

# Preserving the Archival and Historical Memory of Government at Library and Archives Canada<sup>1</sup>

by

Dr. Ian E. Wilson

Librarian and Archivist of Canada

Tokyo, November 15, 2004

President Kikuchi, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

First let me thank my distinguished colleague, Mr. Kikuchi, for his kind invitation to be here today. I have been looking forward to this for some months. Japan has both a long history and a significant archival tradition. I expect to learn more while I am here than I can contribute but I trust that my comments may add to your discussions. It is difficult to prepare a paper many thousand kilometers away but perhaps in my discussion of our efforts in Canada in developing our approaches to common professional challenges you will find some ideas you can adapt and build upon to respond to your own circumstances here.

I mentioned in my remarks on Friday that I expected to learn while I am here and indeed I have. The National Archives of Japan kindly arranged for Mr. Stuckey and me to visit Kyoto this weekend, an experience which will remain with me for my lifetime. I would, in fact, prefer to give this lecture with all of us seated beside the Zen garden in the Ryoanji Temple, considering its meaning for our challenge. You know it well, with its carefully tended white sand and pebbles and the 15 larger rocks, only 14 of which are visible from any human angle, the wall around with its patterns and the trees and birds outside. To my mind I found there the key part of my talk for today. The garden might represent the entire universe of records in a modern government or major institution. For much of my career as an archivist, we have been as ants in this garden, examining each pebble for significance, finding a few of seeming importance and taking these back to our archives to be carefully maintained. Occasionally we saw part of the pattern made as the white pebbles and sand are raked, and often changed through reorganization, the series of records. But seldom did we see the large rocks, the major records of the government, the enduring permanent part of administration that must remain. The challenge to our profession today and the key message from both Mr. Stuckey and myself is to shift our focus, to rise above ground level and see the full garden and the broader social

---

<sup>1</sup> I wish to acknowledge the kind and essential assistance of Dr. Richard Brown of Library and Archives Canada in the preparation of this paper.

context in which it is created and functions. Our approach to appraisal needs to be based on an understanding and view of the full context of the entire record keeping system and its administrative and societal context if we are to make informed decisions regarding the retention and disposal of records. My paper outlines how we are attempting to do this in the national government in Canada.

Our topic today addresses an issue residing at the very heart of contemporary archival endeavor. This is an issue, which continues to challenge archives at the national and other levels of jurisdiction, and has long stimulated debate and discussion internationally within the archival community, especially over the past 20 years. I am referring here to the ongoing and fundamental business of acquiring and preserving records for the purposes of establishing and building historical memory; of making choices and taking decisions about the heritage and other values of information; of identifying and selecting archival and historical documentation for the accessibility and use of society and its future generations. In other words, I am going to be discussing some of the questions and problems associated with our responsibility to define and articulate the documentary past, what we typically call in the archival profession, the *function of archival appraisal*.

I think that all of us here would accept that the human propensity and capacity to remember grounds, under-structures, and illuminates the human condition. Our accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the past over time (for example, the history of governments, wars, and famines; or the history of sea-routes, or of food, or of science and technology; or the history of philosophy, ideas and literature, or the history of art and music; or our historical connections with our ancestors, our customs and traditions and our families through stories and recorded memories) continues to shape and define who we are both as individuals and as members of communities, including at the level of society, culture, and nation-state. These are cultural arguments but, of course, the official record is vital for other reasons: legal. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, we have seen our records used to settle and define border and boundary issues, to resolve disputes on land ownership, to protect and defend human rights and commercial interests in our society. And, the records of constitution, treaties and exploration define our way of government and our sovereignty. History and the record is a living force and we as archivists have a unique stewardship responsibility on behalf of our societies and of generations, past, present and future. We are inevitably bound to the past (to explore the archaeology of our historical memory) and to remember. Our understanding of this experience in turn shapes our future. Canadian archivists are fond of quoting one of my predecessors, Arthur Doughty, who as national archivist in 1916 wrote:

***Of all national assets, archives are the most precious. They are the gift of one generation to another and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization.***

This is a powerful statement of the value of our endeavor, written in the midst of the First World War when in Europe the future of civilization itself seemed in doubt.

