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Stephen Brooks  
Editor

# Promoting Canadian Studies Abroad

Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

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Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy

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## PREFACE

Every Canadianist has a story. It explains how he or she came to study Canada and why, through their research and writing, their teaching, the guidance they provide to the graduate students, and the many administrative tasks they may perform, they have made the study of Canada an important part of their professional life. I have heard many of these stories over the years. One of the things that has long struck me about them, indeed the thread that runs through almost all of them regardless of the particularities of each case, is the enthusiasm for the subject and the conviction that the study of what Bruce Hutchison famously called “The Unknown Country” has relevance beyond the borders of Canada.

I first became aware of this while teaching an American politics course in Leuven, Belgium. That country was in the process of adopting a federal constitution. During my year there, I was asked to give talks on the relations between the French- and English-speaking communities in Canada, on Canada’s federal model, and on the independence movement in Quebec. Several years later, and like many thousands before me, I was fortunate enough to be a Fulbright Scholar in the United States. It was during that year that I was introduced to what was then a thriving community of American scholars who had created an impressive national and many regional and state networks for sharing their research and teaching experiences and interacting with colleagues from Canada and other countries. My first direct encounter with this vibrant community of Canadianists was at Columbus, Ohio, where I learned about the hundreds of students who registered each year in Bowling Green State

University's Canadian Studies course each year. The energy and the organization of those who attended this two-day conference was remarkable. It was and continues to be found, if on a diminished scale, across the United States.

Thanks mainly to Jean-Michel Lacroix, the dean of Canadianists in France, I was privileged to hold the Chair in Canadian Studies at the Université de Paris 3 in 2007–2008. Used as they are to imagining that peoples throughout the world admire them and know about their country and its accomplishments, Canadians are usually surprised to learn that only the first of these two beliefs is true. I was struck during that year in France at how little real knowledge of Canada would have existed without the dedication and tireless efforts of French Canadianists. As I quickly found in the courses that I taught in Paris, the fact that goodwill to Canada already exists opens the door and creates a receptiveness among students to learn more about a place, a society and its history that are often hidden in the long shadow of Canada's southern neighbor.

This interest in hearing more about Canada's story exists in countries across much of the world. I recall speaking to a group of professors, graduate students, and state officials in Warsaw on the subject of Canada's immigration policy, labor markets, and multiculturalism. It was a moment in time when the Polish government was considering admitting thousands of workers from China to help improve its transportation infrastructure. In Belgrade I had the chance to speak to a group of international studies students and professors on Canada–US relations and to give a talk on Canada at the opening of a Canadian resource center at another university. Hundreds of Canadianists can tell similar stories. More recently I have been fortunate to assist Sciences Po Lille in placing French students with Canadian parliamentarians as part of that university's excellent internship program. Some of these students will go on to become opinion leaders and decision-makers and will have knowledge, memories, and personal contacts in Canada that may influence their professional activities and, to some degree, the image of Canada that they project to fellow leaders and to citizens in their home country.

Today, the university courses, the invited talks, the seminars and conferences, the Canada Day activities, the internships, the student and faculty exchanges, the visits to Canada, the research and all the other activities that make up the tapestry of Canadian studies across the world continue with very little in the way of financial support from the

Canadian state. Interest in Canada predated the active promotion of academic cultural diplomacy (or, for that matter, any form of public diplomacy) by the Canadian state. This interest continues, if more modestly, since Ottawa's retreat from this support in 2012. The irony is that we live in an age in which the idea that national branding and national standing are important is accepted by most politicians, as is the widespread belief that because of globalization it has never been more important to be able to compete with other national brands clamoring for attention on the world stage. For a country that aspires to have influence on that stage, to turn its back on a key tool of public diplomacy seems rather odd, to say the least.

This book tells the stories of Canadian studies in various parts of the world. In deciding which countries and, in the case of German, language communities to include, I was mindful that I risked offending the many other national and regional associations of Canadianists whose stories are not told in this volume. Cases such as those of the American, British, and French Canadian studies communities had to be included because of the size of their respective memberships, the fact that their pre-institutionalized histories of studying Canada go back many decades, and that all three of these countries have, in their different ways, rather special and intimate relationships to Canada. In selecting the other cases, the size of membership in Canadian studies associations and the scale of their activities were factors also taken into account. But so too were the unique characteristics of each case and also the importance of including non-Western stories in this examination of Canadian studies and cultural diplomacy. We have endeavored to explain the origins, development, and significance of Canadian studies in each national case. At the same time, however, we have attempted to examine the ways in which the academic form of cultural diplomacy can and does contribute to a country's image by encouraging and supporting the individuals and institutions that generate and project this image abroad.

In *Le Temps retrouvé*, Marcel Proust writes, "Un livre est un grand cimetière où sur la plupart des tombes on ne peut plus lire les noms effacés." (A book is a big cemetery where the names have been erased from most of the headstones.) The same may also be said when it comes to the influences that have contributed to the decision to write a particular book. One may think that this or that person, event, or other influence was decisive, but overlook the importance of others. I will

only say that I feel especially indebted to David Biette, Mark Kasoff, and Jean-Michel Lacroix, the three of whom are exemplars of Canadian studies abroad. Canadians have been fortunate to have had such unofficial ambassadors.

Windsor, Canada  
Lille, France

Stephen Brooks

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