

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

April 11, 2006

To: Administration Committee
From: City Clerk
Subject: 2005 Annual Report of the City of Toronto Archives

Purpose:

To provide a summary of the acquisitions and activities undertaken by the City of Toronto Archives for 2005.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

The Acquisition Policy for the City of Toronto Archives adopted by City Council at its meeting of July 27, 28, 29 and 30, 1999, as Clause 4 of Report No. 2 of The Administration Committee requires the City Clerk to submit “to Council an annual report for the City of Toronto Archives which will describe the activities of the program, including a list of the acquisitions made under the terms of this policy”

Comments:

The City of Toronto Archives is an integral part of the Records and Information Management Program, which was established by City Council in July 1999 to ensure the co-ordinated 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 interests.

Building upon a foundation of archival services that began at the former City of Toronto in 1960, and the former Metropolitan Toronto in 1985, 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.

Conclusions:

The Archives' annual report for 2005 is a useful tool to communicate the City's initiatives and accomplishments in the area of documentary heritage to the public and interested organizations. In keeping with the objectives and key activities under the City Clerk's Office's core businesses, the Archives undertakes to govern the disposition of government records that possess archival value, as well as the acquisition of non-government records that promote an understanding of the historical development of the City of Toronto. A team of professional archivists review the records of the City, its special purpose bodies, and non-government sources in order to preserve and make accessible Toronto's documentary heritage. This activity is in accordance with the Archives' acquisition policy that provides direction to the corporation in order to ensure the preservation of records required for legal, fiscal, evidential and cultural reasons, as well as assists staff as they develop archival holdings in a planned, systematic, and efficient manner.

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List of Attachments

Attachment No. 1: Annual Report of the City of Toronto Archives for 2005.

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Introduction:

The report provides an overview of the accomplishments of the Archives over this past year through several processing, conservation and digitization projects. Important initiatives in public

programming that include school tours, virtual exhibits, walking tours, annual Open House events and partnership projects have provided a much greater public awareness of the Archives' role in Toronto's local heritage.

Acquisitions:

Government Records:

A significant number of collections in the Archives were created by the City of Toronto and its predecessors municipalities in the process of carrying out its many activities and responsibilities. These government records significantly complement and expand the descriptions in the Archives' database. In 2005 many of the government records which were described and made available in the online database include:

- Approximately 456 volumes of assessment rolls for 1996 from six of the former municipalities
- East York Planning Board minutes and reports, 1957-1983
- Leaside Planning Board minutes and reports, 1954-1966
- Etobicoke Planning Board minutes and reports, 1944-1966
- North York Planning Board minutes, 1957-1971
- Scarborough Planning Board minutes, 1947-1983
- Scarborough Planning Committee, minutes and reports, 1983-19925

Non-government records:

In 2005 the Archives acquired 38 donations of non-government records, which represent the records of many individuals, organizations and associations who have contributed to the documentary heritage of Toronto. Fifteen legal agreements were signed with donors and four monetary appraisals were carried out for a total amount of \$217,388.00. Some of the major acquisitions are listed below, along with the date range of the documents included in their donations and, where appropriate, a brief note regarding their sphere of activity:

Records of George Robb Architect, ca. 1945-1995 (architectural records relating to the design of such significant projects as the now demolished Shell Oil Tower, Old York Lanes boutiques, various Valhalla Inn hotels and several prominent residences in Ontario).

Records of David Hlynsky, 1973-1990 (records consist of photographs which document Toronto's alternative art scene during the 1970s and 1980s).

Records of the Toronto Computer Leasing Inquiry and the Toronto External Contracts Inquiry, 2002-2005 (records consist of the transcripts, exhibits, and other supporting documentation which were created as a result of an independent judicial inquiry to investigate the computer leases and contracts entered into by the City of Toronto with MFP Financial Services Ltd.).

Photographs of the York Mills Ratepayers' Association, 1953 – 2003 (records document the activities and concerns of a local North York organization representing residents of the York Mills community).

Records of Karl Lee, 1924-1984 (records consist of photographs which document the activities, equipment and personnel of the Toronto Fire Department from 1924 to the mid 1980s)

Records of Mario Silva, 1991- 2004 (former City of Toronto politician)

Records of John Adams, 1989 - 2000 (former City of Toronto politician)

Records of Geoffrey James, 2000-2004 (records consist of 50 panoramic photographs documenting aspects of Toronto's commercial, industrial, residential, and natural landscapes)

Records of Veterans Against Nuclear Arms, 1986 to 2004 (Records document the creation, organization and activities of the Toronto Branch of the national organization)

Records of St. George's Society, 1838- 1981 (A further accrual to records already held by the Archives and consists of minutes, annual reports; financial records, operational records about fund-raising; scrapbooks, framed display items; and various administrative support records from 1988 to 2000)

Preservation Management:

One of the major initiatives undertaken in the conservation lab in 2005 was the restoration of a map entitled *Toronto Map of 1862*. In its various storage locations it had suffered water damage, insect attack, coffee spills and constant exposure to dust and grime. It was identified as an original rendering, hand-drawn, annotated and coloured. It details the wards and boundaries of early Toronto extending from present day Dovercourt Rd. in the west, to Bloor St. in the north, the Don River in the east and Lake Ontario in the south. Its significance warranted considerable conservation treatment which consequently restored it to its original condition. The entire map is now encapsulated in a clear, archival film to ensure safe storage and handling.