If it is clear (and we accept the assumption) that humanity is driven to remember the past, and to draw inspiration, knowledge, experience and understanding within the context and meaning of history, then the *memorization* (or the selection or *construction*) of the past becomes enormously significant. For centuries, this has been the primary role and occupation of archives: to provide a secure and

monumental place of physical preservation for records and documentation dedicated to history, knowledge and remembering. Prior to approximately, say, the mid-twentieth century, this responsibility had not been especially onerous or troublesome from an intellectual perspective, insofar as archives and archivists were largely dealing with records and documentation which had survived over time; the documentary residue, which had escaped administrative disposal, or deliberate destruction for political or other reasons, or the ravages of war, social unrest, fire, etc.

For a very long time, archives were primarily places of storage; warehouses or repositories for *survived memory*. They were passive monuments to the documentary past.

Today, however, the situation and circumstances of archives have changed considerably, and I will be alluding to some of these changes over the course of my presentation. Let me just say at this juncture that the most fundamental change has been the growing requirement for archives to intervene in memory-building: to make choices about which records will be preserved and made accessible, and coincidentally, to engage directly in or to permit the destruction of records. In this context of changing roles and responsibilities for archives, it is important to recognize that the function of appraisal is not simply about records acquisition and preservation. It is also about what one of my predecessors, the late Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, called the "fine art of destruction", i.e., archival appraisal is concerned with determining processes to "decide wisely and well what shall be destroyed and what shall be retained".

Unlike the antiquarian role of "collecting" documentary residue generally assumed by archives prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, archives now play a very active role in determining and shaping recorded memory. In Canada, this responsibility was recognized fairly early on, beginning with the *Report of the Royal Commission Inquiring Into the State of the Records of the Public Departments of the Dominion of Canada* in 1914, when our federal government first began to develop processes and procedures to provide for an orderly destruction of public records based on rational business principles. The taking of official inventories in order to manage the life-cycle of government records (including the timing of their destruction by departments or their preservation by what was then the Public Archives of Canada) was first introduced in 1924 with the general records schedule for the administrative records of the "public departments", and the application of records "scheduling" was subsequently extended to the operational records of government during the years 1936 to 1945 through a series of central agency (Treasury Board) decisions. The profile of archives in this records destruction decision-making was subsequently enhanced between 1945 and 1965 with the participation of the Dominion Archivist in the deliberations of the Public Records Committee, composed of some of Canada's most senior bureaucrats, who spent many hours in regular meetings assessing lists of dormant government records to make appropriate keep-destroy decisions and arrange transfers of historical records to the Public Archives.

Since that time, first with passage of the *Public Records Order* in 1966, afterwards the *National Archives of Canada Act* 1987, and most recently with our new legislation, the *Library and Archives of Canada Act (LAC)* of 21 May 2004, the role of the archives has inexorably evolved into a business preeminently occupied with the construction of memory, that is, the identification, organization and preparation of the documentary past to provide it with coherence, unity and accessibility for public use. In Canada, it is now accepted fundamentally that the illumination of the past by archivists

through appraisal is primary, inevitable given our mission, and entirely rational, legitimate and necessary. In fact, this is precisely the role recently and rather splendidly articulated for LAC by our Parliament, i.e., to be an institution occupied with the preservation of the documentary heritage of Canada for the benefit of present and future generations; to serve as a source of enduring knowledge accessible to all, contributing to the cultural, social and economic advance of Canada as a free and democratic society; and to serve as the continuing memory of the Government of Canada and its institutions. I would emphasize, however, that archival appraisal continues to be as much about the destruction of documentary memory as it does about its preservation and accessibility. Preserving archival and historical memory involves necessarily documentary erasure. This is the central issue.

