
TECH TALK



Newsletter of Thunder Bay Chapter
Ontario Association of Library Technicians/Association des Bibliotechniciens de l'Ontario
Vol. 32 No. 2 Feb. 2005

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OALT/ABO

Quarterly Newsletter
Vol. 32 No. 2
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OALT/ABO

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“Notes a la President”

It was quite a year since I was in Florida for the SuperBowl last year. Not one month went by without someone needing a lot of attention due to illness in the immediate family. I did not get much accomplished. This year SuperBowl Sunday was spent at our first official meeting and we enjoyed ourselves while searching for the motivation to keep this Chapter viable and interesting for all the members.

When everyone left I remembered a wise saying; “one should not die with their music still in them.” It came to me that maybe that is all we really have to do. We sing our own song with as much integrity as we can muster and the other responsibilities will look after themselves. You can not sing your own song however, unless all aspects of your body, mind, soul, and spirit are all focused on the same goal. This is difficult to do when you are facing illness. This is also difficult to do without people around that keep all of these aspects in their proper perspective. It was my responsibility to get help and I did not. For that I apologize.

Last year we had some exciting times together. We tried to have meetings about, and involving places where our different members worked so we could experience the widest scope of the Chapter. Attendance was light last year and of course worse



this year because we were unable to plan ahead. However, unlike the NHL, we are going to have a season even if it is a little short. We have a records management demo and tour of the City Archive on March 3.

Then a few weeks later, our ABM will be a Pot Luck supper with Kathy Crewdson at her house on April 24. It is a bit later than usual and at a house because of the lack of time and funds to find a catered room. At this time we will try to field a new executive and carry on. We will already have our yearly report ready to be sent to Toronto and will just have to fill in the names if we find someone to carry on. If not then we must decide how to liquidate our assets, which as it stands now, will probably be forfeit to Toronto.

The past few years have seen a lot of change and a drop in interest in OALT/ABO group activities. The whole OALT/ABO experience started in Thunder Bay and I would hate to see this hotbed of innovation disappear quietly under the waves of Lake Superior. Aside from the advent of the WWW and the inevitable demographics which changed activity patterns for very many social

organizations, several growing pains associated with internal OALT/ABO changes have lost us some interest. With no library school in town we are now missing a lot of corporate and private members whose connections with us were primarily academic.

Einstein said that you can not get a different result with the same thinking and action so we are thinking differently about how to grow. We tried some ideas and they did not work much better than those in the past few years. Therefore we are looking for some new fresh faces to lead this group.



I am sending this newsletter out to everyone involved with OALT/ABO in the last four years because it was your time and effort that made this association and you should have a say in what happens now. So, if someone calls, please consider standing for office. I am not sure I have complete records of all the recent past members so please talk to others at your workplace that you know have been involved with what is now the Thunder Bay Chapter.

Thanks for the experience.

TREASURERS REPORT THUNDER BAY CHAPTER

Previous Balance: 1414.18

Expenses:

Post Box rental 139.10

Newsletter postage 26.22

LaRea Moody life dues 12.00

Chq. # 227 177.32

Ser. Chg. 7.60

Expenses 184.92

Revenue:

Membership 276.00

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Deposits 276.00

New Balance: 1505.26

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Net worth 3714.37

I did not realize until I took over the books that for the most part we run the Chapter in the red, because of fixed expenses, until we sponsor a major event which makes cushion money to cover for a few more years. We ran a deficit of \$300.00 when there were about thirty members.

Not paying enough attention to this, the executives for the past three years, while the membership was down, heavily sponsored the ABM Banquet and Jingle mingle for food and prizes. Last year we spent around \$750.00 more than we earned. This year we have not spent but you have not recieved a full slate of newsletters or meetings.

This is not a big problem as long as we keep aware of our real income. Expenses can be cut by alternate newsletter delivery methods and inovative ways can be found to keep the cost of meetings down and still have an interesting day.

Bottom line is that if we keep the deficit down to \$300.00 a year we still have enough money left to last 10 years.

