

## Old Institutions - New Opportunities:

### Archives and Information Management in Government and Society

by

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I am pleased to be with you today and want to thank most sincerely my distinguished colleague, Mitsuoki Kikuchi, for his thoughtfulness in inviting me to participate in this important event. I believe it is a good example of *Wa-kon Yo-sai*. It is an honor to be here as your guest, though I must admit I hesitated before accepting. Japan has a much longer historical tradition and is one of the great civilizations in world culture. Canada is much younger and its culture is in process of rapid change as we understand more about our Aboriginal peoples and as new Canadians arrive from around the world, each contributing important aspects of their traditions and knowledge to our new country. I suspect I will learn more being here than I can contribute. I simply hope my reflections on archives and information management in the Canadian context will encourage discussion on how our governments and our societies are approaching a common challenge.

I have been asked to talk about the role that archives play in government and society, the challenges that public archives face today and how governments and institutions in other parts of the world are addressing some of these issues. More broadly, I would like to discuss the management of information in public sector organizations, especially in the electronic environment. My primary message is this: all governments must give greater attention to how they create, manage, preserve and use information to enable good governance and to protect their heritage. The creation of a strong system of national and local archives is an essential part of this effort.

Although many of you are program managers from across government and many are archivists and records managers, I think you will agree with me that archives and archivists are not widely understood. This is certainly the case in Canada as I have found through my career. On one occasion, while I was the Provincial Archivist in Saskatchewan, a western province of Canada. I was asked to talk about archives in a small town. At the event, I sat next to an elected official - a member of the municipal council - who had been asked to introduce me to the audience. This person wouldn't talk to me and I could tell that for some reason he was very uncomfortable. I learned the reason when he stood up and unhappily introduced me as the "Provincial Anarchist". Canada is a very liberal society, but it has never appointed an official "anarchist".

Early in my career as an archivist, I was often told that I was not *old* enough to be an archivist.

Unfortunately, I no longer hear that.

I would like to tell you something about the new institution I head, Library and Archives Canada. It was legally established just a few months ago, bringing together the National Library, created 50 years ago and the National Archives, established in 1872. We are seeking to build upon the traditions, the extraordinary collections and documentary resources and the staff expertise of two major national institutions to form a modern, integrated knowledge resource for Canadians and others who want to learn more about Canada. Its purpose is to collect, preserve and provide access to Canada's documentary heritage, published and unpublished, from both public and private sources. The integration of a national library and national archive is unique. It recognizes the changes and increasing convergence in the two institutions and their professional communities. It also recognizes the need to use *all* documentary media and sources to provide a comprehensive research and educational resource. Our resources range from the official records of the Government of Canada, from the office of our head of state, the Supreme Court, the prime minister and Cabinet through all the functions of a major government, but also include all the books and publications obtained through legal deposit, the papers of many noted Canadians donated to us, the records of political parties, businesses and labor unions, films spanning a century, 22 million photographs, records of radio and television, a million portraits, 2 million maps, the national music, literary and stamp collections and other documentary materials. This is a significant, largely unique cultural resource, all focused on the Canadian experience over the last 400 years. It has been the source for academic studies, histories, films, TV productions and exhibits but it remains little known by the great majority of our people. Our challenge is to address shared opportunities and benefits of using new communications technologies to reach Canadians across our vast land and to ensure these collections are a living part of education and life-long learning. Bringing the library and archives together has been seen by our government as a key strategic initiative for the knowledge society of the 21st Century.

Our legal mandate is found in the *Library and Archives of Canada Act*, passed this year when we officially became one institution. The *Act* gives the Librarian and Archivist of Canada the authority to determine which records will be preserved. No official records may be destroyed without my permission. The *Act* identifies the traditional library and archival functions as well as the role the institution has in supporting records and information management in the Government of Canada. It also provides a mandate to promote Canada's documentary heritage through public programs and to play a national leadership role in information management and in the development of Canada's library and archival communities.

