



TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

1. IDENTIFICATION OF PERSON

a) Name of Person:

Margaret Ridley Charlton

b) Date(s):

1858-1931

c) Field of Endeavour:

Medical Librarian and Co-Founder, Medical Library Association

d) Existing Historical Recognition:

None

e) Previous Documentation on File:

None

f) Theme(s)/Priorities:

Women's History Priority. System Plan: Social and Cultural, Education and Well being

2. PROPONENTS

a) Submitter(s):

Mr. David S. Crawford, Health Sciences Library, McGill University

Supporters:

Canadian Health Libraries Association/Association des bibliothèques de la santé
President, Patrick Ellis, Dalhousie University

Committee on Medical School Libraries, Association of Canadian Medical Colleges
Chair, George Beckett, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dean Abraham Fuks, Faculty of Medicine
McGill University

Mrs. Frances Groen, Director of Libraries, McGill University

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

b) Report Prepared By:

Dianne Dodd

c) Organizational Affiliation:

Parks Canada, HSB

3. BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Margaret Ridley Charlton (1858-1931) was a pioneer in medical librarianship, a scholar and a founder of an international library association. As Assistant Librarian of the McGill Medical Library from 1895 to 1914 and Librarian of the Academy of Medicine in Toronto from 1914 to 1922, she was the driving force behind the modernization of two major medical libraries in Canada. She helped establish librarianship as an autonomous profession, and, through her example, inspired other professional women to take leadership roles. In 1898 she became co-founder, along with Sir William Osler and Dr. George Milbray Gould, of the Medical Library Association, an international organization which led the way for other specialized library associations in Canada and the United States. Charlton was also an author of children's books and an under-recognized scholar of medical history.

4. JUSTIFICATION

a) HSMBC Criterion/Guidelines:

This nomination relates to the System Plan priority of women's history, librarianship being one of several professions in which late 19th, early 20th, century women made a place for themselves.

b) Historical Importance:

Margaret Charlton was born 10 December 1858 at Laprairie, near Montréal, the youngest of four sisters. Christened Margaret Anne, Charlton later changed her second name to Ridley, partly as a literary disguise, and partly in honour of her father, Captain John Charlton, who descended from the famous Bishop Ridley, an Anglican martyr burned at Oxford in 1555. Like many young ladies of her time, Margaret was educated almost entirely at home until the age of 16. Then she joined the first group of girls to be admitted to the Montréal High School. Already 26 years of age when Anglophone women in Montréal were first admitted to McGill, Charlton did not attend university.¹ Nonetheless she was well educated for the standards of late Victorian Canada and became one of many educated middle-class women to assume new roles in the labour force, the church and some of the professions, particularly teaching, nursing, journalism, social work and librarianship. In doing so, they gained

¹W.W. Francis, "The President's Address: Margaret Charlton and the Early Days of the Medical Library Association", *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 25 (1936/37): 58- 63; Frances Groen, "Margaret Ridley Charlton: Medical Librarian and Historian: an Evaluation of her Career," *Bibliotheca Medica Canadiana* 2001 spring 22(3). Reprinted from Fontanus 1989; 11: 55-63; Sylvio Leblond, "Margaret Charlton: notice biographique" *Canadian Society for the History of Medicine Newsletter* (Spring 1983): 15-16; "The History of the Medical Library Association," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association Quarterly* 1 (1) July 1911: 7-9.

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

challenging public roles, respect, recognition and a measure of financial autonomy.²

Like many early librarians, Charlton (Figure 1) came to her love of books through a literary and scholarly interest. In her early career she wrote numerous historical sketches for the *Dominion Illustrated Monthly*, published from 1888 to 1894. In collaboration with her good friend, Charlotte A. Fraser, she wrote several children's books, including a two volume collection of fairy tales called *A Wonder Web of Stories* (1892) which has the distinction of being the first book of fairy tales to be published in Canada.³ Following Fraser's sudden death, Charlton decided to become a librarian. As librarianship was not yet established as a profession in Canada at this time, there were no schools devoted to training librarians. Thus Charlton attended a summer course, one of first of such courses offered, at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts in the early 1890s. There she learned the Dewey decimal system which was quickly becoming the standard in most libraries. Formal library education was inaugurated by Melvil Dewey at Columbia University in 1887, but it would be several decades before the first comparable schools for librarians were established in Canada. In 1904 McGill University's librarian, Charles H. Gould (1855-1919), a friend of Dewey and the first Canadian president of the American Library Association, established a short summer course in librarianship, the first in Canada. Another course was established in Toronto in 1911 through the Provincial Department of Education, intended in part to train librarians for public and school libraries. Reflecting the feminization of librarianship in this period, the vast majority of students, and some of the teachers in both programs, were women. Vernon Ross, Virginia Murry, Bertha Bassam, Winifred Barnstead and noted childrens' librarian Lillian Smith all played key roles in library education. McGill and University of Toronto programs were successful in introducing library education into English-speaking Canada, and were the direct progenitors of the country first two academic-year library schools.⁴ In French-speaking Canada, where no movement to establish public libraries emerged, librarianship education developed more slowly. L'École de bibliothécaires was established in 1937, affiliated with L'Université de Montréal.

