



THE OSLER • LIBRARY • NEWSLETTER •

NUMBER 98 • 2002

Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University, Montréal (Québec) Canada

IN THIS ISSUE

The lead article in this number of the *Osler Library Newsletter* is by Dr. Bruce Fye, historian, Oslerian, and bibliophile (Dr. Fye's "day job" is in the Cardiovascular Division of the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota). When it comes to bibliomania, Dr. Fye knows whereof he speaks, having assembled a formidable historical-medical library of his own, and having abetted those similarly afflicted over many years. This case study of Osler's chronic print-addiction was to have appeared in the *Newsletter* last year, prior to its publication in *The Persisting Osler III*; however, multiple moves and the organizational disabilities of the Editor caused a delay in its appearance until after *The Persisting Osler III* appeared. The *Newsletter* wishes to thank Krieger Publications for permission to reprint Dr. Fye's essay.✻

WILLIAM OSLER'S BIBLIOMANIA

A century ago, William Osler (1849-1919) was the English-speaking world's most prominent physician and medical educator.¹ He was also a bibliomaniac.² Osler's family and friends knew of his irrepressible passion for books; he made no attempt to hide his addiction. Indeed, his legacy is due in large part to his collecting habit. Osler's bibliomania led him to create one of the finest libraries of medical books ever assembled and to write more than one-hundred historical and biographical papers.³ His influence on medical book collectors, institutional libraries, and on the emerging field of medical history was substantial, and it persists to this day. For Osler, book collecting, historical research, and writing were complementary pursuits. He collected works written by authors in whom he had a special interest and sought books that were viewed as important historically—those that illustrated the history of medicine. Osler's library, in turn, stimulated him to study and write about the lives and contributions of influential figures in the history of medicine and science.⁴

It is of some interest to trace the origins of Osler's bibliomania. He grew up in a family that enjoyed reading and in a home filled with books. His father, a country parson, owned about 1500 volumes, mainly on theology. When Osler was seventeen, his oldest brother, Featherstone, encouraged his interest in rare books by giving him for Christmas a copy of J. Hain Friswell's *Varia: Readings from Rare Books*.⁵ Shortly thereafter, young Osler bought his

first books: the popular Globe edition of Shakespeare's works and the 1862 Ticknor and Fields edition of Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*. The Shakespeare book was later stolen, but half a century later Osler characterized this Browne volume as the most precious book in his library.⁶

Osler was first exposed to scientific books when, at sixteen, he entered Trinity College School in Weston, Ontario. The school's founder and

by Dr. Bruce
Frye



Oak-paneled library at 13 Norham Gardens in Oxford.

... Osler came to view books as a necessity, and they would compete successfully for his time and his income.



warden, Reverend William A. "Father" Johnson, owned a library that included books by Charles Lyell, Charles Dana, William Carpenter, and several other 19th century scientific authors. Osler enjoyed exploring Father Johnson's books and later remarked that "browsing in a large and varied library is the best introduction to a general education."⁷ When he moved in with Dr. James Bovell of Toronto in 1869, Osler discovered a vast new world of books—medical books with extraordinary engravings and spellbinding real life stories of diseases, doctors, and death. He spent his evenings roaming and reading in Bovell's extensive library of medical and scientific classics. This adolescent experience fueled Osler's passion for books—his bibliomania. He wrote in 1914, "I date my mental downfall from that winter, upon which, however, I look back with unmixed delight."⁸

As a student at McGill Medical College between 1870 and 1872, Osler came under the influence of Dr. Palmer Howard, who also owned a large medical library. He spent the next two years studying abroad, where he was exposed to several large institutional libraries and to many antiquarian booksellers. Osler's very limited budget allowed him to purchase very few books in Europe, mainly textbooks necessary for his studies. Soon, however, Osler came to view books as a necessity, and they would compete successfully for his time and his income. Reflecting on his rich and varied life in 1901, he told an audience at the opening of the new building of the Boston Medical Library, "Books have been my delight these thirty years, and from them I have received incalculable benefits."⁹

When Osler moved to Philadelphia in 1884, his bookish and historical interests were stimulated by new friends and colleagues such as S. Weir Mitchell and Howard A. Kelly and by the resources and ambiance of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and its library. Considering Philadelphia's important role in the early history of medicine in the United States, it is not surprising that Osler began to collect medical Americana while

living there. He acquired some "special treasures," as he called them, including John Morgan's very rare book *A Discourse upon the Institution of Medical Schools in America*, published in 1765.¹⁰

Osler evolved gradually from an ambitious young pathologist and aspiring doctor who wanted to have a useful working library, into the world's best known physician who assembled a spectacular book collection illustrating the history of medicine. The published catalogue of his library, *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, reveals much about Osler's passion for books. In his introduction he explained, "A library represents the mind of its collector, his fancies and foibles, his strength and weakness, his prejudices and preferences."¹¹ As his career unfolded, Osler gravitated toward men and institutions that shared his passion for books and history.

