Prelude

Geography was already well-established in many American, British and French universities at the time for the First World War. However, there was only one Canadian university with a professorship in geography. This was at L’Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales, Université de Montréal, where Henry Laureys had been appointed. In the 1920s academic geography developed rapidly in many western countries. In Canadian universities such courses as existed were given in other departments, at the University of British Columbia in the Geology Department and at the University of Toronto as part of an economics or commercial programme. The lecturer in Toronto was the economic historian, Harold Innes. He was to exert a strong influence on the development of geography at Toronto in the 1930s and subsequently on the evolution of geography in anglophone Canada. He played a major role in the appointment of Griffith Taylor (a strong environmental determinist although he disclaimed the label) as the first professor of geography at Toronto in 1934. At this period, the eminent French geographer, Raoul Blanchard, was visiting professor at the Université de Montréal, an appointment that led to several outstanding publications on the geography of Québec.

At McGill interest in the establishment of geography increased after Cyril James was appointed Principal in 1939, although the outbreak of the Second World War curtailed any action until it was nearly over. Pressure came both from within McGill and from outside groups. The Institute of Education at Macdonald College already had a geographer on its staff, Miss D.J. Seiveright, who later collaborated with Trevor Lloyd as joint author of geography text books for schools. High school geography teachers were keen to establish geography at the university level. The Montreal Association of Geographers led by its President, James Logan, Principal at Hudson Heights High School, tried to interest Principal James in establishing a department on the downtown campus. Internally, the main pressure seems to have come from the Dean of Graduate Studies (David L. Thompson) who took a great interest in the department in its early years.

In 1936, the International Geographical Congress met in Amsterdam and Canada joined its governing body, the International Geographical Union. Canadian membership was sponsored by Colonel Grant-Suttie, a non-professional geographer residing in Toronto. An ad hoc national committee was formed with Québec providing four members, one of these to be nominated by McGill. The University failed to name a representative and it was only in 1943 that university representation was established. Colonel Grant-Suttie, as Chairman of the National Committee, wrote to Principal James at considerable length and took the opportunity to press for the establishment of a geography department at McGill. In the absence of a professional geographer at McGill, the Principal nominated Professor Lattimer, an agricultural economist at Macdonald College for the McGill position on the ad hoc national committee. By the end of the year the Principal decided to make an appointment in geography and had contacted Griffith Taylor (at Toronto) and
Derwent Whittlesey (at Harvard) seeking advice on a suitable person.

A selection committee was named by Principal James that included the dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science (Cyrus J. Macmillan), the Dean of Graduate Studies (David Thompson), the Dean of Applied Science (J.J. O’Neill, a geologist) and Professor Lattimer. It met on the 31st March, 1944, and it was agreed that the creation of a chair of geography was desirable as a first step towards the establishment of a department. Principal James had already prepared a list of potential candidates of whom half were from the United States and the remainder from the Commonwealth. At the close of the meeting, James undertook to determine whether the individuals on his list would allow their names to be considered and to write to other people seeking additional names. One of these was Rodwell Jones, whom James had known at the University of London. He replied immediately that he could recommend three individuals, including George Kimble, who was at that time in the Royal Navy. Kimble himself responded quickly with a letter. By fortunate coincidence he was in Philadelphia for a short period, and he took an overnight train to Montreal and called on James (20 May 1944).

The committee met for a second time on June 19 and considered suggestions from Karl Sauer, Derwent Whittlesey, Griffith Taylor and J.J. Fleure. Individual applications were also considered. It is interesting to note that Sauer declined to suggest an American candidate because of "the prevailing low standards in the United States," but, together with Morrison (the official historian of the United States Navy), he wrote in favour of Kimble. A short list of seven was finally agreed on, of which one was an American. There were no Canadians, although two had applied.

The Committee’s choice was George Kimble. Negotiations followed rapidly and on October 3, 1944, he was appointed the first Professor of Geography (to date from January 1, 1945). Dean Macmillan allocated two rooms in the Arts Building to geography (rooms 30 and 38). Originally the Principal had planned to make two appointments, but Dean Thompson argued that the second position should not be filled until after the arrival of Professor Kimble. The Dean also reminded the Principal, apparently with little effect, that geography would need books in the library and above all maps. It was an observation that was to be repeated many times in the next fifty years.

**The Early Years at McGill**

Kimble arrived early in 1945. He gave an inaugural address in Moyse Hall in April, and the first lectures were given in October (the usual month at that time for the start of lectures). The teaching staff was effectively doubled with the appointment of F.K. Hare in March. Like Kimble, Hare had served as a climatologist during the war, in this case attached to the RAF. Hare was a specialist on the monsoon climates of southeast Asia and attempts to get him released (the war with Japan being of unknown duration) were not at first successful. When the Air Ministry relaxed their hold it was difficult to find shipping space for Hare and his family (Mrs. Hare not being a war bride according to the Canadian definition of the word). These were by no means the only difficulties. One of Kimble’s responsibilities was the McGill Observatory. The building, on a site now occupied by the Leacock building, included accommodation for the Director. It must have been somewhat dilapidated. Kimble, the Department of Buildings and Grounds and the Principal had correspondence over several months on renovations that were required. Who
eventually paid for the installation of "toilet facilities for the maid’s room" is not known!

In his inaugural address Kimble accepted the view that geography was a social science (as did the Faculty of Arts and Science). It is therefore somewhat surprising that the first three faculty appointments recommended by him (Ken Hare, Ross Mackay and Bogdan Zaborski) were individuals who had made their reputation as physical geographers! Kimble’s early research interests were in the History of Geographical Exploration and Thought, but he had already become involved in the sciences, specifically meteorology, during the War. When he arrived at McGill he was 36 years old, intellectually extremely sharp, highly energetic and he was ambitious both for himself and for his department. In his inaugural address he promised that geography would not "poach" on other subjects, and then proceeded to say that he planned to resuscitate meteorology (a discipline which already had a base at McGill in the Department of Physics).

Kimble remained at McGill until 1950, but was actually present on the campus for less than four academic years. What was achieved in the period and how did it influence subsequent developments? The Department opened its doors to undergraduate students in October 1945 with a first year course in the General Principles of Geography and a second year course on the Elements of Physical Geography. Three hundred undergraduates registered, and an additional hundred signed up for a half course on the Geography of North America to be given after Christmas. These three courses were to form the core of the undergraduate programme for many years although the order in which the first two were offered was reversed. Not until 1989 was the course in physical geography returned to its original second year slot. By then, its contents had been much modified and it became a half-year course, although recognizably still the same. In keeping with changes in demand (i.e. in fashion) a full-year environmental course, covering much the same ground but with a different emphasis, succeeded it. The course on the General Principles of Geography changed more quickly, incorporating material on the habitable world, and became the introduction to social geography. In turn, it was modified as new human geographers joined the department and the whole character of human geography changed. By the time Kimble left two additional regional courses were being offered and the Department was having some difficulty deciding how North America should be treated in separate courses, Canada, and the United States. Although the department offers regional courses today they have little resemblance to the earlier ones. They reflect changes in geographical philosophy and the unwillingness of faculty to remain bound by the old pattern. It should be noted, however, that the few Canadian departments continuing to offer regional courses report large numbers of students registered in such courses. The problem is to find instructors who are capable and willing to cover broad regional fields.

