

# The Gryphon



The Newsletter of the Friends of the  
Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections

Spring/Summer 2024



## FROM THE CHAIR

It is wonderfully exciting to be celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Osborne Collection. First, however, we want to thank all the Osborne staff and the TPL's Special Collections staff for their hard work over the past few months. As you may know, the Toronto Public Library was hit by a ransomware attack in late October. While the system is slowly being brought back online, many services, including the catalogue, have not been available. The staff have soldiered on through this and we appreciate all their work.

The Toronto Public Library Foundation remains unaffected. For those of you who have renewed your membership online—or those who have been hesitating to do so—you can feel confident that your data are unaffected.

We hope to see you at the March 7 Lahmer Lecture featuring author Danny Ramadan (see more on page 2). A busy author and advocate, Danny writes for both children and adults and also chairs the Writers' Union of Canada. We are all looking forward to hearing his talk.

The Lahmer, Pantazzi, and Stubbs Lectures are regular elements of our year, but plans are also in place for a special 75th anniversary lecture later in the spring. Watch for details

of this and our AGM shortly. And, as we reported in our last issue, the Friends are excited to sponsor the first illustrator-in-residence at the Osborne, scheduled for the fall, to wrap up the 75th celebrations.

Over the years, the Friends have supported conservation efforts at the Osborne. In past issues of *The Gryphon*, you have been able to read conservator Emily White's

informative reports on her work, including the dummy books in the Margaret Bloy Graham fonds (donated to the collection by the artist's estate in 2015). We are very excited about a new and large conservation project that will include completion of rehousing and the creation of a finding aid for the Margaret Bloy Graham fonds, along with conservation treatment on a title-by-title basis. The fonds includes

## Welcome to the Osborne Collection!

The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books has four main areas of concentration. The Osborne Collection itself contains literature published before 1910. The Lillian H. Smith Collection comprises books of literary and artistic merit published in English from 1910 onward. The Canadiana Collection is a selection of 19th- and 20th-century children's books in English, related to Canada, or whose authors, illustrators, or publishers are associated with Canada. The Jean Thomson Collection of Original Art has over 5,000 illustrations for children's books in watercolour, pen-and-ink, woodcut, and many other media.

As part of the Toronto Public Library system, the Collection is open to all.

[facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Osborne-Collection-of-Early-Childrens-Books-177552168943174/](https://facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Osborne-Collection-of-Early-Childrens-Books-177552168943174/) \* [osbornecollection.ca](http://osbornecollection.ca)  
[www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/osborne/](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/osborne/)

Email the Friends at: [FriendsOsborne@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOsborne@gmail.com)

Lillian H. Smith Branch / Toronto Public Library, 239 College Street, Toronto, ON, M5T 1R5, 416-393-7753. See the website for hours.

See page 16 for membership and donation details.

preparatory sketches, dummy books, and original pre-separated art for books illustrated and/or authored by Graham; in all, there are materials from 22 titles. Funding for this project is coming from two sources. In 2021, we received very generous bequests from the estates of long-time members Jean Laundry and Judith (Billie) Wilder. Your Executive decided that these bequests, matched with unspent funds from pre-pandemic donations, should go toward funding this ambitious two-year project. We are grateful for the opportunity to do this.

More than 20 Friends joined our members' tour of the Osborne 75

exhibit at the TD Reference Gallery on January 16. Thanks to Services Specialist Jennifer Yan for an excellent tour (you can read more about the exhibit on page 12).

Looking back to the fall, we had two superb lectures. The Pantazzi Lecture by illustrator/author Jon Klassen was a hybrid event—our first lecture to be so—and we had excellent attendance in person and online. Danielle Daniel's Stubbs Lecture was moving, thoughtful, passionate, and, in the words of several audience members, "amazing." It was a wonderful close to our first year of in-person lectures since 2019. Turn to pages 14–15 to see photos from these lectures as well

as from the launch of Maggie Knaus's book, *Eleanor's Moon*.

We try to pack all the information we can into our two issues of *The Gryphon*, but we do send out emails for late-breaking changes or new events. If you haven't received any emails from us in the last six months, please get in touch at [friendsosborne@gmail.com](mailto:friendsosborne@gmail.com) and we will make sure you are on the list.

Thank you for being a Friend of the Osborne and for all your support of this wonderful collection.

—Gillian O'Reilly

## SPRING / SUMMER EVENTS

### Exhibition

#### *A World of Dragons*

February 20–May 4



The exhibit was planned for 2024 as this is the Year of the Dragon in the Chinese lunisolar year. The show features dragons in children's literature.

More details: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/a-world-of-dragons-dragons-in-childrens-books-tickets-839131744637?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

### Talk

#### *A Very Gorey Birthday Party: An Osborne Collection Show-and-Tell*

Thursday, February 22, 6:30–7:30

A talk given by Myrna Scully-Ashton, assisted by Jennifer Yan.

A celebration of the life and work of writer-illustrator Edward Gorey (1925–2000), with the Osborne Collection. In honour of the 99th anniversary of Edward Gorey's birthday, we gathered some of his weird and wonderful creations for a show-and-tell presentation to explore original artworks, rare books, and unique objects from Gorey's career. <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/a-very-gorey-birthday-party-an-osborne-collection-show-and-tell-tickets-796324406737> and <https://events.tpics.ca/4880>

### 20th Annual Albert & Clara Lahmer Memorial Lecture

#### *Danny Ramadan: Writing an Immigration Children's Book—While Also Keeping It Fun!*

Thursday, March 7, 6:30–7:30



Danny Ramadan is a Syrian-Canadian author and LGBTQ+ refugees advocate who will discuss his award-

winning children's books, the Salma series. When we think of stories about refugees and immigrants, tanks and tents on a grim landscape come to mind; stories of separation and trauma. But Ramadan will describe how to tell a different story: one with joyful moments, community-building, and family love.

Events are held in-person and are free. Location: Lillian H. Smith Branch. Lectures and talks in lower-level auditorium. Exhibitions on 4th floor.

