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## Digitization in Ontario Public Libraries A Fresh Look

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# The Newmarket Era

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NEWMARKET, ONT., FRIDAY, NOV. 15TH, 1918

Single Copies, 5c. each.  
VOL. LXIV, No. 12

**HOUSEHOLD HELPS**  
—AT—  
**BINNS' HARDWARE**

1900 WASHING MACHINE  
DUSTBANE  
JAP-A-LAC  
BISSELS SWEEPER  
VACUUM CLEANER  
ELECTRIC STOVES  
AIR WASHERS  
BANK OF MONTREAL  
BUY VICTORY BONDS



**Mr. M. E. Sweetman,**  
Organizer of the Victory Loan Campaign in North York.

Mr. Sweetman spent his school days in Bracebridge, and ten years ago he accepted a position in Toronto. For five years he continued to advance in business until at the end of this year he was admitted as a partner in the firm of Goldman & Bond dealers. Because of his position in this line he was chosen by the Provincial Organ- ization for the Victory Loan Campaign. Mr. Sweetman is a native of this nature, but he has given himself equal to the position, and under his capable direction we have no doubt but that North York will distance its objective, namely One Million Dollars. Mr. Sweetman is a born leader, easy to get acquainted with, has a level head and is a public pusher.

### Newmarket Celebrates Victory!

**MONDAY WAS A RED-LETTER DAY  
LONG TO BE REMEMBERED**

**PROCESSION HALF A MILE LONG**

**Bells Ringing, Whistles Blowing, Bands  
Playing, Canons Booming, Etc.**

The Town of Newmarket was all astir early Monday morning, word having reached here at 4 a.m. that the armistice was signed. The first intimation was the ringing of the Town Bell, soon followed by other bells, and at 6 a.m. all the whistles in town gave a tremendous blow.

At 8 a.m. the Proclamation of Acting-Mayor Keith appeared in flaming red letters, announcing a public holiday with fitting ceremonies in the afternoon. At once the town put on holiday attire, all places of business were closed and preparations made to make it a day of gladness never to be forgotten.

The blowing of the whistles in concert at 2 p.m. was the signal for the procession to get ready, and Huron Street became alive with motors and the special attractions of the procession.

It took some time to arrange in proper order, but at last Marshall Roy Shaw on a white steed gave the signal that all was ready, and it moved off towards Main St. in the following order:

- Mounted Marshalls
- Mounted Veterans in Uniform
- High School Cadets
- Newmarket Boy Scouts
- Newmarket Bugle Band
- Kaiser and Crown Princes in Effigy
- Borne by Stretcher-Bearers
- Half a Dozen Fatlumpkins
- on Bond
- Men Carrying on a Pole

and God Save the King brought proceedings to a close.

A prayer and thanksgiving service was held in St. Paul's Church at 7 p.m., which was well attended, the church being filled.

The day closed with a Bonfire and Fireworks on the Specialty Flats.

### Red Cross Society

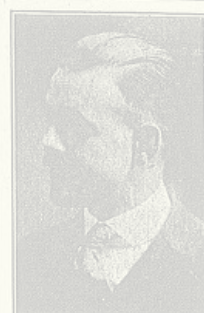
The annual meeting took place in Rooms over McCauley's Store on Monday afternoon, 16 members present.

The President, Mrs. T. J. Robinson, presided.

The Secretary reported that there had been eight business meetings held with an average attendance of 10 members.

The treasurer presented the following excellent report.

Receipts	
Bal. from last year	\$ 532.77
Annual Members	75.00
Life Members	50.00
Small Donations	78.13
Concert	90.50
Pres. S. School	25.00
Orchestra	16.50
Mrs. Davis' Al. Home	105.50
Glen Ellison Recital	16.35
Ryrie Bros. Committee	10.00
St. John's Garden Party	85.00
Canoe Drawing	62.50
Orchestra Beach Regatta	167.25
Chautauqua Booth	85.00
Sewing Meetings	61.50
Euchres	156.75
Red Cross Pins	1.25



Mr. A. T. Quay, who was selected by the North York Organizer in the Victory Loan Campaign as his Secretary, and he is certainly a clever manager. He was born and brought up in Toronto and for several years has been engaged as City Traveller for local enterprises. He has the reputation of being a fiend after detail and the office work here has given him a large scope to practice. We are pleased to say that he is filling the bill and if the North York objective is not largely over-subscribed it is not his fault.

**11**  
Hostilities ended on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918.

### SUMMARY OF THE ARMISTICE

German surrender terms include the following main points:

- Cessation of hostilities.
- Evacuation of invaded territories, including Alsace-Lorraine and Luxembourg.
- Surrender of vast amounts of arms and equipment.

### 50 YEARS AGO

From Era File, Nov. 20, 1868.

A meeting of the patrons of the Union Cheese Factory on Yonge St. is to take place on Tuesday afternoon to settle business for the season.

Mrs. Dr. Stow of Toronto lectured before the Mechanics' Institute last Friday night on "Women as Physicians." Attendance fair and lecture good.

Mr. Geo. Flint of Stouffville advertises his Revolving Horse Rake as something very desirable for farmers, and asks orders for the spring delivery.

McMaster & Lockard make a big advertising display this week.

### 25 YEARS AGO

From Era File Nov. 17, 1893

Mrs. Geo. Bastedo is home from Lislewood.

Mrs. (Dr.) Irwin of Weston is visiting her mother.

Miss May Markham of Lemonville is visiting Mrs. Saxton.

