

## **2025 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. The Archives 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 two on-site partners at the Bartleman Centre: the C. Robert Craig Memorial Library 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 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. **Collections Management System** (CMS) is used by Archives to manage the administrative, physical and intellectual controls of records under its control.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Archives priorities**

Collaboration and community engagement continue to be important priorities with the Archives as it looks at building and strengthening relationships both internally across City and externally with community stakeholders and the broader heritage community to create archival spaces, both digital and physical, that promote a sense of belonging and connection with Ottawa's history. In fulfillment of its primary mandate, the Archives works closely with Information Management and City departments to identify and preserve records that document decision making processes and functions of the City. A collaborative approach is particularly beneficial when dealing with digital records to ensure their continued long-term preservation and that all contextual information is captured. Working with community partners has greatly enriched many of the initiatives undertaken in 2025 including exhibition development and our collaborative efforts working with Ottawa's Indigenous communities, as well as our work with community-based archives and historical societies.

In November 2025, the Archives opened *Cultivating Community*, an exhibit exploring the layered history of agriculture in the Ottawa region, at the Barbara Ann Scott Gallery in City Hall. Drawing on archival photographs, documents, and artifacts, the exhibit traces agricultural practices from early traditions to contemporary urban farming. The exhibit

also highlights stories of resilience, innovation and relationships to the land from both settler communities and the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, who have lived along the Ottawa River watershed for millennia. To ensure their perspectives were authentically represented, the Archives collaborated closely with the Kitigan Zibi Cultural Centre to enable them to tell their own stories and share objects from their collections. At the opening, Gilbert Whiteduck, Director of Education and former Chief of Kitigan Zibi, spoke about the importance of shared stories in advancing reconciliation. In accordance with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action with respect to archives, the Archives sees this exhibit as one step toward acknowledging past harms and fostering respectful relationships with local Indigenous communities.

The Rideau Archives in North Gower is the City's community hub for the rural south Ottawa community, preserving the area's unique documentary heritage and offering a specialized reference library for local history research. The hub is a model for smaller, community-based archives that is founded on the support of local volunteers with knowledge of the area. In 2025, the Archives undertook a renovation of the facility's vault to replace and modernize the original shelving, which had reached end of life. With professional conservation-grade shelving in place, the facility's life has been extended, allowing for the continued long-term preservation of the area's archival records. As well as acquiring and making available archival records from the community, the Rideau Archives added new book titles to its library by way of donations, expanded the collection of Historical Research Files, and through preventative conservation extended the lifespan of nearly one hundred bibliographic works.

In 2025, the Archives received the AAO Institutional Award from the Archives Association of Ontario for its work on the Tapestry initiative to engage with and build meaningful relationships with diverse communities in Ottawa. The Archives also secured grant funding to create an index focusing on Black voices found within two newspapers held by the Archives, the *Ottawa Journal* (1885-1980) and *The Spectrum* (1984-2013), which celebrated the stories and achievements of Ottawa's Black African and Caribbean communities that are not captured elsewhere. This work has started in 2026.

The Archives has also been working with the Bytown Fire Brigade Historical Society by providing support and advice to the organization, including arranging for an Applied Museums Studies intern from Algonquin College to assist it with online content creation over the Winter 2026 semester.

### **Collections management system procurement and data migration**

Another key priority for the Archives has been the successful procurement of a new Collections Management System (CMS) and work is underway for the migration of data to the new database.

The legacy CMS has been used by the Archives 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 database is critical to operations as it manages the transfer and gift documentation for all records at the archives, tracks restrictions, access, conservation treatment, and copyright for all Official Business Records and community records, including photographs, plans, drawings, and objects. In 2025, the Archives completed the procurement of a replacement CMS that will enable the branch to continue to efficiently manage this inventory of archival records and make the catalogue available to City staff and public researchers. The new, fully accessible system, to be provided by the Canadian company Lucidea, will provide a modern search interface for improved discoverability of archival records in the branch's custody. It is expected to go live by mid-2026.

Archives staff have been preparing for the data migration from the legacy system to the new system ArchivEra and will be working closely with Lucidea throughout the system configuration, data mapping, data import and testing. Staff have been assessing the existing data structure, sources, quality and relationships, and have been conducting data cleanup. This work has been devised to reduce issues relating to data corruption, data loss, failed transfers, mapping errors, and broken links that can occur during the migration process. This work is being completed to limit disruptions to Archives operations and services.

