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Casey Would! Dr. Casey A. Wood, the McGill Library's Forgotten Benefactor
Le cas de Casey. Le Dr Casey A. Wood, contributeur oublié de la Bibliothèque de l'Université McGill

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Rare Birds and Rare Books: Casey Albert Wood and the McGill Libraries

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Article abstract

The world-renowned physician, bibliophile, and McGill alumnusSir William Osler (1849–1919) wrote that "a library represents the mind of its collector, his fancies and foibles, his strength and weakness, his prejudices and preferences."* Osler's own collection of medical and related works formed the nucleus of McGill's Osler Library of the History of Medicine. Opened in 1929, the Osler Library is renowned for both its collection and the preservation of its founder's memory and ethos. In 1920, Dr. Casey Wood (1856–1942), a friend and contemporary of Osler's, created the Wood Library of Ornithology and the Blacker Library of Zoology at McGill. The rare natural history material from these two libraries, now the Blacker-Wood Natural History Collection in the university's Rare Books and Special Collections, rivals the Osler in its depth and rarity. Despite this, its founder remains largely unknown. Although it is understandable—Osler was as famous and loved as Wood was aggressive, overbearing, and vain—it is unfortunate. Wood devoted tremendous energy, drive, and money, over decades, to build one of the best natural history collections around. He also hoped that these libraries would engage in public education and encourage people to respect and enjoy the natural world. Although he could be an unpleasant person, it is useful to know something about the man whose collection so strongly bears his stamp.

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Abstract

The world-renowned physician, bibliophile, and McGill alumnus Sir William Osler (1849–1919) wrote that "a library represents the mind of its collector, his fancies and foibles, his strength and weakness, his prejudices and preferences."* Osler's own collection of medical and related works formed the nucleus of McGill's Osler Library of the History of Medicine. Opened in 1929, the Osler Library is renowned for both its collection and the preservation of its founder's memory and ethos. In 1920, Dr. Casey Wood (1856–1942), a friend and contemporary of Osler's, created the Wood Library of Ornithology and the Blacker Library of Zoology at McGill. The rare natural history material from these two libraries, now the Blacker-Wood Natural History Collection in the university's Rare Books and Special Collections, rivals the Osler in its depth and rarity. Despite this, its founder remains largely unknown. Although it is understandable—Osler was as famous and loved as Wood was aggressive, overbearing, and vain—it is unfortunate. Wood devoted tremendous energy, drive, and money, over decades, to build one of the best natural history collections around. He also hoped that these libraries would engage in public education and encourage people to respect and enjoy the natural world. Although he could be an unpleasant person, it is useful to know something about the man whose collection so strongly bears his stamp.

Résumé

Sir William Osler (1849–1919), physicien de renommée internationale, bibliophile et diplômé de l'Université McGill, a autrefois écrit qu'« une bibliothèque représente l'esprit du collectionneur, ses

* *Bibliotheca Osleriana: A Catalogue of Books Illustrating the History of Medicine and Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), xxi.

fantaisies et ses travers, ses forces et ses faiblesses, ses préjugés et ses prédilections. »* Sa propre collection médicale et ses travaux connexes formaient d'ailleurs le noyau de la Bibliothèque Osler d'histoire de la médecine à l'Université McGill. Créée en 1929, la Bibliothèque Osler tient sa réputation aussi bien des collections de son fondateur que de la préservation de sa mémoire et de sa philosophie. En 1920, le Dr Casey Wood (1856–1942), ami et contemporain de M. Osler, fonda la Bibliothèque ornithologique Wood et la Bibliothèque zoologique Blacker de l'Université McGill. Le matériel exceptionnel d'histoire naturelle de ces deux entités, maintenant regroupées sous le nom de collection d'histoire naturelle Blacker-Wood, dans le Département des livres rares et collections spéciales de l'Université McGill, rivalise avec celui de M. Osler de par son ampleur et la rareté de ses pièces. Malgré tout, son fondateur reste largement méconnu. Bien que ce soit compréhensible—M. Osler était aussi estimé et réputé que M. Wood était belliqueux, autoritaire et vaniteux—ceci n'en reste pas moins regrettable. M. Wood dévoua une énergie et une ardeur sans pareilles ainsi que des sommes considérables, sur des dizaines d'années, pour constituer l'une des meilleures collections d'histoire naturelle qui soit. Il espérait également que ces bibliothèques favoriseraient la sensibilisation du public et inciteraient au respect et à l'appréciation du monde de la nature. Même s'il s'avérait être une personne antipathique, il reste néanmoins important de connaître l'homme dont les collections portent si bien la marque.

Casey toils with heartfelt devotion,
Casey does much, would do more if he could.
His career is one constant promotion,
Would Casey like to be General? Casey would!

—poem on Casey Wood's promotion to Colonel,
US Army Medical Corps, 1919[1]

The world-renowned physician, bibliophile, and McGill alumnus Sir William Osler (1849–1919) wrote: "A library represents the mind of its collector, his fancies and foibles, his strength and weakness, his

[1] The poem was first published in *The Gazette* (Montreal). Cited in Casey Wood, "Some Recollections of a Long Life: Musings and Memories," 93, MSG 1203, Casey Albert Wood Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill Library (hereinafter "CAWC").

Figure 1. Casey Albert Wood (21 November 1856–26 January 1942), c. 1912. Casey Albert Wood Collection (MSG 1203), Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill Library.

prejudices and preferences."[2] Although one rarely feels compelled to disagree with the illustrious Osler, I must point out that there are exceptions to his dictum. One thinks of the libraries of many wealthy collectors. Often resplendent with biblio-treasures and trophies, these collections are frequently assembled with strong guidance from antiquarian booksellers and other experts. There are also libraries named after worthy individuals or organizations whose primary role was to furnish the funds needed to acquire or house a collection assembled by others. Osler's maxim is certainly relevant in those instances where an individual has been the driving force behind a library's formation, particularly when it includes selecting the contents. Because these collections bear the strong stamp of their founders, knowing something about their lives, goals, and collecting techniques provides one with a deeper, contextualized understanding of the libraries they created.

[2] *Bibliotheca Osleriana: A Catalogue of Books Illustrating the History of Medicine and Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), xxi.

A prime example would be Sir William Osler's own collection of historical medical works, the Bibliotheca Osleriana, which he donated to McGill in 1919. This assemblage of approximately eight thousand books and manuscripts became the nucleus of the present-day Osler Library of the History of Medicine. Osler had a very specific goal in mind for his collection, which was to educate and inspire the medical profession through its history. He particularly wanted to highlight the life and work of those whom he felt had made the greatest contributions to medicine. This would provide role models to students and practitioners, and make them feel as if they were standing on the shoulders of giants. This collection, especially because of its printed bibliography, has been influential in defining the key names and texts in medical history. Antiquarian book dealers often note if a title is listed in the Osler bibliography, as this confers additional legitimacy to the work. Both Osler and the library he founded are held in high global esteem, a century after his death.

