

## **2023 Report on the Archives**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Authority and mandate**

The Archives Branch (Archives) receives its mandate and authority from City Council to oversee the City's responsibilities under sections 253 and 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* to preserve and provide access to its records, and collaborate with Information Management in delivering the City's requirements under Section 255 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* 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 to authorize the destruction of records with no archival value. In effect, the Archives is the City's preserver and champion 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 as well as the activities of businesses and organizations, and their contributions to the community, and to aid Ottawa's many communities in managing their own archival records, as described in the staff report titled, "[Central Archives Relocation – Program Requirements and Options Analysis](#)." 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, which also increases 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 archival 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 four 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 archival.
2. BIMS (Business Information Management System) is used to manage City records in electronic form that have been designated as archival.
3. Records365 (R365) is used to add recordkeeping functionality to SharePoint sites. The R365 application, applied to SharePoint sites, is intended to replace BIMS.
4. MINISIS is used to manage community collections of archival records, as well as certain City records that were transferred directly, repatriated, or recovered by the Archives.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Archives priorities**

In keeping with the organization's repeated commitment to evidence-based decision making, delivering on the City of Ottawa Strategic Plan 2023-2026 requires the use of records. For an Ottawa that is affordable, connected, accessible, resilient and diverse, records must be discoverable for good decision making by staff and for transparency and accountability for the public. In this context, the Archives is strategizing new ways of making records seamlessly available to internal clients and the public, and to making accessing the Archives a reflexive action. As staff's work on the Tapestry initiative has highlighted (see *Strategic Alignment* for details), the goal is for the Archives to be applicable and accessible to everyone regardless of their identity, for all residents of Ottawa to see themselves represented in the records in its custody, and for them to feel a sense of belonging within its walls.

## **Staffing and its impacts**

Over the last four years, the Archives has highlighted in its Annual Report the impact of staffing reductions on productivity. While the Archives is – by its very nature – a growth business, it remains fixed in its holdings. Each time new records are added, staff optimize the existing while accounting for the new. Constraints on staff's ability to do so impacts the City's ability to preserve and make accessible its records to not only its own employees, but to the public who depend on such access.

Over time, workload and holdings increase organically, creating a backlog. In the archives sector, the normative backlog is eight years. Through technology and by delaying some functions, our current backlog remains at 12 years. From a risk perspective, this ultimately means that the Archives may not be able to locate (or discover) records necessary for court proceedings or Access to Information requests, in accordance with the timelines expected under legislation. Similarly, resource constraints may impact the Archives' ability to satisfy public expectations.

## **MINISIS procurement**

As noted above, the MINISIS collections management system (CMS) is used to catalogue the City's community archival collections, as well as certain City records that were transferred directly, repatriated, or recovered by the Archives. This system allows the Archives to efficiently locate and manage the inventory of paper-based archival Official Business Records in our custody. Additionally, MINISIS is used by the City's Shared Museums Unit and four external, community museums to catalogue and manage their collections. The Online Public Access Catalogue was procured in 2013 as an add-on to this CMS with funding associated with the *Museum Sustainability Plan*, making these collections available online. The system's maintenance has been renewed annually since then.<sup>1</sup>

In 2022, the Archives reported that the Branch was reviewing the current system to ensure that it continues to meet relevant standards and best practices, including procurement, archives management, and web accessibility. Critically, it was determined that the system no longer complies with accessibility legislation and must be replaced. The Archives completed this review with a request for quotation to potential system vendors in 2023. Unfortunately, none of the responding quotes met the procurement requirements at that time. The Archives has already begun working with Information Technology Services and Procurement to develop a new solution to meet the present business requirements.

## **Strategic alignment**

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

## ***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." This program supports the City's recordkeeping obligations by strengthening access and maintaining the condition of its archival holdings. Preservation tasks include triaging material entering the Archives, rehousing material in archival enclosures, creating inventories to manage records and support efficient retrieval, and maintaining the Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Pest Management programs. These tasks reduce hazards caused by improper storage and pests, ensuring long-term use and access to the Archives' holdings.

In 2023, the focus was placed on compression and consolidation. Over 65 linear metres of storage space were made available as 554 boxes were compressed, and 209 works of art were re-containerized in archival-quality enclosures and inventoried. Compression and consolidation assist with prolonging the life of the James Bartleman Centre.

Archival staff also took part in preservation training that focused on preservation practices and emergency disaster preparedness. These endeavors ensure the Archives and its staff are successful in supporting the City's recordkeeping obligations.

