I can

remember how daunting a task it felt until I just started working on it – more out of necessity, when a donor arrives with their old laptop in hand! This will continue to be a lifelong journey, but I am happy to have reached a point where I can confidently



Jeremy Heil (Submitted photo).

share my expertise (both successes and failures) with others.

How have you seen the AAO make a difference for archivists practicing in Ontario?

I have seen how the combination of educational opportunities through the professional development offerings of the AAO and support and recommendations by the Archives Advisor program have helped to grow the archival community in Ontario. From advocacy for new archives, to ensuring the staff feel comfortable with how to preserve and make records available to researchers, the AAO continues to serve a vital role in this province.

What is the most rewarding part of your work?

I am tempted to talk about the thrill of the find, every time I open a new box or see a set of records for the first time, but that is only part of it. As an archivist, I have my own research interests and there's always a record or bit of information that piques my own interest, but I think the real reward can be seen when assisting dedicated scholars and researchers in their own search. There is an immense sense of satisfaction seeing the culmination of all our work at Queen's Archives: from receiving scattered bags of letters to making individual pieces of correspondence discoverable; from recovering files off of obsolete media to making these same records instantly accessible to a researcher halfway around the world. There are a wide range of activities that go into preserving and making archives available, and I love seeing how our holdings can gen-

erate excitement.

What do you see for the future of our profession?

The future is digital! It's not just in the records we're bringing in and preserving, but also in how we engage with researchers and each other. It's not hard for the smallest of archives to make a large impact with their collections, whether through virtual reference, or an assortment of online services. Digital forensics for file acquisition and recovery will become a normal part of the archivist's skill set, while discovery and research use will be facilitated and enhanced through linked open data. Honestly, I find it's an exciting time to be an archivist!



Ottawa Jewish Archives Announces Release of Ottawa Jewish Bulletin Online

by Saara Mortensen
Ottawa Jewish Archives

The Ottawa Jewish Archives is pleased to announce the completion of a digitization project providing online access to the complete run of the *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin* from 1937 to present.

The *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin Online* is a digitization project with the goal of providing free universal online access to the Ottawa Jewish Archives collection of the *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin*. The project was undertaken in the

lead up to 2017, Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation and the Bulletin's 80th Anniversary year.

The *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin* is Ottawa's longest running Jewish newspaper. It saw its first edition printed on October 22, 1937. The Bulletin has since become the voice of the Ottawa Jewish community and its leaders and organizations. It has educated, informed, entertained, consoled, at times aggravated, and moreover unified its readership; it has strengthened religious and ethnic identity; served as a forum for generations of Jewish thought; and chronicles the development of a small immigrant community into a vital group contributing much to Ottawa life.

Currently, 924 issues spanning 1937 to 2009 are universally accessible online for free, and another 135 issues dating from 2010 to present will be added to the digital library in the coming months. Cover-to-cover scanning was completed at the Internet Archive Canada (IAC) Regional Digitization Centre in Toronto. As part of the scanning process, the IAC utilizes Optical Character Recognition, or OCR, a technology that enables the content of scanned documents to be word searchable, greatly increasing the collection's research potential. The IAC will host the digitized *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin*



Front cover of the *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin* for March 20, 1942
(The Internet Archive).

collection to their publicly accessible digital library for perpetuity, with the end result being that the *Bulletin* archive is accessible online in its entirety with provisions to add digital issues as they are published. The digital collection may be accessed [here](#).

Through recent modernization and collections accessibility projects, the Ottawa Jewish Archives has made efforts to make its collections accessible and open to the community at large. The *Bulletin* collection is an

unmined treasure of the Archives, which has in the past only been accessible through onsite consultation. Now anyone with an internet connection can access the news stories, columns, features, editorials, and advertisements that document the cultural, social, and civic growth of Ottawa's Jewish Community and will allow for local, national and international access to the depth and richness of our local area's Jewish heritage and history as recorded through Ottawa's primary Jewish newspaper.

The project also has great potential to leave an impact on children and youth within both the Ottawa Jewish Community School Board and the Public School Board as access to the collection may allow students and educators to use this previously "hidden" and underutilized collection of local newspapers

to inform and supplement their local history curriculum.

The project was made possible by funding obtained through the City of Ottawa Heritage Funding Program 2016 and by the Ottawa Jewish Historical Society.



