Canadian Culture
Online

Government   Gouvernement
of Canada   du Canada

Canada

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Honourable Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage

Madame,

In growing numbers, Canadians are realizing that the Internet enables us to come together, to show-case our cultural diversity, and to link ourselves to each other and to the world. Consequently, it is of great value to our nation.

Yet it is fair to state that even though Canada is one of the best-connected countries on the planet, little of the content available online is Canadian, and this content can be hard to find.

Realizing that, the Government of Canada decided that Canadians had to hear each other and needed a voice in the digital wilderness. It became imperative, therefore, to harness the technology of the Internet to serve our country's interests—allowing Canadians to tell our stories to each other, instead of selling us the stories others choose to tell.

THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

On May 2, 2001, your government announced over $500 million in funding for culture in the context of Tomorrow Starts Today, of which the Canadian Culture Online Program (CCOP) received $108 million. Further, in the 2002 Speech from the Throne, Her Excellency Adrienne Clarkson enunciated government policy by saying:

> *Canada has a unique model of citizenship, based simultaneously on diversity and mutual responsibility. This model requires deliberate efforts to connect Canadians across their differences, to link them to their history and to enable their diverse voices to participate in choosing the Canada we want [...]. We now have a generation of Canadians who have grown up in the Internet world, a generation of Canadians who are global, at ease with change and diversity, optimistic and eager to create, innovate and excel. And who believe they can achieve their aspirations in Canada. Canada must tap into and unleash this energy.*

As a result, your department seized the opportunity to influence the future of online culture and to offer Canadians more tools for connecting with, and understanding, each other's communities.

As part of its strategy to encourage a uniquely Canadian presence on the Internet, your department created CCOP. Its mission is to work with Canada's artistic creators, cultural bodies, communities and institutions to produce and make available to Canadians the digital cultural content that will help promote our country's rich culture, history, arts and heritage. CCOP is also meant to provide meaning-ful and seamless access to content that helps deepen an understanding of Canada and of our rich diversity.

Furthermore, the main priority of CCOP continues to be the funding of projects that focus on youth, as well as of collaborative projects that create public-private sector partnerships. The funds of CCOP are used equally for French and English initiatives.

THE BOARD ENTERS THE PICTURE

To help you and the officials of your department better ensure that Canadians have increased choice in, and access to, Canadian cultural content online, in both official languages, you established the Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board.

As well as naming me chair, you named 13 other board members from across Canada. They repre-sented a cross-section of Canadian diversity, as well as a variety of perspectives: content users, academics, and content creators and producers. They bring with them their specialized knowledge or expertise in the fields of culture and heritage, marketing, digital media, intellectual property and the Internet. (See list of members in Appendix A.)

We inherited the work of the Canadian Culture Online strategy, which your department created in May 2001. A year later, when we began to fulfil our mission, your department had created a number of funds (see Appendix F) to foster the digitization and creation of various online projects. Your depart-ment had also distributed money in relation to the purposes of those funds, and it had financed the planning of the Gateway for Canadians to find Canadian cultural content on the Internet.

From the beginning of our mandate, it was obvious to us that you were charging us to advise you on all aspects pertaining to Canadian Culture Online's policy and programs. To us this meant, and continues to mean, that our advisory responsibilities include all that is related to content and innovation, to standards, research and development, and to the Gateway. Consequently, Madame Minister, the Board wishes me to assure you that we intend to fulfil that duty to the best of our abilities.

Madame Minister, the Board shares your belief in the power of digital content that speaks to a belief in ourselves, as Canadians; to the depth of our culture and heritage; and to the confidence in our cultural potential. However, the following question has dominated our discussions: is there a way in the digital age to help get that content into the hearts and minds of Canadians? The answer became obvious to us. The content that tells our stories cannot be allowed to be lost in the so-called "digital wilderness." For that not to happen, the content must be relevant to Canadians, must have the right standards, and must have a portal or Gateway that leads us to where the action is.

It is for the above reason that I raise the following, something of great concern to us. It is the matter of the Gateway. It is fair to say that your department has designed the Gateway, known as *Culture.ca*, with limited input from us. In addition, the Gateway issue is further complicated by the fact that it falls under the jurisdiction of a different assistant deputy minister from the one responsible for the other elements of CCOP. In light of these two conditions, we became concerned about the extent to which we could advise you on the development of the Gateway.

Having considered this problem in depth, we recommend—in Recommendation 3—a solution to the difficulty of dual jurisdiction. Moreover, on the matter of *Culture.ca*, it is our aim to give you advice that will lead to the "best" possible Gateway, which will use standards to connect the "power" of content to the audience in which our future is invested, namely the youth of our country.

At the Board's first meeting in March 2002, we defined a Vision Statement (see below) and decided to establish three sub-committees to look at each of these issues in great depth, with a particular eye to the needs of francophones, young people and Aboriginal people:

> **1. Content and Innovation:** This sub-committee advises the Board on the priorities for content development, such as the balance between the digitization of existing material and the creation of new content, and how to factor the needs of the school curricula, researchers, youth, businesses and the public into the consideration of priorities for developing digital cultural content.