Rev. F. Smith of Bradford preached in the Methodist Church last Sunday.

There are 28 Modelists attending.

The Novelty Works are getting out 5000 sleighs for the Christmas trade.

The Football Concert Wednesday night was a grand success. The following took part: Miss Ratcliff, Miss Tolson, Miss Poppen, Miss Hogg, Miss Playter, Miss Bins and Charlie Flood.

Mr. J. E. Dickson presided. There were Club Singing, Fan Drill, Hoop Drill, Wand Exercises, etc.

The Athl—At Aurora, Nov. 8, by Rev. H. S. Matthews, Mr. Rich- and Spenceley to Miss Frances Taylor, both of Whitechurch.

In Toronto, Oct. 21, by Rev. N. E. Scott, Mr. F. C. Mahers to Miss L. L. Powell, both of Aurora.

On Nov. 8, at Aurora.

Our Digital World

### THE RAGGED EDGE OF WAR

Do we in Canada, have the faintest conception of war's meaning? Do we realize that never for one instant can those in the invaded districts escape from the visible proofs of war's devastation, and from what is infinitely

**BANK OF MONTREAL**  
ESTABLISHED OVER 132 YEARS  
**BUY VICTORY BONDS**

# Digitization in Ontario Public Libraries

## A Fresh Look

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	page 3
Our Survey .....	page 5
Collections .....	page 6
Digitization .....	page 8
Next Steps .....	page 12

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Principal Researcher: Allana Mayer  
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**OurDigitalWorld**

We're a non-profit passionate about working with communities everywhere to share and steward our digital collections.



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# Introduction

Canadian and Ontario cultural organizations are working hard to make our documentary heritage accessible online - for researchers, students, teachers, genealogists, artists, and anyone else interested in our collective past. The technical, financial, and strategic aspects of heritage digitization are understudied. Particularly understudied are public libraries, organizations that provide a wide variety of community services - but perhaps aren't the first to come to mind when you think about documentary heritage. But, as we found out, libraries are playing a big role in community heritage and collective memory.

Over the summer of 2018, we asked public libraries in Ontario to tell us about their work in this area - whether they have archival or special collections, what items they hold, how they are digitizing those collections, and what feedback they get. We received a 53% response rate; our respondents serve 85% of Ontario's population.

## Our key findings:

- Three-quarters of Ontario public libraries have special collections
- Almost 60% are currently collecting unique materials - 80% through unsolicited donations
- 89% of collecting libraries take in locally-relevant materials
- Almost half of all libraries accept digital materials; another 28% plan to in the future
- Most library special collections do not represent women, Indigenous people, people of colour, immigrants, Franco-Ontarians, LGBTQ communities, or other marginalized groups we asked about
- Almost every community has an organization to accept unique materials, whether it be a library, archive, museum, or historical society - many have more than one collecting organization
- Most libraries have no strategic or practical guidelines to govern digitization or digital preservation
- 36.4% of collecting libraries were digitizing when we asked; 26% have never digitized
- Many libraries digitize on a project basis, usually because of a one-time opportunity
- Half of respondents rely solely on their library's budget for digitization funding; 80% of budgets allocate under \$5,000/year for digitization
- 85% said their library allocates less than 0.5FTE for digitization work
- Most respondents said that lack of staff time, lack of project funding, lack of ongoing funding from the library budget, and lack of training and expertise were major barriers to digitization
- Libraries are interested in training on almost everything: digital preservation, imaging, copyright, multimedia conversion, metadata, grant-writing and fundraising, digital storage and access, and "where to start"
- 74% of libraries would contribute metadata to an aggregate search portal, though most of those would like technical or financial help
- Most libraries are not doing targeted outreach around their digital collections with the community; about 20% only do passive or informal advertising in general
- Most are measuring the use of their digital collections with web analytics, often for annual statistics or library board reporting; some are using them to plan future outreach, fundraising, or digitization activities.



**"It is extremely difficult for small libraries to fund digitization projects and maintain collections."**





**“Our library would like to start a regional archives since there is no single repository in the area. We have ample room but need grants for renovation and start-up costs and staff with expertise. We began a joint planning process with community partners in 2013 but it has not progressed due to lack of funds and support from the municipality.”**

We identified a number of potential projects that could be investigated or implemented based on these findings in the section on Next Steps. These include:

- training
- equipment sharing
- a register of collections
- a register of current or recently completed digitization projects
- a way for organizations to indicate that they would be open to collaboration
- changes to available funding for digitization in Canada and Ontario
- changes to the Ontario government’s annual library statistics collection
- ways in which libraries can work with other heritage organizations to more clearly define

mandates and priorities around collecting materials of value.

We received a 21.7% response rate from Ontario’s First Nations public libraries. Further research is required on how First Nations public libraries are serving and can serve their communities in regards to unique heritage materials and digitization.

We’d like to see more research done on a number of questions from this survey, as well as see the survey replicated in other heritage sectors.



**“We are at ‘ground zero’ with any digitization activities. We are interested in pursuing digitization, but to date have no resources or capacity to do so. We’d make a great project for some generous-minded organization!”**

# Our Survey

## Our Definitions

In our survey we provided a definition to the term “unique materials,” which we used instead of “archival materials” or “special collections materials” to limit confusion:

This section uses “unique materials” to refer to the archival or special collections your library stewards - whatever you have that’s unique and separate from regular circulation. These will probably be mostly physical (analogue) materials, but you may have digital materials. Collections don’t have to be local, but they might include last copies of historic newspapers, rare books, donated materials, oral histories, or other hard-to-find materials. Please exclude circulating items, e-resources, and subscription-based materials.