\* \* \*

Briefly, over the next few minutes, I want to explain how Library and Archives Canada has decided to approach the problem of identifying the archival and historical value of the records created and managed by our federal government. It is obvious that these records (as would be the case in Japan) provide substantial evidence of how government administers the state and conducts the public business; of how it formulates and implements policy; of how it takes decisions, and delivers programs and services to the civil constituency; of how it interacts with citizens within the broad context of governance. It is also clear that these records help us to know and understand ourselves over time within social, cultural and historical dimensions, regardless of their administrative origins and purposes. In fact, the importance of government records to Canadian archival and historical memory has been formally recognized in our legislation under Sections 12 and 13, which allow Library and Archives Canada to intervene directly in the life-cycle management of information by government (no record of government may be destroyed without the consent of the Librarian and Archivist) in order to make choices, and to require the transfer or protection of records deemed to have archival and historical value. In addition, our new legislation gives us the authority to require the transfer of records, from any part of government, which in our view are at risk of loss or destruction.

Let me begin with a statement of the basic problem. The Government of Canada creates and manages millions of records in all media, increasingly in electronic form, to the extent that the scale of its current information holdings and assets is practically beyond the capacity of inventory or measure, and rapidly growing on a daily basis. It is simply not feasible for the archives to preserve all of these records, nor would this in any case be advisable, since it is obvious that great numbers of government documents become superfluous after a time, sometimes after a very short time, and there would be no justification for their ongoing archival preservation. Alternatively, there are many essential records of government activity, which provide critical information that must be retained permanently or for long periods of time. In this context, we are obliged to address two very basic questions. Which records of government should archives keep? Which records should archives allow government to throw away?

Since 1991, Library and Archives Canada has actively pursued the development of strategic responses to these questions, and we continue to seek improvements. In part, our decision to develop an appraisal strategy for government records, subsequently supported over time by theory, methodology and criteria, reflected the state of our appraisal program as it had evolved through the 1960s, 70s and 80s. While the archives was undoubtedly acquiring important records having national significance and historical importance used by the academic and other research communities, a series

of internal studies and audits conducted in the late 80s noted the following:

1. **The selection criteria utilized by archivists to appraise records was highly subjective and decision-making about the value of records was inconsistent, resulting in variances and anomalies in the nature and extent of the records being acquired.**  
Typically, the archival assessment of government records either followed or applied interpretations of records values which had de facto attained codified status within the North American archival profession during the 1960s and 70s, i.e., the identification and selection of records in reference to their primary, secondary, evidential, informational, historical research, legal, fiscal and other qualities as originally proposed in the writings of the American Archivist Theodore Schellenberg.
2. **The archival holdings were not comprehensive in the sense of documenting government programs and activities from a global perspective.**  
There were significant gaps in our holdings (e.g., very little about women or natural resources or science and technology), and other portfolio domains were oversubscribed (records of the military, foreign affairs, central agencies). In some instances, the appraisal and acquisition of government records reflected specific interests of both archivists and particular research communities.
3. **The government records holdings of the archives were growing at an alarming rate.**  
In a number of cases, because the actual appraisal process took so long, decision-making was being postponed to a later date (selective retention) in order to meet the information management demands of government institutions.
4. **Important records of government activity at the upper executive echelons of policy formulation, decision-making and program management were only sporadically transferred to the archives, coinciding with a disproportionate archival representation and acquisition of records documenting lower-level bureaucratic business.**  
The archives were also acquiring repetitive and largely homogenous case file series of basic program and service transactions.
5. **There were significant issues of accountability, insofar as very little documentation was being prepared to justify appraisal decisions in the form of an intellectual audit trail.**  
Serious questions were being addressed to the archives about the rationale behind some of its appraisal decision-making.

In effect, the process of our appraisal decision-making was slow and highly subjective, largely uncoordinated, not very well documented, unresponsive to the information management needs of government, and yielding, in the end, mixed results in terms of the nature, quality and value of the records being preserved.

