THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEXT DECADE

D[R] WILSON served as National Archivist of Canada, 1999 to 2004, and then as head of the newly amalgamated Library and Archives Canada. He retired in 2009 and received the unusual honour of being named Librarian and Archivist of Canada Emeritus. He has recently worked with the University of Waterloo and Open Text Corporation in establishing the Stratford Institute for Digital Media and served for two years as President of the International Council on Archives (2008-2010). He has been appointed as a Senior Distinguished Research Fellow at the Munk School for Global Affairs, University of Toronto. On the international scene, D[r] Wilson was elected President of the CITRA in 2000 as a vice-president of the International Council on Archives and chairing the CITRA meetings in Iceland (2001), Marseilles (2002) and Cape Town (2003). In 2008 he was elected President of the ICA, representing the international archival community in conferences from Seoul to Tamarasset to Riga, Trondheim, Oslo, Paris, Austin, Canberra, Beijing and Tokyo. He has been an adjunct professor at both the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo. He holds three honorary doctorates (York, Queen's and Saskatchewan), is a Member of the Order of Canada, and was appointed Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Government of France. He is also a Fellow of the International Council on Archives, the Association of Canadian Archivists and the Society of American Archivists.

Canadian archives have inherited a proud tradition of scholarship and service. The establishment of the federal archives was the first cultural initiative of the new Government of Canada (1872) and its evolving role in encouraging teaching and research about our history provides a tangible expression of an emerging cultural policy. Provincial, territorial, municipal, university, church, business and community-based archives followed, with the founding of each motivated by a combination of administrative concerns for legal records and a sense of accomplishment with a record worthy of preservation. From their earliest days, government archives recognized that in a dynamic society, the official record was not sufficient. These archives have been given legislated mandates to acquire and preserve records from all sectors of Canadian society, seeking to document governance in its broadest sense and to preserve a portrait of our society in all its creativity and diversity. In recent decades, the government archives have realized that they cannot fulfill such mandates alone but that they should enlist others by encouraging regional, community and theme-based archives in an attempt to maintain an inclusive portrait of our society. Throughout, the Canadian tradition of preserving all media from the public, private and voluntary sectors; of service to scholars, students and the public alike; and of using new technology to make the record accessible has animated the efforts of generations of our archivists.

The Canadian Archives System now comprises some 800 separate archives serving institutions and communities in all parts of the country. Canada's archives form a loose-knit network of independent organizations, each with its own mandate, which chose to cooperate some three decades ago to provide mutual support and common

action in developing archival services. With the active encouragement of the major government archives, nationally and provincially, and the efforts of many within the community, the system has made great strides in developing standards, providing advisory services at the community level, helping with the arrangement and description of new acquisitions, creating an online national database of archival holdings, and encouraging the necessary infrastructure for the archival profession. Two of the visionary leaders in this process, Marion Beyea and Marcel Caya, describe these developments in their background paper for the Summit. Funding has never been generous, usually employing a matching requirement, but the efforts of a generation of Canadian archivists have set a solid foundation on which to address the challenges of the coming decade.

The records selected and preserved over the decades are now more in demand than ever. History lives: – the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada addressing residential schools; the formal apologies for past wrongs to Canadians of Japanese, Chinese and Ukrainian origin; Arctic sovereignty; land claims; military commemorations; environmental change; and boundary disputes *all* rely on the integrity of the historical record. Many historians are using archive reading rooms not for writing or teaching purposes but for preparing court testimony. And as class action lawsuits proliferate against governments, the governments themselves need a full record for legal discovery. Access to information laws and the essential protection of privacy necessitate both rigorous control over the content of collections, and time-consuming procedures. But all underline the power and social importance of the integrity of the record. The fundamental legal value of the record, both official and personal, is demonstrated daily.

Meanwhile, planning continues for the renamed Canadian Museum of History, which will likely feature archival records, like Pier 21, in Halifax. Similarly the new Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg will require archival records, as the detailed files kept on the treatment of Black Loyalists, the head tax paid by Chinese Canadian families, the confiscation of the property of Japanese-Canadians in the panic of war, and policies regarding First Nations and of immigration are only found in the extensive archival record. The continuing work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the creation of a research/educational centre places additional unfunded demands on archival services. The forthcoming commemoration of the years of conflict during the Korean War and the two world wars and countless local anniversaries must be founded on careful research and access to records. Undoubtedly historical themes, especially constitutional, will be an integral part of the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017. And to the delight of archivists, more teachers are finding that using archival records gives life and immediacy for students learning about past lives. The archival record is the recorded memory of the country, documenting our achievements and our failures. It needs to inform our commemorations and historical exhibits and to inspire films, plays and stories about the Canadian experience.

