

Library Matters @ McGill

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Judy Symansky (Howard Ross Mangement) with George Boynton (formerly of the McGill International Executive Institute) at McGill's Open House in January

FROM THE TRENHOLME DIRECTOR OF LIBRARIES

A recent article in *Educause Review* (<http://www.educause.edu/apps/er/erm07/erm0714.asp>) postulated that if the academic library as we know it ceased to exist, then we might have to invent it. The author suggested that students and faculty be allocated funds to buy materials they required for teaching and learning. They would then rely on searching Google for research materials and back-up resources, and experience challenges locating relevant scholarly journals, databases or books. The writer suggests that while the traditional library role has changed, it has not disappeared, and the Library will continue to purchase published materials in all formats and make them available for use. The article further suggests that focus in libraries will continue to shift to a user-driven model and that we shall continue to bring order from the information chaos swirling around us. We may need to change the ways we provide information and services to our users, but we shall continue to focus on improving our user support of teaching, learning and research.

Janine Schmidt,
Trenholme Director of Libraries



The *Library Matters @ McGill* newsletter, brought to you by the *you-never-heard-it-from-us* editors, seeks to exchange and encourage ideas, innovations and information from McGill Library staff at all levels.

The newsletter is published monthly. The latest issue, as well as an archive of past issues, can be found at www.mcgill.ca/library-about/pubs/newsletter/.

We welcome your contributions. The deadline for submissions is the first day of the issue month. Send your input to the *you-never-heard-it-from-us* editorial team:

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WHAT'S NEW

Government Information Service gets a new librarian

Eamon Duffy joined us on February 19 as a Liaison Librarian in the Government Information Service. Eamon comes to us from Concordia and has previously worked with us as a student. He brings considerable knowledge of the changing area of government publications with him and we welcome him to our team.

Eamon's first day was very eventful—his wife, Alexandra Neveu, went into hospital and they are now the proud parents of a baby daughter, Simone.

Move from Tech Services to Macdonald

Ruth Sonksen who has been working in Technical Services and involved in e-resources cataloguing will commence work as a Liaison Librarian at Macdonald Campus Library on February 19. She will use her existing knowledge and skills to contribute to the provision of services to faculty and students at Macdonald and is look-

ing forward to gaining new knowledge and skills in client services in her portfolio there.

Cataloguing backlog report

Charlotte Stewart has completed her report on our cataloguing backlog. She made a presentation to staff on Friday, February 16. A copy of the report is available on the Common Drive under Reports, Final Report and Recommendations.

A second, more detailed presentation and discussion was held for Technical Services staff on Friday, February 23.

Associate Directors

The first round of interviews has been concluded for the recruitment of new Associate Directors. The Directory would like to thank all involved in the process. Negotiations are continuing.

Drop in Sessions

The next two drop in sessions will be held March 26, from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., and March 29, from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., in the Office of the Director of Libraries.

Aleph version 18 is coming

Jane Aitkens, Systems Librarian (Library Systems Office) reminds us that the journey to Aleph version 18 has begun. The process began in mid-November. Before Christmas, the server was prepared by upgrading the operation system, and disk space was borrowed to hold our version 18 data.

February 5 and 6, Ex Libris added an Aleph 18 environment to our server, a new 'instance' of Oracle 10, as well as all their Aleph version 18 programs.

The next steps will be to clone all our version 16 data into the version 18 instance, to copy over all our local Aleph tables, to upgrade our version 16 data so it will work in version 18, and to upgrade all our tables so they will work in version 18. Then testing will begin!

If you want to watch the progress, please see: www.library.mcgill.ca/aleph/upgrade16_18/index.html

The tentative 'go live' date is on the Victoria Day weekend—which this year is May 19–21. □

TRIBUTE TO JOAN AND CLIFFORD HATCH

BY STEVEN SPODEK (ADMINISTRATION)



Joan and Clifford Hatch were ardent supporters of McGill and the library for more than 40 years. The Hatches founded the Parents Association and established the Parents Fund in 1963. Through annual donations from parents of current students and graduates, the Parents Fund generously contributes to the improvement of library resources and, ultimately, to the growth of the University. Sadly Mr. Hatch passed away in 2006 and Mrs. Hatch passed away in 2004. With seven McGill graduates among their children and grandchildren, Joan and Clifford had a great incentive to make library collections their priority—and their

generosity to the University has provided a legacy for generations of students to come.

