



Canadian Broadcast Museum Foundation
Fondation du Musée canadien de la radiodiffusion



CANADA'S BROADCAST HERITAGE:

WHY IT MATTERS

TO

CANADIAN CONTENT IN A DIGITAL WORLD

October 2016

Preamble

In the years after Confederation, the railway was central to Canadian life, linking communities and regions, carrying essential goods and making it possible for a scattered population to communicate by mail. It took time, but books and newspapers – and even Hansard – gave Canadians a sense of shared experience and of participating in a great national adventure.

From the 1920s onward, radio enlivened the exchange, with wire recorders, acetate transcriptions, the LP and eventually audiotape making it possible to retain an electronic record of events. Three decades later, we could see the country and each other on television – become familiar with far-flung parts of the nation and appreciate the special characteristics of those diverse regions and populations that shared our national dream. Broadcasting, in fact, had become Canadians' principle means of 'keeping touch'.

*But now Canada is confronting a startling crisis: the loss of nearly a century's worth of the electronic record documented by its radio and television programs. **The choice is to act now – or to do nothing and, within a few years, this trove of historic cultural content will vanish.***

As Canada entered the new millennium, a small group of broadcasters recognized that, because of the fragile nature of recorded media, Canada was on the verge of losing forever the national story that aging industry founders and broadcast programs and artefacts could tell.

They had realized too that analog radio and television programs have a very limited lifespan and, without intervention, Canada was approaching the point where decades' worth of this critical inventory would soon be lost – as would their priceless value to future generations of Canadians.

Once our broadcast pioneers are gone, gone too are their stories and first-hand knowledge of the technological, industrial and economic drivers that made it possible for them to 'wire' Canada. And once the unique film, audio and videotape record of events that radio and TV has documented deteriorates, it can never be reclaimed.

*For those reasons, every developed country in the world – **except Canada** – has addressed the need to preserve and celebrate its broadcast record by creating a coherent process that links industry and government in this critical effort.*

In 2000, the Canadian Broadcast Museum Foundation/Fondation du Musée canadien de la radiodiffusion was created to collect, preserve and celebrate Canada's radio and television heritage. For more than a decade now, it has harnessed the creativity and enthusiasm of

Canada's broadcasters and the creative sector, seeking a federal partnership in this massive cultural endeavour.

The Foundation has received accolades and support from Parliamentary Committees, the CRTC, key government departments and agencies, and prospective private sector sponsors. Most importantly, it is trusted by those creators, producers, performers, and technical teams – the generations of talented people who made the programs that tell our story – and are now anxious to see their personal collections (often the only relics that remain) safeguarded.

Moreover, technological and regulatory changes are drawing the curtain on conventional 'broadcasting', and the lifespan of many of its products will soon expire. The CBC's legacy collections of programming and related artefacts document this nation's evolution during the 20th century. When this tranche of original radio and television programming is added to the Foundation's existing holdings, the National Broadcast Collection will constitute the largest collection of Canadian expression in existence

It is indeed timely that the Government of Canada has now chosen to consider "a new model for how (to) ... best foster creativity and support Canadian culture." Of paramount importance is the recognition that this must involve the empowerment of Canada's creators and cultural entrepreneurs, acknowledging the economic and social contributions that result from their initiative and creativity, and the development with them of new domestic and international markets. The pre-eminent backdrop against which this will be achieved is accessibility to high quality news and information that will enhance all Canadians' participation in the democratic process.

A critical element of this latter process is the ability to learn the lessons of our past, on which our radio and television legacy provide a unique window and can facilitate the adaptation of those who choose to make Canada their home and on which our radio and television legacy provide a unique window. Our country's analog record is the essential foundation on which future decades of our digital history will be preserved ... and the time to ensure the preservation and protection of this priceless record of our history and heritage is NOW.

I **DEFINING THE PROBLEM ...**

Day by day we are losing our radio and television legacy, our broadcasting pioneers ... and we're losing access to our national history.

During the 20th century, broadcasting became this country's electronic Hansard, providing news and information, entertainment and enlightenment in many languages to the diverse communities and regions scattered across Canada. In the 1920s and 30s, radio became the instrument of national communication and collective memory – what Graham Spry identified as 'the central nervous system' of this vast nation. Television joined the system in the early 1950s and suddenly Canadians could see places that were theirs, though they might never visit.