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## FROM THE COLLECTION

There was an unfortunate turn of events for the Toronto Public Library in the late fall of 2023, as the organization fell victim to a cybersecurity attack. Although it imposed various limitations, and proved to be inconvenient to say the least, staff rallied to find ways to work through and around it, and to be able to continue to provide service to our customers. Several services such as the Digital Archive, various online databases, and TPL's substantial electronic resources were still available, despite the unavailability of other functions. At the Osborne Collection, staff had to get creative at times when answering reference questions, and it was still busy in terms of the number of inquiries and visitors, especially those stopping by to see the exhibit celebrating the 200th anniversary of the first English translation of the tales collected by the Brothers Grimm.

Winter came in like a lamb and the softly snow-dusted scene that everyone hoped for over the holidays was more of a damp one, with mild and unseasonably warm temperatures. In whatever manner one celebrates, or doesn't, the winter holidays always offer a bit of cheer in the city. Copious twinkling lights, festive music, and the general prettiness of things helped to lift the spirits and "make the season bright."

As the year rolled over to 2024, the collection stepped proudly into its 75th year. As I walked through the grand-scale exhibit dedicated to this milestone at the TD Gallery at the Toronto Reference Library, I felt proud of the accomplishments of all the staff who worked so hard to bring the celebratory showcase together, and truly honoured to be witness

to this rich history. I am always amazed to see some of the original donation items that were first gifted by Edgar Osborne to the library. I also think about what remarkable and innovative work Lillian H. Smith was doing at the time, with regard to children's literature and services. Her work was of such an esteemed calibre that it attracted the attention of our first benefactor, and encouraged the start of this collecting endeavour. Over the last 75 years the Osborne Collection has been privileged to receive numerous donations, and has had many generous benefactors. The Friends of the Osborne Collection are an important part of that legacy and history, and the library is grateful for their continued support, generosity, and avid interest. The Osborne 75 exhibit showcased so many extraordinary pieces acquired by the Collection, and it was a joy to visit them all. Anyone who is interested in a virtual walkthrough of the exhibit can find it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFQ8LIwqn3A>.

Now and again, someone will ask me if I have a favourite item in the Collection, and although I could never identify just one, there are decidedly some that stand out. Two of these can be seen in the exhibit. The first is one of Margaret Bloy Graham's illustrations for *The Sugar Mouse Cake*, by Gene Zion. I knew exactly where the book was shelved in my elementary school library, and I remember retrieving it often and sitting on the carpeted floor so I could pore over its beautiful pictures. The second is a pen-and-ink drawing titled "The Sun Hero Guards the Apples of the Sun," by Henry Justice Ford; it appears on page 214 in *The*

*Yellow Fairy Book*, edited by Andrew and Leonora Lang. Shortly after I assumed my role as Department Head, I was tasked with submitting my first Canadian Cultural Property applications, and this magnificent gift to the Collection by Jane Dobell was among the items for certification.

One of the highlights of the spring season is the Lahmer Lecture, scheduled for March 7, 2024. This year the Osborne is excited to welcome guest speaker Danny Ramadan. Ramadan is the author of the charming Salma series of books, illustrated by Anna Bron, of which there are four installments featuring the intrepid Salma, so far: *Salma the Syrian Chef* (2020), *Salma Makes a Home* (2023), *Salma Writes a Book* (2023), and *Salma Joins the Team* (2024). In addition to being a successful author of both adult and children's books, Ramadan is a fearless and steadfast advocate for literacy, 2SLGBTQ+ rights and freedoms, and an outspoken champion against censorship and book banning.

What else is in store in 2024 for the Collection in addition to the fall lectures remains to be seen, and staff eagerly await a full restoration of services. Always an optimist, I will say that necessity has made inventors and innovators of us all. The staff have demonstrated remarkable strength, routinely turning challenges into opportunities, remaining productive, and simultaneously finding the best ways to continue to provide excellent service. The cybersecurity threat has imposed obstacles, but not insurmountable ones.

—Sephora W. Henderson

# CELEBRATING THE COLLECTION'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

## In Their Own Words

With the Osborne Collection celebrating its 75th anniversary, we asked a few people who have been involved with the Collection over the years to share some of their fondest memories, an item in the Collection that is special to them, and why they believe the Collection is so important.

### Leslie McGrath

#### How were you involved with the Osborne Collection?

I was the Senior Department Head of the Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections for 23 years, starting in 1995. I was at the Osborne Collection's 50th anniversary—congratulations on the 75th!

#### What Osborne event was memorable for you?

Many events were memorable! The visit by Her Majesty Michiko, Empress of Japan, in 2009, was a great honour and was made particularly special by Her Majesty's lifelong interest in the Osborne Collection. Her Majesty's enjoyment at seeing items she had previously only enjoyed in facsimile was a delight, and her warm and gracious salutations to us all left us with glowing memories.

#### What item in the Collection is special to you?

There are so many beautiful gifts at Osborne, special to me because of the generosity of the donors, or because Osborne Friends helped us to acquire them ... items that speak to me because of their wistful or timely messages. Here is one: "Wayfarers All," Ernest Shepard's illustration from *The Wind in the Willows*, in which the exotic travelling Rat entices the home-loving Mole to follow him down the road. Jane Dobell gave this lovely picture to Osborne in 2005. We all need adventures but also the anchor of home. I have mostly retired but still bring classes I teach to Osborne; this is like coming home, and the kindly welcome there from Sephora and her colleagues, and their display of the treasures at Osborne, make me feel I have never really left.

#### Overall, what does the Collection mean to you? Why do you believe it is important?

Today more than ever, librarians of special collections like Osborne need to collect, preserve, and make available historical materials to prevent revisionist history. People have the right to examine the evidence to find truths. The evidence also shows visitors the salutary message that times will always be changing—and that doubtless many of today's assumptions will seem as absurd or dangerous in two hundred years as those from the past look to us today.

Build a "family tree" of children's books at Osborne and you will see how far we have come, and also, where we need to grow. The vibrant emergence of Indigenous stories out of the backdrop of colonial history deserves its own profile, but can be mentioned here as an important example of what the Osborne Collection can illustrate. Poverty, education, children in war—Osborne Collection materials can help us understand how succeeding generations have understood these and other important issues. You will also see that many of the best-loved children's stories span the world, with origins lost in distant oral traditions, but with print descendants now flourishing in diverse, multicultural, and inclusive settings.



An unauthorized printing of the first edition of Perrault's fairy tales, *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé: avec des moralitez*. Amsterdam, 1697.

