A Celebration of the Works of George Bowering

UBC Okanagan Library
Special Collections and Archives
The Commons I COM 004

Fall 2022
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Interpreting the exhibition

Okanagan Special Collections and Archives is pleased to host a co-curated exhibition honouring the works of George Bowering.

Exhibit pieces include selections from two sources. The Baird Bowering Collection, donated by Jean Baird to Okanagan Special Collections at UBCO Library in 2019, and Dr. Karis Shearer’s personal collection of audio cassettes, acquired from George Bowering, also in 2019.

Items from the Baird Bowering Collection are identified with library call numbers, or “pamphlet numbers” which start with “OKPAM.” Items from Dr. Shearer’s collection are marked with a control number starting with “2019.”

The exhibition exists in three parts. Consider starting your tour at the double-sided glass display cabinet. On these shelves, the interplay between the Dual Modalities (sound, text) of the two source collections is foregrounded. Representative magnetic tape technologies recreate a sense of the context of the sound capture and playback. Exhibits are numbered 1 through 18, with notes describing each available in this programme.

Around the perimeter of the Corbishley Family Reading Room, Jean Baird’s collection is arranged generally in Chronological Sequence expressing the highlights of Bowering’s career and bibliography from the 1960s to the present. Chapbooks and ephemera, often catalogued as pamphlets, are emphasized, providing visual interest, and a view into a literary format less familiar to many library users. These items are described on cards immediately adjacent.
The permanent display concludes the tour. This section of the Baird Bowering Collection is housed in the Corbishley Family Reading Room which offers an impression of the full Baird Bowering Collection as a holistic item in and of itself.

A full bibliography of exhibition selections is included in this programme.
"Bowering, as a poet, is one of the pioneers of a poetics that allows you to measure your particular place in the world through verse."\(^1\)

George Bowering is “one of Canada’s most broadly influential writers,”\(^2\) and is the author of more than one hundred books including works of poetry and non-fiction, essay compilations, and novels. In addition to being the recipient of a multitude of literary awards, Bowering was appointed Canada’s inaugural Parliamentary Poet Laureate (2002-2004). During the same time period, he was named to the Order of British Columbia (2004) and as an Officer of the Order of Canada (2003).

Bowering’s collected works have been described as “postrealist” – an expression of tension between “the conventions of realism and post-modernism” and tend to carry a subversive edge.\(^3\)

Born in Penticton, B.C., in 1935, Bowering spent his youth in the Okanagan; experiences in this landscape would influence his writing throughout his lengthy career. In 2015, Bowering published *Writing the Okanagan* (PS8503.O875 A6 2015) – an anthology that compiles selections relating to the Okanagan


from more than 40 of his prior books, 1960-2013, into one powerful volume.

The Baird Bowering Collection is composed predominantly of Bowering’s published monographs and chapbooks, with notable inclusion of literary serials, such as *Tish* 1961-1963 and *Imago* 1964-1974 to which Bowering was any and all of contributor, editor, or publisher. All of these items were gifted from Bowering to his partner, Jean Baird, over the course of many years. The relationship between Baird and Bowering extends to one of shared creatorship through writing, manifest in their 2009 co-edited work *The Heart Does Break* (PN6071.D4 H43 2009).

Consisting of over 250 items dating from 1957 through to new acquisitions as recent as 2021, the Baird Bowering Collection is made special by its particular provenance, and its inclusion of rare literary ephemera, compelling marginalia (consisting mainly of inscriptions to Baird), and a number of intimate inserts including notes and photographs.

The Baird Bowering Collection is housed at Okanagan Special Collections and Archives, UBC Okanagan Library, in Kelowna, B.C. A full bibliography of its contents is available upon request or in the library catalogue at library.ok.ubc.ca.

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https://journals.sfu.ca/capreview/index.php/capreview/article/download/1822/1822/
The George Bowering fonds was given to Dr. Karis Shearer in June 2019 by George Bowering. It consists of 19 audio cassettes, recorded between 1968 and 1987. The tapes were traded in return for a pint of vanilla ice cream.

These sound recordings are housed at UBCO’s AMP Lab.

