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Digital Initiatives at LAC

Digitization

LAC Digitization Strategy

2009-2014

Approved by the Digital Information Steering Committee
October 2008

1. Introduction

In 2004 the Government of Canada brought together the National Library of Canada and the National Archives of Canada to create Library and Archives Canada. A key component of the Mandate of LAC is to serve as a "source of enduring knowledge accessible to all, contributing to the cultural, social and economic advancement of Canada as a free and democratic society."¹ For LAC, the digital world is becoming an increasingly important context for carrying out this mandate.

In 2005 LAC initiated a dialogue with a broad set of Canadian stakeholders reflecting a range of interests in the digital environment. Through a series of national meetings, LAC consulted with over 200 stakeholder organizations from a variety of sectors. The consultations culminated in a National Summit in 2006 where a broad consensus on the elements of a national digital strategy emerged, leading to the development of the *Canadian Digital Information Strategy*. Strengthening content and maximizing access and use were among the imperatives identified in the CDIS consultations.

Since its creation in 2004, LAC has continued to develop strategies and set priorities to better position itself to work effectively in the networked digital environment. The 2008/09 *Report on Plans and Priorities* outlines the Strategic Directions for LAC. Of primary importance is the need for LAC to adjust to the digital environment by promoting broad digital access to its collections and services and by seeking new ways of delivering content and services through partnerships and collaborative arrangements.

The networked digital environment is one of increasing complexity: of search engines and social networking, of private-public partnerships and collaborative arrangements, of mass digitization and digital preservation, and of radical changes to the way culture is created, disseminated and used. It is within this broad and dynamic context that LAC has identified digitization as an imperative and is working ambitiously to hone its digitization program. This strategy identifies the principles, priorities and approaches that LAC will employ to accelerate and scale up the digitization of its collection thereby providing all Canadians with access to the documentary heritage of the country.

2. Digitization Objectives

LAC's primary digitization goal is to create a critical mass of Canadian digital content by digitizing large portions of its collection over the next 5 years thereby increasing the accessibility and usability of Canada's documentary heritage. LAC will also accelerate the digitization of finding aids and of analog audio-visual materials, migrating their content from obsolete to digital formats for continued preservation and access.

The creation of a critical mass of digital content will advance the following objectives:

- Increase the online accessibility and usability of LAC's collection for all Canadians and for those interested in Canada;
- Support the preservation of fragile material and content at-risk of format obsolescence;
- Advance the learning and research needs of Canadian students, researchers and scholars;
- Support LAC's programs and services.

To achieve these objectives, LAC will accelerate the digitization of its collection while maintaining standards, ensuring the preservation of digitized material, exploring new options for access and discovery, and fostering use among research communities and the Canadian public.

In the 10 years since LAC first started mass digitization the institution has produced 6.5 million digital images. Further development of a critical mass of digital content is dependent on a number of factors (e.g., investment of LAC resources, nature of external partnerships, advances in technology, type of material and/or method of digitization, etc.). Taking this into consideration, in the 5 years covered by this strategy LAC aims to digitize, internally, through out-sourcing, and with partners, 30,000,000 images and 50,000 hours of audio-visual material.

3. SCOPE OF THE DIGITIZATION STRATEGY

LAC holds a vast and diverse collection consisting of published and unpublished material in a variety of formats. The digitization principles and approaches outlined in this strategy apply to all of LAC's analog collections. It also addresses the need to ensure that digital copies created outside of the mass digitization program are incorporated into LAC's digital collection available to Canadians.

Although LAC's digital collection includes digitized and born-digital content, this strategy does not address the collection and management of born-digital content nor the integration of born-digital and digitized content. A number of these issues are addressed in other LAC policies, strategies and guidelines (See Appendix).

4. STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO DIGITIZATION

LAC recognizes that digitization can be funded internally or funded by others; and that it can be undertaken in-house or off-site. LAC will therefore govern its digitization program with a holistic view, applying a strategic combination of approaches to scale up digitization and create a critical mass of Canadian digital content. These approaches are as follows:

I. Partnerships and Collaborative Arrangements

LAC will actively seek partnerships and collaborative arrangements to accelerate digitization and promote new research and access opportunities. Digitization using partnerships may be done onsite or offsite. A key component of this approach is a Request for Expression of

Interest (RFEOI). The RFEOI process will enable LAC to identify the level and nature of interest that exists among potential partners, and to develop collaborative arrangements with partners whose digitization objectives complement our own. The terms and conditions of all partnerships and collaborative arrangements will be evaluated against a common set of principles to ensure that they protect LAC's ability to maximize access to Canada's documentary heritage.

II. Digitization using the in-house platform

LAC will hone in-house digitization operations, maximizing the use of its internal capacity and increasing production levels by reengineering the workflow and automating processes. In-house digitization will accommodate mass digitization projects as well as smaller scale projects required to support programs and services.

III. Supply arrangements

LAC will seek supply arrangements to digitize material that is suitable for outsourcing or to carry out specific functions in the digitization workflow such as e-linking or indexing. All supply arrangements will be conducted through a formal and transparent Government of Canada procurement process.