Digitization of existing records proceeds as quickly as our institutions can afford, but without a sustained strategic investment, progress has been limited. At most, 1% of Canada's archival record has been digitized. For a new generation raised to believe that anything of importance is already online, search results are misleading. Even so, many Canadians are discovering for the first time the extent and personal significance of our archival record. History is shifting from the general to the personal. As source material becomes available online, it is clear that local historians and genealogists have joined the archives' traditional academic clientele.

Once online, the often fragile and irreplaceable archival record shifts from being among the least accessible heritage resources to the most accessible, permitting exploration and study at any hour from any place. Historical research has blossomed, as evidenced by the sustained use of both the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (DCB) (the site receives over 80,000 visits each month) and the census records. When Library and Archives Canada (LAC) posted the 1911 census returns online, an average of 17 downloads per second was recorded in the first year. The popularity of the archives-based Canadian TV series *Who Do You Think You Are?* is a testament to the genuine interest people have in researching their own histories (LAC's website hosted over 90,000 visitors each evening during its run). Genealogy is an engaging path into the serious study of our history. Canadians are seeking direct access to the detailed record of our society and are forming and publishing their own insights. About 12 years ago, an average of 50,000 researchers used the LAC reading rooms annually. Today, in-person use has declined but online exploration

of archival holdings accounts for several million serious visitors each year. Similar trends are seen at provincial, territorial and municipal archives; church, university and business archives; and other local institutions. Indeed, history lives.

Canadian archives are rapidly becoming victims of their success. Investing in technology and skills both to preserve the essential born-digital records and websites and then to enhance the unique Canadian content available online has strained the resources of our institutions. Archives have formed new partnerships to accelerate the digitization of important records and to develop name indexes needed for effective research. While Google and Ancestry.ca have profited immensely from offering such unique and authoritative source material, the stewards of these valuable records, the archives, have not. The agreements signed reflect the archival commitment to improve access and these services offer a means to both digitize and index manuscript materials that otherwise would remain dormant on shelves. While provision has been made to respect free public access to publicly-owned records, the value-added services from the commercial sector attract many to pay for access. Little or no monetary benefit flows through to the archives preserving the records.

Online, the link between the archivist and the researcher has been broken, as researchers often thank commercial providers giving little or no thought to the archives that preserve the original record. Similarly the use of archival databases dealing with human rights or immigration and the exhibition of archival documents in museums contributes to the invisibility of the essential archival role. Visiting the Reading Room, a conversation with a reference archivist, having coffee with other researchers and the sense of chance discovery in going through large boxes of records become rare. Public awareness lags despite the extraordinary use of archives on line. And decision makers shift funding to more visible museums in the mistaken belief that all archival problems have been solved by the digital environment. For those concerned about control of the historical narrative, archives can be threatening. Museums choose what to show and present one story to those who visit their exhibits. In the archives reading room or online, the public conducts their own research, pursuing any topic, drawing and publishing their own conclusions, revealing at times the more difficult aspects of our past.

CHALLENGES

1) Every partnership with the commercial sector and with other cultural institutions must include clear provision for public acknowledgement of the role of archives and engage them as partners in making the needs of archival preservation widely known.

2) Rather than having each archives negotiate its own agreement with the commercial sector, could the Canadian Archives System negotiate a common licensing agreement for the online use of its collective content? Unique original content is valuable in the digital age and a system-wide approach should have leverage to develop fixed-term licensing, renewable, perhaps with profit-sharing provisions after the commercial entity has recovered its initial investment.

3) While current agreements are focused on the genealogical market, our archives also hold incredible visual content in the form of maps, architectural drawings, photographs, portraits, landscape and other documentary art. If known, high quality digital reproductions would be in demand for decorating and illustration purposes. The Canadian Archives System should create a partnership with a suitable private sector or NGO entity to establish a purely Canadian image bank, with revenues flowing to investors, the system and participating institutions.

4) To increase the value-added offerings of the archives system, current pilot projects using crowdsourcing to create user-friendly indexes, or to build new interactive archival finding aids should be evaluated and expanded.

5) Recognize that government archives provide cultural/research services and enable them to receive and invest payments for copies or services to further develop services like digital copying on demand.

6) The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission emphasizes once again the essential relationship between First Nations and archives. The establishment of the research/resource centre on residential schools provides an opportunity for a dialogue on how best the Archives System should serve Canada's First Nations.

