Remembering The Real Winnie

THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS BEAR TURNS 100

NOVEMBER 5 – DECEMBER 7, 2014
RYERSON IMAGE CENTRE



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PUBLIC OPENING RECEPTION
NOVEMBER 5, 6–8PM
RYERSON IMAGE CENTRE

33 GOULD STREET
TORONTO 416-979-5164
www.ryerson.ca/ric

REMEMBERING THE REAL WINNIE focuses on a unique chapter of Canadian history from World War I. The Colebourn Family Archive, which comprises photographs and ephemera such as diaries, letters, newspaper clippings and a full veterinary kit from the period, is being shared with the public for the very first time. These artifacts trace the story of Canadian soldier and veterinarian Harry Colebourn (1887–1947), who, at the onset of the war, purchased a pet bear he named Winnie, after his hometown of Winnipeg. When his regiment shipped out, Colebourn took Winnie with him, ultimately depositing the bear in the London Zoo when he was called to the front. It is there that English author A.A. Milne and his son encountered the bear and the world famous Winnie-the-Pooh books were born.

For those interested in learning more about this extraordinary story, our project offers multiple points of access. A focused exhibition at the Ryerson Image Centre investigates the role of photography within the archive, positioning personal, now historical images alongside other original artifacts. To complement the display, we are launching two websites. One catalogues and contextualizes the entire Colebourn Family Archive, making it digitally accessible to scholars and the general public. Another site includes interactive storytelling features, allowing online readers to explore transmedia narratives and engage in international dialogues. Students, recent alumni and faculty from across Ryerson University have teamed up to co-develop this multidisciplinary project, activating the archive while celebrating and bringing to life a truly engaging moment in Canadian history.

Doina Popescu
DISTINGUISHED VISITING FELLOW AND FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF THE RYERSON IMAGE CENTRE

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Exhibition guest curated by Kate Addleman-Frankel and Dr. Irene Gammel

Collection website developed by Ryerson University Library and Archives, therealwinnie.ryerson.ca/collection

Interactive website developed by Transmedia Zone, therealwinnie.ryerson.ca/interactive

Organized in collaboration with Ryerson University students, recent alumni and faculty from:

- Ryerson Image Centre
- Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre
- Film and Photography Preservation and Collections Management, School of Image Arts
- Department of English
- Children's Literature Archive
- Department of History
- School of Early Childhood Studies
- FIION, Transmedia Zone (TMZ)
- Digital Media Zone (DMZ)
- Centre for Digital Humanities
- Ryerson University Library and Archives
- Department of Architectural Science

Presented with the participation of Archive of Modern Conflict; Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph; Narrative PR; STAMP; and Married to Giants.

