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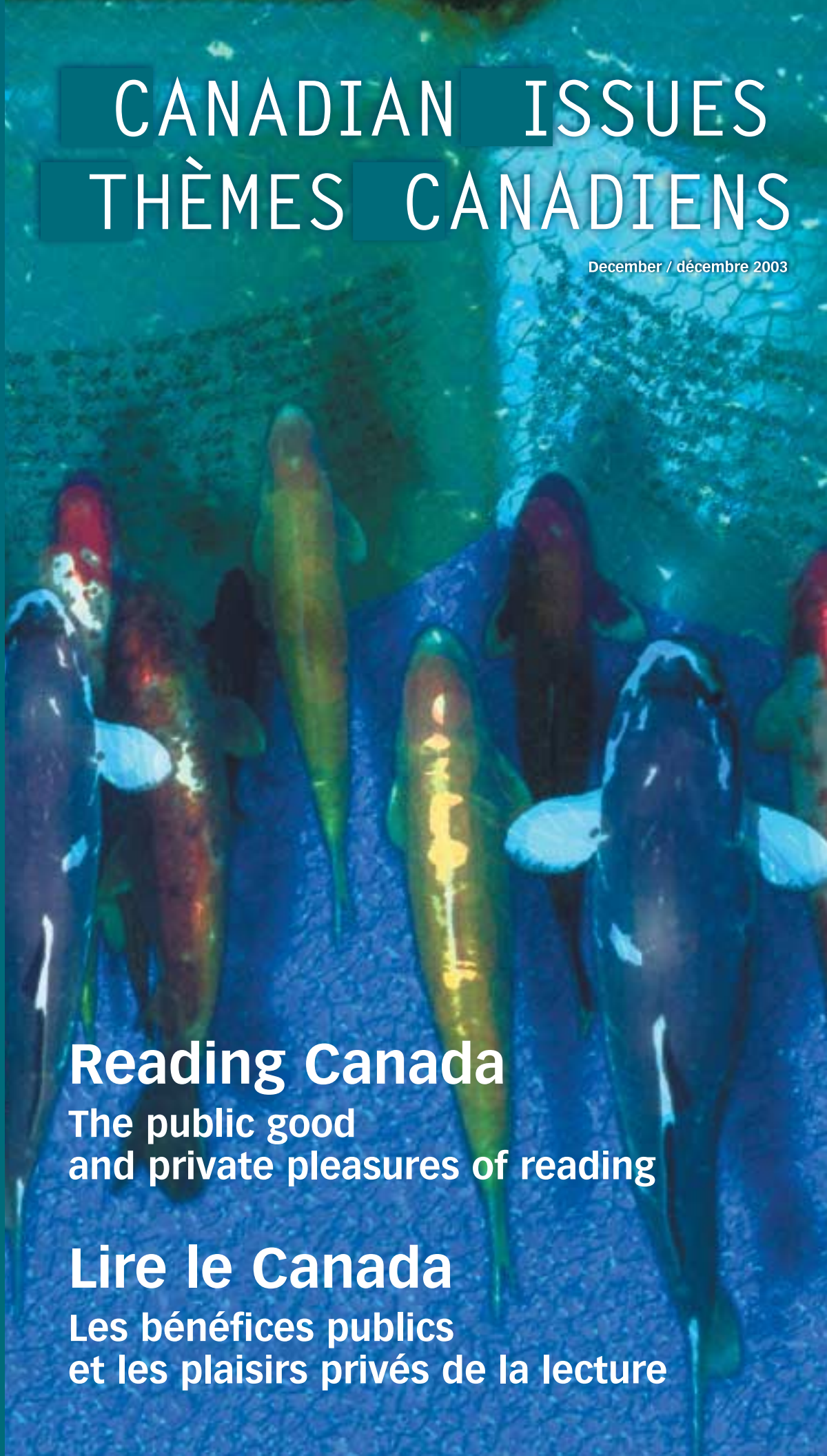

CANADIAN ISSUES
THÈMES CANADIENS

December / décembre 2003

Reading Canada
The public good and private pleasures of reading

Lire le Canada
Les bénéfices publics et les plaisirs privés de la lecture

Convergence and Divergence in North America: Canada and the United States

CNS-ACSUS in Canada
FIRST CALL FOR PAPERS

The Centre for Canadian Studies at Simon Fraser University and the *Association for Canadian Studies in the United States* (ACSUS) will hold in partnership the 5th interdisciplinary *ACSUS-in-Canada* Colloquium October 29-30, 2004, at Simon Fraser University, *Harbour Centre campus,* Vancouver, Canada.

This colloquium will examine North America's convergence and divergence evident in recent US and Canadian political, economic, societal, and cultural developments. Proposals for papers are invited that address these developments from a broad range of disciplinary perspectives, and in a number of research areas, including:

- security, defence, and foreign policy;
- economic policy (including trade and intellectual property rights);
- changing public service and governance regimes
- social policy (including health and welfare state policies);
- contesting equality, gender, and race relations;
- nationalism(s), federalism, citizenship, and globalization;
- immigration, and identity formation;
- natural resource policy regimes, including energy, forestry, and fisheries;
- cross-border regionalism after 9/11;
- labour policy and unionization;
- culture, media, and language;
- arts and literature, particularly, English and French literature.

Proposals for papers, which include a one page abstract, should be submitted to cns_acsuscoll@sfu.ca by 26 March 2004 and the papers in advance of the colloquium by 15 August 2004. Graduate students, in particular, are encouraged to submit. The colloquium manuscripts will be published in print. The editorial boards of peer-refereed journals, such as the *American Review of Canadian Studies, British Journal of Canadian Studies,* the *Canadian Journal of Canadian Studies,* the *International Journal of Canadian Studies,* and *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien,* will be approached to consider selected papers for publication.

This multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary colloquium will provide an intimate forum for Americans and Canadians to compare research and perspectives, and to enhance links among American Canadianists and their colleagues in Canada. The program co-chairs are: Karl Froschauer and Alex Netherton (*Centre for Canadian Studies, Simon Fraser University*) and Don Alper (*Center for Canadian-American Studies, Western Washington University*) and Nadine Fabbi (*Canadian Studies Center, University of Washington*). Updated information about the conference will be posted on the *Simon Fraser University Centre for Canadian Studies,* http://www.sfu.ca/cns and ACSUS, http://www.acsus.org.

ACSUS

Simon Fraser University
at Harbour Centre

Convergence et divergence en Amérique du nord : Le Canada et les États-Unis

CNS-ACSUS au Canada
APPEL DE COMMUNICATIONS

Les 29 et 30 octobre 2004, le *Centre des études canadiennes* de l'université Simon Fraser en partenariat avec *Association for Canadian Studies in the United States* (ACSUS) organisent le 5ème colloque interdisciplinaire *ACSUS-au-Canada*. Cet événement se tiendra au *Harbour Centre campus* de l'université Simon Fraser, Vancouver, Canada.

Le colloque explorera les convergences et les divergences apparentes au sein des développements politique, économique, sociétal, et culturel au Canada et aux États-Unis. Nous acceptons des soumissions de communications soulignant ces développements à l'intérieur de perspectives interdisciplinaires dans un grand nombre de domaines, notamment:

- la sécurité, la défense et les politiques étrangères;
- la politique économique (incluant les droits commerciaux et de propriété intellectuelle);
- le changement des régimes gouvernementaux et de la fonction publique;
- la politique sociale (incluant les politiques sur la santé et l'aide sociale);
- la contestation des relations raciales, de l'équilibre entre les sexes et du concept de l'égalité
- le nationalisme, le fédéralisme, la citoyenneté et la globalisation;
- l'immigration et la formation d'identité;
- les régimes politiques des ressources naturelles, incluant l'énergie, la forêt et les pêches;
- le régionalisme transfrontalier depuis le 11 septembre;
- la politique du travail et de la syndicalisation;
- la culture, les médias et la langue;
- les arts et la littérature, particulièrement la littérature anglaise et française.

Les soumissions de communications, incluant un résumé d'une page, doivent être envoyées à cns_acsuscoll@sfu.ca au plus tard le 27 mars 2004 et les textes complets pour le colloque avant le 15 août 2004. Les étudiants de cycles supérieurs sont particulièrement invités à soumettre une proposition. Les manuscrits du colloque seront publiés en version imprimée. Les comités éditoriaux de revues savantes telles que le *American Review of Canadian Studies*, le *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, la *Revue d'études canadiennes*, la *Revue internationale d'études canadiennes*, et le *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien*, seront contactés pour la publication des communications sélectionnées.

Ce colloque multidisciplinaire et interdisciplinaire servira de lieu d'échanges pour les Américains et Canadiens afin de comparer les recherches et perspectives, d'améliorer les relations parmi les Américains canadianistes et leurs collègues canadiens. Les co-présidents du programme sont : Karl Froschauer et Alex Netherton (*Centre for Canadian Studies, Simon Fraser University*), Don Alper (*Center for Canadian-American Studies, Western Washington University*) et Nadine Fabbi (*Canadian Studies Center, University of Washington*). L'information concernant la conférence sera mise à jour sur le site web de *Simon Fraser University Centre for Canadian Studies* à http://www.sfu.ca/cns et sur le site de l'ACSUS à http://www.acsus.org.

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THÈMES CANADIENS

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CITC est une publication bi-mensuelle de l'Association d'études canadiennes (AEC). It est distribué gratuitement aux membres de l'Association. CITC est une publication bilingue. Tous les textes émanant de l'Association sont publiés en français et en anglais. Tous les autres textes sont publiés dans la langue d'origine. Les collaborateurs et collaboratrices de CITC sont entièrement responsables des idées et opinions exprimées dans leurs articles. L'Association d'études canadiennes est un organisme pan-canadien à but non lucratif dont l'objectif est de promouvoir l'enseignement, la recherche et les publications sur le Canada. L'AEC est une société savante, membre de la Fédération canadienne des sciences humaines et sociales. Elle est également membre fondateur du Conseil international d'études canadiennes.

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LETTERS/LETTRES

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

November 10, 2003

Canadian Issues
Letters
ACS
a/s UQAM
V-5140, P. O. Box 8888
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Montréal, Québec H3C 3P8

Dear Editor,

In their article, "Textbook Wars: Canadian Style," *Canadian Issues/Thèmes canadiens* (October 2003), textbook authors Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel modestly describe the history of their textbook, *History of the Canadian Peoples*, as being "almost as interesting as the history of Canada." Teachers and students are, however, the sole judges of the quality of textbooks. Yet we do question the affirmation that our colleagues make in their article: "If it is true that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we realized that we had hit the mark when our major competition — Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald Smith, *Origins* and *Destinies* — subsequently came out with a new edition that mimicked our text in nearly every respect: illustrations, footnotes, selected readings, and historiographical debates, as well as more regional and social history."

Conrad and Finkel are correct in one regard. Our second edition did indeed include "illustrations, footnotes, selected readings, and historiographical debates" (debate boxes). But contrary to their accusation, we didn't get the idea of illustrations, footnotes, and selected readings, from them, as our first edition in 1988 already contained them. As for the debate boxes, they were new, but how could we copy the idea from their books, as our second edition came out in 1992, and their books only appeared in 1993, as the bibliography of their article clearly states? We continually revise our texts, and have included a new feature, Community Portraits, in our upcoming fifth editions, *Destinies* (December 2003) and *Origins* (early 2004).

Everyone has a right to an opinion, but especially as historians, it is imperative to get our facts straight.

R. Douglas Francis,
Dept of History, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4

Richard Jones,
Quebec City

Donald B. Smith,
Dept of History, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4

Authors of *Origins* and *Destinies*

THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLITERACY

ABSTRACT

Early in her senatorial career, Senator Fairbairn became aware of the literacy problems and learning disabilities in Canada and immediately resolved to tackle these issues. Senator Fairbairn calls for a comprehensive and well-funded public policy framework to help alleviate illiteracy problems, which deeply affect other areas of social concern, such as unemployment and healthcare.

As some of you may know, the promotion of literacy has been the cause of my life for nearly two decades. I was driven to it by my own ignorance of a fundamental social and economic fault line which had prevented millions and millions of Canadians from achieving their full potential or, indeed, even being able to dream of it.

When I finally saw the light, my frustration with myself caused me to describe our literacy situation as Canada's hidden shame, and I set out to try to do something about it. I would like to share some of that journey with you now, as it reflects many of the broader literacy challenges we continue to face as our country charts a daunting but exciting course in this new century.

My trek began when I was sworn in as a Senator in the fall of 1984. While committing myself fully to work in the Senate, and actively serving my province and my beloved home territory in the deep southwest corner of Alberta, I was also looking for a cause. That is one of the great things about the Senate – if you want to invest the time and energy, you have an opportunity to take on issues which have fallen through the cracks or been ignored. In my case I did not find literacy – it found me. My very first assignment in the Senate was a special committee on youth.

Those were tough times of high youth unemployment, disillusionment, and even anger and a group of us set out across the country holding public hearings under the leadership of then-Senator Jacques Hebert, an icon in the promotion of youth involvement through Katimavik and Canada World Youth. We heard what we expected about jobs, drugs and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancies, family breakup – but we also heard something we had not anticipated. In every region of Canada, witnesses of all ages spoke out about literacy problems and learning disabilities and their devastating impact on human lives. We were shocked and, in our report, called for a national campaign to tackle these literacy problems. And then we went back to our regular work on other issues.

However, I was haunted by what I had heard and angry with myself that I had been on Parliament Hill through the sixties as a journalist and then worked side by side for 14 years with one of our most education-oriented Prime Ministers, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and not once had the issue of literacy come up. How could he and I have missed it?

Well, I set out to find the answer in government and on Parliament Hill and discovered I had not missed it – it simply was not there. Literacy had been deemed at some point to be an "education" issue and therefore fell within the jurisdiction of the provinces. Now there is no question education is, and should be, a provincial responsibility. But I believed that literacy went well beyond those boundaries – it was a national imperative. So it became my cause then, now and forever.

Over those years I have trudged across the country (Ancient Mariner) attending countless meetings with our army of volunteers and learners – from large cities to small villages; in community halls and church basements; and on inner city streets or in hidden rooms where no one else could see or hear.

We have button-holed politicians of every stripe – both federally, provincially and municipally, and encouraged, and cajoled, and challenged our corporate leaders. In 1987 out of sheer frustration I launched a debate in the Senate about literacy in Canada. It was the first ever in either House of Parliament which says a lot about where the issue stood at that time.

