



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 4, 2009

## **George Bernard Shaw in the digital age – schools rediscover literary icon**

TORONTO – In the first digital learning collaboration of its kind, students and teachers throughout Ontario and across Canada will soon enjoy exclusive access to newly digitized and interactive resources on George Bernard Shaw and his works.

The ORION-Shaw Project, part of York University's new Sagittarius initiative, is partnering with the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION), to produce and share newly digitized resources on two Shaw Festival 2009 season plays: *The Devil's Disciple* and *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*.

Students and teachers will be able to access annotated texts and resources for the plays directly from their classrooms, complete with the production details, classroom resources, contextual documents, research materials, quizzes and activities, a search engine, and study guides tailored to the Ontario school curriculum. Reference materials by world renowned Shaw scholars will also be available.

The pilot project is available exclusively to the over 800,000 Ontario students in schools and institutions connected to Ontario's next-generation ORION network, and to several thousand more students in schools across the country connected through CANARIE, Canada's advanced research and education network backbone.

"This project introduces a whole new dimension for students, teachers and researchers, especially in access to and dissemination of research materials," says Professor Kelly Thomson, Associate Dean Research of Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies, York University, and Chair of the Advisory Board of the Sagittarius Project.

The Sagittarius initiative has the backing of the venerable Shaw Festival and several of Ontario's largest school boards, including the Toronto District School Board, which is incorporating the materials in its curriculum.

"We are very excited about this new and innovative project," said Professor Leonard Conolly of Trent University, Literary Advisor to the Estate of Bernard Shaw. "This clearly has the potential of not only expanding appreciation and understanding of Shaw's work, but also of making it more accessible to new audiences through new technologies."

-30-

For more information, visit <http://shaw.yorku.ca>, or contact:

Tamara Stoll, Communications Officer, ORION  
416-507-9860 ext. 224  
[tamara.stoll@orion.on.ca](mailto:tamara.stoll@orion.on.ca)

Kay Li, Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies, York University  
416-736-2100 ext. 33860  
[kay.li@atkinson.yorku.ca](mailto:kay.li@atkinson.yorku.ca)



## BACKGROUND

### The ORION-Shaw Project

George Bernard Shaw is one of the most celebrated writers and dramatists of the 20th century. The annual Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake is one of Canada's most popular cultural attractions, and the works presented are an invaluable teaching and learning resource for Ontario schools.

The ORION-Shaw Project is a pilot project of the new Sagittarius initiative of York University's Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies to digitize teaching and learning literary resources for use by Canadian high schools.

Study guides for teachers have been developed and targeted to Grades 9 through 12 for *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* and Grades 7 to 12 for *The Devil's Disciple*. The subject areas targeted include drama, dance, English and history for *King Charles*, and music, drama, dance, English, social studies and history for *The Devil's Disciple*. The curriculum expectations are covered with the pre- and post-show activities listed in the study guides.

York University's Advanced Broadband Enabled Learning (ABEL) Program ([www.abelearn.ca](http://www.abelearn.ca)) is making the resource available to teachers and students through its bank of online resources.

### Quotes

"York researchers collaborate with community partners - policy-makers, industry and other communities of interest – in a range of ways that include asking research questions that are sensitive and responsive to the priorities and interests of our stakeholders, to direct partnerships with stakeholders on specific research projects, to contracts that respond directly to the research interests of stakeholders."

- *Professor Kelly Thomson, Associate Dean Research of Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies, York University, and Chair of the Advisory Board of the Sagittarius Project.*

"This is the kind of innovative resource and applications that we like to support and that takes advantage of ORION's unique capabilities. ORION was created to enable new and innovative ways of teaching and learning and we're proud to help bring this exciting new program to students and teachers here in Ontario and across Canada."

- *Phil Baker, President and CEO, Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network*

"This approach promotes educators' interests and student engagement in learning. Our district school board subscribes to ORION and our teachers are learning how to use digitized classroom resources effectively."

- *Anne Kerr, Superintendent of Education, Toronto District School Board*

"Our members are eagerly contributing their expertise to this wonderful new venture partly just to advance the cause of a better understanding and appreciation of Shaw in Ontario and Canada, where the Shaw Festival resides, but also because they are far-sighted enough to see the long-range benefit of an eventual worldwide availability made possible by an exciting new technology. We will be watching the progress of this project with keen interest and counting the days."

- *Prof. Richard Dietrich, President, International Shaw Society*

"We are very excited about this new and innovative project. This clearly has the potential of not only expanding appreciation and understanding of Shaw's work, but also of making it more accessible to new audiences through new technologies."

- *Professor Leonard Conolly of Trent University, Literary Advisor to the Estate of Bernard Shaw.*

"We at The Shaw Festival are thrilled to support this wonderful initiative enabling us to share our passion, our resources, and our knowledge about Bernard Shaw and his writings with teachers and students across Canada."

- *Suzanne Merriam, Senior Manager, Education, The Shaw Festival*

"Interactive learning content engages students and energizes teachers. ABEL is excited to be able to offer this authentic learning content to teachers and students and support new models of instruction."

- *Janet Murphy, Director, Advanced Broadband Enabled Learning Program*

Study guides are available to teachers in March. Teachers will be able to bring classes to the Shaw Festival performances beginning in June and throughout the fall.

As a special promotion, the Shaw Festival is providing two complimentary vouchers for two tickets to a performance of either of the two plays being digitized as a prize for correctly answered online quizzes. A draw will be held in the event of multiple students correctly completing the quizzes.

This project is among the new programs and services ORION is introducing to help students and teachers derive maximum benefits from ORION's state-of-the art capabilities in supporting teaching and learning outcomes.

Nearly 800,000 Ontario K-12 students in 16 Ontario school boards are connected to ORION, which was created to provide an advanced private network to enable innovation for Ontario's research and education institutions.

A second phase of the Sagittarius initiative will be rolled out in the fall, involving digitizing the works of African Canadian writers.

Learn more about the project at <http://shaw.yorku.ca>.