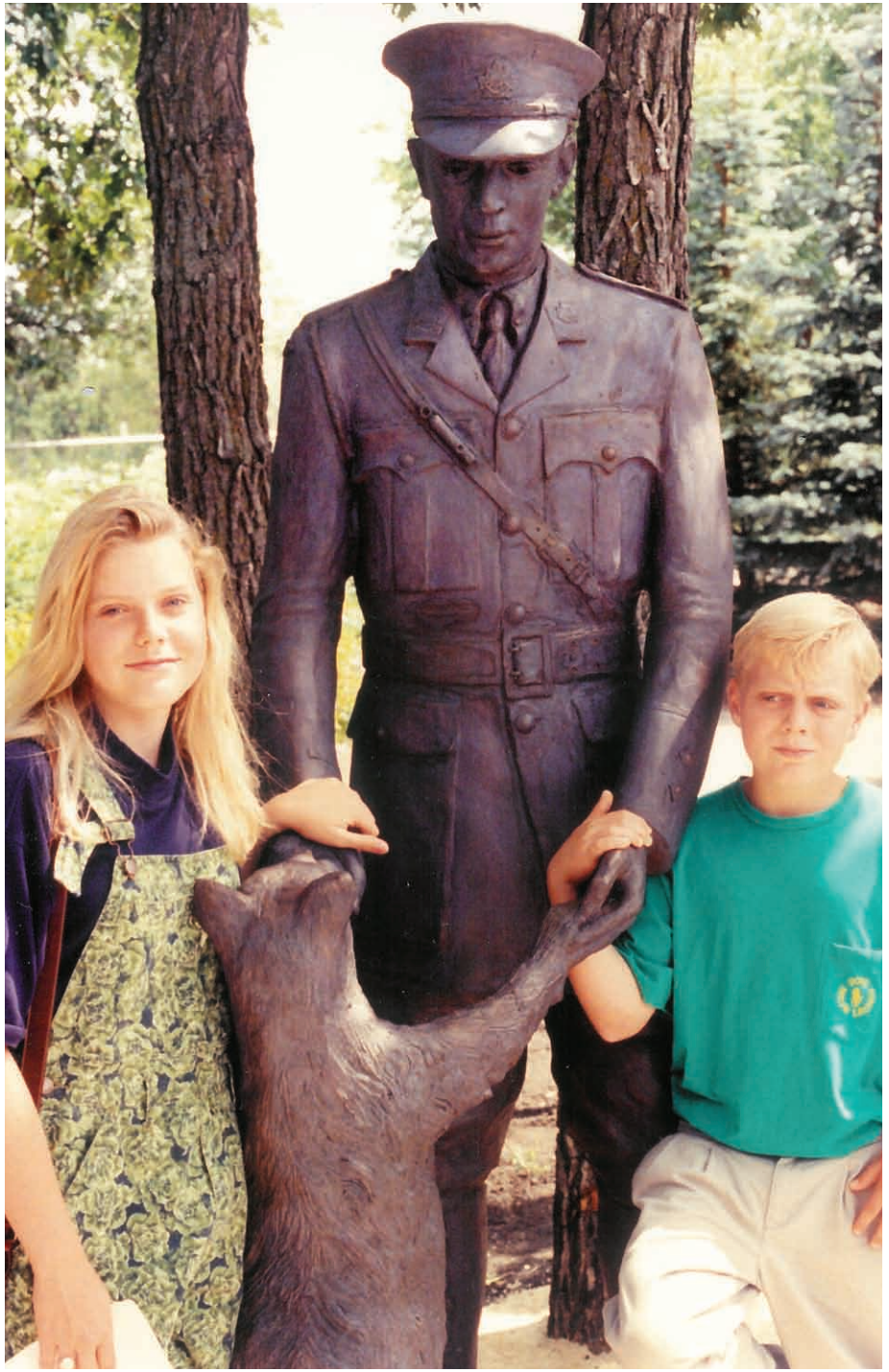
Special thanks to Professor Jana Macalik for providing consultation with the exhibition design and to Lindsay Mattick for making the Colebourn Family Archive available to Ryerson University for purposes of exhibition, research and study.

All images in this brochure are from the Colebourn Family Archive, unless indicated otherwise.

Presented by Ryerson University

Generously supported by Scotiabank

Cover: Photographer unknown, *Harry Colebourn feeding Winnie*, Salisbury Plain, England, 1914, gelatin silver print.



Photographer unknown, *Lindsay and brother Jamie Mattick at the unveiling of Harry Colebourn and Winnie statue by artist Bill Epp*, Winnipeg, August 6, 1992, chromogenic print.

Harry Colebourn and My "Great-Grand-Bear" Winnie

I was twelve years old when, along with my brother and six cousins, I unveiled a ten-foot-tall bronze statue of my great-grandfather, Harry Colebourn, and his now famous pet bear, Winnie. I never met Harry—he died decades before I was born—but on that beautiful August day in Winnipeg, I felt the significance of seeing him honoured in such a way.

My family's connection to the real black bear that inspired A.A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh stories has always fascinated me, but the reasons it captivates my attention continue to grow and shift.

