OurDigitalWorld
2018 Year In Review

OurDigitalWorld is delighted to be entering its eighth year of operations as an incorporated nonprofit. We're taking this moment to look back on our accomplishments from 2018.

We work with over 150 libraries, archives, historical societies, museums, and community groups to manage and provide access to our digitized and born-digital cultural heritage. We provide tools and services that make our shared history more accessible, discoverable, and equitable. We advocate for digital heritage as a public good, we build collaborative solutions to shared problems, and we act as a voice for smaller organizations at provincial, national, and international levels.

In the past year, organizations using our flagship VITA Digital Toolkit uploaded more than 100,000 digital heritage items to the web – all searchable and viewable to anyone, without user accounts or fees. ODW staff and volunteers also made over 50 commits to public repositories on GitHub, evidencing our continuing support of Open Source principles.

In collaboration with a variety of partners, we work on advocacy and research projects that further the capacity of heritage institutions and related organizations. Read on to see the ways we're working to strengthen our sector!

Connect with us by signing up for our quarterly newsletter! We share industry news, VITA member accomplishments, and opportunities to collaborate.

A Message From Executive Director Loren Fantin

As we look back on our 2018 activities, I'm grateful for the opportunities we've had to increase awareness of Ontario's multicultural and diverse communities. Cultural heritage organizations, from public libraries and archives to globally recognized art and history museums, are in a unique position to help foster change by reflecting the diversity of local communities. How we do that more equitably in the online environment is a key challenge as well as an opportunity for the GLAM sector.

In 2018 we received funding from sources such as the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, but the majority of our funding derives from the services we provide (in particular VITA, our cultural heritage toolkit, and our all-in-one newspaper digitization service) to our GLAM partners.

Digital stewardship is not possible without collaboration, and we would like to especially thank and acknowledge the Ontario Library Association, Hamilton Public Library, the University of Windsor, and Western University for their ongoing support.
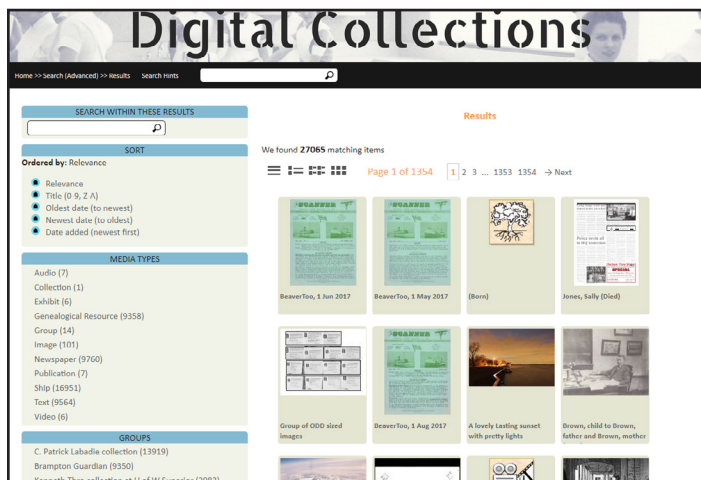
The VITA Digital Toolkit

VITA 6.0 Released

We upgraded the VITA Digital Toolkit to version 6.0 in January, introducing new site styling and substantial under-the-hood improvements.

We tweaked the default front-end design & added three new out-of-the-box styling templates for VITA users looking to try something new.