It has often been a lonely road filled with the frustration of trying to articulate and advocate for an issue that so many Canadians in politics and business and industry and even society in general often view with skepticism and disbelief. Often I was accused of lying. Indeed, it took a landmark international study in 1995 by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), aided by Statistics Canada, that sent shock waves through levels of government and educators across the country. Among a group of 13 of our industrial trading partners we ranked somewhere in the middle below European countries led by Sweden and slightly above the United States.

There were four levels of measurement and, although we did well at the very top of the scale, of great concern was the 20 per cent at the very lowest level – very close to the word we try never to use, "illiteracy" – and another

SENATOR JOYCE FAIRBAIN

Senator Fairbain was appointed to the Senate on June 29, 1984. She has held the positions of Vice-Chair of the National and Western Liberal Caucus (1984-1990) and Co-Chair of the Liberal Party of Canada Election Readiness Committee (June 1991). And in 1993 she was appointed to the Cabinet, as the first woman Leader of the Government in the Senate.

22 per cent at the second level who are only able to read material which is very simple and clearly laid out – everyday tasks that most of us in this room would take for granted.

My message has been simple: literacy IS the foundation for every thing we learn and do – how we are able to function in the routine tasks of daily life – at home, at work, at school, within the family. And, if that is true, we cannot – we must not – ignore some 8 million Canadians, over 40% of our adult population – the 20 plus 22 percent I was just talking about – who currently find themselves marginalized because of inadequate literacy and numeracy skills – and who therefore are at risk of being unable to fully and meaningfully contribute to and participate in our national life.

In recent years we have tended to view literacy from two perspectives. The first is Workplace Literacy, meaning the basic skills needed to enjoy meaningful employment and advancement and opportunity in the high tech world of the 21st century. And the second perspective is Family Literacy, or the many ways families together develop and use literacy skills such as reading, writing, and numeracy to accomplish day-to-day tasks and duties.

The workplace connection is not hard to understand – inadequate literacy skills inhibit job promotion, income potential, and even health and safety. When those of us who view our own literacy level as high struggle through the numerous manuals and instruction books now necessary in today's work arena – and I know I do – how difficult must it be for those workers who have reading problems to start with?

Happily, the vital need for special initiatives in the workplace is now being grasped by governments and many employers - it affects not only their bottom line, but also the morale and well being of their staff.

However, the second perspective – that family literacy connection – has been much more difficult to sell. It has been very interesting and sometimes agonizing to watch the determination and courage in the manner in which that family message has come up from individuals, parents and groups, on the ground in communities all across the land, and NOT down from governments.

Perhaps it rattles government because it is so personal and tough to tackle, and blanket solutions do not really work. One size never fits all in family situations, and I give our current government and provincial partners credit for the joint efforts they have made over the past few years to reach out creatively – with resources – and work with literacy practitioners and individuals to touch the right chord.

That family challenge remains at the heart of our problems and a key part of the reason that our very perception of literacy is being revised to take into account the different pressures and expectations of the 21st century.

In our labor- intensive economy of the past, millions of Canadians were able to compensate for their lack of reading and writing skills. They developed a circle of support, usually within their own family, to the point where, for many, their problems with literacy were not really a major factor in their daily lives. With great skill and courage they learned to work around literacy issues – AND, also, manual skills were in constant demand and provided decent wages.

Today, however, with the advent of new technologies, the information age, a knowledge-based economy, and a vastly diverse workforce, literacy has become a prerequisite to almost every aspect of our lives – no matter what our age or occupation. It lurks everywhere – whether you can use a banking machine, or take an eye examination; try to read the candidate's names in order to mark an X on a line on a ballot; order a meal in a restaurant, find a number in a phone book, fill out a job application.

It confronts millions of Canadians in our towns and cities who travel on the bus or subway by counting the number of stops on their fingers because they cannot read the signs; or who shop at the local supermarket or corner store by memorizing the colour and size and shape and position of goods on shelves because they cannot read the labels.

In today's workplace, demands are driven by technology that knows no boundaries. It affects production line workers, farmers, executives, truck drivers, trades people, office workers, sales clerks, and even the staff at your local fast food outlet.

In Canada, as more and more "baby boomers" retire, and as the birth rate drops, we no longer enjoy the luxury of a continuously growing workforce. For some time yet, we will still be counting on those who are working now to face the challenge of adapting quickly to the use of information technology we could not even have imagined ten years ago. In fact, 70 per cent of the technology used today had not even been created five years ago. Yet up to 25% of today's students have problems reading and writing and some 30 per cent drop out of high school each year. A recent report by the Canadian Council on Social Development, which compared Canada to other developed countries, noted that we have the third largest population of young people with poor literacy skills. That is totally unacceptable.

All this has placed added pressure on parents who themselves have problems with basic literacy skills in their own daily lives and are desperately trying to reach higher, farther and faster to maintain a living. The strain on families is profound. Just think of the risk and the fear of not being able to understand materials distributed by health care providers, or misreading medical dosages or nutrition labels on food, or instructions on a package of baby formula. The results can be disastrous – accidental poisoning, or illness which can increase a child's chance of developing learning and behavioral problems.

We know that lower literacy skills invariably result in below average incomes. In turn, low income Canadians are prone to have more accidents, suffer a wide range of diseases and die earlier. Without question this inflates our healthcare costs.We must persuade our decision makers that a literate workforce will have positive impacts on children as well. Clearly, tomorrow's skilled workforce will be found in today's families.

And we have learned through the federal government's marvelous agency, the National Literacy Secretariat, that money spent on literacy is an investment that can repay itself ten fold in lower health care costs, savings for our social programs, increased international competitiveness, and savings in our justice system.

For me, one of our saddest statistics is that some 1.6 million Canadians over the age of 65 are rated at the lowest level for literacy. Simply stated, that means that these seniors have difficulty reading at all.

How do they come to grips with the increased use of self-medication; or with health and social services where

communications are increasingly impersonal and automated; or with mobility restrictions that can lead to loss of friends, personal contacts, and plain old conversation. They cannot even enjoy a good book as a friend. Society may think that literacy is less important to our elderly population. After all – the theory goes – they are generally retired – their productive days behind them. Well, this attitude totally ignores the fact that seniors – next to health – prize independence beyond almost anything else, and independence demands literacy.

And, when talking about the devastating effects of illiteracy, we cannot but alarmingly stress the link between literacy and crime. The statistics are appalling. Up to 50 per cent of adult inmates can neither read nor write and this can rise to over 80% in institutions with a high aboriginal population, particularly in Western Canada. Over 75% of juvenile offenders have learning disabilities and in some areas it rises to 90%. Up to 90% of adult inmates are school dropouts.

The vast majority of offenders will eventually be released from prison and return to our communities. Without doubt, concentrated literacy programs while incarcerated will help them re-enter the workplace and their communities.

And, finally, I cannot appeal to you and discuss this issue without offering a fervent plea to understand the importance Canadians must place on the inclusion of our aboriginal people in this life long process. Let there be no doubt that literacy and education are at the heart of opportunity for the first citizens in every part of our country, so that they can have equal access to the benefits of this wonderful land which they cared for and protected long before any of our ancestors set foot on what is now Canada. While this is a stated priority for all our governments, we must hold them accountable for a far greater effort, particularly with the children who will lead the future of our first nations.

Without question we have come a long way in Canada over the past two decades. Governments at all levels, along with business, labor, educators and the literacy movement and our volunteer sector are working ever closer together pooling resources for broader results. Over the last two years hundreds of Canadians from all walks of life, myself included, have been crafting what has become known as the national skills and learning initiative. There have been meetings and town halls and consultations from coast to coast to coast, ending in a Summit on Innovation and Learning held in Toronto last fall.

A key driver of this initiative is the Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resource Development and a long time friend of the literacy movement. Not only has she championed our advances in early childhood development, but last spring she asked members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources to determine from a Parliamentary perspective, what they felt could and should be done about literacy in Canada.

It was the first time in Canadian Parliamentary history that a House of Commons Committee had focused in on the literacy issue and its thoughtful report was tabled in the House of Commons on June 12th. It draws attention to Canada's low literacy rates, expresses concern over the current lack of resources and public policy framework necessary to address the literacy challenge, and calls on all governments – federal, provincial, territorial – to take action on a national literacy strategy.

These call for action range from urging the federal government to take the lead on negotiating a pan-Canadian literacy Accord with the provinces and territories, to developing an Aboriginal Literacy Strategy, to cataloguing a variety of ways the federal government can invest in and support literacy with the literacy community and on its own.

Recently, Jane tabled the official government response to this groundbreaking effort in the House of Commons. In it, the Government agrees with the thrust and spirit of the Committee's recommendations. It says that raising adult literacy skills requires a pan-Canadian response, built on multi-level partnerships and that the Government of Canada is taking a leadership role in fostering that concerted effort. This response, along with all the feedback, insights and suggestions from our cross-Canada consultations, will be central to drafting a National Literacy Strategy and an action plan aimed at the budget process of next February.

And even though we are in a period of transition in federal politics, I hope and believe that this issue and the resources required for meaningful implementation will find a welcome home on the agenda of the next government. I certainly intend to fight like a mother with a cub to keep it there.

It is crystal clear that we, as a country, must consolidate a culture based on life-long learning. And we must be careful how we define it – it does not just pop up in transition from school to the workplace or in up-grading to a new job level. Lifelong learning starts at the beginning when the smallest child can feel a book, turn a page, recognize a picture and hear the sounds of reading from a friendly voice within the security of a pair of arms – and it keeps on going through school and work and families – right to the very end of our lives.

Without that span we isolate a huge segment of Canadian society and undervalue the contribution it has the potential to make to our country. With our small population and in terms of human decency and compassion, we simply cannot afford to leave anyone behind. I have moved from earlier days of fighting for this cause on the basis of social justice or economic necessity, to a stubborn insistence that literacy is a right and a responsibility of citizenship for every individual in Canada – wherever they live, whatever their age or circumstance. I have talked in every corner of this land about the necessity of giving each and every Canadian a fair chance to participate, and contribute and have a job and make a decent wage and build a strong and vigorous life for themselves and their children.

This is not about special treatment. It is not about privilege. It is about glorying in acquiring knowledge that not only puts bread on the table, but entertains and comforts and enhances the soul. That is not idle rhetoric. And lifelong learning is not just a slogan: it IS a cultural necessity for this nation. And I am telling you today, with all the heart and soul I can muster that, however long or frustrating the journey may be, however rough the challenges, our spirit and determination must not fail because we are talking about nothing less than the future of our children and the success of our country which I believe to be the finest in the world.

THE PLEASURES OF READING

ABSTRACT

This text is a version of Robert Adams' keynote speech delivered on November 6, 2003, in Ottawa, at the Association for Canadian Studies' conference, titled "Reading Canada."

I am going to discuss what books meant to me but I could as easily have used the expression "the written world" instead of "books." There is nothing sacred about cloth, card board, paper, glue or thread. It is the written word, whether on clay tablets, papyrus, paper or disk, that is holy.

When I was young, living in the Bible Belt of South Wales in Great Britain, I memorized the first verse of the Gospel according to St. John: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." I know that Christian theologians now put a different spin on that passage but I have always taken it literally. The word, especially the written word, represents for me all things good and librarians, the keepers of the word, are the 'priests of the world I live in.'

Books have been so very precious to so many people. When Sir John Franklin died of starvation with all 129 of his men in the Canadian Arctic, he had long abandoned all of his guns, but he died still clutching to him his copy of *The Vicar of Wakefield.* During the Blitz on London during the Second World War, that dreadful man Evelyn Waugh who wrote *Brideshead Revisited* evacuated all of his beloved books out of London to the safety of the countryside. But he left his son Auberon behind. As a boy, Salman Rushdie kissed any book he dropped by way of apology for the act of clumsy disrespect.

I have the same feeling about books.

Books and libraries have always been my salvation. At the moment I make my living by reading and by speaking about what I read on stage, on radio and on TV. It is, I find, a very satisfying way to live, especially as my wife Pearl, my editor and manager, prevents me for most of the time from saying anything *too* foolish or outrageous in public. But my salvation, my rescue by the written word, began much earlier, more than six decades ago.

I was born in a small town, a big village really, in South Wales. My mother and father had little formal education, but they were both widely read and had a great love of the written word. My mother taught me to read when I was four. By the time I was six, my two much older brothers had left to fight in the Second World War. And so I became, in effect, an only child. I had friends in my little town and I played with them after school every day, but after I came home the rest of the evening was always the same. My parents and I each had our own comfortable chair by the fire, and we sat and read after dinner until it was time for me to go to bed.

I don't know how much of that routine was for my benefit. I suspect that at least some of it was a deliberate sacrifice by my parents of other possible leisure activities. It was part of their lifelong effort to teach by example.

It was certainly effective. Reading has always been associated in my mind with love, security, and warmth. I was about fifteen before I discovered that not everyone read for two or three hours every day. When I went into the homes of friends and saw no books, I always assumed that they were in another room and that the family would take up their reading at some time after I left.

I was a teacher for thirty-six years, at every level from Grade Seven to third-year university, and like every other teacher I was often asked by parents how best they might encourage their children to read. My answer was, and is, always the same. If you want to buy books for your child, buy books. If you want to read to your child, read. It is a good start. But if you are serious about helping your child, *let the child see you read.* Children listen to a distressingly small portion of what we say, but they pay great attention to what we do…

Children who see their parents read every day will come to believe that reading is a normal part of human activity and the habit of reading is the greatest legacy a child can receive. I am deeply grateful to my parents.

ROBERT ADAMS

Robert Adams came to Canada in 1964, where he taught History and English for 36 years. Since 1997, he has been giving an annual series of book reviews on stage to sold-out audiences. He has often been a panelist on CBC Radio's "Talking Books," and is a sought-after guest-speaker at literary functions. His talks are regularly telecasted on TV Ontario's "Big Ideas." His second book, A Love of Reading, was a national best-seller in 2001.

I would not have you believe, though, that my parents were perfect. There was always plenty of food on our table but little of it was edible. My mother could not cook. It wasn't until I left home at 17 to go to London that I realized that anyone ate for pleasure. I thought, as a child, that you ate so that you wouldn't die. Even now, I do not frequent restaurants that claim to make food "like mother used to make."

