

Introduction

Nancy Earle

Volume 32, numéro 2, fall 2017

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds32_2int01

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1719-1726 (imprimé)

1715-1430 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Earle, N. (2017). Introduction. *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 32(2), 271–283.

Introduction

Nancy Earle

The articles collected here represent a selection of the papers presented at the Newfoundland and Labrador Book History Symposium, held at Memorial University on 7–8 May 2016. Organized by the Memorial University Department of English, the Basilica Museum, and the Newfoundland Historical Society, the symposium coincided with the launch of *The Finest Room in the Colony: The Library of John Thomas Mullock*, edited by Ágnes Juhász-Ormsby and myself and published by Memorial University Libraries, and an accompanying exhibition held at the Basilica Museum in St. John's. Taking Bishop Mullock (1807–1869) and his wide-ranging book collection as its subject, *The Finest Room* features essays, intended for a general reader, written by 21 scholars working from across the disciplines. Our hope was to extend this spirit of collaboration and public outreach through the hosting of a public symposium examining Newfoundland and Labrador print culture more broadly. Ágnes Juhász-Ormsby and I are grateful to Memorial University's Public Engagement Accelerator Fund and other sources of support that enabled us to complete these interrelated projects, and to *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* for publishing selected scholarly articles emerging from the symposium, the full program of which is included in this issue. The articles collected here reflect the curiosity, knowledge, and insight brought by all the participants, whose generous contributions made for a lively and stimulating event.

Why Book History?

In “Thinking through the History of the Book,” the keynote address of the 2015 conference of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), Leslie Howsam took a step back to ponder the study of book culture and book history, its methods and its aims. Noting that its practitioners come from all fields of inquiry, Howsam dubbed book history “an ‘interdiscipline’ — an intellectual space where like-thinking scholars bring their differing mindsets and methodologies to bear on material texts.” Drawing on her own definition of book history as “a way of thinking about how people have given material form to knowledge and stories,” Howsam observed that what all book culture studies share is “that indefinable ‘something’ which has to do with thinking in terms of materiality, mediation, and mutability.” The common ground of book historians is, in short, the “sense of the creation, mediation and consumption of the objects of communication being crucial to the way that culture and society work.”¹

The papers collected here examine, often in multiple and intersecting ways, the materiality, mediation, and mutability of the knowledge and stories that have helped shape Newfoundland and Labrador. The material object is the spark of Stephen Crocker’s study, which takes as its starting point a family heirloom, a much-read copy of Medyett Goodridge’s *Narrative of a Voyage to the South Seas, and the Shipwreck of the Princess of Wales Cutter: with an Account of Two Years’ Residence on an Uninhabited Island* (1838). As an example of the castaway genre, Crocker argues, this work articulates British imperialist anxieties about “the meaning and effects of isolation, and the possibility of recreating European ideas of civility in the outer reaches of the known world”; equally, as a *Bildungsroman* and family history, it offers a “cognitive map” for one Newfoundland settler family’s transatlantic identity. In another foray into material evidence of transatlantic book culture, Ágnes Juhász-Ormsby examines the surviving library of Bishop John Thomas Mullock — held today within the Episcopal Library of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John’s — in order to understand the significance of

Mullock's "unbiased collecting habit" in relation to his lifelong scholarly methods, as well as his envisioned public library for St. John's.

The mediation of texts can take many forms, from the market demands faced by publishers and the agendas of policy-makers and censors, to the vagaries of distribution and the specific cultural contexts of individual readers. Such dimensions of print culture feature in all the papers here but are especially foregrounded in several essays, including Pearce J. Carefoote's "Keep Your Enemies Closer: Banned and Controversial Literature in Bishop Mullock's Library." Discussing several such titles in detail, Carefoote offers potential explanations for Mullock's selection and preservation in his collection of volumes prohibited by Rome's Index of Forbidden Books, which Carefoote calls "a single tool in the most effective censorship campaign ever undertaken in the West." While Carefoote's study looks to Europe, Jennifer J. Connor turns to the United States, specifically the Grenfell mission, which established travelling and small local libraries servicing Labrador and northern Newfoundland in the early twentieth century, decades before the first government-run libraries were created in 1926. Connor's "local-level" study "offers insights into the extent of literacy not previously understood from state-based sources," while suggesting "the extent to which American — not British or Canadian — printed materials shaped the literary, cultural, and aesthetic sensibilities of a far-flung populace at the coastal margins of the industrialized world." This emphasis on a localized readership is shared by Margaret Mackey's study focusing on the immediate post-Confederation period. In it, the author examines how the literacy education of one St. John's reader — herself — was mediated in a significant part by "helper" institutions, namely Prince of Wales College, Gower Street United Church, Gosling Library, and the Girl Guides.

