Document 1

# 2024 Annual Report on the Archives

## BACKGROUND

### Authority and mandate

The Archives Branch (Archives) receives its mandate and authority from 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. The Archives also collaborates with Information Management in delivering the City's requirements under Section 255 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* with regards to the retention periods and the destruction of records without archival value. It executes these activities from its purpose-built facility, the James Bartleman Centre, which houses the main storage and preservation facility and Reference Room at 100 Tallwood Drive. From this centre, the Archives provides access to the records in its care and provides guidance in line with best archival practices. Archives staff assist City Council and City staff in all departments by locating and making available documents necessary for informed decision making.

Additionally, the Archives fulfills its secondary mandate to document the lives of the city of Ottawa's residents, the activities of businesses and other organizations, and their contributions to the community. It also provides support to Ottawa's diverse communities in managing their own archival records. In this capacity, the Archives' staff provide professional guidance on archival matters to historical societies, cultural groups, families and individuals. This work also involves selectively acquiring community records to ensure the survival of such documentation, which increases the awareness of the city's rich heritage through research, interpretation and promotion.

To accomplish its goals of community access, the Archives pursues a collaborative approach. The Central Archives is supported in the former Rideau Township through an external hub, the Rideau Archives (located in the historic Town Hall of the former Township of North Gower). The Archives also has three on-site partners at the Bartleman Centre: the C. Robert Craig Memorial Library, the United Church of Canada (Ottawa and the Seaway Valley), and the Ontario Genealogical Society – Ottawa Branch. These groups provide significant volunteer support to manage the research collection in the Archives' Reference Room and offer researchers access to their own collections.

### Corporate policy

The Archives Branch is responsible for two policy instruments that direct City staff on how to manage their records:

1. **Continuous Disposition Authorities** (CDAs) remain the primary policy

instrument used to determine 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 to define and govern 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 currently uses three information management systems to manage its archival records, with some overlap in their intended functionality:

1. **Records Management System** (RMS) is used to manage physical records that have been designated as archival.
2. **Records365** (R365) is used to add recordkeeping functionality to SharePoint sites. The R365 application, applied to SharePoint sites, is intended to replace BIMS, which was formerly used to manage electronic records.
3. **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

The Archives Branch, throughout its 49 years, has served the City and the public by fulfilling the City's obligations to preserve its documented decisions and to make those records available to support current and future decision making and accountability. Until the advent of computer and digital files, the term "archival records" brought to mind physical records. However, due to technological changes, this is no longer the case. Archives professionals need to consider the needs of both physical and digital records to ensure their continued availability.

While physical records typically exist in a physical file system that inherently provides a context with other physical records, this is not the case with digital records. Digital records are easily divorced from their context of creation and there is no automatic way to associate one digital record with another. Records management and discovery are becoming progressively more complex – digital records need more management than their paper counterparts – all of which requires greater attention to recordkeeping standards. Only by doing so will the Archives, and by extension the City, be able to fulfill its responsibilities to Ottawa's residents and the democratic process.

Beginning in 2025, the Archives will be evaluating the City's requirements and developing a strategy for the active preservation of digital records with long-term and

continuing value for the Corporation. Such records are at particular risk because they depend on technology for their maintenance, yet the current systems being used for creating and managing digital records were not built for long-term preservation. It is therefore critical for the City that the Archives determines how the records will be maintained once they are no longer used on a regular basis to ensure their reliability and integrity. This is a requirement for accountability and compliance with legislation, and facilitates future access to records concerning prior decisions. Planning for this project will require collaboration with staff across the Corporation and an investigation of storage and overall infrastructure needs for long-term preservation.

