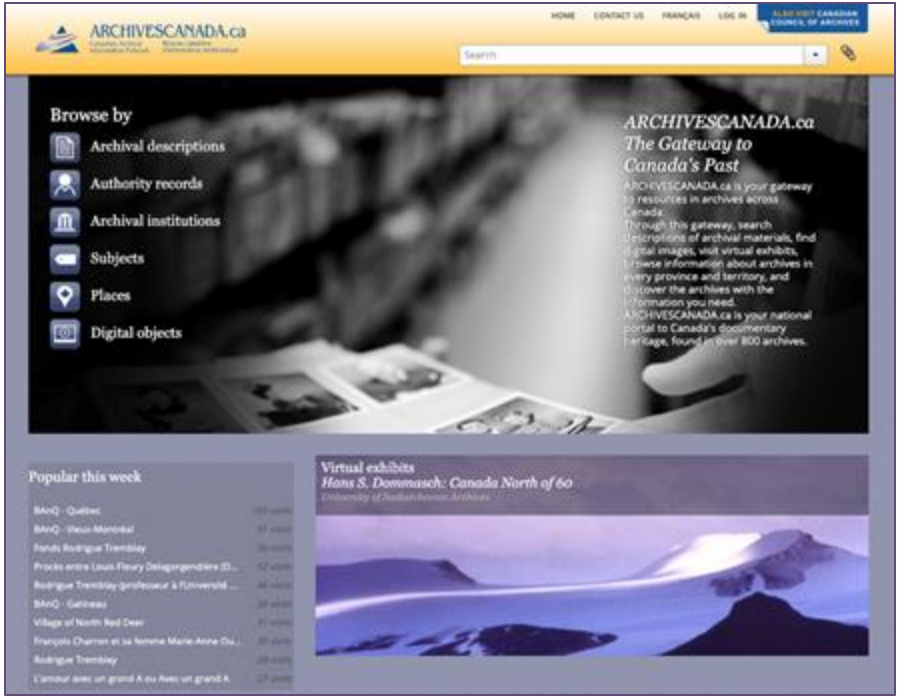
ANALYZING OUR PAST

TO BUILD BETTER OPEN KNOWLEDGE DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

FOR CANADA'S DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

ARCHIVESCANADA.ca
Canadian Archival Information Network
Réseau canadien d'information archivistique



CRKN
MAY 14, 2025

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Kelli Babcock, University of Toronto, Working Group Chair

Mary Grace Kosta (retired), Working Group Chair

Tracey Krause, McMaster University

Jeremy Heil, Queens University

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Anna Dysert, McGill University and AtoM Foundation

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Julienne Pascoe, Library and Archives Canada

Sarah Glassford, Canadian Council of Archives Board of Directors

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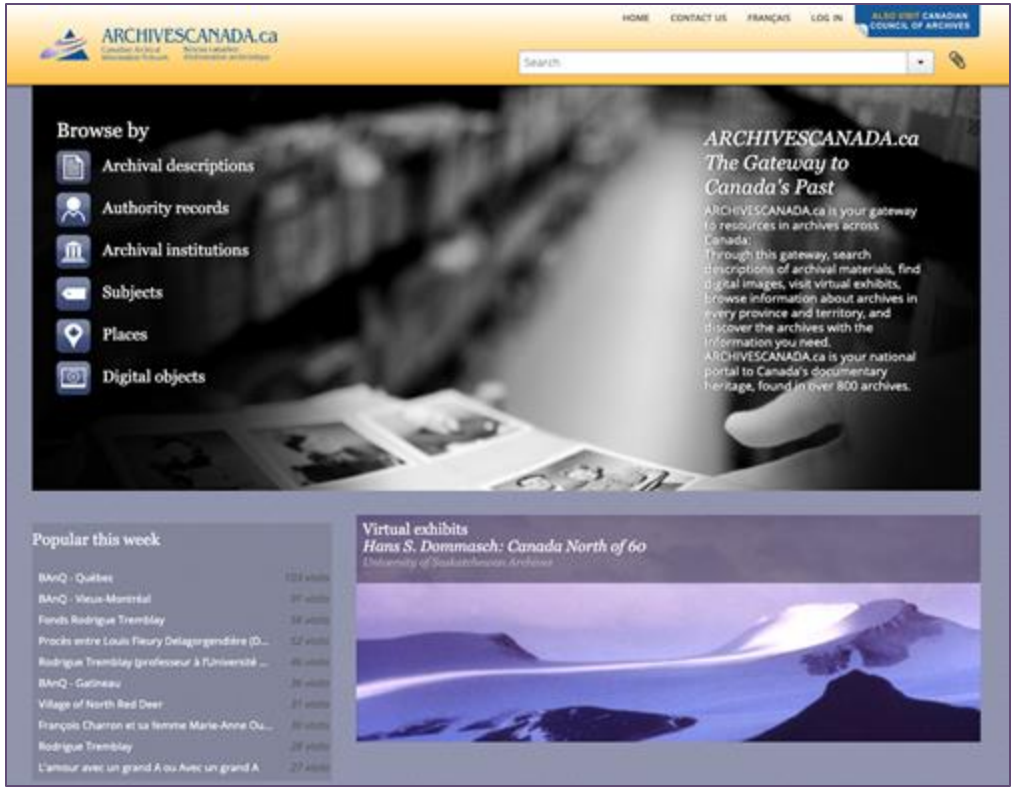
Jennifer Nangreave, Carleton University

Katrina Swift, CANB Archives Advisor

Cameron Hart, SCAA Archives Advisor

Matthew Keels, Memorial University, Newfoundland

WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?



