

92 years and counting: a history of your Alumni Archives
Presentation to Nurses Alumni Association of WGH & HSC, May 2025
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Thank you for letting me come and speak to you today about the HSC Archives/Museum, an endeavor that has its beginnings over 90 years ago.



On 5 April 1933 the Nominating Committee of the Executive of the Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association recommended that an archivist be appointed to take care of documents etc. belonging to the Alumni Association. The Archivist, Stella Pollexfen (WGH 1917) was appointed as a member of the Board the following year. They asked her to “make arrangements and bring in recommendations to the next meeting of what is required for looking after our records.” It is unclear why there was this interest in the history of the nurses but it is likely that it may have been related to the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the School of Nursing. A contributor to the Alumni Journal stated that “It is the story of our school and of our profession as we are building today – between 1933 and 1937 – that is our immediate concern, and the concern of all those who are even remotely associated with it.”

By October 1934 the Archives had furniture, files and scrap-books, a space for them all in the library of the School of Nursing all with the consent of Kathleen Ellis, Superintendent and Director of Nursing, as well as two assistant archivists - Edith Timlick (WGH 1917) and Ruth Monk (WGH 1925).

The first history book “The Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing 1887 – 1953” was written in 1957 by Ethel Johns (WGH 1902), and used the Archives to tell the story of the Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing and its Alumni Association. Just prior to that endeavor, in November 1953, Bertha

Pullen, Superintendent of Nurses and Director of the School of Nursing presented the Alumnae with a collection of historical items and “suggested that a historical record of the school be kept in the form of a museum.”



As part of the Alumnae Canadian Centennial celebrations in 1967 Margaret Cameron, Director of Nursing (WGH 1933) granted the Alumni space for their museum displays and archival research in what had been the Graduate Nurses Sitting room on the main floor of the Nurses old residence. Ten years later the collection was moved to its current location in NA179 in what has become the Isabel M. Stewart building. That year Peter Swerhone assured the Alumni of a continuation of space for them on the HSC campus, an assurance which has been reiterated by the HSC executive numerous times since.

In the 1970s Dr. Harry Medovy, retired Head of the Department of Pediatrics, used some archival records in publishing his book “A Vision Fulfilled” on the history of Children’s Hospital up to 1979.

In the late 1970s and early 80s many of the records that had been created by Winnipeg General, Children’s Hospital and Manitoba Rehab were sent to the Archives of Manitoba. Also, in the 80s, the Annie A. Bond Guild, St. Agnes Guild and Children’s Hospital Foundation transferred their records to the same place. Interestingly, at about the same time the Alumni was consulting with the Archives of Manitoba about their own records but ultimately chose to retain them on site at HSC.

In 1982, possibly in anticipation of the 10th anniversary of the creation of HSC, the hospital established an HSC Archives Committee led by Elsie McClellan

(Assistant to the President) and Pat Edward (WGH 1955). They put out a call in the hospital newsletter for staff to bring in their “old stuff.” It is not clear how much “stuff” came in at that time, although it filled a storage room behind the custom-built display case on the mezzanine of the Thorlakson Building. The committee approached the Alumni to borrow some of their artifacts including two mannequins in uniforms and it appears that both the display case and the storage room were used for historic items until 1997.

Between 1984 and 1992, under the direction of then Alumni Archivist, Elaine Tresoor (WGH 1960), there was substantial growth in the Archives of the Alumni Association including joining the Association for Manitoba Archivists in 1985 and more firmly establishing the Museum aspect of the Archives in 1987 in preparation for the centennial of the School of Nursing. In celebration of this 100th anniversary, the Alumni Association updated their history book in 1988.

Lyn Stephen (WGH 1960) became Archivist in 1992 and in addition to bringing her library expertise to the cataloguing she also began to look for better ways to store the items. This was especially critical after there was a flood due to a broken water pipe. The Archival records were moved from the cardboard boxes on the floor to the four new filing cabinets specifically bought by the Alumni.

