



Jessica MacQueen <jlmacqueen@gmail.com>

Fwd: coffee?

PA Demers <pdemers@ualberta.ca>

Mon, Oct 21, 2013 at 10:37 AM

To: Ernie Ingles <ernie.ingles@ualberta.ca>, Jessica MacQueen <jlmacqueen@gmail.com>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Paul Dyck** <pdyck@cmu.ca>

Date: Mon, Oct 21, 2013 at 10:26 AM

Subject: RE: coffee?

To: PA Demers <pdemers@ualberta.ca>

Dear Pat,

It was very nice to see you again and to participate in the panel/consultation. I did get your message even before I left the college to go to Seika's soccer game—it was very timely. As much as I would have loved to show you around CMU (and hope to get the chance sometime yet), it was a lot to try to fit in.

Here are some of my thoughts, for your panel:

It was interesting to hear, at length, from all the archivists on Friday. That was an education for me. I did come away thinking that much more could be said about libraries though. The archivist's problem is that, ideally, everything should be archived. Because, how can we ever say that something, anything, shouldn't be archived? So by definition, archiving will always be a matter of triage. I think that archivists undermine their position when they don't start off saying something like this (this problem is part of the present TRC archive fight—how could any responsible government ever agree to give *all* of the records involving the residential schools to the TRC archive? The task would be impossibly big. So, that gives this government an excuse to stall the whole thing, which—I understand—they are doing). Perhaps this is to put too much back on the archivists, but if they can't articulate some achievable and in fact noble and inspiring goal for the Archives of Canada, they aren't going to get anywhere, either with this government or with one more sympathetic. Actually, I don't know how it is that the case cannot be made with a relatively *nationalist* government such as the present one that we need a strong national archives and library. There *must* be a positive, constructive way of working on that project with the powers that be.

On libraries generally, I am struck by their precariousness and how our tendency is to throw that precariousness back on the government at some level. Over and over, I heard on Friday that libraries and archives are important, therefore they need better funding. Well, it's handy that we can characterize the present federal government as anti-intellectual, but *any* government is going to have trouble delivering a lot more money to libraries and archives over and against spending on health care and education, so I think we

need to get over our characterization of this as an ideological problem. Any government is, practically speaking, only going to be able to energetically support anything to the extent that citizens are involved. So, if the Canadian Dental Association shut down its library and donated its holdings to LAC, and now those holdings are not readily available, my question is, why did the CDA shut down its library? Every community group, every church, every association has its library, and the moment they cease to have libraries, they cut themselves off from the thought/consciousness that generated them in the first place. Maintaining the memory of the group takes constant effort and expense of resources, and we need to face that reality. If it's not happening at the micro level, it's not going to happen at the macro either. Blaming the government is a dangerously narcotic move (which takes me back to the end of the previous paragraph).

Libraries, like many public institutions and traditions, are in danger of being displaced by privatized experience, entrenched by technological change. In fact, libraries are well-used: when I go to public libraries, I see two groups in particular: parents with children, and people who seem less well-off financially. In other words, most Canadian adults, given the resources, buy their own entertainment at home. If they still read, they read their own books at home. Otherwise, they have great amounts of video and sound information at their own disposal, and feel no need for a library. At the same time, libraries are about much more than information delivery: they are *spaces* to read, spaces dedicated to cultural memory and encounter and production. While new digital technologies seem to offer an alternative to the library space, we need to resist the binary that is popularly imagined. When we began planning a new library at CMU, potential funders wanted to know why we would want to build a library when books are becoming obsolete. The fact is that readers are bodies, and bodies need space, and that the reading body desires a space that encourages reading. So, on a university campus, there are never too many spaces to read and write. And the space to read is more than an absence of distraction: rather, a reading space must positively teach the body to read. Libraries are, if not quite holy ground, at least consecrated, set apart for a crucial, if exceptional, cultural task. In them, one learns, among other things, that there is a lot to know, and that one is part of something much greater than oneself, even just by the witness of the seemingly innumerable volumes that surround one (even in a small community centre library).

The CMU library has been designed to hold books, to give quiet space to readers, to give space for study groups, to give space for social meetings, and to give space for public talks. As such, it is designed to be the heart of the university community, vital to students and faculty, and also open to the public. I don't see how any other space could possibly do this, with the exception of the university chapel (I expect that we will build a new chapel in close proximity to the library some time in the next ten years).

