Canadian imprints but also through the creation of the Bruce Peel Special Collections Library in his honour. Ernie Ingles has been a friend to Canadian bibliography for the past twenty years, and his impact has been national; members of the Bibliographical Society of Canada will be particularly cognizant of his *Bibliography of Canadian Bibliographies* (3rd edition, 1994).

By telling the story of the University of Alberta Libraries (today there are sixteen branches) through the careers of five distinguished librarians, Distad reminds us that great libraries are the work of visionary leaders. May the next generation take inspiration from their example.

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Receiving a copy of this catalogue for the University of Alberta’s exhibition of John H. Meier, Jr.’s collection of the Governor General’s Literary Award-winning English-language fiction books was reassuring. Meier has painstakingly developed his collection for more than a decade, running on manic energy and stubborn hope in the intrinsic merit of the pursuit. “I have asked myself, on several occasions over the past decade, whether I was committing financial suicide by investing my life’s savings, and over a decade of my time, to build this collection,” he writes in the catalogue’s introduction.

Vancouver writer Timothy Taylor offers a revealing glimpse of Meier’s determination to collect winners of what are colloquially known as the GGs, and to prepare a descriptive bibliography of the books, in a December 2007 article for the *Walrus*. With the single-minded focus those of us who prepare bibliographies display when given brief periods of access to important collections, Meier fends off a New York heat wave and makes the most of five hours he’s been given in a bookseller’s storeroom by locking the door and stripping buck naked. “I don’t mess around,” he told Taylor, hesitating as to whether or not he should disclose so much. “I realize I’m a bit
eccentric, but I don’t want people thinking I’m insane.” University of Alberta vice-provost and chief librarian Ernie Ingles, who writes the foreword to the catalogue, seems understanding: “Whatever the objects of their pursuit, all successful collectors display a degree of dedication that sometimes borders on obsession. … John H. Meier, Jr. is just such a collector.”

Indeed, Meier has gone to impressive lengths. The collection made its public debut at the University of Alberta from September to December 2010, and it is now presented in an exhibition catalogue that offers a foretaste of what one can expect from Meier’s bibliography. (He continues to seek a publisher, but hopes to strike a deal for 2013, a year after the award’s seventy-fifth anniversary.) The great appeal of this catalogue is in showing what Meier has done, as well as offering (in his own words) a perspective on the challenges and triumphs of his research. During conversations with Meier, and indeed, in a recent article for Amphora, the thrice-yearly journal I edit on behalf of Vancouver’s Alcuin Society, his stance is full of the single-minded zeal that has made the collection possible. One might come away aghast at the lack of support for such a collection, and impressed at the odds and injustices Meier has, by dint of his inexhaustible store of energies, vanquished. Meier’s introduction to this catalogue offers a measured account of his travails without diminishing the reader’s respect either for what Meier has overcome or for his enthusiasm. Bibliography is not an easy task in a world where publishers increasingly keep their numbers secret, and funding agencies have the option of funding far sexier, more market-worthy, competition.

Meier’s introduction covers the origins of his collecting interest and charts the changes in how collectors discover and buy books as online catalogues and transactions have come alongside traditional bricks-and-mortar stores. Meier also provides an overview of the GGs themselves, the scope and development of his project, and offers some of the many stories he’s discovered in the letters he’s gathered complementing many of the titles.

But what of the catalogue? It provides an overview of the collection in a handsome if simple format. While nowhere near as lavish as a previous University of Alberta exhibition catalogue such as Mappae Mundi: Representing the World and Its Inhabitants in Texts, Maps, and Images in Medieval and Early Modern Europe (2008), it is appropriate to the books it showcases. A full page is devoted to each GG-winning title, and sometimes more when a second edition or
additional material (say, for Hugh Maclennan’s *Two Solitudes* [1945]) is featured. The information accompanying each title provides a basic bibliographical sketch. The block of text accompanying Ryan Mah’s photos of each book provides the author’s place of origin (giving insight into the geographic distribution of the award); author’s name; the title of the award-winning work; publishing information; publication date and price; printer; jacket design/image credit; and a note on any inscription of the exhibition copies.

That the catalogue brings together these books in one place, for the first time, is a good thing. That it offers a foretaste of the bibliography Meier hopes to produce is better. This is where the reassurance mentioned at the beginning comes in. The catalogue documents a revered slice of Canada’s literary inheritance, and heralds the rich trove Meier is committed to documenting in a bibliography.

PETER MITHAM

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