

## Treasure abounds in Special Collections

by Henry Summerfield

Every university library needs a rare book room, where readers can study materials that are too scarce or valuable to be taken out on loan. When Victoria College became the University of Victoria, Roger Bishop recruited the poet Robin Skelton for the English Department, and Skelton soon noticed books that were at risk in the Library's open stacks. The result was the founding of Special Collections in 1966. At that time money for acquisitions was far more plentiful than it has been in more recent decades, and the first Curator of the rare book room, Howard Gerwing, rejoiced to see his treasures augmented by major purchases as well as gifts. The University bought large collections of the books and manuscripts of Herbert Read, John Betjeman and Robert Graves to enrich an already fine collection Anglo-Irish literature. Since then, Ann Saddlemyer has donated part of her own collection to the University. Through purchases and donations, including the gift of many volumes from the library of the late eighteenth-century scholar Patricia Köster, the collection has seen an accumulation of antiquarian books. In addition to one incunabulum or fifteenth-century volume (a volume from the first half century of European printing with moveable type), Special Collections has two complete mediaeval manuscripts, and Erik Kwakkel has facilitated the purchase of other fragments. The complete manuscripts contain the encyclopedic *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (*On the Order of Things*) of Bartolomeus Anglicus and Lydgate's long poem *The Fall of the Princes*. In recent years the Canadian—including First Nations—holdings have been built up, with special attention to the period 1870 to 1900. Some of the acquisitions in this area, like the architectural plans of Samuel McClure and books and manuscripts of the poet Audrey Brown, are of local interest. There are materials of importance for historians,

especially military historians, rare maps and memorabilia among them. On permanent loan from the Catholic Diocese of Victoria is the Seghers Collection of religious works, and from the British Columbia Provincial Library has come the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 1665-1941.



Herbert Geddes collection ([info here](#))

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Special Collections adds to the prestige of the University and draws visits from editors and biographers who need to work on unpublished letters and other manuscripts in its possession. However, it is also important for UVic students in the English and History Departments and in Mediaeval Studies. For graduate courses in bibliography and research, both the antiquarian books and modern manuscripts are a necessary resource to be utilized with the expert help of the Rare Books Librarian. Subjects covered include the printing, binding and illustration of books in different periods, with particular emphasis on the way changes, whether they are accidental or deliberately introduced by the author or publisher, always intrude as texts are reprinted or otherwise reproduced; knowledge of these changes is essential for those who prepare scholarly new editions. Thus

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## From the desk of the Friends' Chair

by Elizabeth Grove-White

For friends of the UVic Libraries, inside and outside Ring Road, this year has marked one of the most exciting periods in the Libraries' 40-year history.

Day by day, the Mearns Centre extension nears completion. This expansion – scheduled for completion in spring, 2008 – will include the Bessie Brooks Winspear Media Commons, a new Special Collections and Archives space to house the libraries' unique treasures, and a range of educational support services for students including the university's new Writing Centre. The expansion will also provide additional shelving, computer workstations, classrooms, rooms for collaborative study and - very importantly - the new Biblocafé on the main floor, a new and welcoming place for library readers to come together.

And as library staff prepare for this new chapter in the libraries' history, celebrations marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Malahat Review*, founded by Robin Skelton and John Peter, both of the English department, reminded us also of one of UVic Libraries' most distinguished

friends. A special edition of the *Malahat Review* (Fall 2007, Issue No. 160) celebrates Skelton's contribution to Canadian life and letters, and the Maltwood Gallery mounted *The Hold Of Our Hands* – an exhibition of paintings and prints by West Coast artists donated by Robin and Sylvia Skelton to the University of Victoria. The library also celebrated Skelton's life in an exhibition of books and ephemera that reflect his wide-ranging interests and achievements as poet, author, artist, publisher, and academic.

On an October evening this year, the libraries' past and future came fully into focus when CBC *Ideas* recorded the second of the this year's Massey Lectures at the University of Victoria. This year's Massey Lecturer was Alberto Manguel, and the title of the series, fittingly, was *The City of Words*. Manguel, author of *The History of Reading*, and *The Library at Night*, spoke to a packed Farquhar Auditorium about how stories and books create identities and

communities transcending the difficult frontiers of ethnicity, gender, religion, and nationalism. Libraries, according to Manguel, are both the repositories of the past and the crucible of our future.

