

Library now two million strong

by Lucinda Chodan

"And now on to our third million."

With those words, Librarian to the University Bruce Peel welcomed the two millionth volume to the university library Saturday afternoon. The book, *Jumonville, Poeme* (1759), is one of only five first editions in North America; it will join other rare volumes in the library's Special Collections.

The presentation ceremony, though, is only another page in the long and colorful history of the U of A library.

The library system, now housed mostly in the Rutherford and Cameron libraries, includes 500,000 government publications, 1.25 million micro-forms — microfilm, microfiche and microprints — and some audio-visual material. Quite an advance from the library's original form in 1909 — about 6,000 books.

When the U of A opened in 1909, the library was housed in Queen Alexandra public school, where the first university classes were held. In 1911, this library was transferred to Athabasca Hall; during the next thirty years, it was shifted to various temporary locations on campus to try and accommodate growing numbers of books.

Although the university decided in 1928 that a separate library was needed, the Depression and the onset of World War II delayed its construction.

With the influx of veterans in 1946, however, the university found itself with a population of 3,300 — and a library with a seating capacity of 285. The result: the rapid construction of the old Rutherford Library, beginning in 1948.

The construction of Rutherford Library was not uneventful, though. Forty-eight hours before the cornerstone was to be laid by the province's Lieutenant-Governor, the official cornerstone disappeared. After a

frantic search by the campus' one-man security force, the Faculty of Engineering was conscripted to produce a facsimile from wood and fast-drying cement. One hour before the ceremony, an anonymous phone call led university officials to a back alley near the university, where the engraved stone was discovered.

Rutherford Library, named for Alberta's first premier and long-time university chancellor A.C. Rutherford, was officially opened in 1951. Then, the *Gateway*, with its usual foresight and accuracy, said Rutherford Library had provided more reading space than would ever be used. How wrong we were!

Increasing enrollments in the 1950s caused the library to consider adding to the Rutherford Library again by 1956. After several alternatives had been considered, a library consultant in 1960 advised university officials that any proposed addition to the existing library would be inadequate. Construction on a new library building began in August 1962; by September 1963, Cameron Library was completed.

The new library was named for D.E. Cameron, university librarian for nearly 25 years. The opening of Cameron Library coincided with the advent of the Education Library, and the institution of such progressive measures as library fines.

The 1960s produced an optimistic, expansionist mood in Canadian universities which was reflected in the U of A library system. The end of the decade saw the all-time peak in library book acquisitions and some optimistic projections regarding library growth.

In 1965, the Library Committee projected a book collection of three million books by 1976. It was only the work of an alert computing sciences professor that prevented the library from committing itself to selecting 1,500 books per



The millionth volume, Sir Frederick Ulrich Graham's "Notes of a sporting expedition to the far west in Canada, 1847", was added to the Library collection in 1970.

photos courtesy U of A library

working day.

The Sixties also saw the first attempts at automation of the library circulation system — and the renewed problem of inadequate library space. By 1970, the library was ready to embark upon its next major project, the construction of an addition to the Rutherford Library.

Rutherford North, completed in 1973, succeeded in preserving the facade of the old Rutherford building while adding 100,000 square feet of library space. The event was an optimistic beginning of a lean decade for the library, though. With declining university enrollments and decreased government funding for univer-

sities, in 1975, book purchases had declined 44 per cent from an all-time high in 1971.

In 1979, the seventieth anniversary of its founding, the U of A library includes several important rare collections. One of these is the John Bunyan collection, over a hundred seventeenth century books by Bunyan and his contemporaries. The collection is one of only three in North America.

Special Collections also possesses the Wood collection of Western Americana, which it acquired about ten years ago. The 7000 books were purchased by the U of A library for \$70,000, and Librarian Bruce Peel says, "In California, they literally wept when they heard it was leaving."

The university also owns an extensive collection of rare Sephardic manuscripts. The Bension collection consists of letters from Jews who had been driven to Morocco from the Western Mediterranean at the end of the fifteenth century. The manuscripts were found in a suitcase in a Montreal basement, and were purchased by the library in 1973.

Special Collections contains many individual texts of interest. One of these is a typewritten copy of R.W. Service's "The Shooting of Dan McGrew", believed to have been typed by the author. The poem is one of many loans by Toronto bibliophile Hugh Morrison, who has been a special contributor to the university's collections almost from the time he was born where the Humanities Centre parking lot now stands.

Three million volumes?
Two million one, two million two...



During the Sixties, a notable collection was purchased by the Library from the Archbishop of Salzburg.