Speeches and statements
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Shaping our Continuing Memory Collectively

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Deputy Head and Librarian
and Archivist of Canada and
Chair, Heads of Federal Agencies

Daniel J. Caron joined the federal public service in 1982. In 2009, he was appointed Librarian and Archivist of Canada. One year later, he launched the modernization initiative to ensure that Library and Archives Canada could meet the multiple challenges of the digital environment. This initiative is a call for collaboration, epistemologically grounded institutional policies and policy driven decisions. In addition to his organizational experience, Mr. Caron is a seasoned author and speaker on public administration and issues related to information and memory both in Canada and abroad. Mr. Caron has also taught in several Canadian universities. He holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Economics from the Université Laval, and obtained a doctorate in Applied Human Sciences from the Université de Montréal.

Foreword

From literacy to democracy, memory institutions have played and continue to play a key role in the functioning of societies.

The various events and emerging social practices that mark the beginning of the 21st century confirm that society has reached a point of no return regarding the influence of information technology on the formation of social fabric and social practices. The profound changes that we have experienced for at least two decades are increasingly embedded in our practices and we are beginning to feel the implications. While our relevance as a memory institution is not immediately called into question, these changes will require significant adjustments in how we work if we want to play our assigned role and maintain our relevance in the future.

The core of our mandate is to ensure that the best possible account of Canadian life is captured through acquiring, preserving and making available essential documentary heritage to Canadians. Documentary heritage includes published and unpublished material, private and public documents and portraits whether in analogue or digital format. Through acquisition and preservation of these resources, memory institutions are developing the *causa materialis* to support various interpretations (those of experts—historians, genealogists, lawyers—and all citizens) of the Canadian experience in the different spheres of society.

Modernizing our institution means creating state-of-the-art approaches by which all of the work accomplished and all of the knowledge accumulated over the last century will be kept current and will continue to be relevant to serve Canadian society. Simply put, this document lays the foundations to undertake a reconceptualization of the way Library and Archives Canada conducts its business in order to continue to fulfill its legal mandate in a relevant, efficient and effective manner.

What follows articulates the way this will be accomplished.

The past in context

The National Library of Canada, founded in 1953, was a significant contributor to the development of legal deposit and description practices, and to the formidable task of developing the Canadiana collection of publications. Since its creation in 1872, the National Archives of Canada has been mandated to build an impressive base of material that today supports government business and provides accurate and comprehensive information resources to support historical, genealogical and general research about Canadian society and Canada.

In 2004, a new institution emerged from the integration of the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada. Library and Archives Canada (LAC) was born and became the first national government establishment to successfully merge its documentary heritage institutions. This laid the groundwork for LAC to make new contributions to the success of Canadian society—in less than five years it has developed considerable capacity and built a solid foundation to support continuing growth.

The stewardship role of the institution includes: maintaining federal government recordkeeping activity; documenting the historical development of Canadian society; reflecting Canada's strengths in literature, music and media; and safeguarding essential records that support citizenship, human rights, legal rights and land claims. As well, LAC enables cooperation and connectivity among Canada's libraries and provides reference services in library and information sciences. LAC also ensures consistency of the standards, practices and policies used in cataloguing and metadata with international library standards and alignment of its description of resources with digital requirements. In accordance with its mandate, LAC provides coordination and leadership to the network of federal libraries to ensure that appropriate information resources and expertise are available for government to function effectively.

Since its establishment in 2004, LAC has made significant progress on a number of key defining initiatives. Bringing together the distinct cultures of two institutions and building a new organizational structure were but the first steps in creating a new institution to better serve Canadians in the 21st century. *Directions for Change* set the stage for transformation efforts and created an open environment to implement key strategies over the past few years. Most importantly, the institution invested in a strategic interpretation of its mandate and took the time to assess and plan for integrating work processes and disciplines

and to consider how to operate more horizontally and strategically.

During this time, critical research and development work led to a new integrated Canadian national catalogue (AMICAN) and a Trusted Digital Repository (TDR) to manage long-term access to digital resources. A new approach was solidified to share the portrait collection with all Canadians. A significant *Directive on Recordkeeping* was created for the Government of Canada and implemented in July of 2009. A national discussion on the development of a Canadian Digital Information Strategy (CDIS) was launched. The institution demonstrated leadership in providing equitable library access for Canadians with print disabilities and worked diligently to make millions of pages available online for Canadians. We continued to add to our preservation capacity by building a nitrate preservation centre and a new collection storage facility. Finally, LAC made significant documentary acquisitions which are being safeguarded for future generations.