If Osler's interest in medical history and biography took root in Philadelphia, it blossomed in Baltimore. A few months after the Johns Hopkins Hospital opened in 1889, Osler, Howard Kelly and William Welch launched the Johns Hopkins Historical Club. With John Shaw Billings of the Surgeon General's Library, a frequent visitor to Johns Hopkins, they shared a common interest in the history of medicine and rare medical books.¹² Osler began to collect more aggressively as his income grew dramatically as a result of his successful consultative practice and the royalties from his medical textbook, first published in 1892. Indeed, in 1904 his income was \$47,280 (including his \$5,000 salary from Johns Hopkins, \$5,200 in royalties from his popular textbook, \$2,000 from investments, and \$35,000 from private practice).¹³

This huge income fueled Osler's bibliomania. He explained later that he began to buy, "first, the early books and pamphlets relating to the profession in America; secondly, the original editions of the great writers in science and in medicine; and thirdly, the works of such general authors as Sir Thos. Browne, Milton, Shelley, Keats, and others."¹⁴ But Osler did not buy old books just to have them. He used his growing library in his research and writing,

both clinical and historical. Osler also used his books when teaching. He hoped to stimulate others to read the older literature, to appreciate the classics of medicine, and to collect books and offprints.

Osler purchased most of his books from three traditional sources: bookshops, catalogs, and auctions. But a powerful force that animates bibliomaniacs—the fun of the hunt—also led him to rummage through bookstalls and seek out little known dealers.¹⁵ During his Baltimore years Osler spent most summers abroad, and his letters reveal his passion for bookhunting. When he visited Holland in 1901, Osler tried to be a tourist—until bibliomania overpowered him. His wife Grace informed Harvey Cushing, "Dr. Osler has been really sightseeing on this trip and is very amusing. He looks at one picture in the collection and then flies to a book shop."¹⁶ In another letter she told Cushing, "We really had a delightful trip, though Drs. Dock and Osler became utterly disgusted at every place where old books were not forthcoming and promptly wanted to leave."¹⁷ Bibliomaniacs, like other passionate collectors, recognize this behavior. They often find traditional cultural attractions uninteresting because they represent a distraction and consume valuable book-hunting time. While abroad Osler's itinerary was often defined by visits to bookshops. Other activities, beyond formal appearances at medical meetings and other professional duties, were secondary.

George Dock described Osler's visit to an Amsterdam shop that had a large selection of old medical books:

W. O. would begin early in the morning and continue all day. In a large and light room they had put out the Index Catalog [of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office] on a table, and on other tables, books that people had gathered for him between visits.... There was a pitcher of drinking water. He would take off his coat, roll up his sleeves, and work systematically, putting the books he wanted on a pile, to be shipped later. In smaller shops he worked

less intensely, but probably not missing much of value.¹⁸

Osler spent the summer of 1903 in Europe. Writing to Cushing from Paris, he boasted, "I have bagged two 1543 Fabricas! 'Tis not a work which should be left on the shelves of a bookseller."¹⁹ A week later, he wrote again, "Besides the two copies of the '43 edition of the De Humani corporis fabrica I have just ordered a third. We cannot have too many copies in America & no Medical Library is complete without one."²⁰ But Osler's hunting trips were not always so successful. Like all bibliomaniacs he got frustrated whenever reality fell short of expectation. On one such occasion he complained to Cushing,

I had a fall in blood pressure of 125 mm. yesterday afternoon. In an antiquariat's here I was pulling over some old books... and on a chair near at hand were two fine quartos, very finely bound, one the History of the Strawberry Hill & the other, Walpole's Noble Authors, the two £1.15.0! I jumped on them... but alas the Delilah in charge knocked me over by saying that she had just sold them—not an hour before, to Sir Tristram??—Shandy I suppose—damn him!! I was disgusted.²¹

Cushing understood. He, too, was a bibliomaniac.²²

Speaking of Osler's final years at Hopkins, Cushing explained, "[his] infection with the bibliomania was becoming chronic."²³ Excerpts from an unpublished manuscript "Burrowings of a Bookworm" that Osler wrote in 1902 (under his pseudonym Egerton Yorrick Davis, Jr.) support Cushing's conclusion. Referring to bibliomania—and writing from personal experience—Osler's alter ego confessed,

In the final stage of the malady, sung of so sweetly by John Ferriar, and described so minutely by Dibdin, the bibliomaniac haunts the auction rooms and notes with envious eyes the precious volumes as they are handed about for inspection, or chortles with joy as he hears the bids rise higher and

higher for some precious treasure already in his possession. Of this final enthraldom the chief symptom, not mentioned indeed by Dibdin, is the daily perusal of the catalogues of auction sales.... Like the secret drinker with a full bottle by his side and the kettle on the trivet the victim in this last stage indulges his passion alone and is never so happy as with a Sotheby catalogue.... Into this final stage, I confess to have lapsed, gradually and insensibly, and without the loss of my self-respect.²⁴

At about this time, Osler spoke at the Boston Medical Library, a focal point of medical history activities and collecting in the city. He described three classes of physicians: teachers, practitioners, and

... a third class of men in the profession to whom books are dearer than to teachers or practitioners—a small, a silent band, but in reality the leaven of the whole lump. The profane call them bibliomaniacs, and in truth they are at times irresponsible.... Loving books partly for their contents, partly for the sake of the authors, they not alone keep alive the sentiment of historical continuity in the profession, but they are the men who make possible such gatherings as the one we are enjoying this evening. We need more men of their class, particularly in this country. ...[they] keep alive in us an interest in the great men of the past and not alone in their works, which they cherish, but in their lives, which they emulate.²⁵

Exhausted by the demands of his practice and concerned about his health, Osler left Johns Hopkins in 1905 to become Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, a position of great prestige but with few responsibilities.²⁶ He knew that serious medical book collectors found most of their treasures in European bookshops and auction houses.²⁷ After moving to Oxford Osler was in a position to visit British and continental booksellers more frequently and to participate in book

auctions more actively. During his Oxford years, Osler spent many Mondays in London attending Sotheby's book auctions.