### Martha Scott

#### How were you involved with the Osborne Collection?

I worked at the Osborne Collection from 1999 to 2021, as Librarian, Cataloguer, Acting Branch Head (during Leslie McGrath's maternity leave), and Services Specialist. I can't imagine a more fascinating or rewarding career.

#### What Osborne event was memorable for you?

Working with Osborne's incredible collection of fairy tales: cataloguing the pre-1910 fairy tale collection, and curating exhibits on fairy tale themes are a few of my overall highlights. On a more specific note: in October 2000, I was privileged to provide a tour of an exhibit on wizards and magical creatures to visiting author J. K. Rowling. My then 13-year-old son, Harry Potter fan extraordinaire,

“just happened” to be at work with me that evening and was equally thrilled to meet her.

I also have fond recollections of puppet shows offered as exhibit tie-ins: *The Tailor of Gloucester* performed for members of the Beatrix Potter Society; Victorian toy theatre reenactments of *The Sleeping Beauty*; and a puppet presentation with Children’s Author in Residence Sarah Ellis of *The Three Little Pigs*, among others. Although beyond the scope of our regular job duties and frequently put together on our own time, these demonstrated the enduring appeal of fairy stories and provided meaningful outreach to Osborne’s community of users. They were also loads of fun!

**What item in the Collection is special to you?**

It’s hard to choose just one, but sticking with the fairy tale theme I’d have to name Osborne’s unauthorized printing of the first edition of Perrault’s fairy tales, *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé: avec des moralitez*. It was published in Amsterdam in 1697, the same year as the original. I love the evocative frontispiece illustration of an elderly woman, the original “Mother Goose,” spinning tales by the fireside to a rapt audience. Perrault’s stories were enormously influential and remain popular to this day.

**Overall, what does the Collection mean to you? Why do you believe it is important?**

It’s wonderful that the Osborne Collection is available within the Toronto Public Library, with its mandate of openness and accessibility to all. I am grateful to have participated in building and making available this world-renowned resource to researchers, students, authors, illustrators, schoolchildren, and so many more.

**Hugh Anson-Cartwright**

**How were you involved with the Osborne Collection?**

I first became involved when the Osborne Collection was at the old Boys and Girls House on St. George Street. On one occasion I met Princess Alexandra, the Hon. Lady Ogilvy, who became the Honorary Patron of the Osborne Collection. Judith St. John was the Head of the Collection. In 1966, the Friends of the Osborne Collection was formed. I succeeded Neman Mallon as Treasurer of the Friends and continued in that role for many years. Later when the Collection moved to College Street, I met Margaret Maloney who succeeded Miss St. John. As my bookshop was located at 229 College Street, I was often asked by Margaret and her successor Leslie McGrath to value donations to the collection and approve the purchase of special items.

**Ken Settingington**

**How were you involved with the Osborne Collection?**

I have been involved with the Osborne Collection during the time I was the Children and Youth Advocate for the Toronto Public Library (1999 to 2010). But I have also been involved with the Osborne through my association with writers and the Collection.

**What Osborne event was memorable for you?**

The most memorable event for me was when I assisted Joan Bodger in scattering her husband’s ashes in the building site for the new Lillian H. Smith library. She told the story of the ashes in her book *The Crack in the Teacup*. Joan was a dear friend and I was always willing to help her—but I did fear that there might be consequences. Fortunately, the only consequence was that I got a good story to tell.

**What item in the Collection is special to you?**

In the collection there is the guest book signed by J. K. Rowling on the occasion of her visit to the collection. I vividly remember the day of the visit because it was a Saturday, after the library was closed. Of course no one mentioned that the elevators shut down after closing and security (unaware of her visit, due to the very secret nature of the visit) had to open the locked doors. I stood outside with our esteemed guest waiting for the staff to open the doors and then we climbed the stairs to the Osborne collection on the top floor. Of course Leslie McGrath was an extremely gracious hostess and the visit was quite magical. Rowling signed the guest book with an image of the “sorting hat.” She then was the guest of honour at the Novel Afternoon lunch the next day at the Royal York. It was a great afternoon!

**Overall, what does the Collection mean to you? Why do you believe it is important?**

The Osborne Collection is the jewel in the crown of the Toronto Public Library. I believe the Collection needs support to maintain and build it for future generations to understand the importance of children’s literature.

**Liz Derbecker**

**How were you involved with the Osborne Collection?**

I worked for the Osborne Collection for thirty-five years, from my start as a page in 1985 to my retirement as a library assistant in 2020.

**What Osborne event was memorable for you?**

The event that really stands out to me is the visit of the Empress of Japan in 2009. She was so gracious and so interested in everything that was shown to her by Leslie

McGrath, ably assisted by Yuka Kajihara. I remember that I was standing well back with our bibliographer, Lori McLeod, and at the end of the visit the Empress of Japan crossed the room to shake our hands. I will never forget that.

### **What item in the Collection is special to you?**

There are so many books in the Collection that I could describe as “my favourite”—I have a lot of favourites! One that I remember well is the 1555 Aesop, which I used a lot during programming. It is a remarkably robust survivor in excellent condition, with clean bright paper and a beautiful device on the title page that depicts a mermaid with two tails. It’s a lovely example of early printing.

### **Overall, what does the Collection mean to you? Why do you believe it is important?**

The Osborne Collection is an invaluable resource. It is a treasure house that has so much to offer and so much to teach, and its position as part of a public library system means that its treasures are accessible in a way that most other special collections are not. The Collection deserves to be appreciated, utilized and conserved, and TPL is fortunate to have such a splendid collection among its resources. I look forward to many more years of consultation with the Collection and its wonders.

### **Chester Gryski**

#### **How were you involved with the Osborne Collection?**

My involvement with the Osborne Collection goes back to the mid-1970s when my wife, Camilla, while in Library School, worked in the Osborne Collection. I would attend Osborne events with her. I joined the Executive of the Friends in 1985 and was Chair from 1986 to 1994. When I retired as Chair, I was honoured by being made a Life Member of the Friends.

#### **What Osborne event was memorable for you?**

Those were turbulent times in the library world of Toronto. Special collections felt that they were under siege by library supporters who regarded them as “elitist,” a pejorative term directed at collections whose books did not circulate and were not focused on the current issues as perceived by these supporters. Some talked of selling the Osborne Collection.

