

William Kaye Lamb

b. 11 May 1904, New Westminster, BC; d. 24 Aug. 1999, Vancouver, BC.



William Kaye Lamb, c.1948: Credit Canadian Library Association.

Education:

1927 BA University of British Columbia

1928-1929 Studied at the Sorbonne and École libre des sciences politiques

1930 MA University of British Columbia

1933 PhD University of London School of Economics

Positions:

1934-1940 Provincial Librarian and Archivist, British Columbia

1936-1940 Superintendent, British Columbia Public Library Commission

1940-1948 Head Librarian, University of British Columbia

1948-1969 Dominion Archivist of Canada

1953-1969 National Librarian, National Library of Canada

Selected Publications:

This listing includes a sample of the extensive publications of Dr. Lamb.

A more complete listing can be found in the Bibliography of the Published Works of William Kaye Lamb published in [Archivaria vol. 15 in 1983](#).

Lamb, W. Kaye (1941?). The mystery of Mrs. Barkley's diary: notes on the voyage of the Imperial Eagle, 1786-87. Canada?: s.n.

Lamb, W. Kaye (1943). The founding of Fort Victoria. Victoria, B.C.: s.n., p. 71-92

Lamb, W. Kaye (1944?). A bibliography of the printed writings of Frederic William Howay. Compiled,

with a biographical introduction by W. Kaye Lamb. Vancouver?: s.n., p. 27–51.

Lamb, W. Kaye (1951). *The governorship of Richard Blanshard*. Victoria, B.C.: s.n.

Harmon, Daniel Williams (1957). *Sixteen years in the Indian country: the journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800-1816*. Edited with an introduction by W. Kaye Lamb. Toronto: Macmillan.

Lamb, W. Kaye (1962). *The hero of Upper Canada*. Toronto: Rous & Mann Press.

Union list of manuscripts in Canadian repositories = Catalogue collectif des manuscrits des archives canadiennes (1968). Director: W. Kaye Lamb. Ottawa: Queen's Printer.

Mackenzie, Sir Alexander (1970). *The journals and letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie*. Edited by W. Kaye Lamb. Cambridge, England: Published for the Hakluyt Society at the University Press.

Lamb, W. Kaye (1971). *Canada's five centuries: from discovery to present day*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill.

Lamb, W. Kaye (c1971). *The history of Canada: from discovery to present day*. New York: American Heritage Press.

Lamb, W. Kaye (1974). *Development of the National Archives: report*. Canberra: Australian Government Pub. Service.

Hacking, Norman R and W. Kaye Lamb (1974). *Princess story: a century and a half of west coast shipping*. Vancouver: Mitchell Press.

Hacking, Norman R and W. Kaye Lamb (1976). *The Princess story: a century and a half of West Coast shipping*, 2d ed. Vancouver: Mitchell Press.

Lamb, W. Kaye (1977). *History of the Canadian Pacific Railway*. New York: Macmillan.

Lamb, W. Kaye (1982). *F.W. Howay: a bibliography*. Vancouver: William Hoffer and Stephen Lunsford.

Vancouver, George (1984). *A voyage of discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and round the world, 1791-1795*. With an introduction and appendices, 4 vols. Edited by W. Kaye Lamb. London: Hakluyt Society.

Puget, Peter John (1990?). *Vancouver discovers Vancouver: an excerpt from the rough logs of Second Lieutenant Peter John Puget*. Edited by W.K. Lamb. Burnaby, B.C.: Vancouver Conference on Exploration and Discovery.

Lamb, W. Kaye (1991). *Empress to the Orient*. Vancouver: Vancouver Maritime Museum Society.

Harmon, Daniel Williams. *Harmon's journal, 1800-1819* (2006). [Edited by W. Kaye Lamb]; with a foreword by Jennifer S.H. Brown 1st TouchWood edition. Victoria, B.C.: TouchWood Editions.

