



# Round Tables on the Future of Libraries and Archives

## Summary Report

### Introduction

Library and Archives Canada recently held two round tables on the future of libraries and archives. The first round table was held on November 27, 2020, and conducted in French; the second round table was held on December 2, 2020, and conducted in English. Julie Dabrusin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, participated in both round tables.

The round tables were held to help identify the challenges and opportunities facing libraries and archives sector in the immediate future, with particular attention placed on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were organized around four main themes:

1. COVID-19 Support Measures
2. Sustainability of the Sector
3. Diversity and Inclusion
4. Environmental Considerations

Prior to each round table, participants were asked to submit policy proposals that would assist in the recovery of the sector while addressing these themes.

The round tables also raised questions related to reconciliation, copyright reform, and the National Heritage Digitization Strategy (NHDS).

A full list of participants can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Below is a combined summary of the two round tables. It begins with a general discussion about the effects of COVID-19 before moving into the four themes and their subthemes.

## General Discussion of COVID-19

The round tables began with an acknowledgement from Leslie Weir, Librarian and Archivist of Canada, that the pandemic has put pressure on arts and cultural institutions, including libraries and archives. It has tested their institutional capacities and resources, in addition to the skills and morale of their employees. It has also illustrated the importance of libraries and archives to the communities they serve. Thus, the round tables afforded a unique opportunity to explore the sector's current needs and highlight the role that it can play in the economic recovery.

Julie Dabrusin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, noted that she was participating on behalf of the Hon. Stephen Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Heritage. She wanted to hear the interests and concerns of the participants, and the round tables provided them with a unique and direct opportunity to discuss what future supports Canadian Heritage (PCH) might provide for the sector.

There was general agreement among the participants that COVID-19 has presented challenges to the sector, but that it has also revealed new opportunities and confirmed the importance of their institutions. The Fédération des milieux documentaires (FMD), for example, noted that the documentary community is diverse and plays many important roles in Canada. Among other things, it supports culture, promotes knowledge, and provides entertainment. The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) described the sector as having three “superpowers”: 1) it is focused on access and preservation (which is good for democracy), 2) it is collaborative in nature, and 3) it is a trusted intermediary in a world of fake news. On the other hand, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) explained that memory institutions are not trusted by all people - an important consideration in the context of reconciliation and the inclusion of minority groups and marginalized communities.

Speaking to changes within the profession, the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) argued that the pandemic has primarily accelerated existing trends as opposed to creating new ones. In this sense, it is possible to learn from the past in responding to the challenges of the present and future. The Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) called COVID-19 a “fascinating” time for libraries. Notably, it has revealed vulnerabilities in the sector, but it has also highlighted areas where the sector can make a positive contribution to society: in improving digital literacy skills, in serving as a “gateway function” to information, in working with public health organizations, in distributing food and technology (e.g., laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots), and in providing physical space for testing. This multidimensional role of libraries and archives as community

hubs, training centres, and trusted sources of information was acknowledged by Julie Dabrusin.

The Ontario Library Association (OLA) thanked non-government organizations (NGO) for their work during the pandemic, adding that they are part of the recovery and should see continued government support. The CULC described libraries as “commonly traveled public spaces” and natural learning hubs. Thus, they have a natural role to play in helping to address some of the challenges presented by COVID-19. Speaking to archives, the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) said they are often the “glue” that holds a community together.

## **COVID-19 Support Measures**

### **Financial and Operational Difficulties**

COVID-19 has created financial difficulties for many institutions and associations in the sector. The Corporation des bibliothécaires professionnels du Québec (CBPQ) has experienced a decline in memberships and income-generating activities, threatening its overall financial situation. The Association des bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Franco (ABO-Franco) has seen its budget cut in half, with its parent organization, the OLA, supporting a recommendation from Imagine Canada that a specific relief package for charities and non-profit organizations be deployed by the federal government. The CRKN also highlighted the need for more financial support from government.

The lack of financial resources has been matched by a strain on other resources and a drop in staff morale. Many people continue to use their local libraries as priority services (as opposed to essential services), according to the Association des bibliothèques publiques du Québec (ABPQ). The Archives gaies du Québec (AGQ) has struggled to remain open because it relies on elderly volunteers, who are at heightened risk right now. Both of these situations point to the growing divide between client expectations and institutional capacity.

