



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

VALLA MCLEAN, PRESIDENT

Spring has finally arrived! It is a time of renewed hope and the season of conferences. Our Annual General Meeting and biennial conference are happening at the end of May. Archives in Interesting Times is the conference theme. Interesting indeed! I am looking forward to hearing what Shelley Sweeney says in her keynote address 'Living - and Working - Through Challenging Times.' And a round of applause for all the presenters who found the energy and time to put together a virtual presentation during a pandemic! I hope to see many of your Zoom faces across my computer screen (not a phrase I thought I would ever have to consider).

Our paths may also cross virtually at the Association of Canadian Archivists conference in June. Digital records curation, the state of archival education, tensions between theory and practice, and many more are on my must-see list. With many organizations choosing to host virtual conferences, my professional development funds have been able to stretch a little further this year. I may even be able to finally attend the Society of American Archivists annual meeting in August. This year the conference has a few sessions that touch on the intersection of records management and archives and several on community archives. As a librarian and archivist, I have one foot planted firmly in both disciplines. So perhaps it is fitting that I represent the ASA on the Library Association of Alberta Advisory Committee. This advisory committee aims to help the LAA become a genuinely inclusive voice for the library community. I see many intersections between archives and libraries and think we would benefit from more collaboration and sharing of ideas. Rene and I met with Nicole Goehring, MLA and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition Liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces and Culture Critic. During the meeting, we had the opportunity to discuss the value of archives and the impact of diminishing budgets on the ASA. Rene was able to pull together some relevant and interesting insights for Ms. Goehring. For example, 25% of archives in Alberta reported receiving information requests about past pandemics; some of this information was used to shape COVID-19 policies. Operating with almost 25% less funding since 2019 led to the cancellation of the only provincial grants program available to archives. With 53% of ASA member archives located in rural Alberta, many relied on this grant to operate. While nothing of great significance came out of our meeting, I think we must continue to keep speaking up and out about the value of archives to anyone and everyone who will listen.

Wishing you a wonderful summer,
Valla

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

FROM THE DESK OF THE ARCHIVES ADVISOR

RENE GEORGOPALIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/ARCHIVES ADVISOR



We are now over one year into this pandemic which has resulted in changes to how our profession does its work. I have heard from many of you that you have researchers who are so eager to get back into your reading rooms but they are unable to do so because of current restrictions. I have also heard from many of you that reference work is more demanding since users are unable to come in person to do their research. Reference work that used to take 15 minutes of an archivist's time is now taking hours. Many of us are still at least partially working from home and not with our collections. There have been budget cuts for many sites which has been stressful. But despite all these stresses we are still doing our work which is so important as people still need access to the information in our holdings.

ASA is still working on some similar projects it has traditionally provided in the spring. We are preparing for our first online conference which is happening on May 28. We also have the Annual General Meeting coming up on May 27 as well as our Spring Institutional Forum on May 26. ASA is also planning to celebrate Archives Week June 7-11.

We offered the Archives Institute online for the first time this winter. It went relatively smoothly despite the different way of presenting it. We will offer it again this fall in an online format. Our schedule for course offerings has shifted a bit from the usual cycle of ASA offerings. We anticipate announcements early this summer for fall workshops. Also, Alberta On Record now has incorporated PAASH subject headings thanks to a grant from Young Canada Works. I hope this change to Alberta On Record will help make your holdings more accessible.

For the upcoming year, we are planning to revamp our website. It was last given a fresh look in 2013. We will send you all updates as this project progresses as well as updates on course offerings.

I hope to see many of you at the upcoming AGM and Conference.

RED DEER ARCHIVES

SUBMITTED BY JILLIAN STANIEC

Well, what a year it has been for the Red Deer Archives. In January we launched our digital preservation and access system, in February we learned that we were moving from our two locations to a new location, shared with the Records Management unit, and in March we started working from home.

Change can be difficult and can bring opportunities. To help with the transition, the list of positives included that this new location would have excellent humidity and temperature control for our collections, room to expand our physical holdings, and a set-up that encouraged increased collaboration between the Archives and the Records Management units at The City of Red Deer. Plus, windows! The building was still undergoing renovations to transform from a gym to the Archives & Records Centre when we closed to the public and started working from home.

Throughout July and August, staff conducted a full box-level inventory of both sites, labeling boxes, updating spreadsheets and databases, and reboxing / boxing records for the move. We also pulled more than a few records to move ourselves (glass plates, floppy oversize records, and a pile of others).



