

REPORT ON

DIRECTIONS FOR LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA
and
EVALUATION OF THE GRANT AND CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA
and
EVALUATION OF THE CANADIAN ARCHIVAL INFORMATION
NETWORK
(CAIN)
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

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INTRODUCTION

The Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) is pleased to participate in consultations with Library and Archives Canada (LAC). ACA congratulates LAC for ensuring the voices of partners are heard in the process of establishing parameters leading to a healthy evolution into the 21st century. We are grateful for the opportunity to be one of the partners in the consultation process.

The ACA is celebrating its 30th year in 2004-05. The ACA has grown both in membership, visibility, services and communications, and impact since 1975. ACA hopes to continue to be a national leader in the archival profession in the second generation of its history. Responding to the needs of the Canadian archival community and participating in the global responsibility of ensuring the preservation of our heritage for use by our succeeding generations is of prime importance.

The ACA is cognizant of the changing times and the challenges faced by LAC. Our remarks are made in a spirit of positive critical assessment and collegiality.

DIRECTIONS FOR LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

The *Library and Archives of Canada Act* merges the two leading institutions in Canada in the fields of archives and library science. The mandate of the new institution, LAC, is:

1. to acquire and preserve the documentary heritage;
2. to make that heritage known to Canadians and to anyone with an interest in Canada and to facilitate access to it;
3. to be the permanent repository of publications of the government of Canada and of government and ministerial records that are of historical value;
4. to facilitate the management of information by government institutions;
5. to coordinate the library services of government institutions; and
6. to support the development of the library and archival communities.

The new mandate is relevant but tends to be very broad in nature. It is hoped that specifics so important to the archival component will not be lost. Precise definitions of policies are required to assist in the creation of viable applications for funding. With a general mandate now including the library sector a more precise definition of “one national collection” is required.

It is unclear how LAC fits into the body of Canadian archives. Many archivists do not clearly understand the role of LAC within the community. LAC is the leading archival institution on the country due to its responsibility, size, and resources but is LAC one of many institutions attempting to preserve Canadian heritage? A precise definition is required.

A Canadian archival network is in place with the existence of the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA), the Bureau of Canadian Archivists (BCA), the ACA, and provincial and territorial councils. A similar library network does not appear to exist. ACA encourages the formation of a Canadian library network but recommends that support be given to both networks and that they function in an autonomous manner. LAC must also act in measured prudence permitting partners to participate in the archival network. Interaction with provincial and local organizations is vital to the health of the network.

ACA supports LAC’s mandate and understands the need for change in the current environment. To that end, ACA is committed to working with LAC in the creation for funding strategies and the delivery of archival services. LAC has served clients very well so a radical change in structure is not necessary.

The mandate of the CCA is vital. Its execution is legitimate and has provided positive results for the Canadian archival community. Numerous institutions, from the large municipal archives to the small religious one, have benefited from CCA support over the past 20 years. Such support has allowed many institutions to apply basic preservation standards and ensure the safe keeping of valuable archival holdings. Through its work CCA has been instrumental in promoting the need to establish archives programs and provided funding to assist in the

application of archival standards by all archives interested in participating in its programs. It is important to note that CCA programs have affected all types of archives in all jurisdictions and helped engendered unity in the preservation of Canada's documentary heritage.

The preservation of Canada's documentary heritage includes the work of smaller institutions. LAC would increase its relevance by working with small institutions in promoting archival programs. Groups of institutions perceived as being small, such as aboriginal archives and religious archives, may have influence in defining a significant portion Canada's documentary heritage and be in positions to create access policies governing vital components of our history.

Mentorship and internship programs would be very useful to the community. A course provided by the National Archives years ago is still fondly remembered as a significant tool in the education of archivists.

Digitization of archival holdings will be beneficial and is necessary. It is important to apply digitization programs with measured procedure and in concert with other archival priorities. Digitization will not occur if the record has not been properly preserved.

EVALUATION OF THE GRANT AND CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

Federal funding of programs is key to ensure the preservation of Canada's documentary heritage and resulting access.

CCA provides a platform for archival institutions to participate in national initiatives helping engender a sense of belonging in national priorities. Its funding programs have been relevant and vital to many institutions.

Grants have allowed institutions achieve their goals of preserving and making available their archival holdings. The matching funding components of grants have led parent institutions to participate in supporting the mandate of their archival programs. Promoting programs is easier with half funding potentially available from a source outside the parent institution.

The existence of archives advisors and preservation consultants has provided archival communities with invaluable services. Hundreds of site visits have led to the establishment of relevant archival programs and priorities. The presence of advisors provides a useful resource in an environment where resources are scarce. The advisor program support is a source of great consolation to many smaller institutions that feel alone in their challenge to establish basic programs for the preservation of their archival holdings. The work of advisors ensures Canada's archival holdings will survive and be accessible to the public.

Professional Development post appointment is most appropriate. CCA support in educational programs has allowed professionals to maintain adequate standards and keep abreast of new developments in our field. Neophyte archivists have taken advantage of

education programs in efforts to become legitimate professionals. These individuals are now in the workforce participating in the work of applying standards for preserving Canada's documentary heritage and designing appropriate access policies. Loss of funding in this area will lead to a reduction in professionalism and in the application of standards.

CCA must supervise the adjudication process of grant applications. The delivery of the adjudication process should continue to be applied by provincial and territorial councils to ensure relevance to local environments and priorities. Involving councils in the adjudication process will only enhance accountability and quality control.