You must choose: -Is small and still alive best, or die and forfeit the money to Toronto??

In the dream library

New England Review, Fall 1997 by Milburn, Michael

Ten years ago in one of its weekly interviews the Harvard Gazette asked Professor William Alfred to name the college's most valuable resource: The faculty? The house system? Intramural and interscholastic sports? Harvard Square and Cambridge? "The library," Alfred replied, meaning primarily Widener with its vast collections. According to Alfred, who received both his bachelor's and doctoral degrees from Harvard and taught legendary courses there in playwriting and Anglo-Saxon poetry, none of the college's educational offerings equaled the availability of so many books in a single location.

I happened to read this article five years after receiving my own Harvard undergraduate degree, still mortified that my sole acquaintance with Widener had come from occasional study visits to its imposing reading room.

Here I had escaped from the more frequented undergraduate havens-soulless but accessible Lamont; remote, luminous Hilles-or exam-week hysteria amid the oak paneling of my "local," the Winthrop House library.

In my four-year amble through Harvard I had never delved into Widener's union card catalogue, ventured past the ID checker into its warren of stacks, or performed the solitary ballet of fingering call numbers along book spines while making my way through its dank, leather-scented aisles.

This avoidance of the institution's intellectual core epitomizes my college experience. Isolated and unmotivated, I absorbed little that was spoken in lectures, rarely completed reading assignments, and managed to survive through a desperate last-minute cramming for exams. Only in the years following commencement (which I skipped) did I begin to regret this neglect and yearn to reclaim my chance for an education. By the age of twenty-six, I finally felt ready to begin.

Astonishingly, a second chance was actually granted to me on July 1, 1983, when I palmed a roundish brass key to the Widener Library stacks. Atop this key was placed a familiar crimson and white identification card marked "Staff," an ironic recategorization since I would learn more during my Harvard employment than in my entire student career. To the personnel officer sitting across from me I was merely acquiring the necessities of my position. Yet one phrase of her orientation speech captured my primary reason for coveting this job: "And as a staff member you will receive full library privileges." Whoever coined this term must have once held a card and key like mine, for my near decade of exploring Widener constituted the great adventure of my intellectual life.

Turmeric

Turmeric is an ancient spice, a native of South East Asia, used from antiquity as dye and a condiment. It is cultivated primarily in Bengal, China, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Java, Peru, Australia and the West Indies. Its use dates back nearly 4000 years, to the Vedic culture in India where it was used as a culinary spice and had some religious significance. The name derives from the Latin terra merita "meritorious earth" referring to the colour. In many languages turmeric is simply named as "yellow root".

Spice Description: Turmeric is the rhizome or underground stem of a ginger-like plant. It is usually available ground, as a bright yellow, fine powder. The whole turmeric is a tuberous rhizome, with a rough, segmented skin. Turmeric is always used in ground form. The powder will maintain its colouring properties indefinitely though the flavour will diminish over time.

Culinary Uses: Turmeric is used as a condiment and culinary dye. In India it is used to tint many sweet dishes. It is used in many fish curries, [usually one of the main ingredients] possibly because it successfully masks fishy odours.

Attributed Medicinal Properties: Turmeric is a mild digestive, being aromatic, a stimulant and a carminative. An ointment base on the spice is used as an antiseptic in Malaysia. Turmeric water is an Asian cosmetic applied to impart a golden glow to the complexion. Curcumin has been shown to be active against *Staphylococcus aureus* (pus-producing infections)

That afternoon I followed my predecessor down the stairs of Lamont, my headquarters, into the subterranean Government Documents section. Within this sprawling cave of shelves, tables, and microfilm readers, scholars peered through statistics-packed bulletins and newspapers.

A tunnel at one end linked the building to Widener three stories beneath Harvard Yard. Emerging in the parent library at underground level D, we followed a maze of aisles past shelves of bound geography periodicals—who ever consulted these?—tracking the various exits I would use in performing my duties. One combination of corridors and wheezing steel doors brought me to a reclusive bowel where mangled and worn books went for resuscitation. A tiny elevator groaned us up to the third floor with its egress into Widener's circulation area and the cluster of tiny offices powering the immense College Library system.

