

CONTEXTS FOR READING THE READER:  
WHY THE PRIVATE LIBRARY OF A TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
CANADIAN WOMAN IS IMPORTANT

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ABSTRACT

An article on a library collected in the twentieth century by a Canadian woman may seem of little relevance to a topic called “A way with words”. Still, one of the many contexts in which we read books is their existence as objects in various kinds of libraries. This article’s subject is a library of over seventeen hundred books accumulated in the twentieth century in a modest house on a modest street in the mid-sized city of Brantford, Ontario, by a woman who had graduated from high school, but who would now be considered to have had a modest education. As well as gathering these books, she read them. In most she signed her name; in many she recorded such information as the date of their acquisition; and, although she did not usually mark them up, she sometimes left objects in them. Over the years she also listed them in notebooks. When she died, her nephew boxed the books in no particular order. Since then, they have been moved several times, and more than half have disappeared. Over six hundred of the books, however, have survived and are now deposited in the MacOdrum Library at Carleton University, Ottawa. While I had these books in my house, I prepared lists of them in alphabetical order according to author, and I arranged them alphabetically in bankers’ boxes. As I reorganised this library, I was impressed with what it revealed about not only Bibliography and Textual Studies, including the History of the Book, particularly as these subjects concern Canada, but also about such topics as Canadian culture and the influence of books and reading on the shaping of images of women in the twentieth century. My article demonstrates the importance of this private library’s “way with words”.

Keywords: Private library; Canada; Ann May Brennan’s library; bibliography; textual studies.

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the many contexts in which we read books is their existence as objects in various kinds of libraries. This article's subject is a library of over seventeen hundred books accumulated in a modest house on a modest street in the mid-sized city of Brantford, Ontario, by Ann May Brennan (1902–1972), a woman who had graduated from high school, but who would now be considered to have had a modest education. As well as gathering these books, she read them. In most she signed her name; in many she recorded such information as the date of their acquisition; and, although she did not usually mark them up, she sometimes left objects in them. Over the years she also listed them in notebooks. When she died, her nephew boxed these books in no particular order. Since then, they have been moved several times, and more than half have disappeared. Over six hundred of the books, however, have survived and are now deposited in the MacOdrum Library at Carleton University, Ottawa. While I had these books in my house, I prepared lists of them in alphabetical order according to author, and I arranged them alphabetically in bankers' boxes. As I reorganised this library, I was impressed with what it revealed not only about Bibliography and Textual Studies, including the History of the Book, particularly as these subjects concern Canada, but also about such topics as Canadian culture and the influence of books and reading on the shaping of images of women in the twentieth century. My article demonstrates the importance of this private library's "way with words".

Southwest of Burlington, Hamilton, Mississauga and Toronto, Brantford, a city of almost 100,000 people, is now part of the densely populated area that contains about a third of Canada's population. In the past, however, Brantford was the site of one of the main villages of the Neutral Confederacy that in the mid-seventeenth century was more or less exterminated by other Iroquois nations. Ironically, just over one hundred years later, some of these same Iroquois who had remained loyal to the British during the American Revolution left New York State to take up a large land grant, now called the Six Nations Reserve, on the Grand River. Led by Joseph Brant / Thayendanegea ("c March 1742/43"–1807), the "Mohawk interpreter, translator, war chief, and statesman" (Graymont 1983), they settled first where they could easily land their canoes. Called "Brant's Ford", this crossing provided the name for the whole area. In the nineteenth century other migrants arrived at Brant's Ford, which in the 1830s adjusted its name to Brantford. Incorporated as "the Town of Brantford", with a population of "around 2000", in 1847 (Hand 2010: 22), in 1877 it became the City of Brantford "with a population of over 10,000" (Hand 2010: 41).

Mike Hand, the author of *A City's Industrial Heritage: The Growth and Demise of Fifteen Major Manufacturers in Brantford, Ontario* (2010), attributes this achievement chiefly to entrepreneurs who came to the community. The most famous is Alexander Graham Bell (1847–1922), "teacher of the deaf, inventor, and scientist". Born in Scotland, he arrived in Brantford with his family in 1870;

there, “behind his parent’s house ... on 26 July 1874”, he got “the inspiration” that eventually led to his invention of a workable telephone (Surtees 2005). Among the others are Ignatius Cockshutt (1812–1901), who came from England, and Alanson Harris (1816–1894), who was born near Brantford. Cockshutt gave his name to one of the two largest companies in the world that manufactured farm machinery well into the twentieth century; Harris, to the other, which became Massey Harris in 1891. Both companies had factories in Brantford.