> **2. Standards, Research and Development:** This sub-committee advises the Board to ensure the application of appropriate standards so that the content developed can be used seamlessly, meaningfully and transparently, in a way compatible with work being done in other sectors, across the country and abroad.

> **3. Gateway and Access:** This sub-committee advises the Board on the design of an Internet Gateway to Canadian cultural content and on specific matters such as visibility, content, filtering for offensive content, safety of children on the Internet, and so forth.

For a list of sub-committee members and their chairs, see Appendices B, C and D. As we carried out our work, we began to identify what we would have to look at during the second year of our mandate, beyond intensifying the work of our three sub-committees. Many of these items are mentioned in the report that follows.

We also came to the conclusion that it would not be possible for us to realize the spirit and the goals of our Vision Statement unless we devised a process to administer and assess its application.

We agreed to take up new issues, including the questions of establishing the Gateway as a public space free of corporate influence, of ensuring that the Gateway reflects Canadian diversity, of fostering "media literacy" on the Internet and of structuring governance over the site (such as editorial monitoring and filtering).

As well, we plan to explore the implications for the Gateway of existing laws and policies, such as those related to hate speech (Criminal Code), privacy and access to information, official bilingualism, and so forth.

The Board will also look at research and development to determine its roles and needs, and to determine the relevance and emphasis of research and development in developing new content. Furthermore, through research and development, the Board will study metadata repositories, tagging tools and digital rights management tools. This study will also examine both the cost of these items and their appropriateness to Canada's cultural sectors.

The Board would like to favour the development of rich contextualized collections allowing Canadians to quickly and easily access a wealth of information on a specific topic of a cultural nature. We are also convinced that we have a responsibility to stress that the content funded by CCOP reaches all Canadians (particularly young Canadians) and that we should provide effective advice on how CCOP can also actively facilitate discussion of common topics, joint projects and aggregation of content on important issues to better maximize the return on investment for Canadians.

Moreover, as you know, Madame Minister, like no other medium, the Internet enables Canadians representing communities of diversity, especially the young, to share their culture online. For this to happen, it is important that CCOP continue to partner with public institutions, not-for-profit groups and the private sector to create a critical mass of content that reflects Canada's diverse history, society, culture and heritage on the Internet.

CONCLUSION

I would like to thank the members of the Board and of the sub-committees. Their commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm made the journey through the mission you gave us as Minister of Canadian Heritage a rewarding experience.
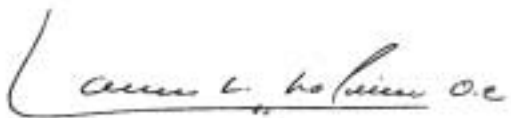
Permit me as well, Madame Minister, to thank the staff assigned to this project. Their help and professionalism contributed much to our work.

My colleagues and I are also conscious that your dedication to this project, to its vision and goals, and to its realization has inspired us to pursue our efforts to help provide Canadians a voice in the digital wilderness.

Rest assured, Madame Minister, that we realize there is much still to do.

At the same time, we are proud of what we have accomplished. This report presents a snapshot of our work so far.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurier L. LaPierre O.C.
Senator
Chairman of the Canadian Culture Online
National Advisory Board

THE VISION

The Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board developed this *Vision Statement* to define, at the outset of its mandate, how it envisages its work respecting Canadian Culture Online. The set of principles in this statement articulates the Board's overarching vision for its work, which, as well, should serve to unify the work of its various sub-committees. As the work of the Board evolves, this set of principles may be revisited.

VISION STATEMENT

Whereas the Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board envisages the Gateway and online access as a vibrant, dynamic and interactive public space with windows for live cultural expression;

Whereas its creative genesis is memory, knowledge and innovation;

Whereas such a public space should be distinctively Canadian in that it strives to reflect the equality of French and English languages in Canadian society, accord a prominent place for Aboriginal cultural expression, and interact with the cultural diversity and multiracial nature of Canada;

Whereas the content, on the Gateway or elsewhere, should develop narratives of the Canadian experience through the generations and connect Canadians to their cultural heritage and to the diversity of their land and of their people, from all walks of life and corners of the country; and

Whereas the purpose of this online space is to allow Canadians, particularly our youth, to tell, create and enjoy the stories of Canada and to engender pride in being Canadian;

**The following principles
shall guide the work of the Board:**

1. Rely boldly on the power of content to bridge digital divides that exist linguistically, socioeconomically and geographically.

2. Foster innovation in content material and, secondarily, foster innovation in technological processes and tools of content creation, while recognizing the interplay between such innovations.

3. Reserve shelf space for digitizing existing physical memory to serve the need to access archival content while striking a balance with the need to emphasize contemporary, innovative and cutting-edge culture.

4. Anticipate a future where the majority of Canadians spend time in the interactive space being entertained, engaged and informed.

