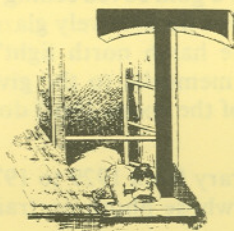


OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

No. 31 — JUNE 1979

OSLER LIBRARY FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION



he fiftieth anniversary of the Osler Library has naturally led to the selection of the history of the Library as the topic of the current exhibit. Quite expectedly too, Osler himself is the topic of the first case, in the form of a short biographical sketch and five photographs representing

the gamut of his varied interests as pathologist, clinician, author, teacher, and bibliophile.

The second case illustrates "Osler's Interest in Books". His "Where Is It?" notebook contains memoranda from his wide reading. "Digby Sir Kenelm 1603-1665. Life by T.L. (1896 read Swanage August 1899)", one page begins. "Called Arch-amateur of all history. . . ." There follow in Osler's tiny, regular hand, notes on Digby's "visible speech" and his "sympathetic powder". Also displayed is *Incunabula Medica* (1923) containing Osler's address to the Bibliographical Society in 1914. There follow samples from the 1,047-odd bookseller and auction invoices preserved in the Osler Library. A somewhat unorthodox record of Osler's book-buying is a letter he received in 1917 from a certain Luigi Aubray [?]. "I am soldier in Rome," writes Luigi. "I have sent to you by this same mail on approval one very interesting medical manuscript of the XIVth cent. on paper — I ask for it £st. 10." Osler bought the manuscript for £6.

Miss Agnes Gallup in 1917 (?) snapped Osler "laid up" in bed, reading. The resulting photograph is displayed to illustrate that Osler practised what he preached, namely "with half an hour's reading in bed every night as a steady practice, the busiest man can get a fair education before the plasma sets in the periganglionic spaces of his grey cortex."

Wherever Osler lived he became involved and interested in the affairs of the local library. He donated many books to a variety of libraries, from the McGill Medical Library to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia to the Royal College of Physicians of London, England. In the exhibit are displayed lists of his donations to these libraries, as well as a book-plate designed by Max Brödel in 1919 for the William Osler Testimonial Fund for the Advancement of Medicine of the Library of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of the State of Maryland. After his son's death in combat in 1917, Osler arranged for Revere's collection of English literature to form the nucleus of a club to encourage the study of the literature of the Tudor and Stuart periods at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. The book-plate of this collection bearing the inscription "In Memory of Edward Revere Osler 1895-1917" is also displayed.

The Osler Library fiftieth anniversary exhibition was planned and set up by Miss Marilyn Fransiszyn, Reference and Manuscript Librarian of the Osler Library. The exhibition was completed last April and will be in place the greater part of the remainder of 1979, the Library's semi-centennial year. Much of the history of the Osler Library is reflected in the exhibition, a description of which by Miss Fransiszyn is the leading article in this issue of the *Newsletter*.

Osler's interest in libraries extended to the profession of library science. Libraries and library science formed the subject of several of his papers which are included in the exhibit. His Presidential Address, "The Medical Library in Post-Graduate Work" was delivered at the inaugural meeting of the Medical Library Association in Belfast in 1909. In it Osler urges physicians to continue their reading beyond medical school, frequent their local medical library, and cultivate a hobby — particularly book-collecting. In "The Library School in the College", an address delivered at the opening of the Summer School of Library Service in Aberystwyth, Wales in 1917, Osler justifies librarianship as a science, hails the growing number of library schools to teach it, and advocates a "School of the Book" in the University of each region. On the occasion of the presentation of the Marburg collection of books to The Johns Hopkins Medical School in 1907 — an acquisition in which he had been instrumental — Osler spoke "On the Library of a Medical School". His own magnificent bequest to McGill University, still twelve years in the future, is foreshadowed by his words that "the library of a great medical school should contain the original works of all the great masters of medicine".

