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More News



Our hybrid classroom

A Message from the Executive Director

By Madeleine Colaço, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It has been almost four months since I joined TMI as Executive Director and let me start by thanking you all for the warm welcome that I have received. Even on Zoom the strength of the TMI community has been apparent and as things open up, it has been so nice to meet some of you in person.

Over the past two years, the TMI community has demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing circumstances. As we look ahead, it is clear that this need for flexibility and new ways of doing things will continue to be part of the landscape—offering both opportunities and challenges.

This spring, TMI is trialling a new hybrid course and event format involving both Zoom and in-person participants. Your feedback on this and other new initiatives will be key as the programming and activities for the next year take shape.

While we look forward, there is much to celebrate in looking back. In this issue of *More News* you will meet members of TMI's Archives Project as they reflect on their experience. The team, which includes many long-term TMI volunteers as well as short-term employees, had the added benefit of sharing expertise and knowledge across generations. Past, present, and future coming together makes for a winning combination.

I was most surprised to discover a link to my own past in an archived TMI newsletter, which featured a picture of my uncle Paul Orr, now 95, leading one of "The Great Books" discussions many years ago. Still in fine form, he was delighted to chat with me about his friendships with Charlotte Tansey, her sister, and others involved in the early TMI days.

I hope to have the opportunity to meet more of you in the coming months—volunteers, students, and donors—as we work together to nourish and build the thriving TMI community of lifelong learners.

Thank you for your continued support.

Madeleine

Spring Edition
March 2022

Upcoming Events

Volunteer Appreciation
and Digital
Archives Launch
6 May 2022

Spring Interview Webinar
8 June 2022

2022-23 Course
Calendar Launch
4 July 2022



"For those interested in
continuous learning,
there is no better place to
learn, have deep
conversations, and make
friends."

-Cristina MacLean,
Volunteer



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Unearthing TMI's Archives

Over the last few months, TMI has been grateful to have the help of key volunteers like Sharon Poissant, Digital Archives Coordinators Isabel Shaw and Veronica Della Foresta, and Archives Clerks Melissa Otten and Ariel Bader-Shamai. With their help we have been able to organize the archives and preserve many documents which will be displayed on Omeka, an online archives and library platform. This will make TMI's history accessible to the community and the larger public.



Volunteer Appreciation
and Digital
Archives Launch
6 May 2022

My time spent in the archive room doing research for the Omeka project gave me **greater respect for the hard work done by the members of the TMI community**. The "Leader Spotlight," "In Memoriam," and "Milestones" sections really bring to light what TMI means to participants and what participants mean to TMI. These sections are what I would call heart-opening.

-Sharon Poissant, Volunteer

I have scanned over 1,000 images for the purposes of online exhibitions and digital preservation. The photos span decades—not only since the founding of TMI in 1945, but also a collection belonging to the Lonergan family that includes several photographs dating from pre-1900. **It is evident in these images that a deep sense of community is woven into TMI.**

Familiar faces coming together over decades to learn and celebrate with each other. It has been a pleasure to get to know TMI through its visual history: see for yourself!

-Ariel Bader-Shamai, Archives Clerk

I was told TMI has a rich history. I wasn't aware of the extent of this until I threw myself head first into its archives. It's incredible what you can find when you just take the time to look. The archival digitization project started in earnest this past summer. It was conceived as a way of raising awareness of TMI's rich collection of documentary heritage—a trove of course curricula, original essays and lectures, correspondences, brochures, and photographs—dating as far back as 1945.

On top of this, a significant amount of time and energy has been devoted to reworking the physical archives, identifying unique holdings, and creating finding aids all in an effort to facilitate information retrieval and collections management. TMI has a rich history indeed. We can't wait for you to see it.

-Veronica Della Foresta, Digital Archives Coordinator



Early TMIs Eric O'Connor (center), Martin O'Hara (third from left), Charlotte Tansey (second from left), and other students



Early TMIs Stan and Roberta Machnik at a social event

Sharing our Curiosity

Recent Workshops

How to Design a Course: Participants gained a new understanding, and confidence, about designing future courses.

The Curiosity Forum: TMI Course Designers met to discuss topics that have been piquing their interest.

