



Getting to Know our Moderators

Last winter, in recognition of the invaluable contribution that moderators bring to our community, the MCLL Council asked the Planning Committee to survey this special group of volunteers — indeed, all moderators are members who volunteer their time and effort. The purpose was to inquire about their engagement in the MCLL community and, especially, to support the retaining and recruiting of moderators.

Then due to the Covid19 outbreak and the high-priority burden the pandemic put on various committees, the survey was delayed until late in the Fall 2020 term. We want to share with you a brief summary of the findings. We received 42 completed responses to questions that were designed to capture basic information about how active the respondents have been as moderators and the types of study group (SG) they offer. A few questions addressed how they experience moderating via Zoom. Here are a few highlights of their responses.

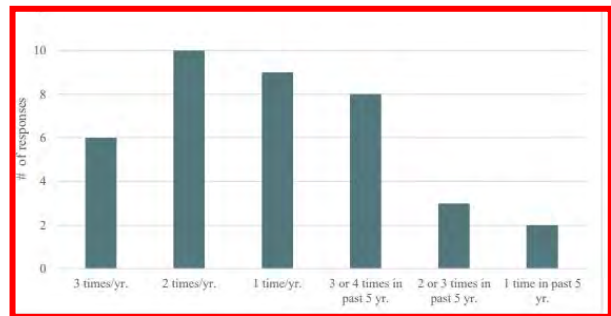
Representation by gender: About half the respondents were female, half male. In our total MCLL membership, the breakdown is about 70% female and 30% male, so this survey finding indicates that women are *under-represented* as moderators in our sample. (If we look beyond our survey at the list of all moderators, we see the same breakdown: about half are female, half male.) We seem to have an underutilized pool of potential moderators among female members.

Representation by age: Of the 36 who responded to this question, their age distribution more or less reflects that of our overall membership:

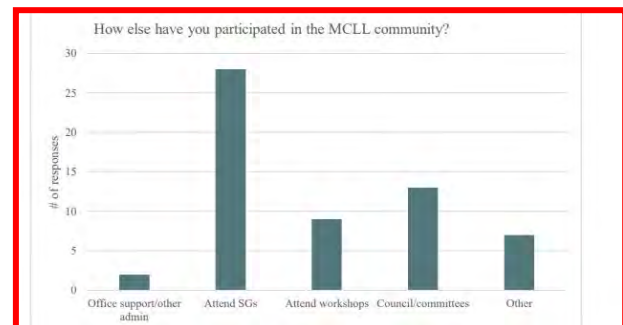
- 36% were between 65 and 74 years of age versus 40% of all members
- 42% were 75-84 versus 35% of all members
- 11% were 85-90 (bravo!) versus 10% of all members



We do see more representation of moderators aged 75-85 than we would expect compared to the overall membership in that age group. We seem to have a somewhat underutilized pool of potential moderators among younger members. To recruit new moderators, several respondents recommended more strongly promoting *co-moderating* as an option — a great idea.



We have a very active core group! 81% of the respondents have been moderating from two to more than five years; and 60% moderate from one to three times a year.



Most respondents participate in MCLL by attending study groups and/or workshops; nearly a third serve or have served on committees and/or the MCLL Council.

About Moderating online (via Zoom)

- About 33% of respondents feel competent using Zoom, and another 16% recommend more Zoom training and support.

Message from the President



We are all volunteers

We are not only a community of lifelong learners, but a community of hard-working and committed volunteers. When I reflect on the many activities we engage in, and the tasks we undertake to ensure the well-being of the MCLL community and its programs, I am truly impressed. Over the last year, we have had to quickly adapt and all of these volunteer activities are

now taking place online. Those of you whose expertise includes digital technology have volunteered to guide us through these challenging times. I am in awe of the commitment of these volunteers who have spent hours on the phone or online to prepare all of us—hosts, moderators and lecturers, and many participants who needed help in learning the features of their particular devices to make their learning possible. There have been glitches and disappointments for some. But the effort to make your online experience successful has been truly outstanding.

For volunteer moderators and lecturers, your engagement in leading study groups and presenting lectures has been remarkable. I would suggest that our program this term has never been richer. Many others have volunteered to edit the online calendar and establish the program schedule. Some have contributed to this newsletter and the eBulletin.

As president of the Council responsible for the governance of MCLL, I have been overwhelmed by the commitment and energy that these volunteer council members bring to the virtual table. Many of you serve on committees, offering your time and talent to ensure the success of MCLL. The team of volunteers who respond to your email messages are carrying on from their homes.

When our leader, Ana Milic, was interviewed after having been chosen as Montrealer of the Month of January by CBC Radio's Let's Go, she spoke not about her own accomplishments but her admiration for the volunteers who accompany her in her role as the executive officer of MCLL. A tribute to Ana turned into an acknowledgment of our support and an expression of gratitude to us. She spoke about the warmth of her relationships with us volunteers, her 'chosen family'.

National Volunteer Week in Canada (April 18-24) will be a time to celebrate volunteers in multiple domains. What we know is that individuals who work together realize amazing goals. We have demonstrated that sharing responsibilities, by contributing in whatever way we are able, is a model of success that cannot be underestimated.

Sandra Baines

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- Of those moderators who have discontinued, seven have done so because of the online format; the good news is that at least one-third reported needing no encouragement to continue moderating.
- Of those moderators who like Zoom (yes, many do!) their reasons for not moderating any longer include not having time, as they are working on other things now, needing some inspiration, or just taking a break. It's hard to exactly determine who will return, but many cited returning once in-person presence resumes, once work stops, or once the inspiration comes to them.

Of course, we're all looking forward to in-person groups again but are thinking about the advantages of some online offerings, too. Also, we realize that this survey is only a current snapshot, but it could serve as a baseline and be repeated regularly.

Finally, we send special thanks to all those moderators who responded to the survey!

Thanks also to the members of the Planning Committee, Curriculum Committee, Moderator Sub-Committee, and to Ana Milic, who exhibited such great teamwork in undertaking this project. The complete report on the survey findings is available on the [Moderators page](#) of the MCLL website.