Heritage organizations have many ways to refer to their collections - whether “special” (often rare books) or “archival” (based on how they’re arranged) or “local history” or “community heritage.” For our purposes, we were interested in “things that can be digitized.”

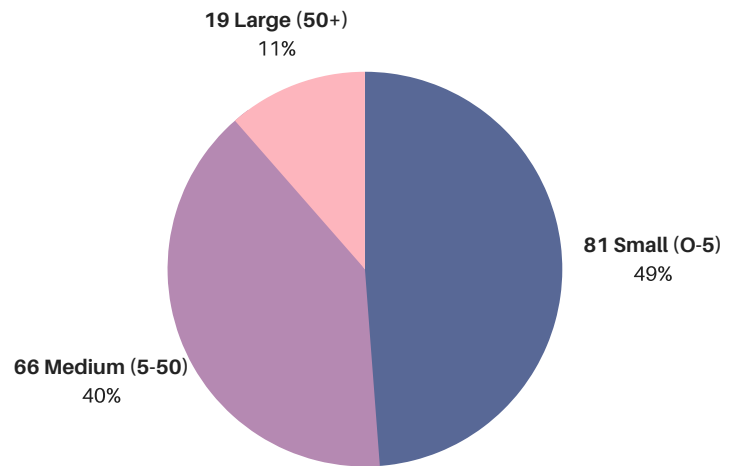
## Methodology

We ran the survey from June 21st to July 30th, 2018. We received a total of 175 responses and removed duplicates and ineligible organizations, working with 166 total responses.

## Demographics

We worked with 166 responses, for a 53% response rate from a total of around 315 Ontario public libraries. The estimated population served by libraries who completed the survey is 12,158,124. Our survey covers 85% of Ontario residents. According to the 2016 Ontario public

## Responding libraries by staff size (in full-time equivalent)



libraries statistics, libraries serve a population of 13,905,798; so, our respondents cover 87.4% of the population served by libraries. We received 10 responses from Ontario First Nations libraries, from a total of 46, for a 21.7% response rate.

We sorted libraries into size by the size of their staff. Many respondents indicated they were the only staff member, and a few mentioned they were volunteers or paid for less than full-time hours. Many reported in comments that their libraries employed no one, or less than 1 FTE staff member, supplemented with volunteer work.

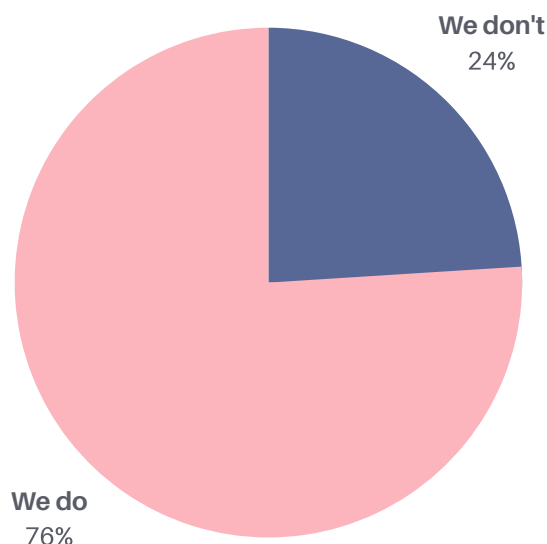
In 91 cases, with little variance by library size, the respondent was the Chief or Head Librarian, Director, or CEO. “Archive” or “archivist” variants occurred 5 times in job titles. There were 9 “local history” specializations, five “community” specializations, one each of “special collections” and “local collections” specialization, and 5 other “collections” roles generally.



**“As a workforce of 1, digitization is not a priority for our library. We have done a bit, but it tends to be time consuming and expensive.”**

# Collections

## How many libraries have unique collections?

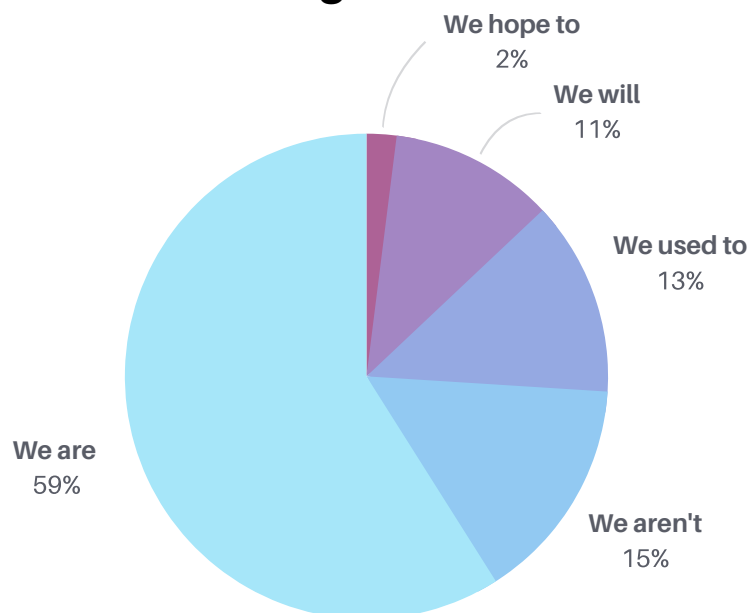


Three-quarters of responding public libraries in Ontario hold unique collections of some kind. Some of the remaining quarter may hold the last copies or only full runs of small publications like local newspapers and newsletters, meaning this percentage might be higher than 75%.