The following year Anne Crossin (WGH 1957), volunteered to not only help sort archival and museum items but also act as a greeter. She suggested that the room should be open one day per week for 4 hours from September to May so that anyone walking past would discover what was behind the Copper Door. The Copper Door was the old elevator door from the Nurses Residence transferred to the Alumni by Peter Swerhone in 1979.

Also, in the mid-90s, Dr. James Haworth, Marie-Alice Grassick and a number of other Children’s Hospital staff formed the Children’s Hospital Archives Group to work towards celebrating the 90th, 95th and 100th anniversary of Children’s Hospital and continued work started by Dr. Medovy to collect Children’s Hospital material both records that had not been transferred to the Archives of Manitoba and also those created after the 1973 transfer.

In 1998 HSC Executive approached the Alumni Association to ask them to serve as “custodians of HSC history” and to “act as archivists for the Winnipeg General Hospital and HSC in a broad sense rather than archiving documents and properties relating strictly to nursing education and nursing practice”.

In 2003 HSC re-established the Archives committee to “preserve the history and heritage of the HSC and its founding members.” Realizing that this was a larger job than could be handled by a volunteer base that was no longer self-sustaining, since the School had closed in 1993, plans to formalize alternative support for the archives began in 2006, involving the Alumni, HSC Executive and other stakeholders. In January of that year there was discussion of sharing an archivist position between Children’s Hospital and Health Sciences Centre and in December a Planning Session was held for all stakeholders. The outcome was a recommendation that Children’s Hospital should be included on the Archives Committee and that there were four strategic priorities, these were accessible appropriate space, dedicated sustainable funding, a computerized catalogue and paid professional staff.

In 2007 the HSC Executive team began work on an institutional history of HSC. Over the next two years of gathering material the editorial committee recognized that large parts of the history of HSC were neither in the Alumni Archives/Museum nor the Archives of Manitoba. This factor reinforced the suggestion of the Nurses’ Alumni Association that the collection needed more substantial help to be grown and sustained. It was also recognized that the shared history of Winnipeg General, Children’s Hospital, Manitoba Rehab and ultimately HSC could bring the staff together.

These two factors: the planning session and the creation of the history book, led HSC and the Alumni to begin to work on the strategic priorities which had been developed in 2006.



Turning then to the first priority Accessible Appropriate Space

In response to the planning session a Global Needs Preservation Assessment was conducted in 2007 through the Association for Manitoba Archives Advisory Services. From here a number of things were changed in the Archives room. This included the installation of an air conditioning system to prevent the fluctuating heat and cold which had not been good for the archival items. This was generously financed and completed by the HSC Facility Management Department. In the past much of the collection had been on permanent display which meant the items were at risk of damage due to light exposure. The assessment recommended that most of the items on permanent display be stored in appropriate enclosures. The Alumni followed this recommendation as best they could, given the circumstances and financial constraints. Although not up to Archival standards, the room became a better place to house archival records which need a constant temperature, constant humidity and as little light as possible.

During the spring of 2009, work was begun at the “HSC Archives/Museum Management Committee” to restructure and update the terms of reference and membership of the Committee to reflect the evolving needs and interests of the Alumni, HSC and other stakeholders. By the fall, the group was reconstituted as the HSC Heritage Committee, with expanded membership. One significant new stakeholder group, the Children’s Hospital Archive Group agreed that their records could be moved from storage in the Community Services Building to the Archives/Museum space in the Isabel M. Stewart building where the collection would have more space, better security and a controlled climate. They agreed to this suggestion under the proviso that their collection be maintained as separated from the rest of the collection and identified as such. The collection was moved into its new space in the fall of that year.

At the same time HSC closed the hospital photography department and the entire public relations negative collection from the 1950s through to the early 2000s was transferred to the Archives. By this time there was no space left in the Archives room.