## **Strategic alignment**

### *Records discovery*

The making available of civic and community records, held in trust by the Archives on behalf of its residents, is a core tenet of the archival community. The Archives ensures that records are catalogued, processed, and described in the appropriate collections management system to aid in discovery by our researchers, documenting the records creator, the arrangement of the records and context around records creation, as well as determining any access restrictions.

Highlights for new or expanded community fonds descriptions include MG1023 Hy Bloom fonds, which includes sound recordings created by this local sound recording studio, and MG484 Minto Skating Club fonds, which is one of the oldest figure skating clubs in Canada.

Thematic guides:

In 2025, the Archives developed several thematic research guides and tools to enhance access to collections and local history resources. The Archives prepared a thematic research guide for 2SLGBTQ+ materials in the Archives collections. This guide outlines materials that can be found in our Reference Library, community archival collections, and the corporate records of the City itself. The guide will improve awareness of these

collections and make it easier for researchers to access materials. It also supports our ongoing Tapestry initiative to improve access to records relating to under-represented communities. The research guide will be published in 2026.

The Archives also prepared a statutory chronology of Carleton County, outlining changes in the legal status of the townships and municipalities that now comprise the City of Ottawa going back to the late 1700s. This is a helpful tool for identifying when townships were transferred from one county to another, or the establishment and dissolution of police villages.

The Archives also compiled a reading list of materials in support of the Bytown 200 anniversary for the Historical Society of Ottawa, which is now available on its website.

Legacy collections and retrospective descriptions:

Retrospective descriptions are developed through a systematic review of collection contents and existing database entries, supported by research into the context in which each collection was created. This process also includes determining appropriate intellectual arrangement and applying archival data entry standards to enhance client access and support independent research. By strengthening the clarity and completeness of these retro descriptions, the work directly contributes to preserving and sharing Ottawa's history with the community.

In 2025, the primary objective of descriptive work was to improve the existing arrangement of collections within the archival database. This priority supported the broader goal of ensuring that community records remain discoverable, accessible, and well documented.

Descriptive work focused on enhancing the accuracy, consistency, and discoverability of the Ottawa Fire Department fonds, Plowman's Association fonds, General Supply Company of Canada Ltd. fonds, Harmelodic Music Club fonds, Ottawa Elementary School Principals Association fonds, and the Artificial Photo Collection.

### *Reference Services*

Reference Services provides public access to historical civic and community records, ensuring the fulfillment of the City's mandate while promoting accountability and transparency. Through the Reference Room at the James Bartleman Centre, internal and external clients are provided support to facilitate a variety of research activities. Clients utilizing the Archives' Reference Services include City staff from many departments across the corporation, Members of Council, students, community members, genealogists, authors, professional researchers, and the occasional curious passerby.

In 2025, Reference Services staff received a variety of requests. The most requested materials were Council and committee minutes, by-laws, historical photographs, and

newspapers. Staff were frequently requested to conduct complex research and legal discovery for internal clients. These internal requests often resulted in the retrieval and review of corporate reports for City staff or the reproduction and certification of by-laws for legal purposes. Support provided for external clients can vary greatly, including assisting with general research enquiries, helping to locate photographs within the collection, family history research, researching the history of a property, or general interest in the collection. Staff ensure that clients feel welcome and supported in their research and work to identify and provide access to relevant physical and digital records.

To assist with providing access to City records, Reference Services worked in 2025 to create a system for clients to request access to the 2001-2012 Council and committee records. With the online records moving to internal access, Reference Services staff kept track of the requests to determine demand and monitor response times. To ensure continued access to the records, guidelines were developed for the information required from clients in order for staff to quickly locate the requested documents. This process has proven to be successful and allowed for continued access for a range of external clients.

In addition to providing access to archival materials, Reference Services also maintains a non-circulating Reference Library within the Reference Room. The Reference Library contains reference copies of frequently accessed records, such as Council minutes and by-laws, City directories, books focused on the history of Ottawa, historical research files, and reference maps. In 2025, a collection of phonebooks as well as a collection of Ottawa yearbooks were added to the Reference Library. Both have been well received and serve as additional resources for historical research.

### *Preservation*

The City of Ottawa Archives Preservation Program works to preserve and provide access to civic government and community records identified as having archival value. This is accomplished through the triage of materials upon intake, the provision of appropriate long-term housing and containers, accurate documentation to support efficient retrieval, and the implementation of Environmental Monitoring and Integrated Pest Management programs.

