

A r c h i v e s A s s o c i a t i o n o f B r i t i s h C o l u m b i a

**SUSTAINABLE ARCHIVES: SELF-STUDY GUIDE FOR INSTITUTIONAL
MEMBERSHIP**

**Institutional Standards Committee
Approved 23 May 2002**

at Annual General Meeting

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INTRODUCTION

The AABC is committed to the preservation of British Columbia's documentary heritage by promoting and strengthening a sustainable and inclusive network of archives throughout the province, and by providing a wide range of archival services and resources. The Association is committed to ensuring institutional members will be able to meet their public responsibility to preserve and provide continuing public access to the unique and valuable archival material in their care.

Institutional membership in the AABC is required by the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) for allocation of federal archival grants. The AABC criteria for membership reflects the CCA Institutional Guidelines for Archives, which can be found on the following web site: www.CdnCouncilArchives.ca/reports.html.

The AABC endorses the definition of an archives used by the Standards Committee of the CCA (see CCA web site):

An archives is a permanent establishment dedicated to:

- appraising, selecting and acquiring the archival records of its sponsoring institution (normally its primary goal) and/or the archival records of corporate bodies, organizations or individuals relevant to its sponsoring institution or to a defined community or thematic interest;
- conserving the archival records or the information accepted;
- arranging and describing the archival records according to accepted archival principles;
- making the archival records available for continuing use under defined conditions by the sponsoring institution and by the public.

To this end, the Association has established standards in eight key areas of archival care. Archival institutions can achieve the standards through a process that combines self-study and advisory support provided by the AABC. Support includes advisory services, site visits, educational workshops, and an electronic toolkit. Archival institutions must meet the minimum criteria in each standard to obtain initial institutional membership in the Association.

Over the next few years, the AABC intends to introduce a process whereby new institutional membership will be granted for a five-year period; and a scheduled will be developed to review all current institutional members, and renew for a five-year period.

The Self-Study Guide is a tool designed for three purposes:

1. To assist the Archives in assessing whether its operation meets the institutional standards of the AABC.
2. To assist the Archives in preparing a comprehensive plan for future improvement.
3. To provide the AABC Membership Committee with documentation sufficient to assess an Archives application for Institutional Membership.

The Guide is divided into eight sections with 3 parts in each section:

1. Statement of the guideline.
2. Questions to help you assess if you meet the standard. Criteria that are essential to meet the minimum standard will be marked with an asterisk (*). The remaining questions will provide guidelines for future development. If you think you meet the standard, please attach supporting documentation to demonstrate the fact.
3. Plans for future development. Describe how your Archives plans to improve during the next five-year membership period.

The Institutional Standards Committee respectfully submits this document to the AABC Executive and membership with the hope that it will assist us all in promoting and strengthening a sustainable and inclusive network of archives throughout the province.

Institutional Standards Committee
February, 2002

Jane Turner, Chair
Fran Gundry, BC Archives
Mickey King, Sisters of St. Ann Archives
Jan Turner, AABC Education and Advisory Archivist

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE SELF-STUDY GUIDE

1. Questions:

In each section, answer the questions by choosing the option you think provides the best answer in your situation. Answer "Yes" if you think you meet the criteria, even in a basic or minimal way. Over the years, the Archives should develop until all criteria are well developed. Remember, this is a self-study guide.

2. Documentation:

In each section, provide documentation that you think supports your claim that you have met the guideline. Documentation does not have to be extensive, and does not necessarily have to be provided for each question. Remember, there is room for improvement during future review applications.

Here is an example of some documentation you might decide to include for guideline 4:

- 4.1, 4.2, 4.7 You answered yes, and decide to include several photographs of your space.
- 4.3 You answered yes, and decide to include the report from the Fire Department.
- 4.4 You answered no, and briefly described plans for development in the planning stage.
- 4.5 You answered yes, and did not include documentation, and briefly described plans for developing documentation in the next five years.
- 4.6 You answered no, and decided that this process needs to be developed in the future, but not in the next five years. You did not refer to it in the planning section.

3. Planning:

In each section, describe how you are going to improve in the next five years, based on the priorities of your Archives. Use your answers to the questions as a guide. For example, if you have marked "Yes" in an area that you think is not well developed, and you decide this area is a priority for your Archives during the next five year cycle, briefly describe how you are planning to improve. If you have marked "No," you might decide this area should be developed in the next five years, or you might decided you have higher priorities, and you want to leave it until a later date.

GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- 1. Legal authority and purpose:** *The Archives is accountable to a clearly recognizable governing institution or sponsor who has a commitment to continuous (but not necessarily daily) and regular operation and office hours, and has a statement of purpose that has been formally approved by the governing body or sponsor. Examples of governing institutions include: Alberni District Historical Society, City of Vancouver, Sisters of St. Ann, University of Northern British Columbia.*
- 2. Designated archivist:** *The Archives has a designated archivist (paid or volunteer) who is accountable to the governing institution or sponsor for managing the Archives and its archival holdings, and who has or is pursuing training and education in archival principles and practice.*
- 3. Sustainable funding:** *The Archives has sustainable funding from the governing body or sponsor that is sufficient to carry out the Archives' mandate on a continuous and regular basis.*
- 4. Secure, designated space:** *The Archives has a secure, designated space for storage and handling of archival material that is maintained regularly, and is reasonably protected from theft, water, fire, light, and extremes of temperature and humidity.*
- 5. Acquisition policy and procedures:** *The Archives has a written Acquisition Policy that has been formally approved by the governing institution or sponsor. The Policy should define the focus of the records that will be acquired and the institutional, geographic and subject concentration of its acquisition activity. This will help avoid conflict with neighbouring repositories and will contribute to a joint acquisition strategy for the region.*
- 6. Access policy:** *The Archives has a written Access Policy specifying guidelines for access and use of records to ensure security of the records and enhance access, including: researcher registration, finding aids system, access and privacy restrictions, warnings of copyright restrictions, reference services, copying facilities and regular public hours.*
- 7. Preservation Policy:** *The Archives has a written Preservation Policy specifying preventative preservation guidelines for storage and care and handling of archival material that is practiced from the moment of accession onwards.*
- 8. Processing Procedures:** *The Archives has established procedures for accessioning, arranging and describing archival records according to accepted archival principles of provenance, original order and archival description.*

GUIDELINE 1. Legal authority and purpose

The Archives is accountable to a clearly recognizable governing institution or sponsor who has a commitment to continuous (but not necessarily daily) and regular operation and office hours, and has a statement of purpose that has been formally approved by the governing body or sponsor. Examples of governing institutions include: Alberni District Historical Society, City of Vancouver, Sisters of St. Ann, University of Northern British Columbia.

This guideline is to ensure that records placed in an Archives will be preserved safely by a responsible institution.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU ASSESS IF YOU MEET THE STANDARD:

1.1 * Is there documentation that officially authorizes the establishment and ongoing operation of the archives by a clearly recognizable governing body or sponsor, e.g.: bylaw, charter, constitution, letters of incorporation, legislation? YES ___ NO ___

1.2* Does the statement of purpose clearly specify that the Archives is responsible for basic archival functions of acquisition, arrangement, description, preservation, and providing public access to records of enduring value? YES ___ NO ___

If you think you meet this standard, please attach documentation to demonstrate the fact.

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:

GUIDELINE 2. Designated archivist

The Archives has a designated archivist (paid or volunteer) who is accountable to the governing institution or sponsor for managing the Archives and its archival holdings, and who has or is pursuing training and education in archival principles and practice.

This guideline is to ensure that responsibility for the management of the Archives is clearly defined.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU ASSESS IF YOU MEET THE STANDARD:

2.1* Has the sponsoring organization formally designated an archivist to be responsible for the management of the Archives? YES ____ NO ____

2.2* Has the archivist received, or is the archivist in the process of making arrangements to receive, archival training such as that offered by the AABC? Please specify _____

2.3 Has the archivist completed a recognized archival education program? Please specify _____

2.4 Does the archivist maintain annual statistics on number and extent of accessions, extent of records arranged and described, number of research visits, number of inquiries? YES ____ NO ____

2.5 Does the archivist prepare an annual work plan and review the plan at the end of the year? YES ____ NO ____

2.6 Does the archivist prepare a written annual report of its operation, including major acquisitions, facility improvement, and use of holdings? YES ____ NO ____

2.7 Does the archivist prepare a multi-year strategic plan, setting out the Archives' long-term goals and activities? YES ____ NO ____

2.8 Does the archivist have an individual membership of the AABC? YES ____ NO ____

If you think you meet this standard, please attach documentation to demonstrate the fact.

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:

GUIDELINE 3. Sustainable Funding

The Archives has sustainable funding from the governing institution or sponsor that is sufficient to carry out the Archives' mandate on a continuous and regular basis.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU ASSESS IF YOU MEET THE STANDARD:

3.1* Is there documentation that demonstrates the Archives has sustainable funding from the governing institution or sponsor that is sufficient to carry out the Archives' mandate on a continuous and regular basis, e.g.: financial statement, letter of agreement? YES ___ NO ___

3.2* Does the governing institution or sponsor provide funding that is sufficient for the purchase of basic archival supplies? YES ___ NO ___

3.3 Does the Archives have core funding? YES ___ NO ___
If NO, does the Archives have a plan to develop secure core funding for the repository? YES ___ NO ___

3.4 Does the Archives submit an annual budget to the governing institution or sponsor? YES ___ NO ___

3.5 Does the Archives submit an annual year-end financial report? YES ___ NO ___

3.6 Does the Archives apply for archival grant programs for which it is eligible? YES ___ NO ___

If you think you meet this standard, please attach documentation to demonstrate the fact.

