Canada's Archives
A New **Blueprint**

Contents

Preface

As Canada approaches the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017, archives and the institutions that care for them play an important role in society. Effective records management is critical to good governance today, and is essential to building the archives of Canada's democracy tomorrow. And the expectations of the public are only increasing with the development of new technologies, the momentum of open information and data initiatives, and the new kinds of outreach being undertaken by archives.

The confidence in archives and democracy is at the heart of The *Universal Declaration on Archives*, which originated in Canada by way of the *Déclaration québécoise sur les archives*. The Declaration positions archives as "…authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions [and playing] …an essential role in the development of societies...." This idea was further developed more recently by two respected expert panels—one from the Royal Society of Canada and the other from the Council of Canadian Academies.

In the digital environment however, the landscape of archives has changed and so too has the work of archivists. Today, the archival perspective is more important and not less so—archivists face the need to manage increasing volumes of digital information; the need to respond to users' expectations for access to information and knowledge instantly and from anywhere; and the need to respond to the interest of the public to access and use historical material about their families and communities in new and innovative ways.

But archives also face special challenges in the digital environment that are driven by their core mandate to preserve and provide access to digital and analogue records in perpetuity. In the face of these challenges, archives are under pressure to respond. In fact, the Council of Canadian Academies report entitled *Leading in the Digital World: Opportunities for Canada's Memory Institutions,* describes "…increasing indications that suggest Canada is now lagging behind other countries in its response to digital opportunities" (p. 38). There is a sense of urgency for archivists and others with an interest in archives, to take collective action to respond to the digital environment. By working in collaboration, archives will make the fundamental transition required to ensure full participation in the digital world.

Archives will continue to transform – seeing archivists reach out to records managers and creators to ensure that today's digital information is captured and preserved for tomorrow. Archivists will put a renewed focus on ensuring the legacy of analogue material is accessible now, and is well-conserved for continuing access in the future. And finally, both archives and archivists will seek out strong and lasting alliances with partners and collaborators, including users and industry.

Purpose

This strategy was not written to educate the public about the value of archives—it was written for the Canadian archival community. The purpose of this strategy is to provide a high-level roadmap to guide collaboration between members of the Canadian archival community with a view to ensuring that this community can better respond to the opportunities and challenges of the digital world.

The strategy spans a period of 10 years, from 2016–2026 and has four areas of focus:
- The Records—building the archives of Canadians for Canadians, and for the world.
- The People—engaging all with an interest in records and archives.
- The Capacity—making archives sustainable today and tomorrow.
- The Profile—making archives visible.

Over the 10-year span of this strategy, priorities will be identified under each area of focus through successive annual planning cycles.

All of the activities identified in this document are meant to complement the initiatives of the members of the Canadian archival community. In this context, implementation of the strategy is not the responsibility of any single member of the community. While members of the Canadian archival system will provide leadership, progress will be highly dependent on the level of engagement of the community in this work, as well as on our commitment to move forward collectively.

Additionally, this document recognizes the fact that there are two archival traditions in Canada – one Francophone and the other Anglophone. These two traditions result in varying levels of integration of records management and archives in institutions, organizations and the workforce in regions across Canada. And finally, the global trend is moving towards a greater level of integration between these disciplines, particularly from the point of view of approaches in the digital environment.

And finally, for the purposes of this document, the **Canadian Archival System** refers to those organizations that provide recognized leadership in the domain, namely the *Association des archivistes du Québec*, the Association of Canadian Archivists, the Canadian Council of Archives, Library and Archives Canada and the Council of Provincial and Territorial Archivists. The **archival community** is much broader, comprising all of the other archival institutions and organizations, professionals and para-professionals, academics and educators. And the term **partners and collaborators** includes all other allies with an interest in archives, including creators, users, donors, researchers, industry, and governments, to name a few.

Vision

> *By working together in a coordinated, collaborative and inclusive manner,*
> *and by engaging partners and collaborators who share our concern about archives,*
> *the Canadian archival community strives to ensure open access to society's analogue and digital*
> *records to support accountability, transparency, and the effective functioning of democracy;*
> *as well as the development of meaningful personal and collective identities. The community also*
> *encourages research and innovation to support the use of archives in the knowledge economy.*

Canada's archival community subscribes to the principles articulated in The Universal Declaration on Archives, adopted by the International Council on Archives in 2010 and the 36th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO in 2011. The Declaration provides a clear statement of the relevance of archives in society, and expresses the vision of the Canadian community.