Our institution has cause to celebrate with pride our ability to provide citizens with access to this rich resource of books, audio tapes, photographs, portraits and films thanks to the creativity, good judgment and dedication of our professionals whose decisions over time have made it all possible. This success has also been due in great part to the illustrious past and professional expertise of its two parent institutions. As a leader in several key areas of continuing memory, LAC has played a considerable role in developing best practices at the national and international levels in library science and as a guardian of documentary heritage.

Although progress has been made, the face of information has changed substantially in the last decade: superabundance; rapid creation, sharing and remixing by individuals; multiple formats; unprecedented access; everpresent and expanding user influence, points of view, skills and engagement. This picture is in direct contrast to that of the past, which was characterized by limited creation and quantity; mediated access and decisions; authoritative sources; specialist interventions; limited number of fixed formats; limited sharing; and fewer players.

Every second a new piece of information is created or discovered somewhere in the world that may be relevant to Canada's continuing memory. The digital images of today

are the building blocks of tomorrow's memory. And tomorrow's "rare book" will be the latest version of today's online success. Among other things, the information framework we are building for Canada to support its continuing memory must reflect the rapidly shifting digital landscape.

For example, in the pre-digital world, editors acted as filters to determine what was to be published. In the digital world, that buffer is increasingly reduced. These changes result in fundamentally transformed relationships between creators, publishers, distributors and users and contribute to the major challenge of defining "published" and "unpublished" resources.

All of this calls into question the very basis of the traditional practices and theories that have driven the management of information, librarianship, documentary heritage and the development of Canada's continuing memory. LAC now needs to determine how to achieve optimal results in this constantly evolving environment to stay relevant to Canadians.

Shaping our future

It is clear that maintaining the unique and treasured elements of a documentary memory institution as a place of both physical and virtual knowledge is an increasingly complex undertaking. In our information-intense and information-dependent era, individuals and organizations have an unprecedented capacity to create, share, modify and access information "anywhere, anytime". The merger of humanity and technologies generating many new possibilities, each of which creates new challenges for memory institutions trying to capture and preserve a representative image of Canadian life. Technology is increasing capacity and ushering in new media. Social transformation creates a sense and a desire for immediate access irrespective of information medium. And as technology duplicates capacity and has an impact on internal documentary management practices, it also affects the way people and organizations interconnect and more generally become involved in society. The constantly changing social context has an impact on creative expression and behaviors as well as on the quantity of information produced and on the quality and value of each piece. For organizations with core information mandates, this has fundamentally shifted the balance towards an increasingly digital model.

That is to say that most of our established environments around acquisition, description, preservation and access have been completely turned upside-down, with little to take the place of current practices. Reference points that guided our decisions for years are being questioned. We must find ways to grow closer to citizens and society and to embrace evolving technologies.

This forces us to revisit our practices by asking some fundamental questions: How do we determine what is important to document in a persistent way for present and future generations? Should LAC become the filter assigning value to all forms of information? How do we monitor and respond to public expectation of instant access, while capturing less immediate, yet important contributions? How do we best engage citizens and professionals from all domains in our efforts? How do we reach out to the new generation of "born-digital" consumers? How do we ensure they can find the documentary heritage we have acquired and described? How do we represent the diversity of views? How do we work in collaboration with stakeholders?

The challenges are significant and complex and as we set course for the future, it is important that our actions and decisions always be linked back to the core elements of LAC's mandate: acquiring, preserving and making accessible Canada's documentary heritage for present and future generations.

In a world of information scarcity, the criteria of "significance" and "breadth" of our documentary heritage collection may have been sufficient to remain relevant. However, in the present environment of information superabundance, considerations of sufficiency based on subject, type of material and period coverage may be needed to introduce some important pragmatism to our collecting efforts.

The context is such that it is increasingly difficult to capture a satisfactory image of Canadian society. To deal with the profound challenges of the digital age, our interpretation of "acquisition" must of necessity be more focused than it has been in years past. This is why of the principles for acquisition has inspired decision criteria, such as significance, sustainability, sufficiency and society.