Additional undergraduate courses, particularly at the upper level (third and fourth years), were added each year, until by 1950 nine and a half undergraduate courses were being offered. From the start, Kimble and Hare were grossly overworked and this problem remained even after the teaching staff was doubled with the arrival of Ross Mackay (1946) and Bogdan Zaborski (1948), initially to replace Kimble who spent the fall session at Berkeley. Teaching was even more strenuous because of the existence of the veterans’ Dawson College at St. Jean to which Hare commuted to present the introductory lectures. He gave the same course again in the summer on the Montreal campus!
In spite of his heavy teaching load Kimble managed to find time for an extensive publicity program to promote geography. His public lecturing included a series of talks on CBC radio on "Geography and the Future".

Early in 1946 Kimble gave the first graduate courses when he lectured on the Teaching of Geography in the Department of Education. In a sense this was his first contribution to raising the quality of geography in the schools where, from his contact with undergraduates, he judged big improvements were desirable. An MSc/MA graduate programme had been approved in 1945 and the following year the first two graduate students entered the Department. The first graduate degree was awarded to Margaret Montgomery in 1949. At the same convocation the first MSc in meteorology, a subject for which geography was now responsible, was awarded. A PhD programme was established in the same year, and by the time Kimble resigned 26 graduate students were registered. The rapid expansion led to some criticism from academic geographers in other parts of Canada who considered that the size of the faculty was too small for so many students. Whilst there may have been some truth in this, the reasons for rapidly expanding enrollment were not hard to find. They lay in the enthusiasm and international contacts of the two senior faculty members combined with their belief, brought with them from England, that the best honours graduates were ready to undertake postgraduate research with a minimum of faculty supervision. Unfortunately this was not always true, particularly for students coming from schools and universities where rigorous preparation in geography was not available.

Two other early developments contributed to the expansion of the graduate school. The first was the creation of a Geography Summer School in 1947. It should be remembered that McGill university has traditionally given little encouragement to summer schools. Until the last few decades there were only two, in French language and Geography. From the start, the Geography Summer School was held at Stanstead College, an independent, residential school located in the border community of Stanstead/Rock Island in the Eastern Townships. The site was discovered by Kimble. He quickly recognized the diversity of the local geography and particularly the opportunity it offered for field training - and he also foresaw the welcome it would receive from the English-speaking community in the area.

From the first year the Summer School emphasized a programme of polar geography. Kimble had little experience of the arctic, but he was aware of its potential interest to students. In his first winter at McGill he invited Vilhjalmur Stefansson and J. Tuzo Wilson to give a series of special lectures at Moyse Hall. Wilson was known as the leader of Exercise Musk Ox designed to test the capabilities of a small military force moving through the Canadian North, and later achieved fame as one of the originators of plate tectonic theory. For the second Summer School in 1948 Kimble was successful in an approach for financial support to the Carnegie Corporation. In the next decade the grant was increased and allowed the Arctic Institute of North America and the university to develop graduate programmes in northern studies. Although the grants were not designed specifically for particular disciplines geography and zoology were the principle beneficiaries. Indeed by 1950 the university was becoming widely recognized as a centre for arctic research with the Department of Geography as one of the prime movers.

In April 1950 Kimble left the Department and McGill for the American Geographical Society in New York. He had been in Montreal for five years of which the fall of 1948 was spent in California. By then, the
Department was a strong unit although weakened by the departure at the same time not only of Kimble but also of Ross Mackay (to UBC) and Harry Lash, the recently-appointed lecturer and fourth member of the teaching staff. Some of the Department’s major achievements in the first five years, due in large part to Kimble’s organizing abilities, have been described. In addition he had begun building an appropriate departmental infrastructure. On the human side this included the appointments of a secretary and a technician. The latter was to follow him to New York and it was nearly 20 years before he was replaced. Kimble had also begun the creation of a map collection, and made a start on equipment, the latter mainly in the field of air photo interpretation. What he had not achieved, although this was hardly his fault, was to find adequate space for the staff, graduate students, laboratories, maps and instruments. We may assume that he was smiling, when in an annual report to the Principal, he thanked him for "an extra room in the Arts building", but noted that it would remain "unusable until ventilation and lights were installed".

Although Kimble was based in the United States until he retired, he retained an interest in the Department. The most immediate link was with the International Geographical Union of which he had become Secretary-General whilst in Montreal. He did not remain long in this post, but following his work for the Twentieth Century Fund in Africa he became chairman of the I.G.U. Commission on the Humid Tropics in 1956. He chose as the Commission’s secretary Theo Hills, recently appointed at McGill, who, with his students, was to be linked with the Commission, its successors and their research for the next 40 years.

The 1950s: A Decade of Development and Research

In the 1950s, Kenneth Hare’s chairmanship of the Department stimulated a period of intense, productive research by faculty and an exceptional group of graduate students. The first act of the new chairman was to replace his decimated staff. However, the university was in a difficult financial phase and this was only to worsen during the decade with the controversy over federal/provincial funding of higher education. The Department had little hope of securing significant increases to the faculty. The new chairman was thought to have succeeded brilliantly when, in his first three years in office, he secured a new sessional lecturer and a second instructor - part time! The existing quarters were only made bearable by finding offices for graduate students working in the North in the Arctic Institute of North America, which had moved into the university’s Bishop Mountain House at the southeast corner of Milton and University Sts. During the next few years, in the absence of any permanent home for the Department its members were dispersed. Individual geographers could be found in the Strathcona Medical Building on the upper-campus; in Morrice Hall in its pre-renovation state; at 539 Pine Ave West (now demolished), in the Macdonald Engineering Building and the Macdonald Chemistry Building. It is little wonder that visitors returning to the Department for a second time, rarely found us!

The first undergraduate courses had been established in expectation that introductory courses in the first and second years would be followed in the third and fourth years by advanced courses that would be part of an honours programme. At the end of the 1940s enrollment appeared to support this view, but as veterans left the university, honours registration dwindled to zero. Much time was spent identifying the causes and possible remedies. The pattern of the popular general BA degree in which students concentrated on easy electives, the lack of preparation in schools, and a false perception of geography by students and their
advisors, all contributed to negligible numbers in the honours programme.