The Réseau des archives du Québec (RAQ) has encountered difficulties in receiving donations due to the closure of its physical space. The RAQ has also encountered difficulties in connecting with clients despite the availability of email and telephone solutions. Consequently, the majority of the RAQ's activity during the pandemic has been spent on upgrading its information technology with the goal of increasing accessibility for the public. Similar difficulties have been experienced by the Council of Provincial and Territorial Archives (CAPT), which is worried about “building up” demand. It has been unable to respond to all of its service requests, and it expects a “flood” of new requests following the

pandemic. This situation is compounded by remote researchers expecting new and extra services during the pandemic. Overall, the situation is not sustainable and it may set false expectations for the future.

The ArQuives – the Canadian LGBTQ2+ Archives (The ArQuives) has found itself getting items “dumped” on it due to the closure of other institutions. This has exacerbated the challenges being faced by the institution, and it has placed added stress on the LGBTQ+ and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities, which have already been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

## **Access to Emergency Supports**

According to the ABO-Franco, access to the Canadian Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS) could be made clearer for libraries and archives. In particular, it is not clear if the OLA, of which the ABO-Franco is part, can apply for the subsidy. Access to the subsidy would help to alleviate the loss of traditional revenue and support the long-term survival of institutions affected by reduced demand and hours.

Although the Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ) has a large and relatively stable membership thanks to its 50 years of existence, the association now finds itself in a state of financial fragility due to COVID-19. The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) has made it possible to keep the AAQ’s current staff of three in employment. However, eligibility for the CEWS requires that an employer experience a 30-percent decline in revenue, which may be difficult for some non-profit organizations to demonstrate.

## **Support to Associations for Training and Conferences**

The CBPQ highlighted the loss of jobs (including specialized staff) and training opportunities as a direct result of the pandemic. The CBPQ also expressed concern for the professional development of staff who have been laid off, a situation that can negatively affect their future job prospects. In this context, the institution’s annual training program is in jeopardy: there are few funds available to organize training, and few members who can afford training at this moment. Support to safeguard continuing education would be welcome.

These points were shared by the AAQ, which described ongoing training as essential. Professional associations are an important relay point for members, and they support the activities of libraries and archives. Thus, new support programs for professional associations are needed. To address some of these challenges, the AAQ has taken the initial step of offering online training

opportunities and developing national and international partnerships in support of these opportunities. Similarly, the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) has begun to offer online training opportunities.

As noted by the Association des bibliothèques du Québec (ABQLA), a major challenge facing the sector is the fact that the pandemic has led to the cancellation of several major annual conferences. These conferences are important in terms of professional development, training, networking, and employment opportunities. They also represent important sources of income for the associations that host them, for both libraries and archives. Unfortunately, online conferences are not an adequate substitute—in terms of offerings and revenue generation—for the traditional conference experience. The FMD raised the related challenge of ensuring adequate training for staff as they transition to online work. Critically, there may be a lack of expertise in this area notwithstanding internal and external expectations that libraries and archives quickly transition to online operations and services.

## **Sustainability of the Sector**

### **Support for the Next Generation of Professionals**

Support for the Young Canada Works (YCW) program was expressed by several participants, including the CCA, the Provincial and Territorial Public Library Council (PTPLC), and the CBPQ. The CCA argued that the YCW has proven its value over the years, and that this value has only increased in the context of COVID-19. Importantly, the pandemic has increased the need for young archivists and graduates to enter into the workforce and help address current backlogs. In addition to seeking continued funding support for the program, the CCA recommended increasing the age limit from 30 to 35.

A similar point was raised by the CBPQ, which suggested increasing the age limit to 40 or creating a new program for those undergoing career transitions. As the CBPQ noted, the library profession often attracts people in second careers, and support is needed to help integrate these people into their new profession. The CRKN cautioned that there is some concern over the status of international students and the funding available to them in the context of the pandemic.

### **Operational Support**

Calls for increased funding support for operational needs were raised by several participants. The CCA noted that archives in remote and impoverished

communities operate on limited budgets: 64 % of Canadian archives have an operating budget of less than \$50,000 per year. It is important that this threshold be increased—a general point that found support from the CRKN and the FMD. In making its case, the CCA highlighted the important community role that archival advisors play. Additional funding is needed to support this role, but archives also need to explore self-sustaining sources of revenue. This would help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector by strengthening its overall financial situation.