In our collections and programs, we try to reflect the full range of Canadian society and history. Among these records are many that relate to Canada's relationship with Japan over a long period of time. These materials document diplomatic relations, the immigration and settlement of Japanese in Canada; and business and economic interests. Our holdings have been used by many Canadian and Japanese scholars to understand the issues and events that link our two countries. Just a few months ago we were honored when Dr. Thomas Shoyama, a noted Canadian public servant of Japanese parents donated his full papers to us. And another Canadian of Japanese descent, Dr. David Suzuki, a strong advocate for protecting the environment, has just been identified by a popular opinion survey run by our national broadcaster as one of the 10 greatest Canadians of all time.

Among the non-government records preserved by Library and Archives Canada are those that relate to a Canadian well known to most Japanese. We have an extensive collection of materials by and about Lucy Maud Montgomery, author of "Anne of Green Gables" and many other books about this red-haired girl from Prince Edward Island. These materials are of great interest to researchers, many of them Japanese. As you may know, "Anne of Green Gables" (or *Akage-no-An*, in Japanese) has been the most famous foreign work of children's literature in Japan since it first appeared in translation in 1952. Since then, the stories of the strong-willed but warm-hearted girl from another island have inspired Japanese readers, particularly young women seeking a more active role in society. They admired Anne's adventuresome, determined and independent spirit. As a result of the war, many of these girls were orphans, like Anne. Japanese of every age have admired Anne's *magokoro*.

Over the years, Japan has shown its affection for *Agake-no-An* in numerous ways. Every year, thousands of Japanese fly to Prince Edward Island on Canada's east coast to visit the Green Gables house. Many of them have had their wedding ceremonies performed there. Some years ago, a replica of Green Gables was constructed by Prince Edward Island carpenters at a Canadian theme park on Hokkaido island. The Maple Leaf Theater in Tokyo has staged the theatrical version of "Anne of Green Gables". In Okayama, a college of social work and nursing is named the "School of Green Gables", and its students are taught to think and act like Anne. I am told that in Fukuoka, there is an "Anne Academy" which teaches Japanese how to speak English with a Prince Edward Island accent.

The Japanese interest in "Anne of Green Gables" is not accidental. As a girl, the Japanese translator of the books, Hanako Muraoka, studied at the Canadian Mission School in Tokyo. The missionaries were using Canadian textbooks. Ms. Muraoka learned not only English but about Canadian culture and life-styles. Her experiences at the school were a major influence in her life. In 1939, when signs of war were beginning to appear, her Canadian teachers and friends had to leave Japan. One of them gave Ms. Muraoka a copy of "Anne of Green Gables". She found strength and courage in the story of red-haired Anne whose imagination, spirit and determination helped her through difficult times. Over the years, the books have led to a closer understanding and friendship between the two countries.

I believe there is considerable interest in Canadian culture in Japan. The Japanese Association for Canadian Studies was founded in 1977. This summer, events were held in a number of Japanese cities to celebrate 75 years of Japan-Canada ties. The festival dealt with many aspects of Canada and included exhibitions of art, films, music, plays, photographs of Canada taken by Prince Takamado, and, of course, an exhibition related to "Anne of Green Gables". Library and Archives Canada also participated in the festival. We organized an exhibition in Tokyo, Hashimoto and Sagami on Canadian jazz pianist Oscar Peterson using audio clips, photographs, letters and manuscripts. Another exhibition in Nagasaki was about Manzo Nagano who was the first Japanese immigrant to Canada. The exhibition focuses on his life and on the important contribution he made to Canada-Japan relations.

Our holdings of archival and published materials relating to Japan and the Japanese experience in

Canada are essential for anyone researching or studying in this field.

These are simply brief examples of why it is important that we preserve and make accessible the most important records of government and society. Our archival records represent a valuable legacy of accumulated knowledge and experience. They are essential for identifying and understanding the issues, events and individuals that have influenced and often continue to shape the development of society.