One of the consequences of my mother's inability to cook was that, when I was 12 years old, I was exceptionally thin. The problem was that I was also six feet tall. The truth is that I looked very odd and I suffered because of it. Children are cruel.

However, as you can see, later I filled out beautifully.

The books in my parents' home were generally classics. My father, with his limited means, bought collections cheaply at estate sales. The result was that, by the time I was about 14, I had read all of Dickens, much of the Brontes, and most of Alexandre Dumas. Before my teens, however, my reading needs had been met by the school library or by the little town library to which our teachers marched us through the streets every Monday and Friday afternoon. I read all the usual suspects, A.A. Milne, Kenneth Graham, Richmal Crompton, Conan Doyle, etc.

Why did I read so voraciously? The short answer is, of course, my parents did and I saw them doing it. But the answer is more complicated than that. Why does anyone read? Charles Lamb said that he loved to lose himself in other men's minds. Harold Bloom says that he reads in search of a mind more original than his own. Macaulay said that his reading enabled him to live more deeply and in greater fellowship with all those who live or who have lived.

Reading means that we are not obliged to reinvent the wheel. There are lessons to be learned from books, from the past. In *King Lear,* for example, I believe that Shakespeare said everything that there is to say about inter-generational conflict. It ought to be required reading for every parent.

We all see articles every day on why we should read. Reading alleviates loneliness, warms our souls, lets our imaginations soar, and stimulates our intellect. After all, it is only the written word that can convey complicated truths. But when I think back to my early years, reading means than all those things. Bear in mind that I was a very tall, very ungainly, very awkward boy, living with good but elderly parents in a stultifyingly small community.

My books gave me the entry into a parallel and more satisfying universe. My books showed me that life could be otherwise and that for me was a life-saving discovery. I say "my books" because I did not have to own a book for it to belong to me. Through libraries, I had access to every book in the world. They were all mine. I had access to knowledge and wisdom that Aristotle and John Milton could never have dreamed of. I could read and re-read and make fantastic friends, intimate friends. I could build a community of friends like Sydney Carton, D'Artagnan, Sherlock Holmes and so many others within my own mind and all I had to do to visit them was to open a book or just go into my own memory.

Reading about the loneliness of Edmond Dantes in the Chateau D'If or the fear of Tom Brown as he was terrorized during his school days legitimized my own emotions, my own fears. I was a frightened, bullied child at school and, until I read, I thought that I was the only human being in the universe with those problems.

Books and libraries really were my salvation when I was a child. I could pretend, in my interior world, that I was brave, that I was Sydney Carton mounting the steps of the guillotine to save the husband of the woman I love or that I was Abel Magwitch, risking death to visit the little boy who had once given him food.

Books and libraries really were my salvation when I was a child. I could pretend, in my interior world, that I was brave, that I was Sydney Carton mounting the steps of the guillotine to save the husband of the woman I love or that I was Abel Magwitch, risking death to visit the little boy who had once given him food.

I memorized the passages, acting them out in the privacy of my bedroom – and I could always bring tears to my own eyes, tears of joy at the beauty of the language and at my own courage. But, more important, that "pretend bravery" kept me going until, in real life, I began to develop a little real courage of my own.

So far I have spoken only about reading and what it meant to me. It wasn't until I was an adult that I realized that reading is only the final contribution to a process that begins with writing. Writing and reading are inseparable. Of one thing we can be sure, writers write to be read. I don't care what Kafka said to Max Brod. If Kafka had really wanted his work destroyed, he would have destroyed it himself. It seems clear to me that an anticipated reader is a part of the writing process. But why must writers write? Haruki Murakami in Tokyo and Rohinton Mistry in Toronto both gave me the same answer, that, if they did not write, they felt incomplete.

But that doesn't really answer the question especially since, for most people, writing is such agony. I have a favourite joke about writers that makes that very point:

> A writer had died and was awaiting reassignment to some future existence. But before the reassignment he was permitted a tour of heaven and hell. First he went to hell, and hell was full of writers, tearing their hair out in frustration, crippled with writer's block, unable to get a word onto the page. And then he went to heaven, and heaven was full of writers, racked with frustration, tearing their hair out, unable to get a word onto the page.

The dead writer turned to St. Peter and said, "I'm puzzled. Heaven and hell seem identical." And St. Peter replied, "No, no, no; the agony is the same, but in heaven they get published."

What is this innate need to write and to be read? Because it is common to every age and culture. More than 2000 years ago, in Rome, the greatest of all orators, Cicero, complained: "Times are bad. Children no longer obey their parents – and – everyone is writing a book."

Why do they do it? There are so many theories. Francois Mauriac thought that all writing is in some way a re-examination of the writer's childhood, a voyage of self-discovery. Jungians argue that there are only so many stories to tell, the myths that inform our Western civilization. We tell and re-tell these stories as acts of comfort, of reassurance that we are not alone, that we are participants in a great collective ongoing past. Perhaps.

The theory that I find most persuasive is that argued by Northrop Frye in his great *Anatomy of Criticism.* Frye suggests first that every narrative contains within itself the author's vision of the individual and his of her relationship to the universe. Second, Frye suggests that the writer has an innate need, not always consciously felt, to communicate that vision to the world outside.

In recent years, I have been reviewing novels alone on a theatre stage, For an hour-and-a half, five times a season, the audience listens as I examine the tension between the author's vision of life and my own vision. It is in that juxtaposition of what the author believes and what I believe that I think we can identify the real excitement, the real joy of reading.

As we match our own vision of life to that of the author, we may sometimes find the author's vision persuasive. Thus the readers, as they read, are using the author's vision of life to produce anew and refined vision of their own.

After I finish speaking, the audience and I enter into a dialogue and there is real excitement as the three visions of existence clash – the writer's vision, my vision, and the vision of each member of the audience.

It doesn't matter that each member of the audience and I may have reacted differently to the novel. What matters is our engagement with it. As Kafka said, "A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us… if the book we are reading doesn't shake us awake like a blow on the skull, why bother reading it in the first place?"

I think that there is also another process at work as we read. As we match our own vision of life to that of the author, we may sometimes find the author's vision persuasive. Thus the readers, as they read, are using the author's vision of life to produce anew and refined vision of their own.

I know that my theory that reading is a clash of visions between the reader and the writer is no more than my own theory to explain the excitement I feel when I read, so let me finish by referring to one of the early joys I found in reading, the pleasure of pretending to be one of the characters.

When I was young and afraid, less cautious. I always pretended to be the hero. Now, I am less cautious.

When I speak on stage, I sometimes dramatize a passage from the novel I am reviewing, even if the character is less than sympathetic. I am going to end with a brief sermon from Brien Moore's wonderful novel, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne.* A bad and bullying priest, Father Quigley, is haranguing his congregation. I suppose I like thundering out the sermon because there were Welsh revivalist preachers among my forebears and, although I now hold a different faith, I still have a taste for what we used to call "hot gospel."

Permit me to indulge myself – from p. 66 of my paperback edition of Judith Hearne:

"Plenty of money! Plenty of money! Plenty of time! Plenty of time! Yes. The people of this parish have both of those things. Time and money. But they don't have it for their church! They don't even have an hour of a Sunday to get down on their bended knees before Our Blessed Lord and ask for forgiveness for the rotten things they did during the week. They've got time for sin, time for naked dancing girls in the cinema, time to get drunk, … time to spend in beauty parlours… time to dance the tango and the fox-trot and the jitterbugging, time to read trashy books and indecent magazines, time to do any blessed thing you could care to mention. Except one."

"They – don't – have – time – for – God."

"Well,"… "I just want to tell those people one thing. One thing. If you don't have time for God, God will have no time for you."

"And speaking of time, your time will come before the judgment seat of Heaven. Don't worry about that… what will God say to them on that terrible day? What will He say? Will it be, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you?' Will it be that now? Do you think it's likely? Or will it be, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels?'"

ÉTUDES ET ESSAIS : UN GENRE SECONDAIRE ?

ABSTRACT

L'auteur, qui déplore le manque d'attention porté à l'essai en tant que genre littéraire, tente d'expliquer pourquoi les lecteurs et lectrices québécois(es), de même que l'industrie du livre au Québec, relèguent l'essai au dernier rang. La négligence des éditeurs face à ce genre, et le fait que les compensations financières versées à ses auteur(e)s soient minimes, contribuent à l'érosion continuelle de la présence de l'essai sur le marché littéraire au Québec. Les intellectuel(le)s du monde académique, pour qui la publication constante de leurs projets de recherche n'a pas pour but les gains financiers mais bien la survie professionnelle, gardent l'essai en vie. Mais cette prolongation de vie, d'après Laplante, est peut-être elle aussi en train de contribuer à sa mort lente.

LAURENT LAPLANTE

Laurent Laplante a consacré sa vie à la communication sous toutes ses formes. Il a été chargé de cours dans diverses universités québécoises. Il a été éditorialiste ou rédacteur en chef dans différents quotidiens, et il a publié une douzaine de livres sur des sujets variés. Il a reçu en 1996 le prix de journalisme Olivar-Asselin et le prix Genève-Montréal en 1998.

Je ne suis pas un spécialiste, mais un journaliste dont les activités d'éditorialiste ont conduit à la lecture de nombreux essais, puis, sans doute par mimétisme, à la rédaction de quelques modestes bouquins. Mes propos ne peuvent porter que sur la production québécoise, qu'il s'agisse des essais eux-mêmes ou de l'appréciation qui est faite des essais par les critiques. Il serait imprudent et injuste d'appliquer mes quelques impressions aux essais en langue anglaise, non que je ne les lise jamais, mais parce que je ne suis pas en mesure de les situer dans la société dont ils proviennent et qu'ils interprètent.

Un sort peu enviable

L'essai n'est pas, au Québec, un genre littéraire propice aux grands tirages. Des auteurs et des titres font exception, mais la plupart des essais connaissent une diffusion presque confidentielle. Diverses raisons peuvent expliquer cette situation. L'information et les affaires publiques – au Québec toujours, je le précise – ont subi l'assaut de la télévision-spectacle. Le livre en général se prêtant mal à ce traitement, les émissions de radio ou de télévision en matière littéraire ne survivent que péniblement. De toute façon, elles font rarement une grande place à l'essai.

Pourquoi cette désaffection (ou ce manque d'affection permanent) ? Les débats entre intellectuels ont cessé d'intéresser le grand public et les idées exprimées par les intellectuels ne parviennent plus à passer du livre au débat public et à l'écran. Par voie de conséquence, les recensions d'essais se sont raréfiées et le grand public n'est avisé que de façon occasionnelle de la parution de nouveaux essais. Encore là, il y a des exceptions, comme celle de Louis Cornellier dans *Le Devoir*. Les éditeurs, honnêtes reflets de l'évolution sociale, préfèrent les essais portant de grosses signatures, mais même l'essayiste connu fait rarement le poids face au romancier dans les efforts de mise en marché. Des initiatives comme le Gala du livre profitent elles aussi au monde de la fiction, à moins que les biographies de vedettes viennent, en s'agglutinant à la « non-fiction », rescaper l'essai. Quand une biographie de Céline Dion entre dans la même catégorie qu'un essai sur la pensée de Léo Strauss, l'essai n'a aucune chance. Peu lu, rarement publicisé, rarement commenté, l'essai, au Québec, fait figure de genre littéraire négligé et négligeable.

L'essai aide-t-il sa propre cause ?

De ce sort qui l'afflige, l'essai est-il lui-même une cause ? Je le crains. Puisque je fais un peu partie de la confrérie, je ne vais pas affirmer que les essayistes ne s'intéressent qu'à l'argent. On admettra cependant que l'idée de consacrer des mois et des années de travail à un bouquin qui va rapporter 1 000 ou 1 200 fois deux dollars en droits d'auteur n'a rien pour déclencher l'enthousiasme. Le Canada francophone est une petite société et la France, qui n'apprécie pas l'unilatéralisme au sein de l'ONU, le pratique assez allègrement en matière de littérature venant de la diaspora francophone. L'essai québécois, sauf exception, rapporte peu à son auteur.

Il existe pourtant un monde à l'intérieur duquel la rédaction d'un essai est mieux traitée. C'est le monde universitaire. « Publish or perish », dit la mise en garde. Bien sûr, les publications savantes absorbent une bonne partie de la rédaction exigée, mais le monde universitaire valorise quand même

le livre et, en l'occurrence, l'essai. C'est, dans les critères universitaires d'évaluation et les fondements du prestige, un élément important. Les conditions de travail favorisent d'ailleurs ce type d'activité et de production intellectuelle : la recherche est facilitée par les bibliothèques, la contribution des étudiants et des jeunes chercheurs est à portée de la main, l'essai pèse lourd dans le cheminement vers les postes et les statuts prestigieux, etc.

À première vue, on devrait se réjouir que le milieu universitaire vole ainsi au secours de l'essai. Le problème, c'est qu'il le soutient en l'accaparant. Les universitaires, en effet, multiplient les essais et en alourdissent les caractéristiques. Les thèses publiées à titre d'essais multiplient les notes infrapaginales, font craquer les coutures, adoptent un jargon peu abordable ; l'essai en sort avec une image qui éloigne tous les publics non spécialisés. L'essai devient un traité savant, complet et fastidieux au point d'en devenir souvent rebutant.

Un genre sans relève

Du fait qu'il adopte les usages universitaires, en rigueur comme en lourdeur, l'essai décourage, d'une part, la jeune génération et, d'autre part, ceux qui ne sauraient adopter de telles habitudes. Lors d'un récent jury siégeant à propos de demandes de subventions, nous avons tous été sidérés par une évidence : à peu près aucun des aspirants n'avait moins de 40 ans. Constat presque aussi patent, la grande majorité des demandes provenaient de personnes travaillant déjà sur le sujet depuis des années et, bien sûr, dans un cadre universitaire.

Quelques exemples en forme de rappels. Camus avait 30 ans quand, en pleine guerre, il écrivit les quatre *Lettres à un ami allemand,* Saint-Exupéry abordait la quarantaine quand, à la même époque, il rédigea la *Lettre à un otage* et Jean-Paul Desbiens avait trente-trois ans quand il secoua le Québec avec *Les Insolences du Frère Untel.* Où sont nos équivalents ?

