

**Evaluation of the Grants and Contributions Program
Library and Archives Canada**

Final Report

**Prepared by the Audit and Evaluation Division
Library and Archives Canada**

March 2004

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	3
2.0 Evaluation Findings	6
3.0 Conclusions	12
4.0 Management Response.....	13

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Since 1989 the National Archives has been providing funds to the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) to assist the community to develop a national archival system. These payments consisted of a non-discretionary grant to fund core operations of the CCA and a contribution program involving payments to third parties administered by the CCA. Since 1989 a total of approximately \$27 million in grants and contributions funding has been provided to the CCA. Because the contribution programs administered by the CCA require matched funding, Canadian archives have also received substantial financial and in-kind support from provinces, municipalities and archival institutions.

The Canadian Council of Archives was created in 1985 and incorporated as a private non-profit organization in 1988. The Council has representatives of Provincial/Territorial Councils and from professional archivists associations. The purpose and key activities of the CCA were considered to be the following.

The purpose of the Council is to advise the National Archives of Canada and other archival institutions on the development of the Canadian Archival System. In order to do this, the Council identifies national priorities. It also develops and facilitates the implementation and management of programs to assist the archival community and evaluates those assistance programs according to critical success factors. As well, it promotes effective communications among various members of the Canadian archival community and makes archival needs and concerns known to decision-makers, researchers and the general public.¹

Prior to 1989 the National Archives provided secretariat support to the CCA and subsidized specified costs associated with certain archival projects through a letter of understanding with recipients. This was changed with the introduction of a sustaining grant to support the operations of the CCA and contributions for the purposes of subsidizing specified costs made to recipients on the recommendation of the CCA. Funding at that time was set at \$1.4 Million annually.

This regular program was supplemented with the introduction of the Conservation Plan for Canadian archival records (CPCAR) that was approved by Cabinet in 1991 at an annual reference level of \$1 Million but for a limited period of three years after which time the funding level would be reviewed. Like the regular programming approved earlier, CPCAR was to be a cost-shared program that involved matching core funding with direct contributions from partners in the form of financial commitments or indirect contributions in the form of specialized services in the field of conservation. The genesis of CPCAR came out of a needs assessment performed by each of the provincial and territorial councils that underlined the priorities of conservation and staff development.

¹ Treasury Board Submission, 1989.

Program Review resulted in an overall reduction of 16%, the same as the reduction for the National Archives as a whole. Since 1998 funding levels have been stable approximately \$1.7 Million per year.

Contribution funding in recent years has been provided by the CCA under five programs;

- Control of Holdings, (originally designed to play a role in reducing the backlog of unprocessed holdings in Canadian archives),
- Professional Development and Training, (assists in the professional development and training of archivists),
- Special Projects, (allows for special projects to be conducted which adhere to provincial/territorial priorities as well as which support CCA initiatives),
- Conservation Plan for Canadian Archival Records (CPCAR), (encourages archivists to integrate a concern for sound preservation practice into all archival activities and ensures the systematic application of preventive conservation measures), and,
- CPCAR Training and Information (designed to assist in the professional development and training of archivists, conservators and those working in archives according to needs assessment plans identified by the provinces and territories in the Preservation Strategy for Archives in Canada adopted in March 1994 by the Canadian archival community).

1.2 Objective of the Evaluation

An evaluation of the grants and contributions program was conducted at this time to prepare for a renewal of the grants and contributions authorities that must take place before March 31, 2005. This deadline came into effect as a result of the introduction of the amended Transfer Payments policy by Treasury Board Secretariat in June 2000.

On October 31, 2003 the Audit and Evaluation Committee of Library and Archives Canada (LAC) approved the Terms of Reference for the evaluation as presented in Appendix 1.

Evaluation issues included the extent to which:

- The program is still relevant
- The objectives have been met
- There have been long-term impacts
- There are more cost-effective ways of delivering the program

1.3 Methodology

The evaluation examined the program as it existed on September 30, 2003 and was directed by the Audit and Evaluation division of LAC with the assistance of Consulting and Audit Canada. An Advisory Committee assisted the development of the methodology used in the evaluation, with documentation, and facilitated contact with program participants. The Committee also reviewed the draft report when it was completed.

The evaluation itself used a number of methods including a review of documentation at the LAC and at the Canadian Council of Archives. Interviews were conducted with staff at the LAC Canadian Council of Archives, some members of the National/Provincial/Territorial Archivists Conference, and others in the archival community who had been influential in the design and delivery of the program. Two telephone surveys were also conducted by Consulting and Audit Canada. One involved a representative sample of program recipients across the program components and types of recipients, while the second involved a representative sample of archives across Canada that had not received program funding in the last three years (see the Questions and Methodologies section for more details). Five case studies were also completed. These case studies involved file reviews as well as interviews with program recipients.

