

Ivan Doig and the UW Libraries: a History

Ivan Doig was born in White Sulphur Springs, Montana in 1939, and grew up along the Rocky Mountain Front where much of his writing takes place. A former ranch hand, newspaperman, and magazine editor, Doig is a graduate of Northwestern University and holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington.

His first book, the highly acclaimed memoir *This House of Sky*, was a finalist for the National Book Award. His most recent novel, *Prairie Nocturne*, will be published in the autumn of this year. Mr. Doig lives in Seattle with his wife Carol.

The following is taken from a talk by Mr. Doig on the occasion of the University Libraries Literary Salon in December 2002. He recalls a tour of Suzzallo Library renovations given to him by Betsy Wilson, Director of University Libraries and Marjan Petty, then Director of Development.

Back in September, Betsy and Marjan were giving me a perfectly nice innocuous tour of the library renovations until we strolled into the Smith Room (down there where we've all just had beverages in our hands). There I made the mistake of thinking out loud while I was gawking around. "Hmm," I heard myself humming, "thirty-six years ago about now, I wandered into this room to start to try to learn how to be a history grad student."

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So, in what I guarantee you will be a brief remembrance of things shelved, I stand before you in the unsought role of the Proust of the Smith Room. Because, the fact is I indelibly know what lined the walls of that history-redolent room back then: rare books. That area of Suzzallo then housed Special Collections—which included the Pacific Northwest Collection, my particular interest as a rookie grad student—and the librarian in charge there, Bob Monroe, lived and breathed the printed word. ...

Tonight you are with fourteen of us who spend our waking hours, and most of our subliminal ones as well, trying our utmost

to write work that will last. I'm the one up here talking because I came out on the short end of that pounce by Betsy and Marjan, so while I'm at it anyway I may as well be the writers' designated bragger, too. Since our various pedigrees are on the list that came with the invitations, I'll simply sum up that at the tables with you are Northwest writers with so many attainments and awards that if we wore them to occasions like this we'd clank when we walked.

But books such as ours don't simply pop out of us every so often. ... Probably every writer here has similar library tales to tell, but in my own case, every one of my books—on the brink of being ten, now—has had to have research done under this roof. A lot of it in the kind of library holdings that don't come cheap, because they take up space almost out to infinity. I slipped into the stacks to grab off this piece of show-and-tell. In the novel I've just written, *Prairie Nocturne*, some of my characters alight into New York in the period between the world wars. I needed to know what details of New York city life would have made the strongest impressions on newcomers. Snoozing right out here on the shelves are memoirs and impressionistic works which were the perfect forgotten eyewitnesses I needed. This one happens to be *The Silent Traveler in New York*, by a Chinese poet, Chiang Yee—full of scenes from Central Park and Harlem and all the rest, with detailed sketches and prints. I was the first person to check this book out in seven years, and only two other users before me back to about 1990. Hardly any demand for books like these, until I or one of the other of this literary gang of fourteen shows up needing precisely books like these.

Other material I've used here would make financial bean-counters faint away because they require specialized caretaking just short of black magic. To give you my most boggling example, although just one of many,



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But, try justifying caring for a 1948 phone book, or this little non-bestseller, to a legislative budget committee in these tattered economic times. I will frankly tell you, as a devout user of the place, there have been times in past years and years of budget cuts when I thought the pulse of this library was slipping dangerously. It's little short of a miracle that Betsy and her predecessor managed to squeeze out of Olympia and elsewhere the funding not only to shore this building up against earthquake threat, but to bring back logic, elegance and convenience in its use. Of course now the place needs to be kept going, in something like the style to which we all want to stay accustomed, which is a need that you as supporters of this library are well familiar with. And just on the outside chance that you might ever be in for a pounce from Betsy and Marjan, I can assure you it's a positively life-enhancing experience.

Let me just leave you with this, and the living evidence of literary perseverance sitting there with you at each of your tables. All books are rare books. Each one comes from a curious, one-of-a-kind combination of writerly determination and available lore. When that lore isn't adequately preserved, in a community trove such as Suzzallo, the consequent muteness—the gaps of silence as budget cuts take away and take away—costs us as writers and you as readers in ideas and eloquence and possibilities for directions of our lives. But when the lore is kept alive and ready, and you turn the pages of what we write, the miraculous whisper of the paper begins here.

