



Canadian Research
Knowledge Network

Réseau canadien
de documentation
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Canadiana Collection Development Priorities

Acknowledgement:

Canadiana was built upon the microfiche collection of the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM), founded in 1978 to make early printed materials relating to Canada more widely available. Over the course of 40 years and several structural changes, the organization became known as Canadiana, and merged with CRKN in 2018. The Canadiana collection continues to be a valuable resource for understanding Canada's past. However, because it is based upon a decades-old library of content, it tells an incomplete, oftentimes distorted, and sometimes harmful story of Canada. As custodians of the Canadiana collection, CRKN and its members have the opportunity to redefine the principles guiding the collection, thereby helping to ensure that future development of the collection is firmly grounded in our commitment to reconciliation. The findings and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as the ongoing social justice movements in Canada and around the world, once again underline the need for each organization to do its part in creating a more just, equitable, inclusive, and accessible society.

Purpose:

CRKN advances interconnected, sustainable access to the world's research and to Canada's documentary heritage content in part through the Canadiana collection. For our [member organizations](#) and the diverse communities they serve, CRKN aims to bring together the broadest possible collection of digitized documentary heritage created by and about those who have lived, and continue to live, on this land. The purpose of this document is to provide background on the growth of the Canadiana collection and to guide its ongoing development.

Background:

Currently, the Canadiana collection consists of four subcollections based on format: [Monographs](#), [Serials](#), [Periodicals](#), [Annuals and Newspapers](#), [Government Publications](#), and [Maps](#).

The Canadiana collection is the product of multiple projects over the years, built on the foundation of CIHM during a period when Canadian documentary heritage was recognized as worthy of further research, but based on perspectives very different from today. Prior to the 2018 merger with CRKN, Canadiana.org contributed material to the Canadiana collection through projects in the following areas:

- Pre-1900 monographs published in Canada or written by a Canadian or including subject matter pertaining to Canada
- 1900–1920 monographs published in Canada or written by a Canadian
- Pre-1900 annuals (almanacs, directories, annual reports) published in Canada
- Pre-1920 periodicals (magazines, journals) published in Canada
- Pre-1900 government publications published in Canada or published in Great Britain or France and relating to Canada
- Pre-1931 newspapers published in Canada

These projects were generally not comprehensive and varied in scope based on the resources available. The content for the projects was borrowed from hundreds of libraries, archives, galleries, etc., both in Canada and abroad.

Following the [combination of Canadiana.org and CRKN](#) in April 2018, a Heritage Content Priorities Task Group (HCPTG) was struck "to establish a scope of work for the development and enhancement of Canadiana content

through 1) principles for content inclusion; 2) guidelines for digitization criteria and priorities; and 3) recommendations to increase discoverability.”¹ The task group’s [final report](#) was completed in November 2020.

Since the 2018 merger, CRKN has been prioritizing the following content as additions to the Canadiana collection:

- Newspapers, especially those published by or for underrepresented communities. Currently we are focusing on digitizing from newspapers on microfilm created by dozens of organizations across Canada.
- Annuals from the CIHM Annuals Microfiche collection.

Digitization has focused on content that has not been digitized and published online by other organizations and that is in the public domain and/or poses a low risk of copyright infringement.

CRKN has also recently begun incorporating already digitized materials into the Canadiana collection. Partnerships with CRKN members that are interested in adding content from their own collections to the Canadiana collection have been prioritized. For example, through a partnership with McGill University Library, [a new Maps subcollection](#) was created in August 2022, consisting of maps from the 1:50,000 scale National Topographic Series.

The [Canadiana Content Sub-Committee](#) (CCSC) was formed in 2022 to provide guidance and oversight of Canadiana collection development.

CRKN staff currently identify new content to be added to the collection in three different ways:

1. Staff identify content from records listed in CRKN’s in-house bibliographic databases (e.g. newspaper database, annuals database), using the guidance of the HCPTG report, as well as considerations such as the availability of the material. These databases have evolved over the years as staff carry out bibliographic research to identify relevant titles. The selected content is then digitized and ingested into the Canadiana collection. The large majority of Canadiana content is added in this way.
2. CRKN staff are approached to digitize content for a third party organization (member or non-member), and CRKN and the organization come to an agreement for CRKN to keep a copy of the digitized records and add them to the Canadiana collection. Rights must be obtained by the third party organization for content not in the public domain.
3. CRKN staff are approached about incorporating already digitized content into the Canadiana collection. The third party organization must provide file formats and metadata suitable for ingestion into the collection. Rights must be obtained by the third party organization for content not in the public domain.

Scope

In the broadest terms, the collection seeks to encompass all of the documentary heritage from the land now known as Canada, which includes materials about these territories, created by and about those who have lived on these territories, or published in these places. We acknowledge that CRKN is one of many stewards of these materials.

