

22 September 2011

To the President, to the Chair of Board, to the Chancellor, to the Board of Regents:

I would have liked to appear before you to make the case but I am in Calgary for the fall. My letter concerns the planned demolition of the Memorial Library at your university. I urge you to reconsider. The centennial of the 1914-18 War is approaching. Countries around the world are planning for the anniversary of the war that killed 9.5 million and ushered in the century. The loss of such an historic building dedicated to students who were killed in WWI seems ironic.

I am working on an international project of remembrance and education for WWI. We will assemble the millions of names of the dead of all nations and project those names on buildings and memorials around the world. To date France, the Imperial War Museum in the UK, Germany, Hungary, Serbia, Belgium and Canada have expressed interest. We are in conversation with 17 other countries. Canada will be the coordinating country for this unique world project. Our aim is to not only remember the 9.5 million in a unique and intimate way but also to create a global project that might catch the imagination of students encouraging them to explore their family and their national history.

In Canada, we will look for buildings and memorials on which to project the names of the 9.5 million. The Memorial Library might be one such location.

To contemplate destroying such an historic building at this time baffles me. How can we gift the present generation of students with history if we are blind to it ourselves? I read Jack Diamond's comment on possible innovative ways to integrate the Memorial Library into any development. I believe universities are places that can lead with imagination and innovation.

You are busy and you have a difficult choice so I will be brief. I am confident that you will review the decision to demolish the library and choose instead to keep the irreplaceable connection to WWI, to the students killed in WWI, to your university's history, and to Canada's history.

Best regards,  
R.H. (Robert) Thomson  
Producer  
1914-Centennial-1918  
The World Remembers