Far less renowned is the founder of the Blacker-Wood Natural History Collection. Currently housed in the McGill Library's Rare Books and Special Collections, the Blacker-Wood is the amalgamation of the rare material from two former special collections: the Emma Shearer Wood Library of Ornithology and the Blacker Library of Zoology.[3] Both were established in 1920 and developed under the rather zealous direction of Dr. Casey Albert Wood (1856–1942). The rare ornithological material, in particular, can be considered as rich in its field as the Osler Library is in the history of medicine. Wood devoted significant time, energy, and finances into developing the

[3] There were several phases in each library's development. Both were originally established as research libraries in 1920, in the Redpath Library Building, and had contemporary monographs and periodical literature as well as historical material. In 1935, Emma Shearer Wood asked that her name be removed, so it became simply the Wood Library of Ornithology. At some point, the Blacker and Wood libraries were merged and became the Blacker-Wood Library of Zoology and Ornithology. In 1988, Blacker-Wood amalgamated with the Botany-Genetics Library to form the Blacker-Wood Library of Biology, located on the ground and basement floors of the 1953 Redpath Library building. In 2005, the library merged with the Health Sciences Library in the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building. At this point, rare material was moved into Rare Books and Special Collections as the Blacker Wood Natural History Collection, and newer purchases and selected items were moved to the renamed Life Sciences Library. The rest of the collection remained in the Redpath basement. Finally, the Life Sciences Library itself merged with the Schulich Library of Science and Engineering in 2013, and its collection moved into either the latter library or accessible storage.

libraries at McGill at an important period in the university's history. That Wood is one of the library's greatest benefactors, despite only having a tenuous connection to the university, makes his achievement particularly remarkable.

Wood's Early and Professional Life

Shortly after Wood's death, the *American Journal of Ophthalmology* reported: "On January 26th, 1942, there died in California, one who had created and occupied a unique position in the ophthalmologic and scientific world. Casey Albert Wood—student; practitioner; linguist; bibliophile; editor; traveler; author; friend."[4] This high praise from his professional colleagues underscored Wood's diverse accomplishments over a long and active life. It is relatively easy to piece together much of Casey Wood's life, since the library holds both the manuscript and some of the research notes for his unpublished autobiography.[5] There are also mountainous files of Wood's correspondence and other material held in various McGill archives, along with several published obituaries and related biographical pieces. Wood's autobiography, tentatively titled *Some Recollections of a Long Life*, was produced over several years during the 1930s. A relative, Edith Hayes, worked on it until ill health forced her to abandon the project in the early 1930s. His nephews Alan and S. Casey Wood III took over the task in 1936. They were expected to produce a draft of the autobiography, which Wood was then to have finalized. He planned to print five hundred copies for private circulation. Had it turned out well, he would have considered having it published, presumably with Oxford University Press, which appears on the manuscript's title page. The nephews spent several months writing and interviewing people about their memories of Wood, adding news clippings, illustrations, and other bits of information that they collected. Wood also contributed several reminiscences of his own. The disparate pieces were organized chronologically and typed out. The manuscript remains in this unfinished state; presumably, neither Wood nor the nephews were willing or able to complete it as a narrative. Although the frequent

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4 Burton Chance, "Casey Wood, 1856–1942," *American Journal of Ophthalmology* 25 (1942): 607–11.

5 Casey A. Wood, "Some Recollections of a long life," unpublished typescript, MSG 1203, CAWC.

praise for its subject makes it read, at times, like a parody of the genre, the manuscript nonetheless provides a great deal of biographical information not readily available elsewhere.

Casey Albert Wood was born on 21 November 1856, in Wellington, Ontario. His parents were American and they moved back to the United States after Casey left home. Like many sons of physicians, Wood followed his father's profession, moving to Montreal to study medicine at Bishop's University in 1874. Although based in the Eastern Townships area of Quebec, Bishop's had a medical school in the city. This was something of the "other" medical school in Montreal; a number of the students at Bishop's, such as women, could not study at McGill at the time. Wood wrote in his autobiography that Dr. George B. Shaw, a former assistant to his father who taught at Bishop's, convinced him to study there.[6] Clinical rotations at the Montreal General Hospital, among other occasions, brought Wood into contact, however, with a number of McGill medical professors, including a young Dr. William Osler and "several other men of importance."[7] In his final year, he was a clinical assistant to Dr. Thomas Roddick, the McGill professor and renowned surgeon, who was instrumental in introducing Joseph Lister's antiseptic surgical procedures to Canada.

Figure 2. Even in 1946, Pointe-Sainte-Charles was an impoverished area. Photo: Richard Arless/Library and Archives Canada (PA-43877).

6 Wood, "Some Recollections," 73.
7 Ibid.

In *Some Recollections of a Long Life*, Wood described the difficulties he had in establishing his practice after he graduated from medical school in 1877. There was stiff competition among physicians catering to the more prosperous strata of Montreal society. It was especially difficult for a newly minted doctor to compete with the well-connected physicians already serving the Montreal elite. Wood's solution was to move his practice from 32 Radegonde Street, near Victoria Square in the fashionable Beaver Hall Hill area, to Point St. Charles (now Pointe-Saint-Charles), a largely working-class district in southwestern Montreal. Many of the area's inhabitants worked in the Grand Trunk Railway's extensive yards and shops. Wood was able to make a considerable income there not by charging high fees but from driving himself hard to serve a large number of patients. He noted that, "for five or six years I worked, per force, day and night at my profession taking very few holidays … Very soon I had a large practice of mixed character including major (railroad) surgery, maternity cases in plenty (for several years my average of deliveries exceeded 200 annually) and every variety of medical practice. My income exceeded many of my supposedly more fortunate colleagues who had gained a foothold in the more aristocratic regions of 'up town'; I was prosperous, kept two horses, sleighs and carriages suited to my position and was generally regarded as one of the 'coming men.'"[8]

Wood described how he would work literally night and day. Like many other general practitioners of the era, he did obstetrics, minor surgery, and other kinds of work later performed by specialists. Sometimes he would work through the night, delivering up to four babies, and would occasionally go days without having time to change his clothes.[9] He was appointed surgeon to the Grand Trunk Railway, the Beaver Club, the Odd Fellows, and the Foresters. He supplemented his practice by teaching chemistry and pathology at Bishop's and contributing to professional periodicals. A friend from the time described him as "very energetic, very popular, had many irons in the fire, was quick of speech and mentally and physically alert, and that he never knew a man who could do so much."[10] He also found time to be socially and romantically active. In 1886, he married Emma Shearer. This was a good marriage in two senses of

8 Ibid., 75.

9 Ibid., 89. Although readers may marvel at his hard work, as perhaps he expected, one should also feel concerned about his rather imperfect grasp of the germ theory and the risk this posed to his patients.

10 Ibid.

the term. Childless, the couple were constant companions in later life, travelling the world for many months at a time. Emma Shearer was also a good catch for an ambitious young man because she was the daughter of James Shearer, a prosperous timber merchant, and the future aunt of the Hollywood movie star Norma Shearer.