Leslie Paris

Donations

MCLL is moved by our members' generosity. Donations, especially over the holiday period, have helped rebuild our finances after the first few difficult months of Covid19 and thanks go out to all who have contributed.



Watch out for notices about **McGill24** coming up on March 10. On that day McGill is going out during 24 hours to ask for donations of any size to help make a difference.

MCLL and the McGill School of Continuing Studies

Irwin Kuzmarov, former president of MCLL, has been invited by Dean Carola Weil to join the Faculty Advisory Board of the School of Continuous Studies. This appointment is another step in Council's gradual move to integrate with the short- and long-term goals of SCS. Congratulations, Irwin!

The Crazy Covid Experience of the Curriculum Committee

Mid-March 2020 – total campus shutdown due to pandemic. Winter 2020 session - MCLL piloting three webcast study groups. MCLL program comes to abrupt stop, one week short of the end of the session. The Spring 2020 program - 37 study groups, 29 lectures - ready to start on April 14th. What to do?

Sometimes the wisest thing to do is to step aside, let those who know more than you do take over, and take that time to learn. Lorne, Martin, Ana and the IT team took over the Sandbox Session. The curriculum committee provides them with the names of moderators from our Spring Program. The ‘pioneers’ who are willing to moderate on ZOOM step forward. And so, the Sandbox session (April 14 -May 15) takes place. In the meantime, Martin, who is generous to a fault, spends hours with me. My cell phone in hand, and Martin on Zoom from B.C. giving me step-by-step instruction on how to navigate on ZOOM.

As the Sandbox session is being organized, the committee develops Corona Session (May 19 - June 23). Phone calls made to all moderators assuring them that full technical support would be offered - all they have to do is moderate and trust us to take care of the rest. The response is amazing. Several proposals are deferred to the Summer session. The members of the committee reach all moderators, encourage them to moderate, and at times fill out proposal forms online. Committee members are available day and night, seven days a week. One moderator works from her hospital bed contacting her moderators and lecturers to submit proposals. And it works! We have a Spring Corona Session offering 10 study groups. Sometimes all it takes is a leap of faith.



Another call for proposals goes out, this time for the Summer session. Our committee members encourage their moderators and lectures to modify their offerings from the Spring Program which morph into our Wonderful Wednesday’s Program. Three lectures are offered each Wednesday from July 8 to August 19, 21 in all.

Surveys are given after each session. Responses are mostly positive. All suggestions are addressed at the Moderators’ Workshops.



By Fall 2020 we are back on track. With full IT support, a host for every study group session, we have a full program - study groups, lectures and workshops.

Thanks, Tony, for being on speed dial and by my side all along!

That’s the MCLL spirit.

We are a community. We share and tap into each other’s strength. We are never too busy or too tired to come to one another’s support. We are the Curriculum Committee.

Nina Maksymiw

Council News

Preparing for the upcoming Annual General Meeting — *Member Documents*

On Friday, **March 26**, MCLL will be holding its AGM. You will be officially invited very soon but, in the meantime, you might want to check out a couple of documents that can tell you a lot about how MCLL works.

Tucked away on the MCLL website is a very precious stash of information simply titled “Member Documents”:
<https://www.mcgill.ca/mcll/members/member-documents> . This page contains links to ten different documents, each of which reveals an interesting aspect of our organization. We will deal with two of them here which might be of particular interest as background information for the AGM. Simply click on the link to download the document.

The Annual Report (2019-2020)

The Annual Report for the year ending June 30, 2020 is now available. It gives a very useful overview of MCLL as an organization. There is an interesting section on the demographics of MCLL members, as well as a Financial Report. You will also get an idea of the different committees that exist and what they do.

Operating Rules (2014)

Each year at the AGM, positions on Council are up for renewal. Council, which is the governing body between Annual General Meetings at MCLL, is mainly composed of a president, vice-president, a treasurer and committee chairs. To get a better idea of the type of responsibilities associated with various positions on Council, you might want to consult the Operating Rules.

Spoiler alert: the speaker at this year’s AGM will be Dr. Joe Schwarcz.

Welcome World!

An analysis of the 60 or so new members who signed up for the Winter 2021 term was carried out to discover how they found out about our program. Unsurprisingly, 89% heard about MCLL via word-of-mouth; 11% searched online; and five people heard first via word-of-mouth then followed up online.

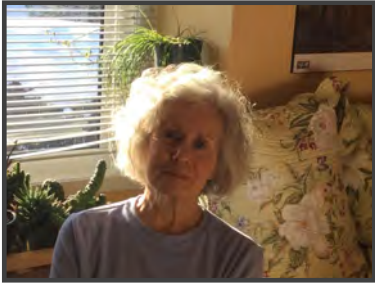
New members hail not only from Montreal but from as far away as Israel and Belgium! Some are friends of one of the lecturers, some have tech-savvy children who found us online and helped with registration (still frustrating to some!), and some are McGill alumni.

Our reputation has reached the ears of lifelong learners in the Laurentians, Ottawa, Toronto and British Columbia. They tell us they love everything about us including the hangouts, they were lonely and have found a community of like-minded people, or they listened to a friend and wondered what we were about; now they know and love it! One new member is even contemplating moderating a study group in the future.

We will continue to seek out new members, probably less by written word adverts or PBS ads (tried but not rewarding) and more by researching the internet to seek out old and new ways to promote MCLL. Meanwhile please spread the word! You are our best advertising tool. Tell your friends what you love about our community and please inform us about anything you believe could be improved.

Portrait d'une bénévole au programme

« Parlons français »



Danielle Duhamel participe au programme « Parlons français » depuis 2018. À la retraite depuis six ans, elle a découvert MCLL en apercevant une de ses brochures dans une bibliothèque près de chez elle. Elle a commencé par assister aux conférences du vendredi, à raison de deux ou trois par semestre. Puis, elle a vu l'annonce du programme « Parlons français » dans un numéro du bulletin d'information mensuelle et cela lui a donné le goût de s'impliquer davantage.