—Ivan Doig

Dec. 13 '02

Betsy, hi--

Marjan no doubt told you I was dubious about providing my Dec. 11 talk for *Directions* because of the Internet problem--any carefully crafted phrase I ever let go onto there is out there for all time, free to be picked up by future audiences before I can use it on them. (I've actually had the heart-stopping experience lately of hearing my introducer using what I had intended to be the climax graf of my speech--he'd of course nabbed it from the Web.) But looking over my script, I decided most of it was specific enough to your event, and I could just nick out phrases I particularly want to reuse. So, here 'tis, with a few pertinent ellipses, for your newsletter use. And strictly for archival purposes, the full text of that night is on the bigger-print white pages.

Carol and I had a good time, and everybody else seemed to, too. We talked on the way home about the notable lack of blazing literary jealousies that there likely would have been in, say, New York. I guess Northwest writers just don't get it. Thank God. Anyway, let's you and Dean and us socialize some on our own in the new year; I think Betty Mayfield intends to be the catalyst, but we can always draw straws. In the meantime, happy holidays. Carol and I intend to be off to Tucson Jan. 22-29, and will tickle the Bengstons in the ribs for everybody.

Best,

Suzallo talk, Dec. 11 '02

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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

October 1, 2002

Ivan Doig
17277 15th Avenue NW
Seattle, WA 98177-3846

Dear Ivan:

On November 14, 2002, 2:30 pm, the University of Washington Libraries is celebrating the reopening of the University's "grande dame," Suzzallo Library, after an extensive 2-year seismic renovation. I do hope your schedule will allow you to attend. The dedication also coincides with Suzzallo's 75th year of service to our community of students, faculty and citizen scholars.

To highlight this important benchmark and to recognize the friends and donors that have helped us flourish over the years, we are planning an intimate dinner in the glorious, newly renovated Smith Room on **Wednesday, December 11, 2002**, beginning with a reception at 6:30 pm. As you are aware, this event is loosely titled a "Literary Salon" and the idea is for each table to feature poets or writers. You have already agreed to attend, and we are seeking approximately 8-10 other literary stars to join you. It will be a period of interesting and invigorating conversation with those at the reception and at your table during dinner. Those invited will be donors or potential donors. As Director of the University Libraries, I will make some brief remarks.

Carol would be encouraged to accompany you – and both of you would be our guests for dinner. It will be a fine opportunity to share your proficiency and creativity while helping the UW Libraries honor its donors, and also encouraging others to sustain the quality of library acquisitions and services.

We look forward to seeing you soon. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Marjan Petty at (206) 685-1973 or email mcpetty@u.washington.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy".

Lizabeth (Betsy) Wilson
Director of University Libraries

Kevin O'Morrison

Playwright, Novelist, Lyricist

10120 240th Place SW

Edmonds, WA 98020

Phone: 206-542-7300

E-mail: k.omorrison@attbi.com

Website: <http://kevin-omorrison.com>

A Literary Salon UW Libraries



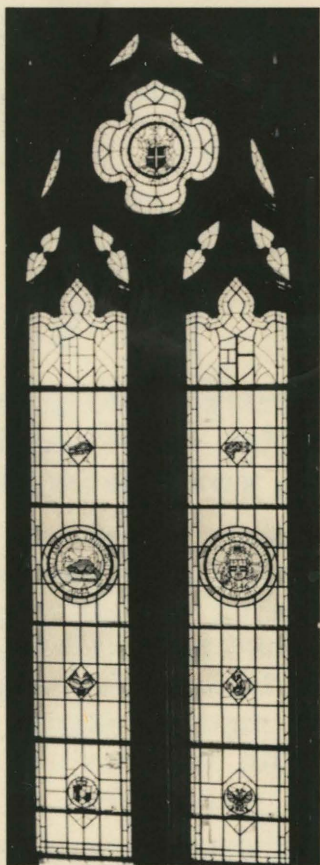
**As a special friend of the
University of Washington
Libraries, you are invited.....**

Come mix and mingle with some of the areas' best known literary stars during a reception in the newly renovated Smith Room in Suzzallo Library. Following the reception, enjoy an elegant seated dinner with the writer or poet of your choice.

Date: Wednesday, December 11, 2002
Reception starts at 6:30 PM
Location: Smith Room, Suzzallo Library
(Enter through west entrance)
RSVP: Complete and return the enclosed response card **by December 2nd.**
Space is limited.
Inquiries: Call Ms. Marjan Petty at
206.685.1973

The stars of our literary salon include:

**Linda Bierds * William Calvin *
Charles Cross * Ivan Doig * GM Ford *
Tess Gallagher * David Guterson *
JA Jance * Bharti Kirchner *
Suzanne Lebsack * Heather McHugh *
Skye Kathleen Moody *
Kevin O'Morrison * Emily White**
Please turn the card for parking information



Parking is available in the underground Central Plaza Garage, located on 15th Avenue. Walk up through the garage to Suzzallo Library. Please enter Suzzallo through the main west entrance from Red Square. Someone will be there to direct you to the Smith Room.