The original four filing cabinets from 1995 were full, and Anne Crossin, by now the Alumni Archivist, had managed to acquire 9 surplus filing cabinets from HSC for the additional material which had been arriving both from external donors and from HSC and Children's Hospital as well as those items which had originally been on permanent display. There was no space for the three cabinets of public relations negatives in the Archives room and so the cabinets had to be stored in the basement along with all the other artifacts that had been acquired including old EEG machines, EKG machines, a bedside cabinet and baby crib from Women's Hospital, a transport incubator and other equipment. In addition, homes had to be found for an Iron Lung, a 1920s wheelchair, a teaching mannequin and an old gurney.

With the hiring of a designated archivist in 2010 substantial changes took place. The room was divided into three sections (Archives, Museum and Office Space). The contents of the filing cabinet were moved to Archival Quality enclosures and boxes that were then stored on Archival shelving purchased by HSC. This shelving fills up the back half of the room and is classed as the Archives area, whilst the front half of the room contains the Museum and Office Space. This consists of the Archivist work area, a computer for volunteers and students, and a large work table for use by volunteers and researchers. The reason for this is that Archival records are generally stored in closed stacks due to their unique nature. This layout guides the visitor through the museum around the designated space without them mistakenly wandering into the Archives. In 2019 a glass trophy cabinet, originally gifted to the cafeteria but no longer wanted by them was acquired for free by the Archives. This cabinet complemented the existing display cases in the Archives/Museum and completed three sides of a display space for more inert objects including bedpans, china and other equipment.

The second strategic priority was Dedicated Sustainable Funding

In 2009 an Endowment Fund was established to sustain the collection, and HSC agreed to consider supplying bridge funding for a professional archivist in the interim.

Whilst the Endowed Fund was established by the Nurses' Alumni Association the monies are to ensure resources are available to continue to preserve and celebrate the rich history of HSC as a whole. It was agreed that HSC should have a professional archivist to continue to preserve, manage and enhance the collection, but the Alumni Association and the hospital did not have funds for this position. The goal was to raise enough money to sustain the Archives/Museum through interest accrued on the capital gathered in that fund for professional management, preservation and enhancement of the collections in perpetuity. In June 2010 bridge funding was established by HSC to allow for the hiring of the HSC Archivist whilst the Endowment Fund was grown.

The bridge funding and resources provided by HSC allowed for significant changes to be implemented in the Archives/Museum space and operations. These included: the aforementioned shelves and boxes and renovations to allow the cabinets of negatives to be moved from the basement to the Archives.

In 2016 the Endowment Fund generated significant interest for the first time. With that money it was possible to pay for a Project Archivist to develop the Intensive Care Unit WordPress site in honour of that department's 50th anniversary. Over the next couple of years additional interest from the fund paid for other similar projects.

Unfortunately, with the dissolving of Business and Corporate Services in 2019 and the subsequent loss of a champion for the archives at the executive level, the use of the Endowment Fund was put on hiatus for five years. Fortunately, the interest continued to accrue and donations, including some bequests, continued to occur so that the fund now has a significant amount of capital as well as a reasonable amount of interest to use for projects as I will mention later.

The next strategic priority, the Computerized Catalogue, was met in May 2011 when we installed and began to use ICA-AtoM which is an internationally

recognized Archives specific database. This allows for the creation of a catalogue which is hosted by University of Manitoba and is on the internet.

<https://main.lib.umanitoba.ca/health-sciences-centre-archives>

The database which is Open Source, was developed by Artefactual Systems, a Canadian software company originally for Archives in the developing world but was soon adopted globally as many smaller Archives are generally run on a shoestring budget, if they have a budget at all. In order to use the catalogue, it was necessary to become an accredited member of the Association for Manitoba Archives and to structure the archival holdings following Canadian standard archival principals,

ICA-AtoM is not designed to support scanned images of our entire hospital records but it does allow a larger audience to learn what we may have. It is also purely an archival catalogue so in 2013 we also acquired a license for PastPerfect Museum Software.

PastPerfect is a database designed for small museums which allows us to catalogue and track all artifacts and art which we hold, manage the displays we create throughout the HSC campus and maintain a list of people who have donated items to us. Fortunately, the Alumni had, in 2007, hired an archives technician on a grant and most of the museum artifacts had ben inputted into Microsoft Access. Access ceased to be supported by HSC Digital Health soon after but it was possible to do a data transfer from the Access system to PastPerfect. Because PastPerfect is a relational database it has the ability to search multiple fields simultaneously allowing for more accurate search results.

