

2022 Report on the Archives

BACKGROUND

Authority and mandate

The Archives Branch receives its mandate and authority from Council to oversee the City's responsibilities under sections 253 and 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* (the Act), to preserve and provide access to its records, and collaborates with Information Management in delivering the City's requirements under section 255 of the Act regarding retention periods and the destruction of records. The Branch's key functions are to determine which civic records have archival value and authorize their transfer to the Archives, to assist in assigning records retention periods, and authorize the destruction of records with no archival value. In effect, the Archives is the City's preserver, champion, and defender of the corporate records that document the rights, privileges, and obligations of the City and its residents.

The Archives fulfills a secondary mandate to document the lives of the City's residents, the activities of businesses and other organizations, and their contributions to the community, and to aid Ottawa's diverse communities in managing their own archival records (ACS2007-CPS-CSF-0004). In this capacity, Archives staff provide professional guidance on archival matters to historical societies, cultural groups, families, and individuals. As well, the Archives selectively acquires community records to ensure their preservation, while also increasing awareness of the City's rich heritage through research, interpretation, and promotion.

The Archives executes these functions from its purpose-built facility, the James Bartleman Centre, which houses the main storage and preservation facility and Reference Room. From this Centre, the Archives Branch provides access to the records in its care, and leadership consistent with best archival practices. Archives staff serve Council and City staff in all departments by locating and making available minutes, by-laws, agreements, policies, plans, reports, and other historical files to support informed decision-making. The Centre is also the main point of public service for residents to consult archived civic records.

To accomplish its community access goals, the Archives pursues a collaborative, decentralized approach. Three partners provide significant volunteer support and

manage research collections in the Archives' Reference Room, which acts as a hub to connect with researchers: United Church of Canada, Ontario Genealogical Society – Ottawa Branch, and the C. Robert Craig Memorial Library. The Archives also similarly manages two external hubs, Rideau Archives (North Gower) and the Gloucester Research Centre (Leitrim), which offer access to local records.

Corporate policy

The Archives is responsible for two corporate policy instruments that provide direction to City staff on how to manage their records:

1. Continuous Disposition Authorities remain the primary policy instrument that determines the disposition of Official Business Records created and/or used by the municipality since amalgamation in 2001.
2. The Official Gift Policy supplies a framework defining and governing the receipt and disposition of official gifts as records of the municipality.

The Archives also participates regularly in reviews of the corporate Donation Receipt Policy.

Information management systems

The City uses three information management systems to manage its archival records, with some overlap in their intended functionality:

1. RMS (Records Management System) is used to manage paper-based City records that have been designated as Archived.
2. BIMS (Business Information Management System) is used to manage City records in electronic form that have been designated as Archived.
3. MINISIS is used to manage private collections of archival records, as well as certain City records that were repatriated or recovered by the Archives or transferred directly pre-amalgamation.

DISCUSSION

Records management in an increasingly digital world

When carrying out its responsibilities, the Archives Branch not only determines the archival value of Official Business Records, but also evaluates the recordkeeping

systems in which they are created. This supports the Archives' requirement to attest to the records' authenticity, ensuring that the City delivers on its recordkeeping obligations under the *Municipal Act, 2001*. Yet, in the context of our increasingly digital world, the Archives is observing several new challenges to its ability to fulfill this role.

In particular, the Archives has seen issues arise around records creation, preservation, and discovery with the rapid adoption of digital systems during the pandemic. In many cases, systems have been adopted without the systematic application of recordkeeping standards, which includes a lack of auditing and training for staff as would have taken place within the workplace pre-pandemic.

At the same time, an increased use of digital applications for business activities has led to a corresponding change of scale and contextualization, as staff are transitioning more quickly from paper to electronic records. While paper records typically exist in a physical file system that inherently provides context, digital records are easily divorced from their context of creation, without an automatic way to associate one digital record with another. This deficit is exacerbated by the aforementioned lack of training, auditing, and verification that would normally take place in the office.

