CAMPUS AUTHOR Recognition Event

Thursday November 1 McLaughlin Library between 4:30 pm and 6 pm

Summary:

Each year, Guelph faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees write, edit and translate an impressive number of books that reflect the breadth and diversity of the campus community's research, personal and professional interests. The Library celebrates campus authors and their books in an annual event. The following is a transcript of the words spoken by our speakers: Rebecca Graham, Maureen Mancuso, and Chris Dewdney.
Rebecca Graham (Chief Librarian & CIO)

What a great turnout. I am Rebecca Graham, the Chief Librarian and CIO of the University of Guelph. I have been here a little over 5 months. I have the good fortune of getting to host this event which basically means that a whole lot of people did the work and I get to stand up here and represent that work as well as the work of the many authors and books that are represented here.

For those of you who may not know, this is our 7th annual event to celebrate our campus authors. This afternoon we honour 79 books published in 2011 and 2012 by University of Guelph faculty, staff, students, retirees, and alumni.

For me, as a new Chief Librarian, it is truly a pleasure to recognize the books published by campus authors, editors, and translators. It is clear from looking at the recognized books and a list of those titles that we have a very broad representation of the intellectual and creative talents of the University community.

If you have not already done so, I hope you will take the opportunity to browse the book display to appreciate the contributions of this community.

You can also visit the library website for the Campus Author Recognition Program. Not only does it include all the books from this year but it also includes those books recognized in previous years. So you get a true sense of the output of the community here. It is fairly impressive.

All the books that are recognized are in the library’s collection and a special bookplate has been inserted in each informing readers and borrowers of the University of Guelph authorship.

The University of Guelph Bookstore has been with us since the beginning of Campus Author and we would like to recognize them again this year for their generous co-sponsorship of this event. Campus Author books will be available for purchase in the Bookstore throughout the next few weeks in a special display and we encourage you to visit the Bookstore in the coming days.

I would be amiss if I did not acknowledge the work that a number of library staff have done in support of this event. In particular, I would like to recognize Jane Burpee who has led the efforts this year. I suspect that Jane would say that it takes a village and it really is a number of individuals that have helped make this event possible.

There is also a commemorative plaque available for each author. Make sure you drop by the table to pick it up and if you haven’t already we would be thrilled if you would autograph your books.

Now I would like to invite this year’s writer-in-residence, Chris Dewdney, to say a few
Chris Dewdney

I am surprised and amazed at the number of authors that this university is hosting. I am fish parasites which fish host, I have been looking at all these book titles over the last few weeks and at the end of my presentation I will read you the results of my research.

I’d like to talk about the process of writing. Incidentally, I am Writer-in-Residence here at Guelph care of Alan Filewod who was essential in getting me here with the English and Theatre Department. I will be here until mid-December. I have regular office hours, Monday and Tuesday afternoons. If you have a manuscript I would be willing to look at it for a half an hour and give you some advice. I am only qualified for fiction, non-fiction and poetry. I am not qualified for any other genres.

Writing is a strange and solitary craft as any of you authors must know. It is an odd thing to do. It is an odd thing to take your experience, memories and emotions and distill them into these abstract shapes, which are letters. Letters look like insects. They are little things on a page. It is a very abstract art. It is not like sculpture where you use your hands, or music where you are singing or painting even. These are much more expressive and human. Writing is the most abstract and the most inhuman of all the arts because everything is being distilled into these abstract shapes. It is strange, it is a strange occupation. Here we are scribes for ourselves, our emotions. You are always alone in a room it seems.

You might ask yourself, “Are writers masochists?” I have a couple of quotes here to the masochistic nature of writing. This one is by Joseph Conrad,

"I sit down religiously every morning, I sit down for eight hours every day - and the sitting down is all. In the course of that working way of eight hours I write three sentences which I erase before leaving the table in despair. Sometimes it takes all my resolution and power of self-control to refrain from butting my head against the wall."

Now that is a very slow writer. Eight hours, three sentences and then he erases them at the end of the day. It is Sisyphean. Isn’t it?

Here is another testimony of how strange writing is. A friend of mine once said that “writing was like chiseling through a concrete wall with a dull spoon”. It is the same kind of process. Now we are talking about fiction and a lot of the writers here are non-fiction writers but even with non-fiction it is still hard to assemble the paragraphs and get that work together.

John Steinbeck wrote:
"When I face the desolate impossibility of writing five hundred pages, a sick sense of failure falls on me, and I know I can never do it. Then gradually, I write one page and then another. One day's work is all I can permit myself to contemplate."