A reoccurring problem faced by archives is the fact their work often goes unpaid or is unfunded. This has a direct effect on the ability of archives to generate revenue, but it also affects staff morale. For example, The ArQuives drew attention to the fact it receives no funding support from the federal government for its operational needs, yet the federal government (as well as other governments and public institutions) have made use of its collection. This has placed strain on The ArQuives, which is primarily funded by the communities it serves. Another example mentioned was the media work done by the CAPT. Although this work draws on the everyday resources of the institution, it often goes unpaid and unrecognized. In comparison, museums receive regular government funding and recognition for this type of work.

Unfortunately, there is no universal way to address these operational needs. Each institution is unique and may have different interest and needs. The CCA brought attention to this point while noting there are over 800 archives in Canada. The Museums Assistance Program - which supports heritage institutions and their employees in the preservation and presentation of heritage collections - is an example of existing support provided by PCH that has proven flexible, and which has assumed greater importance during the pandemic. In speaking to future funding needs, the PTPLC said the sector should be mindful of different levels of local funding and be aware of inequities that may result. The reality of uneven funding opportunities underscores the need for more assistance from the federal government.

Operational areas that can be improved through additional funding support include metadata access and discoverability (CARL), specialized staff (AGQ), and online education and core archival activities (ACA). The AGQ added that support may be needed to help smaller institutions complete grant applications where they lack the time and resources to do this on their own. On the question of investments in online education, the ACA added that this would allow people to learn in their own communities - a factor that might be critical for people in rural, remote, and minority communities. For its part, the CULC identified several operational areas in need for support: 1) public infrastructure, 2) digital

access and online education, and 3) misinformation and digital literacy. In turn, investments in these areas would have a positive effect on the health of democratic society.

Funding support could be extended to professional associations, which have also encountered difficulties with the different rules that apply across the country. According to the CBPQ, funding is not currently available for associations. This is problematic because associations are in need of funding to support their projects and day-to-day operations. The PTPLC made a similar point about charity status: there is some confusion over the eligibility of libraries and archives. Moreover, it is not always clear how to apply for this status. Part of this problem is related to the fact that there are different eligibility criteria across the country, and any help in explaining and evening out these differences would be welcome.

## **Digitization and Digital Infrastructure**

On the question of digitization and digital infrastructure, a number of institutions raised concerns over the growing gap between client expectations and institutional capacity. Critically, COVID-19 has increased the demand for digital access and resources, but existing infrastructure, service technology, staff expertise, and digital collections may not be sufficient to meet these demands. This is a primary area where support from the federal government (in addition to other levels of government) is needed. If the present and future are digital, many institutions risk being left in the past. There was general agreement on this point, including the different challenges and opportunities facing institutions.

Some of the participants have already begun exploring new infrastructure solutions, business models, and service technologies as a result of the pandemic. The CRKN, for example, has increased its investments in digitization projects and digital infrastructure. NOV-ART presented itself as a new creative technology centre that provides training on the creation, classification, and management of artworks. NOV-ART plans to provide digital access to these artworks through an open access digital registry. It called for a reinvention of the business model for libraries and archives, and asked how copyright and intellectual property can be successfully monetized. It has proven possible to monetize streaming rights

through a digital registry like their own. In turn, digital access fees could be used to maintain physical access. Transfers for libraries and virtual tours could also be explored.

Questions were also raised about publications and publishing in the context of digitization efforts. CARL said more support is needed for scholarly publishing and open access. Both of these were already under pressure prior to COVID-19, but now there is an increased need for digital access to primary research data. Federal support for more sustainable digital infrastructure would be welcome. Concerns about the effects of copyright on digitization projects and open access were also raised (see below).

## **Digital Preservation Strategy and the NHDS**

CARL highlighted the need for additional federal support in developing a collective digital preservation strategy. A similar point was raised by the CCA, which noted many institutions are confronted by large digital donations at risk of obsolescence. This discussion eventually drew mention of the National Heritage Digitization Strategy (NHDS) - an existing effort to better coordinate digitization efforts among Canadian memory institutions (see [Appendix B](#)). Responding to interest in the creation of a national digital preservation strategy, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) asked whether partners of the NHDS should be “ramping it up.”