As a child, I was fond of referring to Winnie as my "great-grand-bear." When word spread that I was "related to Winnie," the requests for explanation inevitably flowed. Whether I share the story with a room full of children, or a cocktail party full of adults, one thing remains true: it captures imaginations.

As a teenager interested in history, I was intrigued that Harry would be so bold and optimistic as to buy a bear on his way to war. That simple act said something significant about his character, but also about the war—and how those leaving to fight in it knew so little of its eventual realities.

As a journalism student at Ryerson University in Toronto, I reflected on my grandfather Fred, Harry's son, and his tireless efforts to uncover and document the facts of his father's story. I thought about the explosion of Winnie-the-Pooh's popularity among children and within international media circles, and how charming it was for the world to learn that the inspiration for one of the most beloved tales of all time was an equally heartwarming, authentic Canadian story.

And finally, as a professional with a love of storytelling, I knew that one day I would need to convey this magical history to my own child in a way that captured its full meaning and relevance. A new children's book, to be published in Fall 2015, will bring Winnie's origin story to a whole new generation.

My hope for this jewel-like exhibition, and the interactive websites offering access to our original archive, is that people will feel as inspired by the heart of this story as I have. These resources serve as profound reminders that one can never truly know the impact that a small, loving gesture can have in this world.

Lindsay Mattick COLEBOURN FAMILY ARCHIVE

As You Were: Objects, Stories, and the Colebourn Family Archive



Objects have long been understood as access points to history and the "faraway"—to people and cultures at a temporal or spatial remove. In the thirteenth century, humanists began to assemble object collections that prefigured those found in today's museums and archives. Curiosity about the world had reached extraordinary new levels, and more objects meant more material for study and observation, and more opportunities to explore still-mysterious realms.

The research of present-day scholars continues to be guided by the material. Objects compel our attention because of the innumerable questions they raise about their origins, use, significance, and the cultures or forces that produced them, and because they also embody the answers. How tantalizing a prospect: that to understand an object we have only to make it speak. Or, rather, we have only to listen.

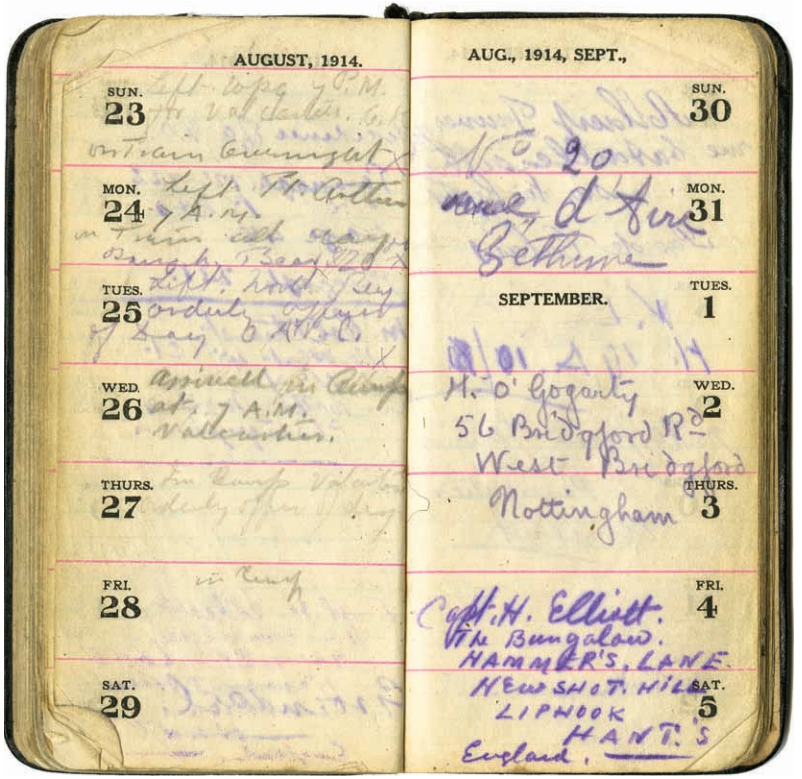
The objects in the Colebourn Family Archive tell many stories, as the variety of essays in this brochure attests: about Harry Colebourn, children's literature, military and veterinary history, World War I. What do we find inside the archive's boxes while laying out their contents and examining, investigating, and photographing them?