Osler worked hard to build his collection. Speaking of his early Oxford period, Cushing recalled that wherever the Regius professor went, "whether by train, tram, or car, he usually carried with him a bundle of ... book catalogues or auction lists, and the number of these things that he could go through in a short time with the unerring scent of the true collector was amazing. He had a rare nose for books, and could track to its lair anything that lurked in them."²⁸ Increasingly, however, it seemed there were never enough books to satisfy Osler's cravings. An addict, he was struggling to feed his habit. When William Keen and Osler were both in Italy in 1907, the Philadelphia surgeon beat the Oxford professor to most of the bookshops. Keen purchased more than two dozen incunabula and other rarities for the library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Although Osler was a longtime benefactor of that institution, he was annoyed that Keen won the race for books. He sent a postcard to Keen that began with just two words, "You Pig," written boldly on the first line.²⁹ But Osler had a double standard. He would buy several copies each of the first edition of Vesalius, the editio princeps of Celsus, and other medical classics, thereby depriving some other bibliophile of the thrill of possessing those treasures.

Osler's detailed knowledge of the history of medicine and of medical authors worked to his advantage when he bought books from general booksellers. Emile Holman, an American student at Oxford during the First World War, recalled Osler telling a group of students how, while searching the "dusty shelves of a little bookshop in Rome," he had discovered a small octavo incunable, priced at just one lira. Holman continued, "Unbelieving, shaking with excitement, he quickly paid the lira, and hurried out lest the proprietor recognize the book for what it was and revoke the sale."³⁰ But Osler also bought big and expensive books in Italy. Describing a 1909 visit to Rome when Osler bought two

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more copies of the first edition of Vesalius, Cushing exclaimed, “... he evidently had an orgy in the book shops.”³¹

Osler’s bibliomania sometimes resulted in behaviors that do not quite fit Max Broedel’s image of him as “The Saint.” That well-known drawing depicts Osler as an angel hovering above the Johns Hopkins Hospital. Osler acquired his copy of the first edition of Copernicus’s *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) from Heffer in Cambridge for 18 pounds sterling. He explained, “It was formerly in Marichal College, and there is no duplicate mark; but I have resisted the prickings of conscience which suggest asking how it got out of the library!”³² Now, contrast Osler’s admission that he did not confirm how this copy of Copernicus’s extremely rare book reached the market with his feelings about the potential loss or theft of one of his own special books. He wrote on the fly-leaf of his interleaved copy of the first edition of his *Principles and Practice of Medicine*: “Private copy. May all the curses of the good Bishop Ernulphus light on the borrower-and-not-returner or upon the stealer of this book.”³³

Despite his substantial income at the peak of his career (nearly 3/4 million dollars per year in current dollars) Osler often expressed concern that he could not afford his book habit! In 1911 Osler at once bragged and whined to Cushing, “I have had some luck lately—several beauties! but next year I must go slow. I have spent too much this year on books.”³⁴ Compulsive collectors like Osler—all addicts for that matter—suffer from a certain lack of self-discipline. Osler even went so far as to tell his colleagues that he was “sanctifying” his consultation fees by purchasing rare books—some for libraries but most for his own collection.³⁵ What a marvelous example of what might be called double rationalization—high fees and bibliomania, each seemed to justify the other.

By 1908, Osler’s books—thousands of them—were displayed in the new oak-paneled library that was the centerpiece of his large home at 13 Norham Gardens in Oxford. It was important to Osler that his books

were readily accessible, so he could use them or show selected volumes to his bookish friends or to first-time visitors who expressed the slightest interest in medical history or his collection. Before long, Osler’s books spilled out of his library into other rooms in the house. Yale historian and bibliophile Edward Streeter recalled, “The library, grown too great for the lower floors, had mounted the groaning stairs and bid fare to have the run of the rooms above. Books everywhere, invading all the premises.”³⁶

Osler’s friends and family knew he was a bibliomaniac, obsessed with building his collection. So did the world’s leading booksellers. In 1911, he confessed publicly at a meeting of members of the International Association of Antiquarian Booksellers,

... you see here before you a mental, moral, almost, I may say, a physical wreck—and all of your own making. Until I became mixed up with you I was really a respectable, God-fearing, industrious, earnest, ardent, enthusiastic, energetic student. Now what am I? A mental wreck, devoted to nothing but your literature. Instead of attending to my duties and attending to my work, in comes every day by the post, and by every post, all this seductive literature with which you have, as you know perfectly well, gradually undermined the mental virility of many and many a better man than I.³⁷

Even physical illness could not cool Osler’s passion for books. Confined to bed with influenza in 1916, he thanked his friend and former student Charles Camac for giving him a very rare work by Thomas Browne, the seventeenth century physician and philosopher. Having collected Browne’s works for half a century, Osler exclaimed, “There was an acute paroxysm of bibliomania a few minutes ago when your parcel came. I jumped on it at once. What a beautiful present. ...it is a great addition to the Browne collection which now lacks but one important item.”³⁸

