



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA
Legislative Library

Access to Constituency Records: MLA Papers Archives

Suher Zaher-Mazawi, Archivist

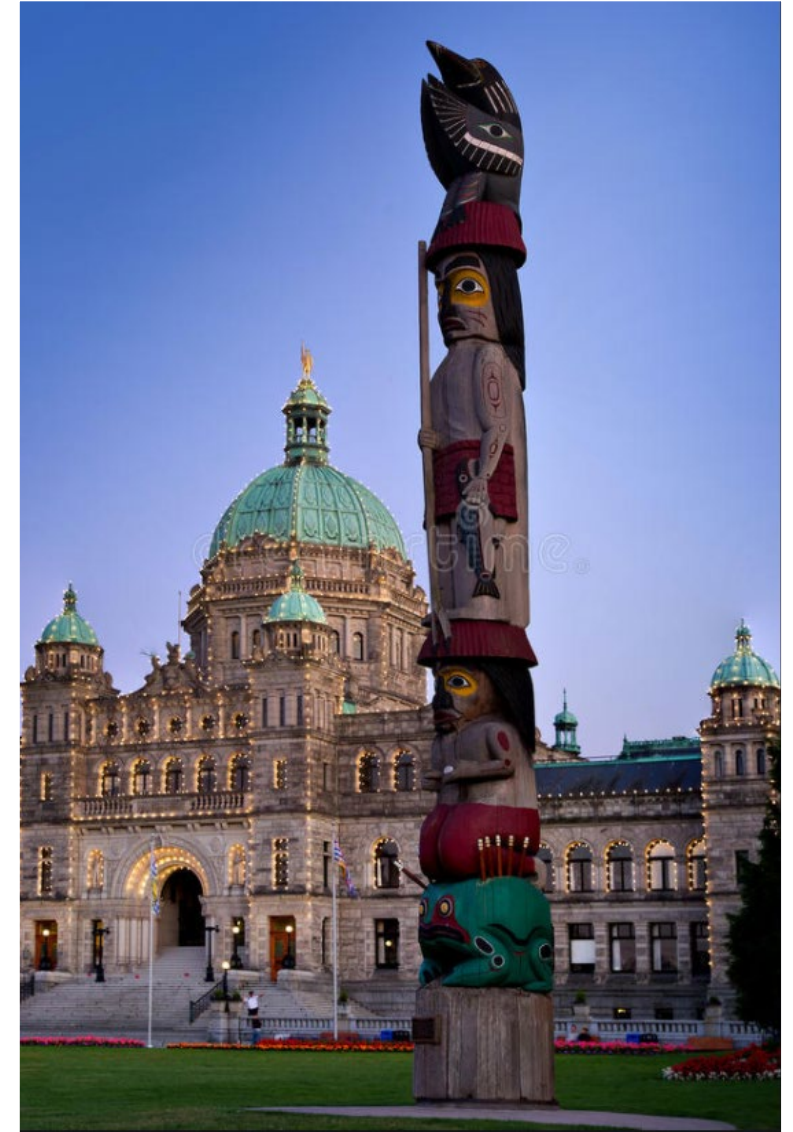
AABC/ARMA-VI Joint Conference 2023
Access/Ability: Exploring Themes of Access in Archives and Information Management

April 28, 2023
Victoria, BC



Land Acknowledgment

*I acknowledge that BC's Parliament Buildings, where I work, and its surrounding areas, where I live, are located on the traditional territories of the **Lekwungen People**, now known as the **Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations**.*



Parliament Buildings, Victoria, British Columbia



Outline

- Legislative Library of BC
- MLAs' Roles, Responsibilities, Records
- Constituency Records
- MLA Papers Archives
- Achievements to Date
- Next Steps





Legislative Library of BC

Mandate:

