

Frontispiece



An unrealised project by Paul Landon

On 1 August 1953, under Reorganization Plan No. 8, the United States Information Agency (USIA) was created as an independent organization within the Executive Branch responsible for the U.S. government's information and cultural programs. Overseas, USIA became the United States Information Service (USIS). Since then, USIS libraries and reading rooms have been opened in virtually every country with which the United States maintains diplomatic relations. Today, there are an estimated 180 worldwide.

Manning, Martin, "The Cover," *Libraries & the Cultural Record*, Volume 36, Number 1, Winter 2001, pp. 267-274 (Article) University of Texas Press

Beyond building libraries, The United States Information Service was responsible for the content, design and construction of the pavilions of the United States at all the world expositions since 1958. These pavilions included the Biosphere designed by Buckminster Fuller for the world exposition in Montreal in 1967. The empty geodesic frame of this structure remains visible against the Montreal skyline, one of a few remnants of the exposition, a lonely reminder its promises.

The central library of *Université du Québec à Montréal* (UQAM) holds a collection of books that were a donation from the USIS, books given to the library in the late 1960s, around the time of the Montreal exposition. One of these is an edition of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories translated by Charles Baudelaire. According to the frontispiece affixed inside the front cover of the edition of *Le Scarabée d'or*, the books were donated to the library "in the interests of better understandings between the peoples of the United States and Canada."

A number of questions are posed by the existence of these books and their provenance. UQAM was founded in 1968, part of a response to a lack of places of higher learning for the French-speaking minority in Canada; it quickly became, and still is, the institutional catalyst for the Nationalist movement in Quebec. We know that the United States Information Service was mostly dismantled in the 1990s after the end of the Cold War. For how long were books donated to the university's libraries by the service? How many books did the university receive? Which books are they?

I began a project to catalogue all of the books donated to UQAM by the USIS. I had intended to have them reprinted and rebound as a collection, a sampling of texts that could be read in order to understand better the relationships between Canada and the United States in the 1960s. An initial search on the Internet and on the UQAM library servers provided no information on the books donated. I was wary of asking the UQAM librarians about the books; I did not want to be seen to be putting into question the former policy and politics of the university.

My project is to be carried out by a methodical and ongoing process of looking in the front cover of every book in UQAM's libraries for the USIS frontispiece. When I have located and identified all of these books, my project will be realised.



This book was
presented to Université
du Québec à Montréal

in the interests of
better understanding
between the peoples
of the United States
and Canada

UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE

Le Livre Club du Libraire
11, RUE DE SÈVRES
PARIS



VINGT DESSINS
A LA PLUME
DE
LOUIS JAMES

Edgar Allan Poe

le
**Scarabée
d'OR**

SUIVI DE

**23 Histoires
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TRADUCTION
DE

Charles Baudelaire

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