**MINISIS procurement**

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 Branch. In 2024, the Archives undertook a procurement project to replace the CMS jointly used by the Archives, Shared Museum Services and four external museums to manage their inventories. Since the system was purchased over 20 years ago, there have been significant changes in technology such that it is no longer able to meet the City's requirements, particularly with respect to accessibility and cost. Further, the City's contract with the existing provider, MINISIS Inc., expired and could no longer be extended. An initial attempt to procure a replacement in 2023 was unsuccessful due to the significant cost in today's market for a multi-tenant CMS. Since then, Information Technology Services (ITS) has recommended that the Archives decouple from the multi-tenant system and procure a CMS solution for its own collections, largely as a result of budgetary limitations. During 2024, the Archives worked closely with ITS and Procurement to select an appropriate vendor for the replacement system, with the successful proponent to be finalized in Q1 2025. Following selection, Archives and ITS will assist Shared Museum Services and the community museums during the transition from the current CMS.

**Strategic alignment**

*Records discovery*

Records discovery is a major function undertaken by the Archives to support the City's recordkeeping obligations. A key component of making records available includes their processing (i.e., verifying and stabilizing condition, determining access to information and privacy restrictions, securely storing, and cataloguing).

In 2024, the Archives Branch, to support the Archives' secondary mandate to document the lives of the City's residents and activities of businesses and organizations, continued to reduce its backlog. This work created 55 new fonds-level descriptions to

bring the current total to researchers to 970, an increase of 5.7 per cent. This backlog work eliminated approximately 10 per cent of the backlog of items from private donors.

In addition, two existing fonds received substantial backlog descriptive work:

- MG017, Sheila Isabella Stewart fonds: sequence of photographs found undescribed in otherwise described fonds
- MG038, Ottawa Civic fonds: description of unprocessed accruals

A highlight of this work included the description of almost six years of *Ottawa Citizen* negatives from the 1970s, a photograph showing the first Knox Presbyterian Church building on Daly Street, a large number of fonds originally collected by the Gloucester Historical Society and the identification of the provenance of a number of fonds that had formerly been unknown.

*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 Branch's services include City staff representing departments across the Corporation, Members of Council, residents, students, genealogists and professional researchers.

In 2024, 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. This includes facilitating the research, reproduction and certification of by-laws for legal purposes. Throughout the year, the development of an improved Knowledge Base Article on by-law research and discovery was identified as a high priority. It was determined that the process of how to research and obtain copies of by-laws is confusing for external clients. For 2025, the Archives will focus on improving by-law access and the clarification of research procedures for all clients.

Reference staff identified the need for an improved finding aid for the fonds RG027, City Photographer fonds. This fonds is one of the most frequently requested by internal management due to the high volume of photographs of former Councils and Committees of Council. Reference staff assist in the research and processing of rush photo orders. To research through the fonds, staff used photographer logs created by former City Photographers. These logs are primarily handwritten and, when scanned, are not captured well using Optical Character Recognition. A modern finding aid was deemed necessary. In 2024, staff reviewed and transcribed the photographers' logs into a digital finding aid that also included box lists, dates and original photographic data. In

2025, the fonds is expected to be fully inventoried. This project will make the approximately 6,000 individual events photographed between 1974 and 2000 more readily available for both internal and external research.

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 Archives actively looks for books for the Reference Library that will improve the diversity of its collections and better reflect the demographics of Ottawa. In 2024, the Archives received a donation of books from the estate of Terry Cook, a local area archivist who made significant contributions to the archival field on a national and international level.

*Preservation*

The Archives Branch's 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 strives to preserve and make accessible civic and community records of archival value to Council, City staff and members of the public. The Archives achieves this through the implementation of a program that focuses on controlling and monitoring its specialized vaults as well as the Rideau Archives. Preservation tasks include triaging material entering the Archives, tracking the condition of archival records, ensuring that archival material is properly housed in archival enclosures and conducting the Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Pest Management programs. These tasks reduce hazards caused by improper storage and pests thereby ensuring the long-term use and continuing access to the Archives' holdings.

*Continuous Disposition Authorities*

The Continuous Disposition Authorities (CDA) program is one of the Archives Branch's major tools for managing the lifecycle of the City's records. This generates the primary policy instruments that determine the disposition of Official Business Records created and/or used by the municipality since amalgamation in 2001. Through this program, records are proactively appraised before their creation to ensure that only the vital records of the Corporation of the City of Ottawa are transferred, preserved and accessible at the Archives. The CDA program focuses on the acquisition of the Corporation's records, as well as from agencies, boards and commissions that are mandated to transfer records to the Archives. The objective of the CDAs is to support the effective management of civic records through protecting the integrity of archival records and ensuring their timely transfer to the Archives.

