Users' Opinions of Archival Display

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with assistance from
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This paper reports on a study that used focus group research to obtain the opinions of archival users on the content and presentation of descriptions in archival information systems. The research builds on and extends a previous research study on bibliographic displays (Cherry and Howarth, 1994). This study addressed two research questions: 1) What information about archival materials would users like to see displayed in an OPAC or on the web? and 2) How would the users like the material to be displayed? Twenty-seven archival patrons, including doctoral students, genealogists, and consultants took part in the study. Displays from four existing archival information systems, one display developed for an Encoded Archival Description(EAD) and a display based on the findings of Luk's study (1996) were used in the study. Preferences for certain display features (e.g., the use of labels) were consistent with the findings of the earlier study. However, the participants in this study found many elements in the archival display difficult to understand. Furthermore, they evaluated the importance of the data elements differently than the participants in Luk's study. The paper concludes with suggestions for designing more usable archival displays.

Introduction

Archival description is similar, but not the same as bibliographic description. Library cataloguing shares the same primary purpose as archival description, that is, providing users with access to material to fulfill an information need. However, library catalogues focus primarily on providing access to discrete items while archival finding aids enable access to groupings or aggregates of records. Records are created to support an organization's or individual's functions and to preserve the value of records as evidence of actions and activities they must be understood in the context of their creation. The context is presented by describing the fonds or the whole of the records before describing its parts, i.e., series or files. A fonds is the "whole of the documents, regardless of form or medium, automatically and organically created an/or accumulated and used by a par-

ticular individual, family or corporate body in the course of that creator's activities and functions." (Bureau of Canadian Archivists 1990). To represent the hierarchical nature of archival material, archivists create multi-level descriptions that link a description of a fonds to descriptions of its parts. Furthermore, archival descriptions contain many elements that relate to the context of the records that are not relevant to library material, e.g. an agency history, or restrictions on access. During the last decade, Canadian archivists have concentrated much effort in developing Canadian *Rules for Archival Description (RAD)* to standardize their descriptive practices and to enable users to access information as efficiently and independently, as possible. *RAD* has been widely implemented by Canadian archivists, but to date, no systematic study has been undertaken to discover whether RAD-compliant descriptions help users locate what they need.

Literature Review

Only two research studies have investigated the ability of users to understand and use archival descriptions. Young and Wiltshire Management Consultants (1992) conducted a study of the patrons of the National Archives of Canada to evaluate the Archives' descriptive system and users' satisfaction with it. They found evidence that users who understood the background and the history of the material consulted were more satisfied with the archives finding aids. Furthermore, many users needed to consult an archivist to receive assistance in using the tools. Spindler and Pearce-Moses (1993) studied users' comprehension of archival descriptions. They found that users had difficulty interpreting the dates of creation element and linear extent statements.

Although there is a dearth of research on archival description, research on users' preferences for OPAC displays provides some interesting insights. The most recent studies were conducted at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Information Studies, as part of 3 year displays project. (Cherry and Howarth 1994) A focus group study conducted by Annie Luk (1996) is particularly relevant to this current research. Luk used focus groups to discover what users find more or less useful in a display. The findings of her study were

consistent with other user studies and design guidelines for bibliographic displays. The most used bibliographic elements were Title, Author, and Subjects while the most infrequently used bibliographic elements were International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN). The participants in Luk's study strongly preferred the prototype display which she had constructed according to design guidelines. The relevance of these findings to archival description is unknown. This research adapted Luk's study and used focus group to investigate what archival users want in a display and to study the relevance of OPAC design research to archival displays.

Research Questions

This study addressed 3 questions.

- Will users prefer an archival display created according to design guidelines over archival displays from existing systems? What formatting features do users prefer?

- Do the elements in existing archival displays meet the needs of users?

- What would an "ideal display" designed by users look like?

Subjects

Twenty-seven participants took part in the study. All but two of the subjects had university degrees with 29% (8) being enrolled in a PhD program, and another 24% (7) having completed their masters degree. The participants were frequent users of archives with 64% (17) having visited an archives more than 12 times in the last year and only 26% having used an archives less than 6 times during the same period. The purpose of their visits included school related research (41%), genealogical research (41%), writing a book (7%), work (7%), and biographical research (4%).

Methodology

Each focus group session consisted of four sections:

- the participants completed a consent form, an audio recording release form and a background questionnaire.

- the moderator led a structured discussion about six different displays using a set of questions.

