

Archives of Ontario

Private Acquisitions Strategy

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THE THRILL
OF DISCOVERY
LE FRISSON
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to outline a Private Acquisitions Strategy for the Archives of Ontario. The Archives of Ontario seeks to improve the representation of Ontario society in the holdings of the Archives of Ontario by establishing core principles of acquisition policy and objectives for the Archives of Ontario; to identify those activities and categories within the private sector which hold provincial significance, and; to effectively communicate these objectives to our stakeholders and the public.

A Private Acquisitions Strategy for the Archives of Ontario, will support both targeted acquisition efforts as well as serving as a screen for unsolicited offers of donation.

A core component is an effective communication strategy to promote the Archives of Ontario's acquisition priorities and to promote the Archives of Ontario as an appropriate place for the donation of records of provincial significance.

Vision

To preserve and make accessible the best documentary evidence of the development and full breadth of Ontario society.

To carry out a more focussed approach to the acquisition of private sector records.

To better reflect Ontario's diverse society.

To identify areas of significant activity within Ontario sectors, and to determine which areas should be considered high priorities for acquisition.

2. Archives & Recordkeeping Act

The *Archives and Recordkeeping Act*, 2006, S.O. 2006, c. 34, Sched. A, Section 17 and PART III Private Records, establishes that, "the Archivist [of Ontario] may enter into an agreement with any person or entity, other than a public body or legislative body, in respect of the person's or entity's records and recordkeeping", and, (c) "that the Archives of Ontario will acquire some or all of the person's or entity's records of archival value by gift, bequest, purchase or otherwise".

The Act also establishes *Provincial Significance* as the chief criteria for assessing the value of records from the private sector.

3. Strategic Objectives

A Private Acquisition Strategy aligns with the Information Privacy and Archives Strategic Plan in several key areas:

Vision

The Archives of Ontario has a vision to be a reliable, trusted, and authoritative guardian of Ontario's documentary memory. The Private Acquisitions Strategy helps fulfill this vision by demonstrating that the Archives seeks to acquire collections that best represent Ontario society and its sectors.

Mission

The Archives of Ontario has a mission to facilitate access to our records through on-going strategies to meet our customers' evolving needs and to enhance the customer experience. The Private Acquisitions Strategy helps fulfill this mission by seeking to acquire a diverse range of collections, which will broaden the research experiences of our stakeholders.

Values: Diversity

The Archives of Ontario seeks to foster and promote diversity in the records we keep in our collection. The Private Acquisitions Strategy supports this value by seeking to target collections that reflect Ontario's diversity in all its many forms.

Priorities: Expanding our Reach

The Archives of Ontario is seeking to increase the Archives of Ontario's visibility to help make the public aware of how they can benefit from our services and resources. The effective communication of the Private Acquisitions Strategy will help to extend this reach by encouraging Ontarians to see a reflection of themselves in the documentary memory of Ontario, and by helping them to understand that they play a key role in helping to make that happen.

4. Archival Appraisal Criteria

This section outlines the criteria by which all potential private acquisitions are assessed.

Decisions to acquire private records are based on the following appraisal criteria:

- Provincial Significance Criteria
- Standard Appraisal Criteria

Provincial Significance Criteria

Provincial significance is the primary criterion for determining Archives of Ontario's acquisition of private records, as established by the *Archives and Recordkeeping Act, 2006*. A potential donation must demonstrate provincial significance before being considered as a candidate for private acquisition.

In the context of archival appraisal, provincial significance can be defined as records that have lasting meaning and importance for the people and province of Ontario. It is most easily contrasted with either municipal or national significance. When applied to appraisal, it acts as a frame that allows the Archives to acquire donations that best document the history of the province.

Records of provincial significance document life in Ontario. They record the activities and experiences of individuals, groups, organizations, corporate bodies, and other groups that are provincially recognized. They also document the physical environment in Ontario, as well as events and trends (e.g., cultural, political, economic, social, demographic, scientific, and religious) that have a broad provincial scope.