Osler's greatest collecting effort was expended in Oxford where the books spilled into almost every room of his large house at 13 Norham Gardens, although only one room was designated "the library". In the exhibit, a photo album entitled "13 Norham Gardens", compiled by John F. Fulton in 1928, is opened at the photograph of "the library", a cosy, cluttered room lined with books, "antimacassared" armchairs, and a fireplace centered against one wall surmounted by portraits in oils of Thomas Linacre, William Harvey, and Thomas Sydenham. This was Osler's library.

Osler himself began the catalogue of his collection. He foresaw that he would not complete it but this did not prevent him from tackling the gargantuan task, as evidenced by his draft of an introduction, "The Collecting of a Library," and catalogue cards bearing bio-bibliographical notes in his hand.

As early as 1911 Osler had made formal arrangements for the disposition of his library. A deed of gift made in that year and witnessed by his butler William Turpin and his parlourmaid Alice Batemen is displayed.

Osler died on December 29th, 1919. Soon after, arrangements were underway to prepare the collection for its final home. They are represented in the exhibit by the telegrams exchanged by Lady Osler and the Dean of the McGill Medical Faculty in March, 1920; preliminary designs for the "Proposed Osler Library" by Nobbs & Hyde, Architects (1921); a photograph of W.W. Francis and R.H. Hill seated at a desk littered with papers and catalogue cards in the book-lined consulting room of 13 Norham Gardens (1928); and the Canadian Pacific "Liverpool Local Bill of Lading to Montreal" for "86 Cases Old Books" to be carried on the steamship "Duchess of Atholl" (Nov. 2, 1928).

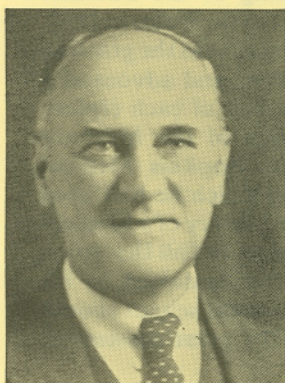
The official opening of the Osler Library on May 29, 1929 attracted wide attention. Under the banner headline "McGILL RECEIVES FAMOUS LIBRARY OF SIR WILLIAM OSLER", the *Montreal Star* reported on the ceremony, while the *Gazette* devoted two full columns

to it. Both newspaper clippings are displayed along with the programme of the opening ceremonies.

The two homes of the Library are next represented, the Strathcona Medical Building, now the Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building, and the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building. Three photographs record the original setting: the black marble entrance with five marble steps, creating "a sense of sanctuary and mortal resting place" but countered by "a golden-toned marble in the walls of the vestibule and... a gold coved ceiling"¹; the central bay with its tall windows decoratively glazed "to reduce, warm and soften the harsh north light"², and the Osler Niche where "the memorial to the giver of the library remains the focus of the room, [but] does not dominate the scene."³

The stewardship of the Osler Library from 1929 to 1979 was entrusted to ten individuals whose photo-portraits are arranged in one exhibit case.

STEWARDSHIP OF THE OSLER LIBRARY 1929-1979



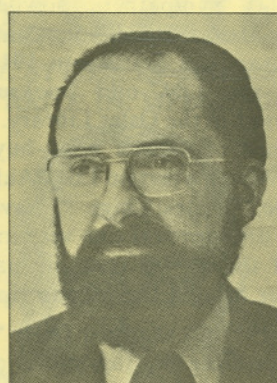
W.W. Francis
Osler Librarian
1929-1959



Cécile Desbarats
Secretary-Librarian
1955-1966
Associate Osler Librarian
1966-1968



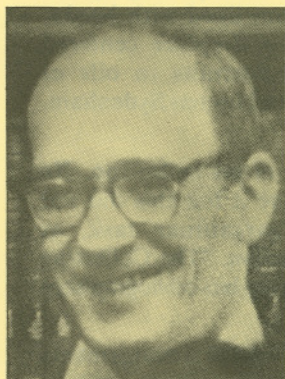
Lloyd G. Stevenson
Assistant Librarian
1954-1956