At the time of Charlton's graduation from library school in the late 19th century, a public library movement emerged in English speaking Canada, the heirs of the Mechanics' Institutes who

²Mary Kinear, *In Subordination, Professional Women, 1870-1970* (McGill-Queen's Press, 1995); Alison Prentice, Marjorie R. Theobald, *Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching* (University of Toronto Press, 1991).

³The two made other contributions to children's literature, including *With Printless Foot* (1894) and *In the Days of Sir Walter Raleigh* (1890).

⁴Elizabeth Hanson, "Early Canadian Library Education: The McGill and Ontario Experience, 1904-1927" in McNally *Readings in Canadian Library History 2*: 84; Peter McNally, "Fanfares and Celebrations: Anniversaries in Canadian Graduate Education for Library and Information Studies" in McNally, *Readings in Canadian History 2*: 57-89; Bertha Bassam, *The Faculty of Library Science of Toronto and its Predecessors 1911-1972* (Faculty of Library Science, Library Science Alumni Association, University of Toronto, 1978).

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

mushroomed at mid-century with a philosophy of practical education for workers. The institutes, which received government grants as early as 1857, established the earliest lending libraries in Canada. Later, reformers promoted the public library as an extension of the educational system, hoping to promote learning and good citizenship among adults as well as children. In Ontario, in 1882, the first library legislation in Canada, the Free Libraries' Act was passed. It provided funding through municipal taxation for public libraries and allowed for the establishment of local Boards of Management, appointed by the Board of Education, to run them. Over time Mechanics' Institutes were transformed into free libraries. British Columbia followed in 1891 and Manitoba in 1899 with similar legislation. Between 1901 and 1923 Andrew Carnegie made 125 grants to build public libraries, most of which were in Ontario. Although a growing presence, many of these early public libraries began with small collections, idiosyncratic cataloguing, and acquisitions based on chance donations.⁵

Women began to play a role as librarians in these new public libraries as well as libraries established in conjunction with schools and social reform initiatives. They were particularly successful in gaining employment in smaller libraries with limited budgets. Charlton's first position as a librarian was in the YMCA library.⁶ Like her, these educated middle class women sought public roles where they could utilize their training and nurture their intellectual interests. Despite the relative exclusion of women from public institutions, they successfully exploited the Victorian ideology of separate spheres in order to gain a foothold in the library profession. Working from the prevailing notion that women were best suited to motherhood and the care of family members, women justified their new roles as appropriately 'feminine.' Just as early women teachers, stressed the education of young children as an extension of the traditional maternal role, women librarians assumed the role of hostess and guide in the new public library, introducing and reinforcing good reading habits and practical education as a means of cultural improvement. Focussing particularly on children, women librarians virtually created the children's section and established 'story time' and other activities to promote reading among the young.⁷

Gaining employment in libraries, however, did not assure women of a leadership role. Like other

⁵Historiography on library history is developing in Canada. See: Peter F. McNally, "Canadian Library History in English and French to 1964: A Survey and Evaluation" in McNally *Readings in Canadian Library History* 2: 3-20; Peter F. McNally, "Canadian Library History in English and French, 1985-1991: A Survey and Evaluation" in McNally *Readings in Canadian Library History* 2: 21-35; E. A. Hardy, *The Public Library: Its Place in Our Educational System* (Toronto: William Biggs, 1912); John A. Wiseman, "Champion Has-Been" Edwin Austin Hardy and the Ontario Library Movement" in McNally, *Readings in Canadian Library History*: 231-243.

⁶Francis, "Margaret Charlton and the Early Days of the Medical Library Association"; Dee Garrison, "Women in Librarianship" in Sidney L. Jackson, Eleanor B. Herlin, E. J. Josey, eds. *A Century of Service: Librarianship in the United States and Canada* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976).