Almost 60% of respondents are currently accepting donations of archival or special collections materials. Several more libraries responded later that, although they do not have a policy of accepting donations, they sometimes take materials on an ad-hoc basis.

86% of collecting libraries do so through unsolicited donations, far more than other methods such as purchasing collections, actively soliciting, or doing oral-history projects. This suggests libraries may take in materials that are at risk of destruction otherwise, or that materials come through personal connections with patrons.

## How many libraries are collecting right now?



Almost all collecting libraries have local materials (relevant to their catchment area or geographic region): 89% said their collections were locally-relevant.

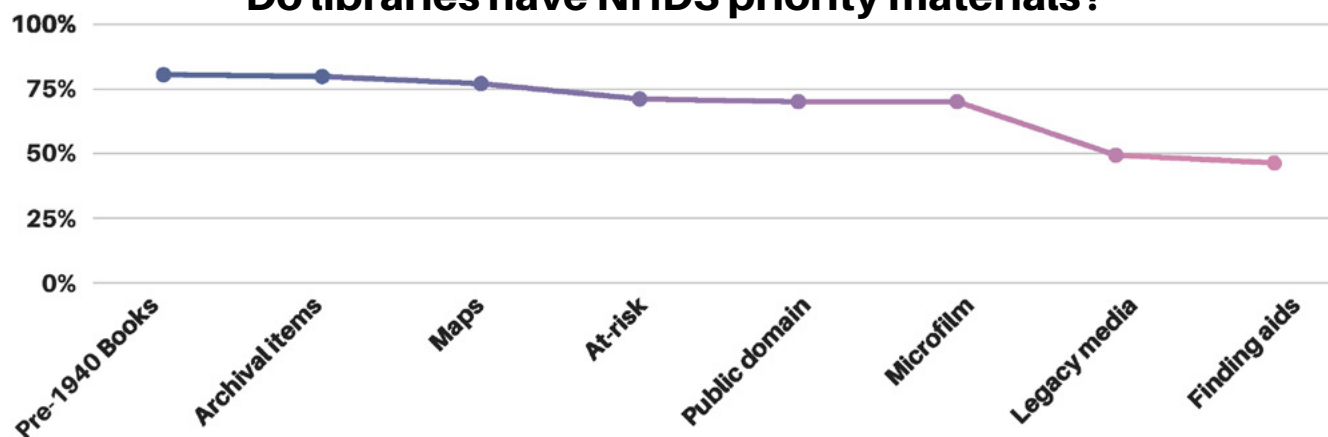
Of libraries that don't collect unique materials, 60% cite lack of space or appropriate facilities as a reason; some commented that they would love to do so but their priorities as underfunded libraries lay elsewhere.

47.4% of responding libraries accept digital-only materials, including borrowing physical materials to digitize them, or taking in digital files. The former includes the popular Archives of Ontario microfilm borrow-to-digitize program. Another 27.6% plan to take digital materials in the future.



**"There is so much on our shelves in our local history room that is not digitized or even cataloged that I can't even begin to give you a number."**

## Do libraries have NHDS priority materials?



Many libraries have materials identified as digitization priorities in the National Heritage Digitization Strategy:

- 78% have books published before 1940
- 77% have archival/genealogical materials
- 73% have historical maps
- 64.5% believe some of their materials are last copies or at-risk
- 63% have microfilm
- 63% of respondents have public-domain materials of some kind.

Libraries generally find it hard to estimate their physical holdings of unique materials. At minimum they have millions of photographs, thousands of archival records, tens of thousands of newspaper items, and tens of thousands of microfilm reels.

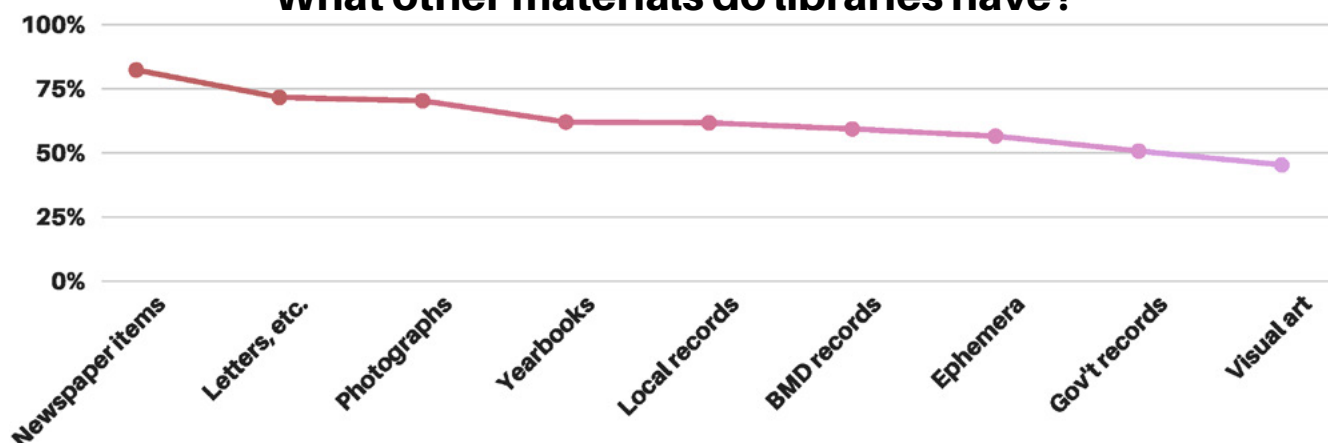
Most respondents say they do not have materials pertaining to underrepresented groups, including women, Indigenous people, or Franco-Ontarians.

