

## BACK TO THE SOURCES: USING PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS IN LEISURE HISTORY EDUCATION

*Susan E. Markham-Starr*

### Introduction

Almost four decades ago Elsie McFarland challenged us to educate our students about the roots of our field. On the opening page of her ground breaking book *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada* (1970) she observed that:

The young people entering the field of recreation will need considerable faith in themselves and in their profession. Knowledge of earlier development, of the progress that has been made, and of the men and women who made it possible may provide future leaders with roots from which to grow in strength and wisdom to face the challenges that lie ahead. (p. 1)

Those "young people" of whom she spoke are now the senior professionals and scholars in leisure, recreation, parks, tourism, sports, community development, and other diverse branches of our field. They have been followed by several more generations of "young people." McFarland's desire that students understand earlier eras and the progress that has been made since then continues to be a concern as our community based services and advocacy efforts often seem overpowered by financial considerations, profit motives, trendy programs, technological gadgets, and sophisticated facilities. A profession needs to know about its roots and its pioneers.

And on a parallel track, what is the state of leisure history education? What teaching materials do we use? Do we use the writings of the few researchers in leisure history? Do we continually rely on rehashing the same sources of older textbooks? Or do we use the actual writings and statements of the pioneers – "the men and women who made it possible"?

Writing in the same era as McFarland, Sanderlin noted that "history is a discipline in which people living in the present time seek to understand the significant communication of people in past societies"(1975, p.1). This presentation will showcase the efforts of one researcher to bring some of the "significant communication" of past advocates for leisure services into a forum that is accessible by both students and fellow researchers. The communications of W.J.S. Walker and the Canadian National Parks Association will provide the content, and the website created with the use of the CONTENTdm software will provide the vehicle. Using a traditional and electronic poster format, this presentation will demonstrate the capabilities of new technology to access primary source historical materials as teaching and research tools.

### The Canadian National Parks Association

The Canadian National Parks Association (CNPA) was a national pressure group working from 1923 to 1952 to protect Canada's national parks system and to promote recreation, fitness, travel and tourism. The initiatives of Canadian National Parks Association and of W.J.S. (Selby) Walker are inextricably linked. For most of the 29 year life of the Association, Selby Walker was its executive secretary and its spokesman, and when he died in 1952 the Association ceased to operate.

Over the course of the last 25 years the textual records of the Association have been reconstructed. There is not one collection that contains the complete records of the Association. Selby Walker's own collection of materials was destroyed after his death by his widow as she

prepared to move from the family home. So the textual records first had to be found and then had to be reconstructed. In the end, documents were found in the collections of 16 individuals and organizations in six archives across Canada: National Archives of Canada; Provincial Archives of Alberta; British Columbia Archives; Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives; University of Alberta Archives; and Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies Archives. As well an interview was conducted with Selby Walker's daughter, Mary Lynas, about her father's conservation advocacy activities.

This was a substantial long term undertaking to reconstruct and document the history of the CNPA. The most significant part of the reconstruction is the 90 bulletins, newsletters, circulars, financial statements and executive circulars that were issued in the name of the Association. This represents about one half of the original publications. The reconstructed collection also includes related correspondence to and about the Association from the collections noted above. In the end, the reconstructed version of CNPA records contains more material than would have been available in any one of the collections noted above, including Selby Walker's own records. This reconstructed collection of textual records is now stored at Acadia University's Esther Clarke Wright Archives and is available for on-site use by other researchers. However, onsite use is not a financially viable option for the majority of student and faculty researchers. The purpose of this project and the presentation that is being proposed is to give researchers, no matter what their geographic location, access to the textual and oral documents.

#### **Accessible Scholarship and Education**

The aim of leisure scholarship should be to improve understanding of a wide variety of leisure experiences using a wide variety of research tools. This presentation aims to improve access to historical materials in general, and in particular, one pressure group, the Canadian National Parks Association, using 21<sup>st</sup> century technology and communications.

There are few readily accessible publications that focus solely on the Canadian National Parks Association. This is a function of at least two issues – lack of research and lack of publication outlets for leisure history. One short publication by Bella and Markham (1984) in the pre National Parks Centennial issue of *Recreation Canada* gave a brief overview of the purpose and work of the CNPA. Further analysis of the Association was the subject of papers given at three conferences and reported in their abstracts and proceedings (Markham, 1994 & 1998; and Markham-Starr, 2000), and an article that is in the review process for *Leisure/Loisir* (Markham-Starr, 2008). Brief (and at times inaccurate) mention has been made of the Canadian National Parks Association in articles by Bella (1987), Fraser (1978), Frost (1945), Henderson (1988 & 1994), Johnston & Marsh (1986), McNamee (1993) and Reichwein (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1998). None of these sources give students and scholars the depth of understanding of the voice of the advocates for parks and recreation in Canada that shows the passion and commitment that these men and women had for the services that they considered worthy of protection and advancement.

With the technology and resources that are now available it is possible improve access to primary source materials - to recapture the spirit and passion of these advocates. All the textual documents that were collected have been scanned as .tiff files, converted to .pdf files and subjected to Optical Character Recognition (OCR) processes so that the documents can be searched by keywords developed by the researcher. Segments of the interview with Mary Lynas were both transcribed and converted to digital audio files. The web pages are being created using the CONTENTdm digital collection management software (CONTENTdm, 2007). As the result, CNPA's official documents and correspondence can be viewed, heard and analyzed by

any scholar with web access. This is a substantial leap forward in making scholarship and leisure history education accessible.

