I would like to personally thank the members of the Flood Advisory Committee, the many contractors who worked in affected sites across the province, Rene and Meribeth for their leadership of this program, and of course Amanda and Emily, our Lead Flood Team, for their hard work. The site visits, reports, resources, and blog posts created by the team has provided the Alberta archival community with the tools and skills to respond effectively and efficiently next time we are faced with an environmental disaster. TA report on the work completed by the Flood Program is available on the ASA Website. This program has been shared far and wide across Canada and the United States. Both Emily and Amanda represented the ASA at national and international conferences, raising the profile of the ASA and the program. We are grateful for their dedication to the ASA and are happy to announce that both Emily and Amanda have found full-time work in their respective fields since completing their contracts with us.

In addition, Deborah has been working hard to complete the Audio-Visual Preservation Project. Once completed, the ASA will have a much better picture of the state of our audio-visual holdings, their preservation needs, and resources currently available in the province. We hope that this report will yield future funding for preservation and education activities for the Alberta archival community. When completed, the report will be made available on the ASA website.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Meribeth for her hard work this past year. Meribeth will continue as Acting Executive Director and Archives Advisor until the end of April. Rene is scheduled to return to the ASA in May and will teach the Archives Institute in June (details to be announced soon). We thank everyone in the ASA family for their patience with us this past year as it has been one full of transitions.

As we move into conference season, I hope to see many of you at ACA in Ottawa this year. If you have not already heard, ACA will be hosted in Edmonton in 2018! It will be a wonderful opportunity for Albertan Archivists to participate in the national conference.

I hope to see all of you at the Spring Workshop, May 12 in Edmonton (details to be announced soon), and at the AGM on May 27 in Edmonton.
The Archives Society of Alberta is supported in part by a grant from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation.

FROM THE DESK OF THE ARCHIVES ADVISOR
MERIBETH PLENERT, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & ARCHIVES ADVISOR

The ASA is currently preparing for all the spring activities and events. Grant applications have arrived, reports about work in the previous year are coming in, and planning is underway for all of ASA’s 2017 workshops. Our workshops are returning to the topic of legal issues for archives, with workshops on Copyright in spring and Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy in fall. As I read over all the grant applications submitted for review prior to the deadline, I do not envy the hard work of our grant committee, as I wish the ASA could fund every single project and idea that comes in!

One of the most exciting things I have been able to do as Archives Advisor is visit institutions that are in the first stages of becoming an archive. Over the winter, I have visited three such institutions, and taken many phone calls and emails from others looking for guidance at the beginning stages of proper records care. The excitement of these places just beginning the work of archives is contagious. Occasionally, the daunting tasks ahead cause a certain level of fear, but being able to provide guidance and support and letting these people know they are not alone in the task is a great joy. The questions of how to increase collection sizes, how to prioritize preservation of the existing collection, and how to set up a relationship with a local municipality to become the donor for their archival collection is an exquisite challenge for me as an advisor. I relish seeing the potential new ASA members develop and seeing Alberta’s documentary heritage come under better care. When members begin to struggle with the day-to-day drudgery of reference and administration, rumors of closure, and constant worry of budget cuts. It is good to experience the excitement of creating new collections.

As the ASA’s Flood Programme is now complete and our DHCP Audio-Visual project wraps up at the end of March, the simple work of advising, grants and education events has become the central focus of the ASA as we work on our direction and strategic plan for the future.

As challenging and rewarding as these two big projects are, the simple tasks of archives are still ones to be praised and rewarded by the entire community.
I started my archives career in the Records Processing Unit at the Saskatchewan Archives Board, and MPLP was already being adopted there. As a researcher, it seemed like a good approach to getting records out to the public quickly while still providing some information to make them useful. As an archivist, however, I still found that though we had quite a few staff in our area, we were still generally working as lone or nearly lone arrangers. That meant that the while the errors were easy to trace back to the archivist responsible (and apologies to everyone who has ever had to fix my early work!), it left some staff very familiar with some collections while they had utterly no idea about others. There were also some inconsistencies between fonds and collections as each staff member would take their own understanding of a task and use that understanding to complete their work.

