# Counterpoint

## From Missionaries to Managers: Making the Case for a Canadian Documentary Heritage Commission[1]

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RÉSUMÉ Des événements récents dans le paysage archivistique canadien suggèrent que la communauté archivistique ait beaucoup de mal à demeurer pertinente à l'ère numérique. Bien que des efforts aient été faits pour articuler une nouvelle vision pour le système archivistique canadien, une faiblesse fondamentale reste dans ce système : il demeure « fermé », sans participation active des intervenants clés, en particulier des créateurs de documents et des utilisateurs. Le Conseil canadien des archives et la notion même de la communauté archivistique partent tous les deux du principe que le patrimoine documentaire canadien est une responsabilité archivistique collective et que, par conséquent, les archivistes peuvent s'acquitter de cette responsabilité par l'entremise d'une action collaboratrice. La révolution numérique a exposé les failles de cette supposition. Le but stratégique de la communauté archivistique collective doit maintenant favoriser un environnement sociétal dans lequel de bons documents d'archives sont créés et valorisés. Afin d'arriver à rencontrer le but ultime du système archivistique canadien – d'appuyer la préservation du patrimoine documentaire du Canada – une nouvelle organisation menée par les intervenants doit être établie, indépendante des institutions d'archives ou de la profession. Son but serait de promouvoir, de soutenir et de faire accroître le patrimoine documentaire canadien en plaçant l'accent sur des documents d'archives complets, authentiques et fiables comme outils pour appuyer le bon fonctionnement de la société contemporaine et comme composantes essentielles de notre patrimoine documentaire. Poussée par les créateurs de documents et les utilisateurs des documents d'archives, cette organisation comblerait un vide, ouvrant ainsi le système archivistique canadien pour qu'il inclut l'apport, à la fois intellectuel et financier, non seulement des institutions archivistiques et des professionnels du milieu, mais aussi du public, qui crée les documents que nous aspirons à préserver.

ABSTRACT Recent events in the Canadian archival landscape suggest that the archival community is struggling to remain relevant in the digital age. While efforts have been made to articulate a new vision for the Canadian archival system, a fundamental weakness in the system is that it remains "closed," without active participation

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from key stakeholders, particularly records creators and users. The Canadian Council of Archives and the very notion of the archival community are both premised on the assumption that the documentary heritage of Canada is a collective archival responsibility and therefore archivists can fulfill that responsibility through collaborative action. The digital revolution has demonstrated the weaknesses in this assumption. The strategic goal of the collective archival community now should be to foster a societal environment in which good records are created and valued. In order to achieve the ultimate goal of the Canadian archival system – to support the preservation of Canada's documentary heritage – a new stakeholder-driven organization needs to be established, independent of archival institutions or the profession. Its purpose would be to promote, sustain, and expand Canada's documentary heritage by emphasizing the importance of complete, authentic, and reliable records as tools to support the efficient functioning of contemporary society as well as central components of our documentary heritage. Driven by records creators and records users, this organization would fill a critical gap, opening up the Canadian archival system so that it includes inputs – both intellectual and financial – not only from archival institutions and archival professionals but also from the public, whose records we strive to preserve.

In these first decades of the 21st century, the activities of contemporary society are increasingly being documented with the aid of digital technologies, from laptop computers to smart phones to camera-wielding drones. The pervasiveness of digital communications media, the volume of data generated, and the exponential growth in born-digital documentation are of concern to many in society, from artists to bureaucrats and from privacy advocates to individuals struggling to manage their own digital records. Archivists are equally concerned about the impact of digital technologies on the nature and preservation of society's documentary record. To meet the challenges posed by digital records, archivists have radically transformed their practice – from acquisition through description, conservation, and access. Archival theorists and practitioners in Canada, as elsewhere around the world, are working diligently to develop solutions to the management of the digital archives in their care.

However, the democratic nature of the digital revolution – that is, the reality that anyone with access to a computer and an Internet connection can create and distribute content globally by themselves, beyond the control of traditional institutions such as governments or mainstream media – means that much of the content in the digital environment lies outside of the current or future control of archival agencies. Archivists know these records are crucial to a comprehensive documentary heritage. We also know that we have valuable skills and knowledge relevant to the task of archival management. But we are not yet clear about the nature of our role and responsibilities in helping society respond to this fundamental change in the creation, management, and use of records.

What should the archival role be? What are the very real limitations on our professional and institutional capacities? And what can we do, as members of our profession and as a concerned community, to achieve the ultimate goal of the

archival enterprise: to ensure that society continues to have access to a rich and diverse documentary legacy on which to build individual and social identities?

In the early 1960s, there were only a handful of archival institutions in Canada, and for the most part they worked in isolation. At that time, archival work could best be described as a "calling," and many involved were in effect missionaries, committed to preaching the importance of the historical record wherever it existed to anyone who would listen.[2] Today, archival institutions have evolved into agencies that support not "just" historical study but also business efficiency and organizational accountability, through the protection of authentic and reliable documentary evidence. Good recordkeeping, not just good archives preservation, has become part of the services we provide.

With maturity in the profession comes the need for change. Archivists can play a beneficial role as society embraces the new digital reality, but only if we make the adjustments required to ensure that archival institutions and the archival profession are part of the solution, not part of the problem. As the archival enterprise has become more and more professionalized, we have moved from being missionaries to serving as managers, and we have developed the tools and knowledge to do the job of archival management right. However, as managers responsible for mandates and budgetary constraints, we must understand exactly which roles have been assigned to us and clarify precisely what we can reasonably expect to accomplish.

As archivists we are ideally positioned to provide leadership to society in dealing with digital records. As the management guru Peter Drucker has famously noted, "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things."[3] Today, the "right things" include redefining our professional

2   The missionary nature of the early archival role was articulated in a background paper prepared for the 2014 Canadian Archives Summit (an event discussed later in this article) and posted on the Association of Canadian Archivists' (ACA) website; see Marcel Caya and Marion Beyea, "The Evolution of the Archival Profession and System in Canada – L'évolution de la profession d'archiviste et du système d'archives au Canada," accessed 6 February 2016, http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Advocacy_attachments/beyea-caya.paper_.pdf. The idea of the archivist as missionary was both a strength and a weakness in the formative stage of Canadian archival development: as the Commission on Canadian Studies noted in its 1975 report (commonly known as the Symons Report), Canadian archival institutions were to be commended for doing a "remarkable job" of collecting historical resources, but the sometimes idiosyncratic nature of archival service had to be acknowledged. As the commission noted, collecting priorities were sometimes based on "the personal interests of some archives personnel and were not always successfully pursued following their departure," resulting in "often haphazard" holdings. See T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa, ON: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975), 69–70.

3   Peter Drucker, the author of 39 books on business and management, made this statement over and over again; as one of his biographers, Jeffrey A. Krames, wrote, Drucker "repeated this riff throughout his career." See Jeffrey A. Krames, *Inside Drucker's Brain* (New York: Penguin Portfolio, 2008), 127. A comprehensive consolidation of his key theories can be found in Peter F. Drucker, *The Essential Drucker: Selections from the Management Works of Peter F. Drucker* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).

and institutional roles and responsibilities; working to ensure that society fully understands the dangers and possibilities of the digital environment, especially regarding accountability; and providing solutions to support the continued preservation of and access to society's documentary heritage in the digital age.