2.0 Evaluation Findings

2.1 Program Relevance

2.1.1 Continuing need

Need for the programming does not appear to have diminished and few alternative sources of funding have materialized.

Those who have received program funding are of the view that there is a continuing need for funding at current or higher levels. When asked about areas of greatest need at present, archives were most likely to include describing collections and preservation/conservation as two of their greatest needs. Other needs, such as improved facilities and increased storage space were also cited frequently.

Key informants agreed that much had been accomplished by programming to date in a number of areas although it was time to reassess the original objectives of the program. Another factor cited was the lack of alternative sources of funding for archives in general and for this type of archival work (describing collections and preservation/conservation) in particular. LAC informants expressed concern about the mandate of the new institution (LAC) and the need to provide support to libraries as well as to archives.

Comparing the composition of the current archival community to that of 20 years ago shows some notable changes: in the first place, there has been substantial growth in the number of archives; and there now appears to be greater diversity in the types of archives, with the emergence of many special purpose institutions, such as religious archives, historical societies, or archives that are combined with museums or libraries (see Appendix 6 for more details).

2.2 Achievement of Program Objectives

2.2.1 Reduction of the backlog

Although significant progress has been made in reducing the original backlog, the need to process and describe collections remains a priority area for archives.

The Backlog Reduction and Control of Holdings Programs have allowed for a great deal of archival material to be processed and described. (See Appendix 7 for a summary of the extent of documents processed between 1986 and 2003.) It is very difficult, however, to determine the achievement of this objective for a number of reasons: the extent of the original backlog was unknown; archival holdings are continually growing; and the standards for describing holdings have changed substantially since the introduction of the CCA programs. In addition, today's archival clients expect to be able

to access more material via the internet, which increases the pressure on archives to make more detailed descriptions and finding aids available on line.

Thus, while participants surveyed for this study were highly positive regarding the role of the Control of Holdings Program in reducing their backlog (92% stated that the funding played a very important role), 97% of the same group indicated that they currently have a backlog, and of these, 61% said that this backlog was large or very large.

Several of those interviewed suggested that the Backlog Reduction Program had addressed the "real backlog" (meaning documents that had been sitting around for a few years), but that there continue to be documents waiting to be processed, and the Control of Holdings Program provides much needed support in this area.

2.2.2 Contribution towards professional development of the community

Training has been effective especially at the local level but now needs to be expanded to encompass skills needed for the future.

While training needs vary considerably from one institution to another and are influenced by the availability of training in the particular environment, the overall assessment is that CCA training has been successful and has contributed to the competence and professional knowledge of archivists.

Most of the CCA funding for training is awarded to the Provincial/Territorial Councils, who then provide training, through workshops and/or the services of an archival advisor, to members of the community. Among institutions that had accessed CCA program funding, relatively few accessed professional development funding directly (8%) while considerably more (38%) indicated that they had benefited from education programs/workshops offered by the Provincial/Territorial Councils. A similar number of those who have not accessed CCA program funding (37%) indicated that they had taken part in education activities offered by their Provincial/Territorial Councils.

Much of the training supported by the CCA in the past has focused on basic skills, such as arranging and describing holdings, implementing RAD and preserving collections. While there is a continuing need for this type of training, there is also a growing demand for instruction in emerging areas, such as the creation and management of electronic records, digitization and computer-based methodologies. Also, quite a number of interviewees referred to the fact that archivists need to develop their management skills in order to undertake activities, such as strategic planning, fund raising and promotion that will help to ensure the long-term viability of their organizations.

2.2.3 Establishment of a national network

Significant progress has been made in developing a national network.

Views about whether or not a national network exists or was on its way to being established varied considerably depending on who was asked. In general though, there was agreement that provincial/territorial networks are more established.

Comparison of degree of agreement about the development of a National or Provincial/Territorial network (All figures in %)		
Statement	Received Program funding	Did not receive Program funding
A National network is well established	34	20
A Provincial/Territorial network is well established	75	53
CCA was important or very important in making it happen	73	38
The Provincial/Territorial Council was important or very important in making it happen	95	66

Key informants generally felt that a national network now exists and that the role of CCA had been instrumental in improving communications, information sharing and developing common standards (e.g. Rules for Archival Description - RAD).