So this is the writer's attitude which is failure, despair, misery, and horror. But then there is the saving grace. What is different of writing from all the other artists, and what makes it magical is that if you are doing a sculpture for instance and you knock off an arm, you would have to glue on another arm and the join would be visible. Or if you are doing a painting and you would have to over paint, the painting gets muddy and you can see where you have done the over paint. But with writing, when you take a word out, the sentence sucks back together and you don't know the word was even there. So with writing you have total control. That's why writers often become neo-fascists. They think they can extend that control into the world, like Ezra Pound and people like that, who are used to the total control of words.

Gustave Flaubert said that:

"An author in his book must be like God in the universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere."

So that is style. Style should be invisible.

Thoreau said that:

"Style should drop like stones."

Nothing should be more simple than the trajectory of a stone to the earth. That is how un-stylistic style should be.

Robert Cormier said that:

"The beautiful part of writing is that you don't have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, a brain surgeon. You can always do it better, find the exact word, the apt phrase, the leaping simile."

So that is true of writing too. You can get it right. In the act of publishing, the only time when you have no more chance to get it right is when that book is published. And there is that magical moment - It is the pleasure that authors have – when they have been through this tortuous process, at the very end you are handed a copy from the publisher and it is a finished thing. It is a finished object. It is a beautiful feeling to have your book finished even though, of course, if you had another chance at it you would probably find some more mistakes or something to edit. Even the process itself generates mistakes. But that finally is it. It is finished. It is over. It is one of thousands of identical objects. That is another strange thing about writing. You have to create
identical objects. There are many of them. Whereas with art, the originality of art or a
great photograph is one of 100 or one off. It is a very interesting comparison.

Now what I have done is put together a surrealist poem. I am a poet after all. I get to
do this. Poets are sort of like scientists or alchemists doing strange things in their
laboratories. This is one of the strange things I did. I took a lot of the titles of the
attendees being celebrated today. So this is a surrealist poem. It is a pastiche. Some of
the titles are not intact, some of the titles had to be broken up and relocated for the
purposes of this piece. So bear with me. This is going to take some concentration:

The Deadly Voyage of The Passenger's Muse

Fish Parasites are like Reimagining Marginalized Foods or like Creating Better
Chickens. As Commander Zero said, "Only Pack What You Can Carry through
the Valley of Fire." Perhaps A Field Guide to the Jewel Beetles and a Geological
Record of Neoproterozoic Glaciations would help. But the key to How to
Become a Really Good Pain in the Ass is the Art of Deception. After all, Love,
Deceit, Discovery are basically the same as Managerial Accounting and other
Barrett Family Trivia. Yet here you ask, is the Community of Rights based on
Blitzkrieg and Jitterbugs, or is it Committing Theatre like a Performance for
Bowed String Instruments? Certainly 60 is the new 20, but a Boomer's Guide to
Aging with Grace will not prevent Dyspepsia and Irritable Bowel Syndrome.
You can throw all the statements for an Owner Managed Business at it you like,
but The French Baroque Art of Mergers and Acquisitions will always supercede
Beekeeping Techniques or, come to think of it, writing Essays in Biotechnology.
It's Social Psychology really, kind of like a Political Intervention spoiling the
Mechanisms of Life History Evolution. Meanwhile, Molecular Fluids stir within
Ourselves and Others as the Gunmetal Blue Ghost of Lizard Rock rises like
Theory and Protection above Woodlawn Engineering.

Rebecca Graham

Now I'd like to invite Dr. Maureen Mancuso, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) to
say a few words to add as well.

Maureen Mancuso
Thank you and good afternoon. It is my pleasure to be here for this event. I love this event. As Rebecca said, the event has been going on for 7 years and I was lucky to have been recognized in the first one.

The power of the written word is something that moves people and nations and changes the course of history. We are here today to honour the members of our university community who have authored books. But not just any books. The honourees today have written books that have touched people or have offered readers new ways of looking at the world around them. But whatever the focus of the book, the authors we celebrate today have achieved something great and lasting. Books demand, as you all know, commitment, hard work, sacrifice and dedication. Add to that the numerous day to day responsibilities that you all juggle and it is amazing what you have managed to accomplish.

The men and women we honour have researched, written, revised, re-written, sought out publishers, worked with editors and crafted that product so that the end result is truly something remarkable. And the very fact that you have survived the entire process and have done so with your spirits and good humour intact is a testament of your character.

This year, as Rebecca has indicated, we recognize contributions by 79 members of our community. Our author collective includes: 50 current and emeritus faculty, 21 alumni, 4 staff and 3 students. Collectively, they contributed towards the publication of 79 new books. Our faculty authors were represented from across campus publishing in areas of the humanities, social sciences, & sciences.