Entendons-nous bien. Je ne conteste pas au milieu universitaire le droit de s'exprimer. L'essai, c'est sa nature, accueille et doit accueillir toutes les entreprises de réflexion. Le problème, c'est que nous sommes ici en présence d'une sorte de libéralisme littéraire qui, comme d'autres, profite aux plus forts et presque exclusivement aux plus forts. La politique qui conduit le Conseil des arts à ignorer dans ses évaluations les revenus des postulants peut, certes, se justifier dans l'abstrait. En termes concrets, elle permet à des essayistes nantis et connus de mener une concurrence victorieuse à des essayistes virtuels de moindre renom et de faibles ressources.

Un genre sous influence

Deux observations supplémentaires. La première, à propos de la France. La seconde, à propos de la polarisation constitutionnelle.

Au Québec, le poids de la littérature française est énorme et l'essai, pour cause d'excellence et d'abondance françaises, n'échappe pas à l'emprise hexagonale. Snobisme et paresse ajoutant leur influence, la critique québécoise se porte plus aisément vers Edgar Morin, Touraine, Sollers, Finkielkraut que vers Simon Langlois ou Gilles Gagné. En plus, les perspectives sont influencées par les penchants des intellectuels français. L'Europe du dernier demi-siècle (ou siècle) a été agressée par deux totalitarismes et non pas par un seul : celui du nazisme, celui du goulag. Comme l'immense majorité des intellectuels français ont flirté plutôt avec la gauche qu'avec le national-socialisme, le procès le plus souvent intenté au totalitarisme frappe les excès du nationalisme plutôt que ceux de la gauche. Cette propension à vilipender tous les nationalismes, une fois transposée en sol québécois, importe des perspectives françaises qui sont propagées ici sans coller à la réalité québécoise. Avec un certain mépris, les analystes français parlent des « crispations identitaires ». L'essai québécois s'en ressent et mène souvent des analyses qui correspondent aux vues de Sartre plus qu'à celles de Fernand Dumont ou de Seymour.

La politique qui conduit le Conseil des arts à ignorer dans ses évaluations les revenus des postulants peut, certes, se justifier dans l'abstrait. En termes concrets, elle permet à des essayistes nantis et connus de mener une concurrence victorieuse à des essayistes virtuels de moindre renom et de faibles ressources.

Cette influence française a contribué, pas seule évidemment, à durcir les positions dans le face à face entre essayistes sympathiques à la souveraineté et essayistes de l'autre clan. Cela n'a certes pas contribué à rendre l'essai québécois plus libre ou plus stimulant.

Des pistes ?

Je ne suis sans doute pas le premier à poser la question, mais elle ne devient pas futile pour autant : le flou artistique que l'on maintient autour de l'essai ne brouille-t-il pas les cartes ? Définir l'essai par la négative (« non-fiction »), n'est-ce pas un peu méprisant ? L'auberge espagnole ne garantit pas la qualité de la gastronomie.

La deuxième question n'est pas plus facile : peut-on, sans ostraciser qui que ce soit, rendre la concurrence plus juste entre les universitaires et les essayistes virtuels ? Les seconds n'ont ni l'expérience, ni le maniement de l'appareil critique, ni l'accès facile à la recherche, ni le stimulant de la contribution étudiante.

PUBLISHING BY THE NUMBERS

ABSTRACT

Despite its relatively small size and its low profitability, the book industry in Canada is alive and kicking, due in part to a group of particularly business-savvy publishers, and extremely talented writers. Those in the business of writing, making, and selling books, then, can only be in it out of sheer commitment and passion. The author describes some of the strategies used by the book industry to remain healthy in a difficult market and praises the fact that if the business of books isn't financially profitable, it nonetheless brings our country, as well as others where we export our literature, incredible cultural wealth.

BILL HARNUM

Bill Harnum is the Senior Vice-President in the Scholarly Publishing division of the University of Toronto Press.

In this essay, I would like to engage with the relation between a particular kind of cultural activity, namely book publishing, and some of the financial and market factors that explain the defining characteristic of the business of book publishing – low profitability. I first intend to talk in general terms about book publishing as an activity and about Canadian book publishing specifically. Then, I will attempt to explain why Canadian publishing combines mediocre economic performance with such stunning cultural success, and whether anything can, or should, be done about this.

Let me open by saying that book publishing in Canada today does not make business sense. There is, in my view, no business model that can be expected to provide a reasonable rate of return to an entrepreneur attempting to publish adult Canadian trade books in Canada. What, then, motivates them to do it? I have spent most of my publishing career in academic publishing, so it seems appropriate to quote from the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Although he was not specifically speaking about publishing books in Canada, Gramsci's phrase "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will" describes perfectly, in my view, the psychology of the successful publisher. In order to be successful in this activity, publishers need to combine the natural emotional optimism that accompanies any new enterprise with the intellectual pessimism that reminds one that publishing is a difficult activity too often yielding a low rate of success. Publishing successfully is like baseball. Only about three of ten publishing projects are successful – a .300 batting average. In baseball, this is good enough to get into the Hall of Fame.

This low rate of success in Canada is exacerbated by other factors, which make Canadian book publishing an industry that suffers from poor or no profits. By Canadian publishing, I mean the Canadian-owned trade book sector. The profits of this sector are poor. After grants, the average publisher earns about 2-3% net profit; on net sales of $1,000,000, we make a profit of $20,000, or $30,000 before tax. Yet, we are blessed as an industry with an astonishingly high number of intelligent, entrepreneurial, publishers – I know many of them very well, and they could be successful business people in more lucrative industries.

It's important to note that book publishing in general is not a particularly profitable business. Canadian publishers are not the only ones who make little money. In fact, few publishers around the world are profitable on book sales alone. Large payments for film, paperback and other subsidiary rights are considerable factors in delivering the bottom line to the Random Houses of this world.

The general activity of book publishing, unlike many industries, combines two unfortunate characteristics: low consumer interest combined with a very high unit cost of manufacture and marketing. It has been some time since I have seen a study of consumer book purchase, but I know that fewer than 10% of the general population will admit to buying a book over the past year.

Small markets are certainly sustainable for certain kinds of industries. Book publishing revenues in Canada are about the same as those for the ball bearing industry. But once you have a good ball bearing, I assume that you can manufacture it again and again, and sell it to the same few companies. But when you combine a small market with very high unit costs – every book is an entirely new product, and must be marketed separately – you have a different set of problems. There is little room for effective market research because of the uniqueness of each product. In fact, the market research performed in this business is usually the first print run.

Publishing general interest books in Canada has other items of interest which make our finances difficult. Our market is very small, and our prices are too low. In terms of market share, Canadian publishers perform at least as well and possibly better, in relative terms, than their counterparts in other countries. In the field I know best, scholarly publishing, our sales per title for Canadian academic books in our domestic market are about sixty percent of sales of American scholarly publishers, which is a remarkably high percentage given the relative size of the markets.

Sales of books published by Canadian-owned publishers comprise about 25% of book sales in Canada. This is a huge percentage – higher, I would think, than any other cultural industry.

But our market is so small that it is surprising, as well as very gratifying, that we have a domestic publishing industry at all. Canada has about 20 million potential English-speaking adult readers. The United States has 220 million, a market size about 11 times larger than ours. The effect of our small market on domestic sales is dramatic and important for understanding our industry. For example, last year, the University of Toronto Press published an important work of Canadian popular narrative history, which is expected to sell, in its first two years, about 5,500 copies. This book will sell almost entirely in Canada – there is no market in the United States for works of Canadian history.

This is one of the two nubs of the matter. Cookbooks and books about golf and puppies have universal appeal. Books specifically about Canadian subjects do not. Therefore, export sales of Canadian books can never be more than a small portion of our revenue. Like many Canadians, some book publishers and politicians regard export as the saviour of our industry. Export sales are fine things, of course, particularly to the U.S. It makes us, as Canadians, feel good to sell books in the United States. We feel that we've finally made it to the big time, that we are being taken seriously. A few years ago, the story that Margaret Atwood's latest novel had received a mediocre review in the New York Times received more coverage in the Globe and Mail than 90% of the books published in this country in that year. But I digress. Sales of our own books in our own market is where our industry will live or die. Which brings me back to the 5,500-copy work of non-fiction.

In relative terms, this is the equivalent of a sale of 60,000 copies in the United States. What does this mean in terms of relative cost? A first printing in Canada of 5,000 copies of a paperback of, say 350 pages, will carry a unit cost to the publisher, in manufacturing alone (not including overhead) of about $8. A printing of 60,000 copies would drop that unit cost to about $5.

It has been a standard rule of thumb for publishers to price their books at about six times the manufacturing costs. Using that standard multiplier, our history title should be priced at $48. The American book would be priced at $30. That would be fine – the differential pricing would mean that both American and Canadian publishers could generate enough margin to cover their costs and give their companies some little profit. Canadians would pay more for books, just as the Germans, the Dutch, and the English. But what actually happens is interesting, and absolutely key to understanding our industry. Because of our proximity to the United States and our free border, we price our book at $30 as well. Canadian books, sitting on the shelves of retail bookstores in Canada, cannot carry retail prices which are out of line with the American competition. In other words, the cost of production of English-Canadian books is too high in relation to their retail price (please note that I have not factored exchange into account, since it doesn't effect the argument).

Canadians get a world class domestic publishing industry, delivering Canadian stories, both fiction and non-fiction, at bargain basement prices. If one travels to Australia or Germany and looks at the prices of domestic books, one will see that they are much higher than the equivalent Canadian price.

The result of this pricing anomaly is simple. Canadians get a world class domestic publishing industry, delivering Canadian stories, both fiction and non-fiction, at bargain basement prices. If one travels to Australia or Germany and looks at the prices of domestic books, one will see that they are much higher than the equivalent Canadian price. Publishers in these countries can use the normal business model to price their books – they do not have to contend with the artificial constraint of low-priced American imports.

The apparent "solution" to Canadian publishers' financial problems would be to increase the price of domestic books significantly. But we can't, because of the free flow of books across our border – a flow that has always been supported by Canadian publishers. We agree that books should not be the subject of tariffs and restrictions. I remember when the idea of limiting the import of books and placing quotas for Canadian books in bookstores was seriously debated. Publishers themselves were the most vocal opponents of such measures.

So, given these difficulties, how do we even reach marginal levels of profitability? In many cases, the difference is the support we received from agencies such as the Book Publishing Industry Development Program, the Canada Council, and others. These grants do not make Canadian publishers rich. Usually, they make them turn a slight profit. But they do enable publishers to produce books about Canada at competitive prices. A few years ago, after reading another editorial about book publishers feeding at the public trough, I realized that a more sensible way to think about these grants are as consumer subsidies – subsidies to the Canadian reader – a subsidy that drives the price of books below their "true" price. This small

amount, to paraphrase Micawber, can make the difference between misery and happiness – or make the difference between having a domestic publishing industry, and relying on the local offices of international publishing companies to publish Canadian stories.

And the Canadian government does rather well out of all this. Our industry, through book sales, collects about $105 million annually in GST. The total value of federal subsidies for books in Canada is slightly less than one- half that. So, Canadian readers pay the federal government $105 million in taxes on the purchase of books, and the Canadian government invests half of that in the publishing industry. As a result, book prices are kept artificially low. Publishing grants act as a subsidy to the Canadian reader. This is a happy balance, I submit, between public policy and commercial need.

We do not publish more books so that we can get larger government grants. Grants are earned, in large part, because of publishers' excellence and their sales program. The motivation of publishers across this country is to produce good books – not go bankrupt – and have some fun doing so.

In fact, ours is one of the most successful domestic publishing industries in the world and is the greatest success story of any Canadian cultural industry. The Canadian-owned sector has between 25% and 30% of total sales revenues, which is far more than, for example, the share of box office receipts collected by Canadian films. The litany of awards won by Canadian authors is too long to go into. Our proximity to the U.S. gives us access to a wonderful ancillary market for some of our books. We accept lower prices as a cost of the freedom of access for all our citizens to the wonderful panoply of books from the United States and Britain. We are unique in the world in that we have access to more books than practically any other country.

Let's be somewhat un-Canadian and revel in our success, and make sure that our public officials, politicians, and citizens hear the story of that success.

THE ROLE OF THE POET LAUREATE

ABSTRACT

Glen Sorestad first begins by reflecting on his role as the poet Laureate of Saskatchewan. He then graces our pages with his delightful poetry.

GLEN SORESTAD
Glen Sorestad is Poet Laureate of Saskatchewan.

I was appointed to my role as Poet Laureate of Saskatchewan at the end of November in 2000 for a two-year term, and was subsequently reappointed for a second two-year term. So I am now close to having completed three years and during this time my role has evolved and altered gradually, but is essentially one that makes me a kind of itinerant, provincial advocate for poetry, writing, and by extension all of the arts and cultural community in the province. *Though I am a poet first and foremost,* and though I read poems (both mine and others') and talk about poetry with students or general audiences, I also bring along as part of my message to whatever communities I am invited into that the arts play an important role in the life of our province; furthermore Saskatchewan has produced some of Canada's finest artists in every sphere of the arts, and especially so in the literary arts. In this sense then, part of my role, with which I happen to approve, is that of a spokesperson and advocate for the arts trying to educate, remind and instill pride in the general public regarding Saskatchewan's highly talented arts scene. It's not hard to express enthusiasm about a writing community that has produced such well known Canadian writers as Guy Vanderhaeghe and Sharon Butala, Anne Szumigalski and Lorna Crozier, Arthur Slade and Lois Simmie, to name just a few.

From the outset it was decided that as Poet Laureate I would be open to invitations from communities throughout the province, large and small, to come to any community for some special occasion that did not necessarily have to be literary because we felt that the program should not just become a one-person reading program. The actual program for Poet Laureate visits is administered by the Saskatchewan Writers Guild. We have stressed in promoting the program that it would be appropriate to invite the Poet Laureate to share in and participate in community celebrations that could be of a cultural, historical or educational nature. So I have spoken at service club anniversaries, high school awards nights, fund-raisers for local museums, school writing competitions, library celebrations, National Poetry month and Canada Book Day events, readings in the Legislature, a fly-in visit to the northernmost schools in Saskatchewan, as well as many others.

I personally try to encourage my participation in events that will encompass other arts, cross-over occasions, such as I collaborated on with the visual artist-in-residence at the Ursuline Campus of the University of Saskatchewan in the little community of Bruno. We jointly presented to several groups of high school students sessions that explored the relationship between poetry and visual art.