- the participants completed one questionnaire which solicited the participant's evaluation of the six displays and ranked 32 data elements in their order of importance. The elements were randomized on the form.

- the participants had an unstructured discussion in which they designed their "ideal display".

The displays came from a variety of places. Three displays came from existing archival systems. A display from a library system that included archival material was captured from the web. The information from that description was then input into two other archival systems and their displays were used. These displays were created for this study, but they followed the display formats used by the archives' information system. Another archives used the information in the description to create a display consistent with a prototype it was developing for its new information system. A group of students working on an Encoded Archival Description (an SGML coding standard developed by the Society of American Archivists) used the information in a display for their project using Panorama Pro. Their style sheet was loosely based on a display from the Library of Congress. Finally, one of the displays was created by the principle researcher. It was based on Luk's prototype display which used the features recommended in design guidelines. (Chan 1995)

Findings

Rating of the displays

Sixteen participants (59%) preferred display 2, seven (26%) preferred display 6 and four (15%) preferred display 4 (see Appendix 1). The participants preferred the display created according to the de-

sign principles and based on Luk's prototype display. The participants commented that formatting features such as use of bold typefaces, lists, labels, white space and justification improved the readability of the displays. They also noted that abbreviations, repetition, and too much information on the screen made the display difficult to read.

Lists can help people locate information quickly and efficiently. During the discussion, 18 of the 27 participants commented that lists increased their ability to quickly browse a display especially for the *Scope and content* element. These findings are consistent with the findings of earlier studies on OPAC design (Chan 1995).

The participants liked labels but they found some of the terms used in the labels confusing. They had particular difficulty with labels that were used in the library system. For example, they found the label publication information which was used in one system to describe the dates of creation element very confusing.
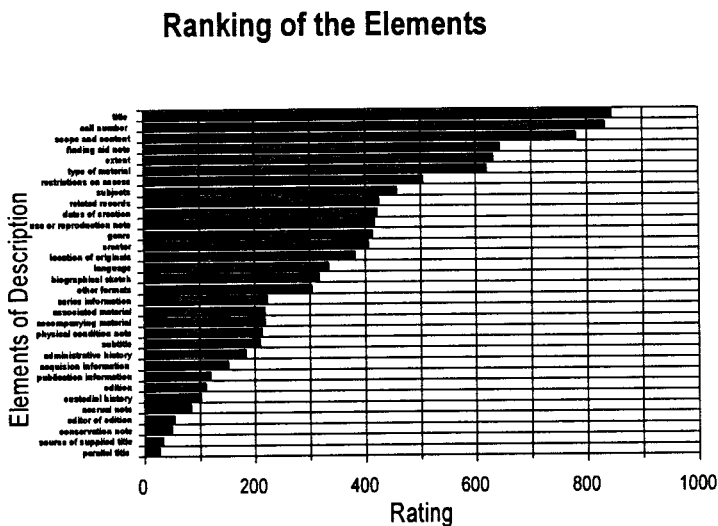
Ranking of the elements

The participants were asked to rank the elements of a display in their order of importance in the process of selecting archival material. The list of elements included all of the elements in the *Rules for Archival Description* at all levels of description. Every time an element was ranked number one it was assigned 32 points, if it was ranked second it received 31 points, etc. Elements that were not ranked received zero points. The rankings were compiled and appear in Table 1 below. The results from the rankings are also presented in Figure 1.

Table 1. Ranking of Elements

Ranking	Element	Score
1	Title	842
2	Call number (i.e., the number used to retrieve the material)	830
3	A description of the scope and content of the material	778
4	Notes on availability of finding aids (e.g., file lists, indexes)	641
5	Extent of the material (Number of photographs, number of pages	630
6	Type of material (e.g. maps, photographs)	616
7	Restrictions on accessing the material	503
8	Subjects	456
9	Related groups of records in the same repository	425
10	Dates of creation of the material	419
11	Terms of the use and/or reproduction of the material	415
12	Form or genre of the material,(e.g Diaries)	411
13	Creator of the Material	404
14	The locations of the originals, if the archives holds only copies	381
15	Language of the material	333
16	Biographical sketch of the person who created the material	314
17	Availability of material in other formats, (e.g. also available on optical disks)	302
18	Series information	221
19	Notes about other records by the same creator in other archives	217
20	Accompanying material	216
21	Notes on the physical condition of the material	212
22	Subtitle	208
23	History of the organization that created the material	182
24	Notes on how the material was acquired by the archives	151
25	Publication information, if published	117
26	Edition information (1st draft)	108
27	Description of anyone other than the creator who owned or controlled the material	99
28	Notes that indicate when other material by the same creator may be transferred to the archives	81
29	Editor of the edition	53
30	Notes on any conservation work done on the material	48
31	Source of the title if it was taken from somewhere other than the material	31
32	Main title in a second or other language	25

Figure 1. Ranking of the Elements

Ranking of the Elements

The elements *Title, Call number,* and *Scope and content* ranked first, second, and third overall, followed closely by *Finding aid note, Extent of the material,* and *Types of material.* Title was ranked first by 15 participants, and 12 participants ranked call number first.