Early in 2005, the Archives arranged to receive a second transfer of records from a donor whose records had been stored in a basement. Because of an infestation of mice, and evidence of asbestos dust and mould, the Archives' conservator co-ordinated the move to ensure that a commercial cleaner was brought in to clean and fumigate the records prior to their transfer to the Archives.

Other preservation projects undertaken in the lab include:

Approximately 77 photographic images (several which are panoramas) from the 48th Irish Regiment of Canada fonds, were unframed, unrolled, delaminated and cleaned in the conservation lab before they could be processed and described in the database.

Approximately 117 former City of Toronto illuminated resolutions from 1850 to 1996 (eg. presentation items made for City Council, municipal elected representatives or staff often during ceremonial occasions) were cleaned and re-housed

Approximately 20,000 4"x5" negatives from the Gilbert Milne photographic fonds were re-housed in archival boxes (removed from old metal drawers).

Approximately 2,600 former City of Toronto bylaws from 1934 to 1900 were re-housed and conserved.

The Archives' conservator also mentored a student from the Collections Management Program at Sir Sandford Fleming College for a 16 week period. This intern worked alongside the conservator getting hands-on experience in the execution of treatments, disaster planning, collection assessment and project planning.

Reference Services:

In 2005 a team of Reference Clerks supported by professional Archivists, responded to approximately 9,600 reference enquiries including walk-in researchers, telephone, written, email and fax enquiries. Approximately 53% of the researchers were first time visitors to the Research Hall. The high percentage of new researchers, and an increasing number of records in our on-line database, has generated additional efforts by staff to meet the service demand. There were approximately 22,500 new records added to the database in 2005 and this annual increase will continue to expand the content of the database and precipitate more enquiries.

The Archives' bylaw clerk entered 7,600 bylaws into the bylaw status register this past year which included bylaws from the Borough and City of Etobicoke, Borough of East York and the Township of Scarborough. The addition of these bylaws allows for improved searching and access to an increased number of bylaws. He also responded to 414 internal and external bylaw enquiries.

Improved Access to Archival Holdings

A major priority for the Archives in 2005 was the launch of the on-line database, WebGencat, in early December. Access to the searchable database via the Archives' internet website has made our archival holdings publicly available to a much wider constituency and constitutes a major corporate information asset. This widespread dissemination of information provides the community with an enhanced understanding of subject content acquired and preserved by the City Archives. A total of 1,684 fonds and series were reviewed and edited as part of the overall clean-up of the data prior to making it available on the internet. The database can be accessed through the Archives website at: www.toronto.ca/archives.

The database now consists of approximately 154,000 descriptive records in addition to another 23, 000 digitized images, all of which reflect the documentary heritage of Toronto. Records are added on a regular basis as new acquisitions are received and described into the database. Internet access to our holdings has generated a marked increase in the number of researchers visiting the Archives and the number of information requests handled by the reference staff.

Processing efforts in the Archives were also significantly enhanced as a result of a Young Canada Works grant which enabled the Archives to hire a student for 12 weeks last summer. The student continued the processing of approximately 1,000 file level descriptions (approx. 7,000 negatives) of images from the Gilbert Milne & Co. fonds, a large Toronto photography studio, into the holdings database.

The Archives also benefited from having a graduate student from the MA Program in Photographic Preservation and Collection Management at Ryerson University over the summer. This student scanned images from several photographic collections (Alexandra Studio fonds and the Construction of the Yonge Street subway series) which were subsequently made available on the Archives website. Several hundred OMB orders relating to bylaws to provide electronic access to these documents were also scanned.

In October 2005 the records of the Toronto Computer Leasing Inquiry and the Toronto External Contracts Inquiry (better known as the MFP Inquiry) were transferred to the Archives where they were re-boxed and described in the database. This collection consists of approximately 36 metres of textual records which formed the basis for the recommendations made by Justice Denise Bellamy for implementation by the City of Toronto. The electronic records will be transferred to the Archives in 2006.

Digitization:

Enormous strides were made in the digitization of over 7,000 images from the Archives photographic holdings which are now available for searching on the internet.

Scanning projects completed in 2005 included series of photographs taken by City photographer, Arthur Goss from 1911 to 1940. These images are some of the most frequently requested by members of the public and their 5"x7" glass plate format has made them priorities for digitization to minimize handling for reproduction. Selected series include:

- Parks Dept. photographs: Approximately 1,610 negatives were scanned. These images document the activities of the former City of Toronto Parks Department during the first half of the 20th century. Arranged chronologically, these photographs offer views of parks and green spaces across the city as well as sports and recreational activities organized in those spaces.
- Victoria Park Filtration Plant photographs: Approximately 107 negatives were scanned. These images document the early development of the site and the construction of the filtration galleries in 1932 and 1933.
- Health Department photographs: Approximately 903 negatives were scanned. These images reflect the health issues and concerns around housing conditions and overcrowding, sanitation, quarantine and communicable disease control, infant clinics etc. in Toronto during the early part of the twentieth century.

