

2021 Annual Report on the Archives

BACKGROUND

Authority and mandate

The Archives Branch oversees 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 as such is the guardian of corporate records that document the rights, privileges, and obligations of the City and its residents. In this role, the Archives collaborates with the Information Management (IM) Branch, responding to Section 255 of the Act – regarding retention periods/destruction of records – to advise which civic records have archival value and authorize their transfer to the Archives, as well as to assist in determining records retention periods and to authorize the destruction of records without archival value.

Via the James Bartleman Centre, which houses its main storage and preservation facility and Reference Room, the Archives Branch provides access to the records in its care, and leadership consistent with best archival practices. Here, the Archives serves 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 the Archives for residents interested in municipal decisions or local history to consult archived civic records.

Additionally, 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 keeping their own archival records (ACS2007-CPS-CSF-0004). Archives staff thus offer advice on archival matters to historical societies, cultural groups, families, and individuals. As well, the Archives selectively acquires community records to ensure the survival of this documentation, while also increasing awareness of the City's rich heritage through research, interpretation, and promotion.

To accomplish its goals with respect to community access, 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 both 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 transferred directly pre-amalgamation, repatriated, or recovered by the Archives.

DISCUSSION

Duty to document

The Archives quietly celebrated its 45th anniversary in 2021. Looking back, this program was created in 1976 to respond to the legislated requirement for the City to preserve and make available the records it creates in the course of business. Today, though technologies have changed, the Archives continues to serve the City and the public as a key agent in the City's fulfillment of its obligations to document decisions and

to make those records available to support current and future decision making and accountability to Ottawa's residents.

In the disruption of the COVID-19 era, there has been a greater challenge not only to ensure that the right records are being created, but also that they are being managed correctly throughout their lifecycle. If records have not been created, or have not been preserved and transferred to the Archives, or have been incorrectly destroyed, there can be significant ramifications for the City in terms of making informed decisions and for legal discovery, increasing the City's liability and costs.

While acquiring appropriate records is a major factor in the City's fulfillment of its recordkeeping obligations, indexing of these records is just as important. Discovery of vital records can only take place when they are properly catalogued, so that material can be located when it is needed. Digitization of records is commonly viewed as the solution to providing immediate access, yet digitizing the full extent of the City's archived records would require an untenable investment in human and financial resources representing many budget years to ensure the quality of records capture and their discoverability. Improving access to the Archives' holdings is best fulfilled by investing in the cataloguing that allows staff to identify and find vital records in a timely fashion, and digitize or otherwise make them available as needed.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario writes that the impact of poor recordkeeping is significant: "Without adequate records, public entities ... compromise their ability to make evidence-based decisions, fulfill legal obligations, and preserve the historical record." The City must ensure that records are not only full and accurate but that they are managed in a way that makes them accessible and reliable for future use, and the Archives is proud to support the City in these endeavours.

Staffing and its impacts

As noted in the Archives Branch's 2020 annual report to Council, in recent years, the Archives program has experienced reductions to its staff complement due to redeployed resources to Recreation, Cultural, and Facility and Services in 2015 and Council Support Services in 2019. With these reductions, the Archives has been accumulating an annual backlog equivalent to the productivity of both positions since that time.

A key component of making records available includes their processing [i.e. verifying and stabilizing condition, determining Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) restrictions, securely storing, and cataloguing]. A continued deficit of resources will impact the delivery of the City's commitments under Item 77 of the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action*, and to its legislated obligations to care for its records and make them accessible to the public in accordance with sections 253 and 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. Further, the City's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion priorities include showcasing the contributions of the diverse communities of Ottawa. Should the Archives acquire these records on behalf of future generations, they would be unavailable to researchers for many years, and could be damaged or degrade (particularly photographic records) if they are not reviewed, treated, and preserved under the care of Archives staff.

While such backlogs are routine for Canadian archives, given that archives are a growth industry, their continued and unmitigated growth maintains a risk. These risks have been captured in the Office of the City Clerk's Risk Register.

COVID-19 response – One City, One Team

As the City's statutory recordkeeping obligations have remained in effect during the COVID-19 pandemic, so the Archives has sustained its services to ensure that both these obligations and public health protocols have been respected over this challenging period. Staff redeployed during the first months of the pandemic returned to the Archives in 2021 to re-focus on acquiring, preserving, and making vital records available. The Archives continued to ensure that record retrievals and Reference Services were completed in a safe manner, working closely with its Health and Safety Consultant, Facility Operations, and the Service Recovery Task Force. This has meant that, as in 2020, Reference Services have been offered by appointment to allow for the fulfillment of health measures, supplemented by virtual services to support access to records where vulnerable clients have been unable to attend in person. The Archives also acquired further records from the community over the past year documenting the experience of Ottawa's residents and organizations during the pandemic. To date, the Archives has received donation offers from more than 125 residents and community groups.