To request disability accommodations, contact the Office of the ADA Coordinator at least 10 days in advance of the event. 206-543-6450 (voice); 206-543-6452(TDD); 206-685-3885(fax); access@u.washington.edu(email)

Suzallo talk, Dec. 11 '02

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walls of the Smith Room sang in all the wonderful old tongues of lasting books.

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But books such as ours don't simply pop out of us every so often. It's not as if writers live in an aquarium--the writer floating dreamily all day long in the fluid of thought and word, and at supertime the figure of God--in the unlikely disguise of a literary critic--drops in the fish food. / No, we writers often have to hang out around those singing walls of other books, to find what's needed for our own. Probably every writer here has similar library tales to tell, but in my own case, every one of my books--on the brink of being ten, now--has had to have research done under this roof. A lot of it in the kind of library holdings that don't come cheap, because they take up space almost out to infinity. ~~and~~

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UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES LITERARY SALON STARS

LINDA BIERDS is the author of seven books of poetry, including *Heart and Perimeter*, *The Ghost Trio*, and *The Profile Makers*. Her work has appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Parnassus*, and other publications. Her many awards include fellowships from Guggenheim, the National Endowment for the Arts, a 1998 MacArthur Foundation "genius grant", and three Pushcart Prizes for poetry. Bierds lives on Bainbridge Island and is faculty with the Creative Writing Program at the UW.

WILLIAM CALVIN, Ph.D., is a theoretical neurobiologist, Affiliate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the UW. He is the author of 11 books about the brain and evolution including *A Brain for All Seasons: Human Evolution and Abrupt Climate Change*, *The Throwing Madonna*, *The Cerebral Symphony*, *The River That Runs Uphill*, *The Cerebral Code* and *How Brains Think*.

CHARLES R. CROSS was affiliated as editor and publisher with *The Rocket*, a biweekly music and entertainment magazine based in Seattle and Portland from 1986 to 2000. He is a graduate of the UW where he was Editor of *The Daily*. Cross is also the author/coauthor of four books: *Heavier Than Heaven: The Biography of Kurt Cobain*, *Nevermind: The Classic Album*; *Backstreets: Springsteen, the Man and His Music*; *Led Zeppelin: Heaven and Hell* and his writing has appeared in many national and regional magazines.

IVAN DOIG grew up in Montana in a family of sheep ranchers. He worked as an editorial writer in Decatur, Illinois, and as an assistant editor for the Rotarian magazine in Kranston. Doig is a graduate of Northwestern University (BA, MA, Journalism). He also has a Ph.D. in history from the UW. In 1989 the Western Literature Association honored him with its Distinguished Achievement Award. His books include *This House of Sky*; *Landscapes of a Western Mind*, *Winter Brothers: A Season on the Edge of America*, *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*, *Ride With Me*, *Mariah Montana*, and *The Sea Runners*.

GM FORD has been an English teacher at one level or another for over twenty years, so when a midlife crisis struck, he had the tools to turn to writing. A longtime fan of detective stories, he sold the very first book he wrote: *Who In Hell Is Wanda Fuca?* featuring private eye Leo Waterman. The book picked up nominations for both the Shamus and Anthony awards. He has written such novels as *Fury*, *The Deader The Better*, *Last Ditch*, and *Cast in Stone*.

TESS GALLAGHER, a poet, essayist, novelist, and playwright, was born in Port Angeles. She received a BA and MA from the UW and a MFA from the University of Iowa. Her honors include a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, two National Endowment of the Arts Awards, the Maxine Cushing Gray Foundation Award, and the Elliston Award for "best book of poetry published by a small press" for the collection, *Instructions to the Double*. Her recent collections include *Willingly*, *My Black Horse: New and Selected Poems*, *Owl-Spirit Dwelling* and *Moon Crossing Bridge*.

DAVID GUTERSON, born in Seattle, received his MA from the UW. After moving to Bainbridge Island, Guterson taught English at the local high school and began writing for *Sports Illustrated* and *Harper's* magazine, where he is a contributing editor. His books include *The Country Ahead of Us*, *the Country Behind*, *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense*, *East of the Mountains* and *Snow Falling on Cedars*, which won the 1995 PEN/Faulkner Award.