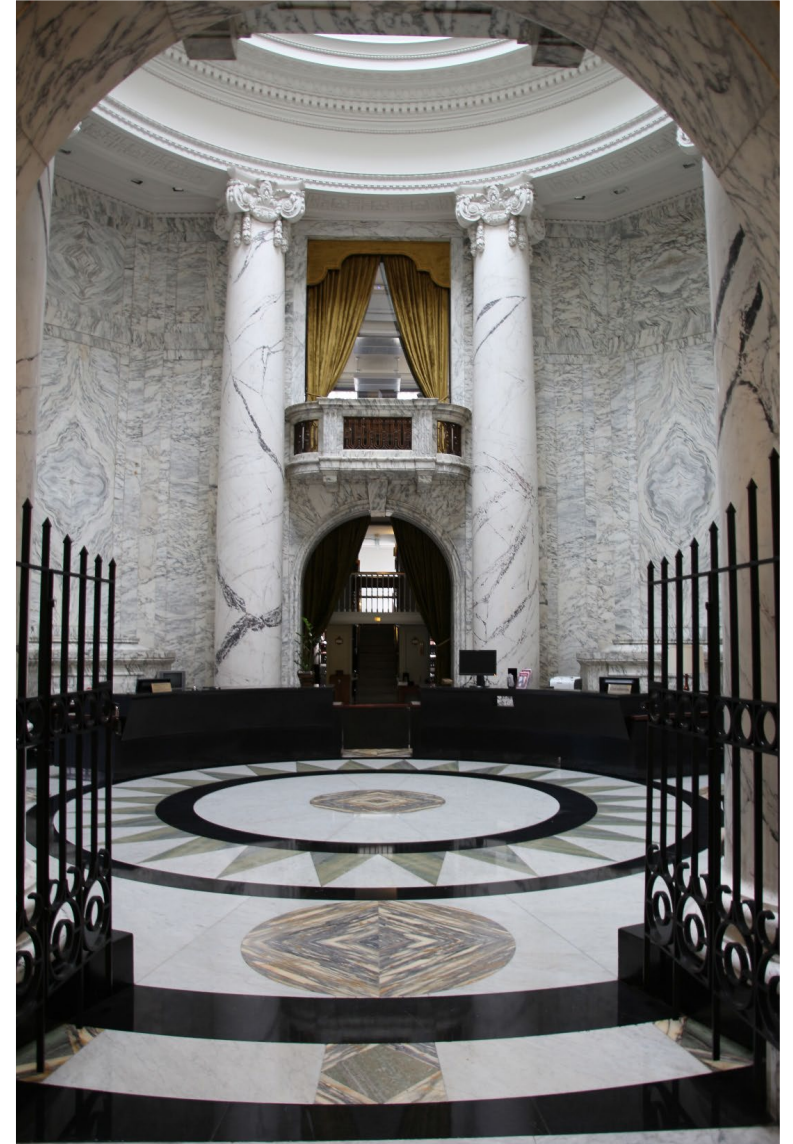
“support the information and research needs of the Legislative Assembly”

Our Services:

Time Sensitive - Confidential - Non-Partisan

Collection Scope:

