

## Annual Report of the City of Toronto Archives, 2001

### Introduction

The City of Toronto Archives is an integral part of the Corporate Records Management Program, which was established by City Council in July 1999 to ensure the coordinated management of recorded information throughout its life cycle to satisfy statutory and operational requirements, and to ensure the availability of the City's documentary heritage in the public's interest. The Archives is a program of the City Clerk's Office of the Corporate Services Department. It is administered by the Director, Corporate Records Systems and City Archivist, and supervised by the Manager of Archival Services.

Building upon a foundation of archival services that began in 1960, the Archives preserves and provides access to records of enduring value regardless of media or format, that provide evidence of the decisions, policies, and activities of the City of Toronto, its predecessor municipalities, and its agencies, boards, and commissions which do not have their own archival programs. The Archives also acquires, preserves, and provides access to non-government records that make a significant contribution to an understanding of the development of the City, its natural and built environment, and the people who lived, worked, or had an impact upon Toronto.

### Acquisitions

The Archives increased its holdings by approximately 450 linear metres during 2001, an improvement of nine percent over the previous year's growth. Municipal and non-government records were appraised by a team of eight Archivists, reviewed by the Manager of Archival Services, and approved by the Director, Corporate Records Systems and City Archivist based on criteria and procedures approved by City Council in July 1999 as part of the Archives' Acquisition Policy.

### Government Records:

Significant effort was devoted to the ongoing identification of archival material among inactive records in the City's eight records centres, most of which had not been appraised to determine archival value prior to municipal amalgamation in 1998. This project was a priority due to the consolidation of inactive holdings at the City's new records centre in 2002, which requires an identification of records with enduring significance that should be transferred to the environmentally controlled storage environment of the Archives. Assessment rolls received particular attention due to the lack of documented control over individual volumes, their large and unwieldy format, and the likelihood that they will receive considerable public use when transferred to the Archives. Accessions during 2001 included a wide variety of other municipal records, including:

## East York

Assessment rolls, 1924-1980  
Records of the East York Hydro Commission, 1926-1997  
Registered plans and condominium plans, 1887-1995

## Etobicoke

Street name change records, 1951-1985

## Leaside

Assessment rolls, 1939-1967

## Metropolitan Toronto

Correspondence control records and financial ledgers for transportation, 1955-1974

## North York

Assessment rolls, 1922-1980  
Action files of the Traffic Department, 1978  
Plans of civic structures, ca. 1980-1990

## Toronto (1834-1997)

Portraits of City Solicitors, 1840-1996  
Recorder's Court records, 1848-1869  
Records of Heritage Toronto, 1960-2000  
Plans of the Property Department, ca. 1900-1990

## Toronto (1998- )

Photographs of the Gardiner Expressway Extension demolition, 1997-2001

## Toronto Transit Commission

Correspondence files relating to construction of the Yonge Street subway, 1946-1951  
Photographs of the Engineering and Construction Department, 1990-1994  
Correspondence files of the General Manager, Engineering and Construction, 1987  
Contracts and agreements, 1920-1989  
Subject files of the Chief General Manager, 1992-1996  
Subject files of the General Secretary's Office, ca. 1989-1996

## Weston

Assessment rolls, 1883-1967

## York

Correspondence of the City Manager, 1990-1997  
Administrative records of the Development Services Dept., Building Division, 1940-1997  
Budget records, 1939, 1946, 1962-1995  
Subject files of the Health Department, 1981-1994  
Minutes of the Health Unit, 1943-1987  
Mayor's office correspondence, 1960-1994

Mayor's office scrapbooks, 1965-1970  
Newspaper clippings of the Clerk's Department, Communications Division, 1985-1997  
General correspondence of the Treasury Department, 1958-1996  
Council minutes, 1986-1988 (incomplete reference set)  
Historical records, 1881-1974  
Subject and research files of the Communications Division, 1983-1997  
Assessment rolls, 1882-1980

