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The Library in the Palm of Your Hand
Dear Alumni, Parents, Friends, Students and Colleagues:

The last year has been successful for the Library despite the difficult financial challenges. We continued to aspire to providing the best possible library service and to bringing a commitment to excellence in all that we offered to the McGill community.

The results included improvements to the facilities, with new furnishings for individual and group study and learning spaces in several branch libraries, giving students more areas in which to study, collaborate and share ideas. The collections were expanded to seven million items, with considerable growth of online resources to over 50,000 e-journal titles and two million e-books. We targeted graduate learning with the development of graduate research workshops and introduced innovative new services such as the digitization programmes to sustain and nurture positive teaching, learning and research outcomes as well as the advancement of scholarship. Additional rare and valuable materials, including a manuscript notebook of 18th century novelist Fanny Burney, enhanced scholarly and research opportunities. At the same time exhibitions, both real and virtual, promoted knowledge and extended access to the collections on topics ranging from Abraham Lincoln to Art Deco.

We continued to take into consideration the needs of McGill students today, the “screenagers” who search and grab for information, available primarily online. Our communication services were enhanced with the adoption of social networking tools such as Twitter, and mobile-learning at the Library was promoted. Library resources became more accessible wherever our users were, in cyberspace or in the real world. A new page on the Library website provided details on how to see, for example, WorldCat Mobile from an iPhone, Blackberry or other hand-held device. McGill students noticed the changes, awarding the Library the highest marks in Canada and an “A” grade in the most recent Globe and Mail University Report card on student satisfaction.

The Library’s achievements over the past year are a reflection of our dedicated staff and the ongoing support of all our generous donors who helped support future generations by furthering the Library’s mission. We are truly grateful for the support, particularly during these challenging economic times. Without your generosity, advancing our mission would be all the more challenging.

Janine Schmidt
Trenholme Director of Libraries
Students Supporting their own Learning

For every hour spent in class, students spend three to four in the Library. The Library has become a 24-hour hub for student life and learning, providing a wide array of services, attractive individual and group study areas and access to seven million library items. Considering the importance of the “heart of the University” to students, it is perhaps not surprising that they have partnered with the Library to provide improved services, facilities and resources.

The Students’ Society of McGill University (SSMU) initiated the Library Improvement Fund (LIF) in 1996. It has to date raised over $5 million. The University matches these funds. “It’s a wonderful success story,” says Principal Heather Munroe-Blum (pictured above), “with students taking ownership of their Library.” The students have voted for a levy on themselves in four successive referenda because they value the role the Library plays in the life of the University.

This partnership between the SSMU and the Library has reaped significant benefits for students. As well as facilitating the much-needed 24-hour opening, the facilities have been upgraded and expanded, and students help provide orientation sessions, guidance and help on Library projects. Of course, the Library’s vast collections have also been enhanced. LIF funding helped enrich the collection of DVDs, travel guides, newspapers, musical scores, as well as the virtual library.

“Students form the majority of our clientele,” says Janine Schmidt, Trenholme Director of Libraries at McGill, “and a strong collaborative relationship with them ensures our funding is being used effectively.” The SSMU sought feedback from students on what they wanted from the Library. A clear message emerged. Students wanted their Library to be more of a community space: somewhere where they could plug in their laptop computers or conduct group study. They also wanted well-lit, comfortable spaces.

The SSMU LIF has helped with the refurbishment of the Education Library and Curriculum Resources Centre, the Howard Ross Library of Management and the Life Sciences Library. It also sped along improvements to the foyers of the Humanities and Social Sciences Library. Most recently, funding has allowed the upgrade of quiet study areas on the 5th floor of the Humanities and Social Sciences Library. New seating, desks and power outlets accommodate a new generation of learners. An energy-efficient approach matches low-glare lighting with a maximization of natural light, enhancing students’ comfort. In response to graduate student requirements, lockable, bookable desks have also been provided. James Gilman, a U2 Political Science student says, “I really like the new space, it is definitely conducive to more productive and effective studying and the lighting and power outlets are great!”

McGill students Abhishek Agarwal and Stephanie Nahas in the McGill Library’s Cyberthèque.
PDAs: The Library Gets Personal

The use of mobile devices is exploding across campus. Wireless access to the Internet has heightened the appeal of devices like the iPhone, iPod Touch, and BlackBerry. These handheld computers are becoming smaller and faster and have much to offer. They are telephones and enable management of one’s schedule but they can also suit requirements for work or play with web applications, email, games, music and the ability to read library-owned resources including e-books and articles in e-journals.

The study and practice of medicine has led the way in PDA (personal digital assistant) use. Health care professionals were early adopters of the technology and continue to be critical in the design of PDAs. Mobile devices can impact positively on the delivery of health care, supplying timely information for clinical decision-making and for ensuring accurate medication.