In the middle range of overall ranking were the elements *Restrictions on access, Subjects, Related groups of records, Dates of creation, Terms of use and/or reproduction, Form or genre of the material, Creator of the material, Locations of the originals.*

Elements that were ranked as important by less than three participants were *Editor, Source of supplied title,* and *Parallel title.*

This is similar to the ranking of the bibliographic element in Luk's s study except archival description has many elements not relevant to library material. For example, library displays normally do not contain *Scope and content* elements or *Restrictions on access, Related groups of records, Terms of us/and or reproduction, or Location of original* notes.

Content

The participants considered the *Scope and content* element to be very important. Some wanted the *Scope and content* to contain lists of the series, while others preferred to have the element start with a short paragraph that provided a short overview of the material.

The participants commented that the *Biographical sketch* helped them identify sources relevant to their research. Short succinct biographies were preferred over long ones. Many participants wanted the *Bibliographical sketch* put at the end of the display.

The extent of the material was rated as 5th most important element, but many participants had problems interpreting extent statements. When asked if anything in the display was confusing, the participants commented.

> S22: I don't know about misleading, but what exactly is 12 metres; I'm assuming m stands for metres of textual records; it doesn't really tell me much of anything.

> S23: Yes, I had the same question, and I was laughing to myself and thinking is this twelve miles? But no, it was metres. Maybe archivists like to tell people that there's twelve metres but does it mean twelve metres high or twelve metres long?

Participants found the some of the notes very confusing. For example, they had difficulty with *Source of supplied title, Finding aid* and the *Accession note*. One participant commented:

> S33: "Source of supplied title: Title based on contents of the fonds." Well I would assume that to be true. It would not make sense to do otherwise. So I'm not quite sure why that's relevant to be noted? It just takes up space. The second one is accessions. I have no idea what that means.

Moreover, the use of the word fonds (word that RAD requires in the title) in the *Title* confused many of the participants. In each group, the participants were hesitant to admit they did not know

the meaning of the word until someone else brought it up. Only then did the rest of the group state that they did not know what fonds meant either. The comments about the fonds were made about 15 to 20 minutes after each session started. The presence of the word fonds presented barriers to understanding the rest of the description.

> S35: Oh, it's Margaret Laurence! It's our Margaret Laurence! It was the fonds that was confusing me.... I just didn't know what fonds... or Margaret Laurence fonds. I was just keeping quiet about that. But it took me away from the fact that we were talking about Margaret Laurence, I was so worried of the fonds... which makes me even more interested in what the moving image records is, because we don't get to see a lot of her.

Some thought fonds was a name.

> S53: At the very top it says "FONDS: MARGARET LAURENCE FONDS". It seems like this is her entire name.

> S51: Actually, I had a big argument at the Archives of Ontario the other day about how come everybody has the same last name.

However, when the meaning of the word was explained, all participants agreed that it was important information that should be conveyed in an archival description.

Some participants suggested that a glossary that explained archival terminology would be extremely helpful.

The content and format of the displays presented certain barriers to accessing the material. The frustration of having to use a display with terminology that one does not understand was summed up this way.

> S25: If it's [the goal of archival description] making material accessible to people, then don't build these

barriers between the ordinary people and the material. The other image I've used is... I have needle work, and it looks very patterned on one side, you turn it over, it's a crazy quilt. So it makes sense to the archivist, in terms of what they have to do in order to turn the material to the people. But don't turn the crazy quilt side out because on your side it looks neatly printed, but to us all that's spread on the back doesn't make any sense at all. So you have to turn it around and write it in language that we can understand, and get to us.

