**Collaboration between galleries, libraries, archives and museums**

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**Speech**

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Check against delivery

Thanks for this great opportunity to discuss the Ottawa Declaration with Jonathan (Bengston) and Vickery (Bowles), two of Canada’s most authoritative voices on libraries and library issues.

I want to begin by noting how appropriate it is that our discussion on collaboration between galleries, libraries, archives and museums is taking place today at a joint meeting of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) and Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC).

To the best of my knowledge, the first-ever summit on collaboration between galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs) took place in an academic institution.

In January 2016, almost a year before we held our own Summit in Ottawa on December 5 and 6, the University of Miami hosted a working summit that brought together the heads of art museums and libraries from 14 academic institutions to explore the barriers to, and opportunities for, deeper collaboration.

The Miami Summit led to recommendations for further effort in a number of areas, including formal structures for collaborative practice, shared budget strategies and joint advocacy.

Now Miami in January is certainly a better venue for a summit than Ottawa in December!

That said, I think our own Canadian effort was more than worthwhile.

My motivation for holding the Summit on the value of memory institutions stemmed from the fact that libraries, archives and museums were not significantly involved in the Canadian content in the digital world consultations under way at Canadian Heritage.

At that time, I figured that as a community, we had a responsibility to make sure that both the “powers that be” and the general public understood the important role that GLAMs play in the digital world.

So I enlisted the Canadian Museums Association and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, and together we invited our members and friends to join us that cold December day in Ottawa.

In the end, the Summit attracted nearly 300 people and some 30 speakers, a number of them from outside Canada.

We asked this group to consider some tough questions, such as these:

* In a society where digital access is everywhere, why should we build new libraries?
* Since virtual museums offer culture and history to people across the country and around the world, who needs the expense of bricks and mortar?
* What about archives—can’t you get everything you need from their platforms, or those of Ancestry or Find My Past?

These are the kind of questions that might sound ridiculous to those here today, but I assure you, they are being asked on a daily basis.

Case in point.

As some of you may know, there is a proposal in the works to create a new super-library in downtown Ottawa—a collaboration between Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the Ottawa Public Library.

The proposal has generated a lot of discussion, most of it positive.

But let’s have a look at some of the negative comments that were published in the *Ottawa Citizen*:

*“A library is a thing of the past, anything you need is on the Internet. It’s a big waste of tax dollars.”*

*“People still go to libraries? LOL”*

*“Libraries still exist? Why? Be cheaper to buy everyone a kindle or a smart phone.”*

*“I get everything I need on the Internet. Why not build homes for homeless people and seniors with all that money?”*

*“Library? Why a big place? No one reads books.”*

It sounds discouraging, but the reality is counter-intuitive.

More people than ever are visiting galleries, libraries, archives and museums.

This fact led the British Library to conclude in a recent document that:

The more screen-based our lives, it seems, the greater the perceived value of real human encounters and physical artefacts: activity in each realm feeds interest in the other.

(S*tatement of Vision and Purpose for 2015–2023,*published in January 2015)

Let me share with you some of the conclusions we reached in December.

First of all, and this was no surprise, technology is not our enemy.

The Summit gave us numerous real-life examples of innovation.

And much of this innovation is driven by technology—a source of both challenges and opportunities.

On the challenges side, we need to find the resources to acquire technology, and to hire and train the people who know how to make the most of it.

And on the opportunities side, technology allows us to reach our users where they are, which is mostly online.

But the great challenge comes from the fact that the more people use the Web to access our collections, the greater their appetite for visiting our actual physical spaces.

Essentially, we cannot de-invest in our in-person services in order to invest in our virtual services.

Memory institutions have to do both, contrary to many other sectors such as music and cinema.

The second conclusion reached at the Summit was that memory institutions are playing new roles.

Providing comfortable spaces for people to gather, welcoming new immigrants and refugees, even providing high-speed Internet access to those who need it.

The importance of this last role is perhaps underestimated.

Remember, in 2016, even though 88.5 percent of Canadians had access to the Internet at home, that still left millions of Canadians without it.

But let’s go back and talk about the spaces themselves.

The importance of public spaces, whether a library or a gallery or a museum, is only now truly understood.

Throughout the world, millions of dollars are being invested in buildings that invite people in. Sometimes these spaces are called urban living rooms, or third spaces.

There is a magic to these spaces.

I remember when I was the CEO of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec in Montréal.

During the Red Square movement in 2012, every day, for more than a hundred days, thousands of students marched the streets of Montréal to protest proposed tuition hikes.

Buildings were occupied, police cars were set on fire. There were demonstrations and arrests, and there was tear gas and violence.

The Grande Bibliothèque, Montréal’s central library, was right in the heart of it, in the centre of Montréal located next to one of the universities.

Every night we saw the protesters meet in a square across the street from the library. We witnessed the march, heard the shouting of slogans and wailing of sirens. It was quite scary.

But not once did the protesters come into the library.

Throughout, it remained a place of safety.

I think this illustrates an important point.

Memory institutions, such as libraries and archives, represent not only safety, but freedom as well.