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:

GUIDELINE 4. Secure, designated space

The Archives has a secure, designated space for storage and handling of archival material that is maintained regularly, and is reasonably protected from theft, water, fire, light, and extremes of temperature and humidity.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU ASSESS IF YOU MEET THE STANDARD:

4.1* Does the Archives have a secure building, or part of a building, for ongoing use that is reasonably protected from theft, water, fire, light, and extremes of temperature and humidity? YES ___ NO ___

4.2* Does the Archives have adequate shelving and a clean storage area that is of sufficient size to store the records? YES ___ NO ___

4.3* Does the Archives consult with local fire authorities, implement their recommendations and comply with the fire code (including detectors, alarms and extinguishing systems)? YES ___ NO ___

4.4 Does the Archives have adequate space for staff and researchers to work?
YES ___ NO ___

4.5 Is the building structure (including foundation, insulation, windows, door and roof) inspected and maintained regularly? YES ___ NO ___

4.6 Is the plumbing and heating system of the building inspected and maintained regularly? YES ___ NO ___

4.7 Is there a separate secure area for storage of the records to which the public does not have access? YES ___ NO ___

If you think you meet this standard, please attach documentation to demonstrate the fact.

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:

GUIDELINE 5. Acquisition Policy and Procedures

The Archives has a written Acquisition Policy that has been formally approved by the governing institution or sponsor. The Policy should define the focus of the records that will be acquired and the institutional, geographic and subject concentration of its acquisition activity. This will help avoid conflict with neighbouring repositories and will contribute to a joint acquisition strategy for the region.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU ASSESS IF YOU MEET THE STANDARD:

5.1* Is there a written Acquisition Policy that has been formally approved by the governing institution or sponsor that articulates the focus of the records that will be acquired and the institutional, geographic and subject concentration of its acquisition activity? YES ____ NO ____

5.2* Does the Archives appraise all material offered or received, to determine whether the records are of enduring value, and within its acquisition jurisdiction?
YES ____ NO ____

5.3* Does the Archives maintain a record of each accession prepared soon after the records are received, including: accession number, date of receipt, donor or office of origin, extent, access restrictions?
YES ____ NO ____

5.4* Does the Archives have a written Donor Agreement that is signed for each accession received from outside the governing institution, specifying the transfer of ownership of the records, and any other specific terms agreed to by the two parties?
YES ____ NO ____

5.5 Are the purpose, objectives and acquisition jurisdiction reasonable, considering the aims and financial resources of the sponsoring organization?
YES ____ NO ____

5.6 Does the Archives purpose and acquisition jurisdiction complement that of other local and provincial Archives? YES ____ NO ____

If you think you meet this standard, please attach documentation to demonstrate the fact.

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:

GUIDELINE 6. Access Policy

The Archives has a written Access Policy specifying guidelines for access and use of records to ensure security of the records and enhance access, including: researcher registration, finding aids system, access and privacy restrictions, warnings of copyright restrictions, reference services, copying facilities and regular public hours.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU ASSESS IF YOU MEET THE STANDARD:

6.1* Does the Archives have a written Access Policy specifying guidelines for public access and use of records? YES ___ NO ___

6.2* Does the Archives have continuous and regular public hours of access?
YES ___ NO ___

6.3* Does the Archives have a researcher registration process that records the names and addresses of each researcher and material used? YES ___ NO ___

6.4* Does the Archives uphold legislated and donor specified access and privacy restrictions, including copyright?
YES ___ NO ___

6.5* Are access and privacy restrictions and warnings of copyright restrictions clearly explained to researchers? YES ___ NO ___

6.6* When the Archives is open to the public, is staff available to supervise researchers, and retrieve records? YES ___ NO ___

6.7 Does the Archives provide basic reference service to people who send long-distance requests? YES ___ NO ___

6.8 Does the Archives provide copying services to researchers? YES ___ NO ___

6.9 Does the Archives provide access to records and services to all researchers equally?
YES ___ NO ___

If you think you meet this standard, please attach documentation to demonstrate the fact.

