

# The Archives nationales du Québec: Memory of a Nation<sup>1</sup>

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**RÉSUMÉ** Le Québec s'est doté d'un véritable système d'archives qui correspond au modèle développé par le CIA et l'UNESCO. Selon ce modèle, un système d'archives doit reposer sur un cadre juridique formel et comporter une structure de gestion. Il doit également comprendre des stratégies de normalisation scientifique et prévoir la diffusion de son patrimoine archivistique. Pour les besoins de sa démonstration, l'auteur retracera le chemin parcouru par la province, en matière d'archives, depuis le 17<sup>e</sup> siècle. D'abord utilisées à des fins administratives, les archives deviennent, au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, la source principale de la recherche historique. Il faudra toutefois attendre la seconde moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle pour que la perception à l'égard des archives se transforme. Les années 60 et 70 seront à cet égard significatives. On y voit, en effet, se profiler les premiers éléments d'un système de gestion documentaire intégré alors que sont créées en 1969 les ANQ. Au fil des ans, cette institution se dotera des outils nécessaires à la réalisation de son mandat qui consiste non seulement à préserver sa mémoire institutionnelle mais également la mémoire collective de la nation.

**ABSTRACT** The author aims to demonstrate that the archival system in Québec corresponds to the model developed by the International Council on Archives and UNESCO. According to this model, an archival system must be based on formal legislation and incorporate a management structure. It must also include strategies for professional standardization and provide for the dissemination of the archival heritage. In support of his argument, the author reviews the history of the archives of Québec from the 17th century. Initially used for administrative purposes, archives became, during the 19th century, the principal resource for historical research. This perception of their function did not change until the second half of the 20th century, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. During that period the elements of an integrated records management system began to emerge when the Archives nationales du Québec (ANQ) was established in 1969. From that date, the ANQ developed all the elements necessary to fulfil its mandate to preserve its institutional memory as well as the nation's collective memory.

1 This article was written following a request from Mr. Robert Garon, Conservator, Archives nationales du Québec, for a series of presentations given at the interdisciplinary seminar entitled "La mémoire dans la culture," organized by the Chaire pour le développement de la recherche sur la culture d'expression française en Amérique du Nord (CEFAN), Université Laval, Fall 1993. It was first published in the journal *Archives* 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1995), pp. 3–15, under the title: "Les Archives nationales du Québec: la mémoire de la nation."

Founded in Paris in August 1950, the International Council on Archives (ICA) remains a productive forum for exchanges which have defined the scope, functions and rules of contemporary archival practise for the benefit of international, national, local, and private archival organizations. Consulting and working closely with UNESCO, the ICA has sponsored numerous UNESCO publications that explore the major dimensions of the new identity of archival practise.

Truths once considered objectionable are now matters of professional consensus. A national archival heritage now consists of the records of state legislative, judicial, and administrative bodies as well as other public services, private organizations, and even individuals. Moreover, it would be impossible to manage any national archival heritage in the absence of mechanisms designed to deal with record-keeping in state administrations and other public services, as well as in the private sector and on the part of individuals. Consequently, the state has a duty, in fact a fundamental right, to protect, preserve, and showcase its national archival heritage. This should be the mandate of all national archives.

### **Elements of a National Archives**

Regardless of the diversity of cultures and of the nature of governments, a state's archival system must possess four elements in order to be considered national:

- legislation defining archival responsibilities;
- a management structure;
- a strategy for the development of professional standards; and
- an outreach and accessibility program.

### ***Legislation Defining Archival Responsibilities***

For archives to gain the attention of government authorities, and in order to allow a more systematic co-ordination of their operation (especially with regard to third parties), they require a formal judicial and regulatory framework. Legislation gives information resources a status as clear as it does the human, financial, materiel, or natural resources that governments also manage. In addition, legislation facilitates a national archival institution's access to the resources necessary to exercise its mandate; it also defines the duties and responsibilities of public and private stakeholders.

### ***A Management Structure***

As we know, the management of historical as well as administrative records (as reflected in our profession's concept of the three ages of a record – current,

semi-current, and inactive) requires a continuous collaboration between archivists and/or archival institutions and document creators and/or various corporate bodies.

