

Letters written by Florence Nightingale released online by University of British Columbia

The University of B.C.'s collection of 159 letters written by Florence Nightingale is now available online.

What's that? UBC has 159 letters written by Florence Nightingale? Yes, it turns out.

They have been in the Woodward Biomedical Library since the 1960s after they were bought from a Boston book dealer.

But until now they have only been made available to serious Nightingale scholars.

"Most people had no idea that UBC had these letters, and now we want people to know it," said university archivist Chris Hives.

"These digitized copies are available to anyone anywhere in the world whether it's a kid in kindergarten or a scholar on the other side of the world."

The letters touch on a number of subjects, including Nightingale's strong religious beliefs, her views on patient care and her nursing philosophy.

On New Year's Day, 1878, she wrote to her fellow nurses: "Don't be afraid of seeming 'unlearned and ignorant'. The best trained nurse is 'unlearned and ignorant'."

In a letter to long-time friend Mary Mohl, she displayed a sense of

humour, writing: "You must sometimes trample on the toes of political economists, just to make them feel whether they are standing on firm ground."

Her handwriting is elegant and cursive, but not always easy to decipher. The paper itself is also somewhat crinkled, which adds to the difficulty. But with patience you can make out the words.

To see the letters, go to <http://angel.library.ubc.ca>

Earlier this year, the university put its collection of letters from Charles Darwin online as well.

Nicholas Read, Vancouver Sun



Florence Nightingale's handwriting was elegant and cursive.