5. Support and promote the exploration, creation and sharing of interactive content that:
   a) is created by Canadians;
   b) embraces innovation and new forms of communication, interaction and expression;
   c) is new and original content or a new and original use of existing or archival content;
   d) will find a ready or emerging audience online among Canadians and the world; and
   e) enhances our public space online by reflecting who we are with all our diversity and by helping us better understand it.

6. Support the growth of an indigenous online content industry with potential for domestic and international commercial viability and sustainability. Address marketing of free and commercially priced content, including consideration of, among other issues, branding, and identifying and building audiences/end users.

7. Promote literacy in new media and promote enhanced critical faculties in the use of new media.

8. Provide for online interoperability and openness that accord with evolving global standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

**In general terms,
the Board recommends the following.**

1. All federal cultural institutions should adopt the *Vision Statement* and apply the principles therein with respect to their own policies, programs and activities that contribute to or support Canadian culture online.

2. The Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board should remain active for the life of the funds and the program should be funded for a further five years after the current funding ends and should be reviewed thereafter. The Canadian government should also increase funding for the program over the life of the program.

3. The Canadian Culture Online Program (CCOP), including the Gateway, should fall under the jurisdiction of the same assistant deputy minister at Canadian Heritage.

4. The Board should offer advice to the Minister a) on the fostering of media literacy among the young; and b) on the governance of the Gateway site, such as editorial monitoring and filtering.

5. The Board will explore the implications for the Gateway, and for the content of those projects funded by CCOP, of existing laws and policies, such as the Criminal Code prohibitions on hate speech; privacy and access to information; official bilingualism; and so forth. The Board will proffer advice to the Minister accordingly.

6. The Board recognizes that research and development is key to its vision, so the Board should analyze ways and means to achieve an important program of research and development that would benefit creators of culture and Canadians generally, and will advise the Minister on this.

7. From time to time the Board should hold joint meetings with its sub-committees and stakeholders in order to engage all those involved in CCOP in the "larger picture," and will advise the Minister accordingly.

**In terms of content and innovation,
the Board makes the following recommendations.**

8. CCOP should shift its funding priorities within the current balance, so that by 2006–07 the majority of funding will be used for new content and for innovative approaches to existing content.

9. As soon as possible, existing CCOP funds for the creation of new content and for innovative approaches to existing content should be increased, and new programs should be created accordingly.

**In terms of standards, research and development,
the Board makes the following recommendations.**

10. CCOP should revise the existing guidelines on metadata (see the report for a description and definition of metadata), which should include clear wording within the contribution agreements on the use of metadata by CCOP. To this end, fund recipients should make their metadata available without charge to CCOP.

11. CCOP funding for a given project should reflect the cost of meeting its metadata guidelines.

12. CCOP should fund a "metadata repository," which will allow Canadians to search for content on the Gateway.

13. Canadian Heritage should develop a digital rights management policy, which should explain how CCOP should deal with copyright issues. The Standards, Research and Development Sub-Committee should advise the Board on the criteria on which this policy should be built.

14. Canadian Heritage should work with other national and international standards bodies so that Canadian cultural viewpoints are reflected in the evolution of standards and specifications. The Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board should define the objectives. To this end, Canadian Heritage should bear in mind the impact of any related work being done by federal and provincial bodies.

In terms of the Gateway and access,
the Board makes the following recommendations.

15. The Gateway should be structured around four elements:

    a) promotion, presentation and dissemination of existing content (as is done on the sites run by CBC/Radio-Canada, the National Archives, Canadian museums, the National Film Board and so forth);
    b) promotion, presentation and dissemination of original Canadian content, especially that which has been funded by CCOP;
    c) provision of an environment where Canadians can suggest and contribute new content; and
    d) provision of an environment for Canadians, especially young Canadians, to form online communities where they can interact with their own culture.

16. The Gateway should serve all Canadians. Furthermore, we recommend that serious effort should be made to engage young Canadians.

17. The Board also recommends that it be consulted on all matters pertaining to Culture.ca.

DISCOVER CANADA: CREATING A VIBRANT CULTURAL SPACE ONLINE

For Canada, the Internet represents an unparallelled opportunity to bring our diverse communities together and to link them to the world. It gives us a chance to showcase the richness of cultural activity already under way in every corner of the country, and it puts us on a more equal footing with cultural products from other countries, on both their turf and ours.

DISCOVER CANADA:
CREATING A VIBRANT CULTURAL SPACE ONLINE
By showcasing our stories online, we help connect Canadians to their own culture, and we also provide a Canadian choice on an Internet that might otherwise be dominated by the values and ideas of other cultures. The Internet is the great equalizer. Someone connecting from an Inuit community north of the Arctic Circle could in time have the same cultural access—and cultural power—as someone connecting from Bay Street or Sussex Drive.

