# Summary of Proposals Received for the Minister of Canadian Heritage Round Tables on Libraries and Archives on November 27 and December 2, 2020

Prepared by Library and Archives Canada

## Introduction

Julie Dabrusin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, acting on behalf of the Honorable Stephen Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Heritage, led the Ministerial round tables on the future of libraries and archives. This document summarizes the proposals that were received for both the round table in French on November 27, 2020 and the round table in English on December 2, 2020.

The appendix comprises a list of the organizations that submitted proposals.

## Impact of COVID-19

- The effects of the pandemic on libraries, archives, minority communities, and the public at large have been many:
  - The closure of library branches and archives across the country resulted in temporary staff reductions, job losses, and losses in revenue. Meanwhile, demand for online services (e.g., virtual events, digital collections, long-distance learning) has increased. Where possible, services have expanded to meet these demands while still adhering to local health and safety requirements. Nonetheless, these online services have related additional costs (e.g., training for employees, the acquisition of and improvement to electronic and online resources) that cannot be ignored. Many rural, remote and Indigenous communities, where internet service was insufficient before the pandemic, have been particularly adversely affected by the suspension of in-person services. An overwhelming majority of participants flagged in their proposals the critical importance of increased support for digital services and access.
  - The suspension of in-person gatherings and events has adversely affected the community of library and information professionals due to the loss of networking, training, and professional development opportunities usually offered by their professional associations. These associations have also suffered a loss of revenue, including income from activities and membership fees.
  - The pandemic has disproportionately affected the LGBTQ2+, BIPOC, and other minority communities, including the heritage institutions that represent them. Further, libraries are struggling to balance their vital

roles as community hubs with public health and safety requirements; this has disproportionately affected students, seniors, and other vulnerable groups.

- o People with print disabilities typically receive accessible library services through the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA), which provides books and other materials to Canadians. However, CELA funding has been delayed due to the pandemic.
- o With archivists across Canada still mostly working from home, the backlog of materials requiring physical processing has increased. Many archives are facing the difficult decision to issue a moratorium on acquisitions until they are better equipped to accept new donations.
- o The pandemic has limited the ability of authors and libraries to partner for public readings and other appearances. This has affected the income of authors. Funding could be provided to support virtual readings and other literary events with the creators.
- o Canadian booksellers have seen sales drop by 27 percent this year. This has had a negative effect on the ability of publishers to publish Canadian content.
- o It is expected that budget cutbacks will follow the pandemic. This could affect public access to information, services (on-site and digital), and cultural heritage.
- o The pandemic has highlighted barriers to making orphan works and out-of-commerce works more accessible, as well as issues related to fair dealing within the university context. Financial support for the digitization of these works, in addition to changes to the *Copyright Act*, could assist in this area. Universities are also interested in the government taking action on Crown copyright and support rights reversion to creators.
- o For Indigenous communities, and the North in particular, the impact on libraries and archives has been exacerbated by the lack of access to decent internet service as well as broadband, in addition to the other effects delineated above. Projects such as language revitalization and the preservation and sharing of cultural heritage and history have been negatively affected.
- o For remote Inuit communities in the North, library closures and service restrictions due to the pandemic have intensified their isolation experience. They are also cut off from a large portion of their preserved cultural heritage, which is kept in the collections and archives of the Avataq Cultural Institute in Montreal.
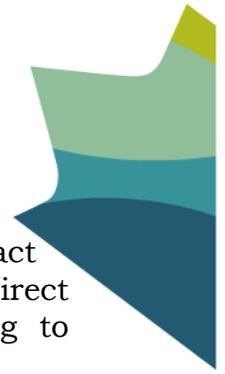
## Sustainability of the Sector

- The viability of the library and archives sector depends on several pre-existing initiatives whose importance was increased by the pandemic. These concern the sector's ability to promote culture, education, and access to information, to fight disinformation, and to provide basic services:
  - o Direct funding for operational needs would help to ensure stability in

the short- and long-term, and it would support the hiring of contract archivists to assist in processing backlog requests when regular services resume. Long-term funding for operational needs, such as adequate physical space, would help to make Canada's cultural materials more accessible and support continued sustainability.

o Digital content is more crucial than ever, but more time and resources are needed (e.g., upgraded digital platforms and research tools, improved systems and storage capacities to digitize current collections, staff and training to digitize—and manage digitized—content). Strengthening the National Heritage Digitization Strategy (NHDS) would assist with this endeavour. Creating digitization funding programs (e.g., grants, contributions) with more flexible eligibility criteria would support the disparate needs of different archives rather than forcing them to develop projects that suit the (often very specific) requirements of the funding programs.