Freedom to think and to question, to create and, of course, to disagree.

This freedom is at the heart of a democratic society.

Going back to the Summit, we also determined that one of the most misunderstood roles for GLAM institutions is the link between our activities and economic development.

The need to “prove our value” is one subject that comes up a lot.

The British Library estimates that for every £1 of public funding it receives annually, £4.90 is generated for the U.K. economy.

The 5-to-1 ratio is similar in Canada, according to recent studies at the Toronto Public Library and the Ottawa Public Library.

For every dollar invested, the community reaps about $5 worth of benefits.

Not a bad investment, I’d say.

Unfortunately, while this value is well known by memory institutions themselves, it is virtually unknown by the political, economic and media elites who spend very little time in GLAMs—those who prefer to purchase rather than to borrow, and those whose economic status means that free services are not really necessary.

Cultural consumption for this group means something very different from that of many library users. And yet these are often the people whom we need to reach to demonstrate our value.

The last conclusion from the December Summit that I want to share with you today is about the role of memory institutions in the creative ecosystem.

During the Summit, we realized that this role could not be reduced to the simple function of collecting and preserving works.

GLAMs also have a role to play at the beginning of the creative chain, providing inspiration and material to artists of all disciplines—not just to authors and poets, but also to digital artists, musicians, painters and directors.

This is an area of rapid growth for memory institutions, who are often seen as the final resting place for creative work, as opposed to a source of inspiration at the start of the creative process.

It may surprise you to learn just how much artists and creators rely on us.

One of the liveliest presenters at the Summit was Eric Chan, a digital artist known as eepmon, who fuses computer code and drawing to portray his artistic vision.

Eric spoke at length about the importance of GLAMs. Well beyond simple sites for research and exhibition, GLAMs are creative mediums in and of themselves.

There are numerous examples at LAC of this very fact. Examples that show how raw material from our collection takes on a second life through the creative interpretation of artists from all disciplines.

Take Jeff Thomas, an Iroquois artist and photographer, who was so inspired by seeing the famous Four Indian King portraits from our collection that he went on to develop an entire series of his own unique works of art: the Red Robe series.

And I am especially proud of the work of artist Sarah Hatton, who is an employee at LAC.

She took hundreds of brass fasteners, removed by hand from the personnel files of Canadian soldiers from the First World War, and used these to create a unique and moving installation called *Detachment*.

*Detachment* is a series of star charts showing how the night sky would have looked over the sites of several major battles in that war, including Vimy and Passchendaele.

Clearly, GLAMs are sources of inspiration. Places where connections can be made, where collaboration can take place, where history can be understood and where the future can be imagined.

The December Summit ended with a commitment to keep going, a recognition that memory institutions share more than they thought.

And so we are now developing a plan based on the ideas that emerged from the Summit.

We have created a working group of eight members, and this group is developing a concrete three-year plan of action based on the principles of the Ottawa Declaration.

Libraries are well represented on the working group. Maureen Sawa from the Victoria Public Library, and Loubna Ghaouti from Laval University are both members.

There is also an archivist and three members from the gallery and museum communities.

We had a first conference call on April 21, and we are set to have another on May 26.

Our first effort together will be to define a study on the value of GLAMs, which we hope to launch in 2018.

But what direction should the study take to ensure that it is of benefit to each sector of the community, while at the same time being of benefit to the GLAM sector as a whole?

And a second thing that we are contemplating is how best to explore the needs and gaps with respect to cultural policy in Canada.

The working group is also considering some environmental scans:

* First, cultural policies that exist across Canada and on the international stage;
* And second, examples of institutions from the GLAM sector who have successfully collaborated with other groups from outside the sector—with the music industry, with theatre organizations—you get the picture.

I am hoping that your comments, both today and in the days to come, will help us to better reflect your points of view as the working group drafts this action plan.

And finally, we want to share the work of this group broadly with the GLAM sector once again, this coming winter.

I am excited by this, and I hope you are too.

In an age of alternative facts and fake news, the recognition of the value of memory institutions is more critical than ever.

And the need for us to work together is being recognized around the world.

Some of you know about the IFLA global vision, an ongoing discussion about the future of libraries.

GLAMs share many of these same challenges: funding, keeping up with technology, staff skills and diversity, measuring and advocating for value, and the legal environment, such as privacy and copyright.

The first vision workshop took place in early April at the new National Library of Greece, and there was also a regional meeting at the Library of Congress in early May.

I want to quote Gerald Leitner, the new IFLA Secretary General:

How to tackle the challenges? Some people think the solution is to build walls.

We think the solution is to break down walls: to break down walls in our minds and to break down walls between libraries to improve people’s lives.

It’s a powerful image, and one I think that applies equally to the world of GLAMs.

There is no doubt in my mind that by working together and breaking down the silos of the past, the challenges facing all of us will be met.

And our value will be demonstrated.

Better that we do this together—rather than alone and from behind a wall.

Thank you.

Source： https://www.canada.ca/en/library-archives/news/2017/10/collaboration\_betweengallerieslibrariesarchivesandmuseums.html