

## The Canadian Circumpolar Library Celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2010

The Boreal Institute for Northern Studies was established at the University of Alberta on 7 January 1960 in recognition of the fact that the North was becoming a focus of scholarly endeavour in many disciplines. It was designed to support and encourage northern studies across the University and to provide better links for communication among northern researchers. William C. Wonders, Chairman of the first Directorate, described the purpose of the Institute in this way:

The major objectives of the Institute were to be ‘the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge of the North.’ ...this was to be effected through a three-fold program: development of an information centre, provision of training and instruction, and implementation and encouragement of research. ... [and] to be of service to the community at large.... (Wonders 1988).

From 1960 to 1965 several of the Institute’s enduring activities were established. These included publication of northern works, support of research activities, sharing of research, and the collection of information about northern scholarship. The priority in the first year was to create a collection of library materials. In this, the institute received full cooperation from Bruce Peel, University Librarian, who arranged for its housing in Rutherford Library. The first staff member was Miss Lois Carrier, a professional librarian who enthusiastically took to the task, and through the first decade, several successors—Phil Connolly, Hilda Robinson, Betty Colyer, and Brenda Chawner—had a hand in shaping the library and establishing its reputation as an information centre on the North (Cooke 1987).

The Library moved at least five times before reaching its present home on the 4th floor of Cameron Library. Its longest tenure was on the 4th floor of the Biological Sciences Building, where it occupied approximately 3,800 square feet of space for two decades. In 1969, when the move was made, the entire institute was housed together. Slowly the space was taken over by the library as its collection grew under the guidance Nita Cooke, who had taken up the post of Head Librarian that same year.

The Boreal Institute Library was modelled after that of the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) in Cambridge, England. The Universal Decimal Classification (UDC), as modified by the SPRI for use in polar libraries, which provided better geographic classification of materials within a subject, was adopted to organize and give access to the catalogued part of the collection.

The Library quickly began to fulfill the dual purpose for which it had been designed: ‘a library of specialized holdings’ and ‘an information centre, not only for members of the University community, but also for government agencies, industrial organizations, and the public at large (Annual Report 1970-71).

The Librarian represented the Institute at several library and information science conferences, notably the Northern Libraries Colloquy, an annual gathering of librarians whose collections are either located in or oriented toward northern regions. In fact, Nita Cooke was a founding member of the colloquy; the Boreal Institute and Library hosted the inaugural meeting in 1970.

Specific areas of the collection were emphasized over the years, and grew in response to researcher needs and through donations and exchanges. As such, it developed strengths in several areas. Researchers inside and outside the University came to rely upon the collections not only for academic monographs and journals about the North, but also for theses, northern and native newspapers, early exploration accounts, northern government documents, environmental impact assessment reports, trade materials, conference proceedings, unpublished papers presented at meetings, consultant reports and northern gray literature.

As the Library developed through the early 1970s, it focused regionally on the western Canadian northlands, particularly northern Alberta, while maintaining a balanced collection from the rest of northern Canada and the circumpolar world. In this period, acquisitions concentrated on ephemera. By arrangement, the library became repository for documents otherwise unavailable: unpublished data from the Peace-Athabasca Delta Project Group and the Northwest Territories Manpower Survey; the judgement by the Quebec Superior Court regarding the James Bay Hydroelectric Project; and documents filed by

Canadian Arctic Gas Pipeline Ltd. supporting the company's application to the National Energy Board for the construction of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

The geographic focus of the collection necessitated the in-house development of several specialized research tools. With privileged access to some of the best computer power and expertise in Canada, in 1970 the library was ahead of the curve in designing methodologies for materials evaluation, and computer applications for special libraries, actively developing special indexes, cataloguing and search programs. The first and one of the best-known was launched in 1972 as the *Northern Titles KWIC* (Keyword in Context) *Index*, a monthly index of titles and authors based on headlines from native and northern newspapers, journal articles, government documents, and other ephemera. The *Library Bulletin* contained references to items catalogued for the collection. In 1973 a second KWIC *Index News Clippings* was introduced to capture relevant headlines from southern newspapers (the clippings retained in a file). The indexes were made available by exchange or subscription.