Records management and discovery are becoming progressively more complex within this dispersed records environment, in which a record's context is increasingly difficult to demonstrate. However, in an age of public enquiries it is clear we cannot rely on these systems to function like magic. Indeed, they need to be managed more than their paper counterparts, with greater attention to recordkeeping standards. Only by doing so will the Archives, and by extension the City, be able to meet its responsibilities to Ottawa's residents and the democratic process.

Staffing and its impacts

Over the last three years, the Archives Branch has highlighted in its Annual Report the impact of staffing reductions on productivity. The Branch requires sufficient resources to manage the City records in its care and improve their discoverability. This is particularly critical in the context of the increasing complexity of records management environments, as discussed above.

With a reduced staff complement, the Archives will be challenged to meet its responsibilities, which in turn impacts the City's ability to fulfill its legal obligations to preserve its records and make them accessible to the public in accordance with sections 253 and 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. It will also impact the delivery of the City's commitments under Item 77 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action*, as well as the Archives' ability to implement the City's Diversity, Equity, and

Inclusion priorities to diversify its archival holdings and showcase the contributions of the diverse communities of Ottawa.

Over time, these issues will have the unwanted effect of eroding trust in the Archives and the City as a whole, as public institutions. The risks associated with unmitigated growth of records backlogs have been captured in the Office of the City Clerk's Risk Register.

MINISIS collections database

As noted above, MINISIS is used to manage the City's community collections of archival records, as well as certain City records that were transferred directly pre-amalgamation, repatriated, or recovered by the Archives. MINISIS is also used by the City Museums and other local community museums to manage their collection records. The online Public Access Catalogue was procured in 2013 as an add-on to the Archives' existing Collections Management System (CMS) with funding from the *Museum Sustainability Plan*. It has since been renewed as "software as a service" on an annual basis.¹ In 2022, the Archives began developing a plan for reviewing this engagement to ensure that it continues to meet all relevant standards and best practices, including procurement, archives management, and web accessibility. This review will be completed in 2023.

Strategic alignment

Continuous Disposition Authorities

The Continuous Disposition Authorities (CDA) program supports the management of the City's records, as well as the City's fulfilment of its recordkeeping obligations. It is the primary instrument used by the Archives to determine the disposition of Official Business Records. Proactively, civic records are appraised before they arrive at the Archives to ensure that only appropriate and vital records are transferred, preserved, and made available.

The CDA program focuses on the acquisition of records from the City of Ottawa since 2001, as well as from agencies, boards, and commissions that are mandated to transfer records to the Archives. Its goal is to enable the Archives to acquire appropriate

¹ The CMS, which was originally procured in 2004, is regularly maintained through a TS&M contract, and is delivered as a client-server solution on the City's servers.

documentary evidence about how the City formulates its policies, makes decisions, transacts its business, and interacts with citizens.

This is done by researching the:

1. Context in which the records are created and used, including the records system itself.
2. Associated legislation, regulations, industry guidance, and best practises.
3. Departments that create and use the records.
4. Records declared against the Corporate Records Classification Scheme (CRCS).

As part of this work, the Archives team works collaboratively with the Information Management (IM) Branch and consults with City staff. The Archives advises on the length of records retention periods and authorizes the destruction of records with no archival value once they have completed these periods.

The archival appraisal decisions of the CDAs are incorporated into the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* Schedule that is approved by City Council each year.

Preservation

The Archives' Preservation program supports the City's fulfillment of Section 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, which requires a municipality "to retain and preserve the records of the municipality and its local boards in a secure and accessible manner". Preservation tasks focus on maintaining the condition of archival records by controlling their environment, storing them in archivally sound containers appropriate to their size and materials, and preventing damage from pests.

Activities include Integrated Pest Management, regular condition assessment and reporting, and re-housing records where needed. Consistent application of these practices helps to reduce negative impacts on archival records in the Branch's custody and prolong usability and access. In 2022, these efforts notably included pest eradication and conservation work on the Mayoral Chains of Office upon their return from exhibition.