Also considered important functions within the Poet Laureate's role have been formal occasions such as a state dinner with Prince Charles at Government House in Regina, a similar state occasion with Governor General Clarkson and her consort, the annual gala Saskatchewan Book Awards dinner at which the Poet

Laureate always has a role to play, the annual Festival of Words in Moose Jaw where the Poet Laureate often introduces Saskatchewan poets at their sessions, receptions with members of the Canada Council for the Arts and the annual Culture reception for MLAs to meet with members of the Saskatchewan arts and cultural community of the province.

My personal touch to the role is to try to involve myself with young writers wherever I go and to encourage the writing and reading of poetry. I have, over the three years, been in touch with quite a number of young poets in many communities and one occasion actually arranged for four young poets to share a reading with me in the Saskatoon Public Library as a National Poetry month event.

These are ways in which the Poet Laureate's role has evolved in Saskatchewan. The next Poet Laureate will, I hope and anticipate, further the development of this role and take it into new areas.

On the Anniversary of 9/11 the Poet has his Pocket Picked

A year to the very day
after the world discovered
airliners could vanish
into towers of concrete and steel
and a nation learned how
vulnerable freedom can be
at the hands of unseen foes

a woman's hand
stole into my pocket as I
boarded a crowded subway train
in Milano and I learned how
vulnerable are those who
trust too easily.

But I whirled, seized
the thief's hand as it slid
beneath the coat over her arm
and my wallet fell at her feet
as she yanked free
and fled the train.

Skyscrapers will be rebuilt
and airliners replaced,
the dead mourned.
Freedom may yet prevail.
Those who trust too much
will be victims, again and again.

HOW MAGAZINES CAN SERVE TO LINK CANADIANS AND HELP THEM TO COMMUNICATE

ABSTRACT

Jim Gourlay, who used to work as a senior political writer, is now the editor of two large magazines serving the Atlantic communities. He has chosen to leave the high-rolling, glamorous world of political journalism for the more fulfilling yet equally valuable world of magazine editing. While he and his colleagues are often accused of engaging in "lightweight and frivolous" reporting, he assures us that his brand of "feel-good journalism" is the perfect antidote to the horror stories reported in newscasts and newspapers.

While we publish two consumer magazines and a host of other publications, I wish to speak here specifically about *Saltscapes* magazine, for I think that title represents a good example of a Canadian publication that seeks to accomplish precisely that.

I tell people that *Saltscapes* is just a great big mirror that we hold up to our audience and say "look how wonderful you are." We market ourselves as a feel-good magazine; we publish nothing negative. There is no shortage of other media out there ready to do that.

We are the antidote for the television news and the latest horror story from the Middle East.

But we've taken some public flack from Journalism students, and competitors, as being journalistically lightweight and frivolous. We would argue otherwise – and our growth and success would suggest we are striking the right chord with our audience, that the mature audience we serve intuitively 'gets it' – and those folks immediately understand and appreciate what we're doing.

That journalism students don't 'get it' is of no consequence. I was also philosophically and passionately naïve in my 20s – and I was resolved to use my pen to defeat governments and rid the world of corruption and so forth. But I learned an important lesson in humility in my early 30s that caused me to begin to reflect upon the relevance of conventional mainstream journalism. At that time I was a member of the elite within the news department – the senior political writers whose byline topped the front page stories, above the fold, day after day about what this politician or that said or did. I rubbed shoulders with Premiers and Cabinet ministers and Prime Ministers and royalty and other foreign dignitaries. I reported from Ottawa, and London and Frankfurt and Boston and the United Nations in New York and so forth.

As senior political writers, we strutted through the newsroom secure in the knowledge that we were the cream and that our colleagues who looked after the local news, and the obituaries and the crossword and the weather forecast, and the horoscope and the letters to the Editor and the classifieds were lesser mortals.

Until one day, I came into possession of a reader survey report which revealed that people preferred to read – the local news, and the obituaries and the crossword and the weather forecast, and the horoscope and the letters to the Editor and the classifieds – over the front page and what some damn politician had said the day before that would be forgotten the day after.

I began to try to work with issues that actually touched people in their every day lives. I turned my back on the coveted Ottawa correspondent position, considered the top job in the newsroom, and the big house that came with it. I became frustrated with the superficiality of newspapers, and 20 years ago I migrated to magazines.

In order to tell you about *Saltscapes* magazine, I need to first tell you a little bit about Atlantic Canada. This is a region of mainly rural communities. The most urban of the four, Nova Scotia, still has a rural population of more than 70%. The value system is based upon tradition, upon family, and upon neighborliness. For example, homes regularly change hands at the closing of real estate transactions without any actual transfer of keys: for there are no keys, never have been, or somebody lost them so long ago nobody can remember.

Driving through those communities, people, even teenagers, wave and smile instinctively at strangers as they go by. The vegetable stands in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia are automated –

JIM GOURLAY

Jim Gourlay is the Publisher of Atlantic Canada's two largest paid-circulation magazines Saltscapes (a lifestyle magazine) and Eastern Woods & Waters (an outdoor magazine). Saltscapes has quickly become the largest and most popular magazine in the Atlantic region and continues to grow.

Nova Scotia style. A little hand-written sign says: "take what you need and leave the money." There's a hand-written price list and a coin box to make change. Nobody steals it.

The Editor's letter in the inaugural issue of *Saltscape* magazine read, in part:

"Saltscapes… is about who we are… and what we have… Not about what we have not…"

And that, in essence, sums up what we do.

So what does Atlantic Canada HAVE NOT? The region HAS NOT a very impressive Gross Domestic Product index. (GDP). So Atlantic Canada is habitually denounced as a "HAVE NOT" region. But what does that mean, what does GDP measure? Does it measure quality of life, or personal happiness? Are conventional economists capable of measuring those things – or do they only serve the corporate sector? Does a higher level of economic activity automatically translate to a higher quality of life; or to personal happiness?

Well… Consider that under Gross Domestic Product criteria, war is a positive – war is an economic stimulant; the cleanup of an ecological disaster is an economic stimulant; clear-cutting old growth forest is an economic stimulant; fighting crime is an economic stimulant… and so on.

Now, consider Newfoundland fishing outports – isolated coastal communities of 300 to 600 or so souls, currently being dismantled for the second time since the province joined Confederation. Those are perfect case studies of the lack of a clear link between economic vibrancy and personal happiness.

In those communities, people have little – and want for little. They are labeled as the ultimate in "HAVE NOT" places. And it's true – they HAVE NOT any stately homes, or golf and country clubs, or BMWs in the driveway, or in-ground swimming pools behind their modest bungalows.

BUT…

They HAVE NOT any crime, or need of policemen, or lawyers or locks on doors.

They HAVE NOT any homeless people, or panhandlers, strip clubs, motorcycle thugs, muggers, armed robberies, Asian gangs, street drugs or water, air or noise pollution.

They HAVE NOT any traffic accidents, or drunk drivers, or traffic lights, parking meters, rush hours, or road rage.

They HAVE NOT any abused or neglected children, abused or neglected elderly parents, broken families, hungry people or disproportionate distribution of wealth.

Yet we are busily shutting down those communities and killing that lifestyle and that value system. As a result, the young people from those places move to the big city in search of the good life. Go figure!

Inevitably, that better life is equated to personal income; and standard of living is mistaken for quality of life; but they all eventually realize the priceless value of what they left behind. And they all ache to return home. *Saltscapes* magazine is about that home and those precious values – and more than 30% of our subscriber base is among ex-patriots living outside Atlantic Canada. We make their hearts ache, but they write and thank us for it.

We are categorized as a "lifestyle" magazine – but we see ourselves as a "quality of life" magazine. We seek to remind Atlantic Canadians that they are among the finest people anywhere – and that their family-based value system is enviable, and worthy of preservation. Surveys show that Atlantic Canadians have the highest rate of psychological wellbeing in the nation, the highest rate of mental health, and the lowest stress rates. Atlantic Canadians have the highest rate of community volunteer work in the country, and the most generous per capita donations to charitable causes in the country. Surveys also show that Newfoundlanders have the highest reported rate of sexual activity in the country – and that is, in my view, a much more accurate barometer of quality of life and personal happiness than Gross Domestic Product.

Surveys also show that Newfoundlanders have the highest reported rate of sexual activity in the country – and that is, in my view, a much more accurate barometer of quality of life and personal happiness than Gross Domestic Product.

We tell our readers about people who have moved to Atlantic Canada from elsewhere so their children may benefit from the exceptional quality of life. We tell them about people who have vacationed in Atlantic Canada and packed up as soon as they got home and moved back to take up permanent residence – or bought a summer place or a retirement home. But they know all this already. It just feels good to have it reinforced in print and beautiful pictures. We give them pride in place.

As outside influences increasingly erode the traditions and the value system of Atlantic Canada, especially among young people, we have our fingers stuck firmly in the dyke. We believe, therefore, that we are serving to link Canadians of common interest together. We believe that to be a worthy editorial mission. And we believe that no foreign magazine would, or could, ever provide that service.

THE DISCREET CHARMS OF ELECTRONIC TEXT

ABSTRACT

Here, the authors discuss ways in which new technologies can enhance our reading practices. They define and explain the versatility and usability of what they call 'metadata' or data about data, which can be used to tag electronic texts so as to allow readers instant access to a vast array of information. The parameters of these metadata tags are set by the readers, and can then be captured and converted into machine-controlled information-seeking dynamics. These dynamics may have little to do with curling up with a good novel. But they do speak to information access. And while novels, short stories, poetry, biography, philosophical treatises, histories, inspirational texts, and cookbooks in print form are all important, so is access to information using sophisticated search and user parameters.[1]

There is every reason in the world to celebrate reading. In fact, it is arguable that the centrality of reading and of literate values has served as a foundation for the development of western society. Combined with such technologies as print on paper and its derivatives – books, magazines, newspapers, scholarly journals and the like – reading and literacy have served as handmaidens to the primacy of reason combined with empiricism and hence the development of the scientific method, codified law, and even institutionalized democracy. In short, we owe much to reading and its necessary pre-condition, writing.[1]

Western society has built a variety of institutions in homage to reading. Educational institutions from the primary school through to the most prestigious universities are, to a significant degree, spin-offs of reading. To encourage authors to provide readers with access to written material on virtually any subject, western society has extended the dynamics of the marketplace into the expression of ideas. It has invented the notion of intellectual property and copyright so that authors can benefit from the fruits of their intellectual labour. In addition, many western societies have created public libraries to ensure that communities have wider access to written materials than they might have were each member required to purchase every item he or she might wish to read. So revered is reading material that both state and private enterprises foster reading. Private enterprise does it by subsidizing the dissemination of reading material in the form of magazines and newspapers.

But what if we were able to go further than reading? It is true that the technologies associated with reading are well ensconced in society and that they fit into social behaviour rather well. Hair salons are filled with magazine readers. Subways, buses and trains are filled with readers of all kinds. Beds and beaches are strewn with book readers. … But what if we could make reading more powerful, perhaps by using technologies other than the book (or magazine or newspaper)?

The purpose of this paper is to awaken you to the possibility that the conjoined production and reading of printed texts on paper leaves room for development and for improvement. Indeed, one might claim that it leaves room for a whole new creativity. The ideas and information we offer for consideration focus on metadata, a familiar term among librarians and computer scientists, but generally not a word that pops to mind when one wants to describe the pleasures of benefits of reading.

First, some definitions: metadata are data about data; information about information. And XML (Extensible markup language) is a coding technique (not the only one but the easiest for computers to handle) that brings metadata into existence. Metadata and XML presume databases of content. XML tags content, thereby creating a second level of content and allows for the separation of content and presentation. Let me put it another way:

Content is the text: for example, the words of this article. Content is stored in a database that can be accessed as required.

Structured content is content that is tagged or labeled denoting the status of the text in relation to the whole and to other tagged elements, for example, the title, authors, and headings of this talk provide a first level of structure.

Presentation is what you see – the first three letters of the old concept of WYSIWYG. But metadata turn WYSIWYG on its head, inasmuch as structured content can combine with a variety of presentation parameters to create multiple forms of the real (i.e., ways of presenting the text).

ROWLAND LORIMER

Rowland Lorimer is Professor of Communication at Simon Fraser University. He is the author of countless Major Commissioned Reports, books, and articles on Canadian mass communication and on the Canadian publishing industry.

ROWLAND LORIMER

John Maxwell is Instructor and research associate at Simon Fraser University. He is writing his dissertation, which traces the history of ideas in educational technology.

To carry on just one further step, grafted onto this foundation of a database of tagged and hence structured content, separated from presentation, is *scripting* – that is, commands that access certain tagged content, convert it "on the fly" (as they say) and present it in a particular form, a template for example.

The significance of the separation of structured content from presentation is perhaps not in the same league as the invention of zero, but it does have major significance. We will illustrate the significance in three main ideas.

In terms of the production or publishing of text, this separation of context from presentation leads to what is called *single source publishing.* In terms of reading, or access to text, this same separation allows for *rich or contextualized access.* At the juncture of publishing and reading, separated content and presentation make feasible *individualized texts.* Let us explain.

The significance of the separation of structured content from presentation is perhaps not in the same league as the invention of zero, but it does have major significance.

On the publishing side, one can produce tagged content that can be used in a variety of applications. The same content (the single source) is used (sometimes via scripting) for myriad applications. For example, the tags allow the user to list all labs (which then can be used to book the required rooms and technology). In the book world, an author's bio can be placed in a database and tagged as such and then used for a catalogue, a publicity piece, the back cover of a book, a citation in *Who's Who,* as part of a list of authors published by a house, and so on. Single source – multiple use. Imagine: Command = "Get bios 2002". Result: Bios of all authors published by the firm in 2002. Similarly, conversion scripts can take structured content files and present them in HTML as text on a screen or generate a PDF to be sent to a printer.

Metadata, that is to say the structuring elements of content, move us into a post-Google world. While Google (and other search engines) bring us searchability (based on the occurrence of words and phrases in any place in a text), metadata allow searches restricted to certain types of articles whose titles contain the words "reading in Canada." Metadata, however, allows an article that happens to use the phrase "reading in Canada" to be *distinguished from* an article that is "about" (in some formally defined sense) reading in Canada. Searching and selectivity are suddenly much more valuable. Our texts become, then, machine-understandable. This doesn't have to imply anything as esoteric as artificial intelligence; it simply means that the semantic structure of the text has been made explicit, so that it can be acted upon by software, so that the machines can be part of the sense-making process.