Preserving Ontario's Past: Exploring Transforming Landscapes Online Using Historical Topographic Maps

by Cheryl Woods
OCUL Geo Community

Representative, Western University

The Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), a consortium collectively made up of 21 University Libraries, holds and preserves large volumes of Canadian topographic maps. However, few OCUL universities have complete sets of these map series, and almost none have been digitized. While the Canadian government's most recent topographic maps are available online, older editions of these maps have not been digitized, and there are no plans to do so.

Initiated in the fall of 2014 by the OCUL Geo Community through a grant from the Ontario Council of University Libraries, the OCUL Historical Topographic Map Digitization Project is an endeavor to preserve and provide broad access to historical topographic maps covering Ontario at the 1:25000 and

1:63360 scales. This province-wide collaborative project highlights Ontario's rich history and changing landscape over the past 100 years, and is evidence of how Ontario's academic libraries continue to play a key role in preserving our national and provincial heritage in the digital age.

The OCUL Geo Community is a forum for the exchange of information and ideas pertaining to maps, geospatial data, and other cartographic resources, both print and digital, within the wider Ontario Council of University Libraries. The majority of the print maps that were digitized for this project are held in academic map collections in Ontario. In addition to the ones found in these university collections, other institutions contributed material from their map holdings. These included: Archives of Ontario; Library and Archives Canada; Natural Resources Canada; and, University of Alberta.

Over the past two and a half years, participants at OCUL institutions and OCUL's Scholars Portal have worked collaboratively to digitize, describe, georeference, and make available sheets published between 1906 and 1977. Accessible through OCUL's [Scholars GeoPortal](#), this digitized collection provides historical views that allow researchers, students, and the general public to travel through time to explore changes in natural and human environments.

In time for Canada's 150th birthday, this collection of approximately 1,100 historical topographic maps of Ontario has been made available for public use. The maps were originally produced by the Department of Militia and Defence, and show a variety of both natural and manmade features covering towns, cities and their surrounding

areas. Early topographic maps are heavily used by historians and researchers interested in examining change over time. These maps, provide historical snapshots that can be used to identify and highlight issues such as shoreline erosion, urban sprawl, transportation growth, diminishing woodlots and disappearing waterways. This project was accomplished by a dedicated team of librarians, programmers and students from various OCUL institutions, working under the OCUL Historical Topographic Map Digitization Project. Together, this team was able to locate, digitize, georeference, describe and transplant these maps into the GeoPortal.

The technical specifications for this project involved hard-copy digitization, georeferencing, and a sustainable transformation for viewing these maps in the Scholars GeoPortal web application.

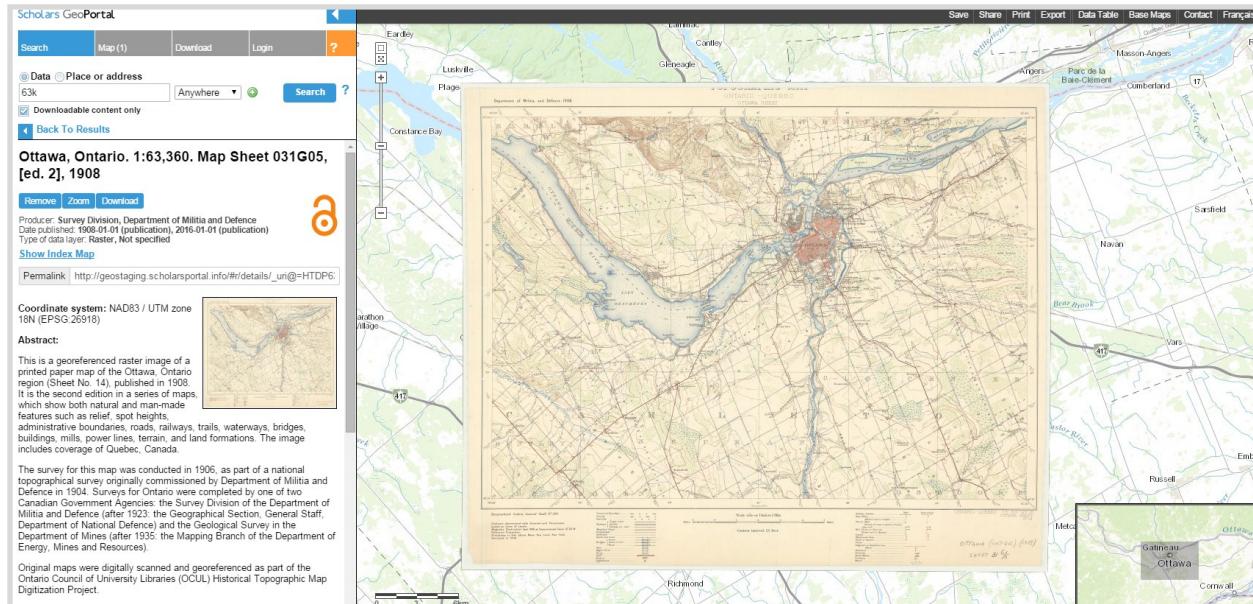
For example if you are interested in looking at Toronto in the 1:63360 series, the maps