2.2.4 Awareness and support of decision makers

Efforts to engage decision makers have not been very successful and more emphasis needs to be given to raising the profile of archives in Canada.

There was a general consensus among all groups that the archival community as a whole has not done a good job of promoting itself and influencing decision makers.. It was suggested that archivists are generally not well suited to this task and would have to acquire new skills (as identified above) to be more successful.

It was also suggested that this is an area where the CCA has not played as strong a role as it should have. There was an impression among interviewees that the CCA Board has focused more on operational issues (e.g. reviewing program applications), than on strategic leadership (e.g. promoting archives to Canadians and decision makers). However, these same interviewees agreed that the CCA has recently recognized this issue and has begun to take steps to address it.

2.2.5 Advice received by LAC from CCA

Perceptions differ as to the level of and nature of advice needed by the LAC.

The levels of interaction between CCA and LAC have varied over the years and depended to a large extent on the level of experience and profile of the CCA Board members. Some interviewees, primarily those at LAC, suggested that the CCA Board no longer includes "key players" from the archival community. An examination of

involvement by Provincial Archivists shows that this was highest in the period up to 1992 and has declined since that time.

The perception from within LAC is that the CCA has moved from a strategic to an operational focus. The perception from among key informants from the archival community is that LAC pays less attention to the CCA and that advice is no longer requested to the degree that it once was.

2.3 Program results and impacts

2.3.1 Canadians have better access to their documentary heritage

As a result of CCA programs Canadians have access to more content but mechanisms are not in place to assess whether clients are satisfied with this access, or whether their needs are being met.

Participants are strongly of the opinion (93%) that access for Canadians has improved as a result of CCA programs. When asked what this opinion was based on most (62%) said that this was based on the fact that descriptions of collections or some part of the collections themselves are now available on line. On some occasions it was mentioned that their web site was connected to a provincial/territorial network or to CAIN. Only in 16% of the cases did the respondent indicate that some statistical access indicator (such as e-mails, web visits, etc) had increased.

Key informants held the same view that access has improved, largely as a result of collections being made available on line. They did identify some other developments, such as the use of thematic exhibits, staff training and the strengthening of the archival network, that have contributed to improved access for Canadians. Once again, in very few cases were any specific figures quoted to support these views or were mechanisms described which were used to regularly gather feedback from clients. Among those institutions that do collect and maintain statistics on usage and enquiries, there was general agreement that in-person traffic has remained fairly stable, while electronic access is increasing rapidly. Several key informants also indicated that those who do visit the archives in-person tend to be better informed than were clients in the past.

2.3.2 Documentary heritage is better preserved

Significant progress has been made in preservation/conservation.

It was generally agreed that programming had been effective in raising awareness and making some progress in the area of preservation/conservation and that much of this work would not have been accomplished without the CCA programs; the global assessments required for CPCAR were particularly useful, as they provided an overview of current conditions and the identification of conservation priorities). From the perspective of those who participated in CPCAR, 86% found the program very important in helping to preserve their collections. This viewpoint was reinforced by key

informants, many of whom credited CPCAR for improvements in both the awareness of, and activities related to, the conservation of archival materials. Despite this, however, there was significant concern regarding the magnitude of current preservation needs and the ability of CPCAR to make a difference at the national level

2.3.3 Participants are satisfied with program impacts

Participants are for the most part satisfied with the results of the CCA Grant and Contributions Programs.

With the exception of awareness of archives and support from decision makers most of the archival community was pleased with the program impacts to date. Some felt that more could have been accomplished had more funding been available.

Institutions that received funding for each of the program components gave high ratings with regard to the importance of each of the program components in achieving its objectives (see table below)

Program Component	Respondents who indicated the Program was very important to achieving their institution's objectives	
	%	Frequency
Control of Holdings	92	25
Professional Development and Training	100	3
Special Projects	100	2
CPCAR	86	29
CPCAR Training	100	4

2.4 Cost-effective alternatives

2.4.1 Assessment of current delivery structure

The current decentralized delivery structure is very flexible and responsive to different provincial conditions and needs but has been less successful in ensuring that federal priorities are recognized and addressed.

Participants and key informants were generally satisfied with the structure used to deliver current programming. Some commented on the flexibility, others on the strong regional component, and some on the requirement for sharing costs with partners as positive aspects of the current model. A few participants suggested that the amount of paperwork required to apply for contributions seemed excessive in relation to the amount of funds involved, and that there were too many players in the adjudication process. A concern was also raised that the regional emphasis worked against the achievement of federal priorities.

