



Champion COMMUNITY Page

Making it easier to rediscover your roots

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

It wasn't so long ago when turning an entrepreneurial buck in the genealogy biz was about as common as discovering that your ancestor was Mary Queen of Scots.

Now, with this millennium all but waving goodbye in the rearview mirror, it appears there's a solid future to be made from the past.

That's new, pointed out Rick Roberts, co-owner of the recently opened Global Genealogy Supply at 13 Charles Street.

There was a time when Canadian history flowed only as plentifully as the grant money that supported it, he said.

"During the '70's there were a lot of small presses producing Canadian historical information," said Mr. Roberts. "But as the grants petered out, they petered out, too."

With the loss of the Canuck presses, amateur historians soon found themselves in the odd position of having to look statewide for information about institutions as classically Canadian as the Mounties and Tim Hortons.

Pricey imports

Adding insult to injury, it came at a premium cost.

"Books that should have cost \$25-\$30 are costing \$45-50 because they're bringing them in from the States," said Mr. Roberts.

In response, Mr. Roberts and his wife and business partner Sandra began scouting out as many information sources as they could.

In 1992, the couple put their hobby to work by founding Global as a part-time business.

By 1995, they added a web site.

By the time 1997 rolled around, Global was a booming mail order business with both the Roberts at the helm full-time.

Thousands subscribe

Since then they have added their own publishing company, Global Heritage Press (GHP) to the mix, along with an on-line genealogical magazine, Global Gazette.

The magazine has 9,000 subscribers so far. It's written on a volunteer basis by authors culled from GHP's publishing roster.

They're also looking to put Canadian history books on CD-ROM to make them more accessible to the home historian.

"You're dealing with a very small niche market and technology really lends itself to that," said Mr. Roberts. "We've got a fairly small market with a very defined need."

The market isn't always small. Currently Global is taking orders from information heavy hitters such as The Church of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah as well as libraries spanning North America.

For mega-customers and the home historian alike, Global offers accessible, one-stop shopping for all kinds of history needs.

"We sell everything from how-to books to very advanced historical books," said Mr. Roberts. "People want to understand their ancestor in the context of (the ancestor's) times."

Genealogy accessories such as archival tape that won't discolor or harm documents, plastic covers that won't lift the ink from paper and pens that won't destroy paper are sleeper hits of the

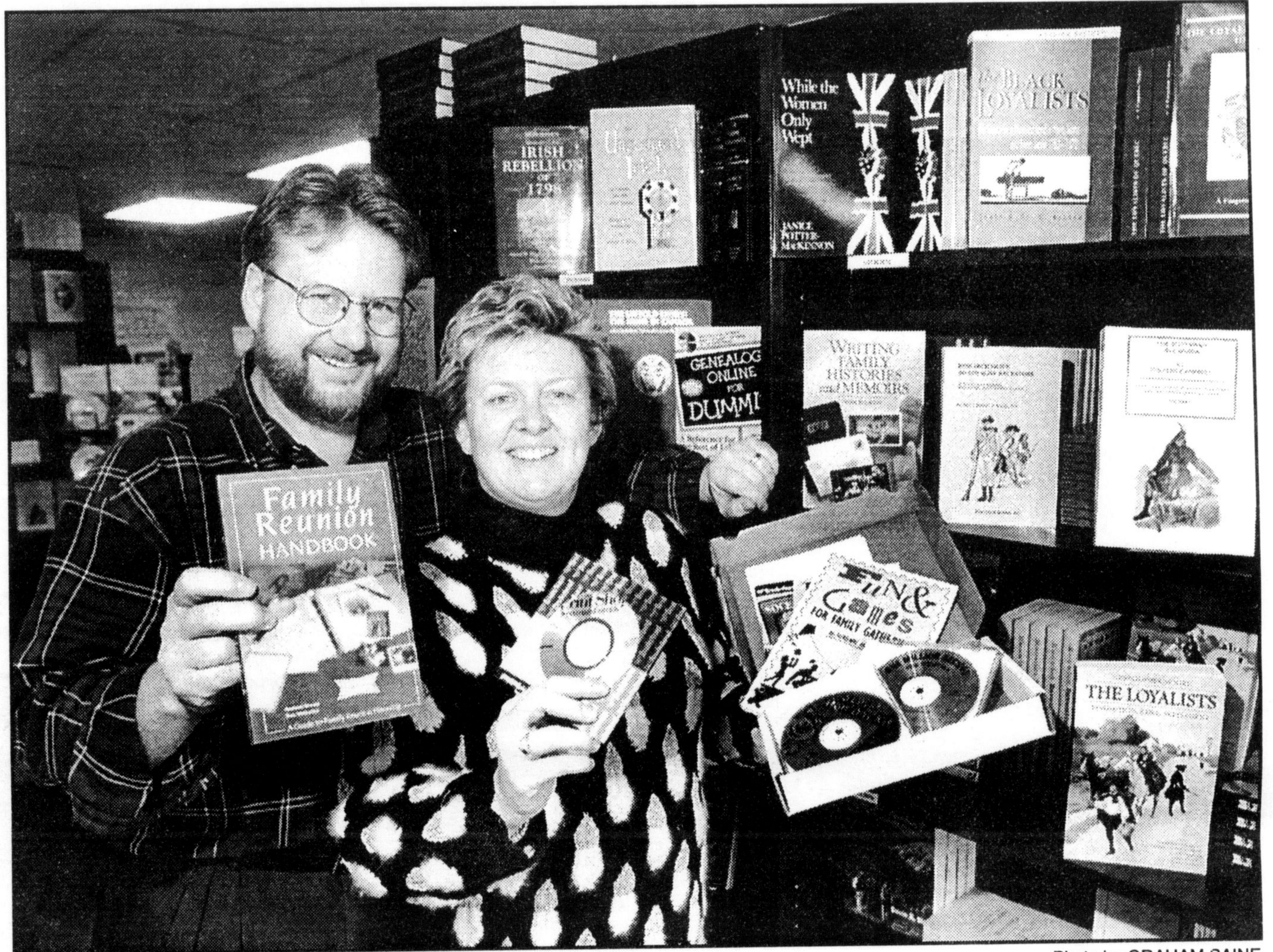


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Rick and Sandra Roberts of Global Genealogy show off some of the tools of their trade — books and CDs that can make anyone an amateur family detective.

trade.

Perhaps more surprising is the brisk business in acid-free archival boxes. Apparently these are coveted by the wedding set, who know that the boxes are aces when it comes to keeping that wedding gown whiter than white.

Market is growing

The genealogical market may be a small one but it's growing all the time.

One reason is economic times are good, so people can afford to lay down big clams for old bones.

"They have curiosity and they have disposable time," said Mr. Roberts. "Their careers are maturing and their kids are growing

up. They have disposable income and they're often very mobile."

According to a report issued by the University of Waterloo, the typical part-time historian is someone who has recently lost a piece of their own past.

"They found that when people had recently lost a relative, that was a trigger," recounted Mr. Roberts. "People felt they should have asked all these questions and they hadn't."

Whatever the reason, Mr. Roberts knows that things sure look different than when he happened on to his initial genealogical conference in the first blush of the 1990s.

Back then, the median age of attendees was 60.

"Now people are there with their kids. There's lots of boomers and even gen-xers," he said.

Meal program is available for seniors

Frozen meals are available for disabled or convalescent seniors through a joint venture between Allendale Home for the Aged and Milton Meals on Wheels.

To become eligible for the program, entries can be picked up at the seniors centre or delivered if necessary.

Both Allendale and private recipe meals

are available.

To place an order, or for more information on the program, call Mary Cooke at 878-6699.

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