available are dated: 1909, 1915, 1918, 1921, 1924, 1927, 1931, 1942 and 1949. Undoubtedly, at the very least, you would notice a substantial urban sprawl over those 40 years.

The maps will be searchable in the GeoPortal using a graphic index overlaying a current map of Ontario. When you click on a box that covers the area you are interested in, the map editions will be listed by their National Topographic System (NTS) number for that area. You then choose the years that you are interested in to view or download.

The [project website](#) includes example sheet maps to view and the following sections: About the Maps, About the Project, Collection Highlights, Using the Maps, Full Collection (alphabetical list of all map sheet names), Frequently Asked Questions, and Contact information.

The ultimate goal is to create and provide access through Scholars GeoPortal to a high



A screenshot of a 1908 topographical map for Ottawa in the Scholars Portal GeoPortal (Submitted photo).

quality, consistent digital collection that preserves historical topographic information and meets the needs of current and future users.

The complete, public-domain collection will be of great use to the university community and beyond. It will be an excellent resource for researchers, students and the general public alike to explore Ontario's past, and examine its growth over time. The project was formally launched in early April.



Adele Torrance Joins the Canada Science and Technology Museums Corporation

CSTMC

The Canada Science and Technology Museums Corporation (CSTMC) welcomed its new Archivist, Adele Torrance, in February. As Archivist at CSTMC, Adele will be overseeing the archival programmes of the Corporation's three museums: the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, the Canada Aviation and Space Museum, and the Canada Science and Technology Museum. The museums have extensive archival holdings demonstrating the development of science and technology in Canada, including: photographs and negatives from the Canadian National Images of Canada Collection; voyage reports and passenger lists from the Canadian Pacific Steamship Collection; annual reports, advertising records, and training films from the Air Canada fonds; draw-

ings of technologies ranging from trains, paper-making equipment, fire trucks to satellites; as well as the personal records of agricultural scientists and astronomers, among others.



Adele Torrance
(Submitted photo).

Adele was Reference Archivist at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 2010 to 2017. Prior to that, she was a Project Archivist for 4 years at the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC, and a Young Canada Works intern at the Halifax Regional Municipality Archives. As a student, she also worked at the archives of the International Federation of Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies in Geneva and at the National Research Council in Ottawa. She holds a Master of Archival Studies from University of British Columbia and a Bachelor of Arts from York University.



taag Update by James Roussain *taag President*

Since our last update earlier this year, TAAG has been busily working on behind-the-scenes preparations for the 2017 AAO Conference and we are excited to soon be welcoming delegates to Toronto at the end of

April for what is surely going to be a great conference. We hope to see you all there!

Aside from preparing for the conference, TAAG has maintained our regular slate of social and professional programming for our Toronto-area members.

Annual General Meeting

Taking place a bit earlier than in past years, TAAG hosted its Annual General Meeting on March 9th where we welcomed over 40 attendees for a talk given by former Librarian and Archivist of Canada, Dr. Ian Wilson. Titled “Whereof what’s past is prologue,” Dr. Wilson’s talk mused on the past and present challenges facing our profession and urged those in attendance to not sit on our laurels but rather to continue engaging our communities, fellow colleagues, and our leaders to promote archives and their importance to society. We can be proud of our past successes but must continue to learn from them and not grow complacent. Dr.