In 2025, efforts were primarily focused on inventory control and access. Over 5,500 boxes moved through the vaults as a result of client and staff retrieval requests, returns, new accessions, and permanent withdrawals. Work continued on addressing the backlog of materials flagged for mould remediation, with 11 assessment rolls treated and rehoused in custom enclosures. An additional 79 custom boxes were acquired to house negatives from the Ottawa Citizen fonds (MG1011). Approximately 1,845 new box numbers were created to manage archival holdings, and 584 boxes of corporate

records were transferred into our holdings from the Disposition Team. In addition, 55 boxes were compressed, freeing approximately 20 linear feet of usable storage space.

These activities support improved access to archival holdings while ensuring their long-term preservation, in fulfillment of the City's records management and stewardship obligations.

In 2025, the Conservation Treatment Committee oversaw a wide range of preservation and conservation activities supported by the annual conservation budget. Funding enabled the purchase of essential archival supplies and supported key projects including appraisals of collections, cleaning, repairs, and mould remediation. Additional work included digitizing film and audio media, and rebinding reference materials such as minutes, by-laws and city directories.

The committee reviewed treatment proposals and expanded its role to include oversight of integrated pest management, with a focus on improving monitoring and trend reporting. Progress continued on optimizing the layout of the conservation lab through testing equipment and installing new storage racks. The committee also improved quarantine workflows by strengthening tracking processes, completing annual inventory, and sending oversized accessioned items for external treatment.

### *Continuous Disposition Authorities*

The Continuous Disposition Authorities (CDA) program is one of the Archives' most important tools for safeguarding Ottawa's history. It ensures that the City's official records created since amalgamation in 2001 are managed responsibly throughout their lifecycle.

What makes this program unique is its active approach: Records are assessed before they are created. This means only the most vital records that tell the story of the City of Ottawa are preserved and made accessible for future generations.

The CDA program covers records from the City itself, as well as agencies, boards and commissions that are required to transfer their records to the Archives. Its goal is simple but essential: Protect the integrity of Ottawa's archival records and make sure they arrive at the Archives in a timely manner.

To make this happen, the Archives works closely with the City's Information Management Branch and consults with staff across departments. Together, they determine how long records should be kept and authorize the secure destruction of those with no lasting value. These decisions are guided by the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* (By-law No. 2021-183, as amended), which Council approves every year.

By managing records this way, the CDA program helps preserve Ottawa's civic memory, ensuring that future generations can understand and learn from the City's past.

### *Exhibits and outreach*

The Archives Exhibit and Outreach Program makes Ottawa’s documentary heritage accessible, fulfilling sections 253 and 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. This program raises awareness about the Archives, promotes knowledge of Ottawa’s history, and develops engaging content about civic and community records.

In 2025, the program launched two new exhibits: Cultivating Community (Barbara Ann Scott Gallery) and Made to Last (Rideau Archives). It also presented The City Through a Modern Lens Exhibit by Merivale High School (Gallery 112), Our Story of Origin by the City for All Women Initiative (Gallery 112) and featured archival displays including the Franco-Ontarian Journey in Ottawa photo display, Gabriela Dabrowski Key to the City display and the Black History Month display. These exhibits reflect a commitment to inclusive representation through collaborations with Indigenous partners, women, youth, and Ottawa’s diverse cultural communities.

The program supported major events such as the Ottawa Sports Awards, Heritage Day, and published 11 Collection Spotlight articles. Additionally, significant research and content development was undertaken for Bytown 200, which will commemorate Ottawa’s bicentennial in 2026.

The program continues to expand and increase traffic to digital content to highlight the collection, provide research resources, and broaden digital access. In 2025, the program promoted the Archives’ holdings and collaborated with various partners to enhance and grow accessibility, outreach, and engagement.

## **ANNEX**

### **Annual summary and statistics**

#### *Public services*

<b>Matter</b>	<b>Total number</b>
Number of research enquiries	2,396
Number of research hours	26,326
Number of patrons served daily (all sources)	10
Number of unique in-person patrons	341
Certified by-laws requested	59
Unique web pageviews	561,086

### *Operations*

<b>Matter</b>	<b>Total number</b>
Number of days in operation	292
Number of days facility open to the public	240
Number of Saturdays	44
Number of bookings	667
Vault circulation	5,501

### *Collections*

<b>Matter</b>	<b>Total number</b>
New community acquisitions	67
Acquisition considerations	99
Acquisition offers tabled	41
New Reference Room acquisitions	207
Reproductions	527
Holdings on-site (linear feet)	55,958
Per cent used of total capacity	59 per cent
Holdings off-site (linear feet)	2,063