## **Special Postal Rate for Libraries**

Support for a special postal rate for libraries with Canada Post was expressed by the ABPQ, ABO-Franco, and the CBPQ. Specifically, the ABPQ argued that the pandemic has shown the importance of maximizing different ways of serving the community, of which mail service is one. ABO-Franco recommended extending the special postal rate to Canadian booksellers while the CBPQ noted there is a special book-shipping rate for private individuals in the United States and France that could be adopted in Canada.

## **Accessibility Concerns and Access to Electronic Resources**

The *Marrakesh Treaty* and related accessibility concerns for people with perceptual disabilities found support from a number of institutions. CARL, for instance, highlighted the different accessibility opportunities - a topic of interest among all memory institutions - created by the Treaty. This point was echoed by the CBPQ, which noted the education sector’s interest in the Treaty. Importantly, educational materials should be available in all teaching situations. The CBPQ also expressed some concerns, however, such as the fact that not all disabilities are recognized under the Treaty. Additional rights may be required to address unique physical and financial barriers to access. Adding to this discussion, the



ABQLA pointed out that manuals are often unavailable in digital format due to their business model. Support for continued funding in accessibility was shared by the PTPLC, which mentioned the need for multiple formats.

Attention to the evolving ways of teaching was raised by the Canadian Council of Information Studies (CCIS). These trends precede COVID-19, but they have increased in importance under the pandemic. In this context, there is a need to match new content with new delivery systems. The CCIS questioned the current needs of students and what skills they require for the future job market. It argued that greater access to primary and secondary sources is needed to help staff and students address these questions.

The ACA stressed that digitization does not imply full access: barriers to access, such as copyright and rights information management, continue to apply. Community protocols, accessibility needs and requirements, and the presence of funding support are other factors to consider. Speaking to access more generally, CARL identified a number of positive actions that libraries and archives can take: they can invest in the *Marrakesh Treaty*, collaborate on access projects, maintain funding for books and periodicals, and open the market to e-books and textbooks. Unfortunately, textbooks remain too expensive for many students. This requires more attention devoted toward increasing the affordability of textbooks and the availability of open educational resources.

## **Copyright**

Copyright presents a barrier to access in its own right, but it has also made it difficult to move some services and collections online in the context of COVID-19. The example of children's story times was provided by the ABPQ, a service that may be important to young families but one that encounters copyright challenges when moved online. These challenges may discourage some institutions from moving their traditional services online. Future copyright reform could help to address this situation, a general point that was shared by the ACA and the CCIS. However, libraries should be sensitive to users who lack access to digital technologies and cannot take advantage of traditional library services as they are moved online.

The CBPQ argued that a better balance between the rights of creators and the rights of users is needed. This may be particularly true in the educational context where restrictions under the *Copyright Act* limit the opportunities for online education. A similar view was expressed by CARL, which noted copyright has long been an issue for research and academic libraries. However, copyright has

taken on greater significance during the pandemic. This issue remains fundamental, and it is hoped that the federal government will introduce new copyright exceptions that support the broadest possible use. CARL sent a proposal on the reform of copyright to the Minister in 2020, but it was questioned whether the review of the *Copyright Act* been delayed. CARL's proposal sought to increase access for all Canadians.

In response to a question from Julie Dabrusin, the ABPQ explained that the copyright situation in Quebec is different from the rest of Canada because the same agreements with collective societies are not in place. Moreover, there are no longer any publishing houses or rights holders in Quebec that provide free access for distribution. While there is solidarity among bookstores, the pandemic has weakened solidarity among authors, publishing houses, and distributors - a situation that might apply to English-speaking Canada as well. The ABPQ added that it has paid for digital access through Copibec out of concern that the pandemic would negatively affect its activities. According to the ABPQ, approximately 75 % of libraries have ceased their activities due to budget constraints; eliminating any exceptions to copyright would exacerbate these challenges and limit access for young families (as it did in the children's story time example above) and other users. The ABPQ is in favour of compensating creators (who depend on their copyright), but many libraries are not able to pay these fees. For this reason, the involvement of PCH is needed to reconcile these positions. The ABPQ has heard from its counterparts in English-speaking Canada that they facing similar concerns.