Those who had not participated in the program cited a number of reasons for not applying for funding, such as they were just starting out and had not gotten around to investigating what programming was available, that they did not have enough information, they did not have the resources to apply, or to provide matched funding, or they believed they did not qualify. In the few cases where an application had been refused (only five cases), most were satisfied that the adjudication process had been fair but not with the feedback they received.

2.4.2 Improvements or alternatives

Some support exists for streamlining the current adjudication process by limiting the involvement of the CCA Board and allowing them more time to focus on national and/or federal priorities.

A common improvement cited was a streamlining of the adjudication process. Several respondents felt that, rather than review all Provincial/Territorial recommendations for funding, the CCA Board should be involved only on an exception or as required basis; i.e. if the Provincial/Territorial Council or CCA Program Officer had concerns with respect to a particular application, it would be reviewed by the Board. This would free the CCA Board to play a greater role in the areas of promotion of archives, development of national standards and/or tools, and support for federal priorities.

None of those interviewed or surveyed for this evaluation identified a viable alternative to the current, decentralized delivery structure.

3.0 Conclusions

1. The evaluation found that the archival community is still highly dependent on funding from the Grants and Contributions Program. To address this finding the archival community should consider what other partnerships would be possible to broaden its base of support and reduce its dependency on the Grants and Contributions Program.
2. The evaluation concluded that the original purpose of reducing the backlog of undocumented archival materials has largely been achieved. However, the on-going acquisition of materials, together with changes in the standards of description and the nature of client demands, mean that many institutions continue to struggle with a backlog. Consideration should be given to whether funding archives to process on-going backlogs is an effective way to support the archival community given the various competing priorities.
3. Professional development remains a concern for the archival community. The archival advisor component of the Professional Development Program seems to be an effective way to assist smaller archives and consideration should be given to strengthening this service where appropriate. Consideration could also be given to expanding the skill base of the community beyond normal archival functions to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in technology.
4. The findings clearly indicate that archives need to be promoted. All levels of the archival community should consider ways in which they can promote archives in Canada, but the CCA needs to take a leadership role at the national level.
5. The evaluation found that there is some confusion over what type of advice LAC needs from CCA. This should be more clearly defined and efforts made to work more closely together to address the needs of the archival community and the needs of the public they serve.
6. Archives need to continue to increase their efforts to make their collections more accessible to Canadians; they also need to put in place mechanisms to collect reliable information on the use of their collections by the public. This should be done with a view to continuously improving the services they provide and by doing so will help to demonstrate the value of archives to the broader community.
7. The evaluation found considerable support for streamlining the adjudication process by removing the necessity for the CCA Board to approve all projects so that more time and energy can be devoted to more strategic concerns.

4.0 Management Response

1. The Strategic Management Office would like to thank all those who participated in the evaluation of the Grants and Contributions Program of the National Archives of Canada.
2. As a federal institution subject to the Treasury Board Policy on Transfer Payments, LAC will seek renewal of authorities for its Grants and Contributions Program. In addition to the results of the evaluation, the renewal process will involve consulting stakeholders and aligning the new program with the objectives of the Government of Canada and the mandate of the new institution, with a particular emphasis on the part of its mandate relating to making known the documentary heritage of Canada.
3. We are pleased that the evaluation confirms that the Program had significant impact on many areas, including the reduction of backlogs, training and preservation, and was key in developing a National Archival Network, improving communications, information sharing and developing common standards. On the other hand, the conclusions raise important issues of sustainability, new skills, visibility and access. These issues will be taken into consideration in the design of the new Program. The relationship between LAC and the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) also needs to evolve. There is a need for a renewed institutional partnership between LAC and the CCA, built on common goals and clear roles and responsibilities while ensuring the financial independence of the CCA and its long term sustainability.
4. Most of the conclusions of the Report (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7) are recommendations addressed to the CCA and/or the archival community. We intend to raise these issues with our key partners in the archival community, including the National, Provincial and Territorial Archivists Conference and the CCA. We will also bring these issues forward when we consult more broadly the archival community as part of the process for the renewal of our authorities.
5. As for conclusion no. 5, we recognize the problem and we are already working with the CCA to improve communications and clarify relationships between the two organizations.
 - Discussions are underway with the CCA to establish more formal communication mechanisms.
 - We will involve the CCA in the consultation that we will launch with the archival community.
 - LAC and the CCA are jointly managing the allocation of funds from the Canadian Content On-Line Program in the archival community for 2004-2005.