### *Student and professional placements*

<b>Matter</b>	<b>Total number</b>
Number of placements	2
Number of hours contributed	629

*Volunteers (all sources)*

<b>Matter</b>	<b>Total number</b>
Number of volunteers	108
Volunteer hours contributed	11,363

*Programming and outreach (by Archives)*

<b>Matter</b>	<b>Total number</b>
Number of programs, workshops and outreach	13
Number of exhibitions	24

*Social media*

<b>Matter</b>	<b>Total number</b>
Facebook	132 posts, 2,800 likes, 3,800 followers
Instagram (started March 2024)	249 posts, 215 followers
YouTube	230 subscribers, 46 videos, 90,792 views

**Donors of cultural property acquired by the Archives in 2025**

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 2025:

- AKG Management Inc., Ottawa, Ontario
- Anne Wallace, Ottawa, Ontario
- Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario
- Barb Nicoll, Ottawa, Ontario
- Barbara Gamble, Ottawa, Ontario
- Barclay Nap, Moffat, Ontario
- Biblion Book Club, Ottawa, Ontario
- Brian Duquette, Thunder Bay, Ontario
- CFUW Nepean, Ottawa, Ontario
- Dorothy Condie, Ottawa, Ontario
- Elise Benoit, Ottawa, Ontario
- [Estate of] Coral Lindsay, Ottawa, Ontario
- [Estate of] John Lund, Ottawa, Ontario
- Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives, Ottawa, Ontario
- Friends of the Concert Hall, Ottawa, Ontario
- Glebe Report Association, Ottawa, Ontario
- George Neville, Ottawa, Ontario
- Georgina Tupper, Ottawa, Ontario
- Harmelodic Music Club, Ottawa, Ontario
- Harry Wright, Ottawa, Ontario
- Heather Moore, Ottawa, Ontario
- International Women's Club of Ottawa, Ontario
- Jim Burant, Ottawa, Ontario
- Kanata Theatre, Ottawa, Ontario
- Kars Women's Institute, Ottawa, Ontario
- Lisa Zanyk, Ottawa, Ontario
- Lucy Boyd, Ottawa, Ontario

- Lynn Ball, Jasper, Ontario
- Lynn Corcoran, Ottawa, Ontario
- Manor Park Community Council, Ottawa, Ontario
- Mary Emery, Ottawa, Ontario
- Meriel Bradford, Chelsea, Québec
- Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club, Ottawa, Ontario
- Parkdale United Church Orchestra, Ottawa, Ontario
- RA Canoe Camping Club, Ottawa, Ontario
- Rick St. John, Ottawa, Ontario
- Robert Hélie, Val-des-Monts, Québec
- Royal Canadian Legion Branch 314, Ottawa, Ontario
- Sheila Armstrong, Ottawa, Ontario

## 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 (Metcalf 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)

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

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

- The City Through a Modern Lens exhibit opening by Merivale High School, Gallery 112 – with L. Logan, Exhibitions and Outreach Officer (Jan. 28, 2025)
- Heritage Day, City Hall – with L. Logan, Exhibitions and Outreach Officer (Feb. 18, 2025)
- Tour of City Hall for the Diplomatic Hospitality Group (DHG) – with P. Henry, City Archivist (May 23, 2025)
- History of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier presentation, City Hall – with P. Henry, City Archivist (May 28, 2025)
- Doors Open Ottawa, Mayor's Office, City Hall – with S. Jeppesen, Associate Archivist (June 7, 2025)
- Gabriela Dabrowski Key to the City presentation, City Hall – with K. Hull, Photographic Archives Officer (July 24, 2025)
- Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Cultural Centre visit, City Hall – with P. Henry, City Archivist, C. Sutton, Archivist, L. Logan, and K. Hull (Oct. 21, 2025)
- History of the Archives Association of Ontario (AAO) presentation for AAO Board Symposium – with P. Henry, City Archivist (Oct. 27, 2025)
- Take Your Kids to Work Day in collaboration with Information Management, City Hall – with S. Jeppesen and J. Bain (Nov. 5, 2025)
- Lillian Freiman street naming ceremony, City Hall, (Nov. 6, 2025)
- Our Story of Origin exhibit opening by the City for All Women Initiative, Gallery 112 – with L. Logan and K. Hull (Nov. 6, 2025)
- Cultivating Community exhibit opening, City Hall – with P. Henry, City Archivist, C. Sutton, Archivist, L. Logan, Exhibitions and Outreach Officer, and K. Hull, Photographic Archives Officer (Nov. 25, 2025)