WHY CANADIAN CULTURE MUST BE ONLINE

Despite Canada's appetite for the Internet, little of the content available online is Canadian, and this content can be hard to find. However, the Internet is still a young medium, and there is still a chance to influence how Canadians use the Internet and to ensure that our stories will stand out amid the flood of foreign content.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. We now need to stake out a public space to demonstrate the best of our values and ourselves, so that Canadians can find themselves online. We must now harness this technology so that it serves our interests, letting us tell our stories to each other. We have redirected technological forces before. In the 1800s, we connected this country by rail with the CPR. In the 1900s, we "connected" it over the airwaves with the CBC. In the 2000s, we must "connect" it once again, this time with packets of digital data.

We must ask ourselves what kind of Internet we want our children logging onto. And we must remember what kind of media we would be enjoying today if our parents had not backed the CBC, the CRTC, the National Film Board, Canadian content rules for radio and so much more.

Having come so far to build a Canadian identity, we Canadians cannot let our culture slip through our grasp because we have chosen not to grab hold of the bits and bytes on which culture is now increasingly encoded.

THE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

Even as monies are being dispensed under various programs to help create content, questions arise.

CANADA HAS GONE ONLINE

Canadians have responded enthusiastically to digital media. According to comScore Media Metrix Canada, the number of Canadians using the Internet from home grew from 11,949,000 in May 2000 to 16,906,000 in January 2003, representing a 41-percent increase.

Moreover, there is a demand for online cultural products. Ekos Research found that 36 percent of us have searched for cultural information about, for example, concerts, plays and exhibits. The same study found that 58 percent of Canadians agree that governments should invest in programs that support the development of a greater amount of Canadian content on the Internet, and that 81 percent of Canadians want the online resources they use to give priority to Canadian content. Significantly, 49 percent of Canadian Internet users report that a strong Canadian focus is a highly important factor when they are deciding which search engine or portal to use.

How does the Department's strategy serve the citizen? What content is relevant to Canadians? What is a worthy endeavour? What and who should we fund first? How do we provide room for Canadians to tell their stories?

Canadian Heritage has three objectives for Canadian culture online:
1. to achieve a critical mass of content in English and French;
2. to prepare the right conditions for the online market to develop and thrive without government management; and
3. to build an audience.

Consequently, we need public resources to help creators of culture create and supply online content in order to have a vibrant public space for Canadians on the Internet—a place that expresses Canadian culture in all its diversity and provides access to existing digitized memory, to new digital content and to creative approaches to the use of existing content.

Doing this involves complex architectural issues, such as interoperability, accessibility, navigability, security and standards. But these issues are manageable. We do, however, need to address some key questions. How public will the space be? When is access free and where is there commercial potential? Are access and participation democratic? Who, if anyone, should "curate" the space?

CONTENT: MAKING CHOICES

The wealth of Canadian culture means that a strategy about content is a strategy about making choices with limited public funds. In particular, making choices means choosing what to emphasize. As a nation that values diversity, we of course want our digital content to reflect that diversity. As a bilingual nation, we want it to serve both anglophones and francophones, especially since the Web is increasingly becoming a multicultural, multilingual environment.

Most importantly, the Board wants the digital content to appeal to young people. It is young people who use the Web most. As digital media become a greater part of our lives, these media will grow up along with the current generation. It is young people who are most fluent in the "new media language" and they will be the next wave of online decision makers.

Consequently, the Board decided that scarce public funds should be used primarily to help Canadians explore, create and share interactive content that meets the following criteria.
1. It is created by Canadians.
2. It embraces innovation and new forms of communication and interaction, expression and interaction.
3. It is new and original content or a new and original use of existing or archival content.
4. It will find a ready or emerging audience online among Canadians and the world.
5. It enhances our public space by reflecting who we are with all our diversity and by helping us better understand it.

REFINING THE PRIORITIES

CCOP has made an invaluable contribution to bringing Canadian stories directly to Canadians. One project, Web Awareness Canada, helps children and young people become safe, wise and responsible Internet users. New media projects such as *Degrassi.tv*, *Angela Anaconda* and *Mia Mouse* have been recognized internationally, as have such projects as *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. These are just a few examples of the exemplary projects that CCOP has funded to date.

We can get a sense of the value of this investment by tracking the success of projects such as these, by looking at how existing funds for creating content have been oversubscribed and by tracking the time Canadians spend online consuming content. By all these measures, the results are positive and encouraging. As such, the Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board strongly believes that CCOP should continue and that it should grow. But even so, the Board also believes that there may be ways of putting CCOP funds to better use.

Certain types of projects better advance the Vision than do others. This analysis was the job of the Content and Innovation Sub-Committee. How are the funds being spent today? The sub-committee evaluated the existing balance of funds against the criteria in the previous section. It didn't look at specific funds, but instead looked at the total group of funds for the following areas:
1. creating new content, which includes innovative digital content, innovative use of elements of existing content, and project distribution and marketing;
2. creating enhanced access to existing content (other than simple cataloguing) based on existing or anticipated demand; and
3. funding administrative and Gateway costs, as well as the costs of a "conducive environment" that supports the creation of content through research and development, metadata and copyright clearance.

At the moment, 27 percent of CCOP funds are spent on creating new content, 45 percent on creating enhanced access and 28 percent on other costs.