An important development at this time was the lead role played by McGill faculty in the creation of a national geographical association, the Canadian Association of Geographers. Supported by the departments in Laval and l’Université de Montréal, together with geographers from Ontario universities and above all from the federal Geographical Branch, the inaugural meeting of the Association was held in the Physical Sciences Centre (Adams Bulding) in May 1951. In the first seven years of the Association’s history, two of its presidents (J.B. Bird and Trevor Lloyd) were from the Department. Although the contribution of the Department to the CAG has varied over the years, its executive office and secretary, have been located in the Department for the past 30 years. During a crucial period in the CAG’s history two McGill faculty members served as executive officers, Frank Innes as Treasurer (1963-72) and John Parry as Secretary and subsequently Secretary Treasurer (1963-74, 1978-79).

The major achievement of the 1950s was the vigorous growth and acknowledged quality of graduate research. Although the main emphasis was on northern physical topics it should be remembered that the first PhD (G. Ridge) was awarded in urban geography (albeit in a northern setting). His work marked the beginning of a close connection with the School of Architecture’s interdisciplinary planning group, which evolved into the School of Urban Planning. The association continues to the present day, not least because its present chairperson (Jeanne Wolfe) is a graduate of the Geography Department.

In the 1950s research of faculty and graduate students (Fig. 3) was concentrated in two areas: Quebec-Labrador where the biogeographical programme of Hare was supported by R. Norman Drummond and Harry Lash; and the Arctic proper, where the work was led by Patrick Baird of the Arctic Institute, who was an honorary lecturer (in geography) and J. Brian Bird, appointed as lecturer in geomorphology in 1950. A direct result of this experience was the realization that northern geographical research would benefit enormously from the establishment of forward field bases. In 1954 Hare proposed the construction of a Sub-Arctic Research Laboratory at Knob Lake (Schefferville) close to the newly opened iron ore reserves in interior Québec/Labrador. It was a bold an successful venture helped with substantial funds donated by J.W. McDonnell and by the engineering skills and support of George Jacobsen. The station has continued to function to the present day. Although no longer part of the Department (it is operated by the university’s Centre for Northern Studies and Research), the Director and much of its research are based in the Geography Department.

A variant on the long-term Knob Lake type of research laboratory followed almost immediately. 1957/58 was designated International Geophysical Year and the Department obtained a contract for the operation of a year-long glaciological/meteorological/climatological station in the arid interior of Ellesmere Island at Lake Hazen, and on the Gilmore Glacier in northern Alaska. Svenn Orvig directed the research at both sites and four graduate students, three Englishmen, led by a Canadian, survived at the Ellesmere station for a year.

Within the next ten years, departmental research stations had been established on Axel Heiberg Island (directed by Fritz Müller) with the active support of George Jacobsen and in the Rupununi Savannas of Guyana under the aegis of Theo Hills. In addition, there were two other university research stations to
which the Department made major contributions - the Bellairs Research Institute in Barbados and Mont St Hilaire in the Montreal lowlands. The story of the field stations is, however, racing ahead of itself and we should return to changes in the Department before completing the story.

By the latter part of the 1950s the number of faculty had increased, but the core of the programme remained the responsibility of four people. The small numbers had one very real advantage in that decisions on policy and planning were often made after informal debates where personal views could be advocated strongly. Three topics attracted the most lively discussion: the imbalance in the Department between the physical and human cohorts, the effects of the substantial Canadian and United States government contracts on research development and the priorities in the selection of new faculty.

Graduate research and the research programmes at the northern field stations were mainly in physical geography. This created a major disparity between the human and physical sides of the Department. This imbalance was increased in 1957 when Bogdan Zaborski and Gordon Merrill (assistant professors during the preceding two years) resigned to join Ottawa universities. This lead to the appointment of a new staff member in human geography, George Michie, who taught courses both on campus and in the Institute of Education at Macdonald College. The commitment to support geography courses in the BEd Programme while it remained at Macdonald College was a contentious issue for several years.

With hindsight it is apparent that the situation was actually even more serious because the Department was not prepared for the revolution that was about to sweep through the academic geographical world with the application of statistical techniques to theoretical and predictive modelling. Although this was ultimately to revolutionize all branches of geography, and indeed had already affected physical geography in the preceding decade, it was in economic and urban geography that the greatest changes would be felt.

As the 1950s drew to a close it was agreed that the next senior appointment must be in the field of human geography. It was expected that the main problem would be to secure the necessary funds. The persuasiveness of the chairman, who made good use of his reputed silver tongue with the Principal, secured the approval of the administration in 1958. What turned out to be far more difficult was to find a suitable candidate for the new Chair in Human Geography. For a time some thought was given to the appointment of a human geographer specializing in the Islamic World. This provided the prospect of a link with the Institute of Islamic Studies then being developed on the campus by W.C. Smith. However, this argument did not prevail and it was decided that a specialist in circum-polar geography would be more appropriate.

In 1959 Trevor Lloyd, former Director of the federal Geographical Branch (Bureau) and by then at Dartmouth College, was invited to join the department. He was to become the third chairman in 1962, although this was not known at the time. In retrospect his appointment probably failed to meet the original intention of stimulating a massive upsurge in human geography as measured by research output, numbers of graduate students and the Department’s national and international reputation. However, Lloyd was a first-class lecturer and his courses visibly strengthened the Department’s undergraduate programme and led indirectly to enrichment of the northern programme in human studies through his professional contacts.

Trevor Lloyd had been a school teacher in Winnipeg for a short period before the War and he had a special
concern for the problems of teachers in upgrading qualifications and maintaining standards. He sought new ways to attract teachers, especially from Québec, to the Geography Summer School. In the long term, however, the Summer School was not the answer to these problems and renewed attention was focused on Macdonald College. Lloyd encouraged the involvement of the Department in the Institute of Education and created a small sub-department at Macdonald College under the leadership of Maurice Scarlett.

Research funds in the 1950s came overwhelmingly from Canadian and United States government and quasi-government organizations. Virtually all the research was contract work to provide terrain and meteorological information required by these agencies. In many cases the contracts were written sympathetically, often in cooperation with the project director, to make the research appropriate for university personnel including graduate students. Relatively large sums were involved. At the end of the 1950s contract research was bringing into the Department special funds that totaled two to three times the annual operating budget. It was feared by some that departmental plans for the future would depend more on achieving success with ever-growing contract research than with the well-being of the Department. Viewed as seriously was the concentration of these funds in the hands of three or four members of faculty. How, went the argument, could these four professors spend a reasonable proportion of their time on departmental affairs if they were busy with private consulting? No solution was found to the problem, if indeed there was admitted to be one. However, changing circumstances largely eliminated it in the next few years. With the rapid increase in the number of faculty, grants and contracts were spread among many more people. With Hare’s move in 1961 to become Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, the most successful of the fund raisers was no longer as active, at least in this role. In addition, the meteorological/climatological research group, a major recipient of contract funds, was transferred into the newly-created Department of Meteorology.

Before long, the departmental operating budget once more exceeded special funds. Today, the income of special funds is between $900k and $1M. It is now no more than 75% of general funds and is spread between 15 or more faculty, a far healthier situation than 35 years ago.