Other major factors influencing our decision to develop a strategic approach to appraisal were the increasing complexity of government in terms of its program, service and business management; the coincidental and spectacular growth in the extent of the information produced and managed in this

new administrative environment; and finally, the arrival and catalyst of electronic systems technology, of which we are all now familiar at the desk-top.

To put it simply, the traditional approach to appraisal (based on the approach advocated by T. R. Schellenberg) we were following at that time, which determined the archival and historical importance of records based on their reading and examination in reference to criteria of value (evidential, informational, fiscal, legal, etc.), could not cope with the scale and complexity of government administration, or the superabundance of its information and its new and evolving forms of automated record-keeping, or the impact of technology on how government was creating, managing and using information. Consequently, we needed to find alternative ways and means to appraise government records.

We also recognized that our appraisal activities (however they were rationalized from an intellectual perspective) needed to be positioned within the broader context of government business, notably within the domain of information management. In Canada at the federal level, responsibility and accountability for the management, preservation, and accessibility of government information is shared amongst a number of central stakeholders: Treasury Board Secretariat, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Library and Archives Canada, the Offices of the Information and Privacy Commissioners, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Office of the Auditor General; and last but not least, the Deputy Heads (the senior level of the professional bureaucracy) of all government agencies. In fact, it is the policy of the Government of Canada that all federal government institutions "manage information to facilitate equality of access and promote public trust, optimize information sharing and re-use in accordance with legal and policy obligations", and further that they "ensure that information is created, acquired, or maintained to meet program, policy, and accountability requirements is relevant, reliable and complete". This policy is based on acceptance of the idea that information is an asset and that it is the responsibility of all program managers to manage it effectively in the public interest.

Library and Archives preserves only those government records that meet its appraisal criteria of national archival or historical significance. The strategy facilitating this selection process is designed to provide Canadians with complete historical documentation of government's decision-making and business activities. It is not intended to assure the preservation of all government records. In fact, only a small volume of the government's records, compared to the total information produced by government, is finally identified for archival preservation, approximately 1%. The vast majority of records created and maintained by government are disposed of by institutions through the application of Records Disposition Authorities as part of their records management programs.

Treasury Board's Policy on the Management of Government Information (2004) establishes the record-keeping responsibilities and accountability of government institutions. This policy requires government institutions to assess their information requirements as part of their strategic planning and business needs analysis. In the normal course of business, the ongoing requirement to retain records is generally established by government institutions according to:

X Operational needs associated with making policy, taking decisions, delivering programs,

providing services or completing business transactions;

- X Legal requirements, meaning compliance with laws or regulations which require the retention of records for prescribed periods of time; and
- X Legal considerations, or the keeping of records to afford protection during litigation, investigation or audit.

LAC is a center of record-keeping expertise. In compliance with its mandate to facilitate the management of government records, Library and Archives helps government institutions by providing advice and orientation in the development of information industry standards and protocols, guidelines, and best practices, and we have recently created a new organization specifically to address IM issues across government (Government Information Management Office (GIMO)).

Let me now provide you with highlights of the changes we have made to our government records appraisal program over the past 14 years. Fundamental changes of intellectual, cultural and business substance of the nature I will outline below do not happen overnight. Since becoming National Archivist (1999), and now Librarian and Archivist of Canada, I have continued to re-evaluate and re-engineer the appraisal process, working with my senior colleagues across government, looking to establish further business efficiencies and rationale both in the protection of heritage memory and information management.

