



**YORK UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

**Inventory of the  
Ruskin Literary and Debating Society fonds**

**Inventory #F0400**

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## F0400 - Ruskin Literary and Debating Society fonds

**Fonds/Collection Number:** F0400

**Title:** Ruskin Literary and Debating Society fonds

**Dates:** 1900-1993

**Extent:** 1.3 m of textual records  
ca. 150 photographs : col and b&w ; 45 x 40 cm or smaller

**Biographical Sketch/  
Administrative History:** The Ruskin Literary and Debating Society was established in Toronto in 1900 as a voluntary organization devoted to literature and discussion of topics of the day. The second meeting of the Society witnessed debates on government ownership of railways, canals and gas companies. James Simpson, the Toronto labour politician was a member of the Society in its first decade. While it continued to meet annually throughout the century, by the 1960s the membership began to decline, and reforms to the constitution were introduced, the result of which led to a revitalization of the society in the 1970s. In the 1980s' topics of debate at society meetings included, an elected senate for Canada, the banning of nuclear arms, the reinstatement of capital punishment, immigration laws, and the Meech Lake constitutional proposal. The officers of the Society include an honorary president, a secretary, a historian, and a critic whose role is to offer criticism of the members' debating styles, arguments and presentation. The society holds an annual banquet, and bequeaths prizes to members in the areas of best essay, and best debating skills. Each meeting of the society is presented with a programme of discussion topics.

**Scope and Content:** The fonds consists of minutes of the Ruskin Literary and Debating Society (1909-1993) [incomplete], reports of the critic (1920-1983), constitutions and by-laws, correspondence, invitations, lists of officers and members (1964-1991) [incomplete], financial records (1964-1979), histories of the Society, lists of prize winners, programmes of events (1904-1988) [incomplete], banquet programmes, and memorabilia, including photographs of meetings and members, the Society stamp and related objects.

**Restrictions on  
Access and Use:** Some access restrictions apply. Consult the University Archives for details.  
No duplication allowed.

**Finding Aid:** File lists available.

**URL of Finding Aid:** <http://archivesfa.library.yorku.ca/fonds/ON00370-f0000400.htm>

**Accruals:** The fonds comprises the following accessions: 1993-007, 1997-043. Further accruals are expected.

**Provenance Access Points:** Ruskin Literary and Debating Society