

The SCOOP

Having just passed through one of the busiest seasons, we somehow still find time to reflect on who we are and why we do what we do. Your Council Executive have been examining workshop opportunities, Council programmes, and national initiatives in preparation for grant applications, yes, but also in search of what it is that is most essential to our archival community. Council grants attempt to in the broadest sense reach out to most members in the greatest areas of need, in particular advisory services in archival and conservation matters, as well as educational opportunities. As the year 2003 drew to a close, we continue to look to the future -- what do we want as archives and archivists -- nationally, provincially, regionally, and locally, within our institutions.

We have been asked to actively participate in our Canadian Council of Archives' review of programmes, grants and services, offering us an unique opportunity to play a role in future directions on the national stage. On December 8th your Executive travelled to Edmonton for a meeting of Western Councils and Provincial Archivists. We examined the role of the CCA, the expectations of Councils, and what we need nationally and locally in order to maintain a truly Canadian Archival System. The result is *What the West Wants: A Proposal for the Consideration of the Canadian Council of Archives*, a document which is going forward to the CCA for national consideration in its fight to secure viable and sustainable funding for archival programmes, activities and services. The result of the federal review of departments and programmes to which the CCA Survey is responding, will affect every archives and every archivist, whether we are maintaining our institutional mandate and services, or actively involved in archival initiatives like

CAIN that reach out internationally. More than ever before, we need to demonstrate that funding to archives works and is vital to providing Canadians with the information they need to know themselves whether personally, and actions of their governments. Archives and archivists matter because we care about the creation, preservation, and use of the 'stuff' that is history on an individual, community and provincial level. (cont'd page 2).

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ARTICLES, COMMENTS,
OPINIONS are welcome.

Please send them to Outreach
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or email outreach-scaa@shaw.ca

Before closing, I would like to sincerely thank Kathy Szalasznyj, our Outreach Archivist, for the many hours she toils beyond the requirements of her position. We are working towards national recognition of the need for a permanent archives advisor position in every province and territory, because we know that this position, more than any other, holds our archival community together, examining and responding to institutional and individual needs for archival knowledge, assisting with grant applications, coordinating and often delivering workshops, and maintaining essential services to our archival community. Thank you, Kathy.

Thank you also to Cameron Hart, our Photo Database Archivist; to the many curators and contributors to the virtual exhibit projects through CAIN; to Jane Dalley and Cynthia Hart, our conservators; to the Executive for their insight and assistance in responding to my pleas for assistance. May the year 2004 bring the very best to you and those who hold a special place in your world.

Linda Putz, Pres.

Mannie Buchheit gave a great workshop on Historic Photos in late November. The notes he provided were excellent and we have plans to bind them into packets for those who didn't attend. Call Outreach if you would like a pack.

HEADS UP...

...did you know that ACA 2005 is happening in our province? Saskatoon in June.

Virtual Exhibits Report

There's a great flurry of activity around the province as archivists from many institutions join together in the co-operative venture of preparing virtual exhibits, which will be housed on the Council website, <http://scaa.usask.ca>. There's the "Road to Medicare," "A Doukhobor Song of Days," "History of Saskatoon," "History of Regina," the "1944 CCF Election," a couple of good history quizzes, a Ukrainian exhibit, "Combined Virtues." While we cannot promise free popcorn we do promise interesting stuff, and thank each one of you who have responded to the search for photographs and information that the curators have been requesting. By June the virtuals will be ready. In all likelihood, we'll be able to do a "Best Practices for Creating Virtual Exhibits" out of all of our experience.

WORKSHOP!

Modern Information Carriers

March 4-5, 2004

with CCI expert, Tom Strang

at University of Regina

How long will they last? What are optimum storage conditions? How do we make long-term commitments to migrate to new forms as they are develop?

Workshop is full; in case you need to cancel, or want to get on waiting list, call 374-7143, Outreach.

Archives Networking

1. How would you describe the archives system we have in Canada?

Essentially and fundamentally co-operative. The Canadian Council of Archives is exactly that – a council of all archival institutions in the country, as represented by their provincial and territorial councils. The Board is elected by the institutional members and is responsible to them. All provinces and territories, as well as the two professional organizations (ACA and AAQ) are represented at the table, and – particularly important in my view – large and small institutions have an equal say in the affairs of the whole. It isn't hierarchical in any manner.

2. What makes it unique?

I don't believe there is a similar system anywhere else in the world. Two things make it particularly unique: the sense of community I think you find among Canadian archives, and our success in providing both practical assistance (through grants) and through our development of standards – for conservation, for institutions, for descriptive practices, etc.

3. What chief changes have we seen in the past decade?

There is no question the system has been under stress, particularly in the 1990s, as funding was cut back quite substantially. Yet during this period of retrenchment, several people managed to stay in the profession due solely to being hired via CCA grants. Those people are now in permanent positions and many have gone on to give their time and skills back to the community through service on executives, boards, and committees.

Also during this time we managed to develop descriptive standards which were essential to helping us build our national database of holdings. I think Archives Canada is a major achievement of the Canadian archival community. And we've just started. So in many ways I think the main change has been the maturing of the Canadian archival system into a cohesive and innovative community.

4. What are our chief triumphs and hurdles?

One of our chief triumphs has to be the dissemination of good ideas across the country. One of the features of our system is the annual

meeting and other events during which provinces can learn about the successes – and failures – of programs or initiatives in other regions of the country. That is essentially how concepts like the "outreach archivist" or other advisory services spread – and they have been enormously successful. This points to another major triumph – the decision by every provincial and territorial council to use some of its funding for cooperative projects, rather than simply having all funds "up for grabs." This in itself has ensured that any archives in a region, large or small, can have equal access to services. That has helped enormously in ensuring a stronger community overall.