Furthermore, archival interventions, whether within the state administration or within other public and private organizations as well as with individuals, would not be possible without the support of a formal management structure accepted by all stakeholders.

### *A Strategy for the Development of Professional Standards*

André Vachon considers archives to be “the soul of our soul ... the principle of individual life and, even more, of collective life.”<sup>2</sup> The complexity of contemporary archival practice and the intrinsic importance of its principal object – records – require that archivists be endowed with an inordinate clairvoyance and competence. Beyond these personal qualities, however, archivists must also have at their disposal a methodology and a common language for dealing with all the stakeholders now involved not only in the protection of an individual’s heritage, but also with those who play a part in the preservation of a nation’s heritage, indeed, in the safekeeping of the heritage belonging to the entire civilized world.

### *An Outreach and Accessibility Program*

In his introduction to *La planification des infrastructures nationales de documentation, de bibliothèques et d’archives*, Bruno Delmas writes: “A society’s degree of civilized behaviour is discernible in the interest it shows in its past.”<sup>3</sup> Archival institutions must therefore make these sources, witnesses to the past, known and accessible. And although traditional finding aids are reaching the limit of their usefulness due to the overabundance of contemporary documentation and the variety of recording media, a national archival system – with the national archives at its head – must contemplate the development of a universal system of research tools supported by new technologies for use by both the officials who create records, and the general public.

It is obvious, from what has been said, that archival practice now encompasses many new elements, encouraged and showcased by the ICA’s numerous activities and publications. But what of the road Québec has taken in this light? Does the Archives nationales du Québec (ANQ) correspond to the

2 André Vachon, “Les archives nationales,” in Jean-Paul l’Allier, ed., *Pour l’évolution de la politique culturelle* (Québec, 1969), p. 175.

3 J.H. D’Olier and Bruno Delmas, *La planification des infrastructures nationales de documentation, de bibliothèques et d’archives* (Paris, 1974), p. 237.

model developed above? A short detour down a historical path may shed some light on the current situation.

### **Records: Memory of the State**

During its first two hundred years, Québec was subject to numerous means of administration according to European decisions. Records, that is public papers, were regarded as creations of the imperial administration in place, and as instruments for their use. In truth, the history of records in Québec, at least the history of the influence of ideas on their creation, arrangement, and preservation, remains untold. However, here are a few significant facts. The French period provides evidence of the interest officials showed in the preservation of public papers. One example, from 1640, involves the Jesuits' re-constitution of the baptismal registry of Notre Dame de la Recouvrance. Its title reads: "Catalogue of those baptized in Québec since ca.1621 to 1640 for whom the register was destroyed by a fire in the house chapel on 15 June 1640. Individuals were consulted for details shortly thereafter in order to recreate these records."<sup>4</sup>

Considered public papers, records of civil status and notarized documents were subject to statutory controls. In the 17th century, the record registration system used in Europe was imported into the colony; it consisted of recording documents with legal value in a register. "Henceforth, registers will be classified and initialled by the judge (or another official, depending on the case), on the first and last page and the clerk will not record a single sentence or any other act in the register unless this formality has been observed."<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, as Ouellet notes, such a system did not take into account the dispersal of these registers among various state offices, or the carelessness of certain officials. Moreover, what became of correspondence and administrative documents devoid of any legal value? What happened when registers lost their usefulness to the current administration?

Mindful of the problems surrounding state records, especially in the wake of the destruction of the Palais de l'Intendant in 1713, officials in France decreed that every important paper in the colony be copied and that all registers be inventoried. Consequently, we can find copies of religious community deeds dating back to 1715, and inventories of registries of the Conseil supérieur (the governing council), the Intendant, the Governor, and the Comptroller of the Navy for 1718. Other inventories include the registries of notaries, for the stewardship of Crown lands, and a land register for the colony.

