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## Dear Alumni, Parents, Friends, Students and Colleagues:

All over the world academic libraries are being challenged by the dramatic changes taking place in universities. These changes include new approaches to teaching, learning and research, as well as the ongoing development of information and communication technologies. These are global phenomena, but they are also very local – we at McGill are certainly experiencing them. So the big question facing us is: How can the McGill Library position itself to provide effective services in these changing times?

Some people thought initially that the technological revolution would reduce the importance of libraries to our students, but that clearly has not been the case. Instead, our challenges involve understanding the changes and planning the appropriate responses. We seek to understand our young people and the lives they lead. The Library is the engine for student life and learning, resting at the very core of the University's mission, yet I am often surprised that many people do not realize that students spend probably more time in libraries than they do in their classes, right across the disciplines. Long after the University has closed, we are still "on". When I drive past the library at ten or eleven in the evening, the windows are lit and the building is abuzz. It is often busier on Saturday and Sunday than it is during the week.

Some of our responses to student needs have been fairly direct. We installed auto-loan stations, and now sixty percent of our loans go through that system. This March, we started a pilot project placing LCD screens at various locations to provide information about our services. On a more ambitious scale, we have redesigned our web site to improve accessibility, and have added hundreds of thousands of e-resources. We have also extended our staffing hours, to provide students with as much support as possible. But perhaps the single most difficult challenge remains communicating what the Library does. After all, accessibility begins with people knowing about the resources, materials and services we have to offer. This edition of the Library In Focus talks about some of these issues, touching on everything from online resources to our library ambassadors program, developed with the support of our very energetic undergraduate student partners at the Students Society of McGill University.

So please let me know what you think of our efforts by sharing your comments and impressions with us. And let me stress how much gratitude we all feel for the very generous support we have received from our friends and benefactors. Without your assistance we would have a much more difficult time meeting the challenges before us.

Yours sincerely,

Janine Schmidt  
Trenholme Director of Libraries





# Shakespeare and the Jews



Shylock, the Jewish money-lender from *The Merchant of Venice*, is one of Shakespeare's most challenging, complicated characters, a stereotype who challenges the process of creating stereotypes. On March 29, over 300 people gathered in Moysie Hall to learn more about him at "Shakespeare and the Jews," the annual Shakespeare Lecture sponsored by the Friends of the Library and moderated by Paul Yachnin, the English Department Chair and Tomlinson Professor of Shakespeare Studies.

The expert panel featured an uncommon pairing: renowned Shakespearean actor Gareth Armstrong and literary critic Kenneth Gross. More than 10 years ago, Armstrong played the role of Shylock in a British production of *The Merchant of Venice*. "He was the most difficult character I've ever played," Armstrong recalled. "So I ended up wanting to get into him more fully, to understand him bet-

ter." Charged by this desire, Armstrong wrote a one-man play, *Shylock*, told from the perspective of Shakespeare's only other Jewish character, Tubal, from the same play. "I still find Shylock troublesome but now can hold him to my heart without agreeing with what he wants to do."

From Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* Hodder & Stoughton, 1909. Frontispiece by Sir James D Linton.

Armed with his own interpretation of Shylock's character, Armstrong's play was performed at the University of Toronto in 1997. "I have become Shylock," he joked.

Kenneth Gross, professor of English at the University of Rochester and, most recently, author of *Shylock Is Shakespeare*, was also intrigued by the character's dramatic appeal as a survivor, an interest that led him to further inquiries into the psychological relation between Shakespeare and his creation. "What fascinated Shakespeare about this character who is repellent, repugnant, jubilant, intelligent and very perceptive about politics?" he asked, suggesting that Shylock's strategy of manipulating scenes to ensure his survival might reflect the playwright's own concerns. "Somehow Shakespeare found a way, through Shylock, to voice aspects of himself as a maker of scenes. Shylock shows Shakespeare as a man of the theatre, an actor and courtier of audiences." Gross's theories on Shylock's genesis within Shakespeare's dramatic imagination were especially compelling in exchange with Armstrong's musings on the challenges of becoming Shylock on a regular basis in performance. As Gross noted in conclusion, "In *The Merchant of Venice*, the idea of the 'human' is very volatile."

The Shakespeare Lecture is one of three annual lectures organized by the Friends of the Library ([www.mcgill.ca/library-friends/](http://www.mcgill.ca/library-friends/)).

many newspapers have a searchable 60 day archive.

*PressDisplay* sits alongside other electronic news information resources available from the Library such as *Canadian Newsstand*, *Factiva* and *Virtual News Library* and rounds out the Library's suite of online news collections. In addition to the online newspapers, the McGill Library subscribes to *NewspaperDirect*, a complementary service to *PressDisplay* which permits daily printing of newspapers.

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## Alexander Deguise

Masters student in Economics

“I’m almost embarrassed by how often I’m in the Humanities and Social Sciences Library,” says Alexander Deguise. “Seven days a week, between four and ten hours a day: I know every person who works on staff, many by name, and pretty much all the security staff.” Most of those hours are spent at his third-floor carrel, where he keeps books related to his graduate studies. “The space has a quiet, pleasant atmosphere that is conducive to work,” he explains. But while the McLennan Library Building is his home away from home, Deguise stresses that he uses many different branches, including the Howard Ross Management Library and the Schulich Library of Science and Engineering. “After all, we’re very mathematical in economics.” And when not camped at his carrel or visiting other branches, he logs onto the growing electronic collection from home. “We’re starting to have a good breadth of economics and business texts available online,” he says. “And in graduate school, we need to have the latest material, so we can cite contemporary and ground-breaking research.”

Deguise is more than simply a student user, though: he also represents the Post-Graduate Students Society on a number of library committees, including the Humanities and Social Sciences Library Advisory Committee. “Our responsibilities involve discussing what direction we think the library should be taking,” he explains. “This usually entails focusing on whether we are acquiring the necessary electronic resources, using the budget effectively, or carrying out necessary renovations.” During a recent session of the Principal’s Task Force on Student Life and Learning, on which he also serves, Deguise stressed that, because of the University’s space demands, the McLennan-Redpath complex has become the de facto laboratory for arts and humanities students. “Most economics students run modeling software in the Electronic Data Resources Service lab by the entrance to the Redpath Library Building, because there is very little lab space available otherwise for arts students,” he says. “The Humanities and Social Sciences Library fills this critical need for us.”

## Laurence Bich-Carrière

Third-year Bachelor of Science in Economics

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