Opening Doors for the Writer:

The Mary Donaldson Lecture, April 11, 2002

First, let me say how pleased I am to be able to present this Mary Donaldson Lecture to you this evening and I want to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity because it allows me to say some of the things I've wanted to say to an audience of librarians, an audience in which I know that books still hold an inestimable value in a world that has been listening to doomsayers predicting the death of the book for many years now.

For any writer it would be hard to imagine a more meaningful or appropriate topic to relate to than the one you have chosen as your conference theme this year. Libraries do, most assuredly, open many doors – for many people. But writers as a profession or avocation are surely among society's foremost library beneficiaries. I believe that libraries, in several distinct and different senses of the word, are instrumental in the germination of any writer. Robert Kroetsch's well known query, "How do you grow a poet?", which could apply to any writer, not just a poet, could easily be answered and strongly argued to be a one-word response: *libraries.*

No one should need to validate the presence of libraries. Libraries are historically so well rooted in our civilization that one might reasonably assume there can be no possible further need, ever, for any rationale or justification for the presence and significant public support of library systems in our twenty-first century world. But of course, like many assumptions we make, this is not necessarily a sound one. Within any society there are always, as there have always been, forces opposed to the free and unfettered flow of knowledge and information, whether those forces be individuals, governments, factions, interest groups or religions. Public libraries are a kind of Pandora's box in the sense that not everyone is equally receptive to or accepting of what comes out of that box; so there will always be books and information that specific individuals or groups will feel ought not to be there. Unfortunately, the forces of censorship are still alive and well in our society and will continue to be, perhaps even increasingly, as we move through this new century. The phenomenal increase in knowledge during the previous century was not accompanied by a similar increase in human tolerance of ideas and information. Hence both libraries and writers continue to come under attack from those who would deny libraries their fundamental purpose to act as an unrestricted conduit between the public and any and all information that will make them better informed citizens in a democratic nation.

I am quite well aware that anything I can offer you — you who help open those many doors for people like me— must simply be ideas that you have heard before from different people, no doubt uttered with far more articulate persuasiveness and intellectual profundity than I can possibly offer. What instead I propose to do is to personalize your theme and take you back with me into my own life story, into those memories that make me what I am, those memories of libraries and books that may have been significant milestones in the journey I have travelled to becoming the first Poet Laureate of this province. In doing this, I hope it will become clear as mountain spring water what libraries, in several distinct senses of the word, have meant in my life and just how wonderfully apt this year's conference theme is for me.

Whenever I am asked the question, "What do you think it was that made you decide to be a writer?" I answer it with some hesitant trepidation because I am never positive whether there is one scintillatingly formative moment I can put my finger on; or whether there are a combination of moments at various points in my life that, taken together, somehow resulted in my decision, at thirty-one years of age, to set out on that arduous journey to becoming a poet, of taking on what Chaucer, some six centuries ago called "the crafte so longe to lerne". So, because I *have been and still am* uncertain about how to answer the question, I have ended up giving different answers at different times, none of them ever completely satisfactory, though probably all having some grain of truth and validity, as far as that goes. I keep sifting through the ingredients of memory, as if some day I will uncover the one incident or epiphany to which I am positive I can ascribe that weighty designation: THE MOMENT. I do keep coming up with more memories, but so far all that has happened is that the gathering of memories has made the whole matter seem more complicated than it ought to be, as if somehow there *ought* to be one specific crucial time and place that will emerge from the past and be the focal point around which everything else will quickly fall into place.

