

Council of Nova Scotia Archives
Renewal and Sustainability Committee
Final Report – April 2015

Background

In 2007 the CNSA commissioned a Needs Assessment, and the resulting document provided us with a big-picture view of the state of the organization and our members at that time. By early 2013, the Needs Assessment was six years old, and a review of the document and its recommendations was determined to be in order. The goal was not to repeat the Needs Assessment process, but to instead review the report and recommendations and determine what had been implemented successfully; what had not; what was relevant and what was not; and the reasons behind all.

Much has changed in the archival environment since 2007. The cancellation of the National Archival Development Program (NADP) by the federal government in 2012 cut off a primary source of grant funding to CNSA members, as well as harming the ability of the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) to act as a national voice for archives councils. Currently, the CNSA relies entirely on provincial sources of revenue to operate and support our members' needs. The most significant source of funding is the anchor grant provided by the department of Communities, Culture and Heritage (CCH) through the Nova Scotia Archives. This funds the majority of our operations, including our Archives Advisor position. Additional funding comes from our membership fees and revenue from our classes and annual conference. The CNSA also adjudicates the Provincial Archival Development Program (PADP), which is funded by CCH and currently administered by the Nova Scotia Archives. Apart from the services offered by the CNSA, the PADP is the only existing grant program aimed specifically at the Nova Scotia archival community. A one-time ministerial top-up of the CNSA anchor grant was provided in 2013 to assist in CNSA projects, particularly the development and launch of our new MemoryNS provincial archives database. The last of those top-up funds will be expended in 2015, mostly to complete phase one of the database launch. Additional funding has come from CCH to support the 2015 joint conference between the archives, library, and museum communities.

As the provincial government reviews its culture strategy, it is essential for the CNSA to demonstrate its key role as part of Nova Scotia's heritage community. The launch of our new provincial archives database will open up the collections of our members to the world, and the joint conference in the fall of 2015 will give us a chance to promote the work of our members

to the rest of the cultural and heritage community. The need to step back and review the operations of the CNSA, identify our opportunities, and plan for the future has never been stronger.

Committee Formation and Terms of Reference

The Renewal and Sustainability Committee (RASC) was formed as an ad-hoc special committee of the CNSA with an expected start date of fall 2013 and completion date of fall 2014. Information and terms of reference for the committee were presented at the CNSA AGM in May 2013. Committee members were chosen to represent a variety of CNSA members from various institutions, as well as at least two members who had worked on the 2007 Needs Assessment and could contribute knowledge and experience to the process.

Terms of Reference (**Appendix A**) were determined by the CNSA Executive. Membership is listed in **Appendix B**.

Logistics

The RASC met six times between October 2013 and June 2014. In addition, there were two sessions at the 2014 CNSA-AGM dedicated to Renewal and Sustainability. The first involved 'world-café' sessions, each addressing one topic from the list below, and designed to encourage member feedback; the second was a more general discussion with all conference participants, exploring results of the breakout sessions.

Discussion themes covered by RASC and the world-café sessions were wide-ranging, covering most areas of CNSA operations, activities, and membership. Key Observations from the Committee and CNSA members, and the resulting Recommendations drawn up by the Committee, have been broken down into the following six areas:

- Governance
- Outreach and Services
- Education and Training
- Funding (Provincial Archival Development Program)
- MemoryNS; and
- Public Awareness and Marketing

GOVERNANCE

High-level governance issues related to the organization – e.g. the constitution, and the mandate and make-up of the various CNSA committees – were deemed out-of-scope for the RASC exercise. However, governance-related issues such as membership criteria, cooperation with partner organizations outside the CNSA, and the widespread climate for change observable across the provincial heritage community were all discussed.