o Improvements to high-speed Internet access are needed. As essential service points for computer access and broadband Internet access, public libraries are crucial for many rural and Northern communities, as well as people with low income in urban settings. Providing funding for better broadband infrastructure and supporting other initiatives to facilitate broadband access would help offer essential library services and could enable remote access. Improved internet access in the North would also allow the Avataq Cultural Institute to move from Montreal to Nunavik, where it would be better positioned to preserve, and promote Inuit access to, Inuit cultural heritage and history.

o A National Digital Access Fund could support enhanced access to digital information for individuals and sectors relying on archives for certain activities, including education, business development, and local capital projects.

o Targeted grants for Indigenous communities could enable them to conduct research while making use of local GLAM resources, drawing on other community knowledge, and working with non-local larger institutions to identify existing materials that would be good candidates for digitization. A training component could develop local capacity, support the preservation of records, and enable heritage projects. Common barriers to funding must be removed (e.g., requiring matching funding, which smaller organizations might have trouble producing; requiring that all material digitized be made public, which Indigenous laws may prevent).

o Funding is also needed to allow Indigenous peoples to organize and describe their cultural materials using their own methods, rather than approaches to archival practice that are colonially rooted. Decisions about what content is digitized and preserved, in which ways, and how (or if) it is made openly accessible, must be made in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Unique content from Indigenous and multicultural communities may also be in an oral format on legacy technology that is at risk of failing and must be upgraded for preservation.

o It will be important to ensure that any funding directed to Inuit and Indigenous libraries and archives is equitable both between and among Indigenous communities. It also means addressing longstanding shortfalls and not solely the immediate impact of the pandemic. The success of such programming depends on direct community engagement and on sustained and dedicated funding to address gaps in basic infrastructure and ongoing operational needs.

o Financial support is needed for increased licencing costs for digital content, including audio and e-books, from both domestic and multinational publishers. Support for high-quality Open Education Resources (OERs) in both official languages is also critical.

o Some of the challenges archives are facing—such as the preservation of digital records, an increase in paper records, and growing public demand for their online access — could be alleviated by tapping into alternate streams of sustainable, non-governmental financial resources. A strategy is needed that will lead to the creation of a diversified income framework to sustain core operations and build organizational resiliency for archives as self-supporting economic contributors within the sector.

o Event funding could be provided over longer periods of time to allow institutions thoroughly to plan for and execute special programming.

o Professional associations and groups of associations would benefit from programming, possibly on a shared platform, to support their efforts to share best practices and provide continuing education (especially in digital initiatives) to librarians and information professionals.

o Sixty-four percent of non-profit and public sector archives have operating budgets of $50,000 or less. Professional support and advice is often beyond their financial reach. Investing in an advisory service program would provide more equitable access to professional support and improve standards and best practices across regions and between urban and rural, remote, and Northern communities.

o Maintaining and increasing funding in support of student employment opportunities (e.g., the Young Canada Works program) and internships would help to sustain institutions for the duration of the pandemic.

o Strong partnerships exist at the local, provincial/territorial, and national levels. These partnerships may be leveraged to deliver on federal priorities. However, additional funding - including support for dedicated staff and shared initiatives, such as a shared service platform - is needed to fully pursue partnership opportunities, which often provide little funding themselves.

o Engaging directly with each jurisdiction would help ensure more equitable support for recovery, and it would inform how to scale initiatives to ensure that rural, remote, and Indigenous communities benefit. In addition, direct federal funding is required to address the unprecedented financial shortfalls being faced by municipalities due to the pandemic.

o Support is needed for Canadian publishers and booksellers so that they can continue to publish Canadian content in the Canadian market.

Increased funding to the Canada Book Fund (CBF) and the Canada Periodicals Fund (CPF) could be useful. Additionally, the CBF and partners could work together to increase the level of support available to university presses to transition to open access.

## Diversity and Inclusion

- Several organizations noted that the pandemic has disproportionately affected different communities, but added that opportunities exist to address this challenge:
  - Digital access, which requires high-speed Internet, can promote equity by removing barriers in income, geography, and expertise. Limited digital access is an issue that disproportionately affects rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, as well as people with low income. It is also a concern for Official language minority communities (OLMCs), who would benefit from increased access to material in their preferred language. Digital access is an issue not just for patrons but for library and information professionals as well, who should be able to access continuing education, best practices, and other professional development tools regardless of their location, language, or funds.
  - There has been a lack of federal support for LGBTQ2+ and BIPOC communities in the heritage sector. Moreover, COVID-19 has disproportionately affected minority communities, including the memory institutions that represent them. Funding for ongoing operational needs and community-led projects could help to address this gap.
  - Continuing education on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion for library and information professionals will help them better serve Canada's diverse communities.
  - Student-hiring programs, internships, scholarships and education programs represent a positive investment towards a vibrant, resilient, and diverse workforce for the future. A Young Canada Works program inclusive of Indigenous youth, ethnic minorities, and at-risk youth will lead to a more diverse body of archivists and archival leaders, as will increasing the enrollment of these communities in library science and information education and training programs. Financial incentives and targeted opportunities might increase the participation of these communities in such programs.
  - The provision of an accessible, online archival education program could build capacity within marginalized communities such as First Nations, Inuit, Métis Nation and BIPOC communities. Such a program would empower participants to manage the archives in their own communities and to contribute to the broader archival network.
  - In the service of reconciliation and decolonization, Indigenous cultural centres should be decentralized from larger institutions in order to promote their visibility and autonomy. Inuit and Indigenous-specific funding must be distinctions-based and culturally-relevant and should