The Records—building the archives of Canadians for Canadians, and for the world

Common processes and tools must be developed and used by all organizations involved in the acquisition, preservation and provision of access to archives. These processes and tools must support collaborative approaches and be subject to continual review to ensure a close alignment with the evolving ways that society creates, uses and accesses information.

1.0 Standards, best practices, legislation and policy

1.0.1   Identify Canadian experts, and engage them in the development of mechanisms to maintain national standards and best practices over time; and initiate dialogue to ensure that national standards, like the *Rules for Archival Description*, reflect the digital environment.

1.0.2   Identify existing and required standards, best practices and policies in the areas of records and archives; and increase information about them via a clearinghouse to encourage uptake (e.g., appraisal, acquisition, arrangement, metadata, analogue and digital preservation, post-custodial archival models, open information and data, private archives).

1.0.3   Establish mechanisms to exchange information and best practices in areas related to government records, including born digital records, non-custodial records, disposition, appraisal strategies, information technology and systems requirements, open government, etc., across Canadian institutions.

1.0.4   Examine legislation and regulations with an impact on archives (e.g., copyright, access to information freedom of information, privacy), to ensure that these reflect trends in the broader environment, and strike a balance between protection of rights and access by users.

1.0.5   Foster relationships with other organizations involved in the development of standards, best practices and policies generally (e.g., Canadian General Standards Board, Society of American Archivists, and International Council on Archives, International Organization for Standardization).

1.0.6   Build Canada's presence in international standards work by promoting participation in international standards committees and groups; by sharing international expertise within the community; and by increasing communication around standards, best practices, and policies, both within the community and with international partners.

1.1 Acquisition

1.1.1 Develop and formalize a national initiative that fosters collaboration among institutions acquiring private archives, and uses shared processes and tools to support and enable coordination.

1.1.2 Establish mechanisms to exchange information and advance practice in all aspects of the acquisition of born-digital government and private records, including selection, capture by ingest or harvesting, required metadata, etc.

1.2 Preservation

1.2.1 Establish Canadian centres of expertise in analogue and digital preservation by communicating the existence of in-demand resources in Canadian institutions and organizations (e.g., equipment, expertise, etc.), and by establishing permanent expert groups in key areas.

1.2.2 Identify mechanisms for analogue and digital preservation, and establish priorities for collective action (e.g., at-risk holdings).

1.2.3 Examine existing collaborative models to manage and preserve digital records, including migration of digital formats over time; and use these studies to develop approaches to increase collaboration among members of the archival community, and between them and partners and collaborators in academia and industry.

1.2.4 Examine options and develop approaches to enable smaller institutions to develop basic preservation skills, and through collaboration, access other preservation services and capacity.

1.3 Discovery and access

1.3.1 Continue the ongoing development of ARCHIVESCANADA.ca by engaging the archival community using a clear business case and development roadmap.

1.3.2 Develop strategies to prepare existing records for release as open information and data, and to incorporate archives into open linked-data projects.

1.3.3 Develop and implement collaborative approaches to digitize and enhance access to Canadian archives.

1.3.4 Develop best practices for all aspects of onsite and online services, including reference and consultation, accessibility, optimized search and discovery, and engage users in this work.

1.3.5 Identify and share information on viable platforms to incorporate user-contributed content with a view to improving access.

The People—engaging all with an interest in archives

All stakeholders of archives must be actively engaged in the archival endeavor, and with each another. They must foster open, generative and flexible relationships, and must remain open to new approaches. By developing common strategies to engage partners and collaborators in archives work, archives will be better positioned to respond to the rapid and ongoing changes in the digital environment. These partners and collaborators include volunteers; users; creators, whether private individuals, families, community groups, corporations or government; industry and the information communications technology sector; and cultural and memory institutions, among others.

2.0 Workforce and professional development

2.0.1   Develop a profile of the current archives workforce, including trends and gaps, as well as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and survey employers to better understand required skills and competencies, to develop standard competencies, and to recommend steps to develop the current and future workforce.

2.0.2   Develop approaches to raise awareness of existing educational offerings related to archives, and to ensure that these offerings respond to the actual needs of the workforce, especially with respect to the new skills and competencies required for the digital environment.

2.0.3   Enhance relationships among national, provincial and territorial, and regional archival professional associations to increase the coordination of their respective professional development offerings.

2.0.4   Identify emerging leaders and ensure that these individuals have access to leadership development programs (both professional and management-focused), and career pathways that promote ongoing engagement with, and sustained leadership within the archival community.