At the end of his lecture, responding to a question from the audience, Manguel spoke of libraries as "the symbolic centre of our society" and reminded the audience of our duty to sustain these libraries: "if we want to call ourselves a civilized society," said Manguel, "we have the duty of sustaining libraries, individually and as a society."

So this spring when we open our doors to the new, expanded UVic Libraries, we will remember gratefully the men and women whose contributions over the years have sustained and built our library. And as we do, we also look ahead to welcoming new generations of readers and library users whose lives and identities will continue to be transformed by the commonwealth of books Manguel so eloquently celebrates.

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in my bibliography course, each student was asked to pick a pre-1800 volume from a carefully chosen selection and to prepare a technical description of its makeup. Such a description can reveal the existence of a hitherto unknown reprinting which needs to be carefully examined for textual alterations. My students also used facsimiles of Shakespeare quartos to practise compiling tables of variant readings. As is usual in graduate courses, each member of the class was required to give an oral presentation, and some chose to give these in Special Collections, where they could use rare volumes to illustrate their points. Thus one student was able to demonstrate an important difference between a photocopy of printing by William Morris and the original. For the exercise in editing an unedited text which came as the culmination of the course, teams of three or four combined skills they had learned earlier and worked either with all the editions of a work with variant readings or with unpublished manuscripts,

often of an author's letters. It should be mentioned that members of the public, too, are welcome to consult most materials in Special Collections provided they deposit their driver's licence as security. (Members of the University deposit their library cards.)

The fine exhibitions the librarians periodically put together also deserve mention. Exhibition cases on either side of the entrance can be viewed even when Special Collections is closed, while three others stand inside the room. Especially inviting is one which permanently holds items from the Bruce L. and Dorothy E. Brown Collection, including an ancient Egyptian block bearing hieroglyphics, the first volume of *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates* (1724), a typed letter signed by Einstein, and a self-portrait of Charlie Chaplin, which was featured in the spring issue of *The Torch*.

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## UVic Libraries News

# Learning Commons coming to UVic

What is a Learning Commons?

A Learning Commons is a place where accessible academic support is available for students in one physical location. The Commons provides academic services as a cohesive whole so that students have access to effective, efficient and integrated assistance. The Commons also creates a space for collaborative work between students and between students, their TAs and their faculty.

Why are we starting one here at UVic?

The Learning Commons model has been shown to provide excellent academic support to students as they do their research and complete assignments.

UVic makes an ongoing effort to create a successful learning environment for students and the Learning Commons is one more way this can happen.

Why is it centred in the library?

Library research is a key component to academic success and as such the library is a good venue for the Learning Commons. On a more practical level, the building of the new Mearns Centre for Learning has allowed the library the opportunity to expand its mission on the university campus.

Who are the partners?

The partners who are currently involved

include the Library's Reference service, the Writing Centre, Learning Skills, Peer Helpers, Math Tutors and the UVic Computer Help Desk. The Library is discussing partnership with others on campus as well. Initial partners will be limited not by imagination, but by space.

When will the Learning Commons open to students?

The Learning Commons will be located in an area of McPherson Library that is currently occupied. Once the library addition is complete, the occupants of that area will move to the new building and the space will be renovated for the Learning Commons. It is anticipated that Learning Commons partners can begin moving into the Commons in late spring and be ready for full operation in August.

What needs to be done to get everything in place?

Many things need to be accomplished to make the Learning Commons a reality, including creating a programme plan; determining a governance model; identifying key players who will oversee the operation; planning space, furniture, signage; creating a communication plan and web presence; and discussing appropriate assessments.

# New BiblioCafé named and ready for launch



UVic Libraries and Housing, Food and Conference Services (HFCS) are pleased to announce the naming of the new cafe, BiblioCafé. The winner of the café naming contest is Karen Waugh, a UVic staff member in Student Recruitment. Marnie Swanson, University Librarian, and Thomas Bain, HFCS Manager of Retail Outlets & Vending, presented Karen with

a \$50 HFCS Food Card on October 16th. The Libraries would like to thank everyone who submitted an entry to the contest; we received 784 entries of 2000 creative names!

