



News Release

The preservation of historical Canadian data is at risk, finds Expert Panel

Ottawa (February 4, 2015) – Released today by the Council of Canadian Academies, a new expert panel report, *Leading in the Digital World: Opportunities for Canada’s Memory Institutions*, addresses the challenges and opportunities that exist for libraries, archives, museums, and galleries as they adapt to the digital age. Canada is falling behind, and vast amounts of digital information are at risk of being lost because many traditional tools are no longer adequate in the digital age.

Memory institutions are confronted with many challenges, including technological change, increasing pressure on resources, and shifting public expectations. Furthermore, they face the difficult task of preserving digital files in formats that will remain accessible over the long term. As one of the most wired populations in the world, Canadians expect their heritage to be accessible and discoverable online. Today, past content and new digital information are not always accessible. This matter will not fade away with time – rather, it will become more prominent.

“Overall, our 13-member Expert Panel determined that, to meet the challenges presented by the digital revolution, memory institutions will need to focus strategic and business planning around digital technologies,” said Doug Owram, Chair of the Expert Panel. “There is an opportunity for these institutions to collaborate more strategically and develop interactive relationships with users, thereby enhancing content and providing meaningful experiences.”

The Panel’s key findings are:

- To keep pace with the fundamental and unavoidable digital changes that are reshaping society, Canada’s memory institutions must exercise their capacity to be leaders within and among their respective organizations.
- Many of the challenges faced are rooted in technical issues associated with managing digital content, the sheer volume of digital information, and the struggle to remain relevant.
- The digital world has the potential to change the relationship between memory institutions and people. The integration of a participatory culture into the daily operations of memory institutions can encourage a sustainable, authentic relationship with the public.
- Collaboration is essential for adaptation. It enables memory institutions to access the vital resources required to deliver the enhanced services that users now expect in the digital age.

Understanding the challenges faced by memory institutions, Library and Archives Canada requested that the Council conduct this in-depth assessment to better understand and navigate this period of change. The resulting report will help those involved in this area to reshape their policies and identify strategic opportunities. In addition, the report brings together a wide range of successful practices from around the world that could be considered for the Canadian context.

For more information or to download a copy of the Panel's report, visit the Council of Canadian Academies' website, www.scienceadvice.ca.

About the Council of Canadian Academies

The Council of Canadian Academies is an independent, not-for-profit organization that began operation in 2005. The Council undertakes independent, authoritative, science-based, expert assessments that inform public policy development in Canada. Assessments are conducted by independent, multidisciplinary panels (groups) of experts from across Canada and abroad. Panel members serve free of charge and many are Fellows of the Council's Member Academies. The Council's vision is to be a trusted voice for science in the public interest. For more information about the Council or its assessments, please visit www.scienceadvice.ca.

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