During the last part of the session the participants created their own ideal display. The participants wanted the *Call number*, *Title* and *Scope and content* at the beginning of the record and the *Biographical sketch* near the end. They wanted a *Scope and content* which contained a brief overview followed by a list of the series. One group wanted the list to contain the titles of the series, their extent, their dates and their call numbers, if appropriate. They also wanted to be able to move from the brief description to a fuller description. This group wanted each screen to display a header with the call number and title of the fonds. Their ideal display is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Ideal Display, Group 1, Screens 1 and 2

Call #   Title

Creator: Date/Period of Creation:

Language:

Scope and Content:
(Paragraph Style - Brief)

List of series
Series   Extent   Date   Number
(Hyperlinked to more detailed screens)

Call #   Title

Access Conditions
    Usage
    Accessiblitily - condition of the material
                    ILL
                    Reproduction

Related Material
    -here
    -elsewhere (hyperlink to other archives pages)

How and when acquired

Biographical sketch

Conclusion

The results from this study confirmed that archival users prefer a display created according to design guidelines over the displays from existing systems. The findings about preferred formatting features of the displays are consistent with other user studies of bibliographic displays and with design guidelines. Furthermore, the results showed that archival users have specific preferences concerning archival displays in terms of content and format. Some of the "ideal displays" they created could be used for future prototypes.

In terms of the content of the displays, the results of this study showed that the elements in existing archival displays meet most of the needs of our users. However, the users also suggested the inclusion of glossaries, online help, electronic finding aids, and indexes, which are presently missing in existing systems. Some problems with the overall use of archival terminology in the displays (e.g., dates, and labels) were identified.

The findings of this study provide insights into the use and usefulness of existing displays. They also suggest that archivists should incorporate the findings from OPAC research into the design of their systems. However, there are areas where archivists will have to conduct their own studies because the needs of archival users will be similar but not the same as those of library users. Research on multi-level description is needed to discover how to display the hierarchical nature of archival material. Archivists need to study their users to discover what the users understand about archival displays and systems. Archivists need a better understanding of their users' needs so that archival displays are not "crazy quilts." With appropriate research, archivists will be able to turn archival displays around. They will be able to create displays that are written in a language that patrons understand and with which they feel comfortable . These displays will present the "neatly printed" side to archival users.

References

Bureau of Canadian Archivists. Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards. 1990. *Rules for Archival Description*. Ottawa: Bureau of Canadian Archivists.

Chan, J. 1995. An Evaluation of Displays of Bibliographic Records in OPACs in Canadian Academic and Public Libraries. Master's thesis. University of Toronto.

Cherry, J. M., and L.C. Howarth. 1994. Towards More Useful Bibliographic Displays. Unpublished proposal funded by SSHRC. File # 410-94-0111.

Luk, A. T. 1996. *Evaluating Bibliographic Displays From the Users' Point of View: A Focus Group Study*. Master of Information Science Research Project Report. Toronto: Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto. Internet WWW page, at URL: < http://www.fis.utoronto.ca/research/displays/annie2.htm >

Spindler, R.P. and R. Pearce-Moses. 1993. Does AMC mean 'Archives made confusing'? Patron understanding of USMARC AMC catalog records." *American Archivist* 56: 330-341.

Young and Wiltshire Management Consultants. 1992. *Evaluation of the Control, Sub-activity at the National Archives of Canada: Final Report.*

Appendix 1

Display 1

Screen 1

F0341
Margaret Laurence fonds

Title:
    Margaret Laurence fonds
Publication info:
    1953-1987
Physical description:
    12 m of textual records. - 18 audio cassettes. - ca. 100 photographs : b&w and col. ; 28.5
    x 20 cm or smaller
Biographical note:
    Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and educated at
    United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947). Following her marriage to John
    Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana).
    In the 1950s. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to England in 1962 and
    returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario. Laurence served
    as a writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was named chancellor of
    Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981. Laurence was a founding member of
    the Writers Union of Canada, but left the organization in a dispute over its acceptance of
    money from the Canadian government. Active in peace organizations and intensely
    interested in women's concerns. Laurence views and works did cause controversy. Her

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Screen 2

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    money from the Canadian government. Active in peace organizations and intensely
    interested in women's concerns, Laurence views and works did cause controversy. Her
    books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community. This group
    tried to have books removed from the school curriculum because of their alleged
    pornographic content. Margaret Laurence was the author of five novels, including the
    Manawaka quartet ('The stone angel,' 'A jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,' 'The diviners,'),
    short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's books. She was named a Companion
    of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.
Abstract:
    The fonds consists of the following series: S1006. Correspondence, 1962-1987; S1007.
    Financial records, 1961-1986; S1008. Manuscripts, 1953-1986; S1009. Printed materials,
    1963-1987; S1010. Personal files, 1965-1987; S1011. Graphic materials, [196-?]-1987;
    S1012. Sound recordings, 1973-1987; S1013. Moving image records, 1978-1987.
Access restriction:
    Access is unrestricted.
Terms of use/reprod:
    Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing access to the Margaret Laurence fonds
    must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access is granted.
Associated materials:
    There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library.
Index note:
    File and item lists available