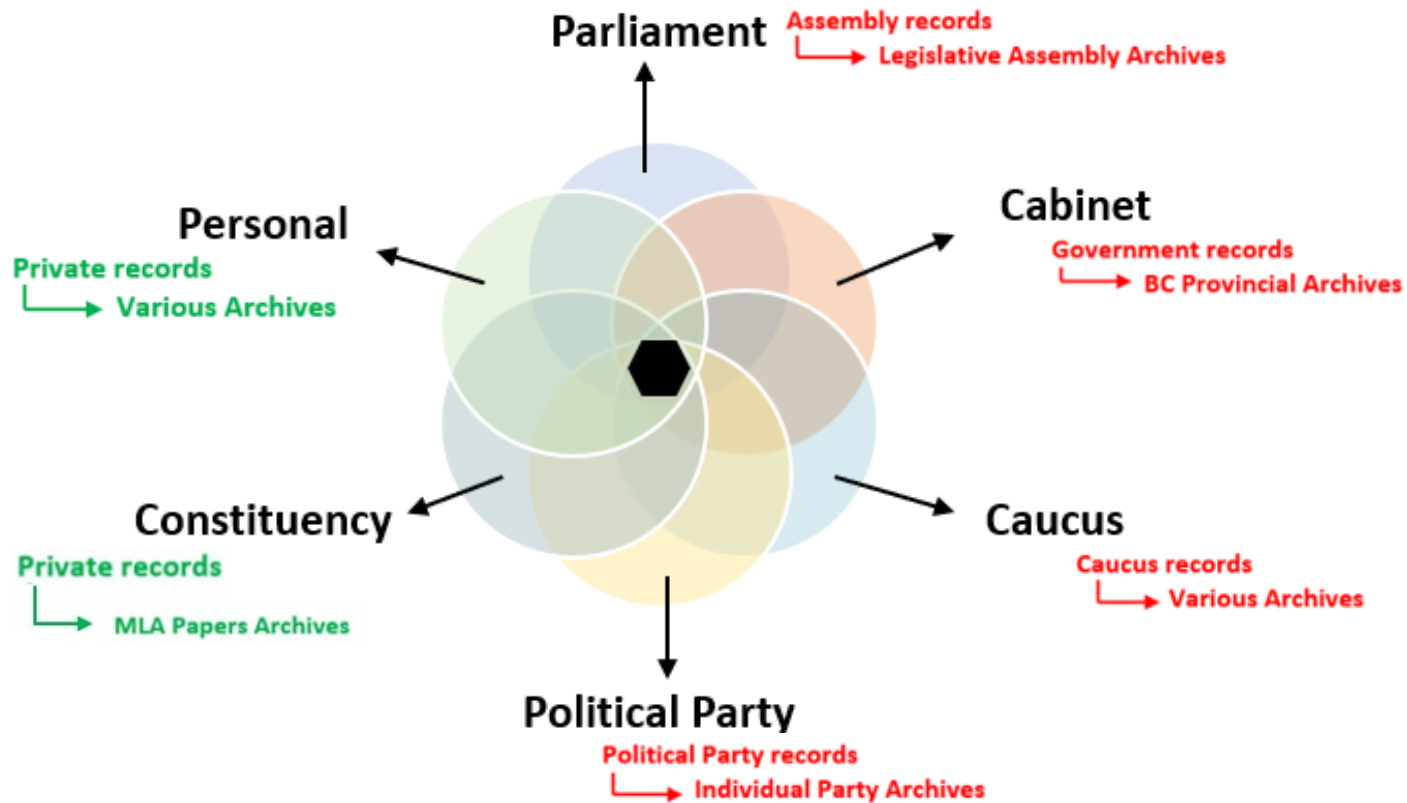
- Extensive Subject-based Collection
- BC Government & Trade Publications
- Royal Commissions & Commissions of Inquiry
- Reference Collection
- Rare Books & Special Collections
- **Archival Holdings**
 - ✓ **MLA Papers Archives**
 - ✓ Alan J. Hodgson fonds