Directly linked to the questions of value and significance are the challenges

of digital and analogue preservation, insofar as the capacity to create and produce information has far outdistanced the capacity to store and preserve it. At the same time, one of the fundamental purposes of preservation is to serve the possibility of future use. Traditional archival and library approaches to preserving paper documents, films and the like must be maintained alongside our renewed acquisition strategies and in line with the new digital environment. Not only will there be a requirement to better integrate analogue and digital preservation practices and approaches, but we must also constantly question the relevancy of previously acquired material. In other words, can we continue to afford to preserve all that we acquire? As well, to keep pace with technology, from a preservation perspective in a digital environment, we must craft new principles reflecting changing technologies, required processes and fundamental underlying professional values.

We recognize that comprehensive acquisition and preservation are unattainable goals, at least not by one institution or in one place. We must make informed preservation decisions to effectively preserve the multiple and growing number of formats—acid paper documents, nitrate photos and films, the mass of audio/visual materials and web sites.

Physical and virtual preservation will have to exist simultaneously with access. New methods such as virtual vaults, podcasts, expert demonstrations and webcasts are now required. Through collaborative arrangements, we must ensure that exhibitions by other cultural institutions complement our needs. Broad accessibility must remain at the forefront of our thinking while providing experts with access to specific resources in the institution. The new landscape demands a new and different set of principles from the perspective of the user. The answer will come through finding new ways to describe material as a foundation for resource discovery as well as a growing presence on the web.

The institution will review how it obtains and creates required capacity. Our challenges will not be resolved simply nor will sustainable solutions rely solely on bigger budgets. Several options are available. Collaboration represents a necessary avenue. It is time to recognize that the work to be done is too complex for a single institution, and that acquisition and resource discovery require a coordinated and shared approach with other Canadian libraries and archives. As well, solutions will emerge from greater collaboration among experts traditionally focused on published and unpublished material. This is particularly important in the

case of description. The same reasoning also applies to expertise and abilities developed regarding both pre-digital and digital material. Our major task here is to weave together our management strategies and practices related to analogue, digital, published and unpublished material.

Leveraging our current level of resources to attract partners represents an additional avenue that will permit the attainment of greater outcomes for Canadians as focus will be necessary for us to succeed. We need to commit to a few issues, resolve them and move on to the next set of priorities.

Lastly, having a seamless continuum effectively linking the core functions of LAC's mandate is paramount to our relevance and effectiveness. Acquisition will benefit strongly from being connected to preservation and resource discovery in order to make information resources reflecting Canadian life accessible over time. Preservation must be technically sustainable in order to support acquisition and permit resource discovery. Access is and will be possible if preservation is well done and if we continue to select the right documentation to reflect Canadian life. The absence of such interrelationships is currently a barrier to full achievement of our desired outcomes. Integrated management will serve as the linkage to all decisions we make.

Next steps: Engaging in actions

The fundamental rule guiding our modernization exercise is the acknowledgment that we are entering a world of continuous improvement and adjustments. We are setting the foundations to allow the institution to adapt to these evolving contexts. This means four things. First, we will invest in developing our staff's potential to its fullest. Changing environments require constantly renewed professional and management capacities. Second, we will not wait to have a perfect solution before beginning to implement new approaches because the environment is constantly changing. Third, none of our new practices will be cast in stone; rather, they will be experimental in nature and always subject to modification as dictated by the interpretation of our mandate and the changing environment. Lastly, our success will be informed by the capacity of each work unit to articulate key results and targeted outcomes and to engage in a change agenda that will permit the transformation of business processes to achieve those results. Successes will be documented and acknowledged.

Modernization cycle

The core of the modernization cycle will last between 18 and 24 months with a launch in the spring of 2010 and a targeted completion date in the fall of 2012. It is comprised of five key components: defining concepts and principles for action, defining work processes, testing approaches, iterative implementation of selected approaches, and evaluating results.

As stated earlier, for each of the three major business functions of the institution, we must rethink our approaches in order to reflect the new environment while preserving the spirit of professional values and principles. We must also clarify expectations and identify possible collaborations and complementarities with key stakeholders. To do so, working groups will identify guiding principles, concepts, values, risks and opportunities to build specific approaches in order to frame the way the institution will deliver on its mandate. The results will be moved forward in consultation with employees and external stakeholders, based on business intelligence and crafted to ensure that they align with core business functions.

Looking at our business functions from these new perspectives reorients our work processes and permits us to keep focused on our priorities. These new perspectives include integrated internal management along functional lines and outcomes framed within a context of external collaboration. If we structure our processes well, we can adopt new approaches and press forward with new institutional orientations to achieve expected results in an efficient and effective way. The future success of our institution, both in the short and long term, will be largely dependent on the modernization of these processes.

