

Nomination for the Honours Award – Gordon Beck, McMaster University - 2020

The Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives (ACMLA) recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to map librarianship at the local, regional, national, and international levels through their granting of the Honours Award for Outstanding Achievement

This year's winner of the Honours Award is Gordon Beck of McMaster University for his significant contributions to map librarianship, curatorship, and archiving at the local, regional, national, and international levels throughout his career.

Gord's McMaster Library career began with a Library Assistant's position in the H.G. Thode Library in 1985. He transitioned to a Map Assistant's position in the Lloyd Reeds Map Collection in 1997 and since that time has been promoted to his current position of Map Specialist. He developed his expertise in military cartography over his 20+ year period working in the Lloyd Reeds Map Collection. Due to Gord's extensive knowledge of maps and mapping (and specifically its advancement during World War I), requests are often made for him to give talks to undergraduate classes, as well as local and national groups. Despite the requirements on his own time, Gord always accepts these talks in a gracious and selfless manner. Highlighted among these engagements is a talk given in October of 2014 for the National Gallery of Canada exhibition in Ottawa: "The Great War: The Persuasive Power of Photography", and a McMaster Lager Lecture public talk entitled: "Cartographic Connections: The role of science in the history of mapping".

In 2014, Gord (and Margaret Rutten, Map Metadata Specialist) received the McMaster President's Award for Outstanding Service. That award recognizes employees who have made an outstanding contribution beyond that normally expected for their position to the mission of McMaster University. In addition to their continuing commitment to traditional service, Gord played an instrumental and leading role in the Library's expanding focus on developing digital resources for research and teaching. Specifically, Gord was a key contributor to the development of the Geospatial Literacy blended learning modules that were created in partnership between McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (MIETL) and the Library. These online modules have been integrated into coursework in three different Faculties, helping students to develop their geographic skills and succeed in their learning. These modules were among the first of their kind in Ontario and Canada, and have been highly regarded and requested by various Geography departments across the country. The team's success with the geospatial literacy modules has been equaled or surpassed by their work to digitize and provide online access to tens of thousands of historical and rare maps in the Library's collections through McMaster's [Digital Archive](#).

In 2018, he was the curator of the Robert Clifford Map Exhibit, in the McMaster Museum of Art. Maps in that exhibit were generated for Napoleon's campaigns, and some were of enormous proportions. Bacler d'Albe, Napoleon's chief cartographer, devised a method of mounting the maps on linen backing, dissecting them into sections, and folding them for ease of transport. One such map in the Clifford collection measures in excess of 9 x 12 feet when fully assembled. The exhibit marked the first time that it was available for public viewing in its entirety since the acquisition of the Clifford collection by McMaster in 1969.

Finally, Gord's recognized expertise in the field of WWI cartography and aerial photography has resulted in many high-profile cultural and media products. In addition to appearing regularly in local and national news media as an expert on these topics, he has completed two projects with Canadian Geographic involving the creation of a 'Giant Floor Map of Vimy Ridge,' and a documentary about mapping and aerial photography in WWI narrated by Dan Aykroyd and entitled, 'Drawn to Victory.' And most recently, a map of France, from the Lloyd Reeds Map Collection at McMaster University, from the First World War was featured in the Oscar-nominated film "1917", starring Colin Firth. Digitized maps from the Collection will soon be used in another Colin Firth war epic, as his production company has asked permission to use 20 maps in the upcoming film "Operation Mincemeat".

A selection of recent media stories includes:

- <http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/mcmaster-maps-and-archives-help-shed-light-on-pivotal-point-in-hamiltons-history/>
- <https://museum.mcmaster.ca/about/news/clifford/>
- <https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/events/lager-lecture-cartographic-connections-the-role-of-science-in-the-history-of-mapping/>
- <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/canadian-connection-to-first-world-war-map-featured-in-oscar-nominated-film-1917-1.4803399>
- <https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/events/lager-lecture-cartographic-connections-the-role-of-science-in-the-history-of-mapping/>

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