In addition, the Osborne Collection, along with the Merrill Collection and the circulating children’s collection that lived together at Boys and Girls House, located at 40 St. George, faced their own challenges. A major one was that the building’s security system and environmental system were in need of updating. The site was small and an addition could not be built there. Boys and Girls House was tucked behind what was once the Central Reference Library but was now the University of Toronto’s Koffler Centre. Many people mistakenly thought that the library, especially the Osborne Collection, was part of the university. These were all reasons to find a location on

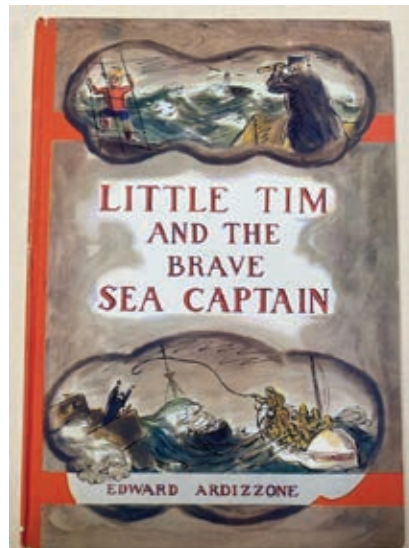
which to build a new building. Then as now College Street, the preferred location, was already developed, which made finding a suitable site difficult.

Several possible sites with buildings were looked at but were considered to be unsuitable for conversion. Finally, about the beginning of 1990, the present site of the Lillian H. Smith Library at 239 College Street was found to be available, but it had problems. First of all, the site was formerly a gas station which meant there were contamination issues to be dealt with. Second, the existing zoning would not accommodate the building that the Library Board envisioned because the Board wanted to add space for a circulating adult collection, an

aspect that was missing in Boys and Girls House. This meant that the process of getting a change in the zoning would have to be undertaken. Thus it was not at all certain that the building could be built on the site and if it could, when it would be completed.

Housing, as always, was a concern in the City of Toronto and about this time the university and a non-profit housing body approached the city and the Library Board seeking to purchase 40 St. George with the intent to build an apartment building on the site. This proposal was received favourably in some quarters. The problem for the Osborne Collection was that the proposed purchasers were not interested in waiting until the new library was built but wanted the site sooner.

The transparency that current thinking and the internet now bring to the functioning of public bodies did not exist then. A lot of what was happening was not general knowledge, especially the fact that the library was being approached to sell the site and was thinking of doing so.



New York: Oxford University Press, 1936.

In order to sell, the library would require that the Collection be put into storage until a new library building was built. While the books were in storage, they could not be used. Of course, no one knew how long this might last.

Margaret Maloney was then Head of the Collection. One afternoon in November 1990, I got a call from Margaret. She had just learned that at the Library Board Meeting that evening, a motion would be made to sell the land and put the Collection into storage. She asked could I as Chair of the Friends do something. She as staff could do nothing. I said I would go the meeting.

When I got to the meeting, I found that the only people there were board members and senior library staff. They worked through the Agenda, and then the motion to sell the land and put the Collection into storage came up. There was some discussion but it struck me that the feeling of the meeting was to pass the motion. Before the vote, the chief librarian, Les Fowlie, looked over in my direction and asked if anyone had anything to say. I took advantage of the opportunity, rising and proceeding to set out all the reasons I could think of to demonstrate that this was something that should not be done.

What I said struck a chord with some Board members and it was moved and approved to put the matter over for a future meeting. With that extra time, we were able to spread the word and mount a strong and effective vocal opposition to the plan. The plan died.

**Overall, what does the Collection mean to you? Why do you believe it is important?**

The Osborne Collection, the Merrill Collection, and the circulating children's collection stayed in Boys and Girls House until the new library opened five years later. Today 40 St. George is the site of the University of Toronto's Department of Computer Science, and the Osborne Collection invites the world to visit and see its holdings on the fourth floor of the Lillian H. Smith Library.

### Jane Dobell

**How were you involved with the Osborne Collection?**

I have been involved with the Osborne Collection for over 50 years. I was introduced to the Collection by my cousin Sybille Pantazzi who was a librarian at the Art Gallery of Ontario and who donated a number of books to the

Osborne. I established and endow the annual Pantazzi Memorial Lecture to honour her. I was also involved with choosing images from the Collection that we could use on cards, bags, magnets, etc., to sell commercially, for community outreach, at the Osborne lectures, as well as other places such as Word on the Street, the North York Library, and the Reference Library. [Jane is a Member Emerita of the Executive of the Friends of the Osborne Collection.]

**What Osborne event was memorable for you?**

There was a discussion in the early '70s whether the City of Toronto should support the Osborne Special Collection in the new building, and I was involved with a letter writing campaign to the head librarian who was not in favour of the support. There was a Japanese tourist group that was interested in seeing the Osborne Collection at the time, so it showed that there was international interest—we were very proud of that. Another very memorable event was an exhibition in my honour (2005). I have an interest in education [Jane has served as an Ottawa Board of Education Trustee], and have bought many children's books from museums and galleries, and rather than keep them I've donated over 1,000 of them to the Collection.



Venice: Apud haeredes Petri Rauani & socios, 1555.

**What item in the Collection is special to you?**

My favourite book is *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain* by Edward Ardizzone. I used to read it to my son, and I appreciate Ardizzone's drawings.

**Overall, what does the Collection mean to you? Why do you believe it is important?**

The books in the Osborne Collection are a history of childhood. It's an opportunity to see what children were taught to read, and it reflects childhood at different times: being an educator, I am interested in different types of propaganda from British to German to Russian.

The Collection holds an important position; there is nothing to match it in Canada, and it's important internationally—not all collections of this calibre are accessible to the public. The Osborne is widely available to everyone.

—Karri Yano

## A RARE BOOKS CLASS VISITS OSBORNE

I bring iSchool (the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information, originally known as a library school but now encompassing many facets of information studies, including museum studies) classes of prospective special collections librarians to Osborne and Merrill each year to give them first-hand knowledge of the use and care of rare book collections. Both collections have unique experiences to offer, but the focus here is on Osborne: we begin tours with the shared experience of childhood reading, preserved within the busiest public library system in the world. Here the librarians perform the rare feat of providing access to challenging historical materials while offering attractive exhibits in a family-friendly setting.



*Babar et le père Noël*. Jean de Brunhoff. Hachette, 1941. Photo by Connor White.