Some titles were the result of collaborative work between student and faculty, and many of the authors here today have multiple works authored this year. As Christine Bold told me today, “It was kind of like having twins, with only half the pain.”

The topics explored by our authors run the gamut, from global food systems, to the journals of Lucy Maud Montgomery, to the impact of soccer in Trinidad and Tobago, to a field guide to the jewel beetles.

And while winning prizes and awards is not the goal of authors when they begin a new work, we do want to take a moment to recognize a few of the achievements of this year’s authors

- Faculty member Dr. Alan Filewod won the Ann Saddlemeyer Book Prize from the Canadian Association for Theatre Research, and was a finalist for the Gabrielle Roy Prize from the Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures for his book ‘Committing Theatre: Theatre Radicalism and Political Intervention in Canada’
• Shane Neilson won the 2012 National Magazine Award, Poetry for his book ‘Gunmetal Blue’
• Daniel O’Quinn’s book ‘Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium’ received honorable mention for the prestigious Joe A. Calloway Prize for the best book in Theatre Studies over the period 2010 to 2012.
• Elizabeth Waterston - was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2011

It is with a sad note that I highlight two of this year’s books that were written by authors that have passed away:
• Pervasive Computing and Networking was written by Dr Mieso Denko, a professor in the Department of Computing and Information Science. Dr. Denko passed away on April 25, 2010. He was part way through editing the book. One chapter was written by his student Jason Ernst.
• From Horseback to the House of Commons was written by alumnus, Lorne Greenaway. Lorne studied veterinary medicine at Guelph University and set up a practice in BC’s interior; he went on to ranching in the Cariboo and exporting cattle before becoming a Member of Parliament for the Progressive Conservative Party. Lorne suffered from ALS and died on September 13, 2010. I am pleased that some members of his family are here with us today.

This gathering also provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the continued importance of promoting writing and reading. Just as significantly to celebrate the book, especially in today’s information age. In these times writing has taken on many shapes and forms ranging from blogs to email listservs but nothing will ever take the place of the printed word. Books will always remain a cornerstone of our civilization. That is because it is a timeless object. As the writer William Haslet said:

“If I have not read a book before, it is for all intensive purposes, new to me, whether it was printed yesterday or three hundred years ago.”

The books we write today will appear on the shelves in libraries in Canada and around the world for years and even centuries to come. The very finest of them will transmit messages that will continue to resonate with future generations. Perhaps above all at a university like Guelph where individuals are free to think big thoughts, ask big questions, and question big assumptions, indeed we encourage you all to do so, books will always remain a vital teaching tool. In the words of artist, poet and activist Jane Evershed,

“To read is to empower, To empower is to write, To write is to influence, To influence is to change, To change is to live”.

Congratulations to all of this year’s authors
Rebecca Graham

Thank you Maureen.

Now I would like to present plaques to two individuals on behalf of the entire group. Each year we select two individuals to represent a particular group of authors from our community. This year we would like to ask two authors of academic works to accept their plaques.

Christine Bold is a graduate of the University of Edinburgh and University College London. She is Professor of English at the University of Guelph. Her previous books include Selling the Wild West; The W.P.A. Guides; Writers, Plumbers, and Anarchists; and (as coauthor) the award-winning Remembering Women Murdered by Men. US Popular Print Culture 1860-1920 was published in 2011 in the UK and 2012 in the US. Her next book, forthcoming from Oxford University Press in 2013, is titled The Frontier Club. She has co-edited the Canadian Review of American Studies and currently reviews for the Times Literary Supplement.

Hugh Brewster is a Canadian writer and editor who has worked on many books for both children and adults for over 30 years. After graduating from the University of Guelph in 1971, he began work as an editor for Scholastic Inc. From 1984-2004, Brewster was the publisher of Madison Press Books in Toronto. He has also authored twelve children’s books including Anastasia’s Album; On Juno Beach; At Vimy Ridge; The Other Mozart; Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose (a 2007 Governor General's Award nominee) and two novels, Prisoner of Dieppe and Deadly Voyage.. His 2012 adult nonfiction book RMS TITANIC: Gilded Lives on a Fatal Voyage was a Canadian bestseller, published in eight countries, and praised by the New York Times Book Review.

Would our two authors please come forward to collect their plaques?

Presentation to Christine Bold and Hugh Brewster with their plaques

Congratulations to all the authors.

Rebecca Graham

That concludes our formal program.

Join us next year as we celebrate books published in 2012/2013. You can become involved in this process by submitting the names of authors and books.
anytime to the campus author website (in your program).

Again, we’d like to thank The Bookstore for their co-sponsorship of this event.

Authors, please pick up the mounted copy of your poster before you leave. We would ask that you autograph the display copies of your books before you leave.

Thank you all very much for coming.