The Archives' Graphic Reproduction program supports preservation and access to its archival holdings. At the request of external and internal clients, scanned reproductions of photographs, documents, maps, and plans are created. The resulting scans are then made available through the Online Public Access Catalogue. Additionally, scanned reproductions support preservation efforts by ensuring that degrading items or those at risk of further deterioration are captured in the form of digital surrogates. Once reproductions are complete, the original items are withdrawn from circulation. In 2023, the Graphic Reproduction program began a proactive scanning project to highlight records reflecting special interests of the public, and those that speak to the impact of Ottawa's diverse communities.

## ***Continuous Disposition Authorities***

The Archives' Continuous Disposition Authorities (CDA) program supports the management of City records, and is an integral part of the City's fulfillment of its recordkeeping obligations. It is the primary instrument used to determine the disposition of Official Business Records. Through this program, records are proactively appraised before they arrive at the Archives to ensure that only appropriate and vital records are transferred, preserved and made accessible. This is accomplished through research conducted on associated legislation, regulations, industry guidance, and best practices; the context in which the records are created and used; the departments that create and

use the records; and records declared against the Corporate Records Classification Scheme (CRCS).

To deliver this program, the Archives team works collaboratively with Information Management and consults with City staff. The archival appraisal values declared in CDAs are incorporated into the *Records Retention Disposition By-law* Schedule that is approved each year by City Council.

### ***Records discovery***

One of the key functions the Archives undertakes is making the civic records in its custody discoverable. Records must be evaluated, described, and their descriptions entered in the information management systems used for discovery by City staff and the public. Without such work, the records would be invisible.

Improving records discovery includes such tasks as identifying and appraising records transferred by various City units; evaluating and describing legacy civic records from former municipalities, agencies, boards, and commissions, and updating the Archives' finding aids and information management systems; and reappraising previously archived records to correct legacy data. The scope and importance of such work can be appreciated when one considers that 90 per cent of the Archives' more than 23 kilometres of holdings are pre-amalgamation records.

The Archives is also responsible for ensuring access to the community records in its care, and in 2023 it continued its dedicated project to reduce the existing backlog of records to promote public access. This resulted in an additional 43 linear meters of records that are now publicly available through archival arrangement and description. These records document various aspects of Ottawa's history that include healthcare, education, arts, disability activism, 2SLGBTQ2+ activism, landscape design, and NGO social services. They include the following collections (the titles reflect contemporary names):

- County of Carleton General Protestant Hospital
- Enriched Bread Artists
- Family Services Ottawa
- Ottawa Civic Hospital
- Ottawa Handicapped Association
- Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities

### ***Reference Services***

Reference Services are vital to the fulfillment of the City's mandate to provide public access to archival Official Business Records to ensure accountability and transparency. These services are provided through the Reference Room at the James Bartleman Centre, where internal and external clients gain access to historical civic and community records. Clients using the Archives' counter services include City staff representing departments across the corporation, Members of Council, residents, students, genealogists and professional researchers. Reference Services also maintains a non-circulating library that includes ready-reference copies of frequently accessed civic records, such as by-laws and minutes, and secondary sources focused on Ottawa's history. This collection is augmented annually through a selective acquisition of donations, along with new publications as appropriate.

In 2023, the most requested materials were by-laws, Council and Committee minutes, historical photographs, and newspapers. While enquiries vary, Archives staff are frequently requested to conduct complex research and legal discovery on behalf of internal clients. Examples of specialized research include by-law and other historical reviews, street or facility name vetting, and environmental planning reviews.

Throughout the year, Reference staff also directed significant efforts towards digitization projects created to promote access to the City's archival records. The largest ongoing project includes the digitization of legacy finding-aids, which is currently focused on by-law indexes. This work allows the Archives to provide access to the right records in a timely manner by pinpointing the by-laws researchers require for decision making. Archives staff also completed the former municipalities zoning by-law digitization project, which involved digitizing all the comprehensive zoning by-laws and amendments from Ottawa's pre-amalgamation municipalities. Staff completed optical character recognition (OCR) for all scans which totaled over 6,500 pages.

To assist with 3-1-1 enquiries, Reference Services also updated and created knowledge-based articles for Service Ottawa. Topics include general information about visiting the Archives, the types of enquiries for which the Archives can provide responsive records, research resources for the public, donations and exhibitions.

Throughout its work, Reference Services ensures that the City achieves its recordkeeping and accountability requirements and provides access to the right records and reference materials that support decision making.

### ***Community access***

The Archives uses a collaborative decentralized approach to meet its community access goals, with three on-site partners in the Reference Room and two external hubs for delivery of localized archival services. The United Church of Canada, the Ontario Genealogical Society (Ottawa Branch), and the C. Robert Craig Memorial Library each provide significant volunteer support and manage research collections in the Archives'

Reference Room. The Archives' external hubs include the Rideau Archives (North Gower) and the Gloucester Research Centre (Leitrim), which manage and provide access to local records.

