



Coalition for Canadian
Digital Heritage

Coalition pour
la numérisation
du patrimoine canadien

Coalition for Canadian Digital Heritage

Year in Review

2023

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Introduction

The Coalition for Canadian Digital Heritage (CCDH) is a cross-sectoral coalition of memory organizations committed to expanding digital access to Canada's cultural heritage. We strive to build an inclusive community of practice by enabling and coordinating collaboration, capacity, and resources to advance shared priorities. CCDH provides a collaborative framework for individuals and organizations to advance community-driven priorities, projects, and initiatives, while sharing resources and expertise to avoid duplicating efforts. By uniting as a community, we more effectively harness the available resources and advocate for a sustainable future for Canadian digital heritage.

Respectful access to and preservation of cultural heritage is a cornerstone of all democratic societies. Cultural heritage is a vital component of economic, social, legal, and cultural understanding and growth, and fosters innovation. Understanding the past requires access to documentation and records of lived experiences of that past. The shift from an analogue to a digital world has been transformative, and the collections and archives that tell the stories of those who came before us are more accessible than ever before. Yet there is still much more to be done to surface, digitize, preserve, and make available those diverse stories.

This Year in Review highlights the strong foundational work that we were able to achieve in 2023. In the first half of 2023, we focused on finalizing and publishing our [strategic framework](#), which was a fantastic collaborative effort undertaken by our committee members and stakeholders in our wider community. In the second half of 2023, our focus shifted to actualizing these strategic priorities, through the formation of working groups that correspond to the three primary strategic priorities established in the framework. As we reflect on the foundational work in 2023 and look to what 2024 will hold, we aspire to grow our community into a diverse and highly representative coalition of practitioners across memory organizations on this land now known as Canada.



Message from the Chair of the Executive Committee
Jonathan Bengtson, University Librarian, University of Victoria

Emerging from an extensive national, multi-sectoral consultation and strategic planning process in 2022-2023, the Coalition for Canadian Digital Heritage is a re-envisioning of the National Heritage Digitization Strategy. Our new strategic framework provides a vision for libraries, archives, museums, and community cultural organizations to prepare for the road ahead and work together towards a future where heritage material is consumed and understood in new ways, unlocking content to allow for technological innovations. Our goal is to bring diverse people and organizations together so that we can leverage our collective knowledge, infrastructure, and resources to enhance the digital presence of Canada's cultural heritage.

CCDH is a coalition of those who understand that the digitization of analogue materials frees information from the bounds of its physicality; it enables the dynamic interweaving of past, present, and future and empowers diverse interpretations of histories. As our strategic framework asserts, this work is urgent and timely – it builds upon much good work done by many organizations, communities, and institutions over the past few decades and recognizes that there is still a long way to go. Canadian heritage materials are spread across many institutions, organizations, and groups, the majority of which are inaccessible and potentially at risk of deterioration in their physical form or hidden from online discovery. Even the cultural materials that exist online are at risk of being lost to future generations due to the challenges of digital preservation.

Addressing these challenges will require not only robust cross-sectoral coordination, but new and additional sources of funding to ensure that Canada does not fall behind other national efforts to build comprehensive digital collections. CCDH recognizes the need for advocacy in this regard, and the importance of articulating the value of our collective work to all Canadians.

Message from the Chair of the Advisory Committee
Emma Wright, Director of Archives, Royal British Columbia
Museum



Harnessing collective strengths and cross-sectoral knowledge, in 2023 the Coalition for Canadian Digital Heritage focused on disseminating and beginning to actualize the priorities of the CCDH Strategic Framework. Digitization is a task that the heritage sector must tackle together, and collaboration is crucial to success.

Globally, we see increasing momentum towards national strategies for digitization, with governments and memory institutions recognizing the pivotal role of rendering cultural heritage accessible and available in digital formats. Canada is a multicultural country, defined as much by its diversity as by its common values. The connecting power of heritage has a value that should not be underestimated, and we recognize the need to surface and include multiple communities in Canada to ensure that content selected for digitization and preservation reflects this diversity.