Tout de suite, elle a été séduite par l'expérience. « Je suis une Montréalaise, dit-elle. Je suis née à Montréal, j'ai grandi à Montréal, je me suis mariée à Montréal et j'ai fait carrière à Montréal. Bien sûr, j'ai voyagé. J'ai fait un stage de perfectionnement professionnel aussi en Angleterre à un moment donné. Mais quel luxe de pouvoir converser pendant plusieurs semaines avec des étudiants qui viennent des pays les plus divers. C'était comme inviter le monde chez moi. J'ai rencontré une étudiante japonaise. Je suis consciente qu'il y a peu de possibilités que je voyage maintenant au Japon mais là, c'était tout un monde que je pouvais découvrir à travers mes conversations avec elle. »

Danielle était psychologue clinicienne au Centre de réadaptation en dépendance de Montréal – Institut universitaire (anciennement Centre Dollard-Cormier). Au cours des dernières années de sa carrière elle était formatrice et responsable des stages et internats à son établissement.

Lorne Huston

Parlons français : Qu'est-ce que c'est ?

« Parlons français » a été mis sur pied en 2013 par Mimi Caouette. À l'instar d'un programme semblable qui existe en anglais (programme SPEAK), « Parlons français » vise à jumeler un bénévole de la MCLL avec un étudiant de l'École de l'éducation permanente de McGill. Ces étudiants, inscrits dans un programme de langue et culture française, discute pendant une heure par semaine en français avec un membre francophone de MCLL. Ils peuvent ainsi perfectionner leur maîtrise du français parlé et, par la même occasion, mieux connaître les réalités du Montréal francophone. Si vous avez envie de participer à une expérience de ce genre, prière de communiquer avec Lorne Huston à parlonsfrancaismcll.scs@mcgill.ca.



Whatever Happened to Mimi Caouette?

Mimi Caouette founded the program “Parlons français” which was the French-language equivalent of the SPEAK program. The idea in both cases was to pair up an international student at the School of Continuing Studies at McGill with a volunteer from MCLL to help them improve their language skills. “Parlons français” was founded in 2013 and continues to this day, although Mimi “retired” from MCLL in 2018.

Before writing up his article on a recent volunteer to the Parlons français program (see “Portrait d’une bénévole”) Lorne Huston contacted Mimi to see how she was doing. In a nutshell? She is far from inactive. People that knew her will remember how passionate she was about China, especially Chinese culture. It was a passion at least as strong as her commitment to promoting French. At present, she has found a way to pursue both these passions at the same time. She is helping a young Chinese anthropologist revise her doctoral dissertation to be presented soon to the University of Paris-Nanterre. This thesis is on the same region in China where Mimi lived for a number of years. In addition to this specific task, she continues to meet regularly with some Chinese people who want to improve their French. During the spring, summer and fall of 2020, she met with a group of three students in the gardens of the Place Guy-Favreau but this winter, because of the pandemic restrictions, she can meet with only one woman, a person who accompanies elderly Chinese people who need an interpreter.

Dear Mimi. You will never cease to amaze and inspire us! Good luck in your endeavours

Lorne Huston

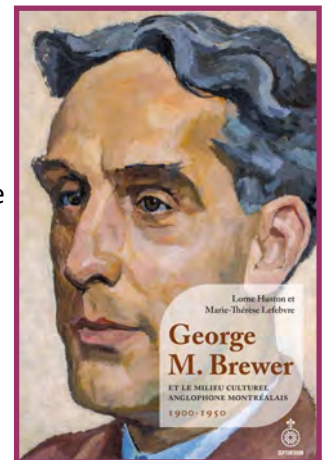


If Music...

Past-president Lorne Huston still gives much of his time and energy to MCLL but he must have energy to burn as quietly, behind the scenes he has been writing a book.

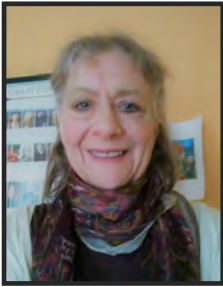
Co-authored in French with musicologist Marie-Thérèse Lefebvre, it is a study of the music scene in English Montreal through the eyes of the organist of the Unitarian Church during the first part of the twentieth century, George Mackenzie Brewer (1889-1947). Brewer was not only an organist but a pianist, teacher, composer, lecturer and sometimes theatre producer. The study opens with an examination of Brewer’s training and his career path in the context of the cultural institutions of English Montreal at the beginning of the twentieth century. Then comes an account of his career as a musician: first and foremost, as a professional organist, but also as an accompanist in vocal and instrumental ensembles. A second career which he led in parallel as a public lecturer and radio host on the history of music is also examined, both in terms of content as well as for what it tells us about institutions in the arts sector like the Pen & Pencil Club, the Arts Club, The Saint-James Literary Society and the masonic lodges of Montreal. Later in life he launched a third career for himself as founder and director of Everyman Players, a theatre troupe specialized in medieval theatre. A glimpse is also given into Brewer’s association with French Montreal’s musical milieu, his collaboration with Wilfrid Pelletier and teaching at the Conservatoire de musique du Québec. A final chapter is devoted to situating his thought in relation to three important issues of the day: science and religion, Protestantism and social reform, and musical modernism.

See Huston, Lorne, and Marie-Thérèse Lefebvre. *George M. Brewer et le milieu culturel anglophone montréalais, 1900-1950*. Québec, QC: Septentrion, 2020.



Portrait of George M. Brewer (1929-30) by Edward Holgate . The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

Special Events Committee



Sally Cooper has made sure that we have our special events despite the pandemic! So now, not only do we have the holiday party in December but regular get-togethers that have proven highly popular. Particularly well attended this winter are weekend hangouts allowing us to enjoy, from the warmth of our armchairs, events such as the St Valentine's Day special, featuring readings by Barrie Baldero, Andrew McDougall and Gabrielle Soskin(See below) A very popular element of these hangouts are the breakout rooms, for example, the one on US politics which, even after the US election, just kept on going by popular demand.