Our November 25, 2023, visit followed a cyberattack that, unbeknownst to us, had severely hampered staff access to library records. With their usual generosity Sephora



*The Earth and its inhabitants*. Carl J. Bauer. Nuremberg, n.p., c. 1840. Photo by Connor White.



iSchool students at Osborne, November 2023. Photo by Oana Calin.

Henderson and the staff had nevertheless retrieved a wide range of materials requested for the Rare Books and Manuscripts class. The first table included very early phonetics, godly Puritan works, moral stories, and so on, illustrating the shift from undiluted instruction to amusement, up to modern picture books and works of fantasy.

We looked as well at Canadiana’s journey from colonial-era imports to homegrown literature, including the emergence of vibrant Indigenous voices. Students observed that while the Osborne Collection is an English-language resource, many of its best-loved stories are gathered from around the globe: some of the fables of Aesop were derived from the Panchatantra of India, *Cinderella* has Egyptian origins, and early versions of *Red Riding Hood* came from China ... The rich cultural nuances of this book collection illustrate the need to study historical artifacts to gain understanding of our shared origins, of our place in the world, and of our changing perspectives. These important messages from the past—that outlooks are continually changing, and that our descendants will in turn be amused, and possibly appalled, at what we read today—are why we must keep early books available. Members of the class commented that such collections help to preserve the cultural record and prevent revisionist history, especially when offered in a public library setting.

Moving on to our next table, we looked at some of the inventive solutions employed by conservators and librarians to protect the materials of widely varied sizes, shapes, and degrees of preservation (many “loved to shreds” in librarians’ tactful descriptions) found in special collections of children’s books. Few public library systems are as well-equipped as Toronto’s, and when it comes to questions of conservation and preservation the specialists are generous in sharing expertise and answering questions.

A final table carried an array of challenged books. Many historical titles would not be included in today’s



circulating collection; products of their time and place, reflecting period language and attitudes, they are of interest primarily to scholars and historians. The Lillian H. Smith and Canadiana collections at Osborne do include modern materials, some of which are also held in the circulating collections. A number of these have been challenged over the years, for a variety of reasons; given a careful review, most remain available for borrowing in library branches. In other cases the books have ultimately been removed from circulating shelves, but these are kept at Osborne, in the reference collection, where they can be contextualized with their literary descendants. Through a literary family tree, students may see examples of these early stories revisited and rewritten into triumphant new tales welcomed to the library's circulating collections.



Pop-up version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Vojtech Kubasta. Prague: Artia, 1961. Photo by Oana Calin.

I asked the students to share their photographs of the visit, assuming they had taken “selfies” in this fascinating setting. Instead, they had focused on the books.

The pictures here show how engaging they found the Osborne Collection and its holdings. The pleasure of using this highly effective teaching resource, continually enhanced by so many notable acquisitions (largely made possible by the Friends), and by the warm welcome of Sephora, Jennifer, and their colleagues, make a trip to Osborne and Merrill truly a highlight of the Rare Books and Manuscripts course.

For all the current pedagogical emphasis on AI and digital information, it is important to remember as well the lessons of the past, shown through artifacts so carefully kept and so readily accessible to classes today. Few collections are better equipped to build cultural understanding and a sense of progressing together as

the Osborne Collection, where the best-loved stories of childhood still speak to us all.

—Leslie McGrath

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author.*

## Renewing Your Membership/Donation

In the past, we have sent the Friends of the Osborne renewal notice with *The Gryphon*, whether you get the publication in print or online.

For those of you who get a print version of *The Gryphon*, you will still receive your renewal notice with the publication. Please use it as your reminder to renew online or by mail.

For those of you who get the electronic version of *The Gryphon*, you will get a separate email reminder instead.

Remember that all donations of \$25 or over automatically qualify you for membership in the Friends of the Osborne, which gets you *The Gryphon* newsletter, invitations to lectures and events, and notices of special exhibits. Your

donations are always welcome, at whatever time of year you choose. If this brief message encourages you to donate now, please feel free to do so at <https://tplfoundation.ca/osborne/>.

## To Our American Friends

The support of our many Friends from the USA underlines the important place early children's literature holds internationally. We deeply appreciate your ongoing support. A reminder that donating online through the American Foundation for the Toronto Public Library can be done easily at <https://tplfoundation.ca/osborneusa/>.

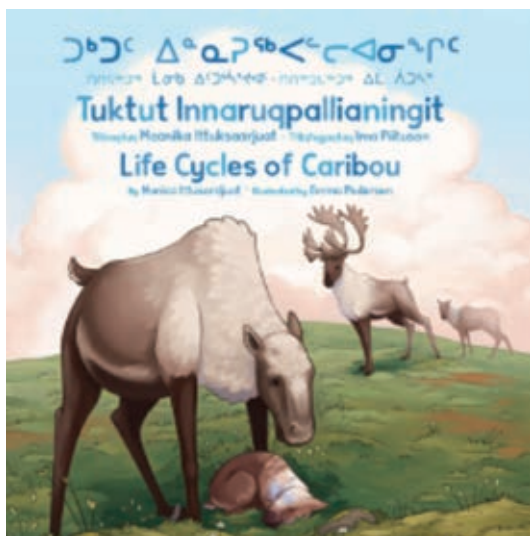
Note that you will have to change the country from “Canada” to “United States” and it will reformat the address lines appropriately. This will ensure your desired donation is credited in US dollars.

## CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS BOOKS AT OSBORNE AND ON MY OWN SHELVES

The month of June marks National Indigenous History Month, putting Indigenous stories front and centre. We can look to the Osborne Collection as part of this celebration as they have a number of illuminating books and artworks by Indigenous writers and illustrators.

A key example is *Lii Yiiboo Nayaapiwak lii Swer: L'alfabet di Michif/ Owls See Clearly at Night: A Michif Alphabet* by Julie Flett. This dual-language alphabet book features text in Michif. Another is 34th Helen E. Stubbs lecturer David Alexander Robertson's *On the Trapline*, the generational story of a boy and his grandfather embarking on a northern journey to visit the trapline where his grandfather grew up, prompting the boy to imagine the contrasts between their lives. These, among others, shine a light on Indigenous children's literature, revealing details of traditional lifestyles and values, such as emphasis on community, connection with animals, and oral history.

What follows is a round-up of children's books that not only detail the Indigenous experience in Canada but also aim to preserve these incredible stories by recounting them in Indigenous languages, in addition to English.



