

Even More Fiction

Bear by Marian Engel. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2009. New Canadian Library Edition. Robarts PS8509 N43 B4 2009

The 1976 Governor General's Award novel by Canadian writer Marian Engel, *Bear* is a perilous story of human and animal relationships. Lou works in the dark and dusty basement of a historical institute handling collections of maps and manuscripts. She is given a field assignment to catalogue a 19th century library located in an old house on a lonely island in Northern Ontario. Lou is excited about her task to organize and compile the estate's intriguing and questionable past. After arriving at the island, she realizes she is not alone. A bear also lives on the island. As Lou researches previous owners and occupants of the estate, she becomes more and more interested in the bear. The bear interests Lou in a way she never thought an animal would. It is an emotional and sexual awakening for her and she learns new things about herself through her strange relationship with the bear. The novel is a curious exploration, which takes the reader on a peculiar journey. The story may appeal to students who would like to see a provocative and stimulating portrayal of an archival character. You never know where your archivist skills and knowledge can lead you!

Chasing Shakespeares by Sarah Smith. New York: Atria Books, 2003. Robarts PS3569 .M5379758 C5 2003

Joe Roper is a graduate student at Northeastern University with a passion for Shakespeare. He makes a promise to Rachel Goscimer, a researcher of Elizabethan studies, to continue her work of finding information of the lost years of William Shakespeare. The Kellogg Collection of Elizabethan books, letters, and manuscripts have been passed on to Joe. He meets Posy Gould, a vibrant Harvard graduate who has studied Shakespeare and is keen to help Joe with his research. They come across some works that question the validity of Shakespeare. Joe and Posy set out on a thrilling research adventure aspiring to answer the notorious question: Did Shakespeare actually write the plays accredited to him? Students studying archives may enjoy the blend of archival research and collections with mystery, adventure and a bit of romance. Real-life archives, such as those at the British Library, are employed on the quest to decode ancient mysteries one of the most famous literary figures in history.

Watch the book come alive in a feature film!

Angels and Demons by Dan Brown. New York: Atria Books, 2003. Robarts PS3552 .R685434 A82 2005 (Special Illustrated 2005 edition)

Angels and Demons is a more readable story than Eco's *The Name of the Rose* with similar themes of religion; the investigation and collection of ancient artifacts, and deciphering long-standing mysteries. The thrilling adventure follows symbologist Robert Langdon and his search for the secret brotherhood called the Illuminati. With their hatred for the Catholic Church, the group plans to bomb the Vatican. Langdon is sent on the hunt to unmask the culprit behind the threat and to stop the destruction. His search leads him to various locations, rare documents, and coded symbols across Rome, as he follows the criminal through ancient crypts, catacombs, and cathedrals. The collections of the Vatican Archives play an important role in the plot. Brown blends religious and historical truth and fiction with action and mystery. The book is a real page-turner and a very easy read. Students may enjoy the fast-paced adventure that offers a glimpse into what archives can help to uncover. The book was adapted into a feature film, released in 2009 and directed by Ron Howard. Tom Hanks stars as Robert Langdon.

The Name of the Rose by Eco Umberto. New York: A. Knopf, 2006. Robarts PQ4865 .C6 N6513 2005

The author's first book is a mystery exploring medieval monastic life as well as its library and collections. The story begins in 1327, with Brother William of Baskerville who has been sent to an Italian abbey to investigate a number of monks who have been suspected of heresy. After William arrives, seven deaths occur all related to the Book of Revelation. These events prompt William to unravel the secrets and conspiracies of the abbey. William's pursuit is guided by the monastery library, where the brother collects documents with secret symbols and coded manuscripts. The library is used as a way for both William and the reader to explore the abbey and get a glimpse of a medieval monastic library and collections. Students may enjoy the historical descriptions of archival use and procedures, combined with a lively story that is intellectually stimulating. The book was adapted into a feature film directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud. The 1986 film stars Sean Connery as William of Baskerville. Christian Slater and F. Murray Abraham play supporting roles.

INF 2180

Archives: Access, Advocacy and Outreach

READERS' ADVISORY GUIDE



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Reading Can Be Inspiring, Thoughtful and Fun!

Essential Fiction

The Historian by Elizabeth Kostova. New York: Little Brown, 2005. University College (Laidlaw) PS3611 .074927 H57 2005

Archives and libraries, vampires and Dracula! A teenage girl discovers a medieval book and old letters in her father's library that unlocks the mystery of her father's past and ignites another quest for finding Vlad the Impaler. Vlad was the 15th century count, whose viciousness inspired the fictional character Dracula. Three intertwined storylines span the time period from the 15th to the 20th century. The reader is transported into the dark, creepy world of vampires, tombs, and ancient Europe, with many twists and turns to the plot. The search leads the characters to secret archives and age-old libraries throughout Eastern Europe, from Bulgaria, to Hungary, to Turkey. The thriller blends historical events with contemporary settings and characters that invites the reader into a fast-paced mystery. Students will enjoy the exciting role archives play in the adventurous, and often dangerous, journey. *The Historian* is an entertaining read and a great break from academic literature.

