

# CONNECTS

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*A sun-drenched view of the Learning Centre on a winter afternoon.*

## LEARNING CENTRE LEADER

### Caring about Communities

#### Collaborate, don't isolate – that's one of the key messages from the new Director of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre.

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► “I BELIEVE that social institutions, whether educational or otherwise, provide better services and experiences when we work closely with the communities we are mandated to serve, rather than holding ourselves apart,” says Sandra Singh, who began her directorship on November 1.

“I firmly believe that my mandate is not to impose my view of what should be done, but rather to work with all my partners, including users, to figure out how to best achieve the Learning Centre’s vision.”

“I’m excited about Sandra’s arrival at UBC,” says Stephen Toope, UBC’s

President and Vice-Chancellor. “Her experience and passion will undoubtedly help the Learning Centre provide lifelong learning opportunities to communities on campus and throughout B.C.”

Singh, 36, succeeds Jan Wallace, the Interim Director who led the Learning Centre through its second phase of construction and the grand opening last April. Wallace remains Head of the David Lam Management Research Library.

Singh is excited about the Learning Centre’s prospects. “I think the potential is there to do some really amazing

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► **Welcome to your Learning Centre**  
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*"I think the potential is there to do some really amazing things"*  
– Sandra Singh, Director of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre.

things, both within the UBC community and more broadly with non-UBC communities."

Singh comes to UBC from the Vancouver Public Library (VPL), where she was the Director of Systems and Special Projects. Previously, she was the VPL's Director of Branches East and Outreach Services, and the Manager of Library Services for the Port Moody Public Library.

Early in her library career, Singh – who was born in Fiji and grew up in Canada – was a Cataloguer and Reference Librarian for Abilene Public Library in Abilene, Texas. "I loved it," she recalls. "The community members were diverse and interesting, our colleagues were open and inviting, it was a busy system and we were able to experiment."

One of Singh's proudest career achievements was leading the Working Together Project ([www.librariesincommunities.ca](http://www.librariesincommunities.ca)). This involved public libraries in Vancouver, Toronto, Regina and Halifax joining forces to build community connections and investigate systemic barriers to library use.

"I have been so profoundly changed by what we learned from our communities through this project," says Singh. "I try

to avoid making assumptions about what communities need and how best to reach them. This perspective has really evolved as a result of my work on the Working Together Project."

The project has wrapped up, but all four libraries are integrating what they've learned into their respective systems. Also, in January 2009, the Working Together Project received the Ontario Library Association President's Award for Exceptional Achievement.

Although Singh comes to an academic institution following years of experience in the public realm, she notes that the two settings share much in common.

"We all care deeply about the communities we serve – whether it be the general public, students, staff, faculty – and we all really want to provide relevant experiences or services," she says.

Singh is no stranger to this campus, however, having earned her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Library and Information Studies degrees at UBC.

"I really appreciate and respect UBC as an educational institution and believe the role of the public university, from education to research, is critical to Canadian society," she says. ☺

## INSPIRING ART

# Through the Learning Centre Glass

**In many ways, the Learning Centre is about inspiring a sense of wonder – for learning, for research, for the beautiful spaces that invite users to study, contemplate, socialize and relax.**

► ART ALSO INSPIRES, and the works on display inside the Learning Centre are no exception. Here, we profile three artists and their pieces that illuminate the building and make it a truly special site.

### Beginnings

In 2004, Dr. Irving K. Barber and his wife Jean attended an exhibition of glass-works held by the Architectural Institute of British Columbia. There, they discovered the spectacular artistry of Vancouver's Jeff Burnette and John Nutter. They were so impressed that they ended

up commissioning both artists to create installations for the space.

"These pieces will add strength to the purpose of what the Learning Centre intends to accomplish over time, from one generation of students to the next," says Dr. Barber, commenting on the building's artistic legacy.





**JEFF BURNETTE, SOUTHEAST STAIRWELL**

▲ **Belle Verre**

Two hundred blown glass plates form a glowing, multi-coloured beacon in the southeast stairwell, drawing people into the building to marvel at the spectacle. This exceptional work,

which reaches a height of 60 feet, took nearly four months to complete and three days to install.

Were there any particular challenges involved with such an ambitious project? “I sent my girlfriend

up the scaffolding because I’m afraid of heights!” admits Burnette, who owns his own glass-blowing facility, called Joe Blow Glassworks, in East Vancouver.



**JOHN NUTTER, RIDINGTON ROOM**

◀ **The Magic of Discovery**

John Nutter was first approached by Jean Barber to create an installation for the Ridington Room, located in the building’s northwest corner. Nutter designed the 45-panel glass sculpture to “flow like the Northern Lights,” and centred the intricate etchings around a series of compasses. Nutter felt the Library, like a compass, should be used “as a tool of discovery.”