What created these opportunities was the Confederation of the British North American provinces of Canada (Ontario and Quebec), New Brunswick and Nova Scotia into a constitutional monarchy called the Dominion of Canada in 1867 and its expansion in the 1870s and 1880s. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, in fact, Canada, bordering on three oceans, was not only the second largest country in the world, but also one that needed infrastructure, policies on trade and a bigger population. Solutions to these challenges were provided by the Conservative government under Sir John A. Macdonald (1815–1891), Canada’s first Prime Minister. It undertook the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway to British Columbia. By imposing tariffs, especially on items from the United States, and by enabling the building of factories in places like Brantford in Ontario and Quebec where waterpower was plentiful to make the goods necessary to develop agriculture in the west, it encouraged an east-west flow of trade. And, to find workers in the manufacturing centres and on farms, it supported immigration, a policy followed by the Liberal government under Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1841–1919) that succeeded the Conservatives in 1896.

As a result, by 1900 Brantford, with a population of over sixteen thousand, had not only grown into “the third largest industrial city in Canada” (Hand 2010: 4), but it had also become a place with such amenities for its citizens as a farmer’s market; a downtown with department stores and bookshops, a Carnegie Library, banks, insurance companies and law offices; newspapers; Christian churches and a Jewish Synagogue; benevolent societies; residential areas with stately homes; and educational institutions, including what is now the W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind and Deaf/Blind, where Bell’s father taught, and the Brantford Collegiate Institute, a high school established in 1852. It is not surprising, then, that Brantford, like many other smaller cities in Ontario and Quebec, produced both authors who were to become famous and readers like Ann May Brennan who collected books.

Brantford was the birthplace of Sara Jeannette Duncan (1861–1922) and Thomas Bertram Costain (1885–1965). Emily Pauline Johnson / Tekahionwake (1861–1913), probably the best known of these writers, was born on the Six Nations Reserve. All three attended the Brantford Collegiate Institute. Each of these authors eventually pursued a career elsewhere. Each, however, featured Brantford and its surroundings in her/his writings. Johnson’s 1892 poem “The

Song My Paddle Sings”, which ends, “And up on the hills against the sky, / A fir tree rocking its lullaby, / Swings, swings, / Its emerald wings, / Swelling the song that my paddle sings” (Johnson 2002: 83), was inspired by her canoeing on the Grand River. Duncan’s best-known novel, *The Imperialist*, published in volume form in 1904, is set in the early years of the twentieth century in Elgin, Ontario, a bustling manufacturing centre based on Brantford. Despite its opening “on the twenty-fourth of May”, which, Duncan reminds “persons living in England”, “*was the Queen’s Birthday*” in Canada (Duncan 1904 [1996]: 2), the novel presents a lively debate between those who support Imperial Federation and closer ties to Great Britain and its Empire, and those who wish for closer ties, including a form of free trade, with the United States. Costain’s *Son of a Hundred Kings. A Novel of the Nineties* (1950) is also set in Brantford. Named Balfour, it is described on 1 January 1890 as a “busy western Ontario city” that “had a life so completely and passionately its own that a meeting of the Bicycling Club or a fire on Holbrook Street was of much more concern than all the rumors circulating in all the chancelleries of Europe” (Costain 1950: 4).

In the opening lines of *Son*, the narrator introduces the chief character as a “boy from England”, and comments, “Boys were arriving from England all the time” (Costain 1950: [3]). One who came in the 1890s from Cambridgeshire was Humphrey Herbert May, the son and grandson of successful drapers. At first, he farmed in Brant County, but when the 1901 Canadian Census was taken, he was living in Brantford and working in a stove factory as a “Metal Polisher” (Census 1901). Later that year he married the Ontario-born daughter of a local farmer. By the time of the 1911 Canadian Census this couple had three children; the eldest was Ann.

