

Why Archives Matter

Preservation of the past will propel a nation into the future – from the fusion of tradition and creativity our uniquely Canadian culture has come to life. The continued vitality of our society depends on this cultural heartbeat, sustained and enriched by a history as expansive as our nation itself. This history is not a mere chronology of events. Canada's heritage is your heritage – your family legacy, your community history, as preserved in our country's network of archives.

Archives are the personal and public records of individuals and organizations, conserved to get the full story. These records can take the form of family photographs, private diaries, maps, or medical charts, debate transcripts or postcards, together contributing to an understanding of times past. They are documentary monuments raised to every kind of Canadian, they are the narrative accompanying our heritage sites, they are testimonies to lives lived and lost, to the lives spent building our nation. Our archives are at the heart of our identity as Canadians.

They are also at risk of being lost forever, according to Sheila Fraser, Auditor General of Canada. In her 2003 report to the House of Commons she alerted Canadians to the precarious condition of cultural affairs, stating, "cultural heritage has suffered from the budget cuts of the last decade". As our archival assets increase, so do the resources necessary to conserve them. However, the

past ten years have seen a significant decrease in heritage funding that threatens archives, and in so doing jeopardizes the collective memory of Canadians.

According to twentieth century philosopher Bertrand Russell, the study of history allows us, "to combine the merits of drama or epic poetry with the merit of truth." The need to preserve our past is clear; the call to action is urgent. Original documents cannot be replaced – damage is permanent, and once destroyed, they're gone for good. Now it is upon all Canadians to take ownership of their archival heritage by actively committing to its conservation. These are your stories. Keep them alive.

Supporting your Heritage: The Canadian Council of Archives

The Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) is the voice of Canada's archival community. Founded in 1985, it exists to assist over 800 Canadian archival institutions advance the preservation, organization, and accessibility of our country's wealth of archives. Drawing member institutions from every province and territory, the CCA has established a nationwide network of archival resources to serve the interests of the Canadian population at large.

As part of this service, the CCA has partnered with the provincial and territorial councils, their member institutions, and the Department of Canadian Heritage to develop Archives Canada, an online tool allowing users easy access to thousands of archives accommodated across the country. Detailed descriptions of archival documents are a simple keyword search away, while virtual exhibits send visitors on a cyber-tour of a host of digitized collections. Designed for efficiency and easy navigation, Archives Canada is the instrument of choice to explore the heritage of which all Canadians are custodians.

On the front lines of archives administration, the Canadian archival community works to sustain our recorded history, managing acquisition, preservation, organization, and access to archives. To better serve this community's needs, three permanent committees operate under the CCA's board of directors to coordinate archival conservation, standards, and description.

As the coordinating body for archives in Canada, the CCA compounds a wealth of human and historical resources. Supporting archives locally, provincially, and nationally, we strive to strengthen the foundation of our communities' culture, making Canada's collective memory accessible to all.

Get Involved!

Visit www.cdncouncilarchives.ca's new advocacy kit to find out how you can support archives in Canada.



**Endangered
Archives:
A Call to All
Canadians**