CARL responded to the same question, arguing it would be irresponsible to weaken or remove fair dealing. University libraries currently pay \$400 million a year on copyright clearances notwithstanding the available of fair dealing. Thus, it is not accurate to say that fair dealing has put publishers in a precarious position, but it has proven itself essential in supporting the learning activities and outcomes of students. Support for fair dealing was also expressed by the AAQ, the CBPQ, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), and the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA). However, the CBPQ added that the rules for fair dealing should be made clearer for publishers and creators while the PTPLC made a general call for more support for creators. The

CCIS noted that copyright, paid licences, and open licences all affect access in different ways, and it might be worth exploring how they both complement and challenge one another.

Other copyright ideas mentioned included exploring cheaper licences (CRKN), increasing access to Crown works/removing Crown copyright (CCA), and limiting liability for the use of orphan works and out-of-commerce works (CFLA). The

CFLA in particular was interested in copyright changes that would support digitization efforts.

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

### **Support for Libraries and Archives in Minority Communities**

As explained by ABO-Franco, libraries that serve minority language communities are especially vulnerable to cuts, both before and during the pandemic. For example, there have been recent cuts to French-language libraries and collections in Ontario. These libraries are essential in serving minority language communities and promoting bilingualism. They often face unique geographical challenges in serving their communities and, thus, require additional support. In recent years, the provinces have adopted policies and legislation to support services in Francophone communities; a national strategy to support these libraries would further assist.

Ethno-cultural archives established in minority communities face similar challenges according to the CCA. In particular, the CCA has a multi-year research initiative underway to diversify non-governmental archives in support of these communities. However, additional operational and advisory support is needed to provide more equitable access and professional support, improve standards and explore best practices in diverse urban and remote communities, and ensure access to centralized digital archival description resources from across Canada. COVID-19 has only increased the need for this support. The development of a national strategy would also promote equitable access for all Canadians regardless of geography.

### **Indigenous and Northern Communities, and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)***

The ABPQ acknowledged that there remains a lot of work to be done in collaborating with Indigenous communities. A knowledge gap continues to exist in adapting and improving their services for Indigenous Peoples. To address this challenge, the ABPQ has invited Indigenous representatives from inside and outside of Quebec to discuss the matter. For similar reasons, the CBPQ has organized training on mediation with Indigenous communities.

COVID-19 has affected the Institut culturel Avataq, albeit it in different way from many other institutions. The Institute enjoys some financial protection because its funding source is secure. For historical reasons, the organization is located in Montreal, including part of its collection. This has become problematic, however, as Montreal has emerged as one of the epicentres of COVID-19 in Quebec. As a result, physical access to the Institute has been limited, and many Inuit have experienced difficulty reaching the Institute online due to poor Internet connections. Recruiting new Inuit staff has also proven difficult for the same reasons. Although the Institute has funding in place to work with the Northern community, travel is not possible at this time. The pandemic has confirmed the decision of the Institute to relocate to Nunavik, the community's archives should not be kept thousands of kilometers away, but support from PCH, including its infrastructure program, is needed to complete the relocation project.

Turning to Indigenous Peoples in general, many of them (including their leaders) lack trust in non-Indigenous institutions. To address this challenge, the UBCIC encouraged the other participants (including PCH) to re-evaluate their programs and priorities against reconciliation and the UNDRIP. In this context, access could be prioritized for development projects and land claims, important work that has not stopped during the pandemic and which has a direct effect on the future opportunities available to Indigenous Peoples.

As explained by the NCTR, another way of building trust with Indigenous communities would be through the removal of sensitive images from circulation. The NCTR also argued for the recognition of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions under copyright, highlighting Articles 13 and 31 of UNDRIP in support of this position. It explained that an Indigenous advisory group could be created to help identify sensitive content. The Inuit Tapariit Kanatami (ITK) agreed that ownership of content is an important issue, with many cultural items being held by memory institutions located outside the community, both geographically and culturally. Moreover, the pandemic has increased the challenges of living in remote communities, including the physical distance that often exists between an Indigenous community and its cultural heritage.