We converted members' FLV videos to MP4, streamlined searching and results screens, made result facets collapsible and expandable, and improved indexing for new and changed items.
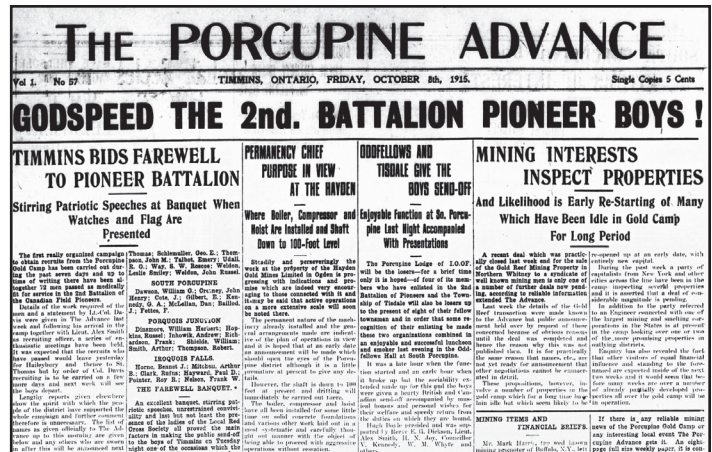

VITA Member News

- Oakville Public Library ran its fourth annual Day In The Life photography contest. For one week, community members took pictures and submitted them with the library's VITA contribution module.

- The Brighton Barns project, launched in 2017, has now documented over 200 historical barns, some already lost and some at risk of demolition, using VITA to host their collection.

- The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario are ambitiously digitizing Tweedsmuir history scrapbooks from across the province. In 2018 they uploaded 79,296 pages of over 1,200 Tweedsmuirs.

- In November, the West Vancouver Memorial Library published three video interviews with World War II veterans as part of their "Research to Remember" project.

2018 By The Numbers

- VITA members created 100,000 new records

- 20,000 new images; 50 audio records; 113 videos; 114 books with 100,000 pages

- Users sent 1,500+ digital postcards to one another using our email-an-item feature

Community Newspapers Expanded

Newspapers continue to be our biggest focus as communities look to preserve their local publications – whether by digitizing from paper or microform, or even sharing new issues straight from the publisher.

Users created or expanded 30 newspaper titles …
… uploading 16,000 issues …
… with over 300,000 pages!

Some highlights:

- Waterloo Public Library shared 125,000 pages of *The Waterloo Chronicle* dating back to 1868.

- Highland Park Public Library in Illinois scanned 30,000 pages of *The Highland Park Press.*

- West Grey Public Library added 29,000 pages of Durham-area news to their BMD database.

- Timmins Public Library added 25,000 pages of *The Porcupine Advance* to their existing index.

- Grimsby Public Library digitized 10,000 pages of *The Grimsby Independent.*

vita

digital toolkit

Projects

Digitization in Ontario Public Libraries

Over the summer of 2018, we worked with SOLS and OLS-N to survey Ontario's libraries about their archival & special collections and their capacity for digitization of these unique and rare items. We undertook this research in light of the Ontario Culture Strategy and the National Heritage Digitization Strategy.

We learned that three-quarters of respondents have unique collections, and almost all communities have an institution collecting local history materials. Two-thirds of libraries have some digitization experience although budgets are typically low.

We released our report, "Digitization in Ontario Public Libraries: A Fresh Look," in early 2019.

Ontario Library Service – North
Service des bibliothèques de l'Ontario – Nord

SOLS | SBOS
Southern Ontario **Library Service**
Service des bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Sud

Microfilm Scanning Prototype

University of Windsor librarian and ODW board member Art Rhyno is developing a prototype to make high-quality local microfilm scanning more affordable. It uses macrophotography and various hardware components to provide better scanning capability. Here are a few titles we've digitized using this equipment:
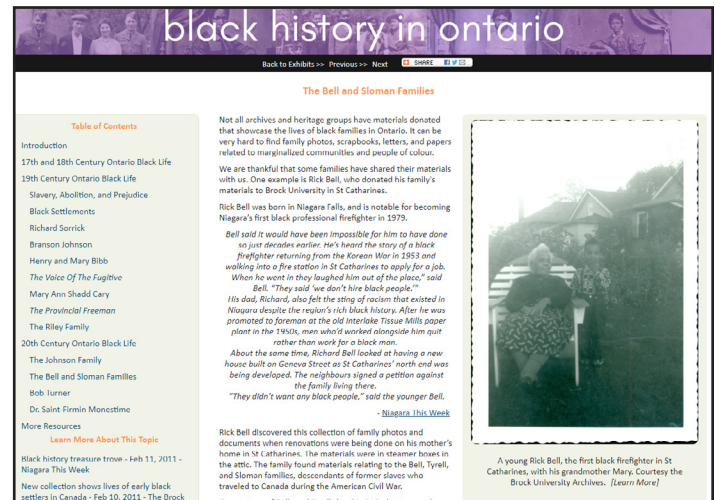
Digital Storytelling for Ontario's Multicultural Communities