In archival consultant Laura Millar's prescient article "Coming Up with Plan B: Considering the Future of Canadian Archives," published in *Archivaria* 77 in 2014 (and for which she received the prestigious Association of Canadian Archivists' W. Kaye Lamb Award), she argues that the digital revolution requires a fundamental change in the orientation of archivists and archival work. She maintains that we must evolve from the custodial, linear model – progressing from identification to acquisition to preservation and then to access – and instead "confront the reality that total archives, and an all-encompassing, post-creation, custodial archival system, will no longer serve society's needs in the twenty-first century." A broader view is necessary, she advises, arguing that "the imperative for archivists today is not to save archival institutions but to find sustainable and effective ways to preserve and protect society's documentary memory."[4]

Millar contends that archivists must focus more on records created today for use today and into the future, and not just on archives – that is, records created in the past and acquired and preserved for present and future use. Archivists should evolve from being "cowboys" who do everything on their own to being team players, working with other information specialists as well as with records creators and users. The essence of her argument, I believe, is that good records make good archives, and in the digital age the act of making good records is problematic. For this reason, I agree with her claim that "for at least the next decade, archivists must focus not primarily on analog archives management but on helping society understand the importance of protecting born-digital records."[5]

The key of course is "helping society." What is the best way to do that, and where do we go from here? Recent events in the Canadian archival landscape, including the loss and then repurposing of Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) funding for its National Archival Development Program (NADP), the apparent collapse of the Pan-Canadian Documentary Heritage Network (PCDHN), and fundamental changes at Library and Archives Canada (LAC), suggest that the archival community as a collective is struggling to remain relevant.[6]

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4    Laura Millar, "Coming Up with Plan B: Considering the Future of Canadian Archives," *Archivaria* 77 (Spring 2014): 117.
5    Ibid., 118.
6    For context about the loss of CCA funding and changes at LAC, see Millar, "Coming Up with Plan B," esp. 104–6. The ACA withdrew its support for the PCDHN in May 2012. While Library and Archives Canada (LAC) identified the PCDHN as a component of its legislated duty to protect Canada's documentary heritage in its 2014 *Stewardship Policy*

In response to these events, particularly the loss of NADP funding, a conference was convened in Toronto in January 2014, entitled Canadian Archives Summit: Towards a New Blueprint for Canada's Recorded Memory.[7] The assembly was intended to serve as "the beginning of a strategic re-envisioning process for the Canadian archival community." Among the participants "drawn from various sectors and regions" were prominent archivists, genealogists, historians, and other academics.

Subsequently, a working group was established to develop a consultation paper based largely on the inputs from the summit. The authors, who included representatives of the Archives Association of Quebec (AAQ), the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA), LAC, CCA, and the Council of Provincial and Territorial Archivists (CPTA), issued *Canada's Archives: A Blueprint and Areas of Focus for 2015–2025* in September 2015. The report, circulated to the Canadian archival community for review, presented a strategy to guide the Canadian archival system over a 10-year period.[8] The vision statement for this strategy reads in part:

By working together in a coordinated, collaborative and inclusive manner, and by engaging communities who share our concern about records and archives, members of the Canadian Archival System strive to ensure open access to society's analogue and digital records to support accountability, transparency, and the effective functioning of democracy; as well as the development of meaningful personal and collective identities.[9]

In reviewing the document, older members of the profession like myself (who served in various capacities within a territorial archival institution for over 25 years) may be forgiven for having a sense of déjà vu. The vision of a national archival system, as articulated in the 2015 report, is reminiscent of sentiments expressed even before the CCA was created three decades ago. Many of the areas identified in the new strategic plan as being central to collaborative

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*Framework*, the initiative has not been actively promoted since; see LAC, About Us: Strategic Policy Suites, *Stewardship Policy Framework*," 9 September 2014, http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/about-us/policy/Documents/stewardship-policy-framework.pdf. The ACA's letter to LAC on the matter can be found on its website; see ACA, Advocacy: Submissions and Letters, "Loryl MacDonald, President, Association of Canadian Archivists, to Mr. Fabio Onesi, Director General, Library and Archives Canada, Re: the Pan Canadian Documentary Heritage Network Forum," 18 December 2012, http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Advocacy_attachments/pcdhn_forum-lac_may-12-web.pdf.

7   An overview of the summit, and the background papers and other resources, can be found on the ACA's website; see ACA, Advocacy, Canadian Archives Summit, accessed 13 February 2016, http://archivists.ca/content/canadian-archives-summit.

8   Canadian Archival System Working Group, *Canada's Archives – A New Blueprint* (Ottawa. ON: Canadian Council of Archives, 2015), accessed 6 February 2016, http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/CAS_CanadasArchives_EN.pdf.

9   Ibid., 5.

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action – such as acquisition, conservation, and access – are remarkably similar to those imagined by the founders of the CCA in the 1980s.

At one time, the CCA (established in 1985) had an acquisition committee, a conservation committee, a standards committee, and a committee devoted to raising funds from sources other than the federal government. The CCA met success with some central initiatives, including the dissemination of *Rules for Archival Description* (originally developed by the Bureau of Canadian Archivists and produced and maintained in co-operation with the CCA), as well as the subsequent development of the Archives Canada database to hold standardized archival descriptions, and the publication of a series of guidance materials on archival conservation and acquisition. But the majority of collaborative initiatives envisioned for the CCA 30 years ago have gradually faded away, despite the efforts of all.[10]

Although many CCA proposals were not successful, or not as successful as the archival community expected them to be, the current strategy, articulated in the 2015 blueprint, does not provide a new approach. More troublesome is the fact there does not seem to have been any analysis of why tasks such as the development of a national conservation strategy or a national acquisition strategy, held up as key goals 30 years ago, are still outstanding.

Furthermore, the new strategy does not include an examination of the very notion of, or basic assumptions underlying, a Canadian archival system. What is the "Canadian archival system" and why should we hold it up as our archival ideal? If the new strategy is seen as representing the consensus of the archival community, it seems all agree change is needed. But missing from the current conversation is the idea that the Canadian archival system as envisioned in 1985, and as affirmed by the proponents of the current vision, may in fact be fundamentally flawed.

The original vision of the CCA was that it would be the cornerstone holding together the archival community, by guiding and coordinating the work of archival institutions across Canada. The CCA would work with professional archival associations – the ACA and AAQ – to provide a framework for

10  Richard Dancy outlines the origins and history of *Rules for Archival Description* in "*RAD* Past, Present, and Future," *Archivaria* 74 (Fall 2012): 7–41. For a brief introduction to ArchivesCanada.ca, see "About Us," accessed 13 February 2016, http://www.archivescanada .ca/AboutUs. The history of the CCA has yet to be written, but a useful high-level overview of its origins can be found in one of the background papers prepared for the 2014 Canadian Archives Summit and available on the ACA website; see Lara Wilson, "The Canadian Archival System Today: An Analysis," accessed 13 February 2016, http://archivists.ca/sites/ default/files/Attachments/Advocacy_attachments/larawilsonsummit.pdf. Background on the evolution of the ArchivesCanada.ca website, when it was known as CAIN, or the Canadian Archival Information Network, can also be found in Laura Millar, *Seeking Our Critical Vision: Speculations on the Past, Present, and Future of CAIN* (Ottawa, ON: Association of Canadian Archivists, 2003), accessed 13 February 2016, http://www.archivists.ca/sites/ default/files/Attachments/Communications_attachments/misc/Web_Pub_3_Future_of _CAIN_LMillar.pdf.

archival activities and thereby create an integrated and coordinated "archival system." According to its constitution and bylaws, the central goal of the CCA, as the body ostensibly overseeing this archival system, is

to preserve and provide access to Canadian documentary heritage by improving the administration, effectiveness and efficiency of the archival system.[11]

In order to support this outcome, the CCA defines its mandate as follows:

to coordinate, provide leadership and foster development and cooperation within the Canadian archival system by assisting and supporting member archival organizations through programs and services that benefit Canadians.[12]

According to the constitution and bylaws, participants in the archival system include

individual archives, provincial and territorial councils of archives or their equivalent organizations and professional associations, dedicated to the development of the archival profession and to the advancement of the discipline and technology of archival science, and the Canadian Council of Archives.[13]

It is my contention that the Canadian archival system as described is incapable of properly addressing the stated goal of the CCA: "to preserve and provide access to the documentary heritage of Canada." This assertion is based on my belief that the Canadian archival system, comprising as it does primarily archival institutions, with some input from archival practitioners, is a "closed system."