In addition to generously supporting the McGill Library, most recently through the Joan and Clifford Hatch Book Endowment in support of Shakespeare Studies, the Joan and Clifford Hatch Foundation has also supported women's legal aid, Scouts Canada, and L'Arche Canada, and the Joan and Clifford Hatch Wildflower Garden commemorates the couple's contributions to the city of Windsor, Ontario's riverfront and parks system. □

136TH MEETING OF THE JAMES MCGILL SOCIETY

BY JOHN HOBBS (NAHUM GELBER LAW)

The James McGill Society held its 136th meeting on February 12, 2007. The Speaker was the Society's founder, the remarkable Dr. Stanley Frost, a week shy of his 94th birthday. The former Dean of Divinity, Vice-Principal (Administration), to whom the Library then reported, and McGill Historian is still astonishingly spry and appears to have changed very little in the more than forty years I have known him. He took as his text "James McGill Revisited: Citizen and Philanthropist."

Dr. Frost discussed the three aspects of McGill's career: fur trader and later prosperous merchant; politician and statesman who was high in the councils of the city and Lower Canada; and soldier as commander of the Montreal militia and in many ways responsible for de Salaberry's victory over the 'pesky' invading Americans at Chateaugay in 1813. Dr. Frost then spoke of the inheritors of McGill's legacy—the executors of



his will—who established the college in the face of law suits, and some of the extraordinary individuals and benefactors who built the university. He ended in his own era of the 1960s with its "rambunctious" students. He was introduced by his former secretary, Susan Button, and thanked by Principal Emeritus Bernard Shapiro.

The Society meets four times a year to present public lectures on some aspect of the University. These events are on a Monday

night beginning with a wine and cheese reception at 5:00 p.m. and ending around 6:30. Membership is \$20 per individual per year, or \$25 for a family membership. As President, I was delighted to see at least half a dozen of my librarian colleagues in the audience for Dr. Frost's presentation. At the next meeting on April 23, Honora Shaughnessy will speak about the Alumni Association on its 15th anniversary. □

WORKING VIRTUALLY (OR IS IT, 'VIRTUALLY WORKING?')

BY CECILIA TELLIS (NAHUM GELBER LAW)

Ever wondered what it would be like to telecommute? Beth Dunning, Liaison Librarian (Howard Ross Management) describes her experience in an article she co-authored with Carolyn Minor:

"During my two years at library school (2004-2006) I was lucky enough to have a really neat part-time job—working from home every Sunday, providing chat reference service for the University of Winnipeg Library. I was hired by telephone, trained and supervised remotely. I never met my immediate supervisor, Carolyn Minor (also a McGill GSLIS grad), but we

decided it would be fun to co-author an article sharing our experience with this very unique staffing solution for Information Outlook. Telecommuting and reference work also became the topic of an independent study I completed—if you need help falling asleep drop me a line and I can send it your way."

You can find Beth and Carolyn's article entitled, "Making virtual library staffing a reality" in *Information Outlook*, vol. 10, no. 7, pp. 29-32, Jul 2006. The abstract can be found below:

Describes how the University of Winnipeg Library, Canada, devel-

oped its weekend Live Help chat reference service using a telecommuting solution. Instead of hiring a librarian to provide chat reference from a distance, the Library hired two library school students as "virtual graduate assistants" to provide chat reference service remotely from their homes. Pays particular attention to the training and supervision requirements of this type of exercise and the need to provide suitable job descriptions, and other duties assigned when the chat service was not busy. □

SEARCH AND THE EMERGING SOCIAL WEB

BY LORIE KLODA (LIFE SCIENCES)

While attending the Ontario Library Association Super Conference early this February in Toronto, Lorie was fortunate enough to attend a presentation by Tomi Poutanen, International Search Operations Director at Yahoo!