The Librarian by Larry Beinhardt. New York: Nation Books, 2004. Robarts PS3552 .E425 L53 2004X Faculty of Information 813.54 B422L

David Goldberg, a university librarian, is in trouble because of his archival skills. Wanting to make a little cash, Goldberg agrees to catalog the personal library of conservative billionaire Alan Carston Stowe. Stowe's past is marred by risky business, involving political intrigue, and now Goldberg unearths this information. While Goldberg himself is not troubled by the discovered facts, his activities upset a few important people and put the librarian at odds with Homeland Security and the state of Virginia. During the election campaign, Goldberg is viewed as a threat and there is a mission to remove him from his position by any means necessary. In this tale of political conspiracy, a quiet and mild-mannered—almost stereotypical—librarian becomes the main driving force, and his archival activities turn into the stage for action.

Possession by A.S. Byatt. London; New York: Chatto & Windus, 1990.. Robarts PR6025 .Y27 P67 1990

The novel tells the story and relationship between two scholars, Maud Bailey and Roland Mitchell, each studying a Victorian poet. The fictional poets are Randolph Ash, believed to be a devoted married man and Christabel La Motte. Through the analysis of old letters, journals, and poems, the scholars discover a secret love affair between the two poets. As Maud and Roland become more intrigued by the affair they discover the truths and secrets about their own lives. The story is a rich narrative, blending historical accounts of Randolph and Christabel with the modern lives of Maud and Roland. The scholars embark on the task of collecting historically significant artifacts and organizing them to distil the needed information. There is mystery, romance, and passion combined with research and learning about one's own self and inner life. The book's descriptions of archival techniques will be appreciated by students and help them value the relevance of archival skills and knowledge for scholarly research.

Bibliographies of Notable Canadian Archivists

Adventures of a Paper Sleuth by Hugh P MacMillan Manotick, ON: Penumbra Press, 2004. Faculty of Information 020.92 M167A

The author, archivist, and historian recounts his life, while also helping to reconstruct Canadian social history. After a number of different jobs, in the 1950s, MacMillan decided to pursue his interest in local and family history. In 1964 he became a "roving archivist" for Ontario Archives and began his significant contribution to the documentation for the institution. MacMillan travelled throughout North America hunting down the diaries, notes, and journals of individuals who helped develop Canada. In his book, he describes the many diverse characters he met throughout his travels and work. He also recounts different humorous and interesting facts he has collected. Similarly to Dempsey's memoir, annotated later in this guide, *Paper Sleuth* is an inspirational read for students studying archives. The book is written by an archivist who is proud and enthusiastic about his work. MacMillan has systematized a vast amount of material, which spotlights the exciting history of the nation and its many heroes. The book is a fun read displaying one man's mission to help document Canadian history and develop a prestigious archival collection.

Always an Adventure: An Autobiography by Hugh Dempsey. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011. Robarts FC151 .D46 A3 2011

Dempsey has been a leading figure in Alberta history and culture. The renowned historian discusses his working life as a journalist, writer, historian, archivist, and lecturer. He is the author of more than twenty books, who has been very instrumental in the development of many significant cultural institutions in Alberta, including the Indian Association of Alberta, the Historical Society of Alberta, and the Glenbow Museum. The book begins with his childhood in Edmonton in the 1930s, and later surveys his many achievements throughout the 20th century. Dempsey became the archivist of the Glenbow Museum in the 1950s, eventually progressing to its curator and director. The book is an inspiring read for many Information students, portraying the diverse nature of the field.

The Man who Saved Vancouver: Major James Skitt Matthews by Daphne Sleigh. Surrey, B.C.: Heritage House, 2008. Robarts FC3847.26 M38 S54 2008 Faculty of Information 971.133 3632M

The account is the first book-length biography of a Canadian archivist. Matthews was a controversial figure in the preservation of the history of Vancouver. He founded the City of Vancouver Archives, ensuring that the history of his "magic city" was sustained for future generations. Sleigh covers the archivist's entire life, beginning with his childhood in Wales and New Zealand and his arrival to Vancouver in 1898. Matthews had a keen interest in and fondness for his new city and its history. Matthews ensured that the collection included a diverse array of artifacts dated to the origins of Vancouver. Archivist students will admire the biography for its captivating portrayal of one of the leading founders of Canadian archival history. Matthew's commitment to his profession and career objectives is an encouragement for students to pursue their passions.