Ronald Rudin

2011 *Trudeau Fellow*, Concordia University

BIOGRAPHY

Ronald Rudin, who earned both his MA and PhD from York University, is a professor of history at Concordia University. He engages in research that touches upon the economic, social, intellectual, and cultural history of French Canada, and—as a public historian—looks for ways to bring his findings to an audience beyond the academy. While he has authored six books, he has also created two multimedia websites and produced two documentary films. He is currently leading a project that aims to bring little-known stories about Canadian history to a larger public by way of a series of episodes made for television.

Professor Rudin's most recent projects have focused on issues dealing with the Acadians of Atlantic Canada. His 2009 book *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian's Journey through Public Memory* (University of Toronto Press), with its associated website Remembering Acadie (http://rememberingacadie.concordia.ca), was awarded the 2010 Book Award of the National Council on Public History and the inaugural Public History Prize of the Canadian Historical Association in 2011. He is currently completing a project that focuses on the creation of Kouchibouguac National Park in New Brunswick, which resulted in the removal of 260 families from their lands and led to significant resistance from the expropriated residents throughout the 1970s. A book is forthcoming, but the testimony of some of the residents can be seen and heard at the Returning the Voices to Kouchibouguac National Park website (http://returningthevoices.ca).

A fellow of the Royal Society of Canada since 2009, Professor Rudin has been both chair of the History Department at Concordia and a Concordia University Research Fellow. He was also the academic convenor for the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences held at Concordia in 2010.

He was nominated a Trudeau fellow in 2011.

ABSTRACT

This lecture is based upon a simple proposition, namely, that almost anyone with a teaching position at a Canadian university has reached that rather high rung in society thanks to significant public support. Accordingly, it seems only reasonable that researchers should make the knowledge they generate as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. In this "Case for Public Knowledge," I draw upon my own experience to show that small gestures can make a difference, exploring first my use of digital media in my practice as a public historian and then turning to my support for the implementation of open access policies at my university. Without sacrificing the quality of what we do, such small steps can go a long way toward providing our patrons—the public—with access to the research that they support.

"The Case for Public Knowledge"

University of Manitoba

Servants of the State

In preparing this lecture, I was encouraged by the Trudeau Foundation to provide a sense of what inspires me to do what I do. So what follows is not a narrowly conceived talk about my current research projects (although glimpses will emerge). Rather, I am going to give a sense of my own intellectual journey, which has led to my involvement with making the knowledge that we develop within the academy as widely accessible as possible.

This lecture is based upon a simple proposition, namely, that almost anyone with a teaching position at a Canadian university has reached that rather high rung in society thanks to significant public support. In my own case, taxpayers have largely paid for my training (by subsidizing my tuition), my living expenses (when I was a graduate student), my salary (as a professor), and my research (through grants from government agencies). In that context, it seems only reasonable that researchers like me—supported generously in various ways by public funds—have a responsibility to make the knowledge that we generate as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. And so the title for this lecture: "The Case for Public Knowledge."

More specifically, the lecture is organized around two ways that I have been engaged with the effort to make knowledge public. In the first part of the lecture, I am going to reflect upon my own efforts, in my practice as a public historian, to create tools that bring my research to an audience far beyond the academy. In the second part, I will turn to my involvement in our efforts at Concordia to provide leadership in the movement to make academic research accessible to the public, what is often referred to as "open access."

I am not trying to present myself here as some sort of pioneer either within the field of public history or in the open access movement. Nor is it my intention to criticize those who have taken another path in disseminating their research: I can talk only about my own journey. However, to the extent that I can be a bit of a missionary, my goal is to encourage others within the academy to take some small (and not very dramatic) steps that—if they were widely adopted—would make the work that we do (with public support) more accessible to our patrons (the public, which foots the bill).

Public History

When people ask me what I do, I tell them that I am a public historian.

Over the past 40 years, my research has dealt almost entirely with the history of French Canada—first focusing on Quebecers and more recently on the Acadians of Atlantic Canada (more about them later). But since the late 1990s, I have defined what I do as much in terms of my own engagement with the public as in terms of the time or place on which I focus my research. Indeed, both of the courses that I am teaching at the moment are designed to train students to become public historians, but do not have a particular geographic or temporal focus. So let me explain what public historians do.