We look forward to the opening of BiblioCafé this winter (December or January) on the main floor of the McPherson Library.

# United Way Booksale an Annual Success

The Libraries United Way Book Sale was held November 6-8 and raised over \$5,000 towards UVic's United Way Campaign. Organized by Donna Mollin and Jaqui Thompson, with the help of many library staff members, the sale was held in the Student Union Building this year due to construction in the McPherson Library.

The organizers wish to thank everyone who participated in another successful sale.



## Talking to a friend A conversation with Phoebe Noble

by Ann Saddlemyer

Life keeps happening to Phoebe Noble, and she embraces it with laughter and zest, to say nothing of thoroughness. Teacher, wife, mother, professor, Co-ordinator of Women's Activities, acting Dean of Women, chair (several times) of mathematics, master gardener extraordinaire, friend and advisor, she has



Phoebe Noble and the Honourable David C. Lam, Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia 1988-1994

performed many roles over the years, most of them associated with UVic during its transformations from college to university. The only thing she hasn't done is run for public office, and why should she? Public office comes to her.

As so often happens, young Phoebe Riddle's choice of career was accidental.

Torn between love of English literature (Principal Harry Smith, Peter's father, was her teacher at Victoria High School) and mathematics, she was still undecided which direction to take during her two years in Victoria College, then housed in Craigdarroch Castle. But when she attended one of Walter Gage's lectures the die was cast; fortunately this magnetic teacher turned up at UBC the year she went over to complete her degree in Honours Math. While studying at the Vancouver Normal School she spent two summers working at the Dominion Observatory in Victoria, where she was offered a permanent job. But Phoebe refused, insisting that she had been trained to be a teacher and would remain so. And so for ten years she taught mathematics at Mount Douglas High School. With marriage to Jack Noble (they met while working summers at David Spencer's store before it was taken over by Eaton's) and the birth of a daughter came a pause in her career but at the outbreak of war she returned to teach at Mount Doug.

Life changed again in 1945 when Phoebe was persuaded by Principal Ewing to join Bob Wallace in the math department at Victoria College for one year; there were 200 students at the college and 17 faculty. By January 1946 she had a class of 18; by September the building was crammed to overflowing with returned veterans. Again the die was cast: she had planned to join her husband in Europe, but Jack Noble came home in a body cast. Meanwhile at Craigdarroch Castle students could be seen perched on the mantelpieces and peering out from the fireplaces while lectures were frequently given from a tabletop. In October 1946 occurred the famous protest march on the Legislature when, carrying a banner parodying "The Charge of the Light Brigade" - "Into the College of Death filed the 600", more than that many students demanded better, safer quarters. Within weeks of the march the government agreed to transfer the entire college to the west wing of the Lansdowne Campus Normal School and Phoebe went with them. For thirty-three years her

history would be bound up with that of an institution that couldn't be held down either. Exciting times indeed!

Quarters at Lansdowne were also crowded, but Phoebe harmoniously shared the big office under the clock with Gwladys Downes (who was teaching French and English) and Phyllis Baxendale (who taught German). In 1951 Bob Wallace, her senior (and only) colleague in the math department, realized that the recently invented computer would change the future of mathematics - would she teach Boolean algebra? Undaunted, she got four books out of the college library and spent the summer studying. Then along came "the new math": again she turned to the library for assistance, creating evening classes and courses up island for dismayed teachers, encouraging them with the assertion "If you can count to ten you can do the new math."

Uneasy though the co-habitation between college and Normal School may have been, it worked; the union was officially recognized in 1956 when the renamed Faculty of Education officially became part of Victoria College. During those transition years Phoebe was President of the Faculty Association; then she reluctantly served twice as chair of the mathematics department, which by then included 35 faculty members. Inevitably, when the College evolved into a fully fledged degree-granting university, further administrative responsibilities were thrust upon her. Principal Harry Hickman appointed her to the Gordon Head Campus Committee whose report, she recalls, optimistically stipulated that the campus should hold no more than 10,000 in order to retain communication between faculty and students, and that all academic buildings remain inside the Ring Road, leaving the outside for non-academic activities.