The current scope of the Canadiana collection includes digitized published content in the format of monographs, serials (periodicals, annuals and newspapers), government publications and maps. The collection is largely composed of materials published prior to 1933 in order to avoid risk of copyright infringement, with exceptions where licenses were obtained from the rights holder. The collection currently includes content that was authored by a Canadian, published in Canada, and/or contains subject matter pertaining to Canada.

Currently, the collection is composed solely of still images, i.e. textual materials, maps, and artwork. CRKN has

¹ “Heritage Content Priorities Task Group Terms of Reference,” CRKN, last modified May 15, 2019, https://www.crkn-crdc.ca/sites/default/files/2019-06/HCPTG%20TOR_Final%20%28Revised%20Format%29%20-%202019-05-10.pdf.

plans to diversify the content types in its collection as improvements to the Canadiana technical infrastructure progress.

The current infrastructure for the Canadiana collection does not support archival metadata. As the infrastructure progresses, it will be possible to incorporate archival content into the collection.

Principles:

The HCPTG recommended that the following principles, further refined by the CCSC, should guide decision-making around adding content to the Canadiana collection:

Representative: The Canadiana collection will be developed to represent the geographic, socio-cultural, and linguistic diversity of Canada with a view to underrepresented and marginalized voices and communities both historically and in the digital record.

Collaborative: The Canadiana collection will be developed in close collaboration with CRKN members, stakeholders, and other partner organizations and communities to ensure alignment of priorities and to support coordination of effort.

Open Access: The Canadiana collection will generally include open access content while recognizing that some valued materials, for cultural reasons, may not be appropriate for open access.

Collection Development Prioritization

High-level priorities:

In Spring 2020, the HCPTG surveyed CRKN's membership regarding their digitization, hosting, and preservation strategies, priorities, and needs. CRKN members identified two primary types of content to be prioritized:

- Content that is reflective of the diversity of Canadians such as, but not limited to, diversity of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, class, and abilities; also under consideration are diversity of time period, geographic location, and types of communities such as social, cultural, or political communities.
- Content that is at risk due to factors such as, but not limited to, potential physical deterioration or financial constraints at its home institution.

Additionally, two forms of content were identified:

- High interest archival collections
- Newspapers

Annual priorities:

Given the breadth of material available, and limited resources, it is proposed that CRKN conduct an annual call among its members to identify priority material to be added to the collection for the following year. The call will ask members to identify collections of material that fit one or more of the criteria above and adhere to the principles suggested by the HCPTG. Staff may also provide a list of potential additions for member input.

Material must be owned by or accessible to the member institution physically or digitally, including metadata, or must be available from Library and Archives Canada. The availability of financial resources such as grant funding may also be taken into consideration. Call participants will be given guidance as to the acceptable formats of content and technical specifications, as well as the evaluation rubric.

Upon completion of the call, staff will perform an initial assessment based on the rubric developed by the HCPTG and refined by the CCSC. The results of this assessment will then be shared with the CCSC for evaluation. If the number of high priority projects is estimated to exceed annual capacity, the CCSC will determine whether projects should be deferred to the following year. The CCSC may also recommend that a project be divided into multiple phases if the scope of any project exceeds available capacity for a given year.

One-off requests and “gap-filling” requests outside of the call, including those from Canadiana users, will be collected and included in the annual assessment process or added to the collection based on the scope of the request and available capacity.

If CRKN has excess capacity in any given year, staff will prioritize deferred projects or lower priority projects based on guidance from the CCSC. CRKN may also consult members as needed.

CRKN will communicate its annual targets to members and the community as well as provide regular progress reports. Based on past practice, an annual target of 200,000–300,000 images will be set. This annual target is intended to accommodate CRKN’s capacity, while allowing for a diverse and successful digitization program.

Collaborations and Partnerships:

Opportunities may arise for collaborations with members and stakeholders who have content they are interested in adding to the Canadiana collection, whether it is previously digitized content, content they are digitizing in-house or with a third party, or content they are planning to digitize as an ad hoc project with CRKN. These opportunities will be evaluated based on the relevance of the material to the Canadiana collection, alignment with collection development priorities, copyright permissions, and CRKN’s capacity.

Ad Hoc Digitization Projects:

CRKN will continue to provide digitization services for a fee in order to support the overall public good of sustainable accessibility to Canadian heritage, and to generate revenue to help support the maintenance and development of the collections. Staff will prioritize ad hoc projects based on whether the organization is a CRKN member and whether the content will be contributed to Canadiana. CRKN will accept projects excluded from Canadiana from non-member community organizations and other non-profit organizations as capacity allows. CRKN will not accept digitization projects from commercial entities where content is not being contributed to Canadiana. CRKN staff will ensure that any ad hoc project accepted does not compromise the ability to meet its Canadiana annual target.