There have always been historians who have felt that they should present their work in a way that is easily accessible to a larger public. In Canadian history, Pierre Berton is perhaps the clearest example. But public history is much more than simply an effort to write for a

general audience. Rather, it is a field of enquiry that only really took shape in the last decades of the 20th century and that tries to engage with questions connecting the public and the past in a number of ways.

Some public historians study the means that allow the public to secure an understanding of the past, in both our own and earlier times. Sometimes, these means are associated with what is often called public memory, as societies develop a common understanding (or understandings) about their past through such tools as public statuary, spectacles, parades, commemorative events, film, and (most recently) the Internet. Each of these tools has its own language that influences how the past is understood, and public historians have been sensitive to the motives of leaders of society who have often employed these tools in order to generate a sense of the past that served their purposes.[1]

Other public historians have not been content to study the tools used to communicate a sense of the past, but have been involved with creating tools of their own in order to reach an audience that extends beyond the academy. In this regard, public historians are involved in such activities as producing documentary films, creating digital tools (such as websites and phone apps), and curating museum exhibits.[2] Along the way, public historians frequently work with members of the larger community in creating knowledge, often

1. The literature on the creation of public memory is vast, but among the indispensable contributions to the field are Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); *Invention of Tradition,* eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

2. Public historians have little reflected on the tools they have been creating, an exception being Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

by means of oral history interviews. In such circumstances, the historian is not the "expert" and the interviewee the "subject." Rather, the historian is involved in what Michael Frisch has called an exercise in "shared authority," an expression that communicates well the spirit of engagement with the public that is at the heart of public history.[3]

In all its guises, public history took a prominent place within the academy during the last decades of the 20th century, symbolized by the emergence of a professional journal (*The Public Historian*) in 1978, a professional organization (the National Council on Public History) in 1980, and public history programs in numerous universities.[4] This was no accident, but rather part of a reaction to an existential crisis being experienced across the historical profession, a crisis that very much influenced my own journey toward public history.

To understand this malaise, it is necessary to go back to the roots of an autonomous historical profession in most parts of the Western world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. By and large, from its beginnings to the 1960s, history developed as a discipline that—for better or worse—was closely related to literature. Historians wrote in a way that made their works accessible not only to their colleagues, but also to a larger, well-educated audience beyond the academy. They prided themselves on being skilled communicators (although to be sure there were exceptions) and were pleased to take a prominent role in the public discussion of current affairs.[5]

3. Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

4. I recently spoke at Ball State University in Indiana on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of its public history program. The director of the Ball State program, which was established in 1987, was confident that it was the first or one of the first public history programs in the United States.

5. The history of the history profession has been analyzed in various national contexts. The American context is superbly discussed in Peter

But there was also much wrong with that picture. The historians in the immediate decades after the Second World War were a rather homogeneous group of white men who frequently came from privileged backgrounds. They studied a rather narrow range of subjects, and in Canadian history their work was particularly marked by the writing of political biography. So when I was a doctoral student in the early 1970s, much of what I was expected to read about Canadian history was about the lives of great men. This all started to change with the rapid expansion of universities, in Canada and across the Western world, bringing significant diversity to the student body and eventually to the professoriate. I guess I identify with all of that, having been the first person in my family to attend university—let alone go to graduate school.

And when "outsiders" like me arrived at university, we were no longer interested in studying the lives of the privileged, but rather wanted to bring groups into the picture that previously had not been deemed worthy of study—women, First Nations people, immigrants, workers…and the list goes on. In short, here were the roots of a focus on social history.

But the revolution in historical writing was not only about content, but also about methodology, because historians were increasingly seeing themselves—with their new-found interest in social history—as social scientists, no longer so closely linked to the humanities. Historians were caught up in a larger process that spanned a wide range of disciplines in which researchers took on the

Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). The English-Canadian story had been told in Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) and Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). Also, I described the writing of professional history in French-speaking Quebec in *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

guise of the objective scientist whose work was marked by a certain distance from both their subjects and the larger public.[6]

As part of this process, I was encouraged in graduate school to use sources that had never much been used—aided with the early application of computer technology—to understand, in my case, the behaviour of Quebecers in the business world. My first book, *Banking en français*, was dedicated to figuring out (in light of much that had been written about their failings in business) if there was anything to distinguish French speakers from their English-speaking counterparts, after controlling for a number of variables such as the funds at their disposal.[7]

This was a typical project of the late 1970s and early 1980s, written from the point of view of the detached social scientist. I am satisfied that *Banking en français* played some role in revising our view of Quebecers' place in the world of business, and I think it made an important contribution at a time when Quebecers were debating their place within Canada. But the book was not written in a manner that made it likely to be read by anyone but my colleagues. Of course, those colleagues in universities across Canada passed along findings such as mine in their lectures to undergraduates. But it is hard to deny that the audience for our work was shrinking. And as historians increasingly wrote for each other, they retreated from the public scene and ceased to be viewed as the go-to people for comment on public affairs that they had once been.