The mutability of knowledge and stories — how texts are composed and altered through new editions and adaptations, and how ideas are transformed in new cultural contexts — is apparent in Hans Rollmann's examination of Moravian education and Inuit literacy in Labrador, and its focus on the late-nineteenth-century Württemberg-based

pastor and publisher Christian Gottlob Barth's illustrated collection of Bible stories, a worldwide best-seller translated into Inuktitut, which in later editions also served as a school text in Labrador. Also focusing on the nineteenth century, Calvin Hollett examines the circulation of religious books and tracts within settler populations in Methodist and Anglican outpost communities, arguing these materials "provided the narratives that informed spirituality in a storytelling oral culture where, once heard, they were told and retold in a personal and creative way in kitchens and in stage lofts, and, among a mobile people, in winter houses, on sealing vessels, on the Labrador, and on the western shore." While several of the studies outlined here emphasize local reception of print, Donald W. Nichol examines an instance of local publishing in his history and reading of *The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador (ENL)*, the five-volume work published over 13 years between 1981 and 1994. Envisioned and initially edited by Joseph R. Smallwood, *ENL* is a landmark Newfoundland publication, "a monument that most other provinces can only aspire to have," that takes its place in the pre-Wikipedia history of encyclopedias, each of which is marked by a (perhaps hopeless) quest for a comprehensiveness and an "agonizing . . . instant out-of-datedness" upon publication. Indeed, as his eclectic piece indicates, Nichol is infected by the encyclopedic impulse, addressing omissions and supplying updates to *ENL*'s "mosaic of modern history."

Together, the essays gathered here "[decentre] print culture history,"² in the words of Patrick Collier and James J. Connolly, whose edited collection, *Print Culture Histories beyond the Metropolis* (2016), demonstrates how rural, nationally peripheral, or colonial sites, when examined from their own standpoints, are not simply passive recipients of publications emanating from the large metropolitan centres, but are actively "appropriating, grappling with, and taking part in modern print culture in ways indelibly marked by local conditions, affiliations, institutions, and patterns of sociability."³ As the present collection demonstrates, long before Smallwood launched the ambitious and province-centric *ENL*, outports, towns, and city neighbourhoods

alike were “sites of cultural creativity” where inhabitants often made sense of their lives and locations through some degree of participation in print culture.

These essays extend the existing body of scholarship and research into the book culture of this province. As an aspect of our larger culture, the history of the book in Newfoundland and Labrador has been approached directly or indirectly in numerous discipline-specific studies in such fields as education, history, literature, and religious studies. Memoirs and other popular works also offer rich accounts of individuals’ encounters with print as students, teachers, and librarians, among other roles. While it would be difficult to list these titles with any hope of comprehensiveness, a brief overview of the existing focused book history studies, as well as studies of authorship, publishing, and reading in Newfoundland and Labrador, is more manageable.

Foundational to much of this scholarship is Memorial University Libraries’ Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS). Established in 1965, the CNS adopted a mandate that encompassed the collection of all published materials relating to Newfoundland and Labrador. Over the past half-century, the centre has been both an important contributor to the field and a resource for other researchers. The CNS founding librarian, Agnes O’Dea, published the two-volume *Bibliography of Newfoundland* in 1986. More recently, publications emerging from the centre include Suzanne Ellison’s *Historical Directory of Newfoundland and Labrador Newspapers* (published in three editions from 1988 to 2001) and the online *Newfoundland and Labrador Map Bibliography*, compiled by Alberta Auringer Wood. The *Periodical Article Bibliography (PAB)*, currently containing over 100,000 citations to periodical articles relating to Newfoundland and Labrador published between 1668 and the present, is a major digital resource being produced under the ongoing supervision of the Head of CNS, Joan Ritcey.⁴

In 1998, William Barker and Sandra Hannaford published “Towards a History of the Book in Newfoundland,” a background paper for the History of the Book in Canada project, which was revised and developed as William Barker’s “Three Steps Towards a History of the