Fast-forward five years to the Red Deer & District Archives in fall 2016. We were just winding up a massive accession file update project and about to embark on our new adventure: processing and reprocessing our entire holdings. We had attempted a few processing projects (we use processing to include arrangement, description, and all physical processing) over the years with some success. From these experiences, we discovered three key things: one small error or change in procedure during processing can compound across an accession and into an entire fonds leading to a lot of re-work down the line; large projects led to a single person knowing about a particular collection but did not always increase everyone’s knowledge (we all work the reference desk so we all need that knowledge); and we had a lot of work to do that could easily take us well over our allotted 5 year project timespan to complete. It just felt overwhelming and we were looking for a way to break the work down into smaller, faster pieces while still getting our records out to the public in an effective archivally-sound manner.

While speaking with a friend about his computer programming work in October, I learned about the Scrum approach. Scrum is part of the Agile Software Development methodology. In software engineering, long product development cycles can kill companies. Far too often by the time you’ve finished developing the product, the market has already moved away from something you can’t sell. Under Scrum, his workplace works on pieces of a project in an iterative approach, always making sure that you create something shippable to the public at the end of each 2-4 week Sprint. The quick development cycle with a consumer-ready product that you could always build on in another Sprint sounded like an intriguing way to accomplish our goals.

At the Red Deer & District Archives, we are now using this approach to process some of our City donations. This seemed like a good fit because they were reasonably predictable records, ownership was not an issue, and the City is trying to push access and transparency so it’s a good opportunity to show how we fit with that strategic goal. Our first set of records, the City of Red Deer Public Works department fonds, was processed in January 2017. It took three and a half staff members 12 work days to complete the fonds from start to finish, including processing 13 accessions consisting of 10 metres of records, 59 photos, 32 technical drawings, 3 video cassettes, and 1 CD-ROM. That timeline included listing all files by accessions, reboxing and refoldering all records, removing clips and binders, identifying restricted records, and creating a new fonds and authority record description. The project also included daily stand-up check-in meetings, about six hours of meetings before and after the project (to learn about Scrum and set goals for the description and processing project overall and for this Scrum particularly to ensure we could complete the project we defined within the time period), moving all the records from off-site to on-site, developing and improving our processing procedure, and creating new in-house databases for fonds and authority record descriptions (for in-house use as well as to prepare records for input in Alberta on Record). Given these extra tasks, we were slightly ahead of the CCA Guidelines for processing which isn’t bad for our first attempt.

Using the Scrum approach focused our energy on completing this project in a do-able way. Daily stand-up check-in meetings with everyone in the archives (including our reference staff for the month) meant that everyone was on the same page and adjusting their work as anything changed or decisions were made about the processing procedure, how to update various fields,
THE SCRUM APPROACH (CONT.)

how to label folders, or what level to process to. The Scrum approach also enabled us to stop any mismatches between what we were creating and what the public would need, through our non-archives supervisor’s participation in our meetings. The entire archives also developed a great understanding of the types of records held in that fonds and how they are described so we can best assist the public and our City co-workers when they come in to research.

Of course, this system won’t necessarily work as well for every archives. We’re very fortunate to have a fairly large staff and a high level of control over our daily work. We literally dropped everything else for those two weeks, aside from our reference lead for the month, checking emails twice a day maximum. We also have our paperwork in order enough that we can focus nearly exclusively on processing and description. That said, we think the ability to focus on what you need to get done to complete a version of descriptive work that can be presented to the public in two to four weeks in smaller archives may just mean doing less detailed description or listing the first time and then expanding that description (to include series or file level descriptions) in a later scrum iteration.