In the ten years between the 1911 Canadian Census and the one in 1921, a great deal happened. On the one hand, World War One had benefitted Brantford in that a number of its industries had done well making ammunition and other items for the war effort. On the other hand, many men from the area had enlisted, and, if they had not died overseas, they had returned wounded physically and psychologically. Although he had a family and was thirty-four, Ann’s father, who described himself as a “carpenter” on his “Attestation Paper” (May), joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force in April 1915. By June that year he was serving in France, where in October 1916 he received shrapnel wounds in his neck, knee, ankle and groin. After a stay in hospitals in England, in early 1917 he resumed active service until the war officially ended in November 1918. Having risen through the ranks, he was discharged as an officer in April 1919. Although he lived a long life – he was ninety-three when he died – one can only imagine how his experiences in World War One affected him, and, with their father absent for four years, his children. Certainly, for Ann, who was twelve when he left and sixteen when he returned, it must have been difficult. By the time of the 1921

Canadian Census, however, although she was still living at home, she had completed her studies at the Brantford Collegiate Institute and was working as a “folder” at Barber-Ellis Company, a “paper factory” (Census 1921) that by 1930 had become the largest Canadian manufacturer of envelopes and stationery.

Sometime in the 1930s, Kenneth Brennan, born in Brantford in 1919, and employed by Canadian Durex Abrasives Limited, which had been founded as the Canadian Glue Factory in 1905, moved with his parents to a house on the street where Ann lived. They met, and despite the difference in their ages, they married in August 1939 – the headline in the *Brantford Expositor* on Saturday, 26 August, 1939, the day that their wedding was announced in the newspaper, read, “Efforts to avoid war increased: Berlin feels compromise formula will be found” (26 August, 1939, *Brantford Expositor*). Their life together was short. Canada declared war on Germany in September 1939, and Kenneth enlisted in the Canadian army in April 1940. By July that year he had embarked at Halifax, Nova Scotia, for England, where he arrived on 2 August. One of the many Canadians who went missing in action during the in/famous raid on Dieppe, France, in August 1942, his death was finally confirmed in June 1944. It was in the following years that Ann, living again with her parents, both collected most of the books that formed her library and recorded their titles, according to their genres, in notebooks.

The most complete of the extant notebooks is the one dated “18 Oct[ober] 1967”, in which she both copied titles from the earlier notebooks and continued to make entries until just before her death. In the opening pages Ann, quoting from *Areopagitica* (1644) by John Milton (1608–1674), wrote that “a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life” (Milton 1933: 733). She also pasted in a short item entitled “A book speaks”. Dated “1961”, it ends, “I am a book – your friend, guide, entertainer, counsellor, always your servant. I wait upon your pleasure. I am yours to command”. She then listed the books under the following categories: “Fiction”, “Poetry”, “History”, “Biography”, “Religion”, “Gardening”, “Art of the World”, “Books of Nature”, “Miscellaneous – Non Fiction”, “Hobbies” and “Astronomy”. In this article I am concentrating on the books whose authors’ last name begins with “S” because in the fiction category, the most numerous in the library, they number over one hundred and sixty and represent the work of twenty-five men and fourteen women.

Canadian authors do not dominate either in the library as a whole or among those whose last name begins with “S”. Of the three from Brantford, for example, none of Duncan’s works appears in the 1967 notebook, but it does record a copy that has disappeared of Johnson’s *Flint and Feather*, the volume of her poetry first published in 1912, as well as fourteen novels and histories by Costain, including *Son*, although only four form part of the collection that went to

Carleton. Among the “S” authors whose works remain, Arthur Stringer (1874–1950), a native of Chatham, Ontario, is the only one born in Canada; Ann owned a copy of *The Silver Poppy. A Novel* (1903). The library also still holds two volumes of the poetry of Robert Service (1874–1958), the native of Preston, England, who spent many years in Canada where he chronicled events like the 1890s Yukon Gold Rush in such poems as “The shooting of Dan McGrew” and “The cremation of Sam McGee”. A native of New York City, Anya Seton (1904–1990), three of whose novels remain in the library, had a connection to Canada: although born near Newcastle, England, her father Ernest Thompson Seton (1860–1946), the author of “realistic animal stories” (Morley 1990), spent his formative years in Ontario and Manitoba.