With a larger student body came further challenges. Concerned about the welfare of the many women students living off campus, she and Principal Hickman invented the title "Co-Ordinator of

Women's Activities" (she would never be a fully fledged Dean of Women). Again she turned to the library for help, taking various summer courses on counselling. Appointed "Client's Representative" for the first residences, she insisted that she have full responsibility to deal directly with the architect, spending several summers living in university residences elsewhere to study their arrangements. Later she was instrumental in naming the first two colleges after distinguished women - Margaret Newton (the graduate student in agriculture responsible for the discovery of rust-free wheat) and Victoria artist Emily Carr, but she recalls with some chagrin the stipulation in her first report that the exterior appearance be similar to a "gracious Victoria home". A strong believer in delegating responsibility ("find some body smarter than you are and give them the job"), she appointed the two youngest women faculty members and three students to draw up regulations for the residence. She recalls with satisfaction that, despite the surprising flexibility, there were never any problems.

The 60s, she admits, "were an interesting fun time". During that decade she also served as President of the Faculty Club (as a member of the planning committee she insisted that the building be chrome-free) and charter president of the Victoria Zonta Club, part of a worldwide service organization of executives in business and the professions working together to advance the status of women.

When Professor Noble retired from the university in 1978, a new career beckoned, sparked this time by family tradition: her grandfather had owned a nursery in Winnipeg (boasting the largest glass greenhouse in North America), and her father and uncles had followed his interest. In her turn, she determined to discover every plant that could be grown in the Pacific northwest. Out of this came a spectacular garden known well beyond Canadian borders, a popular book simply entitled *My Experience Growing Hardy Geraniums* (1994), the discovery of a new

geranium with brilliant magenta flowers which would be named after her, and an invitation from Lieutenant-Governor Lam to advise on the restoration of the gardens of Government House. In recognition of her work in this field, and her lifelong encouragement of women, the Zonta Club established the Phoebe Noble bursary for a student studying horticulture.

Throughout her academic career the library remained central to Phoebe Noble's life, even though she never completed doctoral studies (after several sessions at the University of Washington she despaired of their methods and left). She recalls with gratitude the support she and her students were always given by librarians, especially in the field of her greatest interest, the history of mathematics. Now as she gradually retires from an active role as master gardener she has turned back to that first love and looks forward to a winter working on quantum mechanics, because the physics she once studied "is being shot down".

The University of Victoria Archives includes the tapes from the Women's Caucus oral history project. When interviewed, Phoebe Noble was asked what it was like to be a woman in a male-dominated environment: "I've always just thought of myself as a person," and then adds, "first and foremost, a teacher.... I live in the future, not the past." For this long time friend of UVic, life continues to be interesting.

## Gwladys Downes donation to McPherson Library

Joan Coldwell, former member of the Friends' executive and one of Gwladys Downes' literary executors, writes of her donation to McPherson Library.



Gwladys Downes

In the years following her retirement as Professor of French, Dr Gwladys Downes continued to serve both the university and the wider community. She was an active participant in cultural events, a volunteer archivist at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, a translator of Québécois poetry and a published poet (her last volume appeared when she was in her eighties). She was also generous in founding the Gwladys and Gwen Downes Scholarship in Theatre, augmenting the Gwen Downes Memorial Book Prize earlier established in memory of her mother.

When Dr Downes passed away in 2005, she left a substantial financial legacy to the Special Collections division of McPherson Library as well as to the Maltwood Gallery and the Downes Scholarship. In addition, the bulk of her extensive library was left to the University of Victoria Foundation.

Dr Downes was a voracious and wide-ranging reader. She was not a collector of rare books but purchased new titles in the many subjects of interest to her.

First and foremost this meant the work of Canadian poets, in both English and French, as well as collections of American and British poets, especially of one of her favorites, Ted Hughes.