By this time Osler’s library was both very large and very valuable. He was now in his sixties and, like every bibliomaniac, he had to decide what would become of his collection—the fruit of decades of passionate but focused collecting. By 1912 he had decided to bequeath his library to McGill University, his medical alma mater.³⁹ And Osler would give McGill much more than several thousand rare and important books and offprints in the history of medicine and science. He would give them a detailed road map of his collection: an annotated catalogue in which the books would be arranged in a unique and most compelling way. A year before his death in 1919, Osler told Leonard Mackall, “My library continues to grow and I am trying to get a proper Catalogue. ...my scheme will be on interesting lines. I have divided the library into seven groups—Prima, Secunda, Historica, Biographica, Bibliographica, Incunabula, and Manuscripts.”⁴⁰

Osler’s library and its catalogue contains seven sections. Prima, the centerpiece of his collection, includes 1,702 entries, most representing very important and rare books. Arranged in chronological order, the entries provide a bio-bibliographical account of the evolution of medicine and science up to the discovery of x-rays. Osler chose to include in Prima separate sections devoted to works by and about sixty-seven individuals from Hippocrates to Roentgen. Several other authors’ works were included under subsections of Prima.

Osler was especially interested in two major developments: Harvey’s discovery of the circulation and the invention of inhalation anesthesia. Anesthesia was the only entry that represented a subject rather than an individual, and Osler was especially proud of this special collection. His persistent effort to build a comprehensive anesthesia collection reveals his recognition of the importance of acquiring periodical contributions in addition to printed books. After decades of collecting Osler wrote to Boston surgeon J. Collins Warren in 1916, “My Anaesthesia collection grows. ...[but] I lack—and want badly—the Bost. Med. & Surg. Journal for 1846.”⁴¹ He appealed to Warren to

see if the Massachusetts General Hospital library had a duplicate copy of this volume that contained the original description of the first use of ether anesthesia. When he finally got a copy of this journal during his last month of life, Osler had it inscribed: "All things come to him who waits—but it was a pretty close shave this time!"⁴²

Prima also reveals that Osler was not always successful in getting specific books to complete his special author or subject collections. For example, the Osler library copy of the rare 1653 first English translation of Harvey's book on the discovery of the circulation appears in the addenda section of the catalogue because John F. Fulton donated it to the collection after Osler's death.⁴³ Osler was proud, however, that he possessed what he considered to be the "rarest" Harvey item, the first edition of *Exercitatio anatomica de circulatione sanguinis*, published in Cambridge in 1649. This classic volume includes the first description of the coronary circulation and the results of new experiments Harvey performed to support his theory of the circulation.⁴⁴

Secunda, consisting of 2,596 entries, includes the works of individuals who had made notable contributions to medicine and the life sciences or whose works especially interested Osler. Although the authors and their publications were less significant than those included in Prima, some very important individuals appear in this section such as Leopold Auenbrugger, Giorgio Baglivi, Charles Bell, Hieronymus Fracastorius, Jean Baptiste van Helmont, Giovanni Maria Lancisi, and Thomas Willis. Osler's own publications, including seven bound volumes of his offprints, appear in Secunda. Litteraria, consisting of 1,311 entries, greatly interested Osler. In 1918 he told George Dock, "The literary section will be the most interesting—poets, novels, plays, works, by Doctors, or in which the profession is portrayed."⁴⁵ This genre had long intrigued Osler.⁴⁶

Historia, consisting of 956 entries, represents Osler's reference collection of secondary sources. These books and offprints on medical history were an indispensable part of

his working library. He used them to learn more about the history of medicine and the individuals and institutions that were a part of that history. Biographia, consisting of 297 entries, was another area of special interest to Osler. His Baltimore associate William Sidney Thayer recalled, "Throughout all his life Osler was a student of the lives of those who had gone before. Biography was to him of compelling interest. ...he stimulated in his students a reverence for the great names of medicine."⁴⁷ Osler published dozens of biographical studies, several of which were reprinted in his popular 1908 book *An Alabama Student and Other Biographical Essays*.⁴⁸ He explained in its preface that he not only enjoyed reading biographies, but he held a strong conviction that they were useful as an educational tool.

Bibliographica, consisting of 538 entries, includes items that helped Osler place his books and their authors in context. They also helped him identify rare and obscure publications that he might have otherwise overlooked. By the turn of the century bibliography had become increasingly sophisticated. Osler explained in 1902, "... medical bibliography is worthy of a closer study than it has received heretofore in this country. The subject presents three aspects, the book itself, the book as a literary record, i.e., its contents, and the book in relation to the author."⁴⁹

Incunabula, consisting of 105 entries, includes the so-called cradle books of medicine, items printed before 1501. Thirty additional incunabula are catalogued in the prima section of Bibliotheca Osleriana. This remarkably large number of 15th century publications reflects Osler's special interest in early printed books and, more importantly, that many incunabula were still on the market a century ago. Today, almost all medical incunabula are in institutional libraries. Osler's collection was an important stimulus for his pioneering bibliographical study of 214 medical books printed between 1467 and 1480.⁵⁰

Manuscripts, consisting of 163 entries, included unique items spanning several centuries.