In a large and comprehensive public archive, they document society's political, economic, social, cultural and other development. In Canada, for example, they reflect a multicultural society of over 150 different religions, languages and nationalities. They record the struggles of early settlers, the history of relations with Canada's aboriginal peoples, the rise of cities and towns, the development of commerce and industry, new immigration from many lands, the fight for workers and women's rights and discoveries and inventions that changed our nation and sometimes the world. They are the stories of famous figures as well as ordinary people as they faced the large and small problems of their personal and public lives, in times of peace and in times of war. Together, they tell of the hopes, struggles, accomplishments and errors of individuals, of communities and of a nation. They represent our collective memory as a society and are a fundamental source of information, evidence, knowledge, wisdom and inspiration. Archives are the gift of one generation to another.

The preserved historical record describes a nation's achievements, but it often documents our failures as well - for example, where governments failed to respect ethnic minority rights, provide justice in the courts, protect the environment or deal with social or economic problems. All societies must celebrate their past achievements, but they must also learn about their failures if they are to avoid the mistakes of the past.

The preservation and use of archives have many purposes. The courts use them to verify and protect the rights of individuals and groups. Police use them to review and re-open old criminal cases. Lawyers use them to settle old land claims and defend the government. Public servants and journalists study the records to learn how previous governments dealt with similar problems in the past. Medical researchers use them to study the progress and treatment of diseases. Environmental researchers track climate change and pollution through historical data. The public uses the records to verify and secure pensions and other entitlements. Families trace their history through birth, death, marriage and land-ownership records. Historians, authors and filmmakers access them as authentic sources of information about the past. Communities use the archival records to identify and protect other valuable heritage resources such as local historical buildings.

The preservation and accessibility of the official record is essential for making government more open, accountable and effective. Good record keeping is fundamental to the effective management of all programs, all business functions; for planning, delivering and evaluating programs; and for effective communications within government and with other stakeholders. In many respects, the real business of government is the careful management of information. If carefully created and preserved, the records authoritatively document important decisions and actions of officials and what results - if any - were achieved. With the current records of government, they allow citizens and groups to evaluate

the performance of politicians and public servants. They are the foundation of governance systems that are based on reliable information and evidence, and the rule of law. Good record keeping is essential for good governance and for a relationship of *trust* between citizens and their leaders.

In the Information Age, citizens and groups have increasingly high expectations of government. The public expects full, accurate and timely information about every aspect of government. They want the personal information they have provided to government to be protected. They want government to ensure their security and safety while guaranteeing their democratic rights, including information access. Citizens and communities want to be more involved in how they are governed and have a direct voice in government decision-making. And most important, they want government to be open and transparent in the way it functions and more accountable to them for what it says and does.

These are not abstract ideas. Governments rise and fall because they have satisfied or failed to fulfill these expectations. Public scandals in Canada, Japan, Australia and elsewhere frequently center on how government records and information were mis-used or ignored, were unavailable, were hidden or were illegally destroyed by politicians or public servants. This is also true in the business sector where corporate governance and ethics have become important public issues because of Enron and similar scandals, and the subsequent passage of the *Sarbanes-Oxley Act* in the United States.<sup>1</sup> One goal of this legislation is to improve the accuracy and reliability of company records.

A colleague of mine, the Information Commissioner of Canada, has compared the records of government to human DNA. He said:

"Like our own DNA, the records comprise the threads of information and evidence that reveal how the political organism is structured, how it grows, how it responds to internal and external influences, how it protects itself and whether and how it adapts to new conditions. The records show how government functions, makes or avoids decisions, takes or refuses to take action. When the public record is complete and orderly, all of the threads are in place and we can see the connections among policies, programs, personalities and events. The body politic is open, accessible, transparent and healthy. When important records are missing, altered, inaccessible or poorly managed, the threads are damaged or broken and the fundamental processes of governance become opaque and unresponsive."<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, the value of this documentary DNA lies in whether and how we use this information and knowledge to solve the problems of the present and guide us in the future.

