

The Executive Committee of the Historical Society of St. Catharines is greatly dismayed by the St. Catharines Public Library's recent culling of hundreds of important books related to our local history, mainly from the Special Collections department.

Special Collections was established decades ago as the major public resource for St. Catharines and area, for research into our history and genealogy. Over the years a valuable collection has been curated. Special Collections is well known and well used by the local research community and has a reputation in wider research communities for its significant collection of books, files, maps, photographs, and microfilms. Some of these materials have been donated, others acquired at considerable expense to the taxpayers.

It has come to our attention that the Library's current policy is to remove materials pertaining to areas outside St. Catharines. Ironically, the Library is apparently considering climate control to protect fragile books. But the Library has just divested itself of countless rare and fragile books! Some of these books have been donated to other libraries or institutions, some sold to individuals or used book dealers, while many other books have been sent to landfill.

The Historical Society of St. Catharines considers this recent policy to be unacceptable. We should have been consulted before these valuable books were discarded. Unfortunately, much damage has already been done, both to Special Collections and to the Library's reputation. It is difficult to know how to proceed from here. At the very least we can only plead for the Library to cease, immediately, the plundering of this valuable resource.