

# Where Uncommon Knowledge Is Found

The value of rare books spans the centuries and extends into the future, RALPH STANTON explains in an overview of UBC's rare book holdings.

THE COLLECTIONS IN the care of the Rare Books and Special Collections Division of UBC Library are an invaluable resource. They have grown over time, developed relationships with one another and work together as a collective resource. Together, they are a testimony to the community of donors and the scholars who have made UBC Library what it is. One might assume the story of the collection is renowned—at least to the scholars working at the university. Yet times, and especially people, change so the knowledge that we once took for granted has to be renewed or refreshed from time to time. This is what I hope to do tonight.<sup>1</sup>

## ON FOREIGN SHORES

But let's not start this story on our wet and green coast. Rather, let's begin near a dry and beige foreign shore where the Spanish river Guadalquivir allows an inland city to connect to the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Spain has three important claims to prominence in the history of bibliophilia.

First, it is the site of the initial European reception and production of paper. That invention, borrowed from nature, originated in China around 100 BCE and began its slow journey west, arriving in Samarkand, then at the limit of Chinese influence, in the seventh



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*Casa Juan Cromberger in Mexico City, site of the first printing office in the Americas. (Wikipedia photo)*

century, Baghdad in the eighth, Damascus in the ninth, then via Jerusalem, Cairo, Fez and Ceuta, it came to the great city of Córdoba in the 10th century of the Common Era.<sup>2</sup>

Second, southern Spain was a rich crossroads for the transmission of Western classical texts, which from their original Greek or Aramaic, often through Hebrew or Arabic, were translated into Latin. The celebrated ibn Tibbon family was a dynasty of Jewish translators who first rose to prominence in southern Spain in the 10th century. The supporting structures for this activity were the excellent libraries built up by the Muslim rulers of al-Andalus, present-day Andalucía, whose library at Córdoba exceeded 400,000 scrolls at a time when a Christian monastic library would consider itself rich with fewer than 1,500 books.

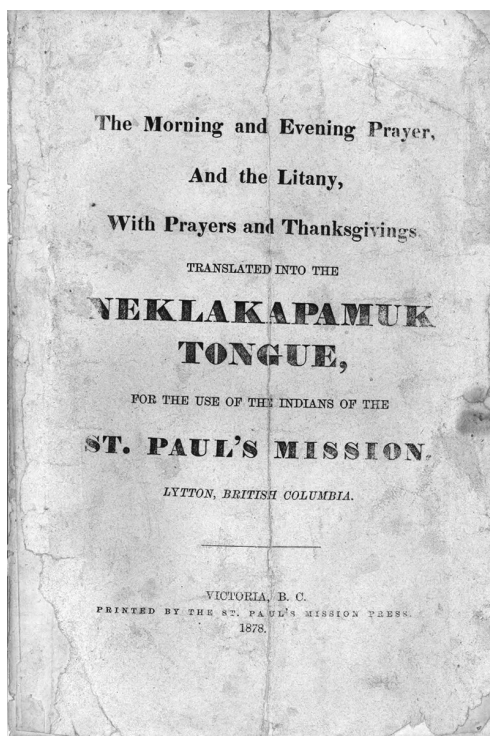
Spain's third claim to bibliophilic prominence stems from the fact that in the 1500s Seville held a royal monopoly for trade with the Spanish colonies in the Americas. So it was from there that the art of typographic printing, another

Oriental invention, was exported to the Americas. The agent of this transformation was the firm of merchant printers founded in Seville by Jacobo Cromberger or Jácome Alemán—"Jacob the German," whose son Juan Cromberger inherited the business. His partner in this venture was named Juan Pablos by his Spanish and Mexican friends, although he was known back home in Brescia as Giovanni Paoli. The prototypographer of the Americas set up his shop a few doors from the main cathedral of Mexico City in 1539. The spread of printing in the Americas mainly followed Spanish power; the printing press arrived in Peru in 1584 and Bolivia in 1610. In 1639, printing came to the British colonies that later formed the United States of America, then back to the Spanish-influenced transmission to Argentina in 1700, Colombia in 1738. In 1752, a printing press began operating in Halifax, on the east coast of what we know today as Canada.

