



June 3, 2013

Dear ACA board and members,

On behalf of ACA's Canadian Archival System Taskforce, I am happy to submit the following report for discussion at the ACA Annual General Meeting in Winnipeg in June 15.

I would like to thank all CAST committee members for their collegial and thoughtful representation on the committee. Further thanks to Sean Berrigan, Raymond Frogner and James Roussain for helping in the writing and editing of this interim report.

I look forward to a productive discussion in Winnipeg.

Scott Goodine  
Chair, ACA Canadian Archival System Taskforce.

## **Reframing the Canadian Archival System:**

On April 30, 2012, Library & Archives Canada (LAC), abruptly ended the National Archival Development program (NADP) amid considerable budget and staff cuts to its professional programs. This sudden cut caught the archival community completely by surprise and led to a desperate attempt by the archival community to advocate for its return.

After a resolution supporting the Canadian Archival System was passed at the Association of Canadian Archivists' (ACA) 2013 Annual General Meeting (Appendix A), the ACA Board decided the most effective action would be to create a Canadian Archival System Taskforce (CAST) to analyze and prepare the Association for an uncertain future. Scott Goodine, of the Archives of Manitoba, was tasked with chairing CAST and recruited the following members in an attempt to create a committee with diverse geographical, archival and demographic backgrounds:

- Sean Berrigan, Library & Archives Canada (retired)
- Angela Fornelli, City of Wetaskiwin Archives
- Raymond Frogner, Royal British Columbia Museum & Archives (representing the CCA)
- Kathryn Harvey, Guelph University Archives
- Loryl MacDonald, University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services
- Nancy Marelli, Archivist emerita, Concordia University (representing the CCA)
- David Mawhinney, Mount Allison University Archives
- Jennifer Roberts, Yukon Archives
- James Roussain, ACA University of Toronto student chapter

CAST's first task was approving a Terms of Reference (Appendix B) and then began its work. This interim report is the first opportunity CAST has had to report back to the ACA membership.

A year later, the return of a federal funding program similar to the NADP seems unlikely. On a pessimistic note, these cuts have dramatically and negatively affected many of the provincial and territorial archival associations. Many have cut or completely eliminated paid positions and have struggled with the onerous task of already busy volunteers taking on more responsibilities. But not all is negative, the archival community has proven to be resilient- not one provincial or territorial association has ceased to exist- and united. The past year has shown that the Canadian Archival Community is amazingly cohesive and creative as different groups have formed alignments to advocate for the community. Without question, archivists are much more politically savvy than they were a year ago and the community is ready to move forward, even if it is towards an as yet defined goal.

With the cuts and the recent (May 16, 2013) resignation of Librarian and Archivist of Canada Daniel Caron, it is clear that the Canadian Archival Community is at a crossroads. Because of the controversy surrounding the cuts and actions at LAC, the Canadian Archival Community has received considerable media coverage and even attracted the creation of expert panels of the Royal Society of Canada and the Canadian Council of Academies. The future of the Canadian Archival System is very much at risk but archivists are also in a strong position to shape that future. The past year has also awakened a much deeper understanding of what the Canadian Archival System is and how it came about. A large portion of this interim report will attempt to place the current crisis into the context of Canada's long archival history.

## The Evolution of the Canadian Archival System

The archival record is not constant. It continues to evolve and develop through document creation, discovery, augmentation and aggregation. The Canadian archival system, which constitutes the collective documentary memory of the country, has also evolved and adapted over time.

The challenges facing the Canadian archival community in 2013 continue to be significant and require a concerted effort to address them. However, the Canadian archival community has been faced with crucial challenges in the past and has been able to overcome them with robust discussion, collaboration and forward-looking and long-term thinking. These current challenges will require the same vision, resilience, creativity, dedication and determination to advance the principles of Canadian documentary heritage both in its activities and in its profession.