Loose snapshots and card-mounted portrait photographs, pocket-sized diaries from the war, a veterinarian's bag of archaic tools. One hundred years of family storage have left them yellowed, torn and rusted. There is also a scrapbook assembled by Fred Colebourn, some time after that small bear in the old photographs—Winnie, Harry Colebourn's companion from home—had metamorphosed into a fictional icon. Articles and books document and testify to that transformation: clippings from *The Globe and Mail* and the *Winnipeg Free Press* explaining the Canadian heritage of A.A. Milne's beloved character, and paperback volumes of the Milne books in which the invented Winnie stars. This archive contains tangible links between the realms of reality and fiction, private and public, and the individual and the global within its account of four family generations. Each of its objects, like all personal items, provides evidence of experience, however distant, and the means of bringing it closer.

Kate Addleman-Frankel

GUEST CURATOR; PhD STUDENT IN ART HISTORY, DEPARTMENT OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO; MA, PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION AND COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT, SCHOOL OF IMAGE ARTS, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Harry, Winnie, and the War Diary





"Left Wpg 7 P.M." On Sunday, August 23, 1914, Winnipeg veterinarian Harry Colebourn embarked on his journey into the Great War. "Left Port Arthur 7 A.M./ on train all day," he penciled the next day, adding: "Bought Bear $20." He named the cub Winnie after his prairie hometown. Photographs show the pair bonding during military training in Valcartier, Quebec, and in Salisbury, England.

"Took Winnie to zoo London," Colebourn noted in December. Two months later, he sailed to the turbulent war front in France: "Sea very Rough and I was damn Sea Sick. Just laid down in Hay with the Horses."

Filling six small, pocket-sized volumes, and spanning the war years from 1914 to 1918, Major Colebourn's writing exemplifies the personal war diary genre as penned by thousands of soldiers and officers. From the Somme to Vimy to Poperinghe, Colebourn recorded camp life at the French and Belgian fronts. Telegrammatic in style, his minimalist grammar tracks weather ("wet + cold"), events ("1 horse died") and people ("Meet Capt. Dixon"). With the first person "I" missing, verbs assert Colebourn's agency: "Visit lines A.M." Next to the quotidian he records explosive war scenes, such as the entry of April 19, 1915, set in Ypres:

> Germans shell town and kill 4 soldiers in Grand Place. Many others injured. Saw aeroplane fall. Stay in cellar under large grocery story for several hours. Tremendous shelling.
>
> Fine.

"Fine" is the barely suppressed sigh of relief that marks the soldier's survival. As hundreds of thousands succumbed to war, such accounts testify to the lives that bore witness to the destruction and continued fighting.

His entries cycle through weekly and monthly rhythms ("Shave + then make monthly diary. Not feeling very good"), the silences between them alluding to serious crises, whereas renewed writing reaffirms life: "In London all day. Visit zoo in morning and see Winnie." As the war continued, and Colebourn's health deteriorated in late 1917, Winnie offered an interlude of peace and restoration. Their bond is a touchstone of survival.

Dr. Irene Gammel

GUEST CURATOR; PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR, AND DIRECTOR OF THE MODERN LITERATURE AND CULTURE RESEARCH CENTRE, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Above, from left: Harry Colebourn's diary, 1914; Photographer unknown, *Harry Colebourn feeding Winnie*, ca. 1914–1915, gelatin silver print.



Photographer unknown, *Second Canadian Infantry Brigade HQ Staff*, Valcartier, Québec, 1914, gelatin silver print.
Lt. Harry Colebourn is sitting in the middle row, second from the left, while a soldier friend holds Winnie.



Photographer unknown, *Portrait of Harry Colebourn*, ca. 1914–1919, gelatin silver print.