With the acquisition of a microfilm-microfiche reader-printer in 1974, it was possible to add to the Library's holdings many northern graduate theses and other materials available only in those formats, including transactions and the pamphlet file of the Canadian Association in Support of Native people. From January 1974 onward, the monthly-issued *Acquisitions List* also included entries derived largely from cards sent by SPRI, giving an added dimension to the index.

By 1975, the Library was reporting its holdings to the National Union Catalogue of the National Library, Ottawa and some periodicals were listed in the *Union List of Scientific Series in Canadian Libraries*. The Library also maintained the *Contribution Series*, that collected reprints or articles that resulted from research funded through the Institute or conducted by Institute members. Reprints were available on request.

Use of the Boreal Institute Library had increased by more than 50 percent annually. Growing public awareness of the collection, together with increased demand for information on northern regions would maintain an upward trend in circulation; inter-library loan transactions also increased some 500 percent between 1972 and 1975. By 1976, the clipping file and index, now called the *Boreal Institute Vertical File on Northern Affairs* was being marketed commercially in microfiche format. Active cooperation with other polar libraries continued, notably with the SPRI.

The Library began making inroads into the electronic world, creating several databases. The first was the *BOREAL*, a record of the card catalogue and one of the largest arctic databases in the world, set in operation in 1978. Analytics were designed to give access to articles in periodicals and chapters in books. Computer programs were also written, for example, to help with the compilation of the *Yukon Bibliography*, which was subsequently mounted with the *BOREAL* database, along with the *Boreal Northern Titles* (BNT), on a commercial online database service, QL Systems, and searchable online through the national system CAN/OLE.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, interest in the north again expanded with devolution of government services to the territories, industrial development and attendant environmental impact studies, and the recognized need for social programs and training in the North. Dr. Robbie Jamieson, Director of the Institute at the time, spoke of the Boreal Library with abundant pride. Its resources were available to residents of the North, as well as government agencies, industry partners, private consultants, and the general public. "We get very heavy usage from people in the oil industry, in coal and transportation, from scientists and consultants in various fields" (ACUNS 1984).

The Library responded to demand by expanding services. In addition to usual services of reference and interlibrary loans, the library provided selective dissemination of information (SDI), as well as more detailed bibliographic verification services and specialized searches of the *BOREAL* that could be backed with hardcopy material. Staff would also undertake searches of commercial databases, or direct researchers to resources available elsewhere in the UofA Library system and beyond. Services to clients outside the university were provided on a cost-recovery basis.

In the late 1960s, Dr. Dewey Soper donated more than 1,000 negatives and prints (dating from 1934 to 1952), providing a valuable documentation of the landscape and wildlife at that time. The Library also routinely received materials from such organizations as the Arctic petroleum Operators Association

and the Northwest Manpower Survey. In the mid 1980s it began receiving copies of all documents tabled in the Legislature of the Northwest Territories, and Dr. George Scotter, a biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service, donated his extensive reprint collection and several books on reindeer herding. Although BINS did not have space for a museum, some archival material and artefacts were donated or bought by the library. The more fragile of these were deposited in the University Museum or Archives for safekeeping.

In 1984, to complement Nita Cooke's expertise in the hard sciences, an assistant librarian with a background in the social sciences (Robin Minion) was appointed. Now staffed with 5 full-time librarians and assistants and two part-time clerks, the Boreal Library contributed regularly to programs of the UofA's School of Library Science and the Grant McEwan College Library Technician Training Program.

Prompted by the possibility of future mergers with other northern database systems, a major focus in the mid-1980s was on adding records to the database. By 1984, the fragmented nature of northern information systems in Canada was apparent, and the Boreal Library and the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA) in Calgary began research into merging databases as a first effort toward integration. BOREAL and ASTIS (the databases of BINS and AINA, respectively) were the largest publicly-accessible polar databases in Canada, together containing over 70,000 unique records. The feasibility of further development was to be gauged in light of progress made by this first merger.

When 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations began in 1985, the Boreal Institute had fulfilled its original goals to a remarkable degree. In particular, its library and information centre was recognized internationally as an outstanding facility and collection. The holdings had grown to approximately 137,000 pieces encompassing materials at all reading levels and in all disciplines in a wide range of formats. The collection was strongest in material relating to the Canadian North, however, significant works relating to all polar and cold regions had been acquired. Librarians were representing the Institute at several conferences, notably the Polar Libraries Colloquy, which was hosted at the UofA for a second time in 1986.