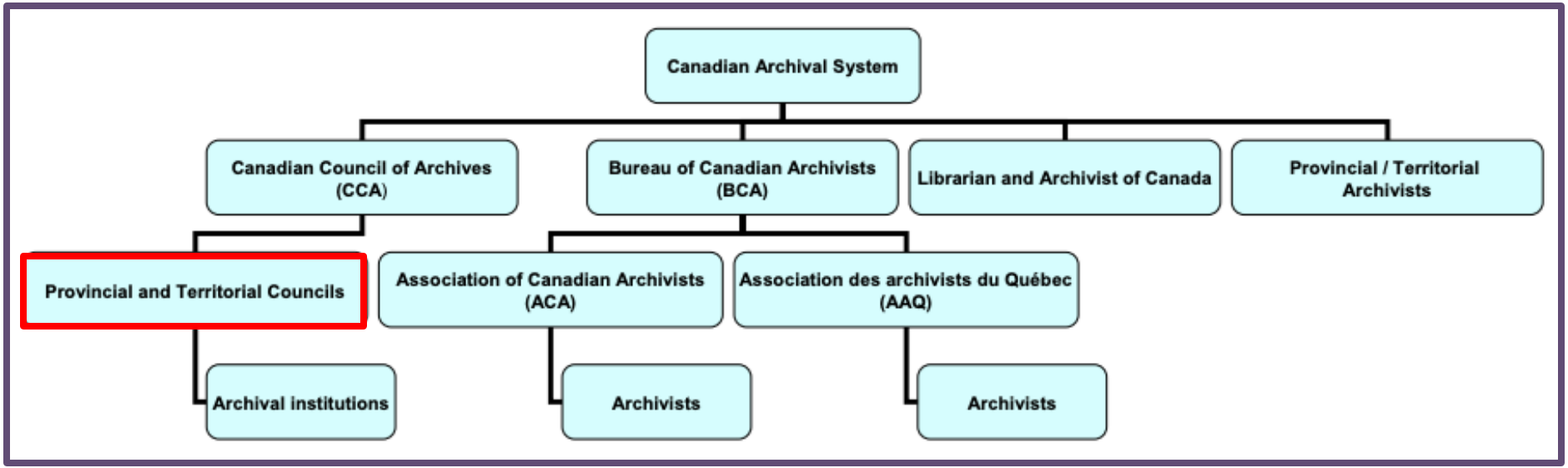
https://archivescanada.accesstomemory.ca/

WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?

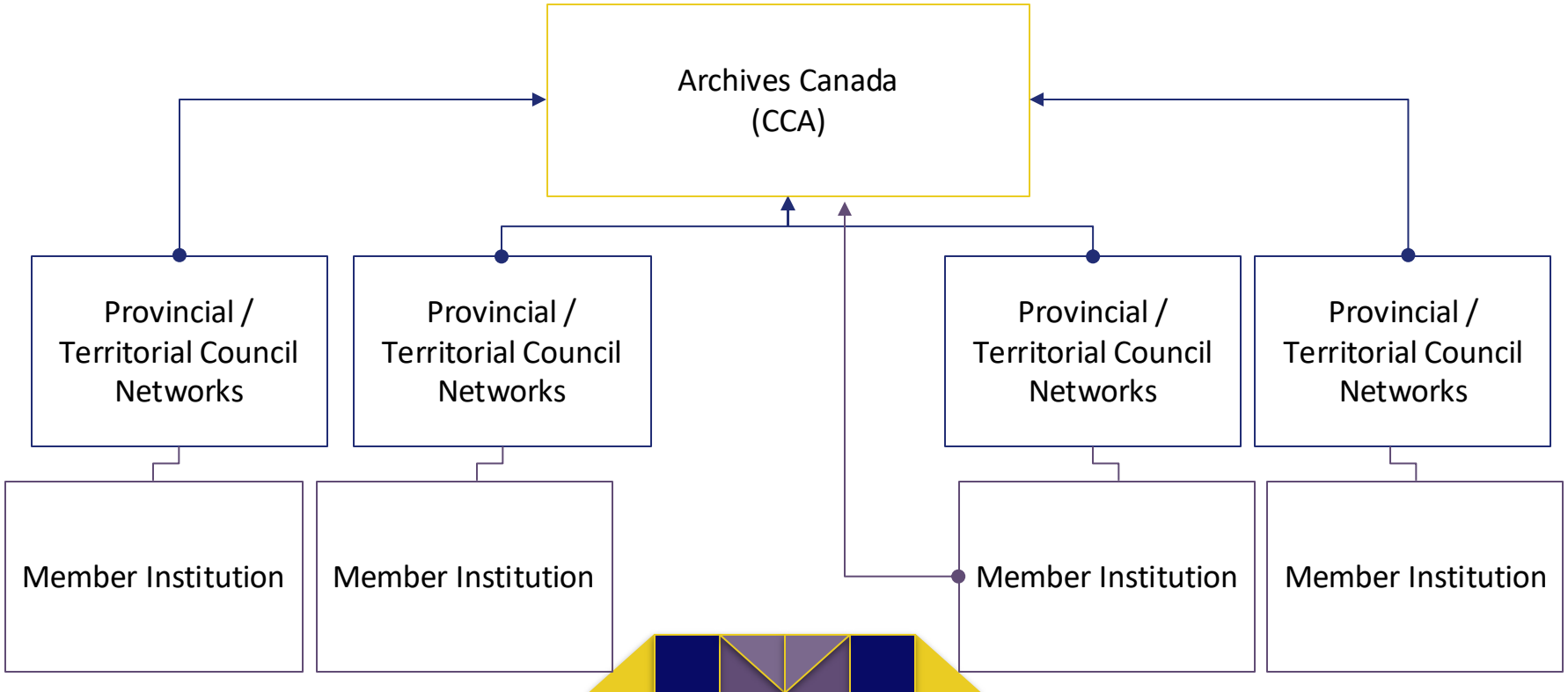
https://archivescanada.accesstomemory.ca/

WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE PEOPLE

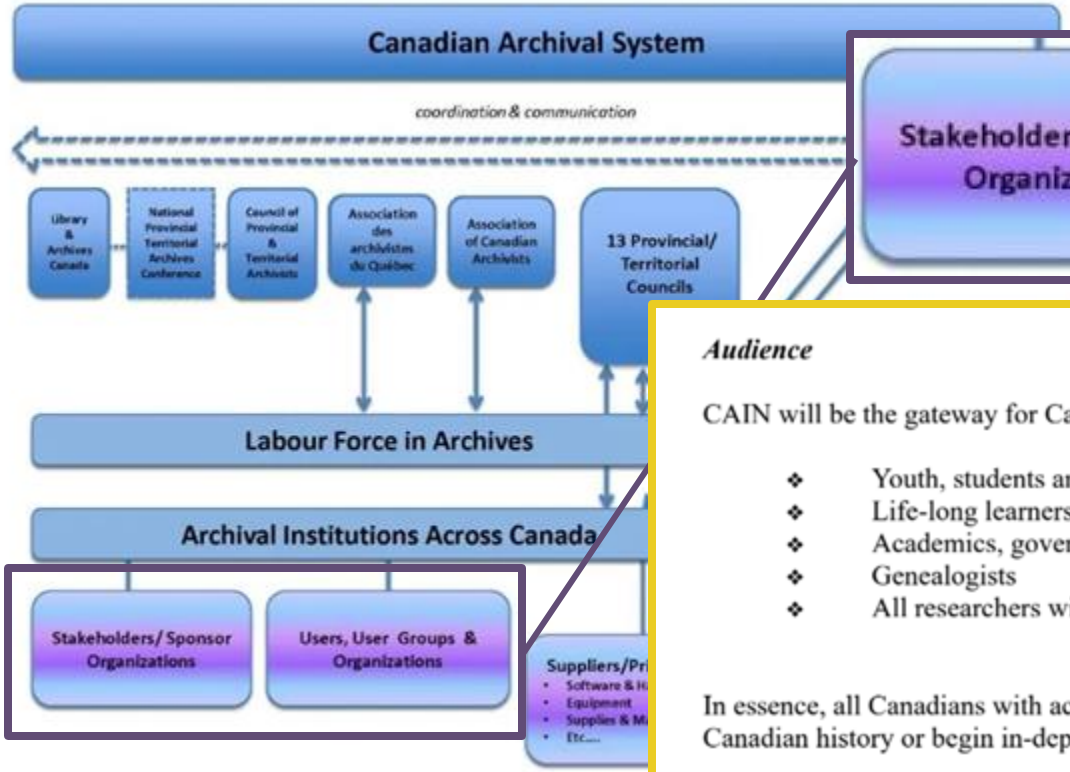
WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE PEOPLE

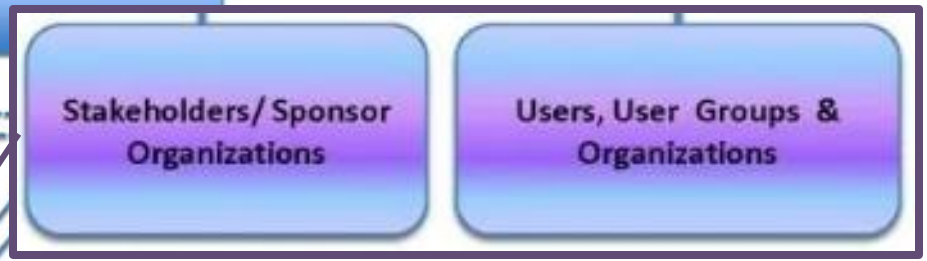


WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE PEOPLE



WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE PEOPLE





Audience

CAIN will be the gateway for Canadians to explore our country's heritage.

- Youth, students and teachers
- Life-long learners
- Academics, governments, writers
- Genealogists
- All researchers with an interest in Canadian history

In essence, all Canadians with access to the Internet, will be able to expand their knowledge of Canadian history or begin in-depth research into topics of national or local interest.

WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE PEOPLE

WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE PLANNING

Canadian Council of Archives
Conseil canadien des archives

FILE

RAISING CAIN:
BUILDING CANADA'S
ARCHIVAL INFORMATION
NETWORK

Prepared by the CCA Information Highway
Task Force
November 15, 1997

Canadian Council of Archives
Conseil canadien des archives

RAISING CAIN: A PROPOSAL TO BUILD CANADA'S ARCHIVAL INFORMATION NETWORK

FEBRUARY 1998

2

Overview of Options

Following the first meeting of the Technology Sub-Committee, the interim report identified four approaches.

1) A **central database approach**, which would involve all descriptive records being loaded onto a central server.

2) A **Z39.50 approach**, which would involve all descriptive records and/or indexes stored on remote servers across the country, which would be searched from a central gateway and results brought to the central server via Z39.50.

3) A **central index approach**, which would involve indexes stored on a central server (or brought to a central server via Z39.50) and point to decentralized resources. This would mean that searches would actually be conducted on a central server, and users would then be pointed to decentralized descriptive records.

4) A **central search strategy**, wherein a central server would "broadcast" a search to the various remote servers across the country in a format specific to each of the remote servers. This method would broadcast the search in a format consistent with the search engine for each server. The central server would then collect the results, collate them into a specified report format and produce an HTML page with pointers to the decentralized resources. In a sense, this is a hybrid of options 2) and 3), insofar as a search is broadcast and run individually on each remote server, however the results would come back to the researcher in the form of pointers to those decentralized resources. This approach was uncovered during our discussions with a vendor. Although the vendor suggested that it is a option which "in theory" could work, it is untested. The Sub-Committee dismissed this option as too risky and did not pursue any further research into it.

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WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE PLANNING

Budget and Sources of Income and Expenses

The National Archives of Canada will provide the CCA in 2000-2001 with $700,000 to be matched 50/50 by project participants. Appendix A outlines the financial figures for 2000-2001.

Partnerships

Archival institutions of all types across the country have provided staff and resources to develop CAIN to its present stage and will continue to assist in delivering a product unprecedented anywhere in the world. Governments across the country are onboard. The Canadian Historical Association, the Councils of Archives in every province, and the two professional Associations of archivists in Canada have endorsed CAIN as the most important effort in the history of Canadian archives.

WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS

Select an index and enter your search term:

Any Keyword

Submit Clear

Search Tips:

- to find records created by an individual or organization, search the *provenance* field;
- to search for a phrase or adjacent words, use quotation marks: eg. "canadian national railway"
- to *broaden* your search, use *?* eg. *farm?* will find *farmer, farming,* etc.
- to replace a single character, use # eg. *acadi#n* will find both *acadien* and *acadian*
- still need to limit the results? Use the Advanced Search screen for more options.
- If you have had a successful search, and would like to gain access to the material, you will need to contact the archival institution, this information is a link under the field *Repository* in the record display.

WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS

5. TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The first three parts of this section requested identification of the software, hardware, and operating systems used in each of the networks. Since MB, NU, NT, and YK do their own systems (the former two are hosted with SK and the latter two with BC results reported below do not include them.

5. (a) Software

NL	Gencat, version not known
NS	Eloquent System's WebGenCat v3.6.1 and WebArchives v.4.1.1 beta
NB	MS Access database, but a new direction is clearly needed.
PE	Microsoft SQL Server (2000) for the database; Microsoft Access 2002 (200 file format) interface
QC	ColdFusion 7, IIS 6 and Pearl 5
ON	Isearch-1.42 from Clearinghouse for Networked Information Discovery and Retrieval (CNIDR) with updates from the Etymon Isearch-1.47d as well as custom modifications (e.g. French language support. Also custom progran written in Perl, C, C++, and Bourne Shell script.
SK	(OCLC) SiteSearch 4.2
AB	ACT/Cinemage
BC	ACT/Cinemage

atom

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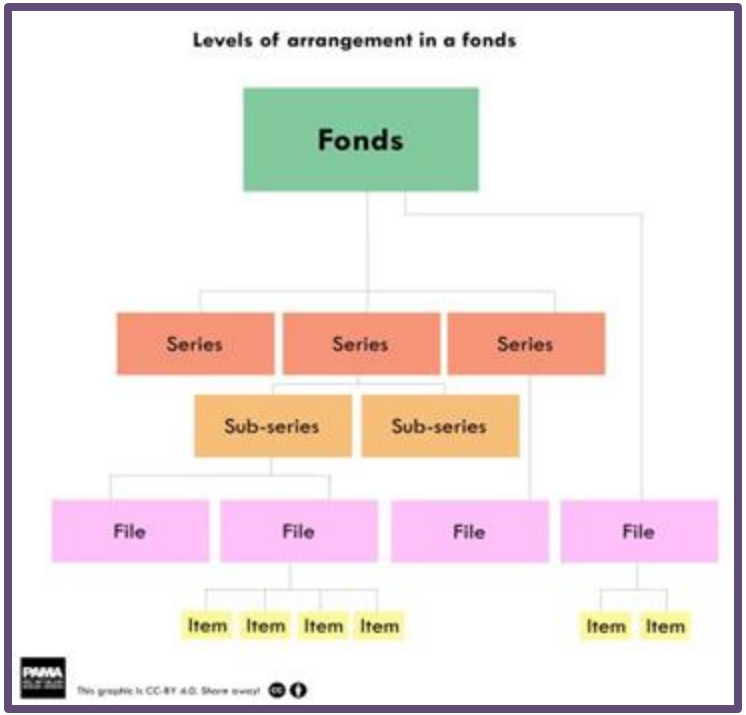
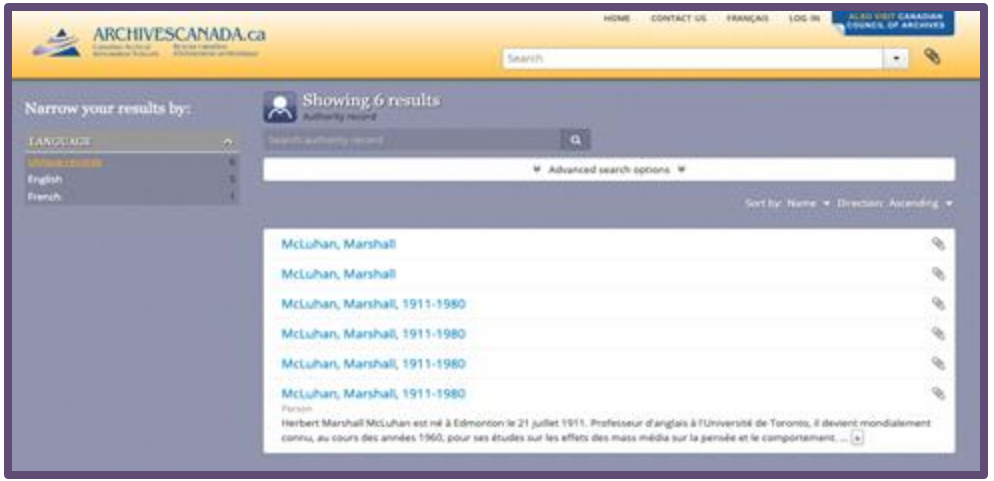
WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
TECHNOLOGY AND STANDARDS



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WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE FUNDING