Key Observations

CNSA membership. Currently, the two membership categories for institutions – institutional and general – include various benefits (chiefly the ability to participate in PADP) in return for meeting specific qualifying criteria. For the institutional level, e.g., member archives must have a written mandate, a dedicated physical space, specific open hours, and demonstrated policies in the areas of acquisition, access, and preservation. Concerns identified around membership include:

- How many CNSA members actually meet the conditions for their particular membership level? Shortfalls can be identified during site visits by the Archives Advisor, but otherwise may be difficult to determine.
- Should there be a formal accreditation process to review members? Or instead, a less formal follow-up consultation shortly after new memberships are granted?
- Whatever process is put in place, the goal is to help members who are struggling to meet the criteria for institutional membership, rather than punish them.
- Not enough is being done to promote the benefits of membership. The resources, grants, and services available to members more than match the modest fees levied for both general and institutional memberships

Cooperation with other institutions and agencies. The ‘Routes to Your Roots’ project, completed in 2011 in partnership with the former Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage (now Communities, Culture and Heritage) and the Niche Market Project: Community Development Trust, were noted as examples of innovative and successful collaborations. Projects such as these, unheard of ten years ago, greatly expand the reach of CNSA and open up additional opportunities for partnerships and funding. Similar collaborations at a more local level also emphasize the reality of many CNSA members in today’s heritage community – the members are multi-sector operations (archives/museums, archives/libraries, etc.) by their very nature.

Climate for Change in the Heritage Community. The heritage landscape in Nova Scotia is changing. Partnered projects and collaborative discussions point to the need to work with other

cultural heritage organizations to maintain visibility and leverage funding. The old Heritage Strategy (to which the CNSA Needs Assessment was linked) has expired, and the province is now reviewing their approach to culture and heritage, with a view to developing a new **Culture Strategy** – a wide-ranging initiative with a much broader scope than the previous Heritage Strategy and its outcomes. Under this strategy, archives will be just one player in a larger group that will include groups representing music, art, theatre, etc.

The **Culture Strategy** formulation is an excellent opportunity to look at how archives fit within the broader cultural landscape. The importance of ‘aggregating up’ was noted – the idea of building up individual members to make a stronger collective force with more representation at the table. RASC members also noted that almost all of our archives have some sort of overlap with other cultural areas or activities that can be promoted and enhanced with this strategy. We have archives with theatre collections, others with literary collections, and our membership includes music centres, genealogy-focussed institutions, as well as museums and libraries.

Recommendations

1. Review CNSA membership categories, including follow-up with current institutional members to determine if they are meeting qualifications for that membership level; develop support systems to assist them if they are not.
2. Seek out opportunities for collaborative and partnered projects with other like-minded bodies, including the Nova Scotia Archives (NSA) and its parent department (CCH); professional associations such as the Association of Nova Scotia Museums (ANSM) and the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA); library groups such as the Atlantic Provinces Library Association (APLA) and the Nova Scotia Library Association (NSLA); and other heritage/cultural groups in both the public and private sector.
3. Actively participate in and contribute to the provincial Culture Strategy. This could include identifying areas where archives overlap with other cultural agencies and bodies, as well as more formal activities such as participating in stakeholder consultations during strategy development
4. Be ready to move forward into new joint ventures within the heritage community, such as a Heritage Council struck to advise government on strategy and ensure that heritage-related issues are kept front-and-centre.

OUTREACH AND SERVICES

Many CNSA outreach services, such as site visits and training, are centralized around the activities of the Archives Advisor. This category also includes the CNSA Cooperative Acquisition Strategy, value-added services such as the loan-out of preservation equipment, the CNSA Annual Awards, and community outreach activities. The Executive Committee, and in particular the Member-at-Large for Membership and Nominations, provide much of the direction for these activities.

Key Observations

Site Visits are a core activity for the Archives Advisor. These visits present an opportunity for the Advisor to meet and talk with staff at member institutions, view their facilities, and discuss any archival questions, issues, or challenges the members are facing.

- members confirm this is a highly valued CNSA service
- there is little documented implementation of recommendations once a visit is over, either due to a lack of resources and/or sometimes a lack of will.