The two systems, ICA-AtoM and Past Perfect simultaneously allow us to have a free online catalogue so researchers can discover what we hold whilst also allowing us to manage the collection internally.

Finally, the strategic priority – Paid Professional Staff was met in June 2010 when I was hired on a three-year term as the Archivist.

I came to the Archives with experience as the Archive Coordinator at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab in Toronto as well as additional experience in the archives of various other sectors. Because of my experience at Bloorview I had an existing network of healthcare archivists which I continue to nurture, there happened to be an existing historical connection between one of Bloorview's and one of HSC's founding institutions, and I was just starting to write my master's thesis at University of Manitoba in Archival Studies.¹

To begin with the Archivist position reported to the Director of Organizational Engagement who in turn reported to the Chief Operating Officer. In December 2012 the then COO made the HSC Archivist position permanent and shortly thereafter the position was moved to reporting into Business and Corporate Services where it remained until 2019 when BCS was dissolved. After a couple of changes in reporting relationships over the next 5 years the HSC Executive, in discussion with the Alumni, finally decided the best fit for the archives was within Health Services.

There are many advantages to having a paid professional archivist. It allows the Archives to be consistently open all year round which is not something that can be easily achieved or expected of volunteers. It allows us to apply for grants for students where there is expectation of some level of professional supervision and provides someone to direct volunteers and unpaid placement students. It allows for the Archives to be more firmly integrated within HSC as a whole and also allows consistency when staff members or the public are corresponding with the Archives.

Even during the pandemic, I was on site for large amounts of time and answered reference questions albeit remotely. In addition, I was able to continue to change the displays for those staff who had to work on site.

Within the first few years of there being a paid Archivist the Corporate Archives Policy was created, the HSC Archives/Museum became the first healthcare archives in Manitoba to be Accredited with the Association for Manitoba Archives, a series of federal, provincial and community grants were written and

¹ "Acute Condition? Exploring the Status of Corporate Archives in Canadian Hospitals" (University of Manitoba, 2014)

awarded, and various initiatives were implemented to showcase the collection through displays and by writing various pieces for the internal staff newsletter.

So, what is an archives and what does an Archivist do?

An Archives/Museum is a place where unpublished materials (with the exception of internal newsletters) that have been created and/or used by an organization or person in the course of their affairs under specific circumstances or for specific reasons have been acquired and made available and have been preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information or the evidence of the functions and responsibilities of the creator.

An archives can contain any record for example paper documents, photographs, maps, electronic records etc. An Archives/Museum also collects some artefacts for example pins, uniforms and equipment which is unique.

The Archivist shares information and collaborates with other health, education and national archives and museums, as appropriate, to maximize preservation of and access to valuable historic records and artifacts while minimizing duplication. The archivist ensures that the records of today are preserved for future generations so that there is a way to study and understand the life, ideas and thoughts of those who have gone before.

In our case the HSC Archives/Museum originally documented the activities of graduates of the Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing and later the way in which the School of Nursing and Alumni Association were organized and run. From 2010 we broadened the mandate to include the documentation of business activities of HSC and its predecessors as well as other entities which had influence or were influenced by the hospitals.

Officially the HSC Archives/Museum acquires, preserves and makes available records of legal, administrative, fiscal and historical value created for, by and about HSC, its predecessors, its successors and individuals and organizations with which it has been, is and will be associated to document the social and cultural history of the School of Nursing, Alumni Associations, Winnipeg

General, Children's Hospital, Manitoba Rehab and HSC. It also collects and preserves artifacts of a unique nature used by or at HSC.

The HSC Archivist is an individual responsible for building, managing and maintaining the HSC Archives/Museum collection, and for managing access to the materials in that collection by interested parties for example current members of the organization, researchers, members of the public etc. in a way that reflects legal requirements such as copyright and privacy laws.