Casey Wood's nephews interviewed Dr. Frank Richardson England, who assisted Wood for three years in Point St. Charles. Dr. England graduated from Bishop's in 1885, incidentally winning the Gold Medal endowed by Casey Wood for the graduate with the highest marks. England had a successful medical career and married Grace Octavia Ritchie, who was valedictorian of the first class of women to graduate from McGill. She also received her medical degree at Bishop's, becoming the first woman to graduate in medicine in Quebec. The notes from Dr. England's interview are collated with other background material and a copy of the autobiography given to McGill by one of the nephews several years after Wood's death. The notes show that England's comments were only partially incorporated into the manuscript, without attribution. Even if he read the draft autobiography, Wood most likely never realized that England thought he was a "hustler," as well as full of energy. The interview notes also show that England considered Wood an opportunist, who "wrote to people who could be of service to him. Didn't waste time over people who didn't matter." England estimated that Wood earned five to eight thousand dollars per year, and that his marriage was financially beneficial, as he believed Emma Shearer inherited $100,000 or more from her father.[11]

Ophthalmology

The year of his marriage, 1886, was also a propitious year for Casey Wood professionally. Grand Trunk employees frequently suffered eye injuries from metal splinters and other causes, which piqued Wood's interest in ophthalmology. That year, he sold his Montreal practice and enrolled in the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary and Post-Graduate Medical School. He also undertook further post-graduate training in Europe, notably Berlin and London. Returning to the United States, Wood realized that competition in New York was too stiff, so he moved to Chicago. Like his earlier decision to locate

[11] Ibid., inserted note.

in Point St. Charles, Wood saw an opportunity to advance by going where there was less competition. In Chicago, he established a very lucrative practice, which he combined with teaching and research. In the autobiography, one of Wood's oldest friends, George Iles, attributed his success in Chicago as "due to his rare skill and acute observation, to his STERLING GOOD SENSE."[12] Wood took over the practice of an established ophthalmologist and developed it into a large eye clinic with several doctors in different sub-specialties. "Then I settled in Chicago to practice (until 1917) ophthalmology," Wood wrote years later, "in which pursuit I have been unusually successful, having probably had the largest clientele (and income) of my U.S. colleagues. There I taught and wrote constantly and made many friends of all ranks … I was attached in Chicago to many hospitals, including (now on honorary staff) the best i.e. most aristocratic and exclusive St. Lukes."[13]

Among his teaching posts were professor of ophthalmology at the University of Chicago and head of ophthalmology at Northwestern University. His bibliography lists close to three hundred publications written between 1875, when he was a medical student, and 1920, when he retired from practising medicine.[14] Almost all of these publications were on ophthalmological topics, including several important monographs. He also edited the monumental eighteen-volume *American Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Ophthalmology*[15] as well as professional journals. After the United States entered the First World War in 1917, Wood volunteered for full-time service with the United States Army Medical Corps. (The British Royal Army Medical Corps had turned him down for active service when he tried to enlist.) His two years with the army were varied, to say the least. Among his duties was testing the eyesight of prospective pilots. In the Surgeon General's Office, he was an author and editor in the division responsible for producing the official medical history of the war. He retired with the rank of colonel and, even though he was a non-combatant, non-career military man, he seemed to enjoy using the title Colonel Wood.

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12 Ibid., 93. Emphasis in the original.

13 Ibid., 121.

14 See: Effie C. Astbury, *Casey A. Wood (1856–1942): Ophthalmologist, Bookman, Ornithologist: A Bio-Bibliography*, Occasional Paper 7 (Montreal: Graduate School of Library Science, McGill University, 1981).

15 Casey A. Wood, *The American Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Ophthalmology* (Chicago: Cleveland Press, 1913).

Collecting

Throughout his life, Casey Wood showed an interest in collecting more than fees, influential friends, and prestigious appointments. In a letter to Dr. William W. Francis, the first librarian of the Osler Library, he described the influence Sir William had on him. It is a charming letter that exudes the warmth of a fond memory shared between old friends about their mutual hero. Looking back from the last year of his life, Wood recounted the time when he and his wife sailed across the Atlantic with the Osler family, in 1899 or 1900:

> We talked on every subject under the sun, including cabbages and kings, and I, sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, was daily refreshed and instructed. Principally, of course, I was encouraged to continue my omnium gatherum of bound books, manuscripts, reprints, letters, paintings, drawings and so forth, but Prof. Osler advised me henceforth to concentrate on ophthalmology and medico-historical items, and not to spread myself too thin over this and that, hither and yon. This advice (if you will include ornithology) I recognized as of the best and I have since followed it as well as I could, so that "it presses to my memory like damned, guilty deeds to sinners' minds", as another Bill hath said.[16]

That Wood, like so many others, held Osler in affectionate reverence is evident in this letter. His devotional acts were many. For example, to celebrate Osler's seventieth birthday, in 1919 (Osler's last, as it turned out), Wood helped to produce a two-volume festschrift[17] and co-edited a collection of poetry for physicians.[18] After Osler's death, he contributed an article on his student memories to the Osler memorial issue of the *Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums*.[19]

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16 Casey A. Wood to William W. Francis, 30 July 1941, P155, W. W. Francis Fonds, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University. Underlining in the original.

17 *Contributions to Medical and Biological Research: Dedicated to Sir William Osler, Bart., M.d., F.r.s., in Honour of His Seventieth Birthday, July 12, 1919* (New York: P. B. Hoeber, 1919).

18 Fielding H. Garrison and Casey A. Wood, *A Physician's Anthology of English and American Poetry* (Oxford: Humphrey Milford and Oxford University Press, 1920).

19 Casey A. Wood, "Student Reminiscences from Montreal Period," in "Sir William Osler Memorial Number: Appreciations and Reminiscences," ed. Maude E.

Osler seems to have influenced Wood not only in how to collect, but also in what to do with the collection. Around 1910, Osler made it clear to Wood and others that he would one day donate his collection of historical medical works to McGill. The Osler Library of the History of Medicine eventually opened in 1929, ten years after Osler's death, as it took almost a decade to produce a detailed catalogue of the collection. Osler insisted that the library be accessible to all interested medical people, not just McGill affiliates, and that a printed bibliography of the collection be produced to guide those interested in the subject. Shortly after Osler's announcement, Wood began donating his ophthalmological books to the McGill Medical Library. In 1911, he gave the library 1,500 historical volumes dating from 1489 to 1890. His remaining two thousand volumes came to McGill about a decade later. He also set up a $3,000 endowment to buy contemporary ophthalmological works and gave an additional $1,850 to buy foreign journals.[20] His goal was to create an outstanding scientific research library, which he rightly saw as requiring comprehensive periodical literature collections as well as contemporary and historical books. He explained this in a 1934 letter to the McGill Medical Library's director, Dr. C. F. Wylde. The letter is worth quoting in some detail, as the same philosophy guided him when developing the Wood Library of Ornithology and the Blacker Library of Zoology:

> I need not repeat to you, who are deeply in sympathy with my own feelings on the matter, that complete files of periodicals and serials of all dates and in all languages form by far the most important titles in any library—especially any medical library—that aspires to first class university rank. Textbooks of medical knowledge and the latest information on progress are to be found in periodicals; and of these you already have a collection of which any library may well be proud. But, like Oliver Twist we call for more and I, with a personal interest in the matter, may be depended upon to do what I can to assist in acquiring all the desiderata in the lists you have sent me.[21]

Abbott, *Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums and Journal of Technical Methods* 9 (1926): 178–79.

