

## An Archivist Archived

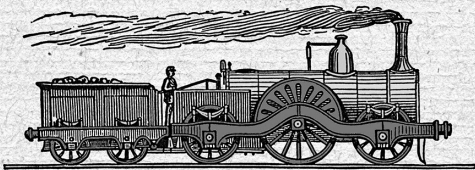
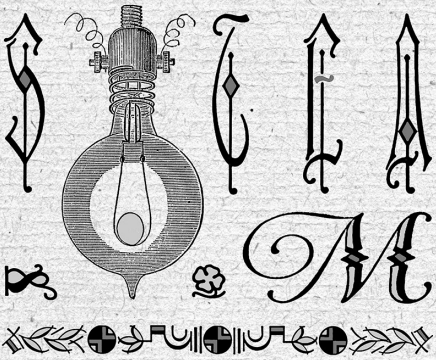
WHEN WE LOOK AT the items sitting in libraries and archives, we don't often think about the people whose time and energy makes these items available to us. We research the creator and subjects of materials (with good reason), but every once in a while we come across a reminder that there are other people involved in shaping these items. I spend a lot of time with the bookplates in the University of British Columbia's Rare Books and Special Collections and, for the first time, I recently came across a bookplate that offers a peek behind the curtain of institutions like my own.

The bookplate for Francis J. Audet features a coat of arms with the motto "AUDET ET VINCIT" (He dares and succeeds). The shield features a chief charged with an open book and fleur-de-lis either side. The book reflects Audet's love of learning, while the fleur-de-lis indicate his French heritage. The shield is also charged with a lion rampant and spray of maple leaves. As I later learned, Audet was a long-time Canadian public servant and these symbols reflect his service to his country. Beneath his name, we see that Audet is a "Docteur en droit" (Doctor of Laws), a "Membre de la Societé Royale du Canada" (member of the Royal Society of Canada) and an "Archiviste" (archivist). An archivist *in* the archives? Intrigued, I began to research one of the foundational figures in Canada's national archives.

Francis J. Audet was born in Detroit on July 29, 1867 to Delphine Goulet and Francis Audet, who moved the family to Montreal when Audet was quite young. After school, he became an accountant. On February 1, 1888 he became the clerk to Alphonse Audet, curator of archives and custodian of records in the records branch of the Department of the Secretary of State. At this time, the records that would come to form Canada's national archives were managed by two separate bodies: the Canadian Archives was responsible for historical records, while the Department of the Secretary of State, where Audet worked, was

# Dingbats

## ORNAMENTS & *fanciful initials*



A regular feature of  
**The Devil's Artisan**

<http://devilsartisan.ca>

responsible for government records. Eventually, in 1904, these two bodies merged and the Public Archives was formed to manage both historical and government records. Today, we know the institution as Library and Archives Canada, an organisation that combines Canada's national archives with its national library. Audet was moved to the Public Archives at its formation and became a central figure.

Audet had various roles within the Public Archives. In 1912, he was the secretary to the royal commission enquiring into the records of government departments. On April 1, 1913, he was named head of the index division, which in 1918 became responsible for information requests. That function is important to note because Audet himself responded to more than 20,000 information requests during his 51-year career! Audet was widely known for his work in developing the index division. His responsibilities included writing more than 2,000,000 (yes, *two million*) files for new acquisitions. To commemorate 50 years of service in 1938, the Public Archives gave Audet a bust of himself. When he finally retired a year later, at the age of 71, he received the title archivist emeritus.

Outside of the archives, Audet was also a prolific writer, authoring 12 books, 23 brochures, and more than 600 articles. He was also involved in various societies and professional associations and sat on several boards. He was a founding member of the Canadian Historical Association, the Société des Dix, the Société des écrivains canadiens, the Monument national d'Ottawa, and the Association canadienne-française d'éducation de l'Ontario. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1923 and received an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Ottawa in 1934. By the time Audet died on September 13, 1943, he had left an indelible mark on Canadian archival history.

.....

.....

~ Emily Larson is a Dual Master of Library and Information Studies and Master of Archival 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 Open Collections site, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/>.