In the life of any writer there are at least two principal libraries – the institutional or formal library with its coherent organizational system; and personal libraries, or even various memory-libraries, with their idiosyncratic, haphazard or even chaotic organization. Both libraries are of extreme importance to the writer throughout his or her career, so in opening memory's scrapbook, I will be referring to both kinds. I think it goes without saying that writers are voracious readers; writers usually have life-long love affairs with books. This is certainly true of the writers I know and over the years I've known hundreds. They are usually unrepentant bibliophiles, sometimes incredible hoarders of books who live in homes that are quite literally collapsing under the weight of their personal libraries. I have been in many such homes and I've learned that each writer has his or her own distinctive way of arranging titles, according to some highly individualized purpose, not usually evident to anyone else. Needless to say, most writers can quite quickly locate the books they need, when they need them, though why that title is located where it is would be utterly unapparent to any trained librarian.

Although writers often talk about the solitary nature of writing, part of the overall process by which most writers accomplish their

writing is to surround themselves with books. Usually this is so – and it certainly is in my case. Within easy reach are those books that are the most important to the individual writer at any time. I am surrounded by a library of Canadian poetry and fiction – perhaps a couple thousand volumes gathered over the years like bumps and bruises, often with stories attached to the gathering of them. Above me, atop the hutch that houses my journals and files and the eclectic paraphernalia of the writer's craft, are the volumes that I use most often in the writing and especially rewriting process – *Roget's Thesaurus, Soule's Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms, Collins Etymological and Reference Dictionary, The Penguin Canadian Dictionary, Who's Who in Mythology, A Dictionary of Symbols*, the four volumes of *The Canadian Encyclopedia,* Paul Fussell's *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form.* You get the picture. This is part of the personal library that sustains me, that sustains my writing, that I can no more think of not having around me than a carpenter can imagine building without his tool kit at hand.

In this environment, surrounded by these silent companions, I can almost feel the intense energies emitted by the poetic or prose works of those whose words have touched, shaped and encouraged me, that have empowered me to follow, to further their work by adding my own. I can feel the spirits of those who have gone before me – Al Purdy, Dorothy Livesay, Anne Marriott, Earle Birney, Anne Szumigalski, John V. Hicks, Al Pittman, on it goes. Compatriots all, who had doors opened for them and for whom a final doorway opened to another place, hopefully one rich with libraries and books. But I also feel the energies of those who are still writing, whose latest books I may have on my bookshelves but haven't yet managed to read, those volumes calling out to me for my attention.

I believe writers are shaped very early in their lives – even though I have already confessed to not having taken up the calling until I was thirty-one, married with four children, and well into a teaching career in Saskatoon. My mother told me that at some early stage of my childhood in Vancouver I was given a set of wooden alphabet blocks, learned to sound out all the letters, then began phonetically mouthing words in the daily newspaper, sitting on my father's knee – all this long before I went to school. I may have been the only child in Mount Pleasant Public School on East Broadway who arrived in school for the first grade reading the newspaper with considerable fluency – no doubt occasioning some kind of pedagogical dilemma for my poor teacher, a Miss
McMilliken, who was charged by the demands of the curriculum of the day to inflict upon me, along with the rest of my fellow beginners, the tedious primer of the day – which I have thankfully forgotten and which thankfully did not inflict any serious damage on my reading appetite.

If wooden building blocks with boldly coloured capital letters became a kind of metaphoric first library for the child I was, then equally important were the nursery rhymes read by Mother or Father, those rhymes that lodge in the memory, many of which never fade. "Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town/Upstairs, downstairs, in his nightgown" or "Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross/To see a fine lady upon a white horse". It's strange which fragments of early childhood listening experiences are retained, but they certainly do become a highly personalized library of remembered lines and rhymes, and delicious words and clashes of sounds for us. First library: a library of sounds and rhythms, building blocks and nursery rhymes.

Though I have no memories of specific books of my early Vancouver childhood, I was apparently already a frequent reader of library books. Perhaps I was already building my own personal library by the time my parents decided to leave Vancouver and return to their roots in Saskatchewan. I was ten at the time and my memories of books and libraries and school are much sharper in my recall in the Saskatchewan years that followed. But I do remember that as a ten year old in Burnaby I had amassed a considerable stash of comic books, especially the so-called Illustrated Classics, but also a kind of squarish hardbound illustrated adventure book we called "little big books". All of these were left behind in our mid-winter move to the frigid prairies when I was ten. I acutely missed that library of adventures that I had gathered around me by dint of several paper and magazine routes in Burnaby. For a time I felt as though a small part of me was lost.