Many communities have more than one organization collecting local materials. Only 2 communities out of 122 respondents have no local collections to speak of, either at the library or elsewhere.

Of other unique materials:

- 82% have newspapers or other periodicals
- 71% have letters, scrapbooks, or diaries
- 70% have photographic materials
- 61.7% have school yearbooks
- 61.4% have community organization records
- 50.4% have government records.

## What other materials do libraries have?



**"We have many microfilm reels we would love to digitize. It is a priority, but we have not been successful in grant applications to digitize these items."**



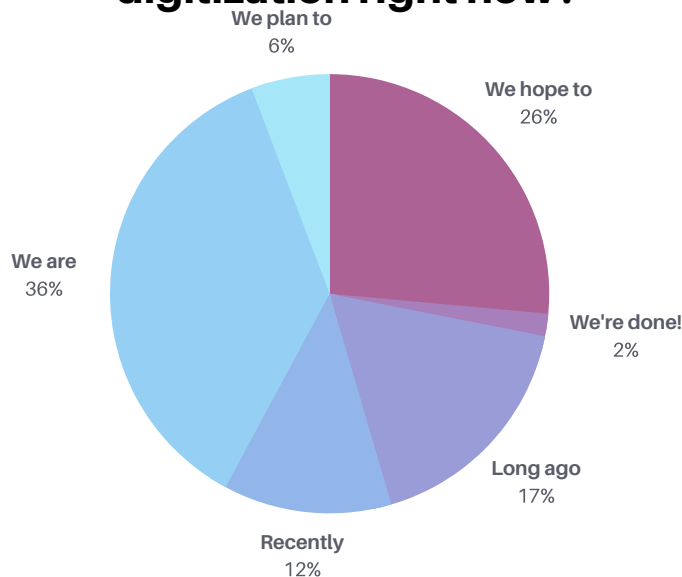
# Digitization

## Strategies and Guidelines

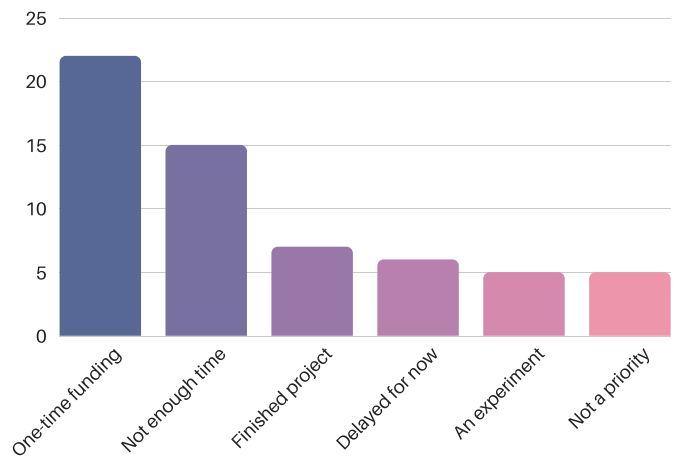
Most libraries don't have digital preservation strategies (74.4%), digitization policies (67.3%), or digitization procedures (65.9%). Most have no specific plan for keeping up with evolving technologies (50.8%); the majority that do say they're relying on their vendor for those changes.

Most libraries are aware of one relevant jurisdictional strategy, the Ontario Culture Strategy (69.6%), but not the National Heritage Digitization Strategy (46.7%), and almost half are not aware of how either could affect their approaches to local collections or digitization (48.4% and 39.3% respectively). Very few have incorporated these strategies into their activities (16.1% and 10.7%) - those that have are mainly large libraries. Many knew of the NHDS only because of an associated one-time funding opportunity.

## Are libraries working on digitization right now?



## Why did libraries stop their digitization work?



## Digitization in Practice

36.4% of libraries were working on digitization at the time of the survey; 26.4% have never, but hope to do some in the future. 17.4% last digitized more than three years ago; 12.4% within the past three years.

Materials most likely to be digitized:

- materials made before 1917,
- finding aids,
- legacy audio-video on physical media, and
- photographic items.

39% of respondents have digitized under 1,000 items; another third have digitized under 10,000 items.

Most libraries who stopped digitizing did so because it was a one-time funding or labour opportunity, perhaps a grant for a summer job or internship.