4 François Drouin, "Je te baptise au nom de l'Église et de l'État," *Cap-aux-Diamants* 31 (1992), p. 19.

5 Fernand Ouellet, "L'histoire des archives du gouvernement en Nouvelle-France," *La Revue de l'Université Laval* XII, no. 5 (1958), p. 9.

In 1733, these measures were further complemented by the addition of an archives vault located in the new Palais de l'Intendant, installed in order to ensure "the safety of public and private deeds deposited in the archives of the Council and of the provost, and the minutes of deceased notaries."<sup>6</sup> Hocquart considered that these records in effect "could not be safe in the homes of individual registrars where these minutes and registers are subject to potential fires."<sup>7</sup>

Unlike religious communities, whose constitutions had since the 17th century distinguished between current records and those "they would no longer need to consult except as records of past events," colonial administrations seemed to consider public records strictly for their business use.<sup>8</sup> Thus, following the surrender of Montréal in 1760, the majority of public officials, judicial authorities, and military officers were able to return to France with their records, leaving behind only those records deemed necessary for the country's new government. Consequently, only documents dealing with civil rights, deeds, and the operation of the seigneurial system remained in the colony. All administrative records, letters, and reports were sent to France, notwithstanding the fact that the principle of provenance already formed an element of peace treaties of the time, and was confirmed by Article 22 of the *Treaty of Paris*. In fact, these records were never claimed since "officials did not require the records in order to ensure the continuity of administration because new institutions were being organized."<sup>9</sup>

The records left behind in the colony were distributed among the various offices of the new British administration. This parcelling out of records recurred many times over the years in response to new circumstances and the growth of public institutions. Fortunately, the custom of the period dictated that the new incumbent of a public office maintain an account of the documents received. Many of these registers have survived, allowing us to trace the documentary history of the period and to identify new record series created to meet the needs of the incoming administration.

The dispersal of archives – especially those of the French regime, deemed less useful – led to carelessness in matters of record preservation. In December 1787, Governor-General Lord Dorchester established a Committee of Inquiry charged with studying the state and status of the province's old registers. In 1788, the committee was also asked to investigate the contents of each register. The enquiry was thorough, listing all registers and all notarized documents found in the various public offices of Québec. The seven hundred cop-

6 Letter from Gilles Hocquart, Intendant, to the Minister, 12 October 1734 (Fonds des Colonies, series C11A, vol. 62, fol. 86–87v).

7 *Ibid.*, 5 October 1731 (Fonds des Colonies, series C11A, vol. 55, fol. 48–50v).

8 Christine Turgeon, "Des coffres et des constitutions," *Cap-aux-Diamants* 31 (1992), p. 25.

9 Ouellet, "L'histoire des archives du gouvernement en Nouvelle-France," p. 14.

ies of the report were distributed to judicial and ecclesiastic offices in order to “make the public aware of the state of these important records.”<sup>10</sup>

With the exception of François-Joseph Cugnet’s *Le traité des fiefs*, published in 1775, the first collection of documents to be printed, entitled *Capitulations et extraits des traités concernant le Canada*, appeared in 1783. It was followed by a number of important collections published between 1803 and 1806: *Édits, ordonnances royaux, déclarations et arrêts du Conseil de l’État du Roy (1548–1806)*, *Extraits des titres des anciennes concessions en fiefs et seigneuries faites avant et depuis la Conquête*, and finally, *Ordonnances des intendants et arrêts du Conseil supérieur du Québec*.

The publications attest to an obvious preoccupation with “these precious deposits on which the fate of numerous families depends.”<sup>11</sup> They provided “legal precedents when dealing with courts”<sup>12</sup> and aimed to ensure property rights.

As the colony went through a period of turmoil, feeling the effects of major international events such as the American War of Independence, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and particularly the War of 1812, a bourgeoisie emerged. This new class was composed of merchants, civil servants, and members of the liberal professions. It encouraged the development of an intense intellectual life centred on the arts, literature, and science. From that point, the study of history began to attract many individuals and, as elsewhere, archives began to find new favour.

