

# **STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES**

**Approved by the Saskatchewan Archives Board  
November 12, 1999**

## INTRODUCTION

Following the appointment of a new board in September, 1997, the board decided to undertake a process of strategic planning. Our goal was to create a strategic plan for the Saskatchewan Archives which will serve as the basis for renewal and improvement for the first decade of the next century.

To get the planning process underway, in 1998 the board commissioned a team of highly-qualified archival experts, Michael Swift and Associates, to produce a report on the state of the Saskatchewan Archives and proposals for the future. While noting a number of positive accomplishments, the consultants found that Archives' operations have been badly neglected, in ways that now threaten the credibility and viability of the Archives, and by extension also threaten the record-keeping function of government, the ability to enforce Freedom of Information legislation and more generally, the public memory of the province. The consultants see the origins of this neglect primarily in long-term under-funding of the Saskatchewan Archives, but also in questions of policies, organization, planning capability, and lines of accountability.

The accompanying document was developed in 1999 by a steering committee of Saskatchewan Archives staff at the direction of the board. The committee was influenced by the Swift Report as well as by input concerning the Swift Report from stakeholders and interested members of the public. Assisted by a trained facilitator, members of the steering committee, each with his/her own areas of expertise, worked together to create a plan for the Archives as a whole.

The key elements of the strategic plan are as follows:

- Greater accountability for the Saskatchewan Archives as an independent entity reporting to the Legislative Assembly, or as an independent board reporting to a Minister with a strengthened legislative framework and improved operational connections with central agencies of government;
- An increased role to act as the central agency responsible for managing government information;
- The creation and implementation of a policy and planning/administrative services unit to support the Provincial Archivist;
- The adoption of a comprehensive "portfolio" management structure. This means reorganizing human resources around specialized thematic portfolios, alongside generic support services. This system would replace the current branch system and the separation between government and private records. Results would include expanded capabilities as well as more integration, more concerted teamwork, and greater flexibility;
- The Saskatoon office be reorganized around portfolio clusters appropriate to the northern part of the province, and be housed in an appropriate, accessible visible facility, if possible, shared with other partners. Failing this, that the Swift recommendation to offer only reference service in Saskatoon be further studied;
- The "split facility" option be adopted as the most acceptable and appropriate solution to accommodation in Regina;

- One-time funding for a 5-year special project to eliminate the huge records processing backlog;
- The appointment of a professional conservator to increase quality of collections maintenance, integrate preservation management into institutional planning and priorities and provide leadership to the wider archival community;
- In partnership with national and provincial archival community, scanning and digitizing selected archival records for inclusion on a provincial archival information network for use by schools, libraries, governments and researchers.

In developing new strategies that will succeed, members were always conscious of the need for the Saskatchewan Archives to make the most of its resources, eliminate duplication of effort and increase productivity. While the strategies proposed will not solve every problem, nonetheless, they offer a blueprint for the organization to follow. Some strategies can be implemented quickly; others will take a longer period of time. Whatever emerges from the planning process, renewal of the Saskatchewan Archives, including long-term resolution of questions of mandate staffing and facilities would be a fitting contribution to the province's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **1. ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES OPERATES**

Archives are responsible for appraising, acquiring, preserving and making available documentary heritage in all media. A record, created by government, organizations, or individuals in the courses of day to day activity, could take the form of letters, diaries, photographs, minute books, sound recordings, financial records, maps, film or electronic records. This evidence offers a unique and immediate source of information on the thoughts, decisions and actions of groups and individuals. When collected together in archives, such documentation forms the basis for historical research, documents the rights of citizens and provides a system of accountability for government information in our democratic society.

The archival community in Saskatchewan, of which the Saskatchewan Archives is by far the largest facility, is small. It consists of 31 repositories including libraries and museums that possess a functioning archival component. Most of the archives are one-person operations and largely volunteer. Unlike other provinces where there are a number of regional or larger archives with wide-ranging mandates, Saskatchewan has one, the Saskatchewan Archives. By and large, the following constitute Saskatchewan's archival community:

- Operating in Regina and Saskatoon with 36 staff, the Saskatchewan Archives acquires and preserves records in all media from public and private sources having a bearing on the history of Saskatchewan;
- The archives of the two universities, with a staff complement of 2 - 4 persons, focus their energies on acquiring records of administration, faculty, students and alumni;
- Both the cities of Regina and Saskatoon support 1 - 2 person archival operations and largely concentrate their efforts on corporate records;
- Records of a particular urban or rural municipality are occasionally kept by a museum, library or historical society, or are microfilmed by the Saskatchewan Archives;
- Some religious denominations maintain an archives of their own records;
- Some heritage groups maintain their own archives and contribute records to the Saskatchewan Archives;
- While relatively new, some health districts are establishing archives/records management programs for their records; and
- Some First Nations bands and both Indian Federated Colleges maintain archives of their own records and the aboriginal community.

While not maintaining archival records, the following organizations work with the Saskatchewan Archives:

- Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation operates a records centre for the Government of Saskatchewan where records are stored until such time as a decision is made by archivists on their final disposition;
- The Legislative Library works closely with the Saskatchewan Archives in microfilming Saskatchewan weekly newspapers, providing information from Archives to offices of ministers and MLAs through reference service cost-sharing agreement for purchase of commercially-produced microfilm; under legislation provides preservation copy of

Saskatchewan government publications; works with Legislative Assembly and Archives on Executive and Legislative Directory;

- The Provincial Library serves as a clearinghouse for libraries borrowing Saskatchewan Archives' microfilm.
- The Saskatchewan Council of Archives is an umbrella organization representing archival repositories; the provincial council serves as a conduit for Canadian Council of Archives grants and offers conservation and outreach services to archives; and
- The Saskatchewan Archivists Society represents the archival profession in the province and offers professional development and training opportunities through CCA grants.

As the Final Report of the Interim Heritage Council indicates, funding is the major problem for all archives in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Archives is no exception. Michael Swift and Associates point to long-term underfunding as the primary reason for the institution not being able to keep up with the demands for change. To put the matter in perspective, the consultants compared the Saskatchewan Archives to provincial archives of provinces of similar size, Manitoba and Nova Scotia. Excluding facility costs, the total operating budget during 1998/1999 of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba was \$2,382,400 and the Public Archives of Nova Scotia was \$2,168,000. For the same year the Saskatchewan Archives' total operating budget was \$1,749,348. Moreover, the Saskatchewan total was for operating archives in two locations, which is not done in the other provinces, and includes a wide range of responsibilities, because provincial archives in other provinces are complemented by important private-sector archives.

The Saskatchewan Archives is funded by the Government of Saskatchewan which through transfer of government records or donations of ministerial papers supplies 85% of its records intake. In performing its functions, the Saskatchewan Archives contributes to a knowledge of the past, an understanding of the province and its people, a collective sense of history and identity, as well as understanding of past and present government policy, democratic accountability, and a climate of free information supporting citizen rights. Such products of archival activity are public goods that benefit society as a whole rather than individuals. Because these products are collective in nature, funding should be borne by the public purse.

Where possible the Saskatchewan Archives will ensure its operation is as efficient as possible. To finance its mission, however, the institution must rely upon its parent body, the Government of Saskatchewan. It is not appropriate for users to pay prohibitive fees as this would impair accountability to its citizens. It is not appropriate to charge donors, as this would impair the representativeness of the holdings, and in most cases donating papers or records is not an act carried out for individual benefit or advantage. In a few instances the Saskatchewan Archives could increase service charges, or could recover partial costs associated with the monetary appraisal of documents, but the opportunities for cost recovery from users or donors are minimal. Put another way, if the Saskatchewan Archives cannot carry out its mission well, the cost to government and to the taxpayer will only lead to greater cost inefficiencies in government administration, making it more difficult for the public to access information and increase the potential for further records loss.

## **Stakeholder Comments:**

Stakeholder comments focussed on absence of a prominent place for aboriginal issues in the Plan and the need to better reflect the whole community within the province as opposed to select institutions and “walks of life.”

A response from an informal Saskatoon committee of people concerned about archives and heritage (Gordon Barnhart, U of S International, Ph.D. in History, former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; F. Laurie Barron, Native Studies – U of S; R.H.D. Phillips, publisher and consultant; and Duncan Robertson, community historian and author) [hereafter referred to as “the Saskatoon Committee”] strongly recommends that the Saskatchewan Archives should “increase its credibility and worth among the general population by expanding its collections and linking the whole to a wider Saskatchewan population.” They note that the percentage of population in the province that is aboriginal is increasing steadily but that the Archives does not collect aboriginal records and “does not have staff who can show much understanding and connection with the aboriginal community.” The Saskatoon Committee also feels that the Saskatchewan Archives must offer leadership to the archival community including outreach, shared processes and opportunities for efficiencies and improved service (i.e. one-stop shopping). They recommend that the Archives look into partnering arrangements with businesses, schools, aboriginal and community groups.

J. R. Miller (Professor of History, U of S, and researcher/author on Indian/White relations) noted that Aboriginal peoples should have a more prominent place in the Plan. “First Nations (Indians), both status and non-status, and Metis are an important and growing social phenomenon. Native political, social, and economic organizations are also generating enormous amounts of documentation at the present time, and with the expansion of Aboriginal self-government ... it will be essential for the public memory that a representative sample of this documentation be preserved and made accessible.”

## **2. VISION, MISSION, AND THE CONSTITUTIVE VALUES OF THE SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES**

### **VISION:**

The vision of the Saskatchewan Archives is to facilitate for all levels of government, and society in general, the identification, public access and preservation of the province's documentary heritage. This vision is rooted in a far-reaching community approach that advances shared responsibility, co-operation and equitable access. The Saskatchewan Archives recognizes that individual and collective rights, as well as cultural identity are supported through an informed dialogue with the past.