Somewhat surprisingly, Osler did not actively collect autographs or letters. He did, however, add a few selected letters to his collection if they were by individuals in whom he had a special interest. Osler's description of his acquisition of a remarkable collection of letters to and from British physician and botanist William Withering reveals the workings of this bibliomaniac's mind. He informed his former pupil and longtime friend Joseph Pratt in 1918:

My library grows, and I am working at a catalogue. Did you know that I made a great haul of Withering's letters &c? A man came in one day with a bag & said—are you interested in W? I said 'rather' & he pulled out a big bundle of letters & papers & his Edin. diploma. I offered him £20, at which he nearly expired, as he had hoped for not more than £5. I should have gone to double at auction. I have them all in chron. order & beautifully bound.⁵¹

Osler's books remained at Norham Gardens almost nine years after his death while the catalogue was being completed.⁵² Shortly after Lady Osler died in 1928 almost 8,000 books were shipped from Oxford to Montreal where they were installed in a special room in the Strathcona Medical Building.⁵³ Osler instructed his alma mater that his library was "for the use of students of the history of

His legacy of old and rare medical books and reference works would be an accessible working library, not a stagnant museum collection.



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science and of medicine, without any other qualifications.⁵⁴ His legacy of old and rare medical books and reference works would be an accessible working library, not a stagnant museum collection.

Osler loved libraries and greatly enjoyed the company of knowledgeable librarians, whom he viewed as kindred spirits. Baltimore physician and historian John Ruhrah stated it well when he wrote in 1920, the year after Osler died, "Wherever he happened to be his interest in the medical library was paramount."⁵⁵ Osler's special affection for libraries was related in part to his love of books, but it also reflected his beliefs that libraries hatched scholars and that physicians knowledgeable about the history of their profession were better practitioners. Osler believed that physicians had a duty to familiarize themselves with the rich history of their profession. He thought that the best way to learn about the history of medicine was to read books and articles written by and about the leading physicians and medical scientists of earlier generations. Libraries and private book collections were the focal point of this important intellectual endeavor.

Osler gave thousands of books, journals, and offprints to libraries as he moved from one location to another or as he ran out of space. He was equally generous when it came to individuals. His practice of giving books to friends and acquaintances as a token of his affection or as an incentive to study and collect the history of medicine grew dramatically through the years. In 1916 he informed Charles Sayle of the University of Cambridge library, "I send books at Xmas to about 100 of my old students, and this year I have selected your 'Ages' & the just-issued edition (trans.) of Galen's 'Natural Faculties'."⁵⁶ Boston physician and historian Henry Viets recalled Osler's "annual shed" of duplicates during his final years: "I have seen delighted students carry away a small library in their arms and many a nucleus for a private medical library has been started in this way."⁵⁷

Of all the books and collections Osler gave to libraries over the years, the gift that surely had the greatest

emotional impact was his bequest to the Johns Hopkins University of his only child's small but significant collection of English literature of the Tudor and Stuart periods. Osler had characterized his son Revere, just twenty years old when he was killed in France during World War I, as a "chip off the old block in his devotion to books."⁵⁸ He supplemented Revere's collection with his own "general literature" books, including works by Milton and Shelley. These books formed the nucleus of a library that would be the focal point of the new "Tudor and Stuart" literary club at Hopkins.⁵⁹

Osler had a profound impact on the emerging field of medical history a century ago.⁶⁰ Bibliomania fueled his interest in the history of medicine, which, in turn, led him to acquire more books. For Osler, book collecting and historical research and writing were inseparable interests and activities. Although several American physicians such as John Shaw Billings, Samuel D. Gross, and Joseph M. Toner had researched and written about the history of medicine before Osler got interested in the subject, he, more than any other person, catalyzed widespread interest in medical history as a pleasant pastime and as a subject of scholarly endeavor.⁶¹ Osler encouraged his colleagues to contribute biographical sketches and articles on historical subjects that interested them. Moreover, he set an example by publishing more than one hundred biographical and historical papers.

Speaking of Osler's impact on the history of medicine, Owsei Temkin declared fifty years ago, "To Osler, more perhaps than to anybody else in this country, does medical history owe inspiration and academic representation at a time when it lacked departments or full-time appointments. Through papers, books, and personal contacts, Osler impressed the historical spirit upon American medical research and literature."⁶² In a more recent study of Osler's historiography Philip Teigen concludes that "... whether one views Osler's historical writing favourably—and many do not—it was a major event in 19th-century medicine."⁶³ By any measure, Osler's influence on medical history in the