### **The Archives: Source of Historical Research**

The publication in 1791 of the Dorchester Report (*Anciennes archives françaises*), coincided with the *Constitutional Act* creating Upper and Lower (the present province of Québec) Canada and with the ensuing administrative reorganization. Henceforth, a range of documents were to be entrusted to the care of the Provincial Secretary: all official records, deliberations, governors’ and other officials’ commissions, orders from administrators, and registers dealing with the granting of seigneuries. Judicial and notary records became the responsibility of court clerks, records pertaining to roads were entrusted to road surveyors, and records dealing with crown lands were sent to the inspector of crown lands.

Was this fine arrangement entirely successful? Although numerous enqui-

10 S.A. *Anciennes archives françaises ou extrait des minutes du Conseil qui concernent les Registres du Canada lorsqu’il était sous le gouvernement de France* (Rapport Dorchester), Québec, Samuel Nielson, MDCCXCI (1791), p. 44.

11 Requête de Joseph-François Perreault à son Excellence Guy Lord Dorchester, 14 December 1798.

12 J.-Edmond Roy, “Les Archives du Canada à venir à 1872,” *Mémoires et comptes rendus de la Société royale du Canada* (3<sup>rd</sup> Serie) IV (1911), p. 85.

ries (1796, 1799, 1802, and 1823) revealed that, in fact, it was not, they do reflect a marked interest in archives. In fact, a group of prominent citizens in Montréal insisted that the government erect a building to preserve archives, even promising the city's support for the project. In 1824, Lord Dalhousie created the Société littéraire et historique de Québec (Quebec Literary and Historical Society) and deemed it the official repository of public archives. The Society worked with – and was supported by – the state and played a key role in archival preservation. It published numerous works of history. In addition, other noted individuals such as William Smith (who published the first history of New France in 1815), Father Thomas Maguire (chaplain and archivist for the Ursulines of Québec), and Denis-Benjamin Viger published historical texts. In 1832, Joseph-François Perreault published the *Abrégé de l'histoire du Canada* which he “undertook with pleasure, editing the works of Father Charlevoix, printed in Paris in 1743 and W. Smith's work, printed in Québec in 1815.”<sup>13</sup> François-Xavier Garneau revised his *Histoire du Canada* three times in order to take account of strong criticism of the work and to incorporate the flow of new documents which continued to surface at the time.

Numerous transcription “campaigns” led by the Société littéraire et historique de Québec took place in European archives. Father John Holmes was already in Paris in 1836 where he produced the transcripts published in 1838, 1840, and 1843. In 1845–1846, Glackmayer travelled to Albany to copy the transcripts prepared by the American Brokhead in the French Archives de la Marine and de la Guerre (Naval and War Archives). That same year, Louis-Joseph Papineau went to Paris and returned with ten volumes of transcripts. Georges-Barthélémy Faribault, Pierre-Louis Morin, and the Jesuit Father Martin also travelled to Paris to acquire transcripts of manuscript and cartographic archives.

While some were copying archives overseas, others were undertaking the same kind of work in Québec. In 1852, *Pièces et documents sur la tenure seigneuriale* was published, two years before the abolition of the seigneurial system. In 1854, *Écrits et ordonnances* was re-edited and republished. This movement to “search for material capable of contributing to the country's history”<sup>14</sup> continued with commendable zeal within an increasingly difficult political and administrative environment. Following the *Act of Union* of 1840, Parliament moved from Quebec City to Montréal in 1841, where it was burned to the ground during a riot on 25 April 1849. Parliament returned to Quebec City in 1851 only to be burned down again on 1 February 1854. It moved to Toronto in 1855 but returned to Quebec City again in 1860.

13 J. Perreault, *Abrégé de l'histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu'à sa Conquête, par les Anglais, en 1759 et 1760* (Québec, 1832).

14 Roy, “Les Archives du Canada,” p. 113.

The new province of Québec, created by the *British North America Act of 1867*, received the records of New France, which were placed under the authority of the Provincial Registrar. Subsequently, the distinction sharpened between historical documents and administrative records, which remained under the authority of their respective ministries. Among the many incumbents of the position of Assistant Registrar, responsible for archives, was John Langelier, who declared in 1882 that the Provincial Registrar's office had the mandate for the collection, co-ordination, conservation, and even the publication of historical, administrative, and judicial archives of former governments. Langelier went so far as to say that the office was responsible for the collection and acquisition of all documents, books, and newspapers dealing with the province's history so as to complement the official archives. These two objectives were to serve as the cornerstones for the development of what was to become the Archives nationales du Québec (ANQ).