### **Larger Issues - Actual or Potential Applications**

While this presentation will focus on one researcher's efforts to bring primary source materials into the hands of users, it is inherently linked to the larger issues of electronic publishing and open access publishing. Those issues are now being addressed by organizations with which the Canadian Association for Leisure Studies is linked. The Canadian Federation for Humanities and Social Sciences has recently completed their position paper on open access (CFHSS, 2006). The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council has completed an evaluation of open access journals (SSHRC, 2006). SSHRC is involved in the Synergies Project that will partner universities and academic journals to promote digital access in social sciences and humanities. The ever-evolving positions and policies of SSHRC and CFHSS will be discussed as part of this presentation with the expectation that individual researchers, CALS and *Leisure/Loisir* will benefit from the knowledge and the discussions about the future of scholarship and publishing.

At the community level, this project has great potential for community development purposes. Many organizations post electronic versions of their current documents such as background reports, plans, meeting minutes, notices, etc. However, what about their founding documents, such as the council minutes and legal documents leading to their establishment, newspaper accounts of the publicity sought and received by their proponents (and opponents), and photographs of early spaces, activities, staff, and dignitaries. All of these documents can be added to websites of government and non-profit organizations to build the corporate record and to make it accessible to members of the community.

Archives in government and academic institutions have led the way in moving their collections from limited on site access, to electronic access. This presentation will show leisure scholars one example of partnerships that can link many organizations including archives, governments, programming agencies, and advocacy groups.

In summary, this presentation will address the large scholarly issues of electronic publishing and open access, and the community and organization issues of showing their roots and pioneers to interested parties.

### **References**

- Bella, L. (1987). *Parks for profit*. Montreal: Harvest House.
- Bella, L., & Markham, S. (1984). Parks first: Patriotic Canadians from coast to coast in support of national parks and tributary highways. *Recreation Canada*, 42(5), 15-16.
- CFHSS (2006). *Position on open access*. Retrieved October 30, 2007 from <http://www.fedcan.ca/english/pdf/advocacy/OpenAccessPosition-e.pdf>
- CONTENTdm (2007) *CONTENTdm: Digital collection management software*. Retrieved October 29, 2007 from <http://www.contentdm.com/>
- Fraser, E. (1978). *Wheeler*. Banff: Summerthought, Ltd.
- Frost, E. C. (1945). *Canadian National Park resources*. University of Alberta, Edmonton.
- Henderson, G. (1988). Looking back: The founding of the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada and the people and events involved. *Park News*, 23(5), 4-6.
- Henderson, G. (1994). James Bernard Harkin: The father of Canadian national parks. *Borealis*, 5(Fall), 28-33.

## CCLR 12 ABSTRACTS

- Johnston, M., & Marsh, J. (1986). The Alpine Club of Canada, conservation and parks, 1906 to 1930. *Canadian Alpine Journal*, 69, 16-19.
- Markham, S. E. (1994). The Canadian National Parks Association: Grass roots advocates for national change. In F. I. Bell & G. H. V. Gyn (Eds.), *Access to active living: Congress program and abstracts of the 10th Commonwealth and International Scientific Congress* (pp. 124). Victoria, BC: University of Victoria.
- Markham, S. E. (1998). The Canadian National Parks Association. In E. Hamilton-Smith (Ed.), *Celebrating the parks: Proceedings of the first Australian Symposium on Parks History* (pp. 5-20). Melbourne: Rethink Consulting P/L.
- Markham-Starr, S. E. (2000). Selby Walker and the Canadian National Parks Association: Protectors of the Banff environment. In C. Parratt (Ed.), *North American Society for Sport History proceedings* (pp. 101-102). Iowa City: University of Iowa.
- Markham-Starr, S.E. (2008) "The Canadian National Parks Association and Selby Walker."
- McFarland, E.M. (1970). *The development of public recreation in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Parks/Recreation Association.
- McNamee, K. (1993). From wild places to endangered species: A history of Canada's national parks. In P. Dearden & R. Rollins (Eds.), *Parks and protected areas in Canada: Planning and management* (pp. 17-44). Don Mills: Oxford University Press.
- Reichwein, P. (1994). Guardians of the Rockies. *The Beaver*, 74(4), 4-13.
- Reichwein, P. (1995a). *Beyond the visionary mountains: The Alpine Club of Canada and the Canadian national park idea, 1906 to 1969*. Carleton University, Ottawa.
- Reichwein, P. (1995b). 'Hands off our national parks': The Alpine Club of Canada and hydro-development controversies in the Canadian Rockies, 1922-1930. *Journal of the Canadian Hostelling Association*, 6, 129-155.
- Reichwein, P. (1998). At the foot of the mountain: Preliminary thoughts on the Alpine Club of Canada, 1906-1950. In J. S. Marsh & B. W. Hodgins (Eds.), *Changing parks: The history, future and cultural context of parks and heritage landscapes* (pp. 160-176). Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc.
- Sanderlin, D. (1975). *Writing the history paper*. Woodburn, NY: Barron's Education Series, Inc.
- SSHRC (2006) *Study of the feasibility of open-access publishing for journals funded by SSHRC's Aid to Scholarly and Transfer Journals Programme*. Retrieved October 30, 2007 from [http://www.sshrc.ca/web/about/publications/journals\\_report\\_e.pdf](http://www.sshrc.ca/web/about/publications/journals_report_e.pdf)
- 
-