English-speaking world has been profound.✱

Notes

1. Osler infected several prominent American medical book collectors such as Harvey Cushing, John Fulton, and Lawrence Reynolds with bibliomania.⁶⁴ Many more recent medical bibliomaniacs, including this writer, can trace their addiction to Osler, at least indirectly. And while serious present-day medical collectors may be grateful for Osler's inspiration and his example, they are no doubt grateful that he is not here to compete with them for the few old and rare medical books that come on the market.⁶⁵ Cushing, *The Life of Sir William Osler* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925). A valuable new study based on extensive archival research is Michael Bliss, *William Osler: A Life in Medicine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
2. See Leonard L. Mackall, "Sir William Osler as a bibliophile," in *Sir William Osler Memorial Number*, ed. Maude E. Abbott (Toronto: International Association of Medical Museums, 1926), 9: 97-103 and Leonard Payne, "Osler as a Bibliophile," in *Oslerian Anniversary* (London: The Osler Club of London, 1976), pp. 38-47. A recent survey of bibliomania is Nicholas A. Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for the Book* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995). See also Charles G. Roland, "Bibliomania," *J.A.M.A.* 1970, 212: 133-135.
3. Osler's book collection, donated to McGill University upon his death in 1919, is described in detail in William W. Francis, Reginald A. Hill, and Archibald Malloch, eds. *Bibliotheca Osleriana: A Catalogue of Books Illustrating the History of Medicine and Science Collected, Arranged, and Annotated by Sir William Osler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929). Hereafter, *Bibliotheca Osleriana*. For Osler's publications, see Richard L. Golden and Charles G. Roland, eds., *Sir William Osler: An Annotated Bibliography with Illustrations* (San Francisco: Norman Publishing, 1988). See also Ellen B. Wells, "Books for the Bibliotheca: A study of Sir William Osler's book bills," in Golden and Roland, *Sir William Osler*, pp. 163-167.
4. William Osler, "Remarks on the medical library in postgraduate work," *Br. Med. J.*, 1909, 2: 925-928.
5. J. Hain Friswell, *Varia: Readings from Rare Books* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1866).

6. Osler, "Sir Thomas Browne," in *An Alabama Student and Other Addresses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1908), pp. 248-277.
7. Osler, "The collecting of a library," in *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, pp. xxi-xxxii, quote from p. xvi.
8. Osler, "Letter to Jefferson Medical College students," *The Jeffersonian*, September 1914, 15: 1-2.
9. Osler, "Books and Men," *Bost. Med. Surg. J.* 1901, 144: 60-61, quote from p. 60.
10. Interest in "Medical Americana" peaked during the first half of the twentieth century. In recent decades, medical collectors in the United States have tended to focus more on the literature of the medical and surgical specialties. This reflects both the dramatic growth of specialty medicine during the twentieth century and the disappearance of eighteenth and nineteenth century medical imprints from the market. See Leonard L. Mackall, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Early and Later Americana* (New York: New York Academy of Medicine, 1926) and W. Bruce Fye, "Collecting medical books: Challenges and opportunities in the 80s," *Bull. N.Y. Acad. Med.*, 1985, 61: 250-265.
11. Osler, "The collecting of a library," p. xxi.
12. See John Shaw Billings, "Rare medical books," *Johns Hopkins Hosp. Bull.*, 1890, 1: 29-31.
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OSLER ARTIFACTS

Last spring we received an offer we could not resist: the Canadian Museum of Health and Medicine in Toronto was closing its doors and offered us several items directly related to William Osler. While it is always tremendously sad when a museum collection is

dispersed, the Osler Library has benefitted from the unfortunate demise of this venerable institution.

When preparing for the exhibition to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Osler's birth, we were surprised to learn that we did not own any of the famous twelve Hartnack microscopes purchased by Professor Osler from Paris for his students in 1875. However, a visit to the CMHM resulted in a loan for the exhibition of two microscopes used by Osler, and two slides prepared by him. The Museum had many other Osler treasures which we could not display, including James Bovell's desk at which Osler had worked with his microscope as a student. This is now at the Museum of Science and Technology in Ottawa. (I tried.) We are delighted to have acquired a Hartnack microscope, not one of Osler's Paris order, but one belonging to Dr. Holford Walker of Dundas, Ontario, the Osler family physician with whom Osler is believed to have worked in the summer of 1869 after his first year at the University of Toronto's medical school.¹ Dr. Walker claimed that Osler had used it during that summer, which would not be surprising given Osler's intensive interest in microscopy at that time. The instrument is marked "E. Hartnack & A. Praznowski, Rue Bonaparte 1, Paris". Two slides prepared by Osler in 1869 and 1870 accompanied the microscope.

For our display, the CMHM also offered us William Osler's fur-lined winter overcoat, bought in Baltimore



Inkstand, inscribed "Dr. Osler from medical friends in Toronto, May 16, 1892."

in 1900, which we have now acquired. His father's bleeding lancets, each blade marked "Laundy" (instrument makers 1783-1844), and protected by tortoiseshell wings all housed in a small battered leather holder, are now in our care. (Clergymen were often called upon to perform minor surgery in remote areas.) Although the lancets are small, they are very evocative pieces. A chair from Osler's examining room in Baltimore, passed on to Dr. Thomas McCrae and then via relations to the Toronto Academy of Medicine is now with us. As can be seen from the photographs, the acquisitions include an extraordinary inkstand, inscribed "Dr. Osler from medical friends in Toronto, May 16, 1892." W.W. Francis presented this to the Toronto Academy of Medicine in 1957 on the occasion of the Academy's 50th anniversary. The Toronto Academy's collection later became part of the

Artifacts from left to right: Hartnack microscope, Osler's fur-lined winter coat and chair from Osler's examining room in Baltimore.



CMHM and so, with its closure, it seemed natural for the inkstand to return to us.