Essentially, to respond to the challenge of preserving government's historical memory, Library and Archives Canada has adopted a strategy to identify and protect a *comprehensive* and *representative* archival record of the administration of the national state, the machinery of the federal government, and the interaction between government and its citizens. Broadly speaking, the archival acquisition or protection of government records by Library and Archives is related to their national significance as determined through an exhaustive appraisal process in support of the following objectives:

- X To preserve selected records which document the deliberations, decisions and actions of government in relation to its assigned business functions, programs and activities, as well as records that establish the sovereignty, organization and administration of government.
- X To preserve selected records which provide government and the public with accurate, authentic and integral information about the policies, decisions and programs of government institutions over time for the purposes of review, scrutiny and understanding;
- X To preserve selected records which document the impact of government decision-making upon citizens and groups in Canada and the interaction between the Canadian public and the federal state;
- X To preserve selected records that are considered essential to protect the collective and individual rights and privileges of Canadians and their social, cultural and physical environment;



- X To preserve selected records which contain information unique to government that will substantially enrich understanding about Canada's history, society, culture and people;
- X To preserve selected records that the Government of Canada is required to maintain for a substantial period of time by law, or by virtue of their ongoing, long-term business value to government.

Library and Archives Canada calls this strategic approach *macro-appraisal*.

During the actual appraisal process, Library and Archives undertakes a rigorous analysis of the functions and activities of federal departments and agencies, seeking to understand their policy, program and service delivery environments and their importance to government and Canadian society at large, and to identify the substance and context of the documentation being created and managed by institutions in support of public business enterprise. Using the knowledge gained through this business systems analysis, LAC acquires selected records from offices and responsibility centers in departments and agencies, which best illustrate the operations of government and the broad framework of national governance as expressed in the criteria outlined above. Decisions about the archival status of government records, and permission to dispose of records without archival or historical value, are conveyed to government institutions in the form of Records Disposition Authorities.

One of the critical changes to be noted here is the *macro-appraisal* focus on the context of records creation in relation to the business of government, rather than on the information content of the records themselves. In other words, we no longer generally consider the importance of information measured against research and other criteria of value, but instead analyze the importance (from both business systems and government administrative perspectives) of the primary offices of responsibility formulating policy, taking decisions, and delivering programs and services directly in relation to legislation and mandate. Records are only consulted on a very limited basis to confirm our research and hypotheses about the functions and programs of government, and to determine the extent of the material that is required to provide sufficient archival documentation and evidence of these activities. This approach represents a fundamental departure from traditional archival appraisal thinking, which has typically focused its decision-making on the historical significance of records.

Because Library and Archives is responsible for preserving government's archival and historical memory, it bears an obligation to explain to Canadians (and to others who may wish to use its archival holdings) how and why decisions are made regarding the archival preservation of government records. LAC now maintains comprehensive documentation of the government records appraisal process, including the rationale supporting preservation decisions for all Records Disposition Authorities. One of the most recent innovations at LAC in this regard is the development of a database with sophisticated search tools containing all of our corporate appraisal documentation, which we call the Records Disposition Authority Control System (RDACS). LAC has just gone on-line with this information to all government employees via our federal extranet environment, and the capacity and protocols necessary to provide full Canadian public and global access to this data through the Internet



is being put in place as I speak to you today. In the very near future (within the next 12 months), here in Japan, you will be able to see all of our internal appraisal documentation: records disposition authority records, appraisal reports, agreements with government agencies and memoranda of understanding, terms and conditions of records transfer, program studies, pilot projects, etc., all corporate information that LAC creates and manages to conduct its government records appraisal business and make memory preservation and destruction decisions.

In effect we are saying that to understand the archival record that we have selected to preserve, the researcher should also be able to understand the full administrative context of the record and the archival rationale for the selection of that small percentage which we have kept.

I am very proud of this product (I believe it is unique in the archival world) for two reasons. First, the provision of this information to Canadians and others addresses the issue of accountability. Given the monumental nature of our work in terms of creating and managing history, and as a public department of the federal government with resources allocated to this purpose, Canadians are entitled to know how their tax dollars are being spent and utilized in the portfolio of cultural and heritage memory preservation. This is, after all, a national endeavor of collective remembering at public expense. Precisely for this reason, we have also placed our appraisal program on a business footing by incorporating a project management approach to records disposition decision-making in partnership with government agencies, wherein every phase of appraisal and disposition is documented, agreed and tracked in a database (Records Disposition Management Information System). In addition, a detailed, step-by-step explanation of the government records appraisal strategy and methodology followed by LAC has been made available on our web-site at the Information Services Management web-page under the heading, Government Records Appraisal and Disposition Program. This web-page also includes a number of other program tools, including published versions of records disposition authorities, which have government-wide application (Multi-Institutional Disposition Authorities).