The added value that metadata and hence machine understandability yields is what is termed "the semantic web" – not merely the vast array of information and disinformation of the web itself but an *array of ordered of filtered* content. Metadata, then, can be seen (for computers) as a kind of Rosetta stone of web content and an immensely powerful reference tool for human beings using the web.

Added to the above, and again, derivative from databases and metadata, is an additional possible array of automated control and interactive functions connected to database operations. For example, in a neat little module we created for the *Canadian Journal of Communication,* we invited graduating Communication Ph.D.'s to enter their thesis abstracts into a database. Included in the information requested is the name and email address of their supervisor. When they click on "submit," an email is generated from the editor to their supervisor asking him or her to confirm the validity of the abstract. When the supervisor validates the submission by replying to the editor, the editor accesses the submission, clicks once to change the status of the submission from "inactive" to "active" and presto, the abstract is published on the CJC-Online.ca. By the way, a lot of science article publishing is incorporating procedures such as the one described above with the added function of online editing by both reviewers and professional editors. It both speeds up the process and renders it less expensive.

To move on to the second idea, on the side of reading, tagging or metatagging allows for contextualized access. Apart from the issue of a much-improved signal-to-noise ratio in the results we see when searching the web, the separation of format from content means that a text is not the same thing to all people. While literary critics have made this point for some time, consider the multiple presentations of a work in formats suited to (a) sustained reading, as at the beach or on the bus, (b) close reading for reference, perhaps onscreen with a search tool, (c) text-to-speech conversion for the hearing-impaired, (d) quick browsing on a cell phone or PDA, and so forth. Further, as collections of tagged texts grows, new possibilities for reading styles and research appear: for example, a citizen can examine the time-ordered statements of a politician on a particular topic alongside his or her voting record, by browsing legislative records tagged according to such criteria. This is an illustration of creating or accessing ontologies "publishing or recorded histories and contexts."

At the juncture of publishing and reading on the web, the above dynamics are combined with reader ontologies. The resulting process is inspired by the much maligned and much abused technology called "cookies." Imagine if your computer provided you with the following when you accessed a report you had been reading online:

> In your last session you highlighted the following text passages. (A list would then appear.) Further, you noted the following. (The list is then changed to an annotated list.) At the end of your session you added some thoughts of you own. (A second list appears.)

You may wish to proceed with your analysis. However, since your last session the following scholarly articles, government reports, and newspaper clippings have been identified as potentially relevant to your topic. Here are abstracts of those texts. You may access them now, or later, or you may delete the derived list.

My sense is as these three dynamics, web publishing, contextualized access, and tracked, smart user histories come together, we seem to be talking about something significant.

In overview, at the simplest level, metadata allow for user-selected and user-sensitive information access, or, put differently, user-defined databases, assuming, of course, that the information exists online and that user-responsive software continues to be developed. Placing metadata at the fingertips of the reader combines the power of print on paper with the range of and ready accessibility to the vast array of content on the web, and with the tools of a reference librarian. Instituting smart tracking extends or projects forward the efforts of user potentiality quite powerfully.

In overview, at the simplest level, metadata allow for reader-selected and reader-sensitive information access, or, put differently, reader-defined databases and reader-responsive information seeking. Bumping up the significance somewhat, the full implementation of metadata combines the power of print on paper with the range of tagged web content, and with the tools of a reference librarian. Instituting smart tracking potentially extends or projects forward the efforts of the reader quite powerfully.

Let us inch toward a conclusion with another example to illustrate a slightly different point. Here are some facts about book purchasing that come from two studies undertaken by faculty of the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing in 1997 and 1999:

- Sixty percent of bookstore visitors depart with a purchased book that they did not intend to buy when they entered the store.
- Bookstores are the main source of awareness of books.
- Sixty percent of book purchases are made by women.
- Eighty-one percent of children's books are purchased by women, mostly of 'motherhood' age.
- Canadian book buyers are mostly up-scale citizens. Two-thirds have graduated from university and over 50% have a household income of over $55,000.
- While women purchase more books than men, men spend more per book.
- The average buyer purchases 2.3-2.5 books.
- The average amount paid per book in 1999 was $15.95, males $17.05 and females, $14.95.

These are points that are germane to any discussion of reading. Were they readily available on the web, and were teachers, publishers, scholars and librarians sophisticated and constant users of the web, these facts would be well known and they would likely inform discussions of reading and book purchasing. But because they only exist in print within two studies done for two different Canadian publishers' organizations, they are effectively hidden from view. And so we tend to work with a lack of information; to wit: that books are not like opera tickets, purchased primarily by the well-to-do; that people most often purchase one book when they go to a bookstore; that the majority of people do not buy on impulse; that people find out about books from a wide variety of sources, none of which are dominant.

While conceptualization is extremely important and appears to be greatly facilitated by literacy, and conceptualization has brought much to western society, in part because western society has embraced conceptual thought, there is, at certain times and in certain circumstances an all-too-readiness to substitute conceptualization for information.

Let us close with a speculation. While conceptualization is extremely important and appears to be greatly facilitated by literacy, and conceptualization has brought much to western society, in part because western society has embraced conceptual thought, there is, at certain times and in certain circumstances an all-too-readiness to substitute conceptualization for information. The example of the book purchasing data was meant in part to illustrate how we can carry around a concept of the typical book purchaser that may not be borne out by the facts. Because electronic text allows ready access to a vast increase of ordered information, and user dynamics can be instituted to assist the user in a defined task, we may find that the tendency to conceptualize in the face of limited information may lessen. Put differently, the balance between reason and empiricism may shift somewhat towards empiricism. The matter is not just easy access. The web addresses the real in sound, colour, and still and moving images. Electronic text may lead us out to the courtyard (or at least to an account, complete with visuals, of someone who went out into a courtyard) to count the number of teeth in a horse's mouth rather than encouraging us to merely speculate or repeat our well-worn conceptualizations.

Notes

[1] We wish to thank Richard Smith for his comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

[2] Derrida aside, for the moment.

READING BOOKS: THROUGH THE PRISM OF PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT

ABSTRACT

In this essay, Gwen Hoover first explains the function and role of the Public Lending Right program in Canada and demonstrates how it sheds light on the reading practices and patterns of Canadian readers. Hoover's article underlines the importance of libraries to our book-reading culture.

GWEN HOOVER

Gwen Hoover is Executive Secretary for Canada Council for the Arts Public Lending Right Commission.

The Public Lending Right operates according to basic rules. While PLR payments won't make any one author rich – the average payment last year was $694 – it is highly valued by writers as it represents public recognition of their contribution to Canadian society.

Let me begin by offering general information about the Public Lending Right Commission:

- Founded in 1986, it makes annual payments to Canadian authors for the presence of their books in Canadian libraries.
- Federally-funded, managed by an independent board of writers, librarians and publishers under the administrative aegis of Canada Council for the Arts.
- Had a budget of $10,000,000 in 2002-03.
- Has paid 13,889 authors for their 53,532 eligible titles in February 2003.
- Registers 600 new authors and 3,500 new titles every year.
- The payments are calculated by checking the list of registered titles against the collections of a number of libraries every year; payment is made each time a title is found in one of these libraries.
- The maximum amount any author could receive in 2003 was $3,485.
- Although Canada is the only country in the Americas to have a PLR program, thirty-four countries in total have recognized the principle of PLR.

The pioneers of our program in the early 1980s have determined that public lending right payments would be based on the presence of the book in the library, not on the amount of times that books are lent. The founders did not want to simply replicate the marketplace and reward bestsellers. Moreover, librarians were concerned about the burden that might be placed upon them in counting loans – those were the days before sophisticated computer systems when tracking loans was not an option.

Fortunately, this method of recognition also obviated the need for us to do what the PLR did in Germany in the 1970s when their program started up: volunteers fanned out over the country in the summertime, spending a day or so in each library photographing the books that crossed the check-out desk. These individuals would return to the head office, have the film developed, and then staff members would try to make out the title and author of the books and tabulate the results by hand to determine which authors would be paid and how much. Tedious, to say the least.

In Canada, we sample titles in ten libraries (public and university libraries) on a rotational basis every year, and determine from the results the amounts to be paid. Presence, therefore, is the defining criteria. If the book is in one of the libraries we have selected, and only one copy is necessary for it to count, a payment is made. The premise is that if it is in the library, it is being used, either on site, or lent out.

While it is impossible to provide individual loan data per title, it is still possible to determine which Canadian-authored books are being read. A look at books registered in 1986, the first year of the program, tells us which of the most recent payment distribution in February 2003 are still found in all 10 sampled libraries. This information suggests that these titles are among our classics, and that Canadians are still reading these titles today, otherwise the libraries would have jettisoned them by the summer of 2002 when the data was last collected. It is important to consider, when looking at these titles, that in 1986, writers registered all the books they had published up to that date; therefore, some of the titles go back as far as the 1940s. PLR payments are only made to living authors.

When looking at the PLR data about the titles registered in the spring of 2002 that are found in all ten libraries in the first year of sampling in the libraries, we see which books libraries rushed out to buy and catalogue as quickly as possible due to the importance of and demand for the titles.

Of the 16,584 eligible books registered in the first year of the PLR program in 1986, 12,106 are still being paid. Out of these 12,106 titles still being paid, 1,929 (16%) of them are being paid at the maximum rate. This means that, after seventeen years of rotating throughout the major public and university libraries in the country, these titles are still found the maximum number of times.

The Reading Canada Environics poll, recent Statistics Canada data, as well as articles and bestseller lists in our newspapers and magazines offer a wealth of information about the reading habits of Canadians. We learn from recent articles in the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Life* magazine that Torontonians have the second highest lending rate in the world after Hong Kong. So, what are Torontonians reading? According to the Toronto Public Library's summer newsletter, non-fiction predominates. *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy,* by Robert Dallek and *The Crisis of Islam* by Bernard Lewis had the most holds.

The PLR data is also a good indicator of what Canadians are reading. For example, the table below shows which titles registered last year are found in all libraries sampled.

Libraries are always looking for all kinds of way to encourage the reading of books. For example, over 1,500 patrons participated in a Toronto Public Library poll to guess who would win the Giller Prize this year. Five ballots selected are receiving a copy of all five short-listed books. In 2002, Vancouver Public Library encouraged everyone in the city to read Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* with its "One Book, One Vancouver" project, inspired by the success of similar initiatives in US cities. The library reported that the book was checked out 7,000 times, and 6,000 copies of it were sold in the bookstores putting *The Jade Peony* on the BC Bestseller list for 13 weeks. This year, Timothy Taylor's *Stanley Park* has been selected for VPL's One Book, One Vancouver title.

The Public Lending Right program helps promote the reading of books in Canada, it provides valuable data as to what Canadians are reading, and it undeniably shows the importance of libraries to our book-reading culture.

Author	Title	1st Publication Date	1st Publisher
FICTION			
Richard Wright	*Clara Callan: A Novel*	2001	Harper Flamingo Canada
Rohinton Mistry	*Family Matters*	2001	McClelland and Stewart
P.K. Page	*A Kind of Fiction*	2001	Porcupine's Quill
Audrey Thomas	*The Path of Totality: New and Selected Stories*	2001	Viking
Monique Proulx	*Le coeur est un muscle volontaire*	2002	Boréal
Monique Larue	*La gloire de Cassiodore*	2002	Boréal
POETRY			
Lorna Crozier	*Apocrypha of Light*	2002	McClelland and Stewart
Robert Kroetsch	*The Hornbooks of Rita K.*	2001	University of Alberta Press
Louise Warren	*La lumiere, l'arbre, le trait*	2001	L'Hexagone
NONFICTION			
William Weintraub	*Getting Started: A Memoir of the 50s*	2001	McClelland and Stewart
Thomas Homer-Dixon	*The Ingenuity Gap*	1998	Knopf
Heather-Jane Robertson	*No More Teachers, No More Books*	1998	McClelland and Stewart
Marcel Trudel	*Mythes et réalités dans l'histoire du Québec*	2001	Hurtubise HMH
DRAMA			
Carole Fréchette	*Jean et Béatrice*	2002	Leméac
SCHOLARLY			
Sherrill Grace Press	*Canada and the Idea of North*	2002	McGill-Queen's University
Gregory Marchildon	*Profits and Politics: Beaverbrook and the Gilded Age of Canadian Finance*	1996	University of Toronto Press
André Brochu	*Rêver la lune: L'imaginaire de Michel Tremblay dans les chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal*	2002	Hurtubise HMH
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE			
Arthur Slade	*Dust*	2001	Harper Collins
Christiane Duchesne	*Mister Po, chasseur*	2001	Boréal

THE CRISIS OF NON-FICTION

ABSTRACT

Myrna Kostash reflects on the lack of interest that nonfiction generates within the Canadian literary landscape. Given the genre's capacity to raise critical questions and to provoke constructive debates about important social issues, she argues, the extinction of his genre might considerably impoverish Canadian culture and society.

Once upon a time, I played a viola. In orchestras this means I sat right in front of the cellos, playing exactly a fifth higher than whatever they were playing. You can *see* us play – we're sawing up and down in the air while the cellists are sawing sideways – but you can never hear us. We don't count. We're the drones to the violin and cello melodists.

That's how writing nonfiction in Canada feels. Many of us who write it have been moaning and groaning about our status for years but have simply assumed – as the current affairs magazines disappear and the literary agents and publishers chase after the hot new novelists – that nobody but ourselves was taking notice of the distortion of cultural – not to mention civic – life that the absence of argument in our everyday discourses represents. For that is how I think of my genre: each nonfiction book is an argument the writer lobs into the public square.

I was lucky: I started out writing for magazines in Toronto in the 1970s when there was still a cohesive audience for popular journalism. That was the pre-post-modern era, of course, when it was still legitimate to seek to address unfragmented readerships gathered in a public space of the media. But with the institutionalization and glamourization of Can Lit and the Celebrity Novel, nonfiction has found itself marginalized in the "spaces" now turned over to fiction: the literary festivals, creative writing programs and schools, the sexy prizes, the book clubs, translation grants, international Canadian Studies conferences, and so on. I quote an established nonfiction writer (who wishes not to be named): "What does it mean when literary festivals from coast to coast are allowed to exclude nonfiction, when most writers-in-residencies are reserved for people who don't write nonfiction, when critics and academics routinely study and write about fiction and poetry to the exclusion of literary nonfiction [except, I may interject, when it is written by someone whose principal genre is fiction or poetry]? I can only conclude that no one cares."