Barrie Baldero



Over a career spanning forty years, Barrie has appeared in every major professional Canadian theatre, including the Stratford and Shaw Festivals. In the sixties, in Toronto he appeared in the first commercial Improv show and later appeared with John Candy and Dan Ackroyd on a regular basis. In the mid-80s he was inducted into the CBC Wall of Fame for Comedy; this included his work as writer/satirist on the original *This Hour has Seven Days*. While at Stratford he was awarded the Sir Tyrone Guthrie Prize. He has also worked over the years in radio, television and film in Canada and the USA.

While serving in the army in Kenya, in a theater which included Masai herdsman, he was cast in Rattigan's "Flarepath" which concluded halfway through the play, as the heavy rains on the tin roof drowned out the actor's lines. The next night, the second half was performed. It was during this period, he says, "that I started to write revues which eventually brought me to Montreal in 1964 with the popular review *Uptempo*."

Of all his achievements, Barrie is most proud of being one of the Dames in British pantomime, but he never describes himself as a Dame of the British Empire!

Films Barrie has Appeared in:



1974



2000



Kate McDonnell

If you were wondering about the singer who graced MCLL's last two holiday parties, she is Kate McDonnell, musician, songwriter (and social worker), based in Albany, New York. She performed at our 2019 Holiday Party at the Nouvel Hôtel and joined us again for the 2020 party, this time via Zoom. She sang a Leonard Cohen song as well as one of her own compositions.



Kate first picked up a guitar at the age of four. The guitar was for a right-handed player so she taught herself to play it lefthanded ("upside down and backwards") - a technique she uses to great effect to this day. She teamed up with her identical twin sister, Ann, during their high school and college years to perform around their Baltimore hometown. In the mid-80's, Kate started performing with guitarist Freddie Tane, a one-time member of Bill Haley's Comets.

In 1989, Kate started writing her own songs, earning some serious critical recognition. She has performed at venues ranging from house parties to the Kennedy Center and the Newport Folk Festival. In Montreal, she has delighted guests at the McGill Faculty Club's Burns Supper with her interpretation of songs by Robert Burns.

After a 15-year break from recording, during which she earned a Master of Social Work, she wrote and recorded her fifth CD, *Ballad of a Bad Girl*, during the pandemic summer of 2020. She will be performing songs from this CD as a benefit for the legendary Caffe Lena in Saratoga Springs on Friday, February 19 at 7 p.m. You can view the show on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LupvTuBJ5o

Sally Cooper



Andrew McDougall

Andrew was born in England, but escaped in 1974. Settling in Westmount in 1977, he worked as a computer engineer until he retired early in 2003 (thanks to his wife Chantal who now supports him). During that time, he increased Westmount's population by four sons. He was a scout leader and soccer coach in Westmount for over 30 years and received a number of awards.

Since his retirement, Andrew has kept busy by singing, initially with the Montreal West Operatic Society, and currently with the Montreal Welsh Male choir. As a member of MCLL, he moderates courses on Canadian Literature and Canadian Railway History. He is also involved with Exporail, the Canadian Railway Museum on the South Shore of Montreal, where he drives streetcars and is responsible for the museum's passenger train operations.

Andrew tries to keep fit by practicing Tai Chi, and participating in the Westmount Recreation Department's Body Design program. He also delights in watching his sons play hockey at the Westmount Recreation Centre.

At MCLL, Andrew got a taste for play readings as a member of Ann Weinstein's "Golden Stagers". Then, after reading a Dickens biography, he discovered Dickens' published readings, and decided to try his hand at imitating the great man. Since then, he has performed all of Dickens' readings (except *A Christmas Carol*) and has gone on to complete and perform others that Dickens never performed.



Gabrielle Soskin



A graduate of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Gabrielle came to Montreal from her native England in 1970.

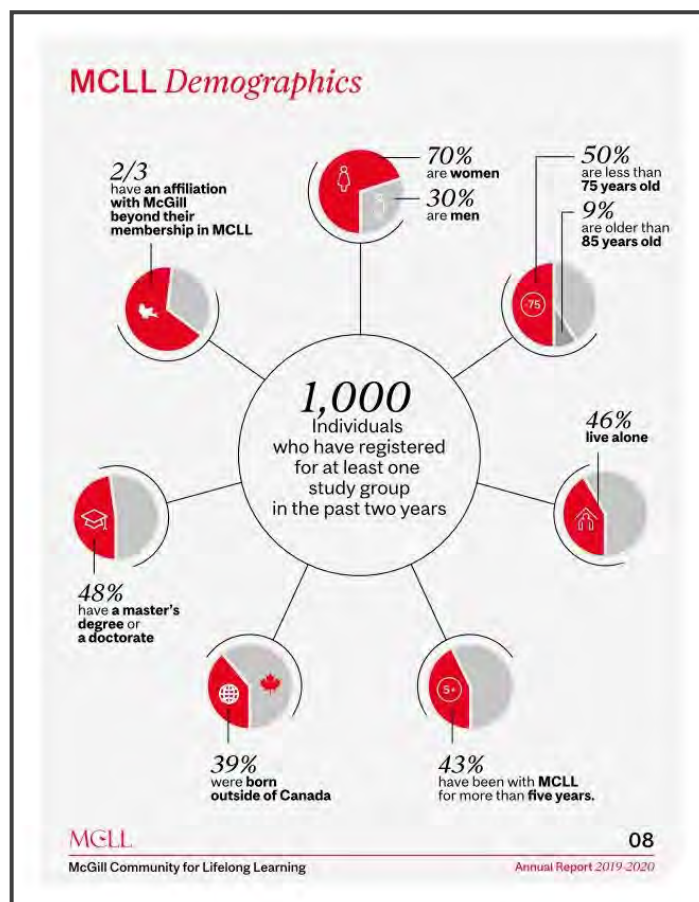
She started her theatrical journey as an actor before becoming a teacher and a director. She has had a challenging and fascinating career and participated in the training of many vital young artists in the community as well as directing every genre imaginable.

In 2000 she created Persephone Productions, a not-for-profit theatre company, mandated to give emerging theatre artists work opportunities. The company has won several awards over the years. In December 2007,

Gabrielle herself was a recipient of the Myron Galloway award for distinction given by Montreal English Critics Circle association for her special contribution to Montreal English Theatre. After 14 years at the helm, Gabrielle stepped down as Artistic Director but remained on the board as Founding Director.