We envision a future in which:

- The documentary records of the province are efficiently managed and made available to all interested individuals and organizations;
- Records that document government, institutions, organizations, societies and individuals are preserved;
- The collective identity of Saskatchewan people, as documented through public and associational life, artistic and cultural activities, is preserved, as well as the diversity of the contributions of the First Nations and the many different ethnocultural groups who have chosen Saskatchewan as their home.

### **MISSION:**

The Saskatchewan Archives serves as a flagship of the archival network in Saskatchewan, diligently working with its partners to preserve the collective memory of the province.

The mandate of the Saskatchewan Archives is to select, acquire, preserve, arrange and describe, make accessible and to encourage the use of documentary records in all media, from official and private sources, bearing on all aspects of the history of Saskatchewan, and to facilitate the management of the records of government institutions.

Archives, as institutions, reflect times past, examine the present and look to the future. Therefore, the mission of the Saskatchewan Archives is to:

- Ensure that the essential public records of Saskatchewan are preserved;
- Ensure continuing access to essential evidence that documents the rights of Saskatchewan people, the actions of government officials and elected representatives, the Saskatchewan experience;
- Preserve the public and private records that reflect the diversity of Saskatchewan's past;
- Be the central agency responsible for government records management, providing government with an effective and accountable management system responsive to the necessity for timely identification and disposition of records;

- Facilitate research and reference services to individuals and organizations, maximising availability to sources through archival finding aids, consultations and guidance;
- Provide a leadership role in advising the provincial archival community in records management and preservation;
- Work in tandem with provincial and national cultural and heritage communities in the exchange of knowledge through professional and ethical approaches to our task;
- Conserve records in the most appropriate format for the retention of and access to the information contained therein.

## **CONSTITUTIVE VALUES**

The rights and responsibilities of a democratic society empower us to carry out our archival mission. In carrying it out we are guided by the following values:

- We value the responsibility we are given to serve the people and the Government of Saskatchewan and we dedicate our efforts to ensure that a knowledge of the province's past is preserved;
- We value the effective management of government records, and the contribution we make to that system;
- We value the historical records entrusted to our care;
- We value our relationship with the university community and its use of the record to contribute toward a better understanding of society and its efforts;
- We value the contribution of individuals, local history and heritage organizations in their efforts to document the past;
- We value the benefits of decentralized archival facilities to ensure that people from all parts of the province have access to our collections and services;
- We value the principles of fairness and equity and apply them to all of our dealings with Government and the public;
- We value the dedicated staff and their contributions to the development and delivery of archival services;
- We value archives as a public good that must be accessible to all citizens.

### **Stakeholder Comments:**

Public response to the draft vision and mission statements and to the draft constitutive values was strongly supportive. However, comments received asked that they also include statements that were more visionary and proactive in the area of community involvement and outreach.

The Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society asked that we emphasize that another important aspect of Saskatchewan Archives' mission is to educate the general public and decision makers on the value of archives to society. The leadership role the Saskatchewan Archives plays in keeping our documentary heritage interests in the public eye was also mentioned several times. Community outreach must then assume much greater importance to the overall mandate of the Archives. Developing the Archives' computer technology would enhance its ability to provide distant access to its finding aids and to reach out to the community in many other ways.

Attention was drawn to the changing demographics in Saskatchewan. Several comments related to the need for giving greater prominence to preserving records of the aboriginal peoples, whether that be through direct acquisitions or through developing co-operative working relationships with First Nations and Metis archives.

Another submission indicated that there should be an explicit commitment from the government and other constituents that the Archives' "collection will be enhanced and maintained as a crucial contributor to our preservation of Saskatchewan's heritage."

### 3. ACQUISITIONS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

1. An acquisitions strategy involves the development of a detailed plan for seeking and collecting public and private records. Such a plan helps the archives and their staff to set priorities, and ensures the development of holdings that are comprehensive, integrated, and mutually supportive. By implication, prioritizing some kinds of records means not collecting others, or devoting less effort to seeking them out. Since decisions not to collect records may be irrevocable, priorities must be set with great care. For this reason, the acquisitions strategy must be carefully drafted by professional archives staff and continuously monitored, reviewed, and adapted. An acquisitions strategy is not a static document, but is the product of a process that must involve continuing consultations with the archives' external stakeholders.
2. The Saskatchewan Archives Board identifies the following as general directions for the development of an acquisitions strategy. The following areas are intended as priorities, ranked beginning with the most essential:
  - (a) The Saskatchewan Archives document the actions of government agencies by collecting or managing records that are essential to support the rights of citizens to freedom of information. Examples include court records, land records or case files containing personal information;
  - (b) The Saskatchewan Archives collect or manage public records so as to ensure the democratic accountability of governments to the public and to future generations. This includes documenting government actions and policies with a wide impact on citizens. Examples include ministerial records, agricultural development in the settlement era, the development of Medicare in the 1960s, or natural resource development.
  - (c) The Saskatchewan Archives collect other public and private documents related to policy development and decision-making in key areas such as those mentioned in (b) above. These include personal and organizational collections that complement government documents by illustrating the influences on and effects of government policies. Examples include personal papers of politicians as well as records of agricultural interest groups, studies and public debates about Medicare, or records of enterprises and communities associated with the natural-resource sector.
  - (d) The Saskatchewan Archives collect records that illuminate the common social, cultural, political, and economic life of the province, including reflecting the diversity of the province's people. Examples include records of the press, of associational life, of citizen groups, and of literary or artistic communities.
  - (e) The Saskatchewan Archives collect records likely to be of interest to future academic or community researchers. These include documents related to communities, to social and cultural groups, and to families and individuals. Examples include records containing genealogical information or documenting daily life.

Clearly the Archives' legal and ethical duty to collect records systematically and comprehensively is greater for the items near the top of the above list, but the commitment of the Saskatchewan Archives is to devote adequate attention to all priorities.

3. Regarding the form of records (printed text documents, images, recordings, digital documents, material objects etc.), the Saskatchewan Archives aims to collect records in whatever form (a) meets relevant requirements of historical preservation and authenticity, and (b) suits the convenience of access by future users. All forms of records are collected, according to the circumstances in each case. The Archives are committed to acquiring and making accessible records in electronic form where this makes sense.
4. The above are preliminary guidelines only. The Saskatchewan Archives are committed to working out more precise acquisitions goals, and periodically reviewing them, in conjunction with our partners and audiences in government, and among interested organizations and members of the public. To ensure the preservation of historical records at all levels of society, the Saskatchewan Archives is committed to developing its acquisition strategy in tandem with other members of Saskatchewan's archival community.

#### **Stakeholder Comments:**

Several responses to the draft strategic plan provided strong support for the maintenance of a prominent role for Saskatchewan Archives in collecting, preserving and making accessible records from both public and private sources in order to document all aspects of provincial society. They also expressed concern that the Archives be given sufficient resources to fulfil that mandate. They mentioned the need for wider consultation with the public and other archival institutions in any redefinition of the Saskatchewan Archives' acquisition mandate, particularly with regard to private records, local government records, and new record formats such as electronic records. It is perhaps worth repeating in this context the emphasis given by respondents to the issue of collecting and preserving aboriginal records. Other areas identified as needing greater emphasis in the Archives' acquisitions strategy were the business community and municipalities (where resourcing partnerships might also be possible).

The Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society acknowledged that government records constitute the core of the collection but warned that "there is no other comparable Archives in this province to preserve the archival records of non-government donors." They summed up this point by stating that the "Plan must work towards obtaining sufficient funding for the continued archiving of both private and public records in all media in the province."

An informal Saskatoon committee of people concerned about archives and heritage (Gordon Barnhart, U of S International, Ph.D. in History, former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; F. Laurie Barron, Native Studies – U of S; R.H.D. Phillips, publisher and consultant; and Duncan Robertson, community historian and author) feels that the current acquisition practice is elitist, only addressing a select segment of our society. They urge the Archives to rethink acquisition strategies and develop a collection that is representative of the province as a whole.

#### 4. ACCOUNTABILITY

**Vision:** The Saskatchewan Archives will continue to function as an independent entity within the government framework, but with greater accountability to government and the people of the province.

**Background:** The scope and depth of the functions carried out by the Saskatchewan Archives makes it a unique institution within the "government framework." For this reason, it has functioned as an independent board reporting to a Minister since its establishment under The Archives Act in 1945. It is funded almost exclusively by its parent body, the Government of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Archives is responsible for the disposition of government records and for the acquisition of government records possessing archival significance. It is also mandated to acquire private records of individuals and organizations. This mandate includes records of differing points of view such as governing and opposition parties, business, unions and other interests that contribute to the province's definition and development.

The present structure and reporting relationship has the following problems:

- Lack of any legislative mandate for overall government records management;
- The lack of definition in terms of role and reporting relationship to the Minister;
- Tenuous relationship to government that provides little basis for establishing a strong program relating to the management of government information;
- Removal from usual communication processes and distribution networks within government;
- Difficulty in conveying our needs directly to the key policy and decision-makers;
- Lack of co-ordination between Saskatchewan Archives and Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation in records storage and planning.

#### **Principles and Interests:**

- That all points of view, regardless of affiliation or persuasion, must be respected and documented;
- That politics must not interfere in the archival functions of appraisal, selection, access and disposal;
- That only through regular scheduling, acquisition, preservation and access of the official records at all levels of government can civil servants and elected representatives demonstrate how they have fulfilled the public trust;
- That successive governments would not only turn records over to Saskatchewan Archives, but feel comfortable doing so, knowing that integrity of record is secure.

#### **Goals:**

- To play a leadership role in managing government information;
- To establish a better process of accountability, continuity and credibility for information created by successive governments, elected representatives and officials;

- To assure a depoliticized role for the Saskatchewan Archives in carrying out its mandate and functions with governments, individuals and organizations of differing interests;
- To ensure that public and government records management are impartial and accountable.

### **Options:**

1. "Status quo". The Swift Report does not even consider this as an option.