A similar type of question - (how much the Department gained from peripheral activities) - was raised by the continuing involvement of faculty in the Stanstead Summer School. In its early days, there is no doubt that the School provided effective advertising for the Department and that it played an important role in attracting graduate students. In addition, the emphasis on research into the polar regions gave the Department a high profile. It was argued after the first decade that the benefits to the department were offset by committing faculty to summer teaching at the expense of their own research. As with many other Departmental problems, this one solved itself. In the early 1970s a regular summer school (of the Faculties of Arts and Science) was established on the Montreal campus. Thus, an off-campus summer school became less viable. In addition, the Department began to offer undergraduate shoulder term courses at St. Hilaire (in May). There was no longer a requirement for a Stanstead Summer School. However, involvement with the Stanstead area has not ended: the Department now has an undergraduate field course in human geography based at Stanstead College in August.

One of the most significant legacies of the agency-funded research of this period was the innovative use of aerial photography in obtaining a wide range of terrain data. Hare’s McGill Research Group, which
included R.N. Drummond and M.C.V. Douglas was funded by the Defence Research Board of Canada. Their task was the investigation of the surface characteristics of Labrador - Nouveau Québec - an area of nearly 1.3 million km$^2$ - using air photo interpretation keys specially designed for landforms and vegetation. Two series of maps were compiled (scale 1:500,000), one of vegetation cover type, the other of surface conditions.

Continued interest in the north is reflected in two major research projects undertaken at the Department of Geography in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The first, directed by Brian Bird, was supported by the RAND Corporation, an American agency undertaking research for the US Air Force. Their task was the production of a series of maps and reports on the physiography of the southern Canadian arctic between Baffin and Banks islands. The work involved the compilation of information from existing sources and the interpretation of air photographs in order to provide an accurate assessment of terrain conditions. During the life of the project seven reports were prepared each covering an island or group of islands in the Canadian Arctic.

The second project, the Jacobsen-McGill Expedition to Axel-Heiberg Island, led by Fritz Müller, received support from the National Research Council and from private sources. All aspects of the physical geography of the central part of the island were investigated and special attention was given to glaciology and the techniques of glacier mapping. General maps at a scale of 1:50,000 were prepared to show the glaciers and landforms. In addition, special maps of the lower parts of the White and Thompson glaciers were produced at a scale of 1:5,000 with a 5-metre contour interval to show small-scale features on the ice and on adjacent moraines. These maps sheets (printed in six colours) represented a very significant contribution in the field of glacier mapping.

By the end of the 1950s research opportunities were opening up in very different latitudes. As early as 1957 Principal James had approached the Department in the hope that one or more faculty members might be prepared to make use of the Bellairs Research Institute on the island of Barbados. James did not have to wait long for a positive response. In 1958 two graduate students commenced research projects on the island and Theo Hills began an investigation into the changing relationships between peasant farmers and the plantation sector that was to continue for several decades. Subsequently Brian Bird and Ben Garnier initiated research projects, the former in coastal geomorphology, the latter in tropical climatology.

**Into the 1960s: Expansion and New Goals**

The numbers of full-time faculty (of all ranks) had remained relatively constant at about seven in the 1950s. The next decade was to be a period of rapid growth, reflecting partly the ambitions of the Department, but above all the improved financial position of a university, which was able at last to respond to the pressures to make new appointments. Between 1960 and 1965 the number of faculty doubled and in the next three years increased by the same number again. Towards the end of the decade there were 20 on-campus faculty, excluding sessional lecturers and long-term visitors).

Although not always evident at the time, a coherent pattern is recognizable in the new appointments. Three specialities were encouraged: biogeography, climatology and quantitative geography. Biogeography was
identified in the late 1950s as an integrative field and considerable effort was made to make an appointment. The problem lay in finding suitable candidates. There was very little research in this field in Canada, and not a great deal more in foreign geography departments. At one stage there was some thought that Pierre Dansereau would join the department. Unfortunately this was not to be. In 1967 Peter Holland was appointed, thus reinforcing our New Zealand links. It had been agreed that every effort should be made to have a minimum of two faculty working in the same general research field and a second biogeography position was approved. This was even more difficult to fill and maintain, although outstanding young biogeographers came to McGill for short periods.

In the late 1960s there was little public awareness of the significance of natural environment issues. Although biogeographers were by no means the only scientists to provide special skills in this field, they offered a unique combination of expertise in the physical, biological and human sciences. The Department did not foresee the explosion of interests in the environment that took place in the 1970s and there was little attempt to influence the university in developing new programmes. This was unfortunate because decisions were taken by the administration to locate environmental programmes at Macdonald College in order to support the Faculty of Agriculture. It was not until 1982 that the Faculty of Science recovered a central position in these developments and the Department (together with biology) assumed a leading role in environmental studies. By then, however, to accommodate massive budget cuts one of our biogeography positions had been lost.

Similar staffing problems faced the expansion of climatology in the Department. The withdrawal of Ken Hare from geography (to become Dean in January 1962) and the transfer of Sven Orvig to the new Department of Meteorology left the Geography Department without a faculty member in a field in which it had been conspicuously successful. However in 1965 approval was obtained for the appointment of a professor in climatology. L As with biogeography, it was found difficult to attract a scientist of appropriate calibre, until Ben Garnier agreed to come to Montreal from Indiana in 1965. By then a junior appointment in climatology had been made (Wayne Rouse) and the Department appeared set to maintain its dominance in Canadian climatology. However, as in biogeography, young and talented scientists were difficult to retain. The first appointees (Oke and Rouse), both men of exceptional promise (which was richly fulfilled in later years), left McGill after a short time for other Canadian departments.

Throughout the 1960s and indeed into the early ‘80s, by which time new faculty positions were rare, the Department suffered repeatedly from the loss, after a few years, of many of its best junior staff. Not only was this a considerable waste of resources, considering the time spent in recruiting an individual, but it often meant that an instructor left before his research projects, and the graduate students they might have attracted, fully materialised. The reasons were not hard to find. Universities with new geography departments were in a stage of rapid growth and attractive new positions were opening up all the time.

In the 1960s human geography, especially the economic and urban fields, was in the midst of the quantitative revolution that involved far more statistical modelling than had been attempted previously. It was recognized that if our students were to compete, once they left McGill, they had to be qualified in these rapidly changing fields. The appointment of Don Foote (a former student of Trevor Lloyd) went some way toward balancing the preponderance of physical interests in the North up to that time. The recruitment of
instructors in the fields of human and economic geography led to important changes in Arts undergraduate courses. The introductory human course was revised to incorporate many of the new theoretical ideas, and in 1967 instruction in computer mapping was initiated. In physical geography changes were less dramatic; appointments were made in the expanding fields of process geomorphology and hydrology (Carson and Dunne), and by the end of the decade the Department was well-balanced and offering graduate programmes across the spectrum of geography.