⁷Harrison, "Women in Librarianship"; Milner, *Lady Librarian*; Margaret Penman "The Challenge of Writing the TPL's History, 1883-1983 "These Lady Librarians Created a Civilization"" in McNally, *Readings in Canadian Library History*: 53-61.

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

women professionals of this period, women librarians played a subordinate role in most institutions. As it was considered inappropriate for women to hold positions of leadership in public institutions, head librarians in academic and specialized libraries were almost always male scholars with an amateur's interest in librarianship. Similarly scholars or literary men monopolized such positions in large city libraries. Clerics dominated libraries in the French-Catholic tradition. Although many, like Charlton, had considerable academic accomplishments to their credit, few women librarians were recognized as scholars. Rather, most were hired as 'assistants' to perform the tedious, routine work of the library. Lacking the scholarly tradition of academic libraries and dependant on public funding, some public library boards, especially in smaller centres, hired women to assume the role of librarian. However, they paid them as low as 50% of what men in comparable positions earned.⁸

Charlton was unique among her fellow women librarians in that she made inroads into the academic library and managed to break out of the subordinate role expected of women. She was appointed in 1895 to McGill's Medical Library, as Assistant Medical Librarian, reporting to Dr. Frederick Gault Finley, the Honorary Medical Librarian, with a Library Committee of the Faculty of Medicine overseeing the library's functioning. As in most medical libraries of this period, the librarian was a full time physician who did not consider librarianship a separate professional specialty. Despite being nominally subordinate to medical authority, however, Charlton was able to chart her own path largely because Dr. Finley recognized her outstanding ability.

By all accounts, Charlton was very successful in bringing McGill's medical library up to 20th century standards by supporting research as a professional activity and developing services for undergraduates as well as faculty. When Charlton became assistant librarian, the 72 year old library, which had begun in the home of a faculty member, had just undergone an expansion. Already a leading medical research facility in Canada, McGill's medical library, containing 14,000 volumes, was the largest in North America connected with a medical school. Typical of a period before the development of library techniques, however, the collection was poorly classified and catalogued. Charlton reduced the cataloguing chaos to order. She also introduced user statistics and provided student reading rooms. During her 19 years at McGill, she also made important new acquisitions, adding about 10,000 new volumes. Extraordinarily successful as an advocate, Charlton obtained second hand donations and wormed new and expensive books out of unsympathetic publishers or authors. Charlton also disseminated medical information by distributing papers written by McGill faculty to journals and to European and American universities. When she assumed control, McGill's medical library had been a faculty resource under the control of physicians. She turned it into an undergraduate education resource under the direction of a trained librarian. In doing so, she helped redefine the role of medical librarian from a part time librarian/full time physician to a full time paid librarian, skilled in cataloguing, classification and acquisitions, and provided the support which allowed McGill to emerge as the

⁸Harrison, "Women in Librarianship"; Nina Milner, "*Lady Librarian*": *The Feminization of Librarianship in Canada, 1880-1920* (M. A. Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1992).

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

premier medical faculty in Canada. Charlton's accomplishments in modernizing the McGill medical library are all the more remarkable in that she did so largely without skilled help, as a non-physician and woman. Her example certainly proved that women could perform the work of the professional librarian.⁹

Charlton also provided unique leadership outside of McGill, helping to establish medical librarianship as a specialty which followed a different course from public libraries and even other academic libraries. Early in her McGill career, Charlton became interested in professional issues, and convinced her superiors to send her to the 1896 meeting of the American Library Association in Chicago. At this time, American library associations were the only professional associations available to Canadian librarians. A few years later, E. A. Hardy, an ardent proponent of public libraries attempted to establish a Canadian association; his efforts led instead to the launching of the Ontario Library Association in 1900. By the 1930s, all provinces had provincial associations, but the Canadian Library Association was not established until 1946, when Elizabeth Morton worked toward its birth. During her long service as Secretary to the organization lobbied for the establishment of the National Library, which became a reality in 1953.¹⁰ With medical education developing rapidly and the number of medical libraries increasing, Charlton saw a need for improvements in managing medical libraries. A major concern was the Dewey Decimal system, which Charlton found it ill-suited to the special needs of medical libraries. Frustrated in dealing with the special problems of medical libraries through the American Library Association, Charlton became convinced that a separate association for medical libraries was needed.