Indeed, what looked from the southeast corner of Harvard Yard like an amalgam of institutional buildings—the pillared fortress of Widener, the brick shoebox of Lamont—was actually a library flower with several interconnected petals. Once through the tunnel one could descend further into the subterranean Pusey Library. This newest addition to the Yard, while outwardly pleasing (a submerged courtyard nestled in front of Lamont), resembles a warehouse within.



Book Reviews

The Tipping Point London: Little Brown and Co., 2000
Kilachand Library in India

The Tipping Point grew out of an article the author wrote for *The New Yorker*. The book explains and analyses the 'tipping' point which is that magic point when ideas, trends and social behavior cross a threshold and 'tip'. This could be a result of a small but strategic placement of ideas and resources and could lead to their spread and expansion.

Gladwell looks at many ordinary everyday experiences to drive home the point. He surmises that just a single, sick individual in a crowded store can trigger an epidemic of flu; a strategically targeted push can make ideas and products hugely popular.

The same principle applies for negative social trends, such as crime, drug use, etc. Through a combination of lucid explanation and real world examples, Gladwell shows how minor changes in our environment can cause group behavior to 'tip' in a particular direction. For example, the removal of graffiti from New York subways resulted in a dramatic reduction of crime.

Though the claim that 'Tipping Point' is destined to change social paradigms and overturn conventional thinking may sound farfetched, the value of the book for the young with radical ideas is significant. The book gives the valuable message that one imaginative person applying a well-placed lever can move the world.

Sounds idealistic? Try reading the book.

I hated to pursue a book here: mechanical shelves whirr apart and together at the press of a button, mercifully springing open if a human happens to be caught browsing inside.

In Widener every turn channeled me into a fascinating tentacle of the collection-Soviet history, Kim Philby's memoirs translated into Russian! In Pusey, however, I never found my bearings, simply wandered the corridors repeating call numbers to myself until a final befuddled turn revealed an elevator waiting to return me like Br'er Rabbit to the briar patch.

On a May morning in 1987 a knock at my office door on Lamont's fifth level announced two technicians from the library's newfangled and burgeoning technology branch, the Systems Office. They lugged in a computer monitor, keyboard, and terminal, and installed them in an alcove I had cleared. The necessary wall receptacles had been drilled and mounted during the College Library's comprehensive "on-line" transferal the past summer.

After the technicians had gone, all day I stalked books like a cackling hunter, typing tentatively, then watching as a page unscrolled on screen, a kind of televised catalogue card. I noted locations and call numbers, paced my office, shuffled papers, thought of another book, typed again and, delighted, again ran my quarry to ground. Every title I tapped at the machine it speedily located. And twice a month my bank account fattened: I was being paid for this.

As A newly hired reference librarian, I was trying to be extra sensitive to the needs of our patrons. When an ill-at-ease adolescent boy approached me and in a barely audible voice, asked for books on "beginning to develop," I was prepared. He seemed embarrassed to be talking to me, so I called over a male staffmember and whispered that the boy needed some books about the onset of puberty. A while later they returned to my desk, my colleague with a big grin on his face, and the boy with books on photography.

The computer did more than locate books; it narrowed them by subject, a capacity which helped me to recapture my squandered undergraduate education. By winnowing my search from "American History" to "Civil War, American" to "Civil War, American: Contemporary Accounts" I could pare the display from one thousand to two hundred to twenty titles.

This listing functioned somewhat like a syllabus, lacking only a professor's discriminating eye. I weeded good from bad through browsing, though unlike many professors, I favored readability over pedantry; after all, I wanted to complete this education. Thus, with the computer serving as a trusty course catalogue, my rehabilitation was underway.

