University Archives and Special Collections

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Each year, scholars and visitors from around the globe use these invaluable resources. The resulting scholarship contributes to the continued expansion of human knowledge and understanding.

The University Archives and Special Collections Reading Room (A005 – William C. Mearns Centre for Learning) is open to the public Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30 pm (September–April) and 10:30 to 4:30 pm (May–August).

Cover: Egyptian wooden block with hieroglyphics dating to the 21st – 22nd Dynasty (1085–791 BCE) donated by Bruce and Dorothy Brown

Design: UVic Graphic Services | UVic Photo Services Photograph of Cyril (Cy) Fox


Orchids / Charlesworth & Co. – 1912.

Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens / by J. M. Barrie, with drawings by Arthur Rackham. – 1906.

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In addition to holding books in all disciplines from the 15th-century onward, Special Collections strives to acquire publications that complement the major subject and author areas of its manuscript holdings to provide more comprehensive research collections. These collections of rare books and unpublished material provide opportunities for original research in diverse areas. From its inception in the 1960s, Special Collections has developed internationally recognized holdings in Modernist British, American, French and Anglo-Irish literature. Among the authors represented in print and manuscript are: John Berger, Lawrence Durrell, T.S. Eliot, E.A. Forster, Robert Graves, Aiden Hepburn, Wyndham Lewis, Henry Miller, Sylvia Plath, Ezra Pound, John Cooper Powys, Kathleen Raine, Herbert Read, Laura Riding, D.H. Lawrence, Bobo Skinner, and Douglas Goldring. A complete listing of our archival collections with retrieval aids can be found at http://library.uvic.ca/site/spcoll/literature. Other subject areas collected include Canadian military history, early 20th century literary magazines, Northwest exploration, ethnology, art and anthropology, and regional and Southern Vancouver Island authors and literary culture.

Digital Collections

The University of Victoria Libraries support a variety of digital initiatives to promote wider access to our unique collections. Our collections fall into a range of topics that you can browse using an A-Z list of our digital collections. These digital collections bring together rich resources for research and enjoyment by the university and the community.

http://library.uvic.ca/site/biblog/UVICdigitalCollectionIndex.html

Canadian Military Oral History

The University of Victoria Libraries Special Collections is the repository for one of the largest military oral history collections in Canada. The Military Oral History Collection contains interviews with over 400 military and related personnel offering individual perspectives from the army, air force, navy and auxiliary forces, covering topics ranging from both World Wars, other conflicts involving Canadian forces, post-war era affairs, and a host of other military-related subjects. The Military Oral History collection at UVic has been used widely by all of Canada's foremost military historians since it was made available in the late 1980s. In 2005, Special Collections embarked upon the Military History Digitization project ensuring ongoing access to this unique and irreplaceable collection of military memories.

Colonial Despatches 1846-71

The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island are the correspondence between the Governors of Vancouver Island and the Colonial Office in London, England. In the first phase of the project UVic Libraries digitized documents from 1855 for B.C.’s 150th birthday. With this year’s grants we have collected 117,700 digital images for years 1846-57 inclusive. This project was made possible with financial support from the McPherson Library, the Canadian Council of Archives, the B.C. Treaty Commission and the B.C. Treaty Commission. With continued financial support UVic Libraries can digitize the files from 1858 to 1871. To draw students into the past, The Governor’s Letters is a linked website (http://www.geofit.ca/en/index.php) containing curriculum challenges designed by teacher educators.

The Jack Wise Archives

The University Archives continues to develop its holdings of local artists’ archives, which to date include Jack Wise, Judith Foster and Herbert Sieber. The Jack Wise archives are fully available to researchers.

Wise (1936-1996) was an artist, calligrapher, poet and teacher. His work from the 1950s consisted primarily of paintings in the abstract expressionist style. Wise became disillusioned with his art production and immigrated from the U.S. to British Columbia in 1956, where he spent several years farming in the present’s interior. Wise, along with Lisa Chien-Shih, Emily Carr, and Mark Tobey, is identified with the Pacific Northwest School of Abstract Calligraphic Painting, which combined eastern abstraction expressions with Asian calligraphic tradition and Buddhist philosophy. Wise is also linked to the West Coast Salish, hermetics, who included Gary Lee Ure, Gregory Simpson and Ed Haremy. Although Wise was most obviously influenced by Asian traditions, his art is cited as having a cross cultural significance resulting from his strong interest in Japanese psychology and its central belief in the universal collective unconscious.

Wise’s work is represented in many public, private and corporate collections, including the Scottish Arts Council, Canada Council Art Bank, the Victoria Art Gallery, the University of Victoria’s Malwood Gallery, and the Smithsonian Institution. His archival fonds consists of correspondence, sales lists, exhibition catalogues and lists, photographs, clippings, letters, poems and calligraphy, scrapbooks and notebooks, teaching materials, curatorial notes and biographical documents, publications, and solo and other objects used by Wise in his art practice.

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The Lion and the Fox

Art and literary works by Wyndham Lewis from the C. J. Fox Collection were presented in an exhibition, The Lion and the Fox, to celebrate C. J. Fox’s donation of the material for collection over a seventy-year period about Lewis and other non-conformist writers. Cyril (CJ) Fox collected books, art, and other materials by Lewis and other modernists and his digressions are accumulating this impressive collection. A one-day symposium, The Wyndham Lewis and Modernism Symposium, was part of the Lion and the Fox exhibition topics that ranged from Vancouver to Canadian Modernism. The outstanding scholarly resource will benefit Lewis and modernists for years to come.

Browse the C.J. Fox Collection Archives: http://library.uvic.ca/site/specialfinds/2007-001.html

Historical Photographs

Established by the Senate in 1973, the University Archives is the repository for university records of permanent value from executive, administrative and academic offices. The Archives also acquires and provides public access to archives of individuals and organizations from the university community and the Pacific west coast region, particularly relating to environmental sciences, women’s studies, and arts and culture.

http://library.uvic.ca/site/archives/default.html

The most recent addition to our Architecture Collections is the fonds of John Di Castri. John’s footprint can be seen all over Victoria, including the University where he was responsible for the design of the original Student Union Building (1960), the Connell Building (1966) and the Interfaith Chapel (1984). Victoria born and raised, John spent his career inspiring the city with his exceptional talent for modern design. UVic Libraries is grateful to his wife, Joanne for entrusting us with the care of his papers. To read more about John, please go to: http://library.uvic.ca/about/libraries/castri.html
The Lion and the Fox

Art and literary works by Wyndham Lewis from the C. F. Fox Collection were presented in an exhibition. The Lion and the Fox, to celebrate C. F. Fox's donation of the material he collected over a 50-year period about Lewis and other non-conformist writers. Cyril (C.J.) Fox collected books, art, and other materials by Lewis and other maverick personalities, accumulating this impressive collection. A one-day symposium, ‘The Lion and the Fox: Modernism Symposium,’ was part of The Lion and Fox exhibition topics that ranged from Vorticism to Canadian Modernism. The outstanding scholarly resource will benefit Lewis and modern studies for years to come. Browse the C. F. Fox Collection Archives: http://library.uvic.ca/site/spcoll/findaids/2007-001.html

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