In 1897, at a combined meeting of the British and Canadian Medical Associations held in Montréal, Charlton seized the opportunity to present her idea of a medical library association to some one who could further the plan. Although the exact chronology is unclear, it appears that at (or about the time of) this meeting, Charlton spoke to either Sir William Osler or Dr. George Milbray Gould about forming a medical library association. She later recalled, "The question of forming a Medical Librarians Association came up during several conversations I had with Dr. Gould of Philadelphia on Medical Libraries. I suggested to Dr. Gould the advisability of establishing a MLA in the interest of the medical profession. The question was warmly taken up by Dr. Gould. He became enthusiastic over it and

⁹Jennifer Conner, *Guardians of Medical Knowledge: The Genesis of the Medical Library Association* (Medical Library Association and The Scarecrow Press, Inc., Lanhan, Maryland and London 2000): 30-51; Samuel Rothstein, "Service to Academia," in Jackson, et al, *A Century of Service*: 80; Groen, "Margaret Charlton and the Early Days of the Medical Library Association".

¹⁰Jean-Rémi Brault, Gwynneth Evans, Richard Paré *The National Library of Canada and Canadian Libraries: Essays in Honour of Guy Sylvestre* (Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1996); Bruce Peel, ed., *Librarianship in Canada, 1946-1967, Essays in Honour of Elizabeth Homer Morton* (Canadian Library Association, 1968); John Y. Cole, "The National Libraries of the United States and Canada" in Jackson, et al, *A Century of Service*; Peter Conmy, Caroline M. Coughlin "The Principal Library Associations" in Jackson, et al, *A Century of Service*; Hardy, *The Public Library*; Wiseman, "Champion Has-Been".

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

worked very hard to perfect the scheme.”¹¹ Although one historian claims that Gould, not Charlton, was the true originator of the idea,¹² most credit Charlton with a founding role. In fact, the Medical Library Association itself credited her as a co-founder in 1898 along with Osler and Gould, featuring all three on its 75th anniversary coin.¹³ Although Charlton could clearly not have acted alone in the male dominated world of medical libraries, she played a key role in obtaining the needed support and sponsorship of influential physicians.

Too busy to handle the day-to-day operations, Dr. Gould commissioned Charlton to do all the correspondence relating to the Medical Librarians’ Association. Charlton issued the invitation on Dr. Gould’s behalf to a group of physicians and librarians to attend the first meeting 9 May 1898. Besides Gould and Charlton, several physicians and medical librarians were in attendance, including Marcia Noyes, librarian of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland, Baltimore who later became the first woman president of the association. Charlton was appointed the first Secretary in 1898 and continued in that role until 1903, returning again from 1909 to 1911 in the same capacity. The name was changed to the Medical Library Association in 1907. While Gould promoted the Medical Library Association through his editorship of the *Philadelphia Medical Journal*, he had many other interests as ophthalmologist, lexicographer, poet, and promoter of his unique theory that eyestrain caused all manner of illnesses. Charlton, with her librarian’s training and working knowledge of running a major medical library, contributed “the vision and the enthusiasm which nursed the Association through the critical years of its infancy.”¹⁴ She was much better placed to address the unique problems of medical libraries than physicians who had only a limited knowledge of the growing complexities of librarianship in a large medical library which served the growing research needs of students and faculty.¹⁵

As Secretary, Charlton promoted her own approach to establishing adequate collections of medical

¹¹Connor: 46.

¹²Connor dismisses substantial documentary evidence which credits Charlton with a leadership role in the organization’s founding. Despite acknowledging that medical librarianship was dominated by prestigious male physicians, Connor is surprisingly insensitive to the gender politics of the Medical Library Association, in suggesting that Charlton was but a paid subordinate. Other historians stress Charlton’s success in obtaining male sponsorship for her ideas, despite the need to defer to the authority and prestige of honorary male physicians/part time librarians. Connor, *Guardians of Medical Knowledge*.

¹³Sources substantiating Charlton’s leadership role are numerous including, James F. Ballard, Librarian, Boston Medical Library, “The Past History of the Medical Library Association, Inc.” *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* Vol 36 (1): 228; Martha Noyes, Tuesday Evening Meeting. (Recorded comments) *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 23 (1934): 33; Francis, “Early Days”: 59; and, Groen, Margaret Ridley Charlton, Medical Librarian and Historian”: 58.

¹⁴Francis, “Early Days”: 61.