The earliest archival activities in Canada took root in the colony of New France in the documentation of the colony's records for administrative and legal purposes and in the appointment of a custodian of archives in 1724.<sup>1</sup> This custodian began to add family, parish, judicial, notarial and ecclesiastical archives to its documentary holdings.<sup>2</sup>

Canada's archival heritage has been built on a unique duality: balancing and building on the foundation of both the public administrative and legal record and the societal and cultural role of documentary heritage. This foundation was predicated on a model of public responsibility and public funding for the Canadian documentary record in order to serve the common public good.<sup>3</sup>

This unique role among Western nations of documenting Canada's collective memory for both public and private sources in all media is deemed by archival scholars and professionals as the "total archives" concept and practice.<sup>4</sup> It has been cited as having its "intellectual origins" in the establishment of the Literary and Historical Society of Québec in 1824.<sup>5</sup> This concerted approach of documenting private and public spheres through the acquisition and preservation of both public records and historical information in all documentary media has been reflected in all political jurisdictions- federal, provincial/territorial and municipal and among community, public and university archival institutions from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and continues today.

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<sup>1</sup> Ian E. Wilson, "Archives," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, n.d., 85; Ian E. Wilson, "A Noble Dream: The Origins of the Public Archives of Canada," *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-1983): 22.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh A. Taylor, "The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries As Heritage," *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-1983): 120.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Millar, "Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada," *Archivaria* 46 (Autumn 1998): 104-105.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; Ian E. Wilson, "Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives" (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), March 1980), 63-64.

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, "A Noble Dream: The Origins of the Public Archives of Canada," 16; Millar, "Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada," 104-105.

This duality of public and private records provided the foundations of the Nova Scotia government's establishment under Joseph Howe of a Records Commission in 1857.<sup>6</sup> The Records Commission was to provide "*the illustration of history and progress of society in this province.*"<sup>7</sup> This duality of public and private historical documentation also provided the basis of the mandate of the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) in 1872.

In his 1882 Archives Report, Douglas Brymner the first Dominion Archivist, expressed his vision for the nascent Public Archives of Canada by noting that: "*the special object of the office is to obtain from all sources, private as well as public, such documents as may throw light on social, commercial, municipal as well as purely political history.*"<sup>8</sup> Brymner, in addition to the management of the growing number of departmental and government records, added to the developing collection historical materials such the papers of Governors General, and the diaries and records of explorers and religious orders thus solidifying the initial marriage of public and private in the national institution.<sup>9</sup>

Recognizing this dual function, Brymner's successor, Arthur Doughty was appointed in 1904 as both Dominion Archivist and Keeper of the Records with a mandate as inclusive and expansive as Brymner's.<sup>10</sup> Doughty, seeking the advice of historians on the need for critical historical information, created the Historical Manuscripts Commission in 1907 to enrich the Public Archives collection of manuscripts and historical records crucial for scholarship.<sup>11</sup> This wide-ranging mandate covering both public and private sources found its legislative confirmation in the *Public Archives of Canada Act* passed in 1912.<sup>12</sup> During this period, the archival activities of the provinces and municipalities took on a renewed vigor using the model of the PAC as a guide for their mandates. The establishment of provincial archival institutions in Ontario, Québec, BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, in many cases with the leadership offered by provincial legislative libraries, were also building on the duality of private and public archives held within the same institution. These provincial archives, working with the local and regional historical societies and universities were critical elements in the developing network of the archival community in Canada.

The establishment of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts Letters and Sciences, commonly known as the Massey Commission, provided an important vehicle for the Canadian archival community to begin to build the connections and networks required to stitch together in an embryonic form the archival network/system.

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<sup>6</sup> Wilson, "Archives," 85; Millar, "Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada," 108.

<sup>7</sup> Millar, "Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada," 108.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, "Archives," 85; Douglas Brymner, "Report on Canadian Archives," 1882-1883, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, "Archives," 85.

<sup>10</sup> Wilson, "A Noble Dream: The Origins of the Public Archives of Canada," 24; Wilson, "Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives," 22.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson, "A Noble Dream: The Origins of the Public Archives of Canada," 27; 30.

<sup>12</sup> Millar, "Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada," 110; Wilson, "Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives," 24.

