Shifting Paradigms – creating more equitable and inclusive practices at the Archives of Ontario

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ontario.ca/archives

Ontario

Who We Are

Collect

Preserve

Promote

#GLAMsGetSocial

Make Available

What We Have

- **Ontario Government Records**
- **Private Records**

Our Collections by the Numbers

- 158,000 metres of textual records (286 CN Towers!)
- 6.6 million photographs
- More than 318,000 architectural plans
- Over 113,000 maps
- 39,000 hours of sound and moving image recordings
- Approximately 24 TB of digital records
- Around 2,700 works of art
- More than 84,000 library items

Diversity in Practice: Questioning What We Do

- What role can the AO play in promoting diversity and inclusion?

- How well are all the people that call Ontario home represented in our holdings?

- How can we adjust our practices to reflect emerging expectations of citizens and community groups from government information-related services?

- How can we collaborate and work with other repositories in answering these questions?

Steps Towards Shifting the Paradigm

- Working with Indigenous communities / supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action*

- Engaging with Ontario's ethno-cultural communities / reimagining our role in developing stories about Ontario and its people

- Developing a policy to govern our approach to archival description

- Putting our collections in places where people can find them / AO's work with GLAM Wiki

- Supporting projects with similar goals

Community Engagement

- Outreach starts at home: identify relevant materials in our collection and how to make them more publicly accessible.

- 'Finding Multiculturalism and Ethno-Cultural Communities Records' Research Guide
    - 52 government record series identified
    - 28 private fonds identified
- Submission of the Alvin McCurdy fonds to the Canadian Memory of the World Register

- Rethink GOVERNMENT Records as COMMUNITY Records
- Review restrictions policies on relevant government record series.
- Digital engagements – web archiving, digitization priorities.
- Considering practicum opportunities

Community Engagement

- Not one size fits all and we don't have all the answers

- Pro-active outreach activities and conversations with other archives, scholars and community activists
- Relationship over custodianship: focus on developing and strengthening long term relationships rather than on acquisition of records
- Rethinking how we define provincial significance and adjusting our practices accordingly
- Developing a province-wide initiative to capture/map the ethno-cultural collection focuses across archives in Ontario
  - Public benefit – centralized database of all relevant information.
  - Archives institutional benefit – awareness can help with donation offers and assist researchers

Description Policy

- Principles and practical guidelines to govern our approach to describing archival records

- Major focus on equity and inclusion, with themes falling under two main categories:

  - Improving how *we* describe underrepresented people and communities

  - Valuing external voices and perspectives so people and communities can 'describe themselves'

Description Policy

Improving our descriptions

- Respectful representation and language
- Enhanced discoverability
- Multidimensional description and expanded concept of provenance
- Transparency and accountability
- Accessibility

Listening to external voices

- Acknowledging subjectivity and limitations of our knowledge
- Participatory description

Description Policy

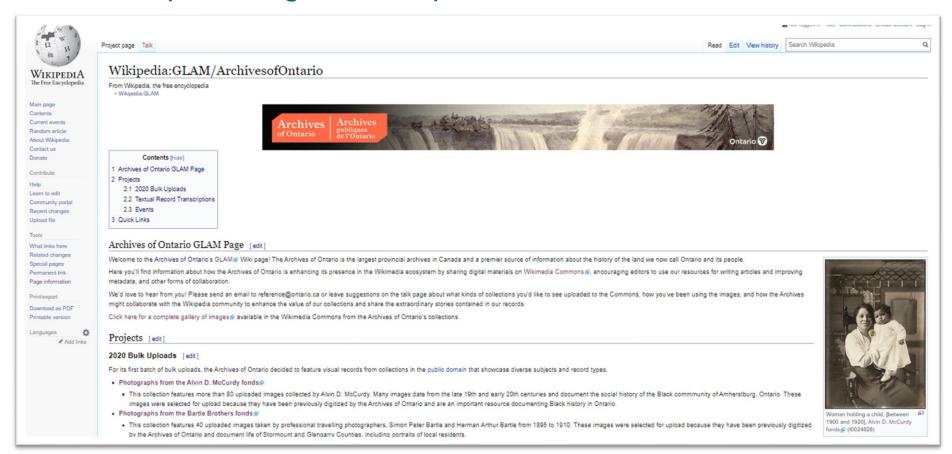## Description as an iterative process

Moving into New Spaces

GLAM WIKI

Learn more:
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM

Our GLAM Wiki Page
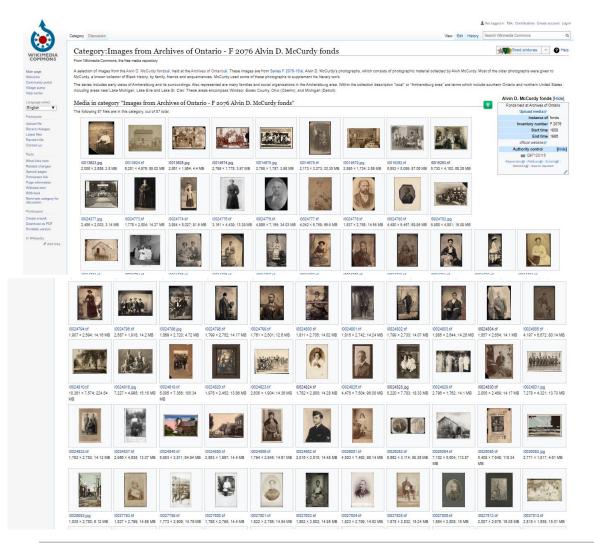
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/ArchivesofOntario

Bulk Uploads to the Wikimedia Commons

20/21 Bulk Uploads

- Uploads from 10 collections

- Photographs, documentary art, posters

- In total, ca. 3,000 images

Early Success & Next Steps

Highlights:

- First upload in June 2020

- 1.4 million image views during 2020/2021 fiscal year

- Most viewed image: 191K+ views

Stay Safe and Thanks

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