¹⁵Groen, “Margaret Ridley Charlton, Medical Librarian and Historian.

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

journals and devising cataloguing techniques best suited to medical literature. She also saw the importance of keeping medical libraries separate from public libraries. In this, she disagreed with Dr. Gould who believed that there should be a medical library in every public library. One project on which Gould and Charlton agreed was the need for a medical exchange. When Dr. F.G. Finley and Margaret R. Charlton were appointed as librarians at McGill, they campaigned immediately to receive complimentary copies of medical society transactions and to initiate library exchanges where possible. Knowing that medical libraries routinely acquired duplicate material, Gould devised a centralized system of exchange whereby they could help one another to complete or expand their collections. The medical exchange was established 1 December 1899 and became the backbone of the association. Margaret Charlton and Marcia Noyes ensured its successful operation.

The Medical Library Association was one of the first specialized library associations to take a path separate from the American Library Association. Following the model provided by the medical librarians, the Special Libraries Association was formed in 1909 and later the American Society for Information Science and the Theatre Library and Music Library associations.¹⁶

Charlton worked in a climate where male physicians made the decisions. Only a few women had gained entry into the medical profession itself and women rarely held medical librarian positions. The Medical Library Association, for example, was not presided over by a woman until 1933, when founding member, medical librarian and longtime manager of the medical exchange, Marcia Noyes, was elected. All of Charlton's accomplishment required first obtaining the approval of medical authorities, nominally in charge of medical libraries who were often uninterested in augmenting and cataloguing their growing collections, or in transforming their libraries into undergraduate resources. Charlton's status as an "assistant librarian", woman, and non-physician made her contribution to medical librarianship as co-founder of a major international association all the more remarkable.

Despite the difficulties faced by academic women in this period, Margaret Charlton continued to contribute to scholarship even during her busy years at McGill. Under the pseudonym of Lynn Hetherington, taken from an ancestral mansion in North England, Charlton wrote four historical articles between 1909 and 1913 for the University Magazine. The first was on "Tecumseh", another on the famous Beaver Club of the fur traders, 1785-1824, another on Father Lacombe, the contemporary veteran missionary to First Nations and the last on Mrs. Simcoe, wife of the first governor of Ontario. For her later work, she drew inspiration from Canadian medical history, an article which appeared in Johns Hopkins Bulletin in 1914 on Louis Hébert, whom she termed "Quebec's first surgeon." She also wrote a companion study on Ontario's pioneer physician, Christopher Widmer (1780-1858), a veteran of the 1812 war and the first qualified physician in York.

¹⁶Peter Conmy, Caroline Coughlin, "The Principal Library Associations" in Jackson, et al, *Librarianship in the United States and Canada*: 266.

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

Despite her many accomplishments, Charlton's McGill years were not without conflict. In a period when women were discouraged from assuming leadership roles in public institutions outside of strictly defined 'feminine' pursuits, Charlton was unable to develop the management, technical and human skills necessary to the modern medical librarian. Honorary Librarian Dr. Finley, a patient man who recognized that Charlton's colourful but grating personality were "more than balanced by her energies and abilities," left her to run the library her own way. In loyalty to Charlton, Finley stayed on as Honorary Librarian longer than he might have otherwise done, knowing that others would not tolerate her 'vagaries.'¹⁷ Indeed her resignation in May 1914 followed intolerable friction created when a new Honorary Librarian drew up a program she refused to carry out. Despite being recognized as an innovator in her field, Charlton left McGill feeling unappreciated.

At the time of her resignation from McGill, Charlton also lost her mother. Like most Victorian daughters, she was expected to be home-loving and this loss may have made possible her exit from Montréal. From October 1914 to May 1922, Charlton took charge of the library of the Academy of Medicine, Toronto, this time as Librarian. In this capacity, she increased its collection from 6,500 to 12,000 volumes. That she classified it according to Dewey indicates that this system was still widely used even in academic libraries. Charlton had almost completely finished this work when she felt it was time to retire and return to her sisters in Montréal.¹⁸

Although largely unrecognized as a scholar, Charlton continued to write, specializing in her later career in the history of medicine and attempting to document the contribution which women made to Canadian history. Her writings include a sensitive portrayal of Jeanne Mance as a warm, compassionate and heroic woman and reveal Charlton's interest in improving the treatment of the insane. Writing at a time when the historical profession was in its infancy, Charlton pioneer in recording the history of Quebec medicine.¹⁹ Between 1923 and 1924 she published a series of articles in the *Annals of Medical History* which explored the medical history of Lower Canada from 1608 to 1759. These articles drew on McGill's excellent medical history collection.²⁰ Of her contribution, one historian has noted:

Le nom de Margaret R. Charlton est maintenant pratiquement oublié;
pourtant son apport à l'histoire de la médecine québécoise fut important.
Elle fut en effet, avant Abbott, Howell et Heagerty, la première personne

¹⁷Groen, "Charlton, Medical Librarian and Historian": 109.

