The newly announced provincial budget has brought about fiscal restraints – the kind Alberta and its heritage sector have not seen since the 1990s. The funding for the Alberta Heritage Resources Foundation (AHRF) – the ASA’s main source of financial support – has been cut by 8%. This reduction of funding presents an immediate challenge that ASA has to address short-term and long-term. This cut in funding will not be an easy task for an organization with such a lean structure: the ASA operates with only one full-time employee and relies heavily on volunteers for governance, outreach, grant adjudication and other functions. There is no fat to be trimmed, yet we are tasked with finding the way to operate with less.

In anticipation of the cuts, the ASA Board had already made some adjustments that are efficiency-oriented. The Board meetings will be partly conducted by teleconferencing, which will help save on travel cost; the plans for the new office reflect only the bare necessities. In the light of the new cuts, these measures are certainly not enough. 8% reduction will require a review of all operations and programs, including the annual Access to Holdings Grant. Our goals, as the ASA Board, is to make the changes with minimal disruption, minimal loss of services and with the an eye on long-term sustainability of the organization.

The ASA is instrumental to many individual and organizational members all around Alberta. We help local archives preserve, utilize and promote their holdings; we support archival specialists in their work and professional development; we foster the spirit of appreciation of the documentary heritage and its importance for open and accountable democratic governance. Shortchanging this mission would be wrong. The ASA will continue supporting members and finding ways to fulfill its promise despite the fiscal challenges of the day.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S COLUMN
RENE GEORGOPALIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/ARCHIVES ADVISOR

This fall, the ASA is working on adjusting its 2019-2020 budget as on October 24 we were informed that there is an 8% cut to our funding for the current fiscal year. The ASA will keep its members notified on how these cuts will affect our services. There was other news with the budget cut including that our funding no longer comes from Alberta Lotteries as that money now goes into the government’s general revenue. The Alberta Historical Resources Foundation (AHRF) has been dissolved in order to reduce red tape. We are still receiving funding despite the dissolution of AHRF.

We are working on a few projects this fall: we are researching association management software that will allow members to renew and register for workshops and events online and we are hoping that membership renewal will be a more convenient experience. We hope to launch this platform in April 2020. ASA’s current office lease ends at the end of February so we are also busy planning a move. The new office will cost the ASA a little less which will slightly help us absorb the budget cuts.

In addition to these major changes, we are continuing to offer our advisory services and to administer the usual fall offerings: the fall workshop and the fall institutional forum. The fall workshop is full and as I write, we have a waitlist of 7 people. The workshop is on the Canadian Archival Accession Information Standard that was finalized in May 2019. It should be interesting to have discussion of how this standard can be integrated into our databases and workflows.

In other news, the ASA Communications Committee is working on re-defining its purpose and goals as a response to our recent Communications plan. Archives Week 2019 took a different approach this year in which ASA tried to support members with outreach and advocacy initiatives rather than produce a calendar and launch its own event. This year was just the beginning of these changes and we strive to have increased member participation in outreach and advocacy. We hope to increase archives’ profile so that archives remain a priority.
NEW ASA INSTITUTIONAL MEMBER: MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Mount Royal University Archives and Special Collections in Calgary is very pleased to join the Archives Society of Alberta as its newest institutional member. The Archives and Special Collections holds records and publications relating to the history of Mount Royal University (from 1910 to present), as well as other teaching and research collections that support the University’s academic programs. Although our primary users are Mount Royal University students, faculty, and staff, our 185 linear metres of holdings are open to everyone and are searchable via Archives Search (https://archives.mtroyal.ca/), an AtoM site that we launched last year.