In their report in 1951, the Massey Commission focused on the role and dual nature of the Public Archives of Canada but also focused on the growing “regional” (sic) archival community.<sup>13</sup>

*“..... There is general agreement that the document collections should not be divided. The reasons for this are evident to the archivist and to the historian but may not be clear to others. It is not always easy to distinguish between a private and a public document. This is particularly true in Canada and it was thought and it was this difficulty which led the first Dominion Archivist to add other historical documents to the public records.”<sup>14</sup>*

Indeed the commission in its report on local and provincial archival activities, albeit displaying a particularly centralizing vision, posits that: *“..... it is impossible to separate national from local and provincial history. The local archival collection, whether provincial, municipal, or private, is an essential factor in the effectiveness of the national institution.”<sup>15</sup>*

The commission also lamented the lack of *“either a local or national approach to the adequate provision for the collection and preservation of public records or of other archival documents.”<sup>16</sup>* They understood that the public records of provincial governments, while completely autonomous, were an integral part of the records of the nation.<sup>17</sup> The Commission in its report on local and provincial archives recognized the rationale and the deeper need for the establishment of a coordinated approach to the acquisition and preservation of the wide array of Canadian archival content. The Commission notes in its footnotes that: *“Numerous organizations stress the interdependence of national and provincial archival collections particularly the Public Archives, the Ontario Historical Society, the Saskatchewan Archives Board and the British (sic) Columbia Historical Association.”<sup>18</sup>*

### **The Essential Building Blocks**

Over the next 25 years, the archival community in Canada grew exponentially. When the Massey Commission was preparing its report there were approximately 49 Canadian archival institutions in place. By 1960, those numbers had grown to 75 and it is been estimated that over the next decade there was a growth of approximately 5 institutions per year.<sup>19</sup>

In the period leading up to, and following the celebration of Canada's Centennial in 1967, there was a renewed and deepening interest in Canadian history, Canadian social institutions and the growing diversity of our population. Adding to this was the growing interest of family historians and scholarly and general researchers seeking the documents of religious, business and ethnic

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<sup>13</sup> Millar, “Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada,” 115.

<sup>14</sup> “Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences 1949-1951 (Massey Report),” 1951, Chapter X: 115.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Endnote 7, p. 416.

<sup>19</sup> Association of Canadian Archivists, “The Applebaum-Hébert Report: Official Responses,” *Archivaria* 15 (Summer 1983): 100.

communities. The burgeoning development of the new discipline of Canadian studies was seen as a foundation for reinforcing a strong Canadian national identity that could lead the country into the 21st century.<sup>20</sup> The Symons Report officially titled: *To Know Ourselves: the Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* ushered in an era of considerable growth in Canadian archival community.

Established in 1972 under the chairmanship of Thomas H. B. Symons the report cited the crucial importance of the country's archives to the core of the Commission's mandate: "*The future quality and scope of Canadian studies will depend on the state of our country's archives*". The Report has been characterized by many in the archival community as the watershed moment for 'the coming of age' of the Canadian archival community. While assigning a major role to Canadian universities in the role of promoting public awareness of the potential historical and archival value and importance of private, public and other community held archival material, it also recognized the need for ..."*the development of a comprehensive archival system that will meet the needs of Canadians throughout the country.*"<sup>21</sup>

The report stated that "*the degree of success attained in meeting this twin challenge will determine the future of archives in Canada and indeed the future of Canadian studies.*"<sup>22</sup> It galvanized the archival community and provided the impetus for the creation of the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives chaired by Ian E Wilson (known also as the SSHRC or Wilson Report) which launched its work in 1978 and reported in 1980. The Wilson Report laid the groundwork for the structure of the current Canadian archival system. While the core of its mandate was to report on the state of the Canadian archival system, the group quickly came to terms with the challenge: "*First the term "system" is misleading in that it implies a degree of coordination of shared objectives and of structure that is only beginning to emerge among Canadian archives. Second, meaningful generalizations about individual archives are difficult, with variations in circumstances almost defying systematic description...*"<sup>23</sup> The committee wrote early in this report that quote '*we found a sense of crisis in Canadian archives today*' and "*...That the system clearly is inadequate.*"<sup>24</sup>

