

## INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP SMITH, CHAIR OF THE L. M. MONTGOMERY INSTITUTE

## ENTREVISTA COM PHILIP SMITH, DIRETOR DO L. M. MONTGOMERY INSTITUTE

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**Abstract:** This text aims to present an interview with Dr. Philip Smith, professor of Psychology at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) and chair of the L. M. Montgomery Institute (LMMI). The L. M. Montgomery Institute, located in Charlottetown, Canada, provides a dynamic research center focused on the life and work of the Canadian author L. M. Montgomery (Lucy Maud Montgomery). Montgomery is best known for her book *Anne of Green Gables*, published in 1908 by the L. C. Page Company. She also wrote twenty novels, an autobiography, and hundreds of short stories and poems. The LMMI, founded in 1993 by Dr. Elizabeth Epperly, has been dedicated to promoting research into the life, work, and culture of L. M. Montgomery. This interview results from a training program conducted at the University of Prince Edward Island, with funding provided by the CAPES Foundation (Process n.: 88887.838993/2023-00).

**Keywords:** L. M. Montgomery. L. M. Montgomery Institute. Philip Smith.

**Resumo:** Este texto tem por objetivo apresentar uma entrevista com Dr. Philip Smith, professor de Psicologia da Universidade da Ilha do Príncipe Eduardo (UPEI) e diretor do L. M. Montgomery Institute (LMMI), instituto localizado em Charlottetown, no Canadá, que se propõe a apoiar pesquisas relacionadas à vida e obra da autora canadense L. M. Montgomery (Lucy Maud Montgomery). Montgomery é reconhecida principalmente pela obra *Anne of Green Gables*, publicada em 1908, pela editora L. C. Page. Contudo, no decorrer de sua vida, escreveu vinte romances, uma autobiografia, bem como centenas de contos e poemas. O Instituto, fundado em 1993 pela professora Dra. Elizabeth Epperly, tem se dedicado à divulgação, pesquisa e elaboração de congressos bienais a respeito da vida, produção literária e cultural de L. M. Montgomery. Esta entrevista é fruto de uma capacitação realizada na Universidade da Ilha do Príncipe Eduardo, no âmbito do Programa CAPES-PRINT, financiada pela CAPES (Processo n°: 88887.838993/2023-00).

**Palavras-chave:** L. M. Montgomery; L. M. Montgomery Institute; Philip Smith.

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## Presentation

L. M. Montgomery (Lucy Maud Montgomery) was a Canadian author born in Clifton (now New London), Prince Edward Island, on November 30, 1874. She is best known for her work *Anne of Green Gables*, published in 1908 by the L. C. Page Company. She wrote twenty novels, one autobiography, and hundreds of short stories and poems in her lifetime. Admired internationally for over one hundred years, L. M. Montgomery's works have been translated into more than thirty languages. She died in Toronto, Ontario, on April 24, 1942.<sup>3</sup>

The L. M. Montgomery Institute (LMMI), housed in the Robertson Library at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), honors L. M. Montgomery's achievements and provides a dynamic research center focused on her life and works. During a training program conducted by the CAPES Foundation (Brazilian Federal Foundation for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education)<sup>4</sup> at the LMMI, we were able to interview Dr. Philip Smith, current chair of the L. M. Montgomery Institute, in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Philip Smith is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Prince Edward Island, where he has served as Department Chair and as Dean of the Faculty of Arts. His research interests focus on (i) the promotion of positive parenting and family relationships and (ii) the promotion of healthy behaviors, particularly non-smoking, and especially among people living in poverty. Dr. Smith worked closely with the L. M. Montgomery Institute as a member of the LMMI Committee, attended several of its biennial conferences, and became a Friend of the LMMI until he was appointed as the Chair of the Institute by UPEI Vice-President Academic and Research.<sup>5</sup>

Below are some photographs featuring Dr. Smith and Tatiane Rodrigues Lopes dos Santos, and the front of the building "Memorial Hall" at the University of Prince Edward, where Dr. Smith's office is located and where he usually works:

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<sup>3</sup> This information is available at: <<https://lmmontgomery.ca/about/lmm/her-life>>. Access on September 8, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Through the CAPES-PRINT Program, CAPES Foundation has awarded Tatiane Rodrigues Lopes dos Santos a scholarship to conduct her training at the University of Prince Edward Island. Process number: 88887.838993/2023-00.