The Archives works collaboratively with the Information Management Branch and consults with the City staff that create and/or use the records. The Archives advises on the length of record retention periods and authorizes the destruction of records with no archival value once they have completed their retention periods. CDAs are incorporated in the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* (By-law No. 2021-183, as amended), which is approved by Council each year.

*Tapestry Initiative*

The Tapestry Initiative began in 2021 with the goal to expand the diversity of the Archives Branch's community holdings and to build a more inclusive archives that reflects the rich diversity of Ottawa. In 2024, the initiative experienced organizational changes part way through the year. The Archives took this as an opportunity to step back and reflect on the work that came before, which was done with its primary partner, Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives. The initiative started to raise awareness on the value of preserving history and memory in building to better reflect on the pivotal role of community engagement in building strong relationships with Ottawa's diverse communities. The Archives and Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives want to continue this important work and time was taken to strengthen the Tapestry Strategic Plan. Consequently, changes were made to the plan to take the initiative to 2027.

The Tapestry Initiative's exhibition *Stories from Ottawa's Chinese Canadian Community* closed in March 2024 after receiving positive media coverage and broad community interest. At the beginning of the year, the City Archivist and community leader Robert Yip had an interview with CBC in the exhibition space. To further promote Ottawa's Chinese community, the Archives launched an exhibit booklet in both print and online.

*Exhibits and outreach*

The Archives Branch's Exhibit and Outreach program supports its mandate to make Ottawa's documentary heritage accessible in its 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. The program continues to increase focus on creating digital content to highlight the collection, provide research resources and increase digital access.

In 2024, the program promoted the Archives' holdings and collaborated with various partners. The Exhibit and Outreach program created displays such as:

- *Rick St. John: Carver and Community Builder*

- *The Ottawa Civic Hospital: Celebrating 100 Years*

- *Capital Skies: Honouring the RCAF in Ottawa*

- *Electric Streetcar Bank Street Plaque*

A new exhibit for the Barbara Ann Scott Gallery is also in development. Additional displays included the *Team Homan Key to the City, Diane Deans Photo Commemoration* and *Accessibility Day Photo* reel. In the Archives' home Gallery 112, the *Carefully Selected* exhibition was curated by Archives' staff to highlight the Archives' photo collection, where staff were asked to choose their favourite photographs for exhibition.

*Legacy collections*

The Archives Branch has a Retro Description program that improves public access to previously acquired records. This includes updating, expanding and creating descriptions of processed and unprocessed records. Priorities in 2024 were based on collections frequently requested by the Archives' clients and those who represent Ottawa's diverse communities. Some of the fonds that were improved by implementing best practices and standards included:

- MG013, Project 4000 fonds

- MG984, Ottawa Choral Society

- MG1013, Brian Duquette fonds (re: Laurentian High School photographs)

- MG1016, Aline Akeson fonds (re: Ottawa Council for Low Income Support Services)

Staff reviewed the file and item-level descriptive information in the Archives' main database as well as developing and implementing new data standards to improve consistency and accuracy.

A review began for two specialized databases: the Commemorative database and the Elected Officials database, to ensure that entries are complete, accurate and have source information. For example, the Elected Officials database requires the confirmation of the municipalities and wards elected officials served, their terms in office, committee memberships and biographical information.