On her walls was a fine collection of contemporary paintings; her library contained a wealth of art books and art magazines. Needless to say, there were shelves upon shelves of French classics and critical works, especially those related to the symbolist poets, subject of her doctoral dissertation and influence upon her own poetry. Religion, magic, mythology, philosophy, history, biography: books on these subjects, many with her own annotations, completed the donated collection. The respect and affection of her fellow-writers is marked by the great number of presentation copies, signed by their authors to her. The inscription in my own copy of her *House of Cedars* reads "How can one thank a friend for friendship?" We might well wish we could thank her now for her generosity as a founding Friend of the UVic Libraries.

## Nosing about in Special Collections

by Dr. James Gifford

Dr. Gifford of the English department continues his "nosing about" in Special Collections.

UVic Libraries' rich Lawrence Durrell collection holds many surprises. In Durrell's famous *Alexandria Quartet* (which even echoes in a lecture by M.G. Vassanji now held here), Amaril marries Semira, a masked woman he meets during carnival who has no nose, but whom he assists through plastic surgery. The plot's source is Georg Groddeck, whom Durrell discovered through Auden and wrote on in Stephen Spender's *Horizon*. Moreover, Special Collections holds Durrell's copy of Groddeck's strange *The Unknown Self*, which has extensive marginalia. "E," perhaps 'payoff,' marks Groddeck's

assertion "Protruding eyes betray curiosity... And the squinter draws attention to his nose, the symbol of his strength or of his virility." With three vertical lines, Durrell also highlights "We recognise this great importance of the nose only when we see people with noses eaten by disease, and there can hardly be any other cause for the universal fear of syphilis than the fact that in comparatively rare cases syphilis attacks the bone of the nose." While perhaps ridiculous, Durrell's Amaril reviews "the possible causes of [Semira's] feature, repeating with terror words like syphilis." The relationship between the "horrible... slit" of Semira's nose and Amaril's "virility" suggests

rebuilding her nose repairs his injured masculinity, just as their marriage heals them both. It also suggests we cannot read Durrell's novel without turning our attention to the archive, even if it is to find a poor clinician's notes transformed into a striking plot. Groddeck also contends "the sick man [has] a dual relation with his doctor... , yet sees in him a menace to that artistic effort, his illness." Durrell underscores this passage again in the preface, suggesting its importance. Thus, Semira's acquisition of Amaril as a lover is the artistic culmination of her illness — she achieves its purpose in Durrell's borrowed plot. For such illnesses as Durrell's artistic effort exhibit, this library holds the cure.



# Reveries among the Stacks

by Judith Terry

In the old days, that is, the 1960's, teachers of children's literature were envisaged as grey-haired ladies in large hats and white gloves. Students of the subject scuttled about with their heads down and the titles of the books under their arm turned inward. "Kiddy Lit!" The scornful remark would otherwise have to be braved or challenged. Children's literature had a somewhat dubious status. Even now, despite huge expansion and interest, I am not sure that doubts do not linger, but in those days, the class was a bit like a secret society: we closed the door and knew ourselves to be in one place where we were not obliged to make any excuse or defence.

Soon after my arrival at UVic, I was offered the chance of teaching children's literature in Summer School. I knew nothing about the subject, but terror drove hard. I read and annotated for several months and rapidly became addicted. Appropriately enough, those teaching children's literature tended to have a rather peripheral position in the English Department, at that time solely responsible for the only course in the subject. Mrs. Nancy Cutt was teaching it when I began, and she worked part-time, as I did. In 1974 she would complete a critical biography of Mrs. Sherwood for Oxford University Press, and, later, *Ministering Angels: a study of nineteenth-century evangelical writing for children*. She also had another connection with the subject through her spouse, W. Towrie Cutt, who wrote several novels for children drawing on his childhood in the Orkney Isles, and also an autobiographical account: *Faraway World: an Orkney boyhood*. Mrs. Cutt was highly principled, very knowledgeable, rather shy and retiring (though she did not wear large hats or white gloves). We both took seriously the task of improving the library's collection of children's books, and many of the volumes of nineteenth century

children's books presently on the shelves are there because we faithfully submitted our book order request slips to the collections division in those days when there was no block ordering.