More important in my view, however, is the opportunity we have to make some essential connections between archives and our communities in terms of defining, articulating, preparing and understanding the documentary past. Through its records description systems and associated holdings management processes, LAC maintains the attributes of archival government records as evidence; ensures that these records remain in continuous official custody; and keeps with the official archival holdings finding tools that provide researcher access to the records. In my opinion, all of the custodial and appraisal information archives develop should be available to the public in a connected way, enabling users not only to understand what the archives maintains in the way of collections and holdings and how they may be used, but also what it does not have and why: what decisions were made to preserve and acquire or to permit the destruction of records, and what the intellectual thinking and rationale and business processes were around these choices. In other words, archival appraisal at LAC is not simply about identifying the records that will tell the stories of our history, it is also about telling the story of how we have decided to tell our historical stories; of how our society will be able to remember in the future. Explaining the context and implications of appraisal to Canadians and others is an important component of our broader strategic vision moving LAC forward towards greater openness, transparency and accessibility, and a significant step in the evolution of a new knowledge institution dedicated to the identification, preservation and use of archival and

historical memory.

I would like to conclude my presentation today with some remarks concerning the nature of the challenges we still have before us at LAC, not only in reference to building accessible historical memory for social and cultural purposes, but more generally in relation to our role and responsibilities in enabling government's management of information as a critical commodity and public asset within the new national and global knowledge economy. As I mentioned earlier, LAC has a legislated mandate to facilitate the management of information by government in the interests of supporting and transacting public business broadly in terms of policy development, resource allocation, developing functions and structures of governance, providing for transparency and accountability of decision-making, and delivering programs and services to Canadians.

Last year, the Auditor General of Canada reviewed our government records appraisal program and criticized some of its limitations, noting deficiencies and expressing concern over, for example, the absence of Records Disposition Authority coverage extending to records in all government institutions; the volume of records not yet transferred to archives and their physical condition (records at risk); and the slow rate of progress in the process of their appraisal evaluation and the corresponding production of Authorities. It was also acknowledged, however, that the size of the appraisal task before LAC was enormous and that the program was critically under-funded. The Auditor concluded that despite the sophistication of its methodology and the recent steps to modernize and re-plan its business process, LAC does not have the resource capacity to pursue the records appraisal and disposition agenda of government in an effective and timely manner. Coincidentally, the recent annual reports of the Information Commissioner (who administers our national Access to Information legislation) and studies undertaken and surveys conducted by the Chief Information Officer Branch of the Treasury Board Secretariat (which is responsible for the development of government's Information Management Policy) have indicated that record-keeping in the Government of Canada is in a state of "crisis". Records are not being inventoried and managed appropriately, and they are not well described and accessible. Consequently, there are serious issues in relation to government's business accountability and transparency, and its capacity and competency to lever and advantage its knowledge assets in global economic competition. And of course, because government information is not being well managed, well described, or controlled in a logistic manner under rules and protocols, and because it is not comprehensively accessible or substantially linked to or directly supportive of business process, LAC effort to make archival and historical choices is significantly hampered.

In addition to these critiques by external observers, I must admit here, amongst professional colleagues, that while our archivists have done excellent work on the preparation of appraisals, using the macro-appraisal methodology, and while we have issued some excellent decisions on retention and disposal of records, I remain far from comfortable about the capacity of departments to actually implement these decisions. We need to evaluate the quality of the record we receive from departments to verify that they have followed our decisions. It is not enough for us simply for us to do an appraisal and issue our authority for transfer or disposal, we need equally to ensure that the result is what we intended. Our commitment is not to a process but to the integrity of the official record. Are we certain we are accomplishing what we set out to accomplish?