Using the Vision Statement as a guide, the sub-committee examined this ratio. The Board believes it is important to allocate funds to encourage Canadians to make greater use of the content that already exists. However, the Board also realizes that over time a shift toward creating new content and new approaches to existing content will have to take place.

It is new content along with new approaches to existing content that can best take advantage of the "language" and possibilities of digital media, because it will be designed from conception with that language and those possibilities in mind. New content can keep up with changing audience demands, the changing nature of cultural content and the changing technology of digital media itself.

THE FUTURE OF CONTENT

It is of the utmost importance that Canada take a leadership position in creating content that establishes an online beachhead for Canadian content. CCOP should shift funding priorities within the current balance, so that by 2006–07 the majority of funding will be used for new content and for innovative approaches to existing content. The Board will refine its view of the scale of this commitment to funding new content and innovative approaches to existing content. In this context, over the next year or more, the sub-committee would also like to do the following:

1. analyze available information and identify gaps that could be filled with further research;
2. look at the role and needs of research and development;
3. develop recommendations for possible new funds that may better respond to priorities, and explore further collaboration between existing cultural institutions and the interactive content industry;
4. determine which other elements from the Vision Statement need to be specifically addressed in the context of content priorities (such as the needs of young people, francophones, Aboriginal people and other diversity communities);
5. identify opportunities for integrating public, private and not-for-profit content and for creating new content;
6. come to a better definition of the point where enhancing existing content becomes creating new content; and
7. determine whether CCOP funds are used in accordance with the *Vision Statement.*

THE FUTURE OF CANADIAN DIGITAL MEDIA

Just as artists are always innovating, so too are the engineers, technicians and scientists who create the "palettes" on which artists work. The Board believes that Canadians need to be innovative, both artistically and technologically.

Canada already has an impressive research and development track record when it comes to digital media, particularly in the areas of animation, film and multimedia technologies. The Board believes that Canadian researchers and artists need to continue researching and developing the tools, knowledge capital and human skills of the cultural sectors. In this exercise, these Canadians have the full support of the Board.

A PLACE FOR CANADIAN CONTENT

It's one thing to have Canadian culture online. It's another to know where it is. A Web portal, or Gateway, helps users find information by collecting links in one place. What is more important to the Board, however, is the view that a Gateway can also be a showcase for the content that people create themselves.

It is for this reason that the Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board struck the Gateway and Access Sub-Committee to investigate ways of building a unique, vibrant, dynamic and interactive public space, accessible to all Canadians, where online Canadian cultural content can be easily found, shared and promoted.

One such vehicle is the Gateway, a site where Canadians can find and explore each other's cultural products. The envisaged Gateway will ensure visibility of and accessibility to Canadian cultural content online. Consequently, the Board hopes that, over time, Canadians looking for cultural information would fall into the habit of first checking the Gateway being proposed.

This Gateway would be a place where Canadians can find not just what they want but what they didn't know they wanted and what they never would have expected. We are talking about much more than what is currently offered by search engines such as Google. While search engines are passive, the Gateway that the Board has in mind would actively promote and provide original content.

The Gateway would be a meeting place where Canadians could contribute their own vision of Canadian culture. It would add value to the content it provides by creating a unique experience, one that takes the shape of a road map and later makes it possible to personalize the site based on the needs of

each user. The Gateway would also have a proactive role, backed with adequate human, technological and financial resources. Only in this way will the Gateway be a meeting place and a place of innovation, rather than just a content distribution centre. For all these reasons, the Board is convinced that creating, promoting and maintaining the Gateway is of the highest importance.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP VS. CORPORATE CONTRIBUTIONS

In the matter of the Gateway, the Board feels that as relationships develop with corporate content providers and with corporate bodies that themselves sponsor cultural products, the Board will want to ensure that what is being built will be a public space, not a platform designed for delivering "eyeballs" to third-party advertisers.

Many search engines sell higher ranks to advertisers, literally auctioning position. Desperate for revenue,

other Web sites are borrowing product placement tricks from TV and movies. Just as some action movies are essentially extended ads for a series of products, many Web sites covertly "embed" third-party content, disguising it as their own. Public spending, by its very nature, can transcend the requirements of commercialism. The government can use the people's money to support the people's culture.

Put simply, the Board is of the opinion that the proposed Gateway will draw a line in the digital sand, stating unmistakably that our culture represents our values, and that our values are not for sale. In other words, the Gateway will not trade preferential space or treatment for money. What the Board sees instead is a partnership with other bodies that can offer Canadians cultural products they will value; that is, products that deserve to be seen.

The Board is willing to accept the principle of corporate contributions as a way of funding the Gateway, but only if they are made in the spirit of true philanthropy. The Board believes the Gateway should not be in the business of selling control over content.

FINDING SOMETHING ON THE PORTAL

As the Canadian Culture Online Program funds new content and enhances existing content, it will link much of that content to the Gateway, where all Canadians will have access to it.

But the more content we have, the more clutter we have. A Web page is like a business card—a business card dropped on the streets of downtown Montréal. It might get found. But it probably will not.