Compression of civic records is one of the most significant preservation tasks undertaken by the Archives. The Archives collaborates with the IM Branch to identify previously transferred civic records for re-appraisal, to use containers more efficiently and reallocate vault space. In 2022, the Archives compressed 414 boxes and saved 28

linear metres of shelving, thereby helping to prolong the life of the James Bartleman Centre. Such endeavours are critical to the Archives' successful execution of its functions to support the City's recordkeeping obligations.

Records discovery

As part of its responsibilities, the Archives processes and describes records transferred into its custody in order to ensure their discoverability. Since amalgamation in 2001, the Archives has focused on the records of the City's former municipalities to improve access to these records. Of the more than 23 kilometres of civic records in its holdings, about 90 per cent were created prior to amalgamation in 2001. Ensuring they are discoverable is a critical part of the work Archives staff undertake annually.

Projects focusing on improving discovery with respect to pre-amalgamation civic records entail:

1. Identification and appraisal of records through regular transfers by various City services.
2. The review, classification, and description of legacy archived vital civic records from former municipalities, agencies, boards and commissions, to update the Archives' finding aids and information management systems.
3. Review of classification and re-appraisals to enable the correction of legacy data in collaboration with IM.

The Archives is also responsible to ensure access to the community records in its care, and in 2022 began a dedicated project to reduce the existing backlog of such records and make them publicly available. Already over a third completed, this project has created almost 1,000 descriptive records, making 20 linear metres of collections now available to researchers, including records which directly describe the City's historical diversity.

Reference Services

Reference Services is the centre of research activity at the Archives, where internal and external clients gain access to historical civic and community records. These services are carried out through the Archives' dedicated preservation and research facility, the James Bartleman Centre, and are vital to ensuring the City fulfills its mandate to provide public access to records to promote accountability and transparency. Clients include

City staff representing departments across the corporation, Councillors, residents, students, genealogists, and professional researchers.

In 2022, civic records requests made up approximately 75 per cent of all inquiries, a five per cent increase from the previous year. Overall, the most requested materials were:

- By-laws
- Council and Committee minutes
- Planning and Development reports
- Legal records
- Historical events and photographs

While research enquiries vary, Archives staff are frequently requested to conduct specialized research and legal discovery on behalf of internal clients. These enquiries often require significant resources with many hours of research involving multiple staff. Examples of specialized research requests include by-law and other legal historical reviews, street or facility name vetting, and environmental planning reviews.

As well as providing access to archival records, Reference Services also maintains a non-circulating library in the Archives' Reference Room that includes ready-reference copies of frequently accessed civic records (such as By-laws and Minutes), and secondary sources focused on Ottawa history. This collection is augmented annually through a selective acquisition of bibliographic donations, along with new publications as appropriate.

The Reference library will also be the site for access to the Archives' catastrophic event research files. In the next year, the Archives, in concert with Information Management, will develop a protocol to trigger the contemporaneous capture of records and information relating to calamitous events affecting Ottawa, its residents, and environs. Given the fleeting nature of such events, early and consistent capture is necessary as the Archives' traditional practices capture such information only in the fullness of time, long after witnesses or — in particular — friable electronic records may no longer be available.

Through such work, Reference Services ensures the City's recordkeeping and accountability requirements are carried out in all their complexity and provides access to the right records and reference materials that support decision making.

Exhibits and outreach

The Archives' Exhibits and Outreach program supports its mandate to make Ottawa's documentary heritage accessible in relation to sections 253 and 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. This program has particular value in reaching non-traditional audiences to raise awareness of the Archives, promote knowledge of the city's history, and develop new, engaging content about the Archives' holdings, for both civic and community records.

During 2022, the exhibitions and outreach program focused on creating several virtual exhibits and digital content, developing upcoming exhibits, and installing displays at the Central Archives and City Hall. A sample list of exhibits created and installed in 2022 includes:

- Enduring Bonds: The Story of the Dutch Royal Family in Ottawa
- Key to the City: The Ottawa Citizen Anniversary
- LGBTQ+ Portraits

The Archives also promoted its holdings and programs through initiatives supporting the Office of Protocol such as the Demise of the Crown photo display, the Aberdeen Heritage Festival photo display (Aberdeen Pavilion) and Mayors Gifts exhibit update.