20 Martha Benjamin, "The McGill Medical Library 1829–1929" (PhD diss., McGill University, 1960): 59–60.

21 Casey A. Wood to C. F. Wylde, 10 December 1934, RG 4, Board of Governors, McGill University, McGill University Archives (hereinafter MUA).

Although Casey Wood's interest in ophthalmology and medical history persisted throughout his life, the second decade of the twentieth century saw a major shift in his collecting habits and, indeed, his life in general. This change was a product of his lifelong love of nature. His sister Edith reminisced that, as a boy, Casey "was a happy little fellow, and loved flowers and nature, and especially he loved birds. His later love of bird life was evinced at this early age when many a time he came home with a blackened eye from a scrimmage with the boys to protect his bird friends from the nest robbers."[22] His avian affection seems to have been reciprocal. His obituary in the *American Journal of Ophthalmology* described an interesting experience at a zoo. The author noted that Wood "had been all his life a true lover of birds, and had an uncanny power over them, even in the wilds of the jungle. In visiting the aviary at the Zoological Gardens … as he would approach the cage, it was observed that a drooping, disconsolate individual, shrinking in the corner, would, as by magic, rouse itself and come fluttering to the bars chirping and calling as it might have done had it been in its native forest."[23]

It is not surprising that his professional and personal interests would eventually merge into the study of the eyesight of birds. His first major publication in this field, in 1917, was *The Fundus Oculi of Birds*.[24] In the introduction, Wood argued that it was beneficial to study birds' vision because of their superior eyesight. He had an immersive approach to ornithology that required (or at least justified) much travelling as well as voracious collecting of contemporary and historical ornithological literature. He wrote that it was essential to know something of general ornithology in order to understand the eyes and eyesight of birds. This required more than just studying books, illustrations, and skins. "If the image of an animal is to be permanently impressed upon the memory-sheet," he wrote in 1923, "it must be watched while going about its daily rounds and in its native neighborhood. Other and more fortunate observers possess a genius for acquiring this adhesive form of knowledge with less trouble, but for me, especially in this study of their vision, I must

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22 Wood, "Some Recollections," 30, 13.

23 Chance, "Casey Wood, 1856–1942."

24 Casey A. Wood, *The Fundus Oculi of Birds Especially As Viewed by the Ophthalmoscope: A Study in Comparative Anatomy and Physiology* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1917).

(appropriately, you may be tempted to interject) see as many birds as possible in the very act of seeing."[25]

The First World War postponed Wood's plans to retire from medical practice. Retirement in the usual sense of the word would have been impossible for a person like Wood, so that when his service with the US Army Medical Corps was winding down in 1919, he dove into his great passions of ornithology and collecting. Although their official residence, from 1920 on, was in Pasadena, California, the Woods and their niece, F. Marjorie Fyfe, spent much of the next twenty years travelling and living in Rome for long stretches of time. This enabled him to acquire rare and interesting items from around the world.

Philanthropy at McGill University

Between 1919 and his death in 1942, McGill University was the focus of much of Wood's ardour, energy, and largesse. McGill was not the obvious recipient of this generosity. Wood had more substantial and more recent affiliations with several other institutions, including professorships at the universities of Chicago, Northwestern, Illinois, and Bishop's. He never taught at McGill, and even his McGill medical degree was issued *ad eundum gradem* (at the same degree) in 1906, decades after he graduated from Bishop's, as a result of Bishop's medical school merging with McGill. Interestingly, this merger led to Wood's first known donation to McGill. He had previously endowed a gold medal at Bishop's that was awarded annually to the top medical graduate. After the amalgamation, he had the endowment transferred to McGill. Since McGill already awarded the Holmes Medal for the top graduate, the Wood medal became the prize for the most outstanding clinical performance by a student in the clerkship period. Fundamentally, Wood had a sentimental (and perhaps opportunistic) attachment to McGill. He expressed his feelings in a letter to the dean of medicine, Dr. Thomas Roddick, in 1905, when he offered McGill the endowment:

> I now have the sincere pleasure of offering the same medal endowment to the medical faculty of McGill University, among

[25] Casey A. Wood to Family, 12 November 1923, RG 40, Libraries, McGill University, MUA.

> the members of whose staff I am proud to number many friends. Perhaps you may have forgotten, although I have not, that quite a few of the McGill staff were my teachers and that among the most noted is the present Dean, whose clinical clerk I was in the Old Montreal General Hospital days. Consequently, I have always sustained the warmest feelings toward Old McGill and, in any event and although only a foster child, shall always regard as my adopted alma mater.[26]

Fourteen years later, Wood began what would be his greatest efforts for his "foster mater." In the summer of 1919, he informed the university librarian,[27] Charles Gould, that "my income has been reduced, by Army service and retirement since then from practice, to a fraction of its former amount … I have decided to spend any surplus over living expenses chiefly on McGill Libraries."[28] Intriguingly, Wood alludes to a scheme that he could not afford, but could perhaps persuade a wealthy friend to support. This may have been the desire to fund a zoological library, which Wood managed to engineer the following year. Sadly, the sixty-four-year-old Gould died suddenly shortly after receiving this letter and never knew of the improvements that were about to take place.

The State of the Libraries in 1920

Wood's involvement with the McGill Library would really take flight with Gould's successor, Dr. Gerhard Lomer. The thirty-seven-year-old Montrealer held both bachelor's and master's degrees from McGill. He went on to earn a doctorate at Columbia University, in 1910, and to occupy a variety of academic positions. He taught at McGill, Columbia, and Wisconsin universities, published, and was an academic editor before returning to McGill as university librarian, in 1920. Lomer was surely dismayed by the state of the libraries when he arrived. McGill had been going through a period of growth as a graduate-level, research-oriented university and professional school, particularly under

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[26] Casey A. Wood to Thomas Roddick, 13 June 1905, RG 4, Board of Governors, MUA.

[27] The University Librarian was head of the largest library, the Redpath, which encompassed many subjects. One notable exception was the medical library, run by the faculty. This arrangement was not uncommon in North American medical schools.

[28] Casey A. Wood to Charles Gould, July 1919, RG 40, MUA.

Figure 3. Redpath Library, McGill University, c. 1920.
Photo: Wm. Notman & Son, McCord Museum (VIEW-6495.0).