#### Non-government records:

Acquisitions included an eclectic mix of records created by individuals and groups whose activities fell within the Archives' mandate. Non-government records are usually acquired in response to inquiries from potential donors, which resulted in 21 appraisal reports completed by the Archivists, reviewed by the Manager of Archival Services, and approved by the Director, Corporate Records Systems and City Archivist. Seventeen donation agreements were coordinated by the Manager of Archival Services with the assistance of the City's Legal Division, and several donors made accruals to earlier transfers. These donations have preserved the records and collections of many people and organizations who contributed to the development of Toronto. Their names are listed below, along with date range of the documents included in their donations and, where appropriate, a brief note regarding their sphere of activity:

- Becker, Larry, 1782-1996 (collection of ephemera pertaining to the history of Toronto)
- Citizens for Local Democracy (C4LD), 1996-1998
- Cumbo, Richard, 1999-2000 (Maltese culture and language, including records of the Canada-Maltese Society)
- Corrigan, Frank, 1975 (moving images of Sikorsky helicopter topping off the CN Tower)
- Globe and Mail, 1925-1949 (photographic negatives)
- Harbord Village Residents Association, 1975-2000
- Hession, Barry, 1888-1997 (collection of photographs of Dovercourt Public School)
- International Beverage Dispensers' and Bartenders' Union, Local 280, 1954-1996
- International Beverage Dispensers' and Bartenders' Union, Local 299, 1961-1985
- Johnston, Harold Southam, 1929-1979 (editorial cartoonist for the *Mail and Empire*)
- Lilley, Vernon, ca. 1920-1970 (graphic and commercial artist)
- Longstaff, Frank, 1947-1999 (urban planning in Metropolitan Toronto, and heritage preservation in Etobicoke)
- Mah, Jay-Dell, 1972-1989 (CBC journalist's notes on the development of a domed stadium in Toronto)
- McGill Club, 1973-1998
- Nissel, Peter, 1976-1982 (twinning of North York with Wroclaw, Poland)
- Organized Working Women, 1976-1997 (organization for women involved with trade unions)
- Patterson, Alexander, 1867-1933 (businessman)
- Sewell, John, 1961-2000 (former municipal politician, civic activist and writer)

- Seyward, Henry, 1967-1978 (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto)
- Speight, Van Nostrand & Gibson, ca. 1845-1964 (survey firm)
- Toronto Area Archivists Group Education Fund, 1986-1991
- Victoria Day Care Services, 1918-1987
- Wenger, Emile, ca. 1920-1975 (designer and fabricator of steel metalwork)

### Preservation Management

#### Conservation:

The Conservator provides advice to staff of the Corporate Records Management Program on the care, handling and proper storage of documents throughout their life cycle to promote the long-term preservation of information. When fragile or damaged records with significant archival value and potential for use are identified by Archivists and the Manager of Archival Services during processing projects, the Conservator assesses the requirements for cleaning and repairs, and undertakes treatments to prepare the documents for use by researchers, for reproduction, or for display. Projects undertaken during 2001 include:

- Assessment of approximately 10,000 cellulose diacetate photographic negatives to determine the effects of “vinegar syndrome,” an irreversible condition that shrinks the negatives’ film base and results in total loss of the image. This assessment formed the basis for a successful grant application to the Canada Council of Archives for funding in 2002 that will allow the Archives to transfer a large number of these negatives to cold storage in order to stop deterioration.
- Phase boxing of more than 2,000 volumes of assessment rolls from East York, Leaside and North York to prepare the records for transfer to the Archives.
- Improvement of storage conditions for documents in the Larry Becker Collection, including the flattening of panoramic photographs and the aeration of newspapers.
- Cleaning of drawings, books and other papers of Emile Wenger, a metalworker whose work with steel left a significant deposit of grime on his working documents.
- Preparation of records and the Archives’ exhibit atrium for a new exhibit, “Your Home, Our City: 100 years of Public Control over Private Space,” including exhibit layout, selection of colour scheme, and the installation of blinds to minimize the impact of sunlight.
- Preparation of displays on conservation problems and treatments for the Archives’ open house in May 2001, and provided advice to the public on the care of family records.