To ensure sound feasibility and applicability of our proposed approaches, it is important to test and implement gradually as we learn lessons. Pathfinder projects will validate concepts, approaches and work processes. Lessons learned will allow us to address what needs to be corrected and keep us in a mindset of experimentation and continuous improvement. Gradual implementation accompanying the pathfinder projects will permit a smooth transition from current to new practices in a risk-controlled environment. Finally, feedback, measurement of results and impacts will help to assure that the relevance of approaches is continuously questioned.

Setting priorities: The roadmap

Each working process within the institution must be revisited with the aim of their reframing or rebuilding according to a common set of attributes and governance guidelines. To do so, we will use the functions as laid out in our legislation: acquisition, preservation and resource discovery. The preservation function includes both the preservation aspect and the on-going collection management element. The latter includes regularly monitoring the continuous relevance of the LAC collection. Resource discovery also entails two dimensions: service (responsiveness to Canadian citizens' requests) and programs (partnering with other institutions to make known elements of our collection). Each of these functions and sub functions must be broken down into multiple smaller work processes.

To anchor the new processes within the spirit of modernization as described in earlier sections, every revision must be built around four attributes and two governance criteria.

The attributes reflect the current complexity of the information world in which we live. First, all work processes within the core functions of the institution need to reflect the diverse clusters of which current – and past – Canadian society is composed. Second, all work processes will relate to recognized documentary heritage collection domains. Third, ownership of working processes must be questioned with a view to identifying best fits amongst all existing stakeholders. Fourth, efforts will be guided by clearly enunciated and executable principles that arise from professional values.

Given the complexity of the environment, the contribution of external communities is key to delivering our mandate. It is fundamental to acknowledge that the work to be accomplished will benefit by as many viewpoints as possible. Of course, immediate feedback will come from professional associations, users, advocacy groups and citizens that have a particular interest in what we are doing because it directly affects their day-to-day life or operations. Such feedback is key. It plays a particular role in our decision-making process as a long-term memory institution. To that input, we also must add impartial external advice.

The first governance criterion, which relates to external horizontality, requires that we consider how we can obtain support and advice from stakeholders for each of our work processes. And we must then determine which stakeholders should be involved and how, and by which mechanisms we should be accountable.

The second governance criterion has to do with our internal horizontality. In order to guarantee the delivery of desired results, we need to put in place an organizational structure that will ensure as much synergy, complementarity and efficiency as possible, based on the best use of our talents.

All new approaches must pass the test of internal and external horizontality and apply the set of attributes described above.

These elements must be embedded in each function at the heart of the institution's mandate to produce desired, targeted results.

The documentation of Canadian society: Acquisition in the modern world

Acquisition is essential for any memory institution. It enables the documentation of society and guarantees that we have the appropriate information resources to portray the most accurate reflection of how our society functions at any given time. To do so, we make sure that fundamental political, legal and administrative decisions are documented continuously and

sufficiently. Essentially, this means that decision-making processes in all sectors of society, whether cultural, military, scientific or commercial, can be fully retraced.

This aspect of documentation is critical to the functioning of modern democracy and our society in general. For the most part, these essential documents are produced primarily by Canadian federal government institutions, either in a published or unpublished format, or through various media: traditional print, digital, audio-visual or audio.

Subsequently, we complement this first field of information resources (a field where content is more clearly defined and easily captured) by including important resources produced by Canadian society at large. Generally, these are from private corporations, politicians, authors and artists, comprising books, artistic collections, business records, portraits, videos, recordings, maps, etc.

Finally, given the rapid and phenomenal growth of the volume of information resources in a world more and more characterized by a hybrid analogue/digital environment, the documentation of Canadian society is only possible through the use of transparent criteria and parameters and the utilization of a collaborative, iterative, and distributed model, which is regulated where appropriate

(directive on recordkeeping, legal deposit, etc.).

This collaborative effort ensures a nationally-distributed documentary heritage by engaging participation of the memory institutions best placed to ensure its preservation and continued access. In doing so, the acquisition framework is continuously updated in consultation with the major stakeholders and serves as the basis to identify the documents to be acquired in order to accurately document Canadian society. In addition, various advisory committees comprised of information professionals from across the country will support the decision-making process to ensure that the right documents are acquired, that they are suitably preserved, and that access is assured.