"After the war…"

Names and addresses line Harry Colebourn's 1914 diary: memories of home and those met on his journey to the Great War. "After the war…" Colebourn scribbled: no doubt hoping that he, and they, would see better days.

There are few notations about the war he went to fight, or his feelings about it. Like most soldiers, Colebourn quietly did his duty. He wrote about everyday things: the horses he cared for, the weather, his routine. Most days he wrote nothing at all.

Those who fought had little time to think about history. Few comprehended the massive changes the "war to end all wars" had unleashed. They focused on their job, survival, and what came after the killing. All soldiers shared a strange camaraderie that was shaped by the carnage around them. They lived between boredom and terror. They suffered bad rations, rats, and rampant disease. They feared the constant shelling, enemy mines underneath, and mustard gas.

Colebourn was no chronicler of the war, but his diaries offer an important first-hand record. Starkly simple detail of fighting at Ypres in 1915: "terrible scenes" while "Canadian soldiers hold on grimly." Watching the action near Vimy Ridge in 1917, he focused on the "snow and rain" and thousands of "Hun prisoners." About his own life he was even more sparing. A few lines mark New Year's 1918, wracked by dysentery and confined to hospital. Sent on extended leave, he wrote only about his travels, "all day at sea," "arrived at Halifax," and "in Winnipeg, 10 P.M." Nothing about being home again, the doubts and fears he must have had returning to war, or how the death and destruction he saw changed him.

On November 11, 1918, another simple but powerful entry: "Armistice is signed. Great celebrations all day." Pages of daily routine follow. A formula for indigestion, a "pick me up" tonic, and more names and addresses: from Australia, France, England, and Canada. All untold stories of a world at war.

Dr. Arne Kislenko
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Harry Colebourn and the Veterinarians of World War I



Harry Colebourn was one of hundreds of veterinarians who served in World War I. Historically, veterinarians had been attached to various regiments to care for military animals, but it was not until 1910 that a dedicated unit, the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps (CAVC), was established within the Canadian Army. Veterinarians in World War I not only provided a critical service, but also brought their profession needed public exposure as it sought to distance itself from the informal or lay practitioners of the past.

The service of veterinarians in World War I reflects the important role of animals in the conflict, and the injuries to animals that CAVC encountered varied widely. Because of this, young veterinarians such as Colebourn had the opportunity to treat a variety of different cases on a daily basis. Bullet and shrapnel wounds were a major source of injuries for horses and mules, given their close proximity to the fighting. While veterinarians successfully treated many of these injuries, infection was always present due to unsanitary conditions and, unfortunately, many animals succumbed to their wounds. Additional common injuries included strains from hauling heavy equipment in muddy and difficult terrain, breaks from falls or confrontations with other horses, and hoof damage from stepping on debris that commonly littered battlefields and surrounding areas.

Preventative care was also an important part of CAVC's duties. Monitoring nutrition, providing dental work, hoof care, and disease prevention all constituted important and regular activities. This was easier said than done, however, as CAVC suffered constantly from lack of funds and equipment. Despite these challenges, they maintained good levels of health for the over 23,000 horses of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and upwards of 2000 horses at its hospitals at any given time throughout the war.

Dr. Lisa Cox

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW AT ONTARIO VETERINARY COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Harry Colebourn's veterinary bag and a selection of instruments, ca. 1915.



Photographer unknown, *Winnie at the London Zoo*, ca. 1916, gelatin silver print.