Looking at what is known as a Web page's source code, one might see something like this: <meta name="dc.title" content=" Introduction to the Government of Canada Official Web Site | Canada Site">.

This is an example of metadata, and it helps search engines find the content one is looking for. If the Web is a vast library, metadata is the card catalogue. Adding metadata to a Web page is known as "tagging" a page. Metadata makes a page easier to find and use. But metadata relates to more than just the Web. There are other kinds of metadata, and the Standards, Research and Development Sub-Committee looked at many of them. In fact, metadata can be used to describe just about any type of digital object. It can even

THE AGORA AND THE MALL

In ancient Greece, the agora was the place where the community came together. Merchants met their customers, and the people who had gathered from disparate places exchanged ideas and debated. In the Middle Ages, the fair replaced the agora. It, too, was a place of business, but also a place where people from different countries had a chance to share ideas.

Traditionally, places where we have shopped have been places where cultures mixed and mingled and grew. Many of our greatest cultural forms have arisen from this mixing of ideas in public and commercial spaces. Created in New Orleans's Congo Square, jazz mixed the African music remembered by former slaves with the European music played by New Orleans Creoles.

Today, however, commerce has overwhelmed culture. Malls are now entirely private spaces that are under the tight control of the malls' management. The vigorous public debate of the ancient agora is expressly forbidden in many modern malls.

The Board envisions something different. Instead of privatizing public space, it wants to de-emphasize commerce on Canada's corner of the Web. It believes the government can create a public place online where Canada's culture can stand on its own merits, even though the Board also recognizes that commerce and culture can work together perfectly well elsewhere.

be used to help sort through your MP3 music clips or the photos you take on a digital camera.

With metadata, a creator can classify digital objects by name, description, category and much more. Metadata can help a searcher find digital objects more quickly, and also improve the quality of the search. For instance, if one is looking for a song about Louis Riel, one may employ any number of search strategies. Widespread use of metadata means that more of these strategies will produce the desired results.

WHY STANDARDS?

Digital media are full of standards so that people can view the same content the same way, even if they are using different hardware or software. Standards are critical to ensuring ongoing access to and sharing of digital Canadian content, now and in the future. Standards are a set of common social and technical languages that allow us to communicate, express, find and exchange digital content with as many people as possible. CCOP should ensure that the content produced and digitized under the program is accessible, valued in domestic and international markets, and not limited in audience exposure, by addressing the issues of standards in regard to Canadian culture online.

While standards are important to CCOP now, they are of equal long-term importance. Historically, standards have allowed goods and services to retain value beyond their original intended use. We live with innumerable standards from the past that make it easier to use goods and services in innovative ways, adding benefit to our lives.

We must ensure that this is equally true of digital Canadian cultural content. We must ensure through standards that, for example, Canadian digital content can be used to educate Canadian youth in our e-learning environments, that it is available to be marketed when a particular opportunity arises and that contemporary Canadian culture can be accessed generations from now for its historical importance.

The Board sees the following added benefits to employing standards in CCOP.

1. Standards will ensure that digital content produced through CCOP is accessible and will improve the quality of searches for Canadian content online.

2. Standards will diversify the uses of the content and therefore increase the return on investment.
3. Standards will increase the market for Canadian culture and increase Canada's competitiveness in the international market.
4. Standards will facilitate the fair trade and use of Canadian digital content and support electronic and physical economies.

PROTECTING ARTISTS' RIGHTS ONLINE

An important standards issue is digital rights. Many Canadians are familiar with the controversy over downloading music from sites such as Napster. As this peer-to-peer file sharing grows on the strength of faster broadband connections, people have begun to download other types of content, including images and even digitized film clips. It is already possible, with optical character recognition, for someone to digitize another person's literary works.

Artists want to protect their rights to the work they have created, even when this work goes online.

STANDARD TIME

One of the standards we rarely even think about is Standard Time. It used to be that each town had its own "time zone". When the fastest means of transport was a horse, this was no inconvenience. But the advent of trains made it possible to zip past several towns in a single day trip. A Canadian, Sandford Fleming, was working as a surveyor for the CPR when he realized the chaos this was causing, so he developed a system of Standard Time. In 1884, the international community adopted 24 main time zones, thereby achieving Fleming's vision.

Standard Time does more than help the trains run on time. It enables all sorts of economic efficiencies, particularly in a mass communications era when we need to know what time it is all over the world.

Standard Time also has a social dimension. When travelling, one bases one's itinerary on the time the plane lands and takes off. In fact, all standards have some sort of social dimension. They exist to make our lives easier, and they exist in a cultural context of the decisions we make about how we want to live.

In a new media context, having standards makes it possible to communicate, express, find and share cultural ideas.

Digital rights management can make it cost effective to deal with copyright clearance. Unless copyrights are respected both online and offline, it will be impossible for Canadian artists to remain "in business." The Board wants to achieve a balance between the artist's right to control access to a work, on one hand, and an economic model that allows efficient and fair trade on the other.