On a farm in east-central Saskatchewan and in a one-roomed country schoolhouse my love of reading and of books blossomed and I think it is safe to say that part of the writer I was to become was already taking shape, though at the time I was entirely unaware of this. I went to Wergeland School about three miles east and four miles north of Buchanan. At the time I had no idea whatsoever that this school was named after a famous Norwegian poet and playwright. I suppose even had I known at the time I would not have been impressed. But in another of life's inexplicable turns, just four years ago in Norway I stood below the statue of Hendrik Wergeland alongside my friend Arne Ruste, one of Norway's most important contemporary poets and translators. There we posed for a photograph – two friends beside an historic monument. I am still in complete awe at the strange, ironic kind of circuit I had travelled – from Wergeland School in 1948 to the statue of Wergeland, somewhere north of Lillehammer in 1998, exactly half a century later. It wasn't so much that Hendrik Wergeland had shaped my future, but the little schoolhouse named after him in Saskatchewan most assuredly did.

Most of Saskatchewan's rural schoolhouses were one-roomed, box-shaped structures, but Wergeland School had a small library that may have been built onto the original structure on the south-facing side, as if its initial purpose might have been as a cloakroom. However, it had somehow become the library, such as it was, for few rural schools could afford to buy many books, it seemed, and hence, had little impetus for libraries. I had no idea until much later that to have even such a tiny space that could be called a library, which actually held a few books, was quite unusual for country schools across the prairies, unless they were large and served considerable grades and students. So here, in this first memorable institutional library for me, between the ages of ten and fifteen, I'm sure I read everything in that little anteroom, some volumes several times, though now I can not remember many of the books, except that a volume I know I pored over many times was a substantial tome on North American birds. It may have been an Audubon bird

book, but what remains in my mind even now were the illustrations, the photos and the drawings that introduced me to so many of the birds I was learning to discern, one from another, in the bird-lush parkland that had become a learning ground for me in my boyhood rambles. It was in Wergeland School's library that I was launched on a fascination with birds that has been one of my lifelong joys and something that clearly manifests itself in my poetry over and over again. When I start looking back through my poems I am always surprised by the number of poems I've written about birds, most recently just this past autumn at Emma Lake in the poem "Blue Heron at Sunset":

Blue Heron at Sunset

The sun falls into the spruce tops
on the western shore and paints
the woods dark as night. The lake
is a murky green mirror we boat
like a giant water beetle. From reeds
a great blue heron springs,
flaps its graceful arc away,
seeking as we all do, a place
to itself, where it can lead
a quiet heron life and stand
stock-still in shallows,
become a feathered statue,
peering for its favorite food
to appear at its feet – a blue heron
poised in reeds, waiting. The sun
sets, the vigilance continues.

But it was not only birds that caught my fancy in Wergeland School and in the many happy hours I had to myself with various books in that little library area. I found myself immersed in the poems of the old lyric masters – Tennyson and Wordsworth, Burns and Browning, Noyes and de la Mare – being carried away by the rhythms, the narratives, the images, the rhymes. A child's education in Saskatchewan schools in the late '40s and early '50s always involved a certain amount of memorization and recitation of poetry, a practice that I personally admired, but about which some of my fellow students were far less enthusiastic.

Wergeland School sometimes was unable to attract a qualified teacher. The result of this was that we would get a study supervisor, an unqualified substitute for a teacher, who gave us students correspondence courses to work on independently. The correspondence courses for literature seemed to have a definite pedagogical leaning towards ample memorizing as a key to appreciating and enjoying poetry. I'm not so sure that this was always borne out in the results, but in my case the proof was certainly in the pudding. I was hooked for life. I memorized lines and lines from now mostly forgotten or neglected British and American poems, lines, which I can repeat to this day and which intrude upon my consciousness on a regular basis.

