November 25, 2016

The Honourable Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Canadian Heritage
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

RE: CANADIAN CONTENT IN A DIGITAL WORLD 2016 CONSULTATION

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important consultation process.

Public libraries are cultural institutions that fulfill a critical role in the promotion and support of Canadian content. Public libraries have been providing equitable access, opportunity and connections for years, long before the development of the digital world. As Memory Institutions, we are uniquely positioned to leverage digital technologies to work with our communities to ensure that Canada's cultural heritage is preserved and promoted.

For your information, the Canadian Urban Libraries Council / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CULC/CBUC) is comprised of 45 member public library systems (www.culc.ca/about/librarymembers) that collectively provide public library service to more than 65% of Canada's population; representing close to 80% of the public library activity in the country. This happens from almost 600 physical locations and extensive websites. In 2015, member libraries were used by Canadians more than 350,000,000 times. CULC/CBUC strives to strengthen our vibrant urban communities through building the capacity of Canada's urban libraries.

We have surveyed our membership and are pleased to provide a summary of their responses to the three consultation questions. A number of local examples were collected to illustrate the degree to which Canadian public libraries are embedded into the digital world and the Canadian heritage network. A sampling of these are included as an addendum to this submission.

QUESTION ONE
What does a cultural system that supports creators and respects citizen choice look like to you?

A cultural system that supports creators and respects choice has three foundational principles: access, opportunity and connections. It must advance literacy, including digital literacy, so that individuals are empowered to access information and use technology to enrich their lives. Such a system provides equitable access to relevant print, digital and other resources to meet the diverse needs of our citizens.

There isn't a unique, homogenous, single, or territorial Canadian culture. We need to capture unique perspectives at the local level. Public libraries are community hubs that bring together people from a variety of backgrounds and with diverse experiences. We are gathering places for local ideas and interests. We provide not only credible sources of information to our communities, but also the expertise, services, collections, tools, and spaces that facilitate and promote the critical assessment of information for creators and consumers. Public libraries are conduits for the consumption and creation of content.

How do we do this?

Start Local:
- Give voice to local stories and story tellers.
- Empower communities to share unique views.
- Embrace a variety of contributors.

Provide the tools to create, share, and explore:
- Provide free use of tech equipment, access to resources, info, and people.
- Provide a platform to share: digital or in person.
- Develop programs to promote participation and critical thinking.

Reduce barriers to make it easy for creators to access/share their creations:
- Make the system open and accessible for those who may face skill challenges in sharing their creations in a digital environment.
- Ensure that digitization projects that are funded are coming into the same standard so the content can be used universally.

Convey to community the broad scope that covers being a creator – it can include community creation, self-publishing, etc.:
- Build community engagement around creating – makes it less formal than limiting to a narrow definition of a creator.
- Ensure broad representation of creators across the country.

QUESTION TWO
How do we support Canada's artists, content creators and cultural entrepreneurs in order to create a cultural ecosystem in which they thrive and that will benefit the growth of our middle class at home, and help them reach beyond our borders.

A cultural system should give everyone a chance to participate. It should reflect the growing diversity of our country. Cultural offerings are imbedded in every community in Canada. They are one of the building blocks of community development. A strong cultural ecosystem makes art, culture, and creativity accessible and available to all of our citizens. In this context it is important to include people who are new to Canada but who will add a layer of richness to the tapestry of Canadian Culture.

Public library spaces are changing to provide the tools, resources and staff support that creators need. Libraries are that "third place" for cultural entrepreneurs to work and meet, expanding their possibilities. To quote Michael Agresta[1] libraries are "a place where we not only download culture, but upload it too." By leveraging existing infrastructures and providing additional resources, libraries are transforming to become key leaders in the creation and preservation of Canadian content, Canadian identity, and Canadian innovation.

How do we do this?

Help grow skills and access information and resources:
- Through partnerships and collaboration, provide opportunities to grow literacy skills, for all types of literacy (eg. financial, digital, etc.)

Provide Canadians with space to create and a platform to spread their words:
- Leverage the existing network of public libraries to provide support to citizens so that they can acquire the skills and tools to convert personal heritage content to new formats

1   www.slate.com/articles/life/design/2014/04/the_future_of_the_library_how_they_ll_evolve_for_the_digital_age.html

License Canadian content nationally, so that it can be offered freely via public libraries:
- This would support less known artists in being discovered via the huge and active users of Canada's public libraries. Public libraries provide access to both local and international visitors.

Support Canadian creators and artists by giving them a forum or platform to be recognized and celebrated:
- Recognize and support the role of libraries in orienting and assisting immigrants and Canada's newest citizens, and celebrate the mosaic of Canadian identities. With well-curated digital initiatives, libraries can espouse social justice, democracy and values to our citizens of every age.

Ensure fair and balanced pricing for e-content in Canadian libraries:
- Fair pricing is essential for both creators and consumers. Public libraries continue to face challenges in ensuring universal access to ebook content. The Canadian Public Libraries for Fair Ebook Pricing is a coalition that was led by the Toronto Public Library and Ottawa Public Library to bring together Canadian and provincial library associations, including CULC. It is working collaboratively with other large public library systems across North America.

Provide alternative format works in physical and digital forms to ensure that all Canadians have equal choice:
- The Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) was established to provide library materials in alternative formats through local public libraries, thus ensuring that all Canadians have equitable access to the materials they wish to read. A secure funding model for this enterprise is required.