Library Rotunda, Legislative Library of BC



MLAs' 3Rs: Roles, Responsibilities, Records

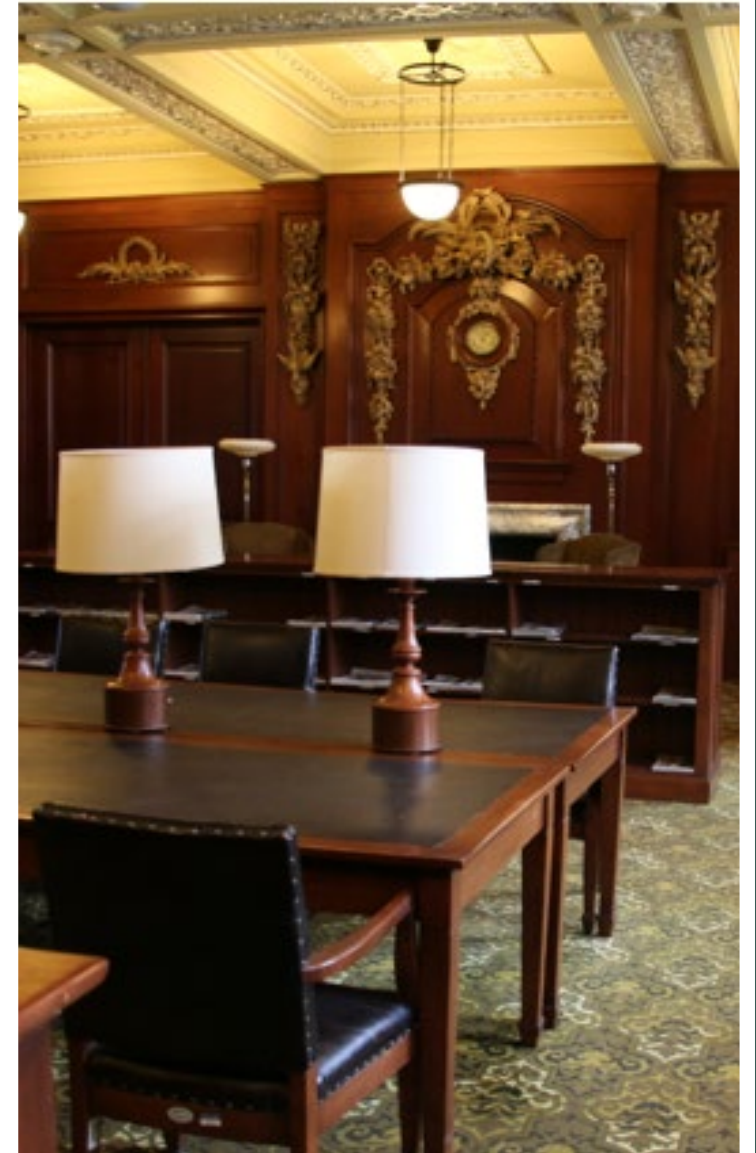


Legislative Chamber, British Columbia



Constituency Records: Significance

- Capture aspects of citizens' engagement in provincial democratic governance
- Document the political history of legislation
- Provide unique insights on Members' individual contributions to the legislative process in relation to their respective communities
- Bring a holistic view to the work done by elected officials
- Complements government information
- Encourages accountability



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Constituency Records: Types

Representing and Acting for Constituents

May include:

- Community files
- Events and public appearances files
- Individual constituents case files
- Issues files
- Media relations files
- Reference materials files

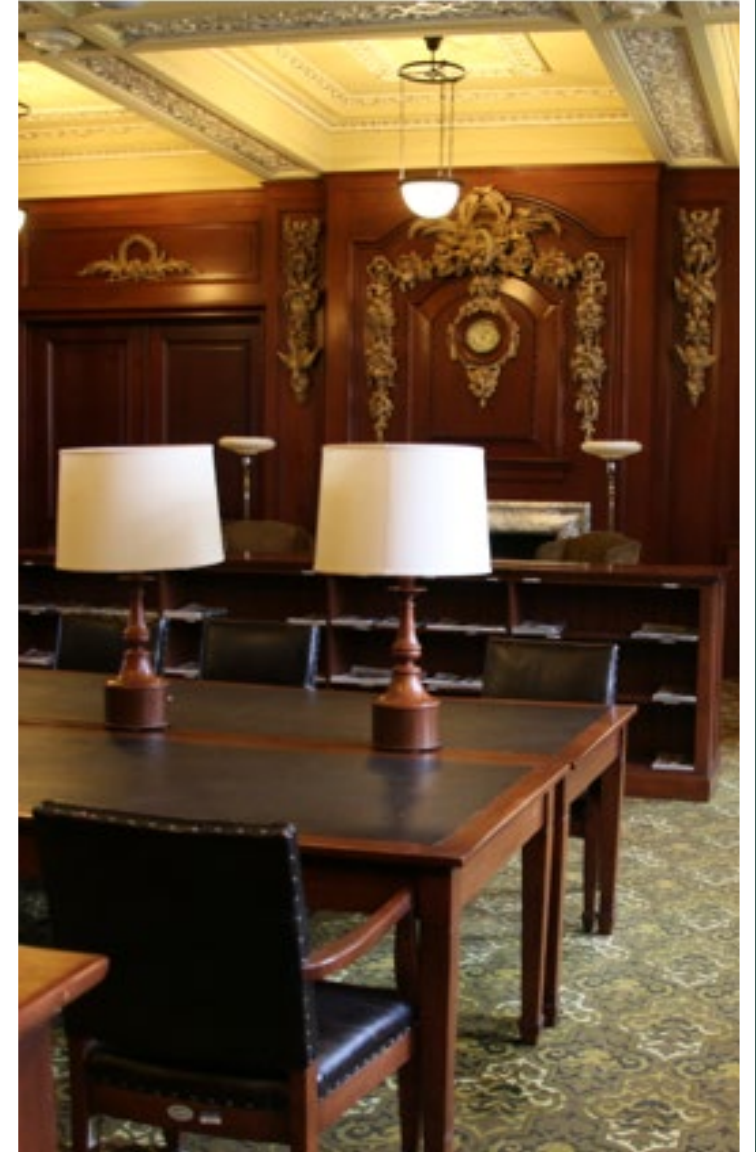


Legislative Chamber, British Columbia



Constituency Records: Issues

- Jurisdictional Framework
- Election Transitions
- Recordkeeping Practices
- Nature of the Records