- In the ensuing decades Canada led the world in harnessing transmitter, cable and satellite technologies to extend a choice of services to 99% of its scattered population, from coast to coast and into the high arctic.
- That first focus had to be on extension of services but, unlike other countries, Canada has never since addressed the appropriate preservation of its remarkable broadcast heritage.¹
- As a result, the electronic record of our national evolution is being lost or destroyed as we ignore the need to invest in its preservation and ensure future access.
- Each day that passes compounds this national cultural disaster. If it is to stop, we must construct a practical and effective way to assemble and preserve the artefacts and programming record from our past and develop Canada's National Broadcast Collection.

¹ A scan of how other countries have addressed the broadcast heritage issue is contained in Appendix A.

II THE ANALOG CONUNDRUM

Eight decades of Canada's broadcast record predate the digital world. On the one hand, digitization of this vast archive is assumed to provide potential guaranteed future access but digital media have proven to be less stable than had been hoped. Security is also an issue and constant transfer to match new protocols will be an on-going requirement.

In these circumstances, the long-term preservation of original analog material is critical, both for reasons of practicality as well as for adherence to international heritage practice.

As Canada's broadcasters have been heard to say about their industry, "The system is broken – and we need to fix it." With respect to broadcast heritage in this country, there is no system to fix. It has never existed.

This is especially critical now that audio-visual media are becoming the predominant documentary sources for information about our present and recent past. In this century and beyond, the vast majority of our population will learn about their country through image and sound.

III WHAT'S BEEN ACHIEVED ...

The CBMF/FMCR has made productive use of the last decade to accomplish the following:

- It examined contemporary options for development of a National Broadcast Museum & Archive for Canada;

- As earlier generations of Canada's television pioneers moved into retirement, the Foundation began collecting oral history recordings so that our broadcast veterans could tell the story of Canadian broadcasting in their own voices;
- it created the National Broadcast Collection for Canada to take custody of and preserve programming and related artefacts that document Canada's story, ² in the wake of increasing calls for assistance from the estates of broadcast pioneers,
- It scanned the world, looking for a cost-effective way to address its unique mandate while maximizing public accessibility to the electronic record of our shared national experience, and
- It created AIREUM.ca, a practical intersection of emerging technology and Canadian content – and the online infrastructure for a 21st century facility that will in future house much of Canada's National Broadcast Collection and provide easy access for all Canadian to the audio and video record of the past century.³ With appropriate rights and other protections in place, AIREUM.ca could also function as an effective link to the global marketplace for vintage and other creative product.

While all this activity was underway, a tsunami of change hit Canada's radio and television sectors.

² Development of this collection has been so rapid that it already amounts to more than 65,000 items, making it larger than the fine-art collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

³For a sense of the scope of the task at hand, consider that the entire A/V collection of Library and Archives Canada represents less than the annual total of professional A/V production generated in Canada in just one year.

Internet-driven technological innovation began to recast audience usage and revenue expectations while convergence pressures forced unforeseen consolidation within and across media. In the resulting process of station or network acquisition, new owners streamlined operations, often disposing of decades of historic archival material as they ‘rationalized’ space requirements. It can be no surprise, therefore, that these years of uncertainty have left the future of Canada’s broadcast sector unclear and this, in turn, has only increased the vulnerability of the national broadcast record.

IV WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Recently, private television broadcasters have flagged for the CRTC their interest in abandoning conventional over-the-air service as they move to streamed or other web-based delivery models. The approaching deadline for ‘unbundling’ Canada’s specialty channel packaging model is approaching, making uncertain the future of many of them as well as the Canadian production companies who provide their domestic programming. Soon it will no longer be possible for many of those creators who built and sustained Canada’s television presence to protect and preserve their programs.

Adding to this industry pressure are imperatives now confronting Canada’s national public broadcasting service, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Radio-Canada (CBC/R-C). The Corporation is committed to a 50% reduction in its real estate holdings by 2020, so that the recaptured resources can be redirected into programming.

These changes have focused attention on the future of its legacy collections of radio and television programming and related artefacts that have traditionally been housed in Toronto’s Broadcast Centre, at La Maison in Montreal and in numerous regional locations throughout Canada,

including the unique Indigenous-language program collections at broadcast locations in Nunavut, NWT and Yukon.