In the current landscape, Canadian institutions and communities encounter barriers to digitization that extend beyond mere technological challenges. We support equitable, barrier-free access to digitized resources for all Canadians, while respecting cultural and access protocols.

Our commitment is to tackle barriers head-on, leveraging the strength of our coalition to address challenges and to advocate for the necessary funding to drive meaningful digitization efforts across the nation. By fostering partnerships with government bodies, cultural institutions, and community allies we aim to create a supportive ecosystem that encourages collaboration and ensures the sustainability of Canada's digital heritage landscape and initiatives.

Together, we can make a lasting impact towards the safeguarding of Canada's digital heritage for future generations.

Vision, Mission, and Principles

Our Vision

Building an inclusive future by revealing our diverse histories.

Our Mission

The Coalition for Canadian Digital Heritage enables digitization, access, and preservation of heritage content for discovery and innovation.

Our Principles

The work of the CCDH is guided by the following principles:

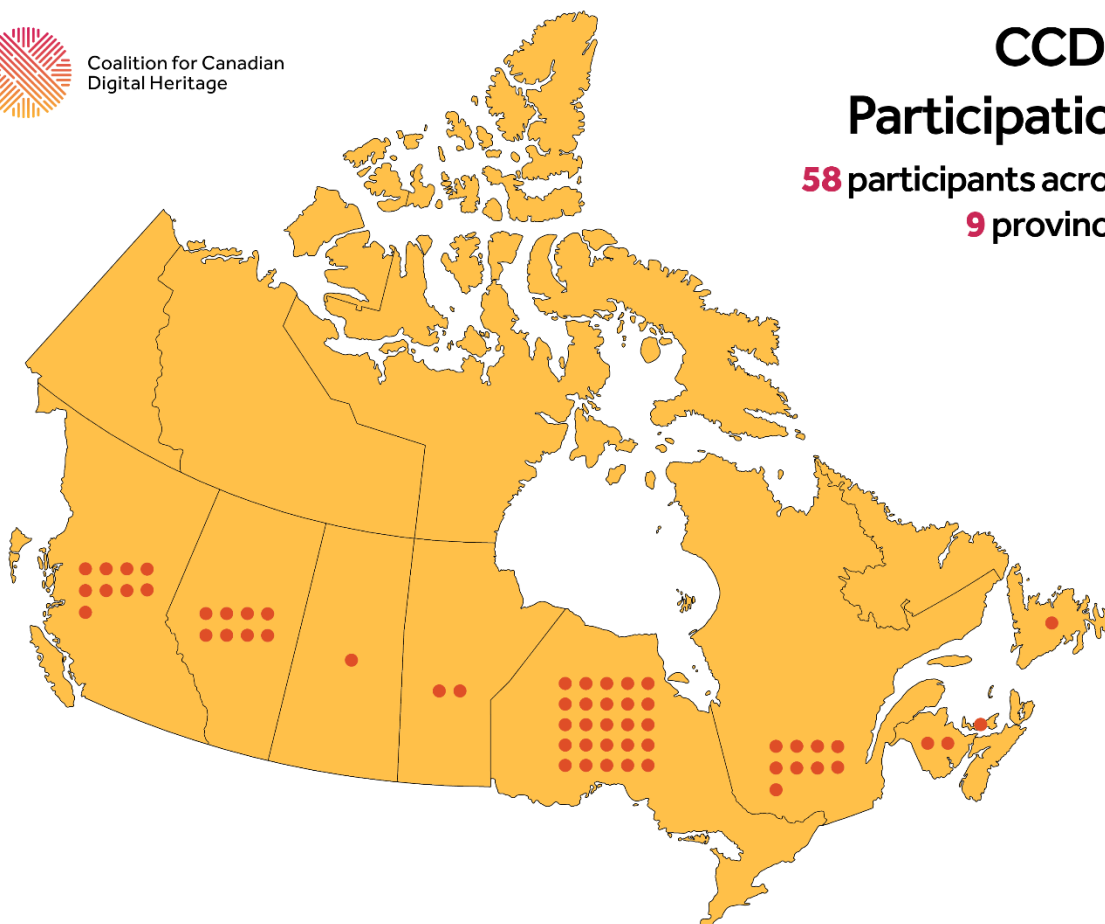
- It is our responsibility and promise to future generations to preserve the digitized heritage of Canada.
- We intentionally and respectfully surface the diverse stories of Canada's past, as told from many voices and perspectives.
- Justice, human rights, and sustainability are advanced through equitable and respectful access to the digitized heritage of Canada.