The Report noted the "*startling diversity*" of Canadian archives and highlighted "*the lack of inter-institutional coordination among them.*"<sup>25</sup> "[A]s a result of their newness in the near vacuum in which they were created Canadian archives are greatly needed organization standardization and professionalization."<sup>26</sup>

The Report noted the degree of growth in the archival community between the Massey commission's work and the approximately 600 institutions and organizations identified by the consultative group illustrating the stunning growth of both archival activity and organizations

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<sup>20</sup> Millar, "Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada," 114.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas H. B. Symons, "Archives and Canadian Studies," *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-1983): 58.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Wilson, "Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives," 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 30; 58.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, "Archives," 86.

responding to the needs of geologists, local historians social and cultural historians, social demographers, heritage activists, teachers, radio and television producers, and journalists, all of whom were encouraged to explore their collections.<sup>27</sup>

This Report underscored the need for the national institution, then the Public Archives of Canada to recognize its responsibility and to assist in the development of and leadership in the Canadian archival system.<sup>28</sup> The key recommendations from the Wilson report were that: “...all public archives reevaluate their overall programs to achieve a appropriate balance between their traditional institutional programs and new programs designed to provide leadership to cooperative system of archives in their region;” ...“that all archives in each province form a coordinated network to establish priorities and to develop services, facilities and programs of benefit to all;” and, perhaps more importantly, a new body to coordinate the functioning of the Canadian archival system: “We recommend the formation of the Canadian Association of Archives(CAA) (to) plan projects and programs affecting archives and to express this to shall viewpoint on matters of public policy or professional activity.”<sup>29</sup>

The Wilson Report's recommendations fell on fertile ground ensuring that the discussions following its publication engaged the archival community in a robust and lively discussion about the appropriate role for this new body, while not disputing the importance and need for a body to coordinate the archival system.

The Applebaum Hébert Report of 1982 reiterated the need for a coordinating body and ,taking its lead from the ACA , proposed an alternative to the CAA : a National Archival Records Commission and supported the need for an interdependent and cooperating system of archival institutions and organizations.<sup>30</sup>

These discussions held in the early years of the 80's led to the convening of a National Archival Congress in Kingston in 1982 galvanizing pressure on federal/provincial/territorial government officials to place the proposals for a coordinating body on the agenda of the Federal Provincial Territorial Culture and Heritage Ministers Conference later the same year.<sup>31</sup> In 1984, after continued activism by the community, FPT Ministers endorsed the recognition of the concept of the Canadian archival system and led to a commitment by the Canadian government in 1986 to fund the concept with the infusion of \$1.8 million to underpin the Canadian archival system.<sup>32</sup> The result was the establishment of the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) to coordinate, plan and speak on behalf of the Canadian archival system and its institutions. In the CCA, reflecting on the debates and deliberations of the previous ten years, leadership for coordinating the system was shared among universities, provinces, provincial and territorial associations, and by

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<sup>27</sup> Wilson, “Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives,” 69.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 69; 109.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 69; 73; 109.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>31</sup> Marion Beyea, “Pennies from Heaven: The History of Public Funding for Canadian Archives,” in *Better Off Forgetting? Essays on Archives, Public Policy, and Collective Memory*, ed. Cheryl Avery and Mona Holmlund (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

and large and small institutions.<sup>33</sup> The proposals developed in the 1970s and 1980s provided the infrastructure which enabled the development, advancement and cooperative activities of both archival institutions and the archival system in Canada and which has served the community, Canadians and the country well.

Today, the progress that has characterized the last 50 years of archival development stands at a crucial crossroads. In 2012, budget reductions emanating from Library and Archives Canada canceled not only the \$1.7 million contribution program, supporting both the National Archival Development Program and the core activities of the CCA, but as well struck a significant blow to the core public funding commitments undertaken by the Canadian government in response to the archival system proposed by both the Symons and Wilson reports.

