

objective, principal designers Natalia Radawetz and Candace Hogue, of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, selected a series of documents that illustrate through both form and content the power of everyday writing to convey and make immediate the lives of average women and men. Captions on each of the four panels lead viewers through a series of concepts: that women have always felt a need to record their thoughts and experiences, that the content of their writing offers glimpses into their lives and the world in which they live, that the language they use and the materials with which they write contain additional information about women and their role in society, and that museums and archives preserve these records for study and interpretation.

Although documents selected for “Personal Thoughts, Private Lives” reflect the experience of literate, English-speaking women (with the exception of the Anna Baerg diary), they illustrate well the theme of the display and draw attention to the idea that average women are as interesting as the famous, wealthy or prominent women whom the word “history” generally brings to mind. Had artifacts or images of women from oral or other traditions been incorporated into the display, the impact would have been stronger still. Selections include a 1912 photograph of a mother and two children from the Edgar J. Ransom Collection (PAM). In contrast to the comfortable scene depicted in this photograph, excerpts from the Mrs. Thomas Kitson daily journal, 1906-1915 (PAM) reveal a mother fearful for her sons’ lives, as World War I rages in Europe. Amid reports on the weather and everyday comings and goings, Mrs. Kitson wrote, “I wish this cruel war was over, & they would not need to go over the ocean, but if they need to go we will try to be brave & say, go [,] your King & country need you, but it is awful hard ...” Reflecting better times, excerpts from the 1907 travel diary of Mamie Manwaring reveal a young woman of unbounded enthusiasm, while Lizetta Nason’s wry comments, in an 1889 letter to a friend in eastern Canada (PAM), evoke the sense of spirit and adventure that marked the boom years of Winnipeg in the 1880s. The Anna Baerg diary, 1917-1924 (CMBS), written in her native German on the reverse side of milk can labels, demonstrates women’s resourcefulness and resilience when challenged by change and uncertainty. She writes, “... Oh the earth is just as black here as there, the sky just as blue, and the people all have noses in the middle of their faces wherever you go ...” (Translation by Gerald Peters.) Use of contemporary writing on the final panel—Anna Beauchamp’s diary of the Persian Gulf War—gives the viewer a sense of the immediacy of history.

Along with a number of other exhibits celebrating the women of Manitoba, “Personal Thoughts, Private Lives” was first shown on Manitoba Day (12 May) at the Forks in Winnipeg, at an event marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the extension of the electoral franchise to Manitoba women. The display will now travel to museums and archives throughout the province.

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Bright Lights, Big City: The History of Electricity in Toronto. EXHIBITION COMMITTEE, TORONTO CHAPTER OF THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF ARCHIVISTS. Mounted at the Market Gallery of the City of Toronto Archives, Toronto. 2 March - 23 June 1991. 61 p. catalogue.

Exhibitions of archival materials can serve many purposes, from illustrating and interpreting a subject, to increasing public awareness of the range of materials available in local repositories, and educating the public about archives and archival activities in general. In 1988, the Exhibition Committee, Toronto Chapter of the Ontario Association of Archivists, decided to mount an exhibition that would address all of these objectives. The Committee also sought to involve a wide variety of local archives in the project (eighty archives were canvassed during the preparation of the exhibition and the catalogue; over thirty repositories were featured). This ambitious undertaking culminated in "Bright Lights, Big City," at the Market Gallery in Toronto in the spring of 1991.

As an historical exhibit, "Bright Lights, Big City" documents the development of electricity in the Toronto area between 1860 and 1950. Photographs, textual documents and artifacts are arranged topically to illustrate the many areas in which electricity had an impact; especially transportation, the workplace, the home and leisure activities. The exhibit also touches on the early debates between public and private utilities, highlighting some of the local personalities involved at the time.

Today, we take electricity and its benefits for granted. Electricity, however, revolutionized the lives of our forefathers, giving rise to both innovative and practical ways to make use of the power of "white coal." For instance, some medical practitioners attracted attention in the 1870s by using electric current to treat over 100 diseases, ranging from asthma to weak eyes. By the 1910s, Adam Beck's Hydro "Circus" was touring rural areas, and school children were given a holiday to see the electric milking machine. On 8 August 1925, the first traffic lights were installed at the corner of Bloor and Yonge streets. The *Toronto Daily Star* that evening reported that many motorists were initially confused by the red, yellow and green signals, but quickly caught on, so that there were no reported collisions at Bloor and Yonge that day. Examples such as these are one of the strengths of "Bright Lights, Big City," which gives us a sense of the far-reaching effects of the development of electricity.

For the viewer who has the time and interest to read further, lengthy captions provide many details about the development of electricity and the political debates that attended each new initiative. (It would be interesting to know how much of the information appearing in the exhibition was gathered through archival research.) For the casual observer, however, the captions are too dense, and the long blocks of text too visually intimidating. Furthermore, they are not always well placed, and sometimes bear little relevance to the nearby display items. In many cases, these items are given little explanation or context.

Reservations about the captions notwithstanding, "Bright Lights, Big City" provides an interesting perspective on a subject that directly affects so much of our daily lives. But how well does the exhibit meet its other purpose, that of increasing public awareness about archives? My reaction to this question is mixed. Artifacts, textual documents and photographs are labelled to indicate the titles and dates of the items, as well as the repositories and fonds/collections to which they belong. Photographs are also identified as original prints, or modern prints made from original negatives or copy negatives. These details show the viewer something of the variety of archival repositories in the Toronto area, and the potential wealth of material that lies behind what is displayed. It is unfortunate, however, that so much of the exhibition consists of

photographs and, to a lesser degree, artifacts. The value of textual documents is also not readily apparent, and viewers could be forgiven if they left with the impression that archives are mostly about photographs.

More conscious effort to promote public awareness of archival principles and functions resulted in two displays on "Exhibit Preparation" and "Conservation" (the latter is oriented towards restoration and conservation techniques used on some of the items and artifacts displayed). In addition, captions placed throughout the show outline or explain several basic archival principles, define archives and archivists, and provide information about how to use an archival repository. Although one could debate some of the definitions, the text provides a good introduction to the world of archives. Again, however, this information will only benefit those viewers who stop to read the captions. It would probably have been possible to leave the exhibition without realizing the role that archives play in documenting society.

"Bright Lights, Big City" also serves as the focal point for a variety of programmes that extend beyond the exhibit venue. The several purposes of the Exhibition Committee are well represented in the catalogue. Researched and prepared by historian Robert Stamp, the catalogue contains much information about the development of electricity in Toronto, a glossary of archival terms, and "sidebars" incorporating the information contained within the exhibition proper about archival principles and practices. A seven-week lecture series was also part of the programme, offering guest speakers covering topics such as the history of Ontario Hydro and the impact of electricity on the role of women. "Information Kits" were available to viewers in tandem with the show, while separate education kits for elementary and secondary school students were also developed.

The Exhibition Committee is to be congratulated for a successful conclusion to the three years of planning and preparation that went into this multifaceted project. We all have much to learn from this kind of exhibit, and the questions which it raises about its effectiveness as an outreach tool.

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