INTERNET ARCHIVE WayBackMachine

http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/financial.html

110 captures

31 Aug 2001 – 29 Nov 2024

Canadian Council of Arch

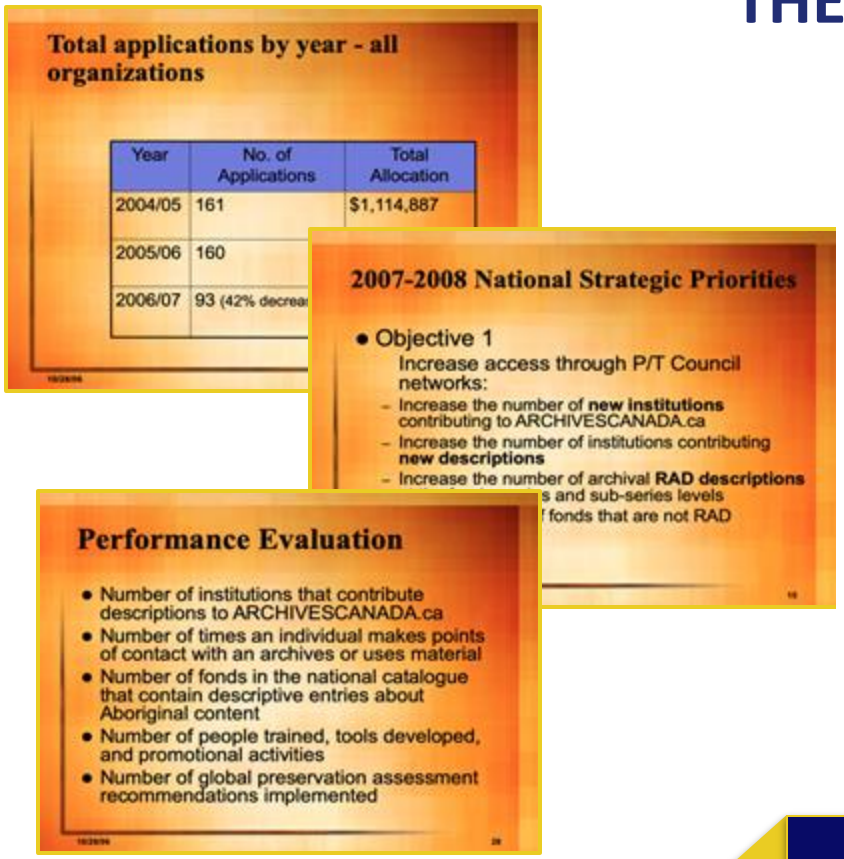
Government of Canada Fi

About CCA

National Archival Development Program (NADP)

The National Archival Development Program (NADP) is a financial assistance program of Library and Archives Canada (LAC). The NADP provides contribution funding to Canadian archival organizations to increase their capacity to preserve and make accessible archival materials about Canada and Canadians.

WHAT IS ARCHIVESCANADA.CA?
THE FUNDING

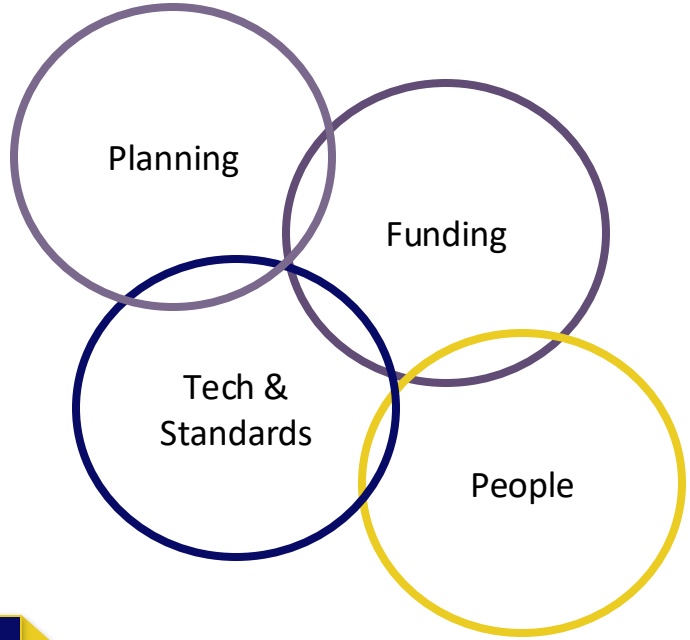


8. (e) Stability of Funding

This question asked if the method and amount of funding is stable or if it is expected to change in the next 1-2 years. An explanation of any expected change was also requested. Four provinces (NS, QC, SK, AB) reported that relatively stable funding was anticipated for this time period.

NL	Our funding for training [of member institutions] is dependent on NADP support.
NS	Appears stable for the next 2 years.
NB	N/A
PE	Depends on NADP for the training fund; funding for other network-related training, upgrades or activities is not anticipated.
QC	Amounts should remain about the same, except the funding will have to increase slightly if the project to improve the network is carried out.
ON	No, relies on NADP grant and volunteer contributions.
MB	We have no resources to maintain a network; we are totally dependent on the generosity of the University of Saskatchewan.

What is past is prologue.



Lessons

- Staff & policies are needed to encourage data standardization (& review)
- Technology will expire; budgeting for maintenance is essential
- Resilient business cases must identify more than a single OTO funding stream
- Collaboration across GLAM is needed (community building; advocacy; participation incentives)
- Technology without iterative UX testing cannot evolve; online user behaviour will inevitably change

ARCHIVESCANADA.CA USER NEEDS SUB-GROUP

GOAL: Gather information on whether a national finding aid is important to users (defined as practitioners and researchers).

- Determine what users want out of ArchivesCanada
- Does ArchivesCanada meet user needs?

OBJECTIVE: Survey archival users needs across Canada to discover what users would prioritize in a national finding aid

2024 USER NEEDS SURVEY

DEMOGRAPHICS: EN and FR Practitioners & Researchers in Canada

MODE OF DATA COLLECTION: Survey Monkey

COLLECTION PERIOD: Oct. 22 - Nov. 30, 2024

DISTRIBUTION: 202 practitioner surveys and 73 researcher surveys were sent via individual email, listservs, discussion Boards

2024 USER NEEDS SURVEY RESULTS

202 *practitioner surveys and* ***73*** *researcher surveys were sent via individual email, listservs, discussion Boards*

- **EN practitioner responses - 159**
- **FR practitioner responses - 11**
- **EN researcher responses - 42**
- **FR researcher responses - 2**

DEMOGRAPHICS: PRACTITIONERS

Q2. Position Title	
ENG (140)	FR (8)
Archivist (62.86%)	Archivist (75.00%)
Admin (10.71%)	Admin (12.50%)
Volunteer (5.00%)	Assistant Archivist (12.50%)

Q3. Years in the Profession	
ENG (140)	FR (8)
+15 yrs (37.86%)	0-3 yrs (37.50%)
11-15 yrs (22.86%)	11-15 yrs (25.00%)
4-6 yrs (17.14%)	+15 yrs (25.00%)

Q8. Location	
ENG (140)	FR (8)
ON (17.86%)	QC (75.00%)
NS (17.86%)	MB (12.50%)
BC (16.43%)	NS (12.50%)

