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## follow up to Halifax meetings of the panel

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Dear Panel Members:

I want to commend the panel for two very interesting and informative sessions last week. I would like to follow up on a few points raised at the sessions at Dalhousie University and the Dartmouth Library. The short-lived funding through SSHRC had a number of drawbacks. SSHRC tended to fund subject guides to holdings, that is outlines of collections that had already been arranged and described, rather than the arrangement and description of unorganized collections and fonds. The former might have served an academic audience and been more manageable given the funds available, thus SSHRC's favouring the approach, but the latter was the need within the archival community. Also SSHRC's embracing of the importance of such a stream of funding ran somewhere between lukewarm and resentment. So, it is not surprising when the situation presented itself, SSHRC offered it up as a cut.

The topic of co-location, particularly regarding libraries, and by extension convergence was raised at both sessions. Both are detrimental to archives because they inevitably draw resources away from the core activities of archives, the acquisition, arrangement and description, and access provision to the documents. Archives overlap with many activities - libraries, museums, education, legislative, tourism, justice etc. This can be seen through how archives are organizationally situated across the country. In a university setting an archives under a vice-president administration vs under the library can have very different focus. For Provincial Archives their reporting situation can vary from a department of Government Services to Education to Tourism to Culture, or some combination of several. Where difficulties arise is when the sponsor or adjoining activities start to intrude on the functions of the archival activity. This occurs most often when archives are aligned with entities that are perceived to be similar. This can take many forms, staff seconded to departmental activities, resources shifted to compensate for shortfalls in the budgets or staffing of other branches, or emphasis shifted because of the illusion of similarity of activities. This is a major challenge in part because archives operate on such thin margins financially, with staff time by far their largest budgetary item, often over 90% of budget. In my opinion this is the major threat with the suggestion that LAC become part of the Canadian Museum of History. Although there may have been some advantages in the establishment of the Rooms Corp. in St. John's or the convergence of library and archival functions within LAC, the bottom line is that both acted to diminish the effectiveness of those institutions to perform their core archival activities by a deviation in focus. Surgeons and dentists are both doctors, but I want each to specialize in what they do. Occasionally their practice may touch, but it is not sufficient overlap to amalgamate them.

I plan to provide a longer document to the panel with more detail but wanted to forward this in the meantime. Although the panel's work and report will be viewed with interest by the library community, the archival community, I believe, is deeply invested in the results of your deliberations and the

distribution and uses made of the report and recommendations.

Yours truly

Fred Farrell

Assoicates of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick