

A Mountain Culture Committee view on preserving the Library

BY ISABELLE DAIGNEAULT

Among the elements that define the Alpine Club of Canada, and which set us apart from other outdoor clubs, are our history and culture. The ACC has long shared the mountain experience with Canadians, and the Club's Library documents our mindset and passion for mountains as it evolves over time. Literature and photos have traditionally been – and continue to be – the means by which mountaineers document their feats, epic adventures and inner reflections on their appreciation for alpine and mountain environments. The Club's Library has tremendous intrinsic value for ACC members, the community and researchers alike. As such, the Club must preserve it.

While managing the ACC Library no longer fits into the mandate of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, it continues to be the duty of Club members to preserve this world-class collection, one that has taken the efforts and unbroken attention of many a mountaineer over a century to build (not to mention the special care of ACC member, the late Bev Bendell). The Mountain Culture Committee expects that book and other media donations of tremendous historical significance are yet to come—if the ACC maintains ownership of this important holding. New media is at our door and the committee anticipates that it, too, will become an important part of Canadian mountain culture along with our current collection. Without the degree of control that comes from ownership, the committee cannot assure the future of the content or size of the ACC Library.

Although funds will be required, firstly to house, and then operate a Club Library, the Mountain Culture Committee sees this opportunity as a way to showcase the ACC. It also recognizes

that the Library, even in its current form, is an indispensable part of Canada's climbing and mountain community. Keeping the Library in proximity to the Club's Archives, which remain in Banff at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, also makes sense for research purposes. The Library and the Archives go hand-in-hand; the Archives are proof and documentation of various ascents and of mountain life, and the Library is the interpretation of that proof!

The American Alpine Club manages its archives and library in one beautiful building, which is located in Golden, Colorado. As the AAC has clearly outlined, "The library is the cornerstone of the outdoor community's knowledge base." Housing the ACC Library in a facility that allows mountain enthusiasts, university students and historians to congregate and conduct research would be a terrific Canadian resource—don't you think?

There is no doubt that an interesting challenge lies ahead. It's not like we haven't climbed mountains and reached summits before! First things first: the Mountain Culture Committee, with the help of several volunteers, is currently appraising the collection to determine if any volumes (irrelevant or double titles) should be sold or donated elsewhere. The result will yield a better idea as to the financial value of this asset. Parallel to this, a subcommittee made up primarily of Mountain Culture and Facilities Committee members will pursue creating the vision for housing the Library in its



Alexander Mackenzie's Voyage Through North America, 1st Edition (1801), includes a pull-out map. PHOTO BY MEGHAN WARD.

own space, while remaining under the full control of the Alpine Club of Canada.

Every member's support will be instrumental in making this happen.

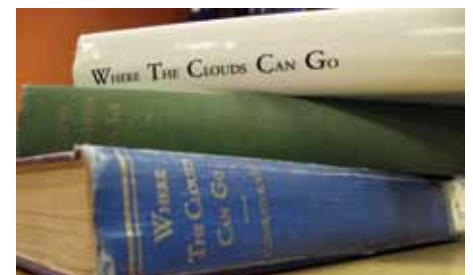
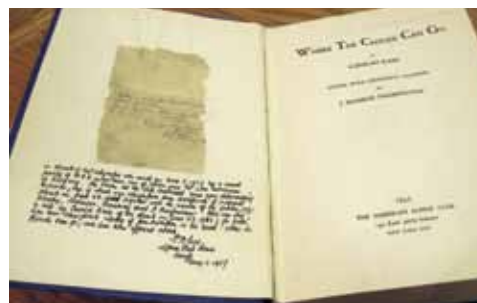
Were it not for the numerous volunteers involved in helping move this initiative forward and their deep care over what happens to this valuable asset, we would be nowhere. The ACC owes special thanks to Len Gottselig, Zac Robinson, Robert Omeljaniuk and Meghan Ward for their time and effort, and also to Suzan Chamney, Lynn Martel and the many other contributors who have provided sound advice.

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The oldest book in the ACC archives, dated 1560, originates from Switzerland and was written in Latin. PHOTO BY MEGHAN WARD.

This summit note written by Conrad Kain in 1913 and found on Mount Whymper is pasted into this 1935 edition of *Where the Clouds Can Go*. The inscription below, written by F.C. Bell, who retrieved Kain's note, reads: "A climb of Mt. Whymper was made on Aug 7, 1957 by a small party of ACC members, one of whom was Mr. Wm. Morrison of Calgary. The cairn at the top contained some now deteriorating records, one of which was Whymper's own certificate of original climb on June 26, 1901, together with the names of his guides Mr. Klucker, Pollmager, Bosemay and C. Kaufmann." PHOTO BY MEGHAN WARD.



The ACC Library includes three editions of Conrad Kain's *Where the Clouds Can Go*. From bottom to top, the 1935 first edition, a 1954 reprint and a 1979 edition. PHOTO BY MEGHAN WARD.