Icons courtesy of https://www.flaticon.com/

DEMOGRAPHICS: RESEARCHERS

Q1. Profession	
ENG (42)	FR (2)
Archivist/Librarian (62.86%)	Archivist/Librarian (50.00%)
Historian (16.67%)	Retiree (50.00%)
Genealogist (11.90%) Museum (11.90%)	

Q2. Institution Affiliation	
ENG (42)	FR (2)
Academic (30.95%)	Academic (50.00%)
Non-profit (21.43%)	Non-profit (50.00%)
Government (19.05%)	

Q4. Education Level	
ENG (42)	FR (2)
Master's (69.05%)	Master's (50.00%)
Doctorate (21.43%)	College Diploma / Technical Program (50.00%)
Undergraduate (9.523%)	

Icons courtesy of https://www.flaticon.com/

Q21R/Q36P. DO YOU THINK ARCHIVESCANADA.CA SHOULD BE DISCONTINUED?

SURVEY GROUP	YES	NO	DO NOT KNOW	SKIPPED QUESTION
159 EN practitioners	14	66	34	45
11 FR practitioners	0	4	1	6
42 EN researchers	5	20	9	8
2 FR researchers	0	0	1	1

Q20R/Q35P. ON A SCALE, HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK A NATIONAL FINDING AID NETWORK IS?

SURVEY GROUP	VERY	SOMEWHAT	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT NOT	NOT
159 EN practitioners	42.11%	32.46%	9.65%	8.77%	2.63%
11 FR practitioners	60%	20%	0%	0%	0%
42 EN researchers	55.88%	23.53%	0%	2.94%	2.09%
2 FR researchers	0%	50% (1 skipped)	0%	0%	0%

Q15R/Q31P. HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH ARCHIVES CANADA?

SURVEY GROUP	NOT APPLICABLE - DO NOT USE	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NEITHER	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
159 EN practitioners	33.33%	0.88%	8.77%	26.32%	17.54%	13.16%
11 FR practitioners	60%	0%	0%	20%	20%	0%
42 EN researchers	35.29%	2.94%	32.35%	--	29.41%	--
2 FR researchers	0%	0%	100%	--	0%	--

Q1R. PLEASE INDICATE WHAT CATEGORY YOU FEEL YOU BELONG TO

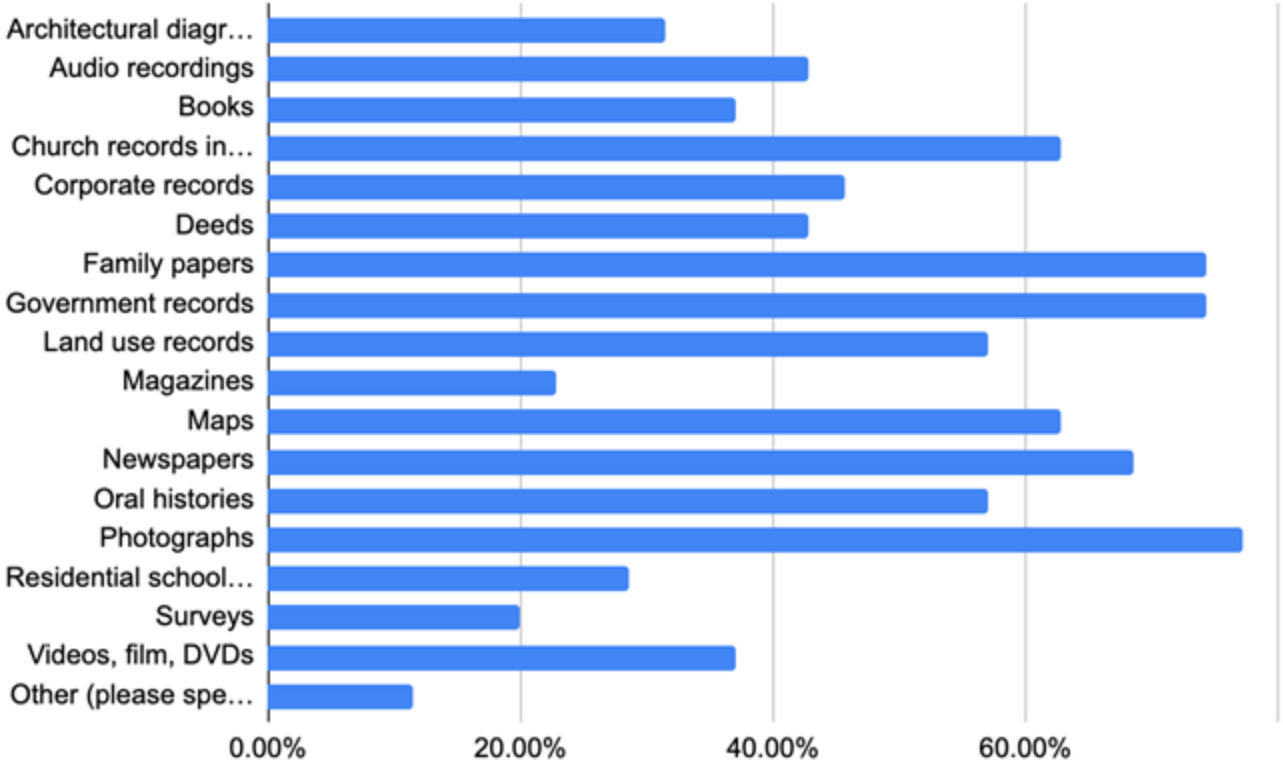
Researcher Category	42 EN researchers	2 FR researchers
Archivist/Librarian	20	1
Faculty/Academic researcher	3	0
Genealogist	5	0
Historian	7	0
Museum or gallery professional	5	0
Retiree	1	1
Consultant	1	0

Q2R. WHAT TYPE OF INSTITUTION ARE YOU AFFILIATED WITH?