In 2023, the Rideau Archives, which preserves and makes available the records of south rural Ottawa, focused on renewing its existing facility and collection. The aim was to increase storage for library and archival holdings within the current footprint, modernize work areas, and provide a more efficient and accessible layout. Part of this work included the physical reconfiguration of the heritage site in North Gower where the Rideau Archives is located, as well as the intellectual reorganization of its archival holdings within the collections database. The Rideau Archives' exhibit *North Gower Township Hall Restoration, 1980-1990* also emphasized renewal by highlighting the restoration of the designated building in 1980 and its subsequent development in 1990 as an archival repository. This exhibit was the Archives' focus for Doors Open 2023. Of special note, Rideau Archives staff and volunteers developed a new outreach partnership with the North Gower-Marlborough Public School. Elementary students visited the site during Remembrance Week to research local veterans using selected archival resources. Students will be returning in 2024 to further engage with local history.

### ***Tapestry Project***

Continuing work started in 2021, the Archives made considerable progress on the Tapestry Project in collaboration with the Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives. With the assistance of the community-led Tapestry Advisory Committee, the Archives has begun developing relationships with the following diverse communities to either expand the diversity of its community holdings or to offer support for the development of community archives: Chinese, Caribbean, South Asian, and Muslim communities. In February 2023, the Tapestry Advisory Committee toured the Archives building at 100 Tallwood Drive, followed by a social event. A guided tour and discussion were also held for members of the Muslim community in October. These outreach efforts resulted in the Archives formally acquiring archival material from the Chinese community, the Caribbean diaspora, and the 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

In November 2023, the Archives launched the display *Tapestry Presents: Stories from Ottawa's Chinese-Canadian Community*, scheduled to run from November 16, 2023, to March 16, 2024. It centred on donations from community member Robert Yip. The opening reception was well attended by Ottawa's Chinese community and the broader heritage community, and has led to more conversations with Ottawa's diverse communities.

### ***Exhibits and outreach***

The Archives' Exhibit and Outreach program supports its mandate to make Ottawa's documentary heritage accessible in fulfillment of sections 253 and 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. This program has particular value in raising awareness about the Archives, promoting knowledge of Ottawa's history, and developing new engaging content about the Archives' civic and community records.

During 2023, the exhibitions and outreach program launched two significant exhibitions. The first exhibition, titled *Ottawa Rocks Reunion Tour*, was hosted at City Hall and provided a backdrop for the City's music strategy. The second exhibition, titled *Stories from Ottawa's Chinese-Canadian Community*, reflected the Archives' mission of diversifying its holdings. In addition to these exhibitions, other displays included the *North Gower Township Hall Restoration: 1980-1990*, a diversity-focused photography display titled *Context*, and displays showcasing HMCS Carleton and HMCS Ottawa. Following a 10-year run, the sport exhibition at City Hall closed in 2023, as did the *Postcards from Ottawa* exhibition, which has been on display for five years. Apart from physical exhibits, the Archives continues to create an abundance of new digital content to increase access to the collection via the website and social media, thereby making it available to a greater audience.

In 2023, the Exhibit and Outreach program focused on promoting the Archives' holdings and programs, as well as collaborating with partners for events such as the Barrack Hill reinterment, Ottawa Sports Awards Ceremony, Letters to Santa, Ottawa Heritage Day, Doors Open Ottawa, Archives Awareness Month, and several archives-related conferences.



## ANNEX

### Annual summary and statistics

#### Public Services

	Total
Number of Research Enquiries	2,909
Number of Research Hours	20,384
Number of Patrons Served Daily (all sources)	12
Number of Unique In-person Patrons	137
Unique web pageviews	698,119

#### Operations

Number of Days in Operation	289
Number of Days Open to the Public	241
Number of Saturdays	41
Number of Bookings	355
Vault Circulation	5,865

#### Collections

New Community Acquisitions	57
– Acquisition Considerations	144
– Acquisition Offers Not Acquired	34
New Reference Room Acquisitions	275

Reproductions	702
Holdings On-site (li.ft)	52,545
Per cent used of total capacity	53%
Holdings Off-site (li.ft)	2,098

**Student placements**

Number of Students	5
Number of Hours Contributed	1,165

**Volunteers**

Number of Volunteers	62
Volunteer Hours Contributed	9,873

**Programming and outreach**

Programs, workshops, and outreach	39
Number of exhibitions	22
Facebook Reach and Likes	121,531