In 2018 Gabrielle performed her own play "Counting Aloud" and in 2019 resumed her position as Artistic Director. Meanwhile, Gabrielle studies the piano seriously and is in the process of writing a play called "Remarkable Voices" inspired by a recent course given at MCLL by Susan Van Gelder.

Despite a very independent spirit and strong commitment to feminism, Gabrielle did marry and, in Gabrielle's own words, "They live happily ever after and have two delightful young adult children, Matthew and Annabel.



New Moderators

Paul Aubé



Né à Beauceville au sud de la ville de Québec, aîné d'une famille de 6 enfants dont le père était inspecteur d'école et dont la mère adorait les débats politiques locaux, Paul Aubé aura hérité de ces valeurs familiales soient, l'éducation et l'engagement

politique et social.

Diplômé en génie électrique de l'Université Laval (1968) et d'une maîtrise en génie électrique de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique (1970), il est aussi détenteur d'un MBA de l'École des Hautes Études Commerciales de Montréal. Durant ses études universitaires et au cours de sa vie professionnelle, Paul a été sensibilisé aux causes environnementales, aux activités syndicales et aux mouvements de solidarité internationale.

Ayant fait carrière au sein d'Hydro-Québec où il a occupé plusieurs postes, Paul a pris congé en 1976-1977 pour faire le tour de la Méditerranée en sac à dos. Par la suite il a repris ses fonctions en tant qu'ingénieur en planification de la production et a œuvré sur plusieurs projets internationaux. Retraité depuis 2008, il a travaillé jusqu'en 2017 à temps partiel pour des firmes de génie-conseil sur des analyses économiques de centrales électriques et d'interconnexions électriques.

À MCLL depuis 2009, Paul a participé à divers groupes d'étude sur l'histoire, les sciences, la politique et l'économie. Actuellement, il anime sur la plateforme Zoom un cours intitulé : « Demystifying Project Analysis: The Interface of Technology, Politics and Economics ». Même, si au cours de sa carrière et à MCLL, Paul a été amené à donner à plusieurs reprises des séances et des ateliers de formation, ces activités se sont toujours faites en personne. C'est sa première expérience en atelier virtuel. Sur le plan technique, tout se passe bien grâce au soutien technique fourni par MCLL.

Tout n'est cependant pas au beau fixe. En effet, pour Paul, il est primordial de pouvoir lire le langage non verbal des participants de façon à pouvoir aller chercher l'attention de l'un ou de l'autre et à détecter rapidement s'il y a des interrogations. Il regrette aussi les pauses-café qui permettaient de faire plus ample connaissance avec les participants et d'aborder de façon informelle les ajustements à faire. Sans compter les parties de

fin de session qui s'ouvraient sur des échanges plus personnels et souvent sur des amitiés nouvelles.

Il n'en reste pas moins que c'est un exploit que MCLL ait pu s'adapter aussi rapidement au monde virtuel et il faut saluer bien fort le dévouement de tous ceux qui assurent le soutien technique et qui sont le fondement de cette adaptation. Ils nous ont permis de survivre à cet isolement social que nous aurait amené la pandémie sans eux et à continuer ces échanges si fructueux entre les membres.

Charlotte French

Ginette Bazergui

One of our exciting new moderators for Winter 2021 is Ginette Bazergui. She first joined MCLL in the Fall of 2018 and then got her feet wet during a study group with John Felvinci in which she gave a presentation on Christopher Columbus – the Early Years. By then an experienced mem-



ber, she decided to moderate a study group this winter on the subject of flags. What led her to this interesting if somewhat out-of-the-normal topic? Well, she owned a flag shop! First, beginning as a franchise holder, she bought the Montreal franchise in 2001 and eventually sold it to her nephew, although she still keeps her hand in from time to time. This was a pre-retirement interest: the major part of her career was in shopping malls, from the initial concept right through to the opening. Her latest project was with Promenades de la Cathédrale. Her husband, Peter, moderates study groups on travel, of which he is an enthusiast par excellence – perhaps just a little too much so, according to his wife!

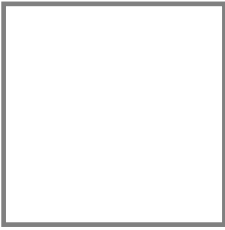
Ginette has three children, a daughter in Mt. Tremblant and sons in Toronto and Michigan, as well as four grandchildren and a great-grandson.

Asked about her reaction to the present necessity of moderating a group during Covid, she feels that it can be quite successful with active participants, but because of the lack of direct communication, it is a little more difficult to engage more passive members of the group and to encourage presentations. (Personally, I would have thought that a study group on flags would have generated great enthusiasm, with everyone anxious to research the flag of their ancestral homeland or a favorite travel destination.)

If Ginette offers a study group in the future, keep your eyes peeled. She is a thoroughly interesting, cultured and articulate lady, and I hope we will be seeing a lot more of her!

Sandra Frisby

Leora Birnbaum



Leora Birnbaum is happy to join as a moderator at MCLL this year. Prior to 2017, she was working as a physician (internist) at the MUHC. Unfortunately, she sustained a severe traumatic brain injury in the summer of 2017 and, since then, has been unable to return to her

clinical duties. However, she always enjoyed teaching residents and others and, therefore, has offered to moderate classes at MCLL. Her study groups this year are:

1. Woman's Health and Aging and
2. Memory Changes with Aging.

"I look forward to continuing my involvement at MCLL," she declares. Aren't we lucky!

Bruce Brown



It is with great pleasure that we welcome new moderators to our team, especially given the difficult circumstances under which we are presently operating. I had the pleasure of speaking with Bruce Brown, who is co-moderating a study group on End-of-Life

Planning along with his wife, Elizabeth Robinson. It sounds on the surface like a very somber topic but, having spoken with Bruce, I can see that he can make it extremely interesting and positive. The study group is for five weeks, and Bruce says he has taken the lead from a site called Educatoi (a very impressive site, by the way, whether you are a member of the study group or not.) So far, the group has discussed power of attorney and living wills, and Bruce is excited about receiving Mme. Jennifer Drouin for the last hour, to answer questions from an expert's point of view.