Donald G. Bates
Acting Osler Librarian
1966-1971



Ellen B. Wells
Associate Osler Librarian
1968-1971
Acting Osler Librarian
1971-1972



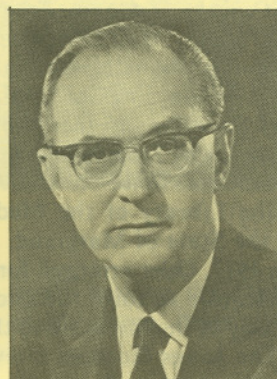
H.D. Vos
Acting History of
Medicine Librarian
1973-1974



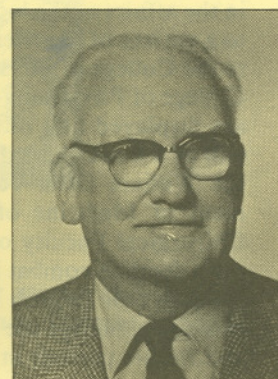
Philip M. Teigen
History of Medicine Librarian
1974-
Osler Librarian
1979-



Wilder G. Penfield
Honorary Osler Librarian
1963-1976



William H. Feindel
Honorary Associate
Osler Librarian
1963-1969



E.H. Bensley
Honorary Osler Librarian
1979-

"The Osler Library Now" is represented by a statistical summary of the collection, services, and staff, as of May 31, 1978 and a comparison with the statistics available in 1931. Dramatic growth is evident: 26,631 books in 1978, 8,181 in 1931; 8,702 readers in 1978, 582 in 1931; seven staff in 1978, one in 1931. A group photograph by Mrs. Anne Joseph of all seven staff members in 1979 — Karin Waterhouse, Zlata Blazina, Olga Werbowyj, Yvonne Chackal, Marilyn Fransiszyn, Rose Atherley, E.H. Bensley, and Philip Teigen — is also displayed.

A cabinet in the Osler Room contains a reconstruction of an exhibit by Osler himself which he called "Illustrations of an Attempt to Collect a Bibliotheca Prima in Science and Medicine." In 1919 the Classical Association met in Oxford. Osler, as President, delivered what was to be his last formal address and one of his most brilliant, "The Old Humanities and the New Science." He also arranged two exhibits for attending members, one of early scientific instruments which had been stored in various Oxford Colleges, and the other a selection from his own collection of outstanding classics in science and medicine. Today they form part of the "Bibliotheca Prima" section of his Library at McGill and are a fitting symbol of his vision for a history of medicine library, "to have in a comparatively small number of works the essential literature grouped about the men of the first rank, arranged in chronological order."⁴

¹Susan M. Wagg, *The McGill Architecture of Percy Erskine Nobbs*, Master of Fine Arts thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, 1979, p. 77.

²John Bland, "The Architect of the First Osler Library: Percy Erskine Nobbs," *Osler Library Newsletter*, no. 13 (June, 1973), p. [1].

³Wagg, p. 83.

⁴William Osler, *Classical Association, Oxford Meeting, 1919: [Programme]* ([Oxford] 1919), p. [1].

THE OSLER SOCIETY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY Report for the Academic Year 1978-79

The Osler Society regaled those thirsting for wine and culture at its 269th, 270th, and 271st meetings, held in the Francis Seminar Room. The Fifty-Eighth Annual Osler Banquet was honoured by the presence of Dr. Thomas McKeown, Emeritus Professor of Social Medicine at the University of Birmingham and the Osler Lecturer for 1979.

On September 19th, Danielle Perreault of the second-year medical class presented her film, "Au Pays Dagari". Produced during her tenure as part of a travelling public-health team in northern Ghana (home of the Dagari tribe), the film offered insights into the social, economic, and nutritional background of a number of problems in tropical medicine. It should be noted that peripatetic Danielle is presently spending several months working at a clinic in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, so we can look forward to an account of her further adventures in the coming year.