Fraser, Simon (2007). *The letters and journals of Simon Fraser, 1806–1808*. Edited and introduced by W. Kaye Lamb. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Associations/Committees:

1939–1940 President, British Columbia Library Association

1945–1946 President, Pacific Northwest Library Association
1947–1948 President, Canadian Library Association
1953–1964 President, Champlain Society
1957–1958 President, Canadian Historical Association
1961–1962 President, Society of Archivists (Great Britain and Commonwealth)
1964–1965 President, Society of American Archivists
1965–1966 President, Royal Society of Canada

Honours:

1949 Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada
1969 Officer of the Order of Canada
1969 Honorary Member of the Bibliographical Society of Canada
LL.D. awarded by Canadian universities: British Columbia (1948), Manitoba (1953), Toronto (1954), Saskatchewan (1956), Assumption [now Windsor] (1958), Victoria (1964), McMaster (1966), New Brunswick (1967), York (1968).
D.S.Litt awarded by University of Victoria (Toronto), 1961
1965 J.B. Tyrell Historical Medal, Royal Society of Canada
1983 Festschrift in *Archivaria 15: Archives and Libraries: Essays in Honour of Dr. W. Kaye Lamb*
Awards created in his honour include: the Association of Canadian Archivists' W. Kaye Lamb Prize established in 1983, the Ex Libris Association and Canadian Library Association's W. Kaye Lamb Award for Service to Seniors established in 2002, and the British Columbia Historical Foundation's W. Kaye Lamb Scholarship.
The British Columbia Historical Federation began awarding a student scholarships on British Columbia history in his honour in 2001.

Accomplishments:

1937 Founded and edited the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* for ten years until 1946.
1936 Became Superintendent and Secretary of the BC Provincial Library Commission. He oversaw the development of the British Columbia Document Disposal Act.
From 1940 to 1948, he served as Librarian of the University of British Columbia, and that institution remained a very special connection for him for the rest of his life. As a result, not only does the Library hold records on his career there, but later in life, he donated a number of items to Special Collections including the bulk of his notes and papers relating to the major four-volume work he edited on the voyages of Captain George Vancouver, and a number of other records relating to works on the Pacific Northwest. Of very special interest to him at UBC was the Howay Reid Collection, a collection that he acquired for the Library. He had been a great friend of both Judge Howay and Robie Reid, and both during his lifetime and after his death, rare and/or valuable works relating to the exploration of the Pacific Northwest were donated to UBC to supplement this collection.
From 1948 to 1969 he served as Dominion Archivist during which time he greatly broadened the scope of the archives, incorporating film, television and sound archives, and he also created a comprehensive federal program for the management of government information holdings.
From 1953 to 1968 he was Canada's National Librarian: he built the library service into a world-class institution.
Dr. Lamb carried out surveys of library and archival institutions in Nigeria and Guinea for the Ford Foundation in 1961 and undertook a major archival study for the Government of Australia in 1973.

Papers:

Some archival material held at the Vancouver Maritime Museum. Archival description in the BCAUL at <http://memorybc.ca/william-kaye-lamb-collection;rad>. Accessed May 9, 2013. The major portion of Dr. Lamb's private and professional papers and his books, however, are housed in other institutions.

Recording his early career, the Archives of British Columbia holds some papers listed in the Government Records Catalogue, GR-1738, and occasional references in the Non-Government Records Catalogue, e.g. MS-1240 and MS-0207. These cover the period of time when he was in Victoria, serving as Provincial Librarian and Archivist, 1934-40.

He is represented in the University of British Columbia in the [Lamb Research Collection](#) which contains 1.3 m of textual records and in the Library fonds, 1908-1995.

From 1948 until 1969, he was in Ottawa, where he was first appointed as Dominion Archivist in 1947 and later as Canada's first National Librarian in 1953. The bulk of his papers, both official and private, generated during those years are in the Library and Archives of Canada in the [W. Kaye Lamb Fonds \[multiple media\]](#) 1949-1998, Reference R9380-0-3-E, MG 31-D8 which contains 10.34 m. of textual records. A copy of the finding aid to these holdings, [Finding Aid 1644](#), [PDF download] is included in Series 1 Personal Papers and Biographical Materials.

Sources:

Canadian Who's Who, volume 23, p. 486 (1988).

Stuart-Stubbs, Basil. [William Kaye Lamb: a Eulogy](#). August 31, 1999. [PDF accessed May 1, 2013]

Stuart-Stubbs, Basil. "[William Kaye Lamb](#)." Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada 38, no. 2 (2000): 26-32. [PDF accessed Nov. 8, 2023]

Association of Canadian Archivists. [W. Kaye Lamb Prize](#). [Accessed April 15, 2023]

Cook, Terry. "[An Archival Revolution: W. Kaye Lamb and the Transformation of the Archival Profession](#)." Archivaria 60, 2005: 185-234. [PDF Accessed April 1, 2026]

Evans, Gwynneth, Elizabeth Hawkins and Joan Honeywell. [Bibliography of the Published Works of William Kaye Lamb](#). Archivaria 15, 1983: 131-144. [PDF accessed August 15, 2013]

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