#### TO OUR OWN COAST

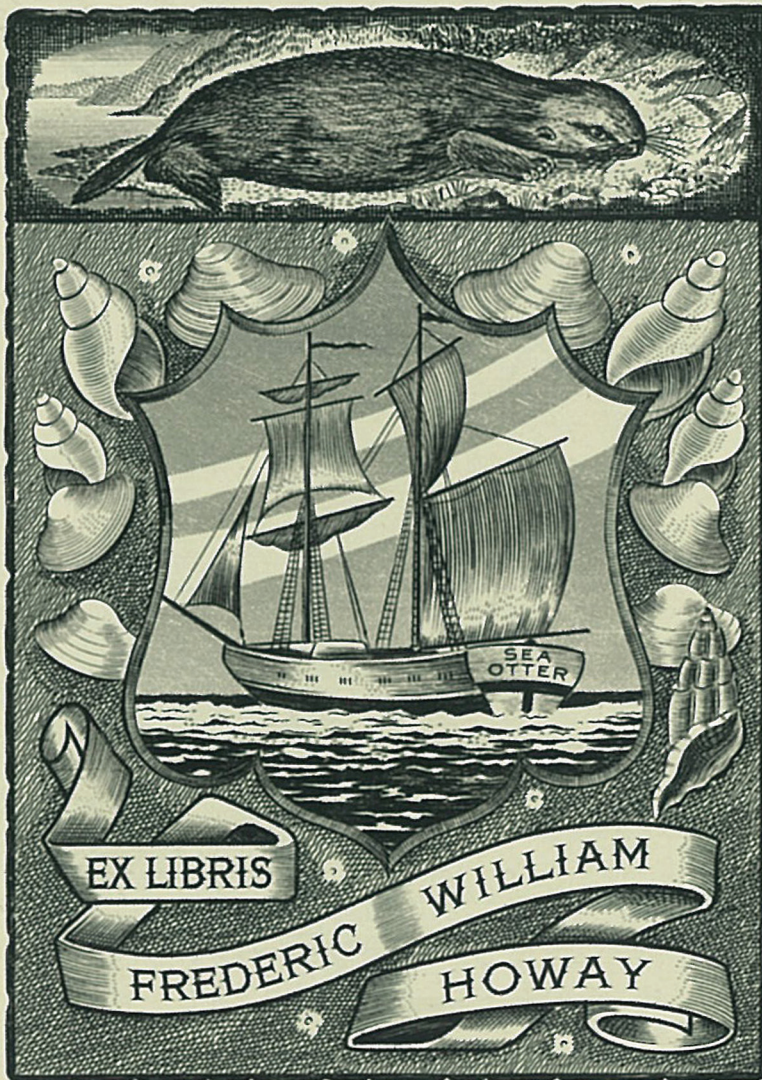
The northwest coast of the Americas was the last, in temperate climates, to be explored by Europeans. So it is no surprise that after Burma in 1827 and Nigeria in 1843, printing came to the traditional territories of the Salish peoples at Victoria, in the colony of Vancouver Island. The nominal date is June 1858, with the first issue of the *Victoria Gazette* printed on a press brought from San Francisco by Williston and Howard. It was not the first press in the colony; the first had been shipped from Belgium by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for Bishop Modeste Demers in 1856—it was believed that his press went unused until put into action by de Garro to print the French-language newspaper *Le courrier de la Nouvelle Calédonie*, published in September and October 1858. The recent discovery by the Vancouver bookseller Stephen Lunsford of a short text printed in Chinook, the hybrid trade language of this coast, may upset the timetable by pushing it back a year or two and therefore establish the press from Belgium as the first to print in B.C.<sup>3</sup>

So 319 years after printing was established in the Americas, a B.C.-based author could be published in B.C. Most printed works read here were manufactured elsewhere, however, most



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*The title page of the first known extant mission  
imprint in B.C., printed in 1878.  
(SFU Special Collections)*





*Bookplate of Frederic William Howay.*  
(All images in this issue courtesy of UBC Rare Books and Special Collections except where indicated.)

often in London, Montreal, New York and San Francisco. The print culture of the two British colonies took the form of job printing: menus, notices, letterheads, cheques, bills, business cards and ledger books, and of newspapers as already mentioned, and of government printing like David Cameron's *Order in council constituting the Supreme Court of Civil Justice of Vancouver Island and rules of practice and forms to be used therein* (1858), or Edward Sparshott's *Military manual of infantry drill* (1861), and the occasional trade pamphlet like Alfred Waddington's *Fraser Mines Vindicated, or, The history of four months* (1858).

From the point of view of the collector, and these are the people we want to talk about, there was, at last, something to collect! Yet it would be the better part of a century before serious collections of B.C. literature appeared at UBC Library. The seminal event was the arrival in 1943 of the collection of Frederic William Howay, who was born near London, Ontario, in November 1867. His family settled in New Westminster in the fall of 1874. In 1885, he was one of only two students to pass the provincial teachers exam, the other candidate being Robie Lewis Reid, who would be his friend for nearly 60 years.

In 1887, Reid urged Howay to join him at the Dalhousie law school in Halifax, where both graduated in 1890. In 1893, they formed the firm of Howay & Reid in New Westminster. This partnership would last until 1906. Upon the retirement of Judge W. Norman Bole in 1907, Howay was appointed judge of the county court of New Westminster, a position he held until the fall of 1937, shortly after his 70th birthday.