The CNSA Co-operative Acquisition Strategy is a key initiative among CNSA member archives. The Strategy is unique in the Canadian Archival System; no other jurisdiction currently offers any mechanism resembling it, and in its best expression it enables equitable sharing of the province's unique documentary-heritage resources. First developed in 2001, its goal is to enable archives throughout the province to work collaboratively in collecting, appraising, re-appraising and deaccessioning archival material, so as to avoid duplication and to ensure equitable distribution and sharing of primary-source archival records. The strategy was designed to be a flexible guide rather than a set of mandatory rules. It also provides information on the collection policies of subscribing members, enables them to make better decisions when creating their own collection policies, and encourages them to redirect donors and material to other archives located near where the records were originally created. Issues identified include:

- The strategy is 13 years old but has had very little follow-up on its utility or effectiveness
- No evaluation review or use analysis has ever been undertaken
- Is it working for our members?
- Can it be improved?

Value-added Services. In the past, CNSA has offered certain value-added services, such as bulk purchases of archival supplies, and the loan-out of specialized preservation equipment.

- The price of good quality archival supplies can be excessive, and can deter some members from following sound preservation and storage practices. Many smaller archives, purchasing on their own, cannot buy in sufficient quantity to get a good rate
- Centralized, scheduled purchasing by CNSA for archival boxes, acid-free folders, etc. would enable bulk discounts, after which supplies could be sold at cost to members.
- Managing such a project and the logistics for distributing supplies around the province are potential challenges
- Feedback at the 2014 Conference indicated initial interest in such a service, although some members were concerned about their ability to pay for supplies or equipment
- The lending service for preservation equipment is valued by members and should be continued.

CNSA Awards. The Annual Awards recognize archival excellence and are a feature of the Annual Conference.

- Participation rate in this 'good-news' opportunity is low
- A review of the nomination process is underway, with a view to making the process simpler and hopefully to increase the number of applications
- Concerns around the awards also tie into larger issues of marketing and promotion

Community Outreach Activities. The CNSA undertakes various activities designed to enhance knowledge of the Council, promote its services, and profile its successes. These include outreach visits for students at Dalhousie University and the Nova Scotia Community College; the Provincial Heritage Fair for school students; and occasional opportunities to participate in tourism marketing or promotion shows, or community-based events. It is important to continue these activities and look for new opportunities.

Recommendations

5. Strike an ad hoc committee to review the CNSA Co-operative Acquisition Strategy:
 - Consult those who have actively used it, for feedback on value and process
 - Measure results of use, determine need for adjustments, revise accordingly
 - Provide training in applying the Strategy, and promote expanded use
6. Compile and monitor a list of challenges, deficiencies and remedial suggestions identified during site visits -- e.g. recurring issues that are seen repeatedly during visits, or issues specific to that particular institution – as a starting point for discussion in subsequent visits by the Archives Advisor. This will provide a benchmark for those institutions and allow for deeper, more targeted advisory services.
7. Explore value-added services, with a view to continuing and expanding them or identifying new ones:
 - Bulk purchase of archival supplies:
 - Undertake an initial survey of members to determine level of interest
 - Plan around the financial year, i.e. coordinate purchasing with budget cycles
 - Coordinate delivery of supplies with the annual conference, when many members are at a central location.
 - Promote the lending service for preservation equipment more aggressively
8. Monitor changes to the CNSA awards process closely:
 - Consider further revisions if participation does not increase
 - Promote award winners more aggressively
 - Develop visual recognition of winners (such as a CNSA gold star) for adding to websites and promotional material.
9. Look for opportunities for new and visible outreach activities that get the CNSA into the community and enhance broader knowledge of services and value.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The CNSA is involved in education and training in four key areas, all developed and/or delivered by the Education Committee or the Archives Advisor:

- **Core curriculum** – a long-running program designed to provide CNSA members with training in specific archival functions, via 6 two-day workshops; participants who successfully complete all six courses earn a certificate
- **Individual workshops** -- sponsored by the Education Committee to address specific archival topics, such as conservation (working with the Canadian Conservation Institute) or the Co-operative Acquisition Strategy

- **Annual Conference** – includes a strong educational component, delivered via speakers and workshops sponsored by the Education Committee
- **‘Introduction to Archives’** – one of CNSA’s major success stories – a one-semester course offered since 2013 within the Library and Information Technology program at the NS Community College (Dartmouth); delivered by the Archives Advisor.