There was significant evidence in the late 20th century that the public was as interested as ever in history—witness the audiences for the History Channel, attendance at history exhibits at museums,

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6. This point was central to Novick's *That Noble Dream*. I described that process in *Quebec in Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (1997).

7. *Banking en français: The French Banks of Quebec, 1835–1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

and tourism at historical sites.[8] But the historians within the academy were largely disconnected from those trends, mired in a period of introspection about whether the objectivity they had so prized for decades was really possible in the face of the inevitably illusive nature of knowledge about the past. And so by the 1990s, having retreated from the public and unsure about their mission, historians became involved in a period of intense reflection about the future of their profession. Whole courses could be taught using the books generated by this period of introspection.[9]

There were various reactions to the direction that the historical profession had taken. One reaction was to wish that social history had never happened and that we could just go back to the "good old days" when historians wrote about great men. In Canada, the leading advocate of this reaction was J.L. Granatstein, who in 1998 wrote *Who Killed Canadian History?* in which he took historians to task for having produced "unreadable books on minuscule subjects."[10] To be fair to Granatstein, much historical writing had become unreadable, as the reward structure in place valued communication among colleagues but showed little concern about communicating with the larger public. But Granatstein's focus on the elite suggests that he was not particularly concerned with studying the larger public. His classic statement was to mock women's historians (and social historians more broadly) whose work he characterized as studying "the history of housemaid's knee." He may have been interested in the public as an abstraction that might buy more books about wealthy men, but

8. Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), ix–x.

9. The list is long, but for starters see Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) and Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994).

10. J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998), 140.

he showed no real inclination to engage with the 99 percent (to take a page from the Occupy Movement).[11]

But there was another, more constructive, response to the "crisis" facing history, and this brings us to public history. In 1998, the same year that Granatstein's book appeared, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen published *The Presence of the Past*, a book that literally changed my life by steering me in the direction of public history.[12] Rather than treat the public as an abstraction, not worthy of serious study, the authors carried out a survey of 1,500 randomly selected Americans, who were contacted for long telephone interviews regarding their engagement with the past. Rosenzweig and Thelen's findings make great reading and have stimulated similar studies in other countries, including Canada.[13] Essentially, they found that nearly all Americans were engaged by the past in one way or another, in the process rejecting the idea that the reason why historians had lost their influence was the population's lack of interest in the subject.

But perhaps their most interesting finding came when they asked Americans about the activities by which they engaged with the past. Prominent in the list were various activities that ordinary Americans undertook without the intermediary of professionals of any sort, for example, collecting photos, working on family genealogy, or keeping a diary. By labelling these people "popular history-makers," Rosenzweig and Thelen gave them the agency to figure out

11. Granatstein originally made this dismissive comment in Christopher Moore, "The Organized Man," *The Beaver* 71 (April–May 1991), 59.

12. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

13. The Canadian version of the Rosenzweig–Thelen approach is the Canadians and Their Pasts project (www.canadiansandtheirpasts.ca), led by Jocelyn Létourneau. The Australian project is described in Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton, *History at the Crossroads: Australians and the Past* (Sydney: Halstead Press, 2007).

the past on their own. Beyond those activities was a wide array of perhaps more expected forms of engagement by way of museums, movies, and even reading books by historians. The study went on to show which types of engagement were most "trusted" by ordinary people (museums did well; history teachers not so well), but I think you see the point. If historians were feeling marginalized from the larger public, it was not because of a lack of interest in the past.