Asked about his experience with Zoom, Bruce has found it quite a positive experience, and, while lacking the intimacy of an on-site class, he is quick to emphasize that the participation has been fantastic, and he wants to particularly give credit to his Zoom host, Peter Roberts, who has been most supportive and has oiled the wheels of the meetings to an extraordinary degree thanks to his mastery of the process.

Bruce was the Director of Professional Services at Queen Mary's Hospital for 15 years before retiring. Elizabeth was a specialist in public health before her retirement, but has jumped back into service during the crisis doing contact tracing. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Both their

sons are doctors and are heavily involved with the Covid crisis – one son is an epidemiologist!

We hope we will see Bruce's name among our moderators for many years to come. He not only brings a world of knowledge to the table but, more important, he is awash with positive energy!

Sandra Frisby

Frank Nicholson



Frank participates in MCLL from Toronto, where he has been active in the later-life learning movement since retiring from a career as civil servant and association executive ten years ago. He is a long-time member of Living and Learning in Retirement

at York University and previously also belonged to MCLL's peer-learning counterpart in Toronto, the Academy for Lifelong Learning at the University of Toronto, where he served on the Board and I.T. Committee and co-moderated a dozen study group courses.

In 2015, Frank formed an Ontario-wide group of fellow later-life learners interested in the possible uses of Internet videoconferencing. The group initially used the technology to bring presenters from outside Canada into classrooms at the University of Toronto. It then launched a 100% virtual monthly transatlantic public affairs discussion forum with Canadian, British and American participants at the table that is now into its fourth year.

Hearing that MCLL was also looking into using Zoom, the group contacted Ana Milic and Martin Coles and participated in the trials of MCLL's remote-equipped classroom.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Frank's group, in partnership with Martin's committee, invited later-life learning organizations from across Canada to a weekly Zoom workshop, which recently held its 25th session. At MCLL, Frank himself Zoom-hosted several of our courses and lectures, and, last month, officially joined our organization. He is currently co-moderating a course called Assassination in History and is slated to give three Friday lectures, including one on New Orleans in the Civil War (that city being his hometown).

Remembering Judith Schurman –



Some of our older members will remember Judith Schurman, who was Volunteer Coordinator from 2008 to 2011 but most will know her from her role in Bloomsday which she and her husband David founded 10 years ago and which MCLL has supported ever since.

Judith Schurman retired in 2003 and not long after joined what was then MILR and for the next 17 years was active in all the possible roles a volunteer can occupy. Throughout this time, Judith gave and attended many a study group – usually in theatre and plays, literature and short stories and, of course, attending the science study groups moderated by her lifelong companion, David. She took over the running of the office as Volunteer Coordinator from 2008 to 2011 when the office was faltering and organized it into an effective administrative unit. Sitting on Council, she kept Council members on their toes with probing questions and her need to know, so often followed by her incisive wit and that warm and spontaneous laughter. We will miss it, all of it.

Words from Marlene Chan

Judith's enthusiasm was infectious and she was a major reason why the momentum of planning major projects such as the MCLL Symposium, *The Challenge of Transformation: Lifelong Learning and Living in the 21st Century* could be sustained over two years. Chaired by Ruth Rigby, the Symposium was held in November 2017. Together with Mary Ann Mongeau, Judith participated actively on the planning committee and follow-up as well as the shared role of MC at the event. As an educator, the subject matter closely aligned with her values and purpose in demonstrating the power of lifelong learning. It took little convincing, if any, for her to see it as an opportunity to participate in a first conversation about reshaping education for the future. Some four years later, the keynote speaker for the Symposium, Christine O'Kelly, Coordinator of the Global Age-Friendly Network based in Ireland at Dublin City University was shocked to learn of her death and quickly offered her condolences and support to David, Miriam and family as well as those of us at MCLL. Judith touched the very heart of everyone with whom she came in contact. Our loss is immense.

Words from Maggie Benfield, a long-time friend and co-moderator with Judith

We could hear that Judith and David had arrived at MCLL before we saw them. The sound of laughter, cheerful exchanges, concerned enquiries, delighted reunions... all would lead the way to the classrooms. It seemed to me that Judith carried enthusiasm with her wherever she was going: a study group, a meeting, a lecture. We co-moderated several times, the most memorable probably being The Short Story group several years ago. We were 26 people, crammed in somehow, but we had a wonderful time, analyzing, discussing, reading aloud and enjoying it all. The now-famous Bloomsday started at MCLL, following a course on James Joyce. Again, it was the combined enthusiasm of Judith and David that gave the festival its birth and life. And what hard-working, proud parents they were to that "baby" (now ten years old)! Judith had an amazing ability to make things happen. Combined with equally amazing joie de vivre, the sky was the limit. And that might be a British understatement! She was a light in all our lives.

Words from the eulogy by Kathleen Fee at Judith's funeral on February 11, 2021

She always knew just what to do or say. Whether in a committee meeting, in front of a classroom, in a public debate or a private conversation, she could lift spirits, restore calm, gently but pointedly set people straight, rescue someone's dignity, inspire, console... with the most profound respect for the feelings, foibles, and frailties of others. Oh, and then serve banana bread.

She was a daughter, a sister, a mother, a teacher, a colleague, a baker, a hostess, a fighter, a joiner, a carer. She was a huge human being. A non-pareil. A woman of heart.

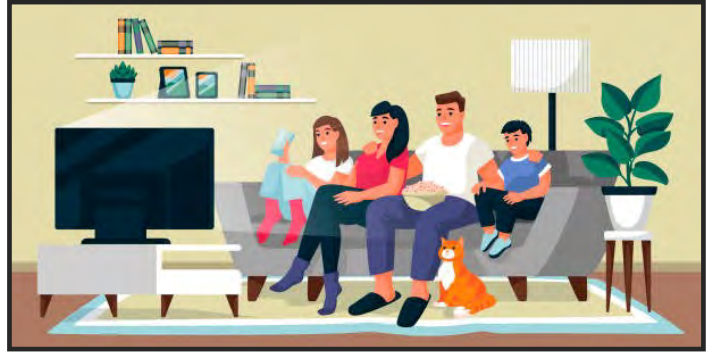
Let's imagine a rainbow connecting our hearts to hers wherever she may be. A bright, shimmering arc of colour as rich and beautiful as that hearty laugh we'll never hear again.