We are blind until we see That in the human plan Nothing is worth the making if It does not make the man. Why build these cities glorious If man unbuilded goes? In vain we build a world Unless the builder also grows.

These lines are a little poem by an American poet, Edwin Markham, and it's called "Man-Making". I don't know whether anyone ever reads Edwin Markham any more, nor whether there are others like me who carry these particular lines around, stuck to some part of memory like a burr to a spaniel's long ear. Sometimes I think perhaps they intrude upon my consciousness to remind me that the utterances of the past still hold, or should hold for us, a relevance – as well as satisfaction and delight.

For entirely different reasons these lines will be triggered in my head on different occasions, lines from one of my favorite early poets, and without warning I'm quite apt to burst into Alfred Lord Tennyson's marvelously lyrical poem about the tragically curse-doomed maiden of the Medieval castle:

On either side the river lie Long fields of barley and of rye, That clothe the wold and meet the sky; And thro' the field the road runs by To many-tower'd Camelot; And up and down the people go, Gazing where the lilies blow Round an island there below, The island of Shalott.

I have an uncle who is only a half-dozen years older than I am, a career banker, now mostly retired and living in the southern California desert. He took his first eight or nine years of schooling in the same country schoolhouse that I have described. Two months ago, almost to the day, I was visiting with my uncle and we took an afternoon drive through the irrigated date orchards and vineyards and farms near La Quinta, admiring the fields on either side the highway, when for no particular reason I began to recite those opening lines from "The Lady of Shallot". To my utter surprise, my uncle joined in and we continued a spirited joint recitation of the lines, rolling along the highway, both of us calling forth from the past lines we'd memorized in the same country schoolhouse over a half-century ago. I'm chagrined to report that he had committed even more lines of this poem to memory than I had. So not only was the Poet Laureate one-upped in this instance by his own uncle, but by a life-long banker at that! Now can there be a more cogent argument for the power of poetry than the fact that my uncle is still carrying Tennyson's wonderful poem around in his head sixty years later and is able not just to recall a few lines, but to recite stanza after stanza – and to do so with a very obvious sense of satisfaction?

I actually used to *love* to recite poetry – something that carried over to many recitations and acting parts in the annual Christmas concerts. This love of the written word and its power to entertain and enthral an audience, a trait that stood me in good stead in Wergeland School, was to serve me equally well in my professional career as a school teacher, especially as a teacher of high school English. One of my hallmarks as a teacher was that on the first day of classes, I would wait outside the doorway until all the students had found seats, then stride into the classroom reciting in my most dramatic voice a poem like Robert Frost's "Stopping By The Woods On A Snowy Evening". By the time I reached the front of the

classroom you could hear a pin drop and from that moment on, they were mine – well hooked for all the classes to follow.

When I left teaching in 1981 to pursue my writing career and began giving readings of my work from coast to coast across Canada, I was always gratified that former students of mine would often show up at my readings and tell me how much they enjoyed hearing me again because they had enjoyed my readings or recitations so much in high school. I think we tend to underestimate the power of the spoken word and how much we all love to hear someone who can read or recite with passion – but that's a subject for another presentation. Some of my ex-students were even great surprises to me, a few that I had wrongly assumed were not paying much attention at all and who were just marking time in class. More than once I was guilty of misreading them.

In the Fraser Valley in Kwantlen College a number of years ago I gave an evening reading and was told beforehand that an ex-student of mine was in the audience. I was downright shocked when it turned out to be a young man who sat through two semesters of English with me and not once in all of those classes, at least that I can remember, exhibited the slightest degree of interest in anything I ever said. And now here he was, several years later, telling me how my English classes were the only reason he kept going to school at all and that he hung on every word I said. I told him he did an awfully good job of concealing it from me – and from everyone else for that matter, which was probably more important to him at the time.