A work by each of two European “S” novelists remains in the library. One is a copy of Jeremiah Curtin’s 1896 translation of *‘Quo Vadis’: A Narrative of the Time of Nero* by Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916), the Polish writer who “won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1905” (Mikoś 2007). The other is a translation from German of *Désirée*, the story by the Austrian writer Annemarie Selinko (1914–1986) first published in 1951 about a woman who became Queen of Norway and Sweden.

Of the remaining “S” works, twenty-four are British. Rafael Sabatini (1875–1950), the Italian-born “novelist” who “became a British citizen in 1918”, is represented in the remaining library by five novels as well as by *The life of Cesare Borgia*, a “notable historical” work first published in 1912 (Fraser 2011). There are also five works of fiction by Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) and three by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), as well as a novel by each of Margery Sharp (1905–1991), Neville Shute (1899–1960), John Collis Snaith (1876–1936), Marguerite Steen (1894–1975), Rosemary Sutcliff (1920–1992) and Annie Shepherd Swan (1859–1943). Three works of fiction by Mary Stewart (1916–2014) also remain as well as a twentieth-century edition of *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift (1667–1748).

These eleven British authors are outnumbered by twenty-three “S” authors from the United States whose works remain in the library. In this group the only non-fiction volume – Ann listed it as one of her gardening books – is *Just Weeds* (1945 [1957]), a “New, Expanded Edition” of a work first published in 1940, whose author was Edwin Rollin Spencer (1881–1964), Professor of Biology at McKendree College (now University) in Lebanon, Illinois. Since a version of *Just* was still in print in 2011, Spencer’s name may be better known than some of the other American authors, including several writers of “Westerns”. Still, Frank Gill Slaughter (1908–2001), “a surgeon who became a prolific best-selling novelist”, whose works “sold an estimated 60 million copies” (Lewis 2001), is represented by fifteen titles, including *Sword and Scalpel* (1957), “A Novel of an American Surgeon in the Korean War” (Slaughter 1957). Other well-known titles are



*Woman of Property* (1947) by Mabel Seeley (1903–1991), *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1943) by Betty Smith (1896–1972), *The Wayward Bus* (1947) by John Steinbeck (1902–1968), *The Passionate Journey* (1949) by Irving Stone (1903–1989) and *A Girl of the Limberlost* (1909) by Gene Stratton-Porter (1863–1924).

So far, I have identified each author by place of birth. The place of publication of each book, however, does not always reflect its author's nationality. Ann's copy of Stringer's *The Silver Poppy*, a first edition, was published in New York by D. Appleton and Company, which copyrighted it in the United States. Her copy of Service's *Songs of a Sourdough*, which appeared first in 1907, was issued in 1962 in Toronto by The Ryerson Press; it was printed in Great Britain. Germaine Bourgoïn Service (1887–1989), the poet's widow, owned its copyright. Ann's copy of the translation of '*Quo Vadis*', first published by Little, Brown and Company of Boston in 1896, was printed in Canada and published by George N. Morang, Toronto, in 1897. It had been copyrighted in Canada when it was "Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-seven, by Little, Brown and Company, in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture" (Sienkiewicz 1896 [1897]: [ii]), which for many years was the federal government department that handled Canadian copyrights. In his entry on Sienkiewicz in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Michael J. Mikoś notes that the author "was not protected by international copyright law", and, therefore, received no royalties from Curtin's enormously popular translation (Mikoś 2007). Ann's copy of *Gulliver's Travels* was a volume in "Everyman's Library For Young People". First published in 1906, this impression, printed in Great Britain, was issued in 1922 by J. M. Dent and Sons Limited of London and Toronto, and E. P. Dutton and Company of New York.

The international sources of copies that remain in the library are confirmed by those written by Sabatini. *Cesare Borgia*, printed in Great Britain, and published in London by Stanley Paul and Company, Limited, in 1925, is the ninth impression of this work first issued in 1912. *Saint Martin's Summer*, the novel first published by Hutchinson and Company in London in 1909, is represented by its first American edition published in 1924 in Boston and New York by Houghton Mifflin Company, which that year became Sabatini's legal publisher in the United States. The next year Thomas Allen Publisher, Toronto, arranged with Houghton Mifflin to copyright and to print in Canada its edition of *Mistress Wilding. A Romance*. Issued by the American publisher under this title in 1924, when it was first published in 1910 in London by Hutchinson, its title was *Anthony Wilding. The Sea-Hawk*, first published in 1915 by Martin Secker of London, in which firm Sabatini became a partner in 1916, exists in Ann's library in a copy printed in Great Britain, but bound in Long Island City, New York, and issued by World Wide Publishing Company, New York. Its "Foreword" announces:

World Wide Publishing Company is intended to bring the best-known novels in the world within the reach of the millions, by presenting at the lowest possible price per copy, in convenient size, on excellent paper, with beautiful and durable binding, a long series of stories, which everybody has heard of and could desire to read.

