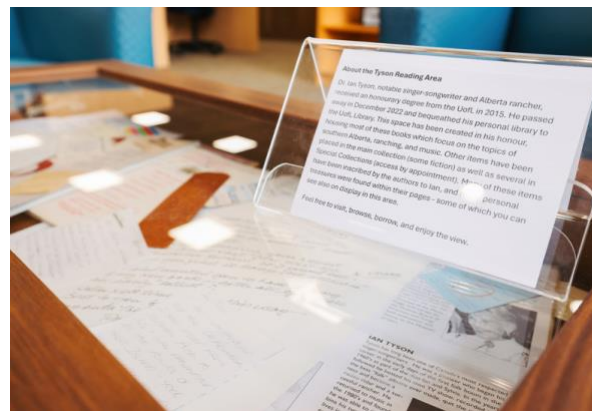


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Ian Tyson Reading Area pays homage to legacy of Canadian country music icon

Authentic just might be the most apt word to describe Canadian country music icon, the late Dr. Ian D. Tyson (LLD '15). Nicole Eva, the University of Lethbridge's Associate University Librarian, discovered that fact and so much more about the ULethbridge honorary degree recipient when combing through Tyson's personal library, which he bequeathed to the University upon his death in 2022.

"It was quite remarkable as we were going through the books and the kinds of themes that we identified, it was very clear that he lived his persona," says Eva. "If you were to think of what types of books Ian Tyson might be interested in, it was exactly what you would imagine — southern Alberta, ranching, rodeo, cowboys, horses, western art, cowboy art, folk music. If the kind of books you collect speak to your legacy, he was the real deal."



Those books, and associated memorabilia, are now celebrated in the University Library in the form of the Ian Tyson Reading Area. The sun-drenched nook on the southwest corner of Level 10 features a seating area, shelves of books from [Tyson's collection](#) and a glass table display with an assortment of notes, letters, event tickets and assorted treasures.

"Many of the books have notes written in them or are inscribed by people who gave books to him, while others had ticket stubs or poems and hand-written notes stuffed in them," describes Eva. "It's a very personal collection and we wanted to find a way to display those items, so we had them inset in a glass table. The ticket stubs from Nashville to Denver and the cowboy poetry gathering every year in Elko, there's a whole story and legacy there that we want people to experience."

Tyson produced many popular and critically acclaimed folk songs reflecting rural culture in Alberta. He has been inducted into the Juno Hall of Fame, the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame and the Western Music Association Hall of Fame, is a member of the Order of Canada, was inducted into the Alberta Order of Excellence, and has received a Governor General's Performing Arts Award and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

His choosing ULEthbridge to safeguard his legacy through the display and use of his personal library speaks to the relationship the University cultivated with him over the years. In addition to Tyson receiving an honorary degree in 2015, he served as the headline musical act when ULEthbridge celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2007.

“To be part of Dr. Tyson’s planned giving decision is very gratifying for the University because it highlights the shared values we enjoyed, the personal relationship we developed and the trust he had in us utilizing his library in a way that kept not only his legacy alive, but that of the culture he cherished,” says Erika Scott, Director, Philanthropy & Information Services.

Eva says the library kept just over 300 titles with 260 displayed and another 50 placed in special collections due to their value. Titles that fell out of the scope of what fit at the ULEthbridge Library were donated to [Better World Books](#). And while the library does not often encourage or accept donations, Tyson’s library fit within the scope and the mandate of their southern Alberta focus.

“Once we started to go through the collection, we found a number of really niche books you would have a hard time finding anywhere else that explored southern Alberta themes, so this just seemed like a natural home for them,” she says. “There are a number of items that could be used for research purposes but also, I’m really hoping the public finds out about this, because I think they’d find it very interesting.”

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/ian-tyson-reading-area-pays-homage-legacy-canadian-country-music-icon>

PHOTOS:

Tyson-1: The Tyson Reading Area

Tyson-2: Books on display from Ian Tyson’s personal collection

Tyson-3: A memorabilia table within the Tyson Reading Area

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Our University’s Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.