Key factors considered when assessing a donation (private individual or organization) for provincial significance include:

- Has the individual or organization contributed a significant role in the cultural, political, social, demographic, scientific, economic or religious life of the province?
- Has the individual or organization had a significant impact on the development or evolution of the province?
- Has the individual or organization operated in several areas throughout Ontario? If not, was it influential beyond the locality in which it operated?
- Is it representative of an important, unique, or unusual function or activity?
- Has the individual or organization played a pioneering or leadership role in its field?
- Is it associated with a noteworthy individual or other organization?
- Do the records document significant events and trends in the province? (e.g., cultural, political, economic, social, demographic, scientific, and religious)?
- Do the records document the physical environment of Ontario (e.g., the physical landscape, wildlife)?

Standard Appraisal Criteria

These criteria will be considered once the provincial significance has been determined:

- Does the potential donation complement the Archives' existing government or private holdings in a meaningful way?
- Is the Archives of Ontario the most appropriate repository? (IPA should take into account the priorities of other archives' acquisition policies (e.g., McMaster University is an important collector of literary manuscripts; Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) acquires records of gay and lesbian-related organizations).
- Does the potential donation display an aesthetic or exhibit value?
- Is the potential donation a complete fonds? Are records from that individual or organization already held by another institution?
- Is the potential donation a comprehensive fonds (do records document the subject / individual / function).
- Is the provenance of the potential donation known?
- Does the potential donation require additional resources or technical expertise (preservation, reformatting, digital storage, etc.)?
- Is the potential donation in a usable format? (i.e. are they in a format we can access and preserve)
- Is the information available from another source in a more stable or accessible format?
- Do the records consist of originals, or are they copies of original records held by another source?

5. Addressing Our Gaps - Ontario's Sectors

While it is through the standard appraisal criteria that we will review offers of potential donation, it is through a review of Ontario's sectors that we will establish our highest acquisition priorities.

The Archives of Ontario aims to be proactive in the identification of areas of acquisition priority. Through a combined assessment of gaps within our existing holdings and a review of government priorities in conjunction with societal trends, the Archives is conducting analyses of sectors of Ontario society in order to identify areas of acquisition priority.

Developing a strong knowledge of high priority areas will enable to Archives of Ontario to pursue the records of individuals and organizations whose records may be potentially available when such opportunities are of a timely essence. Examples may include knowledge of retirements, or the closure of significant organizations, etc.

Identifying Ontario Sectors

The Archives of Ontario is working to identify Ontario's major sectors, and the various sub-sectors and activities within them, in order to discover gaps in the Archives' holdings.

- Agriculture
- Business and Industry
- Community Services
- Consumer Services
- Culture
- Education
- Energy
- Environment
- Health
- Infrastructure
- Labour
- Natural resources
- Science and Technology
- Sports and Tourism
- Transportation

Appraising Activities within Ontario Sectors - Analysis Reports

Sectors identified as a priority, and their related sub-sectors and sub-categories, are assessed according to the following guidelines. These appraisals are captured within the Analysis Report for Ontario Sectors.

The reports assess the value of documenting activities / sectors / sub-sectors primarily, but they may also be used to assist in the identification of records of specific individuals, organizations and companies when appropriate.

The *Analysis Report for Ontario Sectors* include the following categories for identification and analysis:

Sector Identification

Definition and scope of the sector and its significance within the province.

Sub-sector / Category Identification

Identification of sub-sectors and categories within each sector.

Sub-sector / Category Description

Overview of the scope of the sub-sector or category and a description of the types of the bodies, organizations and groups fall within it.

Government Functional Linkages in the Private Sector: Methodology

When appraising the provincial significance of activities in the private sector which have been established by or are subject to governing or regulatory legislation, it can be useful to employ a methodology that compliments existing acquisition criteria for government records at Archives of Ontario.