Never before has it been possible to present books of the world's most famous living authors at such a small price. To render it possible now it will be necessary that each volume should have a sale of hundreds of thousands of copies and that many volumes of the series should in due course find their way into nearly every home, however humble, in the United States and Canada.

(Sabatini n. d. [1915]: [4])

Alas, the paper in this copy is burning, and I have found little about the publisher. The copies of this edition listed in World Cat describe its date of publication as sometime in the 1900s. Ann dated her copy "Aug[ust] 1929".

Most of the remaining "S" volumes written by authors born in the United States are published in the United States. All Slaughter's novels that remain in the library were issued by Doubleday and Company, Garden City, New York. *Sword and Scalpel*, for instance, was published by this company in 1957; printed in the United States, it was copyrighted there by Slaughter the same year. But Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, first published by Harper in New York in 1943, was copyrighted in Canada in 1944 by The Musson Book Company Limited, Toronto. Ann's copy, issued in 1945, was the Canadian edition's third printing. The title-page of Steinbeck's *The Wayward Bus* announces that it was published by The Viking Press, New York, in 1947. Its verso adds that the volume, printed in the United States, appeared in February 1947 and was copyrighted the same year by the author; it also states that the novel was "Published on the Same Day in the Dominion of Canada by The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited" (Steinbeck 1947: [vi]).

Ann acquired these "S" volumes from various sources. In 1960 she bought from her father-in-law her copy of *The Lone Wolf and the Hidden Empire / An Original Story by Carl W. Smith / Featuring the Famous Character Created by Louis Joseph Vance*. Described on its title-page as an "Authorized Edition", and published in 1947 by the Whitman Publishing Company in Racine, Wisconsin, in its "Stories of Adventure and Mystery" series of "Up-to-the-minute novels for boys and girls about Favorite Characters, all popular and well-known" (Smith 1947: [250]), Smith's story recreated as its chief character Michael Lanyard or "the Lone Wolf" (Smith 1947: 9) about whom Vance (1879–1933) had written several novels. Although many were purchased new, her copy of *Killer's Code* (1933) by Charles Wesley Sanders (1876–1937 [?]) came from the Brantford Book Exchange and Lending Library in July 1938. Copyrighted in 1933 and printed in Great Britain, it was published by William Collins, Limited, London, and issued in the "Wild West Club" series that was aimed at "Thousands of readers, sick of sex novels" and "turning to healthy yarns of life in the open



spaces, where ‘men are men!’” (Sanders 1933: [253]). Ann acquired her copy of Shute’s *Round the Bend* in March 1964 from the Salvation Army Store. Its title-page states that it was published by William Morrow and Company, New York, in 1951; the verso of this page, however, notes that it was “Published Simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada” by William Collins, Canada, Limited, and “Printed and Bound in Canada” by the T. H. Best Printing Company in Toronto (Shute 1951: [ii]). Like Steinbeck’s *The Wayward Bus*, many of these volumes were Book-of-the-Month Club selections that arrived by mail.

Ann’s books are mostly case bound. With its silver poppy with curving green stems on both the front and the spine, and its front with the additional colour of orange on its black background, the binding of Stringer’s *The Silver Poppy* is an elegant example of the Art Deco style fashionable in the first decades of the twentieth century. Sometimes these volumes, like Slaughter’s *Sword and Scalpel*, come with a book-jacket that provides further knowledge about the work. One of the items left in a volume is a pamphlet reprinted from the *Book-of-the-Month Club News* of February 1947 evaluating Steinbeck’s *The Wayward Bus*. Written by Henry Seidel Canby (1878–1961), “the first chairman of the editorial board of the Book-of-the-Month Club” (Engelman 1990), it was included in Ann’s copy of this title “so that it” could “be pasted, if desired, to the flyleaf of the book” (Canby 1947). She may have used such items to mark her place, but they help show as well, to paraphrase “The book speaks”, the importance of these volumes as friends, guides, entertainers and counsellors in Ann’s life.