In the language of business systems and organizational management, "open systems" are those that support interaction with an outside environment, whereas "closed systems" are inward looking, with little external interaction. The strength of an effective open system is that it provides the central players with regular feedback, allowing them to gauge how well they are meeting stakeholder expectations and what they could do to improve. An open system also informs stakeholders of issues related to the matter in hand, in this case archives and records. A closed system, on the other hand, receives few or no external inputs and so is not equipped to react to and deal with changes, thus preventing it from remaining relevant to stakeholders.[14]

11  Canadian Council of Archives, *Constitution and By-laws*, "Mandate," accessed 16 September 2016, http://archivescanada.ca/CCAConstitutionandBy-laws#Anchor-3.
12  Ibid.
13  Ibid., "Canadian Archival System."
14  The human body is an example of an open system: the body takes in and expels oxygen and nutrients in order to maintain life and health. A Thermos full of hot liquid is a closed system; nothing can penetrate the container as long as it remains sealed. The concept of

The Canadian archival system, as articulated by the CCA, primarily comprises institutions, with some input from the archival profession through the ACA and AAQ. There is no mechanism to support formal, frequent, continued, and (perhaps most importantly) informed input from or engagement with records creators or records users. Thus, the CCA is a classic "closed system." Like a two-legged stool, the CCA cannot stand up without the third leg: the public on whose behalf we acquire, preserve, and make available documentary resources. The CCA's orientation toward archival institutions, and the absence of public interaction, combine to prevent the Canadian archival system from responding appropriately to changes in societal needs and priorities.

The question of how to open up this closed system by engaging the public more fully will be addressed later. But first it is important to examine another fundamental weakness in the CCA's structure and strategy. There is an inherent belief in the archival community that there is much to gain when archival institutions co-operate with each other. As a result, calls for institutional co-operation have become motherhood statements, and the CCA relies almost exclusively on inputs from archival institutions to support collaborative, co-operative ventures. Given the fundamental belief that co-operation is "good and right," it is difficult to argue against the value of a co-operative approach to anything. But as outlined below, in reality archival institutions are not able to co-operate at the level necessary to achieve the results intended by the CCA's founders.

There are in Canada, as anywhere else in the world, a wide variety of types of archival institutions: provincial/territorial, municipal, university, corporate, and museum, to name a few. Stakeholder groups have created every archival entity in the country for vastly different reasons. The raison d'être of the Archives of Manitoba is not the same as that of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto. The Mennonite Archives of Ontario exists for reasons very different from those of the Inuvialuit Social Development Program.

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open versus closed systems has been a subject of great interest to writers on topics related to business and organizational management. For a succinct explanation of the idea of open and closed systems, see *Encyclopedia of Management*, "Open and Closed Systems," accessed 13 February 2016, http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Ob-Or/Open-and-Closed-Systems.html. A more in-depth analysis of systems theory can be found in W. Richard Scott and Gerald F. Davis, *Organizations and Organizing: Rational, Natural and Open Systems Perspectives* (New York: Taylor & Frances, 2015). Victoria Lemieux touches on concepts of organizational configuration and systems theory, specifically in relation to archival appraisal, in "Applying Mintzberg's Theories on Organizational Configuration to Archival Appraisal," *Archivaria* 46 (Fall 1998): 32–85. However, there has been little analysis in the archival literature of the concept of "systems," particularly regarding their specific application to archival enterprise. The topic, while beyond the scope of this article, is worthy of further exploration.

Just as each archival institution is created for a specific purpose, each faces different problems requiring unique solutions. Each must deal with its own ever-changing environment, its own priorities for funding, staffing, collections development, conservation, and so on. A corporate archival institution will normally prioritize records and archives services that meet the legal requirements associated with recordkeeping and support the sponsor institution's business needs. A historical society archives, on the other hand, is primarily focused on collecting material with informational and historical value to its community.

Both institutions may be concerned with providing access to their holdings, but each will interpret "access" in dramatically different ways: a corporate archive with legal and administrative requirements in mind, and a community archive with a focus on fostering community identity. As a result, each institution will develop access systems suitable for their own needs. To ask these disparate institutions to work together on an initiative such as the development of common, nationwide access strategies for archival repositories is to ask them to step away from their own institutional responsibilities and focus instead on the creation of tools that do not necessarily address their own requirements. They would each need to divert resources and time from their priorities, and despite the goodwill of the individual participants, it would be difficult to justify the time and expense to a sponsor agency.

Despite this fundamental weakness in the notion of institutional collaboration, Canadian archivists have been looking for ways to increase cooperation for years. In 1980, in the wake of the publication in 1975 of the report of the Commission on Canadian Studies (the Symons Commission) – which documented the sorry state of our documentary heritage – the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) commissioned a Consultative Group on Canadian Archives to address weaknesses in Canadian archives and offer suggestions for action. Among the recommendations: the formation of coordinated provincial archival networks, the creation of a Canadian Association of Archives, and an increase in federal funding for archival development, to be administered through the Public Archives of Canada.[15]

To move these initiatives forward, a conference was held in Regina in 1982, bringing together archivists, historians, genealogists, and government officials, including representatives of SSHRC. The importance of the meeting, called "Planning for Canadian Archives," was highlighted in the opening remarks of Wilfred Smith, the Dominion Archivist, who said that the focus

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15  Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, *Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Supply and Services Canada, 1980), esp. 109–10. This report is commonly referred to as the Wilson Report, after the chair, Ian Wilson.

of the conference "should be on the identification of common goals and of cooperative arrangements which would permit the implementation of archival development activities."[16]

Reflecting on the recently published report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (known as the Applebaum-Hébert Report), Smith noted that the findings "seemed to show that archivists have not agreed on what is needed, or on the means to achieve results, thereby surely weakening the position of archives as compared to the clearer objectives of libraries, museums, the performing arts and so on." Smith also remarked that provincial and federal ministers of culture, who had just met in Regina in May 1982, announced that "they are prepared to give a high priority to archives but that archivists were not then in a position to clearly indicate either their needs or the best channels for desired support."[17]

Coming on top of the Symons Report and the Wilson Report, Smith's statements were yet another clear call for increased archival co-operation. However, one of the presentations, by Christine Ardern, at the time the archivist for the Salvation Army in Canada, addressed straight on the fundamental difficulty of institutional co-operation. She questioned how effective inter-institutional co-operation could actually be and whether it was necessary or beneficial.

