

## Toronto Hosts Alcuin Awards Evening

CHESTER GRYSKI reports from the historic Arts and Letters Club on an autumn event destined to please and praise designers and their ilk.



*Bar of the Arts and Letters Club before dinner (left).  
Great Hall during dinner, Randall Speller at the podium (right).*

THE GREAT HALL of Toronto's Arts and Letters Club was filled to capacity the evening of October 3, 2011, as eastern Canadian winners of the 2010 Alcuin Society Awards for Excellence in Book Design in Canada and Robert R. Reid medal recipient Frank Newfeld were honoured.

The evening started with an opportunity for attendees to view the winning entries in the club's LAMPS room and to mingle and catch up on gossip. Next was dinner in the Great Hall, adorned with a new exhibition of work by club members, entitled Great Canadian Landscape Show.

The formal ceremonies began after dinner. Club president Diane Kruger welcomed everyone. She was followed by Gary Stark, the chair of the Art Committee, who officially opened the exhibition that made the Great Hall such an aesthetically pleasing setting for dinner.

Randall Speller was the master of ceremonies for the Alcuin Society portion of the evening, introducing all of the speakers. The first was Brian Maloney, printer at Massey College and a teacher at Humber College, who refreshed

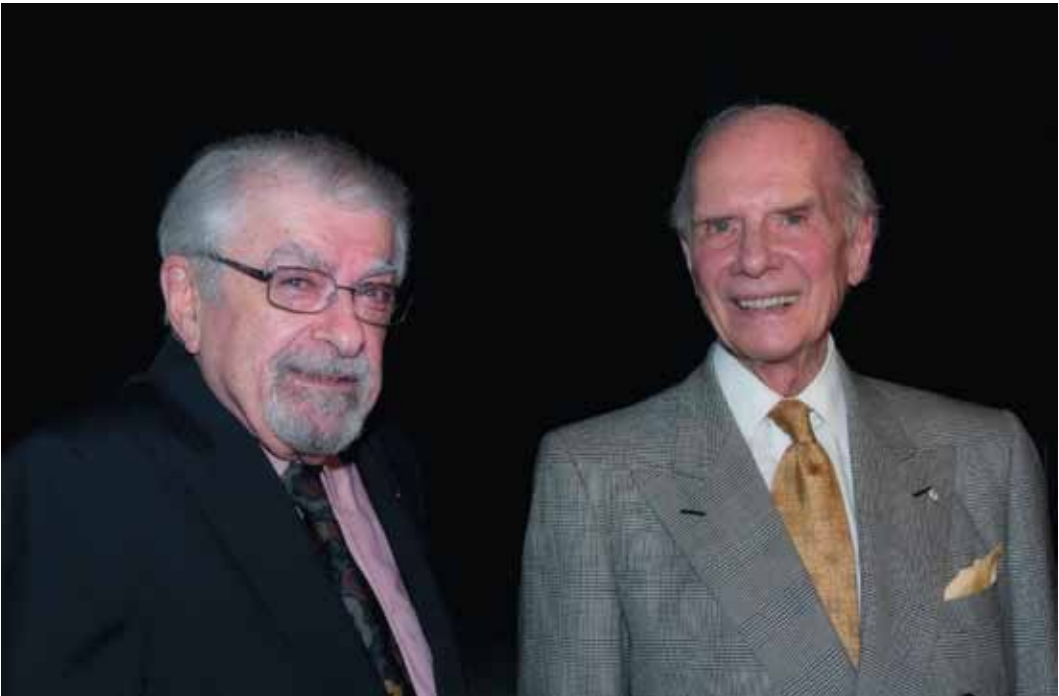
everyone's memory as he talked about the first four winners of the Robert R. Reid Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Book Arts in Canada. He illustrated this talk with slides showing the work of Robert Reid, Jim Rimmer and Glenn Goluska. He spoke only briefly about Frank Newfeld, because Newfeld was the subject of the next speaker, William Toye.

As Randall pointed out, William Toye is a giant in Canadian publishing. One worries more about leaving out something significant when introducing him than saying too much, because there is so much to say about his accomplishments. Bill Toye was the venerable editor of Oxford University Press in Toronto for 48 years. He was also a published author and editor in his own right, with titles ranging from *Cartier Discovers the St. Lawrence* (1959) to the second revised edition of *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (2011). Bill Toye gave us a detailed tour of the life and work of Frank Newfeld, illustrating his remarks with many examples of Newfeld's work.