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:

GUIDELINE 7. Preservation Policy

The Archives has a written Preservation Policy specifying preventative preservation guidelines for storage and care and handling of archival material that is practiced from the moment of accession onwards.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU ASSESS IF YOU MEET THE STANDARD:

7.1* Does the Archives have a written Preservation Policy that has been formally approved by the governing institution or sponsor? YES ___ NO ___

7.2* Does the Archives have a plan to protect records in a disaster? YES ___ NO ___

7.3* Does the Archives practice preventative preservation from the time of acquisition onward? YES ___ NO ___

7.4* Does the Archives have storage area for the records that is reasonably protected from dangers such as overhead pipes, boilers, water heaters, sewer drains, and areas subject to flooding? YES ___ NO ___

7.5* Are staff and researchers given instructions on handling archival records, including careful handling, use of pencils, and white gloves when appropriate?
YES ___ NO ___

7.6* Is smoking, eating and drinking prohibited in areas in which records are stored, used, or worked on? YES ___ NO ___

7.7 Does the Archives have a Disaster Plan that has been formally approved by the governing institution or sponsor? YES ___ NO ___

7.8 Does the Archives regularly monitor temperature and relative humidity in the records storage area? YES ___ NO ___

7.9 Are the shelves and containers chosen to provide appropriate and effective protection for the records? YES ___ NO ___

7.10 Has daylight been eliminated from the records storage area? YES ___ NO ___

7.11 Have electrical lights in the storage and research area been tested for light levels, and equipped with ultra-violet filters or dimmers if necessary? YES ___ NO ___

7.12 Are lights turned off in the storage area when the room is unoccupied? YES ___
NO ___

7.13 Are researchers given a limited number of documents at a time? YES ____
NO ____

If you think you meet this standard, please attach documentation to demonstrate the fact.

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:

GUIDELINE 8. Processing Procedures

The Archives has established procedures for arranging and describing archival records according to accepted archival principles of provenance, original order and archival description.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU ASSESS IF YOU MEET THE STANDARD:

8.1* Does the Archives arrange and describe its holdings according to the principles of provenance, original order, and archival description?

YES ___ NO ___

8.2 Does the Archives have a systematic finding aid system to assist researchers in their search for records? YES ___ NO ___

8.3 Does the Archives prepare an inventory to the series and file level for each fonds that requires it? YES ___ NO ___

8.4 Does the Archives use the CCA's Rules for Archival Description (RAD) as a standard for description? YES ___ NO ___ If not, does the Archives use a nationally or internationally accepted archival standard for description?

Please specify. _____

8.5 Does the Archives prepare a RAD description for each fonds in its custody?

YES ___ NO ___

8.6 Does the Archives send its completed RAD descriptions to BCAUL? YES ___

NO ___

8.7 Does the Archives routinely up-date BCAUL? YES ___ NO ___

8.8 Are RAD descriptions and inventories accessible to researchers? YES ___

NO ___

If you think you meet this standard, please attach documentation to demonstrate the fact.

PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP PERIOD:

PROPOSED PROCEDURES FOR INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP, 2002-2003

1. Institution applies to the Membership Committee for Institutional Membership.
2. membership Committee grants associate membership, outlines process for proceeding to institutional membership, and sends planning document, Sustainable Archives: Self-Study Guide for Institutional Membership.
3. Membership Committee contacts Regional Representative, Education and Advisory Archivist, and Preservation Coordinator who will all contact the new member to provide advisory services and assistance in preparing the Self-Study Guide.
4. When the Self-Study Guide is complete, the Associate member applies to the Membership Committee for Institutional Membership. membership Committee assesses the new application, and makes a recommendation to the executive of acceptance or rejection. If accepted, institutional membership status will be granted for a five-year term.
5. All current institutional memberships will be subject to renewal on a 5 year basis, according to a schedule devised by the Membership Committee. The schedule will attempt to have approximately one-fifth of the members re-apply each year.
6. If any institutional member allows membership to lapse within the authorized 5 year period, the institution must re-apply.

PROPOSED PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. Institutional Standards Committee will develop guidelines, procedures and assessment criteria for Institutional Membership, and submit to Executive for approval.
2. Executive will review and approve Self-Study Guide and procedures for implementation. The Executive will present the package to the members at the 2002 AGM, and implement use of the Self-Study Guide as a guideline for assessing new membership applications during the 2002-2003 year.
3. Executive will submit a constitutional amendment to the members at the 2003 AGM to change institutional membership to a five-year period, and to commence a process of review of current members.
4. Membership Committee will develop a 5 year schedule for current members to re-apply for institutional membership, and begin to implement the new process.
5. Membership Committee will notify each institution of the deadline for renewal, and send information about where to obtain Self-Study Guide.
6. Membership Committee will review the procedures on an annual basis.