*Life Cycles of Caribou*  
By Monica Ittusardjuat  
Illustrated by Emma Pedersen  
Inhabit Books, 2020

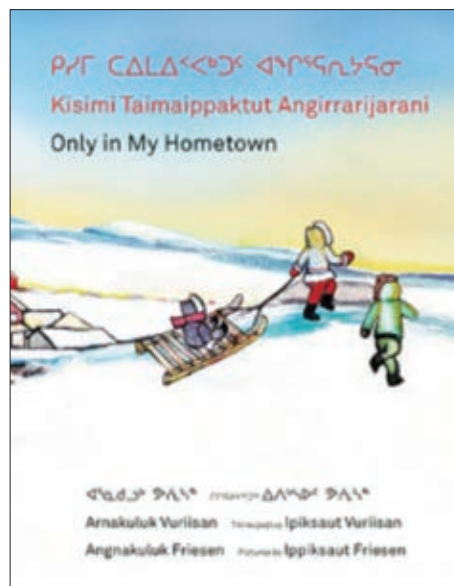
As an avid collector of children's books, I'm drawn to beautifully illustrated stories that expose me to cultures and languages other than my own—these works introduce and celebrate the rich and vibrant cultures, communities, traditions, and languages of Indigenous peoples in Canada.



*We All Play*  
By Julie Flett  
Greystone Books, 2021

*Life Cycles of Caribou* takes children on a journey through the lives of these vital creatures. Told through Inuktitut syllabics, Inuktitut roman orthography, and English, and set against a backdrop of gorgeous earth-tone illustrations, the text provides young readers with an understanding of Inuktitut terminology.

In Julie Flett's *We All Play*, animals and children are connected through one universal action: playtime! Birds



*Kisimi Taimaippaktut Angirrarjarani / Only in My Hometown*  
By Angnakuluk Friesen  
Illustrated by Ippiksaut Friesen  
Translated by Jean Kusugak  
Groundwood Books, 2017

chase and chirp, whales swim and squirt, and kids shout “We play too! / kimêtawânaw mîna!” Apart from beautiful artwork celebrating the commonalities between humans and the natural world, the book includes a glossary of Cree words, along with a pronunciation guide and a link to audio recordings.

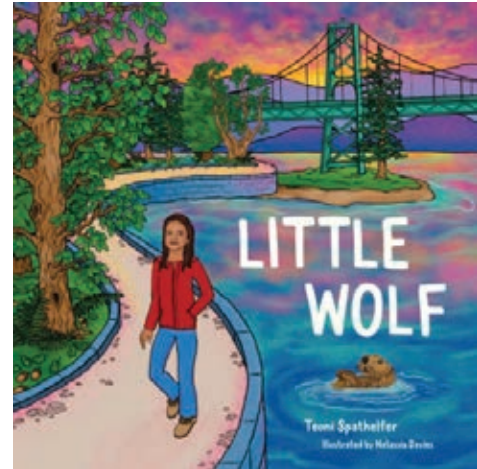
Described as an “ode to small-town life in Nunavut,” this book by sisters Angnakuluk Friesen and Ippiksaut



*Arctic Song: Creation Stories from the Arctic*  
By Neil Christopher  
Illustrated by Germaine Arnattauijuq (Arnaktauyok)  
Inhabit Books, 2023

Friesen weaves a stunning depiction of growing up in an Inuit community in the Canadian North. The simple text, translated into Inuktitut and written out in syllabics and transliterated roman characters, mixed with unique painted illustrations, will connect with every reader who holds their hometown dear.

*Arctic Song* is a visual retelling of Inuit creation stories, originally passed down from generation to generation as oral history. Based on the animated short film *Arctic Song*, which was co-produced and co-directed by the author and illustrator, the book is presented in English and Inuktitut and takes the reader on a rich journey through the creation of day and night, of the sun and the moon, and to the origin of death.



*Little Wolf*  
By Teoni Spathelfer  
Illustrated by Natassia Davies  
Heritage House Publishing, 2021

While not in the Osborne or in my personal collection, *Little Wolf*, written in English, offers a glimpse into the life of a young Indigenous girl who is new to the big city. Finding herself out of place in an urban setting, she feels isolated and removed from her culture at first, but eventually discovers that some cultural connections just might still be possible in the city—not to mention all the wildlife she finds along the way! This book is an excellent example of the blending of traditional and contemporary Indigenous themes, ideal for a child who may feel like a fish out of water.

—Valentina D’Aliesio

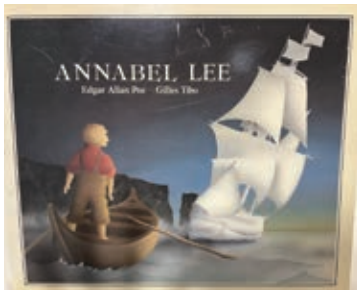
The Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books is always actively expanding our collection to include diverse voices, perspectives, and cultures. In addition to the books and artworks created by Indigenous creators, here are some offerings from our previous speakers.

**20th Annual Helen E. Stubbs Memorial Lecture with Michael Arvaarluk Kusugak: The Perfect Story.**  
Copies of Michael Arvaarluk Kusugak’s published Stubbs Lecture are available at the Collection.

**14th Annual Sybille Pantazzi Lecture with Roy Henry Vickers: The Art of Storytelling.**  
Crowdcast presentation from February 10, 2022:  
<https://www.crowdcast.io/e/the-art-of-storytelling-3>

## A DONOR'S STORY

### Me and *Annabel Lee*



As a young reader, I remained unmoved by Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee*, finding it both saccharine and dreary—a sentiment that will shock many lovers of this poem.

Over my years in the book industry, I acquired various books at events or as promotional copies. One of them was a 24-page picture book version of *Annabel Lee*, illustrated by the acclaimed Quebec artist and author Gilles Tibo (b. 1951) and published by Tundra Books in 1987.

Tibo had already illustrated more than 30 books by 1987 (he now has 150 to his name and in a diversity of styles) but the jacket copy notes that “his work on *Annabel Lee* was a new experience for him as an artist. He dedicated nearly a year to the poem and, in his own words, ‘to entering another world and painting with power and poetry the great spaces where sky and sea meet and lead us into *la lumière de la nuit*—the light of the night.’”