Community outreach initiatives included the Ottawa Sports Awards Ceremony, the Larry Robinson Hockey display in partnership with the Osgoode Museum, and special events such as the Tapestry program launch, Letters to Santa, Ottawa Heritage Day, and several archives-related conferences.

Tapestry Project

Continuing the work started in 2021, the Archives made significant progress on this collaborative project with the Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives. With the assistance of the community-led Tapestry Advisory Panel, the Archives reached out to the following four diverse communities to either expand the diversity of its community holdings or to offer support for the development of community archives:

- The Caribbean diaspora
- The Chinese community
- 2SLGBTQ+ communities
- South Asian communities

The Archives officially launched the Tapestry project to the public with a speaker event in November 2022. Speakers included Canadian poet George Elliott Clarke, Ottawa artist Don Kwan, and Carleton University educator Allison Everett, each of whom addressed the importance of archives in preserving and telling diverse community stories/histories.

The Archives is also working on a gap analysis and documentation strategy for racialized women in the technology sector, investigating which records may exist in the community for potential acquisition. This project seeks to provide an efficient means to align the Archives' acquisition strategy with the Equity and Inclusion Lens to gather more records representing Ottawa's cultural diversity.

Annual summary and statistics

Table 1 - Summary statistics relating to services offered to the public

Public Services	Total
Number of research inquiries	2,139
Number of research hours	18,819
Number of patrons served daily (all sources)	9
Number of unique in-person patrons	96
Unique Web pageviews	779,422

Table 2 - Summary statistics relating to business operations

Operations	Total
Number of days in operation	287
Number of days facility open to the public	236
Number of Saturdays in operation	39
Number of bookings	173

Operations	Total
Vault circulation	4,738

Table 3 - Summary statistics relating to collections

Collections	Total
New reference room acquisitions	87
New community acquisitions	46
Acquisition offers not acquired	78
Reproductions	269
Holdings on-site (li.ft)	52,911
Per cent used of total capacity	53%
Holdings off-site (li.ft)	2,144

Table 4 - Summary statistics relating to student placements

Student Placements	Total
Number of students	2
Number of hours contributed	180

Table 5 - Summary statistics relating to volunteers

Volunteers (all sources)	Total
Number of volunteers	51
Volunteer hours contributed	7,585

Table 6 - Summary statistics relating to programming and outreach by the Archives

Programming and Outreach (by Archives)	Total
Number of programs, workshops, and outreach	36
Number of exhibitions	22
Facebook reach and likes	94,606

Donors of cultural property acquired by the Archives in 2021

Subsections 9(1) and (2) of Schedule “C” of the [Delegation of Authority By-law](#) (By-law No. 2023-67), provides as follows:

1. The City Clerk, the Manager, Legislative Services, and the City Archivist individually are delegated the authority to negotiate, approve, conclude, and execute agreements related to the long-term deposit of library and archival materials in the City Archives, [...] provided that such agreements:
 - a) are in accordance with applicable City policies
 - b) are related to approved departmental programs and objectives; and
 - c) are within approved budget limits.

2. The exercise of delegated authority pursuant to subsection (1) shall be reported to the appropriate Standing Committee at least once in each calendar year.