Speaking as a corporate archivist, Ardern emphasized her belief that any co-operative action had to support individual archival institutions; otherwise institutional support might well be difficult to secure. As she said, "I am only one person within my institution. If my administration feels that this [network] is not a viable solution, my job will be to lobby to try to achieve this end." But, as she concluded, "The bottom line, I feel is … that if we are not all in agreement that our institutions will benefit from networking, no amount of pushing will make the concept work."[18]

Despite Ardern's concerns, the meeting ended with a series of resolutions that advanced the idea of an "archival system." The first resolution was that "each province [should] form a coordinated network to establish common priorities and to develop services, facilities and programs of benefit to all." Instead of the Canadian Association of Archives, as recommended by the Wilson Report, the Bureau of Canadian Archivists was identified as the "archival advisory committee" that would assess priorities, recommend poli-

16  Wilfred Smith, "Opening Remarks," in *Planning for Canadian Archives/Pour un développement planifié des archives canadiennes*, ed. Marion Beyea and Marcel Caya (Ottawa, ON: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 1983), xxiii.

17  Ibid. See also Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, *Report* and *Summary of Briefs and Hearings* (Ottawa, ON: Department of Communications, 1982).

18  Christine Ardern, "The Current State of Archival Structures," in *Planning for Canadian Archives/Pour un développement planifié des archives canadiennes*, ed. Marion Beyea and Marcel Caya (Ottawa, ON: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 1983), 91–92.

cies, and establish funding mechanisms.[19] In the end, the bureau's role in these initiatives was taken over by the Canadian Council of Archives, established in 1985.

Ardern's argument – that archivists had to demonstrate to their sponsor institutions that there would be direct benefits from collaboration before they would obtain approval to join in cross-institutional activities – highlights the essential challenge of inter-institutional co-operation: there is little intrinsic benefit for any one archival institution. Each agency has a job to do, be it managing corporate archives for legal purposes, collecting historical archives for community purposes, or other. To achieve these results, each is given its own mandate, and each uses that mandate as the foundation on which it builds all its policies, procedures, strategies, and actions.

The resources available to each archival institution are completely dependent on (1) the clear articulation of mandate, needs, and priorities; and (2) the acceptance by the sponsoring institution that those needs and priorities merit support. One archival institution cannot reasonably use its own resources – allocated to achieve its own mandate – to support the needs and priorities of another completely separate institution. Ultimately, any attempt to co-operate across institutions requires that all participating institutions draw on their own resources. Realistically, few institutions can afford the largesse required to support activities not intended for purely internal purposes. This means, in the end, that meaningful, sustained inter-institutional co-operation will be minimal at best.

Another problem with archival co-operation, and one of the reasons the CCA has not found success with several attempts at inter-institutional collaboration, is that many co-operative initiatives have been developed to address an underlying problem the archival system simply cannot solve. If an archival institution does not receive the financial support it needs from its parent organization to do its own mandated job or if it does not effectively allocate the resources it does receive, the wider archival community cannot become responsible for filling that gap in service. This problem is outside of the remit of a Canadian archival system and beyond the scope of federal funding programs. It must be solved at the institutional level.

Ultimately, the fate of individual archival collections is *not* a societal problem. It is up to individual institutions to decide if they want or need an archival facility and, if so, to provide adequate support. What *is* a societal problem, however, is the fate of the Canadian archival record. If the ultimate goal of the Canadian archival system is to support the preservation of Canada's documentary heritage, then every effort must be focused on achieving that goal. And

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19  Marion Beyea and Marcel Caya, eds., *Planning for Canadian Archives/Pour un développement planifié des archives canadiennes* (Ottawa, ON: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 1983), 117.

herein, as suggested earlier, lies the real weakness with the CCA. The CCA is attempting, largely by itself, to serve as "the archival system," without opening up this system to other critical stakeholders.

As cited earlier, the ultimate goal of the CCA – "to preserve and provide access to Canadian documentary heritage by improving the administration, effectiveness and efficiency of the archival system" – accurately reflects what it should strive for and the reason it was funded: to support the preservation of and access to the archival record of all of Canada. But the CCA's mandate and organizational structure are in conflict with that goal. As previously stated, the CCA's mandate is

to coordinate, provide leadership and foster development and cooperation within the Canadian archival system by assisting and supporting member archival organizations through programs and services that benefit Canadians.

To accomplish this mandate, the CCA has developed an organizational structure oriented almost exclusively toward archival institutions, with only limited participation by professional associations and virtually no direct input from records creators or users. The CCA comprises provincial and territorial councils, each administered by elected representatives of archival institutions. One person from each council is selected to represent that jurisdiction on the CCA General Assembly. The General Assembly then elects a board of directors to carry out the executive functions of the CCA. The CCA's annual budget and major programs are approved by this General Assembly.[20]

Given this organizational structure, decisions about the direction of the CCA are made by representatives who, while they may well have the best interests of the archival record at heart, hold their positions because of their affiliation with individual archival institutions. This structure would be suitable if the purpose of the CCA were to make decisions related to the concerns of individual archival institutions. But the mandate of the CCA is much broader: it is to "provide leadership and foster development and cooperation," with the goal of preserving and providing access to Canadian documentary heritage.

20  The organizational structure and operations of the CCA are outlined in the CCA constitution and bylaws. Some might argue that archival professions are well represented on the CCA, in part because many archival councils and provincial-level archival associations have merged over the last decades. These mergers, which are quite problematic for reasons beyond the scope of this article, do mean that archival practitioners "sit at the table" of the CCA General Assembly, but they do so as members of councils intended to represent and support institutions. As section 5.1.1 of the CCA constitution outlines, the Class A voting members of the CCA include 22 members; of those, one member represents the ACA and one the AAQ. There is no seat for representatives of records creators or records users. See CCA, *CCA – Constitution and By-laws*, accessed 1 September 2016, http://archivescanada .ca/CCAConstitutionandBy-laws.

Any democratic organization has to serve its members' needs first and foremost. Otherwise, the members simply will not participate. As Ardern pointed out in 1982, there is a danger with collaborative archival initiatives: if institutional masters do not see those initiatives as in their own interest, they will not support them. As much as individual archivists may wish to support collective actions such as those envisioned by the architects of the CCA, those archivists must ultimately take direction from their sponsors, who, as argued earlier, require a strict focus on their own institutional priorities.

This gulf between what the archival "system" needs and what the individual members of the CCA need for their own institutions first appeared even before the formation of the CCA in 1985. In 1983, SSHRC struck a committee to follow up on the findings of the 1980 Wilson Report, the 1982 Applebaum-Hébert Report, and the 1982 Planning for Canadian Archives conference. In its 1984 report, this committee, made up of prominent archivists from across the country under the chairmanship of Ian Wilson, recommended the formation of the body that was to become the CCA. But the committee also emphasized the need for public funds to support specifically institutional problems, particularly backlog reduction. Participation in national initiatives would have to wait until institutional backlogs had been addressed. As the committee argued, a new grant program

would not be intended to start new archives, nor to supplant the responsibility of individual and institutional archives in funding the basic operation of archives. Instead, the program would assist Canadian archives in the "catching-up" required to responsibly carry out their duties of preserving Canada's documentary heritage to help them to meet new challenges.[21]

As a result of this pressure to address institutional challenges, one of the first funding programs offered by the CCA supported backlog reduction. The program, later referred to as the control of holdings program, continued to operate, absorbing an ever-larger percentage of federal funds, until LAC discontinued funding entirely in 2011.[22]

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21  Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Advisory Committee on Archives, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Archives* (Ottawa, ON: SSHRC, 1984), 76.
22  In 2015, LAC announced a new archival funding program focused on two primary outcomes: increased access to and awareness of Canadian archival institutions and holdings; and increased capacity within and across archival institutions. While the funding does not specifically support backlog reduction, it is possible that institutions may use the funds to process archives in order to make them available for digitization or other public use. For the funding guidelines, see LAC, Services and Programs: Documentary Heritage Communities Program (DHCP), "Guidelines 2016–17," accessed 13 February 2016, http://www.bac-lac .gc.ca/eng/services/documentary-heritage-communities-program/Pages/guidelines.aspx#t4a.