From reading the poetry of others with drama and flair before a captive audience of mostly jaded teenagers to reading my own poetic efforts before the more select literary-going audiences that attend poetry readings is not so great a step as it might seem – though reading one's own work is always to some extent an uncomfortable peeling away of one's clothing of privacy. However, as a poet I have accepted that I am also a performer and if I can separate the performer from the writer for the time of the reading, I can survive quite nicely without feeling that I have stripped myself bare before a group of people I don't even know.

About the same time that I was working my way through the ancient tomes and dog-eared novels of the Wergeland book collection — battered copies of *Lorna Doone* or *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, or *The Last of the Mohicans* — I was also beginning to build my own personal library in the farmhouse where I lived. In the bedroom I had been consigned a wooden crate that had been used to ship oranges and which had a solid wood divider. When stood on its end this orange crate became a crude bedside table for a coal-oil lamp and a bookshelf for the occasional books that came my way, mostly as birthday or Christmas presents. At various times this makeshift bookcase held Zane Grey's *Spirit of the Border* and others of his romantic yarns of the frontier and Old West; or the series of novels featuring Silver Chief, dog of the north; or a tale that I found captivating, *The One-Eyed Trapper*; or Jack London's *Call of the Wild* and other stirring narratives of the frozen north. Considering where and when I was growing up, I was not unsurprisingly drawn to animals and adventure and wilderness especially. But tales of heroes from the recently concluded war, or the mighty deeds of sporting heroes also provided ample fodder for my imagination. I had no idea that my orange box library was an inescapable step on the road to becoming a bibliophile, a lover of literature, and eventually, a writer. But somewhere in those small beginnings – alphabet blocks and nursery rhymes, the Wergeland library and my orange crate book shelf – a passion had taken hold of me that was fired in those early days of my country schooling, then languished for a time in my teens when fast cars and the inescapable attractions of the opposite sex asserted their ascendancy in the scheme of things.

Although I cannot say that my days in Sturgis Composite High School doused my desire for reading or literature, for the power of recitation, or the love of poetry, all my hormones were hard at work dictating other more carnal pursuits. My passion for books was not rekindled until I became a teacher and was once again reconnected with the world of books and libraries. However, it was in the high school in Sturgis that Harvey Clotsman, our English teacher and a poet himself (though I was quite unaware of it at the time), did his best to encourage my latent writing abilities and, in fact, was responsible for furthering my carefully disguised love of poetry, mostly by demonstrating on a daily basis his own enthusiasm and appreciation for good poems. He read very well, with verve and flair, and sitting through his classes was usually very pleasant for me, though I regarded most of my other classes as a necessary evil, an ordeal that one had to somehow endure to satisfy the expectations of family and society. Mr. Clotsman told me that I had a great way with language and that I should consider doing something with it. The problem was that I was seventeen and had no idea what I wanted to do with my life at all. So, because the uncle I've already mentioned was working in a nearby Bank of Commerce and was quite happily entrenched into what would be for him a long and productive career, I decided to embark on a similar banking vocation – one that turned out to be mercifully short-lived, both for me and I'm sure, the Bank of Commerce. Had I stayed in the bank another month I may very well have been responsible for the collapse of the Canadian banking system.

I won't go into the details of how I ended up in Yorkton in 1963, an elementary school teacher, married with two children and one on the way, nor the role my university days played in the forming of a writing interest, for that, as they say, is another story. But it was in Yorkton school system that I met and came under the considerable influence of someone who was just beginning to have a profound impact on school libraries in this province. Jim Bowman, a transplanted working class Englishman, was then principal of an elementary school in Yorkton. Extremely well read, an indiscriminately voracious reader, he was also a highly persuasive and articulate man of action. He considered the state of libraries in Yorkton's elementary schools so dire as to be next to non-existent. Starting with his own school, he set off on a personal mission to change things, especially the way libraries in the schools were regarded. And change them he did. Bowman convinced school officials to make libraries the centre and focal point for the school and for the educational process; he turned libraries into true resource centres. Not just in Yorkton, but in Prince Albert and then many of the

province's schools.