Key Observations

Core curriculum:

- Low participation in the certificate workshops is a concern. In 2013/2014, registration was sometimes only two or three participants. Several possible reasons were cited, including competition from the NSCC archives course, and a high completion rate among existing archivists, coupled with a generally low staff turnover in many archives around the province
- An analysis of who is taking the courses may help to determine whether the curriculum is appropriate. It may be time to consider new courses in areas such as archival research or grant writing. A refresher course on archival best practices may also be needed, as many who have completed the certificate program did so more than a decade ago. For certain topics, online updates or refresher courses might be useful and would allow members to receive training without taking significant time away from work.
- Feedback at the 2014 Conference indicated continuing strong support for the core curriculum program, regardless of current participation rates. Regular turnover at member institutions, while sometimes slow, means there will always be a demand, even if there are occasional years with low attendance. It was also noted that members often need to include registration costs for these courses in their yearly budgets; otherwise, they are unable to participate.

Individual workshops:

- Specialty workshops offered in conjunction with e.g., the Canadian Conservation Institute, should remain a priority. Otherwise, feedback from members has specifically indicated the need for a copyright workshop. RASC members also felt the current grant-writing workshop should be re-written and aggressively promoted, based on the current needs of members.
- The Committee also noted that a variety of training and informational resources could be designed to supplement the work of the Archives Advisor. These might include FAQ’s or
- Q&A products delivered on the CNSA website or Facebook page, as well as YouTube demonstrations and similar approaches.
- The possibility of a **mentorship** program was also considered. This was approached largely from an educational standpoint, with the goal of bringing together members to assist each other in specific areas, such as digitization work, records management, etc. CNSA would act

as an intermediary, connecting members wanting support with other members already proficient in that area.

Recommendations

10. Analyse participation in the core curriculum certificate program and identify gaps in course content
10. Explore developing an online component of the certificate program; this could be an off-shoot of the NSCC online course scheduled for development in 2015
11. Explore developing supplemental training for online delivery, possibly adapted from resources developed in other jurisdictions and available via YouTube and similar channels
12. Explore potential for a refresher course on archival best practices for those who have completed the certificate program
13. Announce the core curriculum schedule (and other specialty workshops) at a time that coincides with members' budget planning cycle, usually in January or February
14. Look at new workshops for specific subject areas, delivered as part of the Annual Conference or as stand-alone training opportunities; potential topics include:
 - Grant-writing (especially if PADP is revised)
 - Copyright
 - Donor relations, including formal acquisition and income tax benefits
 - *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* as it applies to archival records
 - records management for small archives, perhaps partnered with the Association of Nova Scotia Museums
 - care and management of non-traditional media, including born-digital and audiovisual material
15. Explore a mentorship program, either formal or informal, to bring CNS members together and build solidarity.

FUNDING (PROVINCIAL ARCHIVAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM)

Both RASC and CNSA members primarily addressed the Provincial Archival Development Program (PADP), though there was some discussion of other funding/grant issues and opportunities relating to both CNSA and its members.

PADP is administered by the Nova Scotia Archives on behalf of the department (CCH). It began in 2008 and initially provided \$85,000 in funding for archives-related projects in the province. CNSA's role in the process includes promoting the program; assisting with grant applications via the Archives Advisor; chairing the Adjudication Committee; and submitting final funding recommendations to the Minister. In 2009 the program was reduced to \$50,000 and has remained at that level since then. CNSA is interested in working with NSA and the department regarding a review and update of the program.