Tibo sets the story in the Gaspésie of the 1930s. The young boy, who is “the son of a poor fisherman” and the beautiful and mysterious girl from another world play out their adventures against the backdrop of the little fishing town of Percé, the tidal pools along the Atlantic shore, and the dramatic Percé Rock. The soft, almost ghostly quality of the pictures and the two figures with featureless faces present an interesting contrast to the real working-class setting and rocky landscape. (At the time of publication, reviewers had mixed reactions to the illustrations.)

As an enthusiastic student of Canada's literary history, I was delighted to offer this example of Tibo's art and Tundra's output to the Osborne shelves. I valued the book because I believe strongly that children should be able to discover stories set in their own country and I appreciate Tibo's inspiration to set the poem in a beautiful and dramatic part of his own province. Having visited Percé several times as an adult, I get a kick out of seeing a place I know being transformed into a magical story. However, despite Tibo's efforts, I remain as unenthusiastic about the poem as I ever was.

*Annabel Lee*, by Edgar Allan Poe, illustrated by Gilles Tibo (Toronto: Tundra Books, 1987), 24 pages.

—Gillian O'Reilly

## MEMBERS' TOUR: “OSBORNE 75TH” SHOW

The members' tour of the Osborne 75th show was very successful. Jennifer gave an excellent and enthusiastic tour and we had the extra treat of Brenda Clark, illustrator of the Franklin books, being one of the attendees. She spoke a bit about her illustrations.

The show itself is wonderfully curated and beautifully designed—from a blow-up of Dušan Petričić's illustration of the Lillian H. Smith branch to advertise the exhibit to movable wooden models of Lothar Meggendorfer's movable books for kids and adults to play with. The show was an opportunity to see some of the Margaret Bloy Graham works whose conservation we have been funding. There is also a wide range of interesting books and art: Tolkien, Sendak's Osborne gryphon, Takashima's illustrations for the groundbreaking *Child in a Prison Camp*, *Alice* (of course), and much more. The exhibit is very accessible and a delight for all. I hope many of you have had a chance to see it. The show was on until February 18 but now can be visited online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFQ8LIwqn3A&t=1s>, or <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZM6GRPYCJ/>.

People went home with a Harry the Dirty Dog cookie created by our regular cookie provider, Confectionery Magic. When Jennifer said she wanted to get a Harry cookie, I was keen on the idea, but wondered if it could be done. The answer is definitely yes!



—Gillian O'Reilly

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COLLECTION

### J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*

Due to last fall's cybersecurity incident, the Notable Acquisitions and Gifts-in-Kind features will not be available in this issue of *The Gryphon*. We would like to take the opportunity to instead highlight a select few treasures available in the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books.

The story of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1937) needs no introduction, as the popular children's fantasy novel has garnered a large and loyal following that frequently attracts new fans. Incredible as the story of *The Hobbit* is, the origin and publication story for the book is equally fascinating.

Wayne G. Hammond's *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography* (USA: Oak Knoll Press, 2002) discusses how *The Hobbit* was brought to life. Tolkien was a professor at the University of Oxford, and while grading a large stack of papers he decided to scribble on a blank sheet of paper the line: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." Tolkien was greatly inspired by this scribble, and started to form a story around it, resulting in *The Hobbit*.

After completing the manuscript, he shared it with his friends and colleagues. In fact, Tolkien shared the story with fellow University of Oxford professor and close friend C. S. Lewis (creator of *The Chronicles of Narnia* series). Tolkien also shared the story with his students. One student, Elaine Griffiths, was acquainted with Susan Dagnall, a staff member of the publisher George Allen & Unwin. Griffiths told Dagnall about Tolkien's story, and after reading *The Hobbit*, Dagnall asked Tolkien for permission to share the story with her employer. Stanley Unwin, the publisher's co-founder had his 10-year-old son Rayner review the book. Rayner gave a favourable review, stating: "This book, with the help of maps, does not need any illustrations it is good and should appeal to all children between the ages of 5 and 9." Rayner's positive review helped clinch the publisher's decision to move the manuscript forward into publication.

A publication run of 1,500 copies of *The Hobbit* was printed on September 21, 1937, and copies of this rare first impression have become highly sought after: the fierce competition among an incredible fandom, and the scarcity of this impression have made it challenging to find. To determine if you have a copy of this "precious"

first impression, there are a few unique characteristics that stand out among other impressions. Tolkien personally drew and submitted over 100 original illustrations for the book, however due to budget constraints only 10 images were included. The dust jacket was illustrated and designed by Tolkien, and when spread out, it showcases a symmetrical overview of the landscape that wraps around the entire book. The Lonely Mountain is purposely placed at the centre of the dust jacket, and when the book is closed the mountain sits perfectly at the book's spine. As a nod to his academic career as a professor of Anglo-Saxon literature, he included Anglo-Saxon runes along the border of the cover which translates the book's title, author, and publisher information.

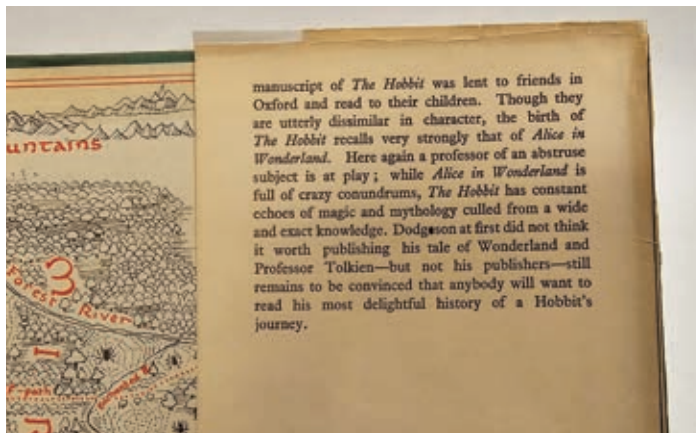


Another element highlighting Tolkien's thoughtful design is seen when the book is closed: readers will find that the front cover features a daylight landscape with eagles flying across the sky. When the book is flipped over, the back cover features an image of a dragon flying across the night sky. Early impressions of the book covers stay faithful to the design of the first, with later editions changing the colour of the runes, sun, and text.