We have an amazing collection in the Archives/Museum and now house some material from Winnipeg General, HSC, Children's Hospital, White Cross Guild, Guilds of Children's Hospital, Children's Hospital Foundation in addition to the Alumni Association and School of Nursing items which were originally collected and still make up the bulk of the collection.

We have yearbooks, scrapbooks, photographs and negatives of individuals, classes, departments and buildings. We also have course content, curriculum design, early student records, records of examinations, biographical files of many graduates, both prominent women, such as Isabel M. Stewart, and those who made a difference to people at a more local level through the compassion and caring that they gave. We also have the Alumni Association Journal and a large collection of historic textbooks, records from the Dietetics Internship programme, the Intensive Care Nursing Program and the Communications and Marketing records for Transplant Manitoba. We have also acquired some records and artifacts related to both the Margaret Scott Nursing Mission and the Victorian Order of Nurses – two professional groups with which the nursing graduates of Winnipeg General had strong connections.

In addition to these records we also have artifacts including pins, medical instruments and equipment as well as what we have been told by the Canadian Museum of History is the best collection of uniforms from one particular school of nursing in the county. We continue to get all of these items from the Alumni and their families.

But its not just about acquiring and storing these items, it is about finding ways to share them with a wider audience. To that end there have been various initiatives which we have implemented.

When the Ann Thomas building was constructed in 2007 it created a long empty corridor leading from the new William Avenue entrance to the Thorlakson Building ostensibly following what had been the front of the 1957 North Wing. The desire from the HSC Executive had always been to create a history walkway. With the publication of the history book and the hiring of the Archivist this vision became a reality.

Conceived in 2011 the Heritage Way became a way to demonstrate some of the vast history of the Health Sciences Centre and engage patients and staff with the history and archives of the hospital. Through a bequest from Virginia Maude Phillips, a design committee was established with staff members from departments such as capital planning, communications and archives to secure an architectural and design firm to complete the project. The project was undertaken by Bridgman Collaborative Architecture, who would design and supervise the structural changes to the space and collage panels. They would also help to formulate the narrative for the heritage way in conjunction with the design committee and supervised by the HSC Executive.

The Heritage Way directive was expanded to include seating, new lighting as well as the wall size collage panels and corresponding narrative panels that provided background information on the stories influencing the Heritage Way. Archival research and images were provided by the HSC Archives/Museum and used with contemporary photographs to form the design for the Heritage Way.

A deliberate decision was made to not include touch screens or actual artifacts and also an attempt was made to stay away from a time-line style of presentation. All of this so that the space maintained a longer-term currency, there was limited need for long term financing for repairs, and there was no risk of long-term damage to the historic artifacts.

The Heritage Way was officially opened on January 6 2015.

One of the early tasks that I was given was to promote the archive/museum to the staff by making the items more accessible and helping to engage the staff in the place they work and the history that is HSC. Whilst the room in the Isabel M. Stewart building continues to be the repository for all items we have, and hope to receive, we use the pieces in a variety of ways throughout the Centre.

One of the first initiatives along these lines was to move the Isabel M. Stewart display case, originally developed by the Alumni, from the Archives, where it was only seen by a few staff members, to NA105 – the Auditorium in the School of Nursing building - which is a space more heavily used for large gatherings of staff.

The custody of the display case on the 2nd floor Thorlakson building was given to the HSC Archivist having been empty for a number of years. In 2011 we installed an exhibit about the 60th anniversary of the Women's Hospital, a celebration which was also being recognized by HSC Executive due to the impending construction of the new women's hospital at that time. Over the next decade and a half, the display case was used to recognize the 50th anniversary of many programs and services including the cafeteria, Manitoba Rehabilitation Hospital, Spiritual Health services, the Laundry, Ultrasound, Intensive Care Unit and the Renal unit. 2023 and 2024 saw the space used as one place to show the physical recognition of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Winnipeg General and the 50th of the creation of HSC.