Overall, we think we’ve discovered a great way to take overwhelming projects (there are 90+ metres of records in several of our city fonds which require processing) and make it accomplishable. This approach puts the needs of our researchers front-and-centre, and as we apply it to community records, we plan to use this approach to work more closely with them so they better understand what we’re looking for, what we’re doing with what we have, and how we’re able to help them and their records over time. Scrum is ensuring that we actually create things researchers need, with a new or updated finding aid, digitization or description project released every 3-4 weeks, while keeping us all accountable, on-task, and working towards our shared goal. Maybe some variation of this is already in-place at your workplace. If not, and especially if you’re looking at an overwhelming pile of work, perhaps this article will help you adapt your approach to tackle the elephant.
We have been very successful in creating a dynamic readership using Facebook for weekly posts. We have shared colourful pioneer stories, biographies, historic photographs and early 1900’s newspaper excerpts with our Facebook Friends. Insights are shared at monthly board meetings and we respond to inquiries on our posts in a timely manner. We have a lot of interesting comments and additional information shared on our page. In our most recent posts, we reached 8,795 readers on our page.

We were honoured to be recognized in a Top 20 list compiled by Andrew Chernevych of the Galt Museum & Archives in August 2016. The Sylvan Lake and District Archives rated 2nd in the province and 12th across Canada based on the number of followers.
When this symposium was announced I was immediately interested in attending. At the University of Calgary there has been an intense interest in the convergence of libraries, archives and museums (LAMs) for several years, and the concept was a strong influence on the design of spaces in the Taylor Family Digital Library - which houses most library, archival and museum activities and services on campus - which opened in 2011. This Summit offered an opportunity to understand how other institutions had experienced the development of closer relationships between LAMs and their staff, what successes they had achieved, and how those experiences might inform activities that could be pursued at my own institution.

The Summit proved to be an interesting two days: attended by 300 professionals from Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and Switzerland, it included sessions on innovative and non-traditional partnerships of LAMs, how content creators (actors, playwrights, digital graphic artists) are using LAM resources, and how LAMs might consider moving forward to develop new relationships with their users and other institutions in future. It also featured keynote addresses by staff at the Glenbow Museum, the Ottawa Public Library, Canada Council for the Arts, the Canadian Museum of History, and the National Library of Switzerland about the experiences at their institutions. A session on the “value” of LAM resources featured keynote speaker Andrew Tessler, an economist and Associate Director of Oxford Economics, who outlined the various ways in which the economic impact of LAMs has been calculated by his company. It was a bit mind-boggling for a non-economist, but the results of his work have been used to support requests by LAMs and other cultural attractions for public funding, including the British Library, Kew Gardens and the Great Barrier Reef so clearly have been found to be of significant worth by the cultural sector.

A dominant theme of the Summit was how technology has increased opportunities for collaboration between researchers/creators, and how the resources found in libraries, archives and museums are used. A wonderful example is Canadian actor R.H. Thomson’s The World Remembers project. This international collaboration seeks to mark the centenary of the First World War and to respect the sacrifice of individuals and their families. The project is creating a database of all those who died during the Great War and displaying their names, individually, one at a time, nation-by-nation, along with archival images from contributing countries.

While the value of digital collections was recognized as a way of making resources more broadly available to the public, the importance of collecting and preserving the original record or artifact was understood to be the core of LAMs’ activities. While researchers can use LAM resources to interpret historical events from numerous perspectives, and hence tell different “stories” about the same event, the “truth” that exists in the original resources held in LAMs remains inviolate. By way of example, Mark O’Neill, President and CEO of the Canadian Museum of History, discussed the importance of the Museum’s digital collections in disseminating its holdings to the public but noted that it was the original artifacts that resonated most loudly with visitors. He had brought to the Summit the red tunic worn by Isaac Brock in 1812 at the Battle of Queenston Heights where he suffered a fatal wound, and as he unveiled it, noted the gasped response of the audience who were in awe at being in the same room as that iconic artifact. The acquisition and preservation of original collections by memory institutions remains a core and important responsibility of all LAM institutions.

While the Summit proved to be less about convergence than it was about how LAMs are building a new client base by developing relationships with new partners and audiences, it reiterated the need for “memory institutions” to work together more in future, and provided a wealth of examples for how we can all approach the dissemination of information about our collections and attract new users and ways of using those resources. For those who want to read more about the event, the abstracts of the Summit’s presentations and the final report on the Summit are available online.
EXHIBITION

NORTH OF ORDINARY
THE ARCTIC PHOTOGRAPHS OF GERALDINE AND DOUGLAS MOODIE
Glenbow Museum - Until September 10, 2017
Presented in conjunction with Exposure Photography Festival
CURATED BY SUSAN KOOYMAN

This exhibition celebrates the remarkable creative partnership of Geraldine Moodie, western Canada’s first professional female photographer, and her husband Douglas, a senior officer of the North-West Mounted Police.