What to do with this finding? It is here that public historians found their niche. Some public historians sought to satisfy the demand for historical knowledge by developing new tools that would be easily accessible to the public, particularly with growing access to the Internet in the late 1990s when Rosenzweig and Thelen published their book. Indeed, Rosenzweig went that route by founding the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University; the center has been a leading force in the field of public history for nearly 20 years.[14]

I ultimately went that route as well, but it took me a while to get there. So let me tell you about my journey toward public history. In the early 1990s, I was working on a book about historical writing in 20th-century Quebec, in the process charting some of the processes I described earlier—the movement of historians from an engagement with public affairs to their taking on the guise of technocrats who firmly believed in the objectivity of their work. *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* was published in 1997, at roughly the same time as Granatstein's jeremiad and Rosenzweig and Thelen's survey, and so I wrote the book in the midst of that period of intense reflection among historians.

Ultimately, when I came to the end of the book, I stepped back from the historians I had been studying and reflected on the various means that allow the public to learn about the past. Rosenzweig

14. Available at http://chnm.gmu.edu. Following Rosenzweig's death in 2007, the centre added his name to its title.

and Thelen were interested in the tools available in our time, but I set off to explore some of the tools that had been available in earlier times—a classic public history exercise. The result was my book *Founding Fathers*, in which I explored some of the tools that had been used in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to bring the stories of Quebec's two "founding fathers" to the public. Samuel de Champlain occupies a privileged place in Québécois culture as the founder of Quebec City, while Monseigneur François de Laval fills a similar role as the first bishop of Quebec. To put it in other terms, Champlain was the secular father and Laval, the religious one.[15]

I explored how the stories of these two figures had been kept alive in the public mind through the use of a number of tools that ranged from staging public processions to constructing monuments. However, the most significant single event that allowed the public to learn their stories was the tercentenary of the founding of Quebec in 1908, by far the largest commemorative event in Canada until Expo 67.[16] And the most significant tools for telling stories during the summer of 1908 were the historical pageants staged in an amphitheatre especially constructed on the Plains of Abraham. In various ways, these pageants engaged the public: from the people who filled the stands, to the individuals who were recruited from the population to play the characters in the drama, to the countless volunteers who sewed the costumes and provided meals to the cast of thousands.

I truly enjoyed trying to understand those pageants, particularly in terms of the stories that were being told. But at some point in the process, I started to wonder what it would be like to actually be

15. *Founding Fathers: The Celebration of Champlain and Laval in the Streets of Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

16. The story of the 1908 tercentenary is also told in H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

on hand to watch the creation of a large commemorative event and then to be in attendance to watch it unfold. I wanted to be able to understand the motivation of people (not professional historians) who wanted to tell a story about the past in public, and I wanted to be on hand for such public storytelling, instead of having to judge such events by means of photographs.

The opportunity to be the fly on the wall presented itself when I learned that plans were under way to stage a series of commemorative events to mark the 400th anniversary (in 2004) of the establishment of the first permanent French settlement in North America on Île Ste-Croix in 1604, four years before the founding of Quebec City. The story of what happened is fairly simple: the 79 members of a French expedition (including Champlain, who was part of the crew as a cartographer) arrived in the summer of 1604, and against the advice of the local Aboriginal people, the Passamaquoddy First Nation, chose to settle on an island, Île Ste-Croix, which today sits on the border between New Brunswick and Maine. The winter of 1604/05 was a difficult one, and half of the Frenchmen died despite the aid of the Passamaquoddy. When the spring of 1605 arrived, the survivors moved on to create more permanent settlements that formed the basis for the French colony of Acadie, in what is today Nova Scotia.[17]

Although the story of Île Ste-Croix in 1604 was one of failure, I quickly learned that this was precisely the sort of opportunity that I was looking for, because three different groups of people all had a claim on telling the story in public. I discovered Acadians who viewed the Île Ste-Croix saga as their founding story, much as the Québécois look to the founding of Quebec City. But the Acadians had not lived in the region for centuries (especially after their

17. I tell this story at greater length in *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian's Journey through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

deportation in the mid-18th century), and the people who now live there are English speakers, some of whom viewed the 400th anniversary of the Île Ste-Croix adventure as an opportunity to attract tourists. There were also the Passamaquoddy, today a cross-border tribe that is recognized in the United States but that the Canadian government insists does not exist. On this anniversary, the Passamaquoddy saw an opportunity to tell their story and advance their efforts to secure recognition in Canada.

For me, the richness of the story provided an opportunity to observe ordinary people engaging with the past. But once I started going down this road, it seemed like I would have been missing an opportunity to tell this story to a larger public if I did not explore the possibilities of using media other than print, particularly given the rapid development of the Internet in the late 20th and early 21st centuries and the rapid reduction in costs connected with the development of digital technology. In other words, I was led from studying how the public engages with the past to creating tools about the past that are accessible to a large public.