In western archives, considerable attention is given to the process of determining which records will be preserved. Because the volume of paper and electronic records created is so vast, government archives in most countries can only select and preserve a tiny fraction of the total. There is simply not enough money and space to preserve the majority of records, most of which have little or no value after a few years. As an example, Library and Archives Canada preserves less than 1% of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Sarbanes-Oxley Act, 2002 (Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act)*:  
<http://www.sarbanes-oxley-forum.com/>

total volume of records produced by government departments each year. Most government records are systematically destroyed with my permission. The paper records are shredded and recycled. Electronic files are erased. The challenge is to make sure it we preserve the right 1%, covering the most important decisions, actions and transactions of government and this 1% finds its way routinely to the archives, while the other 99% is disposed of as soon as it has fulfilled its administrative or legal purpose.

Government archives are a key part of the systems modern governments have developed to manage the huge volumes of information and data they create, receive, store and use. The explosion in the volume of information is largely the result of the growth and complexity of government in the electronic era. In the developed world, powerful computer and telecommunications systems are transforming every aspect of society, enabling electronic government and a creating a digital global economy. Information and communications technologies permit huge volumes of information and data to be assembled, stored, processed and distributed quickly and efficiently. These systems are enabling both government and the private sector to transform business processes, eliminate unnecessary activities and deliver programs and services more efficiently and at less cost to citizens, clients and customers. They are eliminating the traditional barriers of time and space and are providing huge potential for greater individual and organizational productivity. The Internet is producing a global information community and changing the way we live, work, learn and govern ourselves.

These trends are well known to you and Japan is a leader in this electronic revolution.

Governments are learning, however, that information technology and information management are not the same thing. Computers and telecommunications systems are powerful tools but their value depends on how government and its partners use them to create, manage, share and use information and data to make decisions and take action. Information technology without good information and knowledge management is useless.

What is important for us to understand today is how archivists together with program managers throughout government can play an important role in managing and protecting the information and evidence on which good governance depends.

Archives in many countries are playing a leadership role in the development and management of new information and record keeping systems in government. There are many reasons why this is happening. One reason is that often no one else is focusing on information management issues. The central agencies responsible for computers and communications technology are usually more concerned with data and network management rather than with ensuring that a complete and accurate record of government decisions and transactions is produced and maintained. Information technology specialists often consider records management to be a low-level, paper-based activity. Yet,

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<sup>2</sup> The Honorable John M. Reid, P.C., Information Commissioner of Canada, "Information Management in the Government of Canada", July 28, 2004; <http://www.infocom.gc.ca/speeches/speechview-e.asp?intSpeechId=100>

I am sure that if "records management" did not exist, a computer specialist would need to invent it to make things work. Many expensive computer systems have failed because basic records and information management issues were ignored.

The Year 2000 computer problem is an example of what can go wrong when information management needs are not taken into account when computer systems are designed. Computer specialists, program managers and information managers failed to work together to ensure that important data was protected for as long as it was needed.

The focus of technology is on its immediate uses and on quickly changing computer systems and standards. Archives are often the only institution in government concerned about the long-term availability and integrity of the public record. Unless archives play a significant role in how new information systems are designed and managed, they will be unable to ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of the records, especially in a volatile electronic environment. The electronic records and publications will simply not be there on computer hard drives, servers and web sites. They will be "digital dust" or they will be unusable, unauthentic or otherwise unreliable.

As an example of the role that national archives are playing in information management, I would like to tell you something about activities in Canada. My purpose is NOT to suggest that we are an outstanding model. We face many challenges to which I will refer later. Each jurisdiction must define models and solutions that fit its *needs*, its *culture*, its *resources* and its *opportunities*.

Over the last several years, there has been increasing awareness in the Government of Canada that improvements were needed in information management policies, practices, leadership, training and awareness. Library and Archives Canada and others sponsored studies of the situation, and reports by the Auditor General of Canada and the Information Commissioner called attention to the lack of trustworthy and accessible records. The Information Commissioner is responsible for aspects of Canada's freedom-of-information legislation. He has emphasized the message that unless government records exist and are well managed, information access laws are meaningless. We also prepared and widely distributed a document that summarized the importance of records and information management and called for a collaborative, government-wide information management strategy.<sup>3</sup>

Library and Archives Canada is one of three lead agencies for information management in the federal government, along with the Chief Information Officer Branch and another central department responsible for major management, technology and training activities.<sup>4</sup> I have been named as one of two Champions for Information Management for the Government of Canada. We have been promoting attention to information management issues in departments and agencies, sponsoring conferences and other events, and presenting awards for innovative projects.