So why is this library collected and catalogued in Brantford, Ontario, by Ann May Brennan significant? One reason is that, even though diminished from its original size, it has been preserved. In the three volumes of *History of the Book in Canada* (2004–2007), for instance, when this monumental work does mention what it calls personal libraries, it provides few examples of these libraries that still exist. In *Volume I: Beginnings to 1840* (2004), Marcel Lajeunesse lists thirty-nine “of the most important personal libraries” collected between 1650 and 1840, most of which are known only “through the inventories and catalogues published for the book auctions that followed a death or a departure for Europe” (Lajeunesse 2004: 203–207). In the same volume, however, Richard Landon describes what he calls “the largest private collection in the province”, that is, the library of Robert Addison (1754–1829), who came to Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake), Upper Canada, “as a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel” in 1792, and who “brought with him a library of some 1,500 books dating from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries”. Its volumes are now housed at St. Mark’s Anglican Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario (Landon 2004: 211–212). In *Volume II: 1840–1918* (2005), Yvan Lamonde & Andrea Rotundo state, “Of 352 personal libraries known to have been assembled during this period, 163 are documented through auction catalogues, 27 through catalogues

of the booksellers that sold the libraries, 16 through catalogues printed when donations were made to libraries, 10 through inventories taken after death, ... 8 through catalogues prepared by owners of the libraries themselves, and 1 through an exhibition catalogue". They name several owners of these libraries, including two women, but they do not specify any private library from this time that still exists in whole or in part (Lamonde & Rotunda 2005: [243]–246). In *Volume III: 1918–1980* (2007), there is no section on personal libraries. Ann's library collected during the period covered by this volume, thus, may well stand as one of the few private libraries that not only have several catalogues but also actual volumes to study.

There are other reasons why this library is important. Many of the personal libraries mentioned in *History of the Book* were assembled by professional men who had a much higher social status than Ann. Of the two women named by Lamonde & Rotunda, one was the wife of the registrar of Quebec City; the other, the wife of a prominent Montreal businessman and lawyer. Although for her time she was well educated, Ann, by contrast, spent her entire life in a smaller urban environment, worked, as did her father and husband, in one of the many factories in this manufacturing centre, and, as a widow, lived a middle-class life in a modest house on a modest street. She also experienced many of the traumas of women of her generation, including having a father who disappeared for four years while he served in World War One and a husband who was killed in World War Two. Maybe it is not so surprising that many of the books that she read were fiction, and many of them romantic novels with happy endings.

How could, then, Ann's library be used for Bibliographical and Textual Studies, including the History of the Book? First, each copy of a work in this library tells its own story of its bibliographical history and may be useful in the preparation of both a descriptive bibliography and a scholarly edition. Second, because many of Ann's so-called Canadian editions, even those registered with the Department of Agriculture, are really issues and impressions of editions published elsewhere, they point to the complexity of their printing and publishing histories. They also emphasize the fact that Canadian book history is international book history that has been greatly influenced by the history of the book in the United States, including this country's frequent refusal to respect international copyright.

Two other characteristics of this library relevant to Book History are also noteworthy. One is the number of volumes that have book-jackets. Routinely thrown out by libraries, and ignored by most bibliographers and book-collectors, "this important class of primary material" is difficult to locate (Tanselle 2011: 8). Not only, then, do the book-jackets in this collection provide the opportunity to give a complete bibliographical description of each volume that has one, but, by showing examples of fashions in their design, they also contribute information

about the visual art of, and in, the book, and this art's creators. John Alan Maxwell (1904–1984), an American artist who in 1936 “won first place in a competition held by the Society of Illustrators and was named one of the top ten illustrators” in the United States ([The talented Maxwell brothers](#)), for example, created the book-jacket for Slaughter's *Sword and Scalpel*.