A significant development during the period of Trevor Lloyd’s chairmanship (1962-65) was the expansion of the map collection which eventually came to be the university map library. The map collection had remained basically unchanged since George Kimble’s time. It contained teaching sets and Canadian and United States topographic maps deposited by their respective governments. During the early 1950s a wider variety of maps had been available, but these were the property of Bogdan Zaborski. They were stored in the labyrinth basement of 539 Pine Ave. Until Zaborski moved to the University of Ottawa, when the maps went with him. Trevor Lloyd invited a map curator from Dartmouth College to advise on the creation of a viable university collection and then proceeded to "sell" the report to the Dean of Graduate Studies and to Senate. The report was welcomed by the university, but no separate budget was established for the collection and it continued to be funded through the Department. However, it did become possible to employ a professional map curator although no assistant was forthcoming for another ten years! By the time the Department moved into its new quarters in Burnside Hall in 1971 the University Map Collection contained nearly 100,000 maps.

The expansion of McGill geography in the 1960s was associated with and to some extent influenced by an array of new research activities which faculty members either initiated or co-ordinated.

The Planetary Surface Interpretation Project with Brian Bird as co-ordinator and Alistair Morrison as chief researcher was a direct product of the space race and the major developments taking place in remote sensing and satellite technology. The project was funded by NASA and the major task was to investigate the feasibility of distinguishing physiographic regions and major topographic and structural features using imagery obtained from orbiting satellites in the Mercury and TIROS missions.

In 1960, with Theo Hills as the prime mover, the Department embarked on the first long-term project abroad. Hills, as part of his 1958 field program decided that the Rupununi savanna area of Guyana would provide an excellent base for research on savanna and rainforest ecology, regional climatology, and the human ecology of local Amerindian people. Support for the McGill Savanna Research Project was provided by the government of Guyana, Demarara Bauxite (Alcan Canada Ltd.), the U.S. Office of Naval Research and the McGill Centre for Developing Area Studies. In all, seven McGill faculty members participated in the project, either as joint researchers or as supervisors of the 13 graduate students whose thesis research was based in southern Guyana.

The Terrain Evaluation Project, which progressively increased in scale during its 21 year history, was funded by the Defence Research Board, later to become the Defence Research Establishment of Canada. Initially the main interest was in terrain analysis similar to that done by the McGill Research Group in the 1950s. However the emphasis soon shifted to the new field of terramechanics - the relationships between
quantifiable terrain parameters, such as soil strength, surface slope and microrelief, etc., and the performance of off-road tracked vehicles. The major areas of interest were Canadian Forces bases Petawawa and Gagetown and a series of carefully selected arctic and sub-arctic test areas which included the whole Mackenzie delta, Churchill, Manitoba, Lac Saffray and Schefferville in northern Québec. Increasingly remote sensing was used to obtain terrain data and innovative research was undertaken with recently declassified thermal and radar systems. During its life span more than a dozen research assistants and associates were involved in the project using the data as a base for their graduate theses. In addition to field research in northern Canada, the project director, John Parry, was able to work with military engineers and terrain scientists in the U.S.A., the U.K., Norway and Australia.

The end of the decade saw the start of a new project in the tropics - the McGill-Rockefeller Foundation Programme for Geographical Field Studies in Kenya. In effect this was a partnership programme with the University of Nairobi in which a McGill faculty member was seconded to Nairobi for a year to teach a field course in a particular discipline - geomorphology, biogeography, hydrology, etc., and set up a field programme in Kenya involving local faculty and students. With the change over to CIDA funding in 1980 the programme became a departmental responsibility. In all 10 faculty members were able to spend extended periods of time in East Africa, which contributed significantly to their own research perspectives. In addition, there has been an ongoing productive exchange with University of Nairobi faculty and graduate students.

The 1960s was a period of conspicuous success for the department which could boast of a chain of field stations from the arctic to the equator - Axel Heiberg, Schefferville, St. Hilaire, Bellairs-Barbados, Lethem-Guyana, a productive and enthusiastic faculty - one of the largest in Canada, expanding undergraduate and graduate programmes, and improved resources and facilities, including soils and cold laboratories, an air photo (remote sensing) laboratory, cartographic and darkroom facilities. Would the next decade see even greater expansion?

**The 1970s and ‘80s - Burnside Hall - Expansion and Retrenchment**

In the 1950s the geography faculty was so small that decisions on departmental objectives and their implementation were often made informally over coffee, or at lunch in the Faculty Club. By the second half of the 1960s, with a threefold increase in faculty size and the appointment of a new generation of young and liberal-minded individuals, it was clear that a new modus operandi was needed. The growth of a strong movement across the university for greater participation in the decision-making process, initially by all faculty and subsequently by students, and ultimately, if some activist groups had their way, by everyone in the university meant that change was inevitable. The demands for the direct involvement of all faculty members in the government of the Department did not sit well with Trevor Lloyd and rather than battle the wave of change he resigned as head of the Department in November 1966.

The new chairman was Brian Bird. Whereas Trevor Lloyd and his predecessors had been appointed on the sole advice of the Dean, on this occasion consultation was invited between the Dean and individual faculty members. However, it would be twenty years before there was a faculty election to fill the Chair, and even
then the result was not considered binding on the Dean!

In an attempt to broaden faculty involvement in decision-making, the Department established an elected and representative Executive (later Advisory) Committee and included graduate and undergraduate students in various committees.

With expanded faculty numbers (it reached twenty by 1968 - a number that has not been exceeded since for any extended period) it is hardly surprising that the turnover was high. Larger faculty numbers were matched by increases in the office support staff, but there was no success in persuading the administration of the need for technical staff. However, the appointment of a full-time administrative assistant was approved. The department was well-served by Jean Satterford who occupied the position for sixteen years until her death in 1985. Before coming to Canada she had been the bursar for a small college in England. She brought with her many administrative skills and she soon became in many ways the centre of the geography community at McGill.

Student agitation in the United States associated with the Viet Nam war and the draft spilled over into Canadian universities and there was continuing student unrest at McGill University, but direct impacts on the Department were slight. Indirectly, however, these demands for change contributed to a decision that was to have permanent repercussions on the Department’s future. The university, as it had grown, had become academically unwieldy and had been divided into four (and later five) divisions. Geography was represented in two of the divisions, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences. In 1971 a proposal was introduced to subdivide Arts and Science into two Faculties. Three departments, Mathematics, Psychology and Geography, by their content should have been in both faculties, but for budgetary reasons could only be in one. All three elected to join the Faculty of Science.

Meanwhile plans were going ahead for the consolidation of the scattered offices and teaching space of the Department. A new building, to be named Burnside Hall after James McGill’s farm once at the corner of McGill College and De Maisonneuve, was planned for the lower campus beside the Otto Maas Chemistry Building. The site of the new building was perhaps not the most auspicious. The lower campus looked as though it might become the focus of continuing political agitation and events reached crisis point with a march along Sherbrooke Street by some hundreds of activists for a francophone and Marxist McGill. The "invasion" was contained at the Roddick gates by riot police. Although few people admired the architecture of Burnside Hall it was a major accomplishment to have a permanent home for the Department. The move into the new building took place in a snowstorm in February 1971.