In 1886 another decision was to have significant repercussions for the future of Québec's archives. The government adopted the *Loi sur le Secrétaire de la Province* (Law on the Provincial Secretary). Article 3 reads: "The Provincial Secretary is the keeper of all government ledgers and records that do not clearly belong to another department."<sup>15</sup> This provision ensured that each ministry was responsible for its own records.

On 17 March 1888, John-Chrysostome Langelier, brother of the former Assistant Registrar (who had died prematurely), wrote a comprehensive report on the state of the Registrar's Office, with an emphasis on the "archives branch." Following in his brother's footsteps, he advocated that the Registrar's Office be given responsibility for all records of New France in the province, including those held by the court clerks, the Department of Lands, and the Société littéraire et historique de Québec. His report concluded that in order to make archives more accessible, it was more important to create detailed inventories than to publish collections of documents. Interest in history, and consequently archives, was growing in the province. A survey conducted by the Société littéraire et historique de Québec identified more than ten historical societies in 1892 whose members included a number of prominent politicians and influential citizens.

It is against this backdrop that Pierre-Georges Roy appeared. In 1895, he launched the *Bulletin de recherches historiques* (published until 1968). From 1894 to 1914, he served as Court Clerk for both the Court of Appeal and the King's Bench. In 1914, Roy assumed the position of Director of the federal archives in the Province of Québec. In September 1920, he accepted the position of Archivist for the government of the Province of Québec. Over the

15 Bernard Weilbrenner, "Les Archives provinciales du Québec et leurs relations avec les Archives fédérales, 1867-1920." Deuxième partie. "Beaucoup de projets (juillet 1877-juillet 1887)," *Archives* 16, no. 2 (1984), p. 18.

course of his career he received two honorary doctorates and published the *Inventaire des archives de la province de Québec* collection, thereby fulfilling the wish expressed thirty-five years earlier by John Langelier. In 1921, Roy initiated the *Rapports annuels des Archives de la province de Québec*. As well, he was the author of several monographs and was the first secretary of the Historical Monuments Commission. He maintained close contact with many contemporary historians, including Thomas Chapais, Aegidius Fauteux, Victor Morin, Gustave Lanctôt, and Lionel Groulx.

Although Roy received political support and enjoyed a certain notoriety among the intellectual class, he was not enthusiastic about acquiring the archives held by government departments and the court clerks. Instead, he concentrated his efforts on the archives of New France, both in Québec and in France. This task was facilitated by his appointment as a knight of the Légion d'Honneur in 1927 and recognition of his work by the Académie française the previous year.

The weak legislation (the *Provincial Secretary Law* of 1888) in place at the time, the lack of space available, and most likely Roy's unwillingness to destroy any document probably contributed to his limited success in securing contemporary documents: "Which principle should one adopt in order to perform an appropriate selection? I have been responsible for archives for thirty years and I have found no answer ... therefore, one should never destroy anything."<sup>16</sup>

Arthur Doughty stated that Roy's "passion for popular history ("la petite histoire") led him to underestimate the mission of history and of archives."<sup>17</sup> This harsh judgment needs some qualification. Roy's contribution to Canadian History Week and to the Canadian History Contest, and, most of all, the impressive list of his historical and archival publications attest to his commitment to the use and value of archival documents as important sources for historical research.

It is clear that archives in Québec to this point in time fell short of the definition of a national archives developed by the International Council on Archives and UNESCO after the Second World War. Initially, interest in archival documents in Québec centred on their administrative usefulness and, secondarily, as sources for historical research, focussing almost entirely on government archives. Meanwhile, other records were being created in the public and private sectors: municipal archives, school board archives, hospital archives, business archives, cultural archives, personal archives. It is the establishment of partnerships among these government, public, and private partners that spawned the creation of the Archives nationales du Québec.