#### Digitization:

The Archives undertakes digitization projects to promote the long-term preservation and accessibility of archival records that will likely be in high demand for research by the public. While digital technology cannot be regarded as a permanent replacement for the original record due to steadily evolving software and unproven storage formats, scanned images are being linked to the Archives’ descriptive database to reduce the wear and tear on the archival holdings,

decrease the number of retrievals and refiles performed by staff, and prepare the Archives for remote access to municipal records through the Internet. These projects were coordinated by the Consultant, Media Conversions and supported by the Document Imaging Clerk.

More than 3,500 postcards from the Larry Becker Collection were scanned during 2001, providing electronic access to a broad assortment of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> images of Toronto. Each image was inspected and compared with the original postcard to ensure quality control. This project brought the total number of images scanned by the Archives to approximately 18,000 by the end of 2001, with most of these files linked to file- or item-level descriptions in the Archives' database. As a result of this ongoing involvement with the use of imaging technology to promote preservation and access, the Archives developed specifications and a business case for a graphics workstation that will require further consideration at a later time.

In addition to his involvement in the management of the Archives' digitization projects, the Consultant, Media Conversions also played an important role in the Corporate Document Management Project, an initiative of the City's Corporate Services Department to develop a strategic plan and architecture for the management of documents regardless of format. The Director of Corporate Records Systems and City Archivist is one of the sponsors of this project. The involvement of Archives' staff helps to address issues involving the long-term accessibility of electronic data, so that the City's corporate memory for the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be as comprehensive as its archival holdings for previous centuries.

### Processing Projects

Before acquisitions are made available to the public, they must be arranged, described and transferred to appropriate containers for storage. Processing projects include a review of the acquisition to identify material that may require conservation treatment, as well as a description of the records according to national archival standards in a relational database that links all of the records of a particular individual or group – items, files, series and fonds or collection. Records are accessible to the public as soon as descriptions are entered into the database, although access may be limited by the physical condition of the records or due to restrictions imposed by the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* in the case of government records, or by donation agreements for non-government records.

More than 24,500 descriptive entries were added to the Archives' database as a result of processing projects during 2001, an increase of 18 percent from 2000. Most of these entries were the result of projects involving recent acquisitions, such as the boxing and description of more than 2,000 volumes of assessment rolls from East York and North York. The remainder were generated by projects to integrate the finding aids for records processed before 1998, which required re-arrangement and redescription as the result of standards implemented by the program after municipal amalgamation. These conversion projects focused on records of the Children's Aid Society and the former City of Toronto's finance, health and parks departments and Board of Health, making descriptions of more than 9,200 files (approximately 140 linear metres of textual records) available to visitors through the Research Hall's public access computers.

The Archives acknowledges the work of Jonathan Forestal, a student at Woburn Collegiate who served as a volunteer through the Cooperative and Career Education Program of the Toronto District School Board. His item-level descriptions of thousands of Works Department photographs from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century has provided the public with searchable access to important images of parks, water works, road construction, and social conditions.

### Reference Services

A team of three Reference Clerks supported by eight Archivists responded to a growing number of visits, telephone calls, letters, faxes and electronic mail under the supervision of the Reference and Standards Officer, as indicated by the statistics for the Research Hall activities:

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
Visits by researchers	2,905	3,417
Telephone calls	3,494	3,483
Inquiries by fax	26	32
Inquiries by letter	48	27
Inquiries by electronic mail	124	431
Requests for retrieval of records	310	709
Photocopies made for researchers	10,396	13,916
Photograph orders	408	417
Photographs reproduced for researchers	2,053	1,971
Images used for publications or broadcast	751	716

Staff registered 1,839 visitors as researchers during 2001, an increase of 337 people (18 percent) over 2000. Almost 1,600 of these researchers visited the Archives on more than one occasion. More than 83 percent of the researchers were from Toronto, while nine percent resided in the Greater Toronto Region and another five percent in southern Ontario. Thirty-three researchers travelled from other Canadian provinces and eight visited from the United States, suggesting widespread interest in the Archives' holdings.