Former National Archivist and Librarian of Canada Ian Wilson speaks at TAAG's 2017 Annual General Meeting (Photograph: Celia Schmidt).

Wilson's talk offered reflection and amusing anecdotes accumulated through his years of public service which culminated in a lively discussion amongst all in attendance.

As our full executive was elected last year with a two-year mandate, no elections were called at the meeting and our administrative business wrapped up quickly. Our executive remains:

James Roussain, President

Emily Sommers, Vice-President

Tys Klumpenhouwer, Secretary

Katey Watson, Treasurer

Celia Schmidt, Member-at-Large

Maegan Ayre, Member-at-Large

Amanda Tomé, Member-at-Large

Julia Holland, Past President

TAAG would also like to thank the current executive members for their tireless effort and commitment to our group, and to the profession.

With the 2017 AGM passed and the conference coming up, we reflect on our 2016-2017 year and want to thank our loyal colleagues who brave rain, snow, and sleet to join us at our events and support us through workshops and pub nights. We are always happy to see new faces, too, so please join us at our next event. TAAG is YOUR chapter.

As always, stay tuned for news on upcoming tours and workshop in the coming months, details TBA. Keep current with upcoming events and TAAG affairs by following us on [Facebook](#) or visiting our page on the [AAO website](#). If you need to reach us, please be in touch! Email us at taag.chapter@gmail.com.

Support the AAO Shirley Spragge Education Fund!

DONATIONS ARE NEEDED FOR THE 2017 SILENT AUCTION

The AAO 2017 Conference Silent Auction Committee is looking for members to donate items such as (but not limited to): Artwork, archival supplies, baked goods, books (related to the profession), hand crafted pieces (i.e. jewelry, knitted wares), pottery, gift baskets (i.e. chocolate, wine, beer).

Funds raised from this auction will go to the AAO Shirley Spragge Education Fund to encourage the continuing education of archivists in Ontario. Your donations are greatly appreciated. A donation to the silent auction will not only support this fund, but will honour the memory of a respected colleague. All items donated will receive a tax receipt. If you have interest in donating to this year's silent auction, please contact Jessica Haskell by sending an e-mail to taag.chapter@gmail.com.

Shirley Spragge was an enthusiastic, dedicated archivist, well known in the archival community in Ontario and across the country. While she was most closely associated with Queen's University, she was involved in many other endeavours, including archival associations, historical groups, church archives, and university faculty work. In 1995, Shirley died from complications associated with lupus.

Hey, Students! Hi!

OTR would love to feature your work and ideas within its pages. Think about contributing to the **Practicum profile** (short pieces on your internships, summer projects, volunteer work and all the other stuff you do) and **Ask An Archivist** (an ongoing advice column for students and new professionals). Good? Good. Get in touch with the Editor at otr@ao-archivists.ca today!

Great software works for you!

eloquent[®]

Celebrating 40 Years of Knowledge Management
Software for professionals who manage:
ARCHIVES – LIBRARY – MUSEUM – RECORDS
Purchased or in the Cloud

Click here for more info ►

DIGITAL ASSETS
Render all your material with any browser: audio, video, flip books, large maps & drawings.

PUBLIC ACCESS
The world can enjoy your rich heritage online or from storage.

MANAGE STORAGE
Find available space, locate items quickly, and generate meaningful statistics.

MANAGE REQUESTS
Manage requests arriving by automated email or into the database.

GOOGLE MAPS
Present your geographic locations on the map for all related material.

BROWSER-BASED
You need only a browser with access to the 'cloud' or your own server.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
Support the hierarchical structure required by all professional standards.

ELOQUENT ARCHIVES™ WWW.ELOQUENT-SYSTEMS.COM 800-663-8172/100



On Pointe: My Practicum at the National Ballet Archives

by Lisl Schoner-Saunders
MI Student, University of Toronto

From the moment I discovered the existence of the archives at the National Ballet, I knew that I had to somehow worm my way in. The chance to combine my lifelong interest in ballet and my current professional education and aspirations seemed too good to be true. For those who do not know, the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto offers an Information Professional Practicum course, which gives students practical experience working with information professionals through the completion of a project. (Projects can be submitted [here](#)). It was through this means that I was able to work at the archive over the past four months.

Established in 1975, the National Ballet Archives was created over twenty years after the initial founding of the company. Accord-

ing to their mandate, “the National Ballet Archives was created for the collection and preservation of materials that best serve to illustrate the founding and development of The National Ballet of Canada, and to assist, whenever possible, research and scholarly work in dance.”¹ As a corporate archive, the significance of the archive and the high demand for the archivist within the institution came as a pleasant surprise. The archive is responsible for numerous essential tasks within the National Ballet, such as creating displays, writing and recording histories, and managing the digital repository.

My project was a reorganization and assessment of one of the series within the archival collection. My role was to first ensure that the existing holdings met with current archival and conservation standards. The next stage was to integrate the outstanding accession records into the General Administration subseries. Additionally, I was also responsible for ensuring the database was up-to-date and written in accordance with RAD standards. The best part of this project by far was the day spent typing out labels for the Hollinger boxes and acid-free folders on the typewriter.

Going through these records, I spent my days looking at old campaign lists, donor notes, sponsorship inserts, and more. The most interesting and ironic find was a return letter from Kentucky Fried Chicken—on official KFC letterhead—saying they were unfortunately unable to donate to the National Ballet. One of the subseries was exclusively a collection of program inserts, full of perfectly preserved pictures of Rex Harrington, Frank Augustyn, and Karen Kain from their acme. In these instances, it was often hard to stop myself from exclusively admiring the content of the collection, rather than completing my job.

Supplementary to my project, I was able to contribute to the “150 Pointes of Canada” project. In support of the sesquicentennial, the National Ballet is hosting a social media based project where participants around Canada take pictures at significant Canadian sites or with Canadian figures, with the provided pointe shoe. The hope is that by the conclusion of the project, the archive will be able to create a virtual exhibit of all the pictures.

Coming from a background in library sci-



Lisl at the Archives (top) and the infamous typewriter (bottom)
(Submitted photos).

ence, this experience has allowed me to learn new methods of preservation and organization from an archival perspective. The challenge of refining in my knowledge of librarian cataloguing and organization standards in favour of preserving the provenance within a collection proved to be of particular use and interest. This experience has been a perfect blend of both traditional and virtual archiving. Through this project I learned that each item has value, and the overall necessity of preservation.

As the National Ballet Archives’s Motto states:

“In order to find the most reasonably appropriate, suitably permanent resting place for every document worth keeping in this department, you must never resist or have fear of any piece of paper passing through your hands more than once...”

¹ “Archives,” National Ballet of Canada. 20 Mar 2017. [Link](#).

Header photo courtesy of the University of Toronto Archives, 2006-2-1MS.



Conservation Treatment of a WWI-Era Sarnia Newspaper

by Jennifer Robertson
*Book and Paper Conservation
Services*

As a book and paper conservator working in private practice, I frequently undertake projects for smaller regional institutions who don't have conservation staff in house. These are some of my favourite jobs to work on because they always present interesting items that have great local importance.

Recently, the [Lambton Heritage Museum](#) in Grand Bend, Ontario contacted me about having a rare copy of a 1916 *Sarnia Canadian* newspaper from their collection conserved. The newspaper, originally a single sheet folded into two leaves and consisting of four printed pages, had been further folded into quarters and stored in a legal file folder for many years. It was soiled along the top edge, and the sloppy creases had been folded back on themselves several times, obscuring text from the centre of the page. The two pages of the sheet were detached along the spine fold and there were many breaks and chips along the edges. The brittle paper inhibited opening, and with each handling the item deteriorated further.

The newspaper featured articles describing the upcoming deployment of the 149 Battalion (Lambton) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, in May of 1916. This First World War battalion was popularly known as



Sarnia Canadian newspaper before conservation treatment (top and bottom).

"Lambton's Own" as most of the men who joined came from Lambton County. According to Assistant Curator Luke Stempien of the Lambton Heritage Museum, the paper is the only known copy of this issue of the *Sarnia Canadian*, a weekly newspaper estab-

lished in 1860. The newspaper was part of a research collection in the museum, and was never formally accessioned or catalogued. Although some Sarnia Canadian issues are available on microfilm, this particular issue was not, and the original artifact was the only means of accessing the information. Museum staff came across it recently and flagged it as archival material with the intention of properly cataloging and storing the item.