#### Advantages:

- Maintenance of independence from government of the day ensures freedom from political interference in carrying out appraisal, access and disposal functions;
- Documentation of all points of view and all segments of provincial society;
- Board appoints Provincial Archivist.

#### Disadvantages:

- Does not ensure that overall government records management is accountable;
  - Poor accountability framework;
  - Tenuous relationship to government that provides little basis for a strong program relating to managing government information;
  - Removal from usual communication processes and distribution networks within government; given third party status even though a crown agency.
2. "Independent Board reporting to Minister with an improved legislative framework and with improved operational connections with central agencies of government."

#### Advantages:

- Better representation from community groups;
- Strong legislative mandate to manage government records;
- Strengthen connections of operational staff with central agencies of government;
- Process for nominations from archival community.

#### Disadvantages:

- No mechanism to validate authority to create policies for executive government;
  - Unless in legislation, operational connections depend upon situational relationship.
3. "Branch within a line department". The Swift Report noted that this option would be a good one if there were a department that had a clearly defined role in managing the business of government. It summarized this option by stating "we acknowledge that no appropriate department currently exists in the government of Saskatchewan with this mandate." As a result, all the advantages of this option relate to support functions while the disadvantages relate to the core functions and mandate of the Saskatchewan Archives.

#### Advantages:

- Provision of administrative support functions as well as policy and planning infrastructure;
- Stronger accountability framework;

- Place the Archives within executive government to manage government information.

Disadvantages:

- Does not ensure impartiality of archives;
  - No one department within government with which the mandate of the Archives can identify;
  - Only a part of the Archives mandate would relate to the mandate of the department and that part of the mandate would be in competition with other department functions for resources;
  - Remainder of Archives mandate and functions would not even relate to the department's mandate and functions and would suffer from lack of attention;
  - Reliance on the administrative support structure within the department could distort the ability to carry out the mandate and policy and planning could be expected to conform to the department's mandate and objectives.
  - Saskatchewan Archives as part of executive government would be subject to The Government Organization Act which could change structure, reporting relationship and mandate by Order-in-Council;
  - Provincial Archivist appointed by Order-in-Council.
4. "Independent Entity reporting to Treasury Board". Within this model, the Board would serve as an "advisory" body of stakeholders as opposed to a "management" board. It is unlikely that the Archives would be able to maintain an independent status within this framework.

Advantages:

- Allow Saskatchewan Archives to pursue all aspects of its varied mandate;
- Relate directly to Treasury Board for funding;
- Management of government information would have the authority of Treasury Board;
- Strong accountability framework;
- Place the Archives within executive government to manage government information.

Disadvantages:

- Subject to provisions of The Government Organization Act which could change structure, reporting relationship and mandate by Order-in-Council;
- Provincial Archivist appointed by Order-in-Council
- Would not be seen as sufficiently impartial.

5. "Independent Entity reporting to Legislative Assembly".

Under this option, the Saskatchewan Archives would receive its appropriations through and report to the Board of Internal Economy of the Legislature. The appointment of the Provincial Archivist would be made by this all-party committee.

The Swift Report notes that this arrangement "would have the two advantages of providing independence of operation and a high profile in performing its management role for government." It would also provide greater accountability framework for information created and maintained by all levels of government.

Advantages:

- Greater perception of impartiality;
- Authority mandated to Archives through legislation and in matters of information management, including auditing the performance of departments and agencies could be fully exercised;
- Independence of operation in carrying out archival function;
- The office and nature of the work would be depoliticized;
- Higher profile for Saskatchewan Archives;
- Elected representatives would oversee the process of accountability for information;
- Provincial Archivist an officer of Legislative Assembly;
- Would ensure greater influence over government policy.

Disadvantages:

- The Board of Internal Economy has many other responsibilities and currently lacks an appropriate secretariat.
- This option may be inconsistent with performing an enhanced information and records management role for the Government of Saskatchewan as a whole.

Other Implications:

- Role of Provincial Archivist would have to be redefined;
- Role of board would have to be redefined; a stakeholder advisory board would still be required.

**Recommendations:**

Ensure independence of Saskatchewan Archives through a strengthened legislative framework that incorporates one of the following options that guarantee this:

1. An independent entity reporting to the Legislative Assembly, and with a stakeholder advisory board, or
2. Independent board reporting to a Minister with a strengthened legislative framework and with improved operational connections with central agencies of government.
3. If an enhanced role in information and records management is desired, that a closer relationship of the Saskatchewan Archives with government may be necessary, but in this case a strong advisory body (chaired by a Chief Justice such as in Nova Scotia) will be required.

Actions:

- Negotiate the issue of structure and reporting relationship with appropriate officials.

**Stakeholder Comments:**

All of the stakeholders that addressed this issue wanted an accountability structure that removed the Saskatchewan Archives from “line government.” The independent agency reporting to the Legislative Assembly was the most popular alignment. The Saskatchewan History & Folklore

Society also addressed the issue of central agency functions relating to information management for the provincial government, supporting this role for the Saskatchewan Archives.

The Saskatchewan Genealogical Society (SGS) suggested that “the structure must allow the Saskatchewan Archives to carry out its mandate and functions with governments, individuals and organizations without political interference.” The SGS supported an independent entity with an advisory board reporting to the Legislative Assembly and thought that representation from the genealogical community on the board would be appropriate, given the high percentage of users that are family historians and genealogists.

The Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society (SHFS) “fully supports the SAB’s strategy to become either an independent entity reporting to the Legislative Assembly, or as an independent board reporting to a Minister.” The SHFS believed both would provide access to appropriate funding and responsibility to both the government and citizens of the province. The SHFS further believed that the Saskatchewan Archives should assume a central agency function relating to FOI, filing practices and scheduling in government, to the extent that the SAB “should have the power to compel the compliance of all government departments and agencies.”

A response from an informal Saskatoon committee of people concerned about archives and heritage (Gordon Barnhart, U of S International, Ph.D. in History, former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; F. Laurie Barron, Native Studies – U of S; R.H.D. Phillips, publisher and consultant; and Duncan Robertson, community historian and author) supported the model within which the SAB would be an independent entity reporting to the Legislative Assembly. They say the SAB must be independent from partisan politics and must be seen as a safe and neutral place. They suggested that a widely representative Board should supervise operations but that budget and public policy decisions should rest with the Legislature rather than the Cabinet.

The University of Regina stated that “we are particularly pleased to see the report advocating an increased presence for Saskatchewan Archives in the selection and management of government documents. The people of the province would be better served with these functions in the hands of those who are expected to preserve the documents than in the hands of those who may have a vested interest in suppressing or exploiting them. Similarly we agree that the arms-length, if not independent, status of the Archives would enable it to serve the people of the province more effectively.

## **5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT:**

**Vision:** The Saskatchewan Archives will be a more integrated institution at all levels of organization in order to improve delivery of service and to make more effective and efficient use of resources.

### **Background:**

In the past, the Saskatchewan Archives attempted to pursue a broad mandate in the face of inadequate resources. In essence, direct services to users were preserved as much as possible in the 1980s - 90s at the expense of essential functions such as processing, description and physical management of records. The result, as identified by the consultants in 1998, has been a growing backlog of unprocessed or inadequately processed records, even while the extent of this problem has not been made apparent to the users of the archives. We recognize that these problems have reached critical proportions and are committed to solving them by ensuring that the archives' mandate and resources are proportional to one another.

Currently, the Saskatchewan Archives is organizationally divided by function or area of business. There are two branches, Government Records Branch (GRB) and Historical Records Branch (HRB), headed by directors that report to the Provincial Archivist. GRB consists of the Information/Disposition Management Section and the Archival Records Section. It has staff at two locations in Regina and one in Saskatoon. HRB consists of a Reference and Collections Section in Saskatoon, and a Reference and Special Media Section and a Manuscripts, Maps & Architectural Drawings Section in Regina. There is one Information Technology position that relates to all of the Saskatchewan Archives. There are no other separate units (i.e. preservation management, space management, policy and planning, etc.) that relate to the organization as a whole. This has resulted in a disparate approach between branches and, within HRB, between Saskatoon and Regina offices, to a variety of essentially common responsibilities such as the preparation of finding aids, both paper and electronic, electronic accession forms, acquisition and space management.

Within our present organizational structure there is also no administrative unit responsible for managing the financial, administrative, and planning activities of the Archives. Human resources administrative support is received from the Department of Finance; however, directors and chief archivists are largely responsible for administrative functions. The status quo is inefficient and places a heavy burden on understaffed programs.

Also reporting directly to the Provincial Archivist is the City of Regina Archivist. There is little or no standardization of policies, either operational or administrative, between the City of Regina Archives and the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that we cannot continue to deliver service to our clients through our existing allocation of human and financial resources. Chronic underfunding of the provincial archives has been the root of this problem. The current polarity and duplication of functions between branches and offices within the Saskatchewan Archives also

undermines our ability to provide efficient service to our clients, to establish institutional priorities and initiatives, and to deliver essential management functions to the records in our custody.

### **Principles and Interests:**

- To establish a clear accountability framework internally as well as externally;
- To show that money spent relates directly to the mandate of the organization and is directed to objectives of high priority;

As well, the following interests were identified as those that should be met by the organizational structure of the Saskatchewan Archives:

- We need government to understand the role of the provincial archives as a valuable information resource;
- We are committed to ensuring the preservation of essential archival functions (records management, appraisal, disposition management, arrangement and description, acquisition and specialized reference) and to providing excellent, equitable service to clients;
- We value an integrated, institutional approach to our work as archivists, enhancing the total archives concept, promoting the effective and efficient use of resources, ensuring the consistent definition and application of policies, and developing priorities and initiatives that will assist in the creation of a viable public and private records system;
- We recognize that the assignment of archival functions within the portfolio (as defined on page 15), and the movement of staff among portfolios and/or services according to the priorities and initiatives of the institution, promote career development among staff and develop an appreciation of the work of our colleagues;
- We are committed to providing government with an effective and accountable management system responsive to the need for timely identification and disposition of records;
- We recognize that the Saskatchewan Administrative Records System (SARS) and the Operational Records System (ORS) must become the cornerstones for a successful records management system for government records;
- We value our credibility with respect to access to restricted public and private records, and recognize the need to provide researchers and the public with the means to make informed access requests.
- We recognize the adoption of new technologies as a means of effective communication and of efficient access to information (for researchers, government clients, private donors).
- We value the contributions of the journal Saskatchewan History as a forum for the discussion of our province's history; however, we recognize that this publication, in order to be viable, must receive additional resources;
- We recognize that the status quo relationship of the City of Regina Archives with the Saskatchewan Archives is undesirable.