<sup>5</sup> This information is available at the websites <<https://lmmontgomery.ca/content/three-questions-lmmi%E2%80%99s-new-chair-philip-smith-melanie-j-fishbane>>, <<https://www.upei.ca/profile?u=smithp>>, and <<https://lmmontgomery.ca/about/institute>>. Access on September 8, 2023.



**Photographs 1, 2, and 3** – Dr. Smith and Tatiane Rodrigues Lopes dos Santos, and the front of the “Memorial Hall” building at the University of Prince Edward Island, where Dr. Smith’s office is located.

(Source: Personal collections)

## Interview

Thank you for accepting our invitation and taking the time to answer our questions, Dr. Smith.

*Thank you for your interest, and for the opportunity to share news about the L. M. Montgomery Institute!*

- I. What are the origins of the L. M. Montgomery Institute (LMMI) (when was it created, by whom, under what circumstances, and what were its aims)?

*The L. M. Montgomery Institute (LMMI) aims to promote research into, and informed celebration of, the life, works, culture, and influence of the Prince Edward Island-born, acclaimed Canadian writer, L. M. Montgomery. The LMMI celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2023. The Institute was launched in April 1993 with three years of base funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The LMMI has since been supported by grants, donations, research project funding, and biennial international conferences.*

*Montgomery graduated from Prince of Wales College (PWC) in 1894. In 1969, PWC and St. Dunstan's University together formed the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). She is thus an alumna of our university.*

*Prince Edward Island historian and UPEI History professor, Dr. F.W.P. Bolger, was inspired by the newly rediscovered girlhood letters of Montgomery to her cousin, Penzie Macneill in Cavendish, and published the ground-breaking *The Years Before Anne* in 1974. He donated Montgomery's manuscript letters to UPEI. In 1978, Dr. Bolger invited Dr. Elizabeth R. Epperly to edit with him a collection of letters written by Montgomery to her Scottish pen pal, G.B. MacMillan. McGraw-Hill Ryerson published the book in 1980 (and Oxford University Press, in 1992) as *My Dear Mr. M: Letters to G.B. MacMillan from L. M. Montgomery*<sup>6</sup>.*

*When Elizabeth Epperly rejoined the UPEI campus in 1992, after publishing the first full-length critical study of all Montgomery's novels, *The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass*, founding Women Studies professor Dr. Elizabeth Percival urged her to make a Montgomery proposal for the SSHRC funding competition. Dr. Epperly's proposal for the creation of the LMMI was enthusiastically endorsed by Dr. Bolger as well as by Dr. Percival and the Dean of Arts, Robert Campbell.*

Here are some photographs of the L. M. Montgomery Institute office taken during the training program conducted by the CAPES Foundation at the University of Prince Edward Island:

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<sup>6</sup> More information about this book is available at: <https://islandpines.rob.lib.upei.ca/eg/opac/record/132531?query=%20Dear%20Mr.%20M%3A%20Letters%20to%20G.B.%20MacMillan%20from%20L.M.%20Montgomery;qtype=keyword>. Access on September 8, 2023.



**Photographs 4 and 5** – The L. M. Montgomery Institute office, housed in the Robertson Library of the University of Prince Edward Island.

(Source: Personal collections)

- II. Although L. M. Montgomery is one of the most prominent authors in Canada, Carol Shields, Alice Munro, and Margaret Atwood also stand out. Why did the Institute choose Montgomery specifically to honor?

*You are quite right to note that Canada is proud to claim a long list of accomplished authors, and especially accomplished authors who are women. I would raise three points:*

*First, with the publication of Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston's co-edited volumes I, II, III, IV and V (Oxford UP 1985, 1987, 1992, 1998, and 2004) of the Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery, Montgomery scholarship was coming into its own in the early 1990s. Having been relegated at times in her own life and since as "just" a children's author, the academic world was taking notice of the depth and breadth of Montgomery's work, her life, and her influence. Montgomery required a centre of academic focus, and one that would link the academic world with the vast array of Montgomery followers, independent scholars, collectors, and enthusiasts.*

*Second, if indeed there was to be L. M. Montgomery Institute, what better location than in her home province, Prince Edward Island, and at a university that claims her as one of our own alumna.*