I'd like to also note that libraries cannot be (merely) temples to the codex. Rather, they need to cultivate a wide range of information technologies, and, I think, should be places in which the latest technologies are being used in the most substantial ways. Much easier said than done, for all sorts of reasons, but this starts with an attitude. If a small university can afford only one of some new kind of technology (whether that is a 3D printer, a holograph room, or whatever), I'd ideally like to see that hosted in the library. The library should always be the place that people associate with cultural memory and its production, broadly understood.

Thanks,

Paul

Paul Dyck, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of English

Canadian Mennonite University

on sabbatical 2013-14

Visiting Fellow, 2013-14,
St. John's College
University of Manitoba

pdyck@cmu.ca

<http://www.cmu.ca/facultystaff/pdyck.html>

From: PA Demers [mailto:pdemers@ualberta.ca]

Sent: October-20-13 12:31 PM

To: Paul Dyck

Subject: Re: coffee?

Dear Paul:

Now that I'm home and replaying the whirlwind of the Winnipeg consultations, I'm writing to thank you for attending the session and for encouraging your VPA and other colleagues to participate. The plans for CMU's library are really exciting; I'd appreciate any update you want to share. And, as a completely biased judge, I think you'd be a terrific choice for VPA—if that's what you want.

I'm really sorry that I didn't get to see the School for the Deaf, but arrangements for a restaurant on Friday proved rather complicated. Every place we tried was booked. The Peasant Cookery was entirely booked for "the mayor's daughter's wedding." We ended up at the East India Company, which pleased carnivore, vegan/vegetarian, and omnivore. I hope you received my voicemail explanation; I'd forgotten to pack the charger and my bberry was dying. And, as I'm sure you'll realize, it's harder to be a lone ranger when you're travelling with others.

all the best,

Pat

On Wed, Oct 16, 2013 at 10:09 PM, Paul Dyck <pdyck@cmu.ca> wrote:

There's actually a coffee shop in the library, which is not irrelevant to your visit! I'll come around 1.

Happy travels!

Paul

On 2013-10-16, at 6:35 PM, "PA Demers" <pdemers@ualberta.ca> wrote:

Hi, Paul.

We're staying at the Fairmont and should arrive at UMan around 1:00. I can't be more specific right now, since I'll be travelling with 2 other people. I assume there'll be a coffee shop near by the Dafoe Library.

looking forward to seeing you,

Pat

On Wed, Oct 16, 2013 at 12:08 PM, Paul Dyck <pdyck@cmu.ca> wrote:

Hi Pat,

Just checking in with you about a possible coffee on Friday. I'm available both before and after, with a preference for before (Seika has a soccer game at 6!).

Best,

Paul

From: PA Demers [mailto:pdemers@ualberta.ca]

Sent: October-01-13 9:40 PM

To: Paul Dyck

Subject: Re: ELR article

Great! I look forward to seeing you, Paul. Shelley S, has been very helpful in setting up this consultation for us. We fly in Friday morning, and should be at UMan well before the event. I hope we can have time for coffee before or after. I realize it's a Friday afternoon, but I also hope you can encourage CMU colleagues to attend.

best,

Pat

On Tue, Oct 1, 2013 at 8:13 AM, Paul Dyck <pdyck@cmu.ca> wrote:

I didn't know about the consultation—I'll plan to come. Does this mean you'll be in Winnipeg? If so, you'll likely have a tight schedule, but it would be nice to have coffee or something.

Paul

From: PA Demers [mailto:pdemers@ualberta.ca]

Sent: September-30-13 6:58 PM

To: Paul Dyck

Subject: Re: ELR article

Congratulations on your article, Paul. Yes, it does bring back memories, and I recognize the 1611 KJB frontispiece, your gift of the print of which hangs in my hallway. I hope you'll be able to attend the consultation at Special Collections of UMan on Oct. 18 about libraries and archives, The poster is attached.

best,

Pat

On Mon, Sep 30, 2013 at 2:09 PM, Paul Dyck <pdyck@cmu.ca> wrote:

Dear Pat, David, David, and Rick,

I'm attaching an article that has just come out in ELR (electronic anyway, print to come in a few weeks). If you have a moment to look at it, you'll see fairly quickly that it follows the course set by my doctoral work, guided by you.

Thanks again for your work with me, and all the best for fall.

Paul

Paul Dyck, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of English

Canadian Mennonite University

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