**Donors of cultural property acquired by the Archives in 2023**

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

1. The City Clerk, the Manager of 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, the Archives acquired cultural property from the following donors in 2023:

M. Adornato, Ottawa	C. Ireland, Oshawa
D. Allston, Ottawa	P. Isztin, Ottawa
Arnprior & McNab/Braeside Archives, Arnprior	A. Johnson, Ottawa
M. Aubin, Ottawa	M. Kelly, Ottawa
B. Ballantyne, Ottawa	B. Lougheed, Ottawa
B. Blackman, Ottawa	K. Maryan, Ottawa
C. Bradshaw, Ottawa	Nepean Fire Arts League, Ottawa
M. Brunton, Ottawa	Nepean Horticultural Society, Ottawa
A. Charron, Ottawa	Ottawa Choral Society, Ottawa
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, Ottawa	Ottawa Civic Hospital, Ottawa
C.M. Cole, Ottawa	Ottawa Horticultural Society, Ottawa
A. Cruz-Valerrame, Ottawa	Ottawa People's Commission, Ottawa
F. Dawson, Ottawa	Ottawa Public Library
D. Dodd, Ottawa	Pride Committee Ottawa-Gatineau Inc., Ottawa
R. Dolgoy, Almonte	A. Ross, Ottawa
L. Eckhardt Smith, Ottawa	D. Sangster, Ottawa
Enriched Bread Artists, Ottawa	G. Sealey, Ottawa
T. Ewanovich, Ottawa	W. Staubi, Ottawa
Family Services Ottawa, Ottawa	Ukrainian Canadian Professional and Business Association of Ottawa
M. Guttadauria, Gatineau	University of Ottawa Archives
M. Hatchard, Ottawa	J. Waldroff, Newington
B. Hicks, Ottawa	E. Walters, Ottawa
Ingenium – Canada's Museums and Science and Innovation, Ottawa	M. Wilkinson M, Ottawa
	A. Pearson, Ottawa

R. Yip, Ottawa

### **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:

- Annex Gallery (Heritage Building, City Hall)
- Barbara Ann Scott Gallery (Atrium, City Hall)
- Canadian Tribute to Human Rights (Monument, Elgin Street)
- Gallery 112 (100 Tallwood Drive)
- Lord Stanley's Gift (Monument, Sparks Street Mall) in partnership with the Sparks Street BIA
- Mayor's Gallery (Heritage Building, City Hall) in partnership with the Office of Protocol
- Ottawa Sports Hall of Fame Gallery (Heritage Building, City Hall)
- Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Memorial (Monument, Lansdowne Park)
- *Permanent displays (additional to exhibition space above)*
  - Barbara Ann Scott Display (Barbara Ann Scott Arena)
  - Causeway photo wall (Heritage Building, City Hall)
  - Chains of Office (Atrium, City Hall)
  - City of Ottawa Archives Interpretation (100 Tallwood)
  - Gifts to the Mayors of Ottawa (Heritage Building, City Hall)
  - HMCS Ottawa (Atrium, City Hall) in partnership with City of Ottawa Facilities
  - Keys to the City (Atrium, City Hall)
  - Larry Robinson display case (Metcalf Arena)
  - LGBTQ portraits (Atrium, City Hall)
  - North Gower Client Services Centre
  - Order of Ottawa (Atrium, City Hall)
  - Ottawa Sports Awards (Atrium, City Hall)
  - Past Productions display (Meridian Theatre)

- Poets Pathway (100 Tallwood)
- Riverboat G.B. Greene Anchor and plaque (Britannia Beach)
- York Street Millennium Fountain (intersection of York St. and Sussex Dr.)
- Various circulating framed prints from the Archives' collection in the community

### **Select media community outreach engagements**

- History of snow clearing in Ottawa interview, CBC – with P. Henry, City Archivist (March 24, 2023)
- Bytown Fire Brigade celebrates a banner year: 1840 interview, CBC – with P. Henry, City Archivist (April 30, 2023)
- Presentation about Tapestry Project, Ottawa Asian Heritage Month event – with T. Sorel, Archivist (May 13, 2023)
- Doors Open Ottawa, Mayor's Office, Ottawa City Hall – with S. Jeppesen, Archives Assistant (June 3, 2023)
- Ottawa rock 'n roll history interview, CBC – with P. Henry, City Archivist (November 13, 2023)
- Tapestry Presents: *Stories from Ottawa's Chinese Canadian Community* launch, City of Ottawa Archives and Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives – opening remarks by J. Bain, Archivist (November 29, 2023)
- Letters to Santa, City of Ottawa Archives (December 2023)

### **Executed contracts and agreements (MOUs or higher)**

- Ottawa Sports Awards Trophy Display (MOU)