Ontario

In 2018 we completed Phase I and began Phase II of an initiative to curate digitized heritage materials into online exhibits and curriculum resources for Ontario schools.

We shared three virtual exhibits on Ontario women's, black, and Japanese history, using digitized items from over 50 heritage institutions.

These projects are funded by the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

A young Rick Bell, the first black firefighter in St Catharines, with his grandmother Mary. Courtesy the Brock University Archives. *[Learn More]*

The Provincial Digital Library Project

BC DL | British Columbia Digital Library

Matt Barry, our project lead, and Loren Fantin presented at the OLA SuperConference with Caroline Daniels and Dan Sifton from the BC Digital Library initiative on our prototype Provincial Digital Library search portals. We're working with Supplejack, an aggregator from Digital New Zealand, and have very promising results.

Since then we've leveraged those technologies & infrastructure in piloting a new Government Documents portal. We're now testing and collecting user feedback on the interface, with plans to release it in 2019.

Experience For Students

We had multiple practicum students from the University of Toronto iSchool in 2018 who pursued research, data and visualization, and marketing projects with us:

- Tiffany Luk worked with web traffic data to identify potential stakeholders and networks for promoting our digitized newspaper collections.

- Maria Romano evaluated and recommended updates to our online collection of resources about digitization, looking for best practices, ethical discussions, and updated tools.

- Christine Patullo helped break down the results from our survey on digitization in Ontario public libraries, cleaning and normalizing the data, looking for significant results, and interpreting correlations.

- Yoonhee Lee created an infographic for our VITA members on how to promote their digital collections.

Partnership With The Leddy Library

University of Windsor

In May we announced an exciting new partnership with the University of Windsor's Leddy Library. This agreement leverages OurDigitalWorld's long-standing track record in newspaper digitization and combines these efforts with recent work at the Leddy Library on community history and digital scholarship.

The Library now supports OurDigitalWorld's Community Newspapers initiative as a platinum sponsor, furthering both organizations' goal to get Ontario's community history online and accessible.

Advocacy And Representation

National Heritage Digitization Strategy

Loren Fantin has joined the NHDS Steering Committee for a two-year term. We're excited to have this opportunity to represent the interests of diverse heritage organizations in this Canada-wide initiative.

Community News Stewardship

In response to the closure of a number of Ontario community newspapers, we convened a working group with Postmedia, TorStar, the Ontario Library Association, the Toronto Public Library, Library and Archives Canada, and the Archives Association of Ontario, to collaborate on ongoing stewardship and access to those newspapers' issues.

ORION Library Advisory Group

The ORION Network has convened an advisory group to advance library-relevant services and projects, especially the interests of public libraries. We are working with representatives from SOLS, FOPL, and OLA on this group.

Outreach

- OLA SuperConference: presentations on our Provincial Digital Library project & on our microfilm scanning prototype

- Creative Commons Summit: digitization and its impact on communities and societies

- Ontario Women's History Network conference: virtual exhibits and researching women online

- Government Information Day: our new GovDocs portal, leveraging our work with Supplejack

- Webinars presented through SOLS: we presented a variety of the resources we offer libraries & the public, including "Helping patrons search Ontario's digital community newspapers collections"

Find out what's upcoming in 2019 at
ourdigitalworld.org