### **The Canadian Council of Archives**

The CCA is a non-profit office with the following six goals:

- identify national priorities;
- make recommendations as to the system's operation and financing;
- develop and facilitate the implementation and management of Programmes to assist the archival community;
- advise the National Archivist;
- promote better communications between the various components of the Canadian system; and
- communicate archival needs and concerns to decision-makers, researchers and the general public.

From the beginning the CCA was a joint program of federal and provincial participation. This is borne out in the Council's organizational structure. The National Archivist is an ex officio member of the Council. Every provincial and territorial council has CCA representation. The Association of Canadian Archivists and the Association des archivistes du Québec are also represented.

In addition to these delegates, the Council includes a number of observers; currently, representatives from the National Library, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Canadian Conservation Institute. As required, the CCA may invite other observers to attend Council meetings.

One of the principal vehicles the CCA used to deliver on its stated goals was the National Archival Development Program (NADP). Founded in 2006 the NADP, in coordination with Library and Archives Canada (LAC), promoted the development and preservation of Canadian archival heritage through five goals:

- Increase access to Canada's archival heritage through the national catalogue of archival descriptions, ARCHIVESCANA.ca
- Increase awareness and broaden use of Canada's archival heritage
- Increase representation of Aboriginal peoples and under-represented ethno-cultural groups in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Canada's archival heritage

- Increase the capacity of archival networks to undertake strategic and development activities; and;
- Increase the capacity of archival institutions to preserve Canada's heritage.

NADP distributed \$1.7 million annually through the 13 territorial and provincial councils to projects adjudicated to develop the national archival catalogue of resources. Beyond support for arrangement and description of records, NADP delivered professional conservation and preservation advice, offered outreach and archival education opportunities, site assessments to developing archives, and financial support to the territorial and provincial councils. Audit Services Canada, the office of Audit and Evaluation of Public Works and Government Services Canada, submitted consistently positive reports on the success of NADP. These audits should be understood as the federal government's official recognition of NADP's functional and financial success. The Summative Evaluation and Audit Comments of Audit Services Canada reported:

The findings of this Summative evaluation support the findings and recommendations of previous evaluation reports and confirm the need to continue the National Archival Development Program (NADP). It is the recommendation of this evaluation report that the funds of the program be increased in order to cover the expected inflation rate and in order to support initiatives in coping with the digital environment.<sup>34</sup>

So great was the endorsement of the Summative Evaluation of the NADP that the report despaired of the future of our national archival network should the program be discontinued:

The NADP was found to be highly relevant to the needs of the archival community. For many institutions, it represents the sole opportunity for financial assistance. Should the NADP be discontinued, institutions would likely have difficulties in preserving and making available to Canadians the nation's archival collection. The present level of support provided has not increased with inflation, and does not reflect the increasing financial pressures faced by the archives to preserve access to Canada's documentary heritage, in particular digital records.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, it should be observed that the *Summative Evaluation of the National Archival Development Program* noted how the NADPs functions coordinated well with the goals of Library and Archives Canada and the greater concerns of the federal government:

The program aligns well with the mandate and Strategic Outcome of LAC. All program objectives correspond to the mandate as described in government documents. The program also demonstrates some alignment with the recent modernization initiative in that it strongly promotes a collaborative approach to addressing the challenges of a changing information environment and recognizes the need to adapt to change in the way that users interact with archives.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> PRA Inc. and the Evaluation Group at Library and Archives Canada, "Summative Evaluation of the National Archival Development Program" (Approved by LAC Evaluation Committee, November 23, 2010), 20: section 5.4, recommendation 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 19: section 5.1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Statistics further underline NADP's success. In 2007-2008, 952.77 m. of records were arranged, described and made available through NADP funded projects. In 2010-2011, 378,878 items were digitized and made available through NADP funded projects. In 2008-2009, 123 individuals found employment in the archival profession through NADP funded projects.