The Mount Royal University Archives and Special Collections is located in beautiful new facility on the fourth floor of the Riddell Library and Learning Centre, which opened in 2017. It features climate-controlled storage, staff work spaces, and a large reading room that is used for both research and teaching purposes. We operate a popular archives instruction program through which course instructors can bring their students to Archives and Special Collections to learn about archival research and to work with primary sources. Over the past year, we’ve taught over 30 of these archives sessions. We currently have four staff: one Archivist/Special Collections Librarian (Peter Houston) and three archives assistants. Please see our website (https://library.mtroyal.ca/collections) for more information about us, and come visit if you're in Calgary - we're always happy to show colleagues our holdings and facility!
For Archives Week 2019, the Provincial Archives of Alberta participated in two initiatives designed to raise the profile of not only the people who visit the reading room but also the records that they encountered as part of the research process.

First, the PAA joined the ASA’s social media initiative to highlight the diverse users who visit the reading room. Facebook posts throughout Archives Week described how genealogists, academics, artists, professionals, historians, teachers and students, and members of public had used archival sources for a variety of purposes. The post typically included a photograph of the user, a description of their research activity, and images of typical archival records that they had used. Followers of the PAA’s Facebook page frequently commented on and shared the posts widely throughout the week. The most popular post, which described a homeowner’s research into a 1959 railway disaster in Carbondale, inspired a segment on the CBC’s Edmonton AM with Mark Connolly on October 16. The ASA shared each participating institution’s posts to its own Facebook page, capturing the wide-ranging efforts, contributions and service of the province’s archives in preserving and making accessible Alberta’s history to the widest community of users. The PAA hopes to repurpose the existing posts as a contribution to RETROactive, a blog operated by the Government of Alberta’s Heritage Division, and may continue to profile researchers on an ongoing basis.

The second contribution to Archives Week was an evening presentation on October 9 designed to coincide with the PAA’s current exhibit in the lobby titled “Food and Community.” I presented a talk entitled “For Meat’s Sake: Food and Community at Gainers,” which highlighted the history of the Edmonton meatpacking company from its creation in 1891 to its end in 1994. Illustrated with newspaper clippings, documents, a plan of the Ritchie facility, and artifacts from a private collection, the presentation also discussed how the Gainer family, the company, the workers, and the various unions active at the facility built a sense of community. Over 30 people attended the event, including former Gainers workers as well as local descendants of company founder John Gainer.

By drawing in different audiences online as well as in person, PAA’s Archives Week events proved successful this year, and we look forward to participating in next year’s activities with our fellow ASA members.
ARCHIVES WEEK AT THE PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (CONT.)

Angie Friesen, previous ASA Board Member was married this summer and her name has changed to Angie Dilts. Congrats Angie!

John Yolkowski moved to Ontario for a position as the first archivist at Humber College. He was the archivist at the Banff Centre. Alyssa Hyduk is the now in that position at the Banff Centre. Congratulations to both of you on your new jobs!

Anna Gibson Hollow has been hired as the University of Alberta’s new University Archivist. Also, Krista Jamieson left the UofA Archives and now works at McMaster University.

PROMOTIONAL PHOTO, “FOR MEAT’S SAKE: FOOD AND COMMUNITY AT GAINERS”

CREEN CAPTURE OF ARTICLE ON CBC EDMONTON FACEBOOK PAGE, OCTOBER 17, 2019
SUBMISSIONS, QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Archives Society of Alberta News is published quarterly by the Archives Society of Alberta. Submissions, questions and suggestions should be directed to the Newsletter Editor c/o: Archives Society of Alberta Suite 407, 10408-124 Street Edmonton, AB T5N 1R5

Editor contact information:
Telephone: (780) 424-2697
Email: reneg@archivesalberta.org

Individuals and institutions are encouraged to submit articles, reviews, reports, photographs or letters to the editor to the Archives Society of Alberta News, Issues #1, 2, and 3. Submissions are preferred in electronic format as Word files for textual submissions, or as JPG files for graphic submissions.

Please note:
Issue #4 is reserved for Annual Reports of the Society and its committees.

The views expressed in the Archives Society of Alberta Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Archives Society of Alberta or its Editor.

The Archives Society of Alberta is supported in part by a grant from the Government of Alberta.