"How d'you like that…I can go to Davie & Bute while you traipse off to Stow-on-the-Wold."

Okay, now let's all think **asymmetrical** Triple-E…
Everything Ontario wants it gets,
Everything Quebec wants it gets,
Everyone else gets whatever is left over…

CONSTITUTIONAL
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ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO CARICATURE

Cathrine Wanczycki

HE SFU Library is preserving and providing online access to the often humorous, sometimes sobering, work of artists who make a special contribution to journalism's core mission: creating, in the words of the late *Washington Post* publisher Philip Graham, "the first rough draft of history." The SFU Library Editorial Cartoons Collection Online is a seminal digitization project that will showcase the chronicling of our history by B.C.'s finest editorial cartoonists.

In 1996 the library became home to 1,660 Len Norris original drawings. Earlier this year, Roy Peterson, seven-time National Newspaper Award winner and Norris' colleague from the *Vancouver Sun* editorial pages, donated a collection to SFU. And now a new generation of cartoonists is following suit. This fall, the library will acquire archival donations from Bob Krieger, editorial cartoonist for the *Province*. By year's end, the library will have perhaps the most substantial editorial cartoon collection in Western Canada.

Good editorial cartoonists reflect and often satirize – with a skilfully rendered image and a few choice words – the actions, moods, and opinions of the world around them. For three generations, British Columbia has produced some of the finest cartoonists anywhere.

As one of Canada's best-loved cartoonists, the late Norris' career spanned over four decades. He typically generated three cartoon roughs per day, every day. Trevor Lautens, an editor and colleague of Norris for a number of years, once stated that "Len's daily discards would make other cartoonists weep with envy." Lautens described Norris as "a kind of walking *Magna Carta* – an Englishman, though long Canadian, who knows his rights, respects those of others, values his privacy, and tends his own hedges and garden." That's a sentiment today's generation would endorse.

But, while protecting their privacy, they also want exposure for their work. Adrian Raeside, editorial cartoonist for the *Victoria Times-Colonist* whose cartoons are syndicated in 150 newspapers worldwide, says, "Donating to an archive makes cartoonists feel good about their work as a contribution to the world of learning. It also ensures that wrapping fish is not their final destination. As editorial cartoonists, we occasionally take flak for what we do;

this type of project ensures the distribution of our ideas and opinions without the hate mail."

Norris, Peterson, Krieger and Raeside are part of a long line of noted Canadian cartoonists. We enjoy our editorial cartoonists and, based upon the number of syndications spilling beyond our borders, the rest of the world enjoys them too. As historian, political commentator, and SFU vice-president of external relations, David Mitchell, points out, "Canada has a well-established tradition for editorial and political commentary being crystallized in graphic form."

Mitchell cites poet and painter John Wilson Bengough (1851–1923) as perhaps the earliest example of this tradition. Often referred to as "the Father of Canadian Political Cartooning." Bengough began his career as a political cartoonist when Canadian newspaper publisher and senator the Honourable James Beattie came across a caricature of himself penned by Bengough. Beattie subsequently offered Bengough a job at one of Beattie's
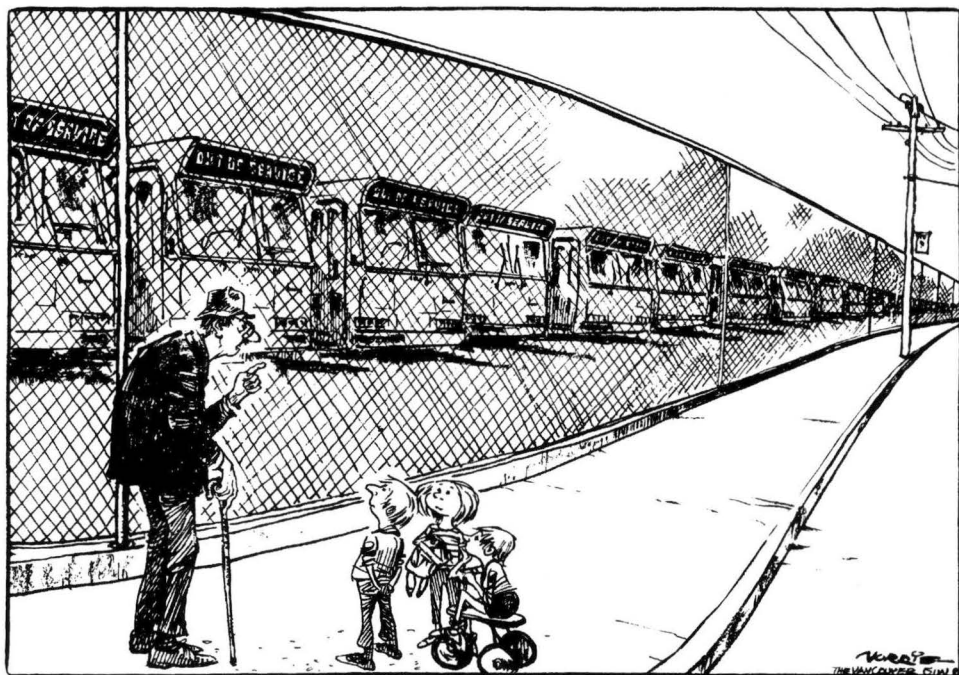
"It used to be something called public transit … then for reasons you're too young to understand, they did away with the public."