Book in Newfoundland” and published in 2010 in a special issue of *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, edited by Nancy Earle, which focused on “Book Culture in Newfoundland and Labrador.”⁵ That special issue followed on the heels of the three-volume *History of the Book in Canada* (2004–07), which examines the history of print in what is now Canada from the beginnings to the year 1980.⁶ Newfoundland and Labrador features in all three volumes, with discrete articles by William Barker (“Books and Reading in Newfoundland and in Labrador [to 1840]” in volume 1) and Bert Riggs (“At the Sign of the Book: Dicks and Company of St. John’s” in volume 2).

While creative writers are well represented in authorship studies centring on the province, these studies have typically extended their scope beyond strictly literary circles. Female authors of Newfoundland and Labrador are included in the Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory’s *Canada’s Early Women Writers*, described on its webpage as a “bio-bibliographical database of Canadian English-language women writers who published before 1950.” This ongoing project encompasses authors working in all genres, from poetry to scientific writing to journalism. Kristina Fagan Bidwell has explored authorship in late nineteenth-century Labrador in her 2010 study of the Inuit-Métis author Lydia Campbell. Twentieth-century female authors, their communities, and their publication venues are the focus of Danielle Fuller’s *Writing the Everyday: Women’s Textual Communities in Atlantic Canada* (2004), which contains a chapter on the novelist Joan Clark, as well as a two-chapter section entitled “Life Sentences: Women Writing Newfoundland,” which details the founding of the Newfoundland Writers’ Guild and the Writers’ Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador, among other topics. Another interesting recent contribution to our understanding of the networks facilitating authorship is Jeff Webb’s *Observing the Outposts: Describing Newfoundland Culture, 1950–1980* (2016). This work examines the institutions, specifically Memorial University, and the interdisciplinary research communities that supported the production of such major scholarly publications as *The Dictionary of Newfoundland English*.⁷

Studies of Newfoundland and Labrador printing and publishing include E.J. Devereux's "Early Printing in Newfoundland" (1963) and Jean Graham's overview of "Printing and Publishing" in *The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*. Hans Rollmann has produced a body of work outlining the history, beginning in 1790, of Moravian printing in Inuktitut for and (later) in Labrador. Sandrine Ferré's *L'édition au Canada atlantique: Le défi de publier une région* (1999) and Roy MacSkimming's *The Perilous Trade: Publishing Canada's Writers* (2003) both offer chapters examining Newfoundland book publishing in the twentieth century.⁸

Studies of readers in the province are beginning to emerge, with two recent examples being Judith P. Robertson, David Lewkowich, and Jennifer Rottmann's 2010 study of contemporary book clubs in St. John's and Margaret Mackey's captivating monograph, *One Child Reading: My Auto-Bibliography* (2016). Newfoundland book collectors have also received some scholarly attention: in addition to *The Finest Room* (2016) on Mullock, already mentioned, W.G. Gosling has been the focus of an article by Melvin Baker and George Story, published in 1996.⁹

Before concluding this inevitably incomplete survey of Newfoundland and Labrador book history studies, I must acknowledge the contributions of one eminent scholar. As an author, memoirist, historian, critic, and teacher, Patrick O'Flaherty illuminated Newfoundland and Labrador print culture in works ranging from his foundational *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland* (1979) to recent highlights, including his 2013 Pratt Lecture, "Poetry and Politics in Newfoundland in the 1940s."¹⁰ We were honoured to welcome Dr. O'Flaherty as a presenter at our symposium, and are saddened by his sudden passing on 16 August 2017.

The story of the book in Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be written today by the policy-makers, publishers, purveyors of print, educators, librarians, and of course the writers, storytellers, and readers who all help create Newfoundland and Labrador's dynamic culture and society. We hope that this themed issue of *Newfoundland*

and *Labrador Studies* will illustrate that participation in print culture has long been an aspect of Newfoundland and Labrador life and that it remains a vital one today.