The other noteworthy characteristic relevant to Book History is the number of volumes in the library that come from the Book-of-the-Month Club. Co-founded by Harry Scherman (1887–1969), a native of Montreal, in the 1980s the well-known Canadian novelist Mordecai Richler (1931–2001) was one of “the individuals responsible for the monthly main selections” (Radway 1997: 29). In *A Feeling for Books. The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (1997), Janice A. Radway also mentions the difficulty of finding information about subscribers to the Club and their motives for joining an organization that was contributing to what she calls “the Fordizing of America” through its combination of commerce and culture. The Book-of-the-Month Club selections that Ann acquired, with their inserts, book-jackets and inscriptions, provide knowledge about one subscriber to this “important twentieth-century cultural institution” (Radway 1997: 188).

So far, I have emphasized the significance of this library for Bibliographical and Textual Studies. It also makes important contributions to the understanding of twentieth-century Canada. The library demonstrates the role that a prosperous city like Brantford, with good jobs and good infrastructure, including educational institutions and bookstores, played in the development of Canadian culture, especially from the last decades of the nineteenth century until the 1970s. It, thus, acts as a notice to contemporary students that, as well as looking at literary events in big cities like Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, they need to consider smaller cities, especially in Ontario and Quebec, for characteristics of that culture. The library also emphasizes the centrality of reading in a society, which, still getting used to the telephone, movies and the radio, with limited television and before the electronic revolution, depended on the products of the printing press for much of its entertainment and knowledge. With the dominance of fiction and the non-dominance of Canadian Literature in the library, it helps to define characteristics of this reading. By itself, it does not prove definitively that this reading was typical of Canadians. My mother, however, who grew up in St. Thomas, Ontario, another smaller Canadian city, whose father, two brothers and two brothers-in-law served in World War One, and whose husband took part as an officer in the Royal Canadian Navy in the Battle of the Atlantic in World War Two, certainly read some of the same novels. Since we moved a lot, she borrowed them from the public libraries in the cities in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Quebec where we lived. Nevertheless, they adorned various tables in our houses until they were returned and, of course, replaced by new titles.

I also know that in some ways Ann's volumes reflect other places, people and collections. Many of the same titles were auctioned off when my aunt's house in the United States was sold. I saw similar titles at another aunt's house in England; she was particularly fond of Mary Stewart's fiction. This Canadian library, then, helps define such critical terms as "highbrow", "lowbrow" and "middlebrow" culture (Radway 1997: 128) as they are applied to reading and readers both in Canada and in other parts of the English-speaking world. These volumes provide, in fact, knowledge about reading by women in the twentieth century and the role that the books that they read, by both female and male authors, played in shaping images of themselves and, therefore, influencing their lives.

Ann's library was not as large as the "fifty thousand volumes" (Jones 2023: 49) owned by Edward Harley, the second earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1689–1741), "book collector and patron of the arts" (Stoker 2010), that Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) set about cataloguing in the 1740s. It is certainly not as grand as other eighteenth-century family libraries described by Reid Byers (Byers 2021: [231]–266), or as learned as G. Thomas Tanselle's portrait of the "books ... and ... artifacts of all kinds" in his living room (Tanselle 2021: 33). Still, the extant notebooks that record her collection of over seventeen hundred volumes and the over six hundred books that are now at Carleton, especially as they form a rare collection of twentieth-century reading, contribute to our knowledge of Bibliographical and Textual Studies, Canadian culture, and reading by women in the English-speaking world in various significant ways. Ann May Brennan's library, thus, is an important example of one twentieth-century woman's "way with words".

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## APPENDIX

Volumes at MacOdrum Library, Carleton University, Ottawa, by authors whose last name begins with S in Ann May Brennan's private library:

