

**Institutional Standards for Ontario Archives:  
Building a Foundation of Excellence**

Presented by

**The Institutional Development Committee  
Archives Association of Ontario**

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*An archives is a permanent establishment dedicated to:*

- *appraising, selecting and acquiring the archival records of its sponsoring institution (normally its primary goal) and/or the archival records of corporate bodies, organizations or individuals relevant to its sponsoring institution or to a defined community or thematic interest;*
- *conserving the archival records or the information accepted;*
- *arranging and describing the archival records according to accepted archival principles;*
- *making the archival records available for continuing use under defined conditions by the sponsoring institution and by the public.*

*-CCA Definition of Archives (by-laws)*

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## **Preface to the 2019 edition**

This 2019 revision of the 2000 Institutional Standards serves as an aspirational guide to archival institutions in Ontario in improving the quality of their programs. With the cancellation of *National Archival Development Program* (NADP) funding on April 30th, 2012, the role of the Institutional Development Committee (IDC) with respect to the adjudication and administration of such grants ceased to be the primary function of the IDC.

Since that time, the IDC has focused on strengthening resources available to institutions in the province, creating opportunities for program heads and their staff and volunteers to meet collaboratively at Forums and the Conference, and fulfilling its mandated role of providing advice to the Board of the AAO on matters affecting institutions.

In this new environment, it became obvious that a revision of the 2000 Standard, originally designed to provide a framework for the adjudication of grants, might serve as an opportunity to set out our understanding and expectations of archival institutions in this province, both as a guide to existing institutions, but also as a blueprint to future ones.

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Chair  
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2017-2019

## 1. **Benefits:**

- 1.1 The Institutional Development Committee (IDC) has developed standards that would provide the Archives Association of Ontario with guidelines for the benefit of its **Institutional** members. Manitoba, Alberta, Nova Scotia and British Columbia have adopted criteria to serve as institutional membership standards. The IDC's proposed standards are similar to those already adopted by these provinces. In addition, these standards will provide archivists endeavouring to establish and maintain a viable archival program with a minimum set of institutional requirements by which they can measure their own effectiveness.
- 1.2 Accordingly, the IDC has drafted these institutional standards to benefit users, keepers, and **sponsors** of archives. They will inform sponsors regarding the minimum requirements necessary to establish and maintain an archival program. They will provide basic guidelines for archivists wishing to manage responsibly a sound archival program, and most importantly, they will help ensure the requisite physical conditions essential for both the preservation and use of archival materials are in place.

## 2. **Proposed Institutional Standards:**

- 2.1 **Legal authority and statement of purpose** that is approved by the governing body of a sponsoring organization for the operation of its archives;
- 2.2 **An official designated as archivist** who is accountable for the operation of the archives and who demonstrates professional competence in the acquisition, appraisal, arrangement, description, preservation, use, and general administration of archives;
- 2.3 **Sustainable funding** from the sponsoring organization sufficient to carry out its goals and objectives over the long term;
- 2.4 **Secure, designated space** for the storage and handling of records, including provision of access to the records, adequately protected from theft, vandalism, flooding, fire, and environmental extremes;
- 2.5 **Demonstrated observance of archival principles in adopted policies, procedures, and practices**, including acquisition, appraisal, arrangement and description, reference, and preservation policies developed in accordance with guidelines established from time to time by the Canadian Council of Archives;
- 2.6 An **access policy** specifying public hours and procedures for consulting archival records.

### 3. Proposed Application:

- 3.1 **Legal authority and statement of purpose** Approved by governing body of an organization responsible for the operation of a given archives; should state purpose, objectives, acquisition jurisdiction, and responsibility for archival functions. Reference or citation to enabling legislation, excerpt from enabling document (unnecessary to copy multi-page document). Minutes of governing body. Looking for evidence of formal authority and knowledge of purpose of archives.
- 3.2 **Person designated as archivist** Accountable for the operation of the archives; has responsibility for **planning**, budgeting, and general administration. Demonstrated, competence in archival functions. Named individual including position, title, statement of professional training, years of experience, level of responsibility, reporting level. Can be an appointed volunteer. Formal title may reflect their role as a records manager or other informational professional with responsibility for archival functions.
- 3.3 **Sustainable funding** From sponsoring organization sufficient to carry out goals and objectives over the long term. Looking for evidence of sustaining core funding from sponsoring body, through **budget**; may be complemented by fundraising, grant money. Length of time archives in existence.
- 3.4 **Secure, designated space** For the storage and handling of records, adequately protected from flooding, fire, **environmental** extremes, theft, vandalism. Includes designated public reading/reference area. Reference to current conditions - space allocation (including designated public reading/reference area), environmental controls and monitoring, disaster plan, mention of security policies and practices. Use of Archives Advisor, or environmental monitor loan program. Evidence that archives is trying to make the environment the best possible.
- 3.5 **Policies** Formal written policies that govern archival functions, including appraisal, acquisition, arrangement and description, preservation (including emergency planning), reference, and access. Reference to approved policies and practices that conform to applicable archival principles and CCA guidelines. Demonstrated *RAD* compliance.
- 3.6 **Access** Policy that specifies public hours, procedures for using archival records, contact person, programs available. Can range from full-scale public service to visitation by appointment only. Evidence of written policy or statement.

#### **4. Proposed Implementation:**

##### 4.1 Archives Association of Ontario

4.1.1 The AAO Board of Directors adopted in principle, the set of minimum institutional standards drafted by the Institutional Development Committee in Section 2 of its report to the Board dated March 15, 1999.

4.1.2 The AAO Board of Directors presented the draft Institutional Standards to the membership at the Annual General Meeting, June, 1999.

4.1.3 The IDC presented the proposed standards to the institutional membership for comment on the content of the standards in March, 2000.

4.1.4 The AAO Board of Directors will receive this 2019 revision at its last meeting in the 2018-2019 year for presentation at the AGM.

##### 4.2 AAO Institutional Members:

4.2.1 Institutional members have the opportunity to approve the implementation plan, prior to implementation of the proposed institutional standards.

4.2.2 Institutional members recognize that these are a set of minimum institutional standards and that, as they develop their programs, they will strive to exceed them with support from the AAO.