But right now, our major hurdle is advocacy and funding. I put the two together, as without good arguments for archives – why what we do is important, and why Canadians benefit from a strong archival system -- we will not be able to make our case for the financial resources we need. We need to make a strong business case to the government, and we need to demonstrate the community has been and will continue to be responsible in its allocation of resources.

5. How can we help make the Canadian archives system work?

Through your participation. Serve on a committee or on your local executive; let your name stand for national boards and committees. Feel free to contact provincial and national executive members to discuss issues and provide advice – or complain! We need to hear from you. And -- in the next few months, the CCA will be preparing a business case and proposing a communications strategy. We will need everyone to write a letter or letters, to fill out surveys – to help us lobby on your behalf. We've done a lot of good work, collectively. Now is not the time to hide our light under a bushel.

TOOTH SOME ARCHIVES

The Odd Archives Artefacts Search has thus far turned up a moose, some baseball uniform fabric samples and some teeth.

What else is out there?

Preservation Consultative Meeting, December 5, 2003

It was good to gather around a table of preservation issues—to have a quick glimpse of the state of preservation across Canada as Outreachers and others gave reports province by province. Here are some highlights – more next time.

Nova Scotia—global assessments moving forward (about 25 done); they have a good lending programme for conservation equipment – hygrothermographs, 12 dataloggers, lux metres and UV metres that institutions can borrow to “test their weather.”

Northwest Territories: sound recording preservation lab designed and operating for more than a decade; reformatting sound recordings at a rate of 5—a year and photos at a rate of 5,000 to 10,000 year.; much work done with revitalization of Aboriginal languages of which there are many.

Alberta: steady progress, using the “assess, plan, act” ...conservation assessments, working on preservation management plans; educational institutes deal with preservation issues.

Reseau des archives du Quebec: cooperative purchase of preservation supplies; virtual library located at www.rdaq.qc.ca ; concern for deterioration of audio-visual records.

Nfld/Labrador: has a Preservation Officer available for consultation, helps set preservation goals, arranges global assessments; CPCAR grants for preservation activities, and proper storage of records.

Ontario: has its own Preservation Consultant; followups after preservation assessments, many preservation workshops offered, equipment loan programme.

We all agreed that preservation is a critical field, and one of the main areas is audio-visual records. This field will have to see a lot of time and

resources applied to it as tapes (video and audio) begin to deteriorate.

Round, About and Back Again

Tx. to all who did the CCA Survey in January. It is an effort to reply to surveys, but it can be critical to the continuation of programs. So just know, the Council is glad you did it!

Bulk purchase of conservation supplies...the application went forth and as soon as we know, we will notify all participants.

Hearts are in Saskatchewan Conference was well-attended. Discussing history in relation to tourism, it did not deal with archives directly, but archives as THE backbone was pointed out to participants, so our position was heard.

The Saskatchewan Archives Conservation Mentorship is off and running with Cynthia Ball and Kari Schwartz.

Interesting historic note - Dr. James Hannay visited SK in 1907, collecting docs. of note for Dr. Doughty, to be added to the commodious, fireproof Archives where valuable records “repose in security.” (Regina Leader (October 25, 1907)

Archives of the North (La Ronge) had its conservation assessment, and everyone was so pleased how much has been accomplished there in a short time.

Pls. check that your memberships are updated. It’s easy to let it slip, and you wouldn’t want to miss a minute of SCAA archival life. Call 975-7578, Treas. Cheryl Brown if in doubt.

11 February 2004

For Immediate Release

Heritage: A Crisis Extending Beyond the Confines of Ottawa.

Ottawa, Ontario -- "The Report by the Auditor General of Canada is pointing out a crisis that is beyond the confines of Ottawa" according to Cheryl Avery, Vice-Chair of the Canadian Council of Archives. "The Auditor General clearly defined the very real and imperative needs of the Library and Archives Canada. However, preserving our nation's documentary heritage is shared by a network of archives across the country." Avery explained, "The Auditor General specified that the federal government should complete the proposed Heritage Policy as soon as possible and that this work should be done in collaboration with key stakeholders and the private sector. The archival community welcomes this endorsement!"

Millions of documents, heritage photographs, maps and audio-visual treasures are held in institutions across Canada that are struggling to attract sufficient funding and trained staff to acquire and process the documentary heritage of Canadians. This has created barriers to accessing a wealth of knowledge for teachers, researchers, genealogists and the general public.

Over the past twenty years, unprecedented growth has occurred in Canadian archives. Preliminary findings from a recent survey of archival institutions across Canada indicate that on average, archival holdings have increased 157% since 1986. However, almost half of the responding institutions reported that over 49% of these collections remain unprocessed and therefore, largely inaccessible.

"Chronic low funding and a shortage of staff have significantly hampered the ability of archives across the country to play their complementary role with our federal partners the Library and Archives Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage" said Fred Farrell, Chair of the Canadian Council of Archives. Farrell continued, "The archival community is looking forward to working with The Honourable H  l  ne Chalifour Scherrer, Minister of Canadian Heritage, and the National Archivist Mr. Ian Wilson, to find innovative ways to resolve the challenges of managing, protecting and making accessible our archival holdings for all Canadians to enjoy."

Founded in 1985, as a result of federal-provincial efforts to encourage and facilitate the evolution of an archival system in Canada, the Canadian Council of Archives is a national non-profit organization dedicated to nurturing and sustaining the nationwide efforts of over 800 archival organizations across Canada. The Council also recommends on national priorities, policies and programs for the development and operation of a Canadian archival system.

For further information:
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