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 community museums to manage their collection records. The Public Access Catalogue (OMAC), as an add-on to the Archives' existing Collections Management System (CMS), was procured in 2013 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, in consultation with Supply Services and Information Technology Services, along with its partners in City Museums and Community Museums, will develop 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.

Strategic alignment

Continuous Disposition Authorities

The Continuous Disposition Authorities (CDA) program is one of the Archives' major tools for managing the lifecycle of City records and generates the primary policy instruments that determine the disposition of Official Business Records created and/or used by the municipality since amalgamation. 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 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 primary goal is to ensure that the Archives acquires appropriate 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, including the records system itself;
2. Associated legislation, regulations, and rules for creation and retention;
3. Departments that create the records; and
4. Records associated with the records classification in the CRCS (Corporate Records Classification Scheme).

As part of this work, the Archives team works collaboratively with the Information Management (IM) Branch and consults with City staff who create the records. The

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.

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.

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 and preventing damage from pests and improper storage. Activities include Integrated Pest Management, regular condition assessment and reporting, and re-housing materials for proper storage. Following the workforce adjustment in late 2020, preservation tasks were redistributed amongst the Technical Services team.

Compression of civic records is one of the most significant preservation tasks undertaken by the Archives. The Archives has collaborated with the IM Branch since 2015 to identify previously transferred civic records for re-appraisal, to more efficiently use containers and reallocate vault space. In 2021, the Archives reviewed more than 680 boxes from two projects. Where appropriate, boxes were reduced in size or re-appraised for destruction to free up space for future records, thereby helping to prolong the life of the James Bartleman Centre. In 2021, compression re-housing saved 32 linear metres of shelving.

Also of note, the Archives introduced additional environmental monitoring into the storage spaces at the James Bartleman Centre during the past year with the use of new data loggers, precise scientific instruments used to track temperature and relative humidity levels. With more accurate and timely monitoring for changes in environmental conditions, the Archives can identify potential risks to records and act before damage occurs.

Finally, the Archives engaged the services of external conservators in 2021 to prepare a Preservation Assessment of the James Bartleman Centre. The resulting report reviewed preservation policies, procedures, and guidelines and provides an overall assessment of collections and potential risks. The Preservation Assessment will assist the Archives in prioritizing future preservation activities.

Pre-amalgamation discovery

The Archives holds more than 23 kilometres of civic records, and about 90 per cent of these records were created prior to amalgamation. These are the vital and legislated records collected by all former municipalities prior to 2001 under the Clerks' custody and authority delegated to the Archives. Ensuring they are discoverable is a critical part of the work Archives staff undertake annually.

In 2021, the Archives' team worked in collaboration with members of IM Disposition and Operational teams to move several projects forward, with the result that more than 1,775 boxes and 17,633 individual records were processed and indexed in 2021.

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

1. Identification and appraisal of records through regular transfers by various City services, such as: Council and Committee Services; the Office of Protocol and Intergovernmental Affairs; Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development; and the former Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton.
2. The review, classification, and description of legacy archived vital civic records from former municipalities and former corporate planning libraries, and Ottawa Public Library transfers to update Archives' finding aids and information management systems.
3. Review of classification and re-appraisals for correction of legacy data in collaboration with IM. Staff investigated and identified records without location and reviewed former Gloucester Township transfers to make these records discoverable.

Reference Services

In 2021, Reference Services continued to be the main mode for making the paper-based archived records of the City of Ottawa accessible. The Archives' mandate includes responsibility for access to both community and civic records (pre- and post-amalgamation), which aligns with Section 253 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* requiring municipalities to provide public access to records. As in previous years, the largest client group using archival materials were City staff representing departments across the corporation and Councillors, followed by the public (which includes citizens, students, genealogists and professional researchers).

Civic records requests made up approximately 70 per cent of all inquiries from both internal and external clients. The following represent the most frequently researched topics and materials within the Archives' holdings over the past year:

- By-laws
- Council and committee minutes
- Infrastructure Services records
- Legal records
- Historical events
- Historical photographs
- Family history

Reference Services staff routinely conduct specialized research to identify and locate relevant records for internal clients, as when supporting legal discovery and street name vetting. These types of requests require significant staff engagement, particularly in those cases when the Archives must engage in records forensics to locate and authenticate records. Staff do so by investigating records creators and recordkeeping systems to identify those documents the City has, those that have been destroyed, and records it should have but does not (and the reasons why not). They further examine the records context and chain of custody to confirm their reliability. During the last five years, the Archives has seen an increase in the complexity of research requiring this level of staff engagement, a trend that continued in 2021.

Through such work, Reference Services enables the City to fulfill its recordkeeping and accountability requirements in all their complexity and provide access to the right records that support decision making.

Exhibits and outreach

The Archives' Exhibits and Outreach program supports the Archives' 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 captivating content about the Archives' holdings, for both civic and community records.

With facility and gallery closures at the Central Archives and City Hall in 2021 due to the pandemic, the Archives focussed on creating virtual or digital materials, developing upcoming exhibits, and installing displays as restrictions lifted.

