

# Guy Sylvestre

b. May 17, 1918, Sorel, QC; d. Sept. 26, 2010, Ottawa, ON

## Education:

1939 BA University of Ottawa  
1940 LPh University of Ottawa  
1941 MA University of Ottawa

## Positions:

1942–1944 Translator, Department of the Secretary of State  
1944–1945 Editor, Wartime Information Board  
1945–1947 Assistant Private Secretary to the Minister of Justice  
1943–1947 Literary Critic for *Le Droit* and Translator for the House of Commons  
1947–1950 Private Secretary to the Rt. Hon. Louis St-Laurent, as Secretary of State for External Affairs (1947–48) and as Prime Minister (1948–50)  
1950–1953 Administration Officer, Dept. Of Resources & Development  
1953–1956 Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament  
1956–1968 Associate Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament  
1968–1983 National Librarian of Canada

## Selected Publications:

Guy Sylvestre contributed over 150 articles to library journals and popular and literary magazines, including *Cahiers*, *Canada français*, *Culture*, *Dalhousie Review*, *Gants du ciel*, *Notre Temps*, *Nouvelle revue canadienne*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *Revue dominicaine*, *Saturday Night*, *Top of the News* and *University of Toronto Quarterly*. As well, he authored books, contributed to many literary monographs, and published many conference addresses.

## Monographs:

Sylvestre, Guy. *Anthologie de la poésie canadienne d'expression française, précédée d'une introduction*. [s.l.]: Valiquette, 1942 (5 editions to 1966); 6e éd.: Beauchemin, 1971, and 7e éd., 1974.

Sylvestre, Guy. *Guidelines for National Libraries*. Paris: Unesco, 1987 (also published in French, Spanish, Arabic and Japanese editions).

Sylvestre, Guy. *Panorama des lettres canadienne-françaises*. Québec: Ministère des affaires culturelles, 1964 (English translation published in 1967 as *Literature in French Canada*)

Sylvestre, Guy. *La poésie française au Canada: Guide du lecteur*. [S.l.]: Services éducatifs de la Légion

canadienne, 1944.

Sylvestre, Guy. *Poètes catholiques de la France contemporaine*. Paris: Éditions Fides, 1943.

Sylvestre, Guy. *Situation de la poésie canadienne: Regards et jeux dans l'espace, axe axe et parallaxes*. [s.l.]: Editions du droit, 1941.

Sylvestre, Guy. *Sondages*. Montréal: Beauchemin, 1945.

Under pseudonym **Jean Bruneau**: *Amours, délices et orgues*. Québec: Institut littéraire du Québec, 1953.

Under pseudonym **Blaise Orlier**: *Louis Francoeur, journaliste*. [S.l.]: Editions du droit, 1941.

### **As editor or compiler:**

Sylvestre, Guy and George Stanley (1961). *Canadian universities today: symposium presented to the Royal Society of Canada in 1960*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Sylvestre, Guy, Brandon Conron and Carl F. Klinck (1964). *Canadian writers/Écrivains canadiens: a biographical dictionary*. Toronto: Ryerson Press [rev. ed. 1966].

Sylvestre, Guy and H. Gordon Green (1967). *A Century of Canadian literature*. Toronto: Ryerson Press.

Sylvestre, Guy (1960). *James P. Manion, a Canadian errant: Twenty-five years in the Canadian Foreign Service*. Toronto: Ryerson Press.

Sylvestre, Guy (1966). *Structures sociales du Canada français: études de membre de la Section I de la Société royale du Canada*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.

### **As contributor:**

Sylvestre, Guy, "François-Xavier Garneau" (1959). In *Our living tradition*, ed. by R.L. McDougall. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Sylvestre, Guy, "La recherche en littérature canadienne-française" (1968). In *La recherche au Canada français*, ed. by Louis Baudoin. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1968.

Sylvestre, Guy, "Le romain" and "La poésie" [with Jeanne d'Arc Lortie] (1970). In *Visages de la civilisation au Canada français*, ed. by Leopold Lamontagne. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

He was also a contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Encyclopedia Canadiana*, *Encyclopédie Grolier*, *Funk & Wagnall's* and *Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*.

### **Library articles:**

Sylvestre, Guy (1969). "A co-operative acquisition plan for Canada." *Canadian Library Journal* 26, no. 6: 433-438.

Sylvestre, Guy (1969). "The National Library of Canada." *Canadian Library Journal* 26, no. 1: 25-31.

Sylvestre, Guy (1971). "The prime mover: the role of the National Library." In *Proceedings of the Canadian Library Association 25th annual conference, Hamilton, Ontario, June 20-25, 1970*, pp. 12-21. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association.

Sylvestre, Guy (1972). "The developing National Library network of Canada." *Library Resources & Technical Services* 16, no. 1: 48-60.

Sylvestre, Guy (1973). "Towards standardization of catalogues in Canada." *Canadian Library Journal* 30, no. 3: 252-259.

Sylvestre, Guy (1974). "The National Library of Canada." In *Library services cross borders: Minutes of the eighty-fourth meeting, May 9-10, 1974*, pp. 3-13. Washington: Association of Research Libraries.