The McGill Library provides software which enables mobile devices to access online information held by the Library. Access through mobile devices is particularly important in medicine. Palm and Pocket PCs are popular with practising doctors and clinicians for obtaining evidence based medical practice and pharmaceutical and drug information. Quick and easy access to the Internet now opens up the world of electronic resources that the Library makes available to McGill students, faculty and staff. Through PDAs and similar devices, the McGill Library has truly gone mobile.

The Library’s online collection includes e-books for all disciplines, with two million titles. It also includes 800 article and research databases, as well as 50,000 e-journals delivering the full text of articles, all in the palm of your hand.

Dr. Priya Manjoo extols the wonders of accessing the Library from her PDA. “It is fantastic!” she exclaims. “Having detailed information at your fingertips is essential to clinicians. Our work is dependent on the availability of reliable evidence.” Dr. Manjoo is also completing a Master of Science degree in Epidemiology at McGill and depends on the Library for support for her research. She finds the PDA “a convenient way” to search the literature and read relevant journal articles and texts.

The Library has extended its services to meet the changing needs of members of the McGill community like Dr. Manjoo, and will continue to support PDA use in medicine and beyond. There are many opportunities for Library outreach through video tutorials, customized quizzes, and games for PDAs. Palm-held audio and video tours also provide a means of getting to know the Library and campus spaces. There is further work to be done to make the Library’s website more PDA-friendly with pages that are easy to navigate on handhelds. With all of these opportunities, it is no wonder the Library is getting personal and facilitating mobile access.
If you have been to the fourth floor of the Humanities and Social Sciences Library lately, you may have peered through a glass wall and discovered two large, futuristic looking machines with robotic arms. Despite a passing resemblance to props from a science fiction film, the Kirtas APT2400 high speed robotic book scanner (www.kirtas.com, www.ristech.com) and the Espresso Book Machine (www.ondemandbooks.com) are actually high tech devices that allow the Library to engage in digitize on demand (DOD) and print on demand (POD) services.

The Kirtas machine scans books very quickly by taking high resolution photos of each page and using robotic arms to turn the pages. This allows the Library to create digital versions of books that are out of copyright. When a client requests that a certain book be scanned, this is known as DOD, or digitization on demand. “It’s an exciting time for the Library as we embark on a new era of services,” says Louise O’Neill, Associate Director, Library Technology Services at the McGill Library. “With this innovative technology we can reveal our collections through user-driven digitization and distribution.” The Espresso Book Machine picks up from there, printing attractive, paper bound books from digital input; when a client requests this service, it is known as POD (print on demand).

The Library’s recently acquired Kirtas APT2400 book scanner can digitize up to 2400 pages per hour.
Fanny Burney’s reputation grows. She is now feted in literary circles as a direct influence on Jane Austen and William Thackeray. In May 2009, the McGill Library, in collaboration with the Burney Centre, bought one of her manuscript notebooks, adding to its rare book collection.

“These letters”, enthuses Dr. Peter Sabor, the Canada Research Chair in 18th Century Studies, and the Director of the Burney Centre, “are eye-opening, among other reasons, for medical historians and the general reader alike, in their account of her fight with breast cancer and her eventual mastectomy without anesthetic.” They have presented us with a peephole back into 18th and early 19th century society.

Burney brought a fresh realism to the written portrayal of female society, in particular, of the late 18th century. The Burney Centre is part of the vanguard throughout the world of those promoting a greater understanding of her contribution. Supported through a collection of primary and secondary material housed in the Library’s Rare Books and Special Collections, the Burney Centre is able to bring together archival material on the Burney family from around the world. The Library’s holdings include microfilm copies of the major Burney collections from the New York Public Library, the British Library and Yale University. The staff at the Centre is enthusiastic about the growing number of emails and visits by international scholars. Visiting scholars come yearly to the Centre on a fellowship. The most recent recipient of the fellowship, Danielle Grover, who is pursuing research in 18th century music and its role in women’s lives, found the Burney archives far exceeded her expectations and would “recommend [the Centre] to other scholars.” The scholarship is jointly funded by the Library, the Faculty of Arts and the Burney Centre.

The rare manuscript notebook bought earlier this year with funding from the B.H. Breslauer Foundation is “a unique treasure that will support research at McGill,” according to Dr. Richard Virr, Head Curator of the Library’s Rare Books and Special Collections. It contains the drafts of some 40 letters in French addressed to various friends from 1809-1811.

Other acquisitions made at the same auction include numerous early-editions of her novels, letters from her posting as Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte and one of her diaries. A manuscript by her niece, Sophia Elizabeth Burney, was also part of the cache.

Add a visit to Fanny Burney at McGill Library to your must-do list.

It is thanks to the B.H. Breslauer Foundation that the McGill University Library was able to acquire the rare Fanny Burney manuscript. “The Foundation’s generous support is greatly appreciated,” says Janine Schmidt, Trenholme Director of Libraries at McGill University. “It allows us to build on our solid base in historical literary artifacts for all to use and enjoy.”