Jim Bowman and his family became close friends of our family and it didn't take much encouragement for me to become an enthusiastic supporter of Bowman's missionary zeal to replace all the miserable little classroom collections of old tomes into well organized school libraries of more contemporary publications, complete with teacher-librarians to turn libraries into learning centres within the schools. But Bowman's impact upon me was not so much in reaffirming my belief in the value of books and libraries, as in other less tangible ways. He lived and breathed books and went through volumes, anything and everything, like a teenaged boy through the refrigerator at midnight — anything so long as there's plenty of it. He fed me books and ideas like a farmer fattening a steer for market. I began to eat, sleep and dream books. I began to "discover" Canadian writing and the newly blossoming literary publishing scene in Canada that came to flourish by the end of the 60s. About this time I first encountered the fiction of Sinclair Ross and W. O. Mitchell, perhaps even Margaret Laurence. It was Bowman's encouragement that led me to start reviewing books and building up a library of review copies, which in turn led to becoming a collector of books, especially of Canadian poetry and fiction.

One of my fond memories of my friend Bowman was that on more than one occasion over a mug of beer he would break into the reciting of one of his own favourite poems, a particular epic he would launch into with great gusto, booming forth in his deepest, full-throated warrior voice:

The mountain sheep are sweeter, We forced a strong position
But the valley sheep are fatter; And killed the men who held it.
We therefore deemed it meeter To carry off the latter. We made an
expedition; We met a host, and quelled it;

It was the opening salvo of Thomas Love Peacock's "The War Song of Dinas Vawr", with which at the time I was totally unfamiliar – though it didn't take me long to find it after I first heard it pouring from Bowman. What Bowman's recitations did was to put me back in touch with my own neglected sense of joy in spoken poetry and apart from having to find the unfamiliar but delightful poem that he was so fond of uttering, to read more poetry for my own enjoyment. I think in some way at this stage of my life, Bowman's poetic recitations and his very evident love of the spoken word legitimized for me the whole subject of poetry, a subject that apart from my classroom had all but disappeared from my life in the hectic day-to-day routine of working and raising a family. After all, if this roll-up-your-sleeves, spit-on-your-palms and get-down-to-work, meat-and-potatoes man who came from working class parents, as he was fond of reiterating, quoted poets and other famous writers at will and could at the same time be an intelligent man of decided action, then poetry surely was not some effete practice reserved for the weak and the timid, was it? My languishing love of poetry was given a kind of validation, which I suppose at this time in my life I needed.

The Irish have a saying that God never closes one door but what He opens another. The closing of the door on my career in Yorkton, where I was involved with a demonstration library at Columbia School, turned out to be the opening of the door into Saskatoon and into newly built Alvin Buckwold School in which the library was to become a full resource centre. In two short years yet another door opened and beckoned me into Evan Hardy Collegiate as a teacher of English. Two years later I had a classroom right smack-dab in the new library resource centre. By this time I was an aspiring writer and a voracious reader, teaching in a library, which I had considerable influence in stocking with literary titles. Life was about as good as it gets for an English teacher in love with language and poetry.

I spent ten years teaching in that Evan Hardy Library classroom, at the same time honing my craft as a poet in whatever time I could manage away from teaching, until the day in 1981 when I handed in my resignation, closing the classroom door behind me for good. At the same time I could see the next door beckoning, the door to my writing office which is, not unsurprisingly I suppose, a personal writer's library. And on the first day of July in 1981 I became ex-teacher, now a writer with more than a passing interest in publishing – not just my own work, but the work of others through a literary press that I helped to bring into existence six years earlier. So for the remainder of the twentieth century I wrote my own poetry books, while at the same time seeing into print the writing of a great many Saskatchewan and Canadian poets and fiction writers in the form of Thistledown books.