Our challenge is both one of capacity and of our approach. One program innovation we are pursuing in a vigorous way under my direction is the development of strategic partnerships with selected government institutions, which simultaneously address IM accountability issues inside federal departments in relation to operational program and service delivery and LAC concerns about heritage memory preservation. At this time, our primary focus is on paper records which, despite the advent and use of electronic record-keeping continue to be produced by government in vast quantity, and in particular we are concentrating on government's legacy business records.

Our research indicates that government is currently storing approximately 2,000,000 cubic feet (approx. 620,000 linear metres) of paper records and is spending CDN\$250,000,000 per year to maintain them. We also know through analysis and discussions with departments that many of these records no longer have value to government from a business perspective, and that only a very small fraction of them have documentary heritage value to LAC. With our client agencies, our goal is to eliminate this paper backlog and the costs of its storage in order to redeploy the savings towards the sustainable management of information having ongoing and long-term value to government and Canadians. To meet this objective, we are systematically applying archival macro-appraisal methodology to the paper backlog with expanded selection criteria to address departmental business needs in large-scale records scheduling initiatives.

Let me give you an example. LAC has recently embarked on a pilot project with the Department of Health Canada (Health Canada) to develop a Risk Management Strategy to eliminate this agency's paper records backlog of approximately 100,000 meters. The records are under minimum descriptive control to the extent that the majority are not accessible, the department is struggling with the cost of storage and the absence of protocols to manage them effectively including the destruction of non-essential information, and LAC has few if any details to identify archival records and produce a disposition authority to permit the department to move forward. By sampling a discrete quantity of the records, and by applying archival macro-appraisal methodology to the sample including business criteria provided by the department, the project is defining a risk-based strategy to determine the value of the information, which could be subsequently applied to the entire backlog. The project is designed to both satisfy the business needs of the department and archival requirements, and we are hoping that the strategy and lessons learned will have broader, government-wide application. This is just one of a number of IM-Archival pilot projects recently launched by LAC looking at particular records disposition issues related to legacy business records, including the management of legal and case records at the Department of Justice, the imagery holdings of the National Air Photo Library of Natural Resources Canada, the decentralized regional records of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and functional applications of macro-appraisal to backlogs at Citizenship and Immigration and the Department of Agriculture. We have also developed an IM Capacity Check Tool for government agencies to self-assess the state of institutional record keeping and plan corrective measures with LAC.

In the end, however, what is really required is a significant investment of resources by government in the management of its information. Our joint macro-appraisal initiatives with certain departments are promising, and will provide strategic frameworks for decision-making around the value of records

from both business and archival perspectives, but they are nevertheless locally limited and hardly sufficient to cope with the enormous scale and complexity of government's IM issues. These are very serious problems that cannot be resolved simply through intellectual effort on an *ad hoc* basis: they require major capital investment in government-wide IM infrastructure building. These days, an important element of my work is to sensitize senior managers in government to the challenges of the IM agenda: to the need to put serious money on the table to enable Canada to manage its public business effectively, capitalize on its information assets, and remain competitive in the new knowledge economy. There are senior allies in support of this agenda, and I am cautiously optimistic that investment will be forthcoming, as government has lately acknowledged a number of significant administrative problems associated with the absence of comprehensive IM capacity. At the moment, Canada is also considering major revisions to its federal Access to Information legislation, which could include the expansion of its coverage to all government entities. Things are coming together, and the timing may now be right to move the IM agenda in government forward with new money both in the interests of good governance and the preservation of our documentary heritage.

Thank you very much.

---

NOTE:

Information related to LAC's Government Records Appraisal and IM programs is available on-line at <http://www.collectionscanada.ca> under the Information Management Services web page, which also includes multiple links to other information management sites.