16 Pierre-Georges Roy, *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la province de Québec pour 1929–1930* (Québec, 1923), p. x.

17 Bernard Weilbrenner, "Pierre-Georges Roy et le Bureau des archives de la Province 1920–1925," *Archives* 21, no. 1 (1989), p. 27.

## The Archives nationales du Québec (ANQ)

Under the direction of Pierre-Georges Roy, the Provincial Archives of Québec continued to concentrate its acquisition efforts on colonial archives and, on occasion, the papers of prestigious families. Government departments were left to deal with growing volumes of documents, to the detriment of their efficient operation. By the end of the 1930s, the situation had become critical. In June 1940 the Executive Council created a Committee for the Destruction of Documents, modelled on a similar committee of the federal government, which reported directly to the Premier. This committee gave rise to the first records management program, linking together active administrative documents and historical records. Unfortunately, the committee did not survive the new government of 1944, and despite a few weak efforts, initiatives to revive the process were not undertaken until 1961, after noted archivist-historian Fernand Ouellet intervened in the popular press.

In 1961 the Archives du Québec became part of the newly-created Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Shortly thereafter, the government created an Archives Committee reporting to the Provincial Secretary, with a mandate to authorize the destruction of documents. Although many jurisdictional conflicts caused by overlapping draft legislation ensued, the elements necessary to an integrated records management system were in place: an inventory of documents, a classification scheme, records schedules, semi-active storage sites, a process for document destruction, the production of security copies, and transfer to an archive of records of enduring value. Gradually, these concepts took root in administrative practice, although they still could not, at this stage, be considered to form a coherent whole. In a response to the Deputy Minister of Cultural Affairs, the government's legal counsel declared in 1965: "I must point out that in general, public records are the responsibility of the Provincial Secretary; your Ministry is only responsible for historical documents."<sup>18</sup>

Yet in December 1969, the government abolished the Provincial Secretariat, at the same time creating the Archives nationales du Québec (ANQ), the new name for the Archives de la province de Québec. The ANQ was an archives in name only. It had no legal right to review current records held by departments and agencies, and, therefore to identify the government's future archives. It could not intervene with non-government public institutions nor with private archives, with the exception of accepting acquisitions or deposits.

Major changes, however, were on the horizon. In 1967 the newly-created Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ) became a forum for profitable exchanges between archivists and records managers as both groups developed an acquaintance with European and American records management theories.

18 Louis Garon, "Les archives gouvernementales aux Archives nationales du Québec: De l'indifférence aux luttes de pouvoir," *Archives* 18, no. 4 (1987), p. 30.

Bridges were progressively built between the two professions. The AAQ also became the meeting place for officials from government, municipal, and educational administrations and from private secular and religious institutions. Seminars, publications, conferences, and symposia became the vehicles of a new discipline and a burgeoning program of professional development.

At the same time, numerous archival programs were born. Although a municipal system had been established in Québec in 1855, its accompanying archival programs only really began to take shape in the 1960s and 1970s, with the exception of Montréal (1913) and Québec City (1924). The same can be said for universities: twenty-one university archival programs have emerged since 1962 even though the oldest universities date back to the nineteenth century (McGill in 1821, Bishop's in 1843, Laval in 1852, Montréal in 1876). Religious communities have been keeping archives for a very long time yet the systematic organization of their archives only dates back to 1974, with the publication of the *Guide sommaire des archives des communautés religieuses au Canada*.

Although hampered by weak legislation, the Archives nationales du Québec continued to be actively involved in the work of the Interministerial Committee on Records Management established by Treasury Board. In 1971, the ANQ embarked on an important regionalization of its services, supported by an agreement between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1975 calling for the accessioning of judicial and civil archives over one hundred years old. At that time a dream dating back more than one hundred years was realized: to bring together all the archives of New France held in Québec under one authority. Supported by this agreement, the ANQ were represented in nine regions of the province by 1981. Armed with acknowledged expertise, the support of a dynamic professional network, and reliable political support, the ANQ prepared a draft bill on archives which was approved on 21 December 1983.

