

April 14, 2015

The Royal BC Museum celebrates National Volunteer Week with a terrific invitation

VICTORIA, BC – Today, to celebrate National Volunteer Week, the Royal BC Museum launched *Transcribe* (transcribe.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca), a crowd-sourcing website that invites the public to transcribe valuable historical records from our archival collection.

By donating their time to transcribe letters, diaries, journals and other materials, volunteers can help share BC's history from the comfort of their living room, library or local café.

Don Reksten, a long-time member of the Friends of the BC Archives and volunteer at the BC Archives for 12 years, was one of the first to transcribe a document on the website. "From the BC Archives point of view, the benefits of *Transcribe* are twofold," he said. "The documents are now available online and you end up with searchable transcriptions. It's really a worthwhile endeavour."

The concept behind *Transcribe* is simple: the Royal BC Museum provides digital photographs of archival materials alongside a blank text area, and users type exactly what they see. Anyone with access to the internet can participate. Volunteers simply visit the website, choose a collection and start transcribing, all on their own time.

"Crowd-sourcing is an increasingly popular way for archives and museums like ours to improve the accessibility of their collections," said David Alexander, Head of New Archives & Digital Preservation at the Royal BC Museum. "The more volunteers who turn their attention to the *Transcribe* website, the easier it is for future users to search for – and learn from – handwritten source records."

Once the finished transcriptions have been approved by Royal BC Museum staff, the data will become searchable on the *Transcribe* site, using relevant keywords. Visitors to the site are not obligated to transcribe; they will also have the option to view the materials as an online exhibition or to browse existing transcriptions.

Volunteers already serve a significant and visible role at the Royal BC Museum, with 426 volunteers providing assistance by doing work as varied as classifying specimens, greeting visitors, leading tours and mailing information to members. The beauty of the *Transcribe* project is that volunteers can assist from just about anywhere.

The site currently features diaries, letters and other materials from WWI. As the project grows, new collections and new audio and video media will be introduced. The first batch of images includes the letters of Victoria lawyer Arthur Douglas Crease, who described the war in letters to his family. Crease survived the war, and his letters became an important part of BC's history.



The *Transcribe* site joins the Great War Installation and our annual Remembrance Day events as another way for the Royal BC Museum to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of World War 1 (1914-1918).

About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Looking to the future, by 2017 the Royal BC Museum will be a refreshed, modern museum, extending its reach far beyond Victoria as a world-class cultural venue and repository of digital treasures.

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