A national study, undertaken in 1987 to examine the state of polar research in Canada, recommended that a Canadian Polar Information System (CPIS) be established. Having demonstrated that a merger of BOREAL and ASTIS would be feasible, it was proposed that the combined database be used to form the core of a system that would be enhanced with contributions from other collections. By this time, database cooperation was also being explored internationally with the SPRI and in December 1987 the libraries agreed to exchange similar level analytics for 13 northern-related journals.

The Boreal Library experienced a disaster in 1988. Librarians arrived one morning to find ankle-deep water on the floor; some 1,500 books were damaged. A major salvage operation took the better part of 3 months but nearly all of the damaged books were recovered. Librarians involved in the salvage would later lend their newfound expertise to a 1991 workshop organized by the UAL as part of its disaster plan.

In 1989 Mrs. Cooke retired after 20 years with the Boreal Institute, leaving a lasting legacy. Robin Minion was promoted to Head Librarian, and CCI and AINA embarked on studies to explore the needs, access, contributions, and infrastructure required for a national polar information system based on a consortium model. The report *Sharing Knowledge, Sharing Resources* summarizing the working group's efforts was presented to the newly-established Canadian Polar Commission in 1991.

On July 1, 1990, the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies was renamed the Canadian Circumpolar Institute, and Dr. Clifford Hickey appointed as Director. The renaming was symbolic of many changes in the Institute and a re-invigoration of northern research at the University of Alberta. The incorporation of the word 'circumpolar' specifically reflected the internationalization of northern programs. Core functions were maintained and many of the operations were expanded with collaborative arrangements with other faculties and units. Such was the case with the Boreal Library, renamed the Canadian Circumpolar Library (CCL) that on 24 July was moved within the UofA Library System, and maintained as a separate collection in the Science and Technology (S&T) Division, Cameron Library. Newly appointed Chief Librarian Ernest Ingles was 'delighted,' exclaiming "What we have here is one of the best library systems in Canada, and with the Boreal, a jewel in this already glittering crown, it will be

that much better” (*Folio*, 17 May 1990: 3), and assured the Institute that the library would be very well served in its new location.

Indeed, the CCL retained its reputation as the world’s premier library for research on northern Canada. It preserved, through distinctive signage and appropriately configured space, its unique identity and many of its special services to northern researchers, such as the *BOREAL* (by that time, holding 45,000 records) and the *Northern Titles KWIC Index*. A distinct collection policy continued to emphasize the vital ‘gray literature.’ The addition of a CD-ROM station further improved accessibility, and starting in June 1990, the CCL’s databases were being added to the NISC CD-ROM, providing users with access also to several other polar databases as well.

With its move to the Cameron Library, the CCL experienced many positive impacts. There was a substantial increase in the number of clients served; proximity to other collections proved advantageous to users. While the CCL continued to be housed separately, it benefited from services supplied by the larger system, such as cataloguing and shelving, taking advantage of economies of scale. Parts of the collection that required special service were relocated within the larger operations; for example, the map collection was integrated into the William C. Wonders Map Library and the rare materials into the Bruce Peels Special Collections Unit. There was an increase in the acquisitions budget, increased hours of service to users, and the redressing of the backlog of cataloguing and binding. As well, the microfilming of rare but deteriorating materials was accelerated. The expansion of the Institute’s mandate internationally broadened the scope of the collection.

The CCI continued and still supports the CCL through donations, acquisitions, and direct funding for projects that enhance the collection or improve accessibility and usefulness, especially projects that draw advantage from new technologies. Furthermore, the UofA Northern Advisory Committee (UANAC) maintains an advisory role with regard to policy and future orientation of the collection and Institute staff and researchers liaise closely with CCL to promote common interests. The Institute supports CCL participation in meetings of interest, and especially ensures representation at bi-annual meetings of the Polar Library Colloquy.

By 1992, new faces were appearing at the CCL reference desk to deal with the increase in use. Decisions regarding cataloguing were delayed until 1994 when the databases and indexes were merged with the on-line catalogue (GATE) of the UofA Library System. Until then, material was added to the *BOREAL* and the UAL’s DOBIS database. Eventually, the CCL was also listed in the consortial NEOS Library Catalogue.

