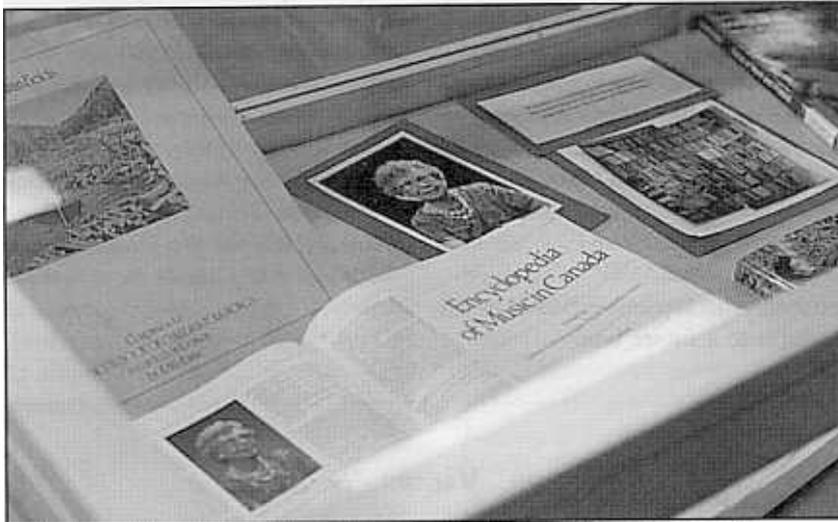


## Edith Fowke: A Celebration

Ada-Marie Atkins Nechka

On March 31, 1997, the University of Calgary hosted a celebration to honour the work of Edith Fowke and to acknowledge her generous donations and recent bequest. Approximately 30 friends, colleagues, faculty and staff gathered on the fourth floor of the Library Block to review Edith Fowke's personal library bequeathed to the University Library. The 1996 bequest significantly complements her earlier donations to the Special Collections area of the Library, of books, archival materials, and sound recordings. Guests were invited for refreshments and to listen to tributes delivered by Tom Eadie, Director, University Library, and Professor Lois Choksy, Head of the Department of Music. A display of previously donated materials and a copy of one of Edith's books, *A Family Heritage: The Story and Songs of LaRena Clark*, published in 1994 by the University of Calgary Press, were included as part of the celebration.



Tom Eadie acknowledged the significance of the collection, which adds greatly to the Library's resources in Canadian Music and Folklore, and thanked the Estate of Edith Fowke. Although Edith's husband, Mr. Frank Fowke, who resides in Toronto, was not able to attend the celebration, he was sent copies of the tributes, guest book, and photos taken at the event. The University Library thankfully acknowledges Mr. Fowke's cooperation and assistance in preparing the materials for shipment from Toronto to the University of Calgary. Professor Jeanette Panagapka, Department of Music, Lynn Van Hyfte, Fund Development Office, Apollonia Steele, Special Collections Librarian, William Sgrazzutti, Music Librarian, University of Calgary, and Dr. Skye Morrison, Sheridan College, Ontario, are also to be thanked for their efforts in ensuring the collection arrived safely and will be available for generations of researchers.

Professor Choksy, who worked closely with Edith Fowke, gave those in attendance a more personal view of Edith Fowke the woman and remembered Fowke's presence in Calgary during the 1980s, when she came here to teach folk music in the Kodaly programme: "The experience was wonderful on both sides. The students took great delight in her stories and her songs, and, for her part, Edith enjoyed the students here. She had never taught musicians before. Her classes at York University were in folklore, not folk music, and her students were mostly English majors. She took great pleasure in her classes of 100-and-more

students here, who lustily sang every example she introduced."

Also in attendance was Dr. Richard Johnston, Professor Emeritus, Department of Music, and former Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts, who has acknowledged his work with Edith. "Thanks to her and her collaborators ... the work of the music teacher in the classroom has now been made richer and easier," noted Dr. Johnston, who added, "This fine material ... will always be fresh and will continue to serve researchers and educators."

Professor Panagapka reminded listeners that, although "Canada lost a national treasure when Edith Fowke died in March 1996," her work will be carried on, thanks in no small measure to the archival material dedicated on this occasion. "... Edith Fowke donated her collection of 150 field recordings (representing 2000 songs) and a bequest of 1000 books relating to folk music and folklore, which will be housed in the Music Collection and other areas of the MacKimmie Library.

"During the month of January 1997, Dr. László Vikár began the task of musical transcription. He was able to notate and analyse 90 songs from one singer, O.J. Abbott. Working with him on this research will be Lois Choksy, Janos Horvath, Jeanette Panagapka, and graduate students. Much of the text is still to be transcribed, and then it will be transferred to computer notation. There is enough material from this singer alone to form the basis of publication. Dr. Vikár will continue to oversee as well as to work on this material during his summer visits to Calgary. The initial analysis indicates that most of these songs are story-telling ballads which originated in Ireland. Many of them are in a major key and 6/8 meter."

Other guests included Dr. Jānis Svilpis, Department of English, Dr. T. B. Rogers, Department of Psychology, former President of the CSTM and editor of the *Bulletin*, and Dr. George W. Lyon, Mount Royal College. Many of those in attendance are eager to utilize the impressive collection which Edith Fowke amassed during her lifetime dedicated to Canadian folk music. The archival collection includes material relating to her activities in the Canadian Society for Traditional Music, whose *Journal* she edited from its inception until her death. The Society's archive is also held in the Special Collections area. This archive is, readers should remember, available for use by all Society members.