I do not need to be convinced about the absolute need for and benefits from a good library system. Nor does a conference of librarians. So my telling you all the ways in which institutional libraries continue to be an important part of my life is the next thing to redundant. Except that from time to time we all need to be reminded that there are programs and services and resources that writers like me, as well as all of those aspiring writers who will follow me, can be so thankful for because of what it has meant for me in the development of my career as a published poet. I have no idea how many writers I have heard read from their works in public libraries, writers who have become friends, writers who have influenced me and my writing. Conversely, I have no idea either, when I have given readings in so many different libraries across Canada and in the United States, how I may similarly have influenced others in their own writing, or on the way to becoming writers. I spent a wonderful year as Writer-in-Residence in Saskatoon's Frances Morrison Library and I cannot begin to tell you all the many ways that the year was a boon to me both as a writer and as a person. But I certainly can assure you that writer-in-residencies in libraries are extremely valuable experiences for writers, not just in giving them an opportunity to work on their craft while at the same time receiving remuneration in the form of a monthly cheque – something most writers treat as a novel experience itself – but to be able to encourage others in the various stages of their own writing careers by reading their work and offering advice or criticism.

I have no idea of how many times over the years of my writing career I have had occasion to rely upon the Information Services Department of the Saskatoon Public Library for help in locating information that was important to something I was writing.

Saskatoon's writers, if they are at all like me and I suspect they are, can be extremely thankful for such a wonderful service. But it is not simply people in Information Services, but those in children's and young adult literature, local history, music and art, pick any area. I've had occasion to draw often upon the expertise of many of these librarians. Good library staff are a boon to writers as they are to the community at large and I, for one, am extremely thankful for all these enthusiastic library people.

So here we are, embarked on another century, one in which we have little notion of what shape the libraries we treasure will eventually take, what services and programs will be needed and by whom, whether the internet and other, yet-to-come technological wonders will render every form of communication with which we are now familiar into historic artifacts. But I am still opening doors of libraries and libraries are still opening doors for me. I hope, during whatever time I may have left to me in this new century, that doors will always be open and inviting me in. Let me leave you with a few lines from one of my favourite early poet-mentors, the American Carl Sandburg, whose poem "Doors" poses some interesting and perplexing questions:

An open door says, "Come in."
A shut door says, "Who are you?"
Shadows and ghosts go through shut doors.
If a door is shut and you want it shut, why open it?
If a door is open and you want it open, why shut it?
Doors forget but only doors know what it is doors forget.

ACRONYMS

(Related to the Saskatchewan Library Association)

AGF	Annual Global Funding
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ALA	American Library Association
APLA	Atlantic Provinces Library Association
BCLA	British Columbia Library Association
CAC	Cultural Advisory Committee
CACUL	Canadian Association of College and University Libraries
CARL	Canadian Association of ResearchLibraries
CAPL	Canadian Assoication of Public Libraries
CASLIS	Canadian Association of Special Libraries and Information Services
CLA	Canadian Library Association
CLTA	Canadian Library Trustee Association
LAA	Library Association of Alberta
MLA	Manitoba Library Association
NSLA	Nova Scotia Library Association
NLC	National Library of Canada
NWTLA	North West Territories Library Association
OCULA	Ontario College and University Library Association
OLA	Ontario Library Association
PCO	Provincial Cultural Organization
PTLAC	The Provincial and Territorial Library Associations' Council
QLA	Quebec Library Association
SAB	Sskatchewan Arts Board
SBA	Saskatchewan Book Awards
SLA	Saskatchewan Library Association
SLA	Special Library Association ("big one" - international)
SLW	Saskatchewan Library Week
SPG	Saskatchewan Publishers Group
SRP	Summer Reading Program
SWG	Saskatchewan Writers Guild