2.1 Engaging Aboriginal peoples

2.1.1   Alongside First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, develop approaches to engage Aboriginal peoples in the archival workforce, to promote archival education, and to introduce archival skills and competencies into the management of records and archives within communities.

2.1.2   Alongside First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, develop ethical research guidelines and respectful approaches to enhance access and use of archives housed by non-Aboriginal institutions and organizations, including but not limited to governments, churches, universities; and to consider recommendations contained in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

2.2 Research and innovation

2.2.1   Identify ways to promote Canadian research in records management and archival studies undertaken by both academics and practitioners.

2.2.2   Identify approaches to increase the dissemination of Canadian and international research in records management, archival studies, information technologies, etc., through continuing education, conferences and journals and other publications.

The Capacity—making archives sustainable today and tomorrow

A range of innovative approaches to resourcing and organizational capacity must be in place to support acquisition, preservation and access to archives in perpetuity. These approaches must be founded on business models that recognize an environment of limited resources and that archives must seek to be perennially self-sustaining.

3.0 Value and impact

3.0.1   Establish connections with libraries, museums and other partners and collaborators already involved in defining the value of culture and heritage, both nationally and internationally.

3.0.2   Develop models to qualify and quantify how archives contribute to Canadian society culturally and economically, as well as to present information on the programs, activities and collections in Canada's archives.

3.0.3   Foster dialogue with academic researchers and statisticians to ensure that archives are on the radar when surveys or other activities are planned and undertaken.

3.1   Recognizing total costs

3.1.1   Develop models to depict the total cost to acquire, preserve, and provide access to analogue and digital records.

3.1.2   Develop strategies to ensure that creators, donors, academics, governments, etc., are aware of total costs associated with archives.

3.1.3   Engage academics, professional associations and research-granting bodies to ensure that grant submissions acknowledge archives required to fulfill the proposed project, and that they include provisions to resource work to be undertaken by archives to fulfill the proposed project (e.g., digitization); initiate dialogue with these groups to encourage the deposit of digitized records resulting from these projects to further enhance access.

3.2   Partners, collaborators and funding

3.2.1   Explore models to introduce fees for archival services beyond basic research and use; and explore models for compensation for commercial use of archives.

3.2.2   Create common strategies and approaches to engage private-sector partners in funding projects and initiatives (e.g., exhibitions, public programming); and broadly disseminate and communicate these strategies.

3.2.3   Create common strategies and approaches to engage partners and collaborators in the library, museum and gallery communities in developing joint projects and initiatives; and broadly disseminate and communicate these strategies.

3.2.4   Develop standard partnering and collaborative arrangements to increase access to archives online.

3.2.5   Promote existing government funding opportunities, and engage governments to seek equity with other funding streams in the cultural and heritage fields (e.g., arts, museums).

The Profile—making archives visible

Archives must be made visible—this includes records, organizations, professionals and other workers in archives. To promote a coherent profile for archives, an increasingly coordinated approach to internal communications, advocacy, marketing and outreach must be developed and implemented.

4.0 Advocacy

4.0.1   Develop an advocacy strategy to align and coordinate messaging by the Canadian archival community, and promote archives in relation to contemporary issues and events; include a profile and other tools based on a set of main messages for traditional and social media campaigns, public speaking, research, etc., on relevant issues.

4.0.2   Develop mechanisms to increase engagement and communications with partners and collaborators, including industry and governments, on issues that impact archives to influence policy and decision-making, technology and systems development, etc.

4.1   Outreach

4.1.1   Engage media (e.g., radio and television), libraries, academics (e.g., researchers and educators), professional associations, research-granting bodies, and other organizations to ensure proper crediting and citation to increase the visibility of archives.

4.1.2 Engage educators to develop toolkits for primary, secondary and post-secondary students to increase their awareness and use of primary source material.

4.1.3 Engage researchers to raise awareness of the value of depositing research generated through the use of archives.

4.1.4 Identify and make available resources on creating personal, family and community archives to make it easier for creators to access information on developing their own archives or contributing to existing archival programs.

Conclusion

The vision, areas of focus and activities described in this strategy are the result of extensive discussion and consultation among members of the Canadian archival community. The strategy also builds on the strong foundation established during the Canadian Archives Summit in January 2014. Members of the Canadian archival system and the archival community have an ongoing commitment to advance this strategy over the next 10-years in order to enhance access to society's archives.