



Continuing an excellent tradition, Archives Week will be celebrated in Saskatchewan, February 5 – 11, 2007, officially proclaimed by the Honourable Glenn Hagel, Minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation.

2006 was our first-ever Archives Week, bringing archives into the provincial spotlight as never before! There were individual and inter-institutional displays of historic documents, Historic Film Night in Regina, a CBC Radio Phone-In, “Archives Day at the Co-op,” Archives’ Open Houses and more.

This year, the SCAA has put together this Archives Week Action Guide with tips on planning events, undertaking local outreach activities that engage the local media, and encouraging individual archives and archivists to make the most of this time of celebration — their way!¹

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¹ We would like to acknowledge with gratitude the value of the “Public Relations Kit” prepared by the Society of American Archivists for American Archives Month, 2006, available at <http://archivists.org/archivesmonth/ArchivesKit.pdf>

Celebrating Archives Week (Who, What, When)

As you think of celebrating Archives Week at your archives, ask yourself three vital questions:

1. Who would you like to reach with your message?
2. What do you want to say?
3. How do you want to say it?

For instance, are you interested in reaching youth, potential donors of archival records, the media, or key community leaders? Perhaps you are interested in building community relationships while having a great time while underlining the value of archives.

Both formal and informal approaches work. "Formal" means a direct message, such as a descriptive ad, or a billboard. "Informal" means creating ambience, a "feeling for archives," that brings pleasant awareness, such as organizing a fun event. Sometimes you can creatively combine the two approaches.

What do you want to say? Some possibilities are: visit archives and use its resources; let us care for your valuable collection; archives a key to knowing ourselves. Boil your message down to a single point that your staff, Archives Week committee, etc. can work with. Make your message the kernel of your media interviews and your displays.

How will you say it? Be creative, clear, speak in terms your community will understand. There are many ways to get the message across, from displays to historic re-enactments, a feature film, a billboard, posters, a tea: the possibilities are endless, but of course, must be within the archives' means.

Posters and Buttons

Posters and buttons for Archives Week 2007 are available from the Saskatchewan Council for Archives and Archivists. They will be mailed prior to SCAA members prior to Archives Week. Besides copies of posters you might get from the Council, PDF copies of the poster will also be found on the SCAA website that might be taken to your local printer and printed in the size you like.

Explaining Archives in a Nutshell

How can archives be explained quickly? It is good to have some accurate, descriptive phrases that are easy to understand, and easy to use.

What are archives? Archives are records considered to be of enduring value that have been created by individuals, organizations and governments in the course of their daily activities. They take such forms as correspondence, financial and legal documents, photographs, digital files, videos and audio records. Archivists are persons who assess, collect, preserve, maintain control of and give access to this valuable, cached information. The places the records are kept are also called "archives."

Archives are important because:

- They build community memory – who we are
- They add to accountability and transparency
- They protect our rights and property
- They make information accessible

Who uses archives? Journalists and newsmakers; municipal and other society leaders; teachers and students; genealogists, historians, novelists, and many more. Archival records are found everywhere from postage stamps and our money to T-shirts and street murals.

“Our sense of ourselves, our hopes for the future rely on an informed engagement with the past. The ultimate source of the stories we have told about ourselves, the fashion in which we revise and amend them in future, rests on accurate archival resources....”

Guy Vanderhaeghe, Saskatoon, award-winning author

Writing a Press Release

A press release formally declares your event. Press releases follow a particular style, given below:

1. First paragraph should have: primary facts of the story (who, what, when, where, why).
2. Keep sentences short, concise, no jargon and spell out all acronyms (SCAA – The Saskatchewan Council for Archives and Archivists).
3. Double space your work, with wide margins.
4. Place contact information in the upper right hand corner and the release date in the upper left hand corner. If it can be used immediately, write “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE”
5. At the end of the release, include a sentence that explains your organization.
6. Try to send your release out to the media 2 weeks before your event, follow up 2-3 days before the event to ensure the press release was received.