Government and institutional archives have a special responsibility for the integrity of the official record. This is defined in legislation or other formal mandates and often makes clear that the Archivist is the sole decision-making authority in appraising records for permanent retention or for disposal according to a defined classification system and disposition schedule. Archives must be focused on ensuring that the 1% or 2% of the records created in modern administration of enduring value for legal, accountability or research purposes flow routinely to the archives while the remainder are disposed of as soon as their administrative purpose has been fulfilled. In large, complex bureaucracies, whether government, university, business or NGO, the records function has been decentralized with the transition to digital recordkeeping systems. CIOs have tended to focus on managing large IT procurements and rollouts, and have forgotten the concept of record. Auditors and information commissioners have called attention to the issues of effective recordkeeping in governments. Recent revelations around the deletion and revival of emails in the offices of the Ontario Premier and the Prime Minister as well as the use of a private email account by a senior official in the latter office are, one suspects, but the tip of a far larger iceberg. Within governments, corporate responsibility for the integrity of the official record is vague at best. Emails and now social media messages form the basis of information exchange but are simply treated as transitory. Without records, there is simply no accountability. Archivists are few and have no powers of investigation or verifying compliance with legislation. Public accountability, open government and our social memory fall victim to the 'delete' key.

The digital revolution, transforming record keeping systems across society, adds further new complexity to the archival task. Identifying, securing and maintaining e-records in all their rapidly changing formats, while retaining their essential value as legal evidence is an immense technological challenge. Archivists have been learning new skills, supporting graduate programs in archival studies, and advancing research on standards and solutions. In many governments, human resource classification systems for archivists are woefully outdated. In addition, the high cost of obsolescent hardware and the wide variety of software is seldom factored into the price of implementing new administrative systems. New enterprise content management systems now rolling out in various jurisdictions have built-in records classification and disposal rules and the likely next step will be for governments and institutions to contract out to the private sector the archival functions for all e-records.

Apart from the official record of governments, businesses, NGOs, university and church administrators, writers and artists as well as prominent individuals in all walks of life have made the switch to digital. All archives, small and large, are facing the issues of the long term preservation of digital records.

CHALLENGES

7) Government and institutional archivists must ally with auditors and information commissioners to address issues of compliance with archival and recordkeeping legislation. They and their various professional organizations must collaborate to develop and advance 'duty to document' legislation, regulations and standards to ensure that records are in fact created to document decisions, actions and transactions in all government-funded bodies.

8) As part of the current Open Government initiatives, the archives' records appraisal reports and disposition authorities should be placed online to help the public understand records issues and as part of the archives' public accountability.

9) Archivists must work with enterprise information management system providers to ensure that appropriate archive rules are embedded in the software. They might also collaborate to create permanent retention/retrieval capacity.

10) The Canadian Archives System might consider developing a common, shared trusted digital repository to serve smaller archives with e-records recovery and permanent retention, in collaboration with governments and the private sector.

11) Governments and other major employers of archivists should be pressed to update their job classification standards for archivists to reflect the occupational realities of the digital records.

Government and university archives have been actively engaged in seeking out and acquiring the papers of older businesses, unions, NGOs and of individuals prominent in all walks of life. Such private sector acquisitions aspire to document all aspects of our national, regional and community life, adding substance and other perspectives to the official record. As printed collections have become commonly available online, university libraries have increased their efforts to add unique research collections through active archival programs in the private sector. As donations of such cultural property can be appraised and receipted for its 'fair market value,' and at least one provincial government matches the value of the donation, the university can build a unique research collection at relatively little cost. While at times this dispersal complicates research, it has eased the pressure on the government archives, allowing them to focus on their responsibilities for the official records and e-records. The provincially-based archives advisors have done yeoman's work in helping school boards, hospitals, and local governments manage their archival responsibilities. And, increasingly, major archives are either redirecting offers to donate archival materials to more appropriate repositories or asking continuing businesses to contribute to the actual costs of archiving their records.

The key, perhaps imponderable, question is whether the Canadian Archives System currently has the capacity to document our society in its complexity and diversity. With the proliferation of organizations and of their records, how much documentation from our generation should be preserved and passed along to the future? Is the current system adequate? The archives advisor program has assisted many communities, including ethno-cultural, religious and other communities who feel underrepresented in the major archives, to establish and develop small but professional repositories. But there has been no study of what archival material is being lost through neglect or its importance. As our economy undergoes painful restructuring with the loss of the textile industry, the closure of manufacturing, the loss of small farms, the reductions in religious orders and the displacement of one-resource towns, are the records being saved? Or do they quietly disappear into bankruptcy proceedings, transfer to foreign owners or simple neglect in abandoned factories? There are no headlines over the loss of such records and while heritage activists will chain themselves to stop the destruction of heritage buildings, there is no evident concern about the records in the attic of the building. The inadequacy or perhaps inflexibility of the Archives System is suggested by the creation of archival institutions outside the system to preserve massive research databases, geo-spacial data and other specialized e-records and by the reluctance of various record-creators, like broadcasters, news media and photographers who wish to market the content themselves.

