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## Academy Member Spotlight: Gary Spraakman

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## Academy Member Spotlight: Gary Spraakman

Gary Spraakman did not expect to be an accounting historian. It can be best explained as occurring by happenstance when travelling with his nine-year old son in Northern Ontario. His son Christopher was interested in all kinds of history, and insisted on stopping at as many historical sites as possible. There are many in Canada. At a Parks Canada re-created Hudson's Bay Company fur post on the Mattawa River in Northern Ontario, he was persuaded by his son to stop. The Hudson's Bay Company was the iconic Canadian company that had survived from its start in 1670 to the present.

The re-creation at the Mattawa River represented an 1810 fur trade post. There he saw the usual fur trade articles from that time period such as canoes, paddles, guns, pots, and beaver pelts. He was surprised to see a journal or ledger book. He wondered why the fur traders would have needed accounting in 1810.

Gary was interested in how uncertainty affects the use of management accounting. There was much uncertainty with the 1810 fur trade, starting with the precarious ocean trip to bring



trade goods and supplies from London to oceanside ports. Uncertainty was further increased with inland travel by canoe and crude boats to aborigines to exchange trade goods for furs. The general belief was that with uncertainty, you need flexibility and not management accounting. The latter was assumed to be restrictive. His research revealed the opposite; the use of management accounting increases with uncertainty. The study of management accounting at the Hudson's Bay Company from 1670 to 2005 allowed for understanding the development of management accounting for imple-

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menting strategies and for ensuring survival.

Gary soon learned that the Hudson's Bay Company archives were unique for their completeness of management accounting documentation from 1670. They provide a deep understanding of management accounting, and the opportunity to understand how management accounting functioned and its actual economic role. The result of Gary's initial observation of a journal or ledger in a re-created fur trade post was 12 papers in refereed journals, many with co-authors who added important insights.

Gary is a professor of management accounting at the School of Administrative Studies, York University. He is also the associate dean for the 25,000 students at York's Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies. About half of his research is devoted to accounting history with the remainder divided between management accounting, accounting education, and ethics.

As the vice-president of relations for the AAH, he is on the editorial advisory boards for the Journal of Accounting and Organizational Change and for Qualitative Research in Accounting Management. He an associate editor with Accounting Perspectives

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## **New Shipments of Materials at University of Mississippi Library**

Members and scholars should be advised that there have been two significant shipments of materials received at the University of Mississippi library which may be of interest to historians. Eight cartons of materials from the research files of Dr. Edward N. Coffman, late professor of Accountancy at Virginia Commonwealth University contain original copies of the four-volume softbound sets of Academy Working Paper Series and several research file sets in various stages of undertaking and completion. The most prominent of these relate to members of the Accounting Hall of Fame who were former chairmen of

the Financial Accounting Standards Board, all dating up to the period of about 2001. The files also contain briefer profiles of other Hall members and some of their papers and article publications for the same time period, through the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The second recent shipment of 13 cartons of material was received from Professor Emeritus Doyle Z. Williams, former dean of the Walton School, University of Arkansas, and also a former faculty member at the University of Southern California

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- Number of public lampposts: from 1,487 (1855) to 4,649 (1860)
- Residences with piped gas: from 950 (1855) to 4,828 (1860)
- In 1860 the company started selling coal to residences
- A new gas pipe in Rio de Janeiro was in the final phase of development

Maua perceived that he could use the Financial Report of his company as a “propaganda piece”. He also advertised that the company profits for the second semester of 1859 increased by 4% when compared with the first semester with a total 236 million Reis (236 “contos”). The profits for 1859 were in the order of over 400 million Reis (400 “contos”), a very large sum for the time.

The vision that he was trying to “sell” the Gas Company stocks with this Financial Report publication is supported by the fact that he addressed price growth of the dividends: 12,000 Reis per stock in the

first semester of 1855 to 21,000 Reis per stock in the second semester of 1859, a growth of 75% in five years, making the Gas Company a very appealing investment.

### Conclusion

The Viscount of Maua, in 1860, made the first use of a Financial Report as a “propaganda piece” to attract investors. It is very common in the present time to publish financial statements with the intent of gaining new investors, but in 1860 it was a revolutionary idea that Maua implemented in Brazil.

### References

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tives and a member of the editorial advisory and review board of the IMA Educational Case Journal. He is very proud of his book, *Management Accounting at the Hudson's Bay Company: From Quill Pen to Digitization*, that was just published by Emerald in their Studies in the Development of Accounting Thought.

Gary and his wife Cherilyn have three adult children, and so far one grandson and one granddaughter.

