



Roch Carrier's Iconic Book in Space

In the fall of 2010, Canadian astronaut Dr. Robert Thirsk contacted author Roch Carrier with an extraordinary offer. Dr. Thirsk wished to present the author with the copy of his book *The Hockey Sweater* that the astronaut had taken with him during his 2009 mission aboard the International Space Station. Carrier, overwhelmed by this news, communicated with his contact at Library and Archives Canada, who then shared the story with the Friends of Library and Archives Canada.



The official flying kit, with Astronaut Dr. Robert Thirsk on board the International Space Station, inset

What an opportunity for the Friends to organize such a historic and significant event, where two Canadian icons would meet for the first time and share their passions with the public! It took a while to find a date that would accommodate both men's hectic schedules, but once a date was chosen, the Friends were well on their way and planned the event in collaboration with the Canadian Space Agency.



Inset photo courtesy:
Dr. Robert Thirsk,
Canadian Space
Agency



Astronaut Dr. Robert Thirsk and author Roch Carrier

On June 13, 2011, the Friends of Library and Archives Canada and the Canadian Space Agency hosted "Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater* in Space" at Library and Archives Canada's Ottawa headquarters. The excitement was palpable as the audience, including more than 60 students, parents and teachers from Roch Carrier Elementary School, anticipated the hand-over of the official flying kit containing the copy of the book that Dr. Thirsk had read while on his six-month mission.

Thirsk first presented some home movies from his time in space and spoke of living and working on the International Space Station. He highlighted the important Canadian research carried out during the mission and the need for teamwork and collaboration in space exploration. Following his presentation, he responded to questions from the curious students. Embedded in his responses was a clear message about the importance of reading, learning and encouraging young people to follow their dreams.

"As former National Librarian, I was proud to see Library and Archives Canada getting on board with the Space Agency, the Science Museum, the TD Bank to promote reading and literacy; as a participant in the event, my greatest pleasure was to listen to the questions that the elementary school students were asking and the fascinating answers Dr. Robert Thirsk, the astronaut, was giving them."

Roch Carrier



Photo credit: Peter Rochon

Students from Roch Carrier Elementary School and centre, from left to right: Canadian Astronaut Dr. Robert Thirsk, President of Friends of Library and Archives Canada Marianne Scott, and author Roch Carrier

Then it was time for the hand-over. It was an emotional moment when the astronaut presented the official flying kit with the "flown" book to the author. The audience was delighted, and the photographers in attendance scurried to the front of the room to seize this momentous event on film.

Following the presentation, the audience was treated to a reading of *The Hockey Sweater*, in French and English, by Roch Carrier and Robert Thirsk. While refreshments were being served, the two special guests signed autographs and were available for photographs with the audience members.

The Friends of Library and Archives Canada are always pleased to have the opportunity to host events that highlight Canada's documentary heritage or promote and raise awareness of learning and literacy. We would like to thank our partners who collaborated in this event: the Canadian Space Agency, Library and Archives Canada, the TD Summer Reading Club, and the Canada Aviation and Space Museum. 🐦

Peter Rochon is the Program Director of the Friends of Library and Archives Canada.

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"It's better to have any sort of library job than no job at all," says Colin, who retains his sense of humour despite hardship. "In fact, old librarians don't die, they simply work increasingly part-time."

Talking to librarians in British towns and villages as well as in the major cities, one understands that although they are discontented and worried about how cutbacks might affect them, they have lost neither their gumption nor their idealism; nor are they without hope, no matter how low the pound sinks or how high the percentage of unemployment rises. One assumes that they will continue to speak out in support of their libraries, no matter how many pigeons come home to roost. 🐦

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