The Bear, the War, and the Children's Classic

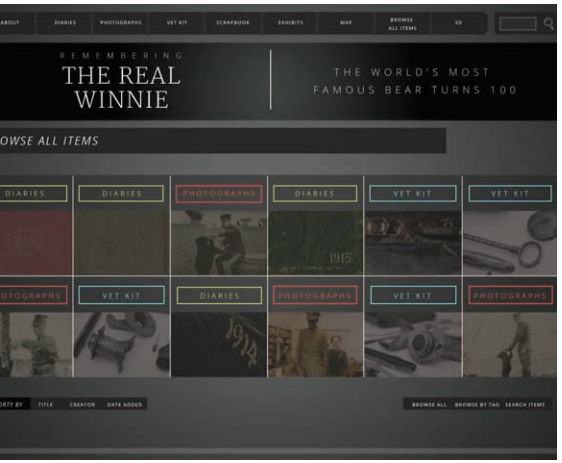
Lt. Harry Colebourn made a crucial contribution to the world of children's literature and culture, even if it was wholly unanticipated. The historical events that brought together the bear and the author of one of the most enduring classics of children's literature (not to mention a global popular culture phenomenon) are by now widely known: Colebourn purchased a female black bear cub from a trapper in White River, Ontario, named her "Winnie" after his hometown of Winnipeg, and brought her with him when he shipped out to England at the beginning of World War I. The cub became the mascot for the Fort Garry Horse, the regiment to which Colebourn was attached as a veterinarian. When he was deployed to France, Colebourn left Winnie in the care of the London Zoo, eventually donating her after the war. It was here that a young Christopher Robin Milne became so enamoured of Winnie that he named his favourite teddy bear after her, and obliged his father to take him for repeated visits to see her. Inspired by his son's love of Winnie—live and stuffed—A.A. Milne introduced the Winnie the Pooh character to readers in his collection of poems *When We Were Very Young* (1924), and later in his most acclaimed work, *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926).

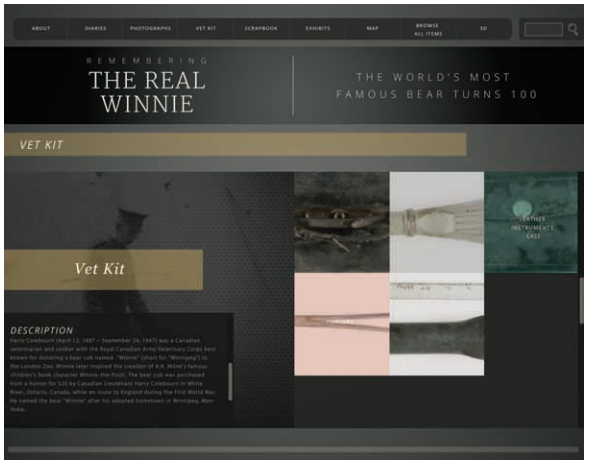
The Great War, however, was not merely incidental to this vital chapter in children's literature history. In very important ways, it motivated Milne to develop a singular vision of childhood that still resonates today. Milne, who had served, like Colebourn, in the French theatre of operations, responded to the horrors he had witnessed by imagining the idyllic setting of the 100 Acre Wood and its charmingly naïve cast of stuffed animals. A pacifist who would later publish a passionate, brilliant defense of his principles, *Peace With Honour* (1934), he created, along with illustrator Ernest H. Shepard, the definitive child-space of idealized innocence: bucolic, serene, gentle, removed from adult concerns and a modern world that had recently witnessed an unprecedented episode of death and suffering. As Milne's biographer Ann Thwaite notes, the only weapon permitted in the 100 Acre Wood is a pop gun, the cork secured by a string to render it harmless. If Winnie the Pooh's fantasy world seems utterly remote from the battlefields of Europe, this was precisely Milne's point: that childhood's innocence might offer a retreat from a world scarred by war.

Dr. Andrew O'Malley

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, AND DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ARCHIVE, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Remembering The Real Winnie: The Collection Website