Soon after the Archives was moved into the Business and Corporate Services portfolio, a second display space at HSC was assigned, this time in the cafeteria. This became the Heritage Window and the expectation was to change the display on a semi-regular basis. Unlike the MS2 display space it was much smaller and therefore ideal for displaying smaller items. It also had a higher traffic location allowing for a broader audience of staff, patients and visitors

This space has been used to display everything from bedpans (complete with Christmas decorations) to syringes (during flu shot season), brains to blood pressure machines and nursing to the Teddy Bear's Picnic. As with the MS2 display it was also used to recognize the 150/50 of Winnipeg General and HSC.

During the five years when the Archives reported to Business and Corporate Services the displays were a major component of the work done by the Archivist, volunteers, summer students and briefly the archives assistants. In addition to both the MS2 and Heritage Window the Archives was also given access to the display case in the William Avenue Mall (SR1) and a custom built one in the Annie Bond Room in the Community Services building.

Having three large and one small display cases in addition to the 10 in the archives plus the Isabel M. Stewart display in NA105 and the board outside the archives was both a blessing and a challenge. There are a finite number of artifacts and creating and mounting a display is not a five-minute job, something to which anyone who has ever helped me can attest.

The solution was initially to rotate the displays. This not only allowed for a wider audience but also allowed one display to be used multiple times which had the advantage of both time and cost saving.

Whilst this continues to be an initiative between MS2 and SR1 it was decided that, due to circumstances including distance across the campus, the Annie Bond display would be better developed as a permanent display similar to the one for Isabel M. Stewart in NA105. Created in 2017 the display about Annie Bond, the founder of Children's Hospital, included two portraits of her and her various medals. In addition we developed a large history panel complete with a couple of reproductions of photos, including one sourced from her early career in New Zealand to complete the display.

Fortunately, the display had been developed with two distinct halves, and so when, in 2023, it was requested that portraits of Dr. Harry Medovy and Dr. Gordon Chown be moved from the basement, where they had been languishing in the fitness centre, to a more appropriate space, it was possible to develop a permanent display of early Children's Hospital plaques and portraits.

In comparison, the display in SR1 is prime display space situated as it is in the small mall, next to the hotel and coffee shop and on the way to University of Manitoba.

When Business and Corporate Services was dissolved in 2019 the Archives became the sole custodian of the SR1 display case. Whilst we have, at times moved displays from MS2 to SR1 there have been occasions when it has been used for a unique display. It was used to commemorate the Winnipeg General Hospital grads who were nursing sisters in the First World War, to display the time capsule contents which was found when the Ellen Douglass School was renovated to become the Ambulatory Care Clinic and most recently when we celebrated the return of the 'Teddy Bear's Picnic after a COVID and RSV induced hiatus of many years.

Turning then from the physical to the digital realm we come to the opportunities to showcase our holdings to a broader audience. In 2016, with the first infusion of monetary interest from the endowment fund, we were able to hire a Project Archivist to research and develop a virtual display celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Intensive Care Unit. Using material acquired by the Archives both by the Alumni and later under my tenure the Project Archivist curated an amazing site of photographs, historical information and oral histories. This site was followed in the run up to the centenary of the First World War by one recognizing the contributions of Winnipeg General and Children's Hospital nursing graduates who served on the Western, Eastern and home fronts.

Finally, in celebration of the move of Women's Hospital from 735 Notre Dame to 665 William Ave a couple of different Project Archivists were funded, again by the Endowment Fund and by Grants to research and develop another virtual exhibit on our WordPress Site.

After 2019 the appetite for these sorts of exhibits diminished. Caught in the waves of the dissolving of Business and Corporate Services, the disruption that was the transformation of the healthcare system, the creation of and ultimate sub-sumption of HSC into Shared Health and the COVID pandemic the Archives struggled to find an advocate.