Key Observations

- CNSA members have indicated that their participation in PADP is hindered by the complexity of the application form, and sometimes by a general lack of grant-writing skills
- PADP priorities have not been reviewed since the program was created. The priorities were initially set up to interact well with the National Archival Development Program, but since this program no longer exists it is now time to review priorities
- Funding levels should be re-visited – since the funding envelope was reduced from \$85,000 to \$50,000, the total amount applied for annually by CNSA members has consistently exceeded the money available; worthwhile projects go unfunded each year. In 2014, e.g., the total ask was approx. \$93,000, of which \$90,000 met program criteria – but with only \$50,000 to disburse, several institutions were left wanting
- Members may be suffering from burnout or apathy when it comes to grant-writing in general and PADP in particular; either they have not been successful in their PADP applications, or they have been daunted by the complexity of the forms.

In terms of broader funding issues, members expressed concerns with watered-down or **unstable funding sources** that make strategic planning difficult.

There may now be an opportunity for CNSA to take a more active role in administration of PADP. This would involve taking over various administrative duties from NSA, such as managing the program cycle, accepting and processing applications, issuing cheques, determining and ensuring completion of projects, etc. Exactly what these duties would involve is a matter of discussion; NSA or the department would nevertheless retain an oversight role and final accountability for the program. CNSA would not be able to assume an expanded role unless and until PADP funding was increased to cover administrative costs. At a minimum, PADP would have to return to its original \$85,000, and this would unlikely be enough to cover both administrative costs and increased demand from members.

Recommendations

16. Participate in a review of PADP priorities; this will involve a committee struck by NSA with CNSA representation; possible new priorities could include:

- Simplify the application form
- Open the program to general members by offering a 'bridge grant' designed specifically to help them meet requirements for institutional membership
- Explore funding projects with a more focused community orientation
- Create a dedicated digitization stream
- Consider using PADP to assist in hiring student interns for archival projects, e.g. partnership projects with the NSCC
- Encourage more applications directed at under-utilized PADP priorities, specifically those related to under-represented and culturally diverse groups

17. Build a sound business case for CCH to increase the PADP funding level. There is a clear need for these funds, and a strong demand from our membership. Regaining the original envelope of \$85,000 is an absolute minimum; we can demonstrate the need for more. A \$100,000 base program, with an additional 15% to cover administrative costs, for a total of \$115,000, would be ideal

18. Provide more information to members about types of grants successfully funded in the past, and a flowchart showing the grant process. This would assist them in choosing the correct funding priority in their application (another recurring issue)

19. Any renewal or redesign of PADP should be accompanied by a re-branding, i.e. changing the application process, administration, and funding envelope, should be accompanied by a new name and new brand – a fresh start will help members move beyond their past reluctance to participate.

As an alternative, and if PADP remains as a project-based granting program:

20. Promote other existing departmental grant programs such as the Strategic Development Initiative (SDI) and Support4Culture as options for CNSA members looking for development and operational funding

21. Work with CCH to identify additional appropriate grant programs and encourage participation from CNSA members

MemoryNS

During the active stage of RASC and related discussions with CNSA members, Council was in the process of migrating the online provincial archival database from Archway to the new AtoM-based MemoryNS database. Annual licence fees will be supported on a continuing basis by NSA, but various concerns were identified around implementation and management responsibilities. Specifically, there were questions regarding what form the final database would take, how members would participate in it, and how members would respond to the opportunity.

Key Observations

Members were primarily concerned about:

- Ability to import data from existing systems into MemoryNS, especially for larger institutions with extensive files needing record cleanup
- Complexity of the new database, mostly as a result of memories of the Archway system
- Support for migration activities
- Ongoing training for members

Continuing routine maintenance and trouble-shooting for the catalogue

Recommendations

22. Address implementation and participant buy-in through appropriate training
23. Re-brand the catalogue to encourage additional interest and support from CNSA members
24. Ensure there are clear policies and procedures in place regarding options such as:
 - including digital objects in the database
 - using tickets to resolve technical issues with the database provider (Artefactual)
25. Manage user expectations on the part of CNSA participants
26. Explore the need for ongoing MemoryNS maintenance and management, then seek appropriate solutions and funding

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND MARKETING

CNSA has used a variety of communication methods over the years to reach out to members, funding agencies, and the broader community of archives' users. For many years a printed

newsletter was distributed, until it was halted in 2007. The email listserv and website have been active for nearly two decades, and social media tools are now playing an increasing role.