In defining the organizational structure of the Saskatchewan Archives, it is important to define the role of the Saskatoon office. The following corporate realities and interests were identified in defining service delivery in Saskatoon:

- The Saskatoon office serves the province's largest city and a major university and has a large number of potential donors, both public and private;
- The Saskatoon office serves a large rural area and provides a connection to the North;
- We believe we have a responsibility to the public to operate in an efficient and effective manner. In this regard, we are concerned about the differences in and the duplication of services between the Saskatoon and Regina offices that impact on how we operate and on how we serve our clients. For these reasons, the status quo is undesirable;
- We recognize the need for general reference service and for the local availability of archival expertise in public and private records within the organizational structure of the Saskatoon office.

### **Goals:**

- To make more efficient use of staffing resources;
- To allow greater flexibility in assigning resources;
- To focus on selected or strategic themes e.g. health and health-related records;
- To integrate government and private records around these themes;
- To allocate dedicated expertise to assist in acquisition and preservation decisions within priority areas.

### **Adoption of the Portfolio Approach:**

The above noted principles and interests would best be met by the Saskatchewan Archives adopting a portfolio approach. A portfolio is a concentration of expertise around a thematic area of archival services and holdings. This approach to archival services will provide opportunities to obtain a more complete record through an institutional approach to collecting all media of public and private records, to develop professionally through the flexible allocation of human resources, and to define and deliver consistent institutional policies.

The portfolio approach, as recommended by the consultants and used by other provincial archives, brings various functions together under distinct themes. These functions then become the responsibility of one staff member or a team of staff members according to the priorities of the organization. The individual portfolios would relate public and private records in all media and include records management, appraisal, disposition management, arrangement and description, acquisition and specialized reference. Examples of possible portfolio components include:

- Human Services: Health, Social Services, Education, Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, Labour, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, Economic and Co-operative Development, and so on;
- Infrastructure and Resources: Environment and Resource Management, Agriculture and Food, Highways and Transportation, Energy and Mines, Saskatchewan Power Corporation, SaskEnergy, SaskWater, Saskatchewan Transportation Company, and so on.

The adoption of a portfolio approach suggests one option for redefining the role of the Saskatoon office of the Saskatchewan Archives, namely, to assign the Saskatoon office responsibility for

portfolios of particular interest to Saskatoon and the northern part of the province. This option is considered below.

Operating outside of the portfolios, yet co-ordinating activities within each portfolio, are a number of functions that should stand alone. These functions include:

- Reference, including access and outreach;
- Preservation management;
- Information technology;
- Space management;
- Policy, Planning and Administrative unit;
- Descriptive Standards Office.

The new organization structure for the Saskatchewan Archives requires more resources to start up than the current human and financial resources available.

A portfolio approach together with the development and adoption of an acquisition policy for the institution would facilitate the Archives' work with records creating agencies, government departments, professional organizations and associations, local archives and heritage bodies in developing options for managing records through their life cycle.

To achieve this work environment it is important to encourage ongoing education, professional development, and training in information technologies, archival functions, and general societal trends to promote a greater understanding of work assignments and satisfaction in individual work performance.

### **Service Delivery in Saskatoon:**

The report presented by Swift and Associates made many observations about Archives programs and facilities in Saskatoon and commented upon the need for greater rationalization of service delivery there. The report made several specific recommendations about the future of the Saskatoon office. These related to inefficiencies in duplicating staff functions and facilities in two different cities. It was therefore important to consider the overall strategic priorities of the Archives as a whole, and how operations in Saskatoon might serve to enhance meeting those priorities.

### **Options for Saskatoon Office**

1. Close the Saskatoon office and move staff and collection to Regina:

#### Advantages:

- Services would be integrated in one city, offering long-term staff efficiencies and financial savings;
- Storage conditions would be improved over the current situation, with capital resources concentrated in Regina;

- Researchers would have just one office to contact and work with.

Disadvantages:

- The net cost of moving 7 FTE positions, collections and functions to Regina would be approximately \$90,000;
- Increased costs in Regina for storage and operational facilities, estimated at \$100,000 annually, and for delivery of services to Central and Northern Saskatchewan;
- Physical accessibility to services by researchers, donors and other clients in Northern Saskatchewan would be reduced;
- A very large facility with appropriate storage conditions would be required in Regina.

2. Maintain only reference services in Saskatoon:

Advantages:

- Clearly defined reference service and thematic collections would remain available for research in Saskatoon;
- The Swift report estimated that synergies could be achieved by transferring staff to Regina. Compared to 7 FTE positions currently in Saskatoon, 3 FTEs would be required for the operation of a dedicated reference service, along with Saskatoon collections and functions.
- Consolidation of appraisal, acquisition, arrangement and description functions in Regina would promote more efficient use of staff resources;
- The historical relationship with the University of Saskatchewan would remain intact.

Disadvantages:

- The net cost of moving 4 FTE positions and a limited move of collections to Regina would be approximately \$58,000;
- There would be a geographical split between donors in Northern Saskatchewan with the work units responsible for appraisal, acquisition, arrangement and description of their records;
- Reference staff in Saskatoon would have limited detailed knowledge about the collection that they must make available for research;
- The 3 FTE positions left in Saskatoon would be underutilized because of limitations in the functions they would perform;
- The current facilities must be upgraded and the collection in Saskatoon will continue to grow, creating a future demand for a greater storage capacity and resulting in higher capital costs.

3. Locate both reference and portfolio functions in Saskatoon:

Advantages:

- Services and expertise in both reference and collections functions remain for both public and private sectors in Saskatoon and Northern Saskatchewan;
- Collection development is possible with emphasis on themes or portfolios especially relevant to Central and Northern Saskatchewan;

- There would be much lower, or possibly even no, costs associated with moving staff currently in Saskatoon to Regina, depending on functions to be performed in the Saskatoon office;
- The historical relationship with the University of Saskatchewan is maintained.

Disadvantages:

- The current facilities must be upgraded and the collection in Saskatoon will continue to grow, creating a future demand for a greater storage capability and resulting in higher capital costs;
- Movement to and from portfolio responsibilities based on shifts in operational priorities within the institution would require physical relocation.

The board recognizes that there is an expressed desire in Saskatoon and the North to continue a strong presence for its services in Saskatoon. In their responses to the Swift report, stakeholders and interested individuals all commented on how important they believe this presence to be. Several donors indicated the need to keep their records close at hand for ongoing administration and consultation. Also the research community argued the importance of maintaining a strong documentary collection in Saskatoon. As the President of the University of Saskatchewan pointed out, "We recognize that documents housed on our campus are a veritable treasure store and we would have no desire to diminish access to this store." We must make every attempt to retain a high level of service in Saskatoon that, at the same time, maximizes efficient use of the resources available to the Archives.

**Recommendations relating to organizational structure:**

- That the Saskatchewan Archives adopts a portfolio approach, with services and directorates as the basis for future development and delivery of its services to both government and private clients;
- That the Saskatoon office remain open and offer reference and specialized services related to the portfolios of agriculture and Northern Saskatchewan which will be concentrated in Saskatoon;
- That there be an Administrative Services/Policy and Planning unit supporting the Provincial Archivist;
- That the Policy and Planning unit reports to the Provincial Archivist. Further, that this unit, in consultation with Administrative Services, the Portfolio Directorates, and the Services Directorates defines strategic policies and procedures in the areas of acquisitions, information technology, communication, professional development, preservation management, outreach, descriptive standards that are reflective of the priorities and initiatives of the institution, and that the unit ensures consistent application of these policies;
- That greater emphasis be developed around client and community services, archival services, and descriptive standards;
- That within the portfolio approach, the Saskatchewan Archives provides records management and preservation management advice to private organizations, as policy and resources permit;

- That the reporting relationship of the City of Regina Archives be considered apart from that of the directorates while retaining a direct reporting relationship with the Provincial Archivist.

## **Human Resources Management:**

### **Background:**

In the process of gathering information on the competencies of staff, expertise and training, adequacies of numbers and other human resources issues, Michael Swift and Associates concluded that it would be useful to comment on the current status of staff in terms of commitment to the institution and its morale. They reported the following:

- Professional, technical and clerical staff are proud of association with work of heritage preservation;
- Involvement in archival professional important to staff;
- Strong dedication to the work of the institution;
- Staff morale is at a very low level, largely as a result of:
  - Funding of archives neglected by successive governments;
  - Staff members who have left not being replaced;
  - Ever-growing backlog of unprocessed records;
  - Other institutions moving ahead with use of information technology;
  - Provincial governments destroying records or not establishing policies to ensure records will be preserved in the interests of good government and healthy democracy;
  - Classification/compensation issues still outstanding, particularly for executive management.

### **Goals:**

- To improve staff morale;
- To improve communication throughout organization;
- To build up a work environment which encourages professional development and training and promotes a greater understanding of work assignments and satisfaction in individual work performance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:**

- That the Saskatchewan Archives develop an external/internal communication strategy that will be managed through the Provincial Archivist's office;
- That the Saskatchewan Archives develop a human resource strategy to improve staff morale and workplace conditions. Components of such a strategy could include: developing guidelines on managing portfolio approach, prioritizing services within organization, reviewing position description and responsibilities for all employees, developing work plans with employees and identifying training needs.

