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NEWS RELEASE

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Early Typewriters
The world's first typing machines revolutionized modern communications

(Toronto, Ontario – June 21, 2007) Starting **July 7 2007**, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) presents an intriguing exhibit of more than 25 antique typewriters from the very beginning of their history, in the 1880s and 1890s. *Early Typewriters* presents the renowned collection of Torontonian Martin Howard, the largest of its kind in Canada. These fascinating examples of early modern communications technology will be seen in the ROM's Canada Court (Level 1) until **January 2008**.

"The ROM is pleased to collaborate with Mr. Howard to produce this exhibit," said William Thorsell, Director and CEO of the ROM. "These machines represent the ongoing evolution in personal communications and provide an interesting retrospective on how we've arrived at the writing tools we use today."

Early Typewriters exhibits a variety of the world's oldest typing machines, highlighting their sophistication, diversity and development over time. Period letterhead, advertisements and photographs will also help contextualize the typewriters and the world in which they were used. One featured machine is the rare Columbia 2 – Index, manufactured in 1885, which is one of only 50 known to exist today. Another highlight is the Crandall, New Model, produced in 1886 by the Crandall Machine Company (Croton, New York). This typewriter has a Victorian design and is decorated with hand painted roses, accented with inlaid mother-of-pearl.

Crandall, New Model
Crandall Machine Company
Martin Howard Collection of Early Typewriters
Antiquetypewriters.com

The advent of the typewriter was meant to solve the problem of fast and accurate communication methods for businesses expanding in the late 19th century. Their diverse designs and mechanisms catalogue the many ingenious techniques devised by mechanical engineers to type letters onto paper. Another reason for such variety in style was the high price of early typewriters. While models with a full keyboard were available in the early 1880s, they could cost as much as $100 apiece – no small amount considering a horse-drawn carriage cost between $40 and $70. In order to lower the price, companies were forced to create innovative typewriter designs with fewer moving parts, called "index" typewriters, costing as little as $5 each. One such experiment resulted in the first European typewriter, the Hammonia, produced by Guhl & Harbeck of Hamburg, Germany in 1884. The mechanism employs a long brass blade that has the characters cut out along the bottom edge. To type, one lifts the blade and moves it back and forth to select a character. The result looks a lot more like a cheese-cutter than a typewriter!

Hammonia
Guhl & Harbeck
Martin Howard Collection of Early Typewriters
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The exhibit also serves to explain why typewriters evolved as they did into the modern or QWERTY keyboard used today (so named because of the position of the first six letters along the top left of the keyboard). This key layout was first seen on the typewriter produced by Remington in 1873. Letters were not placed alphabetically in an effort to keep adjacent type bars from hitting each other while typing. This arrangement grew popular and the modern keyboard was born.

Early Typewriters' lender, Martin Howard, was born in Durham, England in 1959. He inherited his love of collecting from his father who is also an enthusiast with a large collection of antique mechanical objects such as butter churns, seeders and medical implements. Martin bought his first period typewriter in 1989, a Caligraph model from the early 1880s. Since then, Martin has gone to great lengths to build his 75-piece collection, scouring flea markets, antique stores and following leads across North America to find the rarest and most beautiful examples.