Central agencies and departments have been collaborating to develop and improve policies, standards, practices and tools that are used to manage records in all media and forms. But, speaking frankly, the most important challenge for us within our government in promoting effective information management is a issue of culture within the public service. For generations, information has been seen as almost a waste-byproduct of government, to be managed by clerks and others usually in

basement with minimal resources. The challenge for modern government is to understand, as I have been outlining, that information is a vital ASSET of government, perhaps the most valuable asset in government, that must now be managed as effectively as we manage finances, human resources and space. To conceptualize information, in whatever form, as an asset, implies a significant shift in how we invest time, effort and funding to maintain it. We are stressing that information does not belong to the individual public servant and not just to the program area but it is a corporate asset belonging to the government and held in trust for the public. We are increasingly pushing to see this as an asset that must be managed across the government, with a legally based accountability framework to the framework traditionally in place to manage finance. Our allies in this are the government's lawyers, the auditors, and officers of Parliament like the Information Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner and the Auditor General.

The foundation for information management in the Government of Canada consists of a core group of laws and policies. These include the *Management of Government Information Policy*.<sup>5</sup> The central principle behind the policy is that "Information is a valuable asset that [we] must manage as a public trust on behalf of Canadians." The policy identifies the legal framework for information management and defines the requirements for managing information in all forms. It describes departmental and agency information management responsibilities, governance and accountability. The *Policy* makes all managers and staff responsible for creating and managing their records, documents and data. It assigns primary accountability to the most senior public servant in a department, the Deputy Minister, and requires that they designate an official with overall responsibility for implementing the policy. Many of these officials are Chief Information Officers, responsible for both information technology and information management. The *Policy* also identifies the roles and responsibilities of central agencies such as Library and Archives Canada and the Chief Information Officer Branch. It requires the monitoring and evaluation of information management programs by departments and central agencies. It also makes a commitment to electronic systems as the primary and preferred means of creating, using, and managing recorded information in the Government of Canada.

Many federal departments and agencies are reviewing their records and information management programs and are developing or revising their internal policies, practices and management structures to meet the requirements of the government-wide policy. A two-year \$6 Million (Canadian) *Implementation Fund* has been established to help departments improve their programs. The process of improving records and information management is a long one, however. Departments are at different levels of capacity and interest. I expect the same is true in Japan as well.

I have already mentioned the *Library and Archives of Canada Act*, which establishes the archivist as the central decision authority to dispose of information. Other important pieces of legislation are the *Access to Information Act* and the *Protection of Privacy Act*. These were passed in the early 1980's. These laws provide the right to access information held by the Government of Canada (with specific

<sup>3</sup> The "Case for Action for an Information Management Strategy for the Government of Canada" is available at [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/docs/action\\_e.doc](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/docs/action_e.doc)

<sup>4</sup> Public Works and Government Services Canada

<sup>5</sup> The policy is available at: [http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs\\_pol/ciopubs/TB\\_GIH/mgih-grdg\\_e.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/ciopubs/TB_GIH/mgih-grdg_e.asp)

and limited exceptions) and to have personal information contained in federal government files protected from inappropriate access and use. Canada's provinces and territories have their own access and privacy laws covering provincial and local government records. Another important law is *The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, passed in 2000. This *Act* protects personal information held by the private sector in Canada as well as authorizes the use of electronic records and data in government, commercial and legal transactions.