The George Bowering fonds is distributed between the holdings of UBC Vancouver’s Rare Books & Special Collections (RBSC-ARC-1044: 6.5 cm textual material) and Library and Archives Canada R11712-0-8-E, LMS-0115: 27.17m textual and other materials, including 57 audio cassettes).
1. **TISH 30: A poetry newsletter (1965).**
   George Bowering, Dan Mcleod, David Laing Dawson, and Peter Auxier, editors
   OKPAM OS58
   Created in Vancouver in 1965, each copy of this newsletter was individually typed before being sent off. These are two of 18 pages of the 30th issue of the monthly poetry magazine, *TISH*. Includes poems written by George Bowering.

2. **27 George Bowering [baseball card] [ca. 2006]**
   OSC BIB 04 VF no. 1
   Associated with Bowering’s *Baseball Love*, published by Talonbooks in 2006.

3. **TISH happens [publicity kit] (2001).**
   OSC BIB 04 VF no. 1
   A series of talks and discussions about poetry in today’s world, in celebration of the 40th anniversary of *TISH*.

4. **71(+) for GB: an anthology for George Bowering on the occasion of his 70th birthday (2005).**
   Jean Baird, George Stanley, & David W. McFadden, editors
   Published by J. Baird
   PS8503.O875 Z995 2005
5.  [Letter in envelope addressed to Jean].  
[correspondence] [n.d.].  
OSC BIB 04 VF no. 1  
Found between pages 96 and 97 of 71(+) for GB: An anthology for George on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

6.  [Jean Baird and George Bowering Wedding Invitation]  
OSC BIB 04 VF no. 1

George Bowering, author  
Talonbooks  
PS8503.O875 A6 2015

George Bowering, creator  
Angela Bowering and Thea Bowering, contributors  
Soundbox Collection: 2019.002.007  
This audio version of the “home video” records George and Angela Bowering and their daughter, Thea Bowering, talking and singing songs. George Bowering was a prolific recordist of family life, and particularly of different stages of Thea’s childhood.

George Bowering, author  
New Star Books  
PS8503.O875 A93 1972

10. [George and Jean] [Polaroid photograph] [n.d.].  
OSC BIB 04 BIB VF no. 1
George Bowering, creator
Sheila Watson, contributor
Soundbox Collection: 2019.002.009
This tape records a guest lecture Canadian poet Sheila Watson gave about modernism and Wyndham Lewis in George Bowering’s class at Simon Fraser University on October 6, 1982. Bowering’s introduction of Watson gives us insight into his career as a poet-professor.

George Bowering, creator
Angela Bowering, Warren Tallman, Roy Kiyooka, contributors
Soundbox Collection: 2019.003.002
Side A of this cassette features a home recording of George and Angela Bowering interacting with their young daughter Thea between the ages of one week to five months. Side B records George Bowering, Angela Bowering, UBC professor Warren Tallman, and multimedia artist Roy Kiyooka as they gather around the television in the Bowering’s Montreal home on Grosvenor Avenue to witness the historic 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing and discuss poetics. Many of Bowering’s tapes in the SoundBox collection record casual conversations with friends in the private setting of the
13. [George Bowering] [Polaroid photograph] [n.d.]
OSC BIB 04 VF no. 1

George Bowering, creator
Sharon Thesen, Robin Blaser, Angela Bowering, contributors
Soundbox Collection: 2019.003.012
The “Bowering Party Reading” is a home recording captured by George Bowering on August 16, 1986. The private event featured readings by Sharon Thesen, Robin Blaser, and several other poets. George and Angela Bowering’s home was a convivial space for poets to gather and share their work.

George Bowering, author
Vehicule Press
PS8503.O875 C65 1977

George Bowering, author
Sergio Mondragón, translator; Roy Kiyooka, illustrator
Ediciones El Corno emplumado

PR9256.O896 M35 1965
   George Bowering, author
   Robert Duncan and Robert Hogg, contributors
   Coach House Press
   PS3507.U629 Z512 1971

   OKPAM 305
Chronological Sequence:
Exhibits no. 19 through no. 112

Full interpretive notes are printed on cards in the display cases.