Support broadband initiatives so that access to digital content is available to all:.
- In order to support these new digital directions, reliable and sufficient broadband access is critical. The Government of Canada must continue to develop and fund national broadband initiatives so that access to digital content is available to all.

Include public libraries in federal infrastructure funding opportunities:
- Public libraries require physical changes to existing spaces to create open and engaging makerspaces for digital conversion centres, 3D printing, and provide production studio facilities for the creation of music, videos, webinars, podcasts, and broadcasts, etc.

QUESTION THREE
How can we meet the challenge of promoting Canada's creativity in the digital world, and how can we use Canadian content to promote a strong democracy?

Now, more than ever, the open exchange of ideas and opinions must be supported to nurture and sustain creators and ensure citizen choice. Documentation and the provision of access to the ideas, knowledge and perspectives of our communities is an imperative for cultural systems in the 21st century.

Throughout history, libraries have provided free access to published content in multiple resources that have supported content creators in their research and for creating new works. We foster critical thinking and stimulate a variety of voices of a healthy democracy through everything we do. We support and respect creators through ensuring fair use and understanding of copyright law with digital content. When we provide free and inclusive public spaces that bring our communities together to create and share their stories and ideas across many different forms of expression, we learn about each other and amplify the voices of Canadians. By understanding each other and meeting in safe, accessible, and inclusive forums like public libraries, where all voices can be heard, we build the conditions of a strong democracy.

How do we do this?

Provide independent, national, digital public space:
- A federally funded and independently managed national digital platform that is open to contributions in multiple channels, in multiple formats, from all the diverse communities of Canada. This platform would support both those with a wide range of digital literacies, from the techie to the rookie. Would gather stories told in words, pictures, sounds and images and collectively we would build a new cultural ecosystem.
- Open data / open licensing approach to allow fair re-use and sharing. Enable community contributions to existing stories such as tagging, geolocating, creating visualization.
- Provide grant funding opportunities that support the local digitization of important historical and cultural records. Ensure the terms of grants require that the content created adheres to national standards and are included in a national digital platform.

Use content as a platform for dialogue and learning:
- Initiate learning strategies/activities based on content.
- We run the risk of having content sit stagnant unless we figure out ways to leverage it as a learning opportunity for democracy.

Strengthen the role of public libraries in promoting Canadian creativity and content:
- Public libraries are natural allies in promotion, and have a highly functioning, existing network and community reach.

Give citizens ownership of Open Data:
- The library is a place to increase understanding of digital citizenship and to promote the importance of reading and literacy in all its forms.

In conclusion, we would like to take this opportunity to commend the work that Libraries and Archives Canada has undertaken to provide a "cohesive way forward for the digitization of the collections of Canadian Memory Institutions, to ensure they remain relevant in the digital age by making their collections easily accessible", as outlined in the National Heritage Digitization Strategy released by LAC earlier this year. The collaborative approach that LAC has taken to develop this strategy and its plans to move forward on their objectives is both progressive and encouraging.

We urge the Ministry of Canadian Heritage to strengthen its investment in LAC's efforts which will provide an essential support for the promotion and preservation of Canadian content in a digital world.

Yours sincerely,

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Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) / Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada

Canadian Urban Libraries Council
Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada

SUPPORTING & ENGAGING CREATION AND CONSUMPTION OF CANADIAN CONTENT

This sampling is far from an exhaustive list, but will serve to reflect the impact of Canadian public libraries in supporting and promoting Canadian content.

Inspiration Lab – Vancouver Public Library
- www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/digital-inspiration-lab-opens-at-vancouver-public-library-1.3062671
- www.vpl.ca/programs/cat/C1051

EPL Makerspace – Edmonton Public Library
- www.epl.ca/browse_program/makerspace
- globalnews.ca/news/1145264/edmonton-public-library-launches-makerspace

Le Square – Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
- square.banq.qc.ca

Digital Innovation Hub – Toronto Public Library
- www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/using-the-library/computer-services/innovation-spaces/community-spaces.jsp

Imagine Space – Ottawa Public Library
- www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/makerspace-ottawa-public-library-bigger-1.3425824

Love Your City – Share Your Stories – Hamilton Public Library
- www.hamiltonstories.ca

Flickr Commons – Reaching beyond our borders – Hamilton Public Library
- www.flickr.com/commons/institutions
- www.flickr.com/photos/hpllocalhistory

Studio Central – Kitchener Public Library
- kpl.org/studio-central

Media Studio – Halifax Public Library
- halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/branches/locations/halifax-central-library/central-media-centre.html

Emerging Local Authors Collection – Greater Victoria Public Library
- gvpl.ca/using-the-library/our-collection/emerging-local-authors
- www.bclocalnews.com/entertainment/334357491.html
- www.straight.com/blogra/813906/vancouver-public-library-prepares-plan-promote-self-published-local-authors

Bram & Bluma Appel Salon – Toronto Reference Library
- www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/appel-salon

Writer in Residence Programs
- calgarylibrary.ca/author-in-residence
- www.hpl.ca/articles/writer-residence-0
- www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/writer-in-residence

Aboriginal Reading-in-the-Round – Winnipeg Public Library
- www.winnipeg.ca/corp/ird/oan/pdfs/ARRpamphlet.pdf

Dunlop Art Gallery – Regina Public Library
- www.dunlopartgallery.org/exhibitions

Idea Exchange – Cambridge Public Library
- ideaexchange.org/art

Culture & Recreation Pass Programs
- gvpl.ca/using-the-library/our-collection/cultural-and-recreational-passes
- pwp.vpl.ca/inspirationpass
- www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/museum-arts-passes