The library went "on-line" gradually, with computerized records available only to staff at first, as new acquisitions were incorporated into the database along with a small percentage of the library's existing collection. Somewhere in Widener, day and night, "keypunchers" performed

"retrospective conversion," typing in entries to document the entire library. By the time I left my job it was rarely necessary to trudge over to Widener and thumb through the anachronistic Union Catalogue. Lamont's own wooden cabinets, plucked clean of their thumb-worn cards, had already been stacked forlornly by the front doors and wheeled away.

HOLLIS: It's a fall afternoon on Lamont's fifth level, a meeting of liaisons for HOLLIS, the Harvard On-Line Library Information System. The liaisons, heretofore wed to a universe of paper invoices and white card stock, assemble weekly to keep pace with the Systems Office's steamrolling computerization of bibliographic procedure.

Ironically, such meetings shut off my library future. Whereas a cocktail party sketch of my position conjured envious remarks-"What a great job, surrounded by books. Perfect for a writer! "-in reality the minutiae of library work bored me to the point of extreme exhaustion.

More Book reviews by Library Technicians

Title: *Memoirs of a Geisha*

Author: Arthur Golden

Summary: The story begins in a poor fishing village in 1929, when, as a nine-year-old girl with unusual blue-gray eyes, she is taken from her home and sold into slavery to a renowned geisha house. We witness her transformation as she learns the rigorous arts of the geisha: dance and music; wearing kimono, elaborate makeup, and hair; pouring sake to reveal just a touch of inner wrist; competing with a jealous rival for men's solicitude and the money that goes with it.



Title: *The many lives & secret sorrows of Josephine B.*

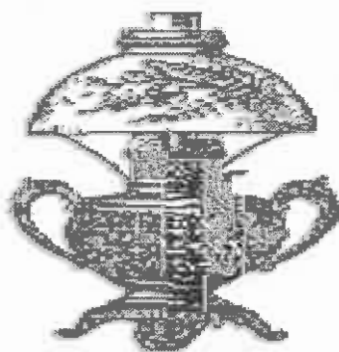
Author: Sandra Gulland

Summary: *The many lives & secret sorrows of Josephine B.* is the first in Canadian author, Sandra Gulland's Josephine Bonaparte trilogy. The fictional account traces the life of Josephine Bonaparte from her girlhood in Martinico through her first marriage to Alexandre and finally up until her marriage in March of 1796 to the Corsican, Napoleon Bonaparte. Readers will be enthralled with this passionate tale of French history and will be eager to continue the series with the other two installments, *Tales of passion*, *tales of woe* and *The last great dance on earth*.

Title: *Unless*

Author: Carol Shields

Summary: *Unless* is about a writer, Reta Winters, a middle-aged novelist, mother/translator who lives in a pastoral town just outside of Toronto. Reta lives a happy and successful life until her eldest daughter, Norah, abandons family, boyfriend, and university to panhandle on a busy and slightly seedy Toronto street corner, saying nothing - wearing a sign that reads only "Goodness." Norah's strange self-sacrifice sends Reta into despondency, and she seeks some sort of explanation for her daughter's behaviour in a profoundly pessimistic mode of feminism, insisting over and over again that Norah, as a young woman, was simply shut out of any hope for a fulfilling life by a monolithic and masculinist culture.



One can pass days in conversation about call numbers, shelflists, and conversions, and never recall that the shelves a few feet away house language intended to instruct and please. Lamont's librarians discussed books intelligently, and I owed to them my ease in browsing the stacks and computer catalogue. A single staff meeting, however, while indispensable to the system function, extinguished for me all connection between libraries and adventure, books and joy.

Academia's love of structure had plagued me as an undergraduate, too, with its required courses, fixed syllabi, and prescribed topics for essays. Dozing through an assigned text, I'd pick a novel and read it hungrily. My term papers swooped from the ordered topic toward some undocumentable speculation.

I approached the library with similar casualness, viewing it as a town in which certain books lived in certain neighborhoods, some more congenial than others, some familiar simply through proximity to my headquarters. Doodling through a liaisons meeting I knew that just beyond the conference room doors were alcoves formed by shelves housing Islamic or Christian history. Each alcove held a table and chair for studying; I would often bring my forbidden sandwich and pile books on a table, browsing through, perversely consoled by the dour monochromes of the library bindings, the dense academic prose.