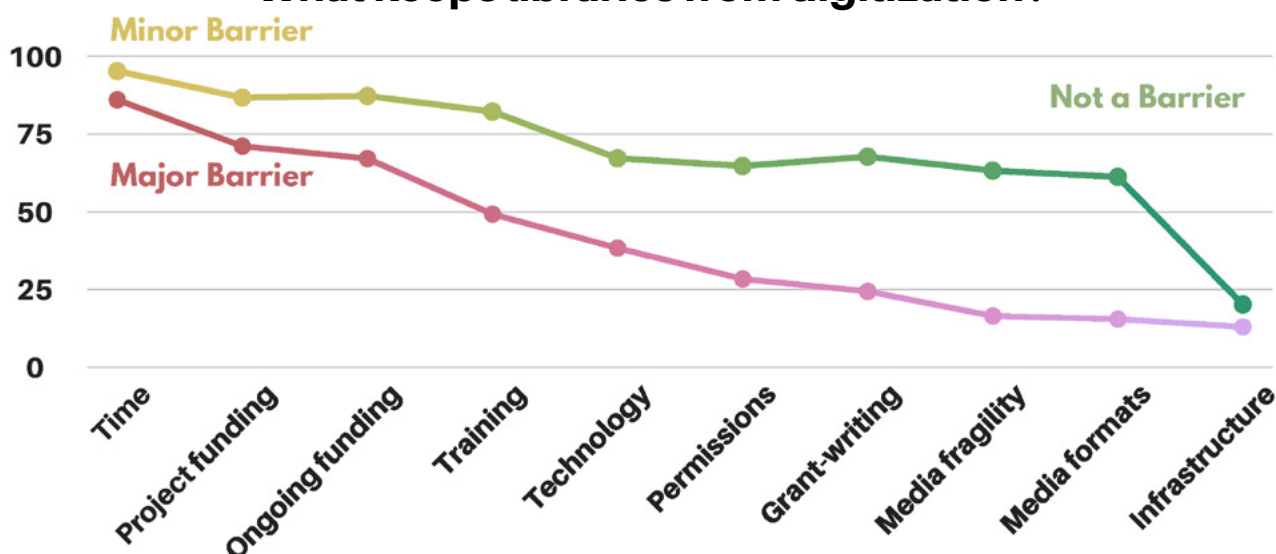
Two-thirds of libraries rely on permanent library staff for digitization projects, while 37.8% use paid interns or students; 31.1% use contractors, and 25.7% use volunteers.



**"We no longer have our contract staff member who was focused on this project. We hope to digitize again in the future when financial and staff resources allow."**



## What keeps libraries from digitization?



Half report assigning zero staff time to digitization work; 31.9% said they assigned less than half of one full-time equivalent.

31.1% of respondents use a mix of in-house technologies and outsourced technical work; 26.9% say they have everything they need in-house.

68.5% of respondents budget under \$5,000 annually for digitization work, total. Half of responding libraries rely solely on the library's operating budget for digitization funding; another 24% rely on library budgets along with other sources of funding. Library budgets are responsible for, on average where used, 84% of the funding. For those relying on provincial grants (either exclusively or in combination), provincial grants cover an average of 78.5% of the budget.

Libraries are most interested in training on:

- digital preservation,
- imaging,
- copyright,
- multimedia conversion,
- metadata,
- grant-writing and fundraising,
- digital storage and access, and
- "where to start."

**"We would have to have a budget (get funds from outside our municipal funding) for a new or temporary position, that included training, to even consider [digitization work]."**

Most respondents identified lack of staff time, lack of project funding, lack of ongoing funding from the library budget, and lack of training and expertise as major barriers to digitization work.

### Collaborations

About three-quarters of libraries who are digitizing or have digitized have worked in collaboration with another organization on these projects. Local museums, historical societies, and archives are the most frequently reported collaborations.

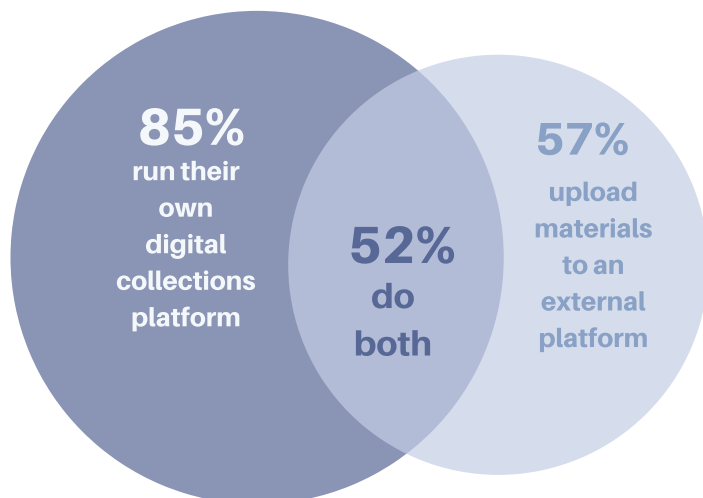
Funding contributions and access to materials for digitization are the most frequent means of collaboration - about 20% of respondents said they did not receive any support through their collaborations, meaning libraries were the ones offering the bulk of the contribution.

Libraries see their past collaborations as mostly positive (55.6%) or middling (36.5%). 59.3% of respondents are interested in future collaborations; 34.7% were unsure.

**"[We'd collaborate with] organizations that represent marginalized communities that possess objects of interest for the general public and research purposes."**



## How do libraries get their digital collections online?



### Access to Digitized Materials

85% of the 82 libraries with digitization experience host their own digital collections platform. 57% are uploading materials elsewhere, from media-hosting sites to their social media accounts. 52% are doing both. Nine libraries with digitized items don't offer any online access.

80% of respondents don't restrict access to their digital items in any way. 11.6% have some items available in-branch only; 6% have by-request-only items; and 5% have staff-only items.

49% of libraries don't re-enclose public domain materials under a copyright license. 10% say they put their own copyright on things they digitize.

Libraries are using MARC and Dublin Core more than other metadata formats.

The majority of libraries (74%) would be willing to contribute metadata to an aggregate search service in order to increase discoverability for their collections, though many will need technical or financial help (56%).

We asked if libraries would find a register of current and recent digitization work useful, and 89% agreed.