Space plans were drawn up to accommodate an expansion of the holdings; however any development of the collection was to be preceded by a rationalizing of materials and coordination with other sectors of the system. For example, in an effort to eliminate duplication of periodicals and government documents, collection policies were revised to reflect consolidation. The collection would undergo several waves of rationalization and deselection of materials, but through it all would retain its distinctive status, and in fact it would grow in a more focused and deliberate manner.

In 1996, Robin Minion, who had been acting as the Head of the Science and Technology Library, as well as being Canadian Circumpolar Librarian retired, and a new era in the life of the CCL began. The unique activities of the Circumpolar Collection were distributed among staff of the S&T Library. Sandy Campbell assumed overall responsibility for librarian services to the collection and the community. Several staff members contributed to the identification and acquisition of polar gray literature; others worked on the indexing of periodicals into Polar Info database. Reference Service was provided from the S&T Library reference desk and the Circumpolar Reference Collection was integrated into the S&T Reference Collection. During this time, the library experimented with the use of new technologies for the promotion of the Canadian Circumpolar Institute Collection. A podcast walking tour and a screencast virtual tour were developed. An experimental Circumpolar Collection blog was also launched.

In June, 2004, an administrative decision ended the indexing of polar periodicals. The Institute continues to seek funding to re-establish Polar Info (and redress the index from July 2004 to present).

In 2006, the Institute expanded its mandate once again. Dr. Marianne Douglas, whose research interests include Antarctic subjects, was appointed Director. She has also been instrumental in developing the Institute's connections with the northern colleges.

In June, 2008, the University of Alberta Libraries and the Canadian Circumpolar Institute hosted the 22 Polar Libraries Colloquy, which met jointly with the University of the Arctic Council. It was the third time the PLC had met in Edmonton and the Canadian Circumpolar Librarian and Institute had been instrumental in organizing the event. During the meetings, the Bruce Peel Special Collections unit mounted an exhibition of rare polar materials. *A Most Dangerous Voyage* showcased some of the remarkable exploration journals collected over the years by both the Institute and the Libraries. Delegates also had the opportunity to see exhibits of polar maps and to visit the Circumpolar Collection.

In July, 2008, Sandy Campbell took on other responsibilities and was replaced by Joy. Most recently (November 2009), Lindsay Johnston took up the responsibility as Circumpolar Librarian.

Today the Canadian Circumpolar Collection is a world-class specialized and distinct reference centre for materials on Northern Canada and an outstanding collection for circumpolar research housing approximately 280,000 items. The collection attracts polar researchers from all over the world, many of whom make extended visits to use the materials. It is situated within the University of Alberta Library, one of Canada's major research libraries, which contains the basic subject material for a range of disciplinary areas, providing a solid foundation for the CCL. The boundaries of the collection are geographic with an emphasis on the North American arctic and sub-arctic regions. Information about the northern portions of the Canadian provinces, Canadian aboriginal peoples, Greenland, Scandinavia, Antarctica and cold regions in general can also be accessed through this library. It is a multidisciplinary collection of materials relating to the earth sciences, biological sciences, life sciences, applied sciences and social sciences. Subjects covered include, but are not limited to, peoples of the north, health, education, religion, government, land claims, land use, environmental concerns, mining, and engineering.

One of the major objectives of the Institute when it was established in 1960 was 'the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge of the North.' This remains a priority today as we work with the UofA Library to continue building the physical collection, and 'to be of service to the community at large' by making its resources more accessible through innovative tools and new technologies that characterize modern library use. We also look forward to enhancing the collection with digital collections and resources, as well as open access materials, an evolution that will be marked with the launch of the Circumpolar Digital Collection in winter 2009.

In 2010, the Canadian Circumpolar Institute is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Plans are underway for a variety of celebratory activities, including a concert, a conference, and several exhibits including displays in the Circumpolar Library and the William C. Wonders Map collection. The Institute and its many friends and affiliates look back with considerable pride on the legacy of fifty years of development in northern scholarship and look forward with the knowledge that there is every-increasing urgency in the need for the support of scholarship in our rapidly-changing circumpolar environments.

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Visit the Canadian Circumpolar Library online at <http://guides.library.ualberta.ca/polar>

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