The newspaper was a high priority candidate from their collection, and several reasons prompted the Museum to seek conservation treatment to preserve it. A researcher seeking WWI materials in the collection wished to read the articles on the front page, but access was prevented by the condition of the paper. The anniversary of the date of deployment of the Battalion is ap-



Dry cleaning to remove grime

proaching, and the Museum hopes to display the item at an upcoming County Council Meeting to mark the occasion. Finally, it is an ideal piece for inclusion in an upcoming exhibition the Museum is organizing to celebrate Lambton County's participation in WWI. Considering all these factors, the Mu-



Flattening creases in the paper



Performing tear repairs with Japanese tissue

seum decided to pursue having the newspaper conserved, and they brought it to my studio for treatment.

After careful examination of the paper's physical condition, I provided a condition report and conservation treatment proposal to the Museum staff. Whenever possible, I try to offer several treatment options to meet a client's needs and budget as well as the best interests of the item; in this case the Assistant Curator and I discussed the all the factors and together we settled on a medium level treatment that would allow access to information and safe handling of the paper.



Tracing losses to create fills with Japanese paper

The treatment began with gentle dry cleaning of the paper to remove the dirt and grime, particularly the dark strip on the top of the front page that had been exposed outside of the folder. Not all of this was able to be removed, as the dirt particles were well ground into the paper fibres, but it was significantly reduced with cleaning, giving a more even appearance to the page.

Next, the centre folds were relaxed by applying a thin line of distilled water by brush along the peak of each crease. This allowed the sheets to be gently opened without causing the brittle paper to crack; the moistened creases were then flattened using a hot tacking iron.

Once opened flat, the many tears and breaks in the sheets could be repaired. An extremely thin, cream coloured Japanese tissue was selected for these repairs and the tissue was adhered with wheat starch paste, a stable and reversible adhesive which will not become yellow and brittle with age. This particular tissue, known as RKO, is so thin that it is nearly transparent and can be applied over printed text while still allowing it to be read, an essential con-



Sarnia Canadian newspaper after conservation treatment (top and bottom).

sideration for an item printed on both sides. Next, the losses in the paper around the margins were filled with a slightly thicker Japanese paper. The objective was to give enough strength to the margins that further damage from handling would be avoided. It was decided not to rejoin the two leaves, since a repair along the spine fold would not necessarily have had the strength to withstand frequent folding and unfolding. In-

stead, the paper was repaired as two individual sheets, providing safer and easier handling and storage; the sheets may be exhibited side by side as if open, or together as if folded.

Finally an overall humidification and flattening was performed. The sheets were placed in a humidity chamber for approximately an hour, to gently dampen the paper. They were then placed between two layers of Hol-lytex spun polyester fibre material and several sheets of blotter paper, and weighted to dry. The blotter was changed several times over the course of a day to gently extract the moisture, and the following day the newspaper was removed.

The treatment was very successful; the repairs have restored strength and flexibility to the newspaper, and the flattening has allowed all the information to be easily accessed. This is a perfect example of how a seemingly simple conservation treatment can make a big difference to an object, bringing it from a virtually unusable state back to being a valuable historic record.

The [Lambton Heritage Museum](#) plans to include the newspaper in its upcoming exhibition next fall at the [Judith and Norman Alix Art Gallery](#) (JNAAG) in Sarnia, Ontario. The exhibition will focus on Lambton County's participation in WWI, and particularly the war effort on the home front in Lambton. It is to run concurrently with the national traveling exhibition *Witness: Fields of Battle Through Canadian Eyes*, on loan from the Canadian War Museum, and the Lambton County Museums are looking forward to exposing this important local history to larger audience. Book and Paper Conservation

Services is very pleased to have been part of this project and to have contributed to the exhibition in a small way.

You can read about this conservation treatment and others like it on our [website](#) or follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) to see exciting work in progress. Contact us [directly](#) or 519-495-3402 if you have any conservation questions about items in your collection.

All photos submitted by the author.



Archives in Fiction: *Bear* (1976)

by Grant Hurley

[This article is the second of an occasional series on the representations of archivists and archives in fiction by Ontario authors. Please reach out with suggestions on what I should read next, or contribute a piece of your own! - Ed.]