This legislation, and the policies and procedures that followed, had a significant impact on the archival world in Québec. First, it addressed the ambiguity in our discipline's terminology (public records, administrative records, historical records, archives) by clarifying the concept of archives:

Archives: means the body of documents of all kinds, regardless of date, created or received by a person or body in meeting requirements or carrying on activities, preserved for their general information value.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the law encompassed the active, semi-active, and inactive records of all government departments and agencies, all public organizations such as tribunals, urban and municipal communities, school boards, academic

19 Gouvernement du Québec, *Loi sur les archives: L.R.Q. Chap. A-21.1* (Québec, 1992), article 2.

institutions, and health and social services organizations. Finally, the *Loi sur les archives* complements the *Loi sur les biens culturels*; it provides for the protection of fonds, collections, and individual archival items, while at the same time supporting conservation and accessibility activities in private archives.

This law's effectiveness depends on close collaboration among all public, government, and other organizations with the ANQ. The success of these relationships is reflected by the approval of retention schedules for more than 90 per cent of our partners and by the certification of seventeen private archival repositories. Born in 1920, "in this modest attic (of the Legislative Building) where we did not even have enough room for our reference binders,"<sup>20</sup> today the ANQ collaborates with over 155 ministries and government organizations and with more than 3800 non-governmental public institutions. The ANQ participates in the management of their administrative records and ensures the conservation of archival records. The ANQ also oversees the operation of seventeen certified private archival repositories and offers financial support to organizations and individuals deemed to have archives of national interest.

Finally, following extensive consultation, the Archives nationales du Québec published the *Normes et procédures archivistiques*, which deals with acquisition, selection, arrangement, conservation, outreach, and microfilming. It is widely distributed in Québec and is now available in more than 90 countries in both French and English. In addition, numerous records management guides and pamphlets have been prepared on the development of retention schedules; the transfer or deposit of archival records; the management of electronic records; and the creation of classification plans for administrative records as well as for archival documents.

The aim of these publications is to standardize not only our vocabulary but also our practices. Their ultimate purpose is also to promote the accessibility of these records, both physical and intellectual – wherever they reside in the different government, public, or private archives. As our colleague Jacques Grimard stated: "All are in ready agreement that keeping archives only makes sense insofar as they are usable and used to enhance knowledge of the evolution of our societies."<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

Québec's approach to archives has taken shape over a protracted period, with many trials and errors along the way. In the end, however, Québec's archival

20 Pierre-Georges Roy, *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la province de Québec pour 1929–1930* (Québec, 1930), p. v.

21 Jacques Grimard, "La pratique archivistique a trouvé son identité. L'offre et la demande de services archivistiques en cette fin de vingtième siècle," *Archives* 24, no. 3 (1993), p. 9.

community has developed a distinctive approach to archives. The province has drawn very effectively from the European and American experiences. Its *archives* legislation encompasses all public records, from creation to final disposal. Although there is always room for improvement, Québec's legal framework equips it with the means to control its public records and to ensure the transfer of the most significant among them to an archival repository to preserve institutional memory.

As for private archives, Québec has chosen another path, one of co-operation and partnership. Over the years the Archives nationales du Québec has acquired important private archival fonds. Its decentralized program has enabled the ANQ to form close bonds with holders of archives as well as to encourage the efforts of others with regard to conservation and outreach. The ANQ's budget for financial assistance in the accessioning and description of private archives has increased from \$4000 in 1973 to \$180,000 today. In addition, the co-operative principle embedded in the *Loi sur les archives* allows regional centres to better manage their own private and public archives by establishing a network of quality services to the management of which the ANQ contributes financially. This exemplifies the government's recent approach to "have done instead of doing." Today Québec is endowed with a system for the management of recorded information whose degree of integration is unique in the world. Yet this system represents only one aspect of the formation and use of a nation's memory, which is also nurtured by artistic and literary creations, by the works of archaeologists and ethnologists, and by research produced across all learned disciplines. These efforts collectively advance our knowledge of *Homo Quebecensis*.