LAC was well aware of the unlikelihood that archival institutions would ever "catch up" with their backlog. In its 2004 audit of the backlog reduction and control of holdings programs, LAC noted that the funding had allowed for "a great deal of archival material to be processed and described." But the audit also noted the following:

It is very difficult, however, to determine the achievement of this objective for a number of reasons: the extent of the original backlog was unknown; archival holdings are continually growing; and the standards for describing holdings have changed substantially since the introduction of the CCA programs … while participants surveyed for this study were highly positive regarding the role of the Control of Holdings Program in reducing their backlog (92% stated that the funding played a very important role), 97% of the same group indicated that they currently have a backlog, and of these, 61% said that this backlog was large or very large.[23]

As the LAC evaluators concluded,

the original purpose of reducing the backlog of undocumented archival materials has largely been achieved. However, the ongoing acquisition of materials, together with changes in the standards of description and the nature of client demands, mean that many institutions continue to struggle with a backlog. Consideration should be given to whether funding archives to process on-going backlogs is an effective way to support the archival community given the various competing priorities.[24]

The emphasis on backlog reduction was, in effect, using grant funds to pay archival institutions to manage archives they should rightly have been able to process using their own money. While the backlog reduction program did not support the management of purely institutional records, it did support the care of archives that the institution had chosen to collect, using funds received from its sponsor agency for that purpose. Should an archival repository be able to collect archival materials if it cannot provide the resources to accomplish its primary function – to process and manage those records – without turning to grant funds for assistance?

Another example of the institutional orientation of the CCA can be seen in the story of the development of a national acquisition strategy, one of the oft-stated priorities of the CCA in the early years. The strategy was intended to create a framework to ensure, as much as possible, that a full record of the development of Canada was acquired, preserved, and made accessible by archival institutions all across the country. In 1988, a committee was struck,

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23  LAC, Archived – About Us, Audits and Evaluations, *Evaluation of the Grants and Contributions Program, Final Report* (Ottawa, ON: Library and Archives Canada, 2004), section 2.2.1, accessed 13 February 2016, https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/audits -evaluations/012014-202-e.html.
24  Ibid., section 3.0.

with me as chair, to develop this national strategy. Among other outcomes, the committee produced a report entitled *Building a National Acquisition Strategy*.[25] This report recommended a strategy grounded on the development of acquisition networks across the country. Within these networks, institutions with similar mandates would co-operate on acquisition activities. For instance, institutions with an interest in literary archives would liaise with similar institutions; repositories focusing on sports or politics or theatre would work with comparable repositories; and so on. The goal was to minimize conflict while supporting the preservation of the best possible record of Canadian activities. The report was released as part of a CCA priorities and planning conference in 1994, but in the end the proposed acquisition strategy was not supported, and the CCA executive abolished the committee in 1995.

I articulated my thoughts on the demise of this strategy in an article in the *ACA Newsletter* in 1995, and I believe the challenges identified then are similar to those I see for the CCA today.[26] Because the vast majority of archival repositories in this country are institutionally based, and because they take their direction from their sponsor institution, the ability of these repositories to participate in collective initiatives, particularly in the area of acquisition, is constrained. The first priority of any archival institution must be its own organization, not the wider archival community or Canadian society. Asking archival institutions to collaborate on an acquisition strategy or similar cross-institutional initiative would require them to stretch beyond their institutional responsibilities and perhaps beyond their existing archival mandate.

There are legitimate drivers for revising a mandate, such as to address changes in institutional operations, new or different research priorities, or expanded scholarly or research needs. But an archival institution cannot by itself change its acquisition priorities or other archival responsibilities without justifying the change to the holders of the purse strings, which means tying those changes to real institutional needs.

The national acquisition strategy proposed in 1995 demanded that the archival community reach beyond institutional boundaries to acquire and preserve archives not covered by existing acquisition mandates: neglected or "orphaned" records, as it were. The strategy was based on the unquestioned assumption – at the heart of the CCA's vision – that the preservation of Canada's documentary record should be the concern of the archival community. The strategy also assumed that sponsoring agencies would understand and accept the obligations of archival institutions to the CCA and to an "archival

25 CCA Acquisition Committee, *Building a National Acquisition Strategy* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Council of Archives, 1996).
26 D. R. Valpy, "The Canadian Council of Archives and Archival Acquisition," *ACA Bulletin* 20, no. 1 (November 1995): 10.

system" and would therefore be willing to contribute to collaborative, co-operative programs that do not in fact help them address their immediate institutional problems.[27]

As archivists, we care deeply about the fate of the archival record. We want to ensure it is preserved and available, for today and for posterity. But just as archival institutions must answer to their political masters, we as archival professionals cannot take personal responsibility for preserving Canada's documentary heritage. Both archival practitioners and archival institutions provide a service, just as architects and architectural firms provide a service. Architects do not decide which buildings should be designed and built; society does. The same is true for archivists. Archivists do not establish archival mandates, nor do they create archival institutions; they work in them. Archives exist because the people who create records, and the people who use those records, want those institutions to exist. Only records creators and records users can act to create archival institutions, after which they can, and should, engage the services of archivists to manage operations in order to fulfill the mandate envisioned by the creators of those institutions. The days of archival missionaries are long past.

Much as we may wish otherwise, archivists cannot expect an administration responsible for sponsoring its own archival operation to take responsibility for the records of another organization if that latter agency has decided not to invest in the care of its own archives. All the goodwill in the world will not change the reality that resources are finite, existing mandates and priorities must be achieved, and deviations from institutional priorities justified or avoided. Archivist Michael Swift identified this problem as early as 1985, when he wrote, "It is difficult in the best of times to convince administrators and government officials that resources should be spent on cultural activities. It is doubly difficult to do so if they know, or even suspect, that archivists are not managing effectively resources they now have."[28]

What does this reality mean for the CCA? Despite the best intentions of its founders, the CCA has become an institution whose success is measured by how effective it is in helping members achieve their own institutional goals, not by its success in supporting the less tangible goal of preserving Canada's

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27   It is interesting to note that in June 2016 the members of the National Provincial and Territorial Archivists Conference (NPTAC) put forth a "Statement of Guiding Principles for Identifying 'Best-Fit' Repositories for Private-Sector Archival Records." The initiative confirms that federal, provincial, and territorial archival institutions "will work collaboratively" with all members of the Canadian archival community. As positive as this action is, it still does not address gaps in the historical record or propose any remedial action. See LAC, News, "New Coordinated Approach to Acquiring Private Archives Proposed by the National, Provincial and Territorial Archivists Conference," 2 June 2016, http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/news/Pages/2016/approach-collaborative-acquisition.aspx.