Adding metadata about copyright will make it easier to find and reimburse artists for the use of copyrighted material. Metadata can tell a searcher under what conditions the artist allows use of his or her work. The artist may, for example, want to allow free use to educators but to charge for use of a picture or poem in a business presentation.

HELPING TO FIND A STANDARD

The easier it is for people to use standards, the more likely they are to use them. That's why the Board wants to ensure as much public access as possible to the metadata people have created for their digital objects. This metadata should be gathered in a "metadata repository" that, for example, could be used to search for content on the Gateway.

Accessibility must be measured against the needs of diverse stakeholders. For example, the Board wants to balance users' need to effectively search for content with producers' need to manage the cost of implementing metadata.

The Board won't be writing new standards. If anything, there are already too many standards for digital media. Instead, it will be looking for ways to simplify standards so that artists, more versed in affairs of the soul than in W3C protocols, will be able to categorize their content easily.

To this end, the Board will seek standards that are easy to apply and have the greatest "interoperability," meaning that they maximize compatibility. Generally, the cultural sector has not spoken out on technical standards. The Board's role is to advise on the best ways to give stakeholders and users a voice as standards are developed. Standards help users to understand what is appropriate for them, bearing in mind the goals of accessibility and interoperability. The Board works with the community of users to offer support in implementing and funding standards, in developing tools, and in analyzing costs, benefits and learning curves.

But the Board isn't the only body looking at new media standards. Provincial bodies are mulling them over, as are international bodies and, for that matter, other federal bodies, such as Industry Canada and the Department of National Defence. The Board is asking Canadian Heritage to work with all these other bodies, including the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, and CANARIE (a non-profit corporation that advances Internet development), so that Canadian culture has a voice in shaping these emerging standards, ensuring that Canadians are not left behind.

We also need to consider how people will be able to access content on the Gateway, not only in 2003 but also decades from now. Just as we can still read books printed by Gutenberg, we want our distant descendants to be able to see who we were and what we believed.

PAYING FOR STANDARDS

While talking about implementing metadata, we should underline the fact that doing so is not without cost.

The Board believes that a contribution agreement should be a two-way street. On one hand, the people being supported should agree to add metadata to the work they create with public money. On the other hand, the Board understands that the contribution agreement should include extra funds to cover the cost of complying with metadata requirements. The Board also believes it has a responsibility to make it as easy and cost effective as possible to use metadata.

However, the Board believes that the benefits of metadata are not simply public benefits. Tagging digital objects opens up possibilities for controlling the use of copyrighted materials, and this in turn opens up e-commerce possibilities. Metadata can, conceivably, pay for itself.

As CCOP provides support for an environment conducive to creating content, the Board will also have to consider suggesting long-term funding, as well as strategic cross-sector partnerships that can leverage investments and minimize long-term costs to the public sector.

IDEAS TO BE CONSIDERED DOWN THE ROAD

While the sub-committee was largely interested in technical standards, other types of standards will also affect the Gateway. For example, as we produce more digital cultural objects suitable for young people, the Board must address the issue of appropriateness of content.

We also need to address the needs of people with disabilities who access the Web using assistive technologies. As part of its Common Look and Feel initiative, the Government of Canada has implemented

a set of standards to ensure Canadians have equitable access to all content on federal government Web sites. As a government Web site, the Gateway would follow these standards. But we still need to work out how these standards would apply to content on the Gateway.

Other standards issues are on the Board's radar as well. Metadata standards will continue to evolve as technology evolves. How will the Board ensure that the content developed through the program will still function meaningfully and be compatible with such new and emerging technologies as handheld platforms or Web-enabled cell phones?

The Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board has decided to make these issues part of its long-term work on governance, given its limited time and resources. For example, it wants to examine a content advisory system to ensure the Internet is a safe place for Canadians of all ages.

In addition, the Board wants the content supported under CCOP to be meaningful to Canadians. How will it know what content people want? How does it measure "success"? In addition to the other standards, the Board will need an ever-higher bar for quality standards.

WHAT WE STAND TO GAIN

Over the past few pages, the Board has offered a pathway that would not merely transplant Canada's rich culture and heritage online, but that would allow Canadians a chance to interact with and contribute to that heritage. This report has shown how the Internet can be not simply a library of the past, but also a harbinger of the future.

The Board looked at how the Gateway can be the touchstone for the dynamic interplay of ideas between Canadians from all regions, of all ethnicities, of all age groups, of all kinds. And this report has discussed the technical details of how we can make the Gateway do what we want it to do.

Over the long term, the Board envisions a cultural realm in which there is a seamless flow between the physical and virtual worlds we inhabit. The Board foresees a landscape inhabited by Canadian stories, expressions and heritage. The Board expects that more than half of the online cultural experience of Canadians will be related to Canadian culture, and that growing numbers of citizens around the globe will learn about and experience Canada online. The Board sees the Gateway as a beginning, an exciting opportunity that will flow with the rising tide of the young. Once we open the Gateway, we will find new worlds to discover. It's time for us to sail.