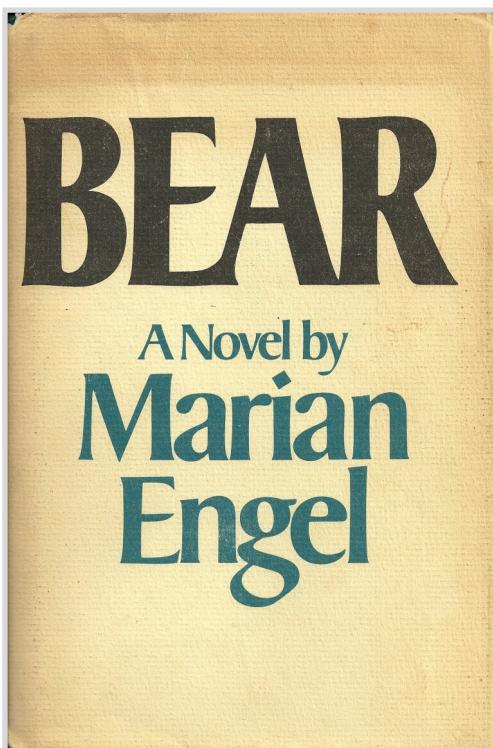
When I was thinking about which novel to feature next in this series, the book that came immediately to mind was Marian Engel's infamous 1976 novel *Bear*. It fits the bill: the novel is set in Ontario and features Lou, an archivist and librarian, as its main character. But the book is better known, of course, for something else: *Bear* is definitely one of the most scandalous literary works to come out of mainstream Canadian Literature. Like many such things, I suspect it is more talked about than read. The paperback version's campy cover got

some [meme coverage](#) a few years back, which certainly helped its reputation. So before I get into more about the novel (and this is definitely not a spoiler if you so much as glance at a summary of the book): the main part of the plot involves Lou having sexual relations with a bear (and not a metaphorical bear, an actual bear). Aside from that definite weirdness, the book is incredibly good. The prose is spare, precise and gorgeous. It's a very short book (barely over 100 pages) but in its precision it sketches out Lou as a complete character, and her experience as one strangely pathetic and bizarre, beautiful and compelling – and ultimately, contradictory. The essential plot is that Lou, who works for an anonymous “historical institute” in Toronto, has been tasked with living on a remote island in the Algoma area over the summer. The island is the site of a grand Victorian-era octagonal house that has been willed to the Institute. The Institute’s director hopes that the house’s library contains valuable information about the early settlement of the area. Lou’s job is to catalogue its contents and report back on its value. In between her work, she meets the bear, who had been kept as a pet by the island’s prior occupants, and the rest of the plot as described in brief above follows.

Responses to the novel have been generally

favourable, but conflicting. In a 2008 article for *Canadian Literature*, Cinda Gault admirably reviews critical readings of the novel from the 1970s onward, concluding that there have been two dominant trends in interpretation. One sees it as a romantic “feminist and Canadian nationalist” novel, while the second reads it as a realist work: the bear presents a real danger because it’s a real bear. (p. 30). The romantic interpretation sees Lou as finding renewal and cleansing at the end of the novel, and a triumphant return to self-confidence. As such, the novel’s mythic elements and a natural setting work as a method of

coming to terms with the national identity via a relationship with nature, and at the end, with feminist liberation. The realist interpretation focuses on how the elements of fairytale romance that begin Lou’s relationship with the bear are undermined by its actual bear-ness, including the threat of harm. Another contingent interpretation sees Lou as being unable to ultimately challenge the patriarchal structures that surround her. Gault sees these conflicting, interpretations as central to the text: it “makes a portrait of identity possible without integration or resolution” (p. 39). Furthermore, she quotes Engel herself in a letter: “I’m interested in your reaction to *Bear* because it’s almost an empty book, in some ways. People bring their own content to it.



The original quite non-descript cover of *Bear* (Scanned by author).

And they make it what they want it to be" (p. 38).