As a provincial government archives with a “total archives” (or “whole of society”) approach to acquisition, and with the aim to acquire records from the private sector that complement and enlighten aspects of the government record, it can be valuable to apply similar analysis and methodology to acquisition in both the government and private collecting areas. This allows for more streamlined acquisition? This provides a more comprehensive understanding of the private sector, and helps us to identify important areas where important functions and activities happen.

For government records, functional analysis is used to determine which records are most likely to document the functions and activities within ministries, agencies, boards and commissions.

Ontario government functional linking can be used to appraise the potential value of private sector bodies which were established by or operate under legislation, perform a regulatory function, or have formal relationships with the Government of Ontario. Functions that have been identified as core functions of a Ministry or government sector are also likely to be significant in the corresponding private sector.

The intention of this model is not to apply functional classification to the whole of the private sector, but to examine certain aspects of private sector activity in relation to government functions in order to identify complementary activities and relationships.

Related private holdings

The Archives will conduct an analysis of existing private holdings of the Archives of Ontario within each thematic sector. This analysis will help to identify gaps in the Archives’ holdings.

Sub-sector / Category Appraisal Rationale

An appraisal rationale is prepared for each sub-sector / category, explaining the extent to which documentation within this sub-sector would be of provincial significance and warrant acquisition by the Archives.

Priority

Based upon the sub-sector appraisal rationale, state whether the priority for acquisition is “High”, “Medium” or “Low”.

6. Communicating Our Acquisition Priorities

The Archives of Ontario will communicate the Private Acquisitions Strategy with our public stakeholders in a manner that is accessible to an external audience.

Communications products

Promotion of the Private Acquisitions Strategy will include:

- Communication via the Archives website
- Production of a refreshed brochure for donations
- Greater integration of donation and acquisition priorities into stakeholder communications.
- Pursue opportunities with liaison groups to further distribute our acquisition priorities.

The Archives of Ontario strives to be a leader within the Canadian archival community. Communicating the goals and objectives of the Private Acquisitions Strategy through existing and new channels will serve to reach new and diverse audiences and will further position the Archives of Ontario as an appropriate place for records of provincial significance.

7. Expected Outcomes

The Private Acquisitions Strategy will result in improvements in the collections of the Archives of Ontario, specifically;

- Greater representation of the many sectors that make up Ontario society.
- Greater representation of Ontario's diverse cultural groups.

A Focus for Outstanding Project Priorities

The identification of priorities in the Private Acquisition Strategy will help guide priorities when assigning outstanding projects. One strategy to assess collections among outstanding private and government processing projects would be to have the current or upcoming targets for the private acquisitions strategy inform priorities for outstanding projects processing. In this model, CDM would address outstanding collections within the thematic groupings that were being assessed for possible acquisitions in the Private Acquisitions Strategy.

This approach would reduce the number of outstanding projects and at the same time give a clearer picture of records already in the Archives' holdings under those thematic groupings for private acquisitions analysis.

Proactive Filtering

Through a combined assessment of the existing holdings of the Archives of Ontario, and an awareness of the collecting mandates of other Ontario and Canadian archives, the Private Acquisitions Strategy will naturally serve as a screen through which unsolicited donation offers can be assessed more systematically.

CDM already maintains a listing of Ontario archives and their collecting mandates that has been actively used when appraising donation.

Those offers of donation that fall within target areas that archivists have identified as low in priority (e.g. sufficiently documented or that are actively collected by other archives) can be appraised more efficiently. Such prospective donors could be referred to more appropriate repositories.

8. Tracking Our Success

When the Archives of Ontario acquires collections which fall within identified collecting priority areas, these will be identified and tracked as successful outcomes of the Private Acquisitions Strategy.

The Archives will track new acquisitions against the appraisal of targeted Ontario sectors and sub-sectors.

These acquisitions can also be featured on the website within the “Donating to the Archives” section, which will help to both promote the successes as well as to serve as a possible enticement to other prospective donors.