#### HOWAY'S COLLECTION

While attending Dalhousie, Howay corresponded with and had essays printed by several newspapers, including the *British Columbian* and the *Mainland Guardian*, both New Westminster publications. His personal historical library would grow alongside his reputation as an authority on the subject of B.C. history. His first historical publication, dated 1902 in the *British Pacific*, was on the rebellion at Hill's Bar during the Fraser River gold rush. Howay died in October 1943, but his last publication was printed in 1944 on the subject of some lengthy open boat voyages

on the Pacific Ocean and was his 286th work.<sup>4</sup>

Remember, he had been a lawyer or judge for all but seven of his 42 years of writing. His collection, just short of 4,000 items, was designed to support his research interests, as evidenced by the annotations he made in his books and pamphlets. Few historical scholars whose work was primarily regional in scope have received as wide recognition as Judge Howay. Among the honours conferred upon him were president of the Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver (1910), fellow of the Royal Historical Society (1928), fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (1930), honorary member of the Société académique d'histoire internationale of Paris (1934), president of the Royal Society of Canada (1941), and president of the Champlain Society (1942).

The arrival of Howay's collection in 1943 marked the first time UBC had received a very large, locally significant library. While it is true that literate culture came to our coast and thrived in the Hudson's Bay Company libraries and in the private collections of the likes of Amor de Cosmos, the second premier of the province, it is also safe to say that Howay was the first of the great collectors of British Columbiana. A small shrine to the founder of bibliography in B.C., in the form of Howay's desk and chair, is located in the Mackenzie seminar room in Rare Books and Special Collections at UBC. His bookplate, on the theme of the maritime fur trade, is encountered by many a user of books on the history of our province.

#### AFTER HOWAY

The next major gift arrived in February 1945, from Howay's contemporary and friend Robie Reid. After the great New Westminster fire in 1898, Reid was made a debenture commissioner for the city under the New Westminster Relief Act of 1899. Reid would later travel to Vancouver and, in 1907, joined W.J. Bowser, KC, then attorney general of B.C., and D.S. Wallbridge to form the firm of Bowser, Reid & Wallbridge. He later became a bencher of the Law Society of British Columbia from 1927 to 1943. He was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1936 and named the president of the B.C.

Historical Association in 1937. He is credited with the founding of the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, published from 1937 to 1958. The task of producing a professional journal of B.C. history was taken up again, this time at UBC, in 1968 when *BC Studies* appeared, with Margaret Prang and Walter Young as editors.

Reid was the quintessential collector, with a broad interest in collectibles concerning Canada, as evidenced by the inclusion of maps, photographs, correspondence and coins in his collection. Reid was perhaps the first collector with a strong interest in the imaginative literature of B.C. He died in February 1945, and his collection of more than 9,000 books, 4,000 pamphlets, and assorted other media was immediately bequeathed to the university. The collection was commonly held to be larger than the Canadiana collections of most public libraries in Canada.

The combination of the Howay and Reid collections gave the UBC Library a very strong foundation for its collection on the subject of B.C. The topics explored are the perennial ones of early B.C. history: the exploration of the coast and the maritime fur trade, the interior fur trade, the gold rushes, the Royal Engineers, the southern and Alaskan boundary issues, the fur seal dispute, and so on.

The next collection came from A.J.T. (Alfred James Towle) Taylor, born in 1887 in Victoria; he was a short, intense man of charm and energy. An engineer by training, he was contracted to build the Ioco oil refinery in 1914, but his masterpiece was the planning and construction of the Lions Gate Bridge, which was integral to the Guinness family's purchase and development of the neighbourhood now known as the British Properties in West Vancouver.

In 1913 Taylor met the Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson and the two collaborated on the Wrangel expedition of 1921–23. In gratitude Stefansson began to assemble a collection of Arctic books for Taylor. Stefansson annotated these on matters bibliographical and added gossip about the authors—presumably to the future delight of students of the now flourishing subdiscipline of postillatology, otherwise known as annotation studies. The collection was installed in Q House, Taylor's residence in West

Vancouver, and later at his office in the Marine Building. These 500 books were donated to UBC in 1946 by his widow. The collection of Arctic maps gifted in 2007 by the estate of Dr. Andrew McCormick, a specialist in pediatric ophthalmology, supplements and informs the Taylor collection, which itself extends the Howay and Reid collections to our most northerly realms.

#### A LONG PAUSE

And so, by 1946, three complementary collections on the history of Canada had arrived. One more was due, and then there was a long pause while the library digested this huge bibliographical meal before another great historical collection arrived. Thomas Murray (1878–1955) apprenticed as a tailor as early as 1890. Around the turn of the century he moved from his native Toronto to Montreal, where he continued to work in the garment industry. He operated his own manufacturing business from 1918 to 1928, amassing a small fortune, which permitted him to retire at the age of 50 and devote the rest of his life to his first love: books.