These three approaches are not mutually exclusive – given sufficient resources and management capacity, LAC can be simultaneously an active partner, a significant digitizer, and a regular consumer of external services. Initially, the balance will favour internal work, but may be expected to shift over time to a mix in which partnerships and, possibly, out-sourcing, will figure more prominently.

5. Digitization Principles

The following principles serve as a framework to guide digitization at LAC.

- 1. *Strengthening the national collection:*** Taking into consideration other Canadian digitization programs, LAC will plan its activities with a view to digitizing in areas where its collection is comprehensive or unique. Recognizing that many Canadian organizations and institutions are active in digitization, LAC will work with other organizations to facilitate the coordination of digitization in Canada.
- 2. *Scaling up digitization:*** LAC will accelerate the rate of digitization and scale up the amount of material digitized by adopting approaches that promote mass and large-scale digitization of its collections (see Section 4). This will require balancing the quality of output with the quantity, coordinating activities internally and externally, further automating parts of the digitization workflow, using partnership and supply arrangement options, and seeking further investment in digitization.
- 3. *Enabling and integrating access:*** LAC recognizes that the value of its digital content depends on making it accessible and usable in the networked digital environment. LAC will increase the accessibility and usability of its collections by ensuring that the work of linking digital images to their metadata does not lag behind the creation of those images, by continuing to develop services that integrate access to all collection content and seeking opportunities to integrate search and discovery, both with other Canadian content holders and through popular network-level services and access channels.
- 4. *Preserving documentary heritage:*** LAC is committed to preserving Canada's digital and analog documentary heritage. Digitization does not diminish LAC's commitment to preserve

the original source material. LAC will provide durable digital surrogates for fragile material and will migrate content from at-risk media to digital formats for continued preservation and access. All digitized material will be preserved in accordance with LAC's Digital Preservation Policy.

5. **Respecting copyright:** LAC's digitization will respect Canadian intellectual property law while seeking solutions that advance access to Canadian documentary heritage for all Canadians. To achieve this balance, LAC will seek solutions that keep digitized public domain material in the public domain and negotiate permission and access arrangements with rights holders. LAC will reserve the right to exercise its own intellectual property rights over digital collections created through its digitization program.
6. **Adhering to standards:** LAC will continue to adhere to internationally recognized standards and best practices to facilitate interoperability and long-term access to digitized content. Regardless of whether the digitization is done in-house or externally, LAC will set the digitization specifications with a view to preservation, access and anticipated use.
7. **Leveraging metadata:** LAC recognizes the value of metadata and the role it plays in increasing the accessibility of digital content. LAC is committed to leveraging existing metadata to increase the value of digitized content. In addition, LAC will seek opportunities to exploit and experiment with new types of metadata, including user-generated metadata and auto-extracted metadata.

6. Prioritizing Content for Digitization

LAC's selection of material for digitization is guided by two principal considerations:

- to maximize the amount of material which is available to Canadians, a quantitative consideration, and
- to select material for digitization according to a set of criteria which ensure that we respond to: client demand, national objectives, partnership opportunities, and preservation requirements, that is, *qualitative* considerations.

The quantitative imperative will be met by selecting material that is suitable for high-speed processes – microform digitizers (microfilm and microfiche), auto-feed document scanners (e.g., finding aids, textual archival records in good condition, and dis-bound publications) and high-speed large-format scanners (e.g., maps and plans).

The qualitative imperative will be met by ensuring that LAC's digitization program reflects:

- I. **User/Client Demand:** The goal of digitization is to increase the accessibility and usability of LAC's collections. For this reason, high priority will be given to material that is in high demand by LAC clients and the Canadian public. LAC has established a number of mechanisms for assessing client demand and will continue to explore ways of reaching out to users.
- II. **LAC's Unique Contribution:** The selection of material will favour LAC's unique contributions and advance the diversity of Canadian digital content in the context of national digitization activities. Digitizing and showcasing content that represents geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity is essential and will be evaluated in a national context.
- III. **Partnership Potential:** LAC will actively seek partners who share our interest in the mass digitization of Canadian content. Material that is of interest to partners will be prioritized, provided that the arrangements advance access and use for Canadians and are consistent

with LAC's partnership principles.

- IV. **Supporting Preservation Needs:** LAC recognizes the need for and is putting in place a migration plan for audio-visual material that is at risk of loss through technological obsolescence of its playback equipment. Non-av material whose condition requires the reduced handling that will result from the creation of a digital surrogate will also be digitized in those cases where its level of use makes this necessary.

Given the strengths of LAC's collection, our current understanding of the national digitization context, and the quantitative and qualitative factors identified above, LAC will focus its digitization program in the period 2009-2014 on the following broad content areas:

- finding aids,
- newspapers,
- audio-visual materials on obsolete supports,
- government publications,
- Canadian books in the public domain, and
- government records and private archives which support LAC services and programs.

¹ Mandate from LAC's website: www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/about-us/012-204-e.html

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