On November 6th, Dr. James Wolff of Harvard University, lately a resident in Pediatrics at the Montreal Children's Hospital, spoke on "Prose, Poetry, and the Practice of Medicine: The Works of William Carlos Williams". Dr. Wolff focused on Williams' experience as a full-time general practitioner in industrial northern New Jersey, both as a rich source of encounters with interesting people (particularly the polyglot immigrant communities), and as a model for many poems and short stories on the

medical experience itself. Excerpts from several of these works revealed a writer of incisive wit, sardonic sometimes, and certainly far removed from the typical genre of the "medical novel".

On January 31st, the Osler Society and CUSO (Canadian University Service Overseas) jointly presented the film, "Seeds of Health", on the Chimaltenango Development Project in Guatemala. This represents the new trend in medical foreign aid. Rather than providing facilities for a few physicians from developed nations, to be replaced by a perpetual stream of volunteers, the Project aims to train a cadre of health workers who will be fully able to function and train their successors long after outside support has ended.

The Third Annual Osler Lecture, "Man's health: The Past and the Future", was presented on April 18th, 1979. Dr. McKeown reviewed the factors that have demonstrably affected the health of the populace in the years since mortality data were first collected, and argued for a classification of diseases clearly related to medicine's ability to intervene for good; to wit, a distinction between those ailments predetermined at conception (which may, of course, be palliated or compensated for medically), and those caused wholly or in part by alterable environmental influences. Viewed in this way, the fields of environmental and industrial medicine assume their proper importance as medical disciplines that have vast potential for a positive impact.

The Osler Banquet was held at the McGill Faculty Club on the evening of April 18th. Shakespeare was much in evidence as the mystery of the Bardolphian Nose was solved, and the pilchards on Sir William's coat-of-arms were compared to herrings. The sad fate of Edward the Martyr, the young King of England assassinated one-thousand-and-one years and one month before the Banquet, was evoked to remind the assembly of the importance of properly performing the Loving Cup ceremony. Our Honorary President, Dr. Harold Segall (MDCM, McGill, 1920) enriched the presentation of Osler's *A Way of Life* with a personal recollection of Dr. William Grant Stewart from the influenza pandemic of 1918-19.

William Peterson, MDCM II
Chairman, the Osler Society, 1978-79

BOOKS ADDED

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Osler Library a special issue of *Books Added* has been prepared. The January/June number lists primary journals available in the Osler Library. This list of early medical journals is arranged alphabetically by title; however, it has been indexed to provide access by the names of most authors and editors and by different titles. Each main entry records Osler holdings including indexes.

Anyone not currently on the mailing list for *Books Added* who would like to receive a copy of this number or wishes to be put on the mailing list for this publication may send the request to Ms. O. Werbowyj, Osler Library, McGill University, 3655 Drummond Street, Montreal, Quebec H3G 1Y6, Attention: Books Added.

The historiated letter of the first page is reproduced from *Le Livre Moderne: Revue du Monde littéraire et des Bibliophiles contemporains*, publiée par Octave Uzanne, Paris, vol. 3, 1891 (*Bibl. Osl.* 7169).