So, where does this leave us regarding Lou's additional identity as an archivist? The novel begins with the line "In the winter, she lived like a mole, buried deep in her office, among maps and manuscripts" (p. 11). And though the narrator notes that "though she loved old shabby things, things that had already been loved and suffered, objects with a past," she nevertheless is feeling trapped under its weight (p. 12). As she begins her work on the island, she quickly finds that the library does not contain what the Institute had hoped for: in the place of potentially useful manuscripts is a fairly conventional Victorian-era library. But what she does find are numerous slips of paper within the books each containing a small note about the history and mythology of bears. Lou begins to catalogue the occurrence of these notes: "She wondered, as she did it, why she was doing it; if she were trying to construct a kind of *I Ching* for herself. No: she was a bibliographer, she told herself. She simply wanted the record to be accurate" (p. 71). Later, she has a conversation with Homer, the estate's caretaker, in which he relates to her the colourful and interesting history of the area. When she returns to the cards, "she could not justify herself. What was the use of all these cards and details and orderings? In the beginning they had seemed beautiful, capable of making an order of their own, capable of being in the end files and sorted so that she could find a structure, plumb a secret. Now they filled her with guilt; she felt there would never, ever, be anything as revealing and vivid as Homer's story, or as relevant" (p. 83). This conflict regarding records shows a tension that mirrors the unresolved tension be-

tween romanticism and realism in the novel's larger narrative. It would be too easy to read the book's treatment of Lou's profession in simple terms: Lou resents her quiet job and grimy Toronto, finds a more exciting life in the purity of the wilderness, and is renewed and freed by it. But, Lou notes more than once that she loves her work, and at the end, resolves to leave the oppressive Institute and find a better job as an archivist elsewhere. At the same time, she is conflicted about the meaning of her professional work: on one hand, there is opportunity in meaning through archival order. What she describes in the first quote is not unlike our profession's (often romantic) justifications for original order: that they may be understandable one day, even if not understandable to the casual user. But there is also the (realist) failure of archival records to be "revealing and vivid" as a stand-in for lived experience. Attempts at recording and describing may at first appear to be objective ("she simply wanted the record to be accurate"), but we know very well that they are not. *Bear*, in its intricate and understanding representation of archival work, therefore gets to the heart of such tensions. These tensions are unresolved, and nor do they need to be resolved; in their coexistence, there is ultimately more complexity and promise.

Citations:

Engel, C. (1976). *Bear*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Gault, C. (2008). Marian Engel's Bear: Romance or realism? *Canadian Literature*, 197, 29-40.



Submissions

Off the Record (ISSN 2370-1099) is published four times per year by the Archives Association of Ontario in electronic format. Newsletter content may be reproduced in whole or in part provided that credit is given.

Commercial Ads

Interested advertisers should contact the AAO at aao@ao-archivists.ca for more information.

Submitting Writing

All submissions, including letters to the editor, should be accompanied by the sender's name, address and phone number.

Articles should be short: pieces of 1000-1500 words or under are preferred. The editor reserves the right to edit for clarity and length. Authors will be contacted for major re-writes.

Submitting Images

Images submitted for the newsletter cover, to accompany arti-

cles, or for other uses may be edited or altered at the discretion of the editor.

Submission Formats

Electronic

Please submit writing as a Microsoft Word document. For graphics and custom layouts the preferred file format is TIFF or JPEG.

Please do not insert images in a submitted article: send them separately. Unless otherwise specified, images will be placed in the body of the text at the discretion of the editor. Other specific layouts should be directed to the editor upon submission.

Specifications for images are at least 300 dpi, 3 inches wide, or 900 pixels. The highest possible resolution is always preferred.

In general, submit a hard copy if special software is needed to open the file.

Hard Copy

Hard copies are not accepted except under special circumstances. Please contact the [editor](#) if you wish to submit hard copies of photographs or text.

Submission Deadlines

The following dates are the submission deadlines for *Off the Record*:

**March 24 for Spring issue
June 26 for Summer issue
September 25 for Fall issue
December 29 for Winter issue**

Issues are typically released the last week of the month following the submission deadline. For example, the Spring issue deadline is March 25 and it would be released the last week of April.

Please send submissions to:

Grant Hurley, Editor
otr@aao-archivists.ca

Keep in Touch—Subscribe to the AAO Listserv!

To subscribe to AAOLIST, send an email message to LISTSERV@YORKU.CA with the following information in the body of the email: SUBSCRIBE AAOLIST firstname lastname

Remember to leave the SUBJECT line of the email message blank.

Please keep the welcome message that you will receive in reply for future reference!

To stop subscribing, send an email to LISTSERV@YORKU.CA with the following command in the body of the note: SIGNOFF AAOLIST