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## Canada

### Alberta

**The Bob Gibson Collection of Speculative Fiction at the University of Calgary** began with an Alberta farm boy's youthful fascination with speculative fiction, which turned into a life-long passion for collecting in the genre. By the time he died in 2001 at age 92, William Robert (Bob) Gibson had amassed over 35,000 books, periodicals, handmade anthologies, and related material. Bob's son, Andrew, brought this remarkable collection to the attention of the University of Calgary Library. In 2002, Andrew donated it to the University. Three years later, the collection was certified as Canadian Cultural property, recognizing its outstanding significance and national importance.

Since its transfer from Gibson's Calgary home in two semi-trailer-sized vans, the collection's depth and breadth have become apparent. Not only is it a rigorous scan of speculative fiction from Gibson's lifetime, but also a significant compilation of such material from the second half of the nineteenth century and even earlier. The oldest book is a 1776 edition of Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *L'an deux mille quatre cent quarante: rêve s'il en fut jamais* (1771; *The Year 2440: A Dream If Ever There Was One*). Among the latest are R.L. Stine's *GOOSEBUMPS* title, *The Blob that Ate Everyone* (1997) and Robert J. Sawyer's *Peking Man* (1996).

To date, 15,000 items have been catalogued, nearly 5000 of which are searchable and thus accessible to researchers. These include hardcover books, paperbacks (most pre-1960), and Gibson's 889 handmade anthologies, which are especially intriguing. For each anthology, Gibson selected stories from issues of a particular magazine, and then assembled them—in chronological order—into a volume of his own design. On their covers, Gibson inscribed the anthologies' contents in his meticulous and miniscule hand. Many of these covers also sport original art by Gibson, which the library has reproduced digitally. Currently, the collection's remaining 10,000 "shadow-catalogued" periodicals and 20,000 uncatalogued paperbacks are stored offsite. With the imminent opening of two new University of Calgary facilities—the Taylor Family Digital Library and the High Density Library—the Gibson Collection soon will be "brought home," with materials made accessible as cataloguing is completed.

As a representation of the history of popular publishing, the collection is invaluable. Not only does it comprise literary material from Canada, Europe, and the United States, it also depicts the evolution of book formats and binding techniques over the course of more than 150 years. Already the scope of the collection is catalyzing new scholarship. Dr. Stefania Forlini (Department of English, University of Calgary) has been investigating the 125 Gibson anthologies that contain material collected from non-specialist popular periodicals published from 1860 to 1920. According to Forlini, "this research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Victorian scientific

imagination and its fundamental influence on the formation of what came to be known as science fiction, underlining the neglected contributions of women in the development of both. It will also contribute to the study of fandom and the study of material culture, especially the practice of collecting.”

To access Gibson Collection records, visit <http://library.ucalgary.ca/> and go “direct to catalogue.” For all records, search by the keywords: fund gift gibson. To retrieve only the anthologies, search the keywords in series: bob gibson compilation. For more information about Bob Gibson and his collection, please see our website at <http://devel.specialcollections.ucalgary.ca/books/gibson>.—Melanie Boyd, Liaison Librarian, English

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