¹⁸Francis, "Early Days".

¹⁹Groen, "Margaret Ridley Charlton, An Evaluation of Her Career": 111.

²⁰Margaret Charlton, "Outlines of the History of Medicine in Lower Canada under the French Regime, 1608-1759" *Annals of Medical History* 5, (1923): 150-174 and 263-278; M. Charlton, "Outlines of the History of Medicine in Lower Canada under the English Regime" *Annals of Medical History*, 6 (1924): 222-235 and 312-354.

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

à tenter de faire une synthèse de l'histoire de la médecine québécoise.²¹

Without Maude Abbott's introduction to her book, *History of Medicine in the Province of Quebec*, this same author would not have known that C.R. Charlton was a woman.

Following her retirement from the Academy of Medicine in Toronto, Charlton was injured in a freak accident. A heavy electric globe, falling on her head during a train trip from Toronto to Montréal, caused her considerable pain until her death on May 31, 1931 at the age of 72.

Margaret Ridley Charlton made exceptional contributions to medical librarianship and medical history. Most outstanding among her achievements was the co-founding in 1898 of an important international association for medical librarians and her role in its early development. The Medical Library Association served as a model for other specialized library associations and led the way in charting a separate path for academic librarianship across North America. However this was not her only contribution. She also shaped the libraries at McGill and the Academy of Medicine, institutions which played a significant role in the development of the medical profession. As a pioneering medical historian, as an early author of children's books, and as a successful woman librarian, she demonstrated that women could assume leadership roles in the library and academic fields.

c) Comparative Context:

There are few HSMBC commemorations in the field of librarianship. Aegidius Fauteux, (NHS 1955) librarian and historian at the Bibliothèque St. Sulpice, Montréal, 1912-31, precursor to the Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec, has been recognized. The late development of national institutions is reflected in a dearth of library commemorations. The National Library of Canada, established in 1953 and closely affiliated with the National Archives, is not represented. However Douglas Brymner (NHS 1938), first Dominion Archivist who established the Public Archives of Canada in 1872 and Sir Arthur Doughty (NHS 1991), historian and Dominion Archivist from 1904 to 1935 have been recognized.

Librarianship is one of several important professions which women helped establish in the late 19th, early 20th centuries. They had a strong numerical presence in the profession, particularly in public libraries. Despite the barriers they faced, many women were active in launching needed educational programs for the training of librarians, in organizing professional associations and in improving practices in acquisitions, classification and cataloguing. Charlton is not the only woman to have made a contribution to librarianship in Canada. For example, Elizabeth Morton served as secretary to the Canadian Library Association and actively lobbied for the creation of the National Library of Canada (1953); while Bertha Bassam, Winifred Barnstead and Lillian Smith, were pioneering faculty in the University of Toronto's school of library science. At McGill, Beatrice Simon, Vernon Ross and Virginia Murray played an important role. However, Charlton clearly stands out among these women

²¹Leblond, "Margaret Charlton: notice biographique": 15.

TITLE: Margaret Ridley Charlton

as exceptional. She co-founded a major international library association, one which served as a model to other specialized library associations. She helped develop librarianship as an autonomous profession through her work at two major medical libraries. And, through her example, and her writings, Charlton demonstrated that women could attain careers in librarianship, particularly academic librarianship. Working in a milieu that largely excluded women, Charlton's contribution is all the more remarkable.

5. POTENTIAL LOCATION(S) FOR COMMEMORATION

McGill University Health Sciences Library

6. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

- Margaret Charlton co-founded the Medical Library Association in 1898, an international association and leader in specialized and academic librarianship.
- As librarian at two major medical research libraries from 1895 to 1922, Charlton innovated library practices at a time when most medical librarians were male doctors and librarianship was not yet recognized as a profession.
- Charlton made a pioneering contribution to the study of medical history in Lower Canada, authored numerous historical works and children's fiction and demonstrated that women could succeed in leadership positions.