Murray was a collector from an early age and had assembled a considerable library by the time he reached his teens. Upon closing his garment business he established the Bleury Book Store (on Bleury Street, of course), and he later opened a branch on St. Catherine Street. Though he was a shrewd businessman, he was a collector first and a bookseller second. His personal collection continued to grow throughout his lifetime, even after he closed his bookstores in 1949, yet he was never known to invite visitors to view his collection. Despite his reputation for being a man of few friends, he visited book collectors of his acquaintance in later years, amazing them with his phenomenal memory and minute knowledge of books. It is unlikely that anyone knew the extent or nature of his collection until after his death. Indeed, it was so vast that it truly had to be discovered: in addition to a large collection at his home, Murray had books stored in several warehouses around Montreal, including former stock from his stores.

In the summer of 1958, the Friends of the Library, in its second year of operation, made it possible for the UBC Library to purchase this

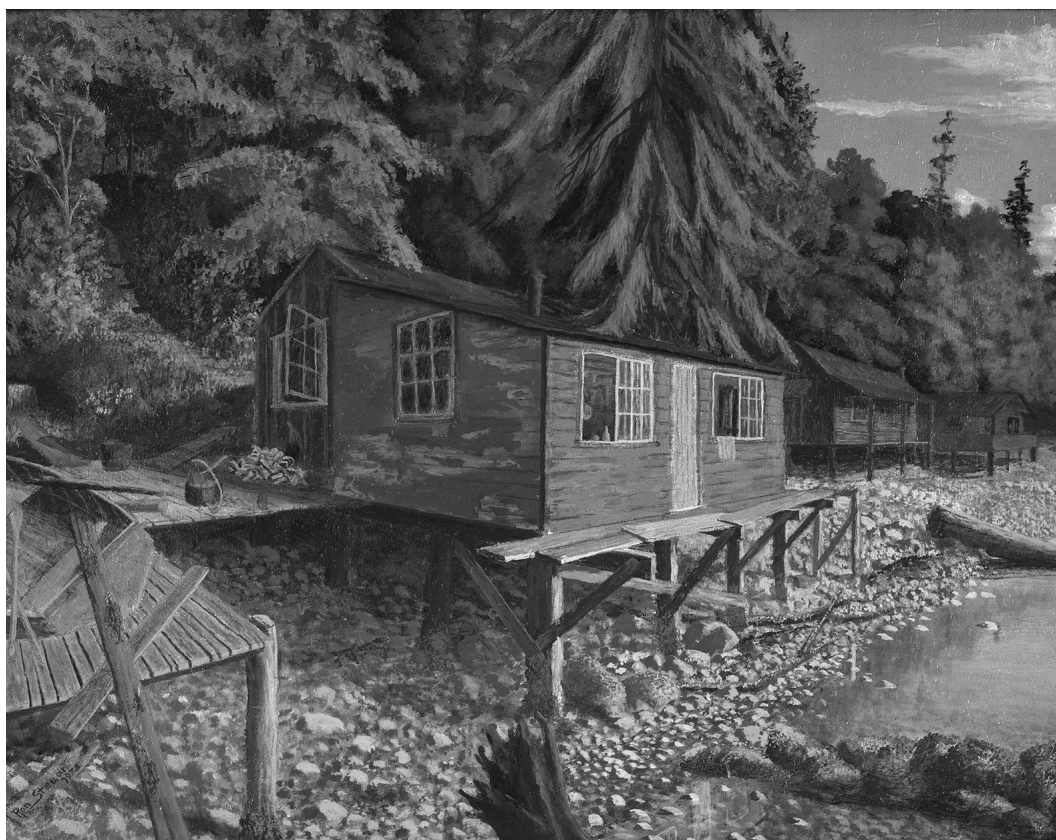
incredible collection. The thousands of volumes in the Thomas Murray Collection arrived in 400 cartons later that year. Neal Harlow, university librarian at the time, noted that this acquisition gave UBC a very well-rounded Canadiana collection, which had previously focused on Western Canada. The Thomas Murray Collection contains many of the chief landmarks of Canadian history and publishing and an extraordinary collection of approximately 2,000 textbooks from the 19th- and early 20th century. These demonstrate the truism that the core of the book printing business is first textbooks, then religious works, legal and government publications. Gutenberg's first publications were Latin grammars, and many of the early Canadian printers produced textbooks for grade-school children.

Murray also acquired a variety of pamphlets relating to such topics as the Northwest rebellions and travel in Canada, and assembled 11 volumes of Canadian bookplates, now the subject of

a student project to digitize the collection as a contribution to provenance studies in Canada.<sup>5</sup> In a single step, Murray's collection enlarged the scope of UBC's collection and raised its standing from regional to national. While the 1940s and 1950s emphasized history, the next period would shift to the literary.