Notes

- 1 Leslie Howsam, "Thinking Through the History of the Book," *Studies in Book Culture* 7, 2 (2016). doi:10.7202/1036851ar.
- 2 Patrick Collier and James J. Connolly, "Print Culture Histories beyond the Metropolis: An Introduction," in James J. Connolly et al., eds., *Print Culture Histories beyond the Metropolis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 6.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 4 Agnes C. O'Dea, comp., Anne Alexander, ed., *Bibliography of Newfoundland*, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in association with Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1986); Suzanne Ellison, comp., *Historical Directory of Newfoundland and Labrador Newspapers* (St. John's: Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2001); Alberta Auringer Wood, comp., *The Newfoundland and Labrador Map Bibliography*, at: <https://www.library.mun.ca/cns/nlmappib/>; *The Periodical Article Bibliography (PAB)*, at: <https://www.library.mun.ca/cns/pab/>.
- 5 William Barker and Sandra Hannaford, "Towards a History of the Book in Newfoundland," History of the Book in Canada Project Background Paper, 1998, at http://www.hbic.library.utoronto.ca/fconfnfld_en.htm; Nancy Earle, ed., "Book Culture in Newfoundland and Labrador," special issue of *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 48, 1 (Spring 2010), at <http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/bsc/issue/view/1401>.
- 6 *History of the Book in Canada: Volume 1, Beginnings to 1840*, ed. Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan, and Yvan Lamonde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); *Volume 2, 1840–1918*, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); *Volume 3, 1918–1980*, ed. Carole Gerson and Jacques Michon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).
- 7 Carole Gerson, ed., *Canada's Early Women Writers*, at: <http://beta.cwrc.ca/project/canada's-early-women-writers>; Kristina Fagan (Bidwell),

- “Well done old half breed woman’: Lydia Campbell and the Labrador Literary Tradition,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 48, 1 (Spring 2010): 49–74, at: <http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/bsc/article/view/21255/17316>; Danielle Fuller, *Writing the Everyday: Women’s Textual Communities in Atlantic Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004); Jeff Webb, *Observing the Outports: Describing Newfoundland Culture, 1950–1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); G.M. Story, W.J. Kirwin, and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds., *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, 2nd ed. with supplement (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
- 8 E.J. Devereux, “Early Printing in Newfoundland,” *Dalhousie Review* 43 (1963): 57–66; Jean Graham, “Printing and Publishing,” in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland*, vol. 4, editor-in-chief Cyril F. Poole, managing editor Robert H. Cuff (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications, 1993), 452–60; Sandrine Ferré, *L’édition au Canada atlantique: Le défi de publier une région*, Collection des Thèses, no. 5 (Paris: Centre d’études canadiennes de L’Université de Paris III—Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1999); Roy MacSkimming, *The Perilous Trade: Publishing Canada’s Writers* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2003). For the works of Hans Rollmann, see his article in this volume.
- 9 Judith P. Robertson, David Lewkowich, and Jennifer Rottmann, “Saltwater Chronicles: Reading Representational Spaces in Selected Book Clubs in St. John’s, Newfoundland,” *Island Studies Journal* 5, 2 (2010): 141–64; Margaret Mackey, *One Child Reading: My Auto-Bibliography* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2016); Melvin Baker and G.M. Story, “Book Collectors in Newfoundland: The Case of W.G. Gosling,” in Eric L. Swanick, ed., *“The Book Disease”: Atlantic Provinces Book Collectors* (Halifax: School of Library and Information Studies, Dalhousie University, 1996), 83–92.
- 10 Patrick O’Flaherty, *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Patrick O’Flaherty, “Poetry and Politics in Newfoundland in the 1940s with a Suggestion about ‘The Bastard’ Acrostic,” Pratt Lecture Series 2013 (St. John’s: Memorial University of Newfoundland, Centre for Newfoundland Studies, 2014).

Related Papers

Newfoundland and Labrador Book History Symposium

Organized by

The Department of English, Memorial University,
The Basilica Museum, and
The Newfoundland Historical Society

May 7th-8th, 2016

A-1043, Arts and Administration Building,
Memorial University, St. John's Campus
(Parking in Lot 15B)



Saturday, May 7th, 2016

9:00 -

Welcome

9:15 AM

Lynne Phillips (Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Memorial University)

9:15 -

Bishop Mullock's Library

11:00 AM

Chair: Adrian Fowler (Grenfell Campus, Memorial University)