Sir William Peterson, principal from 1895 to 1919. Lord Strathcona, Sir William Macdonald, and other benefactors had helped to establish new teaching and research facilities and set up various endowments. McGill awarded its first PhD in 1909, in physics (the department where Sir Ernest Rutherford carried out the research that would eventually win him the Nobel Prize). The Faculty of Graduate Studies was also established during this period. Although the Redpath Library building was opened in 1893 and expanded in 1900, Dr. Lomer found that the facilities, collections, and staffing were inadequate to support McGill's expanding commitments.[29] He launched an ongoing public campaign (in annual reports and in articles in the *McGill News*, for example) to get the university and others to acknowledge and correct what he saw as gross deficiencies in the library system.

In his first year in office, Lomer was able to pitch the library's case to the public during the McGill Centennial capital campaign in

[29] Peter F. McNally, "Scholar Librarians: Gould, Lomer and Pennington," *Fontanus: From the Collections of McGill University* 1 (1988): 95–104.

November 1920.[30] The Centennial Publicity Committee produced a series of pamphlets on the campaign's objectives, which included improving the library. The library pamphlet underscored the central role the library played in carrying out the university's mission:

> The Library is *not* a collection of literary antiquities; it is *not* a dumping ground for books for which donors have no further use; it does *not* offer an easy position for lazy people.
>
> On the contrary, the library is the laboratory of the whole University; it buys (as far as limited funds allow) the latest books on the latest subjects; it preserves the spiritual inheritance of the race, both in the current speech of the modern world, as well as in the language of the historic past.
>
> To-day, the University Library is at a standstill—or the parting of the ways. It can either go on increasing in size and usefulness, steadily towards the ideal of what a University Library ought to be; or it can take the easiest way—go downwards and get nowhere.
>
> The Library is eager to go upwards and to increase its usefulness to the University and the community, but it is held back by limitations of space and funds. It is waiting for the helping hand of the Graduates and friends of McGill.
>
> With them the verdict rests.
>
> Shall it go up or down?[31]

Establishment of the Wood and Blacker Libraries

Given the suboptimal state of much of the library's holdings, one could appreciate how Casey Wood's offer to donate a first-rate ornithological collection and help build a comparable zoological one would have been very much welcomed. Wood was knocking on an open door. In fact, one could say that he and Lomer were birds of a feather, who saw eye to eye on what needed to be done. Writing from Oxford, Osler himself blessed Wood's efforts: "I am glad that you are going to stir up the library at McGill."[32] This must have

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30 King George IV issued McGill's charter in 1821, although teaching only commenced in 1829 when the Montreal Medical Institution became the Faculty of Medicine.

31 "The Library of McGill," RG 17, Development Office, McGill University, McGill University Archives. Italics in the original.

32 William Osler to Casey A. Wood, 9 July 1919, cited in Wood, "Some Recollections," 168.

encouraged Wood immensely. Never one to shy away from expressing his opinions, Wood was giving Lomer the benefit of his judgment of McGill's collections, even before the latter took over his post as university librarian. In response to a news clipping sent to him on 26 November 1919, Wood wrote that he was "much interested in the Audubon clipping. En passant, are you not glad that the McGill Library has a copy of the Elephant Folio[33]—even if it has such a poor collection of ornithological literature as a whole?"[34] In the same letter, Lomer learned that the first installment of the Emma Shearer Wood Ornithological Library had been sent to McGill a few days earlier. This was a complete run of *The Auk*, which Wood considered the most important journal in the field. He also committed himself to supplying funds to subscribe to as many current periodicals as possible.[35] This squares with Wood's belief that a scientific library required complete journal runs, regardless of the language, as well as monographs.

Wood's approach to collecting could be described as vacuum-like, with quality and comprehensiveness emphasized equally. He examined the holdings of a number of other libraries, sought out expert advice, and collected as many book catalogues and lists as he could find, seemingly to gather as many book and journal titles for purchase as possible. His work was of such a scale that he created a mimeographed letter to send out to publishers, distributors, and antiquarian booksellers notifying them of the Wood Library's establishment. It included a list of books and periodicals being sought, and a request that any recent lists and catalogues of any ornithological material for sale be sent to him. Lomer was sent an example of this letter. On it, Wood wrote that the letter had been mailed to forty dealers in the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany.[36]

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33 John James Audubon, W. H. Lizars, and Robert Havell, *The Birds of America: From Original Drawings* (London: John James Audubon, 1827). A group of Montreal citizens raised $1,000 to purchase the elephant folio for the university in 1861.

34 Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, November 1919, RG 40, MUA.

35 Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, February 1920, RG 40, MUA.

36 Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, 6 March 1920, RG 40, MUA (original letter: Casey Wood to Bernard Quaritch, 24 February 1920).

Figure 4. The Wood Library of Ornithology, 1938. Source: Edgar Erskine Hume, Ornithologists of the United States Army Medical Corps: Thirty-Six Biographies, Publications of the Institute of the History of Medicine, the Johns Hopkins University, 1st series: Monographs, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1942).

Visual material supplemented the new and out-of-print books and periodicals being acquired for the library. Both Wood and Lomer were dedicated to collecting prints, drawings, stereoscopic pictures, and lantern slides. Wood was keen that the reading room be decorated with prints and drawings, as can be seen in early photographs of the library. Both men wanted visual material, along with popular and children's books on birds, in order to fulfill another mission of the library: educating the general public about birds and the need for conservation. Letters between them, in 1920, discussed the sorts of material needed to do this. Wood recommended acquiring teaching aids distributed by the National Association of Audubon Societies, in New York.[37] Citing the popularity of a public lecture on birds given recently by a Mr. Job at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Lomer recommended they acquire sets of lantern slides, with the accompanying printed presentations. These could be circulated throughout Montreal and the province via McGill's Travelling Libraries network.[38]

[37] Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, 19 April 1920, RG 40, MUA.
[38] Gerhard Lomer to Casey A. Wood, 8 April 1920, RG 40, MUA.

As has been noted, the library collected historical as well as contemporary material. This was more difficult than buying in-print publications. Items, especially the more desirable ones, were often scarce and could be expensive. One of the most common methods of acquiring rare material was through antiquarian book dealers' catalogues, but based on his experience collecting rare ophthalmological works, Wood found this method unsatisfactory. He fumed to Lomer that others were given an unfair advantage: "By the time all the near-at-hand agents and other favored ones (who get galleys of the about-to-be-issued catalogues) have mauled over a collection only the crumbs (many of them mouldy and many others of elevated price) fall to the other seekers after ornithological bread."[39] A solution was to go on collecting tours of antiquarian bookshops in the United States and, especially, in Europe. This was (and is) a great way to uncover treasures unknown not only to the collector but also to the dealer (especially in pre-Internet days). In the summer of 1921, Wood and Lomer went on such a trip to Europe together. They estimated that they were adding about one hundred books per day to the library.[40] In an article written for the ornithological journal *The Ibis*, Wood described a particularly successful visit to an out-of-the-way shop not known for its antiquarian books. This piece shows the power of persistence in collecting, which Wood possessed to an extraordinary degree:

> Last year I, at a venture, enquired of a small but select London dealer in *objets d'art* whether he had any old drawings or paintings of birds or other animals. After a search in his cellar among much half-forgotten stock, he brought out a parcel containing about thirty small (10 × 14 in.) mounted and coloured drawings of Indian Fishes. Each mat bore an auctioneer's (or dealer's) printed number; a few were signed "E. G.," and upon still more were written legends (that Sir Henry Drake-Brockman later translated for me as Urdu) of the native names of the subjects portrayed. With the contents of this package I was shown a portfolio containing paintings in colour of a few Indian flowers, inscribed with both their English and systematic names. Pasted on one of the front pages of this portfolio was a leaf on which was written "Elizabeth Gwillim, Madras, 1800–1806." While I was examining these drawings and asking for more, a salesman happened along and said to the

39 Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, 26 March 1920, RG 40, MUA.

