

## **ALM Pre-Conference Session – Exploring a Provincial Digitization Strategy**

**Friday 29 September 2015**

**Panel:** Catherine Arseneau, Manager, Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University  
Susan Cameron, University Librarian, St. Francis Xavier University  
Eric Stackhouse, Chief Librarian, Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library  
Erin Comeau, Regional Library Director, Western Counties Regional Library  
Laura Bennett, Manager of Collections, Nova Scotia Museum

**Moderator:** Lois Yorke, Provincial Archivist

**Approx. 100 participants**

**Post-Conference Survey – 31.6 % of respondents rated this session as the most valuable to their field of work and interest**

### **What framework or services could a collaborative strategic approach provide?**

- One place to go, one-stop shopping and ‘perpetual toolkit’ for digitization activities across Nova Scotia’s archives, libraries and museums (ALM) community
- Flexible framework may be preferable, vs. a formal strategy or business model
- Shared technology and collaborative approaches for changing technology, migration of existing data, open data initiatives, etc.
- Opportunities to develop integrated or interoperable systems
- Centralized access to existing resources within the ALM community – technical standards, best practices, manuals, metadata platforms, training policies and opportunities, tech advice and support, tech frameworks, open data initiatives, perhaps convergence of cataloguing and descriptive standards
- Documentation for specific processes
- Shared equipment and software, perhaps even a portable lab, or revenue-generating digitization service for external clients
- Information about products and vendors, questions to ask vendors, opportunities for collaborative purchasing, etc.
- Potentially a Digital Curation Strategy, and maybe a shared Digital Curator
- Shared human resources – volunteers, youth, student interns, practicums, etc.
- Better communication within the ALM community and among colleagues (‘know what others are doing’)
- A bigger voice for advocacy work and when seeking funding
- Pan-provincial collaborative management and leadership ‘under an ALM umbrella’
- Creating or providing digitized content in as rich a format as possible

## Who are the leaders? Who are the partners?

- Need three pieces – government | associations | public communities
- Bring people to the table first, then build it (not ‘build it and they will come’)
- Leaders
  - Libraries Nova Scotia
  - provincial institutions – NS Archives, NS Provincial Library, NS Museum
  - professional associations – CNSA, NSLA, LBANS, ANSM
  - university community and NSCC, including Novanet
- Partners
  - ‘All the Novas’ (NSA, NSPL, NSM, Novanet, NovaStory)
  - collaborative support from AML Division (Communities, Culture and Heritage)
  - federal government funding partners; consortiums (Canadiana.org); allied commercial enterprises (Ancestry.ca)
  - business, media or philanthropic partners – provincially and beyond
  - schools and non-profit organizations
  - users and public – ideas, volunteers, champions, crowd-sourcing

## What projects have you heard about that could be used as a model? Do you know of relevant guidelines and best practices?

- Projects/Models
  - NovaMuse, NovaStory, Novanet, MemoryNS
  - Discovery Garden - Islandora -- <http://islandora.ca/>
  - NS Digital Collaboration Initiative from several years ago
  - NS Historical Newspapers Digitization (LNS)
  - MUN Digital Archives Initiative -- <http://collections.mun.ca/>
  - The Rooms Website (NL)
  - New York Public Library Digital Collections -- <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>
  - Smithsonian – digitization goal of 12%
  - Toronto Public Library – Yonge Street Corridors (crowdsourcing)
  - Library of Congress Newspapers -- <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/>
  - Europeana
  - California Museum of Science – Butterfly Digitization Project
  - Australian museum community – various digitization initiatives
  - Historypin.org
  - look beyond NS to other approaches, solutions and partners – UNB, MUN, Islandora, Europeana, etc. (‘no need to reinvent the wheel’)
- Guidelines and best practices
  - provincial institutions + university community in NS, PEI and NL have growing body of technical guidelines, manuals, best practices, descriptive and cataloguing standards, etc.

**What are *your* digitization priorities? Do they overlap with others? What are the opportunities here?**

- Priorities
  - preservation – fragile and disintegrating material, security concerns
  - access
    - to broaden audiences
    - to mitigate onsite service pressures – but digital access builds client expectations and often increases onsite visitors seeking ‘more’
    - to build digital libraries providing local access to content held elsewhere
  - awareness – digitize ‘gems’ to build audience and public support
  - mandate-based (or needs/wants of sponsoring bodies) – sometimes means a less-than-strategic approach
  - overall ‘seamless integration’ of digital platforms and systems
- Overlapping priorities
  - local history, genealogy, local newspapers, magazines and books (long-term storage of originals a concern)
  - what the public is asking for – their expectations sometimes over-ride institutional priorities and drive digitization activities
  - photograph collections, maps, artworks
  - most popular and/or most significant 100 artifacts
  - finding aids, catalogues and access tools
  - operational/core records for preservation and staff access
  - need for technical training
- Opportunities
  - more digital content!
  - providing public access is a library priority; libraries can use their advocacy expertise to support and promote digitization objectives of archives and museums
  - development of better or integrated search capability
  - more focused and strategic approach to what is digitized and when, across ALM community in NS
  - asking ‘Why would Nova Scotians want this?’ and consulting with user communities and public on what they want and need
  - breaking down silos across ALM community
  - building diversity through broader representation from communities
  - ability for broad, inclusive communication across ALM community
  - potential to move beyond a project-based approach to digitization
  - ability to approach/work with media outlets collectively
  - identification of gaps; avoidance of duplication and overlap
  - linking/leveraging funding opportunities
  - collective technical skills development

- ability to look forward more than one year
- building collectively on outcomes and opportunities of Culture Action Plan

**How will archives, libraries and museums reach Nova Scotians in ten years' time? What would a partnership look like?**

- Ten years from now....
  - audience will be very different; increased shift to and expectation of online access
  - blurring of lines between archives, libraries and museums – even now, users don't care where the digital content comes from
  - centralized digital platform
    - one place to look for all information – either portal site leading to multiple destinations, or all systems/frameworks integrated into one search point; this could be a 'Wiki Nova Scotia' encyclopedia concept – a thematic super-centre for NS history, pulling together all heritage resources under one portal
    - complete digital access
    - user friendly and will reach far beyond NS
- Partnership
  - centralized – built, shared and managed by partners
  - built on provincial standards and collaborative approaches ('everyone on same page')
  - geographical partnership with regional representation – a network of partnerships
  - governance based on MOU; possibly a small operations steering committee meeting twice-yearly, plus an oversight board to ensure equality, fairness and accountability
  - business model and sustainability plan
  - appropriate communications and marketing
  - shared equipment, processes, skills and staff (developer, digital curator)
- Individual ALM members less concerned with loss of control, ownership, funding, or 'specialness'; instead, will see opportunities and value in shared approach
- Onsite visitors not left behind -- equal weight given to physical spaces, sensory and communal experiences, incorporating best of new technology