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*Great Hall during dinner, Randall Speller at the podium.*



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*Frank Newfeld (left) and William Toye (right).*



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*Frank Newfeld addressing the audience.  
 Chester Gryski stands to the left.*

Scott Richardson, creative director at Random House, and a designer, author and Alcuin competition judge, spoke next, delivering comments regarding the judging of the 2010 competition. Any person who might have been nodding off because it was after dinner was jolted awake as Richardson talked about the “life designer,” using speeches from Shakespeare’s *King Henry V* as his model but altering the language to introduce words and concepts that the designers in the audience would readily understand. The otherwise quiet room was punctuated with laughter first from a table on one side of the room, then another from another side, the designers’ guffaws giving away their seating locations (see sidebar, “If Henry V had been a book designer”).

The next stage in the evening was a logical one. The winners of the 2010 Awards for Excellence in Book Design in Canada were called forward individually by Randall Speller, and Alcuin Society director (and design committee chair) Leah Gordon presented certificates to the winners present. Those receiving their certificates at the ceremony included Linda Gustafson for *Words Have No Meaning, Inuit Modern* and *Painters Eleven: The Wild Ones of Canadian Art*; Ingrid Paulson for *Sketches from Here and There*; Carleton Wilson for *Cold Sleep Permanent Afternoon*; Mark Goldstein for *Tracelanguage*; Wesley Bates (on behalf of Andrew Steeves, co-proprietor of Nova Scotia’s Gaspereau Press) for *A Short History of Forgetting, In the Suicide’s Library: A Book Lover’s Journey*,

## IF HENRY V HAD BEEN A BOOK DESIGNER ...

*Once more onto the page, dear friends, once more;  
 Or close the wall up with our ink-and-paper dead.  
 In peace there’s nothing so becomes a designer of books  
 As golden sections and humility:  
 But when the blast of HTML blows in our ears,  
 Then imitate the action of our Baskervilles.  
 Stiffen the leading, summon up the ligature,  
 Disguise fair nature with hard-favoured baselines;  
 And lend your InDesign a terrible aspect;  
 Let pry through the portage of the word space  
 Like the brass cannon; have the kerning o’erwhelm them  
 As fearfully as doth a galled trim size  
 O’erhang and jetty its confounded screen,  
 Swilled with the wild and wasteful e-book.  
 Now set the measure and stretch the margins wide,  
 Hold hard the ragged right and bend up every ascender  
 to its full height.  
 On, on, you noblest type geeks.  
 Whose blood is fed from fathers of page-proofs!  
 Fathers that, like so many Garamonds,  
 Have in these parts from morn till evening fought  
 And sheathed their pica rulers for lack of argument:  
 Dishonour not your readers; now attest  
 That those whom you called Gutenberg did beget you.  
 Be readable now, to men of grosser dots-per-inch,  
 And teach them how to em-dash.  
 And you, good print wonks,  
 Whose limbs were made in paste-up, show us here  
 The mettle of your decorative cap; let us swear  
 That you are worth your Alcuin; which I doubt not;  
 For there is none of you so I-Pad’d and so Kindle’d,  
 That hath not oldstyle figures in your eyes.  
 I see you stand now, like half-titles in the prelims,  
 Straining upon the start. The game’s afoot:  
 Follow your manuscript, and upon this charge  
 Cry God for Caxton, Bembo, and Perpetua!*

.....  
 ~ CS Richardson (with apologies  
 to William Shakespeare)



Presenting the certificates: Leah Gordon (left), Randall Speller (middle), Marvin Harder (right).



Presenting the Robert R. Reid Medal. Frank Newfeld (left), Chester Gryski (right).



Looking at the winning books in the LAMPS room.



Frank Newfeld's Robert R. Reid Medal.

*Through Darkling Air: The Poetry of Richard Outram* and *St. Andrews Architecture, 1604–1966*; Marvin Harder for *Relations on Southeastern Hudson Bay*; and Aurèle Parisien for *The Conservation, Restoration, and Repair of Stringed Instruments and Their Bows*. The certificates for Douglas & McIntyre were later presented in Vancouver, but Bruce Martin of Douglas & McIntyre was present and Douglas & McIntyre's accomplishments in 2010 were acknowledged.

The evening culminated with Frank Newfeld stepping forward to receive the medal accompanying the Robert R. Reid Award that he had received in 2009 (see *Amphora* 151 for the write-up). After displaying the chocolate medal that he was originally given, Newfeld spoke briefly but eloquently about the book. He pointed out the uniqueness of the book and how it has remained faithful to itself through the years, permitting writers to put words into its care and illustrators to put pictures into its

care, although sometimes good and sometimes bad. He expressed concern about the e-book and what he perceived as its main intent on a fast encounter rather than a lingering acquaintance. As he noted when he was in Vancouver in 2009, he was particularly concerned about the effect on children's books. He challenged the Alcuin Society to consider taking the children's book category beyond art and design and having it include among its design criteria whether the book truly offers young readers the ability and opportunity to invest their own imagination.

The evening ended with many returning to the LAMPS room to view and handle the winning entries before the books moved to Ryerson University for display.

~ Chester Gryski is a contributing editor of *Amphora*.