JA JANCE has degrees in English and Secondary Education and earned her M. Ed. in Library Science in 1970. She grew up in Bisbee, Arizona and went on to teach English on an Indian reservation and sell life insurance before becoming a writer. Jance has been happily married

for the last twelve years to Bill Schilb. Between them they have five grown children. She is the author of fourteen J.P. Beaumont books, including 1993's American Mystery award-winning *Failure to Appear*, and six Joanna Brady Mystery novels, including her recent *Partners in Crime*.

BHARTI KIRCHNER was born in India, and worked as a software systems engineer in San Francisco. Kirchner is the author of two novels and four cookbooks. She has won a GAP grant from the Artist Trust of Seattle and two Seattle Arts Commission grants in literature. Her novels include *Shiva Dancing* and *Sharmilas' Book*. Her third novel, *Darjeeling*, will be published this year. Bharti has written over 50 articles for magazines and her short stories have appeared in *The Lynx Eye*, *The Land of Nod*, and *Metropolis*.

SUZANNE LEBSOCK, UW Professor of History, received her BA from Carleton College in Minnesota and her MA and PhD from the University of Virginia. Lebsock held a Guggenheim Fellowship and is the author of many scholarly articles and two books, one of which won the 1985 Bancroft Prize for the best book in American History. She was also the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, sometimes called a "genius" award. Her work includes *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, *A Share of Honour: Virginia Women, 1600-1945*, and *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status & Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860*. Her new book, *A Murder in Virginia*, is to be published in March by W. W. Norton.

HEATHER MCHUGH earned her BA from Harvard University and her MA in English Literature from the University of Denver. She is the Milliman Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at the UW and has won awards from many organizations including the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, PEN (Voelcker Poetry Award), Wellesley College (Sara Teasdale Award), and, together with her husband, translator Nikolai Popov, the 2001 Griffin Prize for Poetry in the International Category. Additionally, McHugh was named a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 1999, and in 2000 a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is the author of many books of poetry and literary essays, including *Hinge & Sign: Poems 1968-1993*, *Broken English: Poetry and Partiality* and *The Father of the Predicaments*.

Writer, photographer, journalist, and former East African bush guide, **SKYE KATHLEEN MOODY**'s work as has taken her around the world. Her first book, *Hillbilly Women* received a Mademoiselle Magazine "Woman of the Year" award, and was adapted for the stage. Moody's second book of narrative nonfiction, *Fruits of Our Labor: Soviet & American Workers Talk About Making a Living* received a National Endowment for the Humanities president's award. Her first work of fiction, *Rain Dance* was nominated for the "Spotted Owl" Award. *K Falls* is Moody's fifth novel in her series about endangered species. She is a member of PEN American Center, and teaches creative writing at the UW.

KEVIN O'MORRISON started his professional career in Orson Welles' and John Houseman's Mercury Theatre. After appearing in more than 50 TV shows, O'Morrison turned to playwrighting and fiction. His three novels are *The Dead File*, *The Passion of Brian Loftus* and *Honey*. His plays include *Helen of Troy Tells What Really Happened*, *The Morgan Yard* and *Ladyhouse Blues*. O'Morrison's recognition includes an NEA Playwright Fellow, CAPS Playwright Fellow and Winner of the National Repertory Theatre First Prize for Playwrighting.

EMILY WHITE is a writer and former editor of *The Stranger*. Her work has been published in *Quarterly West*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Spin*, *The Village Voice*, *LA Weekly*, and *Newsday*. *Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes the Myth of the Slut* is her recently published nonfiction book about girls who endured "slut" reputations in high school. Emily was also a Stegner Fellow at Stanford, a Hedgebrook Colony artist-in-residence, and a contributing editor to the now defunct online literary magazine *Open Letters*.

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- 6:30 Smith

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& Linda

- Kevin O'Morrison

Janet Jones & Shelly Jones / husband / Corn

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Hatch firm

Ellen, B. Lom ~~&~~ Don

(B. Lom account / Lecture)

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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Carol + Ivan -

Looking forward to
seeing you! Ivan,
would you be willing to
say a few words (2-3 min)
encouraging donors to support
the
libraries?

Marjan Petty
Director of Development
University Libraries

482 Allen Library
Box 352900
Seattle, WA 98195-2900
206-685-1973 206-543-1760 FAX: 206-685-8727
mcpetty@u.washington.edu

I will
call you
dva
C

Bob Monroe's suggestions for mug shots for Eng Creek characters:

**NWC WPA pics

--Museum of History and Industry, Mary Gaunt librarian, for newspaper morgue shots.