Display 2

<div style="border:1px solid">

CALL NUMBER: 341-1

TITLE: Margaret Laurence fonds. - 1953-1987

EXTENT: 12 m of textual records. 260 photographs and other graphic materials (posters, drawings, etc.). 35 sound recordings. 6 moving image recordings

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS: Access is unrestricted

TERMS OF USE AND REPRODUCTION: Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing to access to the Margaret Laurence fonds must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access is granted.

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The fonds consists of the following series: S1006 Correspondence, 1962-1987; S1007 Financial records, 1961-1986; S1008 Manuscripts, 1953-1986; S1009 Printed materials, 1963-1987; S1010 Personal files, 1965-1987; S1011 Graphic materials, [196-?]-1987; S1012 Sound recordings, 1973-1987; S1013 Moving image records, 1978-1987.

FINDING AIDS: File and item lists available.

RELATED RECORDS: See Fonds 401, Enid Rutland fonds; F432, Clara Thomas fonds, and F447, Adele Wiseman fonds.

ASSOCIATED RECORDS: There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library.

Display 3

Screen 1

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[[_]---------------------------------------------------------------++
||FONDS 341                                                        ||
||                                                                 ||
||MARGARET LAURENCE FONDS. - 1953-1987. - 12 m of textual records.  260    ||
+| photographs and other graphic materials (posters, drawings, etc.).  35  |+
|| sound recordings.  6 moving image recordings.                    |
||                                                                  |
||   Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba |
|| and educated at United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947).  Following|
|| her marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold|
|| Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950s.  Laurence returned to Canada |
|| in 1957. She moved to England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In |
|| 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario.  Laurence served as a    |
|| writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was named |
+| chancellor of Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981. Laurence |
|| was a founding member of the Writers Union of Canada, but left the |
|| organization in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian |
|| government.  Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in |
|| women's concerns, Laurence views and works did cause controversy. Her |
|| books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted |
|| community. This group tried to have books removed from the school |
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Screen 2

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[[_]---------------------------------------------------------------++
|| curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content. Margaret ||
|| Laurence was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka quartet ||
|| ('The stone angel,' 'A jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,' 'The   ||
+| diviners,'), short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's books. |+
|| She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded |
|| the Molson Prize in 1975.                                        |
||                                                                  |
||    The fonds consists of the following series: S1006  Correspondence, |
|| 1962-1987; S1007  Financial records, 1961-1986; S1008  Manuscripts, |
|| 1953-1986; S1009 Printed materials, 1963-1987; S1010  Personal files, |
|| 1965-1987; S1011  Graphic materials, [196-?]-1987; S1012  Sound |
|| recordings, 1973-1987; S1013  Moving image records, 1978-1987.   |
||                                                                  |
+|    Title based on contents of the fonds.                         |
|    Access is unrestricted.                                        |
|    Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing to access to the Margaret|
| Laurence fonds must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access |
| is granted.                                                       |
|    File and item lists available.                                 |
|    There are Margaret Laurence manuscripts at McMaster University Library.|
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Display 4

Screen 1

Margaret Laurence fonds.

Dates of Creation: 1953-1987.
Physical Description: 12 m of textual records. – 260 photographs and other graphic materials (posters, drawings, etc.). -- 35 sound recordings. – 6 moving image recordings.

Biographical History

Margaret Laurence (1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and educated at United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947). Following her marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950s. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in Lakefield, Ontario. Laurence served as a writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in 1969 and was named chancellor of Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981. Laurence was a founding member of the Writers Union of Canada, but left the organization in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian government. Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's concerns, Laurence views and works did cause controversy. Her books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community. This group tried to have books removed from the school curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content. Margaret Laurence was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka quartet ('The stone angel,' 'A jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,' 'The diviners,'), short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's books. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.