Rest in splendour, Lady Judith.

Tragically Canadian

Saul Bellow once wrote, with prescient irony: "... *It's no easy thing to share a border with the U.S.A. Canada's chief entertainment - it has no choice - is to watch (from a gorgeous setting) what happens in our country. The disaster is that there is no other show. Night after night they sit in darkness and watch us on the lighted screen*" ("him with his foot in his mouth").

There you have the encapsulation of Canadian tragedy: there is no other game in town.



We Canadians hate America as a matter of duty. We hated America when the American colonies rebelled against the British crown and American royalists fled to Canada and founded the informal institution of anti-Americanism. We keep telling ourselves that we are better, nicer, more civilized, more "European", more welcoming (remember the open arms policies of the Mackenzie King government between 1933–48 of "none is too many"?), more morally pure and just (ask First Nations Canadians)! This perception of Canadian infallibility has become an almost constitutive element in Canadian identity. It's almost as if Canadians can't imagine what it means not to hate America and still be Canadian!

During the sixties, Canada became the default living place for young American men who wanted to dodge military conscription during the Vietnam war years. This influx served as a vitamin shot in the arm of our flagging anti-Americanism. No longer an "aristocratic" kind of anti-Americanism, the dodgers were more likely to be socialist-minded students weaned on Marcusean theories. Anti-Americanism evolved into more than just some vague prejudice of superiority over the riff-raff across the border. It has now stepped up to the spirit of the time and elevated to the higher rung of anti-war righteousness. The intoxication with our own moral superiority has endured ever since.

Ironically, we never seem to notice that the two types of anti-Americanism – anti-revolution royalism and Marcusean pacifism - that took such a hold over our collective identity were both in effect American imports!



Furthermore, it might be assumed that such moral sentiments would inspire us to maintain some haughty distance from the object of our disapproval. For example, we could strive to be less dependent on American entertainment, political dramas, or cross-border shopping. Many Canadian senior citizens regularly winter in Florida, enjoying its balmy weather and friendly hospitality, and return in spring, like the migrating birds, to Canada, bearing gifts of cheese and alcohol and tales of ridicule about uncouth Americans.

Over two centuries of practicing what Nietzsche called "*ressentiment*" against "Amerika" have ill-prepared, or at least emotionally braced, us for the possibility that America might actually step on our toes.

Noga Emanuel

A late New Year's greeting from Paul Leong

Bonjour, Ho-Hi, Hello...

2020: The Year of Living Dangerously - with the Corona19 virus!

Unlike the beer, which brings us cheer,
this corona virus brought us fear and despair!
As the unprecedented 2020 was closing down,
a new variant of COVID-19 started spreading around
so, *Mama Mia!* insecurity and anxieties began to mount.
And, as the second wave struck cities and towns,
another lockdown saw businesses shut down,
leading the economy to go aground
and, as gloom and doom abounded,
panic, intolerance and racism rebounded.

But the tide of The Battle of COVID-19 is about to turn round.
As vaccinations double-down, and hope - with support
(e.g. cannabis dope so we are able to cope),
our resilience and positivity will not let us down.
So damn the torpedoes,
this nasty pandemic will not permanently get us down!

However, in order for this fight to be won,
the spirit of Churchill's battle-cry is demanded,
as the gist of this paraphrasing commanded:

"**To respond to** the pessimists' points of view (for **The Battle of COVID-19**), our end point is: We shall not despond. We shall fight this pandemic 'invasion' with determination and resolution; with medications and vaccinations; with isolation, sanitation and other anti-virus solutions..."

"**Therefore** do not let us speak more of bleaker days, let us rather speak of sterner days. These are not hopeless days, although these are rather challenging days..."

"**Therefore** let us brace ourselves to our collective responsibilities, and tell ourselves that, if we keep our cool for another two hundred days, people will say: '**This was their darned testing hour!**'..."

2020 = Annus horribilis. 2021 (may it be) = Annus mirabilis.

Ergo, I wish you well with your physical health, your intellectual wealth as well as your spiritual wellbeing to excel! **Keep safe, stay positive** - in your thinking, not in your COVID test.

Last but not least, in this stressful time, let's relax a bit and enjoy these beautifully positive songs:

"**Nessun Dorma...alla Corona -- Daniel Emmet"**

(2020.04.20) [2-minute video] www.youtube.com/watch?v=uL52AuF4QzY

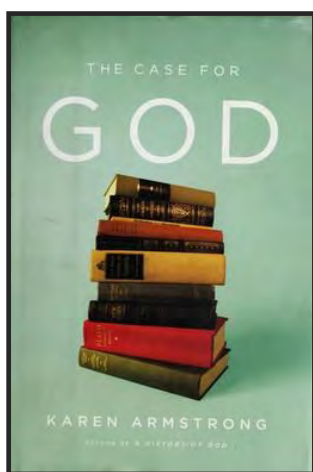
"**David Attenborough -- Wonderful World -- BBC"**

(2011.12.07) [2-minute video] www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8WHKRzkCOY

Paul Leong

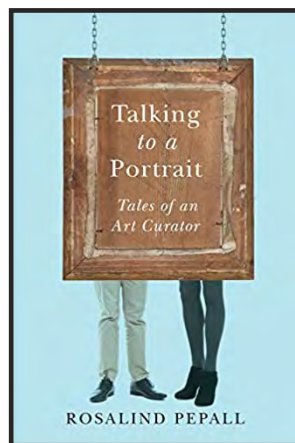
Pamela's Bookshelf

Non-Fiction



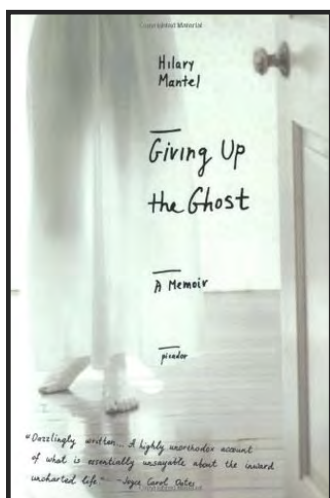
The Case for God by Karen Armstrong (2009) paperback
In “The Case for God”, Karen Armstrong gives us an erudite and engaging survey of religious thought. Now more than ever, in our dangerously polarized society, we need the “knack” for religion, the ability to transcend the pain and accept the mystery of life and death. Armstrong, one of my favourite writers, is totally against the dogmatic approach. It’s not an easy book to read, but if you stick with it, it’s well worthwhile. The range

of literary references is amazing. I found something interesting on every page.