- Sabatini, Rafael. 1946 [1922]. *Captain Blood*. Philadelphia: The Blakiston Company. Triangle Books Edition Published August, 1946, by arrangement with Houghton Mifflin Company. Copyright 1922 by Rafael Sabatini. Triangle Books is a series published by The Blakiston Company, 1012 Walnut St., Philadelphia 5, Pa. Book-jacket. (Signed Ann Brennan, Sept 1946)
- Sabatini, Rafael. 1925 [1912]. *The life of Cesare Borgia: A history and some criticisms*. With A Coloured Frontispiece and Sixteen Other Illustrations in Half-Tone. London: Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd., 8 Endsleigh Gardens, Upper Woburn Place. First edition, 1912; second edition, 1912; third edition, 1914; fourth edition, 1923; fifth edition, 1923; fifth edition, 1923; sixth edition, 1923; seventh edition, 1923; eighth edition, 1924; eighth edition, 1925; ninth edition, 1925. Printed in Great Britain by Hasell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury. (Signed Ann Brennan, April 1966)
- Sabatini, Rafael. 1925 [1910]. *Mistress Wilding: A romance*. Toronto: Thomas Allen Publisher. Copyright Canada, 1925, by Thomas Allen, Toronto. Printed in Canada. Press of The Hunter-Ross Co., Limited. (Signed Ann Brennan, April 1966). On the back of the cover is written Paris, Ontario, Mar. 20, 192 – the last number is unclear; it could be an 8. On the title-page are the letters B. S. C. and 706 or 106)
- Sabatini, Rafael. 1924 [1909]. *Saint Martin's summer*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1924 (Stamped Mrs. A Brennan, St. George St.)
- Sabatini, Rafael. n.d. [1915]. *The sea-hawk*. New York: World Wide Publishing Co. Inc. n.d. Printed in Great Britain. (Signed Ann May, Aug. 1929)
- Sabatini, Rafael. 1939. *The sword of Islam*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1939. Copyright 1939 by Houghton Mifflin Company. At the bottom of the page is printed The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Book-jacket. (Signed Ann May Brennan, Brantford, Ont., Dec. 1941)
- Sanders, Charles Wesley. 1933. *Killer's code*. London: Wild West Club, William Collins, Sons, and Co., Ltd., London, 48 Pall Mall S. W. 1. Copyright 1933. Stamped Brantford Book Exchange and Lending Library, 5 & 8c. 39 Market St. Also stamped R. W. Redman, Prescription Druggist. (Signed Ann May, Brantford, July 1938)
- Sanders, Charles Wesley. 1932. *Riders of the Oregon*. New York & Chicago: A. L. Burt Company, Publishers. Published by arrangement with Alfred H. King, Inc. Copyright 1927-28 by The West Magazine. Copyright 1932 by Alfred H. King, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A. Stamped Brantford Book Exchange and Lending Library, 5 & 8c., 39 Market St., and Circulating Library, High Park Book and Gift Shop, 6 Kettle Street. (Signed Ann May, Brantford, July 9/38)
- Santee, Ross. 1926 [1921]. *Men and horses*. New York & London: The Century Co. Copyright 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, and 1926 by Ross Santee. (Signed to my Pardner Ann. Below is written For Smoky. There are pressed leaves in the book.)
- Sawyer, Josephine Caroline. 1901. *Every inch a king: The romance of Henry of Monmouth, sometime Prince of Wales*. Toronto: George N. Morang & Company, Ltd., 1901. Copyright, 1902, by Dodd, Mead and Company. (Signed Clark Beney and then Ann Brennan, n.d.)



- Schoonover, Lawrence. 1950. *The gentle infidel*. New York: The MacMillan Company. Copyright, MCML, by Lawrence L. Schoonover. Book-jacket. (Signed Ann Brennan, 65 St. George St., June 1950)
- Schoonover, Lawrence. 1952. *The quick brown fox*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1952. Copyright, 1952, by Lawrence L. Schoonover. (Signed Ann Brennan, 63 St. George St., Brantford, March 1966)
- Scott, Jack. 1933. *The black horseman*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers. Copyright 1933 by Grosset & Dunlap, Inc. Stamped Brantford Book Exchange and Lending Library, Magazines 5 & 8c. 39 Market St. Stamped Monarch Library, 1428 Danforth Ave., No. 609. Book-jacket. (Signed Ann May, Brantford, July 9/38)
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- Scott, Sir Walter. n.d. [1823]. *Quentin Durward*. London & Glasgow: Collins' Clear Type Press, n. d. (Signed Ann May 65 St. George St., Dec. 1937)
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- Seeley, Mabel. 1947. *Woman of property*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1947. Copyright, 1947, by Mabel Seeley. Printed and bound in Canada. Book Club Edition. Book-jacket. (Signed Ann Brennan, Mar. 1948)
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- Stratton-Porter, Gene. n.d. [1915]. *Michael O'Halloran*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers. Copyright, 1915 and 1916 by Doubleday, Page & Company. (Stamped Mrs A Brennan, 63 St. George St. There is a date 1960 and crossed out is an inscription From M. E. Bradshaw to Mildred, so the book was very likely purchased second-hand.)
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