#### *BELLES LETTRES RISING*

UBC Rare Books and Special Collections' holdings of the celebrated novelist Malcolm Lowry constitute one of its greatest treasures. They include more than 350 monographs as well as serials, microform, film, audiotape, and a significant hoard of photographs and manuscripts, and an oil painting that is the only colour image of the Lowrys' shack at Dollarton in North Vancouver. The collection results from a collective effort that involved Basil Stuart-Stubbs, Anne Yandle, Norman Levy, Phil and Hilda Thomas, Earle Birney, Marjorie Lowry,



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*Ron Stewart's oil painting of the Lowrys' shack at Dollarton in North Vancouver.*

and many friends of the Lowrys. It continues to grow through the help of generous scholars such as UBC's own Sherrill Grace and others around the world. The library hopes to add other Lowry collections in the future.

While the skilful wordsmithing of Malcolm Lowry commands international attention, the specialized collection of Rocke Robertson demonstrates an even greater attachment to the meaning of words. Robertson had a distinguished medical and teaching career, and he served as principal of McGill University from 1962 to 1970. His collection traces the origin and development of the English dictionary and includes over 350 titles. It starts with a fragment of a leaf from Gutenberg's *Catholicon* dated 1460 and continues with highlights, like the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné de sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751) of Denis Diderot and Jean d'Allembert, and James Murray's *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* started in 1888 (in fascicles as originally published). This collection has grown very little. This may be because it is very specialized, little known, or because there are no dictionary collectors in the orbit of UBC.

The Colbeck collection is the largest single named collection in UBC Rare Books and Special Collections and comprises some 50,000 items including manuscripts, English and Anglo-Irish poetry, *belles lettres*, and non-fiction of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The collection is strong in minor writers of the period and Anglo-Irish writers. It includes many rare first, special and limited editions, association and dedication copies, items of significance in the history of printing (from presses like Lee Priory, Pickering and Kelmscott), as well as many little literary magazines.

A former bookseller, Norman Colbeck was coaxed through 1966 to donate his sizable private collection following a series of negotiations initiated by Dr. E.W. Fredeman, a professor in the university's English department, and then-university librarian Basil Stuart-Stubbs. The following year, the collection arrived and along with it Colbeck, who took up a position as curator of the Colbeck Room, dedicated to housing the thousands of volumes he had amassed during his career. In this role, Colbeck prepared

*A Bookman's Catalogue: The Norman Colbeck Collection of Nineteenth-Century and Edwardian Poetry and Belles Lettres in the Special Collections of the University of British Columbia* (1987).

In 1992, on Colbeck's retirement from the university, the books were transferred to the Special Collections Division of the library. Complementary and significant manuscript materials relating to the Rossetti family and the Pre-Raphaelites enhance the Colbeck collection, which has attracted a wide range of scholars from around the world.

#### SINGULAR FOCUS

While Colbeck collected a huge range of authors, other collectors have chosen to concentrate on a single writer. Alexander M. Donaldson was born in Glasgow in 1891. He worked in B.C. as a travelling auditor for the Ford Motor Co. In the 1930s he began collecting books by and about Robert Burns. UBC acquired his collection of more than 1,500 books in 1962. It is a very fine author collection that covers nearly all the English-language editions of Burns's work, critical and biographical material, Scottish songbooks and works on the favourite haunts of Burns. The Phillip J. Thomas Popular Song Collection, acquired in the 1990s, greatly expanded our holdings devoted to Scottish songs and added some 8,000 books on popular music.

A smaller author collection is that of noted Vancouver literary figure, teacher and editor George Woodcock. He was the founding editor of the UBC periodical *Canadian Literature*, which began publishing in 1959. The business and circulation managers were UBC librarians and its typographer was the celebrated Robert Reid. The publication was well illustrated using wood engravings and linocuts, including many from our George Kuthan collection.

UBC professor Sheila Egoff was a figure of international importance in the study of children's literature and helped ensure the acquisition of another great collection. Stan Arkley, a Vancouver native and UBC graduate, was the western representative of the American publisher Doubleday, and his wife Rose was a well-known primary school teacher in Seattle. The two were passionate collectors of children's books and





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*An item from the Phillip J. Thomas Popular Song Collection.*

through Egoff's help donated their 3,000 titles in 1976. The collection contains American, British and Canadian books enjoyed by children from the late 18th century to 1939 and has grown vigorously thanks to ongoing community support.

Shortly after Katherine Kalsbeek began her work as a reference librarian—she's now head of UBC Rare Books and Special Collections—she received a call from a woman in New Jersey who had found a Canadian treasure at a rummage sale that she had discovered was in very few Canadian libraries; would UBC like it? And so UBC, and the Arkley collection, received its copy of the first colour illustrated Canadian children's book, *Uncle Jim's Canadian Nursery Rhymes*, later valued at \$1,000.