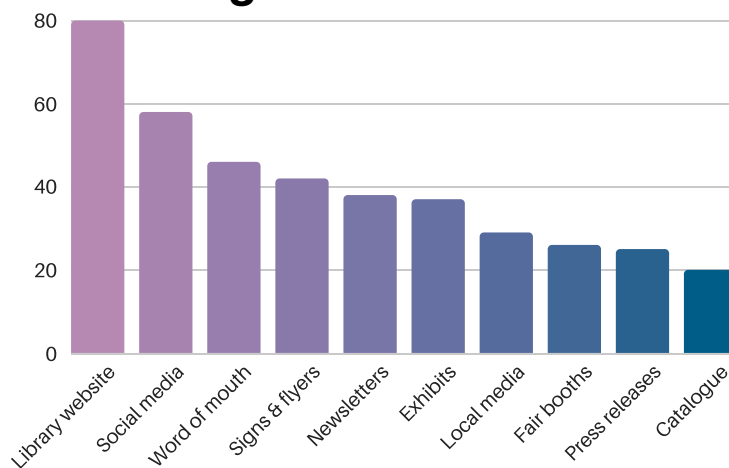
Libraries advertise their digital collections in a variety of ways, but about 20% only do passive or informal advertising: the digital collections are linked from the website, and staff do word-of-mouth informing, but nothing else.

Only 22% of libraries are doing targeted outreach in the community around the use of their digital collections. Those that are are mostly working with historical societies, local schools, genealogists, and other interest groups.

Some comments shared with us about outreach:

- "We promote the digital newspaper collection with local historical organizations, schools, and in our programming."
- "Library staff are part of local history organizations and share what we have at meetings as well as recruit and receive new materials to add to our collection."
- "Scan and Share Days."
- "Articles in historical societies' newsletters."
- "Collaboration with a local history Facebook group. We held a few 'local history discovery nights' where the resource was discussed."
- "Informal and infrequent; time, connections, and workloads for all involved are challenging."

## How do libraries promote their digital collections?



**"We would love to digitize our local newspaper. The problem is finding the funding to complete this."**



## Impact of Digital Collections

70% of libraries are measuring the use of digital collections in some way, mostly through web analytics such as page views. Many are using those statistics to:

- report to library boards,
- improve future digitization work,
- prove the impact and value of digital collections, and
- plan outreach or future fundraising efforts.

We asked libraries to tell us how their digital collections are being used:

- "Teachers using items in classes, researchers finding family history information and obituaries online."
  - "People are providing additional information to our digital content."
  - "Home use, artists, decorators, writers."
  - "Digitized collections are used by local authors, students, teachers, researchers and members of the public. Some images have been used by not-for-profits in fundraising activities, displays for nursing homes, and by artists in the community."
  - "For personal and commercial use, awareness and advocacy."
  - "Local artists find inspiration through the digitized content, the public uses digitized material to promote local heritage/history."
  - "Researchers, publishers, artists, teachers, local council for special events."
  - "Collaborations have occurred with local artists."
  - "The database is predominantly used by genealogists and curious family members."
  - "Mostly for genealogy."
- "Collections are mostly accessed by persons conducting genealogical research, historical research and property research."
  - "For environmental assessments and for heritage assessments, to research a personal property or neighbourhood. For use on historical plaques. For displays and exhibits. In published books and educational videos."
  - "Researchers using material in projects, authors using images in published works."
  - "Local and federal politicians, teachers in class and other organizations conducting research."
  - "Researchers, school assignments."
  - "Primarily, our public inquiries are from people researching historical events, family histories (BMD), and past crimes."
  - "Photographs are being used in a historical video make by the municipality."
  - "Sharing on social media, researchers, crowdsourcing initiatives, teachers, artists, general/private use, etc."
  - "Researching, family trees, local history and genealogy and researchers planning an event."
  - "The digital newspaper collection is primarily being used for genealogical research or local history research."
  - "Researchers use materials for projects, students use materials for projects, genealogist searching for family history information, writers looking for old photos, newcomers to the County wanting to learn about their new Community, yearbooks used during various homecoming ceremonies, ... just to name a few."



**"It's hard to track this as they are available online, free to all."**

# Next Steps

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## More Research

Statistics collected by the Ontario government currently include total special collections items in analogue and digital, not specifically about what's being digitized or how digital items are being added. In future years, the province could include more detailed questions about libraries' digitization tools and skills, about medium and copyright status, about digitization and digital preservation capacity, and a number of other things we've asked about in our study.

A lot of the topics we covered deserve more study. For example, we asked about copyright statements in general but not a specific breakdown of their collections by copyright and permissions status. We asked whether libraries had digitization equipment but didn't ask precisely what they had, or whether they'd be willing to lend it out to other organizations.

One valuable project would be to ascertain the particular ways in which libraries, archives, museums, historical and genealogical societies, and universities collect local materials, and

whether there is a clear differentiation of niches and priorities. How do collaborations work? Do these institutions know when and how to refer donors to other organizations? Are there conflicting mandates? Could transfers of existing collections be appropriate, and how might these be conducted?

Project-based funding often means the sustainability and continued use of digital collections is in question. Libraries need more accurate information about the skills and funding required to promote and encourage the use of their digitized materials over time, not just while the project funding lasts. Case studies and example budgets from other libraries would help.

While First Nations public libraries in Ontario had a relatively low response rate to this survey, half had unique collections. Further study is needed to identify how First Nations communities can best build local collections, and whether First Nations libraries are suitable organizations to collect or create documentation of languages and cultures.