Open Houses

Holding an Open House is a hospitable approach that lets a “picture paint a thousand words.” Invitations that bring a blend of persons to the archives for an entertaining or educational exhibit, a tour of the facility and tea-time make for the building of strong networks. A door prize (e.g. scrapbooking supplies or a book), musical entertainment, or having a story teller on hand—all add interest. You might also have a “Treasure Hunt” Day, where archives are brought in from basements and attics in the community. Your imagination is the limit. One tip: if you are displaying photographs, put them on a long under a sheet of plastic for the day, a great way for people to be study them up close but to leave them intact. Also, consider serving your refreshments away from where the documents are.

Exhibit Tips for Malls, Nursing Homes, and Other Spots

A bright exhibit with large lettering, engaging storyline and staffed by enthusiastic volunteers or staff can do a lot to promote your institution. Period dress, music, special performances that can be announced in advance, give-aways, a youth display of art or “what archives mean to me” – all of these serve a good purpose.

A handy tip for display is to try to “catch the corner.” If you can have a right-angled exhibit (tables that catch mall traffic from two directions, you have captured twice the attention).

A Nursing Home event can be used to honor residents, generate oral history records and to stir memories. Don't forget all of the virtual exhibits available on our website <http://scaa.sk.ca/> which can give you ready information and some ideas regarding photographs that exist on various subjects. Perhaps you can invite persons to bring their own photos and put them up for display?

Having a School Event, and Engaging Youth

Your archives might be able to dovetail a display with a part of the existing teaching curriculum, or stage a Children and Grandparents Day. You might have students visit your archives class by class, or set up an archives exhibit in a Resource Room that classes can access. A Poster Contest or “I Remember” talks by seniors can also bring youth into the Archives Week celebration. The school might well be glad for some media publicity for the event. If possible, contact the school some time in advance, so you can fit your plan into the school’s busy schedule.

Youth and archives –an incredible combination as archives display their key resources and take their place as the vibrant places they really are. A poster featuring youth and archives, archives as potential career, or kids’ websites as archival resources...all of these are ways youth might be involved. You might also feature “Kids’ Stories in the Archives” (documenting the lives of children over the years) or “Archivist for a Day” (where students tour archives and must make simulated archival decisions in a round-table, will add firsthand experience of archives).

Using Newspapers

Run an ad, give a newspaper interview, or submit a thought-provoking article or a “Letter to the Editor” regarding archives or a specific hook-story, like a rare archives find. In an interview, never speak off the record —assume that everything you say may appear in print. Offer information clearly. Newspaper ads cost money – perhaps consider partnering with a local business, where it can help to pay for the ad. Sometimes newspapers are willing to run them for free, as a public service. Usually you can find a Local Happenings spot in the newspaper or community paper where you might advertise your event for free.

Finding a Treasure

Archives are full of treasures, and new ones are appearing all the time. Stimulate acquisitions by having a Treasure Day, or featuring a “find” in the local paper. Explain why it is important, relate it to today’s world, and to events of yesteryear. Poignant, informational, precious — treasures have emotional appeal that will keep archives in the public memory for days to come.

Web It

Can you launch a new Web exhibit on your archives website during Archives Week? Capture life stories in email form? Offer a brief course in memoir writing to interested community members through the use of Internet? Even sending out a celebratory email announcing Archives Week and inviting everyone to “do something” is publicity. The Web is a great resource for publicizing your cause.

After Archives Week

Evaluating how Archives Week went, sending thank you notes to those who participated, and gathering positive reactions from the community (testimonials) after the Archives Week events are useful activities. They will help you plan next year’s events, too, as well as to determine the shape of future outreach work in your community. If possible, post the photos from your events on your website, or share them with the SCAA.

Celebrate Archives Week in Saskatchewan!
February 5 – 11, 2007