Departmental plans for space in Burnside Hall had been prepared by Trevor Lloyd and Brian Bird with the assistance of colleagues. The request for laboratories, specialized teaching areas and space for the map collection were met remarkably well, excepting only for the exclusion of a mid-sized seminar room. However, over the next 15 years the extent and coherence of the geography space was increasingly threatened and eventually destroyed by the rapid expansion of the Computing Centre, unbelievably not predicted by its Director in the planning stages of Burnside Hall, and by the move of part of the Physical Sciences Library to the fifth floor of Burnside Hall. It took about the same length of time (15 years) to
adjust the ventilation and the air conditioning to near acceptable levels!

The new lecture rooms in Burnside Hall were barely ready in time for greatly increased registration in introductory undergraduate courses. The increase in undergraduate enrollment arose in part from the transfer of the Institute (later Faculty) of Education to the downtown campus (and the consequent closing of the sub-department at Macdonald College). An even greater impact resulted from changes in Québec’s educational system and the establishment of CEGEPs. In the long term the new pedagogic structure was designed to eliminate McGill’s introductory year in the four year Arts and Science programmes. However, until the CEGEPs came into being, McGill was to operate a temporary “university” CEGEP based mainly on existing introductory courses.

These changes led to an increase in the number of undergraduate students registered in geography courses from roughly 700 in the late 1960s to nearly 1400 in the early ‘70s, a figure that has only been exceeded in the 1990s (Fig. 1). Increased numbers were not matched by increased quality. The level of CEGEP preparation of many of these students rarely reached the standards we had anticipated. Some CEGEPs had no geography units, while in others geography was taught by instructors with uncertain qualifications. At the secondary level geography was weak or non existent at most Québec schools. Teachers attempting to upgrade their qualifications with a second degree found an MA, which had been the traditional route, to be beyond their means, especially with the length of time that was involved. They turned therefore to the M.Ed. Degree. The Faculty of Education supported academic specialization and the geographers in the faculty were sympathetic, however, it was clear that the improvement of Québec school standards was a long-term business and increasingly undergraduates specializing in geography came to be recruited from other provinces.

The effective doubling of the student body required changes in course content and in teaching methods. Most of the introductory courses included laboratory and tutorial sessions. Traditionally these were staffed by graduate students employed on teaching assistantships. For a short period, full-time sessional lecturers were now appointed by the same purpose. The results were extremely satisfactory, but the positions were eventually eliminated for budgetary reasons.

Another experiment in this period was the amalgamation of part of the geology and physical geography introductory courses with instruction shared by the two departments. This arrangement did not survive the CEGEPs period: nor did the proposal that Geography might become responsible for all undergraduate teaching of geomorphology in the faculty. In later years the place of Quaternary Science in the university was informally debated as was the possibility that three departments, Geography, Geology and Meteorology be amalgamated into a single department of Geosciences (c.f. the department of biological sciences). Dismissed in 1982, the idea still lurks in the minds of some administrators!

By the early 1970s there were already signs of the financial difficulties to come: The administration would not approve the appointment of a second professor in human geography. However, in 1970 it was agreed that Harold Brookfield, an eminent scholar, be invited to McGill’s Centre for Developing Area Studies as a Research Fellow. Subsequently he was offered a chair in geography. He only remained for two years before accepting a full time research appointment with UNESCO. Although his position was not lost to the
Department, budgetary restrictions in later years limited the rank to that of a junior appointment.

1972 was in many ways an *annus mirabilis* for Canadian geography, and the McGill Geography Department was to feature in the events of that year. Eight years earlier (1964) the Canadian National Committee of the International Geographical Union had made a successful bid to hold a Congress in Canada. The prime movers in the national Committee at that time were Louis-Edmond Hamelin, Gordon Merrill and Brian Bird. The venue of the Congress was to be Montréal.

The McGill faculty played a major role in the Congress attended by 3000 geographers from all over the world. The principal sessions were held in the Place des Arts and in the Université de Montréal (under the organization of Louis Beauregard), however, the overall local administration was in the hands of Susan Foster (McGill) and all social functions (Jan Lundgren), visitors’ programme (Beryl Bird), and international publicity (Trevor Lloyd) were organized from Burnside Hall. As might have been anticipated the major contribution from the Department was in the field programme. Excursions and symposia were organized on Baffin Island (Bill Kemp), in the Caribbean (Theo Hills) and in the Queen Elizabeth Archipelago (Fritz Müller). In spite of the logistic problems, this excursion was extremely successful, although it lead to major battles in Ottawa (“Russians are not acceptable in the Canadian North”). In London in 1964, it had been promised (naively as it turned out) that scientists of all nationalities would be welcome everywhere in Canada during the Congress. In the end they were! The department also contributed significantly to a trans-continental excursion from Montreal to Victoria and to the local field programme (John Parry and Norman Drummond).

In 1974, after seven years Brian Bird completed his term as chairman. It had been a difficult period for the university as a whole although the Department had continued to prosper. Appointment of a new chairman in 1974 turned out to be more difficult than expected. Internal and external candidates were examined with several individuals from overseas coming to Montreal for interviews. Only when Ben Garnier, who had been a departmental head and faculty dean in other universities earlier in his career, was prevailed upon to change his initial response, was a new chairman found. It was anticipated that with an experienced administrator at the helm the Department might well surpass its earlier achievements as it entered its fourth decade.

Unfortunately, reality was to be far different. As early as 1970 it had been recognized by some senior members of the university, albeit *sotto voce*, that the university’s income was not keeping pace with its expenditures. If this went unchecked it would lead ultimately to disaster. It was not long before departments felt the effects of financial restructuring. By the mid 1970s one of the chairman’s main tasks was to fight for existing positions when they had been vacated through resignation. His energies were concentrated on defending the *status quo* and attempting to maintain an equilibrium between the demands of the different sectors in the Department.

Fundamental to our problems in the next 20 years was the deficit. Initially this was met, at least in part, by drawing on the unrestricted endowment, but by the end of the decade these funds had been consumed. Slowly it became obvious that budgets would have to be reduced. The first attempts to do this were not particularly damaging to departmental operations as there were surplus funds. However, rapid national
inflation combined with a fixed budget soon removed any surplus. By the end of the 1970s the Department was committed to cutting its budget by nearly 3% a year for 5 years and there was visible deterioration in some activities. Cuts proceeded from university planning groups to faculties to departments. A general, if unpublished, rule was that percentage cuts should be spread evenly across departments. This had the effect of unduly penalizing the younger and smaller departments and geography undoubtedly suffered. A second rule was that no appointments could be made to an unoccupied budget slot (whether or not it had free funds in it) without approval of the university budget planning group.