Central agencies and departments are collaborating to develop or improve records and information management standards, guidelines, practices and tools. We are developing function-based records classification systems and model systems for common administrative records. We have developed metadata standards for describing web documents and geo-spatial data. We are developing metadata standards for other records, developing a core subject thesaurus, and XML guidelines for structuring documents and data on the web. We have produced guidelines to help departments manage their e-mail and other records. Standards have been developed for electronic records and document software systems and many are in use within the federal government. We are streamlining the process that departments can use in identifying and disposing of records that have no archival value. In collaboration with others, we are beginning to develop common solutions for preserving web sites. We are also helping departments dispose of their huge "paper mountains" as they move to electronic records and data systems.

Library and Archives Canada has also developed a useful tool to help departments measure and evaluate their information management programs. The *Information Management Capacity Check*<sup>6</sup> identifies six core aspects of information management<sup>7</sup>. For each aspect, it describes the characteristics of five "maturity levels" ranging from "Non-existent/Undeveloped" to "Industry Best Practices". Departments can review their program and decide which levels best describe their current capacity. The *Capacity Check* enables them to establish a baseline and develop an action plan to address the highest priorities. The tool is compatible with the new international standard for records management (*ISO 15489*). At present, about 30 departments have completed, are using or are planning to use the *Capacity Check* tool.

Information about a variety of information management guidelines and tools is available on our website.<sup>8</sup> There are also links to many valuable materials from other organizations and countries

The government is also working to improve the records and information skills of all government staff and develop a new group of information management leaders. The reduction in government budgets over the past decade has eliminated many records management specialists at the same time that complex electronic information systems were being introduced. This has left a significant gap in information management skills and abilities. The new information management policy requires that departments ensure their staff has adequate skills and training. Various types of training are now

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<sup>6</sup> The *Information Management Capacity Check* is available at [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/0603\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/0603_e.html)

<sup>7</sup> These aspects are Organizational Context, Organizational Capabilities, Management of IM, Compliance and Quality, Information Life Cycle and User Perspective.

available and new programs are being planned. The greatest needs for information specialists are in the areas of information policy, standards and practices; the management of Web and intranet content; and in the area of Knowledge Management. For archivists, the greatest training needs relate to electronic records management and preservation. But *everyone* in government needs to know how to be a good information manager.

My own country aside, I have been asked to comment on international trends in archives and information management. It is possible to make only a few brief comments here. Different countries are at different stages of development in these areas, representing different interests, priorities and capabilities. While some countries are designing complex information and information technology architectures, others are struggling with basic needs.

On a global level, the International Council of Archives, its International Conference of the Roundtable on Archives (CITRA) and the regional branches (such as EASTICA for the East Asian region) are playing a valuable role in awareness raising, information sharing and professional development for archives. Recent meetings have emphasized the proactive role that archives can play in promoting and protecting social memory, in defending human rights in society and in reaching out to new audiences. These are important trends in North America and Europe. But there is also growing interest in these issues in societies that are most at risk because of the lack of strong democratic institutions and serious social, economic and other problems.

Let me give you an example. A year ago, when CITRA met in Cape Town, our African colleagues organized a special meeting of ministers responsible for the national archives in ten African countries. As the Chair of CITRA, others and I spoke to the ministers about the importance of records and archives for good governance. Their interest was on archives and electronic record keeping as the basis of evidence based government. The ministers subsequently issued a strong Declaration on Archives and the need to protect African archival heritage, oral and written. This heritage, the Declaration said, was "ignored, marginalized, transferred and denied during the colonial era" and continues to be neglected today. It urged "governments, regional structures, all-African multi-lateral organizations and donor agencies to give full support to the efforts of national and other archival institutions to better manage official records (in all media), preserve historic archives and record oral memory and traditions..." It further recommended that the New Economic Program for African Development (NEPAD) establish an archival committee to develop archival and records management projects for possible funding by national and international agencies.