### **Other recommendations:**

- That the Director of Archival Services implement a consultation process with service and portfolio areas to address ongoing issues regarding information technology;
- That the Saskatchewan Archives use a business-case approach or similar structured decision-making methodology to approve and fund new technology initiatives;
- That the Saskatchewan Archives co-operate with other partners in setting up an archival information network and outreach service for the archival community;
- That we seek additional financial resources from government or outside agencies to support the journal *Saskatchewan History*, and, if these are not forthcoming, that the Saskatchewan Archives withdraws the allocation of resources to the publication;
- That the allocation of resources incorporates the capacity to provide service to clients through bilingual staff, and the ability to offer outreach activities with funding to support travel within the province;
- That general reference service include research room services during extended hours.

#### **Actions:**

- Meet with Task Force on Municipal Legislative Renewal and appropriate government officials to discuss managing local government information/archiving records;
- Meet with City of Regina officials to discuss future relationship of City of Regina Archives with Saskatchewan Archives;
- Work out the amount of funding to make Saskatchewan History viable.

#### **Stakeholder Comments:**

It was satisfying to see in almost all responses to the draft strategic plan a genuine appreciation and support for the Saskatchewan Archives staff and its expertise. As one submission stated, “It goes without saying that all of SAB’s (or any agency’s) resources, the most important and valuable are its human resources.” There is a widespread concern that the resources allocated to Saskatchewan Archives be commensurate with the great demands placed upon its staff. There are very high expectations from the public for adequate staffing, user friendly services (including expanded hours of service), and efficient and effective use of all resources available to researchers inside and beyond the Archives.

Within this context then, it is perhaps not surprising to see the level of consensus among stakeholders and interest groups that a high priority should be placed on improved facilities, preservation of collections, and elimination of the huge records processing backlog that has accumulated over the years. The Archives’ journal, *Saskatchewan History*, also received a high level of support; many submissions asked that additional resources be allocated to its continued publication, as it serves an increasingly important community outreach function.

Reservations were expressed with regard to adoption of the “portfolio” approach to rationalizing acquisition strategy and the use of human resources, particularly as it affects SAB’s Saskatoon office. Many are convinced that the nature of the province, with its widespread population and the new emphasis on aboriginal peoples and northern development, dictates that the SAB presence in Saskatoon should be upgraded. But some worry that the duplication of services in

Regina and Saskatoon, which can be contained but not entirely eliminated, will stretch the available resources too thinly

The Saskatchewan Genealogical Society (SGS) noted that it would support both reference and portfolio function in Saskatoon only if adequate storage facilities for records such as the homestead records was provided. The SGS noted that reference service for academics at the U of S was important. The SGS summed up by stating that “it is more important to improve delivery of service to make more effective and efficient use of resources than to maintain the present level of programming and service in Saskatoon.”

The Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS), which provides a grant to Saskatchewan History, acknowledged that the journal required additional funding. However, they “do not agree with the further statement that should these resources not be forthcoming the SAB will withdraw all support for this magazine.” They argue that the journal is too important “to be dropped merely because of the comparatively small demand it makes on the SAB budget.” The SHFS was concerned that the portfolio system might fragment the Archives but continued, “As long as SAB management feels that such a structure will be made to work effectively and efficiently, SHFS will support it, assuming it would not negatively affect the way in which researchers use the system. Good service to the public must be paramount.” The SHFS also supported the maintenance of offices in Saskatoon as well as Regina, noting that Saskatchewan is the most rural province in Canada with a widely distributed population. The Society’s response also acknowledged that the most important resource is the human resource.

An informal Saskatoon committee of people concerned about archives and heritage (Gordon Barnhart, U of S International, Ph.D. in History, former Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; F. Laurie Barron, Native Studies – U of S; R.H.D. Phillips, publisher and consultant; and Duncan Robertson, community historian and author) [hereafter referred to as “the Saskatoon Committee”] state that abandoning Saskatchewan History is not an option. They recommend that the editorial policy and editorial board be expanded and outside sources of funding be developed. The Saskatoon Committee generally supports the portfolio concept but notes that the portfolios should be evenly distributed between Regina and Saskatoon and that the aboriginal portfolio should be centred in Saskatoon. This group feels that now is the time to expand the mandate of the Saskatoon Office rather than retrenching. They favour “the option of joining the various archives in Saskatoon into one unit and to house this new service in the Diefenbaker Canada Centre or some similar facility.

W.A.S. Sarjeant, a former Board member, heritage advocate and Professor of Geology at the U of S, also feels that this is a time to enhance the role of the Saskatoon Office rather than diminish it. He indicates that the development of a joint facility in the Diefenbaker Centre should be pursued and that Saskatchewan History should be supported by the Archives to the extent necessary.

J. R. Miller (Professor of History, U of S, and researcher/author on Indian/White relations) observes that the Plan gives a low priority to the needs, desires and even convenience of researchers. He recommends that these interests be elevated in the final report. Professor Miller expresses misgivings with the portfolio approach, particularly as it might relate to the Saskatoon

Office. He also has concerns about the Diefenbaker Centre concept, terming it expensive and unlikely based on other capital projects needed on campus. He recognizes the poor quality of the existing space but thinks some other solution should be sought out. J. R. Miller also urges the Archives to assign a higher priority to the maintenance of Saskatchewan History.

The University of Regina does not think the issue of preserving electronic records has been adequately addressed. The response notes “any long-range planning will have to take into account the complexity and expense of this problem.”

## 6. ACCOMMODATION

**Vision:** Archival holdings of the Saskatchewan Archives will be housed in adequate accommodation with appropriate storage conditions in Regina and Saskatoon.

### **Background:**

Accommodation for the Archives has been a pressing issue for more than a decade. The Archives Board has recognized both the lack of space and substandard quality of accommodation as significant obstacles to achieving program objectives and to implementing its mandate. The Swift Report (p. 85) states that "long-term accommodation solutions have not been achieved in part because there has not been a clear statement of long-term need related to strategic directions to be taken by the Saskatchewan Archives." Through this strategic plan that concern will be addressed.

### **Information Technology and Its Implications:**

The Saskatchewan Archives has been collecting records in a number of formats since it commenced operations in 1945. While the majority of the archival collection is "paper-based," including textual records, maps, architectural drawings, posters, etc., microfilm, photographic negatives and prints, film, video and audiotape and some electronic formats are also present.

One of the basic principles of archives states that records should be collected in the format in which they were created. Originals are to be collected whenever possible. Adhering to this principle was much easier for an archives prior to the technological explosion of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Signed documents could easily be distinguished from "carbon copies" and photocopies could be distinguished from originals. However, today it is not as easy. As well, dealing with "originals" which are digital records is difficult and uncertain and expensive relative to the acquisition of paper copies. It can also be argued that documents created electronically which require a signature do not become documents until the paper copy is signed.

Microfilm has proven to be a stable format and can capture information from a page with few limitations. Limitations include issues such as the relevance of colour--is it significant that a red pen was used to make those notations, or how can a map be interpreted if it employed colour coding?--and the inability to render some inks and colours readable. Other limitations relate to the size of the document. The reduction required to fit the document on microfilm makes it difficult or impossible to read it. Another significant limitation with microfilm relates to accessibility. With a large series of paper files, a researcher can have two or three related files open to relevant documents at one time while this is not possible with microfilm. A researcher can close one file from one box and open a related file from another box quickly while with microfilm he/she would have to pass through hundreds of images in between or change reels.

There has been much talk over the past 20 years of taking information in a variety of other formats, including paper, and creating digital images which would require less storage space and be more easily accessed. Many commercial firms take their large volume records and scan them

into their networks. However, there are significant differences between these two applications. The commercial applications noted above relate to records which are only required for short periods of time (2 to 7 years). Archival records, by definition, are to be retained permanently. Both government and the private sector have come to the realisation that there are significant costs involved in preserving the integrity of digital records. Records stored in a system are accessed through application software that functions through operating systems. Both application software and operating systems are upgraded frequently with new versions replacing current versions every two to four years. With large volumes of information in storage, the costs of "migrating" the information to the new application software become significant quickly and, over time, become prohibitive. For records requiring long-term retention, the most economical current solution in terms of accommodation costs is still the acquisition of additional space. Records retained in a stable format such as paper can be interpreted now and 50 years from now. Records retained in a digital format are "held ransom by technology." Once the institution commits to a digital "original," the record can only be interpreted if the information is upgraded each time a change in technology dictates it. Treasury Board would have to commit to providing whatever funding is required for migration purposes or the whole collection would be rendered useless. The process of committing funding for additional space relates specifically to the records to be acquired in the future--it does not put the current collection at risk.

Archives are very much a part of the information sector and have always been integrally involved in using and applying information technology to a variety of uses, from automated finding aid systems to digitizing records. Because of budget limitations, the Saskatchewan Archives has slowly introduced information technology into the workplace, including:

- The purchase of standard hardware and software;
- The linking of employees by local area networks and offices by wide area networks;
- The use of e-mail for reference services;
- The establishment of a website; and
- The automation of its financial management system.

While modest, these changes combined with appropriate maintenance support and more computer training have led to improvements in communication, productivity and services throughout the organization.

With a relatively small investment of funds, the potential exists for the Saskatchewan Archives to move ahead with a couple of exciting initiatives:

- As part of its leadership role in managing government information, the Saskatchewan Archives be given staffing resources for managing and archiving electronic records;
- Scanning and digitizing selected archival holdings and finding aids in partnership with the archival community in developing a Saskatchewan Archival Information Network (SAIN) for use by schools, libraries, governments and individual researchers. The Canadian Council of Archives is presently seeking financial assistance from the federal government to establish a cost shared assistance program.

