**ALM Pre-Conference Session – Exploring a Provincial Digitization Strategy**

**Friday 29 September 2015**

**Panel:** Catherine Arseneau, Manager, Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University

Susan Cameron, University Librarian, St. Francis Xavier University

Eric Stackhouse, Chief Librarian, Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library

Erin Comeau, Regional Library Director, Western Counties Regional Library

Laura Bennett, Manager of Collections, Nova Scotia Museum

**Moderator:** Lois Yorke, Provincial Archivist

**Approx. 100 participants**

**Post-Conference Survey – 31.6 % of respondents rated this session as the most valuable to their field of work and interest**

**What framework or services could a collaborative strategic approach provide?**

* One place to go, one-stop shopping and ‘perpetual toolkit’ for digitization activities across Nova Scotia’s archives, libraries and museums (ALM) community
* Flexible framework may be preferable, vs. a formal strategy or business model
* Shared technology and collaborative approaches for changing technology, migration of existing data, open data initiatives, etc.
* Opportunities to develop integrated or interoperable systems
* Centralized access to existing resources within the ALM community – technical standards, best practices, manuals, metadata platforms, training policies and opportunities, tech advice and support, tech frameworks, open data initiatives, perhaps convergence of cataloguing and descriptive standards
* Documentation for specific processes
* Shared equipment and software, perhaps even a portable lab, or revenue-generating digitization service for external clients
* Information about products and vendors, questions to ask vendors, opportunities for collaborative purchasing, etc.
* Potentially a Digital Curation Strategy, and maybe a shared Digital Curator
* Shared human resources – volunteers, youth, student interns, practicums, etc.
* Better communication within the ALM community and among colleagues (‘know what others are doing’)
* A bigger voice for advocacy work and when seeking funding
* Pan-provincial collaborative management and leadership ‘under an ALM umbrella’
* Creating or providing digitized content in as rich a format as possible

**Who are the leaders? Who are the partners?**

* Need three pieces – government | associations | public communities
* Bring people to the table first, then build it (not ‘build it and they will come’)
* Leaders
  + Libraries Nova Scotia
  + provincial institutions – NS Archives, NS Provincial Library, NS Museum
  + professional associations – CNSA, NSLA, LBANS, ANSM
  + university community and NSCC, including Novanet
* Partners
  + ‘All the Novas’ (NSA, NSPL, NSM, Novanet, NovaStory)
  + collaborative support from AML Division (Communities, Culture and Heritage)
  + federal government funding partners; consortiums (Canadiana.org); allied commercial enterprises (Ancestry.ca)
  + business, media or philanthropic partners – provincially and beyond
  + schools and non-profit organizations
  + users and public – ideas, volunteers, champions, crowd-sourcing

**What projects have you heard about that could be used as a model? Do you know of relevant guidelines and best practices?**

* Projects/Models
  + NovaMuse, NovaStory, Novanet, MemoryNS
  + Discovery Garden - Islandora -- <http://islandora.ca/>
  + NS Digital Collaboration Initiative from several years ago
  + NS Historical Newspapers Digitization (LNS)
  + MUN Digital Archives Initiative -- <http://collections.mun.ca/>
  + The Rooms Website (NL)
  + New York Public Library Digital Collections -- <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>
  + Smithsonian – digitization goal of 12%
  + Toronto Public Library – Yonge Street Corridors (crowdsourcing)
  + Library of Congress Newspapers -- http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/
  + Europeana
  + California Museum of Science – Butterfly Digitization Project
  + Australian museum community – various digitization initiatives
  + Historypin.org
  + look beyond NS to other approaches, solutions and partners – UNB, MUN, Islandora, Europeana, etc. (‘no need to reinvent the wheel’)
* Guidelines and best practices
  + provincial institutions + university community in NS, PEI and NL have growing body of technical guidelines, manuals, best practices, descriptive and cataloguing standards, etc.

**What are *your* digitization priorities? Do they overlap with others? What are the opportunities here?**

* Priorities
  + preservation – fragile and disintegrating material, security concerns
  + access
    - to broaden audiences
    - to mitigate onsite service pressures – but digital access builds client expectations and often increases onsite visitors seeking ‘more’
    - to build digital libraries providing local access to content held elsewhere
  + awareness – digitize ‘gems’ to build audience and public support
  + mandate-based (or needs/wants of sponsoring bodies) – sometimes means a less-than-strategic approach
  + overall ‘seamless integration’ of digital platforms and systems
* Overlapping priorities
  + local history, genealogy, local newspapers, magazines and books (long-term storage of originals a concern)
  + what the public is asking for – their expectations sometimes over-ride institutional priorities and drive digitization activities
  + photograph collections, maps, artworks
  + most popular and/or most significant 100 artifacts
  + finding aids, catalogues and access tools
  + operational/core records for preservation and staff access
  + need for technical training
* Opportunities
  + more digital content!
  + providing public access is a library priority; libraries can use their advocacy expertise to support and promote digitization objectives of archives and museums
  + development of better or integrated search caspability
  + more focused and strategic approach to what is digitized and when, across ALM community in NS
  + asking ‘Why would Nova Scotians want this?’ and consulting with user communities and public on what they want and need
  + breaking down silos across ALM community
  + building diversity through broader representation from communities
  + ability for broad, inclusive communication across ALM community
  + potential to move beyond a project-based approach to digitization
  + ability to approach/work with media outlets collectively
  + identification of gaps; avoidance of duplication and overlap
  + linking/leveraging funding opportunities
  + collective technical skills development
  + ability to look forward more than one year
  + building collectively on outcomes and opportunities of Culture Action Plan

**How will archives, libraries and museums reach Nova Scotians in ten years’ time? What would a partnership look like?**

* Ten years from now….
  + audience will be very different; increased shift to and expectation of online access
  + blurring of lines between archives, libraries and museums – even now, users don’t care where the digital content comes from
  + centralized digital platform
    - one place to look for all information – either portal site leading to multiple destinations, or all systems/frameworks integrated into one search point; this could be a ‘Wiki Nova Scotia’ encyclopedia concept – a thematic super-centre for NS history, pulling together all heritage resources under one portal
    - complete digital access
    - user friendly and will reach far beyond NS
* Partnership
  + centralized – built, shared and managed by partners
  + built on provincial standards and collaborative approaches (‘everyone on same page’)
  + geographical partnership with regional representation – a network of partnerships
  + governance based on MOU; possibly a small operations steering committee meeting twice-yearly, plus an oversight board to ensure equality, fairness and accountability
  + business model and sustainability plan
  + appropriate communications and marketing
  + shared equipment, processes, skills and staff (developer, digital curator)
* Individual ALM members less concerned with loss of control, ownership, funding, or ‘specialness’; instead, will see opportunities and value in shared approach
* Onsite visitors not left behind -- equal weight given to physical spaces, sensory and communal experiences, incorporating best of new technology