ACA endorses the conclusions made by CCA in its response to LAC's Evaluation of the Grants and Contribution Program.

ACA supports CCA's mandate and hopes LAC builds with CCA a relationship beneficial to the needs of archival institutions and users in Canada.

EVALUATION OF THE CANADIAN ARCHIVAL INFORMATION NETWORK (CAIN) LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

Archives Canada (formally CAIN) is key to the continued evolution of making records available to Canadians. The electronic medium is now fundamental to most and is a vital tool in conducting business. LAC, CCA, provincial/territorial councils, and archival institutions must endeavour to take advantage of the electronic medium to enhance access to records and promote archives programs. Online services are required but should not supersede basic archival responsibilities such as preservation, arrangement and description, and accession programs.

Significant financial and human resources have been used to design and create a structure for Archives Canada at national and provincial levels. Although cognizant that analysis and evaluation of the present structure is necessary, the value of existing Archives Canada components is not questioned.

CCA in representing Canadian archives should play a leadership role in building upon present Archives Canada structures and work to ensure a commitment from LAC, sister associations/councils, and archival institutions. Future planning must involve all interested sectors creating a common voice for an effective Archives Canada advocacy campaign directed at government officials, funding agencies, interested constituents, and potential clients.

A vision accepted by all parties is necessary to engender a collective commitment to Archives Canada. Adequate and sustained human and financial resources are required to ensure Archives Canada becomes a vital component of archives mandates across the country. The delivery of services online is not only necessary but also expected by Canadians.

ACA endorses the conclusions made by CCA in its response to LAC's Evaluation of the Canadian Archival Information Network (CAIN).

ACA endorses CCA Proposal on the Future of Archives Canada.

CONCLUSION

ACA seeks to invite LAC and all its partners to answer, in the immediate future, the call to service because it is high time that our collaboration be recognized as one of great potential in fostering the Canadian archival heritage. In this regard, "Why, for whom, and where?" are the recurrent underlining questions which should be ever-present in our minds. Each archival association and institution has pondered over them in their involvement with LAC and the work of preserving Canada's documentary heritage. Many have proposed specific answers through the creation of policies and procedures. Some have helped develop programs leading to an exchange of information between partners.

There is another reason why our common call to service is relevant at this moment in time. We know from our history that there is a proper time for everything. With the beginning of a new century, and indeed a millennium, there exists increased chances to convey a strong message about the importance of preserving the archival aspects of our society in a tangible format accessible to all, to promote the archival record in all its forms and invite the public and private sectors to support and participate in effective programs. The digital world also creates the potential to speak about archives in an effective manner which both inspires involvement and practical use across Canada. This is a very good time to promote the interests of the archival community. It is also a very difficult time, for various clear reasons, but a very good time to meet and surmount those difficulties, with the application of innovative thinking and inventive opportunities.

We are experiencing today a Library and Archives Canada whose initiatives are not only praiseworthy but also a source of pride for Canadians. The current environment prompts LAC, archival institutions, and associations to evolve, to reach beyond their apparent capacity, to dare dream a little, and ultimately to reach their ultimate potential. Together we may lay the foundation for a new way of speaking about our mission to a wider audience, in order to make the leap to the next natural evolutionary stage. ACA encourages LAC to participate in sharing the essential and fundamental responsibility to cultivate a commitment and appreciation for the preservation of the Canadian archival heritage. Participating in such programs is a fulfilling, dynamic activity.

LAC and its partners should all be committed to furthering the development of priorities and all efforts should be made to ensure that adequate resources are in place to implement them. Priorities like ours normally require hefty financial investment, in the absence of which we must enlist the assistance of the private, public and business sectors to support our evolution, in partnership with other heritage sectors. With the focus being on how LAC and its partners can serve, or in the case of supporters, how crucial archives are at this momentous point in history.

In the recent past, the community witnessed a dedicated network working toward common goals: sustained excellence in service, a commitment to revenue generation, and ensuring that the public and other heritage and professional organizations are aware of archives in their communities and support the archival function. LAC has distinguished itself by offering valued contributions to the archival field in Canada. Activities offered a stimulating model and an inspiring contribution to efforts conducted by LAC.

ACA believe that efforts have not been exerted in vain. But we need to work together to meet the future challenges facing the Canadian archival community. We must strive to ensure the work of our predecessors has meaning and to prepare our successors for the challenges of future mandates.

Our future challenges are exciting even if they appear daunting at times. If we all strive to seek what is best for our archival community, we will surely not yield to failure. ACA believes we should orient our work in tune with the spirit of our evolving associations and institutions which calls for a real dialogue between archivists, in order to come to better grips with the realities they have before them and to stimulate, support and encourage their efforts. This also entails a special challenge in terms of developing better communication channels between various groups in order to exchange information on the initiatives taking place, and to stimulate co-ordinated efforts.

LAC ambitious mandate will not be effective if adequate support does not exist from human resources, financial resources, and the Canadian archival community. ACA's leadership wishes to convey to LAC's leadership a sense of faith and expectation in our organizations and their future. LAC's consultation process is a testament to a desire to ensure evolution into a legitimate archival and library program serving the needs of both constituencies. ACA is hopeful that a collegial spirit will unite all partners in finding long-term solutions leading to the dynamic evolution of archives in Canada.

The significance of the issues at hand is captured in Sheila Fraser's, Auditor General of Canada, speech delivered during the 2004 ACA conference: "... I want them (users) to be inspired by our diligence, our commitment to finding workable solutions, our understanding that when we lose our heritage, we lose part of ourselves."