The first initiative will be of particular benefit to the Government of Saskatchewan as it works to find an orderly and cost-effective use of technology to support service delivery and administrative control. The second will not only benefit regular users of the Saskatchewan Archives, but will bring its holdings to a greater number of people, many of whom have never used an archives before or have been exposed to its treasures.

## **SPACE ISSUES:**

### **Regina:**

Current facilities include the following:

- 3303 Hillsdale Street (shared with other tenants) is occupied by administrative, private records, government records, reference and City of Regina Archives staff and provides storage for collections in environmentally controlled stacks.
- 2222 - 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue (shared with other tenants) is occupied by Government Records Branch staff and Information Technology analyst.
- The Rolloflex Building (shared with other Government clients) provides additional substandard, temporary storage space for government records, architectural drawings and original newspaper files.

### **Saskatoon:**

Current facilities include the following:

- Murray Building, University of Saskatchewan, (shared with other University departments) is occupied by administrative, processing and reference staff, and provides the primary storage for collections in stacks lacking in humidity controls.
- Sturdy Stone Centre provides accommodation for one Government Records Branch employee operating out of a small office.
- Williams Building, University of Saskatchewan, (shared with other University departments) where one former classroom has been converted for temporary, substandard storage of private records and architectural drawings.

### **Principles:**

- Obtaining adequate accommodation with appropriate storage conditions is the most important long-term preservation strategy for any archival custodian;
- Prevention is the most efficient and effective means of achieving preservation results;

### **Goals:**

The Swift Report has proposed general accommodation objectives for the Saskatchewan Archives that have been endorsed by the board, management and staff. They are as follows:

- To obtain sufficient space for the Saskatchewan Archives collections and operations for the present and for future growth;
- To obtain accommodation which will provide safe and secure storage for collections, including the provision of appropriate environmental conditions and controls;
- To obtain accommodation which will provide the Saskatchewan Archives with improved visibility and which will allow the public access to the holdings of the Archives.
- To obtain accommodation which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operations, including consolidation of staff to the minimum number of locations possible.

A number of additional, more specific key accommodation interests have also been identified;

- Storage space that meets modern archival standards for controlled environment and security to preserve and protect Archives collections, specific to individual media requirements;
- Sufficient space to accommodate current storage needs and future acquisitions;
- Good quality space for offices, work stations, meeting rooms, exhibitions and tours to allow for current needs and future growth;
- Improved proximity of staff to records that relate to their portfolio/function and expertise;
- Improved space allocation to provide for more effective work flow and communication among staff;
- Electronic infrastructure to improve staff communication and to allow for access by staff and researchers to electronic records and finding aids where necessary;
- Better location of facilities to allow for higher public visibility and better access (including handicapped access) for staff, researchers and other visitors;
- Improved reference facilities for allow for research access to all documentary media in the collection and for better supervision of researchers;
- Proper shipping and receiving area, including storage space and equipment to isolate and (if necessary) treat incoming records for the safety of both records and staff;
- Adequate space to accommodate technical programs such as conservation and photo labs, microfilm unit, and any other reformatting unit we are proposing.

These objectives and key interests apply to Archives accommodation in both Regina and Saskatoon.

### **Options:**

A number of options for addressing future accommodation needs in both cities were discussed. The desperate need for more quality space for collections and staff clearly resonated with the stakeholders and interested individuals who responded to the Swift report. As one correspondent wrote, "the rich provincial heritage [within the Archives] is in grave jeopardy. The inadequate facilities and equipment and understaffing are well delineated. ...What needs to be done is extensively discussed, and the recommendations provide a basis for action." Whatever options are considered for the future, then, it should be emphasized at this point that one option is manifestly untenable in either location--the status quo. The others are outlined below, with the preferred option listed first in each case:

## **Regina:**

1. All programs located in one building.

### Advantages:

- The new facility could be designed freely with all the Archives' accommodation objectives in mind;
- Having all programs under one roof will provide for greater efficiency of service to clients;
- It facilitates improved communication and improved work flow;
- It provides for better security for records by eliminating the transportation of records within the city.

### Disadvantages:

- Capital/lease and land costs may be higher.
2. A "split facility" with one building to house administration, archival and records management staff, public services and frequently accessed collections, and a separate building to house most of the records storage, processing and technical facilities and staff.

### Advantages:

- The primary facility would provide better public visibility for both Archives administration and research clientele, while also providing environmentally controlled storage space for its most heavily accessed collections;
- The off-site facility would provide more suitable space for the processing of records in proximity to an environmentally controlled storage area and supporting technical services;
- The off-site facility would be located on less costly property that would accommodate current needs and allow future expansion for growth in the collection and the staff complement.
- Both buildings would meet specifications for modern archival standards.

### Disadvantages:

- Finding a suitable site and/or accommodation in a central location may be more difficult;
- Staff movement and transportation between sites is more costly and could jeopardize the physical security of the record.

3. A building shared with other government or private partners with similar program needs.

### Advantages:

- Symbiosis between/among other institutions with similar objectives and needs could lead to economies and efficiencies of service.

### Disadvantages:

- Planning for such a facility is more complicated logistically because several partners are involved;
- Other partners may have different requirements and compromises would be necessary.

It has also been suggested that Saskatchewan Archives contract for short-term records storage space in the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation's Records Centre. However, this proposal raises many concerns regarding the integrity and control of records stored there. With the construction of a gas pipeline in close proximity to the Records Centre, the physical safety of those records also becomes a major concern. So this can be seen only as a short-term solution.

## **Saskatoon:**

As was outlined in Section 5, there is a strong desire within the Saskatchewan Archives and among its clientele to retain a high profile in Saskatoon and northern Saskatchewan. Nevertheless, program delivery needs to be designed to achieve overall corporate objectives and improve access and service.

### **1. A common facility or networked facilities independent of location located on-campus, at Innovation Place, or off-campus.**

#### Advantages:

- More flexibility in planning for the implementation of new initiatives and in marshalling human resources and program delivery to meet corporate objectives;
- Several institutions would partner to share the cost of developing a **common facility or networked facilities**;
- The new facility would improve the public visibility and the quantity and quality of space for the Saskatchewan Archives' collection and staff;
- The **facility** would meet specifications for modern archival standards.

#### Disadvantages:

- Planning for such a facility is more complicated logistically because of the number of partners involved;
- Capital/lease costs would likely be much higher than the other options under consideration;
- Other partners may have differing requirements and compromises would be necessary.

### **2. Upgrade current facilities in the Murray Building if feasible.**

#### Advantages:

- Additional capital costs would be more manageable because they would relate simply to required reconfiguration of public and staff areas and the upgrading of storage areas;
- The close relationship between the Archives and the University community would be maintained.

#### Disadvantages:

- Feasibility studies have not been conducted to determine if environmental controls for storage areas can in fact be installed in the current facilities;
- The current space allotment is inadequate for all the functions performed now and would limit prospects for future reorganization to meet corporate objectives;
- The Murray Building has poor accessibility and public visibility;
- High cost of rendering site accessible to the handicapped.

3. Acquire facilities off the University campus in a building occupied exclusively by Saskatchewan Archives or in partnership with others.

Advantages:

- Obtaining more suitable accommodation would allow for more effective program delivery and more efficient deployment of staff resources to meet corporate objectives;
- It might be easier to incorporate accommodation objectives in facilities planning than is allowed in current space;
- Public visibility and accessibility could be enhanced.

Disadvantages:

- The close relationship between the Archives and the University of Saskatchewan would be jeopardized;
- Ongoing maintenance costs would be higher;
- Capital/lease costs would be higher than remaining in the current facilities.

**Recommendations:**

Saskatchewan Archives reiterates the untenability of the present space situation and the urgency of developing a long-term solution. We recommend that:

- Our accommodation objectives apply equally to all documentary media and to all Archives facilities regardless of location;
- A "split facility" in Regina may be an acceptable and appropriate solution to our accommodation needs, provided that the four primary goals outlined on pages 23-24 are adhered to regardless of which option is chosen;
- The option of entering into a partnership with other institutions in the Diefenbaker Centre expansion concept, as outlined above, to satisfy accommodation requirements in Saskatoon as they arise out of the redefined delivery of service in that office. (See Section 3).
- Temporary, short-term space for our collections, assuring environmental quality and physical security;
- Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation to consider high-density shelving and other innovative solutions as ways of reducing square-meter requirements in any new or renovated facility.

**Actions:**

- Work closely with SPMC officials to ensure primary facility in Regina offers public visibility for both Archives administration and users while also providing secure and environmentally-controlled storage conditions for its most heavily accessed collections;
- In conjunction with SPMC, draw up requirements for a secondary facility in Regina which would provide much more suitable space for records processing in close proximity to an environmentally-controlled storage area and supporting technical services. The secondary facility would be located on less costly property that would accommodate current needs and allow for future growth of archival holdings and staff complement;

- Prepare cost analysis/benefits for three options in Saskatoon;
- Meet with Government and University officials to discuss Diefenbaker Centre expansion concept.

### **Stakeholder Comments:**

This component of the draft strategic plan elicited the most response from stakeholders and interest groups. All agree that SAB facilities in both Regina and Saskatoon are inadequate. What the nature of those facilities should be and where they ought to be located are questions that brought forward mixed responses, however. There is a high degree of awareness of the special nature of archival storage requirements, and a real concern that future resources are sufficient to preserve collections in the best possible environment and working conditions. To ensure that new facilities for the Archives also allow for the newest technology and formats of information, several submissions urged that the collection and maintenance of electronic and digital records be given due attention in the planning stages.

In Regina there is general support for the “split facility” option. A central location, with greater public visibility and accessibility, is a concept that appeals to researchers and other heritage organizations that would like to build stronger working relationships with the Archives.

As was mentioned in the section relating to Human Resources Management, there are conflicting views on the role of the Saskatoon office and the concerns about what resources can feasibly be allocated to maintaining programs, staff and collections there. Expansion of the Diefenbaker Centre is just one option for developing an archives centre facility in conjunction with other partner institutions. Interested parties do not wish that to be the only option considered for SAB facilities development in Saskatoon.