Talking to a Portrait by Rosalind M. Pepall (2020) paperback
An expansive, lively and informative book. Montrealer Rosalind Pepall started writing the book shortly after she retired from her 35-year career as curator for the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The idea behind the book is that it would reach the average person who is interested in art and is curious about the behind-the-scenes aspect of putting a show

together- the planning, research, travels, interviews and so forth. I was reassured to see that there is even a chapter explaining the title of the work. Lavishly illustrated, with pertinent colour and black and white photographs, the book is a collection of stories that adds a whole other dimension to our understanding of the art that it talks about.



Giving up the Ghost by Hilary Mantel (2005) paperback
What a rare and exquisite privilege it is to be admitted into the inner life of the author Hilary Mantel in her 2005 memoir “Giving up the Ghost”. Mantel, the winner of two Booker Prizes for her remarkably vivid depictions of life during the reign of Henry VIII as seen through the eyes of Thomas Cromwell in her well known trilogy, here turns her talent for observation and endlessly surprising writing to

herself, and takes out, as she puts it, the “copyright” on her own life. Ghosts abound both in Mantel’s life and in this wonderful book, which is as much a meditation on memory itself as it is a memoir. Hilarious and harrowing.

Lesley Régnier—Editor

Noga Emanuel

Charlotte French

Sandra Frisby

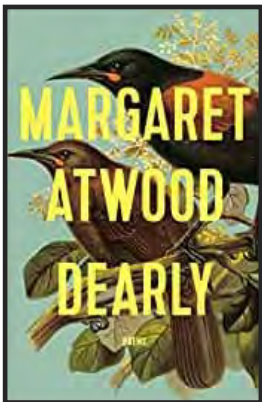
Pamela Sachs

Roger Humphrey—layout

Special thanks to Lorne Huston

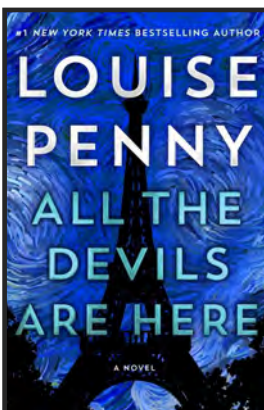
Pamela's Bookshelf

Fiction



Dearly by Margaret Atwood (2020) hardcover
Margaret Atwood's first book of poetry to be published in over ten years. Written over that period, it is divided into five loosely focused sections: the first on things fading away, the second on gender, the third on supernatural metaphors, the fourth on transformation, and the fifth on Graeme (her husband of more than 45 years who died in 2019 after suffering from dementia). Heart-breaking, whimsical,

wise and funny – you'll want to own this book, look at the words on the page, and savor the poems. One example - from the last poem "Blackberries" - "Some berries occur in sun, but they are smaller. It's as I always told you: the best ones grow in shadow."



All the Devils are Here by Louise Penny (2020) hardcover

According to the New York Times literary critic, this is Louise Penny's most haunting novel yet. The setting is Paris where Chief Inspector Armand Gamache and his wife Reine-Marie are awaiting the birth of their fourth grandchild. Steven Horowitz, Gamache's billionaire godfather, is also in Paris and they have arranged to meet him for a bistro dinner. Gamache is horrified when Horowitz is knocked down

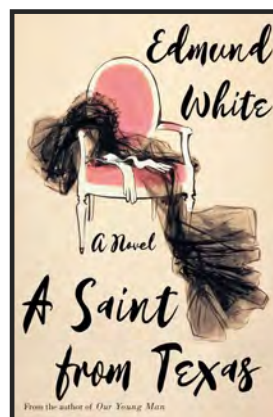
and almost killed by a passing van. Armand knows it was no accident, but attempted murder – a crime which he is compelled to investigate. The novel hinges on whom to trust and is further complicated by Gamache's challenging relationship with his son, Daniel. Meticulously plotted, an intriguing and suspenseful novel. You won't want to put it down.



Chances Are by Richard Russo (2019) paperback

This is Pulitzer prize-winner Richard Russo's first stand-alone novel in a decade. The four characters in this book are Lincoln, Teddy and Mickey, who first met when they were attending a small, private U.S. college and supporting themselves as "hashers" (waiters), and the beautiful Jacy, whom they were all in love with. The story moves along two time-frames: the present, when Lincoln

is preparing to sell his family home in Martha's Vineyard, and the past, when Jacy vanished thirty-four years ago. No one understands men - their bonds and friendships - better than Richard Russo. The narration moves from one character to the next, each one so appealing that we hate to let them go. It is at once a mystery and an exploration of four lives full of secrets, loss and love. Totally absorbing and, so, a perfect distraction from COVID.



A Saint from Texas by Edmund White (2020) hardcover

Edmund White, born January 13, 1940 in Cincinnati, Ohio is considered the quintessential gay writer of our times. He is the winner of numerous literary awards, including the 2018 PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Career Achievement in American fiction. In this novel, twin sisters from Texas with very different destinies escape their past – one as a nun in Jerico, Columbia and the other to the *haut monde* of Parisian aristocracy. The

dispassionate writing style downplays the rather grim details of the exigencies of the plot. Being born a Catholic gives White the vocabulary to talk about sex and spirituality. Amazingly erudite and gorgeously written, this may well be his best novel yet.