A sample list of exhibit projects developed and installed in 2021 includes:

- The Vanessa Gilles soccer display (Ottawa Sport Hall of Fame)
- The Algonquin Wayfinding Wheel fabrication and installation (City Hall)
- The Employee COVID Photo display (City Hall)
- The Mayor's Gifts exhibit updates (City Hall)

Community display initiatives included the Ottawa Sports Awards Ceremony, the Ottawa Sport Hall of Fame Inductee plaque installations, and the installation of a new Inductee digital display.

The Archives also promoted its holdings and program and provided leadership virtually with community partners, through such activities as Letters to Santa; presentations for the Archives Association of Ontario and the Bytown Museum Virtual Showcase; Ottawa Heritage Day; and several archives-related conferences.

Tapestry Project

In March 2021, the Archives and the Friends of the City of Ottawa Archives (FCOA) began the Tapestry Project to both diversify the archival holdings in the City's custody and support the development of community archives. The current holdings of the Archives reflect the colonial origins of archives in Canada, in which the records are the product of the dominant cultural group, the British Empire and Western Europe.

The goal of the project is to develop relationships with racialized, Indigenous, immigrant and ethnic communities, as well as LGBTQ2S+ communities. To this end, the Archives and FCOA have developed an 18-month project in which a panel of representative community members work together to raise awareness about the Archives, solicit records for donation, and learn how the Archives may support community endeavours.

The project began working with four communities as a starting point:

- The Chinese Community
- South Asian Communities
- The Caribbean Diaspora
- LGBTQ2S+ Communities

Examples of potential donations to be offered to the Archives include the full run of the Spectrum Newspaper, the only newspaper directed to Ottawa's black community; and the records of radio program, "Orientation," dedicated to introducing Asian people and

culture to the broader Ottawa community. The Project is scheduled to run until the end of 2022.

ANNEX

Annual summary and statistics

Public Services	Total
Number of Research Inquiries	2,109
Number of Research Hours	16,633
Number of Patrons Served Daily (all sources)	12
Number of Unique In-person Patrons	95
Unique Web Pageviews	1,116,384
Operations	
Number of Days in Operation	293
Number of Days Facility Open to the Public	176
Number of Saturdays	45
Number of Bookings	33
Reproductions	1,292
Vault Circulation	6,375
Collections	
New Reference Room Acquisitions	41
New Community Acquisitions	30
Holdings On-site (li.ft)	53,057
Percent Used of Total Capacity	54%
Holdings Off-site (li.ft)	2,144
Students	
Number of Students	3
Number of Hours Contributed	500.5
Volunteers (all sources)	
Number of Volunteers	125
Volunteer Hours Contributed	5,710.0
Programming and Outreach (by Archives)	
Number of Programs, Workshops, and Outreach	22
Number of Exhibitions (incl. postponed)	33
Facebook Likes and Followers	4,945

Donors of cultural property acquired by the Archives in 2021

Subsection 8(1) of Schedule “C” of the *Delegation of Authority By-law* (By-law No. 2020-360, as amended by By-law No. 2021-8), 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 2021:

P. Arpin, Ottawa, ON	C. Jones, Ottawa, ON
Biblion Book Club, Ottawa, ON	C. Karam, Ottawa, ON
L. Brault, Ottawa, ON	V. Knowles, Ottawa, ON
P. Burnett, Ottawa, ON	D. McPhedran, Ottawa, ON
C. Charette, Ottawa, ON	Media Club of Ottawa, ON
V. L. Cove, Ottawa, ON	B. Nicoll, Manotick, ON
L. Craig, Ottawa, ON	C. O'Reilly-Todd, Ottawa, ON
R. Curtis, Manotick, ON	J. Rau, Ottawa, ON
F. Daley, Waterloo, ON	K. Rothschild, Ottawa, ON
S. Devlin, Ottawa, ON	L. Salisbury, Ottawa, ON
D. Dickie, Nepean, ON	R. and H. Shannon, Arnprior, ON
C. Dupuis, Ottawa, ON	D. Smyth, Ottawa, ON
T. Ewen, Val-Des-Monts, QC	K. Swain, Ottawa, ON
L. Fontaine, Ottawa, ON	R. Wright, North Gower, ON
D. Giff, Smith's Falls, ON	Zonta Club of 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)
 - City of Ottawa Archives Building Interpretation (100 Tallwood Drive)
 - Poets Pathway (100 Tallwood Drive)
 - 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 9, 16, 23, 2021)
- “The History of Public Transit in Ottawa” – Bytown Museum, lecture with P. Henry, City Archivist (May 26, 2021)
- Opening remarks and presentations – British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa Conference, with P. Henry, City Archivist, and J. Lund, Archivist (September 19, 21, 2021)
- “For COVID-19 archivists, history’s happening now.” – CBC News, interview with J. Lund, Archivist, on COVID-19 Collection initiative (October 21, 2021)
- Letters to Santa 2021 – 10th Anniversary mailout kits (December 2021)