Participants

The CCDH is comprised of an Executive Committee and an Advisory Committee with membership representing the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) sector nation-wide. For information about the specific participants and organizations that comprise the CCDH, please view the [Executive](#) and [Advisory](#) Committee pages on the CCDH website.



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CCDH

Participation

58 participants across
9 provinces

Strategic Name Change

In early 2021, the National Heritage Digitization Strategy (NHDS) Executive Committee, supported by the NHDS Advisory Committee and CRKN Secretariat, undertook a strategic planning process to refine the mission and vision for the NHDS and develop community-driven priorities. After extensive community engagement and validation, the NHDS united under a new name as the **Coalition for Canadian Digital Heritage (CCDH)**. The name change reflects the new scope and vision of CCDH and represents our role as a cross-sectoral coalition of Canadian memory organizations committed to expanding respectful digital access to Canada's heritage.

Strategic Framework and Priorities

The CCDH [Strategic Framework](#) was published in May 2023. Our Strategic Framework is the culmination of an extensive community engagement process outlined [here](#), which included a survey, four open community calls, direct stakeholder engagement, conference presentations, and invaluable feedback from the members of CCDH's large and diverse Advisory Committee. We are grateful to all those who engaged with us to shape the future of CCDH.

Through the strategic planning process, it has become clear that CCDH is more than just a strategy; we are a community of practice – a coalition of diverse organizations with shared principles and priorities. The needs of the community also extend beyond digitization, and the new Strategic Plan reflects the importance placed on respectful access, preservation, fostering diversity, connecting institutions, and sharing resources. These are our strategic priorities:

1) Ensure content of importance to Canadians is digitally accessible

- Recommend and enable the cross-sectoral coordination of content priorities for digitization and digital preservation
 - Develop a set of community-endorsed principles
- Strive for sustainable access to cultural and heritage materials through collective investments in national infrastructure
 - Advocate for increased and sustainable funding for digitization and digital preservation

2) Intentionally and respectfully uncover the hidden stories of Canada's history

- Support community-led efforts to digitize and preserve the heritage and cultural materials of marginalized and equity deserving groups
 - Prioritize content and collections for digitization that are aligned with principles of Truth and Reconciliation, and equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Enable cross-sectoral knowledge and awareness of efforts to increase discoverability and usability
 - Engage with the users of memory organizations to understand and support a user-centered approach to discovery

3) Build cross-sectoral capacity

- Identify current digitization capacity in Canada, indicating gaps and future opportunities
 - Develop communities of practice for sustainable digitization and digital preservation expertise and training
- Amplify and support cross-sectoral hubs of expertise in digitization, access, and preservation, providing opportunities for collaboration at local, regional, and national levels
 - Convene a regular forum to encourage partnerships, collaborations, and resource sharing

Working Groups

With a newly clarified set of strategic priorities, three working groups were created in the spring of 2023 to operationalize the important work of respectful access to and preservation of Canadian digital heritage. The working groups are comprised of members of our Executive and Advisory Committees and correspond to the three central priorities established in the strategic framework.