40 Research notes for Casey A. Wood, "Some Recollections," MSG 1203, CAWC.

Figure 5. The Bird Exhibit, Redpath Library, 1 May–15 September 1933. The exhibit featured paintings by Lady Elizabeth Gwillim (in display case). Source: McGill News.

proprietor, "I think that before I went to France in 1914 I saw a collection of bird paintings down stairs." Shortly afterwards this clerk appeared bearing an immense, dust-laden, but extremely well made portfolio about five feet broad and four high. I noticed that it was brass-bound, provided with a safety lock and had a wide wooden back. It must have weighed thirty pounds. On it were painted barely decipherable initials and a date—"E. G. K. 1800." The contents amazed and delighted me. I do not claim to be an art expert, but I realized at once that the paintings of Indian birds in the pockets of that giant container were by the hand of no mean draughtsman.

We are all well acquainted with the productions of brush and pencil wielded by "ladies of quality" during the Georgian and early Victorian periods, and I fully expected to find these amateurish efforts displayed in the bird drawings, despite the rather favourable impression made on me by the fishes and flowers. But I was

> agreeably mistaken; not only were the birds—so far as I then knew them—faithfully depicted as to plumage and posture, but the backgrounds were painted in a fashion worthy of Keulemans or Gronvold. They were in water colour, carefully finished and on fine paper. Some of them were mounted, and all were numbered in the handwriting of the artist …
>
> If the artist had lived a few years longer she would have made a gallery of Indian bird-pictures of the greatest scientific value, worthy to rank with the major collections of the world. Her sudden and early death, however, prevented the completion of the task, and probably consigned many of her best efforts to oblivion …
>
> It has been the proud belief of Americans—myself included—that it was our Audubon who first produced full-length portraits of the largest birds, and certainly the pictures of the male and female Wild Turkey, of Washington's Eagle etc, and their exact reproduction in the elephant folio bear out that claim. However, so far as originals are concerned, we must now concede the palm to Lady Gwillim, who, so far as I know, is the first artist-ornithologist to paint full-sized and exact pictures of any considerable number of birds whose length exceeds, say, 35 inches.[41]

The post-war period was a particularly good time to collect rare books, manuscripts, and prints. There were multiple sources for antiquarian material, especially in Western Europe. To begin with, there were numerous bookshops. These varied greatly in terms of their stock, their owners' expertise, and prices. As the Gwillim story shows, one could make excellent acquisitions in unexpected places. This was augmented by book auctions, direct offers from book dealers and, despite Wood's misgivings, buying from dealers' catalogues. Fuelling the trade was the fact that older and rare material was relatively plentiful and affordable. Many collections came on the market after the First World War, in part because many estates and private libraries were being sold off. Prices were also significantly lower than they would be a century later, even after accounting for inflation. Prices for rare books, like art, have soared at rates well above inflation over the past few decades, fuelled in part by increased demand and scarcity.

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[41] Casey A. Wood, "Lady (Elizabeth) Gwillim—Artist and Ornithologist," *The Ibis* 67 (July 1925): 594–99. Wood's assessment of the Gwillim paintings' importance was correct. They are now the subject of a major international research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, with participation from libraries, museums, and scholars from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and India.

The growth of universities, both in size and in number, since the post-Second World War baby boom has been a significant cause of this. Fortunately for McGill, Osler, Wood, and Lomer were acquiring material aggressively during what looks, from today's perspective, like a golden age for antiquarian collecting.

Wood's letter to Charles Gould in the summer of 1919 referred to a scheme that he could not afford but might be able to persuade a wealthy friend to support. Wood may have been hinting at an attempt to find a donor to stock and endow a zoological library. The library archives show that, in 1920, "Casey went to bat" to convince his friend Robert Roe Blacker to donate $40,000 to McGill to establish the Blacker Library of Zoology in honour of his wife, Nellie Canfield Blacker. Of this amount, $30,000 was dedicated to acquiring books, periodicals, and other material. The remaining $10,000 was endowed to provide a continuous source of funds to keep the collection up to date. The Blackers were friends of the Woods and lived near them in Pasadena. Robert Blacker was originally from Ontario, but had no affiliation with McGill before making the generous gift. According to *The Gazette*, one of the Montreal daily newspapers, Blacker settled on McGill because he wanted to support a Canadian university and had an interest in the natural sciences.[42] This more than suited Lomer, who wrote to Wood that "the gift meets an acute and long-felt need in our scientific resources, and his kindness in coming to our assistance will be appreciated by the whole University."[43] The structure of the Blacker Library, as set out in the memorandum establishing it, mirrored that of the Wood Library. Its principles were that the money would be spent on buying material and setting up an endowment; that the library would serve the general public as well as students and researchers; complete runs of periodicals would be acquired; and lists of desiderata would be compiled. An acquisition committee was named that, unlike the Wood Library, included a zoology professor in addition to Wood and Lomer.

The new libraries quickly built up impressive collections. Writing in 1922, Lomer quoted the opinion of an "English expert of zoological literature." The unnamed expert's assessment was that, "so far as Great Britain is concerned, McGill University Library, in its departments of general zoology and ornithology, is inferior only to that of the British Museum. It is worthy to rank with the library of

[42] "$40,000 Gift for Redpath Library," *The Gazette*, 13 October 1920.
[43] Gerhard Lomer to Casey A. Wood, 7 October 1920, RG 40, MUA.

the Zoological Society of London in these branches of science, and it is almost certainly superior in these respects to the library of any other British institution, not excepting the universities of Oxford and Cambridge."[44] High praise for the colony from the mother country! In recognition of his generosity and achievement, Wood received an honorary doctorate from the university during its 1921 centennial celebrations.