Screen 2

Scope and Contents

The fonds consists of the following series:

S1006 Correspondence, 1962-1987
S1007 Financial records, 1961-1986
S1008 Manuscripts, 1953-1986
S1009 Printed materials, 1963-1987
S1010 Personal files, 1965-1987
S1011 Graphic materials, [196-?]-1987
S1012 Sound recordings, 1973-1987
S1013 Moving image records, 1978-1987

Notes

Source of supplied title:

Title based on contents of the fonds.

Accessions:

ML1-5; 1989-039; 1989-046; 1990-012; 1992-015; 1990-025.

Access Condition:

Effective 1 January 1995, researchers wishing access to the Margaret Laurence fonds must sign the

Display 5

Screen 1

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FONDS 341    SERIES 0      SUBSERIES 0
FONDS:  MARGARET LAURENCE FONDS
INCLUSIVE DATES: 1953-1987.
EXTENT: 12 m of textual records and other material.
ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OR BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Margaret Laurence
(1926-1987), writer, was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and educated at
United College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA 1947).  Following her
marriage to John Laurence (1947), she lived in Somaliland and the
Gold Coast (now Somalia and Ghana), in the 1950s.  Laurence
returned to Canada in 1957.  She moved to England in 1962 and
returned to Canada in 1969.  In 1974 she settled in Lakefield,
Ontario.  Laurence served as writer-in-residence at the University
of Toronto in 1969 and was named chancellor of Trent University
(Peterborough, Ontario) in 1981.  Laurence was a founding member of
the Writers Union of Canda, but left the organization in a dispute
over its acceptance of money from the Canadian government.  Active
in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's
concerns, Laurence's views and works did cause controversy.  Her
books drew criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted
community.  This group tried to have books removed from the school
curriculum because of their alleged pornographic content.  Margaret
Laurence was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka
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Screen 2

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quartet ('The stone angel,' 'A jest of God,' 'The fire dwellers,'
'The diviners,'), short stories, essays, travel and children's
books.  She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and
was awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.
    SCOPE NOTE: The fonds consists of the following series: S1006
Correspondence, 1962-1987; S1007 Financial records, 1961-1986;
S1008 Manuscripts, 1953-1986; S1009 Printed materials, 1963-1987;
S1010 Personal files, 1965-1987; S1011 Graphic materials,
[196-?]-1987; S1012 Sound recordings, 1973-1987, S10013 Moving
image records, 1978-1987.
    SEE FINDING AID NUMBER INDICATED FOR COMPLETE LISTING OF
RECORDS: File and item lists available.
    TO ORDER FILES, USE FINDING AID IF AVAILABLE, IF NOT USE
LOCATION NUMBER:  ML1-5; 1989-039; 1989-046;1992-012;1990-025.
    RESTRICTIONS TO ACCESS: Access is unrestricted.  Effective 1
January 1995, researchers wishing to access the Margaret Laurence
fonds must sign the Access and Use Agreement form before access is
granted.
    DETAILED PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 260 photographs and other graphic
materials (posters, drawings, etc.), 35 sound recordings, 6 moving
image recordings.
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Display 6

Screen 1

Fonds Description
F 1289
Margaret Laurence fonds

Dates of creation: 1953-1987

12 m. of textual records
260 photographs
3 drawings
35 audio reels
6 reels of motion picture film

Biographical Sketch
Margaret Laurence (1926-1987) was a Canadian writer of fiction who
authored five novels.

She was born in Neepawa, Manitoba and education and United College in
Winnipeg, Manitoba (BA, 1947). Following her marriage to John Laurence
(1947), she lived in Somaliland and the Gold Coast (now Somalia and
Ghana), in the 1950's. Laurence returned to Canada in 1957. She moved to

Screen 2

England in 1962 and returned to Canada in 1969. In 1974 she settled in
Lakefield, Ontario.

Laurence served as a writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto in
1969 and was name chancellor of Trent University in 1981. Laurence was a
founding member of the Writer's Union of Canada, but left the organization
in a dispute over its acceptance of money from the Canadian Government.

Active in peace organizations and intensely interested in women's
concerns, Laurence views and works caused controversy. Her books drew
criticism from certain elements in Laurence's adopted community when a
group attempted to have books removed from the school curriculum because
of their alleged pornographic content.

Margaret Laurence's was the author of five novels, including the Manawaka
quartet of novels ("The stone angel", "A jest of God," "The fire dwellers,"
and "The diviners"), short stories, essays, travel memoirs and children's
books. She was named a Companion of the Order of Canada (1971) and was
awarded the Molson Prize in 1975.