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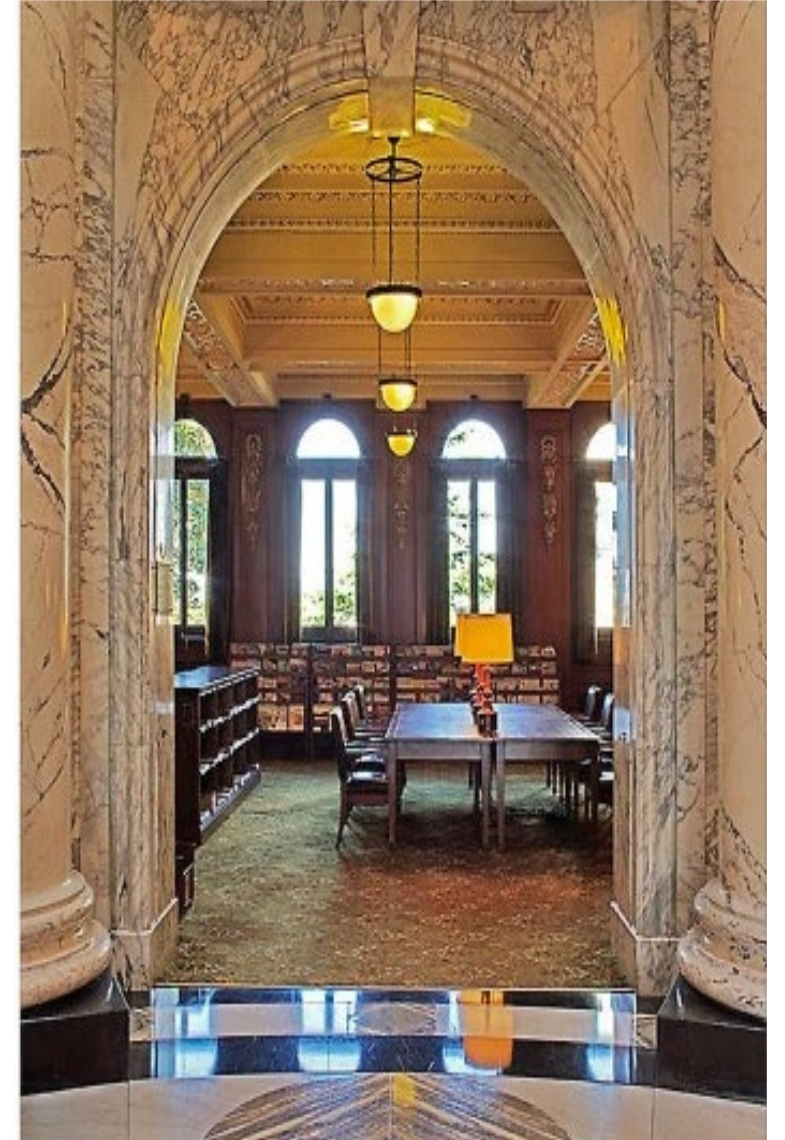
MLA Papers Archives: About

Objective:

- Acquire, preserve, and provide access to the documented heritage capturing the interaction between British Columbians and their elected officials representing them at the Legislature.

Significance:

- One specialized repository
- Complements and enriches existing Library services and collections
- Increases primary resources for research purposes
- Brings in new insights to issues:
 - ✓ being debated at the Legislature
 - ✓ facing citizens and communities across BC