The ITK said this difference between access and ownership should be addressed. Importantly, people should not have to pay to access their own cultural heritage, and geographical barriers limit participation. The UBCIC agreed on this point, saying cultural items should be kept close to the community. This would provide better context and ensure more meaningful access. The ITK proposed increasing remote training opportunities in the North and developing more human capacity in this region as one way of closing the gap between Indigenous communities

and their cultural heritage. It did not consider increased travel opportunities a realistic option due to the geography of the North.

## **Funding Support for Immigrant Welcome Programs**

The ABPQ highlighted the challenges faced by libraries that provide welcome programs for recent immigrants and other minority groups. Critically, the role of libraries in this area is often taken for granted with the effect that they are not given sufficient credit or funding support for this work. This situation extends to PCH, which does not provide funding support for libraries that welcome recent immigrants. In making this point, the ABPQ found support from the ABQLA.

## **Engaging Marginalized Communities**

On the question of engaging marginalized communities, the AAQ suggested that PCH could act as a facilitator and intermediary in order to create partnerships with these communities. Examples of partnerships might include forums and training. The ACA noted that online offerings could be used to increase the participation of marginalized communities. In contrast, The ArQuives argued that the work already being done by marginalized communities, including the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities should be recognized. This work may not be “professional” in the traditional sense, but it is valuable and has been used by other institutions and different levels of government. Additional funding support from government can help to create trust in this area.

## **Inclusive Professions and Institutions**

For the CCA, the YCW program has proven central to its diversity and inclusion efforts. Importantly, the program promotes the inclusion of Indigenous people and members of ethnic and cultural minorities, who in turn gain valuable work experience. The CCA would like to promote greater diversity by expanding on the YCW program.

The ABQLA has taken a different approach to make itself more inclusive and welcoming to new professionals. If people recognize themselves in an institution, they will feel more welcome. Indigenous Peoples, Black Canadians, LGBTQ+ Canadians, and other minority groups should be encouraged to consider librarianship as their field of study and future profession. This can be done by offering scholarships for work experience and advanced studies - a point shared

by ABO-Franco. The CBPQ added that the profession is not well known and scholarships can be used to promote it.

Currently, many libraries are working towards decolonization. They have also begun using copyright and the *Marrakesh Treaty* in different ways that benefit minority groups. CARL has created partnerships in support of developing a new national standard for description. CARL has also created a partnership that aims to decolonize headings and subject matter, to review and rework the descriptive vocabulary, and to identify and remove biased language and terms that are no longer acceptable. The CARL governance committee supports the importance of this work; it represents a major project involving marginalized communities.

The ABPQ highlighted the difficulty of attracting minority candidates to the profession while the UBCIC questioned how marginalized communities outside of the profession have been engaged to date. On the specific question of Indigenous representation, the ACA acknowledged the lack of diversity within the profession. Indigenous Peoples have historically been excluded from the profession for a variety of reasons, including discrimination and geography. Efforts are now being made to rectify the situation. One continuing challenge mentioned by the ITK involves the lack of training programs available to people in the North. The professions needs to develop more professional capacities in this region.

## **Environmental Considerations**

### **Building Green and Supporting Stronger Communities**

Both the CULC and the CFLA argued that libraries have been largely successful in transitioning to new, more environmentally friendly buildings. These successes could be used to “showcase” what is possible and provide learning opportunities for other institutions. Any extra financial support to help in this transition as noted by ABO-Franco - would be welcome. There are many new library buildings currently under construction in Canada, and this would provide an immediate and positive effect for the local environment and economy. At the same time, the CULC cautioned that libraries need to reduce waste within the sector. This could be done by investing in shared physical spaces and investing in shared digital solutions. At a more practical level, it could also involve lending equipment.

The remoteness, and the limited access to water in the region, are unique challenges affecting Northern communities. If climate change continues unchecked, it has the potential to exacerbate these challenges. Thus, efforts to

build “greener” would be supported in the North, with libraries serving as a natural choice given their status as local community hubs. The ITK would like to see more investments made into local libraries for this reason.