In 2002 I was very busy reading 203 books of nonfiction that had been submitted to the jury of the Governor-General's Literary Award for Nonfiction. As you may or may not remember, or even heard, we awarded the prize to Andrew Nikiforuk for *Saboteur: Wiebo Ludwig's War Against Big Oil,* a masterful work of investigative and narrative nonfiction published by Macfarlane Walter & Ross. That jury experience and its aftermath have haunted me ever since, and have led me to believe that the genre of nonfiction in English Canada is in crisis.

Brian Bethune writing in *Maclean's* magazine (November 11/02) in the wake of the announcements of the Governor-General's prizes, argued on behalf of nonfiction that, for all of our fiction writers' accolades and celebrity abroad, "its [fiction's] global influence pales beside [nonfiction] works by Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye." This was cheering to hear. But six months later, Andrew Nikiforuk's publisher went out of business. And Nikiforuk was quoted at the same time as not being sure *he* could afford to stay in the business of writing. As Gary Ross put it in the *Globe&Mail* (April 23/03), "I can't believe how little winning the Governor-General's Award did for Nikiforuk." Well, I can't say I was surprised, although I was terribly disappointed to hear it. I was aware that among the people I know in Alberta, for instance, who read Canadian writing, there had been tremendous discussion about Guy Vanderhaege's new novel, *The Last Crossing,* which had *not* won a prize, and Carol Shield's *Unless,* which had also been overlooked, but precisely no conversation about the Nikiforuk book, which had not only won a national prize but had addressed a public issue of the first importance in Alberta, the environmental crimes of the oil patch.

In May 2003 the *Globe&Mail's* books editor, Martin Levin, wrote a column about the recent announcement of the winner of the Donner Prize for best book on Canadian public policy. Levin called it the Giller for Nerds, meaning that it had a shortlist "guaranteed to go unread outside

MYRNA KOSTASH

Myrna Kostash is an Edmonton-based writer of nonfiction. Her most recent books are The Doomed Bridegroom: A Memoir (1998) and the national best-seller The Next Canada: Looking for the Future Nation (2000). In 2003-4 she is writer in residence at the University of Alberta.

specialized circles," which he very much regretted. After all, books about public policy are "important contributors" to national debate. As Daniel Stoffman, the runner-up to the Donner Prize argued, the publishing of deeply researched and analytical books about Canada is an "essential" activity in the development of a national debate about our collective well-being.

Those of us working in the genre, as writers, publishers and editors, don't need to be persuaded of that argument. The real crisis lies in the apparent indifference of the large majority of readers and media to the national discourses on society that circulate as our nonfiction. It was the *National Post's* Noah Richler who wrote acerbically about the alternative: "Our writers of prose fiction are Canada's literary celebrities, singing the landscape, often badly, and revealing our history to us in dollops generally swallowed without too much pain." [Nov 27/02] Compared to the novel as entertainment, does our nonfiction seem somehow too difficult to read, not action-packed enough or lacking a dramatic story to keep us interested? How many times have I heard otherwise thoughtful people, literate citizens, claim never to read nonfiction as a matter of some principle: they find it too "depressing" or "fatiguing" to read at the end of a stressful day. Richler believed that the imbalance in the market for literary fiction and nonfiction was almost "perverse" and invited us to consider what it says about ourselves that, while literary fiction flourishes and is nurtured at every level of production from writing grants to business-sponsored prizes to proliferating workshops to protective criticism, we do not support a national public affairs magazine in this country, the sort of magazine like *The New Yorker,* or *Harper's* or *Granta,* that is the seedbed of our next generation of nonfiction writers? (Nov 27/02)[1]

When we ignore the nonfiction article or book – don't talk about it, create no buzz, do not review it or interview its author, do not include it on reading lists or in syllabi, do not seek to translate it or otherwise launch it overseas – how in fact do we conduct a national conversation about ourselves "other than in mostly anodyne novels"? "It's really tough to publish nonfiction in Canada," Jan Walter said of her failing enterprise. "We are in a time when fiction is in the ascendancy and nonfiction has to compete with newspapers, magazines and television."

Forums that might be expected to have a lively curiosity in Canadian nonfiction – the book review sections of newspapers and journals, say – are vastly more interested in the cult of the novel and foreign nonfiction (as a routine reading of the *Globe & Mail's* book review section will attest); the Toronto International Literary Festival while under the aegis of impresario Greg Gatenby notoriously and pointedly excluded Canadian nonfiction except for literary biography; Canadian Studies as preached abroad seems to have been overwhelmed by the study of the current novel.

I note that concurrent with this panel is a session titled "One Book, One Community" – an ambition I consider problematic in the extreme, not just for its perverse will to reduce the reading public to a single, monomaniacal fan club but also for its – surprise! – desire to corral us all into reading a novel and nothing but. I echo writer Hal Niedzviecki's alarm, as he wrote a couple of weeks ago, that libraries, of all civic spaces, should be zones liberated from the commercial activity of book-industry marketing: "All books should be considered equal regardless of how much press an author is getting or what awards are dispensed" (G&M Oct 27/03).

Nevertheless, Vancouver Public Library has a campaign to get the entire city to read one novel; visitors to Toronto's public libraries cast their own votes for the Giller winner; CBC radio hosts "Canada Reads" which, through a process of triage (one book overboard each day of the week), resolves in a single "winner" we are all meant to rush out and read. Grant MacEwan Community College in Edmonton has been running The College Book Project for several years, in which a recently-published Canadian *novel* is chosen as a focus for discussion and activity within the college community and with the community-at-large, as they put it. So thin is our sense of nonfiction that most people assume its topics – history, class struggle, sexuality, place, identity, theology – will be better articulated by fiction writers who have been granted a kind of dispensation to handle the big stuff. Or, as journalist Sandra Martin put it, "fiction writers are the only people asking questions." (Hello? I give you Erna Paris, Susan Crean, Marni Jackson, Gordon Laird, Stan Persky, Brian Fawcett *inter alia* if you want great big fat questions!) As a friend wrote who recently published a bold work of creative nonfiction: "Actually, my experience of being reviewed as a writer of literary nonfiction was that none of the questions I posed in my book – about Canadian cultural nationalism, modernism, gender, racism – were even mentioned."

I'm fond of citing Anthony Burgess's Introduction to an edition of Daniel Defoe's *Journal of a Plague Year.* Burgess argued that Defoe is England's first great novelist because he was at the same time a great journalist, and as a journalist, he was great because he came not from literature but from life. Something like that. And this reminds me of Tom Wolfe's "manifesto" of some years ago in which he deplored what was happening in creative writing schools: wannabe writers, that is novelists, were treating literary texts as "real" and the real world as "so-called."

And that's where Canadian public life and discourse are headed, I fear: where, in the absence of the debate of ideas that serious nonfiction provokes, Canadian society and culture shrivel to the dimension of the so-called. And fictions "R" Us.

Note

1 Since he wrote, Walrus has appeared.

CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC: PLEASURE FOR CANADIANS

ABSTRACT

As the editor of a very successful magazine, Rick Boychuk offers his recipe for success. First and foremost, he advises, is the necessity to give a magazine a specific identity so as to create between its readers a sense of community, of commonality, of belonging. In addition, a magazine should not only give readers a sense of who they are and where they belong, but it should also make them feel good about themselves, their lifestyles, and their beliefs.

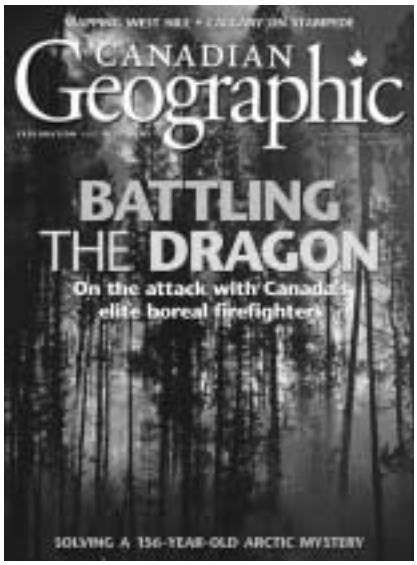
Not everybody buys magazines. All of us in the magazine business would like to know why. But that's a secondary interest. Our greatest preoccupation isn't with those who don't buy magazines but with those who do.

Consider, if you will, the exchange we negotiate with readers every month or, in my case at *Canadian Geographic,* every second month. There are people who actually take the time to stop by a newsstand just to check whether the new issue has arrived. And others, who might simply be browsing, see a copy and think, yes, $6.95 plus tax is a reasonable price to pay. Of course these days, that's the price of a cup of coffee. And still others who take the time to open our mail-out subscription appeals and decide this is a good deal, only $35 for a year.

What do we promise and what are those readers looking for? A newspaper delivers the news; TV delivers entertainment and some information; books, a peek into a different world. Radio is for multitaskers. Where do magazines fit in this mosaic of information products?

Well, we all have our techniques and I'll get back to those in a minute. But what we are promising, in essence, is membership in a community of like-minded individuals. My dad belonged to the Royal Order of Elks. And he read *National Geographic.* As my son would say, the Elks were my dad's crew. In the pages of *National Geographic* he found another crew. Thinking back on it now, I'd have to say he hung in there with the Elks because his buddies did. And he hung in there with *National Geographic,* despite a feeling that he wasn't really of that community, that he didn't share its world view, because he never stumbled across a more congenial group. Until he found *Canadian Geographic.*

I confess; I introduced him to *Canadian Geographic.* But the fact is, my recommendation aside, he immediately felt at home within the ranks of its readers. He's no overt nationalist but he is powerfully attached to his place in this country. And he's still delighted by the fact that *Canadian Geographic* is produced in Canada, is all about Canada and is damned interesting to boot. He lives in a small town in the west where every drug store has a selection of every American magazine you could possibly imagine or want. And when he and his neighbours browse the displays, the only thing they don't see in those magazines about hunting or Hollywood gossip or home décor or how-to repair your deck is themselves. Still, they can be coaxed into buying them by slick ad campaigns or the purchase of a display rack at the checkout or by there mere fact that if you are about to repair your deck and you come across a magazine that will show you how to do it, you might be willing to overlook the fact that it is written by, and for, an audience based in the southern United States.



I'd argue that people like my dad ease themselves from identification with ethnic groups or religions not because they desire to be free of the constraints and responsibilities of membership in those communities

RICK BOYCHUK

Rick Boychuk is the editor of Canadian Geographic, which has twice in the past four years been named Best Magazine of the Year, and has been nominated for 45 National Magazine Awards. He is a former reporter with the Edmonton Journal and the Montreal Gazette and the author of Honour Thy Mother, a work of non-fiction published by Penguin.

but because ethnicity and faith feel less and less relevant to their lives. I'm not about to argue that magazines fill the gap but becoming part of a magazine's readership is one element in a process of self definition. All I have to do is tell you that my friend Sheila subscribes to *Reader's Digest* to create in your mind an image of what sort of person she is.

Our job as editors is to cultivate that sense of community, to give readers the feeling that they are in good company. One of the frequent mistakes new editors make is that they assume the letters page should contain only missives that are uncritical, celebratory or filled with congratulatory commentary. What experience teaches is that to most people, good company is synonymous with stimulating conversation. A dinner where praise is the main course of conversation would be awfully boring. The letters page, which is among the most widely read department in many magazines, should reflect a range of views, should include critiques and corrections, as well as commentary. Readers share values, not necessarily opinions.

Our jobs as editors would be much easier if there were a simple formula for cultivating a sense of community. You can survey and focus group and test and all of these things help. And the other thing that helps – and this is where technique comes in – is craft. Do you have a process in place that ensures consistent text editing and the accuracy of the facts? Does the architecture of your magazine intrude or impede on the reading? Good design and competent editing are skills that need to be both taught and learned by experience. If your magazine is tough to read because the design makes it difficult to know where the story starts or if the reading experience is frequently interrupted by mistakes, then your magazine is going to have a short life span.

Get the basics right and you're halfway there. But as important is the tone or personality that editors set for their magazines. And good magazines have very distinctive personalities. Gossipy. Hip. Ironic. Funny. Dead serious. Sentimental. Jingoistic. Hard right. Soft left. Knowing. Smart.

And finally, one last thing that is truly underappreciated, that is difficult to assign a value to, that isn't done well very often, but that, in my view, is critical to the success of a magazine. How do you put a price on the rare little burst of pleasure that you experience when you come across a bit of clever wordplay, a character description, a terrifically smart conclusion to a story, a deft headline or a photo whose colours and composition strike you memorably beautiful? In our magazine, I've even seen an artfully designed map deliver such pleasurable sensations to some readers. We're the only magazine in Canada with mapmakers on our staff and our chief cartographer is also an artist. There are days when his work makes me jump for joy.

Every dollar that we spend on content for our magazines is an investment both in enhancing the sense of companionship we hope readers feel when they pick up an issue and in delivering to them some degree of pleasure. It's non toxic, it won't give you heart disease or make you put on weight, but we do hope that it becomes addictive.

THE PUBLIC GOOD AND PRIVATE PLEASURE OF READING

ABSTRACT

The Canadian publishing industry offers little financial rewards. It is a difficult enterprise for even the most talented and resourceful publishers. So why would anyone choose publishing as a profession? The passion for books, Gibson suggests. The intense pleasure that is derived from the process of turning the life of a character who only exists in an author's mind into words printed on the pages of a book, glued together and bonded, a life that then finds its way into the living rooms and bedrooms and reading rooms of people around the world. Therein lays the miracle of books.

Reading is a solitary vice that is good for you. Conversely not being able to read is bad for you, leaving you swimming upstream in a literate society. Democracy as it has evolved even in our Friendly Dictatorship requires an informed citizenry and so the public good involved in reading is indisputable. All of these points are so obvious as to be boring. But another key point is that it is good for any society to produce writers who can entertain and inform and move readers, in that society and beyond. And in turn it is important for that society to have publishers that can bring these authors to the attention of readers.