A preoccupation with the digital environment obscures a basic reality: our archives already hold massive unique collections of manuscripts, photos, maps, art works, newspapers, film, sound recordings, video in many formats, microfilm, books, pamphlets, and early computer files. These must also be preserved. Given the fragile nature of many items, this is not assured. Each requires specialist knowledge: of content, of formats and especially of preservation. Many hold intrinsic value, as evidence, as artifacts, and as national or local treasures; others are valuable just for their informational content. They have legal importance, research significance for many disciplines and, frankly, given today's market, substantial monetary value. With libraries, these represent our intellectual capital. Collectively they document the Canadian experience and creativity. They are our inheritance.

CHALLENGES

12) The Canadian Archives System must maintain and develop further the archives advisor program, assisting volunteers and helping institutions with their archival responsibilities.

13) Every archives, in consultation with its community partners, should create a priority inventory of the key record-creating bodies within its community of interest (whether provincial or regional; whether university thematic or NGO-based) and then seek to discover the fate of records of defunct organizations or establish record deposit agreements with continuing bodies. These should be shared online to help build a national acquisition strategy. From this, gaps in documentation might be identified and focused initiatives developed.

14) The Canadian Archives System, through the National Archival Appraisal Board, should develop a continuing engagement with the Cultural Property Export Review Board to maintain a donation appraisal approach with integrity for material documenting Canada.

15) Colleges and technical institutes need to be encouraged to train future conservators for all documentary formats, from book binding to parchment and papers, various video and film formats as well as outdated computer and vacuum tube-based technologies.

16) The Canadian Archives System should identify every year the priority records, in whatever medium, in greatest danger of loss, publicize on an endangered list and seek sponsors to assist.

Government records, private sector acquisition and the preservation of the variety of documentary media formats build and maintain collections but access is eventually the point of the endeavor. Access will not happen if people do not know of the archives and its services. Much is being done, especially with dynamic programs at the community level; much more needs to be done provincially and nationally. Work at the local level with schools and the educational system, with historical and genealogical societies and with libraries has proven productive. Nationally, www.archivescanada.ca is an essential bilingual database showing where archives collections are available across the country. And the exhibition efforts of many archives together with developing searchable databases for or lending original documents to galleries, historic sites and museums have enabled many to see the archival record.

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17) Continue to build ArchivesCanada by uploading all archival finding aids and using an advanced search engine.

18) The Canadian Archives System should reach out to reference librarians in the public libraries. They are often the first point of contact for those seeking reliable information and should be briefed on how best to refer clients to archives.

19) Develop archival exhibitions which focus on how records are created, their uses and the role of the archives. Demonstrate the power of the archival record in our lives.

20) Engage the public and small businesses with programs to help them preserve their own digital files.

The Canadian Archives System has accomplished much in the last three decades; but public awareness and support for the archival endeavor is limited. Let me venture into controversial territory. We lack a strong, unified national voice for archives, the profession and more broadly our documentary heritage. Two national associations developed, both with their strengths and reflecting the communities they represent. The Canadian Council on Archives has provided a voice for institutional concerns nationally and various provincial/territorial councils of archives and associations of archivists, have been active. The voices of some of the leading members of the profession employed by the large government archives are stifled in public debate by confidentiality requirements. The committees of our councils and association have made significant contributions and have advanced the agenda but, in my opinion, a disproportionate amount of time, energy and talent has been directed inward: in developing the profession. Well done and definitely needed! But over the

next decade the key challenge is to refocus, to find a new balance and turn the largest part of this effort outward: to developing the alliances, partnerships and public awareness essential to the future of archival services. This effort has to be more strategic, adding the archival perspective to public policy. Others share the values of the archival profession, our library colleagues foremost amongst them. Key issues on record keeping, privacy and access are part of the public dialogue. Canadians need to hear from us and we need to ensure that the archival record is indeed a key element of a knowledge society: growing systematically, inclusive of our diversity, known and available to all who want to draw on it.

CHALLENGE

21) I leave this to the Summit and the leadership of our councils and associations.