Key Observations

- How effectively is CNSA being promoted? We do not seem to know how much, or how effectively, the messaging is reaching members or beyond

Equally important is promoting the work of CNSA members. There are many successful projects and initiatives undertaken by members, some supported by PADP grants, some not, but all representing the quality and relevance of work being done in archives across Nova Scotia; we shouldn't hear about these success stories only at the time of the CNSA Annual Awards.

Recommendations

27. Explore ways and means to make better use of the CNSA website and its social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube):

- Ensure the website and social media tools are regularly updated and fed
- Use the website and social media to promote grant programs
- Use the website and social media to routinely distribute news to members and the general public
- Investigate using the website and YouTube to deliver value-added training

28. Seek out creative ways to showcase archival collections from around the province, including through traditional and non-traditional media

29. Explore potential and funding for a part-time Communications Officer to more aggressively market and promote CNSA and its activities

Respectfully submitted by

CNSA Renewal and Sustainability Committee

April 23, 2015

APPENDIX A – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mandate:

The CNSA Renewal and Sustainability Committee will identify and explore ways and means to build, communicate, and leverage the value of archives and of the Council in the 21st century.

Term:

The CNSA Renewal and Sustainability Committee will meet as determined by the Committee Chair, starting in October, 2013. The Committee will report to the Executive during monthly meetings, and will prepare and deliver a report of work to date for the membership at the AGM in May 2014. It is anticipated that the final report will be completed and delivered in October 2014.

Scope:

The CNSA Renewal and Sustainability Committee has been constituted as an ad-hoc committee in response to recent changes in funding to archives councils and their members across the country; in recognition of the changing needs of the Nova Scotia archival community and the need to revitalize the Council's core programs and services, and, where appropriate, to augment these to coincide with the changing archival landscape. The Committee is made possible through the allocation of a one-time Ministerial grant, received 1 April 2013, to the CNSA to pursue avenues for the future sustainability of the Council and its membership. The objective of the Committee will be to address the following deliverables with a view to ensuring a more relevant, strategic, visible, and sustainable CNSA.

Deliverables:

The Renewal and Sustainability Committee will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on the following deliverables:

- Revisit the 2007 membership needs assessment and planning study document to identify and explore gaps and opportunities that have arisen since its completion.
- Evaluate and make recommendations to NSA and CCH regarding the current Provincial Archival Development Program (PADP): its objectives, parameters, and processes in relation to its relevance and accessibility to the Nova Scotia archival community. Prepare recommendations and demonstrate capacity to support the proposed CNSA administrative contract for the PADP.
- Become involved in the revitalization of the ArchWay database as an accessible and user-friendly tool for CNSA members and their researcher audiences. Working with the ArchWay Committee to develop promotional and training tools for the use of the new database.

- Determine potential of and make recommendations for the CNSA’s involvement in Nova Scotia’s proposed Heritage Council and the forthcoming government-sponsored Cultural Heritage Strategy.
- Perform a jurisdictional review and assessment of the structures and models employed by archival councils, associations, and appropriate related organizations across the country as possible templates for sustainable management.
- Review existing communication, marketing, and membership recognition efforts, initiating renewal and/or creation where necessary.

APPENDIX B – COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hansel Cook (Chair), Saint Mary's University; CNSA Vice President (2013-2014); CNSA President (2014-)

Catherine Arseneau, Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University; CNSA Past President

Lois Yorke, Nova Scotia Archives; Provincial Archivist, government representative

Michael Moosberger, Dalhousie University; university archives’ representative

Thea Wilson-Hammond, Eastern Shore Archives; museum/archives and MemoryNS representative

Joanne McCarthy-O’Leary, Halifax Public Library; stakeholder community representative

Jamie Serran, CNSA Archives Advisor; ex-officio, Secretary