*And third, the principal founder of the LMMI, Dr. Elizabeth Epperly, brought an expertise and passion to the enterprise that made it all possible. Many have been involved with the LMMI's success, but Dr. Epperly was central to the origins and ongoing success of the LMMI. Shortly after the LMMI's founding, Dr. Epperly became President of the University of Prince Edward Island, and in the years during and since that service, has been a key Montgomery scholar and mentor.*

Presented herewith is a picture of the “Epperly Plaza” situated at the University of Prince Edward Island, a tribute to Dr. Elizabeth Epperly, alongside her portrait in the hall of the university presidents:



**Photographs 6 and 7** – The “Epperly Plaza” plaza located at the University of Prince Edward Island, in honor of Dr. Elizabeth Epperly, founder of the L. M. Montgomery Institute, and her portrait at the hall of presidents of the university at the Robertson Library.

(Source: Personal collections)

- III. Does the LMMI have custody of manuscripts, photographs, first editions, literary works, letters, and other materials that may have belonged to Montgomery or are related to her?

*Yes, the LMMI now has in the Robertson Library of UPEI the world's largest collection of Montgomery first editions, foreign editions, and periodicals containing Montgomery's published stories and poems. Montgomery items are being continually added. For example, in 2020 the Institute received a set of 70 postcards sent by Montgomery to her friend, Scottish writer, and which had*

recently been discovered by the MacMillan family, and purchased by LMMI benefactor Dr. Donna Campbell.

In 2022 the LMMI announced “The L. M. Montgomery Bookshelf: Highlighting a Favourite Writer’s Favourite Reading”, a digital and, to a less extent physical, project that over the coming years will highlight books that Montgomery, a voracious reader, owned or read.

Following are images depicting the Robertson Library of the University of Prince Edward Island:



**Photographs 8 and 9** – Front of the building of the Robertson Library and its sign with information about the library hours and its sections (including the L. M. Montgomery Institute).

(Source: Personal collections)

IV. Are the LMMI Collections available for scholars, professors, and readers worldwide?

*Yes, in two ways. Visitors are welcome to come to the LMMI within the Robertson Library. We were thrilled to have with us for the month of August an emerging Montgomery scholar from Brazil, Tatiane Rodrigues Lopes dos Santos, and look forward to reading more of her work!*

*And we are actively moving more and more of our collection online, principally via Kindred Spaces<sup>7</sup>. We want to share as widely as possible to advance research and to advance informed celebration of Montgomery, her works, and her cultural influence.*

*The LMMI's Journal of L. M. Montgomery Studies<sup>8</sup> is a freely available digital resource created to “publish intriguing, highly original, rigorously researched scholarship on all aspects of L. M. Montgomery’s life, influences, creative work, and legacy.” Such is the importance of our international reach that the Journal has started an “International Notes” series as a focused avenues for contributors and readers around the world.*

Herein are provided additional images of the Robertson Library:



**Photographs 10 and 11** – Front of the building in which the Robertson Library is located and front door of the University of the Prince Edward Island Archives & Special Collections, only accessible by staff.

(Source: Personal collections)

V. How many professors, researchers, and staff are among the LMMI committee members? Are these professors, researchers, and staff faculty members of the

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <<https://kindredspaces.ca/>>. Access on September 8, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <<https://journaloflmmontgomerystudies.ca/>>. Access on September 8, 2023.



University of Prince Edward Island, or are they from other universities? In which areas do they work?

*The LMMI Committee currently includes 13 members, eight of whom are UPEI faculty and staff from English, Applied Communication Leadership and Culture, Anthropology, Psychology, History, and Robertson Library. Five members are from other universities or are independent scholars in Canada or the United States.*

- VI. The LMMI is known for promoting international conferences and research into the life and works of L. M. Montgomery. Since Montgomery's works have been translated into several languages and are available in places beyond Canada and the United States, what are LMMI's relations with other countries?

*Yes, Montgomery's influence is worldwide, with her works having been translated in more than 30 languages. We are proud of the long tradition of international engagement of the LMMI Montgomery Institute. As example, delegates from 17 countries attended the 15th LMMI Biennial International Conference in 2022.*

*Probably our strongest international relationship is with Japan, reflecting Montgomery's enormous influence there over the decades. Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado of Japan has served as our International Patron since 2004, most recently visiting the LMMI in 2019.*

- VII. Does the LMMI have international partnerships? If so, with which countries and which universities?