Starting in 1903, Geraldine accompanied Douglas on expeditions to the NWMP detachment at Fullerton Harbour on Hudson Bay. The two Moodies were an inspired and complementary pair; she set up a studio in the police detachment house and took intimate portraits of the local Inuit community, while he (trained in photography by his wife) documented the landscape and his work with the Mounted Police.

The exhibition draws on an extraordinary 2015 donation to Glenbow of almost 500 vintage negatives from the Moodies, as well as the photographers’ diaries, reports, and photo registers. This gives us an almost-unheard-of opportunity to use the creators’ own words to describe their work.


For a brief period in the early twentieth century, Alberta had its own provincial police force similar to those still found today in Ontario and Quebec. Despite building a reputation as one of the most efficient police organizations of its kind in the world, the Alberta Provincial Police (APP) is mostly forgotten today, leaving behind only faint traces of its accomplishments a century later.

The Provincial Archives of Alberta is reviving the APP story through its latest exhibit: Let Justice Be Done: The Alberta Provincial Police, 1917-1932. Open to the public from February 15 to June 17, 2017. The exhibit tells the story of the APP’s creation, effectiveness and ultimate demise through various historical documents, artifacts and photographs.

This exhibit is just one of many put together by the PAA - a unique facility within the network of provincially owned historic sites and museums - that works to acquire, preserve, and publicly make available records from government, individual people, families and organizations for researchers of all ages.

Here is a small sample of the APP history:

BEGINNINGS

Policing of Alberta began in 1874 with the arrival of the North-West Mounted Police, known after 1904 as the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP). By 1916, the RNWMP was struggling to fulfill its responsibilities. The demand for soldiers to fight in the First World War reduced the number of recruits, and the organization was forced to undertake increased duties for border security, intelligence gathering, and surveillance of suspected enemy aliens without additional resources. The passage of the Liquor Act in 1916 introduced prohibition to the province, further increasing the force’s responsibilities. On November 29, 1916, the RNWMP gave the Government of Alberta notice that they would withdraw from provincial policing duties effective January 1, 1917.
THE APP IN PRACTICE

The Alberta Provincial Police Act of 1917 required officers to be British subjects between the ages of 21 and 36 who were able-bodied, of sound mind, and could read and write the English language legibly. Officers were also expected to attend church, avoid work on Sunday, stay out of debt, and refrain from agricultural pursuits. Similar to those undertaken by their predecessors in the RNWMP, the duties undertaken by APP constables within each detachment were wide-ranging and included investigations involving murder, manslaughter, sexual assault, missing persons, neglected children, arson, illegal hunting, property theft, liquor trafficking, prostitution, public health, prairie fires, stray animals, and censorship of movies.

The Liquor Act and its establishment of prohibition proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of law enforcement in the province at that time; prohibition was extremely unpopular, and the public was generally unwilling to help the APP in its enforcement of the law. The repeal of prohibition in 1923 and the passage of the Government Liquor Control Act of Alberta in 1924 eased tensions and contributed to an improved relationship between the APP and (most) Albertans.

To find out the rest of the story, and why the APP was dissolved, check out the exhibit at the PAA located at 8555 Roper Road, Edmonton, AB. The exhibit is open between February 15 and June 17. Admission is free. For more information about the PAA, visit their website or connect with them on Facebook.

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PEOPLE AND PLACES

We welcome Mark Black (Paul D. Fleck Library & Archives) and Gina Payzant (Alice B. Donahue Library & Archives) to our archives community.

Susan Kooyman has retired from the Glenbow Archives. And Claude Roberto has retired from the Provincial Archives of Alberta. We would like to wish them all the best!
ARCHIVES SOCIETY OF ALBERTA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2017-2018

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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 #3 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.