Other Efforts for the McGill Library

In the fall of 1920, Casey Wood went to bat yet again for the library. On 30 September 1920, he wrote to Lomer that he supported the latter's desire for improved collections and facilities. Wood felt that the best way to achieve this would be to attract more benefactors to donate special collections, like Osler and he had done. These signs of support could then, in turn, be used to convince a donor that a new library wing was needed. On this last point, Wood stated: "I have nothing to suggest except the usual array of wealthy Montrealers who ought to come forward and put up that wing. What is wrong with the Redpaths and their clan? Surely, having the general Library named after the family—and as I understand it they haven't lost money recently—why doesn't one or several of them make the addition?"[45]

October 1920 saw a flutter of activity, with Wood seeming to make personal appeals to people in Chicago and New York. On 7 October, Wood suggested to Lomer that they find a donor to build a completely new natural sciences library building, as opposed to adding an extension to the Redpath Library building. He estimated that this would cost about $500,000, including $100,000 as an endowed maintenance fund. Moreover, Wood felt that he "had such a donor in sight. Don't know whether he will 'come across' or not but think he may." Wood requested that Lomer have an architect draw up a rough sketch of a proposed building immediately, as he was planning to visit Montreal and wanted to present it to his "man." Wood also wanted to know what other special collections were needed in the $30,000 range. As he so delicately put it, "I have a victim in mind

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[44] Gerhard Lomer, "The Development of the Redpath Library," *McGill News* (June 1922): 3–6.

[45] Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, 30 September 1920, RG 40, MUA. Underlining in the original.

to furnish forth that need."[46] Although the record does not indicate whom, if anybody, Wood approached in person in Chicago, New York, or Montreal, it does document a letter-writing campaign. This began after Wood returned to New York, in mid-October. Writing from the Belmont Hotel, he told Lomer that he needed information because "I am preparing the attack on my first series of new victims. Please remember me in your petitions—both at matins and vespers."[47] Lomer, not surprisingly, was happy to oblige. He worked with McGill architect Percy Nobbs to finalize plans for the proposed natural sciences library building. After consulting with others, Lomer wrote that Canadiana and music were two subject areas that should be developed. He also provided Wood with the answers to what could seem like rather odd questions, such as the name of the mother of the Stewart brothers to whom Sir William Macdonald had left his money. No doubt, Wood's ability to bag Blacker, as well as his own generosity, put Lomer in an uncharacteristically upbeat frame of mind: "I am confident that, if you put the case to the benefactor whom you have in view in your usual forceful manner, there will be no doubt that you will be indirectly in the future as great a benefactor to the Library as you have been directly in the past. I wish that your prospective donor would see this so clearly that he would be moved to inscribe the new building 'The Casey A. Wood Library of the Natural Sciences,' because if we ever get such a building it will be thanks to you."[48]

Lomer was not given to sycophancy, so his appreciation, and expectations, must have been high indeed, but they were disappointed. Wood wrote to Walter and Howard Stewart that they should build the "Marianne Howard Stewart Library for Scientific Research" for their mother, since "I cannot think of any philanthropy, or any form of giving that will more honorably and effectually preserve the memory of a good woman—one who 'stood by the ship in all weathers'—than such a donation."[49] There is no reply in the files, so we cannot tell if it was a lack of filial affection or for some other reason that the Stewarts turned down the suggestion. In the end, the university used money from its Centennial fund to build a smallish, 1,600-square-foot extension to the Redpath Library to alleviate the congestion. Lomer

[46] Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, 7 October 1920, RG 40, MUA.
[47] Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, 14 October 1920, RG 40, MUA.
[48] Gerhard Lomer to Casey A. Wood, 15 October 1920, RG 40, MUA.
[49] Casey A. Wood to Walter and Howard Stewart, 23 October 1920, RG 40, MUA.

accurately predicted that this would solve the problem for only a short period.[50] Unfortunately, the university had to wait thirty years for a new building. A pitch to Wood's boyhood friend Sir George Perley, to support the "Emily White Perley Library of Canadiana" in honour of his wife, was also turned down.[51] So was his request to the lawyer Albert J. Brown to fund the "Josephine Home Brown Library of Music."[52] The mighty Casey had struck out.

The Final Two Decades

To his credit, Wood continued supporting the library for the rest of his life. His extensive travels allowed him to collect interesting and exotic manuscripts and artefacts from around the world, in addition to what sources in Europe and North America supplied. Notable among these were Islamic manuscripts, Sri Lankan Ola (palm-leaf) manuscripts, and bird skins (see the chapters by Winterbottom and Salamon in this collection). Although the Wood and Blacker libraries were the primary McGill recipients of his generosity, he also made donations to the Osler Library of the History of Medicine, the Redpath Museum of Natural History, and the McGill Medical Museum (today the Maude Abbott Medical Museum). He also continued to support the ophthalmological collection in the Medical Library. In 1939, Wood estimated that he had spent several thousand dollars, in the past year alone, on the McGill libraries.[53] One of his other significant achievements was to produce *An Introduction to the Literature of Vertebrate Zoology: Based Chiefly on the Titles in the Blacker Library of Zoology, the Emma Shearer Wood Library of Ornithology, the Bibliotheca Osleriana and Other Libraries of McGill University, Montreal*.[54] Published in 1931, the book was inspired by *The Bibliotheca Osleriana*, which had been published two years

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50 Lomer, "Development of the Redpath Library."

51 Casey A. Wood to George Perley, 16 October 1920, RG 40, MUA.

52 Casey A. Wood to Albert J. Brown, 25 October 1920, RG 40, MUA.

53 Casey A. Wood to William W. Francis, 18 March 1939, P155, W. W. Francis Fonds, Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University.

54 Casey A. Wood, *An Introduction to the Literature of Vertebrate Zoology: Based Chiefly on the Titles in the Blacker Library of Zoology, the Emma Shearer Wood Library of Ornithology, the Bibliotheca Osleriana and Other Libraries of McGill University, Montreal*, McGill University Publications, ser. 11 (zoology), no. 24 (London: Oxford University Press, 1931).

earlier. Wood's book is more than a bibliography. The first section is an expository history of the field's literature. The other major section is an annotated list of works in the McGill libraries. One could view this as another example of Wood following in the wake of "the Chief." Wood, however, accomplished what Osler had wanted but failed to do: to provide a detailed discussion of the literature. It is up to others to say if *An Introduction to the Literature of Vertebrate Zoology* has had the same impact, in its domain, as *The Bibliotheca Osleriana* has had on medicine.