Artifacts are not new to the Osler Library. We own several pieces of Osler silver, one of Osler's desks, a bookcase from Norham Gardens and Revere Osler's table, also from Norham Gardens. Combined with Osler's books and archives they help to keep his memory and his achievements alive.*

1 Harvey Cushing, *The Life of Sir William Osler*, Oxford, 1925, p. 57.

DAVID CRAWFORD RETIRES



Portrait by Randy Cole

David Crawford has recently retired from McGill University after over 30 years of service. Mr. Crawford graduated from Queen's University of Belfast and worked in the Medical Library there for 5 years before moving to Canada in 1971. He came to McGill in 1972 as Assistant Medical Librarian and shortly thereafter became Assistant Life Sciences Area Librarian. In these positions he was responsible for the smooth running of the Medical (later Health Sciences) Library and for better integrating the Osler Library's procedures and services with those of the adjacent Health Sciences Library. In 1990 he was appointed Life

Sciences Area Librarian and Health Sciences Librarian and thus joined the Osler Library's Board of Curators. Several times in the last thirty years Mr. Crawford has been the Acting Head of the Osler Library and it was during one of these assignments that he obtained private funding to catalogue our collection of 22,000 French theses and in the late 1990s he was the driving force behind the plans to renovate the library – plans which were in their final stages of implementation as he retired. He was also instrumental in seeing the complete records of the Osler Library's print and microform collections added to the McGill University online catalogue, MUSE—a massive project which was completed in spring 2002. Staff numbers at McGill's libraries have been decreasing for many years and Mr. Crawford's aim has always been to ensure that as much 'general library work' as possible was transferred from the Osler Library so that the remaining staff in Osler could concentrate on the activities only they could do—selecting material for the collection, preparing finding aids and catalogues and dealing with the increasing flood of reference questions from researchers and students at McGill and elsewhere and Oslerians throughout the world. We will miss his energy, attention to detail and sense of humour and wish him a very happy, far too early retirement.

Jim Henderson takes over from David as Head, Health Sciences Library. Jim who has had a busy career in health sciences libraries, comes to McGill from British Columbia where he served as Director, Medical Library Service, College of Physicians and Surgeons. We wish him a happy, fruitful time at the Health Sciences Library.*

WILLIAM OSLER ON THE HISTORY CHANNEL

History Television has just presented a biography of William Osler entitled "At

the Bedside: The Story of William Osler" as part of its series "The Canadians: Biographies of a Nation". Roberto Verdecchia is the writer and director and Patrick Watson the narrator. Much of the filming takes place in the Osler Library and features many images from our collections. Michael Bliss, Dr. Charles Roland and Pamela Miller are interviewed and there is a cameo appearance by Dr. W.H. Feindel. Those wishing to purchase a copy of the video may do so by calling toll free at 1-877-843-9371 or by ordering on line by going to <http://www.historytelevision.ca> and clicking on "Boutique" on the menu.*

APPEAL TO THE FRIENDS, 2002-2003

The Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry has just welcomed the Class of Medicine 2006, 150 doctors and 30 dentists. This is the time when students receive masses of information, instruction and advice from deans, professors, students and administrators. At the welcoming ceremony, Dean Abraham Fuks urged the new arrivals not to hesitate to ask for help from everyone and above all to listen, to teachers, classmates and to the patients. Dean James Lund of the Faculty of Dentistry reminded students that for the first 18 months medical and dentistry students would be taking the same classes, but noted that the subsequent separation of medicine and dentistry is unfortunately reflected in our current health-care system, which gives free care only to children under 10 years of age. He emphasized the negative effect of poor oral health on general health and pointed out McGill's research aimed at remedying the situation.

Osler is omnipresent when the students are welcomed. Professor Faith Wallis, formerly Osler Librarian, finished the session with panache, giving a succinct and humorous history of the Faculty of Medicine. What never fails to bring

While you might think that all our attention this year has focused on the renovations alone, in fact we have continued to carry out many of our normal functions.

By the time
this letter
reaches you,
we should be
unpacking
the rare books
and archives.



a reaction from new students is the fact that Sir William Osler's ashes lie in the Osler Library. This catches their interest and hopefully, over the next four years, they will snatch some time to develop a life-long attachment to Osler and his Library.

While you might think that all our attention this year has focused on the renovations alone, in fact we have continued to carry out many of our normal functions. Service to the public stopped in March but purchasing books for the September opening continued. So also did the Newsletters, and to keep our Friends up-to-date on the renovations, we continue to add photographs of the renovations to our web page. We also continue to answer basic reference questions, having kept several dozen reference books for ourselves out of the hands of the packers. Our recent acquisitions cover a stunning range of subjects. Topics such as the Mexico City Poor House, a history of QI (the Chinese understanding of material existence), the British contribution to twentieth century neurology, many new architectural histories including British hospital and asylum architecture, the Provincial Asylum in Toronto, the history of dialysis, drug abuse, the history of group psychotherapy, the history of psychiatry in Canada, biographies, public health, health and the Highland Clearances, restoration to health of the Maori people after contact with white invaders, reinterpretation of the plague in