28   Michael Swift, "Management Techniques and Technical Resources in the Archives of the 1980s," *Archivaria* 20 (Summer 1985): 95.

documentary heritage. This is why the backlog reduction program became so entrenched, while collaborative initiatives such as the development of shared acquisition, conservation, or access strategies fell by the wayside. The central problem is that the CCA's organizational structure is at odds with its ultimate goal. Structure trumped mission. The tension is not sustainable, and a different approach is required.

Given the above, how can the archival community support the goal of ensuring the preservation of Canada's documentary record? Archival institutions and archival professionals can and should be part of an effective Canadian system, but they are not the *sum total* of an effective, open archival system. What is absent is representation by and input from two critical stakeholder communities: records creators and records users.

The CCA represents existing archival institutions in Canada. The ACA and the AAQ represent Canadian archivists as professionals. But who speaks exclusively on behalf the Canadian documentary record? The system as constructed does not actively solicit input from – and therefore benefit from the ideas, needs, and desires of – records creators and records users, who are the ultimate stakeholders for archival service. What we need to do as an archival community is make a deliberate effort to engage these critical stakeholders in the work of preserving and making available Canada's documentary heritage.

This need to engage with records creators and records users is even more important as we wrestle with the challenge of preserving digital records, which require much more interventionist attention than analog materials. Paper records may stay safe on a shelf for decades, until resources are available to process them. Digital records require immediate attention to ensure preservation. We cannot simply allow digital holdings to sit in a backlog and become "old enough" to warrant arrangement, description, and preservation. If we – as professionals or as representatives of our archival institutions – cannot convince records creators, users, and institutional sponsors of the need to pay for records and archives management now, there will be no holdings in a backlog a decade from now.

As Millar noted, the major challenge going forward is the creation and preservation of good records in a digital world. As professionals, we can address issues related to training, education, standards, or policies, and we can develop strategies to support digital records care. As representatives of archival institutions, we can lobby for the resources needed to protect and preserve digital records and archives. But the archival profession, and archival institutions, cannot by themselves ensure the overall well-being of Canada's documentary heritage.

As the old adage teaches us, anyone can lead a horse to water, and anyone can tell the horse that it should drink, or even what it should drink and how it should drink. But the impulse to drink must come from the horse. Equally,

archivists can tell society that they should create and keep good records, and how to do that, and we can provide the tools to support that work. But the impulse to ensure that good records are created, managed, and made available rests with records creators and records users, not with archivists or with archival institutions. How do we convince this horse to drink? How do we make records creators and records users see how critically important it is to protect digital records today, so that Canada's documentary evidence is available for today and for a century from now?

There is in the business management literature a difference between "selling" and "marketing." Selling is developing a product or service and then trying to convince people or institutions that they want your product. Marketing, on the other hand, is identifying a demand or requirement and having those with the need or requirement come to you for the solution. It is a matter of finding the message and language that your stakeholders will understand and respond to, for everyone's benefit. To quote Drucker again, "The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous."[29] Selling is considered "pushing." Marketing is about "pulling": helping your customers figure out what they need and then helping them find an appropriate source – a company, computer program, a professional – to provide the solution.[30]

To achieve "pull" in archival service, it is incumbent on the archival community to highlight the importance of good records management in a much more meaningful way than has been the case thus far. Rather than *selling* archival institutions (which has implicitly been the focus of the CCA's work for three decades), the archival community needs to *market* the value of good records and good archives, a job best done with the help of the stakeholders who benefit most: records creators and users. Archivists have to do more than just try to convince people that we are useful. We have to *become* useful with the real problems of records and information management in the 21st century. To do this, we need to reach beyond our professional and institutional boundaries and work directly with the public, whose interests we serve.

The need for meaningful involvement from stakeholders, many of whom may not realize they *are* stakeholders, has been noted by two recent studies of the Canadian archival system, both completed by agencies outside the archival community. In 2014, the Royal Society of Canada published *The Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory.* As part of its recommendations, the expert panel of contributors suggested that the CCA "expand its

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29   Drucker, *The Essential Drucker,* 315.
30   American entrepreneur and professor of business administration Robert Donnelly explains the concepts of selling and marketing in various publications. See, for example, his summary "Marketing vs. Selling – What's the Difference?" *Chief Executive,* 3 April 2007, http://chiefexecutive.net/marketing-vs-selling-whats-the-difference/.

membership to include representation of major stakeholders in the public and private sectors engaged in the preservation of and access to Canada's documentary heritage."[31]

The second study was conducted by the Expert Panel on Memory Institutions and the Digital Revolution, a body created by the Council of Canadian Academies. In its report, issued in February 2015, the authors stated, "The digital world has the potential to fundamentally change the relationship between memory institutions and people for the better. The integration of a participatory culture into the daily operations of memory institutions will ensure that they establish a sustainable, authentic relationship with the public."[32]

Of course, the archival community has always said it would involve records creators and users in the Canadian archival system, most recently in the 2015 "blueprint," which states,

All stakeholders of archives must be actively engaged in the archival endeavour, and with each another. They must foster open, generative and flexible relationships, and must remain open to new approaches. By developing common strategies to engage partners and collaborators in archives work, archives will be better positioned to respond to the rapid and ongoing changes in the digital environment.[33]

The above sentiments are laudatory but derivative. Almost without exception, the importance of consulting with user groups and creators has been included in any document concerning the future of the archival community, but there has been a remarkable absence of action. The 1982 Planning for Archives conference, for instance, included several representatives of user groups, from historians to genealogists to federal civil servants. Similarly, when the CCA was first created, organizations such as the Canadian Historical Society and SSHRC were invited to the annual General Assembly meetings as observers. For a few years, members of those groups actually attended the meetings. Over time, though, their attendance became sporadic, with the attendant loss of potentially valuable stakeholder input.

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31  The panel comprised Patricia Demers (chair), Guylaine Beaudry, Pamela Bjornson, Michael Carroll, Carol Couture, Charlotte Gray, Judith Hare, Ernie Ingles, Eric Ketelaar, Gerald McMaster, and Ken Roberts; see Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel, *The Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory: A Report of the Royal Society of Canada's Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives* (Ottawa, ON: Royal Society of Canada, 2014), 13, accessed 1 September 2016, http://www.rsc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/L%26A_Report_EN_FINAL_Web.pdf.

32  Council of Canadian Academies Expert Panel on Memory Institutions and the Digital Revolution, *Leading in the Digital World: Opportunities for Canada's Memory Institutions* (Ottawa, ON: Council of Canadian Academies, 2015), xiii, accessed 1 September 2016, http://www.scienceadvice.ca/en/assessments/completed/memory-institutions.aspx.

33  Canadian Archival System Working Group, *Canada's Archives*, 6.

One could argue that encouraging records creators and users to attend meetings focused on the operational minutiae of archival management would accomplish little. The public does not need to know how archivists administer programs, or arrange and describe holdings, any more than the public needs to know how architects design and construct buildings. But the public needs to care that accurate, authentic, and reliable records are created and that those records with enduring value are preserved and made publicly available, just as the public cares that buildings are well constructed, safe, and maintained so that they are stable and functional for as long as possible.

Archivists used to be missionaries, and we worked diligently to raise the profile of archival work. We would not be where we are today – with hundreds of archival repositories across Canada, with graduate archival education programs, or with an extensive network of professionals working to strengthen and standardize archival work – without passionate visionaries. But now we have become managers, responsible for the complex tasks associated with a myriad of records and archives duties, particularly to address the challenges of a digital world. Going forward, we can only be effective in an environment that values and creates good records. To help society create and keep good records, we need to look outside of our own "system." What the archival community needs to do now is to give stakeholders an effective voice so that they can participate in the preservation of the Canadian archival record.