COME ONE!!! COME ALL!!!

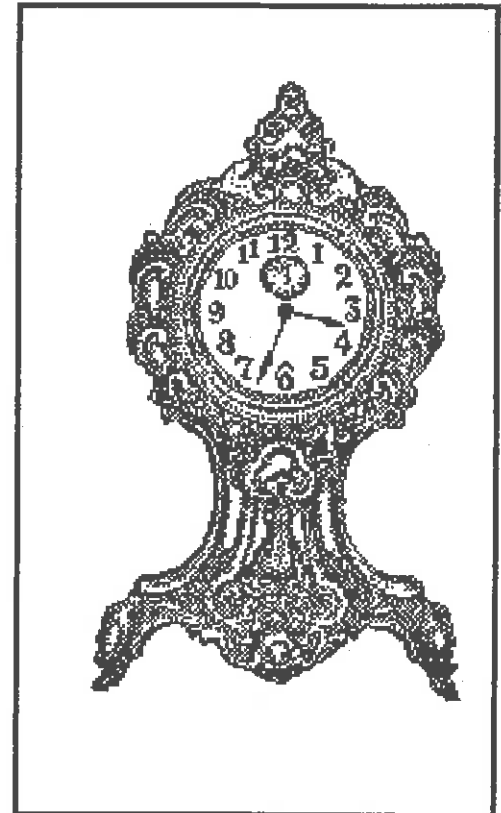
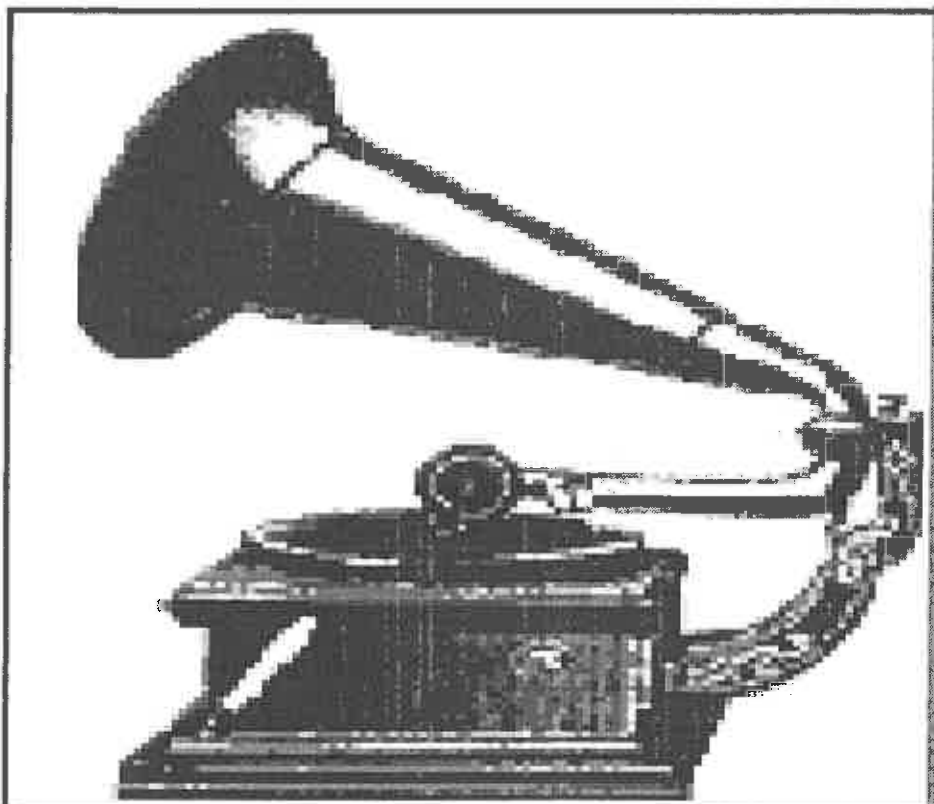
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