Europe – all these will be on our “new books” shelves located on the fourth floor of the Osler Library, when we re-open. Among these books will also be found the late Roy Porter's *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain, 1650-1900*, Ithaca, New York, 2001. As usual we have several very attractive works, for example *Stones Unturned: Memorials of Medical Significance in Exeter Cathedral*, by Christopher Gardner-Thorpe. *The Rockefeller University Achievements*, by Elizabeth Hanson, celebrates 100 years of what Osler knew as the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research and for which his *Principles and Practice of Medicine* was the inspiration. A two volume critical appraisal of the Enlightenment, entitled *The Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* is the English edition of the original French work by Michel Delon containing 200 essays, factual and interpretive by contemporary scholars. Your generosity has also enabled us to add 602 microfiche of the Annals of the Royal College of Physicians, 1915-88, and 333 microfiche of the Council minutes of the Royal College from 1836-1978. Thanks also to you, we have purchased the *Recueil des pièces qui ont concouru pour le prix de l'académie Royale de Chirurgie*, Paris, 1770-1795, and Claude Lachaise's *Précis physiologique sur les courbures de la colonne vertébrale...chez les jeunes filles, sans le secours des lits mécaniques à extension*, Paris, 1827. Recent acquisitions are listed by Mary Simon and updates appear

regularly on our web page. If you do not, however, have access to the web, we are always happy to send you a printed copy.

Naturally, our principal pre-occupation has been the renovations. The dreams of many Osler librarians, the plans of David Crawford, the enthusiasm of Dean Abraham Fuks, and the generosity of Dr. John McGovern have led to what looks like a stunning success. As I write this, we have to thank you for responding to Dr. Cruess' letter enclosed with the last Newsletter. The sums donated have enabled us to order compact shelving which gives us 50% more storage space in a given area, a spectacular result. Apart from a more efficient use of space, our architect, Julia Gersovitz, has produced an elegant design to harmonize with the care and financial resources which have gone into the Osler Library in the past.

By the time this letter reaches you, we should be unpacking the rare books and archives. The circulating books have been accessible since September 3rd. The look of the Wellcome Camera and the Osler Room will be the same, but behind the scenes, many changes have occurred. The W.W. Francis Wing remains in place, housing the W.W. Francis Seminar Room, the library offices and the circulating collection. Books in this area will be available for longer hours, after the Osler closes at 5:00 p.m. and on weekends. All the post-1840 rare books, archives and artifacts are now located in the H. Rocke Robertson, Class of Medicine '36 Wing above and surrounding the Osler Room. Pre-1840 books are found in the Osler Room, which now has a controlled environment all its own, suitable to books of this age. The original glass doors are back on the shelves and there is a great deal more security in this famous room designed by Percy Nobbs.

From the beginning of the project we benefitted from the advice of Stefan Michalski, Manager of Preventive Conservation Services of the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa. He informed us that the CCI is beginning to find mould in collections that have installed climate control over the last 20 years. This appears to occur when significant

Left: The
arrival of the
rails for the
compact
shelving.

Right: the new
environmental
control unit.



humidity is added to a collection, combined with a lack of adequate air circulation. In addition, buildings of the age of the McIntyre have walls which can only be sealed by adding a vapour barrier, at incredible expense. He further stated (and has published articles on this subject) that the greatest danger to a collection is from fire, theft and vandalism so that it would be better to concentrate on fire prevention and security. This we have done. In addition, he suggested that we physically split the collection at 1840, roughly the date of the introduction of chemicals in the production of paper, causing greater acidity. Since the Osler Room does not touch any outside walls, it provided a perfect, natural location for the pre-1840 books which need a slightly elevated RH (relative humidity) in the winter and slightly depressed RH in the summer. The point is to avoid dramatic changes in temperature and humidity. The Osler Room now has its own environmental unit. The post-1840 books will be shelved in the areas above and beside the Osler Room in the Robertson Wing, where the compact shelving is installed. This area requires a cooler, dryer atmosphere in winter but is capable of tolerating gradual changes in the environment, following the seasons, i.e. able to cope with the outside walls. The area outside the Osler Room is affected by the McIntyre's heating and ventilating system, but with controls to prevent violent fluctuations in temperature and humidity. Operating room quality air filters are being installed throughout.

Two completely new research rooms have been added off the Wellcome Camera for secure consultation of pre- and post-1840 volumes. There are lockers in the cloakroom where researchers will leave their bags when working on rare books and archives. It is thrilling to be able to give the collections the environment and security they require to make them accessible for years to come.

This brief report launches our annual appeal. I hope that it also expresses the Library's gratitude for your support, which enables us to care for this outstanding collection.✱

FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The Library gratefully acknowledges the support it has received from Friends, both old and new, who have responded to the appeal for funds for the 2001-2002 academic year. Over the year, 248 Friends have given a total of approximately \$71,642 and they are listed below. Most of the contributions have come from Friends in Canada and the United States of America. However, very welcome contributions have also come from several other continents.

As you can see, your generosity has made 2001-2002 an exceptional year for us. We would like to extend our thanks to those who have helped us with our renovations project. We would also like to take this opportunity to send a special thank you to all the Friends of the Osler Library for their continued support. Your kindness is overwhelming and we could not get along without you.

The appeal to the Friends for the 2001-2002 academic year concluded on May 31, 2002. Contributions received after May 31, 2002 will be recorded in the 2003 fall issue of the *Osler Library Newsletter*.

The appeal for the 2002-2003 academic year is made in this issue, No. 98-2002.

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Legal Deposit 2/2002
ISSN 0085-4557