In accordance with the reporting requirement of the by-law, it is noted that the Archives acquired cultural property from the following donors in 2022:

- N. Alarie, Ottawa, ON
- R. Arscott, Ottawa, ON
- Babin, Ottawa, ON
- G. Bae, Ottawa, ON
- M. Blevis, Ottawa, ON
- F. Bourgeau, Candiac, QC
- G. Bourgeois, Gatineau, QC
- J. Bradley, Ottawa, ON
- Carisse, Ottawa, ON
- L. Clarke, Ottawa, ON
- T. Cullinan, Ottawa, ON
- E. Dreessen, Ottawa, ON
- Dupuis, Ottawa, ON
- S. Edwards, Ottawa, ON
- L. Falcone-Colasante, Ottawa, ON
- M. Falconer, Ottawa, ON
- S.L. Finter, Ottawa, ON

- Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives
- Y. Ge, Ottawa, ON
- G. Hannecke, Ottawa, ON
- P. Hassenklover, Ottawa, ON
- J. Hetherington, Ottawa, ON
- P. Isztin, Ottawa, ON
- Jesmer, Ottawa, ON
- M. Kennedy, Mulgrave-et-Derry, QC
- LeGault, Ottawa, ON
- J. Leon, Ottawa, ON
- S. Letourneau Joubert, Ottawa, ON
- G. Matte, Ottawa, ON
- P. McCurdy, Ottawa, ON
- McEwen, Ottawa, ON
- Munro, Versoix, Switzerland
- New Beginnings, Ottawa, ON
- S. Nickoluk, Ottawa, ON
- J. Desjardins, Ottawa, ON
- S.H. Quick, Ottawa, ON
- Rosenes, Ottawa, ON
- J.P.G Savage, Gatineau, QC
- Seniors Solution, Ottawa, ON
- Sewing for Ottawa, Ottawa, ON
- S. Muldoon, Ottawa, ON
- K. Wilker, Ottawa, ON
- Willow Family Wellness Occupational Therapy, Battersea, ON
- J. Wilson, Ottawa, ON
- P. Wynands, Ottawa, ON
- Zonta Club of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON

Summary of Archives' exhibit spaces, displays, and monuments

The Archives reaches out across the city through exhibition spaces, displays, and monuments dedicated to sharing Ottawa's heritage, providing the Archives with external points of contact with residents and visitors alike.

- *Gallery 112* (100 Tallwood Drive) in partnership with Community Arts Program
- *Barbara Ann Scott Gallery* (City Hall, Atrium)
- *Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) Memorial* (Monument, Lansdowne Park)
- *Mayors' Gallery* (City Hall) in partnership with the Office of Protocol
- *Lord Stanley's Gift* (Monument, Sparks Street Mall) in partnership with the Sparks Street Business Improvement Area
- *Canadian Tribute to Human Rights* (Monument, Elgin Street)
- *Ottawa Sports Hall of Fame Gallery* (Heritage Building, City Hall)
- *Annex Gallery* (Heritage Building, City Hall)
- *Permanent Displays* (additional to exhibition spaces above)

- Gifts to the Mayors of Ottawa (Heritage Building, City Hall)
- Causeway photo wall (Heritage Building, City Hall)
- Chains of Office (City Hall, Atrium)
- Keys to the City (City Hall, Atrium)
- Order of Ottawa (City Hall, Atrium)
- HMCS Ottawa (City Hall, Atrium)
- Ottawa Sports Awards (Heritage Building, City Hall)
- City of Ottawa Archives Building Interpretation (100 Tallwood Drive)
- Poets Pathway (100 Tallwood Drive)
- Larry Robinson Display Case (Metcalfe Arena)
- North Gower Client Service Centre
- Barbara Ann Scott display (Barbara Ann Scott Arena)
- Past Productions display (Meridian Theatre, Nepean)
- Various circulating framed prints from the archives collection in the community

Select media and community outreach engagements

- « Les matinées des Archives », Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans – presentation with A. Lauzon, Archivist (April 26, 2022)
- Re-broadcast of “Our Ottawa” interview, CBC – with P. Henry, City Archivist (May 21, 2002)
- Opening remarks and presentations, British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa Conference – with P. Henry, City Archivist (September 28, 2022)
- Tapestry Project public launch event, City of Ottawa Archives and Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives – opening remarks by P. Henry, City Archivist (November 17, 2022)
- Tapestry Project interview, CBC – with P. Henry, City Archivist (November 17, 2022)
- Letters to Santa, City of Ottawa Archives (December 2022)