And so while this project led to the publication of *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie*, it also resulted in the development of a website that accompanied the book and included a wide array of photographs (both from earlier anniversaries of the Île Ste-Croix adventure and from the events staged in 2004), as well as video footage of interviews with members of the three groups connected with the 400th anniversary (the Acadians, English speakers of the region, and the Passsamaquoddy First Nation). Some of that footage had been produced as part of a documentary film project that resulted in *Life After Île Ste-Croix*, which I produced and which was directed by the filmmaker Leo Arsitimuno, a colleague at Concordia at the time.[18]

18. Available at http://rememberingacadie.concordia.ca; *Life After Île Ste-Croix* (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 2006).

Working with Leo in making this film helped demystify the process of presenting the past by means of a different medium and revealed the possibilities that exist for people like me (trained within the academy) to tell stories through other, more accessible means. Leo taught me a variety of tricks to keep our budget within limits, and we benefited greatly from the spectacular reduction in the cost of high-quality cameras and professional editing software as these products evolved from tools designed for high-end professionals to products for a larger, consumer market.

Once I had had a taste of telling stories through means other than books, I went on to produce a second film, *Remembering a Memory/Mémoire d'un souvenir* (a 2010 production in collaboration with Robert McMahon of the Royal Ontario Museum)[19], which also engaged with public history on various levels. This film focuses on a large commemorative cross that was constructed in 1909 on Grosse Île, an island in the St. Lawrence just east of Quebec City. In the 1840s, Grosse Île was a quarantine station where 5,000 Irish emigrants from the potato famine of the 1840s died, making it the site of the largest famine cemetery outside Ireland. The film explores the creation of the cross (a public history moment in its own right) and the stories that were told at its unveiling. We then attended the 100th anniversary of the cross in 2009 to see how the stories had changed—and they had changed dramatically. The film, available to the public on the Internet, was produced for less than $15,000, which reinforced my sense that what historians need to bring their stories to the public is not large amounts of funding (although it is nice), but rather a blend of persistence and imagination.

With the generous support of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, I am working on two other film projects at the moment, one of which is nearing completion as I write this lecture. The video/

19. Available at http://rememberingamemory.concordia.ca and http://memoiredunsouvenir.concordia.ca.

website project *Returning the Voices to Kouchibouguac National Park* builds on my interest in how Acadians have remembered their past.[20] This project focuses on stories inspired by the creation of a national park along the east coast of New Brunswick in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, creating a park required removing the resident population because officials believed that nature could be shown to visitors only by removing all evidence of a human presence. In this case, over 1,200 people were forced to relocate; given that most of the residents were Acadians, they did not take kindly to what some saw as "une deuxième déportation." As a result, there was significant resistance, and the leader of the resistance—Jackie Vautour—ultimately returned to his land, where he remains today (over 30 years later) as a squatter.[21]

But most people left quietly, and their stories have rarely been told. And so the website has been constructed to tell a wide array of stories, virtually returning the voices of over 20 of the expropriated families to their lands. A visitor to the website can interact with a map of the area before the park was created and click on various properties to hear different stories. One feature of the project is that the website is viewed differently depending upon whether it appears on a computer screen or a hand-held device. In the latter case, visitors to the park will have access to a map that will lead them to stand exactly where a resident once lived when hearing that resident's story. In this way, the project returns residents' voices a bit more directly to their lands.

20. Available at http://returningthevoices.ca and http://leretourdes voix.ca.

21. For the backstory regarding the creation of Kouchibouguac National Park and its place in Acadian culture, see my "Kouchibouguac: Representations of a Park in Acadian Popular Culture," in A *Century of Parks Canada*, ed. Claire Campbell (University of Calgary Press, 2011), 205–33; also available at the Spectrum Research Repository, http://spectrum.library .concordia.ca/7352/.

To end this part of the lecture, I thought I would complete the tour of my life as a public historian by briefly introducing a further project supported by my Trudeau fellowship, which is currently in production. The long-term goal of the Lost Stories/Histoires retrouvées project is to create a television series, each 30-minute episode of which will allow viewers to watch someone tell a story about Canadian history that is not well known and that has a geographical anchor. More specifically, the storyteller is shown passing the story on to an artist, who is given the mission of creating an inexpensive commemorative marker that, at the end of the 30-minute episode, is shown installed on the site connected with the story. For me, this is an opportunity to show that the history we see in public was not created by chance. Decisions have to be made; a story has to be selected.

