

The Alcuin Society wishes to welcome the following new members:

Gail Austin, Victoria, BC

Spencer Stuart, Vancouver, BC

Jeffrey Werner, Vancouver, BC

Alcuin Society membership is open to any individual, institution or organization with an interest in the book arts, the history of books, book collecting and reading. An individual membership is \$50 a year, while institutional membership is \$75 a year. Students may join at the rate of \$25 a year for up to three years. A patron membership is available at the rate of \$125.

Society members within Canada pay in Canadian dollars; foreign memberships must be paid in U.S. dollars. Payment may be made online using PayPal or via cheque or money order made payable to The Alcuin Society, P.O. Box 3216, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 3X8.



Hinterland Vignette

THE THOMAS MURRAY Collection at UBC Library's Rare Books and Special Collections contains a considerable number of 19th- and early-20th-century bookplates. Many were designed by prominent Canadian artists and produced for influential figures. Thomas Murray (1878–1955) was born in Toronto and began his career as a tailor before moving to Montreal. Following his retirement from the garment industry in 1928, he devoted his life to book collecting. Murray established Bleury Book Store at 951 Bleury Street in Montreal and later opened a second location at 67 St. Catherine Street West. During this time, he acquired a notable private collection of Canadian *ex libris*.

One bookplate in particular shows a quiet moment of quintessential Canadiana while

representing a rich intersection of Canadian cultural history. Printed in black ink on cream-coloured paper, the 10 by 13 cm plate depicts a common loon resting on the water. In the background, two low rounded islands produce dark silhouetted forms that reflect and refract on the water's rippled surface. The loon is shown in profile, facing left with its beak open. It is not difficult to imagine its distinctive warbling call, known as a tremolo or "crazy laugh," echoing over the water, which gently laps the shore. Carefully incised lines frame the islands, creating bold patches of positive and negative space that suggest the shifting light of dawn or dusk.

The artist of the bookplate is modestly identified by the initials "TM," tucked into the lower right-hand edge of the image. Below,

the bookplate owner's name and location are identified in block text: "E·R· HUNTER / TORONTO / CANADA." A sprig of pine and a pinecone appear to each side, framing the text.

The characteristic black-and-white checkered back and banded throat of the loon are aptly represented by the bold and minimalist graphic print technique. It is said that the artist—Thoreau MacDonald—preferred working in the linocut medium because he was colour-blind. Born in Toronto, MacDonald (1901–1989) was a painter and illustrator who worked for Ryerson Press and *Canadian Forum* magazine. He served as editor of the latter for 10 years. Thoreau's father, J.E.H. MacDonald, was a founding member of the

Group of Seven. The efforts of these landscape painters in the 1920s and '30s were formative in defining Canada's first national art movement. Even with this artistic lineage, Thoreau was largely self-taught. Yet he did occasionally work with his father, and much of his work reflects the Group of Seven's vision for a Canadian art influenced by direct contact with nature.

The bookplate owner, Edmund Robert Hunter (1909–2011), was a Canadian art historian best known for his biographies *J.E.H. MacDonald* and *Thoreau MacDonald*. These were published in 1940 and 1942, respectively, as part of Ryerson Press's Canadian Art Series (MacDonald *files* supplied art for both publications). Hunter studied art at the Ontario College of Art, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. He worked at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now Ontario

and the Art Association of Montreal before serving as director at art museums in the U.S.

During his research for the MacDonald biographies, Hunter corresponded with Thoreau. The documents are in the collection of the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book

Library and include personal letters, editorial documents and original illustrations. Significant collections of Thoreau's drawings, prints and paintings are held at the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the University of Toronto, and McGill, McMaster and Queen's universities, in addition to other institutions in Canada and the U.K.

The MacDonald-Hunter bookplate well represents the intersections between Canada's

artistic, historical and social culture in the early to mid 20th century.

■ A detail of this bookplate appears under "Ephemera" in Margaret F. Edison, *Thoreau MacDonald: A Catalogue of Design and Illustration* (University of Toronto, 1973). Additional information regarding Thoreau MacDonald is available in a brief tribute by Terry Stillman, *Thoreau MacDonald: Canada's Foremost Book Illustrator* (Alcuin Society, 2005).

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 ~ Sara Ellis is a Master of Library and Information Studies student in the iSchool at the University of British Columbia.

The Rare Books and Special Collections Bookplate Collection can be accessed from the UBC Library Digital Collections and Services site, <http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca>.

