Criteria for Selection and Prioritization of Digitization and Preservation Projects

CRKN works with memory institutions to digitize Canadian heritage content to be added to the Canadiana collection. With the goal of making more Canadian heritage content available to both national and international audiences, CRKN and its members are presented with the opportunity to prioritize what material will be digitized, preserved and made accessible within Canadiana. With this in mind, the Heritage Content Priorities Task Group (HCPTG) recommended a process, subsequently refined by the Canadiana Content Sub-Committee (CCSC), to assist CRKN in its consideration of proposed heritage digitization projects for the Canadiana collection. This process is based on Diane Vogt-O'Connor's framework as presented in "Selection of Material for Scanning."[1]

In exploring digitization projects, a number of criteria may be considered to determine the feasibility and appropriateness of adding this content to the collection. Chief among these are the following:

- Heritage Content Assessment
- Feasibility Assessment
- Resource Assessment

Heritage Content Assessment

Broadly speaking, content that is being considered for digitization and inclusion within the Canadiana collection should represent Canada in a significant way through its subject matter or authorship. In addition, this heritage material should represent aspects of the geographic, socio-cultural, and linguistic diversity of Canada.

High-level priorities:

In Spring 2020, the HCPTG surveyed CRKN's membership regarding their digitization, hosting, and preservation strategies, priorities, and needs. CRKN members identified two primary types of content to be prioritized:

- Content is reflective of the diversity of Canadians such as, but not limited to, diversity of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, class, and abilities; also under consideration are diversity of time period, geographic location, types of communities such as social, cultural, or political communities, and improving representation in the digital historical record.
- Content is at risk due to factors such as, but not limited to, potential physical deterioration or financial constraints at its home institution.

Additionally, two forms of content were identified:

- High interest archival collections[2]
- Newspapers

The CCSC and CRKN staff will use the following assessment rubric when evaluating proposals of content to be added to the Canadiana collection. Individuals or organizations submitting content for consideration should prepare their proposal with these criteria in mind.

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[1] Diane Vogt-O'Connor, "Selection of Material for Scanning," in *Handbook for Digital Projects: A Management Tool for Preservation and Access*, ed. Maxine K. Sitts (Andover, MA: Northeast Document Conservation Centre, 2000), 45-73.

[2] Due to constraints with the current Canadiana infrastructure (as of 2024), archival materials from multi-level fonds, that are not suitable to be presented individually on an item-level basis, cannot yet be added to Canadiana.

How does this material bring unique value to the Canadiana collection?	
Anticipated Audience	
Diversity and Representation Does the material reflect, or is the project supported by (for example, through a letter of endorsement or partnership), a community that is considered marginalized due to factors such as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, class, or abilities?[3] Alternatively, does the material relate to a rarely studied time period, geographic location, or social, cultural, or political community? Will digitizing this material improve representation in the digital historical record?	
Is material at risk?	

Feasibility Assessment

A feasibility assessment involves reviewing project factors that may determine the likelihood of its success. One of these is the consideration of rights issues associated with the collection as well as cultural property or community-held knowledge. This includes copyright and privacy concerns.

Format and technical considerations, including the material condition (fragile or stable) and quality of legacy media (for example, outdated formats), will be weighed against CRKN's capacity to migrate the content to a contemporary digital standard. Technical considerations also include the availability of granular metadata that will be integral to the preservation and use of the digitized heritage content.

Lastly, the overall size and scope of the project will be considered alongside the above content assessment and CRKN's capacity to complete the project within a given timeline (see Resource Assessment section).

The feasibility assessment will be completed by CRKN staff using the scoring rubric below:

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[3] Marginalized communities may include Indigenous, Asian, Black, Latinx, and other People of Colour; Women; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Non-binary, and other Genderqueer people and communities; Immigrants; Displaced populations; Blind, Deaf, and Disabled people and communities; and Colonized, Disenfranchised, Enslaved, and Incarcerated people.

	High Feasibility	Moderate Feasibility	Low Feasibility
Condition of material	Materials are contained in adequate storage and are undamaged. Materials show regular processes of aging	Material is in fair condition and is moderately fragile	Chemically unstable; self-destructing, damaging materials around them; posing health hazards
Legacy Media	Appropriate quality for digitization	Quality presents some challenges	Poor quality – cannot ensure quality digitization
Permissions	No longer covered by copyright provisions, or licensed for reproduction (proof of authorization contained in application); contains no culturally sensitive materials	Permissions are under negotiation, material is deemed to be low risk	Collection falls under copyright protections and no rights have been granted; material is deemed to be moderate or higher risk
Privacy	No personal information is contained in the collection	Some private information, but approved for widespread use	Personal information is contained in the collection
Metadata	Comprehensive, granular, high quality metadata available	Some metadata available	No metadata available
Scope of material			
Score	3 points for each category if more than 90% of the collection falls under the high feasibility criteria	2 points for each category if 90% or more of the collection meets moderate criteria	1 point for each category if 90% or more of the collection meets low criteria

Resource Assessment

Given the volume of project proposals for digitization and Canadiana-inclusion, the CCSC, with assistance from CRKN staff, will assess the scope and duration of each project to help ensure its successful completion. Here, realistic timelines are determined between CRKN and the partnering memory institutions to assist CRKN staff with planning for successive projects, digitization equipment set-up, as well as human resource planning.

Based on capacity, staff anticipate this project will require:	

Once all rubrics have been scored, a final tally will provide a numeric figure to help CRKN prioritize projects based on all considerations. It should be noted that cases may arise where certain factors, such as the risk associated with leaving the collection undigitized or the historic value of a collection, may overwhelm other considerations, undermining the rubric approach. In this instance, additional conversations between CRKN, the CCSC, and the nominating organization should occur to address additional concerns and determine an alternative approach.