THE H. ROCKE ROBERTSON ROOM

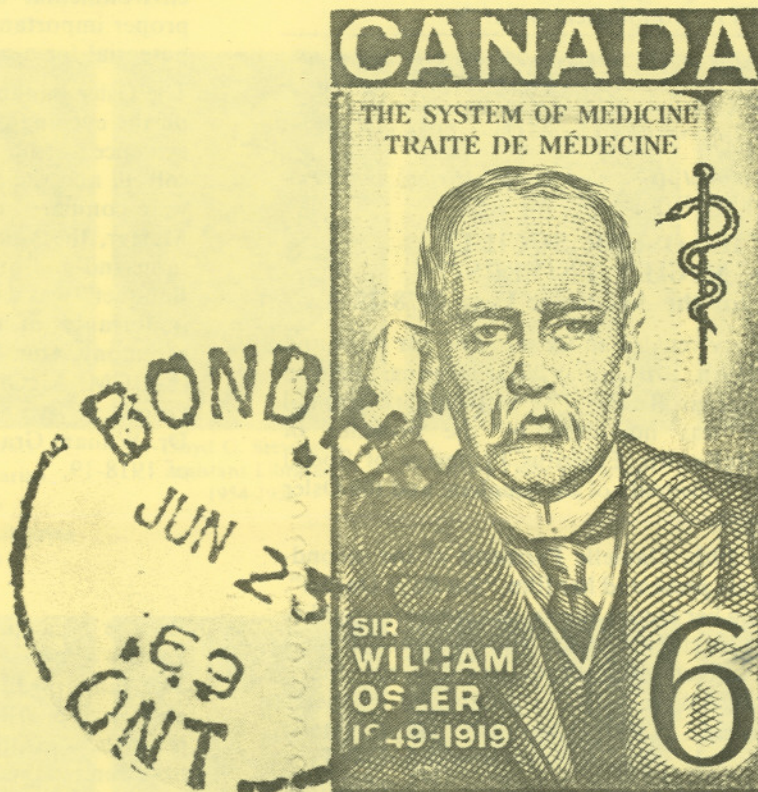
At the meeting of the Board of Curators of the Osler Library held on April 18th last, Dr. Robert E. Bell, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University, announced that the Board of Governors of McGill had enthusiastically approved the naming of the newly created rare-book room of the Francis Wing in honour of Dr. Robertson. This action of the Governors had been taken on the unanimous recommendation of the Curators of the Osler Library.

Dr. Bell recalled that Dr. Robertson was a McGill graduate (B.Sc. 1932; M.D., C.M. 1936) and subsequently had served here as Surgeon-in-chief of the Montreal General Hospital, Professor of Surgery and Chairman of the Department of Surgery at McGill, and recently as McGill's Principal and Vice-Chancellor.

In making their recommendation, the Curators took cognizance of Dr. Robertson's unique role in both the conception and the execution of the new room and the Francis Wing as a whole, and of his long-standing interest in the Osler Library and rare books generally. Dr. Bell emphasized that the naming of the H. Rocke Robertson Room has also a larger purpose. In this way the entire University wishes to put on record its gratitude for the years of service and philanthropy that Dr. Robertson has devoted and continues to devote to his Alma Mater.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NEWSLETTER

The first number of the *Osler Library Newsletter* was published in June 1969. The current number therefore marks the tenth anniversary of the launching of this venture by Miss Ellen B. Wells, then Associate Osler Librarian and founding editor of the *Newsletter*. 1969 was the year the Canadian Post Office issued a Sir William Osler commemorative stamp. The stamp appeared on June 23rd and on that same day *Osler Library Newsletter* no. 1 was mailed from Montreal bearing the Osler stamp; thus our envelopes qualified as "first day covers". As the accompanying illustration shows, the Osler stamp of 1969 cost only six cents; to-day a seventeen-cent stamp is required in its place even for local mail!



First day cover bearing the Osler stamp and, in this instance, mailed from Bond Head, Ontario, Osler's birthplace.

Editorial Committee for the *Newsletter*: E.H. Bensley, Editor; Philip Teigen, Osler Librarian; Karin Waterhouse, Editorial Assistant.

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FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The appeal to the Friends for the 1978-79 academic year concluded at the end of May and the Library is very gratified to receive about \$5,500 contributed by 280 Friends. The appeal for the 1979-80 academic year will be made in the October *Newsletter*; there will also be a note describing how the Friends' contributions have been used by the Library in addition to making possible the continuation of the *Newsletter*. The Library acknowledges with thanks the support of all its Friends. The following have been added to the list since the publication of the February *Newsletter*.

- J. Beaudion, Quebec, PQ
F. Bloch, St.-Prex, Switzerland
F.M. Bourne, Montreal, PQ
*F. Braun, Bellingham, WA
†Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa, ON
†Danish Osler Club, Copenhagen, Denmark
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