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People Profile: Ila Scott

Editor

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While scholars at the **U of A** support an increase in electronic and print access to periodical holdings, strong demand remains for the diversity and strength of the monograph collection. Initiatives have been undertaken not merely to maintain, but to increase these holdings. The first initiative is and will remain the protection of the monograph budget. The second initiative is an ambitious donations program which at the **U of A** has historically been termed the "Free and Gift" Program. Pursued under the auspices of **Dr. Merrill Distad**, Associate Director of Libraries for Bibliographic Services and with the support of **Mr. Ernie Ingles**, Associate Vice President and Chief Librarian, this donations program has resulted in accessions of gift materials which equally matched monographic purchases over the past two years. The library has acquired over 60,000 volumes in each year, approximately half are purchased and half are donated. Tax-receipted donations of materials amounted to well over CDN \$3 million dollars during the same time period.

"Free and Gift" is one of the most cost effective methods of building fine retrospective collections and the efforts of **Dr. Distad** and his staff have enabled the **U of A** to acquire several notable donations. These include a huge array of materials in major collections such as the **Sarjeant Collection** (geology, natural history, genre fiction), the **Schloss Collection** (rich in modern literature and history), and the **Bryan-Gruhn Collection** (anthropology, archaeology). Each collection carries an appraised value of over CDN \$1 million. We also have obtained numerous focused collections of special interest such as the **Chapman Collection** of circus materials, and the **Alloway Connoisseurship Collection**, which covers enology (the study of wine) and the history of ceramics. The "Free and Gift" program at the **U of A** does not replace the purchase of new monographs nor is it intended to make up for any shortfall in the monograph budget. It is clear, however, that these donated resources which strengthen and enrich the collection could not have been acquired in any other way.

This has also proven to be a remarkably good time for the pursuit of donations. The aging professoriate as they retire often remembers the library when clearing out their offices. The baby boomers, a generation of book lovers, have also started to donate their collections to the library. Acceptance of donated materials, most of which are books, wins friendships and promotes library relationships in other ways. It soon becomes well known within the wider academic and geographic community that the **U of A Library** is more than willing to accept and tax-receipt gifts-in-kind. The good will that this activity generates often leads later to further bequests of collections or money.

How can such an enormous influx of material be handled during the calendar year? The **Book and Record Depository**, a large off-campus storage facility opened in 1994 and fondly known as the **BARD**, has allowed the **U of A** library system to accept donations that many

against the grain people profile

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Ila Scott

BORN & LIVED: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

EARLY LIFE: I was raised on a farm near Edmonton and attended a small rural school.

FAMILY: I have a husband, 2 children and a cat.

EDUCATION: Bachelor of Education, Diploma in Education in School Libraries, Master of Library and Information Studies.

FIRST JOB: Elementary school teacher.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Read, garden, sew, watch movies.

FAVORITE BOOKS: I'll read anything: biography, mystery, gardening books, cookbooks.

PHILOSOPHY: Tell the truth, work hard, and enjoy life — it's short!

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN

FIVE YEARS: In five years I believe that we will be seeing more of same, more electronic journals and books, faster computing power, more handheld electronic devices, more remote access issues, etc. However, I do not despair of print books disappearing altogether despite what some are predicting. They will continue to live long and prosper as they have done for centuries.



other Canadian academic libraries can only wish for. The **BARD** is a high-density, temperature and humidity controlled storage facility equipped to handle the serious preservation issues that affect many library collections. Most of the materials assigned to the **BARD** are fully accessible and retrievable to patrons upon short notice. Since the items stored at the **BARD** are lesser used, this use of library space and staff effort is quite efficient and cost effective.

So how is the **U of A** library doing? Not too badly, considering the results of the annual survey of universities in Canada done by *Maclean's*, a major Canadian newsmagazine.⁶ Although the survey considers many aspects of the various universities across this country, one significant finding for us is the ranking of the libraries. The most recent survey, done in the fall of 2003, ranked the **U of A Library** second in Canada, between the **University of Toronto** and the **University of British Columbia**. The standings are determined by consideration of the holdings per student, the proportion of the library budget dedicated to the improvement of the library collection, electronic access, and the proportion of the total university budget allocated to the library.

Another important survey is the **ARL** annual statistical ranking where in 2003, the **U of A** ranked 22nd out of the 114 **ARL** libraries, second in Canada to the **University of Toronto** which ranked 4th overall. In volume holdings the **ARL** ranks the **University of Alberta**

Library as 17th.⁷ Rankings reports such as these are extremely important in garnering goodwill and financial support from central university administrations.

What is the need for book collections in our libraries? **Northrop Frye**, the famous Canadian literary critic and philosopher, is quoted in *New Canadian Quotations* as having once said, "The book is the most efficient technological instrument for learning that has ever been devised by the human mind. It stays around and always says the same thing, no matter how often you consult it."⁸

Although technology is constantly presenting new opportunities and new temptations, librarians need confidence that the record of human endeavour will be preserved. To date the technological advances which we have seen have not given the assurance that this can be achieved more effectively by any means other than the printed book. Book collections, for the foreseeable future, will remain an essential scholarly resource not only at the **U of A**, but also in all of the best academic libraries. *Nolens volens*, we face a future of increasing competition between the demands of the electronic versus the print worlds. While eager to provide the best and most current resources for users, permanence and retrievability can still be most effectively and assuredly attained within the pages of the printed codex.

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