The chief problem of Canadian publishing rests on one iron economic law – the law of economy of scale. To illustrate this law, I'll provide two publishing examples: one micro, the other macro. The micro example is that on a print run of 2,000 copies of a book, the printer will charge the publisher roughly $7.00 per copy. Yet, for a print run of 20,000 copies of exactly the same book, the printer will charge roughly $4.00 per copy. The economy of scale involves other factors that work against the publishers: in addition to the increased cost of printing, we must take into account all of the internal publishing costs, such as editorial costs and design costs and sales costs and salaries and heat and light and, ha! profit – and when all of these costs are applied to a 2,000 copy print run, small publishers find themselves in terrible trouble. Unless, of course, the publisher is able to charge a very high price for the resulting 2,000 copies.

Well – and here the argument turns macro – in Canada publishers can't charge what my colleagues in English Canada – and in Quebec – would describe as realistic prices. The prices of Quebec French language books are on average at least $5.00 per book higher than in English Canada. Why? Because Canadian readers of English are the best-served anywhere, enjoying the chance to read more new English language titles than any other people in the world. In a nutshell, few U.K. titles make it to the U.S. market. For historic reasons – specifically the existence of "Commonwealth rights" – British publishers made sure that all of their books were sold here in Canada, a tradition that continues. Similarly, few American books are published in the U.K. But for geographic reasons they all flow across our border. In the words of Ted Mumford in a recent review in the *Globe and Mail Report on Business:* "This happy fact leaves Canadian publishers struggling to achieve economies of scale in a small market that foreign publishers, their overheads long covered, can serve just by keeping the presses running a bit longer."

All true. This influx of books from abroad is regulated by a system that subsidizes their prices; but this system demands that Canadian publishers price their products competitively, but in the process preventing them from pricing their books at a high enough price to make it profitable. Quebec publishers, however, protected by the Atlantic Ocean and the associated shipping costs of French books, can afford to serve their even smaller market by charging prices of at least $5.00 more per book.

It may not be possible to legislate genius – and I'm speaking of authors familiar to you and readers around the world by surname alone: Atwood, Mistry, Munro, Ondaatje, to name but a few – but genius can certainly be encouraged, as the Government has done for many years by its wise support of authors and of the publishers who nurture them, through the Canada Council and the Department of Heritage.

DOUGLAS GIBSON

Douglas Gibson entered the world of Canadian book publishing in 1968. Since then he has had great success as an editor and publisher, working directly with authors like Robertson Davies, W.O. Mitchell, Alice Munro, Pierre Trudeau and Alistair MacLeod, and becoming Publisher of McClelland & Stewart (M&S) in 1988. Under his leadership, several M&S authors have won major international literary prizes as well as national awards, such as the Booker Prize, the Giller Prize, France's Prix Medici, and the Governor General's Literary Award for fiction.

One would think that Canadian publishers are doing really well outside Canada as a result of Canadian authors winning so many prizes abroad. Indeed, the current crop of Canadian authors has made our country the envy of the literary world. However, the rise of the literary agent has meant that, increasingly, Canadian publishers only are granted rights to famous authors' books in Canada. From all of these international successes they make nothing; not a nickel. And we know for a fact that these revenues can be significant; we were able to acquire world rights for Alistair MacLeod's first novel *No Great Mischief*. And after having sold these rights to over twenty other countries, our share of the proceeds was quite considerable.

Most everyone would agree that it is very important for our Canadian authors to be able to tell and publish their own stories. If denied this opportunity, they may be compelled to go, cap in hand, to foreign publishers who are likely to tell them to change the setting. But sadly, there are so many English language titles coming out every year that if every Canadian writer in English stopped writing and if every Canadian publishing company went out of business next month, Canadian bookstores would still be stuffed full to bursting with fine new books to tempt Canadian readers. This is a sobering thought.

We're not pouring water into a desert; we're pouring it into a lake. That certainly is the impression we get when we consider the distorted retail scene in Canada. Since Indigo acquired Chapters (which in turn had acquired the three earlier chains, namely Smiths, Coles and Classics) one single giant chain now controls 60-70% of the book market in Canada. That's not healthy in any retail sector, in any country. I've been in the business since March 1968. In fact, back in 1988, when I succeeded Adrienne Clarkson, I was already referred to as "a publishing veteran." Yet I've never seen conditions as difficult as they are today for Canadian publishers. There are other factors contributing to this difficult situation. In my friend Peter Gzowski's heyday, CBC Radio was a major force in bringing buyers into bookstores across the country and in making books the topic of conversation around the dinner tables of many households. CBC Radio has not exactly turned its back on books, but it is considerably much harder to get an author on the radio now.

Book publishing in Canada has always been an uphill battle, so why do people do it? Why do bright young people keep enrolling for the Masters programme in Publishing at Simon Fraser University, signing up for courses like the one I have been teaching? It's certainly not for the money. I'm embarrassed by what we, at McClelland & Stewart, mindful of those damned overheads, can afford to pay our highly trained, many-extra-hours-a-week-with-no-overtime-pay staff. Just recently, we lost a good person because he stepped out of the book publishing world, choosing another career that allowed him to increase his salary by 50%. So why do we do it?

Books are magical. Authors like Alice Munro and Alistair MacLeod and Mordecai Richler remind us of the great paradox that the local is universal. The more precisely Alice draws the life of small-town families in southwestern Ontario, or Alistair takes you into the life of people wrestling with Cape Breton for a living, or Mordecai took you into Jewish Montreal, the more recognizable their characters are to readers sitting quietly in rooms large and small around the world. That's magic.

I think the answer someone like myself in the publishing and editorial staff might give is close to the answer that a writer would give when asked why he or she writes. I certainly share in the creative thrill that an author feels when the first copy of his or her book comes to hand. In publishing, that's a special moment. "Hey," someone shouts in the corridor, "the new book by Margaret Atwood or Elizabeth Hay or Alan Cumyn or Jack Hodgins or Andrew Cohen or Susan Delacourt or Rex Murphy, or in the past Pierre Trudeau and John Crosbie and Preston Manning, is here" – and people pour out of their offices. And they cradle the book and open it and riffle through the pages and take off the cover and smell the glue – and if they're like me, they go back to their office and think fondly about the marvel of literary birth and their own helpful part as a midwife; about perhaps wresting the manuscript from Alistair MacLeod; or marveling at finally pinning Rex Murphy down in one place long enough to get him to sign a contract; or about persuading Andrew Cohen that a photo of the dawn light striking the East Block was the perfect cover for a book called *While Canada Slept,* or suggesting to Susan Delacourt that Juggernaut might be a good title for her book about Paul Martin's campaign.

Books are magical. Authors like Alice Munro and Alistair MacLeod and Mordecai Richler remind us of the great paradox that the local is universal. The more precisely Alice draws the life of small-town families in southwestern Ontario, or Alistair takes you into the life of people wrestling with Cape Breton for a living, or Mordecai took you into Jewish Montreal, the more recognizable their characters are to readers sitting quietly in rooms large and small around the world. That's magic.

A REVIEW OF WHO'S WHO IN BLACK CANADA[1]

Who's Who in Black Canada. Dawn P. Williams. Toronto: d.p.williams & associates, Toronto, 2002. 421 pp. $59.99/hc, $39.99/sc.

"How can you tell I'm not from here?" Dawn Williams asks those who enquire about her origins, while on her first trip to Africa. All of her life, living in Canada, she has been asked the same question. But now, right here in Nairobi, where she thought that for the first time in her life she was going to fit, blend, ease right in, she bumps into the same question of identity.

Despite our endorsement of multiculturalism and our pride in the mosaic that we call Canadian culture, we still feel the need to ask those who are not white where they are from – as if they couldn't simply be from here, born and bred on Canadian soil, no questions asked. Visibly not from the mainstream, Dawn Williams grew used to the questions. But when she finally had the opportunity to travel where people look like her, the question, repeatedly asked, took her aback – despite her efforts to immerse herself in the culture of Nairobi, there was still something very distinctly non-African about her that gave her away. "You walk too fast to be an African woman. The women here walk slowly, so they can walk long distances."

The two years spent collecting and putting together the 705 entries in her self-published *Who's Who in Black Canada* took Williams on an extensive journey. That long road may not have mellowed her gait to the rhythm of an African lifestyle, but it gave her plenty of opportunities to continue pondering the hues and nuances of identity politics. In fact, she put together *Who's Who in Black Canada* out of frustration "in seeing very few representatives of the various ethno-racial groups in Canada reflected in trade publications and some public media events" (*WWIBC* 19). The invisibility of members of diverse ethnic and racial groups in the public sphere could be remedied, especially if the omission was based on a lack of available contact information rather than a deliberate attempt to exclude them. Identity politics, then, is at the root of Williams's ambitious project. The very title of her book, she explains, raised important questions concerning black identity. Clearly, a publication devoted to documenting the presence of blacks in Canada and to promoting their achievements forces those compiling the list and those included in the list to first establish *what* is, or more specifically, *who* is *black,* a question that must be approached cautiously because of its political sensitivity.

As an example of one of the difficulties she encountered, she had to take into account the possibility that the word *black* was going to alienate those contributors who do not self-identify as black, or who are uncomfortable with the label they feel such a word imposes. Indeed, Williams recounts that some of the potential contributors she contacted refused to be included on the basis that they did not want to be branded as a *black* fill-in-the-blank professional. She also had to consider whether choosing African-Canadian, Afro-Canadian, or even the hyphenated marker coined by professor / poet / author / playwright George Elliott Clarke, Africadians, rather than black, would help alleviate some of the concerns. But any one of these identity markers would raise their own set of issues, reflects Williams.

While the genesis and growth of the book finds its roots in identity politics, the purpose of the book is somewhat more pragmatic. Williams wishes to make available to the media and to executive search firms, educators, and others, a compilation of the names of black men and women who are examples of success and excellence in their respective professions – be it, for example, medicine, business, law, education, the military, the arts, etc. If someone were to be looking, say, for an expert on the structural mechanics of railways to comment on the cause of a recent train derailment, they could find in Williams's directory the name of Jude Igwemezie, a professional engineer and CEO of Applied Rail Technology, in Brampton, Ontario. And if someone else were to be interested in the experiences of the black sleeping car porters working the Canadian railroads, they could contact Selwyn Jacob and request a copy of his award-winning 1996 NFB film entitled *The Road Taken.*

Who's Who in Black Canada follows a well-established tradition of such directories of successful members of various groups. In fact, in the preparation stage of the book, she met with Gillian

LORRAINE OUIMET
Lorraine Ouimet is editor of Canadian Issues/Thème Canadians. She has published articles on African American Literature and Culture and teaches literature at Dawson College in Montréal.

Holmes, the editor of *Who's Who of Canadian Women,* for advice about the processes of collecting, and selecting the biographical sketches for the volume. The organizing of the information in the book also draws from the *WWOCW,* specifically the use of representative icons to make the categories to which the professionals belong – Business, Community, Dance, Education, Philanthropy, Visual Arts, etc. – easily identifiable. Although the idea of using icons as a way to present the information in a visually pleasing way was inspired by the layout of *WWOCW,* Williams is indebted to a team of graphic artists for the conception of her own set of iconic symbols.

It is important for Williams to balance out the textual and visual components of the entries. Other such volumes, she comments, are often cryptic, heavily relying on many abbreviations. She has opted for a more narrative style, one nonetheless framed by visual elements that permit access to information "at a glance" – after all, she wants the book to become an important tool for everyone; for intellectuals who find comfort in words, busy businessmen and women who value economy of time, or inquisitive teenagers eager to see in a book, any book, images of themselves, and to see their lives, ambitions, and dreams reflected in the experiences of others. This reflexive concern links William's volume with another of the Who's Who family members, namely the *Who's Who in Black Americans.* This volume, edited by Iris Cloyed, and prefaced by the Honorable Damon J. Keith, Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, emphasizes the debt owed "to those who made our success possible." "However we choose to pay back our debt to the black community," Keith pleads, "the debt ought to be paid… the elder runners must prepare the youth and pass on their batons." This metaphor conveys the importance of extending an eye forward to the future as well as backwards to the past. And this is precisely the spirit that animates Williams's achievement. It is a kind of "shout out," if you will, to those who have achieved, and whose echoes guide those who will achieve.

We must be grateful to Dawn Williams for producing such an important book. The work is not perfect – such an endeavor could never be to a perfectionist such as Williams – and perhaps not as extensively compiled as she had hoped. Hence the reason she is already planning a second edition. She hopes that the second time around those who at first withheld their contribution will be less apprehensive to add their biographical sketches to a repertoire that has garnered only thanks and praises. To these praises already earned, I add my own and urge you to acquire and make use of this valuable resource.

Note

[1] A version of this book review will also appear in *Canadian Ethnic Studies,* Vol. 35, No. 2, 2003, pp. 137-138.

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- La place du sport dans l'histoire du Canada
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Leben Malti	Maltese	10:00 AM – 10:30 AM (Saturday)	– OMNI.1
Macedonian Heritage Hour	Macedonian	5:00 PM – 6:00 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.1
Magyar Kepek TV	Hungarian	12:30 PM – 1:00 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.1
Morning Waves	Russian	7:00 AM – 8:00 AM (Sunday)	– OMNI.1
Noi Romanii	Romanian	12:00 PM – 12:30 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.1
Pasqyra Shqiptare	Albanian	2:00 PM – 2:30 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.1
Russian Waves	Russian	10:00 PM – 10:30 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.1
Adnas	Amharic (Ethiopian)	2:30 PM – 3:00 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.2
Afghan Hindara	Pushto/Dari	1:00 PM – 1:30 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.2
Ansantran	Bengali	12:30 PM – 1:00 PM (Sunday)	– OMNI.2
Arirang Korea	Korean	6:30 PM – 7:00 PM (Sunday)	– OMNI.2
Flip	Filipino-English	12:00 PM – 12:30 PM (Sunday)	– OMNI.2
Front Page Philippines	Tagalog, Visayan	4:00 PM – 4:30 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.2
Iran Zameen Today and Pasargad Today	Persian	12:00 PM – 1:00 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.2
Kala Kawaya	Sinhalese	10:30 AM – 11:00 AM (Sunday)	– OMNI.2
Malayala Shabtham	Malayalam	11:00 AM – 11:30 AM (Saturday)	– OMNI.2
Marawar at Arabia TV	Arabic	1:30 PM – 2:30 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.2
Maxapolka Soomaalida	Somali	10:00 AM – 10:30 AM (Sunday)	– OMNI.2
Nor Hai Horizon	Armenian	9:00 AM – 10:00 AM (Saturday)	– OMNI.2
Ondes Africaines	French (African)	3:00 PM – 3:30 PM (Saturday)	– OMNI.2
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