NADP received endorsement from those offices of the government of Canada concerned with financial audit and the documentary heritage of the country. It also received endorsement from the international community of archival professionals as well as the writers, historians, journalists and government policy makers who build their work on the foundation of archival records. The Society of American Archivists noted,

The CCA has worked diligently for 26 years to create a skilled, dedicated, and cost-effective network of archives professionals. The Canadian archival community is well respected internationally, attracting top professionals and creating revenues far in excess of the \$1.7 million that is being cut...(t)he effects of these cuts on the ability of Canadians (and others) to access their documentary heritage is severe.<sup>37</sup>

The Canadian Historical Association was equally critical of the dismantling of NADP,

The Executive of the CHA...considers these cuts to be grave threats to our archival institutions and our ability to use those as historians. Quite simply, if carried out, the tools we depend on as historians, journalists, creative writers and artists, to preserve and share our national memory will be crippled. New resources will not come to light, the digital tools that make our work lighter will not be developed, and existing archival resources will not be protected.<sup>38</sup>

On April 30, 2012, LAC eliminated the National Archival Development Program through a series of telephone conversations. The five-person NADP committee was already in the process of selecting projects from applications from across the country. 90 projects, which had already been fully approved, were immediately cancelled; this resulted in job losses at 74 institutions. This also represents, in many cases, the permanent loss of vulnerable archival records. 17 professionals immediately lost their jobs – 6 at the CCA secretariat itself and 11 further archives advisors and conservators across the nation.<sup>39</sup>

At this moment the NADP seems to be finished and the CCA is on a lifeline; however, significant questions remain concerning the fate of Canadian archival system and the documentary heritage of the nation. The archival profession is confronting a host of challenges that touch on fundamental concepts of archives, records, and the memorialization of society. Digital technologies, multicultural societies, apportioned and distributed governance are all threatening to fragment the concept of records and the role of role of archives as public institutions of social

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<sup>37</sup> Conseil canadien des archives | Canadian Council of Archives, "Memorandum on the Elimination of the National Archival Development Program," 2012, 2: Society of American Archivists.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 2: Canadian Historical Association.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 3.

memory. More than ever, a network of archival professionals familiar with these challenges is required.

At the time of the cutbacks the CCA and NADP were both supporting projects that were addressing these contemporary archival themes. The CCA and the NADP were supporting projects promoting ICA AtoM, an open source archival description software developed to support digital records descriptions. The CCA established a series of well-attended webinars examining recent changes to the Canadian Copyright Right Act (R.S.S. 1985, c. C-42). And work was underway to support the creation of a national trusted digital repository. It is clear that the CCA, through the input of its professional members, was aware and moving forward on the most important contemporary challenges facing the archival profession. With the demise of the NADP and the dramatic attenuation of CCA resources, there now exists a national void of archival expertise and infrastructure to respond to these challenges.

### **Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel**

Canadian academic communities are aware of the diminished state of our national archival network. Several groups have responded with tentative steps to address the issue. Most responses consist of first examining the state of our national archival system. This includes the Royal Society of Canada. As they declare in a press release,

For more than 130 years, the RSC has been bringing together scholars and researchers from diverse disciplines to conduct expert, multi-disciplinary investigations on matters of public importance.<sup>40</sup>

Since the 1980s, the RSC has created “expert panels,” modeled after the US National Academy of Sciences, to study and report on specific issues of importance. Their goal is to offer independent advice and recommendations for Canadian governments and private organizations. Their aim is to supply “independent, comprehensive, and evidenced-based input into the public policy development process in Canada...”<sup>41</sup>

Strangely, the panels’ public abstract begins with comments on “the death of the book” and the challenge of print culture and the publishing industry. Hopefully, issues such as the probative value of digital records, the challenge of authenticity in multimedia environments, and the difficulty of appraising the cultural memory of a multicultural society can be added to the list of bibliographic concerns. Aside from a due date of Fall 2014, and a list of panel members, not much is offered in the way of a plan for the panel or how it may consult the professional archival community. This is particularly concerning when one of the only two professional archivists on the panel had never worked in a Canadian archival institution.