**ANNEX**

**Annual summary and statistics**

| Public Services | Total |
|---|---|
| Number of research enquiries | 2,157 |
| Number of research hours | 26,331 |
| Number of patrons served daily (all sources) | 9 |
| Number of unique in-person patrons | 194 |
| Certified by-laws requested | 59 |
| Unique web pageviews | 578,265 |

**Operations**

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of days in operation | 291 |
| Number of days facility open to the public | 244 |
| Number of Saturdays | 42 |
| Number of bookings | 432 |
| Vault circulation | 8,108 |

**Collections**

| | |
|---|---|
| New community acquisitions | 39 |
| Acquisition considerations | 134 |
| Acquisition offers tabled | 12 |
| New Reference Room acquisitions | 362 |

| Reproductions | 523 |
|---|---|

| Holdings on-site (li.ft) | 55,297 |
|---|---|
| Percent used of total capacity | 58% |
| Holdings off-site (li.ft) | 2,081 |

**Student and Professional Placements**

| Number of placements | 1 |
|---|---|
| Number of hours contributed | 400 |

**Volunteers (all sources)**

| Number of volunteers | 98 |
|---|---|
| Volunteer hours contributed | 10,790 |

**Programming and Outreach (by Archives)**

| Number of programs, workshops and outreach | 50 |
|---|---|
| Number of exhibitions | 25 |

**Social Media**

| Facebook | 2,700 likes, 3,200 followers |
|---|---|
| Instagram (started March 2024) | 115 posts, 87 followers |
| YouTube | 221 subscribers, 23 videos, 95,681 views |

**Donors of cultural property acquired by the Archives in 2024**

Subsections 10(1) and 10(2) of Schedule "C" of the *Delegation of Authority By-law* (By-law No. 2025-69), provide 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, including executing deeds of gift and letters of acknowledgement as required, 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 2024:

Blair Armitage, New Westminster

Auxiliary of the Ottawa Humane Society

Meriel V.M. Beament Bradford, Chelsea

Daniel Buckles, Ottawa

Carsonby United Church, Ottawa

CHEZ-FM, Ottawa

Glenn Crawford, Gatineau

Paul Cyr, Ottawa

Brian Duquette, Thunder Bay

Keith Egli, Ottawa

Shirley Ethier, Ottawa

Catherine Livingston, Kemptville

Dennis Mah, Ottawa

Tom Martin, Ottawa

Jane Monaghan, Elgin

Murray Mosher, Kemptville

Nepean Horticultural Society

Sandra Nickoluk, Ottawa

Osgoode Township Historical Society and Museum

Ottawa Brahms Choir

Ottawa Horticultural Society

Ottawa Little Theatre

Ottawa School of Theology and Spirituality

Ottawa Valley Golf Association

John Pizzey, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, England

Rideau Township Historical Society

Brent Scollie, Ottawa

Gary Sealey, Ottawa [posthumous]

Patricia Smart, Ottawa

Fawne Stratford-Devai, Toronto

Georgina Tupper, Ottawa

United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto

**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

- 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 Drive)

    - Gifts to the Mayor 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 (Metcalfe Community Centre/Larry Robinson 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 Drive)

- o   Riverboat G.B. Greene Anchor and plaque (Britannia Beach)
- o   York Street Millennium Fountain (intersection of York Street and Sussex Drive)
- o   Various circulating framed prints from the Archives' collection in the community

**Select media community outreach engagements**

- Tapestry Presents: *Stories from Ottawa's Chinese Canadian Community*, CBC (on-site) – with P. Henry, City Archivist and Robert Yip (January 31, 2024)

- Tapestry Presents: *Stories from Ottawa's Chinese Canadian Community*, Councillor Wilson Lo (on-site) exhibit walk through – with J. Bain, Archivist and Robert Yip (March 2, 2024)

- Tour for Ottawa's Caribbean Community representative and member from Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives, City Archives – with T. Sorel, Archivist (May 6, 2024)

- Doors Open Ottawa, Mayor's Office, Ottawa City Hall – with S. Jeppesen, Associate Archivist (A), N. Hawkins, Archives Assistant (June 1, 2024)

- Doors Open Ottawa, Rideau Archives, North Gower – with C. Sutton, Archivist (June 2, 2024)

- BIFHSGO Conference remarks – with P. Henry, City Archivist (October 26, 2024)

- Tour for National Archives of Korea, City Archives – with S. Jeppesen, Associate Archives (A), T. Sorel, Archivist, A. Ho, Archivist, P. Henry, City Archivist (December 3, 2024)

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

No service contracts or agreements (MOU or higher) were executed in 2024.