**"It would be very helpful if there was a central website where we can research what is available digitally around the province."**





## More Collaborations

Libraries with unique collections often accept materials when presented to them, without a mandate or specific procedures or policies for doing so. This may be out of fear that the materials may be lost otherwise, but libraries are rarely the only collecting institutions in their areas.

Archives, museums, and other acquisition bodies can help by organizing material transfers or stewardship arrangements with libraries, in accordance with gifting stipulations, as well as developing clear guidelines for what to do when materials are presented to libraries. Libraries should develop clear collecting mandates where they've chosen to be a hub for community materials.

Libraries should also work with nearby collecting institutions to ensure there are plans to capture such things as community news publications and small-press local history publications.

With libraries collecting and circulating community news, and many of those publications going out of business or being closed by their owning corporations, these vital historical sources are at risk of being lost without some arrangements around preservation and digitization, or copyright and sharing permissions from the newspapers themselves.

Libraries may often be the best partner in a given area to offer consistent technical and technological

**“Unfortunately the only way that we will be undertaking any digitization project would be with grant funding. We would partner with the archives and local historical society and outsource the scanning process.”**



support, such as:

- hosting or administering digital tools,
- offering resources and expertise,
- qualifying for grants or staffing funds, and
- reaching out to the community and its patrons to raise awareness of heritage collections.

Collections need to fully represent the diversity of their communities. Libraries can facilitate this in conjunction with other collecting organizations and with community groups and individuals in the area.

Follow-up work could help libraries advertise themselves and build partnerships with like-minded organizations, perhaps through toolkits and case studies that serve as training materials on successful models.

All of the above would be best performed by recognizing the varying capacities of small, medium, and large libraries, and supporting small libraries according to their needs and abilities. We must not design tools and resources around only the interests of large libraries.

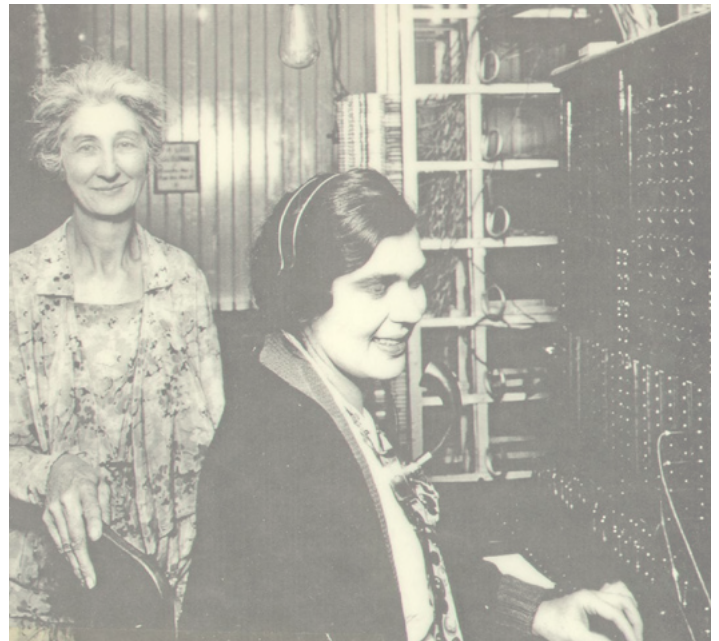
**“Establishing ‘best practices’ and standards for use by all sizes of memory institutions is an excellent idea. It would make digitization projects easier for first-time digitizers because we would have a roadmap to follow.”**



## More Advocacy

In Ontario, public library operating funding from the provincial government has been frozen for more than 20 years, even with the rapid pace of technological change. Many libraries cited funding and staff capacity as the main reasons why unique collections have not been described or digitized, and an increase in funding for this work would make a difference.

A register of unique collections or collecting institutions' mandates in the province or country would help libraries decide what to collect or what to redirect. This has been attempted several times in the past; currently the Archives Association of Ontario has a Ontario Archival Acquisitions Register with some public library contribution.



**"Digitizing is something we would consider for the future; however, we would require financial and technical assistance, as well as staff time to secure copyright permissions. In depth local history curation & digitization is a new discipline for our library, so we would benefit from more training."**

In professional literature many anecdotes exist to indicate that conflicting mandates have caused problems, but it's hard to say how serious the problem is. Further cross-sector research, and sustainable support for such collaborative projects, is needed. A register might also include where digitization equipment exists in the province and how it might be shared.

Some of the libraries that indicated their limited capacity for digitization had participated, in the past, in collaborative digitization initiatives, where a centralized staff and equipment set was able to digitize materials from a number of institutions. A major initiative of this type was the Community Digitization Project, which ran from 2009 to 2011 and was funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and administered by OurDigitalWorld, the Southern Ontario Library Service, and Ontario Library Service North. More projects of this type can increase the diversity of representation in the digital record, and help underfunded libraries

assess, describe, and preserve their community collections.

Current efforts in other jurisdictions to build collections aggregators, such as the Digital Public Library of America, Europeana, and Digital New Zealand, are models that offer lessons for how Canada and Ontario might approach digital collections discoverability across our regions.

While these resources are universally lauded as indispensable, sustainable funding and empowerment through legislation and capacity has been uneven. This is an area in which Canadian federal and provincial governments can be pioneers and create a sustainable model for others to follow, and where galleries, libraries, archives, and museums are already partnering to ensure our digital cultural heritage is accessible to all.



**"It is definitely something for which we need guidance. It is a huge project and it takes time, energy, resources and more and it is a challenge. I think the register idea is very positive and would benefit all."**