How do we give society that voice? How do we engage the public in the archival conversation? I believe that the next step should be the creation of an independent entity, with the goal to promote, support, sustain, and expand Canada's documentary heritage wherever it is found. This organization must be a driver of change. It should focus on supporting and encouraging the creation and preservation of good records – the records Canada needs as evidence today and as part of our documentary heritage for tomorrow.

The entity, to which I refer as the Canadian Documentary Heritage Commission (CDHC), would not be a general advisory body but rather an agency that identifies problems and creates solutions. Because the problem is national and affects every field of endeavour in our national enterprise, the CDHC should be a Government of Canada initiative. The federal government is the only institution with the stature and resources to attract the leaders of other fields required to make the commission work. Issues addressed by the commission should be, for the most part, structural, i.e., legislative or policy changes, the development of guidelines, and increases in federal funding, to name just a few possible areas of change.

The sustainability of those changes would be a major concern. Therefore, any specific activities identified for the creation and protection of good records should not require the continued involvement of the commission. For that reason, this body may only need to exist for a five- to ten-year period, not indefinitely. Comparable examples might include agencies such as the Canada

Council for the Arts, which exists to foster and promote the arts and which is an ongoing entity, or Own the Podium, a non-profit organization established in 2006 to support Canadian athletes and which has been envisioned as a temporary agency lasting several years but not permanently. As an arm's-length agency of the federal government, the CDHC would operate within an effective governance structure; would have the responsibility, capacity, and requisite accountability to manage large projects of national scope; and would be provided with sufficient ongoing funding to engage and maintain staff who could coordinate decisions and implement actions.

A critical element in the success of the CDHC would be that its membership comprise representatives from *outside* the archival community: people in leadership positions from across the broad spectrum of Canadian society, who could represent the public's interest in accountability, transparency, and the documentary heritage of Canada. These leaders would focus on trying to solve societal problems related to the protection and management of Canada's *records*, not on addressing the internal problems of the archival community. Participants must be free of the specific operational concerns that are and must be the priority of archival professionals and archival institutions. A central tenet of, and value of, this entity would be to allow the user community to interact, on an equal footing, with professional and institutional archival associations as well as with others in the information management community.

The leaders of the CDHC would recognize the importance of creating good records, the value of preserving archives, and the threat that poor record-keeping poses both to individual organizations and to Canadian society. The commissioners in charge of this agency should be knowledgeable about a wide spectrum of issues, including accountability, rules of evidence and other legal principles, access to information, privacy, digital technologies, and copyright. Members should also be conversant with issues of social and cultural diversity and with the history of Canada. They should not only be experts in their own fields but also have sufficient standing within Canada to command respect, enhance the status of the organization, and provide strong and visionary leadership to their individual fields of endeavour and to the country as a whole.

Members of the Canadian archival community could be members, as long as they were not included to represent institutional or professional priorities, so that the broader goal of preserving the documentary record remains at the forefront of the commission's mandate. Such an organization – driven by stakeholders drawn from the public at large – could help to address questions related to the preservation of a balanced archival record, tackling issues such as the need for acquisition planning and the development of legal recordkeeping requirements such as the "duty to document," which have today become central to concerns about accountability and transparency in Canadian society.

The placement of this commission in the overall governance structure of the nation would have to be determined. For instance, it could be an arm's-length agency accountable to Parliament, to a particular ministry, or to the Librarian and Archivist of Canada. There is always a risk in establishing such an arm's-length organization: possible threats might include undue political interference from outside the commission or, within the commission, the pursuit of a specific political agenda divorced from the agency's original intent. However, such threats are inherent in any initiative, and the proposed commission is consistent with our system of government. A strong mission and mandate statement would help keep the commission on its intended course.

Regardless of organizational placement, the organization must have the resources to create real change. A solid financial base is vital to ensuring the active participation of record creators and users across the country. The key issue is the recognition on the part of federal government of the importance of creating authentic and reliable records. The challenges of digital records care, along with the growing importance of access to information and public demands for greater accountability, may well be creating the confluence of forces required to highlight the necessity and value of good records. To my knowledge, the financial and societal cost of poor recordkeeping has never been estimated, at least in Canada, but I suggest that any such figure would reinforce the need for action. A solid and stable budget would be required, but it would not have to be particularly large, as continuing large-scale funding programs are not envisioned. Money would be required for travel, for the commissioning of reports, and for developing the means of implementing recommendations. As noted, though, any solutions proposed by the commission by virtue of its mandate would ultimately have to be self-sustaining.

My suggestions below for specific initiatives are intended to help start the conversation. It would be up to the CDHC to identify problems associated with its mission and to develop projects and activities to address those problems. That said, I believe that some of the changes the commission would try to effect would, for the most part, support structural and systemic change. These include:

- developing a marketing strategy to inform relevant stakeholders and the wider public about the need for and challenges of creating and keeping good records
- investigating the requirements of proper recordkeeping for the purpose of accountability and improving the functioning of such necessities as access to information and privacy legislation
- working with universities, research institutes, and federal government agencies on the development of conservation strategies and priorities
- liaising with scholars, genealogists, lawyers, scientists, and other records users and records creators to identify gaps in the archival record and working with those stakeholders to develop the means to fill those gaps

- engaging with records creators, users, and institutions to develop acquisition strategies for records outside the collecting mandates of existing archival institutions

One outcome of CDHC initiatives might be the creation of new archival repositories or the expansion of the mandates of existing institutions. However, it would be incumbent on the commission to recognize that all archival institutions in Canada are businesses that operate according to their own frameworks for accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness. New archival programs would require new resources. But if lobbying for more funding were to come *from* records creators and users *to* records creators and users, decisions would be driven by, and seen to be driven by, public need, not institutional or professional desires.

I believe that the work carried out by the CDHC would reflect the spirit of attempts made by the CCA to influence the direction of archival service. The key difference is that the CDHC would be an agency consisting of records creators and users. As such, it would identify, support, and promote needs and priorities required for the creation and preservation of good records, based on public priorities, not the internal concerns of archival institutions or professionals, whose motivations might be perceived as too self-serving. Let the dog wag the tail, not the other way around.

There would not necessarily be a direct link between the commission and the ACA/AAQ and the CCA, but all three are still necessary, and the channels of communication between them should be open. There is no question that the ACA, AAQ, and CCA are vital not only to the archival community but also to the information management sector in general. But let us be clear, professional concerns are not identical to institutional concerns; in fact, the two may be in conflict. And professional and institutional concerns are not identical to societal needs.

As professional associations, the ACA and AAQ would continue to represent the interests of the archival profession. The CCA would focus its efforts on representing the interests of archival institutions. To serve as an institutional representative, the CCA would have to adjust its mission and the services it provides in order to support archival agencies across the country. In the future, the CCA might well become more and more dependent on membership fees for its resources, and it would need to address institutional priorities accordingly. As archival institutions grow, so too will the need for an association representing their particular interests. I believe this would be a valuable and productive change in the direction of the CCA.

I am not the first to propose such an entity. In "Coming Up with Plan B," Millar suggested the creation of a "public-facing" organization to lobby for

support for archival initiatives.[34] Canadian archival educator Tom Nesmith also offered a detailed proposal in his contribution to the Canadian Archives Summit and in a subsequent article published in *Archivaria* 80 in 2015, which was honoured with the Hugh Taylor Prize from the Association of Canadian Archivists in 2016.