My team and I are currently working on a pilot for the series. Towards that end, in the summer of 2012 we put out a call for stories in Montreal, where we are headquartered and where the pilot will be shot. A terrific storyteller brought us the story of Thomas Widd, a deaf educator of the deaf (they were uncommon) in the late 19th century who founded a school that still exists in Montreal today. That school ended up bearing the name of a wealthy Montrealer who gave the money for the building, and so Widd's story disappeared. We have an artist who is currently working on the commemorative marker in her studio, and we are in the midst of filming. So I can only hope that this series sees the light of day.

But in the end, universities provide tenure (at least in part) to allow professors to use their imaginations without worrying about the consequences of things not going as planned. Because little job security exists anywhere anymore, tenured faculty members are an easy mark for commentators who see us as pampered denizens of ivory towers. So why not use the freedom conveyed by tenure to speak directly to our patrons?

Open Access

I did not seek out public history, it found me. And in a sense, the same can be said in regard to the other activity in which I have been involved in terms of trying to provide the public with easy access to the knowledge whose production it funds.

As it turns out, at the same moment (the late 1990s) that I was starting to reflect on the connection between historians and the larger public, a significant development was taking place with respect to how knowledge created within the university was disseminated. Twenty years ago, the most common tool for dissemination was the journal article. Articles were widely available in libraries, venues that are accessible to both scholars and the larger public. Then along came the Internet and the opportunity to publish the same content online. This was supposed to liberate information and make it more accessible.

In the pre-digital world, university libraries purchased their journals from the publishers, sometimes at significant costs, and so the emergence of digital technology offered the promise of making that same knowledge available less expensively, given that the costs of production and distribution of physical objects had been eliminated. But this is not quite how the story developed.

In the late 1990s, firms emerged to make the knowledge communicated in journals available in digital format. Some of these firms, such as JSTOR, are not-for-profit suppliers, while others, such as Elsevier and EBSCO, are designed to earn a return for their shareholders. This distinction is significant in light of the fact that most of the labour in the creation of journal content is provided freely by members of the academic community. As most readers surely know, neither the authors of journal articles, nor the evaluators of those articles (who help decide which articles to publish), nor the members of the editorial boards that handle the nuts and bolts of journal publishing are paid for their labour. In the pre-digital era,

this system of "free labour" made sense. People like me were paid by universities and saw providing service to the larger academic community as part of our jobs. No one was making any profit in what was essentially a form of artisanal production. But in this new model, some corporations were making profits, a practice that has led to the well-publicized decision by a group of prominent mathematicians to boycott journals distributed by Elsevier.[22]

But even when the profit motive is removed from the equation, content providers are still engaged in a process of erecting gates that cut large parts of the public off from reading about the knowledge that they helped create through their taxes. By and large, these providers bundle packages of journals that they offer to libraries, which are often left with little choice as to which specific journal to acquire. In the process, libraries find their acquisition budgets stretched to the breaking point, and some libraries find themselves incapable of acquiring journals altogether, a problem that is particularly pronounced in the developing world.

When libraries are able to foot the bill, only those users who are connected with the subscribing institution are able to secure access to content that might interest them. Typically this means having a university identification card. But what happens when an unsuspecting member of the public tries to access content provided by a supplier such as JSTOR? Informative in this regard is the experience of a mother of an autistic child who tried to search for articles dealing with autism. As Laura McKenna described, "I could not access any of the first 200 articles that contained the word 'autism.' That's because, for the most part, only individuals with a college ID card can read academic journal articles. Everyone else, including journalists, non-affiliated scholars, think tanks and curious individuals, must pay a substantial fee per article, if the articles are available

22. The statement against Elsevier can be found at http://thecostofknow ledge.com/.

at all."[23] McKenna's experience was hardly unique: the *Chronicle of Higher Education* found that in a typical year some 150 million failed attempts to access JSTOR articles occur.[24]

In recognition of the absurdity of this situation, during the past decade a growing number of individuals within the academy have coalesced around the concept of "open access."[25] The idea was to find tools that would preserve the high quality of published research, but without erecting gates that unnecessarily restrict access to all but a few—those affiliated with institutions that have the funds to buy the corporations' journals.

