

*Creating a New Kind of Knowledge Institution*

# Directions for Library and Archives Canada

JUNE 2004

*This paper describes broad directions for the newly created Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and invites feedback from client groups, partners and stakeholders.*

*Comments can be submitted to:*

[www.collectionscanada.ca/consultation/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/consultation/index-e.html) *(online form)*

*or*

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*WHEREAS it is necessary that*

- (a) the documentary heritage of Canada be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations;*
- (b) Canada be served by an institution that is a source of enduring knowledge accessible to all, contributing to the cultural, social and economic advancement of Canada as a free and democratic society;*
- (c) that institution facilitate in Canada cooperation among the communities involved in the acquisition, preservation and diffusion of knowledge; and*
- (d) that institution serve as the continuing memory of the government of Canada and its institutions;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows: the **Library and Archives of Canada Act.***

Preamble to the Library and Archives of Canada Act

## Creating a New Kind of Knowledge Institution

# Directions for Library and Archives Canada

**Background** On October 2, 2002, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada would be drawn together to create a new knowledge institution for Canadians.

The announcement of the new Library and Archives Canada (LAC) marked the beginning of a change process that was quickly recognized to be not merely a reorganization to take place overnight, nor a transition process to happen over months, but a *transformation* process that will take several years to accomplish.

The first step was to establish the mandate of the new institution in legislation. The *Library and Archives of Canada Act* received Royal Assent on April 22, 2004.

The Act preserves the essential elements of the mandates of the former two institutions, adding some new scope and new powers. It introduces a new legal concept, “documentary heritage”, which includes publications in all media and records related to Canada. The objects conveyed to the new institution are:

- (a) to acquire and preserve the documentary heritage;
- (b) to make that heritage known to Canadians and to anyone with an interest in Canada and to facilitate access to it;
- (c) to be the permanent repository of publications of the government of Canada and of government and ministerial records that are of historical or archival value;
- (d) to facilitate the management of information by government institutions;
- (e) to coordinate the library services of government institutions;
- and
- (f) to support the development of the library and archival communities.

Modernized, technology-neutral wording allows online publications and future new media to be included in legal deposit. The Act also gives LAC power to sample web sites and request the transfer of any government records deemed to be at risk.

The Act allows LAC to establish an Advisory Council “to advise the Librarian and Archivist with regard to making the documentary heritage known to Canadians and to anyone with an interest in Canada and

facilitating access to it.” The Council, to be formed this year, will draw its members from our many user and stakeholder communities.

***Where we are  
in the process  
of change***

We are now defining how LAC would best deliver on its mandate. Through numerous working groups and discussion forums, LAC staff has articulated a set of key directions for the future, as well as internal strategies to support the new directions. Major initiatives that will move the institution forward are now being planned related to digital collections, metadata strategy, service delivery transformation, and information technology architecture, including examining the feasibility of joining AMICUS and MIKAN (the library and archival databases).

***Key  
directions for  
LAC***

The following outlines the broad directions for change that we think are of paramount importance to LAC’s future. Before we refine them further, we are seeking input from our clients, partners and stakeholders.

***1. A new kind  
of knowledge  
institution***

We have the opportunity to create a new kind of knowledge institution, firmly rooted in new opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital information age.

*Unparalleled  
collection*

As a combined institution, we can provide access to a Canadian collection of unparalleled depth and breadth. The collection to be drawn together includes Canadian books, periodicals, newspapers, and government publications; manuscript collections of individuals and organizations of national significance; kilometres of government records; millions of visual artifacts: photographs, prints, drawings, portraits, plans, and maps; rich collections of broadcast and published audio, video and film; and more. The collection is both contemporary and historical, and sheds light on all areas of Canadian endeavour—cultural, economic, social, and scientific. Our goal: to have the collection explored, used, understood and appreciated by an ever-increasing number of Canadians.

*Improved access*

We can furnish seamless access to these resources through the services and access tools we provide. We must find new ways to organize and describe our extraordinary resources, including an increasing body of digital content, for easier access and more widespread and wide-ranging use.

New perspectives will come to light as the archival, library, and other information disciplines come together, learn from each other, and evolve. We will have the courage, as we move toward integration, to examine our traditions critically, build on the best of our professions, and change.

*An emphasis on making Canada's documentary heritage known* The institution will not be a passive repository. A focus on access, a capacity to interpret, and the provision of innovative services will encourage Canadians to discover, learn, research, appreciate, and share knowledge and culture.

We will serve the needs and special interests of Canadians through an integrated and responsive set of services and by raising the profile of some of our most compelling content with programs such as the Portrait Gallery of Canada, the Centre for Newspapers and News in Canada and the Canadian Genealogy Centre.

### ***Questions for you***

*What do you see as the most important opportunities for this new institution?*

*What are the long-standing programs, services or practices that you believe fit a "new kind of knowledge institution"? Any we should let go of? Where do we need to modernize?*

*Where should we innovate?*

## ***2. A truly national institution***

We want to have a national presence and impact, and contribute meaningfully to the quality of life of Canadians of all ages, from all cultures and regions.