The Saskatchewan Genealogical Society supported the “split facility” concept and wanted a “better location of facilities to allow for higher public visibility and better access.... Since genealogists are high users, the facility should be either shared with [SGS] or be in close proximity to it. A Family History Research Center would target the highest users and allow SGS and its members to work with Saskatchewan Archives.”

The Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) recommended that the old Normal School Building on College Avenue be adopted as the main venue for the Archives. This would place the Archives in a heritage building in a central location in Regina. The SHFS approved the Plan’s recommendation that the Diefenbaker Centre be examined as a possible venue for Saskatoon.

## 7. LEGISLATION:

**Vision:** New Archives legislation will be passed which meets the requirements of the Saskatchewan Archives as it moves into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Background:**

The Archives Act has not been completely reviewed since it was first passed in 1945. Some housekeeping measures have been made to change the membership of the board and to clarify issues relating to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOI Act) (1992). A number of changes are required to update and clarify definitions, and in many cases to bring the role and responsibilities of the Saskatchewan Archives in line with that of other provincial archives.

There are a number of anachronisms that exist. For example, the Act states that the Saskatchewan Archives should maintain an office in both universities. These anachronisms do not reflect reality.

The Saskatchewan Archives provides an enhanced service to government in the area of records management compared to when The Archives Act was first enacted. With The FOI Act the provincial government recognized its responsibility regarding recorded information. A greater role backed up by legislation could give our responsibilities teeth so that government institutions would not be allowed to comply when it suits their immediate needs instead of being truly concerned about public accountability.

Court Records disposition is not handled in a timely and well-managed fashion. Orders-in-Council are sought only when the court houses are short of space, creating an inordinate amount of work at one time for staff. These records have historical significance, but the Saskatchewan Archives is forced to address the appraisal and transfer of these records in large volumes at once instead of more manageably over periods of time.

Inconsistencies between The Archives Act and The FOI Act mean that the public has a right to access defined in one act while in the other we do not have legislation that ensures that the Saskatchewan Archives collects and preserves the full public record. At present, ministerial records are considered private records and are governed by agreements. Ministers can grant access to records which the archives holds while at the same time similar information held in Deputy Minister collections which are government records will be restricted pursuant to The FOI Act.

To clarify the role and responsibilities of both the Archives in general and the Provincial Archivist in particular it is advisable to state those roles within the act itself.

Other changes to the act will be necessary if changes to the structure and reporting relationship to government is changed. This issue is addressed elsewhere in this document.

The process for approving government records retention schedules which requires approval by the legislature is time consuming and cumbersome. Sometimes schedules are held up awaiting a session of the legislature to be called. In the meantime departments must pay for storage of records which could be destroyed or transferred to the Saskatchewan Archives.

### **Principles and Interests:**

- We believe that private and government records complement each other and we must be able to acquire both to document the history of the province;
- We recognize that the Saskatchewan Archives is the primary archival institution in Saskatchewan and has a responsibility to ensure that the archival heritage of the province is preserved;
- We believe we are well-placed, particularly in terms of knowledge and expertise to help government be accountable in their record-keeping practices; open, accessible records are essential for open, accessible government;
- We believe that government information should be regarded as essential evidence and handled in an accountable fashion;
- We are concerned that the vagueness and lack of definition in our present legislation allows important records created by government institutions to be lost;
- The process for approval of records retention schedules for government institutions is cumbersome and time consuming and should be streamlined;
- There are inconsistencies between The Archives Act and The FOI Act which create problems for access to records held by the Saskatchewan Archives;
- Court Records provide an important record of the province and should be collected by the Saskatchewan Archives provided we have sufficient resources to do so;
- The establishment by the government of a formal infrastructure to manage government information would be recognized through legislated delegation of government-wide responsibility to Saskatchewan Archives;
- Records created by Ministers of the Crown in the course of their duties should be appraised and selected for transfer to the archives to ensure a record of decision-making and policy development is preserved;
- The Saskatchewan Archives has a responsibility to play a leadership role in the archival community of Saskatchewan
- Records of health boards and municipalities should not be managed by Saskatchewan Archives unless the Archives is given adequate legislative authority to do so. As a principle, it is desirable for municipalities and health districts to manage records through their life cycles in the localities in which they were created

### **Goals:**

- To reflect clear and enhanced roles and responsibilities of the Saskatchewan Archives in documenting the recorded history of Saskatchewan;
- To make archival legislation consistent with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation;
- To commit the Saskatchewan Archives to acquire and preserve both public and private records in whatever media;

- To have the Saskatchewan Archives play a leadership role in managing government information.

### **Recommendations:**

- That a thorough review of The Archives Act be undertaken to look for and correct inconsistencies and anachronisms;
- That The Archives Act be amended to define in clear legal terms what constitutes a "public record". The drafting of the amendment should be undertaken by a legislative drafter and it should embrace the following concepts:
  - The definition should be inclusive of all kinds and formats of documentation, including electronic records;
  - It should include the notion of records "created in the conduct of the business of the department or government institution";
  - It should include the notion of records that are "under the control of" the government department or institution.
- That a detailed list of departments, office, agencies, boards, Crown Corporations and commissions be drawn up and presented as a "Schedule" to The Archives Act, and that agencies and bodies so designated be subject to the provisions of the Act;
- That the legislation make provision for amendments to this Schedule by regulation of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council;
- That, in the consultative process associated with the development of this designation of "department", an effort be made to assure conformity between this aspect of the Archives legislation and The FOI Act;
- That the Saskatchewan Archives be given the authority to act as the central government agency responsible for the management of the government's recorded information and that changes be made to the Act reflecting those changes;
- That court records as defined in the Act be handled by way of the same scheduling process as other government records instead of by Order-in-Council as presently provided for in the Act;
- That government departments be obligated to adopt and implement SARS and ORS for both records classification and records retention of public records, and that the Archives take a leading role in training and educating government personnel in the area of records management;
- That the provisions of the Act governing the scheduling process be amended and that the legislation be rewritten to assign authority for the approval of schedules to a new Public Records Committee of which the Provincial Archivist would be chairperson. The role of the new Public Records Committee should be expanded to give it more authority in the broad field of records and information management;
- That the role of the Saskatchewan Archives and the Provincial Archivist be clarified and clearly stated in The Archives Act. We recommend that we adopt wording similar to that in The Public Archives Act of Nova Scotia which describes the objects and function of the Archives in s.5 as follows:

The objects and function of the Public Archives are to

- (a) acquire and preserve Government and private-sector records of Provincial significance and facilitate access to them;
- (b) develop policies, standards, procedures and services for effective records management in Government;
- (c) be the permanent repository of records of public bodies; and
- (d) encourage and assist archival activities and the archival community.

and the role of the Provincial Archivist in sec. 15. In particular the Act should clarify the role of the Provincial Archivist with respect to access to restricted records in the Saskatchewan Archives' collection.

- That the governance structure mandated in legislation reflect the accountability relationship discussed in section 3 of this plan;
- That the board would welcome an opportunity to be involved in the process for creating new legislation;
- That the Saskatchewan Archives play a leadership role in developing policies at the provincial level and providing advisory services to municipalities and health districts.

#### **Actions:**

- Negotiate the role of the Saskatchewan Archives in managing government information with appropriate government officials;
- Be involved in consulting with public and stakeholder groups about the content of new legislation.

#### **Stakeholder Comments:**

Stakeholders were concerned that the legislation address responsibilities relating to non-government records as well as government records and that it address access issues for users and incorporate users into the Board structure.

The Saskatchewan Genealogical Society (SGS) noted that legislation must commit the government to providing adequate funding for “public and private records” as well as the preservation of government records. The SGS urged that the Saskatchewan Archives should be the flagship of the archival network in the province.

The Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society (SHFS) recommended that The Archives Act be re-written to “make for simpler, smoother access to information by the public” by making it compatible with the Freedom of Information Act. The SHFS wants the legislation to ensure representation on the Board by the user public and also believed that “the public and stakeholders should be consulted in the formulation of the new Archives Act.”

## **8. PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT**

**Vision:** The Saskatchewan Archives will have an effectively staffed and mandated preservation management program.

### **Background:**

Over the last decade the preservation management concept has largely replaced the traditional remedial item-level restoration approach to archival conservation and preservation. It stresses large-scale preventative maintenance management and control of archival collections through improved storage environments, an emphasis on the informational value of records and the integration of preservation and conservation activities into all facets of archival activities. "Priorities are set and applied in operational plans that deliver a systematic combination of preventative measures, specialized care and maintenance, reformatting and mass treatments. Conservation treatment of individual items is planned only in very special cases where particular heritage and evidential values are found."

Preservation management is a core function of any archives, but due to other pressures this program element has been neglected. While collection condition surveys and funding proposals have been prepared, support for such initiatives did not materialize. The Swift Report states that preservation must be given a higher institutional priority. Through the appointment of a professional archival conservator, the Saskatchewan Archives plans to address this long-standing neglect by improving the quality of collections maintenance, integrating preservation management into institutional planning and priorities, and exerting leadership in the archival community by setting standards and providing much needed support to the other repositories.

Substantial portions of the collections held in both Regina and Saskatoon continue to be housed in poor storage environments. Within the Archives itself newly processed textual records continue to be placed into acidic non-archival quality file folders and boxes while almost nothing is being done to provide even the most elementary preventative conservation and maintenance measures.

### **Principles:**

- Preservation is a fundamental part of the work of all archives;
- Preservation management should integrate preservation into all archival functions.

