



Mordecai Richler Reading Room

Concordia honours a literary icon

Montreal, November 28, 2013




Reading Room
Mordecai Richler
Salle de lecture

Concordia honours a literary icon

University opens Mordecai Richler Reading Room, displays writerly possessions

An icon of Canadian literature has commenced a new chapter at Concordia University. The Mordecai Richler Reading Room has opened to honour the late novelist, screenwriter and essayist who attended one of Concordia's founding institutions, Sir George Williams University, between 1949 and 1951 and who served as its writer in residence in 1968 and 1969.

Concordia is now home of Richler's desk, typewriter, writing chair, some of his private papers, books and mementos, as well as an ashtray that once brimmed over with his cigars. Located on the sixth floor of the J. W. McConnell Library Building, the room is at the heart of Richler's old haunts at Concordia's Sir George Williams Campus.

The author's personal effects were generously donated to the university by Richler's literary estate thanks to Frederick Lowy — Concordia president and vice-chancellor from 1995 to 2005 and again from January 2011 until July 2012 — who championed the opening of the Mordecai Richler Reading Room to honour its namesake.

"The creation of the Mordecai Richler Reading Room will ensure that his works continue to be analyzed, celebrated and critiqued for generations to come," said Concordia President Alan Shepard. "We thank the Richler family for giving us this deeply personal collection and for understanding the importance of Mordecai's connections to Concordia — both historical and philosophical."

Richler's personal papers and library will eventually be available for consultation by students, writers and the general public via an online database. "It was my wish that Concordia be custodian of my late husband's writerly possessions," said Florence Richler. "Mordecai worked incredibly hard to leave behind a body of work that would endure. That legacy will be immeasurably strengthened with the addition of the Mordecai Richler Reading Room at Concordia."

Inspiring a new generation of writers

By opening the Mordecai Richler Reading Room, Concordia has created a hub that will inspire creative writers, spark fresh ideas among students and foster original research from scholars. Visible 24/7 through glass walls, the gathering place will host literary readings, master classes, cultural gatherings and short writing residencies.

Friends of the university helped make the Mordecai Richler Reading Room possible. David and Ruth Steinberg, Beryl Goldman and the Felicia and Arnold Aaron Foundation provided financial support, while Alvin Segal, chairman and CEO of Montreal-based Peerless Clothing, allowed Concordia to store the collection in his warehouse for over a year.

A Companion of the Order of Canada, Richler died in 2001. His novels are still read the world over and are translated in dozens of languages from French to Finnish. Indeed, his works continue to be adapted as film and stage productions as well as audio books. Among his novels, *St. Urbain's Horseman* won a Governor General's Award, *Solomon Gursky Was Here* was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, while *Barney's Version* won the Giller Prize.

The Richler collection includes 6,000 books, many of which are annotated by the late author. The collection was catalogued by three graduate and seven undergraduate students from the Department of English under the supervision of Professor Jason Camlot.

"There are real treasures in this collection that researchers will want to consult, such as papers related to an unwritten, non-fiction book," said Camlot. "It's a wonderful resource for Concordia students. From now on, every creative writing student will be able to say 'I studied in the Mordecai Richler Reading Room.'"

Watch our video, narrated by Jacob Richler, on the opening of the Mordecai Richler Reading Room at <http://bit.ly/1crTPI2>.



Terry Mosher, Florence and Jacob Richler



The source of bestsellers



A menu featuring some of Mordecai Richler's favourites.



Concordia President Alan Shepard shares a moment with guests at the Mordecai Richler Reading Room opening.



Jacob Richler, Florence Richler and Rick Miller



Amanda Ruffini, student, Department of English



Dominique McCaughey, Florence Richler, Jacob Richler and Bram Freedman



Honor Robertson, Martha Duffield, Peter Duffield and Douglas Robertson



Bill Brownstein, Florence Richler and Jacob Richler



Jill Didur, chair of Concordia's Department of English, and Florence Richler



Rick Miller reads from Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang.



Florence and Jacob Richler inspect Mordecai's typewriter.



Memorabilia from the author's office



Florence and Jacob Richer thank Alvin and the Peerless Crew for storing the late Mordecai's private collection for over a year.



Michael Levine and Florence Richler outside new gathering space



Kevin Hirsch and Doug Pepper



Jacob Richler, John Ayles, Florence Richler, Francine Levi and Ruth Steinberg



Francine Levi (centre) with Concordia student volunteers from Department of English who set up the new gathering place.



Jacob and Florence Richler are interviewed by Geneviève Beauchemin, Montreal Bureau Chief for CTV National News.



Florence Richler, Jacob Richler, Terry Mosher and Bram Freedman gather as Mosher, a.k.a. Aislin, reveals cartoon.



Julie Bott and Francine Levi



Doug and Ada Craniford

Robust media coverage

The opening of the Mordecai Richler Reading Room at Concordia garnered national headlines in Canada's leading news outlets. Here is a sampling of coverage obtained:

On November 25, *Maclean's* published an article by Jacob Richler about the opening that was reprinted by *Quill and Quire*. *The Globe and Mail* published a page three story on November 28 quoting estate lawyer Michael Levine.

Media across the country ran additional coverage on November 29, including *The Montreal Gazette* with its front page story. A Canadian Press story and video went national in *The Toronto Star*, *Yahoo News Canada*, *Metro News*, *The Chronicle Journal*, *The Calgary Herald*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Brandon Sun*, *The Windsor Star*, *The Dawson Creek Daily News*, *The Prince George Citizen*, *The Nanaimo Daily News*, *The Victoria Times Colonist* and *The Vancouver Sun*.

Broadcast stories appeared across the CBC Radio network, CBC Television News Montreal, CTV National News, CTV Montreal News, Global News Montreal, CJAD, AM 1150, 101.1 FM, Newstalk 610, EZ Rock 106.3, EZ Rock 106.1, *The Kelowna Daily Courier*, News 1130, News 570 and News 680.

Other media that covered the opening included *The Canadian Jewish News*, *The Suburban*, *The Métropolitain* and *University Affairs Magazine*.