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<sup>40</sup> The Royal Society of Canada (RSC) | La Société royale du Canada Les Académies des arts, des lettres et des sciences du Canada (SRC), “Information About Expert Panels,” *Information About Expert Panels*, accessed June 2, 2013, <http://rsc-src.ca/en/expert-panels/information-about-expert-panels>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

## **Council of Canadian Academies Expert Panel**

With a similar approach, the Council of Canadian Academies Expert Panel offers a more articulate approach to crises in Canadian Archives. This expert panel lists a set of pertinent questions it will set out to address:

How might memory institutions embrace the opportunities and challenges posed by the changing ways in which Canadians are communicating and working in the digital age?

### **Sub-questions**

- With the use of new communication technologies, what types of records are being created and how are decisions being documented?
- How is information being safeguarded for usefulness in the immediate to mid-term across technologies considering the major changes that are occurring?
- How are memory institutions addressing issues posed by new technologies regarding their traditional roles in assigning value, respecting rights, and assuring authenticity and reliability?
- How can memory institutions remain relevant as a trusted source of continuing information by taking advantage of the collaborative opportunities presented by new social media?<sup>42</sup>

Like the Royal Society Expert Panel, it is too early to tell what the result of these studies might be. Professional archivists are left to take solace in the knowledge that academic communities have acknowledged our difficulties and how these translate into broader issues of concern for the nation.

### **Current activities of CAST:**

The current activities of CAST have been twofold. First of all, a priority has been the preparation of this report and its attempt to situate the current crisis into a long term view of the history of the Canadian Archival System. Once again the Canadian archival community has been asked to articulate the principles of Canadian archival heritage both in his profession and its activities. It will have once again call upon the community's resilience, creativity and determination in order to survive and to move forward. As noted throughout this document, positive changes have generally come about when Canadian archives have aroused the interest of the Canadian public and affiliated stakeholder groups. It is hopeful that the current crisis will end up having a similar effect for Canadian archives.

The second priority of CAST has been developing a venue for ensuring the concerns of Canadian Archivists are heard by Canadian society. The past year has proven the services Canadian archives provide for our citizens are under severe pressure. They are fragile and in some cases, disappearing. The records selected and preserved by generations of archivists are in more

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<sup>42</sup> Council of Canadian Academies | Conseil des académies canadiennes, "Memory Institutions and the Digital Revolution," *Memory Institutions and the Digital Revolution*, 2012, <http://www.scienceadvice.ca/en/assessments/in-progress/memory-institutions.aspx>.

demand than ever. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission addressing residential schools; Arctic sovereignty, land claims, military commemorations, environmental change and boundary disputes all rely upon the integrity of the historical record. The fundamental legal value of the record, both official and personal, is demonstrated daily.

The digital revolution, transforming record keeping systems across society, adds a new complexity to the archival task. Identifying, securing and then maintaining e-records in all their rapidly changing formats, while preserving their essential value as legal evidence is an immense technological challenge. Archivists have been learning new skills, supported by the graduate programs in archival studies, while advancing research on standards and solutions. Sadly, in many governments, human resource classification systems for archivists are woefully outdated. As well, the costs both for obsolescent hardware and the wide variety of software are high and seldom considered in the price of implementing new technology. In the digital age, governments, institutions, corporations and families are in danger of losing our memory. Yet a preoccupation with digital obscures a basic reality. Existing analogue collections consisting of massive quantities of paper, photos, maps, film, newspapers and microfilm remain and must also be preserved and described for access.

Though still in the planning stage, CAST has been instrumental, with considerable assistance from former Librarian & Archivist of Canada Ian E. Wilson, in creating interest in holding a summit on the future of Canadian archives. Though still very much in discussion, plans are being put in place to hold a broad discussion on the future of Canadian archives with a variety of stakeholders both within, and more importantly, outside of the Archival profession. This summit has been tentatively scheduled for November of this year.

As noted in the CAST Terms of Reference, this committee needs member approval to extend its Term beyond the June 15 Annual General Meeting. The Canadian Archival Community is indeed at a crossroads and we believe the proposed Canadian Archival Summit might be another watershed moment for the Canadian Archival System. We respectfully ask the membership of the association to extend the CAST Committee to the 2014 AGM and endorse, in principle, the concept of a Canadian Archival Summit to be held fall/winter 2013/14.

