Citizens participation and innovative thinking at Library and Archives Canada

Normand Charbonneau
Deputy Librarian and Archivist of Canada and Chief Operating Officer
Presented to the Forum of National Archivists, Abu Dhabi, May 2019
About Library and Archives Canada

• The Dominion Archives was founded in 1872 and was transformed into the Public Archives of Canada in 1912 and renamed the National Archives of Canada in 1987.
• The National Library of Canada was founded in 1953.
• In 2004, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) combined the functions of the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada.
• LAC reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage.
• Library and Archives Canada’s (LAC) collection is the shared documentary heritage of all Canadians and spans the entire history of the country. The collection contains materials in all types of formats from across Canada and around the world that are of interest to Canadians.
As a memory institution and a government institution, LAC's mandate is:

• to preserve the documentary heritage of Canada for the benefit of present and future generations;
• to be a source of enduring knowledge accessible to all, contributing to the cultural, social and economic advancement of Canada as a free and democratic society;
• to facilitate in Canada co-operation among communities involved in the acquisition, preservation and diffusion of knowledge;
• to serve as the continuing memory of the Government of Canada and its institutions.
• Population of **37 million**
• Concentrated in the areas close to the Canada–US border.
• Its four largest provinces by area (Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta) are also its most populous; together they account for **86% of the country's population**.

• Red star represents LAC locations
• Green arrows represents archivists embedded in indigenous communities
Access at LAC: Context

- **Library and Archives of Canada Act** (LAC Act): facilitate access to Canada's Documentary Heritage to Canadians and to anyone with an interest in Canada.
- LAC’s **Access Policy Framework** promotes access as an institutional outcome.
- Government of Canada is seeking ways to expand open and universal access to their holdings, through digital means and open data initiatives.
- Operating in a rapidly evolving digital and networked environment, LAC seeks to leverage these opportunities to enhance access to its collection.
- LAC must serve Canadians, wherever they are geographically.
LAC’s Access Principles

**Discoverable**
Makes metadata discoverable, so that Canadians or those with an interest in Canada can view information about their existence, description, location, and availability.

**Available**
Makes its holdings and associated metadata free of legal and policy constraints so that Canadians or those with an interest in Canada can consult and use them.

**Accessible**
Removes physical, technological and geographical barriers that limit accessibility to discoverable and available holdings and associated metadata to allow improved access to all digital and analogue content.

**Collaborative**
Seeks meaningful collaboration with clients, government institutions, memory institutions, not-for-profit organizations, and/or the private sector, both nationally and internationally. LAC works with stakeholders and users to find innovative approaches to increase access to documentary heritage, as well as to enhance the democratization of knowledge through effective engagement of citizens.
Demand for digital access to LAC’s collections has evolved; people want digital access to our collections.

Making LAC’s analogue collections digital, and creating all the metadata needed to make those collections appear on Google, makes them searchable.

The DigiLab (located at LAC’s Ottawa location) is a hands-on facility where members of the public can digitize and contextualize LAC collections of value to their study, work and communities.

We plan to implement DigiLabs in our other facilities, Vancouver is the next one.

All of the material digitized through the DigiLab is made available online for general public access.

Inspired by the work of our friends and neighbors at NARA
The Basics of DigiLab

The DigiLab provides:

- Scanners to accommodate various media at various resolutions.
- Multiple workspaces with computers and Internet access.
- Access to collections and training for handling and digitizing material.
- Templates to create metadata and descriptions for Internet access.

The Client provides:

- Detailed references of LAC material to be digitized.
- Hands-on digitization of archival materials.
- Creation of tagging, description or other metadata.

And the Archivists...
Easy to use professional grade equipment
DigiLab in Numbers

Total images for the year 2018-2019:
• 24,630 items digitized
• 34 projects

Total images for the year 2017-2018:
• 2,360 items digitized
• 30 projects
Project Naming

• Created in 2002,
• Approximately 10,000 images have been digitized,
• Several thousand Inuit, First Nations and Métis Nation individuals, activities, and places have been identified.
• The initiative not only enriches LAC records for present and future generations, but also helps members of communities connect with their past and create intergenerational bridges.
Project Naming

- Project Naming was conceived by Nunavut Sivuniksavut and began as a collaboration between that organization, the Government of Nunavut and the National Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada).

- The project started modestly with the digitization of 500 photographs taken in four Nunavut communities. Elders identified 75 percent of the people depicted in those images, exceeding all expectations.
LAC’s Collection Search

- Collection Search integrates searching between library, archives and specialized databases.
- clients to use a single search.

Capabilities:
- Faceted search in the result page is tailored to specific databases
- Deep zoom option within its new Harmonized viewer
- Export function of lists of results
Collection Search in Numbers

• Collection Search searches through **12 of 100 databases** which represent more than **19 million descriptive records**

• LAC has **60 million** descriptive records

• LAC is indexing a new database into Collection Search on a **monthly basis**.
Co-Lab is an online tool to allow members of the public to transcribe, tag and add descriptive information to records, images, and other historical material, including diaries, manuscripts, photo albums and more, in LAC’s collection.

The more work is contributed to Co-Lab, the more accessible and usable our digital collection becomes for all Canadians.

https://co-lab.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng
Members of the public can contribute in two ways:

• By taking on a “challenge” put together by experts at LAC that would benefit from their contributions,

• By using our Collection Search to find the materials that matter most to them,

When someone contributes to Co-Lab, the metadata becomes accessible immediately, and it becomes searchable in Collection Search within 24 hours.

People can create a user account and log in when contributing, which will allow them to look back on their contribution history at any time.
Why is Co-Lab Important?

• Based on an interest from the public
• Improves discoverability of LAC’s collection by enhancing existing metadata
• Builds a community of contributors – creating interactivity, and allowing users to share knowledge
• Highlights elements of LAC’s collection to a wider public
• We believe Co-Lab users will become champions of our cause. It is addictive
• If you go that way, don’t forget change management…
Library and Archives Canada is exploring technological solutions that would automate the identification of sensitive personal and classified information in the government and private archival records it acquires.

These solutions could expedite the redaction of such information, allowing for a quicker access to records.
Confidential information management and technology
Project requirements

• Set access conditions.
• Avoid inefficient, labour intensive manual review.
• Reduce risk in undertaking declassification and making records accessible at some point when they contain information that should still be protected.
• To weigh the value of redacting records up front, protecting information while making records accessible to the public earlier.
• At minimum it allows for access to documents that could never be released
  – Passport number, medical information that does not ever need to be released
Confidential information management and technology Environnement scan

- There is no software deployed government-wide.
- Have reviewed 8 software options.
- Demo of Quin-c (AccessData) in January 2019
- The Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Community in the Canadian federal public service is highly interested
Confidential information management and technology
An experimentation

- Robust search capability
- Creates an index search
- Machine learning
- Can manage many different file formats in an unorganized state
- OCRs image files and provides those words in the index list
An experimentation

- It is a web-based interface but can be locally installed on a standalone
- Customized to only have apps(widgets) that we will use
- No file transformation; preserves originals, makes a copy, then can redact, ingest, index
- Auto-redaction
- Files can be redacted and exported as TIFF, or other
- **Pilot project starts in May**
For more information:

normand.charbonneau@canada.ca

Library and Archives Canada

www.bac-lac.gc.ca

Telephone: 613-996-5115 or 1-866-578-7777 | TTY: 613-992-6969 or 1-866-299-1699