Early in 2015, the Corporation recognized that it would no longer be able to house the analog collections of radio and television programming and related materials it had been gathering since its creation in 1936. Consultation with Library and Archives Canada revealed that institution had neither the mandate nor the expertise required to assist, and it was suggested that CBC/R-C approach the CBFM/FMCR since it was the only organization charged with such responsibility.

In June 2015, the Corporation asked the Foundation for assistance. Since then, we have been working with its staff to identify corporate and other requirements, assess the volume of the national and regional holdings and the most efficient and appropriate response to preservation and access in the context of the uncertain future facing all sectors of the broadcasting industry.

What we know is that, in addition to three-dimensional and other artefacts, Canada's broadcast record contains millions of audio and video items - from newscasts to commentary, public affairs and performance, comedy, documentary and drama - that reflect more than eight decades of the social, industrial, political and technological changes that have shaped our diverse nation. **It constitutes the single largest assembly of this nation's cultural product** and, as a public trust, it properly belongs to the people of Canada to be safeguarded and shared for their mutual benefit.

To assist in addressing this growing challenge and effectively harness digital technologies to provide public access, the CBFM/FMCR has created an advisory group of industry veterans and others with broad knowledge

and experience in the production, technology and heritage sectors.⁴

V THE SOLUTION ...

Now is the time for Canada to step up and seize the opportunities presented by emerging technologies, as we did in the 1920s with radio and later with television and new distribution technologies.

This Federal review of cultural policy presents a unique context within which to address media conservation, preservation and public access issues in an innovative public-private partnership. To secure the future of Canada's broadcast legacy and to make it accessible to future generations will require a commitment from the Government of Canada to

- **partner with private and public interests in preservation of the analog components of the National Broadcast Collection: programming of national or regional significance produced in whole or in part with public funds.** The volume of material from the CBC/Radio-Canada whose custody will be subject to transfer will be known by mid-2017. Other network and production company holdings remain to be documented. Transfer of CBC/R-C holdings from corporate sites could begin as early as summer, 2017.
- **partner in development of a National Broadcast Repository** in which the multiple formats of audio and video recordings and other artefacts can be preserved in environments controlled to the highest possible heritage standards. Review of a potential central-Canada venue for the Repository is now underway. Second-level details will be assembled and initial plans completed by April 2017.

⁴ For a list of Committee members and the Foundation's Board of Directors, see Appendix B.

- **support development of online access for Canadians to the National Broadcast Collection via AIREUM.ca.**, this country's bilingual national broadcast heritage portal. It will deliver information about our shared history, about the events and stories that enliven the Canadian experience by tapping the programs and other treasures in the National Broadcast Collection in galleries and with themed and streamed programs – reaching audiences in every corner of the country rather than trapping the national record within the confines of 'bricks and mortar'.
- **Support the continuing work to identify, select, accession** – then digitize and create metadata for what remains of the thousands of independently produced Canadian radio and television programs created since the 1950s so that they can take their place in the distributed National Broadcast Collection.

Swift commitment is essential if we are to address decades of inaction and harness the opportunities that the digital world presents for preservation of our stunning legacy of Canadian content. Equally important, it will encourage the formation of new and supportive partnerships within and beyond Canada's broadcasting industry and make it possible to carry this initiative successfully through the 21st century and beyond.

It is a challenging task ... but for a country that taught the world how to effectively link its citizens over the world's second-largest national land mass, it is not impossible.

We proved Canadians could harness technology – radio, film, television, microwave, cable and satellites to do that. Now we must capture the potential of digital technology to ensure that their history becomes readily accessible and the 21st century too belongs to the people of Canada.

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APPENDIX “A”

Broadcast Heritage Initiatives: Some International Examples



Australia

National Data

Population	24.2 million
GDP	\$1.137 trillion
Area	7,692,024 km ²
Official Languages	English

Broadcast Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Institution/s	National Film and Sound Archive
Corporate Structure	Public
Budget	\$33.9m (Aus \$)
Staff	206
Holdings	2.234m



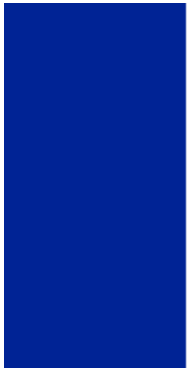
United Kingdom

National Data

Population	65.1 million
GDP	\$2.679 trillion
Area	242,495 km ²
Official Languages	English

