Saskatchewan Archives Board

SUBMISSION TO THE ROYAL SOCIETY EXPERT PANEL ON THE STATUS AND FUTURE OF CANADA'S LIBRAIRIES AND ARCHIVES

November 29, 2013
Regina, Saskatchewan

Comments in Response to Trusted Digital Repository (TDR)
Questions from Panel

As mentioned in the Saskatchewan Archives' presentation to the Society, the major challenge related to born-digital material for the Saskatchewan Archives centres on securing the necessary funding to build a sustainable framework for a Trusted Digital Repository.

On a national front, the National, Provincial and Territorial Archivists Conference (NPTAC) at a recent meeting on October 22, 2013 agreed to collaborate towards the development of procurement standards for TDRs in Canadian provincial/territorial archives through the re-starting of the National Digital Preservation Working Group (NDPWG). The Group, in past discussions has focused on capacity and desired approaches, whereas now the focus would shift to establishing a national approach to standards for procurement. The NDPWG will continue to be co-chaired by Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the Archives of Ontario, with representatives from NPTAC archives. LAC also reiterated at the October meeting its commitment to evolve its TDR program and its desire to establish an advisory panel with national and international stakeholders towards development of a strategy for national TDR collaboration.

Saskatchewan Archives shares the view of its provincial/territorial colleagues that LAC involvement through the NDPWG is the most effective means towards the development of Canada-wide standards. It also supports the active involvement of the Canadian Council of Archives in its efforts to broaden the discussion of TDR development towards the

establishment of a Canadian network in which large and small archival repositories have access to a TDR service.

However, the Saskatchewan Archives views an approach that seeks a joint library and archives TDR solution, such as the committee established through the Pan-Canadian Documentary Heritage Network (PCDHN) initiative, as problematic. Archives, with their mandate to retain their collections permanently and in an environment that perpetually facilitates the management of their authenticity, require a TDR architecture that is significantly different from that needed by libraries. A nationally-centred library and archives based TDR would risk the loss of connectivity and context to the country's wide-spread collection of communities. How would provincial archives fit within this national network? Where would our regional expertise be felt? Past experience with TDR development within the PCDHN has involved discussions that seemed to be by invitation-only and largely library-centric, thereby limiting the voice of archives and regional repositories such as the Saskatchewan Archives. Full participation from all record repositories, both large and small, regardless of their level of technical sophistication needs to be encouraged in order for any such initiative to be successful.

On the provincial front, while the Government of Saskatchewan is actively beginning to examine the records management of its electronic records currently being created within ministries, agencies and Crown corporations, it has yet to address a solution for the preservation of the official records of government in digital form. The Saskatchewan Archives believes that for the successful management, retention and disposition of digital records within the Saskatchewan government there will need to be an integration of both an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) and a Trusted Digital Repository. The successful implementation of these two tools will provide the necessary architecture to allow the provincial government to effectively manage its records from creation to final disposition.

The Saskatchewan Archives' suggestions regarding a Pan-Canadian TDR for archives are as follows:

1) Provide a suite of policies, procedures and best practices for digital preservation.

2) Provide a central pool of funding for archives to tap into, in alignment to their TDR growth. For example, to a repository beginning the process, provide $100,000 for it to conduct project conceptualization, technical requirements and appropriate analysis and modeling. Following completion (and verification) of this phase, allow the repository to apply for additional funds for software and storage, etc.

Regina, Saskatchewan
December 3, 2013.