## Sources Cited

Please note that many of the sources below can be found on the ACA website at <http://archivists.ca/content/key-reports-and-publications-canadian-archival-history>

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## **Appendix A – AGM Resolution June 9, 2012**

We the Association of Canadian Archivists, representing Canadian archivists, reaffirm our support of the Canadian archival system, an existing network of community, regional, provincial, territorial and federal archives.

Let it be resolved that a Canadian archival network is essential to acquire, preserve and make accessible to Canadians their documentary heritage in all media.

Let it be resolved that the Canadian Council of Archives is that network, comprising its membership of Provincial and Territorial Councils, the Council of Provincial and Territorial Archivists, the Association of Canadian Archivists, the Association des archivistes du Québec, and Library and Archives Canada.

Let it be resolved that the Pan-Canadian Documentary Heritage Forum is not the vehicle in which to advance the Canadian archival network; nor is it a substitute for that network because it is neither comprehensive nor representative of the Canadian archival system.

Let it be resolved that the loss of knowledge capacity through the national network of education and preservation advisors, as well as the archival professionals at Library and Archives Canada will impair and damage advancing a Canadian archival acquisition strategy; and will ultimately risk the stewardship of Canada's collective archives and memory.

**Moved** by individual members Ian Forsyth, Kelly Stewart, Luciana Duranti, Bryan Corbett, Shelley Sweeney, Wendy Duff and Fred Farrell.

**Seconded** by individual members Gary Mitchell

## **Appendix B- Terms of Reference: Canadian Archival System Taskforce (CAST)**

### 1) Background

With the sudden and immediate elimination of the National Archival Development Program on April 1, 2012, coupled with the significant reduction of archival staff at Library & Archives Canada, and continuing resource pressures across Canada, the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) was tasked, at its 2012 AGM, to report back to its members on what the future of the Canadian Archival System should be and what ACA's role in the system should be.

### 2) Purpose of the Taskforce

- a) The Canadian Archival System Taskforce (CAST) will examine and make recommendations on how/if a Canadian Archival System should exist and what ACA's role should be within the system.
- b) In conducting this review, the Taskforce will examine the nature, structure, and overall delivery of ACA programs and services in relation to the needs of ACA members, the archives community, external stakeholders, as well as national, provincial and territorial partners. Areas of review will include but are not limited to education, advocacy, governance, outreach, as well as internal and external communications.
- c) Facilitate the archival community's consideration and response to long-term and recent developments affecting the Canadian archival community.

3) Authority

The Taskforce has been created by the Board of the ACA to report to its members. Operational authority for the taskforce will be the ACA Board. Ultimately the taskforce will report to the Members at the 2013 ACA Annual General Meeting in Winnipeg.

4) Composition

The Taskforce will consist of at least 5 members appointed by the ACA Board and will be chaired by an ACA Director. Upon its discretion, the taskforce may invite non-members to sit on the committee.

5) Term

Members of the taskforce shall serve until the 2013 ACA AGM (June 15, 2013) at which point the committee will be dissolved or request approval from the membership to continue.

6) Meetings

The Taskforce shall meet at the discretion of Chair; Committee members may meet in person as authorized by the ACA Board, and via teleconference, collaborative work in the CAST area on the ACA members only web site and email.

7) Compensation

No compensation shall be made to members of the Committee for their participation. However, reasonable authorized expenses will be reimbursed.

8) Participation and attendance

In order to be a Taskforce member, each individual shall be an ACA member in good standing, participate in taskforce work with timely completion of project tasks, and regularly participate in meetings. An individual, who is absent for two consecutive meetings or misses a task submission deadline without providing the Taskforce chair with written or verbal notification and reason for such, shall be deemed to have resigned from the position.

9) Communications

The taskforce shall communicate through standard communication methods as the ACA Bulletin, ACA member e-mail list and ARCAN-L as needed to update the community on its progress.

10) Recordkeeping

The Taskforce's notices, agendas, and minutes will be prepared on a rotational basis by individual Committee members and will be submitted to the ACA Office for retention.

11) Accountability

CAST is accountable and will report to ACA Board via the Chair and will operate at the discretion of the ACA Board.