| Working Group | Central Strategic Priority |
|--|---|
| Community Endorsed Principles Working Group | Ensure content of importance to Canadians is digitally accessible |
| Uncovering Hidden Content Priorities Working Group | Intentionally and respectfully uncover the hidden stories of Canada's history |
| Cross Sectoral Capacity Working Group | Build cross-sectoral capacity |

Highlights from the Working Groups

Community Endorsed Principles Working Group

One of the key actionable goals of this group is to develop a set of community-endorsed content principles. Building on a set of foundational principles created by the former NHDS in 2019, this working group has been updating and reworking these principles to be responsive to the challenges and context of 2023 and beyond. These updated guiding principles for GLAM organizations will encourage diversified, conscientious, and respectful preservation, curation, and support of cultural heritage collections. Notably, the working group has been discussing the need for the principles to explicitly acknowledge topics such as artificial intelligence, data scraping, large language models, and other technological changes the GLAM sector is grappling with. Additionally, the working group is considering how the importance of ownership and Traditional Knowledge should be reflected in these principles.

Work on these principles is ongoing with publication expected in 2024.

Cross-sectoral Capacity Building Working Group

This working group has been assigned three key objectives:

- 1) Identify current digitization capacity in Canada, indicating gaps and future opportunities
- 2) Organize training and resource sharing
- 3) Develop communities of practice for sustainable digitization and digital preservation

Working towards objective 1, the group has identified that skilled labour, knowledge, equipment, funding, and training are all factors affecting capacity and each must be assessed. The group is also considering how new developments and innovations will impact digitization capacity. To do so, they have started compiling a list that focusing on on-ramps for digital collections held by low-resource organizations.

This working group is also identifying and promoting the sharing of valuable training resources. Many of these resources are currently siloed (e.g., training by regional museum or archival associations), so reciprocal sharing and financial incentives may be a way to open some of this material up. Many training resources are also currently only available in one official language, so this group has also suggested that translation would be an effective avenue to promote more widespread sharing of knowledge. Existing training opportunities could also be shared on the CCDH website to enhance visibility.

The working group has determined that seeding a community of practice (CoP) with membership from existing groups is the shortest path to a sustainable CoP. Management of the CoP by multiple sectors will be key to encouraging inclusion and a sense of ownership.

Timelines for this working group continue to be developed. However, deliverables on at least some of these activities are anticipated in the 2024 year.

Uncovering Hidden Content Priorities Working Group

The working group's initial work has revolved around refining their Terms of Reference, defining the correct scope of work, and identifying area of potential future exploration. As working continues into 2024, further developments on a workplan and associated timeline will be actualized.

Future Work

In 2024, CCDH will build on the momentum from our consultative and reimagining work done from 2020-2023. We will continue to advance the objectives of the working groups and the broader strategic plan. Additionally, we will work collaboratively to share important projects, initiatives, and challenges within our coalition and beyond. We will expand awareness of CCDH and our work throughout the GLAM sector and build relationships with like-minded organizations. Finally, we will continue to advocate for digital heritage within the North American landscape to ensure that important digitization and preservation work is made accessible, that vital hidden stories are uncovered, and that we ensure that coalition building is prioritized at every step along the way.

Acknowledgements

CCDH acknowledges the territories of Indigenous Nations and peoples that exist in lands now known as Canada. We commit ourselves to respecting the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations.

CCDH benefits from Secretariat support provided by the Canadian Research Knowledge Network. We thank the Secretariat and the many individuals and organizations across Canada who contributed to the development of a re-envisioned CCDH, our strategic framework, and our collaborative efforts over the course of 2023.

Additionally, we acknowledge the efforts of the working groups and their respective chairs for their dedication to realizing CCDH's strategic priorities.

Contact Us

Visit the CCDH [website](#) or contact us at secretariat@ccdh-cnpc.ca. If you want to hear from us directly, please join the [CCDH mailing list](#).