- Ágnes Juhász-Ormsby and Nancy Earle (Memorial University), "John Thomas Mullock: What his Library Reveals"
- Hélène Cazes (University of Victoria), "A Vision for Culture in St. John's: The Episcopal Library"
- Pearce J. Carefoote (Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto), "Keep your Enemies Closer: Banned Books in Bishop Mullock's Library"
- Joël Madore (Memorial University), "French Titles in Bishop Mullock's Library"

11:00 -

Break

11:30 AM

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM Writing and Publishing by Religious Groups
Chair: Shane O’Dea (Memorial University)

- Hans Rollmann (Memorial University), “The Inuktitut Book Culture of the Moravian Church in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Labrador”
- Sherry Doyle (Independent Scholar), “Revisiting the Nineteenth-Century Archival Writings of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary”
- Calvin Hollett (Independent Scholar), “‘I’d rather have a Prayer Book than a shirt’: The Printed Word among Methodists and Anglicans in Nineteenth-Century Outport Newfoundland and Labrador”

1:00 - 2:30 PM Lunch Break

2:30 - 4:00 PM Drawing and Crossing Borders in Print
Chair: Edwin Bezzina (Grenfell Campus, Memorial University)

- Danial Duda (Memorial University), “Three Maps and their Roles in the History of the Island of Newfoundland”
- Larry Dohey (The Rooms), “Irish-Language Books and Travel Guides”
- Jennifer J. Connor (Memorial University), “‘We like American books’: Book Culture in the Grenfell Mission to Newfoundland and Labrador before 1940”

4:00 - 4:30 PM Break

4:30 - 5:30 PM Newfoundland Book Collecting
Chair: Robert Ormsby (Memorial University)

- Edward Roberts (Independent Scholar), “A Newfoundland Bibliophile’s Random Reminiscences”

Sunday, May 8th, 2016

9:00 - Landmark Books
10:30 AM Chair: Caitlin Charman (Memorial University)

- Steve Crocker (Memorial University), “The Castaway Medyett Goodridge’s *Unvarnished Tale of Shipwreck in the South Seas* (1838): Print Culture and Settler Colonialism in Newfoundland”
- Jeff Webb (Memorial University), “James P. Howley’s *Beothucks*: The Writing of a Definitive Book”
- Patrick O’Flaherty (Emeritus Professor, Memorial University), “A New Zealander’s View of Newfoundland History: A.H. McLintock’s *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland, 1783-1832* (1941)”

10:30 - Break
11:00 AM

11:00 AM - Approaches and Resources
12:00 PM Chair: Don Nichol (Memorial University)

- Joan Ritcey (Memorial University), “The PAB, the Index to Newfoundland and Labrador Periodical Literature”
- William Barker (Dalhousie University), “What Newspapers Can Tell Historians of the Book”

12:00 - Break
12:15 PM

12:15 - Autobiography and Print Culture
1:15 PM Chair: Mary Dalton (Memorial University)

- Jim Connor (Memorial University), “Is there a doctor author in the house? Physician Autobiographies as a Distinctive Genre in Newfoundland and Labrador”
- Margaret Mackey (University of Alberta), “One Child’s Book History in St. John’s in the 1950s”

1:15 - Lunch Break
2:30 PM

2:30 - **The Making of *The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador***
4:00 PM Chair: Joel Deshayé (Memorial University)

- Bert Riggs (Memorial University), “*The Book of Newfoundland, The Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* and Robert Darnton’s ‘Communications Circuit’: Explorations in Book History”
- Robert Pitt (Independent Scholar), “Memories of the *ENL*”
- Don Nichol (Memorial University), “How *ENL* Passed H & Reached Z”

4:00 - **Break**
4:30 PM

4:30 - **The Contemporary Artist’s Book**
5:30 PM Chair: Nancy Earle (Memorial University)

- Pat Warner (Memorial University), “The Artist’s Book as Metaphor: An Excavation of the Tara Bryan, Robin Smith Peck and Kevin Major’s *L’Anse Amour/L’Anse aux Morts*”



Acknowledgements

Thank you to Anne Walsh and the Basilica Museum and Historical Committee; Larry Dohey and the Newfoundland Historical Society; and Memorial University of Newfoundland—the Office of the Vice-President (Research), the Office of the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Public Engagement Accelerator Fund, the Scholarship in the Arts Program, and the Department of English—for their generous support.

Special thanks also to Lisa Dawe, Tina Power, Sarah Milmine, and Theresa Powell, Department of English, for their assistance with the conference.