In this article, Nesmith presents a persuasive argument for an "archival stage" in the history of knowledge. One of the points he makes is that the users of archival materials now include not just the traditional historical or genealogical researcher but also representatives of many other sectors of society, from educators, lawyers, and social and physical scientists to economists, geographers, and political activists of all descriptions.[35] In his presentation to the summit, entitled "The Missing Piece: Towards New Partnerships with Users of Archives," Nesmith introduced this thesis about the importance of archives to a wide range of research, and also noted that most of this new and unexpected interest is centred on analog archival holdings. According to Nesmith, the welcome expansion of potential user groups is threatened, however, because our sponsors do not recognize the value of good digital records "despite the countless urgings, warnings, and proposals for action to do so by archivists." The result, Nesmith notes, is that "archival institutions are not yet able to manage born-digital records effectively."

Nesmith's solution is to create opportunities for much greater collaboration between creators, users, and archives. He states,

We have reached a new stage in archival history when this alliance must be built. The new stage has been brought on by two things: i) the extraordinary recent expansion and diversification of the uses of archives; ii) the widespread use of born-digital records. The first offers to bring archival work out of the shadows and to the centre of societal concerns, as human rights issues illustrate…. The second threatens to scuttle those still embryonic hopes.[36]

To provide a forum for this needed collaboration, Nesmith proposes the creation of what he calls a Coalition for Canadian Archives, composed of the key users of archives but coordinated (at least initially) by the ACA and AAQ. He sees this coalition as helping to highlight "the problems and needs of users of archives, archivists, and archival institutions," increasing archival advocacy

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34   Millar, "Coming Up with Plan B," 134.
35   See Tom Nesmith, "Toward the Archival Stage in the History of Knowledge," *Archivaria* 80 (Fall 2015): 119–45.
36   Tom Nesmith, "The Missing Piece: Towards New Partnerships with Users of Archives" (paper presented at the Canadian Archives Summit: A New Blueprint for Canada's Recorded Memory, Toronto, January 2015), 8, accessed 31 May 2016, http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Advocacy_attachments/nesmith_the_missing_piece_towards_new_partnerships_with_users_of_archives.pdf.

and giving users "a greater role as advocates for archives."[37] Nesmith's vision is strong, and the composition and direction of his coalition is in the same spirit as my proposal. If Nesmith's coalition were established and the user groups quickly took the lead in providing the resources and influence required to identify problems and develop solutions, his plan would certainly be viable.

However, as argued here, the documentary heritage of Canada is not solely a problem for the archival community. The need for good records is a contemporary problem for the efficient administration of society; it is not just an archives problem. My other concern with Nesmith's suggestion is that the ACA and the AAQ, like the CCA, are – quite rightly – democratic institutions whose leadership must reflect the will of the membership. Professional archival associations have their own purpose and mission. Setting up a coalition by the professional associations would be a major project in terms of human and financial resources. Given that the primary mandate of both the AAQ and ACA is to represent the interests of their individual members, not the documentary heritage of Canada, it may be difficult to make the commitment such an initiative would require. Just as the CCA, as an organization representing institutions, cannot be solely or primarily responsible for Canada's documentary heritage, the archival profession – as defined by organizations representing professionals – also cannot address this national problem alone.[38] Therefore, I see the CDHC – driven by records creators and records users, not by archival institutions or archival professionals – as the best mechanism for change.

Canadian archivists began as missionaries, and I like to think I was one of the many who struggled to help develop the archival community we have today. Now archivists have become managers, and our focus is more and more on mandates, budgets, and institutional priorities. As a result, we must become more strategic: we have to identify our institutions' long-term goals and develop plans for how, realistically, to achieve them. If archivists were living in a universe where complete, reliable, and authentic records came into being without question, our jobs would be much easier and preserving the archival record of Canada would be less costly and, indeed, possible. We do not live in that universe, so we must find a way to get there.

37  Ibid.
38  It is important to acknowledge, despite my belief that a new direction is needed for the archival community, that several valuable initiatives are currently underway to change the direction of archival support. For instance, as noted, the NPTAC has recently agreed to coordinate acquisition, and the Archives Association of Ontario is working on the development of a provincial acquisition strategy. The Canadian Archival System Working Group has established a Steering Committee on Canada's Archives to oversee the archival community's priorities over the next few years. I would urge those involved in all these initiatives to recognize that the efficacy of collaborative action on the part of the archival community is limited, and that the challenge of gaining public support for good records and archives management is, above all, a marketing problem. The inclusion of sponsors and clients in all such initiatives will be critical to their success.

To a large extent, Canadian archivists have a marketing problem. Archivists are uniquely placed to recognize the short- and long-term records and information management challenges presented by digital technologies. Archival professionals and archival institutions have the potential to move from being perceived as part of a cultural industry (as essential as that is) to being recognized as an important and intrinsic part of the administration of contemporary society, which ought to be our true role. This shift in public perception will not happen if society does not understand the central value of records and archives – if people continue to think of archives as "old" resources used by academics but irrelevant to everyday life. To make that transition, society needs to understand the importance of creating and preserving complete, authentic, and reliable records. I believe that the CHDC could play a vital role in helping society understand that archival role.
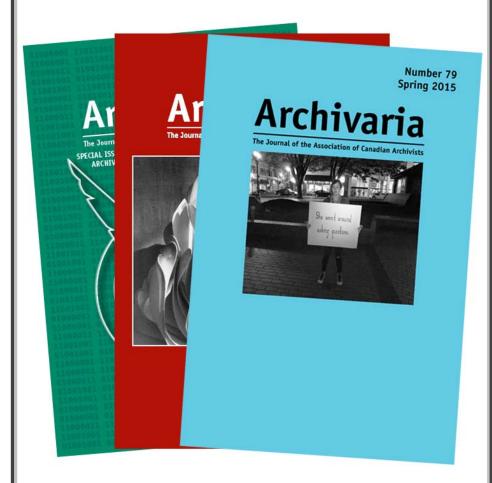
The last few decades have brought fundamental changes to archival records, archival service, and archival institutions. As a collective, archivists must adapt to these changes. The "system" we have created for Canadian archival development is out of date. It is constructed on an assumption that problems related to the documentary heritage of Canada can be resolved by asking existing institutions to "step up" and act unilaterally to support cooperative or collaborative initiatives. But the preservation of Canada's documentary record is a societal problem. Solutions are required that reach beyond the capacity of Canadian archival institutions or professionals alone. The archival blueprint intended to move the archival system forward for the next decade, while developed with the best of intentions, contains only variations of what was proposed for the CCA 30 years ago, and too many of those initiatives were not successful. We have to do something different.

It is time for the archival community to look away from our own institutional and professional concerns. We need to focus instead on the needs of the society we serve, particularly for the creation of good records and for the preservation of and continued access to those records by anyone who needs them. Archival professionals can advise society on the "how" of archival management, and archival institutions can provide the support system for housing, protecting, and making available those archives that come into their custody. But neither professionals nor institutions can "make" society create and keep good records. We cannot make the horse drink.

We need society – specifically, records creators and users – to become aware of the importance of good records and to participate actively in the cause of the documentary record of Canada. This means we have to give society a meaningful and effective voice. By creating an entity such as the CDHC, the Canadian archival system could finally open up, resting on three legs of the stool, not two. Archival institutions, archival professionals, *and* the public would then each play their part as critical stakeholders in the effort to secure Canada's documentary heritage, for today and for the future.

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