

Summary of the Evaluation Report on the Digital Preservation Component of the Preservation Program (2015–2020)



Program Description

This summary presents the results of the evaluation of the digital preservation component of Library and Archives Canada's (LAC) Preservation Program. LAC defines digital preservation as the active management of digital content over time to ensure ongoing access.



Purpose of the Evaluation

The evaluation examined the following issues:

- What is the current state of digital collection and its preservation at LAC?
- What progress was made in attaining the short and medium term program results to which the component contributes?
- How efficient are LAC's digital preservation operations?
- Does LAC have the capacity (expertise and technology) to preserve and provide enduring access to digital holdings?



Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The evaluation covered the period from 2015-16 to 2019-2020, and used a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative lines of evidence, including a literature and internal document review, key informant interviews, an employee survey, and an analysis of financial and performance information.



Evaluation Findings

- The program has improved certain practices related to the verification of the authenticity and integrity of digital holdings.
- Digital material is acquired at a rate that outpaces the ability of acquiring areas to process it, which has a direct impact on digital preservation.
- Ability to preserve is not taken into account in acquisition decisions, which affects the efficiency of digital preservation operations and LAC's ability to provide access.
- The digital preservation infrastructure is not optimal and requires further investment.
- There is no overarching governance mechanism to ensure proper planning and coordination among the various stakeholders.
- Accountabilities are fragmented and disproportionate.
- There is an important policy gap, which contributes to the confusion over roles and responsibilities and the lack of understating of what digital preservation entails.



Conclusions

The evaluation concluded that, the state of preservation of the digital collection over the past five years has been stable; however, it has been affected by declining human and financial resources. Furthermore, a number of factors have significantly impacted the efficiency of digital preservation operations and the attainment of program results.



Recommendations

The following are the recommendations to the program management

1. Develop and communicate to staff, a comprehensive Digital Preservation Policy suite (framework, policy, directive, guidelines) that clearly defines:
 - a. LAC's Digital Preservation Priorities;
 - b. Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved, notably Digital Collections Operations Division (DCOD), previously the Digital Preservation and Migration Division (DPMD), the acquiring areas, and the Digital Services Sector;
 - c. Criteria for the acquisition and preservation of digital material that take into account the ability to preserve and make accessible; and
 - d. A horizontal workflow for LAC's Digital Content Lifecycle Management
2. Ensure that an overarching governance and coordination mechanisms are in place to facilitate consultation and decision making between internal stakeholders;
3. Conduct an annual joint planning exercise with internal stakeholders to prioritize digital preservation activities and to manage interdependencies; and
4. Ensure that LAC has sustainable resources and technology to preserve and provide an enduring access to its digital collection.

Management response

Program management accepted all the recommendations and put in place an action plan including targets and an implementation schedule. For details on the action plan, please refer to Appendix A of the evaluation report.