One well-known writer whose books I had enjoyed as a child and sought to acquire for the McPherson was Patricia Lynch. Born in Cork in 1898, later active in the women's movement and as a journalist, she found her true vocation quite early. Her first novel for children appeared in 1925, by which time she was living in Dublin. Robert Farrell, brother of the writer JG Farrell, who worked in Collections and was also Irish, put in much time tracking down copies of her work. One book in particular I had remembered: *The Turf-Cutter's Donkey*. When I revisited the book, however, I was disappointed: I could not recover the old, familiar joy. This is not uncommon, and certainly no reflection on the book. It suggests what people have always half known: that the child they once were has somehow vanished. "I feel I should never be surprised to meet myself as I was when I was a little chap of five, suddenly coming round a corner," said Kenneth Grahame, so completely did he find himself different.

I am happy that as a result of our efforts, there is a collection of the books of Patricia Lynch sitting amidst the PZ's. *The Turf-Cutter's Donkey* was one in series, and other popular titles amongst many are *Orla of Burren*, and *The Bookshop on the Quay*. A number of her books were illustrated by distinguished artists, including Jack B. Yeats. They await a critic who will unravel the mystery of their charm, for charm they have: one of my sons loved *The Turf-Cutter's Donkey* in his turn, as dearly as I and at about the same age.

Cataloguing children's books in English cannot be an easy task, if the different

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*We asked Judith Terry to recall her experiences when first asked to teach the "new subject" of children's literature, now an important library collection.*

places in which they are scattered through the library is any guide: the main body of children's books reside at PZ, of course, but critical commentary on them is at PN 1009, and children's books by writers whose other work is to be found in the PR and PS sections mostly turn up there rather than in the PZ's. Then again, a whole other collection is across campus in the Curriculum Laboratory in the McLaurin Building, for the easy access of Education students, where they are catalogued according to the Dewey decimal system. As for fairy tales, they turn up in different guises all across the humanities and social sciences, filed and discussed under folklore, anthropology and psychology.

In my first class, I always included a list of the multifarious call numbers. And always very early on, the ever-present question would pop up about how to approach the books of childhood. What a pleasure to re-visit them, everyone exclaimed. But I had suspected pitfalls and found them out by bitter experience. Not only the possibility of disappointment, but the difficult task of analysing such beloved objects with a proper sense of respect. Don't tamper with my recollections! I've had gushes of tears and very nearly fistfights. How can one be objective? And who wants to spoil happy memories? It's like setting fire to the flag. It is arguable that no books have the clinging power of those first read and loved, not least because they are read again and again as few others ever will be. There are pockets of well-thumbed books on the McPherson shelves, as you have probably noticed: they arrest the eye amongst the neater rows of the less read, but nowhere more so than the PZ section where the whole collection has been loved nearly to pieces.

I was not entirely straightforward with my students: I never mentioned the two books closest to my heart, and was rather relieved that no-one ever thought to ask me what they were. In fact, it has only been in retirement that I have finally re-visited them: two novels by Elizabeth Goudge, *Henrietta's House* (1942) and *The Little White Horse* (1946). I do not know whether they are still read. Not much, I should think, since they seem to be only sporadically in print. I was anxious but fascinated. There was a very strong underlying pattern in *Henrietta's House*: the guests going out for a birthday picnic become accidentally

separated and through their adventures achieve some happy degree of self-knowledge. I never noticed this at all. *The Little White Horse* had been my favourite. All these years afterwards, I seemed to know every word before I arrived at it. But I would now rate it a bit sugary, below *Henrietta's House*. Still, I would not presume to judge which Me has got it right.

The Internet informs me that *The Little White Horse* is to be made into a movie, shooting to begin in Hungary in summer 2007, starring Colin Firth in the dual roles of Sir Benjamin/Sir Wrolf. No, as a young reader, I had never noticed that these two characters were two sides of a coin. Will I go and see the movie? I shall be very wary. Despite urging my students to re-visit and analyse a favourite book from childhood - and admiring Colin Firth - I am quite prepared to admit that it is sometimes best to keep the treasures of childhood behind a locked door.



Illustration by Jack B. Yeats, rpt. in Patricia Lynch, *The Turf Cutter's Donkey: An Irish Story of Mystery and Adventure* (J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd: London, 1934). UVic Libraries call number PZ7 L98 TU

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