This isn't the only example of community support for the Arkley collection. Consistent support has come from faculty and students in the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies (now the iSchool at UBC) as well as the English department. The engagement has resulted in a number of publications, including Judith Saltman and Gail Edwards, *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books*

and *Publishing* (2010). The cover illustration is from *Uncle Jim's Rhymes*. To this impressive collection we have added expensive editions of rare early Canadian children's books like those of Catharine Parr Traill, financed by the Arkley endowment and donors. The collection is enhanced by our *Alice in Wonderland* title collection, also very popular and well supported by gifts.

### HAPPY CLOUDS

One day I was called out of the vault to meet a donor. He had a book to donate and it was, he said, only the second copy of a Bertrand Sinclair novel that he had ever found in his long collecting life. The copy of *Pirates of the Plains* (1928) he held was found lying in the dusty basement of a London bookseller and cost him a pittance. Our donor knew that this book would add the one missing title that would complete our Sinclair collection. It's difficult to convey the incredible pleasure that the acquisition of a single book or single journal issue or single pamphlet that completes a collection can bring to a librarian, immediately chasing away the drudgery of the irksome tasks and frustrations



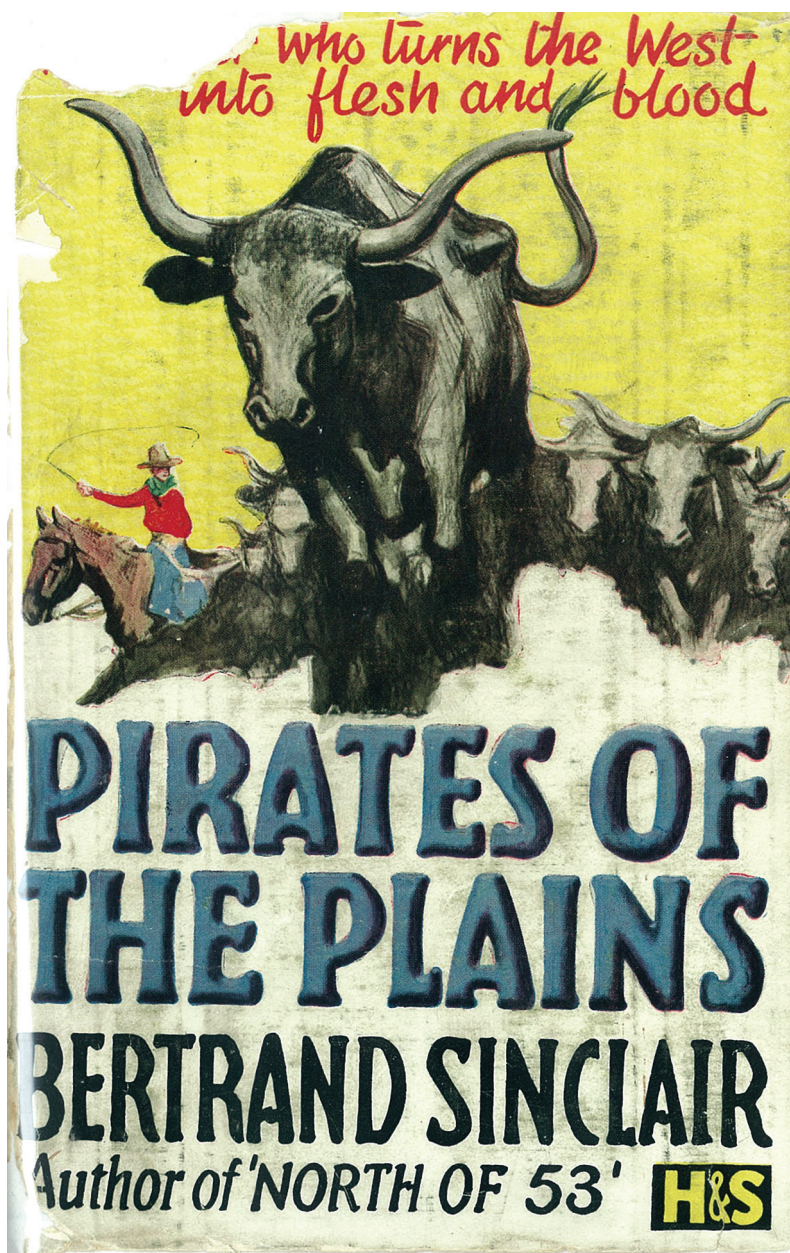
*The first colour illustrated Canadian children's book, Uncle Jim's Canadian Nursery Rhymes.*

that comprise so much of institutional life. I walked around for quite a while after this discovery on a happy little mental cloud.

The collection of Professor William New, the editor of the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (2002), is UBC's most recent acquisition of an important Canadian Literature collection. A large collection of about 10,000 titles, mostly late 20th century, it arrived in stages between 2006 and

2008. It extended already robust holdings and was relatively easy to absorb. It included some early Canadian literature of note, such as Frances Brooke's *History of Emily Montague* (1769), as well as Charles Mair's *Tecumseh, a Drama* (1886).