Responding to the importance of climate change and diversity and inclusion among other contemporary social issues, the CBPQ recently revised its values proposal and vision statement. The organization now takes into account diversity and sustainable development as central parts of its mission. As examples of this change, the CBPQ is now offering scholarships for BIPOC students and has committed to making all of its events eco-responsible.

## **Going Digital**

COVID-19 has created an increase in the demand for the digital services offered by archives while reducing the number of people who have been able to visit archives in person. Overall, this is seen by the CCA as having a net-positive effect on the number of carbon emissions associated with archives. These gains can be maintained and extended through further investments in digital infrastructure and capacity. The end result will be a healthier environment and more equitable access to primary-source information for all Canada. Similar views on the benefits of going digital were expressed by the ACA and the NCTR. While agreeing with these points, the UBCIC raised a point of caution:

digitization may help in reducing travel, but it should also be useful to small and remote communities. In this context, travel decisions can be assisted by placing more finding aids and catalogues online.

The ABPQ encouraged participants to think and act collectively on the topic of digital records. Digital technologies can be used to improve the discoverability of otherwise vast and varied collections. The AAQ supported the use of artificial intelligence for similar reasons. Technologies can also be used to avoid the duplication of efforts and minimize the waste of resources. Problematically, some items are acquired but seldom used due to the difficulty of finding them; other items are constantly being copied due to high demand. By pooling and coordinating their collections and resources, memory institutions can move to address these two problems while contributing to positive environmental outcomes. This would also have an economic benefit in reducing unnecessary investments. This point was shared by CARL, which called for a collective policy on digitization (see the discussion on the NHDS), a collective strategy on print preservation, and investments in common infrastructure.

## Conclusion

The round tables succeeded in bringing a number of different library and archive stakeholders together for a constructive discussion on the sector's future. They provided an overview of the general effects of COVID-19 on the sector, in addition to more specific discussions about COVID-19 support measures, sustainability, diversity and inclusion, environmental considerations. They also brought attention to a number of other issues, including the question of ownership versus possession in the context of Indigenous cultural heritage, the barriers to access presented by copyright, and the need to increase awareness of the NHDS. These important conversations will continue as the sector makes its way through the pandemic and looks toward a positive future.



## Appendix A: List of Participants

Archives gaies du Québec (AGQ)  
Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ)  
Association des bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Franco (ABO-Franco)  
Association des bibliothèques du Québec (ABQLA)  
Association des bibliothèques publiques du Québec (ABPQ)  
Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA)  
Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL)  
Canadian Council of Archives (CCA)  
Canadian Council of Information Studies (CCIS)  
Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA)  
Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)  
Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC)  
Centre d'études acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson (CEAAC)  
Corporation des bibliothécaires professionnels du Québec (CBPQ)  
Council of Provincial and Territorial Archives (CAPT)  
Fédération des milieux documentaires (FMD)  
Institut culturel Avataq  
Inuit Tapariit Kanatami (ITK)  
National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)  
NOV-ART  
Ontario Library Association (OLA)  
Provincial and Territorial Public Library Council (PTPLC)  
Réseau des archives du Québec (RAQ)  
The ArQuives – the Canadian LGBTQ2+ Archives (The ArQuives)  
Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)

## Appendix B: National Heritage Digitization Strategy

On June 3, 2016, the [National Heritage Digitization Strategy](#) (NHDS) was launched to ensure greater cooperation among Canadian memory institutions on their efforts to digitize, preserve, and make accessible Canada's documentary heritage. The strategy is guided by six objectives:

1. Focus efforts
2. Identify standards based on best practices
3. Share knowledge and experience
4. Protect documentary heritage most at risk
5. Avoid duplication
6. Increase knowledge of funding opportunities and develop new ones

The strategy includes specific goals, such as the digitization of all historical maps and 90 percent of all published heritage before 1917, that are meant to maintain the relevancy and improve the accessibility of supporting institutions.

The NHDS has received financial support from the Salamander Foundation and the HBC Foundation. Sixty-eight institutions have agreed to support the strategy, including Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations, the Canadian Museum of History, the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN), the Department of Canadian Heritage, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), the National Research Council, and the Royal BC Museum, in addition to numerous universities and local libraries.

LAC served as the first secretariat of the NHDS from October 2016 to September 2020. The secretariat responsibilities have since been transferred to the CRKN.