*(“Highlights from the Collection” continued)*

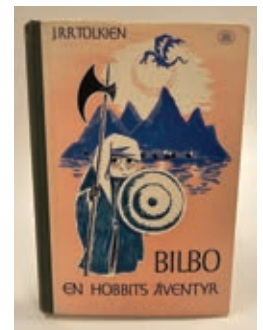
The dust jacket’s blurb draws comparisons to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1866), and cites Carroll’s real name, Charles Dodgson, but with a typographical error that spelled his surname “Dodgeson” with an extraneous *e*. Instead of reprinting the dust jacket with the correct spelling, the publishers decided to manually correct the typo on all 1,500 copies.



Shortly after its release, all copies were sold out, and an order for a second impression of 2,300 copies was made in December 1937. All illustrations in the first impression were printed in black and white, but its clear success and demand for a second impression allowed for the conversion of four illustrations to colour. This makes the second impression easily identifiable from the various early editions and impressions that followed, since World War II shortages caused a reversion to black and white.

After years of growing interest in *The Hobbit*, Tolkien was motivated to write a sequel with a much larger expansion into Middle-earth with *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954–55). While drafting the trilogy, Tolkien realized he would like the stories to align better, and submitted rewrites for a second edition of *The Hobbit* released in 1951. Significant changes were made in the story’s chapter 5, “Riddles in the Dark.”

In addition to new editions of the book, *The Hobbit* was also translated into a number of languages. In 1962, *Bilbo: en hobbits äventyr* (Stockholm: Raben & Sjögren) a Swedish edition illustrated by Tove Jansson, was released. Jansson famously created the Moomins series. In the books, Tolkien describes Gollum as a creature with large plate-sized eyes, and Jansson illustrated such a creature so that he towered over Bilbo, as seen in the image above. In subsequent impressions, Tolkien provided clarification as to Gollum’s size.



The Osborne Collection is fortunate to carry a first impression of this classic piece of children’s literature, along with a copy of Jansson’s Swedish adaptation. Both pieces were also featured in the recent Osborne 75th anniversary exhibit celebrating Edgar Osborne’s original 1949 donation, on display at the Toronto Reference Library’s premium exhibit space, the TD Gallery (see page 12).

—Jennifer Yan

## FALL 2023 EVENTS AT THE COLLECTION

**Book Launch, *Eleanor’s Moon***  
**Saturday, September 23**



Author and illustrator Maggie Knaus with daughter, Eleanor, who inspired the story of *Eleanor’s Moon*.

Maggie with Senior Department Head  
Sephora Henderson.

*Book launch photos by Sephora W. Henderson.*



## FALL 2023 EVENTS AT THE COLLECTION

### Pantazzi Lecture, Thursday, October 12

*"[Klassen] provided remarkable information on his method of writing and illustrating."*

Jon Klassen engaged audiences in person and online in his talk "Omission and Connection in Picture Books" and in

a conversation that continued long after the lecture ended.

For those not able to watch at the time of broadcast, the recording will be available for viewing until October 11, 2024, at <https://crowdcast.io/c/uq7sz17p8q4w>.



Jon Klassen speaking at Osborne.



L-r: Brenda Halliday, Linda Granfield, Karen Patkau.



Top, l-r: Sid Sharp, Serah-Marie McMahon, Susan Yoon.  
Above: A good crowd turned out to hear Jon Klassen speak.

### Stubbs Lecture, Thursday, October 26

*"Powerful."*

*"That was so not what I expected and it was so amazing."*

These were some reactions to Danielle Daniel's moving, thoughtful, and engaging talk "Rocks and Trees and Lakes, Oh My!" examining the extraordinary natural settings of

her Northern Ontario childhood and the life-changing events that shaped her career as an author and illustrator.

As part of the Stubbs Lecture series, the talk will be published in hard copy and distributed to all Osborne Friends.



Danielle Daniel and her husband, Steve Daniel.



L-r: Kirsten Brassard, Patti McIntosh, Emma Hunter.



Danielle Daniel speaking at Osborne.

*Pantazzi and Stubbs photos by Maggie Knaus.*



## The Origin of Our Gryphon

Maurice Sendak was a Life Member of the Friends. His connection spanned the tenures of three Collection heads: Judith St. John, Margaret Crawford Maloney, and myself. I recall with delight his cheerful call giving permission to use the gryphon logo he had drawn for Osborne in 1979. Our gryphon is witty and benevolent despite its fierce appearance. Gryphons are known for guarding treasure and are emblems of valour and magnanimity (Pseudodoxia Epidemica III in *Brewer's*). We owe a great deal to Maurice Sendak for creating such an evocative, inspirational logo.

—Leslie McGrath

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-the-uk/the-disturbing-impact-of-the-cyberattack-at-the-british-library>

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-toronto-public-library-hack/>

<https://www.ft.com/content/102df01d-9fb4-49e9-b644-6038a7d668fc>

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Valentina D’Aliesio** works as a learning experience designer in Toronto and moonlights as a freelance copy editor.

**Sephora W. Henderson** is Senior Department Head of the Osborne Collection and of the Merrill Collection.

**Maggie Knaus** serves on the Executive Board of the Friends of the Osborne Collection as co-chair of the Outreach Committee and event photographer. She has just published her first children’s book with Owlkids, *Eleanor’s Moon*.

**Leslie McGrath**, retired Senior Department Head of the Osborne, is an instructor of the Rare Books and Manuscripts course at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto.

**Gillian O’Reilly** is an award-winning non-fiction author and the former editor of *Canadian Children’s Book News*.

**Jennifer Yan** is a Services Specialist with the Osborne Collection.

**Karri Yano** lives in Toronto. She writes and edits by day, and teaches piano by night.

## OUT AND ABOUT

### Cyber Attacks on Libraries Around the World

A new threat to libraries is cyber attacks. Generally, these kinds of attacks have been thought of as targeting institutions and companies whose data are “useful.” But recently libraries have been hit too, and there are myriad negative effects on staff, writers, researchers, job seekers, and readers. On page 3, Sephora Henderson discusses the autumn 2023 attack on the TPL. The articles at the following links delve more deeply into this topic.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/2-experts-explain-why-libraries-can-become-cybercrime-targets-1.7059002>



You are invited to send ideas for articles as well as general comments or questions to: [FriendsOsborne@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOsborne@gmail.com).

To join the Friends, renew your membership, donate, or learn more about what we do, visit [www.osbornecollection.ca/](http://www.osbornecollection.ca/).

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