Broadcast Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Institution/s	BFI, National Media Museum, BBC
Corporate Structure	Public
Budget	91.6m, 4.5m, 15m out of total (£)
Staff	555, unknown, 300+/- out of total
Holdings	0.8m, 3.5m, 16m



France

National Data

Population	66.7 million
GDP	\$2.647 trillion
Area	643,801 km ²
Official Languages	French

Broadcast Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Institution/s	L'Institute Nationale de l'audiovisuel
Corporate Structure	Public
Budget	\$175 m (€ 125 m)
Staff	945
Holdings	c. 17 million, (800,000 hours of radio and TV now collected annually)



JAPAN

National Data

Population	127 million
GDP	\$4.901 trillion
Area	377,972 km ²
Official Languages	Japanese

Broadcast Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Institution/s	NHK
Corporate Structure	Public
Budget	updated data enroute
Staff	updated data enroute
Holdings	+ 6.8m



Nether lands

National Data

Population	17 million
GDP	\$856 billion
Area	41,543 km ²
Official Languages	Dutch

Broadcast Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Institution/s	Institute for Sound and Vision
Corporate Structure	Private/public
Budget	\$169 m (€ 115)
Staff	c. 200
Holdings	+ 1 million and now added to daily by all Dutch broadcasters



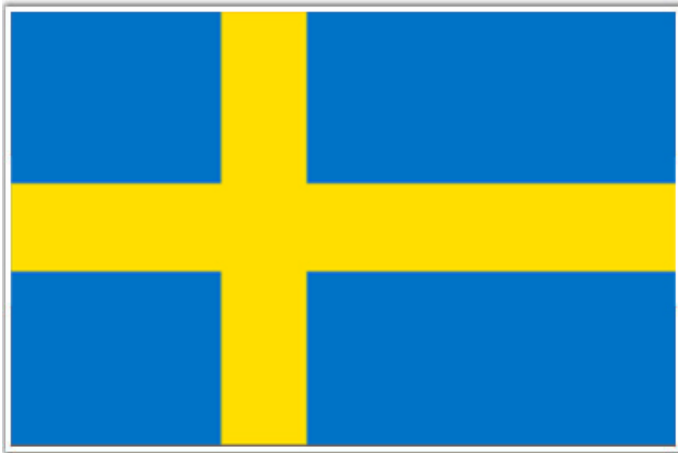
United States

National Data

Population	324 million
GDP	\$18.558 trillion
Area	9,833,517 km ²
Official Languages	English

Broadcast Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Institution/s	Library of Congress- Packard Campus
Corporate Structure	Public
Budget	\$17 m
Staff	120
Holdings	7.3m



Sweden

National Data

Population	9.6 million
GDP	580 billion (\$US)
Area	450,295 km ²
Official Languages	Swedish

Broadcast Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Institution/s	Swedish National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images, now incorporated into the National Library of Sweden
Corporate Structure	Public
Budget	\$9 million (\$US)
Staff	27
Holdings	updated data enroute



GERMANY

National Data

Population	80.62 million	
GDP		3.73
trillion (\$US)		
Area	357,168 km ²	
Official Languages	German	

Broadcast Heritage Preservation Initiatives

Institution/s	German Radio & TV Broadcasting Archive (DRA)
Corporate Structure	Public
Budget	data enroute
Staff	data enroute
Holdings	data enroute

APPENDIX “B”

CBMF/FMCR Board and Honorary Directors

CBMF/FMCR Advisory Transition Committee

CBMF/FMCR Board of Directors

Thomas Curzon	Marc Denis	Peter Herrndorf
Elmer Hildebrand	Valerie Pringle	Pierre Racicot
Red Robinson	Duff Roman	David Taylor
Lorraine Thomson		Robert Underwood

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Juliette Cavazzi, Vancouver	Denise Donlon, Toronto
Michael Francis, Vancouver	Felix(Fil) Fraser, Edmonton
Michael Levine, Toronto	Trina McQueen, Toronto
Gordon Pinsent, Toronto	Lloyd Robertson, Toronto
Pamela Wallin, Toronto	Jim Waters, Aurora

Advisory Transition Committee

Norm Bolen, Vancouver	Marie Charette-Poulin, Ottawa
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Douglas Ward, Ottawa	Stephen Waddell, Toronto