Research topics ranged from architecture to zoos, but by far the dominant interest was local history. More than 60 percent of researchers visited to find information on their house or community, dwarfing all other categories of users. Students were the next largest client group, with 370 researchers enrolled in primary, secondary, and post-secondary educational programs. Other researchers included architects, artists, engineers, environmental consultants, journalists, lawyers, a model builder, urban planners, real estate agents, teachers, and writers, as well as more than 50 City employees who visited the Archives to find information to support their work.

A breakdown of the types of records sought by researchers when they registered with the Archives in 2001 reflected the strong interest in Toronto's properties and neighbourhoods, as well as the importance of ready access to photographic images of the city:

Photographs	26%	Fire insurance plans	4%
City directories	24%	Assessment rolls	4%
Information files	21%	Minutes of Council	2%
Publications	8%	Maps	2%

### Outreach

Archives are preserved so that they may be used to understand the historical context that shaped our contemporary world, but archives will be used only if people are aware that they are available and are encouraged to visit. In order to achieve this goal, staff of the Archives undertook a wide variety of outreach activities during 2001:

- Hosted "Step Into Your Archives," an open house co-sponsored with the Toronto Area Archivists Group that attracted more than 300 people to the Archives on May 26, 2001 as part of Doors Open Toronto.
- Organized "Upstairs, Downstairs on Davenport Hill," a walking tour of the Archives' neighbourhood led by Jack Batten, a CBC Radio personality, author, and user of the Archives. The tour attracted 400 people to the Archives and nearby sidewalks on a rainy Sunday afternoon in June. The Archives acknowledges the assistance of Heritage Toronto in arranging this event.
- Produced research guides for the records of each of the former municipalities, as well as a guide to researching your house.
- Installed a new exhibit in the ground floor atrium. "Your Home, Our City: 100 years of Public Control over Private Space" used more than 130 photographs, blueprints, fire insurance plans, maps and written records to examine how the City's efforts to control urban planning and building construction worked with community and private interests to shape the development of Toronto's neighbourhoods. The exhibit's opening in June, along with other public events hosted by the Archives, accounts for an increase in visitors to the atrium from 1,324 people in 2000, to 1,798 in 2001 – an increase of more than 26 percent.
- Developed educational programming tailored to the provincial curriculum for primary and secondary schools that gives students access to reproductions of photographs, maps, and written records through exercises that encourage analytical thought, and an understanding of the City's historical development. The program was designed and marketed by the Archives' two Exhibit and Outreach Technicians. It was introduced in November 2001, and the

number of students visiting the Archives for educational programming increased from 1,709 in 2000 to 2,280 in 2001, an increase of 25 percent.

- Launched the Archives' page on the City's web site in June 2001. The site includes information about reference services, three virtual exhibits (including "Your Home, Our City"), research guides, and a searchable database providing remote access to 1,000 photographs taken by William James and his sons during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The site received more than 19,500 hits by the end of the year, and visitors viewed 97,500 image files using the on-line database. Development of the web site has led to a dramatic increase in the number of e-mails received by reference staff, and has created an international profile for the Archives. The Archives acknowledges the important contribution of the City's Corporate Communications Division to the successful implementation of this project.
- Provided tours to a wide range of organizations, including representatives from the British Columbia Archives, the National Archives of Australia, the Shanghai Municipal Archives, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China. The steady request for tours reflects a high international regard for the City's archival facility and program. The Archives also continued its relationship with the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information Studies, hosting a visit by its records management course in August.

For further information about the Archives and its services, visit the Archives' web site at: [www.city.toronto.on.ca/archives](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/archives).

Michael Moir  
Director, Corporate Records Systems  
and City Archivist

June 2002