



Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society » News & Events » Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society Presents Brief to Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Libraries and Archives

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The Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society [presented a brief](#) to the Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel on the Status and Future of Libraries and Archives on Friday, 8 November 2013. Bertrum MacDonald (President) and Ross Langley (Member of Council) presented the brief, which led to an hour-long discussion with the members of the Panel.

The brief outlined several anxieties and concerns about the status of Canadian archives and libraries as well as opportunities prompted by rapid changes in today's digital and highly networked society that have been pursued in Nova Scotia. Through this brief, the Society presented five recommendations for the Expert Panel's consideration:

- (1) The fate of information should not be politicized. Discarding library and archival collections or allowing information to be lost should not occur due to political expediency or ideology.
- (2) The benefits of collaboration among libraries and archives as well as other cultural heritage institutions should be emphasized. Financial pressures alone warrant further attention be given to this point. Greater rationalization of efforts and synergies of collaborative ventures will be a primary outcome. Collaboration requires leadership and, at a national level, Libraries and Archives Canada should be empowered to provide pan-Canadian leadership.
- (3) Continued emphasis should be placed on digitization of historical records. Today, amateur as well as professional historians wish and expect digital access to the holdings of our repositories. The value of the



original holdings must not be misunderstood, though. Digitization does not provide a license to discard the originals. Experience with previous inadequate digitization has proven that originals need to be retained.

(4) Technological innovations need to be encouraged and supported to overcome the problem of loss of historical evidence due to technological obsolescence. This matter is a societal problem of considerable urgency.

(5) Greater effort be placed on increasing awareness of Canadians about the resources available to them through libraries and archives.

The Royal Society of Canada established the Expert Panel, chaired by Dr. Patricia Demers, FRSC, University of Alberta, in response to nation-wide concerns about the status of Canadian libraries and archives given the immensely important role they fulfill in society. The Panel is conducting public consultations across Canada seeking input from Canadians “about the value they place on libraries and archives, the services they receive and expect from these institutions, and the ways digital technology is transforming our knowledge universe.” The Panel will publish a major report on its findings for wide distribution in 2014.

In addition, to the chair, Dr. Demers, the panel includes Dr. Guylaine Beaudry, Concordia University; Pam Bjornson, National Research Council; Michael Carroll, American University Washington College of Law; Prof. Carol Couture, Université de Montréal; Charlotte Gray, FRSC, Carleton University; Judith Hare, recently CEO of Halifax Public Libraries; Ernie Ingles, FRSC, University of Alberta; Prof. Eric Ketelaar, University of Amsterdam; Gerald McMaster, Art Gallery of Ontario; and Ken Roberts, Hamilton Public Library.

Further details about the mandate of the Panel can be found at <http://rsc-src.ca/en/expert-panels/rsc-reports/status-and-future-canadas-libraries-and-archives>

[Click here to download the full-text copy of the RNSHS brief to the Royal Society.](#)