Just to dismiss a myth that is frequently noted (I hear it from time to time among some of my colleagues), open access is not about lowering standards to allow anything to pass as if it had been vetted through peer review. Rather, it is about finding new models of making knowledge accessible—and so to me, it seemed parallel to my interest in finding ways to connect the past with the public in my practice as a public historian.

My point here is not to advocate for any one route to deal with the issues highlighted by the open access movement. The options are numerous: from creating open access journals that are free of corporate control so as to provide unrestricted access to the public,

23. Laura McKenna, "Locked in the Ivory Tower: Why JSTOR Imprisons Academic Research," *The Atlantic*, January, 20, 2012, available at http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/01/locked-in-the-ivory-tower -why-jstor-imprisons-academic-research/251649/.

24. Jennifer Howard, "JSTOR Tests Free, Read-Only Access to Some Articles," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 13, 2012, available at http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/jstor-tests-free-read-only-access-to -some-articles/34908.

25. There is a large (and growing) literature on open access. For a good introduction, see John Willinsky, *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006). The book is (appropriately) available at http://mitpress.mit.edu/sites/default/files/titles /content/9780262512664_Download_the_full_text.pdf.

to developing repositories for research that would (again) be widely accessible. All new models have potential problems, but they also offer the possibility of getting us to a better place than we are in at the moment.

And so my point is to show how individuals of good will within the academy, with a bit of imagination and a dose of motivation, can make a difference. I base my comments on my experience at Concordia, which began with the interest of our university librarian, Gerald Beasley, to use Concordia's hosting of the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2010 as an occasion to demonstrate Concordia's commitment to the principles of open access. I was the academic convenor of Congress, and Gerald and I, together with a group of interested faculty members and administrators, tried to come up with a concrete reflection of our university's commitment to open access that could be revealed at the event. As part of that reflection, we aimed to offer programming connected with the issue.

What followed was a two-year campaign (culminating with Congress) to bring the university community around to the idea that all faculty should (we avoided "must") deposit their research in journal articles in the university's open access Spectrum Research Repository or publish it in an open access journal.[26] I would be the first to admit that this initiative was not perfect, but it began a discussion throughout the university about open access, a discussion that was focused on the value of making knowledge accessible and not on the mechanics of any one solution. In the process, departments and faculty councils debated the merits of the proposed mandate, along the way spreading understanding (and reducing misinformation) about the meaning of open access. In the end, there was almost no opposition to the proposal when the Concordia Senate passed

26. The Spectrum Research Repository can be found at http://spectrum .library.concordia.ca/.

it—on the eve of Congress—making Concordia the first Canadian university to introduce such a mandate.[27]

To be sure, the simple passage of this mandate did not force recalcitrant academics to make the knowledge they produce more readily available, because the mandate did not have any teeth. But it did change the nature of discussion in the university, which took pride in the very positive feedback it received for its initiative. And having assumed this leadership role, Concordia—with the ongoing encouragement of its university librarian—has followed up with other initiatives. One involved creating an authors' fund to allow faculty to publish in open access journals that demand a small payment to help fund their operations (since they are free). This is a good investment for university libraries, which often look after such initiatives, because the growth of open access journals offers the promise of freeing libraries from the charges imposed by the large journal providers. Concordia is not alone in taking such an initiative. Indeed, the University of Manitoba, which hosted this Trudeau lecture, has an open access authors' fund of its own.

Why have I told you this story? Much like my engagement with public history, open access constitutes another tool for making what academics do more freely available to an audience beyond the academy. In both cases, the tool for making a difference has been digital technology. But perhaps most importantly, taking the initiative to make what we do accessible does not require actions that are particularly heroic. I see myself in both of these contexts, not so much as a leader, but rather as a good soldier. And from that perspective, my goal tonight was to try to encourage others who think that making what we do accessible to the public is a cause worth pursuing. In terms of both public history and open access, I have had the good

27. For a review of the mandate, see Karen Herland, "Concordia opens access to its research output," available at http://cjournal.concordia.ca/archives/20100429/concordia_opens_access_to_its_research_output.php.

fortune to work with people similarly committed to this cause. What this means is that the small actions of individuals do matter, and we can all make a difference—that is, if we believe that engaging with those who are responsible for our funding is worth the effort.