Canadian Culture Online National Advisory Board

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Description of programs

PROGRAMS	DESCRIPTION	BENEFICIARIES
CANADIAN MEMORY FUND	Connects Canadians with their diverse heritage and provides accessibility to key collections from Canada's federal cultural heritage institutions.	Federal cultural agencies that hold Canadian cultural/heritage assets
PARTNERSHIPS FUND	Encourages digitization of content by networks of organizations across Canada.	Libraries, archives, municipalities, not-for-profit organizations
CANADA NEW MEDIA FUND	Supports the development, production, and marketing of Canadian digital cultural content, in both official languages. Administered by Telefilm Canada.	Canadian private companies
FRANCOMMUNAUTÉS VIRTUELLES	Develops French language online applications and cultural content. Administered by Industry Canada.	Francophone not-for-profit organizations, possibly in partnership with private sector organizations
CANADA-TELUS NEW MEDIA LEARNING FUND	Supports the development, production and marketing of digital cultural content related to the Canadian K-12 educational curriculum. Administered and cost-shared by the Telus Foundation.	Canadian-owned and-controlled private sector small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and not-for-profit organizations
CULTURE.CA	*Culture.ca* will make it easier for all citizens to access online cultural resources and educational materials; experience the works of Canadian creators online and participate in online communities to exchange diverse points of view.	All Canadians
ABORIGINAL CANADA PORTAL	Provides over 7,500 links to information for and about Aboriginal people in Canada.	Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and six national Aboriginal organizations
VIRTUAL MUSEUM OF CANADA	Maintains a virtual museum that links 1,000 Canadian museums online, and creates digital content for it. Administered by the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN).	Museums and public or private sector organizations
ELECTRONIC COPYRIGHT FUND	Improves copyright management in the digital environment by facilitating online copyright clearance.	Private and not-for-profit organizations, supported by copyright collectives, agencies and/or producers
APPLIED RESEARCH IN INTERACTIVE MEDIA	Stimulates innovation in Canada's cultural and new media sector; promotes research and development in interactive media. Administered and cost-shared by CANARIE Inc.	New media artists, arts and cultural organizations, SMEs, academic and research institutions
NEW MEDIA RESEARCH NETWORKS FUND	Stimulates the creation of consortia of partnered organizations (private, non-profit, academic, research institutions) to conduct research and development at the intersection of technologies, culture and content.	Canadian organizations, including private-sector SMEs, non-governmental research institutes, universities, and not-for-profit arts and cultural organizations

Statistics

BROADBAND ADOPTION (ALL TYPES)
• 45 percent of wired households report having high-speed Internet access.

• 82 percent of rural Canadians have a dial-up connection, compared to 46 percent of urban-wired households.

(Source: «The ISP Marketplace», Part of the Rethinking the Information Highway Study, Summer Update Series, Ekos Research, 2002)

MINUTES/VISITOR/MONTH
According to comScore Media Metrix, the "Digital Media Universe", the number of Canadians using the Internet from home grew from 11,949,000 in May 2000 to 15,583,000 in April 2002 representing a 30 percent increase. The value the Internet has in the lives of Canadians is evidenced in the substantial increase in the length of time they spend online. Over 23 months of continuous tracking, Canadians increased the time spent online by a whopping 70 percent from 513 minutes/visitor/month to 872 minutes/visitor/month.

(Source: "Canadian Internet users log on by the millions...and stay on!", Press release, comScore Media Metrix Canada, June 14, 2002)

USERS - CANADIAN INFORMATION - GENERAL
In the last 12 months, 45 percent of Canadian Internet users have searched at least once and up to four times for general information about Canada.; 36 percent have searched at least once and up to four times for Canadian cultural information, such as concerts, plays and museum/art exhibits; and 35 percent have searched at least once and up to four times for information on Canadian historical sites, events or people.

(Source: Rethinking the Information Highway, Ekos Research, 2002)

IMPORTANCE OF CANADIAN ONLINE CONTENT
81 percent of Internet users believe that it is important that Canadian content is given priority by online resources; 35 percent believe highly important.

(Source: Rethinking the Information Highway, Ekos Research, 2002)

SATISFACTION OF ONLINE CULTURAL INFORMATION
77 percent of Internet users who have searched for Canadian cultural information online reported that they were satisfied with the information that they found.

(Source: Rethinking the Information Highway, Ekos Research, 2002)

FRENCH CONTENT ON THE INTERNET
According to the 2002 Edition of Ekos Research's Rethinking the Information Highway survey:

• 66 percent of Canadians who accessed the Internet in French reported difficulties finding information in French on the Internet.
This is down 7 percent from 2000, when 73 percent reported difficulties.

• 61 percent of Canadians who accessed the Internet in French reported that there is more information on the Internet now, compared to two years ago; with 17 percent reporting "a lot more."

• 57 percent of Canadians who accessed the Internet in French reported that the quality of information on the Internet in French is better now compared to two years ago.

(Source: Rethinking the Information Highway, Ekos Research, 2002)