Overture


TISH (1961-1963)


Early works (1957-1969)


**Governor General Award for poetry (1969)**


**Ephemeral poetry publications (1970s)**

35. --. (1976). *My lips were red* [broadside]. (W. Hoffer, Cont.). Vancouver: Cobblestone Press. OKPAM OS57
36. --. [1970?]. *Daniel Johnson lying in state* [leaflet]. Dreadnaught. OKPAM 290
Other works (1970s)


_Curious (1973)_


**BC Heritage Poetry Festival (1978)**


_Imago (1964-1974)_


**Beaver Kosmos folios (1969-1974)**


**Touch (1971)**

63. --. c. 2
64. --. c. 3

**Poetry (1980s)**

68. --. [198-?]. *[3 poems on a broadsheet]* [broadside]. Publisher not indicated. OKPAM OS65
Anthologies, collected poems, and chapbooks (1980s)


*Kerrisdale elegies (1984-2008)*


*Caprice (1987-1994)*


**1980 Governor General Literary Award: Fiction**


**Place-based works (1996-2015)**


**Pseudonyms (Ellen Field)**


**Chapbooks (2000s)**


**Chapbooks and alternative formats (2010s)**


**Recent works (2019-2021)**


**Artifacts of dedication (2003)**

104. --. [Wine barrel lid.] (2000). OSC BIB 04, artifact no. 1

![Wine barrel lid with a dedication plaque.](image)

**Baseball (1990-2011)**


Biography, method, and criticism


References and source notes

https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol16/iss1/77/
Source of quote relating to *Caprice*, exhibits no. 77-80.

Crosfield, L. [2013?]. “*Los Pájaros de Tenacatita / George Bowering*” [blog]. Description for this chapbook (exhibit 97) taken from Crosfield’s website. Crosfield designed and published this chapbook.
https://lindacrosfield.com/nibpublishing/los-pajaros-de-tenacatita-by-george-bowering/


Capperdoni, A. “George Bowering’s poetry as cultural poetics.” (p. 155-160) informed interpretive description for *Kerrisdale Elegies* (exhibits no. 73-76).

Norris, K. “Bowering’s books.” (p. 64-68) and Rae, I. “The art of (re)collecting: Bowering and the London scene.” (p.
183-188) informed Interpretive descriptions for *Curious* (exhibit no. 42)

Persky, S. “Home port.” (p. 124-128) and Quartermain, M. “On first looking into *Burning Water.*” (p. 129-133). Informed interpretive descriptions for *Burning Water* (exhibits no. 81-84). The note about *Caprice, Shoot!, and Burning Water* being readable as a trilogy (exhibits no. 81-84) was informed by the same.

Mobilizing Special Collections

BC Regional Digitized History

Coordinated by UBC Okanagan Library, BCRDH a regional partnership involving numerous community memory institutions. Our goal is to work collaboratively with partner organizations to improve access to a wide range of local historical resources through digitization. bcrdh.ca

BC Wine Territory Memory

Research at UBCO’s Faculty of Management relating to the nature of BC’s identity as a wine-producing region has led to Okanagan Special Collections adopting a focus emphasizing access to and interpretation of the records of the wine industry. wine.ubc.ca/community

SpokenWeb

The AMP Lab is the UBCO branch of the SSHRC-funded SpokenWeb Partnership Grant. SpokenWeb aims to develop coordinated and collaborative approaches to literary historical study, digital development, and critical and pedagogical engagement with Canadian literary audio. spokenweb.ca
Okanagan Special Collections and Archives
UBCO’s Special Collections and Archives acquires books, pamphlets, maps, audio-visual, photographs, and textual archives with relevance to the Okanagan, and other nearby regions, in BC’s southern interior. Discover archival descriptions online at https://rbscarchives.library.ubc.ca/

The AMP Lab
The AMP Lab at UBC Okanagan houses projects that engage in the work of the humanities—adding value to cultural artifacts through interpretation and analysis—in a digital context, with an emphasis on audio media and/or poetry. Learn more about The AMP Lab and the Soundbox Collection at https://amplab.ok.ubc.ca/

Contact Us
The Corbishley Family Reading Room at UBC Okanagan Special Collections and Archives is open to the public. Visit us weekdays, 10:00am to 3:00pm or contact us to make an appointment.
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Web: library.ok.ubc.ca/spaces/special-collections-and-archives/

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Kelowna, BC
September 2022