It was this process that led to the demise of glaciology in the Department. Following the successes of the Axel Heiberg research expedition Fritz Müller rejoined the Department and proceeded to develop a unit for research and graduate teaching in glaciology. Müller broadened the definition of glaciology to cover all processes associated with water in the solid state at and close to the earth’s surface. As such, it was obviously a multidisciplinary subject with ramifications in many parts of science and engineering. When by the early 1970s it became clear that neither the Department nor the university were in a financial position to expand glaciology into a larger unit, such as envisaged by Fritz Müller, he decided to return to Zurich. He retained an interest in polar research until his death, but for fifteen years the department had no commitment to studies on Axel Heiberg Island, and interest was not renewed until Wayne Pollard was appointed to an assistant professorship in 1988.

Budgets may be reduced in many ways, but ultimately large cuts can only be made by reducing the number of staff. Yet in many ways this is the most difficult for both legal (many faculty have tenure) and practical reasons. The course and degree programmes were constructed with the recognition that a certain number of faculty would be in place to teach the required courses. Geography faced a special problem if staff numbers were to be reduced because of the increasing administrative load. This was both external to the Department (where the presence of geography in both Arts and Science virtually doubled administrative responsibilities) and internal because of a broadening of the committee structure for departmental decision-making. In addition, geographers were sought as chairpersons of multidisciplinary units in other parts of the university. At various times geographers chaired the Centre for Developing Area Studies, the French Canada Studies Programme, East Asia Studies programme, the Environmental Studies minor programme and the Centre for Northern Studies and Research.

In the early years of retrenchment Ben Garnier decided to use partial salaries that were still available in the budget, with additional support from Canada Council and other agencies, to bring internationally renowned scholars to the Department for periods of several weeks during which time they would be used to strengthen existing graduate and undergraduate courses. The intention was admirable, but clearly these individuals could make no contribution to administrative needs and so there was little effect in reducing the burden on regular staff. However, the Department continues to benefit from more junior visitors who often come for a year or more as sabbatical leave replacements, or most recently, as post doctoral fellows.

The best scenario in a department forced to make budgetary cuts was to have one of its senior faculty retire thus saving part of the salary when the replacement was at a junior level. Unfortunately for geography, only one full professor retired (and another resigned) in the fourteen years after 1974! The age structure of the faculty was clearly not designed to provide benefits from this exercise. Equally unfortunate was the fact
that resignations at the level of associate and assistant professor continued at a rate of two in every three years. There was a continuing battle, led by the chairman, to retain all or part of these positions. In retrospect it is not easy to determine how many tenure-track positions actually existed, as funding came from many sources. Some positions were on the books, but were not funded and consequently could not be filled. Faculty strength fell to 17 in the 1980s. Eighteen was the number that Brian Bird had presented to the Department, after comparison with other Canadian departments, as being the minimum that would enable a department to offer viable undergraduate and graduate programmes. However, it was recognized that even if this figure was achieved the McGill Geography Department would rank as 16th by size in Canada: a far cry from the early 1950 and 60s.

There had been a shortage of new Canadian faculty in the 1950s: a shortage that was filled in the early years, mainly from Britain and subsequently from the United States, Australia and especially New Zealand. The end of the decade, the buyers’ market situation for faculty seeking first appointments was reversed, and a small surplus of new Canadian Ph.Ds appeared in many (but not all) geographical fields. The surplus was larger in many other disciplines and led to federal and provincial regulations that promoted employment of Canadians. The net effect of this situation was a high turnover of younger faculty in the Department. When vacancies were advertised there was a strong response and the quality of individuals securing appointments was unusually high. In general, the Department sought replacements in the fields in which it had already a reputation and consequently the main areas of faculty strength changed slowly. A secondary effect of the limited employment opportunities for new PhDs was the creation by national agencies of post doctoral fellowships to bank the newcomers. The Department benefitted increasingly over the years from this development.

With increasing budgetary restrictions the functions and number of the support staff were reviewed annually with the result that the number of secretarial staff was nearly halved during the period. The impact was less serious than it might have been as most of the faculty turned to using their own computers for correspondence. More disruptive was the decision to close administrative offices on Friday during the summer months as a cost saving measure. Reductions in the numbers of support staff increased the work load that the Administrative Assistant, Anne Kendrick had to carry.

The effect of closing offices in Burnside Hall in the summer was not entirely calamitous as the building had been made effectively uninhabitable as the result of another university cost-saving measure. Initially the problem was that the building was hermetically sealed, ventilated with air brought in from outside (itself often suspect as the exhaust of the chemical laboratories in the adjacent Otto Maas building was sucked into Burnside Hall when the wind was favorable). In summer the air was not adequately cooled and not at all at the weekends (i.e. Friday to Monday). It was not changed often enough and the relative humidity at weekends was permitted to remain at 100%. The Department went unoccupied in summer except for the long-suffering secretarial staff when they were not on vacation. To the surprise of the ventilation engineers it was also discovered that the sun heated rooms on the south and west sides of the building to tropical levels as early in the year as February, whilst the north and east sides remained in the arctic. It was not until the late 1980s, after 15 years of continuous deterioration, that the university was persuaded to improve the building environment.
We have already seen how the map library came into formal existence in the early 1960s. It continued to grow under two long-term map curators, Brad Fay and Lorraine Dubreuil. Soon after annual budget cuts became a regular routine it was obvious that the Departmental budget was unlikely to contain adequate funds in the foreseeable future for the expansion and management of a collection that was arguably the finest in eastern Canada outside Ottawa. Consequently in 1981, control (and funding) of the collection was transferred to the University Libraries system. At the same time, the term Air Photos was added to its title. The change did not immediately solve the problems of space and staff shortages. However, by the time the name had been changed again and the collection had become the Hitschfeld Environmental Earth Sciences Library (1990) the situation had improved immeasurably.

Senior university administrators look longingly for statistics that will justify changes in the proportional distribution of the budget at faculty and departmental levels. The Faculty of Science was slow to adopt the coarse rationalizations that followed from using crude and inadequate data, but after 1980 it was difficult to avoid some type of scoring system, although it was not always clear whether a high score gained a bonus for the department or whether a position at the bottom of the cellar encouraged make-up funding. What was clear was that the Faculty of Science had some very large and a few diminutive departments, and that the methods of instruction in them varied greatly. However, once the "rules" were announced, it was foolish not to act by them, and geography was no exception. Student numbers, publications, citations, size and number of research grants, all became important.

