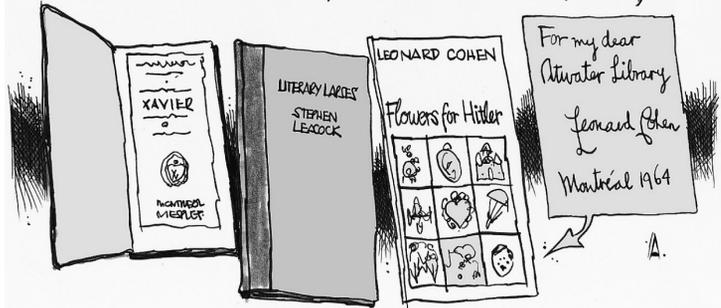


# ATWATER LIBRARY: A MONTREAL INSTITUTION SINCE 1828

## ARTIFACTS: MESPLET, LEACOCK and COHEN (SIGNED)...



### LITERARY TREASURES

What do Fleury Mesplet, Stephen Leacock and Leonard Cohen have in common? All three made a mark on publishing in Montreal – and are represented in the Atwater Library's collection. Printer Mesplet, the founder of *The Gazette*, brought the first printing press to Montreal in 1776; he published the religious book *Neuvaine à l'honneur de saint François Xavier* in 1778. Humorist Leacock self-published *Literary Lapses*, his first collection of stories, in 1910; it was an instant classic. Cohen dedicated this copy of his poetry collection *Flowers for Hitler* to "my dear Atwater Library" in 1964. The books are on display in the library's reading room.

## Google?

JOHN REDPATH PEERS OVER THE SHOULDER OF THE ALWAYS-BUSY LYNN VERGE...



### OVERSEEING THE ADMINISTRATION

A portrait of sugar magnate John Redpath stares down from the wall in the office of executive director Lynn Verge. Redpath was president of the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal, as the library was known in the 19th century. The Scottish immigrant, who trained as a stonemason, was a great believer in self-improvement – a tenet of the mechanics' institute movement.



### SILENCE IN THE STACKS

A corner of the library is a peaceful refuge from the downtown hubbub outside.

# My Dear ATWATER

SIGNAGE: MY ATWATER...

IN 1880, DISCOURAGING VANDALS...

IN 2011, ENCOURAGING VISITORS...

**\$10 REWARD**

TEN DOLLARS will be paid to any one giving such information as will lead to the conviction of any person mutilating or appropriating MAGAZINES or PAPERS, belonging to the Institute.

PLEASE CLOSE THE DOOR GENTLY  
S.V.P. FERMER LA PORTE DOUCEMENT

A fount of knowledge for almost two centuries, the national historic site honours its past while looking toward the future of digital literacy

MARIAN SCOTT THE GAZETTE  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY AISLIN

**B**ull Run. For *Gazette* editorial cartoonist Terry Mosher, that Civil War battlefield will forever be associated with the Atwater Library.

Mosher, 68, better known to *Gazette* readers as Aislin, first came across the intriguing name – a Virginia river where the Confederates beat back the Union army – at age 11.

"What does Bull Run mean?" he asked his mother, she suggested.

And in the Atwater Library's oak-shelved reading room, he found the answer.

"It was like magic opening up the encyclopedia," recalls Mosher. "Anything I wanted to know was in there."

Thus was born a lifelong passion for Civil War history – and an enduring affection for the library whose tan brick facade has presided over Cabot Square for 91 years.

Now, the library is calling on Montrealers to support its \$2 million fundraising campaign. The non-profit

institution, which depends on private donations, needs the money to restore its heritage building and to add an elevator and wheelchair-accessible wash-room.

"My dear Atwater Library," as troubadour Leonard Cohen fondly inscribed on the fly-leaf of a book in the library's collection, occupies a unique niche. A national historic site, the establishment dates back to 1828, when a group of prominent citizens founded the Montreal Mechanics Institute (later known as the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal) – an adult education centre and library. Nearly two centuries later, it is one of the few surviving mechanics' institutes in the world.

But despite justifiable pride in its past, the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, as it calls itself today, has its feet firmly planted in the present. One of the first libraries in Quebec to offer computer programs, it is a leader in promoting digital literacy.

"We were founded on a mission of promoting learning and we've been faithful to that mission," says the

library's executive director, Lynn Verge.

"We really are following in the footsteps of our forebears in doing the projects that we do."

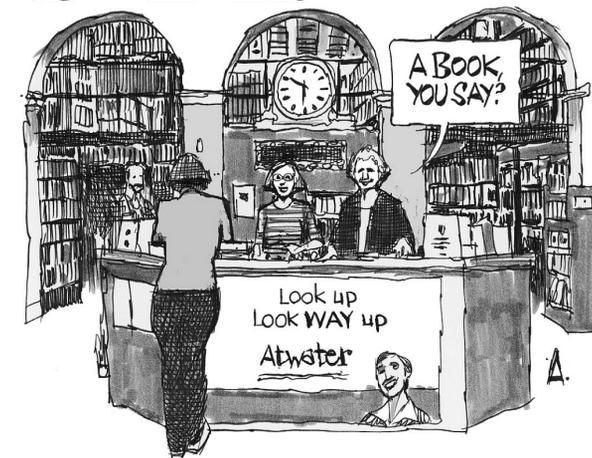
Those include a program where youth from diverse backgrounds learn new media; computer courses for all ages; and a downtown book-delivery program for seniors and shut-ins.

And while some things have changed since Mosher was a kid – a Google search would answer his question in seconds – there is still no substitute for the welcoming smile that greets visitors at the library's front desk.

The Atwater Library, 1200 Atwater Ave., holds a benefit cocktail party on Nov. 2 with a silent auction and music by the Dave Turner Jazz Trio. Tickets cost \$125; a \$100 tax receipt will be issued. To reserve tickets, or to make a donation, please contact executive director Lynn Verge at [atwaterlibrary.ca](mailto:atwaterlibrary.ca) or 514-935-7344.

mascot@montrealgazette.com

## VOLUNTEERS WORK THE FRONT DESK...



### HAPPY TO BE OF SERVICE

A marble clock donated by the Hemsley family of jewellers keeps time over the library's front desk, where you can count on a friendly smile from one of the 150 volunteers who check out books, tend the garden and keep the library open 51 hours each week. "The joy of my retirement has been working here," says Nonny Rankin, 66, who works at the front desk each Thursday and enjoys the sense of community.



## OPEN WINDOW, READING ROOM

### IN VIEW OF THE INFORMATION

The library's reading room looks much as it did back in 1953, when *Gazette* cartoonist Terry Mosher discovered a world of learning there.

## FINDING A BOOK BACK THEN ... FINDING A BOOK NOW



### PLUS ÇA CHANGE ...

Card catalogues may be a thing of the past, but libraries are thriving in the digital age – especially those that embrace new technology. Changing with the times is consistent with the Atwater Library's original mandate in 1828: to help people upgrade their skills in the face of technological advances.

## COMPUTER CLASSES

PLOKTA!

Press Lots Of Keys To Abort!



### CONNECTING TO THE INFORMATION AGE

Whether you want to produce multimedia content for the web or just find your way around the keyboard, the library has programs for all ages and stages. Seven Laville, 20, is a young mother who is learning to produce video in the library's digital literacy program. "It's really nice to get away for those two hours," she says. "I feel excited about it afterwards, like I've actually done something."

## THIS OVERHEARD AT ONE AUTHOR'S PRESENTATION...



### THE FACES BEHIND THE BOOKS

The library is a hive of activity, including authors' readings, conferences and a book club.