This presentation had as its theme Yahoo!'s "FUSE" vision: Helping users not only Find information (and human knowledge), but Use it, Share it, and Expand upon it. The dynamics of the internet have evolved from human edited categories (early Yahoo!), to mass automation, and then on to topological analysis of the web (Google). Poutanen believes that we are coming upon another step in search's evolution: social search. More and more people are involved in creating and organizing (or "tagging") content on the web—hence the ubiquitous term "the social web," also known as "Web 2.0".

Tomi Poutanen presented examples of Yahoo! services that exemplify social search. Flickr, an online photo management tool, has user generated content, user organized

content, user distributed content, and user developed functionality. Flickr also recently added clustering and geotagging functionalities. These features add value when searching, to which traditional search engines cannot really compare. Del.icio.us, a social bookmarking tool, currently has 1.5 million users, considered early-adopters of the relatively new phenomenon of tagging one's bookmarks, or favorites, and enabling others to view them.

The most interesting of Yahoo!'s new services is Yahoo! Answers, an online network consisting of regular people asking questions on any imaginable topic, where anyone can post an answer. This service is free, and since its launch, it has been very popular. Yahoo! Answers offers a very different experience from a search engine—different types of questions can be asked, and multiple (conflicting) answers are expected. There is an average of seven answers per question posted. While a typical search engine query is 2.3 keywords, the average question in

Yahoo! Answers is 13 words.

According to Poutanen, research and experience have shown that people prefer many opinions over a single one, even if it's from people or sources they don't know. There are some questions that are best answered by people, not books, or websites. For example, "Where can I find a good vegetarian restaurant in Toronto?" or "Will I be able to get into medical school?" Search engines are not ideal for answering these types of questions.

Poutanen has advised librarians and libraries to embrace the new social media, and to use these to build networks. As a starting point, if you're not already familiar with the above services, why not give them a try?

Del.icio.us:

<http://del.icio.us/>

Flickr Geotagging:

<http://www.flickr.com/explore/>

Yahoo! Answers:

<http://ca.answers.yahoo.com/>

□

HOW CAN YOUR OPAC BE FUN?

FROM LIBRARY THING ([HTTP://WWW.LIBRARYTHING.COM/THINGOLOGY/2006/12/IS-YOUR-OPAC-FUN-MANIFESTO-OF-SORTS.PHP](http://www.librarything.com/thingology/2006/12/is-your-opac-fun-manifesto-of-sorts.php))

How can your OPAC be fun? (No, not with Flash animations) Here are some first thoughts:

- ☞ Provide blog widgets and RSS feeds so patrons can show off what they're reading and what they thought of it.

- ☞ Let people find what they want, but let them also get entertainingly lost. Encourage exploration, serendipity and lost-ness. Give authors, subjects, languages, tags and other facets their own pages. That stuff's interesting, and can lead one delightfully astray.

- ☞ Allow patrons to interact with the catalog via tags, ratings and

reviews. (And would it kill you to give them patron pages?)

- ☞ Link outward. The web is fun. Point to it.

- ☞ Allow (static) inbound links. What are you, a bouncer?

- ☞ Let patrons access your data via API. Some clever patron will do something fun you hadn't thought of.

- ☞ Give patrons a reason to check in every day—something about the books, and ideally about them and the books, not some "trick" like free movie passes.

- ☞ Talk to patrons in their own language (eg., with tags), not in some crazy argot, where "cook-

ing" is "cooking" and "the internet" is "the information super-highway."

- ☞ Give patrons fun, high-quality recommendations.

- ☞ Give patrons enjoyable metadata. I don't intend to read any of the books in today's NYT Book Review, but I loved reading about them.

- ☞ Let users interact socially around the books they read. (Obviously, anything social needs to be voluntary.)

- ☞ Make it usable and findable too.

□