smaller papers. Fascinated by the speed and accuracy of a new printing process known as lithography, Bengough decided in the spring of 1873 to publish his latest political cartoons in a small weekly newspaper called *Grip*, named after the talking raven in Charles Dickens' novel *Barnaby Rudge*. As a result, Bengough became known as "the Canadian Dickens."

For the next 20 years, Bengough continued to publish his political cartoons, and in 1892, *Grip* ceased publication when Bengough became cartoonist for the *Toronto Globe* and *Montreal Star* newspapers.

On October 2, 1923, while drawing his last cartoon, Bengough died of a heart attack. At the start of his career in the early 1870s, no Ontario newspaper published political cartoons. Decades later, the *New York Herald* would hail Bengough as "the greatest cartoonist on this side of the continent."

Similar accolades are bestowed on many a "Bengough descendant." According to Lautens – who, in his editorial position, once confessed to having been paid to look at perhaps 150,000 editorial cartoons over a quarter of a century – Len Norris and Roy Peterson "became the best editorial-page cartooning team of any paper in North America, bar none."

The SFU library sees a role for itself beyond simply amassing and preserving these collections. Just as Bengough recognized lithography as the emerging technology enabling him to bring his political cartoons to a larger audience, the SFU library recognizes the potential impact of online accessibility of these collections through digitization.

To date, almost the entire collection of Len Norris cartoons has been digitized at the SFU library. This past summer, the library received funding from the Young Canada Works in Heritage Institutions program through the Department of Canadian Heritage to scan and catalogue the Norris collection. An application is in for further grant money to digitize the Peterson cartoons.

Researchers can explore the cartoons by searching by subject heading, caption, date ranges, and notes describing each cartoon. In addition, they can limit searches to particular cartoonists (useful when more cartoonists are added to the database). One feature that is not common among other collections of editorial cartoons on the Web is the ability to browse the list of

subject headings used in the database. Being able to pick out a subject heading that looks interesting, and then see all the cartoons with that heading, opens up ways of viewing the cartoons that is not possible in print.

As Ralph Stanton, head of special collections and gifts librarian, points out, "Libraries are becoming broadcasters of information and we hope to send these wonderful collections to the rest of the world in digitized form. They are interesting, controversial, and well worth studying."

These collections add to our understanding and appreciation of the history of Western Canada. For scholars, they are a valuable resource for research and teaching across a number of disciplines, including history, journalism, and communications. For the community and the world-at-large, the SFU Library Editorial Cartoons Collection Online will provide easy access to uniquely creative perspectives on events, large and small, that have shaped our past. It is a fitting tribute to the genius of our best cartoonists, and a gift to future generations. You can visit the cartoon collection at http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/projects/Cartoons/

Catherine Wanczycki was an advancement officer for the Simon Fraser Library when she wrote this article. She has a degree in communications from Simon Fraser and is currently completing her Masters of Library and Information Studies degree at the University of British Columbia. She here acknowledges the Web site of the Canadian Cartoonists Club (http://wwwpccomix.com/CanadianCartoonistsClub/) for the information on John Watson Bengough.