RED DEER ARCHIVES (CONTINUED)

We also secured permission to deaccession many boxes of records that had little to no archival value or that were better suited to another collection. If your archives gained some of these records, I hope you and your researchers find them helpful for years.

After a few challenges and in-progress changes, the shelving was up, furniture was arranged, boxes were delivered, and the archives was on track to re-open. Then COVID cases in the area worsened so in early December, we all switched back to work from home nearly full-time and we've been there since.



RED DEER ARCHIVES (CONTINUED)

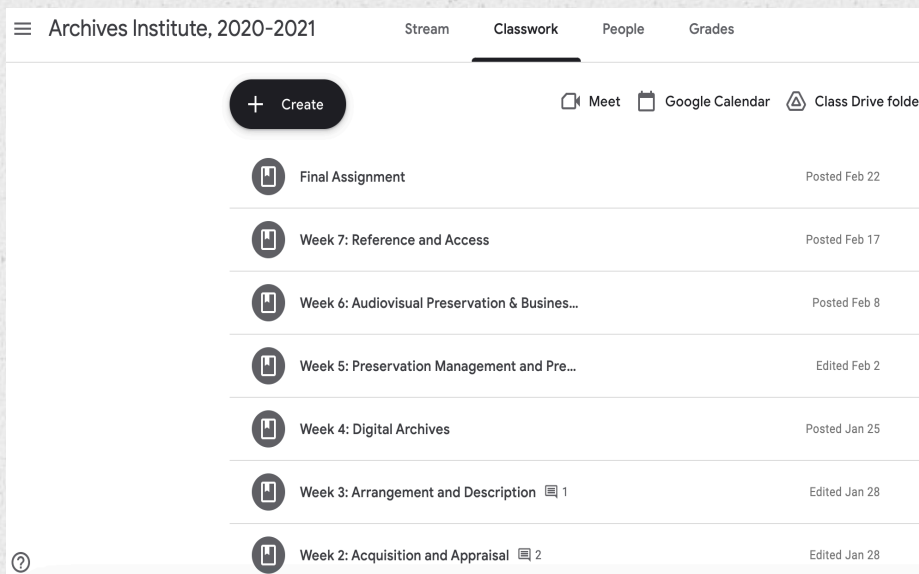
While we still haven't been able to serve public researchers in person, we look forward to welcoming everyone to our new and improved space. It's been a big year of changes and those will continue. As part of the newly updated Information Management Services section we now focus on electronic disposition and born-digital records from the City of Red Deer, while continuing to complete our day to day archival work and reference.



2021 ARCHIVES INSTITUTE

Submitted by Lynn Ferguson, Archives Institute 2021 Registrant

I was lucky this winter to participate in the Archives Society of Alberta's 2021 Archives Institute. Because of the health regulations of the pandemic, the Institute was postponed previously, and this was the first time that information was presented completely online. Our weekly reading materials were posted online, and we watched prepared video presentations from several lecturers on topics and skills related to arranging and acquisitions, RAD description, digital records, and preservation and conservation of archives. I really valued the opportunity to learn new skills and gain confidence to volunteer at a small-town museum/archives that faced a flood eighteen months ago. Zoom meetings scheduled for the participants as well as the opportunity to fire off questions by e-mail to friendly advisors simulated some of the interaction that we might have missed by being unable to gather and chat in person. I never felt that my multiplicity of questions were unwelcome or unworthy of being answered. While this year probably did not offer as rich an experience in hands-on aspects as was available previously, I really appreciated the knowledge and skills being offered online by Rene Georgopolis and her associates as our small museum faces the task of sorting and preserving our archival donations using more professional methods. Many thanks!



Screenshot of the Archives Institute 2021 Google Classroom

UPDATE: ASA'S PAASH MIGRATION PROJECT

ASA has completed its Young Canada Works grant project and we have successfully migrated PAASH so it has been added to Alberta On Record (AOR). We have created a document explaining how to use these subject headings with your descriptive records in AOR: https://archivesalberta.org/doc/Using_PAASH_subject_access_points_in_AOR.pdf. The SKOS RDF format is available online for everyone to use in their own descriptive databases at https://archivesalberta.org/doc/paash_1.0.xml.

Archives in Interesting Times



Register for ASA's
2021
Conference!

Friday, May 28, 2021
Online

For Program and
Registration Information
visit our website.

Registration Deadline is
May 14!

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Sandy Ayer, Archivist at the Ambrose University Archives in Calgary, is retiring this Spring. Congratulations Sandy!

archives

SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

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:

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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 #4 is reserved for Annual Reports of the Society and its committees.

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

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