As an institution, LAC must become more widely known, used, and valued by Canadians all across the country. Our location in the national capital region must be off-set by a constant and deliberate effort to achieve a pan-national presence, both virtual and physical.

### *National reach*

The new institution brings together a wealth of networks and partnerships that we can build upon to deliver our mandate. Our effort to connect Canadians with their documentary heritage should extend through Canada's 3600 public library service points, its 800 archives, its strong network of academic libraries, its school libraries, and other cultural institutions across the country.

### *Relevance for every Canadian*

Canadians must be able to find their own communities' heritage and culture within our collection. They must see themselves, their past, in what we hold. We will increase our efforts to ensure Aboriginal and multicultural communities' documentary heritage, especially that which represents their experience within Canadian society, becomes better represented in our collection. We will also increase the diversity of our staff.

### *Equitable access*

All Canadians should be able to access information in a timely, affordable and equitable manner. LAC will continue to play its key role in assuring the accessibility of information.

*Understanding our national role* One of the challenges for LAC will be to understand what is our essential role as a national institution and how best to play it. The National Library and National Archives had long recognized that some resources are more effectively acquired, made available, and used within a provincial and local setting, and have supported nationally the aggregation of access to these materials through national union catalogues (AMICUS and Archives Canada). But there are additional roles that can be most effectively played at the level of a national institution for the benefit of the whole country. We believe that activities such as policy, preservation research, standards development, international collaborations, and the development of national strategies are among such roles.

### ***Questions for you***

*How would LAC best go about strengthening its relevance and usefulness to all regions of Canada?*

*Should LAC be establishing new partnerships? With whom?*

*How would LAC best play its national role? What would have the most beneficial impact for:*

- *Canadian society as a whole?*
- *Canada's libraries?*
- *Canada's archives?*
- *Aboriginal and multicultural communities?*

*Above we mention several national roles for LAC, including promoting policy, national access catalogues, preservation research, standards development, international collaboration, and development and coordination of national strategies. Are these the key roles, or are there others that LAC should consider?*

### ***3. One national collection... by working with others***

*A holistic view of our own collection*

We want to work with others to build a strong, cohesive collection of Canada's documentary heritage, in which our own collection is only one part of the whole. We think there are two sides to this effort, one more internal, one more external.

First, we will manage LAC holdings as one collection. The thrust of our own collection development policies—which aim toward comprehensiveness for published heritage, and are based upon national significance for archival heritage—will continue. We will give additional emphasis to resources produced by Aboriginal, multicultural, and other communities that reflect the diversity of Canada, and to the effective capture and preservation of digital media. Better defining the network of responsibilities will allow LAC to more clearly define the scope of its own collections and the concept of “national significance.”

We will organize the LAC collection to optimize the linkages between its parts. Emphasis will be placed on integrating access so that our diverse collection parts can be searched as one.

*Strengthening  
the network of  
documentary heritage*

Second, we will work within a network of institutions to give Canadians access to their full documentary heritage. Building the strength of the broader Canadian collection; facilitating its coherent access, use and understanding; and preserving it over time—all are essential and require coordinated effort from archives and libraries of all types, cultural centres, other heritage institutions, and the communities of creators and publishers of Canadian cultural and documentary resources. A network for access, capitalizing on cooperative collecting and preservation responsibilities, will allow Canadians from all parts of Canada to access resources from other parts of the country. Reference services, providing an intermediary between users and information, will be fostered on a country-wide basis through a digital reference network.

***Questions for you***

*How can LAC best foster approaches for access and preservation of the whole of Canada's documentary heritage?*

*What should be LAC priorities in providing support to different communities?*

*Are there subject areas or types of material in which LAC collection policies must change or be strengthened?*

*Are there materials for which a coordinated approach between various institutions to collecting would be appropriate? How would LAC best foster conditions that would help assure long-term access for Canadians to their documentary heritage, including collections held by other institutions?*

*Should LAC place more emphasis on acquiring, creating (digitizing), and assuring the long-term preservation and access of digital resources?*

***4. A prime  
learning  
destination***

We want to be an important learning destination, helping to foster a nation of learners by helping Canadians to better understand Canada's heritage, knowledge, and culture.

*Content and programs  
to support learning*

Our collection, services and interpretive capacity furnish LAC with an opportunity to provide a high quality learning experience to learners of all ages, from all cultural backgrounds, and in all parts of Canada. These may be school age or post-secondary students; they may be teachers or academics; or they may be ordinary Canadians autonomously pursuing a

research passion or a casual subject interest. To provide effective support to learning, we must better understand the learning process and assess the knowledge requirements of learners. We will evolve our content, programs, finding aids and services based on feedback from our engagement with learning and teaching communities.

The collection is rich in primary documents, voices and stories—both familiar and unknown—that provide perspectives on the Canadian experience. We will present these in ways that allow learners to enjoy and draw meaning from them, to understand their content and the context in which they were created.

### ***Questions for you***

*How would LAC best promote the use and understanding of Canada's documentary heritage by young Canadians?*

*What do you see as LAC's key role(s) in support of higher education in Canada?*

*How would LAC most effectively support literacy, reading and life-long learning in Canada?*

## ***5. A lead institution in Knowledge and Information Management***

*Strategic approaches to our legislated roles with government information*

The effective and efficient management of government of Canada information is in the interest of all Canadians—as citizens, taxpayers, and beneficiaries of government programs and services.

