**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