At the time the McGill CEGEPs were being phased-out, the undergraduate course enrollment in the Department ranged from 1800 to more than 2000. Five years later (1980) it had fallen to 1200. This was rightly perceived as being disastrous to the Department if the decline continued, the more so, as no geography courses were required (i.e. compulsory) in any of the largest degree programmes of the Faculties of Arts and Science. The departmental response was to mount an intensive recruiting drive in the Montreal CEGEPs to attract future McGill students into geography programmes and courses. The results were not encouraging, partly because some CEGEPs had no geography units, and in others the quality of geography was low. A different approach was tried involving modification and improvement of existing courses and programmes so that they would be more attractive to undergraduates. Initially, this led to a major revision of the introductory courses and eventually to the whole undergraduate programme. Increasingly these revisions were made with the advice of students on curricula committees and using the results of course evaluations. Inevitably, faculty degree regulations had a constraining influence on any major changes that were proposed, but numerous minor changes in requirements, programme content, new courses and course content were proposed over the years.

Some changes were associated with the appearance of new geographical fields. The most spectacular of these was associated with the development of computers. An indication of what might be in store appeared in the mid-1960s when individual faculty began to use the new university computing facilities. It was not until the Department moved into Burnside Hall, that undergraduate courses began to incorporate this expertise. By 1972, the Geography of Location included assignments that involved considerable keypunching and submission of jobs to be run on the mainframe. Computer terminals were installed in the Department about ten years later, and shortly afterwards the first microcomputer was purchased. The
monopoly of the mainframe was over!

Gordon Ewing and John Lewis (assisted by Larry Houston) and supported by a growing number of faculty, agitated for larger and more sophisticated facilities and in 1987 the joint Math-Geography-Meteorology (MGM) computer laboratory was opened. Demand quickly outstripped the first laboratory and it was moved to a larger area on the ninth floor. The old laboratory then became the department GIS facility.

In the early years of the Department opportunities for students to go out into the field and to apply their geographical knowledge on the ground were of two kinds. Specific field work, which was part of a graduate student’s research project, might be based anywhere in the world limited only by the funding to operate there. No continent (including Antarctica) was left unvisited! More general field instruction for undergraduates and many graduates was provided by day-length, week-end and more extended field excursions, the latter visiting such areas as the Maritime Provinces, the Clay Belt and New York State. Interest in longer geographical excursions declined over the years. However, the possibilities for undergraduate field work began to increase when students went as assistants to graduate students, notably to the Subarctic Laboratory in the early 1970s. Many students undertook field research to provide data for their honours thesis. The value of geography in the field was obvious to students and interest developed in the student body to expand field course requirements beyond the field methods that were taught at St. Hilaire. Additional field courses were introduced based at Schefferville, and later at the Bellairs Research Stations. Less regularly there were ambitious excursions to Europe organised by Ludger Müller-Wille and John Lewis.

As the 1970s progressed there were also changes in the graduate programme. The total number of registered graduate students exceeded eighty in 1970-71. However, this total was swelled by a disquieting increase in numbers in residence due to delays in submitting theses. It was clear that only a minority of students were completing their degrees in the minimum periods of 18 months and 3 years for Masters and Doctoral candidates respectively. A majority was taking two or three times as long, although only an extremely small minority failed to complete the degree. The Department made a determined effort to reduce the interval between entry and graduation, and these efforts were successful at least in part.

Although the number of applications grew larger every year, the number who were accepted was virtually constant in the 1980s when the Department implemented a ratio of three graduate students per faculty member. It soon had to add a means test by which a student had to show an adequate level of financial resources. The progress of students was carefully monitored through their residence. This was in striking contrast to the early years of the Department, when, following British tradition, graduate students were left largely to their own devices with few preliminary courses and minimal supervision. At the same time the geographical origin of graduate students was changing as the European entries of early years gave way to a marked increase in local Quèbec students.

Overseas graduate students were the first to experience financial difficulties as graduate awards were reduced in number. Many Canadian grants and awards were closed to them although a small number of the highly prestigious awards (e.g. Canadian Commonwealth Scholarships) remained open. Their position deteriorated further when Quèbec decreed that there would be higher fees for foreign students. The
department, which had enjoyed the presence of numerous foreign graduate students since its foundation, was able to incorporate graduate training in some of the research programmes, for example, the CIDA projects in Kenya and Thailand incorporated McGill training for students from those countries.

All graduate students suffer in periods of high inflation from a decrease in the real value of teaching assistantships when expressed in constant dollars. Students on the human side of the Department depend more on this particular type of financial aid than do physical geographers. More significant was the fact that the Department as a whole suffered as the value of the McGill assistantships fell far behind those of other major Canadian graduate schools.

One of the ways to mitigate the effects of the financial crisis was for faculty to secure additional and larger research grants which could be applied legitimately to departmental costs, for example, the salaries of research assistants and technicians, the costs of equipment and supplies, etc. Faculty members pursued the granting agencies energetically and the increase in awards doubled in the 1970s and doubled again in the next 15 years. It was a fine achievement involving roughly equal funding from NSERC, SSHRC, FCAR and contract sources, such as CIDA.

The arctic exercised a virtual monopoly over research energies in the 1950s and early 60s. Then came a major expansion in terms of numbers of projects and their geographical focus with new initiatives in the tropics, particularly the Caribbean, and in both human and physical geography in the local region - southern Québec and Montréal. A series of new projects were launched in the sub-arctic in the late 1970s and early 80s and in the same time frame a number of innovative theoretical studies involving modelling were undertaken. One of the most impressive features of the department’s research record is the number of projects that have a "life span" of more than three years indicating that the funding agencies were more than satisfied with the calibre and results of the research and therefore continued their support.

In the early 1980s, Senate approved a proposal for systematic cyclical reviews of all units in the university, both academic and administrative. The reviews were intended as critical appraisals of a unit’s activities, and concluded with suggestions for both internally-generated improvements and for external support to offset the worst effects of budget cutting. The Department was reviewed in 1984 and several faculty and support staff devoted six months to preparing a self-study report for the committee (composed of McGill faculty from outside the department, and a visitor from UBC). Whether the time was well-spent is arguable! The visible result of the committee’s report to Senate was the creation of an additional faculty position. The exercise had a definite salutary effect since it necessitated explaining to the university committee the nature and strengths of a university discipline that according to the AAG and 21 major subdivisions. The Department had, of course, never tried to cover every field of geography. As some form of equilibrium was achieved in faculty numbers after earlier losses, it was recognized how important it was to achieve a critical mass of faculty in a few fields, and this became the major consideration for future planning.

At the close of this history in the 1980s it is possible to point to increasing undergraduate numbers, to a rise in publications and to strong and productive research in many fields. And in passing let us note two rather more "social" activities of the type that were common in the early days of geography: the conferring of an honorary doctorate on His Excellence Paul Lusaka (MA 1963) at McGill’s November convocation in 1985
at which time he was President of the General Assembly of the U.N., and John Parry’s audience with Queen Elizabeth II on his appointment as Director of the Commonwealth Geographical Bureau in June 1984.

Adequate documentation for a history of the Department is not always easy to find. The Annual Reports are often woefully short of detail, particularly in the early years. The writing of this perspective has been much helped by the recollections of many faculty members and former graduate students.