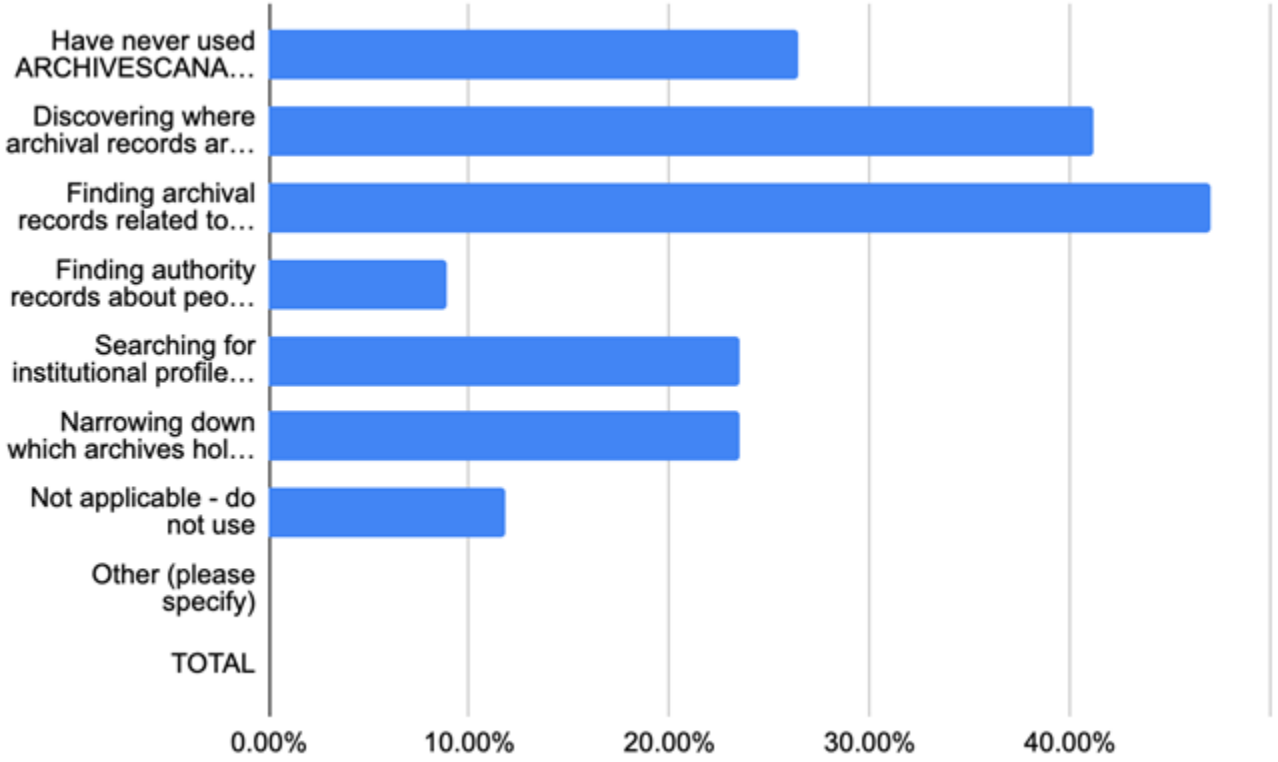
Researcher Category	42 EN researchers	2 FR researchers
Academic	20	1
Government	3	0
Historical Society	5	0
Non-profit	7	1
Private	5	0
Public	1	0
None / Other	4	0

Q5R. WHAT TYPE OF RESEARCH DO YOU UNDERTAKE?

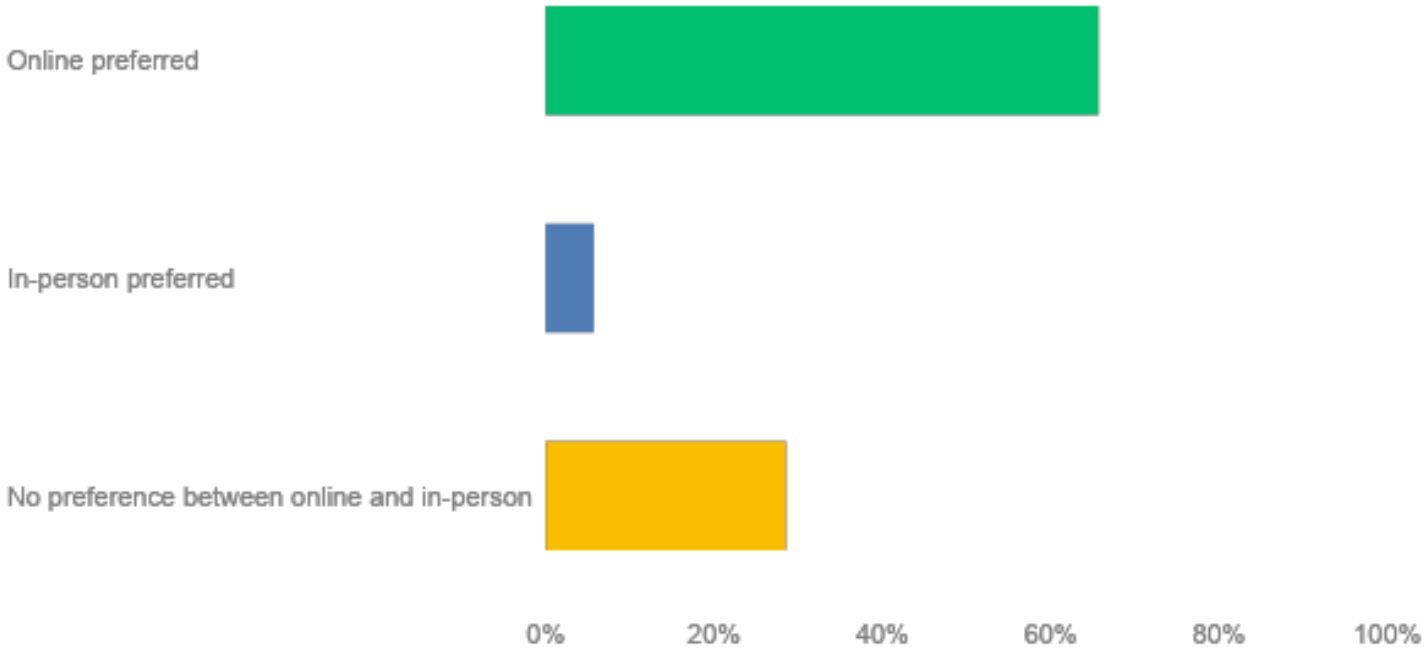
Q7R. WHAT TYPE OF ARCHIVAL MATERIAL WOULD ASSIST IN YOUR RESEARCH?