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be created and developed with Inuit and Indigenous peoples. Engagement should be undertaken directly with cultural centres and begin with building better communication.

- o In consultation with Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation, changes to Canada's intellectual property legislation, including the *Copyright Act*, can be undertaken to further reconciliation. This would include permitting fair dealing for reconciliation purposes (subject to appropriate restrictions) and developing legislation to recognize, preserve, and share Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs) and Traditional Knowledge (TK), or Indigenous knowledge (IK) as more generally understood.
- o A national strategy for public libraries serving OLMCs would help provincial and territorial governments meet the needs of these communities. This would enable purchase of and access to library materials, programs, and services, and it would enhance sector capacity while also promoting a bilingual Canada that encourages innovation and excellence.
- o Targeted funding could be provided for the role libraries play in supporting vulnerable populations across Canada, including people who rely on the library as a "safe place" to access information and various tools.
- o A fund for libraries to improve metadata and develop discoverability tools for accessible materials would support services for the visually impaired.

## Environmental Impact/Greening of the Sector

- The environmental impact of libraries and archives can be reduced by investing in digital services and energy efficient buildings:
  - o COVID-19 has increased the demand for digital services from libraries and archives and has, as a result, reduced carbon emissions (due to patrons not needing to travel to access resources) and helped to eliminate paper waste (due to a reduction in the need for physical copies or photocopies of items). Establishing a strong technical infrastructure and building in long-term support for ongoing maintenance and expansion will improve the ability of libraries and archives to deliver digital services.
  - o Libraries provide services differently in each province and territory and have varying access to funding. All, however, require renovation and infrastructure funds to help reduce their environmental footprints, allow for greater physical distancing, and improve the accessibility of their physical and digital spaces. There is also an economic benefit to these building projects.
  - o For Inuit communities the fundamental issue is access to services that depends on costly and unreliable air transportation and shipping. The solution is high-quality bandwidth and internet access as well as infrastructure and cost-offsetting subsidies. Northern communities also face additional environmentally-specific maintenance costs that must be taken into account.

## Other Priorities

- Other priorities and concerns highlighted by the sector include:
    - Challenging the perception that archives primarily serve genealogists and historians.
    - Increasing access to and options to purchase Canadian and other published content in electronic and accessible formats.
    - Developing a more competitive Canadian cultural heritage sector that will explore emerging formats of digitization, accessibility, and preservation and will contribute globally to digital research.
    - Creating and supporting programs that link writers, artists, and other cultural workers with communities to facilitate life-long learning and reconciliation initiatives (e.g., Canada Council for the Arts).
    - Maintaining the Canada Post Library special book rate to assist with inter-library loans, and potentially extending this rate to Canadian booksellers.
    - Providing support to non-profits and associations that assist the sector.

## Appendix – List of Organizations that Submitted Proposals

Archives gaies du Québec (AGQ)

The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives

Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ) (joint submission with ACA, CCA, CPTA, RAQ)

Association des bibliothécaires du Québec (ABQLA)

Association des bibliothèques publiques du Québec (ABPQ)

Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) (solo submission and joint submission with AAQ, CCA, CPTA, RAQ)

Bibliothèque Champlain et Centre d'études acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson (BC)

Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL)

Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) (solo submission and joint submission with AAQ, ACA, CPTA, RAQ)

Canadian Federation of Library Associations-Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèque (CFLA-FCAB)

Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)

Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC)

Corporation des bibliothécaires professionnels du Québec (CBPQ)

Council of Provincial and Territorial Archivists, care of Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (CPTA c/o PANB) (solo submission and joint submission with AAQ, ACA, CCA, RAQ)

Council of Provincial and Territorial Archivists

Fédération des milieux documentaires (FMD)

Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) (joint submission with OLA)

Institut culturel Avataq

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)

Ontario Library Association (OLA) (joint submission with FOPL)

Provincial Territorial Public Library Council (PTPLC)

Réseau des services d'archives du Québec (RAQ) (joint submission with AAQ, ACA, CCA, CPTA)

Union of British Columbian Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)