**KEVIN DUBOIS, MAIN ENTRANCE**

▲ **Cast Glass Books**

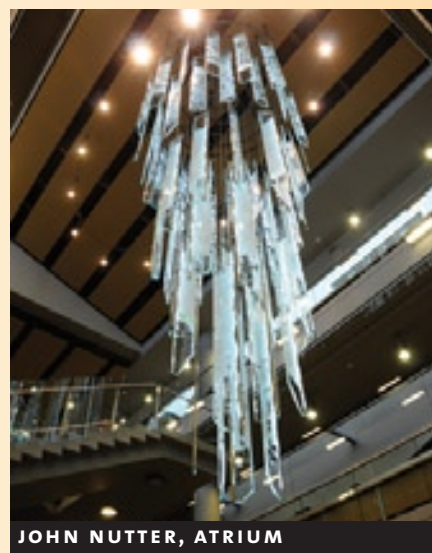
These two installations, commissioned by the Learning Centre, are by local artist Kevin Dubois. His fired and cast glass books, adjacent to the main entrance, lend an air of learning to the facility. Dubois, who has worked with stained,

enameled, cast and blown glass, feels the glass books complement the space.

As part of his practice, he has combined different materials and experimented with various mediums. Dubois, primarily a painter and printmaker, has

also worked in wood, photography, sound and video.

More artwork from Dubois will soon grace the spaces of the Learning Centre, with pieces set to be installed in coming months.



**JOHN NUTTER, ATRIUM**

▲ **It’s a Mystery**

This spectacular chandelier-type piece fills the Learning Centre’s atrium with a spiral of 57 panels of starfire glass. This type of glass is lead-free and low in iron, and therefore less green in hue than ordinary glass.

“Of all the work I’ve done, this piece

exceeds what I thought was possible,” says Nutter. Using sandblast carving and stained glass detailing, Nutter has incorporated symbols, runes and excerpts from such ancient texts as the *Gutenberg Bible*, *Beowulf* and the *Dead Sea Scrolls*. He also applied a dichroic

coating to each panel, which lends a luminescence to the work. LED lights embedded in metal strips accompanying each glass piece add to the ambience.

The piece’s lighting proved to be a challenge at first, as did the need for the necessary seismic clips to hold the sculpture in place.

Nutter believes this work represents the discovery and evolution of knowledge – but he also feels it shouldn’t be overthought.

Now that the job is complete, Nutter says he can’t take such large installation pieces much further. When asked what’s next, he replied – with great emphasis – “Holograms. Definitely.”



*Aleha McCauley,  
Community Business  
Services Librarian.*

**PROFILE: ALEHA MCCAULEY**

## A Constant Curiosity

**One of the latest arrivals at the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre is another indication of the facility's plans to extend services across the province.**

► IN SEPTEMBER 2008, Aleha McCauley began her new role as the Learning Centre's Community Business Services Librarian. Since then, McCauley, a UBC alum, has been busy working on a project called the Business Plan Accelerator – the brainchild of Jan Wallace, the former Interim Director of the Learning Centre and Head of the David Lam Management Research Library. The undertaking is a partnership between the Lam Library, the Sauder School of Business and the Learning Centre.

The idea is to create a collaborative online portal to assist B.C. entrepreneurs and small businesses with market research. The cost of undertaking such research can be high, especially if one acts alone. However, such burdens should be alleviated thanks to the collective efforts of libraries and librarians, government departments and others who may contribute to the Business Accelerator.

Given the importance of small business to B.C.'s economy, that's an encouraging development. According to a government report, 98 per cent of all businesses in the province in 2006 were small businesses. An estimated 1,025,600 people were employed by small businesses in B.C. during the same period,

and these companies shipped more than \$14 billion worth of merchandise internationally in 2005.

McCauley has been working on content for the project website, and the hope is to have a prototype running by spring 2009. So far, she's loved the process. "Everything is new and exciting about this job," she says.

Her past experience has come in handy. For example, earlier this decade she worked for more than three years at the Better Business Bureau of Mainland B.C. McCauley's library roles have also helped. An Ottawa native who grew up in Richmond, she received her undergraduate degree in History and Master of Library, Archival and Information Studies from UBC.

McCauley's first library job after graduating was at the Vancouver Art Gallery, where she worked as a Cataloguer in 2007. Subsequent roles included serving as the sole Librarian at the Italian Cultural Centre Society and as a Librarian for the Vancouver Public Library.

And what attracted her to librarianship? "It's connecting people with information," she says. "It's a constant curiosity about the research needs of people." Just the sort of qualities that should get the Business Accelerator revved up. 📖

# CONNECTS

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