Q14. WHAT WAS YOUR PURPOSE FOR USING ARCHIVES CANADA?



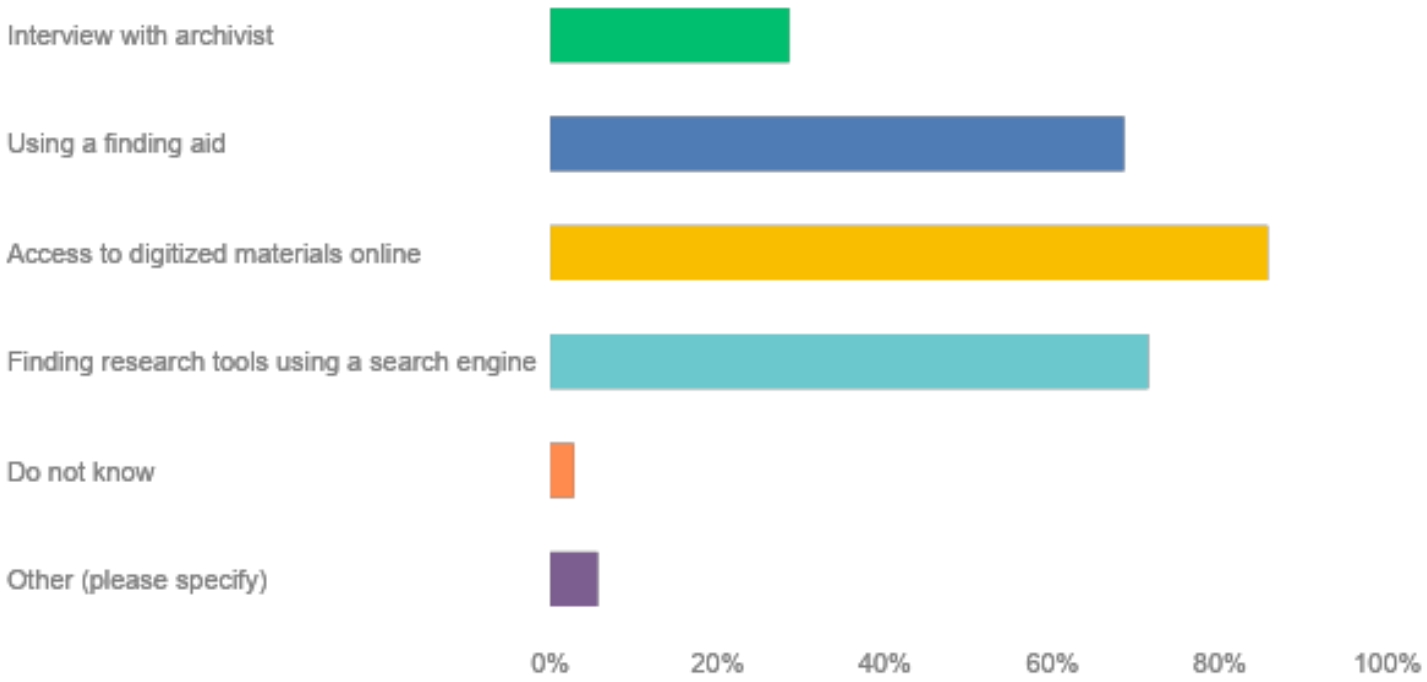
Q8R. HOW DO YOU PREFER TO ACCESS ARCHIVAL RESOURCES?



Q11R. IF YOU USE FINDING AIDS TO GUIDE YOUR RESEARCH, WHERE DO YOU FIND THEM?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES %	RESPONSES #
In the archives	40.00%	14
On the archives website	77.14%	27
Downloaded from or viewed in an online descriptive database	51.43%	18
Online through a provincial archives network	40.00%	14
Do not use finding aids	0.00%	0
Do not know	2.86%	1

Q12R. WHAT WOULD HELP YOU MOST IN DOING RESEARCH?



Q17R. WHEN CONDUCTING ARCHIVAL RESEARCH DO YOU USE OTHER SEARCH METHODS BESIDES ARCHIVES CANADA?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES %	RESPONSES #
Use a search engine	91.18%	31
Visit archives website	91.18%	31
Visit genealogy website	41.18%	14
Use academic library online catalogue	70.59%	24
Use public library online catalogue	58.82%	20
Use Wikipedia	47.06%	16
Use Google Scholar	29.41%	10
Use WorldCat	29.41%	10
Other (please specify)	2.94%	1

CONCLUSIONS: PRACTITIONERS

Most practitioners do not want ARCHIVESCANADA.ca to be discontinued.

A majority of practitioners are interested in starting or continuing to use ARCHIVESCANADA.ca but are unsure how to add content or edit content already posted on the site (descriptions, authorities, institutional profiles).

Practitioners indicated coordination between ARCHIVESCANADA.ca and provincial/territorial association databases was necessary.

CONCLUSIONS: RESEARCHERS

A national finding aid system is important and ARCHIVESCANADA.ca is potentially useful (content is outdated).

Need for more digitized content, faster search functions, and more up-to-date information.

Researchers also indicated coordination between ARCHIVESCANADA.ca and provincial/territorial association databases was necessary.

NEXT STEPS

Presentations

Spring 2025

Focus groups & interviews

Summer 2025

Report to CCA
(recommendations)

End of 2025

THANK YOU

Please get in touch with the Working Group if you have any feedback or would like to send any relevant resources.

Working group minutes are public via the CCA's Google Drive.

Research resources are also compiled into the Archives Canada Working Group Zotero (public and open to join).