Names like Patrick Anderson, Al Purdy, Archibald Lampman, Dorothy Livesay, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Ronald Hambleton, John McCrae, Earle Birney, Bliss Carman,



*Bertrand Sinclair, Pirates of the Plains (1928).*

Margaret Atwood and many others featured in the collection. Because of Professor New's encyclopedic knowledge of his subject, this impeccable collection adds important new dimensions to the library. It relates well to existing manuscript collections like those of George Bowering, Hubert Evans, Roderick Haig-Brown, Joy Kogawa, Al Purdy, Bertrand Sinclair and Ethel Wilson. These have been expanded

recently by the acquisition of the archive of that polymath, artist and author Douglas Coupland.

#### LESSER-KNOWN ACQUISITIONS

A collection that serves as an example of how an important small gift is easily forgotten in a library's collecting and collective memory arrived in October 1945. The labour and socialist editor R.P. Pettipiece donated runs of the

Hx1 W47 W2

# The . . . Western Socialist

VANCOUVER LOCAL  
The Official Organ of the Socialist Party of Canada  
666 Homer Street

Vol. 1, No. 1

WINNIPEG, OCTOBER, 1933



PRICE 5c

## Provincial Elections in B. C.

On the second day of November, 1933, a great free-for-all will be staged in British Columbia, when the people of that province will be afforded an opportunity to elect a government of public affairs suitable to their needs. Entering the fifth year of the most acute economic crisis of modern times, it will be a matter of more than passing interest to observe what advance has been made in a comprehension of those needs. In no previous election has such a multitude of candidates desired the 47 vacant seats, nor has there ever been such a weird and confusing mass of social palliatives occupying public attention as at the present time. This is not surprising in view of the very serious impasse into which the industrial and commercial life of the province has drifted.

The retiring Conservative Government is being held up to scorn and ridicule for their administrative misdeeds by those who still imagine that good or bad times come and go according to good or bad policies in legislation. The problem is deeper seated, however. To grasp the meaning of that which now ails the people of British Columbia, is to understand the nature of the malady that is torturing the whole capitalist world. The existing society was necessary in the order of social evolution; it has done a great work, and done it well. It has built a gigantic machine wonderfully productive of wealth in all its varied, useful forms, but the capitalist class, by their ownership of the means of production, own all the product that accrues therefrom. Today, vast surpluses of commodities choke the warehouses of every civilized country, while the working class, who produced it, are allowed nothing except freedom to starve. The great mass of mankind have neither right nor access to the means of production nor to the commodities they have produced, and the real prob-

lem, therefore, lies in the private ownership of these things by the capitalist class.

Here is a matter beyond the scope of practical politics, and one upon which the workers of B.C. would do well to give quiet consideration before casting their ballots. To hope for permanent improvement in their condition of life under the existing social economy is futile; the stern facts of a class ruled system, decree that the poverty of the wage worker must inevitably deepen. It is with a sure knowledge of this fact that the Socialist Party of Canada enters the campaign for Political Representation.

The position of the party now, as in the past, is one of uncompromising hostility to all other political groups, no matter how appealing their name or gesture for working class support may be. The most urgent need today is a theoretical study of Modern Socialism. Pointing to the fact of the enslavement of the workers to capital, and showing that the power by which that enslavement can be broken lies in their own hands, is the first duty of a revolutionary party of the working class. The principles of revolutionary Socialism are directly in line with the conclusions of science and the real needs of mankind, and those who seek to attract votes by proposals of practical reform are playing the outworn game of capitalist politics, and leading the workers up a blind alley.

The object of the Socialist Party of Canada is:

*The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.*

On this platform our candidates seek your interest and support at the polls in the forthcoming election. If you want Socialism, vote for the candidates contesting the following Electoral Divisions:

VANCOUVER EAST, J. H. BURROUGH  
BURRARD, WILLIAM BLACK

VANCOUVER CENTRE, SIDNEY EARP  
BURNABY, JAMES KING

An earnest invitation is extended to all those desiring to assist in the campaign by William Coombe, Campaign Manager, 666 Homer St., Vancouver, B.C., Financial support is urgently needed.—VANCOUVER LOCAL No. 1, S.P. of C.

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*The inaugural issue of The Western Socialist, edited by R.P. Pettipiece.*

newspapers he had edited: the *Canadian Socialist*, *Western Socialist*, *Western Clarion* and the *B.C. Federationist*. These were important in their day and likely impossible to collect now. These kinds of gifts are the indispensable donations that, over time, help build a great collection.

In 2003 I visited Sam Martz, a retired Montreal businessman with one of the world's largest collections on the game of golf. "Do

you know how many people in the world play golf?" he asked. We had to ask ourselves some questions. Why is the University of Chicago proud to list its special collection of 1,600 golf books? What role does golf play in the social and economic life of B.C.? Is there anyone at UBC who wants to use these books? What does it cost to catalogue 4,849 books?

