

The Launch of the McGill Historical Collections Web Site

by Pamela Miller

In September 2010, Professor Heather Munroe-Blum, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University, cut the ribbon to a special McGill web site that has been several years in preparation. A simple site that allows the searcher to access almost all of McGill's collections from one spot, it stems from an idea initially proposed in 2002 by Professor of History Brian Young to former Principal Bernard Shapiro concerning the appropriate recognition of McGill's heritage environment. Professor Young had been taking his undergraduates to museums and archives around the city for years and was amazed at the wealth of McGill's holdings and at how little known they were, especially at McGill. The Principal's Heritage Advisory Committee was formed, chaired by Professor Young, and Principal Shapiro provided a grant enabling the Committee to hire a professional to produce an inventory of McGill's collections including library collections, departmental collections, museums and nature reserves. Elizabeth Maloney, MLIS, prepared the inventory and ultimately, the web site. In the course of her work, she combed web pages, conducted interviews and searched in caches.

In 2004, her detailed, printed, 65 page inventory of McGill's holdings provided a

history of each of the 30 collections reviewed. It evaluated storage and security conditions and was circulated to senior administrators and curators. When it came time to publish the findings online, collections that presented serious security concerns were omitted from public view.

In her remarks, Principal Munroe-Blum, paraphrasing Frank Scott, referred to the University as a "region of the mind, with no borders". McGill houses the finest university collections in Canada that speak to the region of the mind. They not only reflect the knowledge and passion of the collectors and their love of their University, they also permit the community to enter the gates of the University to view, study, interpret and re-interpret their past, their present and their future.

Committee members are:

Prof. Annmarie Adams, Chair
Julia Gersovitz
Prof. Graham Bell
Prof. David Green
The Honourable Nicholas Kasirer
Pamela Miller
Prof. Sherry Olson
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Prof. Brian Young

The web site was designed by Anthony Seaberg of Content and Collaboration Solutions and may be found at:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/historicalcollections/>