Sylvestre, Guy (1977). "La Bibliothèque Nationale du Canada." In *Livre, bibliothèque et culture Québécoise: Mélanges offerts à Edmond Desrochers, s.j., vol. 2.*, pp. 611-620. Montréal: ASTED Inc.

Sylvestre, Guy (1980). "National Library report: what It Is—what It Is not." *Canadian Library Journal* 37, no. 3: 137-140.

Sylvestre, Guy (1981). "A national preservation program for library materials in Canada." *Libri: International Library Review* 31, no 3: 185-192.

Sylvestre, Guy (1985). "Canadians, UNESCO and IFLA." *Canadian Library Journal* 42, no 4: 219-220.

## **Associations/Committees:**

Académie canadienne-française (président, 1960-1962) [now the Académie des lettres du Québec]

Alliance française d'Ottawa (président, 1960-1962)

Association canadienne des bibliothécaires de langue française

Canada Council (chairman of Committee on aid to publication, 1960-1968)

Canadian Association for Information Science (president, 1970)

Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (president, 1983-1986)

Canadian Library Association

Canadian Writers Foundation (president, 1960-1961)

Cercle universitaire

Conference of Directors of National Libraries (chair, 1974-1978)

Governor General's Literary Awards (chairman, 1960-1962)

International Federation of Library Associations, National Libraries Section (chair, 1977-1981)

Library Association of Ottawa

Royal Society of Canada (president, 1973-1974)

Société des écrivains canadiens

UNESCO Intergovernmental Council for General Information Program, representative (1979-1983)

World Poetry Conference Expo '67 (chairman)

## **Honours:**

1974 Poland's Order of Merit  
1982 Order of Canada  
1983 Outstanding Public Service Award  
1985 IFLA Medal  
1969 DLS University of Ottawa  
1970 DLitt Mount Allison University  
1974 LLD University of Toronto  
1975 LLD University of Prince Edward Island  
1982 LLD Memorial University  
1984 LLD Concordia University

## Accomplishments:

Guy Sylvestre was a major figure in Canadian literature particularly in bridging the gap between French and English Canada with a number of important publications. He was literary critic for *Le Droit* in Ottawa from 1940 to 1949, the founder and editor of *Gants du ciel* and *Nouvelle canadienne* 1951-1956. A senior civil servant in the federal government, he worked for Louis St. Laurent in several capacities when St. Laurent was Minister of Justice, then Minister for External Affairs and lastly Prime Minister. He spent fifteen years at the Library of Parliament as Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, Associate Parliamentary Librarian and Acting Parliamentary Librarian until being named as Canada's second National Librarian in 1968.

During Dr. Sylvestre's term of office as National Librarian the National Library Act was substantially revised. Under his leadership there was a dramatic growth in the collections, programs, and services of the National Library, enabled by substantial increases in resources. In addition to building up the Library's Canadiana, official publications and reference collections and services, he oversaw the establishment of specialized collections and services in music, library documentation, children's literature, multilingual publications, literary manuscripts, handicapped persons and rare books (including the Jacob M. Lowy Collection of Hebraica and Judaica). The Canadian Book Exchange Centre was established. In partnership with CISTI a library system, DOBIS, was put in place and made accessible nationally. Major exhibitions, public programming and a major publications program became the norm. Core services such as legal deposit and national bibliographic and resource sharing services were strengthened. Library standards were put in place and a national decentralized network of libraries buttressed. The Canadian library community was involved through committees and task forces of librarians from across the country on groups ranging from the National Library Advisory Board to the Task Group on Cataloguing Standards, on matters such as MARC, cataloguing and other library standards, services to the handicapped, resource sharing and the Canadian Union Catalogue, and bibliographic services and most significantly on the future direction of the National Library with consultations around the project, *The Future of the National Library*. Guy Sylvestre played a strong role in the international library community establishing the Conference of Directors of National Libraries and supporting and contributing to many international initiatives such as ISDS, ISBN, and CONSER.Papers.

He was editor of *Le Droit* from 1940-1948; of *Gants du ciel*, 1943-1956; and *Nouvelle revue canadienne*, 1951-1956. He lectured at the University of Ottawa after 1954.

## Sources:

The [Fonds Guy Sylvestre](#) held by Library and Archives Canada.

McCormick, Paul. "National Librarian Guy Sylvestre, 1918–2010." *Feliciter* 56, no. 6 (2010): 237–238.

Patterson, Kelly. "Guy Sylvestre 1918-2010: 'he was a leading light'," *Ottawa Citizen*, November 21, 2010, p. B5.

The National Library of Canada and Canadian libraries: essays in honour of Guy Sylvestre. Montréal: ASTED, 1996.

Caya, Marcel (1996). "Le Fonds Guy-Sylvestre" in *National Library of Canada and Canadian libraries: essays in honour of Guy Sylvestre*, edited by Jean-Rémi Brault, Gwynneth Evans, and Richard Paré, pp. 165–171. Montréal: ASTED; and Ottawa: Canadian Library Association.

Godbout, Patricia (2004). "Guy Sylvestre, philosophe des lettres canadiennes." In *Traduction littéraire et sociabilité interculturelles au Canada*, pp. 13–66. Ottawa, Presses de l'université d'Ottawa.

Wyczynski, Paul. "Joseph Jean Guy Sylvestre" [Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

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