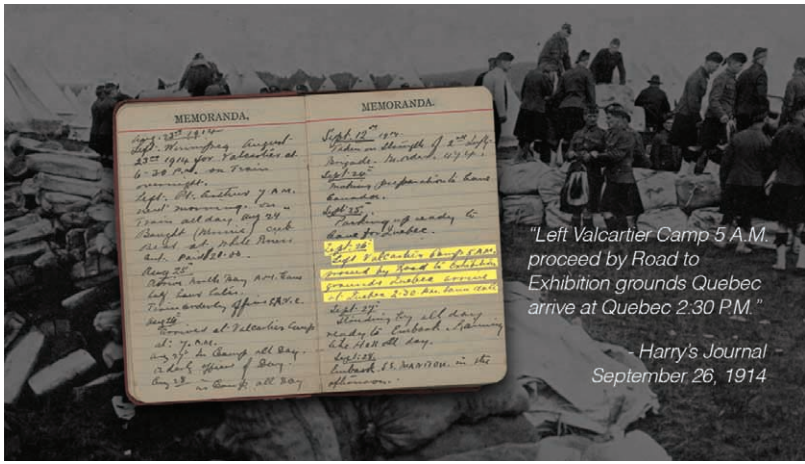
The *Remembering The Real Winnie* website offers digitized versions of documents, photographs, diaries and objects in the Colebourn Family Archive, professionally catalogued and contextualized. The site's primary objective is to provide comprehensive and easily-accessible research materials to anyone searching the web for information on Winnie, Harry Colebourn, veterinary medicine, and World War I. Through detailed descriptions, transcriptions of diary entries, and collection contents listed with dates and place names, the site ensures broad exposure to these academic holdings.

By introducing elements of interactivity, the website animates the collection: the diaries have been transformed into "flipbooks," and three-dimensional scans of several tools in the veterinarian's kit allow users to rotate and view them in detail.

The site also features multimedia exhibits created with selected items from the collection, and links to other resources of interest to both scholars and the general public.

Sally Wilson
WEB SERVICES LIBRARIAN AT RYERSON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Remembering The Real Winnie: The Interactive Experience



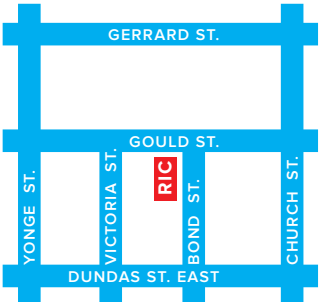
Alongside the *Remembering The Real Winnie* exhibition, an innovative, digital experience brings the Winnie story to life. This interactive website meshes interviews, soundscapes, imagery and motion-graphics with photos of selected artifacts from the exhibition to create a story accessible to people around the world. Through an intuitive interface and evocative use of media, the project provides multilayered access to this compelling story of personal history and its global impact. Both the gallery and digital environments are designed along the principles of great transmedia storytelling, creating two wholly original experiences that pull from the same source material. Each is meaningful in its own way, drawing viewers into the history, character and memories behind A.A. Milne's infamous bear.

Dr. Richard Lachman
DIRECTOR OF THE TRANSMEDIA ZONE, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

therealwinnie.ryerson.ca/collection
therealwinnie.ryerson.ca/interactive

Screen captures from the "collection" website, and the "interactive" website





RYERSON IMAGE CENTRE

33 Gould Street, Toronto, Canada

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday	11 am – 6 pm
Wednesday	11 am – 8 pm
Thursday	11 am – 6 pm
Friday	11 am – 6 pm
Saturday	12 pm – 5 pm
Sunday	12 pm – 5 pm
Monday	Closed

FREE ADMISSION
FREE EXHIBITION TOURS
Daily at 2:30pm

The **Ryerson Image Centre** (RIC) exists for the research, teaching and exhibition of photography and related media. We are an active partner within the academic fabric of Ryerson University, the cultural network of greater Toronto, and the national and international artistic community. We develop rigorous yet inclusive programs for students, faculty, artists, researchers and curators, as well as the general public.

The RIC boasts three interrelated areas of activity. Our **exhibition program** addresses topics of social, cultural, aesthetic and historical concern from a variety of contemporary perspectives. Our **research centre** conducts and facilitates inquiry into primary resource materials and offers workshops, lectures, symposia and publication programs. Finally, we maintain a **collection of photography** spanning the medium's history, as well as several artist and journalism archives—including the renowned Black Star Collection of twentieth century photoreportage.

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