At the recent International Council of Archives meeting in Vienna, members discussed the destruction of archival heritage caused by both man-made and natural disasters. Examples of such disasters include the loss of archives in Iraq, Afghanistan and many African countries. This destruction puts national and cultural identities and core institutions of democracy at risk. The Council urged the United Nations and other international organizations to include protection of vital records in their humanitarian and peace operations. We understand that UNESCO has expressed

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/06/06\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/06/06_e.html) see also the new information management portal at <http://www.informationmanagement.gc.ca>

interest in studies in this area and that the United Nations is taking up again a 1997 report on how to hold the perpetrators of human rights violations accountable for their actions and emphasizing the essential role of archives in protecting civil rights.<sup>9</sup>

Aside from the impacts of war and other disasters, many poorer countries possess weak information and technology infrastructures. While millions of miles of fiber-optic cable - much of it unused - connect the most economically powerful countries, others lack basic communications networks. A 'digital divide' separates them from technology rich countries. Norway has more telephone lines than Bangladesh, a nation with 30 times Norway's population.<sup>10</sup> More than 96 percent of computers connected to the Internet are located in the wealthiest nations, representing only 15 percent of the world's population.<sup>11</sup> And in the Information Age, more than 1 billion adults worldwide remain unable to read and write, 98 percent of them in developing countries.<sup>12</sup> But there are also technology and educational gaps in our own countries among the poor and in aboriginal and rural communities.

The close relationship among information, new technologies and good governance was recognized by G8 countries in the 2000 *Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society*.<sup>13</sup> The G8 nations (including Canada and Japan), international aid agencies and others are attempting to improve this situation. The World Bank is also devoting increased attention to records and information management needs because of the close connection between record keeping and economic and social development. The International Records Management Trust, based in London, is also working to assist archives and records management in developing countries through training and tools. Many Canadian information specialists are working in this international field.<sup>14</sup>

There are many other positive international efforts underway in the archival and information management area. Archives and records management organizations have collaborated to develop an excellent international standard for record management, based on the highly respected Australian model. Canada and other countries are in the process of adopting this standard within their governments. There are also many collective efforts to understand and deal with the archival and records management challenges of *e-government* and the need for new standards. The Canadian-based international body, InterPARES, is developing theoretical and practical approaches to the long-term preservation of electronic records.

At the individual country level, there are valuable programs and initiatives related to traditional archival functions (such as the selection, appraisal, description, conservation and preservation), as well as the development of public programs, training, and leadership roles in public sector information

<sup>9</sup> United Nations document E/CN.4.sub.2/1997/20/rev.1 at <http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda>

<sup>10</sup> Thomas B. Allen, "The Future is Calling", *National Geographic Magazine*, December, 2001

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> World Literacy of Canada; <http://www.worldlit.ca/canorg/wlc/f&f.htm>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/2000/documents/charter.html>

<sup>14</sup> A comprehensive study of the relationship among information technology, recordkeeping and good governance was prepared by a colleague, Andrew Lipchak, and published by Canada's Public Policy Forum ([http://ppforum.ca/ow/ow\\_p\\_11\\_2002B.pdf](http://ppforum.ca/ow/ow_p_11_2002B.pdf)).

management. The National Archives of Australia is an outstanding example in many of these areas and Steve Stuckey will be telling you about some of their developments. Other valuable directions can be found in the National Archives in Great Britain and the European Community.

In these and other countries, efforts to strengthen archives are closely tied to strategies for modernizing government institutions and processes in the new global electronic environment. *E-government* is a major objective in both Western and Eastern countries. In Canada, this program is called "Government On-Line". Although these efforts are often focused on technology issues, effective information management, preservation and access systems are recognized as important elements of the e-government strategy in progressive countries. As examples, there are significant e-government records and information management improvement projects underway in Malaysia and Hong Kong. Government archives are leading these initiatives in partnership with other government organizations. Canadian and other international advisors have been active participants.

Activities to strengthen information management and archival systems are also tied to new freedom of information legislation in some countries. For us, the passage of such legislation in the 1980s has had considerable impact on record keeping in government and on us in the information institutions. In Great Britain, for example, a *Freedom of Information Act* was passed in 2000. As a result, the government is emphasizing the need to organize and improve the management of its records to make them more accessible.<sup>15</sup> As you know, Japan's freedom of information law began to take effect in 1999. I am sure it is also generating more interest in records and archives.