- Art Gallery photographs: Approximately 259 negatives were scanned. These images document children's activities, art classes and other programs offered by the Art Gallery of Toronto (now known as the Art Gallery of Ontario) between 1934 and 1940.

One of the priorities identified for digitization in 2005 and 2006 was the Alexandra Studio fonds that consists of approximately 10,000 images. This collection of negatives is suffering from "vinegar syndrome," a chemical reaction that effects the stability of cellulose acetate film. Because of this condition, and the potential for contaminating other images in close proximity, the negatives must be scanned and prepared for cold storage by the conservator. Last year approximately half of the collection was digitized and the remainder will be completed in 2006.

In addition to providing digital images from the Archives' holdings to researchers and city divisions, staff also provide support to the Archives program by scanning images for operational needs including exhibits, the Archives website, cultural property applications, presentations and reports as required.

Exhibit and Outreach:

The Archives had a very successful year with its public programming activities which continue to enhance the profile and role of the Archives in the community. The Archives received over 10,500 visitors in 2005 including those who came to use the Research Hall (4500), to view the exhibits on display as well as those who came to participate in the educational programming (6,000). Several of the significant outreach initiatives undertaken by Archives staff can be summarized as follows:

(1) Promoted and conducted school programs to both elementary and secondary schools (approximately 3000 students) throughout 2005. Archives' staff designed educational programming in accordance with provincial curriculum guidelines for various grades. These programs expose students to a wide range of archival records through exercises that encourage critical thinking skills and an understanding of the City's historical development. The school programs also generate a great deal of interest from teachers and students and also promote a greater awareness of archives and its role in the community.

(2) Installed an exhibit in the rotunda of City Hall, entitled, V-E Day and V-J Day: The End of World War II in Toronto, 1945. This display was mounted on May 8, 2005 to acknowledge the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II.

(3) In September 2005, the Archives played a major role in the 40th anniversary of the opening of new City Hall. The Archives selected and arranged for the enlargements of 24 images which chronicled the construction of City Hall beginning in 1961 to the completion in 1965. A brochure, consisting of thumbnail images of the displayed photographs and their respective citations was also produced and available to interested parties. The enlarged images, with the support of the Mayor's office, were suspended from the second floor in City Hall for several weeks after the official anniversary.

(4) The above images were complemented by an exhibit in the rotunda, on the same occasion and curated by the Archives, which documented the competition for a new City Hall, leading to the selection of Revell's winning design. The exhibit also included images of the sod-turning

ceremony, the time capsule, the official opening and public art associated with the construction of new City Hall.

(5) A bilingual walking tour was hosted by the Archives in October 2005. Jane Beecroft, President of the Community History Project and Rolande Smith, President of the Societe d'histoire de Toronto conducted the tour in English and French respectively. The walk, entitled, *From Trail to Rail: The Neighbourhood of the City of Toronto Archives* is the fifth walking tour sponsored by the Archives since amalgamation and in all cases the substantial turnouts indicate continuing public interest in the City's history.

(6) Developed three new on-line exhibits that were mounted on the Archives' website to recognize events and highlight materials from the Archives' holdings that include the following:

- The Mandel Sprachman fonds which features the restoration of the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres and other theatres
- A Step Forward in Time: Toronto's New City Hall. A History of the Construction and Opening of City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square
- V-E Day and V-J Day: The End of World War II in Toronto, 1945

(7) The Archives and the Ontario Genealogical Society jointly participated in the launch of an indexed online transcription of the Toronto assessment rolls for 1853. There was a public launch at the Archives on February 28, 2005. The City of Toronto tax assessment transcription project can be viewed at <http://www.ontarioroots.com/>

(8) The annual "Step into Your Archives" open house was hosted by the City of Toronto Archives and co-sponsored with the Toronto Area Archivists Group in conjunction with Doors Open Toronto event. This event attracted more than 600 visitors, most of whom were first time visitors. A full day of programming was organized in the theatre, including poetry readings from Toronto's poet laureate, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco.

(9) An article was submitted to one of the historical journals, *Ontario History*, to publicize a much underutilized fonds with substantial research value in the Archives' holdings. The Lumbers family fonds is a late nineteenth century collection of correspondence and photographs that documents four generations of the family of William Lumbers, a Toronto businessman who settled in Toronto in 1842.

(10) Hosted a evening of poetry readings by four Toronto poets, on May 17, 2005 as part of the University of Toronto's "Voicing Toronto: the City and the Arts."

(11) Many of the Archives' staff gave presentations and/or tours to outside groups which included the following:

- Several graduate classes from the Faculty of Information Studies at the University of Toronto
- Ryerson University (Graduate program on Photographic Preservation and Collection Management program)

- Delegation from the Shanghai Municipal Archives
- George Brown College
- Gardiner Museum of Ceramics