The Swift Report effectively summarizes a number of long-standing concerns with the state of archival conservation and preservation management within the institution. In addition, there is a need to:

- Accept preservation management as a high institutional priority;
- Implement the preservation recommendations and objectives outlined in the report entitled "Saskatchewan Archives Board: Conservation Condition Survey (Turluk, 1993);
- Plan for the allocation of sufficient budgetary resources to meet preservation management requirements;

- Accept that preservation management forms part of a broader accommodation and records acquisition and maintenance strategies;
- Recognize the need to contribute to preservation management outreach into the broader provincial archival records holding community; an outreach program which should be initiated and directed by the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

**Goals:**

- To establish preservation management as a high institutional priority;
- To serve the preservation needs of the Saskatchewan Archives and the broader archival community as set out in the provincial conservation strategy.

**Recommendations:**

- That relevant preservation management issues be addressed in any legislation/mandate review of the Saskatchewan Archives Board;
  - That the Saskatchewan Archives Board accept "preservation management" and implement it as a high priority within the newly proposed corporate policy, planning and management framework;
  - That existing conservation and preservation management resources be surveyed and measured;
  - That preliminary needs assessment surveys be completed or updated by the newly proposed Director of Archival Services position as a basis for determining the general requirements for both institutional and outreach preservation management programs;
  - That a preservation management unit, including an archival conservator and such other staff as might be required, be established and staffed as a high institutional priority; that the preservation unit, in consultation with the proposed policy and planning unit and program directorates, develop an institutional preservation management policy and procedures, including identifying preservation management budgetary needs.
1. To establish a legislative/management framework which facilitates effective and systematic preservation, decision-making, resource allocation and accountability;

**Actions:**

- Incorporate relevant preservation management issues into any legislative/mandate review of the Saskatchewan Archives;
  - Approve and implement "preservation management" as a high priority within the proposed corporate policy, planning and management framework.
  - Develop institutional preservation management policy and procedures, including preservation management budgetary needs.
2. To establish both institutional and outreach preservation management programs.

**Actions:**

- Survey and measure existing conservation and preservation management resources;
- Complete or update preliminary needs assessment surveys in order to determine program requirements;
- Establish and staff a preservation management unit, including a professional conservator and such other staff as required.

**Stakeholder Comments:**

The general public seems to understand inherently the need for preservation management if the documents in the Archives are to survive for the use and appreciation of future generations. As one stakeholder explained it, this investment in “preventive maintenance” would not only save the records physically, but valuable resources allocated to staff time and restoration costs in future. Several responses, including the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society, therefore emphasized that conservation and preservation services should be made a high institutional priority. Many preservation considerations relate directly to appropriate archival storage facilities. W.A.S. Sarjeant, a former Board member, heritage advocate and Professor of Geology at the U of S, argues that, if there were sufficient resources allocated to a good conservation service, a professional conservator and well equipped conservation laboratory could take on additional work from private clients to help recover operating costs. This service would also contribute significantly towards a wider accessibility of expertise among other archives and curatorial institutions in the province.

## 9. A. RECORDS PROCESSING--BACKLOG

**Vision:** The Saskatchewan Archives will process materials in a timely fashion, ensuring rights of accountability and access are met.

**Background:** The Saskatchewan Archives has a very extensive backlog of material that requires processing before it can be easily used by researchers (estimated to require 118 person years). In the words of Michael Swift and Associates, "Management of the province's documentary heritage involves more than just storing records in an archival environment. The Archives' responsibilities include making the records accessible to interested citizens now, not ten years or more from now. The fundamental role of the Archives as the most important cultural and heritage resource in Saskatchewan is undermined if the institution cannot perform that most basic task." As well, accountability, open government, and legal rights of access cannot always be satisfied when records are inaccessible or are extremely difficult to locate because they have not been adequately arranged and described. Staff resources are rapidly and inefficiently consumed when unprocessed records have to be identified and retrieved. Donors and researchers become frustrated when records are not made available in a reasonable time.

The following interests should be considered regarding the current records processing backlog at the Saskatchewan Archives:

- The backlog must be eliminated;
- The primary reason to eliminate the backlog is access: the Archives must provide access to records for the public in general, as well as to comply with statutory requirements;
- It must be recognized that the backlog impacts on delivery of reference services;
  - Staff must know what is included in the archives; holdings in order to provide adequate reference service;
  - The centennial anniversary of the province (2005) will increase the use of the Archives; records will be in greater demand;
- Staff must know what is currently in the Archives' holdings, in order to plan acquisition strategies;
- Processing the backlog will free shelving space, at present a limited and expensive resource.

The huge records processing backlog:

- Has impacted on delivery of reference services;
- Is taking up more shelf space than required;
- Makes it difficult, if not impossible, to comply with Freedom of Information requirements;
- Makes it difficult to develop and implement acquisition strategies;
- Although information was provided to the consultants, a significant amount of unprocessed records were not included in the report, e.g. court records.

### **Principles and Interests:**

- Accountability and legal rights of access can only be satisfied when records are accessible because they have been adequately processed according to uniform descriptive standards.

**Goals:**

- To eliminate the huge records processing backlog which will in turn reduce space requirements.

**Recommendations:**

The present situation is not tenable. The board will adopt a five-year strategy to eliminate the processing backlog.

1. The Saskatchewan Archives will request one-time funding of \$1.2 million dollars per annum for 5 years to eliminate records processing backlog of 118 person years. Beginning in the year 2000/2001, this special project would employ temporary supervisory and processing staff and would be overseen by regular staff member.

**Stakeholder Comments:**

All stakeholders who commented on the backlog favoured quick action to eliminate it. The Saskatchewan Genealogical Society supported the processing of the backlog as a priority and the Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society (SHFS) was forceful in its interest in processing the backlog. The SHFS stated that the backlog “meant that a prodigious amount of material is not recorded and available to researchers [and] that donors, who have every expectation that their material would benefit the public good, have not had their wishes represented.” The SHFS was concerned that the “one-time” nature of this backlog reduction might not eliminate the notion of backlogs and that the processing by temporary staff may not be up to current (i.e.) RAD standards. W.A.S. Sarjeant, a former member of the Board, said that the backlog is “huge and requires quick action.”

## **9. B. RECORDS PROCESSING - GENERAL**

**Vision:** The Saskatchewan Archives will acquire records selectively and uniformly from public and private sources, and will give a higher priority to records processing to avoid backlogs.

**Background:** The following points describe the current state of general records processing:

- Lack of an institutional acquisition policy and strategy hampers a co-ordinated and selective approach to records acquisition;
- Lack of standards for describing records has delayed efforts to automate records processing and descriptive systems, and makes it difficult to provide efficient and consistent reference service;
- Lack of institution-wide records processing reporting standards has reduced the ability to provide quantitative and costing data to support resource requests and multi-year planning.

### **Principles:**

- Accountability and legal rights can only be satisfied when records are accessible because they have been adequately processed according to uniform descriptive standards.

In addition, the following interests should be considered in finding a solution:

- In order to keep an unreasonable backlog from accumulating again, records processing must be seen as an important institutional function;
- An institutional acquisition policy will govern the acquisition of both public and private records in all media, and will direct the development of relevant standards and practices such as institutional appraisal criteria (including cost of maintaining the record, intellectual content, format, preservation, housing, etc.), appraisal reports, acquisition strategies, de-accession policy, etc.; front end records management for public and private records;
- All portfolios must be allocated adequate resources (human resources and financial resources) to address appraisal processing requirements for public and private records;
- Records need to be described in a standard way that can be understood by all users and can be applied consistently throughout the institution. The investment in high quality descriptive work would directly benefit researchers, facilitate automation, and make the work of reference staff more efficient and consistent.

### **Goals:**

- To prevent an unreasonable records processing backlog from accumulating again;
- To ensure accessibility to all archival holdings through uniform description;
- To acquire records selectively and uniformly from public and private sources.

### **Recommendations:**

1. To establish records processing as an important institutional function.

**Actions:**

- Develop an institutional acquisition policy for public and private records in all media;
  - Develop and adopt standards and practices for appraisal of public and private records in all media;
  - Allocate adequate human and financial resources to address processing requirements;
  - Maintain integrated statistics relating to acquisitions and records processing to support budgetary requests.
2. To describe records in a standard way that can be applied consistently throughout the institution.

**Actions:**

- Adopt Rules for Archival Description (RAD), where feasible, and identify resources required to implement adoption;
  - Create and staff a position of Descriptive Standards Officers (DSO), and support the position with an appropriate staff complement;
  - Appoint a Descriptive Standards Committee to guide the process of implementing standards based descriptive practices.
3. To promote front-end records management:

**Actions:**

- Work with departments and agencies as records systems are designed or created in order to protect information and ensure accessibility later;
- Develop standards in order to have recorded information, particularly electronic records, remain in custody of creating department or agency.

**Stakeholder Comments:**

All stakeholders that addressed the processing backlog issue indicated their support for maintaining records processing on a timely basis. The University of Regina urged that the current backlog not overshadow “a long-term plan for ensuring the financial stability of the agency” to assure that the collection be enhanced and adequately maintained.

## CONCLUSION:

In preparing this strategic plan, the board, management and staff of the Saskatchewan Archives have embarked on a course which, if implemented, will lead to far-reaching change for the management of the organization, its programs and delivery of service. With the help of the Swift Report, we examined our entire program, debated some difficult and complex issues and, with the distribution of this draft plan, are putting forward a number of recommendations for discussion by stakeholder groups and interested persons. The task of developing a strategic plan was not an easy one, but those involved recognized that significant changes have to be made in mandate, structure, reporting relationship, program requirements and associated accommodation if the Saskatchewan Archives is to meet the challenges of the "information age." We are confident that the recommendations found throughout the document will help this agency to meet the demands for change in the archives world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As part of the ongoing strategic planning process, we are seeking your reaction to our draft plan. The board has made no final decision on approval of the strategy document, so your input in written or verbal form will be valuable to our deliberations. In the next three weeks, we shall be setting up meetings with those stakeholders who wish to discuss this proposed future direction for the Saskatchewan Archives.

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