National archives are making progress in many areas, but they continue to face many challenges as well. I have already suggested some of these challenges. I would like to conclude my comments by identifying others and suggest some possible directions.

Let me return to our biggest challenge: --the information culture of government. In many governments, political leaders and bureaucrats often see information and records as their personal and organizational possessions rather than as public resources. They often hoard information and are unwilling to share it within government or with the public, in spite of legal and management requirements. Information is power. As a result, a "culture of secrecy" often exists, even in well-established democracies. As well, government internal communications have become increasingly casual with the wide use of e-mail, voice mail and wireless text messaging systems. At times, no record is made of important discussions and decisions. Where strong information access laws exist, officials may be afraid they will have to produce the record and be required to defend it. Many public servants do not understand their responsibilities to document their activities, protect the information and share it with those who have a need to see it. National archives can help educate public servants, promote an information management culture and encourage government agencies to develop strong codes of conduct where they do not exist.

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<sup>15</sup> Great Britain developed a *Code of Practice on the Management of Records Under the Freedom of Information Act* that sets out the practices which public authorities should follow in creating, keeping, managing and disposing of their records (<http://www.dca.gov.uk/foi/codesprac.htm>)

Another challenge is the need to create stronger relationships between archives and other parts of government. Often, senior officials and departments see the archives as narrowly focused and of little relevance to them. Archives need to explain the value of archives, promote themselves and show how they can help other institutions manage their information. In particular, archives need to develop a closer relationship with the information technology community. Too often, their activities are unconnected and uncoordinated and their priorities differ. For a computer specialist, long-term storage is measured in months or a few years. For an archivist, it is measured in decades and centuries. They need to collaborate closely to design and manage information systems that protect records and data for as long as they are needed. Records and data archivists must also be involved when private sector companies are asked to provide new systems.

All of these groups must work together to meet the greatest information management challenge in the Digital Age - the long-term preservation of electronic records. It has been said that "digital documents last forever or for five years, whichever comes first".<sup>16</sup> Quickly changing electronic systems and record media emphasize rapid communication across space. But we need to ensure that they are also able to communicate across time as well. Unless we meet this challenge, what we call the Information Age may become the most poorly recorded period in our history. The loss of information and knowledge would be a catastrophe for government and society. Success in this area requires better standards, tools and training.

Another challenge we face is in developing strong networks and partnerships among archival institutions in our countries. There needs to be better communication and closer cooperation. Most archives are very small and have few resources beyond the dedication of their staff and volunteers. They protect important aspects of community heritage and can assist local government. National archives can play a leadership role and work with archival associations and regional institutions to help these sister institutions. This can occur through leading by example, by sharing professional expertise and training, by providing financial assistance or shared storage space, and through other partnerships. In Canada, archival development has also been stimulated by the development of Internet-based communications networks among our more than 800 government and community archives.

The Internet is also enabling us to meet the last great challenge I would like to mention today - the need to create and serve a larger and wider group of archives users. The Internet is enabling archivists to introduce ordinary citizens to the authentic stories of their past. Most people who visit archives are professional and amateur researchers interested in specific topics. In Canada and other countries, however, new public programs and the Internet are making history more accessible and interesting to a much larger audience. In archives that are using the Internet in imaginative ways, it is changing archives from the least accessible heritage institution to the most accessible. Thousands of documents and images have been digitized and many more collections are described and searchable on our website. There are also virtual exhibitions on many themes, combining text, image and sound to educate and entertain visitors. It is one of the ten most often visited websites in the government.

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<sup>16</sup> Jeff Rothenberg, Rand Corporation, at an electronic records management conference in 1995

In conclusion, I would encourage you to consider these challenges and possibilities as you move forward in your plans. Archives are *ancient* institutions with *new* opportunities to preserve our social memory, inform and educate our citizens and contribute to good government. I believe there is a Japanese expression that describes these possibilities well. It is "Furui ki ni hana".

I wish you success.

Thank you very much. *Arigato gozaimashita.*