A tour of the east coast of Vancouver Island

provided some answers. While we are working away in the library, a significant portion of the province's population is out on the golf links enjoying the sunshine—at least that is what the tourist brochures show—and virtually every community in the southern half of the province has a golf course. The golf courses and the retirement communities are eating up what had once been prime forest land, and B.C. without its golf courses would be much less of a tourist draw. Based on the importance of this game, we accepted the gift. The oldest book listed, *Poems on Golf*, was printed for private circulation in Edinburgh in 1867.

The last of the four great historical collections that make up our strength in B.C. and Canadian history arrived in 1999. It is the Wallace B. Chung and Madeline H. Chung Collection and it is special in a number of ways. First, it takes a broader view of the exploration of the coast by Europeans. The earlier collections had a clear emphasis on the British contribution, but the Chungs have an interest in the Spaniards and

Russians. Second, this collection is the first to look at the Chinese in B.C. and Canada in the context of existing knowledge about the Chinese in the Americas. Third, the collection looks at the communication and transportation systems developed by the Canadian Pacific Railway Co., particularly its transcontinental, transpacific and Pacific coastal elements. The holdings are not limited to books and pamphlets, as they include a substantial archival and photographic component and extend to a large number of artifacts. For this reason the collection presented a conundrum to the conventional library, which was resolved by building a fine permanent exhibition space to display some of its important elements. This is a very popular collection that crosses a lot of pre-existing boundaries and shows the transitions that our communities have successfully made to new understandings and new alliances.

#### CHANGING FASHIONS

One of the difficulties of operating a rare book space is that we are involved in a very long-term



A head tax certificate from the Wallace B. Chung and Madeline H. Chung Collection.

project that is capital and people intensive. But fashion, including academic fashion, changes in a far shorter time. There is always the fear that a collection will not find its users. Fortunately the collections themselves seem to be flexible in that they respond not just to the obvious questions posed to them, but also to new emerging questions. Experience tells us that every collection finds its users and that libraries with great collections will attract great scholars.

The Chungs are great collectors who demonstrate a broad reach. John Keenlyside is a collector who specializes in the legal history of B.C. and has focused mainly on manuscripts. His collection is one of great depth and narrow focus. The collection arrives in small groups each with a thematic element—one on First Nations encounters with the law, another on Chinese encounters with early B.C. justice, and another grouping features early judgments from the pioneer judges of the province.

Twenty-five years ago an unnatural silence had fallen over the library jungle and all was dark. The lions of the rare books departments were pacing their book-lined cages in virtual despair. Some of them had been exiled from places like New York City to small towns in places like Virginia. Library administrators were looking at balance sheets and muttering invectives against the elitists in their rare book rooms. No longer.

What was once thought expendable is now at the centre of libraries' futures. Standard knowledge may flow through the Internet, but if you want access to what is not commonly available, if you want to push back the frontiers of knowledge into the unknown, then you need to go to where uncommon knowledge is found. What is unique and unavailable in the standard digital data set is what libraries will want to find and to distribute through the new platforms they control. The future is rare and special, and it includes rare books.

Many of those specialized and unique items are among the gems in the collections of UBC Rare Books and Special Collections. This short

overview leaves out far more than it has included: absent are the locally produced fine press books, books on cartography, the maps, the charts, the posters and bookbinding tools, as well as the Asian, medical, music and natural history collections and a vast group of archival resources that deal with all aspects of B.C.

In tracing more than 70 years of collecting in B.C., we have clearly come a long way. But what is the point of all this collecting? The point is simply to make these splendid resources part of the public realm and to provide access tools so that scholars and the public can use them. As Alexander Pope wrote in his *Moral Essays* (1731–35), “’Tis use alone that sanctifies expense, / And splendour borrows all her rays from sense.”

1. This is a revised version of a lecture delivered for Arts Wednesdays on February 9, 2011, at Robson Square in Vancouver, B.C.
2. Oriol Valls i Subirà, *The History of Paper in Spain x–xiv Centuries* (Barcelona: Empresa Nacional de Celulosas, 1978).
3. Stephen Lunsford wrote about the mission presses of British Columbia in “Pressing the Word into the Wilderness,” *Amphora*, no. 154 (Spring 2010).
4. W. Kaye Lamb, *A Bibliography of the Printed Writings of Frederic William Howay* (Vancouver: [British Columbia Historical Quarterly, 1944]).
5. The bookplates featured in the Ex Libris column on the last page of each issue of *Amphora*, including this one, are drawn from the RBSC Bookplate Collection, which is located at <https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/bookplate>.

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 ~ Ralph Stanton is a director of the Alcuin Society and the former head of UBC Rare Books and Special Collections.