The celebration of the anniversary of the founding of Winnipeg General and the creation of HSC, which had historically been embraced with pride, was not given the overwhelming support it would have had a mere two years earlier. Coming at the same time that the legacy of colonialism was under a microscope globally,

recognition that more needed to be done in the light of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action coupled with the ongoing pandemic, the financial stringency and a new healthcare entity which wanted a vision of a fresh start meant it was a struggle to find a willingness to obtain resources for the 150/50 recognition. Eventually the Communications team did provide the resources needed and the archival material was heavily used to create a separate website as part of the main HSC internet site.

<https://hsc.mb.ca/about/history/>

Even so, there were projects within the original scope, including an extensive walking tour, which never materialized.

On a more positive note, as the Archives began to develop into a program of HSC, additional tasks were added to the position including, in 2013, the management of the art. Although management of art had been the purview of a variety of different departments over the years, including Capital Planning and Volunteer Services, the then Chief Operating Officer thought what was becoming Heritage Services would be in a better position to manage the art.

An Art Committee was formed comprising of staff from different programs and services including Facility Management, Volunteer Services, Capital Planning, Spiritual Health, Communications, Child Life, Indigenous Health, and Organizational Engagement as well as the Archives. The committee began with an inventory and review of the art at HSC and developed guidelines to manage the acquisition and disposal of art.

The addition of art management to the Archivist portfolio allowed for a request for a database to catalogue the art. This allowed us to request the aforementioned database, PastPerfect. As the program gained momentum more art came off the walls of the hospital and needed to be stored for future use. As in previous times the archives acquired free shelving for art. Unfortunately, it was far from satisfactory, with pieces being laid on top of each other, causing enormous pressure on each piece.

An attempt was made to replace the shelving with something more appropriate beginning in 2015 but it was a slow process and when all the information had been gathered circumstances had changed and the timing was no longer right. After many years of trying to find a way to source appropriate shelving for art in an era when funds for that sort of thing were no longer forthcoming from HSC, the Alumni agreed to use interest from the Endowment Fund to purchase appropriate shelving.



In late 2019 I attended a conference about healthcare and museums hosted by the Alberta Museums Association. It was here that I first heard about social prescribing and realized it was something we could consider within the context of what had become Heritage and Art Services – the use of art and artifacts in health and wellbeing. Given that the number of display cases under the control of the archives had recently grown and the art collection had also increased it became obvious that there was an opportunity to create mini-galleries at HSC to provide spaces of respite for the patients, staff and visitors.

Starting in 2020 an Art Studies student from University of Manitoba volunteered to not only continue with the art inventory but also develop art exhibits in the larger display cases. During the COVID years we were fortunate to continue to have help in this initiative from a staff member who volunteered her time from 2021 until 2023 and subsequently other members of staff have also helped develop displays of art.

The inventory of the art was reinvigorated this year when we partnered with Project SEARCH (a work-oriented career exploration program for high school students with intellectual disabilities hosted by HSC) and have had one of their students continue with cataloguing the art on the walls of the hospital.

So, what does the future hold for the HSC Heritage & Art Services?

The move into the Health Services portfolio in June 2024 was a positive start, as was the re-opening of dialogues between the Alumni Executive and the HSC Executive.

We continue to receive reference requests from internal and external parties as well as donations of archival and museum materials. These come from graduates of the school of nursing and their families as well as people not attached to the school at all. A recent example of this was some records about a 1929 Winnipeg General nursing grad which surfaced at a yard sale in Ontario and were donated to us.

We have resumed grant writing and continued with outreach initiatives including displays, writing articles for the Alumni newsletter and providing photographs for Shared Health Communications social media team.

We continue to pursue the idea of art in healthcare through the development and implementation of guidelines, provision of art from the collection to patients care areas, acquisition of additional pieces through not-for-profit avenues such as Artists in Healthcare, ongoing displays of art in the display cases and general management of the art collection in conjunction with members of the HSC Art Committee which has grown to include representatives from Staff Wellness and Social Work. The Endowment Fund recently supported this initiative by funding my attendance at the first Canadian Institute of Social Prescribing conference.

Finally, my hope is that we will soon be able to revisit and re-affirm the vision of HSC Heritage & Art Services.

Thank you.