Interpretive Discussion: TMI Course Leaders gathered around shared inquiry, reminding us all of the importance of asking genuine questions.

Research Workshops: Khando Langri, Education Researcher, held two workshops at the end of February on the resources available to us through the internet, with emphasis on online archives and oral history projects.

Recent Events

Interview Series: In the fall, we held a roundtable discussion, "Refugee Experiences: Stories at the Grassroots," and most recently, we featured Dr. Jeff Corn tassel in "Land Back as Indigenous Climate Justice and Community Resurgence." View our latest Interview Series webinars on our YouTube channel!

Learning from Seniors: A TMI Exchange: Leaders and participants from TMI's Seniors Outreach Program and TMI's New Horizons for Seniors Project reflected on the needs and wants of seniors in learning, particularly in an evolving digital context. Output from the day will be used as a training tool and will be made available on TMI's website.

Office Updates

A Burst of Soleil!

Congratulations to Rebekah Bradley and her partner on the birth of their baby daughter Soleil, born on the 14th of February 2022.

Welcome John Shecter

TMI welcomed John Shecter in January as our new Accountant, replacing Rebekah Bradley during her maternity leave. John brings with him a wealth of experience in bookkeeping and data management.

Thanks to our Winter Team!

During the Winter Demi-Term, Khando Langri, Michael Shaw, and Izzy Pancaldi provided valuable support to our fundraising and academic programs thanks to funding from the Canada Summer Jobs program.

COVID Policy

The TMI offices are open to the public and our staff are back on a hybrid basis. All visitors to TMI are required to wear masks while on the premises until further notice.

From Winter Boots to Construction Boots

With the snow clearing, construction workers are back on the job, and our main entrance on Atwater Avenue is still closed. Please enter via Manoir Belmont at 2333 Sherbrooke West for access to TMI.



In Memoriam

Roberta Machnik

By Dr. Anne Fitzpatrick, Member of the Board of Directors



When the Institute marked its 75th anniversary in 2020, it was such a privilege to wish Roberta Machnik a Happy Anniversary.

Roberta and her husband Stan were founding members of the Thomas More Institute. Those days must have been poignant for Roberta: she married Stan in 1944 and he died in 2016.

The Machniks would never have seen themselves as the TMI power couple. But besides welcoming and raising four children, Stan was an active designer from the beginning and Roberta a steady enthusiast for the “Imagineering” that saw her coordinating midday interviews at the Royal Bank Auditorium in Place Ville-Marie, initiating courses in St. Bruno, and collaborating with the Montreal Association for the Blind on courses for the blind.

At the same time, Roberta and Stan continued to enjoy the transition from lectures to a discussion model—part of the influence of theologian Bernard Lonergan and “The Great Books” sessions of the 1940s and early 50s. Each prepared meticulously for the experience that

Charlotte Tansey likened to jumping into cold water. How many of us who take or lead classes set about reading and reflecting on Friday evenings? Apparently, Roberta did.

Though biology was always her particular passion and “Science for the Layman” an ongoing focus for courses, Roberta, like Stan, kept the commitment to advancing Lonergan’s work. It was deeply felt. He had officiated at their marriage, given his famous “Thought and Reality” course which they attended in 1945-46, and looked forward to meeting with them when he came to Montreal. Even after classes were over in June (and Roberta and Stan continued leading until 1998), along with a contingent from Montreal that included Eileen de Neeve and Moira Carley, among others, Roberta and Stan travelled regularly to the Lonergan Conference held at Boston College. This week-long workshop, cherished by Lonergan scholars, continues to generate warm friendships, scholarly talk, and ongoing research. All of these surely must have offered food for thought during the summer weeks the Machniks spent at the cabin they had built in Maine.

Roberta’s active curiosity and love for life in all its forms may sometimes lead us to overlook a major gift to the Institute. In 1987, when the book *Curiosity at the Center of One’s Life* was published, it documented the contribution that President Eric O’Connor had made over nearly 40 years. On page viii, a small note appears: “Transcription of tapes prior to 1981 was mainly done by Roberta Machnik...” How fitting that the Archives Project now underway at TMI will extend access to the history in which Roberta, as dedicated as she was modest, played such a part.

We would never have heard it from her, but Roberta became a member of the Institute’s Board of Governors in 1995.