This continuing work guarantees that collections are managed from a sound intellectual perspective. Acquisition choices made during a particular period will be systematically reviewed to ensure that over time these choices remain relevant to society at large. The following priorities are associated with the acquisition function:

- Design and implementation of a documentation and acquisition framework;

- Continuing of the implementation of the recordkeeping directive

Collection management in an analogue/digital environment

The preservation of our documentary heritage is at the heart of the serious questions facing memory institutions today. Along with the preservation of physical documents, we must add the capacity to read documents in the diverse languages in which they were written and the varied machine languages that are in use today to encode and decode them.

The challenges facing curators are, first and foremost, technical in nature, such as the capacity to address the deterioration of acidified paper and film discoloration. The capacity to restore these documents impacts directly on the longevity and accessibility of these collections.

In the analogue domain, conservation techniques are for the most part well-known and accessible. We will work in conjunction with other memory institutions to ensure that the required preservation materials and the related expertise are pooled together, in a practical manner, and made available across the country. A network of specializations linked to the domains of expertise found in and distributed among our various memory institutions should emerge.

Within the digital domain, we are working in collaboration with other communities and institutions facing the challenge of creating a Trusted Digital Repository. The solution will emerge in part from the creation of interdependencies within a collaborative model.

With the growth of opportunities for collaboration in terms of storing both physical and virtual documents, the management of our collections is simplified and made easier, and the material is made more accessible thanks to the creation of a collective catalogue.

The following priorities are associated with the management of collections:

- Design of an approach with regard to the management of the collection;

- Design and implementation of a Trusted Digital Repository (TDR).

Resource discovery in a modern world

The purpose of documenting Canadian society by assembling documentary heritage is to make this documentation available to Canadians. In the immediate future, four elements are to be prioritized.

The first is related to the capacity to make documentary heritage accessible to the greatest number of users throughout the country, both physically and virtually. In this regard, our efforts are directed towards the creation of partnerships built around the comparative advantages of each potential partner within the library, archival or museum communities. Our complementarities are fully developed by the shared use of each other's walls and screens across the country. We can even make the documentary heritage here under our responsibility available to other institutions to maximize its exposure to citizens. Within this framework, memory institutions become the intermediaries and the ambassadors of Canada's documentary heritage.

The second element concerns the presentation of information so that it is easy to use and meets the needs of potential users, whether they are public libraries, teachers, researchers, or any other citizen interested in our rich collections. For example, we are committed to developing many more easy-to-use digital kits and content from various sections of our collections. This way, regardless of geographic location, from coast to coast to coast, anyone can access as many of our information resources as possible directly from our Internet site or from one of our partner's sites.

The third element involves description. We are working to make sure that the description of acquisitions is done as quickly as possible and that it will be structured around metadata that is immediately available and easily found, employing user-friendly language familiar to a variety of users.

The fourth element aims at the creation of instruments to achieve the required synergy between the various functions of our institution. They will enable us to build a documentary heritage which will be accessible to users as soon as possible following acquisition. Resource discovery based on a strong horizontal integration will require a constant dialogue between sectors, focused on user needs.

The following priorities are associated with resource discovery:

- Finalization of the initiative concerning federal government libraries; and,

- Design and implementation of an approach relating to resource discovery.

Internal service areas will develop strategies to best align resources in order to support the changes required and the ongoing operations of the institution. For example, work will be done to engage communities and develop a common understanding on how best to work together. A talent management framework linked to capacity building will be developed and put forward. A long term blueprint budget will be elaborated, a functional ergonomic workspace model will be conceived to reflect the new working structures as they emerge, a business intelligence report will be created, and the LAC web site will be re-designed to reflect the modernized institution.

Conclusion

We must remind ourselves of how much we have accomplished over the last five years in merging two institutions. We are now better equipped and more experienced to deal with a changing environment and to respond appropriately. We have developed the capacity to be innovative and to create "outside-the-box" working models that best fit evolving contexts. The talent of our people, of the next generation of professionals from all disciplines and the expertise and engagement of colleagues from other institutions, constitute a wealth of experience to making possible the materialization of a 21st century memory institution. We now have an opportunity to shape the future of an institution focused on and dedicated to the management of documentary heritage in our country. The current digital environment provides

the ideal conditions to demonstrate our capacity to build the most relevant approaches that will bridge the past with the future.