Wood differed from Osler in less appealing ways as well. Whereas Osler was renowned for his warm personality and consideration of others, Wood could be abrasive and overbearing. Gerhard Lomer's correspondence files are bursting with letters from Wood. He would often send multiple letters a day to the same recipient, a habit he claimed to have developed when he had two secretaries working for him. They usually contained requests for information or other actions, and often he expected news by return post. He was impatient, even when complicated information was sought. Remarkably, I could find only one example of Lomer expressing exasperation with him in writing, although one imagines that much more may have been uttered aloud or under Lomer's breath. In 1932, Lomer told Wood, "I am sorry that you still seem to think that your correspondence, and what it involves, is neglected, as I gather you do from the somewhat impatient tone of your letter of April 2nd which I found on my return from Bermuda. Let me assure you again that we are doing everything we can to carry forward the work of the Blacker and Emma Shearer Wood Libraries as carefully, economically, and efficiently as possible, and perhaps you do not make sufficient allowance either for the distance between California and Montreal or the amount of detailed work that your requests involve."[55]

Wood could also come across as patronizing. In his 1922 letter, marked "to be read only by Dr G. R. Lomer" on the envelope and "private" on every page, Wood informed Lomer of a recent visit with the Blackers. Wood believed that they might be willing to provide more money for the library and wanted Lomer to write them. Not satisfied in just making the suggestion, Wood felt compelled to dictate a six-page draft of the letter he thought Lomer should send, beginning with "Dear Mr and Mrs B." and ending with "I remain,

[55] Gerhard Lomer to Casey A. Wood, 7 April 1932, RG 40, MUA.

GRL."[56] Wood seemed to fear that composing a whole letter was too complicated a task to leave to Lomer, despite his PhD.

In the 1930s, Wood's support for the fascist governments in Italy and Germany may have tarnished his image among those who knew him. Although a number of people in Western Europe and North America were not opposed to Mussolini's and Hitler's regimes early on, support grew increasingly untenable through the mid to late 1930s as their crimes mounted. This was particularly the case after the Second World War began in 1939. True to his character, however, Wood saw no need for restraint when expressing his opinions. In fact, he seemed to go to extraordinary lengths to publicize his support for Mussolini in 1935–36, at a time when many were condemning Italy for its brutal invasion of Ethiopia. Wood, who lived in Rome for extended periods, wrote *Life in Italy under Sanctions* in February 1936. This short letter, which he mimeographed and circulated, mocked attempts by the League of Nations to discourage Italian aggression through economic sanctions. He also circulated *A Warning for Americans* at around the same time. This pamphlet is essentially a pro-Italian, anti-British diatribe, inspired in part by the United Kingdom's opposition to Italy's invasion. Although the pamphlet's covering letter claimed the author was a "Florentine friend," the style and details suggest that Wood may have written it himself.[57]

Wood's private utterances on European affairs were, not surprisingly, even more blunt. Given his tendency to speak his mind freely, one could assume that his circle knew his opinions on European affairs. For example, in a letter to his nephew Alan Wood of 29 May 1939, less than four months before Germany invaded Poland, Wood wrote:

> Don't worry about the chances of a universal European conflict for another year or so. Leave that to the Europeans—especially to the British who have shown their panic-stricken state by licking the boots of that foul murderer, Stalin. My guess is that as a matter of expediency they may join up with that hyena-and-crocodile minded despotism of Russia, the great majority of British people feel that they are eating crow, including the feathers! How under the canopy—of course it's none of my business—England has chosen Russia (that dirty, degraded tyranny) instead of Italy and Germany, who have always been ready to come to terms with them, passes

[56] Casey A. Wood to Gerhard Lomer, 7 December 1922, RG 40, MUA.
[57] Copies of each are contained at: MSG 1203, CAWC.

> my poor brain. England may not like the Nazi regime or Italian fascism but the people of Germany and Italy have chosen these forms of government. Haven't they a right to do so?[58]

To consider Nazi Germany as reasonable and ready to deal honestly with the United Kingdom and France after the reoccupation of the Rhine, the *Anschluss* of Austria, the annexation of the Sudetenland, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia, then still recent, is remarkable. If this letter stinks of mendacity, the one he sent to the McGill Library the following year is frankly astonishing. Wood sent the library an advertisement for a book, *Wunderland der wilden Vogel*, which he wanted it to buy. When he was informed, on 26 January 1940, that the library could not buy German books, he replied on 19 February that "I suppose—but of course it's none of my business—if Canada will indulge with the luxury of 'declaring war' on a friendly nation, the innocent—myself for example—must suffer with the guilty. Germany, who now produces more natural history items than the rest of the world put together must just wait!!"[59] To describe the country that started the Second World War five months earlier as friendly is hard to understand. Nor is his sulking about the hardships that Canada's frivolous declaration had on his ability to acquire German books very palatable. Oddly, not even Hitler's August 1939 pact with "that dirty, degraded tyranny" led by that "foul murderer, Stalin" seemed to have made him think any less of the Nazi regime.

Wood's pro-fascist stand did not sit well. The nephews' research notes for Wood's autobiography include an interview with Dr. Herbert Stanley Birkett, a former dean of medicine at McGill. Unlike Wood, Dr. Birkett saw active service in France during the First World War, organizing and commanding the Number 3 Canadian General Hospital. McGill professors and students, and nurses trained at the Montreal General and Royal Victoria hospitals, staffed a thousand-bed hospital behind the lines. Birkett had been one of the important people that Wood seemed to court to advance his career. According to the interview notes, Birkett had introduced Wood to leading ophthalmologists in Berlin in the late 1880s. They also record, tersely, that "B. disgusted with CAW" due to his pro-Italian stance.[60] Similar sentiments were expressed publicly, albeit less bluntly. A memorial by

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[58] Casey A. Wood to Alan Wood, 29 May 1939, MSG 1203, CAWC.

[59] Casey A. Wood to OPH [possibly Ophthalmic Collection], 19 February 1940, MSG 1203, CAWC.

[60] Research notes for Casey Wood, "Some Recollections."

the former editor-in-chief of the *American Journal of Ophthalmology*, Dr. William H. Crisp, chastised Wood for his pro-fascist Italian position. He lamented that "Casey Wood acquired during his residence in Rome a particular fondness for the Fascist government of Italy, and he circulated to many of his friends strange words of condemnation of the British Empire and more surprisingly words in praise of the country which was then engaged in bombing groups of Ethiopians into gory masses which were described by Count Ciano as suggesting the appearance of red roses bursting into bloom."[61]

Conclusion

Just as a library represents the mind of its collector, it also reflects the esteem in which its founder is held. The many "Oslerians" who find inspiration in Sir William's life, writings, and collection continue to support, use, and frequent the Osler Library. There is no comparable recognition for Casey Wood. What remains today are the collections that he put so much of his time, energy, and money into developing, and a name devoid of any association. The drive, determination, and self-assurance that propelled Wood to create a first-rate natural history collection were the same characteristics that could make him so overbearing, and tone-deaf to the implications of his beliefs. One could speculate that Wood's difficult personality and unpalatable politics resulted in his being "cancelled" long before the recent re-evaluation of donors and other "greats" of the past. Even Osler, celebrated for his generous spirit and considerable achievements, has been subject to re-appraisal lately. Despite his accomplishments and contributions, Casey Wood remains McGill's best forgotten benefactor.

Biography

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61 William H. Crisp, "Casey Wood," *American Journal of Ophthalmology* 25 (April 1942): 469–72.

the Head Librarian of Rare Books and Special Collections and the Osler Library at McGill. Chris has presented and published in the field of library history. His professional activities include co-chairing the Special Collections Interest Group of the Bibliographical Society of Canada.

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