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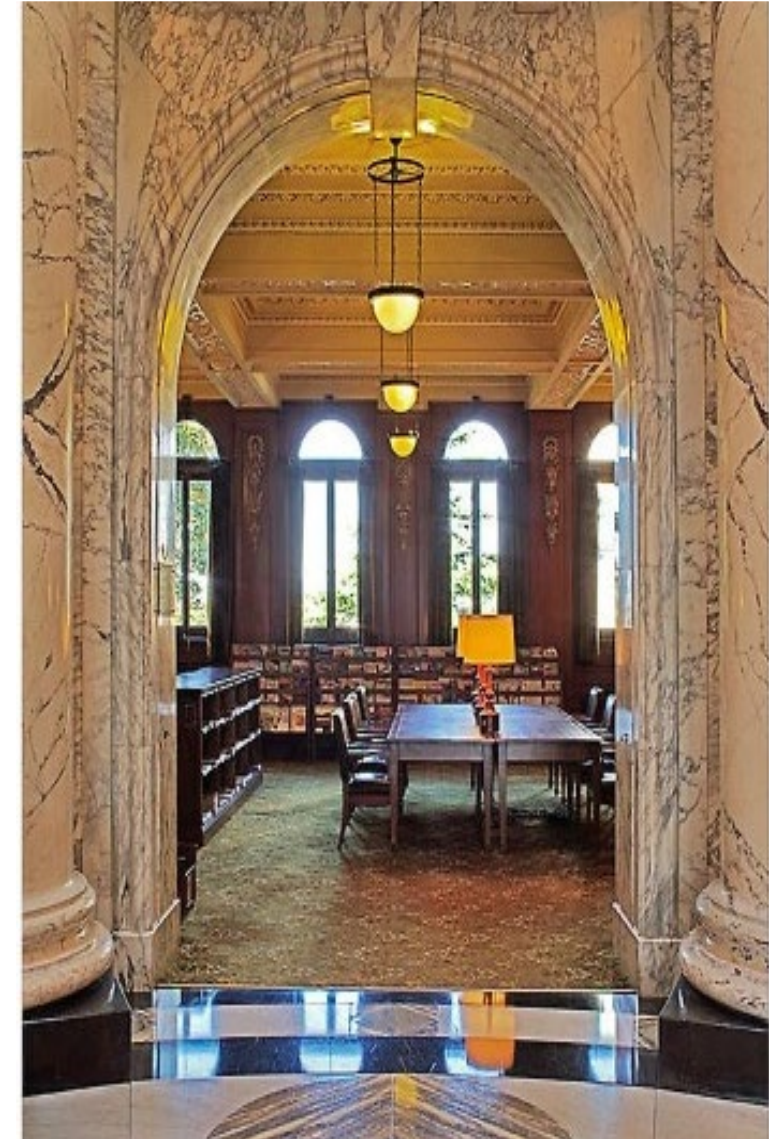


Acquisition Strategy

Approach:

- Target different MLA groups
- Triggers: elections, retirements, leaving office
- Support election transition
- Promotion & Outreach

Process:



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Appraisal Considerations

Constituency records



- Meetings documentation
- Correspondence
- Speeches and position papers
- Issue / subject files
- Casework files
- Publicity materials
- Photographs, recordings, etc.

Personal papers



- Personal diaries
- General correspondence
- Biographical information
- Advocacy and community engagement records
- Manuscripts and research interests
- Photographs, recordings, etc.

We DON'T acquire:



- MLA's expenditures and constituency financial records
- Ministerial and cabinet records
- Political party records
- Parliamentary records
- Caucus records





Balancing Access to Records

- Public vs. Private
- Access vs.
 - Respect of individuals' privacy
 - Confidentiality of communications/relations with constituents
- Restrictions – what's reasonable?





Operational Challenges

- Getting transfer agreements signed
- Backlog building up
- Storage space
- Competing/negotiating with other archival repositories
- Emergence of electronic records



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Achievements to Date

Extent:

- 17 MLAs' collections

Engaging Early

- Archivist is a member of the Election Transition Committee
- Info in the *Member's Handbook* and *Constituency Office Portal*
- Orientation sessions for new Constituency Assistants

Building Awareness

- Targeted publications in internal and external newsletters
- Speaking in professional forums
- On-demand orientation training sessions to Caucus Staff and Constituency Assistants
- Recordkeeping advice and assistance to caucus staff

Archivist in Action

- ***Come & see the Archivist at work!*** – processing architectural records



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Next Steps

- Building relations with other archival institutions
- Developing policies and guidelines
- Developing research tools & finding aids
- Processing the collection
- Providing access to the collection
- Enriching outreach & archives awareness activities



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Questions

Thank You!

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