*The LMMI has a history of collaboration with several Japanese universities, but we do not have any formal international partnerships.*

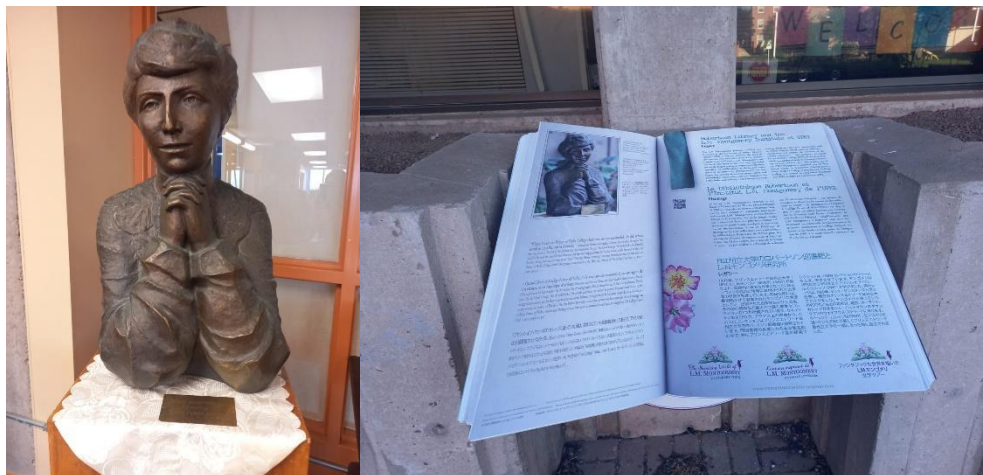
- VIII. Has the LMMI ever had another partnership with Brazilian universities or Brazilian scholars? If so, which ones?

*To date, this has not happened in a formal sense. We are pleased to have established a relationship with Tatiane, and who knows what might be possible in future?*

- IX. The LMMI is celebrating 30 years in 2023. What is the importance of the Institute in carrying out research on L. M. Montgomery and maintaining this author's legacy in Prince Edward Island and the world?

*The LMMI honours Montgomery's legacy and links scholars and readers from around the world who want to learn more about her life, her works, her times, and her enduring legacy. Each wave of new scholars builds upon past work and brings fresh perspectives. We are excited for what how these new understandings will shape our appreciation of Prince Edward Island's celebrated author.*

In the Robertson Library at the University of Prince Edward Island, one can observe monuments dedicated to L. M. Montgomery:



**Photographs 12 and 13** – Photographs of monuments honoring the Canadian author L. M. Montgomery, located in the front and inside the Robertson Library building.

(Source: Personal collections)

## Acknowledgments

The interviewers would like to thank the CAPES Foundation for the scholarship granted to Tatiane Rodrigues Lopes dos Santos and the L. M. Montgomery Institute for welcoming her and providing assistance.

### Suggested references

For more information about the L. M. Montgomery Institute or L. M. Montgomery, here is a list of websites we judge interesting:

*L. M. Montgomery Institute*. Available at: <<https://lmmontgomery.ca/>>. Access on September 8, 2023.

*Robertson Library*. Available at: <<https://library.upei.ca/>>. Access on September 8, 2023.

The Anne of Green Gables Manuscript: L. M. Montgomery & the Creation of Anne. *The Anne of Green Gables Manuscript*. Available at: <<https://annemanuscript.ca/>>. Access on September 8, 2023.

University Archives & Special Collections (UASC). *Robertson Library*. Available at: <<https://library.upei.ca/peicollection/archives>>. Access on September 8, 2023.

L. M. Montgomery Online. Available at: <<https://lmmonline.org/>>. Access on September 8, 2023.

If one is interested in reading an analysis of L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, there is a chapter about this work written by the interviewers and published in a Brazilian e-book:

SANTOS, Tatiane Rodrigues Lopes dos; FERREIRA, Eliane Aparecida Galvão Ribeiro Ferreira. Literatura juvenil de autoria feminina e formação do leitor: uma leitura de Anne de Green Gables, de L. M. Montgomery. In: GALVÃO, Eliane; RICHE, Rosa Cuba (Orgs.). Literatura infantil e juvenil de autoria feminina. Rio de Janeiro: Dialogarts, 2022. Available at: <<https://www.dialogarts.uerj.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/LitInfjuvAutFem.pdf>>. Access on: Access on September 8, 2023.