LAC has specific legislated roles to support the government of Canada's effective management of the wide range and massive volume of information, both published and unpublished, that it generates. LAC bears final responsibility for the long-term custody and access of an authentic and reliable record of government. LAC support to the network of federal libraries helps ensure that the information resources and information management expertise required by government to function effectively are available. By assisting the government in the management of its information throughout all stages of the information life cycle, LAC furthers its own ability to meet its legislated responsibilities to be the continuing memory of the government of Canada and its institutions.

*Increased capacity to provide guidance in digital information management*

LAC must have the capacity to provide leadership and guidance within government on many information management functions including metadata, records management, content management, long-term access and preservation, and information architecture.

Information and knowledge management challenges are compounded by the transition to a digital environment. LAC will focus on providing strategic leadership in all aspects of the management of digital information through policy and research capacity and technical



expertise.

### ***Questions for you***

*Given its mandate, how best can Library and Archives Canada improve access to government information for both the public service business needs and the Canadian public?*

*What is the most useful role it can play in helping the federal government achieve effective knowledge and information management?*

### ***Approaches that will guide us in realizing our vision***

Through these five key directions, which together constitute a vision of the future LAC, we believe that we will contribute significantly to the success of Canadian society.

Strategic approaches will guide the changes we make in how we go about our business.

#### *A clear focus on the client*

- We will place citizens at the centre and view their access, use and understanding of our resources as our primary driver. LAC will put in place ongoing mechanisms for gaining knowledge about, and deriving feedback and guidance from, users. We will institute a clear commitment to follow-through, to evolve our programs based on what we learn. Our clients should be able to tailor their experience of LAC to meet their unique need, and receive timely and responsive services that meet their expectations.

#### *Viewing digital as mainstream*

- We will embrace the opportunities that digital information and technologies afford us. LAC will consciously, proactively seek to understand the impact of digital and adapt itself to the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital information environment. Digital acquisitions, digital preservation, digital collection management, digital content delivery, digital reference, Web-based interpretive programs—all are part of that reality. While content is what users seek, online is where they increasingly seek it. Digital is core to our business, and will be pursued as an over-arching strategic priority.

#### *Effective stewardship through management of risk*

- We will understand that we are stewards of our collection on behalf of Canadians, and that managing our resources involves managing risks. LAC has stewardship responsibility for the largest, most valuable set of information assets within the federal government, and one of the richest cultural collections in the country. We have always been conscientious in that role, but the challenges are growing and we must be increasingly strategic in our use of resources. We need to assess risks actively and continually so that we can prioritize preservation activities and institute risk mitigation strategies and preventive conservation measures.

#### *Strategic*

- We will question our professional traditions related to resource

- approaches to metadata* description, and think strategically about how metadata will help us achieve our goals of serving Canadians simply, effectively and in a timely fashion. For LAC to play an effective role in creating an interoperable network of Canada's documentary heritage, and a central role with respect to information in government, we must continue to contribute to the development of common metadata standards and to drive their useful application within Canada's information environment.
- Strengthened leadership and strategic focus* ■ We will understand how best to play our role as a national institution and build our capacity for leadership and strategic focus in order to make a real difference in the lives of Canadians. We aim to be a confident institution—one that is clear as to its vision and purpose, that knows its desired outcomes and how to measure them, that can be a strong contributor to the achievement of the policy goals of government, that engages in purposeful partnerships, that manages risks and shares its learning experience with others.
- Integrated and holistic approaches* ■ We will view our organization, its roles, and its processes holistically. Fractured approaches would preclude achievement of seamless access to our information for our clients and of effective stewardship of Canada's documentary heritage. We will adopt an integrated life-cycle approach to the development and management of our collection, and make decisions based on total cost of ownership and other key management information. We will articulate our business architecture and develop a solid information and technology architecture to support it.

**Conclusion** Our ability to deliver on our vision rests, as it always has, on the collection and the expertise of our staff. Covering Canada's textual, visual, audio-visual and electronic heritage, the combined collection is vast, rich and diverse. By combining and nurturing our staff expertise—with strength in archival, library and information disciplines, Canadian studies, information technology, conservation, pedagogy, policy, government relations, and more—we can offer Canadians exceptional access to their heritage. The collection and the staff are the core strengths upon which our ability to deliver value to Canadians rests, and we will continue to build those strengths.

LAC is a new institution, and it will need to grow into its future. To define its best contribution to the social, economic and cultural development of Canada is a long-term endeavour, and one that will involve continual reflection, constant change and many successful partnerships.

Our initial reflections have pointed us in the directions we have outlined above. Now it is your turn. We are interested in your reflections on any or all of the questions that have been posed in this paper.

**Final questions for you** *In your opinion, will the five key directions that have been described above provide Canada with the kind of knowledge institution it will need in the future?*

*What do you see as your community's priorities for LAC activities, programs and services?*

*In summary, what are the most important ways that LAC could act to strengthen and shape Canada's information environment?*