The B.H. Breslauer Foundation specifically aims to help institutional libraries acquire rare printed books and manuscripts. Important collectors themselves, B.H. Breslauer (pictured) and his father Martin Breslauer were among the leading antiquarian bookdealers of Berlin (from 1898), London (from 1938) and New York (from 1977), guiding numerous great institutions as well as private collectors in forming their libraries. Dr. Breslauer died in 2004, leaving his residual estate to the Foundation, which has since then funded major acquisitions by many libraries in America and Europe. McGill University Library is its first Canadian beneficiary.

Foundations and planned giving keep libraries afloat, particularly in these lean times. The McGill University Library looks to generous supporters, whether individuals or organizations like the B.H. Breslauer Foundation, to help fund the consolidation of its unique collections. Your help would be gratefully received.
Extending Access to the Collections

If Abraham Lincoln were alive today and could access the McGill Library’s Second Life island, he might check out the exhibition celebrating the 200th anniversary of his birth and chuckle over what has survived and ended up on display. The virtual collection allows the exhibition to be toured from anywhere.

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, who abolished slavery and promoted national healing and unity, has gained even further attention following the election of Barack Obama, who invokes and often references the iconic emancipator. Those curious about the man, considered by many to be one of the greatest American presidents, were invited to visit McGill Library’s Rare Books and Special Collections earlier this year. The Library celebrated the 200th anniversary of Lincoln’s birth with an exhibition titled Happy Birthday Mr. President!, which featured selected pieces from its eclectic Joseph N. Nathanson Collection of Lincolniana.

Among the items on display were several from the pre-presidential years, including what is thought to be the earliest portrait of Lincoln from 1846. The exhibition also featured various photographs of Lincoln, his cabinet and family, several political cartoon posters as well as items of realia including busts, bookends, plaques and china.

Those who missed the exhibition need not be disappointed. The Library extended the exhibition into new media, with Lincoln celebrated by a presence in Second Life, a virtual environment available via the Internet. Selected items from the Nathanson Collection are on display for Second Life users as part of a larger exhibit called Lincoln North (http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/lincoln).

If you have Second Life installed on your computer, you can go directly to the collection at: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Central%20Campus%2C%20Illinois%20State%202/141/33/901/. For more information about accessing Second Life, please visit http://www.secondlife.com.

The Joseph N. Nathanson Collection of Lincolniana is considered one of the most unusual research collections housed at the McGill Library. In 1986, Dr. Joseph N. Nathanson (1895-1989) donated to McGill, his alma mater, the contents of his assorted Lincoln collection. For almost 50 years, Dr. Nathanson avidly collected Lincolniana from his home in New York City, N.Y., where he taught at Cornell University’s School of Medicine. The collection is composed of approximately 4,000 items including books, pamphlets, prints, manuscripts, ephemera and realia.

The Library is extending such collections to greater viewing by both the McGill and wider communities, in order that they might remain with us in perpetuity. If you could not make it to the Library to visit the exhibition and celebrate Lincoln’s birthday, you have the chance to do so virtually.
“My happiest hours at McGill were spent in the Library. I was like a kid in a candy store,” remembers Barbara Greeniaus, BA’72, MLS’76.

She began her career as chief librarian at the Montreal General Hospital, then headed to Winnipeg, where she took up the post of provincial librarian. “Then I kept going west,” Greeniaus laughs. She served as head of public libraries for the province of British Columbia for 14 years, before changing gears in 2001 to work in human resources and organizational development.

Although Greeniaus “fell in love instantly with Victoria” when she moved there, she still has strong emotional ties to Montreal, where she lived for her first 30 years. “I always walk through campus whenever I’m back. McGill and Montreal are almost inseparable for me,” she says.

“My husband Bill and I don’t have children, so when it came time to prepare our wills, our lawyer said to me, ‘Think about how you want to be remembered and at what institutions you can make a difference.’” Greeniaus decided to leave a bequest to the McGill Library, with its 13 branch libraries.

In 2008, Greeniaus began a new chapter in her life as Director of Corporate Communications and Change Management in the BC Ministry of Labour and Citizens’ Services. She also devotes much of her time as Board Chair for Victoria’s Belfry Theatre, one of Canada’s leading regional theatre companies.

“Giving back to McGill is much the same as volunteering for the Belfry,” says Greeniaus. “In both cases, I have an opportunity to give back to the community with time, energy or donations – or all of the above!”

Greeniaus believes that “it’s very important to give back to your alma mater. My McGill education afforded me fabulous job opportunities. There’s a certain prestige to a McGill degree – even way out here in Victoria,” she adds with a laugh.

“I’m happy to be able to help make it possible for young people to have the same great experience that I did. It was such an exciting time in my life.”

Barbara Greeniaus
BA’72, MLS’76